Factors that influence repeaters to come back:

A comparison of ocean and river cruisers

Suellen Maree Tapsall BA, MA, GAICD

This thesis is presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Business Administration of The University of Western Australia.

UWA Business School

2020
Declaration

I, Suellen Maree Tapsall, certify that:

This thesis has been substantially accomplished during enrolment in this degree.

This thesis does not contain material which has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma in my name, in any university or other tertiary institution.

In the future, no part of this thesis will be used in a submission in my name, for any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution without the prior approval of The University of Western Australia and where applicable, any partner institution responsible for the joint-award of this degree.

This thesis does not contain any material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text and, where relevant, in the Authorship Declaration that follows. This thesis does not violate or infringe any copyright, trademark, patent, or other rights whatsoever of any person.

The research involving human data reported in this thesis was assessed and approved by The University of Western Australia Human Research Ethics Committee. Approval #: RA/4/1/7880.

This thesis does not contain work that I have published, nor work under review for publication.

Signature: [redacted]
Abstract

Cruise ship travel has increased twenty-fold since 1980, with more than 30 million passengers expected to ocean cruise in 2019. Once considered a waiting room for the graveyard, and almost exclusively the domain of older, affluent North Americans, cruise ship travel is increasingly multigenerational and multicultural. The industry is worth more than $5 billion/year to Australia, which is the fifth-largest source country for ocean cruise passengers, behind the US, China, Germany and the UK.

Despite increasing attention from academics in recent years, cruise ship research is still limited, leading to the current project, which was designed to increase our understanding of cruise passengers by identifying cruising aspects that influenced repeat cruisers’ choices. The focus on repeat cruisers recognised the continued significance of repeaters within the cruising market and the informed perspectives of those choosing to repeat their cruise experience.

The study was mixed method, with a qualitative phase that used focus groups and in-depth interviews with repeat river cruisers to identify the river cruising aspects that most influenced their choices. These aspects were examined further in a quantitative phase in which data were obtained through online questionnaires completed by ocean and river cruisers. The research found differences between ocean and river repeaters, as river cruising is all about the itineraries and destinations. However, three ocean repeater segments were found. Deal Seekers focused on value for money and onboard experiences, Brand Followers were loyal to
a particular ship line and Experience Hunters were more interested in cruise itineraries. While Experience Hunters and river cruisers were most alike in the importance of itinerary, the two groups were different in age, cruising history and other socio-demographic aspects.

The research suggested convenience and cost were more important than brand, itineraries and destinations for a large segment of ocean cruising respondents; with brand also of less importance to river cruisers and ocean cruising Experience Hunters, who were willing to brand hop and shop in search of the right experience or destination. This calls into question the industry’s reliance on parochial market data and databases, suggesting the need for independent panels to improve their understanding of the market. Given the strong evidence of heterogeneity in the aspects influencing repeaters’ choices, cruise companies need to decide whether they will target the whole market or particular segments and, if so, they need to develop appropriate strategies in terms of fleet size, itineraries and so on.
# Table of Contents

Declaration........................................................................................................................................... i  
Abstract........................................................................................................................................... ii  
Table of Contents................................................................................................................................. iv  
List of Tables ......................................................................................................................................... ix  
List of Figures ........................................................................................................................................ x  
List of Appendices .............................................................................................................................. x  
Acknowledgements ............................................................................................................................ xi  
Chapter One: Introduction to the Thesis ............................................................................................... 1  
  Introduction ......................................................................................................................................... 1  
  Research Overview ............................................................................................................................ 2  
  The Study’s Purpose and the Research Question ............................................................................. 6  
  Contribution to Knowledge ............................................................................................................... 7  
  The Thesis .......................................................................................................................................... 8  
Chapter Two: Literature Review - Cruise Industry and Research ..................................................... 11  
  Introduction ......................................................................................................................................... 11  
  The Cruise Industry .......................................................................................................................... 12  
    River cruising .................................................................................................................................. 15  
    Cruise sector challenges ............................................................................................................... 16  
  Cruise Research ............................................................................................................................... 18
Chapter Seven: Some Initial Findings from the Quantitative Phase

Introduction

The Sample

Personal background characteristics

Cruise history, preference and satisfaction characteristics

Comparing the Ocean and River groups

Attribute Importance: Best Worst Scaling

Attribute Importance

Examining Group Differences

Conclusions

Chapter Eight: Examining Heterogeneity

Introduction

Looking Further at Heterogeneity

Ocean Group 1 (Deal Seekers): Backgrounds

Ocean Group 2 (Brand Followers): Backgrounds

Ocean Group 3 (Experience Hunters): Backgrounds

River Cruisers: Backgrounds

Conclusions
Chapter Nine: Discussion and Conclusion .......................................................... 181

Introduction ........................................................................................................... 181

Major Findings ...................................................................................................... 182

Ocean Cruisers: Journey or Destination? ............................................................. 183

River cruisers: all about destinations and itineraries ........................................... 184

Value for money is more important than the initial ticket price ....................... 184

River repeaters: more likely to ocean cruise internationally ............................. 185

‘Unpack once’ not rated highly by repeaters ...................................................... 186

Implications for the Industry ............................................................................... 187

Implications for governments ............................................................................. 191

Limitations ........................................................................................................... 192

Implications for academia and areas for future research ................................. 195

Some Concluding Comments ............................................................................. 199

Bibliography ......................................................................................................... 201
List of Tables

Table 4.1: Some Research Approaches ................................................................. 64
Table 5.1: The Involvement Questions ................................................................. 94
Table 5.2: The Big Five Factors ........................................................................... 95
Table 5.3: Changes from the RIVER to the OCEAN questionnaire .................... 99
Table 6.1: The Attributes .................................................................................. 127
Table 7.1: The Involvement Scale Items .............................................................. 132
Table 7.2: Personality Scale Items ..................................................................... 134
Table 7.3: Ocean and River Groups background Information ........................... 138
Table 7.4: Cruising Experience and History ....................................................... 141
Table 7.5: Attribute Descriptions ...................................................................... 144
Table 7.7: The BWS Results (River Cruisers) .................................................... 149
Table 8.1: BWS Attribute Importance (Cluster Means) ..................................... 158
Table 8.2: Rotated Structure Matrix .................................................................. 160
Table 8.3: Functions at Group Centroids ............................................................ 161
Table 8.4: Cluster Comparison of Attribute Importance .................................... 167
Table 8.4: Group Differences (personal backgrounds) ....................................... 173
Table 8.5: Group Differences (Cruising experience and history) ....................... 175
A2.1 Balanced Incomplete Block Design (13 Factors) ...................................... 235
A2.2 BIBD with Factor Labels ........................................................................... 236
List of Figures

Figure 5.1: The Best-Worst Question set (an example).............................................93
Figure 7.1: The Best-Worst Task (an example).........................................................143
Figure 8.1: Heterogeneity (Ocean Cruisers)...............................................................155
Figure 8.2: Heterogeneity (River Cruisers).................................................................156
Figure 8.3: Group Differences.....................................................................................161

List of Appendices

Appendix One: Focus Group Protocol .......................................................................229
Appendix Two: Balanced Incomplete Block Design....................................................235
Appendix Three: River Cruise Survey..........................................................................237
Acknowledgements

This research study and thesis would not have been possible without the support of many people. Whether named in this section or not, I thank all of you who provided encouragement and incentive along the journey and to this final destination of a complete thesis. Specific thanks to:

- My supervisor Professor Geoff Soutar, a world-renowned marketing scholar and quantitative genius. Your grace, generosity and intellect cannot be understated and it has been a privilege to work and study with you.

- Viking River Cruises Australia, whose initial support allowed me to garner participants for the qualitative research phase and some for the questionnaire – and made it seem possible to do the research.

- Everyone involved in the UWA DBA program, particularly Professor Tim Mazzarol – this was a challenging and exciting course of study and I valued both the academics and fellow students met along the way. Associate Professor Michele Roberts who first said ‘Why not cruising?’ when I mentioned doing a doctorate and went on to be a co-supervisor in the first part of my study.

- My good friend Caroline Masters for turning 50 and taking three girlfriends on a cruise – if not for you, none of this would have happened. David Masters, Natasha Bartlett, Megan Fisher, Bev and Barrie Yesberg, Susan Conraddie, Nola De Moungey, Kerry Azar, Jason Micallef, Lydia Kilcullen, Jenny Sarich, Steve Brown.
• My long-suffering husband Andrew who had already carried me through one postgraduate research degree and still never said a negative word when this one came along with crazy study hours and ocean and river cruises around the world. Our daughters — Bethsaida, Amaraiah, Jezaniah, Zarah, their partners and our grandchildren, Chase, Jackson, Kylah and Tahnee — for never being afraid to ask how many words I still had to write... and for the many family dinners missed in the name of study. Thanks to all our extended family, including my mother Sue Elliott, uncle John Dunstan and sisters Vicki and Michelle for your love and interest.

• I have been inspired every step of the way by my sister Wendy Elliott who joined me in the DBA program — while living in far north Queensland, raising five children (aged between four and 12 when we started) and working part-time. Your thesis deals with important and worthwhile matters and your intellect and unflagging commitment challenged me to keep going. Walking parallel paths as we have completed our doctoral studies together has been a privilege and the best part of this experience. You kept the promise.

This research was supported by an Australian Government Research Training Program (RTP) Scholarship (RTP Domestic Fees Offset (no stipend)).
Introduction to the Thesis

Introduction

"Cruising has become a religion, complete with its own temples (cruise ships), prophets (cruise agents), and scripture (ABC's enduring The Love Boat). The folks who were shooting angry e-mails to me [after a previous article critiquing cruising] were, in fact, accusing me of blasphemy; how dare I criticize their faith?" (Elliott 1999, p. 316)

In 1977, The Love Boat set sail on 10 seasons’ worth of cruising through first US, and then world, living rooms (IMDB 2019). A decade of The Love Boat brought the “romance and excitement” (Weaver 2005, p. 347) of cruising to the mass market. The show featured a diverse ‘family’ of caring crew (including an authoritative single father captain, a pre-pubescent child, a glamorous young female cruise director, and goofy good-natured Caucasian and a good-looking African American male crew members). This family cared for each other, and a steady stream of celebrity, rich, famous and ‘ordinary’ passengers; resolving issues, escaping both the mundane of
everyday life and troubles, finding dreams fulfilled and life in general a continuous narrative of happy endings. All this was done on board the ship, with the destinations and ports visited little more than glamorous footnotes and dazzling backdrops to the onboard plotlines. *The Love Boat* won awards and attracted large audiences and a strong following, popularising cruising for several generations while embedding romantic and idealised notions of cruising. More than 30 years after the last new episode hit the screens, more people than ever, including more Australians, are creating their own cruising stories (many on similar looking ships from the same cruise line that supplied *The Love Boat*).

**Research Overview**

Cruising is the fastest growing area in tourism and travel, with an average of 20% growth per annum for the five years to 2019, although it is still a small segment of the total tourism market (Cruise Lines International Association Australasia [CLIA Australasia] 2017; Mahadevan 2016; Papathanassis 2017; Papathanassi & Beckmann 2011; World Tourism Organisation and Asia-Pacific Tourism Exchange Center 2016). Worth more than $USD134billion per year globally, the cruise industry employs more than 1.1 million full-time equivalent employees and, in 2019, more than 30 million passengers were expected to ocean cruise (Cruise Lines International Association [CLIA] 2018a).

Papathanassi & Beckmann (2011, p. 166) defined cruise tourism as a “socio-economic system generated by the interaction between human, organisational and geographical entities, aimed at producing maritime-transportation-enabled leisure experiences”. While there is no direct quantification of the part the cruise sector
plays in the total economic contribution of tourism and travel, the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) noted the economic impact of tourism and travel contributes 10% globally to GDP and supports one in 10 jobs (World Travel & Tourism Council 2018a, p. 1). This suggests cruise ship travel is less than 1% of the sector. Although the Australian cruise sector grew by only 4% in 2017 (the first single digit increase in years), this followed 12 years of double-digit growth, with strong performances expected to continue, fuelled not only by new ships and increased capacity, but also by increasing numbers of new and younger cruise travellers and significant ongoing growth beyond the traditional North American market (CLIA Australasia 2018a, 2018b, n.d.; Dowling 2016).1

While tourism is considered a “super growth industry” by the Australian government and is seen as an important economic contributor to the country (Tourism Australia n.d.), Australia is a relatively small player globally in travel and tourism (ranking anywhere between 12th and 33rd on six major measures, including contribution to GDP (direct and total), employment (direct and total), investment and visitor export (World Travel & Tourism Council 2018b, p. 7). However, Australia is performing far more strongly in the cruise travel sector, as cruising has become the country’s fastest growing tourism sector (CLIA Australasia 2017). Australia is the fifth largest source country for passengers (behind the USA, China, Germany and UK) (CLIA 2018a) and has much higher market penetration than the rest of the world, being the only market in which more than four out of every 100 people have cruised (up to almost

---

1CLIA refers to the global cruise association which is the largest cruise association of 60+ of the world’s major cruise lines. It started in the USA 30 years ago. CLIA Australasia is the regional chapter which has evolved since 1996 through a number of different trading names.
6% in 2017 compared to less than 4% in all other regions) (CLIA 2017a; CLIA Australasia 2018a). Industry reports suggest the contribution of the cruise sector to the Australian economy exceeded $5 billion in 2016-2017, with ocean cruise ships stopping at 41 ports nationally and the sector directly supporting more than 12,000 FTE jobs and a further 7,000 FTE jobs indirectly (CLIA Australasia 2018b).

A high proportion of cruise travellers are repeat cruisers, with ‘repeaters’ comprising the majority of many passenger cohorts. However, the massive growth of the sector and large increases in ship numbers, sizes, routes and beds, reflects the industry’s desire (and to some extent success) in attracting new, first-time cruisers, from a wide range of geographies, ages and socio-demographic groups. Although cruise operators might no longer “solely rely” on repeaters (Papathanassis 2017, p. 106), the proportions of repeaters is up to 80% or more on some cruises (CLIA 2011; Duman & Mattila 2005; Petrick 2004a). The high rate of repeaters has been considered a major driver of innovation and continual improvement in the sector (Vogel & Oschmann 2012).

Cruise operators are increasingly investing in resources and ships, while adding new destinations and ports. Various researchers and industry sources have also commented on the market’s fragmentation and segmentation, with competition intensifying as operators jockey to attract and retain new and repeat cruisers (Baran 2018; CLIA 2017a; CLIA Australasia 2018a; Papathanassis 2017).
While there has been growth in cruise-related research in recent years, cruising remains relatively little understood, with many unanswered questions around the social, economic and personal dimensions of cruise travel (Mahadevan 2016; Papathanassis 2017; Zbuchea 2015). Much of the previous research has concentrated on cruising economics and the ‘business of cruising’, particularly ocean cruising, and relatively little on the motives of cruisers or their on-board experiences (Mahadevan 2016; Papathanassis 2017). Similarly, despite the acknowledged increased fragmentation of the cruise sector (CLIA 2017a; Papathanassis 2017), prior research has focussed on cruising as a generic term, with little distinction made between different types of cruise ship travel. Differentiation between types of cruising and cruisers only becomes evident when researchers tackle a specific sub-section of the market (e.g. luxury cruising, expedition cruising or river cruising) (see, for example, Dickinger & Zins 2008; Gouveia, Rebelo, Lourenco-Gomes & Guedes 2017; Hwang & Han 2014; Ioana-Daniela et al. 2018; Irincu, Petrea, Racz, Bulzan & Filimon 2015; Kriwoken & Hardy 2018; Lobo 2008; Paskevich, Dawson & Stewart 2015; van Bets, Lamers & van Tatenhove 2017). Research into these segments is even less developed than that of cruising in general.

The Berlitz traveller handbook (‘Cruising and Cruise Ships’) describes river cruises as a “crossover between ocean-going ships and a land tour’ (Ward 2014, p. 106). River cruise ships are much smaller than ocean ones, carrying just hundreds of passengers and with minimal onboard facilities. River cruising passengers are a very small percentage of the general cruising market but there is considerable growth (e.g. in 2018, more than 103,000 Australians and New Zealanders cruised on European
rivers, a 400% increase from 2012 (CCNR 2019)). Thus, this sector needs to be examined.

**The Study’s Purpose and the Research Question**

The primary aim of the research was to understand what aspects of cruising influence repeat river and ocean cruisers’ decisions about subsequent cruises, with an accompanying objective of understanding whether or not there were significant differences between the aspects seen as important by repeat river and ocean cruisers. A further objective was to see if there were any subgroups who valued different cruising aspects and if they had different personal characteristics. The research was undertaken to increase industry and academic understanding of cruising and was designed to add to our existing knowledge by exploring gaps in prior research by:

- Focusing on ocean and river cruising.
- Using the Best Worst Scaling (BWS) method as a way to determine cruisers’ preferences.
- Obtaining ‘preference’ scores for aspects of the cruising experience, so as to allow operators and researchers to better understand the relative values of different aspects of people’s cruising experience. It was hoped this increased knowledge would provide additional understanding about the aspects of people’s cruising experiences that impacted on repeaters’ decisions to make subsequent cruises.
The research used a BWS methodology to analyse cruise travel for the first time, while addressing some gaps in the cruising literature. By identifying a core set of attributes valued by repeat cruisers, it was hoped the study would increase operators’ and researchers’ understanding of the relative importance these people attached to different aspects of the cruising experience.

While acknowledging that consumers’ decisions are impacted by different factors, including perceived value (e.g. emotional value, social value and functional value), this study was not concerned with these drivers. In other words, the research did not seek to replicate other studies that have explored why or how consumers perceived value but, rather, to determine what aspects of cruising most contributed to subsequent cruise choices.

**Contribution to Knowledge**

The most important impact of this research was its attempt to identify the attributes cruisers value and to see whether there were significant differences in the aspects valued by river cruisers and ocean cruisers. While such differences might be expected, no prior research has examined this issue. Other ways in which it was hoped this research might assist industry and academic researchers included:

- Helping cruise line operators prioritise between different aspects of the cruising experience, to capitalise on those parts of the experience most valued by repeat cruisers. It was hoped the research would increase our understanding of why some cruises are more successful than others, although conducted with the same or similar ships and itineraries.
• Providing a window for the general public, particularly non- and potential-cruisers, that might help them understand the most valued aspects of cruising. This should lessen the perceived risk of such consumption and increase potential satisfaction and intent to act (Quintal, Lee & Soutar 2010; Vogel & Oschmann 2012).

• Developing a better understanding of existing segments in the repeat cruiser market to see whether it might be possible to increase purchases and satisfaction by catering more specifically to these segments.

In setting the research around repeat cruisers, it was also expected the study would provide insights into a less-understood and under-researched area of cruise travel. The rise in segmentation within the cruising market, and possible differences between river and ocean cruising, suggested the present project would provide fertile ground for additional exploration and comparisons between ocean and river cruisers. Finally, in being the first study to apply a BWS methodology to examining cruisers’ preferences, it was anticipated the research would provide further insights into the usefulness and application of this method to cruise research specifically, and tourism and consumer decision making in general.

The Thesis

An additional eight chapters present the methods used and the findings of this research project. Chapter Two and Chapter Three present a literature review of topics related to the cruising industry, cruise research, cruise passengers and consumer decision making, while the methodology used and the research approach
undertaken are discussed in Chapter Four and Chapter Five. Chapter Six describes the outcomes of the qualitative first phase, outlining how this informed the quantitative second phase. Chapter Seven and Chapter Eight present the findings obtained in the second phase, while Chapter Nine discusses the findings, some implications for stakeholders and some limitations before the thesis concludes by suggesting some recommendations for further study.
Chapter Two

Literature Review - Cruise Industry and Research

Introduction

Cruise lines are selling you a dream. The power of your dream, your imagination, creates a challenge that the cruise industry is trying to meet. Television commercials and glossy colour brochures about cruises all promise the same thing – an unexcelled excursion into the glamorous life, with romantic evenings, a perfect tan, six or eight gourmet meals a day, and intermittent forays into picturesque and exotic ports of call where the sun always shines, the shopping is splendid and the natives are friendly and photogenic. Oddly enough, more often than not, it works out that way. (Berger 2006, p. 124)

This chapter explores the literature relevant to this study’s research question (i.e. ‘What aspects of cruising influence the cruise purchasing decisions of repeat river and ocean cruisers?’). In the process, it engages with published research that has examined cruisers’ behaviour and decision-making.

In preparing this chapter and the next, searches were undertaken using three university library search systems (the University of Western Australia, the University of Melbourne and the University of Technology Sydney), Google and Google Scholar to identify relevant cruise-related peer-reviewed journal articles, books and commentary. Several cruise industry research paper overviews were identified that took different approaches to summarising more than three decades of research publications (Hung, Wang, Denizci Guillet & Liu 2019; Papathanassis & Beckman...
2011; Wondirad 2019). These results were analysed and extended to include papers published subsequent to those studies as well as those not included in the later papers that targeted only cruise research published in a limited number of journals. Google Scholar alerts were also set up to provide continual updating on search topics, including ‘cruise ship’, ‘cruise industry’, ‘ocean cruising’, and ‘cruise tourism’.

Here, cruise travel is defined as “any [multi-day] maritime based tour by fare paying guests [accommodated] aboard a vessel whose primary purpose is the carriage of passengers” for leisure and normally visiting “a variety of destinations”. This builds on Wild and Dearing’s (2000, pp. 319-320) definitions of ‘cruise’ and ‘cruise tourism’, with the addition of a multi-day component that includes accommodation, thereby excluding day trips, ferry services between set routes and freight shipping.

The Chapter starts with a description of the cruising industry in general and river cruising. It concludes with a discussion of aspects and attributes of cruise research to date, including some issues and challenges. Research relating to cruise passengers, repeat cruisers and people’s reasons for cruising are discussed in Chapter Three.

The Cruise Industry

Cruise travel sits within and across a number of sectors, including the maritime transport of goods and people for functional purposes, land- and air-based tourism and travel, restaurants, gymnasiums, leisure and more (Gibson 2008; Papathanassis & Beckmann 2011; Weaver 2005). While cruise ships are a “microcosm of the tourism industry” (Whyte, Packer & Ballantyne 2018, p. 1), they differ from other
tourism and hospitality products, being more complex and challenging, particularly for newcomers (Sun, Kwortnik & Gauri 2018, p. 133).

Cruising is the fastest growing area in tourism and travel, with an average of 20% growth/annum for the last five years, although it is still a small segment (CLIA Australasia 2017; Mahadevan 2016; Papathanassis 2017; Papathanassis & Beckmann 2011; World Tourism Organisation and Asia-Pacific Tourism Exchange Center 2016). In 2017, the industry was worth US$134 billion a year and employed more than 1.1 million full-time equivalent employees (CLIA 2018a). It was expected to carry more than 30 million passengers in 2019 (CLIA 2018a). The cruising industry contributed more than $5 billion to the Australian economy in 2016-2017 (CLIA Australasia n.d.), up more than 15% on the previous year (AEC Group Ltd 2016, p. 5).

There are more than 50 cruise lines (CLIA 2017a), but there has been considerable consolidation, with four major cruise corporations controlling 80% of the global cruise market through 21 brands, namely:

- Carnival Corporation: Carnival Cruise Line, Cunard, Princess Cruises, P&O Cruises (UK), P&O Cruises (Australia), Holland America Line (HAL), Seabourn, AIDA Cruises, Costa Cruises
- Royal Caribbean Cruises Ltd (RCCL): Royal Caribbean International, Celebrity Cruises, Azamara, Tui Cruises, Silversea Cruises, Pullmantur
- Norwegian Cruise Line Holdings Ltd: Norwegian Cruise Line, Oceania Cruises, Regent Seven Seas Cruises
- Genting Cruise Lines: Star Cruises, Dream Cruises, Crystal Cruises.
The cruise industry is expected to make more than US$51 billion investment in new ships by 2026, with 81 ocean cruise ships on order for delivery (CLIA Australasia n.d.) and at least 65 new cruise ships expected to debut in 2018-2019 (30 ocean, 35 river), adding to the existing 449 CLIA-member cruise line ships (roughly 95% of the industry world-wide) (CCNR 2019; CLIA 2017a, 2018a). Ocean cruise ships are also getting larger, up 43% on what was considered a very large ship 10 years ago (CLIA Australasia n.d.), with 69 cruise ships weighing more than 100,000 gross tons sailing in 2017, 32 of which had been deployed since 2010 (The Telegraph 2017). More than 60% of the ocean cruise ships on order also measure more than 100,000 GT (CLIA Australasia n.d.). This additional capacity will substantially increase the current total sector capacity of 490,000 lower berth passenger beds (Statista 2018).

CLIA Australasia (2018b) has suggested cruising is an important source of inbound international tourists to Australia. However, Australians also cruise, although tending to stay in local waters (77%), either cruising the South Pacific (35%), around Australia (34%) or to New Zealand (8%) (CLIA Australasia 2018b). From 2003-2004 to 2015-2016, the passenger capacity of ships visiting Australia increased almost threefold, the number of ships visiting Australia doubled and the number of ports or destinations visited more than doubled. Total passenger days in port increased more than six-fold and estimated passenger spend increased more than 12-fold, exceeding $1 billion a year (AEC Group Ltd 2016, p. 5). Industry expenditure has also increased more than 10-fold since 2003-2004 (from $155 million to $1.737 billion in 2015-2016) (AEC Group Ltd 2016, p. 5). NSW is the largest source state (54% in 2017), followed by Queensland (21%) and Victoria (13%) (CLIA Australasia 2018b, n.d.).
River cruising

As already noted, river cruises have been described as a “crossover between ocean-going ships and a land tour” (Ward 2014, p.106). River cruise ships are typically small (e.g. 190 guests on the Viking Gullveig compared to 5,500 on Royal Caribbean’s Symphony of the Seas), without the intense consumption spaces of casinos, ice rinks, multiple formal restaurants, high-end shopping malls, massive entertainment centres and swimming pool complexes. If cruising is less than 1% of the overall leisure and tourism market, river cruising’s place in the market is almost infinitesimal. For example, while more than 800,000 Australians took a cruise vacation in 2013, just under 50,000 embarked on a river cruise (CLIA Australasia 2014). In 2017, more than 1.3 million Australians went ocean cruising (CLIA Australasia 2018a). In the same year, 107,000 Australians and New Zealanders took European river cruises (CCNR 2019), although there is currently no updated indication of the total number of Australians river cruising. However, river cruising has experienced strong growth, increasing by 25% in 2013, outstripping the growth performance of other cruising segments (albeit from a smaller base). Passenger numbers on European river cruises increased by 15% from 2017 to 2018, continuing a trend of at least six years of consecutive growth (CCNR 2019). In late 2017, CLIA (p. 19) reported that river cruising was continuing to “gain traction among travellers”, particularly Millennials. This trend was also observed in Europe in 2018, with strong growth in younger cruise travellers (e.g. a four-fold increase in German river cruisers aged 26-40 and a significant increase (from 11.8% to 18.3%) in those aged 41-55) (CCNR 2019).
The major river cruising destination is Europe, although river cruising occurs to a lesser extent on most continents, particularly North America and Asia (Baran 2011, 2012, 2014; CCNR 2019; CLIA 2014; Dickinger & Zins 2008; Dragin et al. 2014; Frake 2008; Green 2012a, 2012b; Steinbach 1995; Young 2013). The Central Commission for Navigation on the Rhine (CCNR) reported that the Danube River was the most cruised river in Europe, followed by the Rhine and that there were 359 active river cruise boats on European rivers in 2018, more than double the number sailing in 2004 (CCNR 2019). The European fleet comprised 41% of the world’s river cruise ships, with the next largest fleets being on the Nile and African rivers (CCNR 2019). The European sector continued to grow, experiencing “a boom” in 2018, with 1.64 million passengers (CCNR 2019, p. 134). Major source countries were North America and Germany, followed by Britain and Ireland. There is a very small amount of river cruising in Australia (on the Kimberley and Murray rivers), so most Australian river cruisers fly internationally to and from their river cruises. The average length of river cruises is 14 days, compared to nine days for Australian ocean cruise passengers (CLIA Australasia 2014, 2018b).

Cruise sector challenges

Globally, the sector faces major challenges that have been identified by various researchers and industry sources (e.g. Douglas, Mills & Phelan 2010; Dowling & Weeden 2017; Papathanassis 2012b; Papathanassis & Beckmann 2011; PR Newswire 2014; Weaver 2005; Wild & Dearing 2000). These include:
• New technologies (e.g. in boat design and operation).

• Bigger ships leading to larger volumes of passengers and more pressure on ports and services.

• The consolidation of boat builders (falling from 14 to four).

• An increased cost base for businesses (e.g. increased oil prices, compliance costs, and higher wages).

• Increased management complexity, as the bigger the business, the more staff, control, and systems are required (Gibson 2011; Gibson & Papathanassis 2010; Papathanassis 2011, 2017; Papathanassis & Beckmann 2011; Sun, Feng & Gauri 2014; World Tourism Organisation and Asia-Pacific Tourism Exchange Center 2016).

Managing the negative narrative surrounding cruising is another issue, with negative publicity around many aspects of cruising being a long-term issue that escalated sharply in 2019 following river and ocean cruise ship accidents and mishaps. This has resulted in damage to iconic sites and ships, along with loss of life (Chua 2019), the critical reporting of cruise line behaviour, including breaches of environmental sanctions and high drama rescues at sea (Anderson 2019; Otte 2019) and high-profile fatalities of cruise ship passengers, including when two planes in Alaska collided killing shore excursion passengers on both (Elfrink & Horton 2019). These highly publicised incidents build on prior negative coverage, including cruising as a means of transport by terrorists (Green 2014), passengers lost at sea (Cruise Junkie 2018; Godfrey 2018), negative environmental and social impacts on port destinations
Locally, regional, state and national infrastructure and regulatory settings present significant opportunities and challenges for the continued growth of ocean cruising in Australia (CLIA Australasia n.d., 2018a; Pierce 2018). The sector has highlighted the need for additional infrastructure in Sydney, where 63% of passengers in this region start or end their cruises, and elsewhere around the country. The Federal Government announced, as part of its 2018 budget, that it would help fund the search for a third Sydney cruise terminal (Chua 2018). In Queensland, work is underway on a new $158 million international cruise terminal at Luggage Point, while port cruise ship facilities have been, or are being, upgraded at Broome, Fremantle, Newcastle, Geraldton and Melbourne (Chua 2018; CLIA Australasia n.d.; Marmion 2017; McGowan 2017; Pierce 2018; WA Government 2018b). State Governments are jockeying to bring more cruise ships to their ports, loudly proclaiming their efforts and successes (Pierce 2018; WA Government 2017, 2018a).

Cruise Research

Researchers, industry and government organisations have all acknowledged the lack of research into cruising (Hung et al. 2019; Mahadevan 2016; Papathanassis 2017; Zbuchea 2015). Much of the previous research has concentrated on cruising economics and the ‘business of cruising’, and relatively little research as examined
the motives of cruisers or their on-board experiences (Mahadevan 2016; Papathanassis 2017).

Despite the acknowledged increased fragmentation of the cruise sector (CLIA 2017a; Papathanassis 2017), prior research has largely focussed on cruising as a singular entity with little distinction between different types of cruise ship travel. Thus, ‘cruise tourism’ or cruise ship travel is generally assumed to be a homogenic term (suggesting all cruise travel is the same, as are all cruisers and their motivations), when it generally relates to the dominant paradigm of ocean cruise travel. Ocean cruising is so prevalent that much of the existing research fails to even indicate it is this form of cruising being referenced when the word ‘cruise’ is used (see, for example, Bahja 2017; Hung et al. 2019; Mahadevan 2016). While researchers are keen to understand more about the cruise sector, and the increasing diversity of passengers, routes and market segments, research is framed by the fundamental context of ocean-going ships, getting larger, with mega cruise liners that carry more than 5,000 passengers and thousands of crew operating as floating resorts and destinations in themselves, all the while treating cruisers as a homogeneous whole.

Differentiation between types of cruising and cruisers only becomes evident when researchers tackle a specific sub-section of the market, such as luxury cruising, expedition cruising or river cruising (see, for example, Cooper, Holmes, Pforr & Shanka 2019; Ginsberg 2017; Hwang & Han 2014; Hyun & Han 2015; Irincu et al. 2015; Kovačić, Zekić & Violić 2017). Research into these segments is even less developed than that of cruising in general. River cruising, while well-established and a major economic contributor in regions of Europe, has received virtually no
attention from researchers (one peer reviewed paper in the 25 years until 2014 and fewer than 20 peer-reviewed papers from 2014 to 2019 that were region specific and addressed issues related to demand, labour force, local economic impact and environmental effect in Croatia, Portugal, Poland and Europe and related primarily to the Douro, Danube and other river systems (Brodarič, Schiozzi & Smojver 2017; Dragin et al. 2014; Erdeji & Dragin 2017; Gouveia et al. 2017; Irincu et al. 2015; Jones, Comfort & Hillier 2016; Kovačić et al. 2017; Mazilu, Limbert & Mitroï 2015; Nezdoyminov 2016; Tesanovic, Vuksanovic, Kalenjuk & Portic 2015). In 2019, the first paper specifically addressing the desires of Gen X travellers (Australian and American) with regards to European river cruising was published, although none of the study’s participants had undertaken a river cruise (Cooper et al. 2019).

Much of the early research focussed on cruising economics, although there has been a shift to consider more people aspects, including consumer behaviour (see, for example, Go 2010; Huang & Hsu 2010; Hung & Petrick 2011b, 2012a, 2012b; Hur & Adler 2011b; Hwang & Han 2014; Lee-Ross 2008; Li & Petrick 2008; Papathanassis 2012b; Petrick 2005b; Weaver 2005; Xie, Kerstetter & Mattila 2012). Aspects of the cruising experience studied in more recent years have tended to be set in ocean-cruising contexts and include:


An area of increasing focus relates to the consumer and people aspects of ocean-cruising, including:

- Motivations for cruise ship travel research (Hung & Petrick 2011a, 2011b; Jones 2011; Petrick & Durko 2015; Sun et al. 2018; Weeden 2011; Whyte, Packer & Ballantyne 2018).

- Intention and satisfaction research (Brida et al. 2012; Choo & Petrick 2014; CLIA 2018b; Huang & Hsu 2010; Lemmetyinen, Dimitrovski, Nieminen & Pohjola 2016; Lynn & Kwortnik 2015; Mahadevan 2016; Papathanasssis 2012b, 2017; Petrick 2004b; Ramanathan & Ramanathan 2016; Zhang, Ye, Song & Liu 2013).

- Loyalty research (Chua, Lee & Han 2017; DiPietro & Peterson 2017; Han, Lee & Kim 2018; Meleddu, Paci & Pulina 2015; Shavanddasht & Allan 2019).

- Social interaction research (Choo & Petrick 2014; Papathanasssis 2012b; Huang & Hsu 2009; Yarnal & Kerstetter 2005) and value perceptions (Yi, Day & Cai 2014; Prebensen, Woo, Chen & Uysal 2013; Sun, Jiao & Tian 2011; Boksberger & Melsen 2011; Chen & Chen 2010; Duman & Mattila 2005; Petrick 2004a; 2004b).

- Segmentation research (Hwang and Han 2014; Lobo 2008).

