

Does Political Ideology Play a Role in Destination Choice?

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This study attempts to bridge the research fields of politics and destination choice through testing political ideology's effect on leisure domestic U.S. destination choice. Both the travelers and the states visited were characterized by their reported and actual political ideological standings on a liberal / conservative scale. Included in the inferential tests as control variables were destination choice determinants such as advertising, distance, weather, etc. Through the comparison of Akaike Information Criteria (AIC) and Schwartz Criteria (SC) scores, political variables were shown to improve the model fit of destination choice models as opposed to demographic variables. Furthermore, analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) tests showed that reported political ideology, instead of actual political ideology, held an effect on their destination choice. Suggestions are also provided for destinations to ameliorate their position within the marketplace through operational and marketing initiatives.

Keywords: political ideology, ANCOVA, destination choice, self-congruity, leisure travel

Introduction

Over the past few decades a number of scholars have looked into how macro-environmental, psychographic, and demographic factors affect travelers' destination choice (Plog, 2001; Sonmez & Graefe, 1998; Yavas, 1987). Macro-environmental factors (political, economic, ecological, etc.) generally have significant influence on destination choice (Plog, 2001) but often lie beyond the control of destination managers. As a result, psychographic factors, such as personality characteristics, values, and attitudes have become the preferred segmentation tools for destination managers to manage travelers' choice because psychographic factors are believed to be stronger determinants of behavioral outcomes than demographic characteristics (Caprara, Barbaranelli, & Zimbardo, 1999; Thorisdottir, Jost, Liviatan, & Shrout, 2007).

In the meantime, a number of studies in social psychology have focused on building theoretical connections between political ideology, being a political system or blueprint based on beliefs about societal and economic issues (Jost, Federico & Napier, 2009), individual personality, and behavioral outcomes (Caprara et al., 1999). For example, Thorisdottir et al. (2007) have showed that individual's inner self is projected through party identification and a strong relationship between political ideology and behavioral tendencies exists.

In other words, there could be a connection between political ideology and behavioral outcomes through an individual's psychographic characteristics. Furthermore, since the study is based on self-congruity theory (Sirgy, 1985a, b), we implicitly assume that political ideology transcribes into image as political ideology is considered to be an extension of an individual's image (Sandikci & Ekici, 2009).

Political ideology has been shown to be correlated with such psychographic factors as openness and traditionalism (Thorisdottir et al., 2007). At the same time, destination choice is also influenced by psychographic factors (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999). Since destination is influenced by psychographic factors and political ideology is a good proxy of psychographic factors, it would be reasonable to expect that political ideology of an individual could influence destination choice.

Nevertheless, in spite of its potential effect, political ideology has not been incorporated into the destination choice research. This study attempts to address this gap by examining the role of travelers' political ideology in domestic U.S. destination selection. To achieve our goal, we first compare model fit statistics of multinomial models to examine the incremental explaining power of political ideology variables on destination choice. Secondly, we investigate if political ideology affects destination choice through ANCOVA tests.

The significance of this study is two-fold. First, from a theoretical perspective, the study introduces political ideology as a potential destination choice

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predictor that could facilitate more parsimonious destination choice models. This is shown in the findings as the level of the similarities between the travelers' political ideology and the destinations' political standing shows strong potential to be an effective predictor of destination choice. Furthermore, political ideology can also be used as a new factor for market segmentation. The findings show that on average conservative travelers visit states that hold more conservative ideologies than liberal travelers and vice-versa. Lastly, destination managers can incorporate the findings of this study to fine tune their promotion and advertising programs to appeal to travelers holding certain political views.

Literature Review

Destination choice models

Theoretical contributions within consumer decision making has grown rapidly in the past three decades (Sirakaya & Woodside, 2005). Among the fastest growing applications of consumer decision-making theories is leisure destination choice. Some of the consumer decision-making theories that have been applied for determining leisure destination choice are cognitive response theory, cognitive dissonance theory and self-congruity theory (Ankomah, Crompton & Baker, 1996; Chon, 1992; Wang, Hsieh & Chen, 2002).

While cognitive dissonance theory (CDT) is the changing or justification of behavior based on a discord among conflicting messages received (McCann, 1997), cognitive response theory (CRT) involves the deciphering of messages an individual receives into actionable behavioral responses (Smith & Swinyard, 1988). Self-congruity is the influence of behavioral actions based on the matching of one's psychographic factors and the products' functional attributes (Sirgy, 1985a, b). Each of these theories holds similar characteristics in that the individual's actionable response is influenced by the message received or product's attributes. This study will utilize self-congruity theory since it is an investigation of political ideology holding influence on destination choice through the political ideological similarities between the attributes of the travelers and destinations.