Three major studies have systematically reviewed cruising research literature. In the first of these, Papathanasssis and his colleagues (Papathanasssis 2011; 2012a; 2012b; Papathanasssis & Beckmann 2011; Papathanasssis, Matuszewski & Brejla 2012)
summed up more than 25 years of cruising research and academic literature in their studies of prior work in the field (pre-2010). These authors conducted and published meta-analyses of core themes in cruising research as well as identifying contributing authors and journals (Papathanassis & Beckmann 2011), and determining the spread of data gathering and analysis methods of these works (Papathanassis et al. 2012). In the process, they found there was no clear nexus of cruising research, with a wide array of authors, publishing in various journals in a range of disciplines.

The second and third meta-analyses of cruising research, both published in 2019, covered decades of cruising research but were more limited in the journals considered – one compared 88 cruising papers published in Chinese- and English-language journals, the other examining 222 papers published in 20 top hospitality, tourism, marine and environment journals. Hung, Wang, Denizci Guillet and Liu’s (2019) analysis compared publications identified through a search of the China National Knowledge Infrastructure database with those published in six English language tourism journals in the two decades between 1997 and 2016, while Wondirad’s (2019) paper covered 1986 to 2018. Some consistency in results should be expected in that the time-frames overlapped and that five of the journals considered in the English-Chinese comparative review were also included in the latter study of 20 journals.

Hung, Wang, Denizci Guillet and Liu (2019) concluded that, like the industry itself, the English-language research was more developed, while Chinese studies were still emergent, with only one paper published in China in the first decade, compared to 26 English language papers (in the second decade, 25 Chinese papers were published
compared to 36 in the English language journals). On average, three papers per year were published between the six English language journals (Hung et al. 2019). The analysis of publication trends in the 20 journals also demonstrated substantial growth in the past 20 years, with around 30% of the total sample published 2016-2018 (Wondirad 2019).

Both of the more recent studies found the most significant location for cruise research was North America (almost two-thirds of the research in the English journals was based on North American studies (Hung et al. 2019); similarly, 42% of those analysed by Wondirad (2019)). Both studies identified Asia, and China specifically, as an emerging cruise research subject. Additionally, few papers were identified with a specific Australian cruising context (just two in the comparative analysis (Hung et al. 2019) and seven in Wondirad’s (2019) 32-year sample).

Thematically, key topics identified in the English cruising papers were customers, including satisfaction, consumer behaviour and loyalty; cruise management; employee management and destination management (Hung et al. 2019). In contrast the Chines papers were much more focussed on the business of cruising, with cruise management, destination management and the business environment all receiving greater attention than cruise customers (Hung et al. 2019). The pre-eminence of the economic, social and environmental impact of cruising was also identified by Wondirad (2019), along with growth and greater diversity in research themes, as well as increasing numbers of papers over the three decades examined. Prominent passenger-related themes identified in the latter study included motivation, experience, decision-making and expenditure (Wondirad 2019).
As the earlier Papathanassis (2011) study identified researchers from different discipline backgrounds had published in various journals, it is not surprising that the comparative analysis (Hung et al. 2019) found the top six English-language journals were not publishing even one paper each a year on cruising. On the other hand, Wondirad (2019) found three journals accounted for 33% of the published papers she examined, with eight journals accounting for two-thirds of these papers. It is worth noting that while these meta-analyses explored a range of topics, including research methods, key themes, diversity of journals, frequency of publications by journal, the geographic location of the research and the researchers, paper authorship and more, none analysed the body of work by type of cruise, that is whether or not the research focussed on ocean, river or other types of cruising (e.g. expedition) and their associated passengers.

To understand the recent trends in publication of cruising research better, particularly with regard to studies related to Australia and river cruises, a sub-section of the overall cruise research literature was examined (i.e. peer-reviewed articles published from 2015 to 2019). A keyword search was conducted using the search tools of several University databases. Various search terms were used, including combinations of tourism, travel, river cruise, river cruising, ocean cruise, ocean cruising, cruising, cruise ship, cruise line and passengers. The search was limited to peer-reviewed journal articles, with additional papers (e.g. book reviews, conference papers, conference proceedings, books, book sections, industry reports and news articles) being excluded. Google Scholar searches on similar keywords were used to augment and expand the breadth of results. However, it is likely there are relevant
articles that were not identified in the search and, therefore, even this analysis is incomplete.

Unlike the 2019 papers identified (Hung et al. 2019; Wondirad 2019), this review was not limited to a specific number of eminent journals in cruising related fields, such as tourism, travel, hospitality and the marine environment. This produced a broader range of results, including some from lesser-ranked journals. In total, 350 peer-reviewed papers were identified from 181 journals, with seven journals publishing one-quarter of these papers and 124 journals (35%) publishing only one paper in the period under review. Beyond the core discipline areas already mentioned, relevant papers were identified in fields such as food, traffic and transportation, accident analysis and prevention, geography, homosexuality and engineering to public health, safety, gaming, mathematics and revenue and pricing management.

The growth in cruising beyond the traditional North American market was also reflected in the results, with significant geographic diversity in the focus of the papers. Forty percent of the papers reviewed were linked to a specific geographic context, with more than 60 countries or regions named. The growth in cruising in Asia, and the prominence of China as the now second-largest source market for ocean cruise passengers, was evident, with China and its travellers featuring prominently (5% of the research papers, with an additional 4% relating to other parts of Asia). Many of these papers focused on a region’s cruise industry, economy and passengers. Environment and economic issues dominated research into another significant area, the Arctic, which also comprised 4% of location-specific papers.
The diversity of regions perhaps represented the growth of cruise ports of call, itineraries and source markets for passengers, with papers examining multiple sites in the Caribbean, Europe, Latin America, Africa and the Middle East. Only four Australian cruising related journal articles were identified. One was an overview of the Australian “cruising phenomenon” (Dowling 2016), while the second explored the temporal aspects of Australian cruisers’ intentions to cruise again (Mahadevan 2016), the third examined local residents’ reactions to cruise tourism development (McCaughey, Mao & Dowling 2018) and the fourth considered Gen X’s likely interest in river cruising (Cooper et al. 2019). More than 90% of the papers examined cruising in general or ocean cruising, with just 5% studying river cruising and 2% studying expedition cruising.

Key themes were destination management (including ports of call, destination impact); passengers (including behaviour, attitude and decision making); economy (including crew, ship management, logistics and industry); safety; health; environment and sustainability; history/philosophy and cruise research. Some papers fell into multiple categories, so a primary category was allocated to each, followed by a secondary category. It is acknowledged this was a subjective process and others may have allocated these papers differently. As only one coder was involved, there was internal consistency in terms of allocation across the sample. Consistent with earlier findings, the two primary categories of cruise research undertaken in the past five years were economic aspects (32%) and destination management (31%), with cruiser-related research accounting for 20% of the sample.
Clusters of research were also evident in areas including environment, sustainability and corporate social responsibility (6%) and health and safety (6%).

In terms of destination management, port-related topics were found in one-third of the studies, with a further 10% of papers exploring community impact and 10% studying the economic aspects of destination management. Papers with a strong economic focus were largely engaged with the business of cruising, with major themes including industry attributes and performance (17%), marketing (10%) and crew (10%). Aspects of cruise passenger decision-making, attitudes and behaviour covered a broad range of topics including perceived value, perceived risk, willingness to pay, motivation, loyalty and attitudes toward sustainability, corporate social responsibility, satisfaction, safety, onboard experience and shore excursions; although none of these topics attracted the same level of attention as the major destination management and economic themes.

A number of researchers have produced important papers that consider cruising travel from a theoretical and conceptual perspective. Notable among these are:

- Weaver (2005; 2006, 2019), whose use of McDonaldisation and Disneyfication theories provided valuable insights into cruisers’ contemporary consumption experiences.

Australian academic Ross Dowling has actively researched cruise tourism and travel, with most of his works being books, including edited volumes covering topics from cruise sector management to eco-tourism and industry development (Dowling 1995; 1998a; 1998b; 2006; 2010a; 2010b; 2012; 2013; Dowling & Weiler 1997). A fourth cluster of research and researchers, including Hung and Li, is situated around the work of James Petrick. This group has examined cruising consumers’ perceptions of value (2002; 2004; 2006), constraints to consumers’ cruising choices (Hung & Petrick 2010; 2012a; 2012b), customer satisfaction and loyalty (Li & Petrick 2008, 2010; Petrick 2004b, 2005a; Petrick & Sirakaya 2004) and motivations to cruise (Hung & Petrick 2011a, 2011b: Petrick & Durko 2015).

Cruise research challenges and opportunities

The literature review suggested some challenging aspects of research into cruise tourism, including the controlled nature of the cruise environment, difficulty in accessing cruisers, a lack of generalisability, the relative immaturity of research in the field and methodological concerns (Kwortnik 2008; Lee et al. 2012; Papathanassis & Beckmann 2011; Papathanassis et al. 2012; Vogel & Oschmann 2012).

The first of these (the closed environment of cruise ships) in some ways contributes to all the others. Cruising occurs in a controlled consumption space, in which authority belongs to the cruise operator (Gibson 2011; Papathanassis 2012b; Papathanassis et al. 2012). Cruising is not a mainstream pre-occupation, as at least 96% of the world’s population has never cruised, even in countries like North America and Australia that have the highest market penetration.
Researchers have highlighted the likelihood of cruise operators only supporting research activities that have a payoff for them that, typically, address managerial topics, such as demand, marketing, economics and the business of cruising (Gibson 2011; Papathanassis 2012b; Papathanassis et al. 2012). Researchers are unlikely to gain support for investigations that are critical of cruising in general or of particular lines or ships; reflect negatively on the cruising experience or that make public aspects of cruising that contribute to market competitiveness or differentiation. The controlled and mobile nature of the cruising consumptive space, which operates outside of, and apart from, national considerations, further compounds these challenges.

Researchers cannot gain access to the extensive cruise line industry databases unless cruise operators give permission. Further, they cannot conduct research aboard ship or in ports unless cruise operators give permission and they cannot contact specific passenger groups unless cruise operators permit it. The growth of online networks of repeat and frequent cruisers does provide opportunities, but even these channels have limitations, providing access only to those who engage in such virtual cruise community networks. The operators of these virtual cruise communities might also refuse permission for members to be contacted to participate in cruising research. Indeed, one major community owner (Cruise Critic USA) confirmed in 2018 that such invitations were against policy and, accordingly, there was “no way” to poll members (Cruise Critic Message Board Forums 2018). Even if virtual cruise community members agree to participate in research and can be contacted, the transitory and mobile nature of their cruising predilections increases challenges around their
availability to participate in research and their responsiveness in a timely manner. Papathanassis, Matuszewski and Brejla (2012) reiterated earlier conclusions by Papathanassis and Beckmann (2011) that issues evident in tourism research are intensified in cruising research.

Perhaps reflecting these challenges or the relative immaturity of cruise research, there were at least two clear clusters of approaches to such studies. The largest body of work, addressing the business, economics and logistics of cruising, examines generally quantifiable factors, such as how many people cruise, the size and value of the market, itineraries and destinations, dollars spent, environmental interactions and outbreaks of illnesses and other adverse events. This research typically examines matters ‘on the public record’ and accessible through such devices as regulatory reports, government agencies, official inquiries and industry association papers, focussing on facts, processes, systems and logistics in a descriptive recital of what is happening or has happened.

A second cluster explores the socio-cultural experience of cruising through such filters as contemporary and historic theories and disciplines, including McDonaldization, Disneyfication, liquid modernity, post-modernism, servicescapes and semiotics (Berger 2006; Noy 2014; Ritzer 1996, 1997, 2013; Weaver 2005, 2006). Such studies engage with the nature and experience of passengers onboard, with or without any direct input from the passengers themselves (Gutberlet 2019; Weaver 2019) and typically reflects the opinions and musings of the writer, with little or no data gathering. As the socio-cultural dimensions of cruising features most strongly in this category, it appears the lack of consultation, study and engagement with cruisers
and cruising communities is, at worst, a significant failure of these approaches and, at best, a ripe opportunity for investigation.

The three cruise research reviews already mentioned explored the methodological approaches to cruising research (Hung et al. 2019; Papathanassis et al. 2012; Wondirad 2019). Of the 145 papers examined in the 2012 paper, 45 used quantitative methodologies, primarily descriptive statistics collected through structured questionnaires and specific to one cruise, cruise ship or cruise line, while a further 45 used a mix of qualitative methods, including interviewing, participant observation and case studies, with little use of ethnography or longitudinal investigation (Papathanassis et al. 2012). The Chinese-English language comparative study found that for both languages, quantitative methods were employed in half or more of the research studies, while qualitative approaches generally comprised about 20% of the studies (Hung et al. 2019). Just five of the 88 papers they reviewed employed mixed methods. Similarly, 56% of research articles reported in the Wondirad (2019) paper employed quantitative methodologies, with 29% taking a qualitative approach. The limited application of mixed methods approaches was also reported in both 2019 papers, being found in 15% of Wondirad’s (2019) sample and just 7% and 4% respectively of the cruise research published in the English and Chinese language journals examined (Hung et al. 2019; Wondirad 2019).
Conclusions

This Chapter discussed some literature related to the cruising industry, outlined the sector’s importance to Australia and examined some issues relevant to cruise research. In the next Chapter, prior research into cruise passengers is explored, with particular attention being paid to repeat cruisers and people’s motivations for cruising. Themes related to the research question are then considered. Chapter Three concludes by drawing from the literature review to suggest a preliminary set of aspects of cruising that are likely to be valued by repeat cruise passengers.
Chapter Three

Literature Review II

Cruise Passengers and the Cruise Experience

Introduction

In 2019, more than 30 million passengers were expected to go on a cruise, with demand increasing 20% in the five years from 2011 to 2016 (CLIA 2017a, 2018a). While North America continued to be the largest source market in the world, North American passengers made up just 49% of the cruising cohort in 2017, compared to almost 69% in 2006 and 93% in 1990 (Business Research & Economic Advisors 2017; CLIA 2011a; CLIA Australasia n.d.).

Australia’s strong growth in cruise passengers (more than 1.3 million ocean cruisers in 2017) has been beaten only by China (2.1 million in 2016), which is now the second largest source country globally (Business Research & Economic Advisors 2017; CLIA Australasia 2017, 2018b). This change in source markets reflects the changing profile of cruise passengers from the historic stereotype of the older retiree, more upper-class, wealthy Caucasian traveller typified in the quintessential American cruise ship series *The Love Boat* (Bleiberg 2014; CLIA 2015; Dowling & Weeden 2017; Elliott 1999; Véronneau & Roy 2009). Cruisers span all economic classes and ages (CLIA 2015, 2017a). Australian cruisers are drawn from all age groups, with almost half under 50 years old (31.2% under 40), 20.3% aged 60-69 and 15.6% older than 70 (CLIA
Between 2002 and 2011, the average age of the North American cruiser fell from 56 to 50 years (TNS, 2011) and to 49 years in 2014 (CLIA 2015). The average age of Australian cruisers in 2017 was also 49 years (CLIA Australasia 2018b).

**Repeat Cruisers**

“For many cruise customers, after the cruise is before the cruise”
(Vogel & Oschmann 2012, p. 12)

The research aimed to identify those aspects of the cruising experience that influenced repeat cruisers in their subsequent cruise choices. Repeaters were defined in this study as people who had completed at least two prior cruises (i.e. two river cruises for respondents to the river cruise survey; two ocean cruises for respondents to the ocean cruise survey). An acknowledged strength of the cruising market is past cruisers who make repeat cruising purchases (Berger 2006; Mahadevan 2016; Sun et al. 2018; Vogel & Oschmann 2012). Reported estimates of the proportion of repeaters on any particular voyage vary (although operators collect a significant amount of data on their passengers and are likely to have this information, particularly if cruisers have previously travelled with the same line).

Duman and Mattila (2005) found 80% of their respondents had completed at least two prior cruises, and an average of 70% of Jones’ (2011) surveyed cruisers were repeaters. Mahadevan (2016, p. 1424) found more than 83% of her sample of Australian cruisers intended to cruise again, just slightly above, but generally consistent with, industry reports over the years that 76% to 80% of past cruisers were interested in undertaking another cruise within three years (CLIA 2011b, 2017b,
P & O Cruises (n.d.) reported several years ago that over 40% of its 100,000 passengers per year to Pacific destinations had cruised previously, while CLIA (TNS 2008) found 55% of cruisers were repeaters. The importance of frequent cruisers to the sector is widely acknowledged. Some attempts have been made to capture the number and value of such consumers. For example, Berger, Weinberg and Hanna (2003) followed three cohorts of first-time passengers on a particular line for five years to determine their repeat cruising habits and to develop a customer lifetime value measure.

The high rate of repeat cruisers is a key contributor to the sector’s growth and success and might reflect the high level of passenger involvement in all stages of the cruise experience, from planning and pre-embarkation to the journey’s end (Huang & Hsu 2009; Vogel & Oschmann 2012). Repeat cruisers are likely to be more knowledgeable and more demanding when it comes to their cruise experience, becoming expert and highly informed not just about their forthcoming travel but also about different brands, destinations, perceived and actual value and more. A number of studies have found repeat cruisers have higher levels of satisfaction and positive experiences than do new cruisers (Chua, Lee & Han 2017; CLIA 2011b; Papathanassis 2012b; Vogel & Oschmann 2012; Vianelli & Valta 2019) and demonstrate strong brand loyalty. Delivering quality service and experiences in all parts of the cruising enterprise becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy; a never-ending spiral in which cruise operators need to work harder and more creatively to ensure their repeat passengers continue to experience extremely high levels of customer satisfaction. Vogel and
Oschmann (2012, p. 10) suggested this pressure is at least partially responsible for driving high levels of innovation in the sector, noting:

“[Repeat] cruise passengers...learn from their previous experiences and adapt their behaviour, expectations and decisions accordingly. High repeater rates, which may be related to the high consumer involvement, are an essential driver of the cruise sector’s sustained growth and success. They might also contribute to the establishment of a distinct cruise culture.”

Highly involved and affective consumer engagement pre-, post- and during the cruise experience, combined with very high levels of customer satisfaction, generate “high repeat buying probabilities” (Vogel & Oschmann 2012, p. 12). Cruise junkies are more than happy to spread the word, through social media, blogs and preaching to others (family, friends and even strangers) to get on-board (literally), while also maintaining strong intra-cruise community links:

“Websites like cruise-addicts.com, cruisemates.com and cruisecritic.com would not exist without thousands of cruise passengers willing to invest time and effort into communicating their experiences and keeping each other up to date...this prolonged involvement [is] related to hedonic consumption because ‘it extends the emotions and moods triggered by the vacation experience’ (Vogel & Oschmann 2012, p. 12).

In the most substantial analysis of repeat cruisers to date, Sun, Kwortnik and Gauri (2018) reviewed repeater and new cruiser preferences using more than one million records over a two year period from one cruise line (unnamed). The study was limited to US travellers, departing from one of four ports in Florida. It looked at the purchasing behaviour of new and repeat cruisers across five dimensions (purchase price, type of cabin, reservation time, length of cruise, and distance to travel) on their
most recent journey. They differentiated between repeat cruisers, introducing the notion of a ‘first-time repeater’ and ‘multi-time’ cruisers. A significant limitation of their study appeared to be a lack of knowledge about whether some of the ‘new’ cruisers were legitimately first time cruisers or simply ‘new’ to this particular brand or cruise line). This limitation might also relate to the differentiation between ‘first-time’ and ‘multi-time’ repeaters, in that it might be their first time repeating with this cruise line, but they may have cruised multiple times across a range of lines. These limitations aside, the analysis still showed significant differences between new and repeat cruisers (and between first-time and multi-time repeaters), but not always in the ways expected.

The authors concluded that, if the cruise industry was to be successful at attracting new travellers and retaining repeaters, “cruise marketers should look to behavioural segmentation based on past customer experience and to identify differences between new cruisers and repeaters” (Sun et al. 2018, p. 139). While there have been many studies that explored the differences in new and repeat consumers’ purchasing behaviours and in the differences in new and repeat tourists’ travel behaviours, “few studies have looked into the cruise market” (Sun et al. 2018, p. 139).

Further insight into the repeater segment was provided in Vianelli & Valta’s (2019) analysis of how 4000 European cruisers evaluated different attributes. While the study focused on the extent to which tourism destination was a core attribute in cruiser choices, it also differentiated between “cruise repeaters” (that is people who were not first-time cruise passengers) and “brand repeaters” (those who have previously travelled with the same brand). The research found that cruise repeaters
could be brand repeaters – but might not have been (Vianelli & Valta, 2019, p.68). Due to being experienced cruisers, repeaters, particularly brand repeaters, tended to score more towards the extreme ends of the scale when evaluating different cruise attributes, while first-timers and non-brand repeaters were more likely to hover around the mid-point. The researchers suggested this was because everything was new to the non-repeaters, therefore they were less likely to have developed specific preferences (Vianelli & Valta, 2019, p.68).

**Repeaters and Loyalty**

For many decades, the relationship between loyalty and repeat purchasing behaviour has been a topic of discussion and debate between scholars and marketers alike (Berkowitz 1978; Jacoby 1975; Jacoby & Kyner 1973; Jarvis & Wilcox 1977; Liu-Thompkins & Lam 2013). Oliver (1999, p. 34) defines loyalty as:

> A deeply held commitment to rebuy or repatronise a preferred product/service consistently in the future, thereby causing repetitive same-brand or same brand-set purchasing, despite situational influences and marketing efforts having the potential to cause switching behaviour.

It is understood loyal consumers can increase profits and lower costs, not least because retention costs are generally less than those incurred in acquiring new customers (Dawes, Meyer-Warden & Driesener 2016; Jarvis & Wilcox 1977; Oliver 1999).

While there may be an assumption that repeat purchase implies loyalty to a particular brand or service, the literature suggests this might not be the case. Other motivators not reflective of loyalty might include such considerations as
convenience, perceived absence of choice, perceived risk, unwillingness to change brand/product and more (Jarvis & Wilcox 1977). At a simplistic level, Jacoby (1975, p.486) provided yet another alternative rationale for repeat purchasing behaviour; outlining the example of a housewife buying the same brand of shampoo for her husband. Jacoby argued that these repeat purchases were not necessarily an indication of consumer loyalty, but more likely commitment to her husband (who might indeed have been loyal to the brand).

The discussion, debate and research on consumer loyalty is voluminous and diverse in terms of the sectors, products, geographies and brands to which it has been applied. As indicated elsewhere, various studies have explored notions of cruise passenger behaviour and loyalty, including Chi (2012); Li and Petrick (2010, 2008); Lobo (2008); Petrick and Sirakaya (2004) and Vianelli and Valta (2019). However, for this study, respondents were not required to be loyal to cruising or specific cruise brands. They just needed to have completed at least two prior cruises. Therefore, this research did not engage further with the literature on consumer loyalty. In deciding to focus on cruise repeaters for this study, it should be understood that the intention was not to expand on concepts or theories of loyalty, nor to explore, examine or draw conclusions about the brand loyalty of repeat cruise passengers. This research sought to understand what aspects of the cruising experience most influenced people’s decisions to purchase a subsequent cruise, not why they made such purchases, which could be the subject of subsequent research.
Cruises are an almost prototypical example of a high-involvement product (Vogel & Oschmann 2012, p. 10).

The high involvement of repeat cruisers (Chua et al. 2017; Duman & Mattila 2005; Vogel & Oschmann 2012) is consistent with broader consumer behaviour and decision making research that define ‘involvement’ as the importance of, attachment to, and/or interest in, an object, reflecting “the personal relevance of an object based on needs, values and interests” (Laroche, Bergeron & Goutaland 2003, p. 123). Product involvement and product knowledge (i.e. knowledge gained from prior cruises) have been identified as important influencers of consumer behaviour (Laroche, Nepomuceno & Richard 2010; Lim, Soutar & Lee 2013). Involvement role has been explored in a number of sectors, including finance and investment (Foxall & Pallister 1998; Laroche et al. 2010; Lim et al. 2013; Mittal 1989), tourism (Kim, Ritchie & McCormick 2012; Petrick 2004a; Prebensen et al. 2013; Quintal 2007; Quintal et al.), meal purchases (Olsen 2007) and credit card use (Sampaio 2012). The relationship involvement has to various aspects of consumer behaviour has also been explored (e.g. satisfaction (Gonçalves & Sampaio 2012; Olsen 2007; Sampaio 2012), loyalty (Gonçalves & Sampaio 2012; Olsen 2007; Sampaio 2012), repurchasing behaviour (Foxall & Pallister 1998; Mittal 1989; Olsen 2007; Petrick 2004b) and perceived value (Boksberger & Melsen 2011; Chua et al. 2017; Prebensen et al. 2013).

A number of studies have also examined the relationship between involvement and perceived risk (Chua et al. 2017; Laroche et al. 2003; Laroche et al. 2010; Lim et al. 2013; Quintal et al. 2010). Further, knowledge “influences all phases in the decision
process...and specifically, how consumers evaluate the risk inherent in their purchase” (Laroche et al. 2003, p. 125). Moreover, risk apparently increases when consumers lack information and prior experience. Lim, Soutar and Lee (2013, pp. 306, 309) found product involvement positively impacted on respondents’ intentions, consistent with other research that suggested highly involved people better know a product and its attributes and, thus, are better positioned to judge quality and price, which, in turn, increases their willingness to buy.

Perceived risk might be considered a “subjectively expectation of loss” (Laroche et al. 2010, p. 198), which suggests perceptions of risk may differ, even in the same circumstance, resulting in different choices and consumption outcomes (Laroche et al. 2003; Quintal et al. 2010). Some researchers have suggested that, as perceptions of risk increase, “consumers (are) more likely to shop around to compare alternatives and to ask friends and relatives for advice” (Laroche et al. 2003). Perceived risk can have various dimensions, including, but not limited to, performance risk (will the purchase function as expected?), social risk (it may impact on what others think of the purchaser), physical risk (it threatens the consumer’s health or appearance), psychological risk (e.g. buyer’s remorse) and financial risk (potential net loss from purchase or ownership) (Laroche et al. 2003; Laroche et al. 2010; Quintal et al. 2010).

The potentially risk-mitigating aspects of information and prior experience might help explain the extremely high repeat rate of cruisers once they have made their initial cruise.
In an online survey, Chua, Lee and Han (2017), explored the extent to which cruisers’ involvement impacted on their decision making, with a particular emphasis on perceived price, perceived quality, perceived risk, perceived value, loyalty and affective satisfaction. The study also examined the difference between first time and repeat cruisers. The researchers found evidence of differences between the two groups, with repeaters demonstrating significantly higher perceived value, loyalty and affective satisfaction, and lower perceived price and that, for both groups, involvement played an important role in loyalty formation (Chua et al. 2017). The authors indicated a need for further study into first-time and repeat cruisers, and the impact of involvement.

**Personality Traits: The Big Five**

The extent to which personality traits influence consumers’ purchasing decisions is of general interest in the broad field of consumer behaviour. However, there has been little study of this in a cruising context. In considering the potential relationship between personality traits and these aspects of repeater decision making, the literature suggests there might be value in exploring the ‘Big Five Factor’ (BFF) personality traits. This way of considering personality has been extensively explored and tested across decades and is considered a valid, reliable and useful research tool (Chapman & Goldberg 2017; Goldberg 1990; Goldsmith 2016; Jani 2014; Kiffin-Petersen, Jordan & Soutar 2011; Rammstedt & John 2007; Solino & Farizo 2014;).

Goldberg (1990) explored the generalisability and validity of what had come to be called the Big Five Factor (BFF) personality model. The work followed almost 50 years of research since Cattell’s seminal work in the 1940s that clustered personality traits.
While Cattell (1943, 1945) identified a number of bipolar clusters of personality descriptors and oblique factors:

“Only five factors proved to be replicable... These “Big-Five” factors have traditionally been numbered and labelled as follow: (I) Surgency (or Extraversion), (II) Agreeableness, (III) Conscientiousness (or Dependability), (IV) Emotional Stability (vs Neuroticism) and (V) Culture” (Goldberg 1990, p. 1217).

The final factor has also been labelled Intellect, Openness and Openness to Experience.

In four major studies, Goldberg set out to confirm the Big-Five structure, determine whether it was robust across different types of factor extraction approaches and examine any potential factors beyond the Big Five (Goldberg 1990, p. 1217). He concluded “analyses of any reasonably large sample of English trait adjectives in either self- or peer descriptions will elicit a variant of the Big-Five factor structure, and therefore that virtually all such terms can be represented within this model”.

A number of studies have explored the relationships between the Big Five and topics related to this research, including choosing travel destinations (Qiu, Masiero & Li 2018; Souiden, Ladhari & Chiadmi 2017), online consumer engagement and travel information search behaviours (Jani 2014; Jani & Han 2015; Hu & Kim 2018) and shopping (Goldsmith 2016; Stöckigt, Schiebener & Brand 2018; Volland 2018).

In one study, Goldsmith (2016, p. 59) examined the relationship between shopping (non-grocery), the Big Five aspects of personality and happiness, suggesting the research’s primary purpose was “to determine whether any of the Big Five personality dimensions were related to how often people shop”. While largely
concerned with the relationships between happiness, personality and shopping behaviours, several hypotheses related directly to the effect the Big Five Factors had on shopping. The study also considered the impact of age and gender, noting:

“...relatively little research addresses the relationships between the Big Five and shopping. The influence of these five basic traits on overt behaviour is an important topic to study because the distinctions described by the Big Five are universal to all consumers, fundamental to understanding the individual differences that distinguish people, relate to many consumer behaviours and are quite stable across time...” (Goldsmith 2016, p. 54)

A number of scales have been developed to measure the Big Five, with the accepted standard since its publication in 1991 being the 44-item Big Five Inventory (BFI), also referred to as the BFI-44. Rammstedt and John (2007) introduced a much shorter instrument, testing and developing the BFI-10 (a 10-item scale containing two items to measure each personality trait). The scale has been tested across language and culture (English and German) and against the BFI-44 and the 60-item NEO-PI-R. Rammstedt & John (2007, p. 210) concluded the BFI-10 had “acceptable psychometric properties”. They argued the longer BFI-44 scale had superior psychometric properties, but suggested the shorter scale was adequate for many research purposes.

The BFI-10 has been used in many contexts, including studies that examined environmental preferences (Solino & Farizo 2014), sustainability decision making (Stöckigt, Schiebener & Brand 2018), cosmetic surgery and body image (Scharschmidt et al. 2018), learning styles (Cullen, Williams & McCarley 2018), social media use (Whaite, Shensa, Sidani, Colditz & Primack 2018), obsessive compulsive
disorder (Fradkin & Huppert 2018) and other emotional reactions such as anger and stoicism (Pfeiler, Weber & Kubiak 2018; Serrano et al. 2016). It is considered a useful way to measure personality traits (Rammstedt & John 2007; Whaite et al. 2018).

**Cruising Motivations**

While this research explored the factors that were most likely to influence repeaters’ decisions to purchase another cruise, many of these factors were described as, or identified in, the motivations to cruise literature. Motivation is a heavily researched topic in tourism, but has been slower to emerge as a focus in cruising research. Intentions to cruise have received more attention, with its relationship with satisfaction (CLIA 2011b; Hosany & Witham 2009; Huang & Hsu 2010; Papathanasssis 2012b; Petrick 2002), loyalty (Douglas, Mills & Phelan 2010; Li & Petrick 2008; Lobo 2008) and value (Duman & Mattila 2005; Kwortnik 2008; Petrick 2004a; TNS 2011) being examined. Value and price, destination and itineraries, cruise brand reputation, and homeports were identified in the annual Cruise Lines International Association’s (2014a) survey of travel agents. Jones (2011) examined motivations in the context of information sources, cruising experience, itineraries and the Leisure Motivation Scale, while Lemmetyinen et al. (2016) explored cruise destination branding and cruiser motivations, finding various motivations, including value, convenience and discovery, impacted cruisers’ satisfaction with destinations. In seeking to develop a cruise motivation scale, Hung and Petrick (2011b) initially identified 63 possible motivations that they narrowed to 25 and, finally, to 13 aspects grouped under four themes (esteem and social recognition, escape and relaxation, learning discovery and thrill and bonding). Their final scale explained 40% of people’s
cruising intention. It should be noted the “cruisers” in this case were ocean cruisers.

Elsewhere, identified reasons for cruising included:

- A desire to return to a child state complete with unconditional love, total care (food, shelter and entertainment) and no worries worry (Berger 2006; Chon & Berger 2004).

- A low risk mechanism for destination ‘sampling’ (trying out a location with the possible view to returning later for a more in-depth visit) (Hur & Adler 2011a; Vogel & Oschmann 2012, 2013).

- The development of a cruise community and culture that continues to reinforce and reinvigorate itself. The more times people cruise, the more knowledgeable and involved they become, leading to a greater likelihood that they would want (or in Berger’s view be “compelled”) to keep on cruising (Berger 2006, p. 126; Vogel & Oschmann 2012).

- Hedonism, as cruising includes attributes such as pampering, luxury, leisure, novelty and freedom of choice (Brejla & Gilbert 2014; Chen, Duman & Mattila 2005; Hung & Petrick 2011b; Wu & Chen 2010).

The literature has also examined the reasons people give for not cruising, which included a fear of being trapped on board in a constrained space and with a constrained group of people, boredom, seasickness and other health-related issues (Hung & Petrick 2010, 2012a; Hur & Adler 2011a; Kwortnik 2008; Papathanassis & Beckmann 2011; Park & Petrick 2009; Weaver 2005). More recently, Cooper et al. (2019) suggested generational considerations might also be a factor. They found Gen
X travellers might also be constrained by time, opportunity and finance, as well as wanting more “unstructured and carefree” experiences (Cooper et al. 2019, p. 427).

There are those who see cruise ships as new urban arenas, reshaping the consumer landscape, becoming the new and ‘real’ locales of residence and social identity. “It is almost as if real cities no longer satisfy; they do not fulfil the requirements of a population with limited attention spans” (Miles & Miles 2004, p. 129). However, these cruise consumption spaces are not real:

“Whether the tourist likes it or not, and he or she apparently often does, consumption landscapes are inauthentic landscapes. By their very nature from this point of view the places tourists visit must be as familiar as possible and yet retain a modicum of specificity to be attractive. This then constitutes...a hyper-real world in which the only reality is the consumer’s reality” (Miles & Miles 2004, p. 133).

Notions of bonding (Hung & Petrick 2011b) and cruise community and culture (Berger 2006; Vogel & Oschmann 2012) also arise, with two studies considering social interactions and community formation aboard ship, and others exploring guest interactions as a component of customer satisfaction and loyalty (Huang & Hsu 2009, 2010; Papathanassis 2012b). Huang and Hsu (2009) found social interactions were a product of various factors, including the cruise environment and activities, the holiday mindset and the intentions and inclinations cruisers had about socialising. Engagement with other passengers ranged from very limited and superficial interactions, to communication for information and in the moment, to the development of long-lasting relationships (Huang & Hsu, 2009).
An important conclusion, supported by other researchers, including Vogel and Oschmann (2012) and Papathanassis et al. (2012), was the existence of a cruising community in the virtual space of online cruise networks, as well as on the physical environs of the ship. Huang and Hsu (2009) found more experienced cruisers developed deeper relationships and that the group size of travelling parties was a factor in people’s desire and ability to engage. They suggested a need for further investigation into cruiser interactions, arguing such study would help the cruising industry understand how to build and support social engagement on board.

“The communion between customers as well as shared customer expertise constitutes intangible corporate equities which should be invested and utilized. Such equities are exceptionally valuable for products/services where customer interest and level of involvement are intense (e.g. cruise vacations), thereby calling for extra instrumental support and emotional exchange between fellow customers” (Huang & Hsu 2009, p. 564).

**Temporary in-fantasy – the unreal world experience of cruising**.

Cruising once had a very practical purpose. In the centuries before the massification of air travel, which saw prices plummet, destinations grow and routes increase, ocean travel relocated people across the seas from one destination to another. Aeroplanes killed this functional aspect for most travellers and, over the past four decades, cruising developed from a utilitarian to a leisure product, being simultaneously a ‘floating resort’, a tour guide, a restaurant, an hotel, a holiday camp, a day spa and more (Weaver 2005, 2006; Wild & Dearing 2000). The literature eddies around a view of cruise travellers as being transported from the everyday to a life of fantasy, embarking on journeys that provide them with unfettered service, unlimited
food and drink, varied entertainment, shopping on-demand and diverse recreational activities, as well as excursions to different lands and cultures. Present in much of the literature is a discourse around the temporary and unreal nature of the cruising experience, which is seen to cater to human wants, rather than needs (Berger 2006; Kwortnik 2008; Weaver 2005, 2006).

In this aspect, cruising is viewed as indicative of Western culture’s pre-occupation with pleasure and self-indulgence and as the epitome of ‘hedonic’ consumption. “Hedonic consumption designates those facets of consumer behaviour that relate to the multisensory, fantastic and emotive aspects of one’s experience with products” (Hirschman & Holbrook 1982, p. 92). Multisensory is both external and internal. It is historic in that it could be about recalling prior experiences evoked by a product (e.g. a perfume smell or taste that evokes the last experience of that taste or smell); fantasy or imagery; or an imagined response, albeit perhaps one made up of a combination of the real, imagined and surreal, a continuum from the purely historic to the totally imagined) (Hirschman & Holbrook 1982).

Thus, for example, it is possible to find endorsement for cruising as a form of hedonic consumption through the use of Arnold and Reynold’s (2003) six dimensions of shopper motivations driven by hedonic values. Cruising accommodates each of these to a lesser or greater extent. There is adventure in visiting foreign ports and life on a floating resort; social aspects through taking friends and family along or making new friends on-board; value shopping in the highly competitive pricing wars that provide all-inclusive bargain holidays; idea shopping through opportunities to find new things and see new and different things through entertainment and education activities;
gratification (no cooking, cleaning or need to even think for yourself if you don’t want to) and role shopping, with myriad opportunities to buy and give.

Despite making some of the strongest statements about cruising as a regressive pastime, which takes the cruiser back to their infant days complete with total fulfilment of emotional and bodily needs, Berger (2006, p. 128) acknowledged the importance of cruising as an escape from the everyday:

“Some critics have scornfully described cruising as a spectacle of hedonistic excess in which people indulge themselves in every way, and suggest it is a phenomenon with no redeeming social value. But psychologists now tell us that it is very important for people to take vacations and get away from their everyday routines, to recharge their batteries, so to speak.”

The Unreal World – journey versus destination

Further support for a view of cruising as an ‘unreal’ and fantasy experience may be seen in the debate over the importance of the journey and on-board experiences when compared to destinations or itinerary (Jones 2011; Vogel & Oschmann 2012; Whyte et al. 2018). Vogel and Oschmann (2013) argued most cruises have no actual destination or endpoint, often starting and finishing at the same port; while Weaver (2005) suggested cruise ships were the end point, and cruising itself was the destination. The increasing size of cruise ships contributes to such views, as some now carry more than 5000 passengers and are identified variously as “cruise cocoons”, ‘floating/leisure/holiday’ enclaves’, “floating utopias” and “floating resorts” (Huang & Hsu 2009; Noy 2014; Vogel & Oschmann 2013; Weaver 2005; Yarnal & Kerstetter 2005).
In a major study of cruise destination attributes, Whyte, Packer and Ballantyne (2018) developed lists of attributes for both onboard and onshore experiences, producing 92 attributes. A questionnaire was used to refine the initial list of attributes, leading to a refined scale. The resulting Cruise Destination Attribute Scale (CDAS) included eight factors (onboard environment, social interactions and recreation (17 items); and onshore activities, learning and exploration, visual surroundings and safety and comfort (22 items)) (Whyte et al.2018). They concluded that the onboard attributes were more important for many respondents, “with results reinforcing the industry’s push to build new ships as all-inclusive destinations” (Whyte et al.2018, p. 9). Interestingly, respondents suggested shipboard experiences became more important when destinations were of less interest or when passengers were repeating visits to particular ports. Onshore activities increased in importance when the destinations were of more historical or cultural significance (Whyte et al.2018).

Some have suggested cruising satisfies the same human wants as Disney theme parks and McDonald’s restaurants (Weaver 2005; 2006). The former, with its themed spaces, recognisable storylines, fantastical aspects and forever-happy and subservient staff, is a place where ‘dreams come true’, where childhood storybooks come to life and every day is a magical holiday. The latter provides efficient, recognisable, dependable and predictable products and services, whether experienced in a service station on a busy highway in Queensland, Australia or on a moored riverboat in St Louis, Mississippi. Pleasure and profit go hand-in-hand, as is the case on cruise ships, which Weaver (2006, p. 389) suggested were “powered by sales (and not sails)”. While many decry the processes and products of
‘McDisneyization’ as the worst examples of North American-led culture, others highlight the fundamental success component of such enterprises, as many consumers embrace them (Kwortnik 2008; Ritzer 2013; 1997; 1996; 2006; Weaver 2005). McDonaldisation and Disneyfication are, themselves, ripe areas of exploration, particularly given the strong market presence of Disney cruise ships, but will not be considered further in this study, which seeks to understand the most important influencers of repeat cruisers’ choices of a subsequent cruise, rather than their underlying motivations for cruising.

**In the driver’s seat or along for the ride?**

A question that arises from the literature review to date is the extent to which cruise travellers are passive participants. Are they ‘along for the ride’ or actively involved in directing the nature and content of their cruise travel (‘in the driver’s seat’)? Miles and Miles (2004) suggest cruisers are passive consumers, while others highlight concerns about a lack of control over the journey and on-board experiences as reasons why people do not cruise (Huang & Hsu 2009; 2010). However, past research suggests many are active and engaged repeat cruisers who are highly knowledgeable and active in the cruising process (Papathanassis et al. 2012; Vogel & Oschmann 2012, 2013).

**Some Gaps in the Literature**

While there is evident growth in cruise-related research, this literature review identified some core gaps. Despite substantial growth in destination-related and region-specific studies, few peer-reviewed journal articles have been published
about Australian cruising and none about perceptions of Australian river cruise passengers. CLIA Australasia has published regular industry updates and occasional passenger trend data (such as CLIA Australasia 2014, 2017, 2018a). However, this study identified only four Australia-related cruise papers in the past five years; one an industry overview, the second a study of how soon Australian cruisers’ intended to cruise again, the third an analysis of Gen X attitudes to river cruising and the fourth reporting local residents’ response to cruise development in a specific town (Cooper et al. 2019; Dowling 2016; Mahadevan 2016; McCaughey, Mao & Dowling 2018).

Like this project, Mahadevan (2016) surveyed Australians who had cruised previously, using an online survey and obtaining responses largely from a panel provider. However, respondents were required to have been on an international cruise beyond Australia of five days or more. The study’s focus was temporal; seeking to understand how long it would be until respondents took another cruise. The study included a number of other predictor variables drawn from literature, including overall satisfaction, perceived value, novelty, word of mouth and cruise line reputation (Mahadevan 2016). The research has some areas of similarity with the present project, being concerned with Australian cruisers in general, and with some specific influencing factors. However, it is narrower in scope, being primarily concerned with time to cruise again. Limiting respondents to those who have cruised beyond Australia also narrows the field of likely respondents, as many Australians primarily cruise around Australia. Additionally, the present project sought to understand, and compare, influencing factors for both ocean and river cruisers.
The Cooper et al. (2019) study has some commonality with this thesis, as it sought to understand Australian consumers’ views about river cruising. However, that is the extent of similarity, as it used a qualitative phenomenological approach to explore Gen Xers’ attitudes, whereas this thesis used mixed method research to examine the factors that most influenced cruisers’ decisions to repurchase another cruise.

As noted in Chapter Two, there has been growth in river-cruising related research examining:

- Specific regions and rivers, such as the Danube, Rhine, Douro, Croatia, Poland, the Ukraine and Europe in general (Brodarič, Schiozzi & Smojver 2017; Cooper et al. 2019; Dimitrov 2019; Erdeji & Dragin 2017; Gouveia et al. 2017; Kovačić et al. 2017; Mazilu et al. 2015; Nezdoymínov 2016; Urbanyi-Popiolek 2019).

- Cruise management related topics such as overall industry trends, sustainability, health, employment and as a market for local produce (Bosnic & Gasic 2019; Erdeji & Dragin 2017; Jang, Liang & Chen 2018; Jones, Hillier & Comfort 2016; Mańkowska 2019; Tesanovic et al. 2015).

However, this review did not identify any specific papers exploring factors influencing river cruisers’ repurchasing behaviour. Further, while there have been some studies that examined repeat passenger decision-making and preferences, these are limited in comparison to the significance of repeaters to the cruising industry, and none specifically considered river cruise repeaters. The most significant recent study of repeaters, that of Sun et al. (2018) was limited to US travellers from one cruise line and used that company’s records to analyse consumer purchasing data across five dimensions (price, type of cabin, reservation time, length of cruise and distance to
travel). Other repeater-related research has tended to focus on specific aspects of
repeater behaviour, attitude or preferences, usually in a comparative manner against
new- or non-cruisers, in areas such as satisfaction, perceived value, involvement and
intention to travel (Chua, Lee & Han; 2017; Mahadevan 2016; Petrick 2004a).

No studies have comparatively analysed the attitudes of river and ocean cruisers.
Neither have researchers developed a ranked scale of the factors influencing cruisers’
choices. Finally, mixed method research is less prominent in reported studies than
is the use of ‘pure’ quantitative or qualitative approaches and the BWS method has
not been used previously in cruising research.

This project aimed to address the identified gaps by:

- Sampling Australian cruise passenger repeaters, both river and ocean, to
  increase our understanding of this important market segment.

- Generating a set of factors identified by Australian river cruise repeaters as
  influencing their decisions to repurchase.

- Using BWS to compute ‘value’ scores for aspects of repeaters’ cruising
  experiences, to allow operators and researchers to better understand what
  aspects influenced repeaters’ choices.

- Exploring whether these aspects could be used to segment the market so as
  to:

  o Better understand the extent of differentiation if it exists between
    river and ocean repeat cruisers.
Better understand the agreement or disagreement between repeat cruisers over such factors as onboard facilities and amenities, ship brand, destinations and itineraries (e.g. those who are more concerned with the ship experience and those who more interested in destination and itinerary).

Conclusions

The literature review discussed in Chapter Two and in this Chapter suggested cruising is a highly complex activity that spans many tourism, travel, recreation, business and socio-cultural arenas. It is so complex that it might be viewed as a geographically contained microcosm of society (a city in a bottle that sheds light on a range of social, cultural and economic aspects of life, as well as the increasing numbers of leisure, community and occupational enclaves, such as nursing homes, resorts, gated communities and the like).

Past research has focussed on the business and economic aspects of cruising, with little attention paid to aspects of socio-cultural dimensions and community formation on-board or the identification of aspects of the cruising experience that influence repeat cruiser choices. The high numbers of repeat cruisers and the limited market penetration of cruising to date, suggests many of those people who take at least one cruise will take more, so the opportunity for the cruise sector, and dependent businesses and economies, to experience further strong growth is substantial, if there is a better understanding of the factors that contribute to a positive cruise experience.
The literature further highlighted the ubiquity of ocean cruising as the dominant paradigm, which often seems to be synonymous with ‘cruising’ in general. Despite industry and academic understanding of the increase in the use of segmentation and differentiation in the sector, most prior research does not reflect an understanding that cruising and cruisers are not homogeneous. Both have become meta-labels to such an extent that, unless a study is particularly examining a subsector of the market or cruise passengers (e.g. studies on river cruising (Brodarič, Schiozzi & Smojver 2017; Erdeji & Dragin 2017; Jones, Comfort & Hillier 2016; Tesanovic et al. 2015)), there is little attempt to define the type of cruisers or cruising being examined.

Finally, the literature review found no comprehensive studies that have examined the factors that influence repeat river cruisers’ choices. However, an analysis of the admittedly minimal amount of relevant research to date suggested some aspects should be explored, namely:

- The initial ticket price.
- Status.
- Quality and range of on-board facilities, recreation and entertainment.
- Staff and service.
- Fellow passengers.
- Ship itineraries and destinations.
- Ship brand.
• Quality and quantity of food and drink.

• Loyalty incentives.

• Cabin size, quality and features.

• Convenience of mode of travel.

• Discounts and on-board extras.

The next Chapter discusses the research approach and methodology that was used to explore these aspects and to obtain the data about these aspects of cruising that enabled an estimation of the aspects that most influenced repeat cruisers’ subsequent cruise decisions.
Chapter Four

The Research Approach

Introduction

This chapter situates the present study in terms of research philosophy and the author’s worldview, leading into a discussion of the chosen data gathering methods. Research has been described as being akin to an onion, in that one is required to peel away many layers before collecting and analysing data (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2009). Traditionally, the outer layer, and starting point, is an acknowledgement of the researcher’s philosophical approach to the study (i.e. the ontology and epistemology that frame the work). Ontology is simply understood to be the researcher’s interpretation of the nature of truth (or reality), while epistemology refers to the relationship between the researcher and the investigation (e.g. standing outside the matter being studied, being objective; being subjective, with the approach framed by their own experiences, expectations, perceptions and assumptions) (Mayer 2015; Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2009).

Debates about truth and reality date back thousands of years. It is not the purpose of this thesis to shed any further light on these. Nor is it the intent to fan the flames of the ‘paradigm wars’ that have engulfed researchers and various disciplines over the past four decades (Asif 2011; Gage 1989; Goles & Hirschheim 2000; Guba & Lincoln 1994; Maarouf 2019; Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2009; Shepherd & Challenger 2013).
Firmly situated in its origins of scientific method and theory, the positivist research philosophy (also sometimes labelled the quantitative paradigm) suggest there is one truth that is external to an individual. Further, this reality can be known and discovered by an inquirer who is an objective observer, standing apart from the matter being studied (Guba & Lincoln 1994; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie 2004; Mayer 2015). On the other hand, constructivist adherents (also referred to variously as interpretivist, naturalistic or relativist amongst other labels) often take a qualitative approach. This philosophy is more associated with people and human condition research, with a view that multiple realities co-exist that are contextualised by human experience and that the researcher and the phenomenon being researched are interactively linked (Guba & Lincoln 1994; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie 2004; Lincoln & Guba 1994; Mayer 2015).

Research philosophy purists traditionally promulgate a view of explicit incompatibility between positivism and constructivism/relativism and their derivative quantitative and qualitative approaches (Gage 1989; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie 2004; Maarouf 2019; Martela 2015; Shepherd & Challenger 2013). While the incompatibility thesis emerges from the relationship of epistemology and method, suggesting it is inappropriate to mix the two approaches (Tashakkori & Teddlie 2003), some argue method has been conflated with philosophy and that quantitative and qualitative approaches can be used with any research paradigm (Guba & Lincoln 1994; Lincoln & Guba 1994; Mayer 2015; Onwuegbuzie, Johnson & Collins 2009). More recently, alternative paradigms have been articulated and considered, including post-positivism and critical realism (Guba & Lincoln 1994),
which are additional waypoints on the continuum between the purist extremes, being somewhat less strident and more temperate than the original two paradigms. Researchers have also identified pragmatism as a ‘third way’ or ‘third paradigm’ (Gage 1989; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie 2004; Maarouf 2019; Martela 2015; Onwuegbuzie, Johnson & Collins 2009; Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2009). Pragmatism is not a new approach, with roots dating back to the late 19th century with notable contributors such as John Dewey, William James and Charles Sanders Peirce (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie 2004; Martela 2015; Maxcy 2003), but it has garnered renewed attention over the last 40 years. For the pragmatic researcher, “the most important determinant of the epistemology, ontology and axiology adopted is the research question” (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2009, p. 128). Table 4.1 provides some insight into the different worldviews these paradigms represent by comparing them through Guba and Lincoln’s (1994) three fundamental questions, namely:

1. The form and nature of reality (ontology).
2. The nature of the relationship between the researcher and what can be known (epistemology).
3. How the researcher can find out what needs to be known (methodology).

The table is an adaptation of Guba and Lincoln’s (1994, p. 109) “Basic Beliefs (Metaphysics) of Alternative inquiry Paradigms” table without the description of two suggested paradigms (post-positivism and critical theory) and with the addition of pragmatism. It also incorporates descriptions of pragmatism derived from various

Table 4.1: Some Research Approaches

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Positivist</th>
<th>Constructionist/ Relativist</th>
<th>Pragmatist</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ontology:</strong></td>
<td>Reality exists and can be known. The ‘truth’ is out there and discoverable.</td>
<td>Multiple realities can co-exist and are discoverable.</td>
<td>Reality is discoverable and may be one truth or multiple individual truths – depending on which best suits the research question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Epistemology:</strong></td>
<td>Inquirer and object of study are independent of each other. Researcher can and should be objective.</td>
<td>Researcher interactively linked to object of study. Inquiry is subjective.</td>
<td>The researcher may be objective, observing the phenomena, or subjectively engaged in studying it. Tendency for practical applied research.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Methodology:</strong></td>
<td>Hypotheses can be developed, stated and empirically tested to verify them. Tendency to quantitative methods and large sample sizes.</td>
<td>Interpretive methods requiring interaction between and among researcher and respondents. Often qualitative methods with smaller sample sizes.</td>
<td>Tendency to multiple mixed methods. Can be either or both quantitative and qualitative.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As Table 4.1 shows, pragmatism provides researchers with an option to find workable solutions to the world’s problems by adopting a pluralist position that accommodates simultaneously or sequentially different views about the nature of knowing and
being in order to accommodate ontology, epistemology and methodology that best suit the research question and context (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie 2004; Shepherd & Challenger 2013; Teddlie & Tashakkori 2012). Criticisms of pragmatism focus on its silence vis à vis ethics and values (axiology), highlighting the weakness of a philosophy focussed around “what works”, unconstrained by considerations such as “what works for whom?” and “to what end” (Biddle & Schafft 2015, p. 323). This uncertainty and ambiguity around what is considered useful or workable and for whom is acknowledged by proponents of pragmatism, including Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004, p. 19). Other criticisms of pragmatism include that it may lead to the favouring of applied research over basic research, with the former seen as immediate and useful (i.e. its impact on society may be incremental rather than producing more significant change) and that researchers may chose a pragmatic approach to circumvent long-standing philosophical debates. To this point, Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) reiterate that philosophical debates will not end as a result of pragmatism, but they note it offers a practical, immediate and useful middle ground for researchers wanting to better answer their research questions.

While this is a limited discussion of research philosophy and its components, it is sufficient to allow the researcher’s worldview to be enunciated. In terms of ontology, it is accepted that it is possible to know and discover objective reality (i.e. there is truth out there) and that valid multiple realities can co-exist, typically resulting from socially- or experience-related individual contexts. Epistemologically, the inquirer can be both objective observer and subjectively engaged with the phenomena being examined. Finally, the quantitative versus qualitative debate is not relevant here, as
one of these methodological paradigms is not inherently more valuable or valid than the other. Thus, this research was approached from a pragmatist position in the hope that the results would improve our understanding of the research question by using a lens and methods that were most likely to be productive and useful in answering that question.

**Pragmatism and Mixed Method Research**

As pragmatism allows researchers to approach their study in whatever way best suits their question, it is not surprising it has often been associated with mixed method research (Biddle & Schafft 2015; Collins, Onwuegbuzie & Sutton 2006; Ma 2012; Molina-Azorin 2016; Molina-Azorin & Fetters 2019; Tashakkori, Teddlie & Johnson 2015). Mixed method research involves the use of quantitative and qualitative research methods, as appropriate, to answer research questions, with proponents arguing a combination of approaches is likely to result in a better understanding of the research problem (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie 2004; Molina-Azorin & Cameron 2010). Molina-Azorin (2016) also suggested mixed method research provided an opportunity to better develop the field of business studies as it had the potential to enrich our understanding of business issues and questions.

Various research designs have been used in mixed method research, generally being divided into one of two core approaches, namely:

1. The concurrent mixed method, where both quantitative and qualitative methods are employed simultaneously.
2. The sequential method, in which the research is conducted in phases, and different methods used as best suits the research question) (Molina-Azorin 2016; Molina-Azorin & Cameron 2010). This design may see quantitative methods first used to identify patterns and trends (and generate numerical data sets) and then qualitative techniques are used to add colour and meaning, focusing on outcomes, or vice versa.

Various authors have noted that a mixed methods approach is not an easy option generally requiring more time, money, effort and a broader skill set than a purist approach that favours one paradigm extreme over the other (Goles & Hirschheim 2000; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie 2004; McEvoy & Richards 2016; Onwuegbuzie, Johnson & Collins 2009; Shepherd & Challenger 2013). Methodological purists are likely to be critical of mixed method design, as they maintain researchers should operate in one paradigm only and researchers may be challenged when integrating and making sense of their results if the different data gathering techniques produce conflicting outcomes (Onwuegbuzie, Johnson & Collins 2009).

Data Gathering and Research Methods

As the research used a pragmatic, methodologically ambivalent approach that sought to use “what works” in terms of addressing the research question, the research design took a sequential mixed method approach, with Phase One using qualitative methods, and Phase Two, quantitative methods. While the previous discussion might suggest mixed methods research is not widely adopted, it is certainly undertaken in consumer research. Indeed, the approach might be considered traditional, in that the
qualitative data phase was used to generate aspects of interest that were incorporated into the subsequent quantitative phase (O’Donnell, Lutfey, Marceau & McKinlay 2007). Aside from the philosophical alignment of this approach, an added benefit was that the study had the potential to increase our understanding of the value (or otherwise) of mixed method approaches to study of the cruising sector, as there have been limited mixed method research applications to date (Hung et al. 2019; Papanathanassi et al. 2012).

The qualitative method deployed in Phase One was of particular use in determining the set of factors that were examined in Phase Two, as no prior research had examined the factors influencing river cruisers’ repurchasing decisions. As was discussed in Chapter Three, while the literature review had identified various potential influencing factors, these had all been obtained from ocean cruising studies, which were themselves limited in nature and scope. Given the potential size of the audience, and the likelihood that different people would have been influenced by different aspects of river cruising, a qualitative approach using semi-structured focus groups and in-depth interviews was considered most likely to produce the needed insightful data.

In adopting a quantitative approach to Phase Two, the objective was to explore the results obtained in Phase One with a larger sample and to further examine respondents’ similarities and differences. The quantitative approach was also essential to one of the core objectives of the study, which was not just to produce a list of influencing factors but to understand the relative importances (rankings) of those factors. Thus, a quantitative method was best suited to Phase Two’s objectives.
Given that the research design needed a method that produced a ranked/ratio list of measures, a best worst scaling (BWS) approach was used (Louviere, Flynn & Marley 2015).

**The Qualitative Research Phase**

**The Focus Group Interviews**

Focus groups and in-depth interviews (IDIs) have been used extensively in many disciplines, including marketing, business, health and social sciences (Carter, Bryant-Lukosius, DiCenso, Blythe & Neville 2014; Mehta 2011; O'Donnell et al. 2007; Ouimet, Bunnage, Carini, Kuh & Kennedy 2004), generally to “elicit the views of particular populations about various phenomena, products or policies” (Mehta 2011, p. 408). It has been suggested focus groups “represent 85% to 90% of the total money spent on qualitative research” (Burns & Bush 2013, p. 151). The benefits and limitations of focus groups are well understood and extensively reported (Mehta 2011; O'Donnell et al. 2007). Benefits included the opportunity to drill down deeply into a particular topic, develop an understanding of the language used by a respondent group brought together over their shared intimacy with the research topic, and focus groups’ ability to gain better insights into the attitudes or needs of specific populations (Burns & Bush 2013; Carter et al. 2014; Mehta 2011; O'Donnell et al. 2007). Disadvantages and limitations include the generalisibility of the research results (typically small samples are involved), the possibility of ‘group think’, the quality of the interactions and outcomes are closely related to the skill (or otherwise) of the moderator and the extent to which the subsequent data analysis is undertaken with an understanding
of the nuances of this method (Burns & Bush 2013; Carter et al. 2014; Mehta 2011; O'Donnell et al. 2007).

Carter et al. (2014) suggested using multiple methods to source data is a useful means of triangulation and that the combination of focus groups and IDIs increases validity by including different perspectives gathered using different approaches, while also accommodating the voices of participants who are not able to take part in one method (e.g. unavailable at the time scheduled for a specific focus group). Traditionally, focus groups are conducted face-to-face, often with researchers looking on from behind a one-way mirror (Burns & Bush 2013), although online focus groups are gaining some favour. Views on the ideal size of a focus group vary, with most researchers suggesting a range of six to 10 people (Garson 2002, p. 237) or even 12 participants (Burns & Bush 2013, p. 155). Smaller groups can “result in awkward silences and force the moderator to take too active a role in the discussion” (Burns & Bush 2013, p. 155); while larger groups can be counterproductive, resulting in frustrated participants who are unable to express their views and, ultimately, becoming more difficult to manage (Burns & Bush 2013; Garson 2002). Focus groups are usually run in a single block of one to two hours or they can involve a series of conversations with the same group of participants. A critical differentiation between focus groups and group interviews is that no standard questionnaires are administered (Garson 2002, p. 237). Rather, participants lead the conversation, supported by an experienced facilitator who only steps in when necessary to keep an open atmosphere and participants on track (Burns & Bush 2013, p. 151).
Auto-driven Photo-elicitation

The focus group were built around an auto-driven photo-elicitation technique. The use of visual research techniques, such as photo-elicitation, has gained favour in recent decades (Harper 2002; Pollak 2017; Schanzel & Smith 2011), with some going so far as to argue that such techniques, used to their fullest extent, fundamentally challenge traditional researcher-led supposedly-neutral investigation which ‘disowned’ the researcher from study participants and data (Westwood, Morgan & Pritchard 2006). Visual methods incorporate data presented in a variety of ways and media, including photographs, videos, charts, collages, pictograms and other artefacts. This approach might be one of many methods used or the sole method (Pollak 2017). Photo-elicitation is “based on the simple idea of inserting a photograph into an interview” (Harper 2002, p. 13). Photographs can be used as a visual aid and to prompt or encourage a deeper understanding of the topics or themes being discussed (Schanzel & Smith 2011). Photographs might be provided by the researcher or the study participants. When participants direct the discussion based on such visual data, the technique is known as ‘auto-driving’ (Schanzel & Smith 2011; Sweeney et al. 2018).

Auto-driven photo-elicitation is seen as particularly useful in tourism-related studies for reasons including the symbiotic relationship of holidays and photography (Schanzel & Smith 2011), as a reflection of the playfulness and pleasure associated with such experiences (Westwood et al. 2006), and due to the role tourism played in representations of self and identity (Schanzel & Smith 2011; Westwood et al. 2006). While the use of photography and other visual media has grown, as has the use of
auto-driving techniques, Westwood, Morgan and Pritchard (2006) and Schanzel and Smith (2011) suggest there has been only limited use of this approach in tourism research that uses photographs provided by participants.

Researchers have suggested there are a number of benefits to using auto-driven photo-elicitation techniques, including increasing participants’ sense of ownership and engagement, prompting better recall and, thus, producing ‘better’ (more accurate and complete) data, building rapport between researchers and participants and allowing the phenomenon under study to be examined from the ‘inside-out’ or from the perspective of the participants (Pollak 2017; Schanzel & Smith 2011; Sweeney, Docherty-Hughes & Lynch 2018; Westwood et al. 2006). There are some disadvantages, as such methods:

- Rely on the researchers’ skill in facilitating the discussion.

- Often were more expensive (requiring a greater investment of time).

- Might be incomplete, depending on who chose the photos and the extent to which they reflected the desired topic

- Could have data analysis issues.

- Are often not accompanied by structured frameworks.

- Presumed researcher neutrality, which might be problematic (Pollak 2017).
The Quantitative Research Phase

The Online Survey

As was indicated earlier in this Chapter, the quantitative phase made use of online surveys. Most respondents were obtained from an online panel in which participants were paid a small amount of money by the panel company for completing such surveys.

Researchers have used various methods in attempting to understand consumer preferences, including surveys, consumer panels and purchase data (Bernabéu, Díaz, Olivas & Olmeda 2012). There are problems associated with each of these methods, however. For example, questionnaire items can be interpreted differently by different respondents, consumer panels can be expensive and purchase data has a backward looking aspect, while purchaser motivations are unknown (Cohen 2009). Conjoint analysis has been used for this purpose and, while this approach has several advantages, including uncovering hidden drivers, questionnaires can be complex, especially when there are a large number of options, leading to respondents using simplification strategies that often do not allow for separate attribute comparisons (Bernabéu et al. 2012).

As was noted earlier, this study was undertaken to better understand the aspects that influence repeat cruisers’ choices. While ratings scales have been long used to understand this type of phenomenon, such scales can create problems, such as:

- Socially desirable responding, where respondents answer in ways they think they should (to make themselves look good), which can lead to over-reporting
(e.g. about intentions to recycle) or under-reporting (e.g. understating the amount of alcohol consumed) (Soutar, Sweeney & McColl-Kennedy 2015).

- Acquiescence response bias, where respondents tend to agree with a question more often than they disagree (regardless of the content), which is one reason researchers will ask a question several times (positively and negatively) (Cai, Xie & Aguilar 2017; Flynn, Peters & Coast 2013; Kazuya 2015).

- Extreme response style (ERS), where respondents disproportionately used the extreme edges of the scale (all disagree or all agree) (Wittenberg et al. 2016).

- Hypothetical bias, where what people say they are prepared to do on paper or in a lab experiment is not the same as what they actually do (e.g. when spending money) (Adamsen, Rundle-Thiele & Whitty 2013).

Researchers have suggested that to get better information on behaviour, they might need to analyse practices or use choice-based experiments (Adamsen et al. 2013; Cohen 2009; Lockshin & Hall 2003). However, studies on practices (which might or might not involve consumer panels) are expensive and may not accommodate “new attributes or combinations” or generate enough information to allow segmentation (Cohen 2009). Discrete choice experiments (DCE) are a useful way to examine behaviour (Louviere et al. 2000). In DCEs, ‘product concepts’ are developed that have various attributes of interest in combination and respondents have to choose between them (i.e. make trade-offs). According to Cohen (2009, p. 9), it can be difficult to interpret the data obtained from DCEs or to “compare utilities across
different experiments” and the design and analysis of DCEs can be very complex, requiring significant computing power and specialised programs.

Consequently, many researchers have continued to use simple rating scales (SRSs) that are relatively easy to design, administer and analyse. It was often assumed these scales were interval scales and, therefore, it was “straightforward to analyse the data and draw conclusions using simple statistics” (Cohen 2009, p. 9). Cohen (2009) and others have argued that, while SRSs are easy to complete, they may not be very useful when differentiating between attributes. A range of response issues, including those mentioned earlier often lead to skewed data, with surprisingly high correlations among a range of attributes. In summarising the disadvantages of the SRS, Adamsen, Rundle-Thiele and Whitty (2013) suggest these could include problems with score equivalence, including concerns that:

- Ratings might not be comparable across groups.

- Individuals might attribute different values to the same points and that their interpretation of the differences between the points might also vary.

- Different groups could have different response styles. Also, in some cultures, certain numbers carried specific meanings that might predispose respondents to see them as ‘lucky’ or ‘unlucky’ (therefore affecting their willingness to choose those numbers).

Further, rating scales’ designs can influence overall results (e.g. Adamsen et al., 2013, p. 11). Problems can also arise from the length of the scale (e.g. five-point, seven-point and so on) and whether all of the points on the scale are labelled. The order of
questions and way they are framed can also impact responses (Finn & Louviere 1992; Nunes et al. 2016). Finally, it is often difficult to understand the relative importance of different attributes when SRSs are used (Cohen 2009; Lockshin & Hall 2003). Given these limitations, it was decided to use a Best-Worst Scaling (BWS) approach to generate a list of ranked aspects that were most important to repeat cruisers’ choices (Finn & Louviere 1992; Lee, Soutar & Louviere 2008; Soutar et al. 2015).

The Best-Worst Scaling Method

BWS, described by some as generating a “quiet revolution in consumer preference measurement” (Mueller, Francis & Lockshin 2009, p. 205) was used here. Repeat river and ocean cruisers were asked to indicate which of subsets of items from a list of aspects of the cruising experience would have the most or least influence on their decisions to book further cruises. This did not mean the cruisers thought there was a problem with any item on the list, but rather required them to rate the Best or ‘most influential’ aspects and the Worst or ‘least influential’ item. This approach can provide a better understanding of the value connected with each item (Adamsen et al. 2013; Cohen 2009; Louviere et al. 2013).

BWS was initially developed by Louviere in 1987 (Louviere, Flynn & Marley 2015), introduced publicly with Woodworth in 1990 and the application was presented in a co-authored paper with Finn (Finn & Louviere 1992; Louviere et al. 2008, 2015). The method extends Thurstone’s random utility theory for paired comparisons, which was developed in the late 1920’s (Cohen 2009). Thurstone’s paired comparison method involves people choosing an item of greater importance from a pair of items and, while acknowledged as an easy and reliable method to gather information, the
amount of pairs and, thus, the choices to be made, increase dramatically with each additional item (Cohen 2009). For example, when there are 10 items, 45 pairs must be reviewed but for 16 items, 120 must be reviewed (Cohen 2009). As the factors increase, so do practical difficulties in terms of gathering, processing and interpreting these type of data (Louviere et al. 2013).

In contrast, the BWS technique allows for a small number of subsets to be used by arranging items in groups determined by an appropriate experimental design (generally a balanced incomplete block design (or BIBD)). Respondents are forced to ‘trade off’ between items and choose only the best and worst responses from the options provided in each set. At its simplest, BWS is a straightforward method with the total Worst score added and then subtracted from the total Best score (i.e. number of times an attribute is chosen as best minus the number it is chosen as worst). If the result is positive it means the attribute was chosen best more often than worst; if negative the reverse is true (Goodman, Lockshin & Cohen 2008). These scores are often standardised to lie between -1 (always chosen as worst) to +1 (always chosen as best), providing direct comparisons between different samples (Mueller & Rungie 2009). Marley and Louviere (2005) provided evidence that BW scores calculated in this way are not very biased and can be used with confidence. A BWS score that is at least intervally scaled can be computed if a more complicated square root standardisation formula, discussed in Lee, Soutar and Louviere (2008), is used. Indeed, this scale seems to have many of the properties of a ratio scale (Marley & Louviere 2005).
Disadvantages of the BWS method include a suggestion that analysing many different attributes in a single survey can be challenging and that respondents may become bored with seeing the same options repeated over and over, even when the number of choices are limited (Cohen 2009). However, scholars have reported that the use of BWS choice sets is an easier and faster survey method for respondents than other approaches (Lee et al. 2008; Cohen 2009; Flynn 2010; Louviere et al. 2013; Mueller et al. 2009).

Correctly designing the BW choice sets is also critical to ensuring the usability and validity of data. For this reason, many researchers recommend the adoption of the BIBD approach discussed earlier (Cohen 2009: Flynn & Marley 2007; Louviere et al. 2013). Other aspects of concern include debates about the extent to which the order in which respondents choose their best and worst preferences (i.e. do they always pick the best first then worst, vice versa or is the choice random?) (Louviere et al. 2015) and a level of caution around the extent to which simple BWS scores should be used in making inferences about individual respondents (Flynn 2010; Louviere et al. 2013).