Psychographic factors and consumer behavior

Sirgy (1985a, b) was one of the pioneers investigating the relationship between individuals' psychographic factors and the products' functional attributes. He argues that psychographic factors help makeup individuals' ideal (perceived) self-image and

actual self-image and products and services images are derived from their functional attributes. The difference between actual self-image and ideal self-image is that consumers may not fully understand their actual self-image, which based on a subconscious thought process, while ideal self-image is who the consumers feel they are consciously (Walters, 1978). Based on this Walters (1978) suggests that consumers will act to appeal to their ideal self-image but will never stray far from their actual self-image. An example of actual and ideal self-image in behavior would be a consumer who is looking at what type of hotel to book a vacation at. The given consumer's actual self-image is liberal, but the consumer's ideal self-image is conservative. Since the consumer will appeal to who they feel they are, they may pick a traditional hotel resort that holds conservative curb appeal to please to their conservative ideal self-image, but the destination resort's rooms may have newer high-tech amenities as so the consumer does not stray far from his / her liberal actual self-image.

The connection between the individuals' psychographic factors and the products' functional attributes is made through individuals' self-image and products' image. When a consumer experiences a match between his/her own image and the product's image, it is considered high self-congruity (Sirgy et al., 1997). Low self-congruity exists when there is a mismatch between the consumer's own image and the product's image. Sirgy et al. (1997) concludes that the level of congruence between psychographic factors of an individual's and the products' functional attributes facilitate consumer behavior. Moreover, Sirgy and Dane (1981) showed that individuals are more likely to purchase products, whose images match the individuals' actual self-image (self-congruity).

Self-congruity and destination choice

Individuals are likely to make assumptions about destinations that assist in the formation of the destination images (Sirgy & Su, 2000; Tasci & Gartner, 2007). Among these are assumptions that travelers' make based on the destinations' geographic location (Sirgy & Su, 2000). Baloglu and McCleary (1999) contended that the images of destinations formulated by travelers are the most important determinant of destination choice.

The formulation of these destinations images have been shown to be correlated with a range of psychographic and socioeconomic factors as well as previous travel experiences (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Beerli & Martin, 2004). In addition, psychographic factors were shown to be having played more pronounced roles in formulation of

destination images as opposed to demographic factors (Plog, 2002).

Chon (1992) investigated the congruity between travelers and the destination image and found that self-congruity positively correlated with individuals' overall satisfaction from a given destination. Litvin and Goh (2002) further showed that self-congruity correlated with travelers' choice in destination. Individuals who hold high self and ideal congruity between their psychographic factors and the destinations' images were likely to hold a feeling of identification with the destination and, as a result, chose that destination (Kastenholz, 2004). Additionally, Beerli, Meneses, and Gil (2007) showed that tourists were more likely to visit a destination that held higher congruity between their psychographic factors and the destinations' images.

Political ideology and party politics

Political ideology is a collection of similar ideals generated through dealing with societal and/or economic issues within a society (Lawton, 1989). Political ideologies push governmental methods to combat social unrest and economic problems with the objective to mold a society into what is deemed ideal by the theorizing political ideologists (Bjornskov, 2008). In addition, with political ideologists theorizing the end goal can lead to ideological measures that call for extreme shifts from current societal norms such as severely limiting liberties in a more open society to removing governmental involvement in economic production (Booth & Seligson, 1984; Cohen et al., 2000).

While political ideologies deal with governmental objectives in society, they can transcend governmental party politics (Gifford, 2006). This is due political parties being made-up of groups of people within society that can represent blocs of individuals with beliefs ranging from a narrow-set of political ideologies to multiple and sometimes conflicting political ideologies (Finkel & Opp, 1991; Gifford 2006). An example of this would be a political party that portrays itself as a *laissez faire* based party may actually push for governmental subsidies to certain industries while advocating eliminating trade tariffs. Furthermore, representatives or policy makers driving the makeup of a political party may hold conflicting political ideologies (Norris, 1995), thus leading to non-conforming ideologies within a party.

Psychographic factors and politics

When individuals establish a political affiliation by aligning themselves with a political party, they are, in

part, expressing their personality, values, and attitudes (Finkel & Opp, 1991). These expressions led Finkel and Opp (1991) to suggest that demographics hold limited influence on individuals' political ideology. Caprara et al. (1999) further tested demographic variables and found they held no significant influential effects on individuals' political ideology leanings. Furthermore, Caprara et al. (1999) suggested that psychographic factors held stronger influence on political ideology than traditional demographic variables.