BWS ‘Cases’

As the use of BWS increased, different applications emerged that were identified as different types or ‘cases’ of BWS (Flynn 2010), namely:

- “The object case (Case 1), where the choice options are non-attribute based simple options."
- The profile case (Case 2), where the choice options are attribute levels within a profile-based framework.

- The multi-profile case (Case 3), where the choice options are multi-attribute profiles”.

Case 1 (the object case) is useful when trying to determine the comparative values connected with each object in a list of objects (such as brands, public policy goals, foods, and other comparable objects). Having chosen the list of objects, researchers presented choice sets of these objects to respondents. Case 1 has been primarily used in marketing, where the basic best minus worst calculation was first established; allowing a ranking of individual objects (Adamsen et al. 2013).

Case 2 (the profile case) was introduced by McIntosh & Louviere in 2002 (Louviere et al. 2015) and requires people to make choices within a profile, rather than about an object. Respondents still choose a best and worst selection from the attributes. However, the attributes all relate to one profile (such as a health appointment, a health insurance plan or experience with carers). Consequently, respondents are presented with ‘situations’ one at a time and make choices within that situation, not between situations. Respondents are not asked to value the profile as a whole. Adamsen, Rundle-Thiele and Whitty (2013) suggested that this method was suitable when people have no experience making choices in the relevant area or might be in a vulnerable state (e.g. the elderly or impaired) or when the area being examined is sensitive (e.g. health issues). Indeed, Case 2 BWS has been primarily applied to health care goods and services (Adamsen et al. 2013).
Case 3 (the multi-profile case) is also often used in marketing (Adamsen et al. 2013). This requires respondents to select the best and worst from a number of profiles (Marley & Pihlens 2012), such as different mobile phones or holiday destinations, with each profile of that phone or holiday destination listing the various applicable aspects. In this manner, attributes are bundled into a product or service and respondents choose the best and worst from among sets of full profiles provided (Adamsen et al. 2013; Flynn 2010; Marley & Pihlens 2012). Thus, Case 3 is closest to traditional discrete choice experiments (Louviere et al. 2015). Multinomial logit analyses can be used to identify the strength of each attribute (Adamsen et al. 2013). The BWS method, of whichever case allows for an accurate determination of the importance people place on the attributes, which in turn leads to practical results (Cohen 2009; Marley 2008; Orme 2018).

Regardless of respondents’ cultural background, language or country of residence, the BWS process is universal, avoiding problems of ratings bias and cross-cultural issues (Adamsen et al. 2013; Marley 2008; Soutar et al. 2015). Such ratings bias occurs when respondents tend to answer agreeably or positively to questions, regardless of their content, which leads to distorted results (Hinz, Michalski, Schwarz & Herzberg. 2007). Cross-cultural issues occur when scales need to be standardised and adjusted for varied cultures and nationalities and questions and responses are interpreted differently.
The Increasing Use of BWS Methods

In the past two decades, BWS has been used to understand preference on a wide range of topics, including:

- Apples (Hinz et al. 2007).
- Smoking (Marti 2012).
- Wildlife management, farming and more (Grilli, Notaro & Campbell 2018; Lister, Tonsor, Brix, Schroeder & Yang. 2017; Shortall, Green, Brennan, Wapenaar & Kaler 2017; Stetkiewicz, Bruce, Burnett, Ennos, & Topp. 2018).

The first peer-reviewed journal article that used BWS in a tourism context was published in 2018 and reported a study of tourists’ preferred hotel attributes (Kim, Kim, King & Heo 2019).

BWS design

There are several different approaches to designing a BWS questionnaire, including the use of a Fractional Factorial Design (FFD) or a Balanced Incomplete Block Design (BIBD). The present study used a Balanced Incomplete Block Design (BIBD), consistent with Flynn and Marley’s (2014, p. 182) suggestion that BIBDs are the most
commonly used incomplete block design that ensures the “occurrence and co-occurrence of objects is constant, helping minimise the chance that respondents made unintended assumptions about the objects based on the design”. Cohen (2009) noted the importance of using a balanced block design to ensure the validity and reliability of the BWS outcomes, stressing the need to get the design right. Indeed, as long as the experimental design is balanced, the simple Best minus Worst score “provides a scale that is about 95 per cent as accurate as using multinomial logit to model the same data” (Cohen 2009, pp. 11-12).

The simplest design is one in which each item appears only once against the others. The BIB design used dictates the number of times each pair is compared. Increasing these comparisons increases the total number of subsets or the number of items in each subset. While repeated comparisons might improve validity, it makes the questionnaire more repetitive and longer (Cohen 2009), which can be problematic, as respondents lose interest as length increases (Adamsen et al. 2013; Cohen 2009; Vanschoenwinkel, Lizin, Swinnen, Azadi & Van Passel 2014).

In a BIB design, factors appear in each block in a balanced way, so each pair of factors appears together the same number of times. The pairs are also randomised. Youden Squares ensure objects appear in every possible position the same number of times, helping prevent respondents from reading too much into the scale. The BIB design used in this study is provided in Appendix Two. In summary, several of the benefits of a BIBD include:

- There is a ‘level balance’/‘frequency balance’, as each item appears an equal number of times across the sets, ensuring each attribute has an equal chance...
of being selected. Otherwise, one attribute can dominate the results (Lee et al. 2007).

- Each attribute co-appears equally with each other attribute, helping respondents choose maximally different pairs in each choice set (Lee et al. 2007).

- BWS sets have three or more items (aspects) but should be less than seven to minimise task complexity. The consistent number of attributes per case helps prevent demand effects, which cause respondents to perceive, interpret and act on what is believed to be expected or desired behaviour (Cook & Campbell 1979). Such effects can inflate or suppress results and cause confusion.

- BIBDs can be used to develop designs of upwards of 20 sets. However, anecdotal evidence suggests people get bored when there are too many sets (Cohen 2009).

**The Use of Online Panel Data (OPD)**

Online consumer panels have become one of the most common methods of obtaining respondents, despite concerns about such panels and the quality of the data (Boxer et al. 2013; Callegaro et al. 2014; de Gregorio & Sung 2010; Johnson 2016; Liu 2016; Walter, Seibert, Goering & O'Boyle Jr 2019). Online panels are used extensively in marketing, consumer behaviour, health and ‘social’ research (Boxer, Krasner Aronson & Saxe 2013; Johnson 2016; Liu 2016; Walter et al. 2019).

Online panels can be probability or nonprobability panels. Nonprobability panels are made up of volunteers (who might or might not be incentivised to participate), while
probability panels are gathered using random sampling methods to create a set of “respondents who are representative of the population of interest on a number of known demographic characteristics” (Boxer et al. 2013, p. 66). This research made use of a nonprobability panel as the number of repeaters was expected to be relatively small (which was indeed the case).

Panels might also be defined by their membership, with four general types including proprietary (specific to a particular company or organisation), election (eligible voters, usually operated around election time), general population and specialty panels (Callegaro et al. 2014). For current purposes, it seemed likely the sample would be drawn from a specialty panel whose members fitted a specific demographic, behavioural or social interest group (e.g. cigarette smokers, investors or (here) cruise ship passengers) or from a general population survey. These panels tend to be very large, having many thousands of members (Callegaro et al. 2014).

Online consumer panels have number of benefits:

- They are usually easy to access.
- Members are quick to respond.
- Data are collected in a more cost-effective way than traditional methods.
- They make maximum use of technology to effectively and efficiently collect data (e.g. screening out participants or requiring them to answer before moving on to subsequent questions) (Liu 2016; Johnson 2016; Walter et al. 2019; Yoro 2016;).
Disadvantages and limitations largely rested around concerns about data validity and reliability, with questions being asked about the motivations of some respondents (de Gregorio & Sung 2010; McGonagle 2015). Further, participation is limited to those who engage online and, therefore, might not reflect the general population (Johnson 2016; Walter et al. 2019; Yoro 2016). Some have questioned whether responses can be trusted, with problems identified including respondents not meeting population sample criteria (e.g. pretending to have a particular experience in order to benefit from an incentive scheme), participant ‘speeding’ (i.e. responding very quickly to surveys in order to complete them faster, which raised questions about the extent to which they actually think about their answers) (Liu 2016; Johnson 2016; Walter et al. 2019; Yoro 2016), and control and representativeness issues (Boxer et al. 2013; de Gregorio & Sung 2010).

Conclusions

Having established that the researcher is a pragmatist who sought to better understand social and business phenomena through a lens of “what works”, this chapter explored the theory, practice and some prior research relevant to the proposed research methodology. Chapter Five discusses the way the methods were used in the current research project.
Chapter Five

Method: Undertaking the Research

Introduction

As was discussed in the previous Chapter, the research was undertaken in two parts (i.e. an initial qualitative phase and a subsequent survey). These are discussed in turn in subsequent sections.

Phase 1: Identifying the BWS factors

Three focus groups were undertaken with repeat river cruisers (i.e. people who had previously completed at least two or more river cruises). The focus groups took place in Brisbane, Sydney and Perth in neutral locations (one in a hotel and two on the premises of education and training organisations), as recommended by prior researchers (e.g. Burns & Bush 2013; Garson 2002). Three participants who could not make any of the scheduled sessions were also interviewed in-depth. Interviews and focus groups took place in May and June 2016. All sessions were audio-recorded and transcribed into a word processing program and the transcriptions were analysed using NVivo software.

Participants were obtained through an email invitation circulated by Viking River Cruises’ Australian office to people on their email list who had cruised with that company at least twice in the past. Participants were advised that their personal information would not be shared with Viking and that only de-identified findings would be communicated with the company or in any subsequent publications.
A protocol, which is provided in Appendix One, was developed to support the focus group and in-depth interviews, with a set introduction, guidelines and questions, to ensure consistency between groups. The incorporation of an auto-driven photo-elicitation technique allowed participants to direct conversation, rendering the protocol questions a back-up. Participants were invited to bring up to 10 photographs that reflected the aspects of river cruising they most valued. An assortment of photographs depicting common aspects of river cruising was also made available, although most brought their own photographs, or other items, that, for them, epitomised the essence of what they most valued about their river cruising experiences (e.g. one participant wore a shirt decorated with a map of the cruise itinerary, two brought cruise company marketing materials depicting different itineraries and trips and one brought the daily cruise ship bulletins).

The focus group sessions were free-ranging. Participants introduced themselves and discussed their cruising histories and any materials they had brought with them. Questions were only asked of the group to seek clarification, as a confirming technique and where expected topics were not raised.

While the group attendance was smaller than had originally been desired (two sessions had five attendees, and one had four), high-levels of engagement, supported by the strength of participant interest in river cruising and the auto driving photo-elicitation technique, meant the potentially negative aspects of small groups was not experienced in this research.

The focus groups used a ‘critical incident’ approach, in which participants were asked to think about the river cruising experience prior to their most recent cruise and were
asked to identify the aspects of that experience that most impacted on their decisions to make their subsequent cruising purchase. Focus group discussions were audio-recorded, transcribed and, subsequently, analysed using NVivo software to identify the aspects of river cruising valued by participants.

The audio tapes of all focus groups were transcribed, yielding about 40,000 words of text for analysis. Each focus group transcript was coded separately with the researcher individually coding all text and assigning references to relevant nodes. While the researcher had started with an indicative list of codes based on the literature review (e.g. destination, status, price), some of these garnered little or no attention from participants (such as status) while other themes emerged (including local experience, cultural elements and small/intimate). The top 13 themes, in terms of number of references and proportion of time spent on those themes during the focus groups were:

1. Motivations for cruising
2. Itineraries
3. Fellow Passengers
4. Food and dining
5. Shipline
6. Staff and Service
7. Cultural elements
8. Local experiences
9. Location/weather
10. Value for money
11. Problems.

12. Price


The analysis revealed a consistency in responses between the in-depth interviews data and that collected in the focus groups. The focus group and IDI results were further explored in a semi-structured focus group session with river cruise industry representatives from Viking to test and triangulate the emerging factors.

About the Phase 1 participants

Eight males and nine females participated, all aged between their late 50s and mid-70s. Two were still working and two were self-employed, with most having retired from their primary career, if not completely from the workforce. Career backgrounds were varied, including public service, creative industries, accounting, small business, nursing, secretarial, truck driving and home duties. None of the participants had dependent children still at home, although a number indicated they had grandchildren and at least one participant was providing day-to-day care for those grandchildren.

Between them, the participants had river cruised in Europe (most frequently down the Rhine and Danube rivers), Russia, China, America, Myanmar and Vietnam. One participant had only done one river cruise, while most had completed two or three with four having completed at least four river cruises. All participants had travelled in company, most with a spouse or partner. Some had also travelled with other family members (typically a parent or sibling) and friends. While a larger sample size was
initially desired (the objective had been to recruit 40 or more participants), the focus group sessions were very productive and strong consistent themes emerged.

By the final session, it appeared data saturation had been achieved. Data saturation is an important and much debated principle in qualitative research, indicating the point at which a study’s results can be replicated and that no further data collection or analysis is required (Fusch & Ness 2015; Saunders et al. 2017). The combination of focus groups and in-depth interviews provided what Fusch & Ness (2015) called rich and thick data; that is data of sufficient quantity and quality (including being many layered and nuanced). While the literature suggests there is no pure statistical model to calculate how much data is required to reach saturation (Fusch & Ness 2015; Saunders et al. 2017), as the qualitative phase progressed it became apparent that what some suggested were the criterion for data saturation had been reached, with no new data or new themes/codes emerging, and the last sessions replicating the findings of the earlier ones (Fusch & Ness 2015).

**Phase 2: BWS questionnaire and analysis.**

Thirteen factors (or aspects) were identified in Phase 1 and initially included in a survey of repeat river cruisers (for the purposes of this study, this was labelled the RIVER survey). The survey was subsequently adapted to accommodate a counterpart sample of repeat ocean cruisers (labelled as the OCEAN survey). The questionnaire was designed to generate additional information that would allow for more detailed analysis and backward profiling, once the data were collected.
Through the BWS section of the survey, which was discussed in Chapter Four, ‘value’ scores were computed for the aspects of cruising that were obtained from the Phase 1 focus groups and the literature review. After an initial analysis to determine the BW scores and the relative importance of the BW factors, the data were further explored to better understand the extent of respondent heterogeneity, with a view to clustering respondents. A further analysis was then undertaken to see if such groups had distinctive backgrounds (e.g. in terms of age, gender, cruising history, future cruise intentions and/or income).

**Developing and testing the Survey**

The survey, which was hosted on the University of Western Australia’s website, was developed as a Qualtrics questionnaire and piloted in 2017. The questionnaire was divided into a number of sections that asked about:

- Respondents’ cruising history (e.g. how many times cruised, what types of cruises, where cruised, and cruise lines and ships experienced).

- The attributes that were obtained from phase 1 and the literature review. These were included in a BWS section in which respondents were asked to choose the least and most important options in subsets obtained from an appropriate BIB design.

- Respondents’ personal background that included some demographic and socio-economic variables (e.g. age, gender, education, lifestyle and family status).
• Respondents’ future cruising intentions.

• Respondents’ personality (i.e. the BFI-10 scale).

• Respondents’ involvement with cruising.

*The BWS Factors*

As was indicated earlier in this Chapter, the attributes of cruising identified in the quantitative phase were incorporated into a BIB design from which participants had to choose the most important and the least important aspects. Figure 5.1 provides an example of these question sets. Free text options included at the end of the questionnaire allowed respondents to comment on the importance of any or all of the attributes individually.

![Figure 5.1: The Best-Worst Question set (an example)](image)

*Involvement*

As was discussed in Chapter Three, involvement indicates the importance of, attachment to, and/or interest in, an object (cruising in this case), reflecting “the personal relevance of an object based on needs, values and interests” (Laroche et al.
A subset of four involvement questions was used that was modified from the involvement items used by Lim, Soutar and Lee (2013) and Laroche, Nepomuceno and Richard (2010). Two of the original five items—means a lot/means nothing to me and matters a lot/does not matter to me—appeared very difficult to separate in these studies. Consequently, only one of these items was included here, as can be seen in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1: The Involvement Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I see river/ocean cruising as (1) Unimportant ... (7) Important</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I see river/ocean cruising as (1) Insignificant ... (7) Significant</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>River/ocean cruising is (1) not valuable to me ... (7) very valuable to me</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>River/ocean cruising (1) does not matter to me ... (7) matters a lot to me</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**The Big Five**

As this study was exploratory, the short BFI-10 scale was used. It was envisaged that this might provide additional data for investigation if market segments were identified. Potential links between personality traits and consumption and tourism experiences have been the subject of prior research (e.g., Goldsmith 2016; Jani 2014), but there have been no similar studies relating to cruising decisions. Respondents were asked to answer 10 statements on a seven-point Likert-type scale, that ranged from ‘Not at all like me’ (1) to ‘entirely like me (7)’. The 10 statements shown in Table 5.2 (five of which are reverse scored), were based on Rammstedt and John’s (2007) scale.
Table 5.2: The Big Five Factors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personality Trait</th>
<th>Positive Item</th>
<th>Reverse-scored Item</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extraversion</td>
<td>Outgoing, sociable</td>
<td>Reserved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agreeableness</td>
<td>Generally trusting</td>
<td>Tend to find fault with others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conscientiousness</td>
<td>Does a thorough job</td>
<td>Tend to be lazy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neuroticism</td>
<td>Get nervous easily</td>
<td>Relaxed, handles stress well</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Openness (to Experience)</td>
<td>Have an active imagination</td>
<td>Have few artistic interests</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Background Variables

As noted earlier, a number of background questions were also asked (e.g. age, education, income, gender, occupation and nationality). Two questions were adapted to accommodate a known attribute of the cruising community (i.e. many cruisers are older and might be living in different family groups). Thus, respondents were asked if:

- Their relationship status was single, de facto, married, divorced, widowed, or divorced/widowed with new partner (or prefer not to say).

- Their family life cycle stage was no children, pre-adult children at home, empty nesters, adult children and/or grandchildren living at home.

The survey process

The final version of the river survey is provided in Appendix Three. The initial draft was reviewed by the thesis supervisors and submitted and reviewed for ethics
approval. The survey was then pilot tested with a group of 30 respondents known to the researcher or recommended by other respondents. These included cruising industry professionals, repeat cruisers, other researchers, fellow students and friends and acquaintances who had an academic or research background or were themselves repeat cruisers. Minor adjustments were made during the pilot stage to ensure clarity of meaning and improve the flow and wording of the survey. The survey went live to repeat river cruisers in December 2017.

The sample

A sample size of 300 repeat river cruisers was initially targeted. This number was based on a preference, if opportunity presented, to explore aspects of heterogeneity and the accompanying requirement to ensure the sample size was substantial enough that no potential subsets of responses would be any less than 30 cases (Hair, Black, Babin & Anderson 2010). Given the focus of this study was on repeat cruisers, respondents were required to have completed at least two prior river cruises. Unfortunately, this number proved extremely challenging to obtain, resulting in, ultimately, a three-pronged approach to obtaining the eventual sample of 320 valid responses.

The original plan had envisaged obtaining sufficient responses from a direct mail out by Viking River Cruises Australia to its repeat cruisers. However, this resulted in only 30 responses. The invitation to participate was sent to 1700 identified Viking Australian repeat river cruisers. Reminders were also issued to this group. A second strategy was to circulate an invitation to participate in the survey to repeat river cruisers through internet, social media (LinkedIn and Facebook) and cruise
community websites. However, most cruise community websites, would not allow the distribution of an invitation to their members. Thus, this second approach obtained only 12 respondents.

After four months of failing to generate even one-sixth of the desired sample, several research panel companies were approached to see if the remaining respondents could be drawn from their panels. In April 2018, Qualtrics commenced an initial soft launch of the survey to Australian respondents. Shortly thereafter, it became apparent there were significant problems in obtaining the necessary sample size, as:

- There was an insufficient number of qualified respondents.
- There were many invalid responses from people who either did not understand the questions or who were claiming to be repeat river cruisers but whose responses demonstrated they were not. These invalid responses included a number of people who were ‘speeding’ through the questionnaire.

To address the issue of sample size, the survey was opened up to international respondents in May 2018. Again, there were problems with invalid responses. It became apparent the questionnaire, which worked extremely well for respondents who were legitimate repeat river cruisers, did not screen out those who either inadvertently failed to understand the survey’s purpose or were intentionally trying to pass themselves off as repeat cruisers in order to be paid for their participation. Steps were taken to adjust the logic of the questionnaire to better screen out these deliberate or accidental invalid responses. Following an analysis of response validity, a number of remedial steps were taken, namely:
• Changes were made to the introduction to the survey. The introductory text was reduced. This text provided background on the purpose of the research and was clearly being used by some respondents to attempt to ‘game’ the process. While core information about ethics policies, the right to withdraw and the survey being for research purposes were retained, the specific title of the project and the focus on repeater river cruisers was removed.

• Additional screening questions and logic were introduced that terminated respondents who had not previously completed at least two river cruises.

• A minimum time limit was introduced to screen out obvious examples of ‘speeding’. This time (eight minutes) was at a very low end of what the researcher had observed in terms of completion time during pilot testing, which tended to see respondents completing in no less than 15 to 20 minutes.

• The set of questions about cruising history was restructured. The phrasing of these questions might have been inadvertently confusing to respondents. The data gathered were the same as in the earlier version of the questionnaire, but the phrasing of the questions were refined to minimise possible confusion about meaning.

By mid-June 2018, more than 2000 individuals had attempted to respond to the survey, with 106 completed responses, of which 85 were invalid. By September 2018, it became apparent that it would not be possible to generate any further respondents for the river cruise survey and the panel provider indicated that the large number of invalid responses was “not good for panel health” (personal communication 2018).
While the survey was left open until early 2019, ultimately only 61 completed valid surveys were collected (two-thirds of which were collected prior to the involvement of the online panel). As the data collected to that point continued to affirm the initial identification of substantial differences between repeat river and repeat ocean cruise passengers, the initial survey was adapted and released for completion by repeat ocean-going cruisers. This adaptation asked the same questions, but required cruisers to respond while thinking about the ocean cruise prior to their most recent ocean cruise, as can be seen in Table 5.3.

Table 5.3: Changes from the RIVER to the OCEAN questionnaire

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question/ Criteria</th>
<th>FROM (in RIVER)</th>
<th>TO (in OCEAN)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Screening criteria</td>
<td>Minimum 2 river cruises</td>
<td>Minimum 2 ocean cruises</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q12</td>
<td>When was your last RIVER cruise?</td>
<td>When was your last OCEAN cruise?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best Worst factor Block Qs 32-44</td>
<td>Description of river cruising and referencing to river cruising</td>
<td>Deleted river ... used ocean instead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involvement block</td>
<td>“… how you feel about RIVER cruising…”</td>
<td>“how you feel about OCEAN cruising…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qs 45-48: Changed references from river cruising to ocean cruising</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open ended text block</td>
<td>Description changed from “make comments about the aspects of RIVER cruising”</td>
<td>“…”make comments about the aspects of OCEAN cruising”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
After gaining amended ethics approval, the ocean cruise survey was released through social media (Facebook and LinkedIn) in late September 2018. By early November 2018, 30 respondents had completed the survey. The OCEAN survey was subsequently released through the online panel. Again, high numbers of respondents were screened out after failing to meet gateway requirements (most frequently being the requisite number of ocean cruises, invalid responses or speeding). Ultimately a total of 259 valid responses were obtained. Sample characteristics of these respondents are provided in Chapter Seven.

Data Analysis

After individually reviewing each of the responses, the data were cleaned prior to importing the responses into the SPSS program. Due to the data gathering challenges identified earlier, particularly with regard to the need to change the survey to include additional gateways to screen out invalid responses and the broadening of the research to incorporate OCEAN respondents, the data had been collected using five different versions of the questionnaire (three RIVER and two OCEAN versions). While most of questions were unchanged, the framing and numbering of some questions about cruising history were different. This required a mapping process across those questions that produced two datasets (one for OCEAN respondents (259 responses and the other for RIVER response (61 responses)).

An initial analysis of the answers to BW questions was undertaken in Excel to determine the attribute importance for both ocean and river respondents. These data were further explored with a view to clustering or grouping respondents with similar patterns. The data were analysed in SPSS separately, and, where appropriate,
as a whole, to understand sample characteristics (e.g. in terms of socio-demographic variables and cruising history). Attribute importance was examined to see if there was heterogeneity in the responses. Discriminant analysis was also used to better understand the heterogeneity that was found. Finally, the free text comments about the BW attributes were examined. A detailed discussion of the analysis methods and outcomes is provided in Chapter Six and Chapter Seven.

Conclusions

This Chapter described the research process used to gather the qualitative and quantitative data that were used to better understand the aspects that most influenced repeat cruisers’ choices. It describes what is a relatively traditional approach to the research (i.e. using qualitative methods (on this occasion focus groups and in-depth interviews) to identify a list of attributes that were included in a broader quantitative data gathering phase). The Chapter also discussed how BWS was used to explore attribute importance.

The Chapter highlighted the challenges faced in the data gathering process, which led to a fundamental shift in the research. Rather than focussing only on repeat river cruising respondents, the study was broadened to include repeat ocean cruisers. Ultimately this enriched the outcomes, providing data that enabled a detailed comparison of these two groups. The next three Chapters present the outcomes obtained from the qualitative and quantitative research phases.
Chapter Six

Identifying the River Cruising Value Factors

Introduction

This Chapter discusses the results obtained from the qualitative phase of the study, in which data were obtained from a series of focus groups and semi-structured interviews with repeat river cruisers and industry representatives. As Chapter Three noted, a preliminary set of possible value factors was identified during the literature review. The dearth of research on river cruising meant these factors were largely drawn from literature about ocean cruising or cruising in general. This literature had suggested a number of components of the cruise experience that might impact on repeaters’ decisions to keep cruising, namely:

- The quality and quantity of the food.
- The quality and range of ship facilities, on board recreation and entertainment.
- Destination ports, itineraries, cruise length, shore excursions.
- Initial (ticket) price, on-board costs, value for money.
- Convenience of mode of travel.
- Service levels on board, interactions with crew and service staff.
- Interaction with other passengers.
- Cruise line, ship.
- Loyalty programs, pre-purchase incentives (e.g. book next cruise while on this one).
• Size, quality and features of the cabin.

• Discounts and on-board extras (e.g. included drinks packages, pre-paid gratuities) (Huang & Hsu 2010; Hung & Petrick 2011b; Jones 2011; Papathanassis 2011; Papathanassis & Beckmann 2011; Papathanassis et al. 2012; Petrick 2004; Petrick & Li 2005a, 2005b, 2006; Petrick & Sirakaya 2004).

However, as the focus group sessions progressed it became apparent river cruising had some unique attributes that had not been identified in the literature review. These attributes are also discussed in subsequent sections.

Participants’ cruising history and socio-demographic characteristics were discussed in Chapter Five, as was the approach used in this phase of the study. The subsequent discussion in this Chapter focuses on the findings of the qualitative phase, concluding with the identification of the attributes that were examined in the study’s quantitative phase.

The Findings

Participants identified a range of aspects that they most valued about river cruising. These can be clustered into a number of categories, namely:

• River cruises are up close and personal:
  
  o Local culture

  o Local tour guides

  o Proximity to sites of interest
• River cruises provide a floating guesthouse:
  o Unpacking once
  o Casual and relaxed
  o Size matters: small and intimate
  o Staff and service
    o Dependability and reliability
• Value-for-money
• Destination and itineraries drive decision making

Factors that were not as prominent as the literature had suggested included:

• Price
• The quality of the ship’s furnishings, food, amenities and facilities onboard; partly because some were considered hygiene factors and partly because others were largely irrelevant on river cruise ships, for reasons discussed below.
• Status.
Up Close and Personal

Local experiences: environment, culture, people, proximity

The most highly valued aspect of river cruising was getting up close and personal with local geography, culture, people and experiences. These highly travelled participants wanted a first-hand engagement with their destinations.

“I like to see the countryside. I like to meet the people. I like to find out what makes them tick and I think I got a tremendous experience of that on the first river cruise.” (R1)

“That’s the thing, you’ve got something to see all the time [on a river cruise]. Like last year, when we were on that one in France, we were having a few drinks... we came back into Lyon at 1 o’clock in the morning, while the – I think it’s the Notre Dame – right up on top of the hill there. It was absolutely unbelievable, the view of it. Ocean cruising, a lot of the time, you don’t really see very much.” (R3)

Contributing to this sense of being integrated into the local environment was the visibility of the surrounding countryside as the boat journeyed on the river, the daily stops at local destinations and the ability of river cruise ships to pull up in the heart of a town. The proximity to the local centre was frequently mentioned as one of the most valued aspects of the river cruise experience, particularly in contrast to ocean cruising, where ports were often some distance away from local hotspots and additional land travel was often required to visit iconic sites. This aspect was also frequently reflected in the photos provided by participants, including one taken at the Kom Ombo site on the Nile River (R7).
Participant indicated this photo represents the valued aspects of pulling up next to significant sites, ‘getting up close’ to the environment

“Well, our Europe ones, the things that we like is that they always stop at quaint little towns and you can just get off the boat straight away and they always organize a walking tour.” (R1)

“One of the real advantages of river cruising is the fact you pop up in the centre of the town...it’s just like a travelling hotel. And it enters in the centre of town... the towns are always little quaint towns too. Lots of interesting places where you can go there and feel so confident you won’t get lost.” (R3)

A signature component of river cruising is that daily stops feature experienced local guides who lead walking tours of the vicinity. The tour guides wear a headset microphone that connects to a receiver worn by each passenger, meaning all hear the guide, even if they are not standing directly beside the speaker. Participants frequently commented on the calibre and quality of the local guides and the insights they brought that added to the value of their experience of a destination.
“The knowledge of the guide was absolutely current. I couldn’t even begin to imagine how she could maintain the information she did.” (R4)

“The guides on that Russian tour were either professors or teachers…it was during a holiday period. And they were good. They were very, very good.” (R1)

“The thing we also liked is...there are supplied tours...everywhere you go... the guides know exactly what they’re talking about and we love the little Vox sets, so you don’t have to listen, you can just stand there and hear.” (R7)

Excursions to local sites of interest contributed to this sense of being immersed in the local setting, as did cultural activities on and off the ship, including for example, adding iconic local dishes to the menu, cultural performances at meal times (as can be seen in R7’s picture of China cruise staff performing on board) and special talks. Further examples of these valued local interactions included:

- Going shopping at local markets with the ship’s chefs
- Having tea with a local, in their home, after touring a village
- Being shown how to use local transport by the ship’s crew.

“Every meal there’s an alternative, and that was a regional meal.” (R3)
“The information that they provided for you everyday (I have a massive folder I could have brought with me today) of every town and every place we went to), was just superb.” (R4)

“They had this particular walking tour where you went with the chef and the chef took you to the town...Into the markets and actually, they bought produce and the Viking staff took that step further where you could actually then go with the chef and into this area and prepare the meal with the chef.” (R3)

“There’s moments that make [the cruise]...like we spent the afternoon with a Russian family, which I found fascinating, just talking to other people. So while the companies provide that framework for the cruise I think those moments probably are the cement that hold it together for you.” (R13)

A Floating Guesthouse

The literature review had suggested a river cruise might be considered as a ‘floating hotel’ rather than the ‘floating resort’ travellers experience on mega-sized ocean cruise ships. However, these participants suggested the floating hotel tag was insufficient; failing to take into account the highly personal touch and feel of the river cruise experience. A ‘floating bed and breakfast’ label was also inadequate according to focus group participants; especially as all three meals a day were typically eaten on board. They suggested a ‘floating guesthouse’ might be a more accurate description.
R11: I’d have to disagree calling it a floating hotel, because that was the reason why we joined Home Link 20 years ago. There was nothing more annoying for us than to end up in the city and having to live in a hotel, and then to mix meals...I wanted the closeness more of mixing with the people and the culture...Now, what I’m finding, particularly with the river cruise, is that you’re getting to know people and you’re getting to know more of them, and you share a common interest.

R10: And what I found ... is that those people, because there are not young children there, because they’re more your age, because the whole thing is centred around actually getting to understand these different cultures and visiting these little villages and seeing how they’ve survived and how things have changed, I don’t see them as floating barges anymore. They’re my home ...

R1: ....rather than being a boutique hotel...

R11: ...It’s more than that...

R1: ...it’s something like more of a guesthouse, where you go there, and you have all your meals there, [the staff really get to know you]. So it’s more like a guesthouse, a floating guesthouse.

Unpack Once

The ease and convenience of river cruising emerged in every conversation. The need to “unpack once” was repeatedly identified as one of the aspects participants most valued. These participants had typically travelled extensively over many years, often having previously undertaken self-drive and guided bus tours in Australia and overseas. A number said they no longer found the ‘pyjama party’ aspect of packing and unpacking every day and sleeping in a different bed every night as attractive as
they once had. This aspect was also identified frequently in images brought to the sessions, such as the one below (R7).

“We’ve travelled quite a bit in our life... we’ve always been independent, used to drive ourselves. I don’t like to be on organised things, like a bus tour.

“Put your bag out at 7.” There’s a side of me that wants to say, “What if I put it out at 10 past 7?”.”

(R15)

“What I’m not looking for...is: put your suitcase outside the hotel in the morning, go for breakfast, [the tour company] collects the suitcases, you come back, brush your teeth, and so on, on the bus or wherever you’re going. And then, on the river cruise, you put your suitcase there, that’s it. Don’t worry about it anymore, until the end of the cruise, get your suitcase out and that’s it. You had a base...I didn’t like living out of the suitcase.” (R14)

“We like the idea now...of unpacking your bag, having the same bed for at least a couple of weeks, instead of having to pack up the next day.” (R1)

“My wife absolutely hates the pyjama tours. We did a tour of Ireland ...Breakfast, on the bus, here we go, here we are, the hotel, have dinner, go to bed, get up, here’s breakfast. And as much as we liked it...it wasn’t a holiday. I mean, it was an experience and I don’t regret it, but it wasn’t a holiday.” (R10)
**Relaxed and Casual**

Beyond the convenience of only unpacking once, participants valued the casual and relaxed ease of river cruising. This was seen as being distinct from ocean cruising in particular that, traditionally, is associated with notions of formal seating requirements at meal times and ‘dressing up’ while on board. In contrast, river cruisers could sit where they chose and enjoy their often-five-star meals in a casual atmosphere and in casual clothing.

“It’s [river cruising] very relaxed...we’ve been on many tours as well, on buses and trains through Europe. This river cruise was relaxing. Get up in the morning, have your breakfast, relaxed on the boat, see the...countryside until you arrive at the [day’s destination].” (R14)

“Generally [on the river cruise]...no one was bothered by how the other person appeared. So, it didn’t bother them we were there in a polo shirt and trousers.” (R10)

“It is more casual on the river cruise. And on the ocean cruise, because I’m comparing the same company, the ocean cruise, you had to dress for the restaurants; that was sort of required. And no jeans.” (R15)

**Small and Intimate**

Size mattered to these participants, as they overwhelmingly preferred the smaller, more intimate experience of river cruising, particularly in comparison with the much larger-sized ocean vessels.
“We like them small...180 people.” (R7)

“That first one we went on was only about 148 people on it. And, just a nice number. I loved the intimacy of [it]. And the staff get to know you by name.” (R16)

“When it comes to ocean cruising, I’m not interested in big ships. They don’t do it for me. I’m not into the bigger ships. So, as long as the smaller ships are affordable, that’s the way I’ll be going.” (R3)

This intimacy was reflected across several dimensions of the experience, including:

- Smaller group of fellow passengers, generally 200 or less
- Less stress at moorings, no need for big queues
- No competition for access to facilities or staff attention
- As previously mentioned, the smaller sized river-going vessels can pull into town moorings, allowing passengers to self-manage their day trips and excursions and that travellers are not obliged to participate in ship-planned activities.