The importance of political ideology of individuals is on the rise due to a number of reasons (Caprara et al., 2006; Wattenberg, 1998). Political parties are becoming more diverse while moving closer to the center of the political spectrum. In addition, political issues are becoming increasingly complex, which all leads to the growing influence of psychographic factors on political ideology (Caprara et al., 2006). These factors have resulted in the formation of contemporary politics, which can be characterized by conditions when no party has direct grasp on solving of the important issues or the loyalty of their voting blocs (Beck, 2003; Wattenburg, 1998). Therefore, voters are increasingly choosing candidates not based on campaign platforms but based on psychographic factors (McCann, 1997). As a result, political ideology, not political party affiliation, has been considered as a stronger measure of individuals' psychographic factors (Beck, 2003; Caprara et al., 2006; McCann, 1997).

Liberal / conservative spectrum

Due to the shifting of the political parties along the political spectrum (Beck, 2003; Wattenburg, 1998), political scientists have long considered the left / right spectrum a more reliable, potent, and efficient method than party affiliation for classifying individuals' political ideology standings (Feldman, 2003; Jost, 2006; Knight, 1999; Thorisdottir et al., 2007). Liberal / conservative and left / right terms are used interchangeably and refer to the same standings in most political studies. For example, Hill, Hanna, and Shafqat (1997), Jacoby (1986), and Poole and Rosenthal (1984) use the term liberal / conservative, while Castles and Mair (1997), Evans, Heath, and Lalljee (1996), Gabel and Huber (2000) use the term left / right. To be consistent in terminology, this study will utilize the term liberal / conservative.

A number of researchers have investigated the differences in psychographic factors between individuals of liberal and conservative ideologies (Caprara et al., 1999; Jost et al., 2003a, b; Thorisdottir et al., 2007). Thorisdottir et al. (2007) suggest that individuals of different ideologies are expected to

behave differently in order to conform to their political ideologies. Conservatives hold strong relationships to reduce ambiguity and anxiety as compared to liberals (Jost et al., 2003a, b; Thorisdottir et al., 2007). In addition, the core values of conservatives follow the notion of resistance to change and acceptance of inequality (Thorisdottir et al., 2007) as opposed to liberals. Furthermore, conservatives hold higher regard for structure, order, closure, certainty and discipline than liberals (Thorisdottir et al., 2007).

Lastly, on the other side of the liberal/conservative spectrum, liberals were more likely to seek out sensation-seeking activities and openness experiences than conservatives (Caprara et al., 1999; Thorisdottir et al., 2007).

Hypotheses

To reiterate, multiple authors suggest that demographic factors hold minimal influence on individual's political ideology standing and even less influence on destination choice (Beerli & Martin, 2004; Finkel & Opp, 1991). On the contrary, psychographic factors reflect how individuals view themselves (Sirgy, 1982) and hold significant influence on the political ideologies individuals adhere to and their choice in destinations (Kastenholz, 2004; Wattenberg, 1998). Therefore, it is expected that political ideology will be a stronger predictor of destination travel choice as opposed to demographic variables.

Hypothesis 1: Political ideology variables hold better model fit scores than demographic variables in predicting destination choice.

The proximity between individuals' psychographic factors and the destinations' image induces destination travel choice (Beerli, Meneses, & Gil, 2007). Since political ideology encompasses a wide range of psychographic factors, it may serve as a behavioral tendencies predictor (Caprara et al., 2006). In other words, by combining the theories of Caprara et al. (1999), Sirgy (1985a, b) and Litvin and Goh (2002), we expect that travelers would choose destinations that hold political congruity to themselves.

Hypothesis 2: Travelers' political ideology affects their destination choice.

Methods

Key variables

We selected three key variables for hypothesis testing: destinations' political standing, travelers' political ideology, and the political congruity

between destinations and travelers. For travel related questions, travelers were asked to strictly report only leisure travel not including business or visiting friends and family. In determining the actual political standing of the states, we considered both the past four presidential elections results (1996 through 2008) and states' laws on gay-marriages, abortion, gun-control, and death-penalty. We first gave states a 1 through 5 score based on their electoral votes. If a state voted democrat in the past four elections, that state was given a score of 1; if it voted 3 times democrat and once republican, then it was given a 2, and so on. Consequently, a score of 5 was given to the state with four republican votes. Secondly, we gave states another 1-5 score based on their state laws on the given issues noted. These two scores were then averaged to form a State Political Standing Index (SPS).