“So there are 2,000 people on the [ocean cruise] ship and they pulled up at a port because the ship was too big, it pulled up, you had to get off on little tender boats. They said, “well we have 4 hours in this little town here, it’s beautiful, you can see this and this”. Get on the boat. It took us 2 hours to get on the boat, to the shore. By the time we got ashore, they said, “well you better start getting back on that because in 2 hours we’ll be leaving”. So we actually didn’t see the town. We queued waiting for the ferry a couple of hours. And then the ferry went back a couple of times because it was full and you had to wait til the next one and the next one.” (R14)
“River cruising a lot different to ocean cruising. It is the size, you’ve got about a hundred or so people on board, and it’s more intimate. You get to know people more.” (R3)

**Fellow passengers**

Generally, participants valued their interactions with fellow passengers, with a number having made good friends while cruising; friends they stayed in touch with and visited after the cruise ended.

“My husband’s not a very good sleeper, so he would be up in the middle of the night...he loved to take photographs of say, the engineering of the boat, and be there when we went in and out of the locks. He just loved it all the time, and he established this great friendship, kinship, with a group of men who also were awake in the middle of the night at the back of the boat. So that was really nice for him, and just establishing friends who we’ve still got now.” (R4)

“While on the river cruise, we met...a group of people we were so friendly with, from Adelaide, and our whole holiday was added to extensively by our friendship with these people.” (R4)

“We’ve visited two couples we met on the different cruises, particularly because they are near New York where our son was living, and we’ve been to visit them and we still keep closely in touch.” (R15)

“We’ve still got people writing for Christmas to us now from Canada and Spain. We talked to everyone, but after the first couple of days, you’re sort of getting your own little cliquey group.” (R14)

“On both occasions we’ve become friendly with some Americans...we even stayed in the United States in some of their houses and they’ve come and stayed with us.” (R1)
What was not anticipated, however, was that the most frequently occurring negative aspect of cruising discussed was travelling with American passengers. Participants were discomforted by what they saw as “loud and obnoxious” behaviour and the dismissive treatment of staff. These comments were often associated with discussions of paying gratuities (tipping).

“This is not a racist or any other comment, but we found American passengers had a particular attitude to the crew, which we found uncomfortable.” (R13)

“I shouldn’t judge people, they [the Americans] were really quite wealthy people...It was just they were really not very pleasant.” (R4)

“I found in America, they were so friendly...but on the [river] cruise, it wasn’t just one or two, it was obvious...they had an attitude toward staff that we Aussies found uncomfortable.” (R10)

“The reason I mentioned that [the negative experience with American fellow passengers] is because I think it does affect the way that I’ll reach a decision about the next cruise. Because if I found out it’s going to be a lot of Americans, I’ll probably...I’ll pass.” (R7)

**Dependability and Reliability**

One theme that emerged was that river cruising was a known and trusted activity. Participants had a secure and comfortable reliance in the quality and nature of the experience.

“At this stage, we know that every trip to us is important. We want that reinforcement of a good experience because we worked so damn hard in between to get to that point... We need to be reassured all the time and make certain that we’re getting what we want.” (R11)
Most participants had experienced river cruise journeys that had been affected by weather (too much or too little water means ships are unable to travel the river according to their itineraries and might be unable to stop at scheduled destinations) or conflict in some places. However, the participants’ experience was that they had been well-looked after by the ship line at these times and it had not compromised their enjoyment of their holiday.

“We got to Passau…and we were supposed to stay the night and do something the next day. And they said the river was so high you couldn’t get to a particular bridge...But what they were going to do was, the boat was coming from Amsterdam, so they said, that day, the next day, what we would do is pack your bags, they would take your bags off ... We went off somewhere in a bus. The idea was that we would come back on the other side of the bridge. Same route, but on the other boat. But as it happened, later in the afternoon, we got the word that the river had dropped sufficiently so we all had to rush back again and off we went. But what I’m saying is that they’ve thought about this and they’ve got a system in place to deal with it.” (R10)

Some participants saw river cruising as a safe alternative to other means of travel, particularly ocean cruising. These participants were reassured by the visible proximity of river banks and the daily mooring at stops along the journey. These participants were in the minority, but they were vocal in their dislike for being at sea. Other participants liked being safe – not because of any fear of the water, but because of a real or perceived sense of being bored or trapped with people they did not like on large passenger vessels with (literally) no alternative in sight.
“I won’t go on an ocean cruise. The only other option to go on a boat was the river cruise...I don’t like the ocean. I like to look at it, but I like to see land.” (R16)

“The thought of being on an ocean liner in the middle of the Pacific or the Atlantic in the middle of a storm worries me. So it’s the security of the river systems that I find is [attractive]. It’s the fact that on the river, there’s a lot of old – well, that’s where all the towns started on rivers, and there’s lots of interesting places on the rivers, especially in Europe.” (R3)

**Value-for-Money**

Value-for-money included considerations of price, the total cost of the travel and perceptions of the worth of the experience against that cost. Based on the literature review, it was anticipated price would influence repeater’s decisions to make subsequent cruise purchases. However, price was generally not raised at all by the participants, although value-for-money was frequently discussed.

“Value for money is the key.” (R3)

“If we know what we’re going to get, then we know that the value of the money is probably as good as it’s going to get and we’re willing to pay for it. So trust. They let us down once, it might be different.” (R11)

“Pricing wasn’t the main criteria...We would be looking, not so much at the price, but where we’re going, how we can relate to the local culture. Because...there’s not a lot of difference between these different lines. They’re all very similar. The quality of the service and all those kinds of things, I would make an assumption that they are within parameters that are acceptable. Basically, it comes down to where are we going, the linking in, and then we start to look at pricing and airfares.” (R10)
For these participants, price was a secondary consideration to choosing a destination – “we decide what we want to do and then look at the price”, suggesting they might look at cheaper airfares or cabins, but this is “post decision”. They welcomed the all-inclusive cost of much of their river cruising, with walking tours provided at all stops, as well as meals and alcohol at mealtimes. A number commented that they did not need to spend anything once they boarded the river cruise ship, contrasting this to their ocean cruising experience.

“Our neighbour decided she’d travel on a cruise. She wasn’t going to go on [a river cruise] because, even though we’ve been many times, “No, they’re too expensive”, she said. “Found this very good deal that’s very cheap.” Then when she came back, she said, “How much did you have to pay for these extra tours and stuff?” And when we went through what she had to pay for the extra tours, and she had to pay extra for the drinks. She had to pay extra and extra and extra – it was more expensive than ours. I didn’t say a thing, it wouldn’t have gone down well.” (R15)

“The [river] cruise sounds expensive, but [when] you look at what you get, it’s not.” (R3)

The availability of substantial discounts and deals and increased numbers of ships visiting Australia have contributed to the astonishing growth of Australian ocean cruise passengers over the past decade. However, almost all river cruising occurs outside Australia. As a result, intending river cruisers most frequently have to fly internationally to embark on their river cruise and get home again. Not surprisingly, participants valued the offers of cheap or free flights that are often packaged with some river cruise fares.
The focus groups revealed a diversity of considerations related to pricing, including:

- Cruisers who were time- or opportunity-limited (e.g. because one or more were still working, or because they could not or did not want to be away from grandchildren) and, therefore, were more concerned about finding the right cruise to the right destination at the right time, rather than the right price;

- Cruisers who were retired and therefore had the time and opportunity to both search for deals, and take advantage of them at short notice (and who might be more comfortable spending less); and

- Cruisers who were retired and for whom price was not a consideration.

While price was not a primary consideration, most participants acknowledged that it was possible to pay less for their river cruises, through booking internationally, taking advantage of sales, or varying the class of cabin or airfare. Only one cruiser (the youngest participant) indicated that she would actively take pricing into account and search for a cheaper option before purchase: “as long as the smaller ships are affordable, that’s the way I’ll be going”.

Participant photo indicating influence of value-added aspect, including inclusion of free or cheap airfare, as well as all-inclusive cost and service
Participants valued the quality of service and staff interactions on board. There were no reports of negative engagements with river cruise staff. Rather, participants found staff to be knowledgeable, provide exceptional service and committed to understanding their preferences. Most participants highlighted times when staff had gone above and beyond to provide high quality service in circumstances of personal difficulty.

“I hate fussing, but we got into such a habit of a breakfast, we eat a lot of avocadoes, because it’s the only fat food I really eat. When I started, I let the first couple of days go by and then I thought, “Oh, I’ve got to have some avocado, I just can’t stomach eating anything without some avocado”. So I went up and asked for it. Didn’t matter what you asked for. I was [asking] for some obscure things at the end, and they were dragging them out of the fridge and going to other places on the ship to get them. And they sort of singled you out as though, “That’s the avocado lady, get one ready”.” (R11)

“I had food sensitivities and we told the server, who said, “Well, you always sit at this table.”…she’d come along to us and say, “Don’t eat that!”…She’d say, “The chef’s got one especially prepared for you”. (R5)
“On that river cruise that we did in Russia, in St. Petersburg, on the last day on board, the day before we were due to get off, we were on a boat tour of the canals – because it’s a bit like Venice. Anyway … my wife’s knee gave way totally. And you couldn’t get a more helpful crowd [of staff]. They organized to get us to an American medical clinic. [Then my wife was] on crutches, they bent over backwards. There was a lot of stress [but] they were good. So, I’m a fan.” (R1)

“We were waiting [on board] for a taxi, we were the only ones still there after lunch, and they [the staff] invited us to come back and have lunch with the other people that were coming on the ship. So they were accommodating us as well… They’re not racing to grab your bags and shoving you out the door, which we have experienced on those other cruises.” (R11)

“The last cruise we were on [my wife] had an entrée and it was seafood, and … she got crook. Now, we didn’t complain…all she did was just for the day, she stayed in the cabin. I went and saw the cabin staff and said, “Do you just mind bringing a plate of soup? My wife isn’t feeling well.” I didn’t say what the problem was. Not at all. And she stayed in the cabin for that day and the next day she was alright. Anyway, so we never gave it another thought until last week, she gets an email from Viking, apologizing for her getting so sick…And also, giving us $500 towards our next trip. Compensation. And we never said a word. So, the cabin staff have got an eye on the wall too.” (R3)

**Destinations and Itineraries drive decision-making**

Destinations and itineraries are important in river cruising, which had not been anticipated from prior research. There are distinct differences between ocean cruisers who choose their next trip based on the desired itinerary, and those ocean cruisers for whom the onboard experience itself is both the journey and the reward. The experience aspect is particularly evident on mega ocean cruise ships that have
entertainment arcades, shopping malls, multiple restaurants, gyms, swimming pools, spas and more.

For these ocean cruisers, their journey (be it to nowhere or somewhere) is on a floating resort and any port stops are either added bonuses or distractions from the main event. However, this is not the case in river cruising. Most river cruise ships, while comfortable and possibly even lush in furnishings, have cabins and only a few communal spaces – one dining room, a casual meals nook and, perhaps, a lounge area. Onboard activities largely focus on or around meals and mealtimes. Most cruising occurs at night. River cruising is all about the destinations and the itineraries, an aspect that emerged strongly from the focus group analysis.

**R17:** The ocean going cruises have got activities built into their programs, whereas the river cruises, they haven’t got that many because they’re in the towns.

**R1:** That’s right.

**R17:** You cruise overnight –

**R1:** A town every day.

**R17:** And you go into a different town the next morning.

**R11:** Yeah, that’s true.

**R3:** It’s like a taxi, isn’t it?

**R11:** That’s what makes it so personal, doesn’t it? Because everybody is involved...on the river cruise, very few actually stay on.
Participants overwhelmingly identified that deciding to book a river cruise would be secondary to a decision about where they wanted to travel to next.

“We start with where we want to go. Definitely where we want to go. And then we look at the options that are available where we want to go. We enjoy river cruising, so if river cruising was one of the options, it would probably be higher than going on a bus tour. So, we would look at the options and we would grade them probably, from a river cruise through the buses through drive yourself, whatever. But the main driver is where it goes. And that’s why we’ve ended up on a hundred different lines, because some go where you want to go, some don’t.” (R7).

“Same decision that we made with the St. Petersburg to Moscow [river cruise], to be able to see the countryside, somewhere where we couldn’t do it otherwise... we’ve been to St. Petersburg before, we haven’t been to Moscow. We wanted to go to Moscow, so it just seemed like a good way of doing it.” (R13)

However, there were different pathways to that secondary decision. As previously indicated, most participants found the ease and convenience of river cruising more enjoyable than coach or car tours.

Other participants felt river cruising provided access to destinations (including “quaint towns”) they had not previously visited or that would have been difficult to reach otherwise. This was particularly the case in Russia and Asia (R7 photo below).
For several of these participants, their decision was also influenced by pragmatic considerations, such as whether driving occurred on the same side of the road as their home country – although even these decisions started first with the desired destination:

“[My decision about whether to book a river cruise is] easy and clear cut. If we are travelling in a country [where driving occurs] on the other side of the road, we choose the river cruise. It’s really simple, because I’m going to drive myself in England and Australia and New Zealand, so I don’t need a river cruise there. Then I would look to see what river cruises were available...So... If I’m going on a holiday, where is it going to be? Am I going to drive? If I’m not going to drive, then it’s a river cruise. And then I would look at what was available that interested me, that I haven’t been before.” (R15)

“I’m the same. In 1970, we started traveling to Germany all the time. And so, for 30 years, we’ve travelled [extensively], Europasses, [driving] and whatever... But over the last 10 or so years...all we end up doing is debating whether you turn left or right. And I can’t be bloody doing that anymore...The other side of the road. I’m too old for it. I can’t bloody do it anymore...I want someone to say to me, “See that mountain over there”.” (R7)
“[On our first river cruise]...that was the one from Moscow to St. Petersburg...I was used to driving in Europe. And we wanted to go to Moscow. Anyway, the more I researched, the more I figured that it was going to be a little trickier than I thought. So, I ruled out going there, in total, but my wife was saying we should do it... I like to see the countryside. I like to meet the people. I like to find out what makes them tick, and I think I got a tremendous experience of that on the first river cruise.” (R1)

**Hygiene factors: Cabins, food and ship furnishings**

While prior research had suggested the quality of food and ship amenities were likely to be valued aspects of cruising, these appeared to be more akin to hygiene factors for river participants. They rarely emerged spontaneously in the conversation and were most often being discussed only as a result of a direct question from the researcher. In short, as the subsequent exchange indicates, these river cruisers tended to take food and cabin furnishings for granted, while recognising that quality could differ with different ship lines and, particularly, in different regions (Russian and Asian river cruises were typically perceived as lower quality in these areas).

**R10:** It’s like you go somewhere for a hotel... If you stay at a hotel, you know what the food’s going to be like. And you go on a cruise and it’s very similar.

**R15:** I think it’s a given. I guess it’s an assumption on a cruise of any sort, they’re going to feed you. Way too much...

**Researcher:** And room quality – I mean, that’s another one we haven’t talked about, the size of the cabins or the quality of the ship, that sort of thing. Are those sorts of things givens –?

**R7:** We expect that the food will be reasonable. I think there are some people – and if you want to drive yourself to insanity, look up TripAdvisor and find
the whining, grumbling, mumbling, while they go on just about one meal. So there will always be people going, ‘the eggs are cold and the bacon’s droopy’ or whatever. We just find it reasonable. It’s reasonable. So we take it as given. The thing that we quickly found out when we started either doing river or ocean [cruises] or... when you really start doing land touring anywhere: all the rooms are the same, really. Meaning, a motel room is a motel room and it’s the same size, give or take a couple of feet, generally.

R10: You get a travel lodge and you get the same bedspread.

R7: You get on a river boat, and unless you’re up at the pointy end or the blunt end, they’re [the cabins] all the same

Conclusions

The focus groups and interviews suggested a number of factors impacted on repeat river cruisers’ decisions to purchase a subsequent cruise, namely:

- Ease and convenience:
  - ‘unpack once’
  - Relaxed and casual

- Opportunity to experience up close:
  - local culture
  - local sites/geography

- The Destination:
  - Specific itineraries
  - The best way to travel and experience particular destinations

- Quality of staff and service:
  - on-board
- end-to-end from pre-booking to return home
  
  - Overall dependability/reliability of the experience
  - Value-for-money
  - Fellow passengers
  - Ship brand loyalty

While apparently not as important to the participants in the Phase 1 research, the literature review had indicated the following aspects might also be considered:

  - Price
  - Status
  - Quality of on board experience:
  - Cabin, public areas and furnishings
  - Food, wine

On reviewing both the focus group results and those of the literature review, the 13 factors shown in Table 6.1 were identified and defined for inclusion in the Phase 2 survey. The results obtained from this phase of the study are discussed in Chapter Seven.

Table 6.1: The Attributes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attribute</th>
<th>Attribute Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>VFM (Value for Money)</td>
<td>The extent to which the cruise experience is worth the total cost, including all additional fees and charges such as travel, drinks, shore excursions and so on.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Itinerary</td>
<td>The itinerary of the cruise and destinations the ship will visit - the different towns and sites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Onboard Facilities</td>
<td>Facilities and amenities onboard: the quality of the cabins and quality and quantity of any communal spaces, including dining rooms, lounges, gyms, shops, entertainment venues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attribute</td>
<td>Attribute Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff &amp; Service</td>
<td>The quality of the staff and service onboard the ship and throughout the experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casual Atmosphere</td>
<td>Feeling relaxed and at ease onboard - not having to dress up or act in a certain way to please others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food &amp; Drink</td>
<td>The quality and quantity of the food and drink onboard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ticket Price</td>
<td>The actual upfront initial purchase price of the cruise ticket/river cruise.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authentic Experience</td>
<td>Exposure to local residents, culture, food - developing a sense of history, geography, people etc. of the areas being visited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting Closer</td>
<td>The ability of smaller cruise ships to dock in the heart of town or close to sites of interest (and for bigger ships, the need to take a tender and/or other forms of transport to reach destinations of interest)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unpack Once</td>
<td>The ease and convenience of getting onto the ship and unpacking once - having the same bed during the trip</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ship Brand</td>
<td>Preference for a particular cruise company or brand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smaller Ship</td>
<td>Preference for a smaller ship size, such as on river cruises which usually carry only several hundred passengers, compared to thousands on ocean cruises</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fellow Passengers</td>
<td>Interactions with fellow passengers on board - including their personalities, culture, the friends you make, and more</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter Seven

Some Initial Findings from the Quantitative Phase

Introduction

This Chapter discusses some of the results obtained from the quantitative phase of the study, in which data were obtained from online questionnaires. As Chapter Five noted, two different groups were surveyed. The first group, who were repeat river cruisers, was asked about the most important attributes of their most recent river cruise (RIVER) that were likely to influence their subsequent purchase of another river cruise, while the second group were repeat ocean cruisers who were asked about the most important aspects of their most recent ocean cruise (OCEAN) that were likely to influence a subsequent ocean cruising purchase. As Chapter Five also noted, some respondents were obtained directly through email and social media invitations from the researcher and a river cruise company. However, most respondents were obtained from a professional online survey panel, whose members are paid a small amount to respond to questionnaires such as the one used here.

The Chapter starts with some descriptive information about the background and characteristics of the respondents. This is followed by a discussion of the various attributes’ importance. These importances were determined by computing Best-Worst Scaling (BWS) scores from the collected data.
The Sample

A total of 320 people responded to the questionnaire. Some completed the OCEAN survey \((n=259)\), while others completed the RIVER survey \((n=61)\). As was discussed in Chapter Five, the respondents answered the same background variables, provided information about their cruising history, completed a personality inventory and responded to a number of involvement questions. They also responded to the same Best-Worst question survey (i.e. the same attributes and BIB design), although OCEAN respondents answered them with regard to attributes that were most or least influential in their decisions to make their most recent ocean cruise booking, while RIVER respondents were asked to consider their most recent river cruise purchase decision. As the background and personality questions were the same for all respondents, it was seen as appropriate to explore the background aspects of the sample as a whole first, starting with the information provided about their personal backgrounds.

**Personal background characteristics**

The total sample \((n=320)\) was more female than male (57% female). The oldest respondents were 86, while the youngest was 19 (respondents had to be at least 18 to be part of the online panel). The average age of the RIVER sample was older than the OCEAN sample (64 years compared to 50 years). Almost one-quarter of the group was in their 60s, with a further 20% in their 70s and 80s. With 17% in their 50s, this meant almost 6 out of 10 respondents were 50 or older, which reflects the nature of the cruising population. Just over half (54%) reported the highest level of education they had achieved was Vocational (Certificate, Diploma or Advanced Diploma) or
Secondary School. Almost one-quarter (23%) had a Bachelor’s degree, with the remainder (22%) holding Postgraduate qualifications (i.e. Graduate or Postgraduate Certificate, Diploma, Masters or Doctorate). More than 99% of the respondents were Australian citizens or permanent residents living in Australia.

About two-thirds of the respondents reported an annual household income of less than $156,000, with the largest group earning $91,000 to $155,999 and a further 24% reporting an annual income of $52,000 to $90,999 and a similar size group earning less than $51,999. Only 12% of respondents reported a household income greater than $156,000 ($156,000 to $200,999, 8%; $201,000 or more, 4%). Equal numbers of respondents were employed full-time (35%) and retired (35%), with 16% working part-time and 9% being self-employed. Respondents’ work and career backgrounds varied greatly. There were no dominant sectors or industry backgrounds, with the largest groupings being administration and support services (12%), education and training (11%) and professional, technical and scientific jobs (9%).

Most respondents were in a relationship (81%), with 68% married and the remainder in a de facto relationship or with a new partner after being widowed or divorced. Almost one-fifth (18%) of the group was single, widowed or divorced. Most respondents did not have children or grandchildren at home (i.e. they were empty nesters (39%) or childless (27%)). Just over one-fifth of the sample (21%) had pre-adult children at home, with 13% living with adult children and/or grandchildren.

Respondents’ involvement in cruising was measured through the four semantic differential items shown in Table 7.1, which were adapted to the present research context from the involvement scales developed by Laroche et al. (2010) and Lim et
al. (2013). As can be seen in the Table, respondents were relatively involved in cruising, as all of the items’ means were above 5.00 on the seven-point scale used in this case for the overall sample and for each of the river and ocean cruise samples. Further, Cronbach’s alpha was 0.95, suggesting they could be combined into a single involvement scale. In this case, the mean score for the overall sample was 5.35, although river cruisers were a little more involved (5.80) than were the ocean cruisers (5.24). This difference was significant, as the t-statistic in this case was 3.27, which is significant well beyond the 1% level.

Table 7.1: The Involvement Scale Items

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item (positive end of the semantic differential scale)</th>
<th>Mean (overall)</th>
<th>SD (overall)</th>
<th>Mean (R)</th>
<th>SD (R)</th>
<th>Mean (O)</th>
<th>SD (O)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cruising matters a lot to me</td>
<td>5.41</td>
<td>1.31</td>
<td>5.82</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td>5.31</td>
<td>1.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cruising is important</td>
<td>5.28</td>
<td>1.30</td>
<td>5.75</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td>5.17</td>
<td>1.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cruising is significant</td>
<td>5.33</td>
<td>1.29</td>
<td>5.87</td>
<td>1.01</td>
<td>5.20</td>
<td>1.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cruising is very valuable to me</td>
<td>5.37</td>
<td>1.31</td>
<td>5.75</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>5.28</td>
<td>1.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall Involvement Scale</td>
<td>5.35</td>
<td>1.21</td>
<td>5.80</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td>5.24</td>
<td>1.24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An additional analysis was undertaken to see whether there were any significant correlations between cruisers’ involvement ratings and aspects of their personal characteristics, cruising history and BWS preferences. The bivariate correlations suggested involvement was not a potential explanatory variable in terms of the importance attached to different cruising aspects, a finding that held true for the sample as a whole and for the OCEAN and RIVER data sets when they were considered separately. While no significant correlations were found between
involvement and many of the sample characteristics, and none at all for RIVER respondents, the following significant correlations were found for OCEAN cruisers:

- General satisfaction with ocean cruising and involvement were strongly positively correlated \( (r = 0.38, p < 0.001) \).
- Involvement and the likelihood of having booked a future cruise \( (r = 0.23, p < 0.001) \).
- The total number of prior cruises and involvement \( (r = 0.18, p < 0.001) \). On average, people with the highest involvement scores had cruised twice as often as the average of those whose involvement scores were 3.75 or lower.

Respondents also answered a short-form of the Big Five personality test suggested by Rammstedt and John (2007). In this case, each of the Big Five traits were measured through two items, as can be seen in Table 7.2. For the overall sample, the strongest of the Big Five traits was Conscientiousness (5.06), followed closely by Agreeableness (4.98), Openness (4.58) and Extraversion (4.32), while Neuroticism (3.32) lagged considerably behind.
Table 7.2: Personality Scale Items

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Mean (overall)</th>
<th>SD (overall)</th>
<th>Mean (R)</th>
<th>SD (R)</th>
<th>Mean (O)</th>
<th>SD (O)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reserved (ER)</td>
<td>3.93</td>
<td>1.60</td>
<td>3.72</td>
<td>1.62</td>
<td>3.98</td>
<td>1.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trusting (A)</td>
<td>5.23</td>
<td>1.21</td>
<td>5.28</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>5.22</td>
<td>1.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lazy (CR)</td>
<td>4.69</td>
<td>1.64</td>
<td>5.30</td>
<td>1.57</td>
<td>4.55</td>
<td>1.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relaxed (NR)</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>1.42</td>
<td>2.79</td>
<td>1.27</td>
<td>3.36</td>
<td>1.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Few artistic interests (O)</td>
<td>4.23</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>4.44</td>
<td>1.79</td>
<td>4.18</td>
<td>1.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sociable (ER)</td>
<td>4.70</td>
<td>1.47</td>
<td>4.79</td>
<td>1.24</td>
<td>4.68</td>
<td>1.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finds fault (AR)</td>
<td>4.73</td>
<td>1.55</td>
<td>5.33</td>
<td>1.64</td>
<td>4.59</td>
<td>1.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does a thorough job (C)</td>
<td>5.43</td>
<td>1.22</td>
<td>5.80</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>5.35</td>
<td>1.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nervous (N)</td>
<td>3.39</td>
<td>1.63</td>
<td>2.87</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>3.51</td>
<td>1.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>has an active imagination (O)</td>
<td>4.93</td>
<td>1.27</td>
<td>5.03</td>
<td>1.24</td>
<td>4.91</td>
<td>1.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extraversion</td>
<td>4.32</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>1.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agreeableness</td>
<td>4.98</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>5.30</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>4.91</td>
<td>1.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conscientious</td>
<td>5.06</td>
<td>1.11</td>
<td>5.55</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>4.95</td>
<td>1.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neuroticism</td>
<td>3.32</td>
<td>1.31</td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td>1.08</td>
<td>3.44</td>
<td>1.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Openness</td>
<td>4.58</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>4.74</td>
<td>1.09</td>
<td>4.55</td>
<td>1.13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

E=extraversion; A=agreeableness; C=conscientiousness; N= neuroticism; O=openness

R indicates a reverse-scored item

The differences between the two sample’s means were not substantial, with the largest present in the Neuroticism measure (RIVER 2.83, OCEAN 3.44). RIVER respondents scored slightly higher than OCEAN respondents on Agreeableness, Conscientiousness and Openness, and marginally less on Extraversion. These scores suggested that, on average, the cruisers surveyed tended to be hardworking,
energetic and liked planning things in advance, were likely to engage in pro-social behaviour, had broad interests and a tendency to prefer variety over fixed routine, were curious and flexible, were willing to interact with others, were friendly, courteous and co-operative, and enjoyed a “chatty and social atmosphere” (Ul Islam et al. 2017, p. 513) and were generally not especially insecure, worriers or self-conscious, coping well with stress and more emotionally stable (Goldsmith 2016; Jani 2014; Kiffin-Petersen et al. 2011; Ul Islam et al. 2017;).

Cruise history, preference and satisfaction characteristics

While the size of the OCEAN sample was almost four times that of the RIVER sample and, therefore, it was anticipated that the largest portion of the total sample would have ocean cruised, most RIVER respondents had also ocean cruised. This meant 96% of the respondents had taken an ocean cruise ($n=306$), with almost all of these completing two or more ocean cruises. A large number of respondents had cruised more than twice, with 5% of the total sample cruising more than 15 times (up to 40). The median number of ocean cruises taken was two (35% of the sample).

Less than half of the respondents had river cruised (48%). Again, given the relative sizes of the two samples, this meant that just over one-third (36%) of the OCEAN cohort also had river cruising experience. One-fifth of the OCEAN group had river cruised only once (19%), with 29% river cruising two or more times. The most recent cruise of more than half the respondents was in the 12 months prior to them completing the survey (60%), with a further 22% having last cruised in 2015-2016. More than one-quarter of the respondents (30%) had one or more future cruises booked.
Half of the respondents said they were extremely satisfied with ocean cruising in general, with a further one-third being moderately satisfied (only 6% reported any level of dissatisfaction with ocean cruising - from extremely dissatisfied to dissatisfied). Of those who had river cruised, only 3% expressed any form of dissatisfaction with their general river cruising experience, with 58% indicating they were extremely satisfied and a further 30% being moderately satisfied.

**Cruising History**

Respondents were asked to select multiple responses to several questions, including:

- All regions/areas they had cruised (up to 21 choices plus free text ‘other’).
- All cruise lines with which they had sailed (up to 23 choices plus ‘other’).
- All social groupings in which they had sailed (four choices - solo, with partner, with family or with friends).
- The length of the cruises they had undertaken (up to seven choices).

In terms of the total sample, Australia and the South Pacific were the top cruising destinations (53% of respondents had visited each of these locations). A third of the group had cruised to New Zealand, with just under 30% cruising Asia. Given these destinations, companies active in the Australasian region were most cruised; starting with P&O (55% of respondents), followed by Princess (35%), RCCL (30%) and Carnival (25%). Almost three-quarters of respondents had most often cruised with a spouse. Just under half had cruised with extended family (e.g. siblings, parents or children) and around one-third with friends.
Respondents were most likely to have completed cruises 10-14 days long (68%) and seven-nine days (60%), with less than one-third cruising four to six days (32%) or 15-24 days (26%). Only a very small portion of the group had cruised three days or less or more than 25 days.

Comparing the Ocean and River groups

Tables 7.3 and 7.4 summarise the personal and cruising backgrounds of each group. Both groups were predominantly female, although the ocean group was more so. The average age of ocean respondents (50 years) was younger than river respondents (64) by more than a decade. The river group appeared to have a slightly higher annual household income, with a smaller proportion of respondents in the less than $52,000 income bracket and a smaller proportion overall earning less than $156,000. Almost double the proportion of river respondents was retired, which meant a higher percentage of ocean cruisers was employed. In general, the river sample was better educated, with 62% being university educated, and almost two-thirds of these having a postgraduate qualification. While 41% of the ocean sample had a university qualification, the most frequent highest education level attained was a vocational qualification.

Nine out of 10 of the river respondents were in a partnership, compared to 79% of the ocean respondents, with a much larger percentage of the river relationships being marriage. Four-fifths of the river group had no children at home, compared to 61% of the ocean group. Almost one-third of the ocean group was childless, compared to just 12% of the river respondents.
Table 7.3: Ocean and River Groups background Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Background Variable</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
<th>OCEAN</th>
<th>RIVER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n=320</td>
<td>n=259</td>
<td>n=61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender %</td>
<td>Female (57%)</td>
<td>Female (60%)</td>
<td>Male (53%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age (Median)</td>
<td>53 years (55)</td>
<td>50 years (52)</td>
<td>64 years (68)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual Household income</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%&lt; $156000 (%&lt;$52000)</td>
<td>78% (23%)</td>
<td>81% (26%)</td>
<td>66% (13%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%&gt;$200999)</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work status</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Full-time</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Self-Employed/ Part-time</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Retired</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship &amp; Family status</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% with partner (%married)</td>
<td>82% (65%)</td>
<td>79% (60%)</td>
<td>90% (85%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%no children in house (%childless)</td>
<td>66% (27%)</td>
<td>63% (31%)</td>
<td>80% (12%)²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%adult child/ grandchildren in house</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highest Education level</td>
<td>Vocational (34%), Bachelor’s degree (23%)</td>
<td>Vocational³ (36%), Bachelor’s degree (23%)</td>
<td>Postgraduate (39%), Vocational (28%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% with University qualification</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The river cruisers in this sample were older, more likely to be retired, to have a somewhat higher income, to be better educated, more likely to be married and more likely to be empty nesters. This aligns with the perceptions reported in prior chapters that river cruisers are older and have greater disposable income (perhaps because of higher initial ticket prices and because river cruises generally required international travel to take the cruise).

Seventy-seven percent of the river group had ocean cruised, but only 36% of the ocean group had river cruised. River respondents were more than twice as likely to have a future cruise booked (either an ocean or a river cruise). While the highest numbers of cruises (20-40) had been completed by ocean respondents, a higher percentage of the river sample had ocean cruised five times or more and proportionately more of the river group’s total number of cruises was five or more.

Ocean respondents’ overall satisfaction with their general ocean and river cruising experiences was the same, although they were slightly more likely to be extremely satisfied with ocean cruising. However, there was a marked difference in the river sample. All but one river respondent was satisfied with their river cruising experience, with 84% being extremely satisfied, while only 38% of the river group was extremely satisfied with their ocean cruising experiences (70% overall satisfaction).

The two samples differed markedly on most cruised destinations and the cruise lines most travelled. River respondents had most visited Europe (75%) and Northern Europe (44%), followed by the Mediterranean and Alaska (both 39%) and Asia (38%). Australia and the South Pacific were both visited by six out of 10 ocean repeaters,
followed by New Zealand (37%) and Asia (26%). Remembering that almost all river repeaters had also ocean cruised, still only one-quarter of the river group had cruised Australia – less than had cruised the USA and Russia and the same as had cruised the Greek Isles and the South Pacific. More river repeaters had cruised China and the Caribbean (21% each) than New Zealand (18%). River cruisers were also far more likely to have travelled to a larger number of destinations than ocean respondents.

The destination results are reflected in the most travelled cruise brands. Nine out of 10 of the river respondents had travelled with Viking River Cruises, compared to 63% of the ocean sample travelling with their most frequent choice – P&O. The next most travelled cruise lines for river repeaters were all ocean cruise brands – Princess (38%) and Celebrity, Holland America and Royal Caribbean (each 28%). Princess (35%) and Royal Caribbean (31%) were also the next most travelled brands for ocean repeaters. River respondents were more likely to have travelled with a larger number of brands.