To account for the possibility that travelers' actual political ideology might be different from the one they report, travelers' political ideology was measured directly and indirectly through a series of survey questions. To note, travelers' political ideology is measured not only using their voting record but also their attitudes towards key economic and social issues. For direct measurements, we asked respondents to self-report their party affiliation and rate themselves on a 5-point liberal/conservative spectrum. For indirect measurement, we asked their positions (for or against) on 11 political issues that are social and economic related (e.g. abortion right, gun control, distribution of wealth, etc). These summated values were then rounded out into five levels to form a 1-5 Traveler Political Actual Standing (TPAS). The self-reported answers indicated how travelers perceived themselves (reported political ideology) and the measurement based on their answers to the 11 political issues reflected who travelers actually were (actual political ideology).

To measure the actual political congruity between travelers and destinations, the inverse of the difference between TPAS and SPS was adopted as a proxy for actual congruity. Actual political congruity is not the "actual" congruity between travelers and destinations given that the true representations are never actually known (Walters, 1978), but it represents a measure of the actual congruity based on the available information.

Travelers were also asked to directly rate the congruity of their political ideology and the visited state's political ideology on 5-point scale ("reported congruity" hereafter). In addition to political and congruity questions, we also asked questions related to travelers' demographics and travel/destination information.

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Please see Table 1 for the list of control variables based on the destination choice theories discussed in the literature review.

Table 1. Control variables.

Variable	Source
<i>Destination Characteristics</i>	
Price of Destination	Woodside and Lysonski (1989)
Lodging Facilities	Seddighi and Theocharous (2002)
Quality of Services	Seddighi and Theocharous (2002)
Advertising	Woodside and Lysonski (1989)
Attractions	Baloglu (2000)
Nightlife	Baloglu and McClearly (1999)
Dining Options	Baloglu and McClearly (1999)
Weather	Bigano, Hamilton, and Tol (2006)
Culture and History	Baloglu and McClearly (1999)
Closeness to Home	Eymann and Ronning (1997)
Safety of Lodging Surroundings	Slevitch and Sharma (2007)
<i>Demographics</i>	
Gender	Zalatan (1998)
Age	Zalatan (1996)
Marital Status	Zalatan (1998)
Number of Children in Household	Jenkins (1978)
Number of Adults in Household	Gitelson and Kerstetter (1994)
Total Household Income	Kelly (1982)
Education	Zalatan (1996)
Employment Status	Kelly (1982)

Lastly, to control clustering of states with similar political ideological leanings within geographical regions (Wright, Erikson, & McIver, 1985) and the proximity of distance traveled (Eymann & Ronning, 1997), we utilized distance as a control variable. To do so, we segmented the observations by those who had traveled within 500 miles from their residence and those who traveled further than 500 miles. To measure the distance traveled, we assigned latitudes and longitudes from the largest metro region in each state to the visited destination and home residence reported. Measuring based on the largest metro region in each state insured that approximations of latitudes and longitudes were obtained for the residence and visiting destination. In addition, respondents were more likely to be residing within the largest metro region of each state as opposed to smaller metro regions.

For the final part in calculating the distance traveled we then utilized the cosine function to form an approximated distance formula (Kovacs & Goodin, 1985; Smiley, 1958).¹

Models for hypothesis testing

To test hypothesis 1, we compared the model fit of several specifications of multinomial destination choice model. For the multinomial models we included the factors that are considered as destination choice determinants in extant literature as control variables. The state visited was set as the dependent variable. The variables and citations are summarized in Table 1. Each of the political variables was added separately into a destination choice model that included destination choice determinants and demographics. In addition, we tested how well political variables perform in place of demographic variables in the destination choice models. Akaike Information Criteria and Schwartz Criteria scores of Multinomial Regression Models will be used for examining the incremental model fit provided by political variables in the destination choice model.

Hypothesis two was tested through four tests of analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) along with Tukey's tests to examine for significant differences in the effect of travelers' political ideology on their

destination choices. The control variables for the ANCOVA tests were the destination choice determinants tested in hypothesis one. For the ANCOVA tests we included states' SPS index and perceived SPS index as the dependent variables while travelers political standing (actual and reported) were used as the independent variables with destination choice factors as the covariate variables. For the final set of tests, we excluded observations that had traveled within 500 miles of their residence and reran the four ANCOVA procedures.

Sample selection

The target population for the study included individuals who were out of state leisure travelers and registered voters. According to the Census (2008), 67.60% of the United States' population is registered voters. Dean Runyan and Associates (2008) investigated out of state flyer percentages and determined that out-of-state visitors made up between 29% to 83% of each states' visitors who travel by airplane. Louisiana Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism (2005) surveyed park visitors and found that 46.2% of the visitors to Louisiana parks were out-of-state visitors. In estimating the percentage of out-of-state leisure travelers, it was assumed that 52.7% $\{(29\% + 83\% + 46.2\%) / 3\}$ of the population were out of state travelers equaling the average to the figures previously listed. Thus, the target population was roughly 35.6% (67.6% x 52.7%) of the total United States population.