Respondents had most often travelled with their spouse (82% for river, 73% ocean) but river respondents were more likely to have travelled with friends (39%) than family (34%). Almost one in two ocean repeaters had travelled with extended family, and just over one-third of the cohort with friends. Both groups had most frequently taken cruises that were 10-14 days long, followed by those six to nine days, with a greater proportion of river repeaters cruising for 10 days or longer.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cruising Variable</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
<th>OCEAN</th>
<th>RIVER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n=320</td>
<td>n=259</td>
<td>n=61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% ocean cruised/ %River cruised</td>
<td>96%OC/48%</td>
<td>100%OC/36%RC</td>
<td>77%OC/100%RC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#OC per person Min-Max</td>
<td>2-40</td>
<td>2-40</td>
<td>1-23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#RC per person (Min-Max)</td>
<td>1-12</td>
<td>1-10</td>
<td>1-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% most recent cruise in 2017:2018 (%2016)</td>
<td>60% (14%)</td>
<td>63% (13%)</td>
<td>67% (13%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Future Cruise booked?</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ocean cruise satisfaction: % extremely satisfied (total % satisfied)</td>
<td>50% (88%)</td>
<td>54% (93%)</td>
<td>38% (70%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>River cruise satisfaction % extremely satisfied (total % satisfied)</td>
<td>58% (95%)</td>
<td>42% (92%)</td>
<td>84% (98%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regions most cruised (% of respondents who have travelled there)</td>
<td>Australia and the South Pacific (53% each), NZ (33%), Asia (29%)</td>
<td>Australia (60%), South Pacific (60%), NZ (37%), Asia (26%)</td>
<td>Europe (75%), Northern Europe (44%), Mediterranean, Alaska (39% each),</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brands most cruised (% of respondents who have cruised with that brand)</td>
<td>P&amp;O (55%), Princess (35%), RCCL (30%), Carnival (25%)</td>
<td>P&amp;O (63%), Princess (35%), RCCL (31%), Carnival (27%)</td>
<td>Viking River (90%), Princess (38%), Celebrity, HAL and RCCL (28% each),</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cruising Variable</td>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>OCEAN</td>
<td>RIVER</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n=320</td>
<td>n=259</td>
<td>n=61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social grouping</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>most cruised with % of respondents who have cruised in that grouping</td>
<td>Spouse (73%), family (45%), friends (35%)</td>
<td>Spouse (70%), family (47%), friends (34%)</td>
<td>Spouse (82%), friends (39%), family (34%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Of those who Ocean cruised, proportion who cruised</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2- 4 times (%)</td>
<td>203/306</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>14/47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5+ (%)</td>
<td>93/306</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>23/47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Of those who River cruised, number who cruised</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2- 4 times (%)</td>
<td>72/154</td>
<td>31/154</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5+ (%)</td>
<td>20/154</td>
<td>5/154</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Number cruises (river plus ocean)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2- 4 (%)</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5+ (%)</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Attribute Importance: Best Worst Scaling

As was discussed in Chapter Four, best-worst scaling (BWS) was used to understand the attributes respondents considered most important (Best) or least important (Worst). The BWS approach does not suggest least important (or worst) is of no importance or inconsequential. Rather, respondents were asked to consider which of the aspects (all of which might be important) was most important (or least important). Here, respondents were asked to choose between the 13 attributes that

---

4 The terms Best/Most Important/Valued/Influential and Worst/Least Important/Valued Influential will be used interchangeably throughout the thesis.
the qualitative phase of this study and prior research had suggested impacted more
on their decisions to purchase a subsequent cruise. As was noted in Chapter Four,
BWS uses a balanced incomplete block design to provide respondents with a number
of sets of attributes, such as the one shown in Figure 7.1, and respondents made
“best” and “worst” choices in each of the 13 choice sets that were needed in this
case.

![Figure 7.1: The Best-Worst Task (an example)](image)

Respondents are asked to choose the most important and least important attributes
from these sets and these choices are used to obtain scores for each attribute in such
a way that higher scores imply more importance (Lee et al., 2008). The attributes
included in this study are shown in Table 7.5 and the results obtained from this
approach are discussed in subsequent sections.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attribute</th>
<th>Attribute Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Value for Money (VFM)</td>
<td>The extent to which the cruise experience is worth the total cost, including all additional fees and charges such as travel, drinks, shore excursions and so on.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Itinerary</td>
<td>The itinerary of the cruise and destinations the ship will visit - the different towns and sites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Onboard Facilities</td>
<td>Facilities and amenities onboard: the quality of the cabins and quality and quantity of any communal spaces, including dining rooms, lounges, gyms, shops, entertainment venues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff &amp; Service</td>
<td>The quality of the staff and service onboard the ship and throughout the experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casual Atmosphere</td>
<td>Feeling relaxed and at ease onboard - not having to dress up or act in a certain way to please others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food &amp; Drink</td>
<td>The quality and quantity of the food and drink onboard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ticket Price</td>
<td>The actual upfront initial purchase price of the cruise ticket/river cruise.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authentic Experience</td>
<td>Exposure to local residents, culture, food - developing a sense of history, geography, people etc. of the areas being visited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting Closer</td>
<td>The ability of smaller cruise ships to dock in the heart of town or close to sites of interest (and for bigger ships, the need to take a tender and/or other forms of transport to reach destinations of interest)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unpack Once</td>
<td>The ease and convenience of getting onto the ship and unpacking once - having the same bed during the trip</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ship Brand</td>
<td>Preference for a particular cruise company or brand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smaller Ship</td>
<td>Preference for a smaller ship size, such as on river cruises which usually carry only several hundred passengers, compared to thousands on ocean cruises</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fellow Passengers</td>
<td>Interactions with fellow passengers on board - including their personalities, culture, the friends you make, and more</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Attribute Importance

As the groups chose their Best and Worst (Most and Least Important) factors based on different cruise types (i.e. the ocean group considered ocean cruising and the river group considered river cruising), the groups were initially examined separately.

The Ocean Group

As can be seen in Table 7.6, ocean cruisers chose ‘Itinerary’ as the most important attribute 608 times (the largest ‘Best’ score), but also chose it as least important 79 times. ‘Value for Money’ (‘VFM’) was chosen as most important 488 times and least important, 43 times (the least number of times for any of the attributes). ‘Fellow Passengers’ was chosen as least important more often than any other attribute (610) and also had the smallest number of most important scores (32). The top and bottom two attributes were clearly distinguishable from the rest of the attributes, suggesting that, while most respondents agreed about these attributes, there were considerable differences in the relative importances attached to the other nine attributes.

The individual BW means for each attribute were standardised by taking the number of times each respondent chose that factor as Best or Worst, dividing it by the number of times that attribute appeared in the BW question set (four times for each attribute for the BIB design used here) and then averaging these individual means. A ratio-type score can also be computed from BWS data (Lee et al., 2008) (termed sqrt(B/W) in this study) and this score was also computed and used to calculate the relative importance of each attribute (Mueller and Rungie, 2009). These results are also shown in Table 7.6.
## Table 7.6: The BWS Results (Ocean Cruisers)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>VFM (Value for Money)</td>
<td>488</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>445</td>
<td>1.72</td>
<td>0.43</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>3.37</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Itinerary</td>
<td>608</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>529</td>
<td>2.04</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td>0.43</td>
<td>2.77</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Onboard Facilities</td>
<td>404</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>289</td>
<td>1.12</td>
<td>0.28</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>1.87</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff &amp; Service</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>0.46</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.31</td>
<td>1.68</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casual Atmosphere</td>
<td>253</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>1.35</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food &amp; Drink</td>
<td>227</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>0.36</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>1.30</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ticket Price</td>
<td>314</td>
<td>276</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authentic Experience</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>213</td>
<td>-10</td>
<td>-0.04</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting Closer</td>
<td>237</td>
<td>296</td>
<td>-59</td>
<td>-0.23</td>
<td>-0.06</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unpack Once</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>386</td>
<td>-228</td>
<td>-0.88</td>
<td>-0.22</td>
<td>0.54</td>
<td>0.64</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ship Brand</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>444</td>
<td>-284</td>
<td>-1.10</td>
<td>-0.27</td>
<td>0.57</td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smaller Ship</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>566</td>
<td>-467</td>
<td>-1.80</td>
<td>-0.45</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td>0.42</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fellow Passengers</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>610</td>
<td>-578</td>
<td>-2.23</td>
<td>-0.55</td>
<td>0.36</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
‘VFM’ was three times more important than was the initial ‘Ticket Price’ and more than nine times more important than being on a ‘Smaller Ship’. These results were reflected in ocean respondents’ free text comments. For example, “[Value for money will] make or break the experience. Good value makes everything better”. Many highlighted their preferences for larger ships with thousands of passengers for various reasons including additional onboard facilities and amenities and larger numbers of people with whom to engage. For example:

“4000 is about the right size for me.”

“We prefer larger ships especially if there are lots of noisy people and/or children on board so we can get some ‘quieter’ places.”

“On bigger ships there is more to do. I especially love bigger ships to meet more people. It would be dreadful to be stuck with unpleasant or unsociable people.”

While ‘Itinerary’ was the second most important attribute, ‘Getting Closer’ to and ‘Authentic Experience’ of, the destination were considerably less important to ocean cruisers than ‘Onboard Facilities’, ‘Staff & Service’ and ‘Food & Drink’. For example:

“[Itinerary is] not as important as the life on board ship to me.”

“[Onboard Facilities are] most important - must have entertainment, Kids Club and enough facilities for the crowd.”

“Very important for a Cruise, because you have no choice of where else to go.”

“This is what the holiday is about also. Good food and relaxing.”
‘Fellow Passengers’ was the least important attribute, while ‘Unpack Once’ was also among the least valued of these influencing factors.

**The River Group**

The river group appeared more homogeneous. Table 7.7 shows river cruisers chose the attribute ‘Itinerary’ as most important most often (159) and least important least often (16). This pattern held for the top three attributes (i.e. ‘Getting Closer’ (114 most important and 34 least important) and ‘Authentic Experience’ (76 most important and 37 least important)). As with the Ocean group, ‘Fellow Passengers’ was chosen most often as least important (144) and least often as most important (11). Unlike ocean respondents, river cruisers saw the ‘Ship Brand’ as the second least important attribute (chosen 29 times as most important and 107 as least important).

Relatively, the attribute ‘Itinerary’ was substantially more important than any one of the other 12 attributes, with the next attribute ‘Getting Closer’ only 58% as important. All other attributes were less than half as valued. ‘VFM’ was only 40% as important to river respondents (unlike being most important for ocean cruisers). This difference was also evident in some of the free text responses. For example:

“[VFM is] important but a secondary consideration after itinerary and destinations.”

“With limited resources we need to consider costs but not at the expense of our enjoyment.”
## Table 7.7: The BWS Results (River Cruisers)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Itinerary</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>2.34</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>0.43</td>
<td>3.15</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting Closer</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>1.31</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>1.83</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authentic Experience</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>0.64</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td>1.43</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VFM (Value for Money)</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>1.27</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smaller Ship</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff &amp; Service</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.31</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casual Atmosphere</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>-2</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food &amp; Drink</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>-5</td>
<td>-0.08</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td>0.43</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Onboard Facilities</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>-16</td>
<td>-0.26</td>
<td>-0.07</td>
<td>0.40</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unpack Once</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>-22</td>
<td>-0.36</td>
<td>-0.09</td>
<td>0.54</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ticket Price</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>-46</td>
<td>-0.75</td>
<td>-0.19</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ship Brand</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>-78</td>
<td>-1.28</td>
<td>-0.32</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fellow Passengers</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>-133</td>
<td>-2.18</td>
<td>-0.55</td>
<td>0.43</td>
<td>0.28</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The three most important attributes were all related to the cruise’s destination, followed by ‘VFM’ (40) and ‘Smaller ship’ (36). Only about one-third as important as the ‘Itinerary’ was a cluster of attributes related to the ship (i.e. ‘Staff & Service’, ‘Casual Atmosphere’, ‘Food & Drink’, ‘Onboard Facilities’ and ‘Unpack Once’). The free text responses suggested one reason why these onboard attributes were less important to river respondents, as river cruisers spent less time on the ship:

“[Onboard Facilities] are not that important apart from the restaurant, coffee shop and bar. Most time is spent ashore during the day on river cruises.”

A second reason, as was suggested in earlier chapters, was that the generally higher cost of river cruises meant there was a minimum standard of quality onboard that met guests’ expectations:

“Facilities and amenities are generally of a higher standard.”

“Food and drink is always of a high standard. No complaints.”

“It’s generally very good - much better than our experience with ocean cruising.”

‘Fellow Passengers’ was also the least important influencing factor for the river group, with ‘Ship Brand’ and ‘Ticket Price’ rounding out the bottom three. The river sample contained some respondents who had only ever cruised with the one or two companies. While they did not consider brand to be particularly important, they were not especially interested in cruising with other lines: “We went on Viking for our first river cruise. We enjoyed the experience and value for money so continued with them when they were available where I wanted to go”.
Others ‘brand hopped’ depending on the destinations they wanted to visit: “This depends heavily on our destination. We have travelled on several different lines and accept that they will vary and all offer different experiences. That is part of the adventure”.

Examining Group Differences

Having examined the initial BW Scores for each attribute in each sample, as well as the attributes’ relative importances, the two groups (ocean and river) were examined to see if the attributes’ importances were significantly different. As there were two groups, SPSS’s independent samples $t$-test procedure was used to do this. The results suggested the means of some attributes were not significantly different across the ocean and river groups (i.e. ‘Unpack Once’, ‘Itinerary’, ‘Casual Atmosphere’, ‘Fellow Passengers’, ‘Ship Brand’ and ‘Food & Drink’). However, there were statistically significant differences (many well beyond the 0.01 level) between the two groups (i.e. ‘Smaller Ship’, ‘Staff & Service’, ‘VFM’, ‘Getting Closer’, ‘Authentic Experience’, ‘Casual Atmosphere’ and ‘Ticket Price’). Thus, it seems there are real differences in the importance attached to at least some of the attributes examined in this phase of the study.
Conclusions

This Chapter discussed some initial findings of the quantitative phase, including respondents’ socio-demographic and cruising history backgrounds. In this sample, river cruisers averaged a decade older than ocean repeaters, were marginally more affluent and were more likely to be retired, married and empty nesters. Most RIVER respondents had also ocean cruised, but less than half the OCEAN sample had done a river cruise.

The data analysis produced scores for the importance attached to the various attributes for the OCEAN and RIVER respondents. While some attributes had similar importances, the two samples differed in the importance they attached to other attributes. Further, it was apparent there was some heterogeneity in the responses that should be examined in more detail. This analysis is discussed in more detail in the next chapter.
Chapter Eight

Examining Heterogeneity

Introduction

The initial data analysis focused on the Best-Worst scores for each attribute so as to understand the relative importance of each attribute and to see whether attribute importance differed across the ocean and river groups. However, BWS data provides an opportunity to look beyond this type of analysis and to investigate the heterogeneity that may be present in such data. Indeed, Mueller and Rungie (2009) have suggested BWS data can be used to see if there are distinct segments that have different preferences. While there are different ways to analyse BWS data, the Case 1 BWS data obtained in this study is well suited for investigations of heterogeneity (Adamsen et al. 2013; Mueller & Rungie 2009).

While the mean of the BW scores for each attribute suggests the average level of importance, it does not indicate how individual respondents differed in their choices. As an example, the ‘Itinerary’ attribute was chosen as most important 159 out of a possible 244 times by the river group and as least important 16 times. But were the 159 choices a result of each respondent in the sample \( n=61 \) choosing it as best between two and three times out of the four opportunities they each had? Or did 39 of the 61 respondents select this as most important at every opportunity, while a 40th person chose it only as best on three out of four occasions? The answer is likely to be neither of these, but some other combination.
Similarly, while it is clear that at least 45 of the river respondents never chose ‘Itinerary’ as least important, did the least important score of 16 indicate that four respondents chose this as least important on each of the four occasions it appeared, that 16 respondents each selected it once or some other combination? These questions cannot be answered from the analysis discussed in Chapter Seven. However, as the mean of the individual Best minus Worst scores was obtained from calculating the attribute importance score for each respondent and then averaged across the sample, the standard deviation provides a measure of heterogeneity, as the smaller the standard deviation, the more respondents agreed and the larger the standard deviation, the more they differed (Mueller & Rungie 2009).

Standard deviations of more than one (when unstandardised BWS scores are used) suggest heterogeneity (Adamsen et al. 2013; Mueller & Rungie 2009). As the data here was standardized to fall between -1 and +1, standard deviations greater than 0.25 can be used as a guide to heterogeneity, as the BIB design used meant each attribute was seen four times.

In both groups, all but one standard deviation exceeded the suggested minimum, suggesting the presence of heterogeneity. For the river group, there was more agreement on the attribute importance of ‘Onboard Facilities’ and ‘Staff & Service’ than ‘Itinerary’, and more difference in consideration of the importance of ‘Unpack Once’, ‘Ticket Price’, ‘Ship Brand’, ‘Getting Closer’, ‘Authentic Experience’ and ‘Casual Atmosphere’. In the ocean group, there were differences in the importance attached to ‘Ship Brand’, ‘Ticket Price’, ‘Smaller Ship’ and ‘Unpack Once’. Ocean respondents
were most in agreement about the importance of ‘VFM’, ‘Fellow Passengers’ and ‘Staff & Service’.

The means of the attributes’ importance and their standard deviations can be shown graphically, as in Figure 8.1 and Figure 8.2 (Mueller & Rungie 2009). This graph helps identify areas of difference (heterogeneity) and agreement (homogeneity). Attributes in the top right quadrant have greater importance, and larger standard deviations (i.e. heterogeneity). Stakeholders should be interested in more important attributes, but the presence of heterogeneity suggests there may be subgroups with different views about attribute importance and such subgroups can provide the basis for sensible strategy development.

Figure 8.1: Heterogeneity (Ocean Cruisers)

Figure 8.1 suggests that, while ocean respondents disagreed most about the importance of ‘Ship Brand’, Unpack Once’ and ‘Ticket Price’, these were not as
important as ‘itinerary’, ‘VFM’ or ‘Onboard Facilities’, about which there was greater agreement. Figure 8.2 suggests river respondents disagreed most about the importance of ‘Smaller Ship’, ‘Unpack Once’, ‘Ship Brand’, ‘Ticket Price’ and ‘Authentic Experience’. More important attributes for this group, with less disagreement included ‘itinerary’ and ‘Getting Closer’.

Looking Further at Heterogeneity

Following the identification of likely heterogeneity in the ocean and river data, a cluster analysis was used to see whether the identified differences in the ways the respondents assessed attribute importance suggested there were different segments or sub-groups. Cluster analysis aims to identify homogeneous subgroups (Hair et al. 2014; Sekaran 2000). Such an analysis allows researchers to identify any “natural structure among the observations based on a multivariate profile” (Hair et al. 2014,
Ward’s (1963) hierarchical clustering method was used as it minimises within-group variation and tends to produce clusters of similar size (Hair et al. 2014; Sweeney et al. 2011; Viswanathan et al. 2007).

The two datasets were analysed separately, as both scatter plots suggested the presence of heterogeneity and river respondents had chosen their BW attributes as they related to river cruising, while the ocean sample had responded in relation to ocean cruising. Two- to six-cluster solutions were obtain for the ocean data, with the three-cluster solution proving the best option when taking into account minimum cluster sizes and an acceptable point biserial correlation coefficient (0.28) (Lee et al. 2011; Milligan & Mahajan 1980). The four-cluster ocean solution had a group with only 26 members, which was below the desired minimum of 30.

Two-cluster and three-cluster solutions were obtained for the river sample, although the sample size (n=61) suggested clustering was not likely to be useful. As anticipated, while there were two distinct subgroups, the second sub-group had only 23 members, suggesting it should not be used. Consequently, the RIVER respondent group (n=61) was left as a single group and became a fourth cluster in the subsequent analysis. The cluster means for the BWS attribute scores can be seen in Table 8.1.

While t-tests were used to see whether or not the OCEAN and RIVER groups were different, F-statistics were used to see whether the four groups were significantly different.
### Table 8.1: BWS Attribute Importance (Cluster Means)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attribute</th>
<th>Ocean Group 1</th>
<th>Ocean Group 2</th>
<th>Ocean Group 3</th>
<th>River Group</th>
<th>ANOVA Result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group size</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>n=86</td>
<td>n=61</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unpack Once</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>-0.10</td>
<td>-0.61</td>
<td>-0.19</td>
<td>30.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smaller Ship</td>
<td>-0.36</td>
<td>-0.73</td>
<td>-0.42</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>23.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff &amp; Service</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>3.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Itinerary</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>0.53</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>5.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value for Money</td>
<td>0.56</td>
<td>0.56</td>
<td>0.56</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>-0.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting Closer</td>
<td>-0.15</td>
<td>-0.38</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>41.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authentic Experience</td>
<td>-0.17</td>
<td>-0.22</td>
<td>0.34</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>35.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casual Atmosphere</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
<td>2.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fellow Passengers</td>
<td>-0.54</td>
<td>-0.60</td>
<td>-0.55</td>
<td>-0.55</td>
<td>0.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Onboard Facilities</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>0.36</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>-0.07</td>
<td>12.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ship Brand</td>
<td>-0.59</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>-0.26</td>
<td>-0.32</td>
<td>75.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ticket Price</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>-0.27</td>
<td>-0.19</td>
<td>23.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food &amp; Drink</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td>2.08</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As was expected, as the earlier analysis had suggested there were statistically significant differences between the river and ocean groups and that three ocean groups were obtained from a cluster analysis, there were statistically significant differences for all but two attributes (‘Fellow Passengers’ and ‘Food & Drink’). There were bigger differences between the ‘Ship Brand’ (F=75.04), ‘Getting Closer’ (F=41.17), ‘Authentic Experience’ (F=35.28), ‘Unpack Once’ (F=30.71), ‘Ticket Price’ (F=23.69) and ‘Smaller Ship’ (F=23.28) attributes. While still statistically significant, ‘VFM’ (F=-0.15), ‘Casual Atmosphere’ (F=2.73), ‘Staff & Service’ (F=3.26) and ‘Itinerary’ (F=5.89) were less different.

However, the F-statistics examine group differences in a univariate way. Consequently, a discriminant analysis was undertaken to examine these differences in a multivariate way. A stepwise approach was undertaken to do this. Two significant functions were found that, using the $I^2$ statistic suggested by Peterson and Mahajan (1976), explained 69% of the intergroup variation. Further, the F-statistics based on the Mahalanobis distances between the groups were all significant well beyond the 1% level, as they ranged from 18.90 to 33.35 (Gan, Lee & Soutar 2009), suggesting all of the groups differed from each other, as would be expected as they were based on a cluster analysis. These two functions were rotated to obtain simple structure and Table 8.2 shows the rotated structural correlations for each attribute on each function, while Table 8.3 shows the group centroids.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BW Attribute</th>
<th>Function 1</th>
<th>Function 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Authentic Experience</td>
<td>0.56</td>
<td>-0.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting Closer</td>
<td>0.54</td>
<td>-0.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ticket Price</td>
<td>-0.47</td>
<td>-0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unpack Once</td>
<td>-0.46</td>
<td>-0.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VFM</td>
<td>-0.43</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Itinerary</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>-0.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fellow Passengers</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>-0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff &amp; Service</td>
<td>-0.14</td>
<td>-0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ship Brand</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smaller Ship</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>-0.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Onboard Facilities</td>
<td>-0.11</td>
<td>0.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food &amp; Drink</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td>0.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casual Atmosphere</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
<td>-0.06</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As can be seen in Table 8.2, the first discriminant function was most related to having an authentic experience and getting closer to destinations in a positive way and price, VFM and unpacking only once in a negative way, which led to these two endpoints being labelled destination experience (positively) and cost and convenience (negatively). The second discriminant function was most related to the cruise line (brand) in a positive way and to smaller ships in a negative way, which led to these two endpoints being labelled in this way.
Table 8.3 suggests ocean group 1 members felt cost and convenience were more important attributes. While ocean group 2 members felt cost and convenience were important, they also felt the brand was important. Ocean group 3 members felt destination experiences were important, but were not concerned about brand or ship size. Similarly, the river cruisers felt destination experiences were important, as well as travelling on smaller ships. The results provided in Table 8.2 and Table 8.3 can be shown graphically, as in Figure 8.3 (Soutar & Clarke 1981). The groups are discussed in more detail in subsequent paragraphs.
Ocean Group 1 - The cost of the travel experience (ticket price and value for money) were important factors for this group. While the itinerary was important, they did not need to have authentic experiences of their destinations. As this group also valued onboard facilities and amenities, it was not surprising they felt smaller ship size was one of their least important influencers (as typically the smaller the ship, the more limited the onboard facilities). This group was not concerned about ‘Ship Brand’, ‘Itinerary’ or ‘Authentic Experiences’, which suggested the cost of the cruise and onboard experiences were more important than loyalty to a cruise line or a destination the cruise was visiting. Consequently, this group was termed the ‘Deal Seeker’ segment.

Free text responses within the questionnaire supported this name, as this group’s members made comments such as:

“This is the element that hooks me initially. If the initial ticket price looks like an absolute bargain, then I am likely to give it consideration.”

“(Price is) important as we are on a limited budget.”

“(Price) has to be a major consideration for us being on a very limited income.”

“I always seek out the best value for money, so a low starting price is key and Very important as there are always extras to add on.”

As might be expected, given respondents were repeat cruisers, Deal Seekers were aware the initial ticket price might not reflect a cruise’s total cost and that there were often trade-offs between the initial price and overall cost.
“Many things need to be taken into consideration before deciding if the price represents good value for money or not.”

“I like a bargain but not if getting a substandard trip.”

“Important to me but I am aware that you can end up paying a whole lot more afterwards.”

Ocean group 2 - ‘Ship Brand’ was more important to this group than to the other groups. ‘VFM’ was important to this group, as it was for all three of the ocean groups. ‘Itinerary’ was also important. This group cared more about onboard facilities than any other group. In other words, this group cared more than other clusters about brand and onboard facilities, attaching the same importance as the other ocean groups to value for money. This group of ocean cruisers was least concerned about travelling on smaller ships or about getting closer to intended destinations. The largest differentiation between this group and the others was the importance they attached to a particular cruise line. Consequently, this group was termed ‘Brand Followers’. Responses in the free text section of the questionnaire suggested there were at least four main reasons the cruise line was most important to members of this group:

- Some knew which lines they wanted to avoid (e.g. “I will never sail with X company again”).

- Some linked ship brand and quality (e.g. “Important as some [companies] have a bad record”, “reputable brand means better safety” and “Very important as some cruise lines are better than others”).
• Some understood different brands provided different types of experiences (e.g. “Important as there are some brands I have learned to avoid as these are not to my taste”).

• Some saw themselves as loyal (e.g. “Princess Cruises is my favourite because of the loyalty program” and “Very important, I am a loyal customer”).

**Ocean group 3** - For these cruisers, ‘Itinerary’ was the most important aspect, followed by ‘VFM’, ‘Authentic Experience’ and ‘Getting Closer’. Members of this group were least concerned about convenience or initial cost, as they rated ‘Unpack Once’ and ‘Ticket Price’ lower than the other groups. For these respondents, the importance of the cruise itinerary, having authentic experiences and getting closer to destinations meant more than who they cruised with, how big or small the ship was and how much the ticket cost. The group might be described as ‘Experience Hunters’. Their free text responses suggested they were influenced by itinerary (e.g. “it’s the first thing that attracts me to doing a cruise”, “IT’S THE REASON I TAKE THE CRUISE” (respondent chose all caps) and “a crucial factor in determining whether I go or not”). Different justifications for the importance of itinerary and destinations were apparent in the data:

• Some respondents disliked sea days (e.g. “I like places off the beaten track. Do not like to be at sea for long periods” and “Having a few stops breaks up the monotony of ship life; four sea days in a row is too many”).
• Many members were looking for new places to visit (e.g. “locations, locations -- important to see unique destinations, cities, countries”, and “I want to see lots of the world, so the more new places, the better”).

• Some members also highlighted their interest in a variety of experiences, locations and cultures (e.g. “Awesome feeling to jump off a boat and get hit with the culture of the people and places you visit; it’s one of the most valuable parts of travelling”, and “What I love most about cruising, stopping at places I wouldn't visit otherwise”).

River cruisers – River cruisers were most like ocean group 3 as their most valued attribute was ‘Itinerary’. However, there were some differences even with ocean group 3. Unlike the ocean groups, ‘VFM’ was not one of the most important attributes, as ‘Getting Closer’ and having ‘Authentic Experiences’ rounded out the top three most important attributes. Given the nature of river cruising, it is not surprising that this group placed more importance on ‘Getting Closer’ to cruise destinations. It also placed less importance on ‘Onboard Facilities’, ‘VFM’, onboard ambiance (‘Casual Atmosphere’) and the initial ticket price. In other words, river cruisers were much more interested in their experiences and engagement with cruise ports and destinations and being able to easily access these through authentic engagements with people, culture, food and the environment. In general, the overall cost of the experience, both in terms of initial ticket price and value for money, was less important.

While recognising that river cruisers were more similar to the Experience Hunters in some ways, as can be seen in Figure 8.3, the group’s free text responses were
substantially stronger than the Experience Hunters with regard to ‘Itinerary’, ‘Getting Closer’ and ‘Authentic Experience’ (e.g. “This is where cruise planning actually starts. If I don’t want to visit the destinations, the rest doesn’t matter” and “We closely studied the itinerary and destinations before deciding to book the River cruises”). More of this group’s comments related to links between cruising itineraries and the people, place, history and culture of the intended destinations (e.g. “We love the history you get travelling along the rivers”, “important to broaden knowledge and understanding of other cultures, etc.” and “To see a variety of culture and wonderful architecture”).

Many of these respondents highlighted the benefits of river rather than ocean cruises (e.g. “River cruising avoids sea sickness and still allows a visit to port destinations. Itineraries are so varied, you can do lots of cruising without going to repeat destinations”, and “River cruises provide a greater number of destinations and opportunities to explore”). Despite being strong proponents of river cruising, these respondents were aware of the transient and limited nature of this form of travel in terms of authenticity and genuine experiences with different people, places and cultures (e.g. “River cruises provide a brief introduction [which] whet the appetite. There is much more to the towns and countries we visited than could possibly be covered during a brief river cruise stopover” and “it is often difficult to work out if what you are being shown is authentic or a Disneyised presentation for tourists”). These group differences are summarised in Table 8.4.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Cluster 1</th>
<th>Cluster 2</th>
<th>Cluster 3</th>
<th>Cluster 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Group Label</strong></td>
<td>Deal-seekers</td>
<td>Brand-Followers</td>
<td>Experience-hunters</td>
<td>River cruisers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>n</strong></td>
<td>124</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Most valued</strong></td>
<td>VFM, Itinerary, Onboard Facilities, Ticket Price</td>
<td>VFM, Itinerary, Ship Brand, Onboard Facilities</td>
<td>Itinerary, VFM, Authentic Experience, Getting Closer</td>
<td>Itinerary, Getting Closer, Authentic Experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ranked higher than other three clusters</strong></td>
<td>Ticket Price, Unpack Once, VFM (equal), Staff &amp; Service</td>
<td>Ship Brand, Onboard Facilities, VFM (equal)</td>
<td>Itinerary, Authentic Experience, VFM (equal), Casual Atmosphere</td>
<td>Getting Closer, Smaller Ship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Least valued</strong></td>
<td>Ship Brand, Smaller Ship, Authentic Experience</td>
<td>Smaller Ship, Getting Closer, Authentic Experience</td>
<td>Unpack Once, Smaller Ship, Ticket Price</td>
<td>Ship Brand, Ticket Price, Unpack Once</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ranked lower than other three clusters</strong></td>
<td>Ship Brand, Itinerary, Authentic Experience</td>
<td>Smaller Ship, Getting Closer</td>
<td>Unpack Once, Ticket Price</td>
<td>Onboard Facilities, VFM, Staff &amp; Service, Casual Atmosphere</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Having examined how the four clusters differed in the importance they attached to the various aspects examined in this study, the data were further analysed to better understand the groups’ backgrounds and cruising histories.

**Ocean Group 1 (Deal Seekers): Backgrounds**

As can be seen in Table 8.5 and Table 8.6, this group included more females (56%) than males and members had completed between two (38%) and 40 ocean cruises. About a third of the group had completed three or four ocean cruises (16% in each category). Another 20% had completed between five and eight ocean cruises. The remaining 10% were widely distributed between nine and 40, with most taking 20 or less. More than two-thirds of this group took their last cruise in the 12 months prior to answering the survey (2017-2018), with a further 12% sailing in 2016. About one quarter of these people had at least one future cruise booked (26%). More than six in 10 of these respondents had cruised Australia and the South Pacific, with the next most travelled destinations being New Zealand (35%) and Asia (29%). The most cruised brand was P&O (64%), followed by Princess (36%), Carnival (29%) and Royal Caribbean (27%).

Almost 90% of the group was generally satisfied with ocean cruising, with almost half of these extremely satisfied and 38% moderately satisfied. Just over one-third of this group had also river cruised, with two-thirds of these taking only one river cruise. Most of the remaining respondents had river cruised two or three times, with the highest number of river cruises taken being 10. Two-thirds of the sample were extremely or moderately satisfied with their river cruising experiences. This group averaged 52 years old (the oldest in the ocean sample, although considerably
younger than the river cruisers). That said, the ages of these respondents varied greatly, with the oldest born in 1933 and 20% being born in 1949 or earlier. A further 20% were born in the 1950s, 20% in the 1960s, 12%, 13% and 14% respectively in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s.

Almost six out of 10 Deal Seekers did not hold a University qualification, although one-quarter had a graduate or postgraduate degree. Respondents worked in a diverse range of industries, with the largest groupings being in administration and support services (13%), healthcare (10%), education and training (9%), retail trade (8%) and professional, scientific and technical (7%). Four-fifths of this group reported an annual household income of $156,000 or less ($91,000-155,999, 30%; less than $51,999, 28%, 52,000-90,999, 23%). Just over one-third of the group was retired, although Deal Seekers were more likely to be employed, with over half in some form of employment (full-time, 30%; part-time, 15% and self-employed 10%).

Almost 84% of the Deal Seekers were in a relationship (66% married) and 15% were single, widowed or divorced. Two-thirds did not have children at home (empty-nesters 40%, childless 27%), with 21% still having pre-adult children and a further 12% having adult children and/or grandchildren in the house. Deal Seekers most often travelled with their spouse (72%), followed by family (48%) and friends (36%).

Ocean Group 2 (Brand Followers): Backgrounds

This was the smallest cluster (49 respondents), of whom almost two-thirds were female (63%) with an average of 50 years. More than half were born after 1962, with 30% born in the 1950s, and 8% born in the 1940s. Less than one-third of the Brand
Followers had taken a river cruise (of those who had, half had taken only one river cruise). Brand Followers were active and recent cruisers, with more than two-thirds completing three or more ocean cruises, and one-fifth taking seven or more cruises, up to 33 maximum. Almost all (96%) had cruised recently and just over one-third had booked future cruises. Like the Deal Seekers, this group had most travelled Australia and the South Pacific (65% of respondents to each), followed by NZ (35%) and Asia (33%). Also like the other ocean clusters, P&O (63%) and Princess (37%) were the most travelled brands, with Royal Caribbean (35%) and Carnival (33%) the next most travelled lines.

Most of these respondents were generally satisfied with their ocean cruise experiences, with more than two-thirds extremely satisfied (71%) and most of the remainder being moderately satisfied (20%). Almost half those who had river cruised were moderately satisfied with this experience, with all but two of the rest being extremely satisfied with river cruising in general.

Almost half reported their highest educational level as vocational, although close to one-third had postgraduate University qualifications. Industry backgrounds were diverse, with three main ones being retail trade (18%), administration and support services (12%) and education and training (10%). More than one-third (34%) reported a household income of $91,000-$155,999, with 22% reporting an annual income of less than $51,999 and 20% being in the $52K-$90,999 bracket. One in 10 Brand Followers earned $156,000 or more.

Just under one-fifth of the Brand Followers were single, divorced or widowed, with the remainder in a relationship (three-quarters of whom were married). Most did
not have children at home (with equal proportions of empty nesters and childless respondents). Similar numbers of respondents had pre-adult children in the house (20%) or adult children and/or grandchildren living with them (20%). Three-quarters of the group had travelled with their spouses and almost half with family (47%) and friends (37%). Almost one-third of Brand Followers were employed full-time, with a further 20% working part-time and 8% being self-employed. Just under a third were retired.