A total of 65,528 emails were sent out using the US travelers' database from late-June 2009 to mid-July 2009. Emails were selected through systematic random sampling of the database. No incentives were given for completion of the surveys. The number of responses was 376 respondents equating a 0.58% response rate. While a 0.58% response rate may seem low as compared to conventional survey methods, average survey response rates for all administering methods have been declining for a number of years (Baruch & Holtom, 2008). Response rates for emails were as low as 2.5% as late as 2005 (Bonfrer & Dreze, 2009). Canadian Post (2009) reported response rates as low as 0.30% for email campaigns.

Therefore, the figure can still be within a reasonable response range of the same surveying method. Out of the total 376 responses, twenty were not registered voters and 121 out of 376 did not travel. After deleting incomplete responses, 357 observations were utilized for analyses.

Results

Descriptive statistics of the sample

Destination travel studies have found that leisure travelers' demographic characteristics skew towards older, educated, higher incomes individuals with more disposable income and more free time away from work (LaMondia, Bhat, & Hensher, 2008; McCabe, 2009; Zalatan, 1996). Furthermore, email respondents hold higher likelihoods of holding white collar jobs, being more technical savvy, more educated and earning higher incomes (Chittenden & Rettie, 2003; Rookey, Hanway, & Dillman, 2008). Our results supported previous findings. As shown in Table 2, the respondents skewed towards older, educated, higher incomes and retired with an average age of 52.01 years, 41.2% making more than \$75,000, 16.8% retired from the workforce and 54.3% holding at least a bachelors degree.

Lastly, all census geographic regions of the country were well represented with respondents residing in a total of 45 states with the most residing in California followed by Pennsylvania and Texas respectively. Of the destinations travelers visited, Las Vegas was the most frequented city followed by San Diego and New York City.

In total, respondents visited 45 states including District of Columbia (DC) and Puerto Rico. Florida, California and Nevada were the most visited states respectively. 22.44% of travelers reported never visiting their reported destination before, while 16.73% visited one to two times and 60.81% visited at least three or more time previously. A majority of the travelers (57.72%) chose automobile as the primary method of travel. Air travel was the second most frequent method used at 38.61% with other modes of travel making up a small portion at 3.65%.

Table 2. Demographics of respondents.

Variable	Obs.	Percent	Variable	Obs.	Percent
Gender			Age		
Male	167	46.8%	18 to 25	3	0.8%
Female	170	47.6%	26 to 35	33	9.2%
Not reported	20	5.6%	36 to 45	55	15.4%
Marriage Status			46 to 55	107	30.0%
Yes	205	57.4%	56 to 65	93	26.1%
No	129	36.1%	66 plus	45	12.6%
Not reported	23	6.4%	Not reported	21	5.9%
Education			State of Residence		
High School	58	16.2%	New England	12	3.4%
Associate (2-year)	86	24.1%	Mid-Atlantic	65	18.2%
Bachelors (4 -year)	100	28.0%	South Atlantic	37	10.4%
Graduate Plus	94	26.3%	East South Central	22	6.2%
Not reported	19	5.3%	East North Central	23	6.4%
Total Household (HH) Income			West North Central	26	7.3%
Under \$15,000	11	3.1%	West South Central	38	10.6%
\$15,001 to \$30,000	33	9.2%	Mountain	52	14.6%
\$30,001 to \$50,000	68	19.0%	Pacific	71	19.9%
\$50,001 to \$75,000	65	18.2%	US Territories	1	0.3%
\$75,001 to \$100,000	48	13.4%	Not reported	10	2.8%
\$100,001 to \$150,000	54	15.1%	Employment Status		
\$150,001 plus	45	12.6%	Employed Full-time	200	56.0%
Not reported	33	9.2%	Employed Part-time	28	7.8%
Number of Children in HH			Full-time homemaker	13	3.6%
Zero	245	68.6%	Full-time student	4	1.1%
One	43	12.0%	Part-time student	3	0.8%
Two	33	9.2%	Retired	60	16.8%
Three or More	14	3.9%	Not Currently Working	18	5.0%
Not reported	22	6.2%	Prefer not to answer	8	2.2%
			Not reported	23	6.4%

Respondents were asked to report their political leaning on a liberal/conservative scale. In previous studies, both Wattenberg (1998) and Jackson, Bigelow and Green (2003) noted that trends show an influx of voters from either party moving more to the center of the liberal / conservative spectrum. The results shown in Table 3 were similar the results found by Wattenberg (1998) and Jackson et al. (2003). The highest concentration of respondents reported they were moderate in their political standing followed by roughly equal mix of respondents who reported either liberalness or conservativeness. Furthermore, liberals were more

likely in favor of the issues such as environmental laws, gay marriages, abortion rights, gun control and Guantanamo-Bay closing that are correlated with change and openness (Caprara et al., 1999; Thorisdottir et al., 2007). Conservatives, on the other hand, were in favor of issues that sought order and structure (Jost et al., 2003a, b; Thorisdottir et al., 2007) such as immigration laws, death penalty, and Iraq War. Finally, conservatives showed they were against issues that promoted equality (Thorisdottir et al., 2007) that included distribution of wealth, and affirmative action.

Table 3. Response to political issues by self-reported political ideology.

Issues	Liberal	Somewhat liberal	Moderate	Somewhat conservative	Conservative
	<i>Obs=42</i>	<i>Obs=57</i>	<i>Obs=133</i>	<i>Obs=49</i>	<i>Obs=68</i>
	Averages on scale of 1(against) to 5 (for)				
Abortion Rights	4.10 ^{ab}	4.12 ^a	3.53 ^b	2.47 ^c	1.90 ^c
Gun Control	3.69 ^a	3.68 ^a	3.29 ^a	2.16 ^b	2.25 ^b
Death Penalty	2.85 ^a	2.93 ^a	3.75 ^b	4.08 ^{bc}	4.38 ^c
Immigration Laws	3.38 ^a	3.40 ^a	4.23 ^b	4.49 ^{bc}	4.69 ^c
Affirmative Action	3.71 ^a	3.35 ^a	3.26 ^a	2.54 ^b	2.04 ^b
Environmental Laws	4.60 ^a	4.49 ^a	3.94 ^b	3.19 ^c	2.79 ^c
Distribution of Wealth	3.90 ^a	3.33 ^{ab}	3.29 ^b	1.76 ^c	1.56 ^c
Gay Marriages	4.00 ^a	3.91 ^a	3.05 ^b	1.86 ^c	1.82 ^c
Iraq War	1.57 ^a	1.60 ^a	2.33 ^b	3.35 ^c	3.90 ^c
Guantanamo Bay Closing	4.02 ^a	3.77 ^a	2.89 ^b	2.20 ^c	1.46 ^d
Bailing Out Major Corporations	2.20 ^a	2.07 ^{ab}	1.98 ^{ab}	1.59 ^{bc}	1.43 ^c

Note: The figures reported are means of the response to given issues on a 1 (against) to 5 (for) likert scale. 2. Means do not share the same superscript (e.g. a and b) are significantly different at 0.05 level. 3. * significant at 0.05 level; ** significant at 0.01 level.

Testing hypothesis 1

To test hypothesis one, we compared the model fit of the variations based on two models: Base model and Minus Demographics model. The base model listed below includes demographic and destination characteristics regressors listed in Table 1.

$$\text{States Visited} = B_0 + B_{j_s} * (\text{Destination Characteristics}) + B_{k_s} * (\text{Demographics}) + \varepsilon_i$$

The Minus Demographics model listed below includes only destination characteristics as regressors.

$$\text{States Visited} = B_0 + B_{j_s} * (\text{Destination Characteristics}) + \varepsilon_i$$

When comparing models through Akaike Information Criteria (AIC) and Schwartz Criteria (SC), lower scores imply improved model fit (Heij, Boer, Franses, Kloek, & van Dijk, 2004). Schwartz Criteria punishes additional variables into the model more than AIC and log-likelihood and skews towards fewer regressors models (Heij et al., 2004). By punishing additional variables, Schwartz Criteria has a higher chance of showing poor model fit with each additional variable added into the model. This punishing effect of SC showed in the results with the models holding the least amount of variables having the lower SC scores.

Table 4. Multinomial regression model fit comparisons.

Added variables	Akaike information criteria	Schwartz criteria
<i>Base Model</i>	<i>2418.04</i>	<i>5312.78</i>
Base – Demographics	1886.09	3733.18
Base – Demographics + Party Affiliation	1886.75	3887.77
Base – Demographics + Reported Liberal / Conservative	1867.38	3860.57
Base – Demographics + Importance of States' Political Leaning	1918.51	3919.52
Base – Demographics + Actual Liberal / Conservative	1911.53	3912.54
Base – Demographics + Actual Congruity	1792.18	3696.79
Base – Demographics + Reported Congruity	1890.22	3833.97
Base + Political Party Affiliation	3164.84	6204.32
Base + Reported Liberal / Conservative	2497.11	5523.84
Base + Importance of States Political Leaning	2454.02	5493.5
Base + Actual Liberal / Conservative	3189.63	6229.11
Base + Reported Congruity	2459.15	5407.09
Base + Actual Congruity	2387.95	5348.46