**Ocean Group 3 (Experience Hunters): Backgrounds**

This group had the youngest mean age (46 years) and close to two thirds were female (63%). Almost half were younger than 40 (44% born since 1980), with 12% to 17% born in each of the preceding decades. Not surprisingly given their age, nearly eight out of 10 Experience Hunters were employed, with half still in full-time work. Accordingly, Experience Hunters were least likely to be retirees (just 17%) This group also contained the largest number of childless respondents (58%) and, of those who had children, a higher proportion still had pre-adult children at home.

Almost 92% of the Experience Hunters had taken two to five ocean cruises, with half taking two ocean cruises, (three cruises, 23% four, 10% and five, 9%). Most had completed 10 cruises or less, with one person cruising 15 times, making this the lowest number of maximum cruises across the groups). The timing of their most recent cruises was more spread out than in some of the other clusters, with 23% last cruising in 2018; 37% in 2017; 13% in 2016 and 12% in 2015. More than 15% had not cruised since 2014 or earlier. This group had the smallest percentage of people who had booked a future cruise (15%). While the South Pacific and Australia was still the
most travelled destination, proportionately fewer travelled locally (South Pacific, 54%; Australia, 51%). The next two most travelled destinations were NZ (35%) and the Caribbean (24%). Like the other ocean clusters, the most travelled brands were P&O (64%), Princess (36%), Carnival (29%) and Royal Caribbean (24%).

Half of these respondents were extremely satisfied with ocean cruising in general, with a further 35% being moderately satisfied and 11% satisfied. Six out of 10 of the Experience Hunters had not river cruised. Of those who had, more than half had only cruised once on a river and no one had river cruised more than four times. Most of the river-cruising Experience Hunters were moderately satisfied (46%) or extremely satisfied (36%) with the experience.

The Experience Hunters were more likely to have a Bachelor’s degree (33%) and a further 15% had some kind of postgraduate qualification. One-fifth of the group had Secondary School as their highest level of education and the remainder had Vocational training. The two largest industry groupings most represented in their diverse work histories were education and training (12%) and healthcare and social assistance (11%). One-third reported a household income of $91,000-$155,999, with 23% reporting an annual income of less than $51,999 and 26% an income of $52,000-$90,999. About one in 10 (12%) had an annual household income of more than $156,000. Single, divorced or widowed Experience Hunters made up 28% of the segment, with 72% in a relationship, half being married. Like the other ocean clusters, this group most often cruised with their spouse (although at a proportionately lower rate (65%)), followed by family (45%) and friends (30%).
Table 8.4: Group Differences (personal backgrounds)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Segment Name</th>
<th>Ocean Group 1</th>
<th>Ocean Group 2</th>
<th>Ocean Group 3</th>
<th>Group 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ocean Group 1</td>
<td>Ocean Group 2</td>
<td>Ocean Group 3</td>
<td>Group 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Segment Name</td>
<td>Deal Seekers</td>
<td>Brand Followers</td>
<td>Experience Hunters</td>
<td>River Cruisers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n=124</td>
<td>n=49</td>
<td>n=86</td>
<td>n=61</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender Majority/%</td>
<td>Female (55.6%)</td>
<td>Female (63.6%)</td>
<td>Female (62.8%)</td>
<td>Male (52.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age: Average (Median)</td>
<td>52 years (54)</td>
<td>50 years (55)</td>
<td>46 years (42)</td>
<td>64 years (68)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual Household income</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%&lt; $156000 (%&lt; $52000)</td>
<td>81% (28%)</td>
<td>77% (22%)</td>
<td>83% (23%)</td>
<td>66% (13%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%&gt;$200999)</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work status:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Employed Full-time</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Self- Employed or Part-time Employed</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Retired</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship &amp; Family status:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% with partner (% married)</td>
<td>84% (66%)</td>
<td>82% (61%)</td>
<td>72% (50%)</td>
<td>90% (85%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Segment Name</td>
<td>Ocean Group 1</td>
<td>Ocean Group 2</td>
<td>Ocean Group 3</td>
<td>Group 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Deal Seekers</td>
<td>Brand Followers</td>
<td>Experience Hunters</td>
<td>River Cruisers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n=124</td>
<td>n=49</td>
<td>n=86</td>
<td>n=61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% no children in house (% childless)</td>
<td>67% (27%)</td>
<td>61% (31%)</td>
<td>58% (36%)</td>
<td>80% (12%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% adult child/grandchildren in house</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Highest Education level</strong></td>
<td>Vocational(^7) (34%), Secondary School (23%)</td>
<td>Vocational (49%), Secondary School (25%)</td>
<td>Vocational (33%), Bachelor’s degree (33%),</td>
<td>Postgraduate (39%), Vocational (28%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% with University qualification</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^5\) 69% of segment are empty nesters  
\(^6\) NB 30% of segment have pre-adult children at home  
\(^7\) Vocation includes highest educational level of Certificate, Diploma and Advanced Diploma
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Segment Name</th>
<th>Group 1</th>
<th>Group 2</th>
<th>Group 3</th>
<th>Group 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Deal Seekers</td>
<td>n=124</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>n=86</td>
<td>n=61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand Followers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience Hunters</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>River Cruisers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%age ocean cruised/ %River cruised</td>
<td>100%OC/33%RC</td>
<td>100%OC/29%RC</td>
<td>100%OC/39%RC</td>
<td>77%OC/100%RC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#OC per person Min-Max</td>
<td>2-40</td>
<td>2-33</td>
<td>2-15</td>
<td>1-23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#RC per person (Min-Max)</td>
<td>1-10</td>
<td>1-8</td>
<td>1-4</td>
<td>1-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% last cruised 2017:2018 (%2016)</td>
<td>71% (12%)</td>
<td>73% (16%)</td>
<td>61% (13%)</td>
<td>67% (13%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Future Cruise booked?</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>34.7%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ocean cruise satisfaction: % extremely satisfied (total % satisfied)</td>
<td>48% (89%)</td>
<td>71% (94%)</td>
<td>50% (93%)</td>
<td>38% (70%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>River cruise satisfaction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% extremely satisfied (total % satisfied)</td>
<td>47% (89%)</td>
<td>40% (93%)</td>
<td>36% (97%)</td>
<td>84% (98%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Of those who Ocean cruised, proportion who cruised</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2- 4 times (%)</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5+ (%)</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Of those who River cruised, number who cruised</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Segment Name</td>
<td>Group 1</td>
<td>Group 2</td>
<td>Group 3</td>
<td>Group 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Deal Seekers</strong></td>
<td>n=124</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>n=86</td>
<td>n=61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2- 4 times (%)</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5+ (%)</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Number cruises (river plus ocean)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2- 4 (%)</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5+ (%)</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Regions most cruised (% of respondents who have travelled there)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia (64%), South Pacific (61%), NZ (35%), Asia (29%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Australia and South Pacific (65% each), NZ (35%), Asia (33%)</td>
<td>South Pacific (54%), Australia (51%), NZ (35%), Caribbean (24%)</td>
<td>Europe (75%), Mediterranean, Alaska (39% each), Asia (38%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Brands most cruised (% of respondents who have cruised with that brand)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P&amp;O (64%), Princess (36%), Carnival (29%), RCCL (27%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>P&amp;O (63%), Princess (37%), RCCL (35%), Carnival (33%)</td>
<td>P&amp;O (61%), Princess (31%), RCCL (34%), Carnival (22%)</td>
<td>Viking River (90%), Princess (38%), Celebrity, HAL and RCCL (28% each)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social grouping most cruised with (% of respondents who have cruised in that grouping)</strong></td>
<td>Spouse (72%), family (48%), friends (36%)</td>
<td>Spouse (76%), family (47%), friends (37%)</td>
<td>Spouse (65%), family (45%), friends (30%)</td>
<td>Spouse (82%), friends (39%), family (34%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
River Cruisers: Backgrounds

Some of the characteristics of this group were discussed in Chapter Seven when comparing the RIVER and OCEAN samples, but additional detail is provided here. This was the only group that had more male than female respondents (53%). At 64 years, their average age was clearly much older than the other groups. Almost half were born before 1950 (49%), with a further 31% born in the 1950s. Respondents were well-educated (62% with a degree, almost two-thirds of which were postgraduate). As eight out of 10 respondents were 60 or older, it was not surprising that more than half were retired (57%) with the remainder still in some form of work (one-quarter working full-time, 12% working part-time and 7% self-employed). More than half reported household incomes of between $52,000 and $155,999 (26% for the $52,000-$90,999 and $91,000-$155,999 categories). Only 13% reported income of less than $51,999 per annum and almost 15% reported an income above $156,000. Almost one-fifth preferred not to give their annual income.

As previously indicated, River Cruisers were more likely to be married than members of other groups and much more likely to be empty nesters. One in 10 still had adult children and/or grandchildren in the house, with a similar percentage having pre-adult children at home. The industry background of river cruisers was not as diverse as the other groups, with two sectors accounting for almost 40% of respondents (education and training (21%) and information technology, media and telecommunications (18%)).

These respondents were much more likely to have future cruises booked and more than two-thirds had cruised in the two years prior to completing the questionnaire.
Almost 99% of these respondents were satisfied with their general river cruising experience, with the overwhelming majority being extremely satisfied (84%) and a further 12% being moderately satisfied. Eight in 10 of the river cruisers had also ocean cruised, with half taking between two and 23 ocean cruises, while 39% had ocean cruised only once. About 10% reported some level of dissatisfaction with their general ocean cruising experience and almost 70% some degree of satisfaction, including extremely satisfied (38%) and moderately satisfied (31%).

Conclusions

The initial analysis of aspect importance, which was discussed in Chapter Seven, suggested there was heterogeneity in these results. The subsequent cluster analysis undertaken to examine this issue found three groups in the OCEAN data, while the RIVER sample was included as a fourth segment, as the sample size was too small to be used in a cluster analysis in its own right.

The discriminant analysis, which was used to examine group differences in a multivariate way, found the four-group model correctly predicted 71% of cases, as well as confirming some key areas of disagreement between the groups. The results suggested the four groups could be named as:
• Deal Seekers (OCEAN).

• Brand Followers (OCEAN).

• Experience Hunters (OCEAN).

• River Cruisers.

Despite being the most alike in terms of attribute importance, the River Cruisers and Experience Hunters were not similar in backgrounds or in many aspects of cruising history. River Cruisers were likely to be a decade or more older than cruisers in the other groups and almost 20 years older than the average Experience Hunter. Most River Cruisers had cruised five times or more (river and ocean combined), compared to all other groups, in which the majority had cruised only two to four times (with Experience Hunters the least likely to have cruised five or more times, at half the proportion of the river respondents). River Cruisers were also far more likely to have a future cruise booked, with Experience Hunters being the least likely. These results might be a product of age and family life cycle, as these two groups were also at opposite ends of the employment and relationship spectrums (eight out of 10 Experience Hunters were still working in some capacity (half the group in full-time employment) while six out of 10 River Cruisers were retired) and a much higher proportion of the River Cruisers were married. A higher proportion of Deal Seekers was retired than either of the other two OCEAN groups and this group was also the oldest in the OCEAN sample.

Brand Followers were more likely to be female and most likely of the OCEAN sample to have sailed five or more times and to have booked a future cruise, and least likely
of all groups to hold University qualifications. Brand Followers were most likely to be extremely satisfied with their ocean cruising experiences and least likely to have river cruised. Of all the OCEAN respondents, Experience Hunters were most likely to have river cruised, but tended not to have cruised as often – or as recently – as people in the other groups. Again, as Experience Hunters were most likely to be working and to still have pre-adult children at home, this is not surprising.

The next chapter concludes the thesis by discussing the managerial implications of the study’s findings, as well as identifying some opportunities for future research and outlining some study limitations.
Chapter Nine

Discussion and Conclusion

Introduction

This research was undertaken to increase our understanding of those aspects of cruising that most influenced repeat cruisers’ subsequent decisions. More specifically, the research was intended to provide a greater understanding of river cruising and river cruising passengers as well as ocean cruisers. The eventual gathering of two datasets (one of repeat river cruisers and the other of repeat ocean cruisers) enabled the differences and similarities between these two market segments to be examined. The use of a BWS approach allowed the development of a ranked list of attributes, providing for the first time information about the relative importances of the various attributes for these respondents. In so doing, the research suggested that, for these respondents, river cruising was not the same as general ocean cruising, with clearly distinguishable and differently valued characteristics. It also confirmed the presence of distinct ocean cruising segments.

While there had not been any prior studies that specifically sought to produce a ranked list of influencing factors for repeaters’ subsequent purchases, the literature did suggest some motivating aspects. Those most frequently included value or price, destination or itineraries, cruise brand reputation, onboard facilities and experiences (including food and drink, staff and service, cabin quality and amenities) and the cruising community.
This Chapter reviews the findings presented in the prior two Chapters, discussing their implications for industry and government. It also identifies some limitations and opportunities for future research.

**Major Findings**

The findings from this research provide important new information about the cruising sector and about cruising passengers. The most significant of these are summarised below.

- **There continues to be noticeable divisions among general ocean cruisers about the importance of onboard and onshore experiences;** evidenced by the existence of subgroups of repeat ocean cruisers for whom the ship was the destination (i.e. preferring sea days and onboard facilities and activities), and others who were more focussed on ports and shore visits.

- **For repeat river cruisers, destination is king.** There is no more important consideration for these people than the cruise ship’s itinerary and destinations.

- **Repeat river cruisers appear to be more global travellers than the ocean respondents in this study.** Two of the top four most visited destinations by river repeaters were also ocean cruising destinations.

- **Value for money is much more important than initial ticket price.** The standardised BWS scores demonstrated the importance repeaters placed on value for money and the relative unimportance of initial ticket price.
‘Unpack once’ was not rated highly by these repeaters. Despite the qualitative phase suggesting this was an important influencing factor, respondents to the BWS questionnaire rated this as the fourth least important influencing aspect.

Ocean Cruisers: Journey or Destination?

The research showed disagreement among these OCEAN respondents about the importance of their on-board experiences (‘the journey’) compared to their destination (itineraries and ports). This accords with some prior research that argued the cruise trip itself was the destination, with many general ocean voyages being ‘cruises to nowhere’, starting and finishing in the same port (e.g. Jones, 2011; Vogel and Oschmann, 2013; Whyte et al. 2018). Unlike much of the earlier research, the current study did not engage with, or speculate about, the reasons for this divide in cruisers’ preferences, instead providing further evidence that the divide exists and should be understood by cruisers themselves and the cruise industry. Like the Whyte, Packer and Ballantyne (2018) study, the current research found clear evidence of cruisers for whom the onboard experience was paramount (i.e. the Brand Followers and, to a lesser extent, the Deal Seekers), and others whose subsequent ocean cruise purchase decisions were influenced most by the ships’ itineraries and destinations (the Experience Hunters). The Deal Seekers also epitomised another characteristic of the debate, placing importance on both onboard facilities and itinerary, but with both less important than value for money.
River cruisers: all about destinations and itineraries

The findings indicate there is no debate for repeat river cruisers, as the journey is all and only about itineraries and ports of call, both what they are and getting close to onshore destinations. In retrospect, this should be self-evident, as river cruisers generally spend more time on shore than on the ship, which, as noted in Chapter Two, is much smaller and with significantly fewer onboard amenities and facilities. For river repeaters, itinerary was overwhelmingly more important than any other aspect of cruising, with the next closest attributes (getting closer and authentic experience) also being directly related to the itinerary. All three onshore aspects were rated of more importance than were any of the other characteristics. These findings suggest that, for the right itinerary, these river repeaters would be willing to pay more (although they want to see value for money), brand hop and make do with whatever onboard amenities, ships and staff and service came with the itinerary. It should be noted, however, that less important in this case does not mean unimportant. River cruisers expect a certain level of quality with their onboard experiences, are very cognisant of brands and have a critical awareness of the quality and reliability of both their onboard and onshore experiences.

Value for money is more important than the initial ticket price

As was noted in Chapter Seven and Chapter Eight, value for money (VFM) was the most important influence on subsequent cruising decisions for OCEAN respondents, while the initial ticket price was only about one-third as important. For river repeaters, VFM was the most important non-destination or non-itinerary related attribute (fourth) but it was only 40% as important as Itinerary; while the initial ticket
price was the second last of the 13 included attributes. VFM was of equal importance (with the same BW score) to all three ocean subgroups, but was secondary to itinerary for Experience Hunters. That said, the initial ticket price was more important to Deal Seekers than to any other subgroup, and in terms of ocean respondents, of least importance to Experience Hunters. These results suggest these respondents’ connotation of ‘value’ is likely to be framed differently (e.g. the initial ticket price is likely to be more significant to Deal Seekers, the cruise line to be more prominent for Brand Followers and the type of experience and itinerary to be more important to Experience Hunters). While the prominence of P&O as the most travelled brand by these respondents can be explained by its presence in the Australasian region (from which the sample was obtained), the importance of the initial ticket price to value might also go some way to explaining the inclusion of Carnival and the absence of Celebrity and Holland America from the top four most travelled cruise brands for these ocean respondents; both generally have higher ticket costs than Carnival or P&O. Carnival and P&O are also more likely to appeal to a younger cruising demographic than Celebrity or Holland America.

River repeaters: more likely to ocean cruise internationally

As was previously noted in Chapter Two, Australian river cruisers need to travel internationally, as there is very little river cruising in Australia. River cruising is extremely strong in Europe, with active segments on rivers in other regions including Africa, the USA and Asia (i.e. Vietnam, Myanmar and, to a lesser extent, China). Thus, the finding that these river respondents were more likely to have cruised outside Australia than around the region, like the majority of Australian ocean cruisers, might
not seem surprising. In this regard, the fact that three-quarters of the river respondents had cruised Europe and 40% had cruised Northern Europe might have been anticipated. What was not expected was that the next two most frequented regions were ocean cruising locations (Alaska and the Mediterranean). Only two in 10 ocean repeaters had cruised the Mediterranean and one in 10 Alaska, compared to four out of 10 river repeaters. A higher proportion of river repeaters had cruised a larger number of destinations; with 12 of the 21 destinations visited by more than 20% of river repeaters, compared to only five destinations having been cruised by more than two out of 10 ocean respondents.

‘Unpack once’ not rated highly by repeaters

A surprising outcome of the quantitative phase was the relatively low ranking of the ‘Unpack Once’ attribute, as this had emerged as a strong influencer for the qualitative phase interviewees. Both the ocean and river respondents rated this as the fourth least important attribute; receiving more than twice as many ‘Least Important’ scores as ‘Most Important’ from ocean respondents. As noted elsewhere, less importance does not mean of no importance, but the results suggest that, for both respondent groups, nine other attributes were more important to their subsequent cruising purchases.

One reason for this result and the difference between the two phases may be that, of all 13 BW attributes, ‘unpack once’ is the only constant factor. In other words, all other attributes are variable and experiences of and with them can change from ship to ship or cruise to cruise. Unpacking once is the same regardless of where cruisers are travelling or what types of cruises are being undertaken. It may have served as a
hygiene factor for these respondents. For this reason, it might be most appropriate to explore this aspect when investigating preferences of potential new cruises or when comparing cruising to other forms of travel (e.g. bus tours or road trips).

Implications for the Industry

The findings have some important implications for cruise companies and for the cruise industry.

**Cruise companies should reconsider their traditional research and information collecting methods. They should encourage online panel providers to set up independent panels of repeat passengers for future research.** The heavy reliance on passenger questionnaires and dependency on understanding purchasing behaviour from within their cruise line data sets is problematic as such an approach is likely to be inadequate and misleading. Three out of the four subgroups identified in this research placed less value on brand than on other cruising aspects. Deal Seekers, river cruisers and Experience Hunters demonstrated a strong willingness to brand shop and hop for various reasons (Deal Seekers searched for the best deal or value, and the other two groups searched to ensure they had new experiences). While cruise companies rightly see their databases as commercially valuable and unique, they need to access data from and about cruise passengers more generally. Currently there is no mechanism to do this. While CLIA is a major source of market information, these data are also generally sourced from cruise companies and travel agents. CLIA provides access to historical information and fails to account for independent travellers. The voice of the passenger is typically not present in these data.
Cruise companies collect massive quantities of data in end-of-cruise surveys that are completed by many passengers. However, these data are also suspect. Passengers are lobbied by cruise crews from the Captain down to provide high ratings for ship staff, services and amenities, with, for example, explicit discussion that anything less than a nine out of 10 is deemed as a failure for the ship and its crew. This results in a very narrow band of positive feedback, which is of little use in determining relative importance or the value of the different aspects surveyed and results may be influenced more by passengers’ consideration of those who have served them than by their appreciation for particular amenities or service.

To maintain market share and future growth, cruise companies need to know whether they are in the business of providing ocean-going ‘floating resorts’, destination experiences, or a mix of both, and develop appropriate business and marketing strategies to suit target cruisers. If these results hold true more broadly, river cruising companies have no choice. They must realise they are in the destination business. In terms of general ocean cruising, companies need to decide which market segments they want to be active in and, if they want to appeal to the broadest possible market, they will need a portfolio of appropriate products (and ships). Mega ocean cruise ships are likely to be immensely popular with those for whom the cruise ship itself is the destination. However, there is a significant market segment for whom destination and itinerary are more important than ship size or onboard facilities and amenities. The emphasis on mega-ships might need to be considered from the perspective of future cruisers (i.e. those who have not cruised previously), who comprise more than 95% of the potential market, given the
acknowledgement in prior research that some of these do not cruise for fear of being ‘trapped’ onboard with large numbers of other passengers and no freedom to do what they want (Cooper et al. 2019; Hung & Petrick 2010, 2012a; Park & Petrick 2009).

Cruise companies will need to consider the ships and ship classes in their portfolios and decide how to leverage these and their cruise itinerary products to get the best results from their market strategies. Viking River Cruises recognised the potential growth of small-ship ocean cruising segments with the 2015 introduction of its Viking Ocean Cruise journeys and ships. These provide a cruising experience much more akin to Viking’s successful river cruising products (e.g. all-inclusive fare, much smaller ships (less than 1000 passengers) than the current trend and destination-laden itineraries). It is the “thinking person’s cruise as an alternative to mainstream cruises. Ships are small to get guests closer to their destination, with more time in port and more overnights” (Viking Cruises 2019). While clearly defined and appropriate market strategies are core business for cruising companies, such strategies are even more important given the segmented market identified in this research. This view is supported by a recent report based on a survey of 2,500 Australians aged over-50 that found 94% “dislike the way brands, organisations and marketers communicate with them” (WPP AUNZ 2019, p. 12).

In considering their competition for the travel and tourism dollar, destination-focussed cruise lines (in the first instance river cruise companies) need to ensure their competitor landscape includes land-based tourism and travel operators (such as bus
tours, train journeys and self-drive trips), to best attract those cruisers most concerned about the physical land-based locations they visit.

The industry also needs to **further define and understand the value equation** for repeaters and the relative size of the market segments that value different aspects (e.g. whether the initial ticket price is critical or merely the ‘hook’, as suggested by some respondents to get the repeaters’ attention or much less relevant in people’s overall give versus get value calculations) (Zeithaml, 1988). Three of the four subgroups identified in this research (the Deal Seekers, the Experience Hunters and the river cruisers) all demonstrated a willingness to brand shop and hop, depending on the extent to which the cruise on offer appeared to meet their expectations. For the Deal Seekers, VFM was most important, while itinerary and destinations were critical considerations for the Experience Hunters and the river cruisers. This research suggests that both the latter subgroups were prepared to pay more to get the experiences they desired.

It would be prudent for cruise companies to pay **more attention to Australian river cruisers**. There is no publicly available current information on the backgrounds or socio-demographics of Australian river cruisers, or even statistics on their numbers, but more than 100,000 Australians and New Zealanders river cruised in Europe alone in each of the past two years (CCNR 2019). While this is likely to be the largest river cruising destination for Australian river cruisers, other popular destinations include the Nile and African, Asian and American rivers. This research suggests these river repeaters were more mobile globally and more inclined to book future cruises. These river respondents had ocean cruised internationally to destinations including Alaska,
the Mediterranean, the Caribbean and the Greek Isles; while also cruising at a proportionately higher rate to destinations that are home to both ocean and river cruising, including the USA, Russia, China and Asia. This cruising history might be a factor of age (on average, the river respondents were more than a decade older than the ocean repeaters), life stage and work status (river cruisers were twice as likely to be retired), but these are suppositions and more investigation is needed to better understand this market segment and its importance to the cruising, travel and tourism sectors.

For the repeat cruisers most influenced by destination and itineraries, **cruise companies also need to ensure the perceived authenticity of experiences and these cruisers’ engagement with local cultures, people and places**, while protecting their licence to operate and ability to access sites of significance. This means having a good understanding of how these cruisers constitute notions of authenticity.

**Implications for governments**

In as much as this research engaged with repeat cruisers and sought to understand those aspects of cruising that most influenced their subsequent cruising purchases, there was no direct engagement in this study with any of the negative aspects of cruising that were reported in Chapter Two and Chapter Three (e.g. environmental concerns, passenger health and safety and impact on ports (Chua 2019; Cruise Junkie 2018; Klein 2012; Vivancos et al. 2010)). However, some implications for governments can be inferred from the BWS outcomes, namely:
• For Experience Hunters and river cruisers, itinerary is most important. This suggests destinations and ports, and the availability of infrastructure and support services at these destinations, is also critically important.

• For river cruisers in particular, authentic experience and getting closer to sites of interest are also important. This implies governments and local communities need to work together to ensure quality and authentic experiences with people, places and cultures, in order to maximise the engagement with this segment.

• As most Australian passengers cruise in Australasia, the South Pacific and the near region of Australia (CLIA Australasia 2018a, 2018b), investment and growth in the cruising sector should continue to add value to the region’s economy. Conversely, any drop in activity by Australian cruisers or cruise ship visits is likely to adversely affect the economy. Clearly governments need to have strategies in place to ensure cruise lines continue to use ports.

Limitations

This research makes important contributions to the study of river and ocean cruising, but some limitations must be recognised. This was an exploratory study and the sample was made up almost entirely of Australian citizens or residents (99%), with a qualitative sample of 20 and a quantitative sample of 320 respondents. Consequently, the results may not be generalisable. Due to the recruitment process (invitations were sent out by Viking River Cruises), Phase 1 participants may have been alike in their attitudes and experiences. However, data saturation was reached.
and clear and consistent themes emerged, some of which were not anticipated by the researcher. While triangulation did occur through discussions with industry representatives, these were also from the Viking Company. This limitation was further reflected in the quantitative phase with a substantial portion of the river cruising respondents being Viking River Cruise passengers, although some had also cruised with other lines.

Because the respondents were Australian or situated in Australia, there was a clear skew in the ocean cruise respondent group’s cruising experiences, as most cruised on the lines that are most dominant in this region (e.g. P&O, Princess and, to a lesser extent, Celebrity). This aligns with evidence that the overwhelming majority of Australians cruise in and around the local region.

The major challenges and limitations of cruising research identified in Chapter Two and Chapter Three also held for this study, including the difficulty in accessing respondents due to the controlled space of cruise ship travel and as a result of the transient or mobile nature of the cruising community. Despite the support of the Viking River Cruise company, it was not possible to get enough respondents to complete the research focusing only on river cruisers. Other cruising companies, the cruising industry association and cruising websites would not participate and did not allow the use of their sites or networks for distribution of the invitations to take part. While general calls through social media and personal networks provided some additional participants, these were not sufficient to produce a substantial cohort. The large number of invalid responses from the general online panels also highlighted the
unsuitability of this source for the highly specialised content area of repeater cruising (both river and ocean).

As this research was housed in consumer behaviour (and therefore the marketing discipline) it also continued what researchers such as Gibson (2011), Papathanasssis (2012) and Papathanasssis, Matuszewski & Brejla (2012) have identified as a tendency for cruise sector research to focus on marketing topics that might garner more support from the industry.

A further limitation of the quantitative research phase, reflecting the challenges associated with garnering enough respondents, was the time taken to gather a large enough sample size (more than one year from initial piloting to the final data collection). The relative sizes for the RIVER (n=61) and OCEAN (n=259) samples was also problematic. However, given the very small number of Australians who have river cruised and the even smaller number of repeat river cruisers, this should not have been surprising. The small size of the RIVER sample also proved a limitation as it was impossible to examine heterogeneity within the repeat river cruising sample. Further research with larger samples is needed to examine this issue. This would also provide further opportunities to better understand the nuances of both the river and the ocean cruising repeater markets.

There was no attempt in this research to ensure that the sample was representative of the Australian population in general or the Australian cruising population more specifically. Again, this was because of the relative smallness of the cruising segment in Australia and the inability to appropriately identify and access that segment, as well as the paucity of current statistics identifying that market.
Implications for academia and areas for future research

The findings and limitations suggest some implications for the research community, as well as opportunities for future research. Given the strong evidence from this research that there were differences between the RIVER and OCEAN samples, all future cruising research should clearly delineate and define the extent to which research is about general ocean cruising\(^8\) or addresses and encompasses other cruising aspects and forms. Where the latter is the case, the research should specify the types of cruising examined. Similarly, references to cruise passengers should be specific as to their origin and focus. There is substantial opportunity and need for compare and contrast studies to better understand the nuances of different types of cruising, and cruise passengers.

The questionnaire used in the qualitative phase should be refined and examined further using a larger sample. Ideally this sample would be drawn from many countries and across multiple cruise lines. This would increase the generalisability of the results, while also supplying greater understanding of cultural or geographic differences (should such exist). This would also accommodate additional investigation. For example, the current questions around household income and work status could be refined to better understand which retirees are government-funded or self-funded; while residence questions could provide more information about State of residence and so on. While this study has focussed on repeat cruisers,

\(^8\) For the rest of this chapter the term ‘ocean cruising’ means general ocean cruising. There are other specialized and niche forms of cruising which also occur at sea, including for example, expedition cruises or live aboard diving cruises, but the term ocean cruising is referring to the dominant paradigm of general ocean cruising (e.g. to the Caribbean, around Alaska or through the Mediterranean).
the methodology could also be applied to non-cruisers in terms of what factors would most influence future cruise choices. Such investigations would increase our understanding of non-cruiser expectations and also highlight the extent to which their initial expectations are met.

The segments identified in this research highlight the need for a **more nuanced approach to cruising research**. Those who prefer river cruising value different aspects of the experience than do committed ocean cruisers. Even where influencing factors are similar for sub-segments (e.g. river cruisers and Experience Hunters), the socio-demographic and cruising history characteristics and cruising purchase decisions can be very different. Further, the finding that river cruising is a destination business (all about onshore experiences and itineraries) suggests an opportunity to compare demand for, and passenger experiences of, river cruising against land-based travel and tourism (e.g. bus tours, self-drive road trips, train journeys and so on). This aligns with the reported outcomes of the qualitative phase, which suggested repeat river cruisers had always been frequent travellers, many doing self-drive or bus tours, and that reasons for purchasing river cruises included that they no longer wished to drive on the ‘wrong’ side of the road, or were tired of the inconvenience of unpacking and repacking while staying in different lodgings each night.

This study also demonstrated the applicability of BWS to cruise-related research. The **BWS methodology could be used to gain additional passenger, stakeholder and industry insights** into aspects of cruising that are most or least important. Given the admittedly still small amount of cruising research, potential topics are many and varied, ranging from retail and investor preferences in terms of cruise line
environmental practices and sustainability reports to highly specific investigations of destination preferences and shipboard amenities. Beyond the application of BWS methods to further cruise-related topics and segments, the development of a ranked list of influencing factors now provides the opportunity to explore and investigate each of those factors in much greater detail.

One obvious example of this opportunity lies in the importance of authentic experience and the unreal world of cruising, as was discussed in Chapter Two. Authenticity and authentic experiences have been a long-standing subject of much debate and study in the broader field of tourism and travel research, including seminal work such as MacCannel’s (1973) ‘staged authenticity’ search and much subsequent research debating, applying and expanding this area (e.g. Cohen 1988; Cohen & Cohen 2012; MacCannell 2008, 2011; Mkono 2013; Paulauskaite et al. 2017; Theodossopoulos 2013; Yeoman, Brass & McMahon-Beattie 2006).

While authenticity is acknowledged as a concern by some cruise researchers (see for example musings on authenticity and the Caribbean cruising experience (Lester & Weeden 2004; Weeden & Lester 2006)), there is considerable opportunity to explore these notions of authenticity further, in order to better understand its importance to cruisers, what authenticity means in a cruising context and whether or not cruisers vary in their responses to authenticity in comparison to other tourists. Such further investigation is highly relevant in that, in late 2019, Royal Caribbean Cruise Lines heralded the establishment of its first private island destination in the South Pacific that will be established on Vanuatu and opened in 2022 (Leposa 2019), joining the company’s private destinations in the Bahamas and Haiti.
Other topics that are worthy of additional investigation include the personal characteristics briefly addressed in this study (involvement and personality traits). As noted in Chapter Seven, this study found a statistically significant difference in the levels of involvement of ocean and river repeaters. For ocean cruisers in particular, strong correlations were found between involvement and the total number of previous cruises, general satisfaction with ocean cruising, and whether or not they had future cruise bookings. The higher a person’s involvement, the higher were their reported satisfaction and the more likely they were to have future cruise bookings. The more a person had cruised, the higher their involvement, although the study was not structured to determine any causality between involvement levels and these variables.

In terms of personality traits, there were no substantial differences between the two samples; they were generally conscientious, agreeable, open, extroverted and not particularly neurotic. The extent to which these and other related considerations (e.g. engagement, perceived value, perceived risk and so on) might influence repeat cruisers’ choices and might vary with different marketing segments is an area for further research. While some studies have approached perceived value and perceived risk, in particular, with regards to ocean cruising in general (see, for example, Henthorne, George & Smith 2013; Petrick 2004a), there has been no such examination of river cruisers or of the segments identified in this study.

Noting the challenges of data collection from the cruising community both in this and prior research, a major positive step forward for cruising research would be the establishment of an independent specialist cruise passenger online panel, with
participants drawn from across the cruising spectrum (many nationalities and diverse cruise experience; river, ocean, expedition, luxury, budget and so on).

Some Concluding Comments

This research was significant and important, as it was the first major academic study of Australian ocean and river cruisers at a time when Australian Federal and State Governments are investing heavily in supporting the cruising industry, including major new port and infrastructure projects. Simultaneously, cruise companies are bringing more and larger ocean cruise ships to the Australian region and the Australian cruising sector continues to grow, with it having the highest market penetration worldwide and being the fifth largest source country for cruising passengers.

This was the first research that has produced a ranked list of value factors that influence repeat cruiser subsequent cruise choices. It was also the first research that specifically explored river cruising passengers, comparing and contrasting ocean and river cruisers, identifying major differences between them. Finally, it was the first study to use a BWS methodology within the cruising sector. While the results may not be generalisable, they demonstrated the need for a more nuanced understanding of cruising and cruise passengers that future researchers need to consider.
Bibliography


Baran, M 2014, 'Pacific Northwest Via Paddlewheeler. (River Cruising) (American Queen Steamboat Co.'s Relaunch of American Express)', *Travel Weekly*, vol. 73, no. 16, p. 44.


Brodarić, P, Schiozzi, D & Smojver, Ž 2017, 'Analysis of River Cruising with the Main Focus on Croatia', *Pomorski Zbornik*, vol. 53, no. 1, pp. 11-18.