Note: Figures in bold indicate an improvement from the base model

The results in Table 4 show that models with demographic variables (base model) generally had higher Akaike Information Criteria and Schwartz Criteria scores than models without demographic variables, indicating that demographic variables did not contribute to the model’s predicting power and the inclusion of demographic variables actually resulted in redundant models. When the political variables were added to the Minus Demographics model, these held lower scores than the base model. Specifically, Minus Demographics plus Actual Congruity held the lowest and thus best scores for AIC and SC.

In sum, the results support our hypothesis that political variables improve model fit when used in place of demographic variables, implying that destination choice models using politics variables as substitutes for demographic variables are more efficient and parsimonious. Particularly actual congruity appears to be the best among political

variables that improve model fit of destination choice.

Testing hypothesis 2

We conducted four ANCOVA with Tukey’s tests for testing hypothesis two. The results in Table 5, indicate that only reported ideology showed significant effect ($\alpha=.01$) on destination choice as measured by SPS index. Furthermore, travelers regardless of their classification did not show any significant differences in how they viewed the destinations states’ political ideology. Lastly, travelers characterized by TPAS did not show significant differences in their destination choice measured by SPS index. These results are interesting to note, as how travelers view themselves politically, but not who they actually are politically, influences the destinations states they choose to visit.

Table 5. The effect of political ideology on destination choice

Independent variable	Travelers' TPAS		Travelers' Reported Liberal / Conservative Standing	
	SPS index means	Perceived SPS index means	SPS Index means	Perceived SPS index means
Liberal	3.25 ^{ab}	2.93 ^a	2.78 ^a	2.71 ^a
Somewhat Liberal	2.95 ^a	3.18 ^a	3.10 ^{ab}	3.27 ^a
Moderate	3.38 ^{ab}	2.86 ^a	3.32 ^b	2.87 ^a
Somewhat Conservative	3.59 ^b	2.93 ^a	3.39 ^{bc}	2.67 ^a
Conservative	3.57 ^{ab}	3.00 ^a	4.00 ^d	3.33 ^a
F-Value	1.61	0.44	4.55 ^{**}	1.47

Note: Means do not share the same superscript (i.e. a and b) are significantly different at 0.05 level. 2. *: significant at 0.05 level, **: significant at 0.01 level.

The results from Tukey’s test in Table 5 indicated that of travelers categorized by their actual political ideology, actual somewhat liberal travelers visited states that exhibited more liberal political tendencies than the states traveled to by actual somewhat conservative travelers and vice versa. This is interesting, as the travelers on the extreme ends of the actual political spectrum did not show statistical differences in the states they traveled to. Even though actual conservatives visited states on average similar to actual somewhat conservatives, they held more varying range in the states they visited (i.e. standard error) which thus made it more difficult to achieve significance between group levels in Tukey’s test. Furthermore, travelers’ categorized by their views on the political issues through actual political ideology standing showed a shift from their reported political ideology standing with a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.68. This shift caused travelers who reported themselves as liberals or conservatives to be categorized as

actually somewhat liberal or actually somewhat conservative respectively and vice versa based on their views of the issues. Given that where travelers reported themselves on the political spectrum directly correlated as shown in Table 5 with the political leanings of the states they visited, this shift further accounted for the results that only somewhat liberal and somewhat conservatives showed statistical significance in the states they visited.

Of the travelers categorized by their reported political ideology in Table 5, reported conservative travelers were significantly more likely to travel to states that exhibited more conservative ideologies than travelers who reported themselves as holding a more liberal political ideology. In addition, reported liberal travelers were statistically more likely to visit states that exhibited more liberal tendencies than reported moderates, somewhat conservatives and conservative travelers.

Table 6. The effect of political ideology on destination choice (Distance > 500 miles).

Independent Variable	Travelers' TPAS		Travelers' Reported Liberal / Conservative Standing	
	SPS Index Means	Perceived SPS Index Means	SPS Index Means	Perceived SPS Index Means
Liberal	3.78 ^a	2.89 ^a	3.03 ^a	2.83 ^a
Somewhat Liberal	3.06 ^b	3.22 ^a	3.22 ^a	3.17 ^a
Moderate	3.60 ^{ab}	2.83 ^a	3.58 ^a	2.90 ^a
Somewhat Conservative	3.51 ^{ab}	3.03 ^a	3.06 ^a	2.47 ^a
Conservative	3.66 ^{ab}	3.43 ^a	4.13 ^b	3.61 ^a
F-Value	2.04*	1.39	1.81*	2.29**

Note: Means do not share the same superscript (i.e. a and b) are significantly different at 0.05 level. *: significant at 0.05 level, **: significant at 0.01 level.