Carić, H, Klobučar, G & Štambuk, A 2016, 'Ecotoxicological risk assessment of antifouling emissions in a cruise ship port', *Journal of Cleaner Production*, vol. 121, pp. 159-168.


Cattell, R 1945, 'The Principal Trait Clusters for Describing Personality', *Psychological Bulletin*, vol. 42, no. 3.


Collins, K, Onwuegbuzie, A & Sutton, I 2006, 'A Model Incorporating the Rationale and 
Purpose for Conducting Mixed-Methods Research in Special Education and beyond', 

Conlon, D, Van Dyne, L, Ng, K & Milner, M 2004, 'The Effects of Physical and Social Context 
on Evaluations of Captive, Intensive Service Relationships', *The Academy of 


Cooper, D, Holmes, K, Pforr, C & Shanka, T 2019, 'Implications of Generational Change: 
European River Cruises and the Emerging Gen X Market', *Journal of Vacation 
Marketing*, vol. 25, no. 4, pp. 418–431.

Cruise Critic Message Board Forums, Senior manager Community 2018, *Question re Posting 
River Cruise Survey Invitation to Appropriate Board*, Message to Suellen Tapsall. 23 
February 2018. Email: lauras@cruisecritic.com.


Cruise Lines International Association 2011a, 2011 CLIA Cruise Market Overview: Statistical 
Cruise Industry Data through 2010 Available from: http://www.akcruise.org/wp- 
content/uploads/2012/05/2011-CLIA-Cruise-Market-Overview.pdf [22 December 
2019]

Cruise Lines International Association 2011b, CLIA’s 2011 Cruise Market Profile Study Reports 
vacation/news/press_releases/2011/08/clia%E2%80%99s-2011-cruise-market- 
profile-study-reports-positive-consumer. [8 April 2014].

2014].

Cruise Lines International Association 2015, *2014 North American Cruise Market Profile* 
Available from: https://www.cruising.org/docs/default-source/research/ 

Cruise Lines International Association 2017a, *2018 Cruise Industry Outlook*, December 2017 
Available from: https://cruising.org/-/media/research-updates/research/ 

Cruise Lines International Association 2017b, *CLIA Cruise Industry Consumer Outlook Second 
consumer-research/september-2017-clia-cruise-industry-consumer-outlook- 
infographic.pdf [4 August 2018]

Cruise Lines International Association 2017c, *Cruise Industry: Consumer Outlook April 2017*, 
April 2017. Available from: https://www.cruising.org/docs/default- 
source/research/clia_soe_april_2017_10x22.pdf. [14 October 2018]


Diedrich, A 2010, 'Cruise Ship Tourism in Belize: The Implications of Developing Cruise Ship Tourism in an Ecotourism Destination', *Ocean & Coastal Management*, vol. 53, no. 5-6, pp. 234-244.


Fox, C & Williams, P 1977, *The Love Boat Theme*, MGM/Polydor (Released in 1979).


Goles, T & Hirschheim, R 2000, 'The paradigm is dead, the paradigm is dead...long live the paradigm: the legacy of Burrell and Morgan', *Omega*, vol. 28, no. 3, pp. 249-268.


Green, M 2012b, 'Scenic Crystalizes River Cruise Product: Even More Inclusions Slated for 2013. (River Cruising: Onboard Review) (Scenic Tours' Scenic Crystal)', *TravelAge West*, vol. 47, no. 12, p. 36.


Hyun, SS & Han, H 2015, 'Luxury cruise travelers: Other customer perceptions', *Journal of Travel Research*, vol. 54, no. 1, pp. 107-121.


Jones, P, Comfort, D & Hillier, D 2019, 'Sustainability and the world's leading ocean cruising companies', *Journal of Public Affairs*, vol. 19, no. 1, pp. e1609-n/a.


Kim, B, Kim, SS, King, B & Heo, CY 2019, 'Luxurious or Economical? An Identification of Tourists' preferred Hotel Attributes Using Best-Worst Scaling (BWS)', *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, vol. 25, no. 2, pp.162-175.


Lemmetyinen, A, Dimitrovski, D, Nieminen, L & Pohjola, T 2016, 'Cruise Destination Brand Awareness as a Moderator in Motivation-Satisfaction Relation', *Tourism Review*, vol. 71, no. 4, p. 245.


Lincoln, Y & Guba, E 1994, 'RSVP: We are pleased to accept your invitation', *Evaluation Practice*, vol. 15, no. 2, pp. 179-192.


Liu-Thompkins, Y & Tam, L 2013, 'Not all repeat customers are the same: Designing effective cross-selling promotion based on attitudinal loyalty and habit.', Journal of Marketing Research, vol. 77, no. 5, pp. 21-36.


Mahadevan, R 2016, 'Examining the Intention to Cruise Again Sooner Rather Than Later', *Tourism Economics*, vol. 22, no. 6, pp. 1423-1430.


Mayer, I 2015, 'Qualitative research with a focus on qualitative data analysis', *International Journal of Sales, Retailing and Marketing*, vol. 4, no. 9, pp. 53-67.


Mittal, B 1989, 'Measuring Purchase-Decision Involvement', *Psychology and Marketing*, vol. 6, no. 2, p. 147.


Paris, C & Teye, V 2011, 'Segmenting the Cruise Market: An Application of Multiple Correspondence Analysis', *Tourism Analysis*, vol. 16, no. 5, pp. 617-621.


Perić, T, Komadina, P & Račić, N 2016, 'Wastewater Pollution from Cruise Ships in the Adriatic Sea', *PROMET - Traffic&Transportation*, vol. 28, no. 4, pp. 425-433.


Petrick, J & Durko, A 2015, 'Segmenting luxury cruise tourists based on their motivations', *Tourism in marine environments*, vol. 10, no. 3-4, pp. 149-157.


Pierce, J 2018, 'Tourism Industry's Cruising: Liner's Boost State by $1.1b as Ship Numbers Soar', *The Courier Mail*. 31 July 2018


Serrano, S, Calderon, C, Cid, N, de Castro, E, Higuera, O, Arrojo, S, Vicente, M, Capote, A, de La Maza, M & Carmona, A 2016, 'Liverpool Stoicism Scale (LSS) and Big Five Inventory (BFI-10) in a Sample of Patients with a Resected Non-Metastatic Cancer', *Psycho-Oncology*, vol. 25, no. S3, p. 86.


Stieghorst, T 2013, 'All Brands on Deck! For Cruise Lines, Affiliations with Celebrity Chefs, Kids’ Entertainment and Other Household Names Offer Mutual Marketing Opportunities and Familiarity for First-Time Passengers. (Cover Story)’, *Travel Weekly*, vol. 72, no. 16, p. 14.

Choice-Based Conjoint Analyses', *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, vol. 43, pp. 188-199.


Theodossopoulos, D 2013, 'Embera Indigenous Tourism and the Trap of Authenticity: Beyond Inauthenticity and Invention. (Special Collection: Laying Claim to Authenticity:

TNS 2008, *Cruise Lines International Association 2008 Cruise Market Profile Study* CLIA

TNS 2011, *Cruise Lines International Association 2011 Cruise Market Profile Study* CLIA.


Vianelli, D & Valta, M 2019, 'Is the tourism destination a core attribute in the choice of cruise consumers?', in MA Camilleri, (ed) *Strategic perspectives in destination marketing*, pp. 58-80. IGI Global, USA.


Appendix One

Focus Group Protocol

Focus Group dates: 2016

Topic: Most valued aspects of the river cruise experience

Participants: Australian repeat river cruisers, who have completed at least two prior river cruises

Facilitator: Suellen Tapsall

Total FG time required: 2 hours per focus group

Participant involvement: 1 focus group + choosing and sending in photographs in advance

Below is the general guide, which was used as a starting point for the conversations. Text in italics is actual script, while normal text is information for the facilitator.

Introduction (10 min)

- Welcome participants and introduce myself.
- Explain the general purpose of the discussion.
- Discuss the purpose and process of FG.
- Explain the presence and purpose of recording equipment.
- Outline general ground rules and discussion guidelines such as the importance of everyone speaking up, talking one at a time, and being
prepared for the moderator to interrupt to assure that all the topics can be covered.

- Review break schedule and where the restrooms are.
- Address the issue of confidentiality.
- Inform the group that information discussed is going to be analysed as a whole and that participants' names will not be used in any analysis of the discussion.
- Read a protocol summary to the participants.

**Project Introduction**

This study is intended to understand what aspects of the river cruising experience are most influential in repeat river cruisers’ decisions to purchase subsequent cruisers – ‘to keep on cruising’.

Cruise ship travel is an area which has experienced substantial growth over the past three decades – in Australia as well as around the world. More Australians cruised last year than ever before, and Australia now has proportionately the highest market penetration of cruisers in the world. River cruising is also growing, with 50,000 Australians taken river cruises in 2013.

This focus group is being completed as part of a DBA thesis at UWA. The study will provide information that can be used by researchers and the sector to better understand the preferences of repeat river cruisers, and to identify possible patterns of preferences amongst repeaters.
Discussion Guidelines:

I would like the discussion to be informal, so there’s no need to wait for me to call on you to respond. In fact, I encourage you to respond directly to the comments other people make. If you don’t understand a question, please let me know. I am here to ask questions, listen, and make sure everyone has a chance to share. If we seem to be stuck on a topic, I may interrupt you and if you aren’t saying much, I might call on you directly. If I do this, please don’t feel bad about it; it’s just my way of making sure everyone’s perspective and opinion is included.

One of our ground rules is that participants keep each other’s identities, participation and remarks private. You should feel free to speak openly and honestly. As discussed, I will be recording the discussion, because we don’t want to miss any of your comments. No one outside of this room will have access to these recordings and they will be destroyed after the study is complete. Let’s begin. Let’s find out some more about each other by going around the room one at a time. Tell us your first name and how long you’ve been cruising and how many river cruises you’ve done. I’ll start.

Introduction question set9:

• You have each provided 10 favourite pictures from your previous river cruise.

These images are distributed around the room. Please briefly introduce your pictures and explain why you have chosen these particular ones. (All FG pax introduce their pics)

---

9 These topics are identified as ‘question sets’, in that they comprise an initial framing question, but it is likely in most cases that further clarifying and or exploratory questions will be required to ensure a deep dive into the topics under discussion. (In this way, you will explore a series of questions to be followed by relevant prompts to clarify the item. This process is not pre-scripted but interactive in its nature. The goal is for the participants’ experience to lead the way, therefore eliciting the most authentic data possible.)
• *Now that everyone has introduce their pictures, spend 5 minutes reviewing the lot.*

• *What do you notice about the pictures? Any similarities? Differences?*

This discussion will generate a list of initial aspects of cruising valued by pax.

Clarifying questions may be required to ensure meaning is understood. Once conversation reaches an end, move on to next question.

Identified aspects will be recorded on a white board/flip chart as suggested. Pax will be prompted when appropriate through the rest of the session to ensure list is complete.

**Question Set 2:**

• *You have all cruised at least twice? Can you talk about what brought you back after the first cruise?*

• *Thinking back to the last time you booked a river cruise, can you recall what it was about your previous experience that influenced you to make that book?*

• *Are there aspects of your previous river cruising experience that influenced your decision to book a subsequent river cruise that ARE NOT represented in your pictures? If so what would these be? (NB: if an example is required this might be something like pre-booking discounts for booking while on this cruise, or super cheap prices).*

**Question Set 3:** This question set will further explore already identified aspects of the river cruising experience. It will be based on the answers from the previous conversation: e.g.
• Food and dining have been mentioned a lot. What do we mean by that? Food quantity? Food quality? Choice of onboard restaurants?

Question Set 4: This question set will only be used for clarification, if it appears that predicted aspects are not mentioned....eg

• The literature says that one of the things valued about cruising is that other people think you are of higher social status is you cruise. However, no one has mentioned that in this conversation. Why is that?

Question Set 5: This question set will be used to narrow the broad list to a set of most valued aspects

• Out of the list of aspects of the river cruising experience we have identified as influencing the decision to book subsequent cruisers, can we agree which are the most influential?

Further clarifying question/s if new aspects are identified in this section or if there is a gap between photo answers and this one.

The following list of aspects is a guide for me to check to see whether any obvious topics do not emerge, and if not, why not. This list is NOT for sharing with the group in advance of the conversation.

| Food: quality, quantity, diversity, dining facilities, service etc | Quality and range of ship facilities cruise line |
- on board recreation and entertainment activities
- destination ports, itineraries, length of cruise
- initial (ticket) price
- convenience of mode of travel
- levels of service
- social interaction with other passengers
- interaction with crew and service staff

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
- ship
- shore excursions
- loyalty programs
- pre-purchase incentives (e.g. book next cruise while on this one)
- size, quality and features of the cabin
- value for money
- discounts and on-board extras (e.g. included drinks packages, pre-paid gratuities).

**Question set 6:**

- *Any other comments?*

(After a list of most influential aspects has been generated, it will be reviewed with the group for clarity, accuracy and completeness.

**Closing (10 min)**

- Closing remarks
- Thank the participants
- Provide them with any incentive/payment if appropriate
Appendix Two

The Balanced Incomplete Block Design Used Here

A2.1 Balanced Incomplete Block Design (13 Factors)

<p>| | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Set 1</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ship brand</td>
<td>Casual &amp; relaxed</td>
<td>VFM</td>
<td>Smaller ship</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Set 2</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Authentic experience</td>
<td>Unpack once</td>
<td>Getting closer</td>
<td>VFM</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Set 3</th>
<th>12</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ticket price</td>
<td>VFM</td>
<td>Itinerary</td>
<td>Onboard facilities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Set 4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>13</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>VFM</td>
<td>Food &amp; drink</td>
<td>Fellow passengers</td>
<td>Staff &amp; service</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Set 5</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Itinerary</td>
<td>Staff &amp; service</td>
<td>Smaller ship</td>
<td>Unpack once</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Set 6</th>
<th>13</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Food &amp; drink</td>
<td>Smaller ship</td>
<td>Onboard facilities</td>
<td>Authentic experience</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Set 7</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>12</th>
<th>9</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Smaller ship</td>
<td>Getting closer</td>
<td>Ticket price</td>
<td>Fellow passengers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Set 8</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>12</th>
<th>11</th>
<th>13</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unpack once</td>
<td>Ticket price</td>
<td>Ship brand</td>
<td>Food &amp; drink</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Set 9</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>11</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fellow passengers</td>
<td>Ship brand</td>
<td>Authentic experience</td>
<td>Itinerary</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Set 10</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>11</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Getting closer</td>
<td>Onboard facilities</td>
<td>Staff &amp; service</td>
<td>Ship brand</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Set 11</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Onboard facilities</td>
<td>Fellow passengers</td>
<td>Unpack once</td>
<td>Casual &amp; relaxed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Set 12</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>12</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Staff &amp; service</td>
<td>Authentic experience</td>
<td>Casual &amp; relaxed</td>
<td>Ticket price</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Set 13</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>13</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Casual &amp; relaxed</td>
<td>Itinerary</td>
<td>Food &amp; drink</td>
<td>Getting Closer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix Three

The River Cruise Survey

As was noted in Chapter Five, challenges with the respondent group led to different versions of the survey. In all versions, the socio-demographic, involvement, personality trait and most cruising history questions were the same. One block of cruising history questions were reframed for ease of understanding, but the data gathered were the same. The primary difference between the questionnaires between the two samples was that OCEAN respondents were asked to consider the BW factors and involvement items as they applied to ocean cruising, while RIVER respondents completed the questionnaire with regard to river cruising. The final RIVER survey is included below. Table 5.3 outlines the changes between the OCEAN and RIVER surveys.
Thank you for agreeing to participate in this survey!

This study is being undertaken by Suellen Tapsall as part of her DBA thesis at the University of Western Australia. The survey will take approximately 20-25 minutes to complete. The information you provide will be treated as strictly confidential and no data about you will be released by the investigator. Under NO CIRCUMSTANCES will any information be released about you as an individual nor will your data be sold or otherwise distributed. Your data will ONLY be used for academic purposes. Completion of the questionnaire will be taken as evidence of your consent to participate in this study.

Should you wish to participate further with this study, there will be an option to provide your contact details at the end of section three. Any further participation would be greatly appreciated and extremely beneficial. Your responses are important to this project. Should you have any questions about this research, please contact:

Professor Geoff Soutar
UWA Business School
The University of Western Australia

M263, 35 Stirling Highway Crawley
Western Australia, 6009
Email: geoff.soutar@uwa.edu.au

On behalf of:
Suellen Tapsall – DBA Student
UWA Business School
The University of Western Australia
M263, 35 Stirling Highway Crawley
Western Australia, 6009
Email: suellentapsall@outlook.com

Approval to conduct this research has been provided by The University of Western Australia, in accordance with its ethics review and approval procedures. Any person considering participation in this research project, or agreeing to participate, may raise any questions or issues with the researchers at any time. In addition, any person not satisfied with the response of researchers may raise ethics issues or concerns, and may make any complaints about this research project by contacting the Human Research Ethics Office at The University of Western Australia on (08) 6488 3703 or by emailing hreo-research@uwa.edu.au All research participants are entitled to retain a copy of any Participant Information For and/or Participant Consent Form relating to this research project.
We care about the quality of our survey data and hope to receive the most accurate measures of your opinions, so it is important to us that you thoughtfully provide your best answer to each question in the survey.

Do you commit to providing your thoughtful and honest answers to the questions in this survey?

- [ ] I will provide my best answers
- [ ] I will not provide my best answers
- [ ] I cannot promise either way

Have you ever been on a..

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>River Cruise</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ocean Cruise</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Cruise</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Cruising History and future intentions

For this study, a cruise is defined as a trip on a commercial shipline that involves **SLEEPING** on board in a cabin, as a **PAYING** passenger. **Cruisers eat, sleep and are entertained on-board.** Typically, most cruises last from three days to more than 100 days (eg Around the World cruise). The ship has an itinerary, which usually includes port visits and/or shore excursions.

The following are **NOT** cruises as defined by this study:

- A day trip on a harbour, sea or a river (eg Sydney Harbour, Great Lakes, the Thames, the Mississippi, the Meramec, or the Brisbane rivers).
- A trip for the pure purpose of transport, such as a ferry (ie ferry trip from one side of river or strait to the other, eg across the English Channel; from San Francisco to Alcatraz; from Piraeus, Athens, to Chania, Crete; or the Spirit of Tasmania)
- A trip on a private vessel, such as a yacht, defence ship or commercial boat, such as a fishing trawler or oil/car transporter.

How many river cruises have you been on in total?

________________________________________________________________

How many river cruises did you take in 2017-now (inclusive)?

________________________________________________________________

How many river cruises did you take from 2014-2016 (inclusive)?

________________________________________________________________

How many river cruises did you take in 2012-2013 (inclusive)?

________________________________________________________________

How many river cruises did you take prior to, and including, 2011?

________________________________________________________________
How satisfied are you with river cruises in general?

- [ ] Extremely dissatisfied
- [ ] Moderately dissatisfied
- [ ] Slightly dissatisfied
- [ ] Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- [ ] Slightly satisfied
- [ ] Moderately satisfied
- [ ] Extremely satisfied
- [ ] n/a

How many ocean cruises have you been on in total?

________________________________________________________________________

How many ocean cruises did you take in 2017-now (inclusive)?

________________________________________________________________________

How many ocean cruises did you take from 2014-2016 (inclusive)?

________________________________________________________________________

How many ocean cruises did you take in 2012-2013 (inclusive)?

________________________________________________________________________

How many ocean cruises did you take prior to, and including, 2011?

________________________________________________________________________
How satisfied are you with ocean cruises in general?

- [ ] Extremely dissatisfied
- [ ] Moderately dissatisfied
- [ ] Slightly dissatisfied
- [ ] Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- [ ] Slightly satisfied
- [ ] Moderately satisfied
- [ ] Extremely satisfied
- [ ] n/a

How many ‘other’ cruises have you been on in total?

________________________________________________________________

How many ‘other’ cruises did you take in 2017-now (inclusive)?

________________________________________________________________

How many ‘other’ cruises did you take from 2014-2016 (inclusive)?

________________________________________________________________

How many ‘other’ cruises did you take in 2012-2013 (inclusive)?

________________________________________________________________

How many ‘other’ cruises did you take prior to, and including, 2011?

________________________________________________________________
How satisfied were you with ‘other’ cruises in general?

- Extremely dissatisfied
- Moderately dissatisfied
- Slightly dissatisfied
- Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- Slightly satisfied
- Moderately satisfied
- Extremely satisfied
- n/a

Thinking about cruises in general, which type do you prefer to take? Please rank from 1 to 3 in order of preference or skip the question if you don't have a preference.

- River cruising
- Ocean cruising
- Expedition cruising
Where have you cruised previously? (Select all that apply)

- Africa / Middle East
- Alaska
- Asia
- Australia
- Austria
- Bermuda
- Canada / New England
- Canary Islands
- Caribbean
- China
- Europe
- Great Lakes
- Greek Isles
- Hawaii
- Mediterranean
- Mexico
- New Zealand
- Northern Europe
- Russia
- South Pacific
- United States
- Other (please specify)

Which cruise lines have you previously cruised with? (Select all that apply)

- AmaWaterways
☐ APT
☐ A-ROSA
☐ Avalon Waterways
☐ Carnival Cruise Line
☐ Celebrity Cruises
☐ Costa Cruises
☐ CroisiEurope
☐ Crystal Cruises
☐ Cunard
☐ Disney Cruise Line
☐ Holland America Line
☐ Norwegian Cruise Line
☐ Oceana Cruises
☐ P&O Cruises
☐ Princess Cruises
☐ Regent Cruises
☐ Royal Caribbean Cruise International
☐ Scenic
☐ Silversea Cruises
☐ Uniworld River Cruises
☐ Viking River Cruises
☐ Viking Ocean Cruises
☐ Other (please specify)

☐ I do not remember
What length of cruise/s have you undertaken? (Select all that apply)

- □ <3 days
- □ 4-6 days
- □ 7-9 days
- □ 10-14 days
- □ 15-24 days
- □ 25-40 days
- □ 41+ days

In what social groupings have you cruised? (Select all that apply)

- □ Solo traveller
- □ With spouse or partner
- □ With one or more friends
- □ With family
- □ Other
When was your last RIVER cruise?

○ 2018
○ 2017
○ 2016
○ 2015
○ 2014
○ 2013
○ 2012
○ 2011
○ 2010
○ Pre 2010

Do you currently have bookings for one or more future cruises?¹⁰

○ Yes
○ No

**In relation to your future cruise:

Please indicate number of friends or family in your travelling party

________ (respondents can choose from 1-20)

¹⁰ Question set repeats from ** to point indicated (page 14) until respondent answers ‘NO’
Date of your next cruise (departure)?

- Jan to Mar 2018
- Apr to Jun 2018
- Jul to Sep 2018
- Oct to Dec 2018
- Jan to Jun 2019
- Jul to Dec 2019
- 2020
- 2021

Cruise line of your next cruise?

- AmaWaterways
- APT
- A-ROSA
- Avalon Waterways
- Carnival Cruise Line
- Celebrity Cruises
- Costa Cruises
- CroisiEurope
- Crystal Cruises
- Cunard
- Disney Cruise Line
- Holland America Line
- Norwegian Cruise Line
- Oceana Cruises
- P&O Cruises
- Princess Cruises
- Regent Cruises
○ Royal Caribbean Cruise International
○ Scenic
○ Silversea Cruises
○ Uniworld River Cruises
○ Viking River Cruises
○ Viking Ocean Cruises
○ Other (please specify) ___________________________________________

In what social groupings will you undertake this cruise?

○ Solo traveler
○ With spouse or partner
○ With one or more friends
○ With family
○ Other

What is your itinerary?
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________

When did you purchase this cruise?

○ BEFORE last cruise
○ DURING last cruise
○ AFTER last cruise

Have you booked another future cruise?

○ Yes
○ No

*Question set repeats from ** to this point until respondent answers ‘NO’
Some background information about you

What year were you born?
▼ 1999 ... 1920 (Respondents can select from year 1920 to year 1999)

Highest level of education completed?

- Secondary
- Certificate level
- Advanced diploma / diploma level
- Bachelor degree
- Graduate diploma and graduate certificate level
- Postgraduate degree level
- Other education level

Industry in which you currently work (or most recently worked if no longer working)?

- Agriculture
- Mining
- Manufacturing
- Electricity, gas, water & waste services
- Construction
- Wholesale trade
- Retail trade
- Hospitality/Tourism
- Accommodation & food services
- Transport, postal & warehousing
Information media & telecommunications
Rental, hiring & real estate services
Professional, scientific & technical services
Administrative & support services
Public administration & safety
Education & training
Health care & social assistance
Arts & recreation services
Other services

Household annual income (gross)?

$0 - $51,999
$52,000 - $90,999
$91,000 - $155,999
$156,000 - $200,999
$201,000 or more
I do not wish to disclose

Do you speak any languages other than English at home? If so, please provide details in the space below:

Yes __________________________________________________________

No - English only
Gender?

- Male
- Female
- Other
- Prefer not to say

Relationship status?

- Single
- De Facto/Partner
- Married
- Divorced
- Widowed
- Divorced/Widowed - new partner
- Prefer not to say

Family Life Cycle?

- No children
- Pre-adult children at home
- Empty Nesters
- Grown children and/or grandchildren living at home

Nationality/Residence?

- Australian citizen living in Australia
- Permanent resident of Australia
- Australian citizen, resident elsewhere (please specify where)
Which of the following best describes your current work status?

- Employed full time
- Employed part time
- Self-employed
- Unemployed
- Retired

It is important to show you are paying attention during this survey by ignoring all the responses about how you are feeling in the list below. Instead, please select only the 'none of the above' option as your answer.

- Interested
- Distressed
- Excited
- Upset
- Strong
- Guilty
- Scared
- Hostile
- Enthusiastic
☐ Proud
☐ Irritable
☐ Alert
☐ Ashamed
☐ Inspired
☐ Nervous
☐ Determined
☐ Attentive
☐ Jittery
☐ Active
☐ Afraid
☐ None of the above
What aspects of River Cruising are most important to you? RIVER Cruising has experienced rapid growth in recent years, with increased numbers of passengers taking advantage of new routes, new boats, and new ship lines to experience this form of travel and tourism. In this section we will ask you to identify which aspects of RIVER cruising are the MOST important to you and which aspects of RIVER cruising are the LEAST important to you when making your decision to book a RIVER cruise. There are 13 small subsets of the list below provided and while some sets have aspects in common, each set also introduces some new aspects.

It is important that you answer all 13 sets.

Below is a list of the factors that will appear in the 13 sets along with a brief explanation of their meaning:

1. **Unpack once** – this aspect refers to the ease and convenience of getting onto the ship and unpacking once - having the same bed during the trip

2. **Small ship (and fewer passengers)** – this aspect refers to the fact that river cruise ships typically have only several hundred passengers - they are smaller and therefore the number of passengers is smaller. It is a more intimate experience.

3. **Staff & service** – this aspect refers to the quality of the staff and service onboard the ship and throughout the experience

4. **Trip itinerary & destinations** – this aspect refers to the itinerary and where the cruise is going - the different towns and sights it will visit.

5. **Value for money** – this aspect refers to the extent that the total value of the experience is worth the money paid. River cruise ticket prices usually include the actual journey plus meals, drinks at meal time and guided walking tours at each stop. Some cruise companies may also include pre and post tour packages, free air travel and so on.

6. **Getting close to local destinations, docking in local towns** – this aspect refers to the fact that as river cruise ships are smaller sized and they are typically travelling along rivers which form the heartlines of their
environment, the ship can generally pull up alongside the centre of the town or site being visited - this means passengers can walk ashore and experience the local area. It also means local scenery is visible along river banks, etc.

7. **Authentic experience of local culture & people** – this aspect refers to the authentic experience of being exposed to local residents, local culture, local food - developing a sense of history, geography, people, food and culture of the areas being visited.

8. **Casual & relaxed atmosphere onboard** – this aspect refers to feeling relaxed and at ease - not having to dress up or act in a certain way to please others.

9. **Fellow passengers** – this aspect refers to interaction with fellow passengers on board - including their personalities, culture, the friends you make, and more.

10. **On-board facilities & ship amenities** – this aspect refers to the quality of the cabins and quality and quantity of any communal spaces, including dining rooms, lounges, gyms, shops, entertainment venues, etc.

11. **Ship line/brand** – this aspect refers to loyalty to a particular company or brand.

12. **Initial ticket price** - this aspect refers to the actual upfront initial purchase price for the river cruise ticket.

13. **Food & drink onboard** - this aspect refers to the quality and quantity of the food and drink.

Please note: the link shown at the top of each page will take you to this list of aspects and their explanations at any time during the survey.
When thinking about RIVER cruising, please mark the checkbox at the start of the row to identify which aspect is MOST important in your decision to book a RIVER cruise; and mark the checkbox at the end of the row to identify which aspect is LEAST important to you, in each set.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect MOST important to you</th>
<th>Aspect LEAST important to you</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ship line/brand</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casual &amp; relaxed atmosphere onboard</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value for money</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small ship &amp; fewer passengers</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When thinking about RIVER cruising, please mark the checkbox at the start of the row to identify which aspect is MOST important in your decision to book a RIVER cruise; and mark the checkbox at the end of the row to identify which aspect is LEAST important to you, in each set.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect MOST important to you</th>
<th>Aspect LEAST important to you</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Authentic experience of local culture &amp; people</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unpack once</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting closer to local destinations, docking in local towns</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value for money</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
When thinking about RIVER cruising, please mark the checkbox at the start of the row to identify which aspect is MOST important in your decision to book a RIVER cruise; and mark the checkbox at the end of the row to identify which aspect is LEAST important to you, in each set.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect MOST important to you</th>
<th>Aspect LEAST important to you</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Initial ticket price</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value for money</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trip itinerary &amp; destinations</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On-board facilities &amp; ship amenities</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect MOST important to you</th>
<th>Aspect LEAST important to you</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Value for money</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food &amp; drink onboard</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fellow passengers</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff &amp; service</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
When thinking about RIVER cruising, please mark the checkbox at the start of the row to identify which aspect is MOST important in your decision to book a RIVER cruise; and mark the checkbox at the end of the row to identify which aspect is LEAST important to you, in each set.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect MOST important to you</th>
<th>Aspect LEAST important to you</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>O</td>
<td>Trip itinerary &amp; destinations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O</td>
<td>Staff &amp; service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O</td>
<td>Small ship &amp; fewer passengers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O</td>
<td>Unpack once</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When thinking about RIVER cruising, please mark the checkbox at the start of the row to identify which aspect is MOST important in your decision to book a RIVER cruise; and mark the checkbox at the end of the row to identify which aspect is LEAST important to you, in each set.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect MOST important to you</th>
<th>Aspect LEAST important to you</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>O</td>
<td>Food &amp; drink onboard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O</td>
<td>Small ship &amp; fewer passengers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O</td>
<td>On-board facilities &amp; ship amenities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O</td>
<td>Authentic experience of local culture &amp; people</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
When thinking about RIVER cruising, please mark the checkbox at the start of the row to identify which aspect is MOST important in your decision to book a RIVER cruise; and mark the checkbox at the end of the row to identify which aspect is LEAST important to you, in each set.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect MOST important to you</th>
<th>Aspect LEAST important to you</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Small ship &amp; fewer passengers</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting closer to local destinations, docking in local towns</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initial ticket price</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fellow passengers</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When thinking about RIVER cruising, please mark the checkbox at the start of the row to identify which aspect is MOST important in your decision to book a RIVER cruise; and mark the checkbox at the end of the row to identify which aspect is LEAST important to you, in each set.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect MOST important to you</th>
<th>Aspect LEAST important to you</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unpack once</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initial ticket price</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ship line/brand</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food &amp; drink onboard</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
When thinking about RIVER cruising, please mark the checkbox at the start of the row to identify which aspect is MOST important in your decision to book a RIVER cruise; and mark the checkbox at the end of the row to identify which aspect is LEAST important to you, in each set.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect MOST important to you</th>
<th>Aspect LEAST important to you</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>O</td>
<td>Fellow passengers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O</td>
<td>Ship line/brand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O</td>
<td>Authentic experience of local culture &amp; people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O</td>
<td>Trip itinerary &amp; destinations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When thinking about RIVER cruising, please mark the checkbox at the start of the row to identify which aspect is MOST important in your decision to book a RIVER cruise; and mark the checkbox at the end of the row to identify which aspect is LEAST important to you, in each set.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect MOST important to you</th>
<th>Aspect LEAST important to you</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>O</td>
<td>Getting closer to local destinations, docking in local towns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O</td>
<td>On-board facilities &amp; ship amenities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O</td>
<td>Staff &amp; service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O</td>
<td>Ship line/brand</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
When thinking about RIVER cruising, please mark the checkbox at the start of the row to identify which aspect is MOST important in your decision to book a RIVER cruise; and mark the checkbox at the end of the row to identify which aspect is LEAST important to you, in each set.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect MOST important to you</th>
<th>Aspect LEAST important to you</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>On-board facilities &amp; ship amenities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>Fellow passengers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>Unpack once</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>Casual &amp; relaxed atmosphere onboard</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When thinking about RIVER cruising, please mark the checkbox at the start of the row to identify which aspect is MOST important in your decision to book a RIVER cruise; and mark the checkbox at the end of the row to identify which aspect is LEAST important to you, in each set.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect MOST important to you</th>
<th>Aspect LEAST important to you</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>Staff &amp; service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>Authentic experience of local culture &amp; people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>Casual &amp; relaxed atmosphere onboard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>Initial ticket price</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
When thinking about RIVER cruising, please mark the checkbox at the start of the row to identify which aspect is MOST important in your decision to book a RIVER cruise; and mark the checkbox at the end of the row to identify which aspect is LEAST important to you, in each set.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect MOST important to you</th>
<th>Aspect LEAST important to you</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Casual &amp; relaxed atmosphere onboard</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trip itinerary &amp; destinations</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food &amp; drink onboard</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting closer to local destinations, docking in local towns</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Just a few questions about how you feel about river cruising... Please complete the following by selecting the number that best describes how you feel.

Please choose from the following options:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>River Cruising</th>
<th>Does not matter to me</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>Matters a lot to me</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please choose from the following options:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I see River Cruising as</th>
<th>Unimportant</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please choose from the following options:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I see River Cruising as</th>
<th>Insignificant</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>Significant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please choose from the following options:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>River Cruising is</th>
<th>Not valuable to me</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>Very valuable to me</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not at all like</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Entirely like</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...is reserved</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...is generally trusting</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...tends to be lazy</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...is relaxed, handles stress well</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...has few artistic interests</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...is outgoing, sociable</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...tends to find fault with others</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...does a thorough job</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...gets nervous easily</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...has an active imagination</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In this section, you have the option to make comments about the aspects of RIVER cruising you value most... please select as many options as you like and enter any comments you wish to make.

☐ Unpack once _________________________________

☐ Small ship & fewer passengers __________________________

☐ Staff & service __________________________________________

☐ Trip itinerary & destinations ____________________________

☐ Value for money ____________________________________________

☐ Getting close to local destinations, docking in local towns ___

☐ Authentic experience of local culture & people __________

☐ Casual & relaxed atmosphere onboard ____________________

☐ Fellow passengers ________________________________

☐ On-board facilities & ship amenities ______________________

☐ Ship line/brand ________________________________

☐ Initial ticket price ________________________________

☐ Food & drink onboard ________________________________
Should you wish to participate further with this project, please provide your name and email address in the space provided. Any further participation on your behalf would be greatly appreciated and extremely beneficial.

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

This space has been provided for any additional comments you wish to make.

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________