The ANCOVA results on travel further than 500 miles in Table 6 indicate that reported conservative travelers still travel to states that exhibit more conservative ideological standing than travelers who reported themselves as more liberal ideologies. In addition, based on how travelers reported themselves, they viewed the destinations states' political leanings differently overall, but given the low overall observation ($n = 127$), this difference within each group was not significant enough to be shown at the individual group level. Furthermore, Tukey's test revealed an interesting result, that actual somewhat liberals were likely to visit states that exhibited more liberal ideological standings than their actual liberal counterparts. However, neither actual liberals nor somewhat liberals showed differences in the states they visited past 500 miles when compared to travelers of more actual conservative ideologies. Lastly, a key result is found when comparing the f -values in Tables 5 and 6. With the exception being between travelers reported political ideology and the political leaning the destinations states exhibit, longer distances played a positive moderating role on the effect that political ideology holds on destination choice.

The testing of political ideology's influence of destination choice under hypothesis two revealed some unique results. It should be noted that travelers do not fully know the destination state's political leanings as this was shown with the non-significance and inconsistent perceived SPS mean levels between groups in each of the tests. They were however, influenced by the destination's state's actual political ideology even if they were not fully aware of this influence. Furthermore, this influence corresponded with only how travelers reported their own political ideology standings. Lastly, further distances traveled can increase the moderating effect of political ideology's influence on destination choice.

Therefore, we conclude that hypothesis two holds based on how travelers reported their political ideology having an effect on their destination choice.

To sum the results as indicated in Tables 5 and 6, destinations that hint at themselves as somewhat liberal have difficulty in reaching travelers who deem themselves as more conservative than they really are and vice-versa. In addition, destinations that show themselves as moderates reach a larger share of the population as most individuals are somewhere in the middle of the liberal / conservative spectrum and only travelers at the extreme ends of the spectrum (liberal and conservative) cannot be reached by those destinations. Though, if a destination does feel a need to attract a more niche population segment, it may want to appeal to liberals or conservatives through operating and marketing initiatives. The destinations need to tie these initiatives to the political issues listed in Table 3, by hinting at their in favor, neutral or against specific political issues that appeal to the given population segments. For example, a destination looking to target liberal travelers may want to emphasize its high diversity hiring policy that shows the destination is promoting affirmative action to appeal to more liberal travelers.

Conclusion and Discussion

Through testing of destination choice models it was shown that substituting political variables in place of demographic variables would be more efficient in modeling. Furthermore, models including variables that exhibit congruity between political ideologies of the travelers and destinations held the greatest potential for improvement of destination choice models. Further development of destination choice models may include political variables that take into account the political ideology standing of either the

travelers or the destinations. Lastly, researchers may look at creation of variables' that exhibit congruity between political ideology of the travelers and the destinations.

The testing of political ideology's effect on destination choice revealed some interesting results. As expected, distance as a control variable played a significant role in these results. Although, this role is unique in that it strengthened the influence of how the travelers viewed the political leaning of the destinations' states in their choice of destinations. In addition, travelers going further distances were also more influenced by the political leanings that the destination state exhibits based on the travelers' actual political leanings. As travelers increase their involvement by putting more effort into the planning of longer distance leisure trips (Fesenmaier & Johnson, 1989), it can potentially induce additional emotional attachments that the travelers may feel toward the destination (Beerli et al., 2007). Beerli et al. (2007) suggested that this increase in emotional attachments can enhance the moderating effect of congruity based variables on destination choice, in this case the political ideologies between the travelers and the destination choice being the congruity based variables.

While distance is shown to increase the effect of political ideology on destination choice, based on the limited sample, it is difficult to tell where the differences are between each of the political groups of travelers. Given the moderating role that distance plays on political ideology's influence of destination choice, destination managers may look at inquiring into how longer distance travelers politically view themselves and how they politically view the area surrounding the destination.

When investigating regardless of the distance traveled, only reported political ideology showed influence on destination choice. Furthermore, travelers with different actual political ideologies did not view destinations states differently in terms of political leanings. This can be contributed to three attributes. First, travelers' hold a lack of understanding of not only their own actual self-image (Walters, 1978), but also of where their own political ideological views actually fall on the liberal / conservative spectrum (Popkin & Dimock, 1999). Second, individuals are increasingly influenced by various media outlets (TV, newspaper, and internet) that can skew not only their understanding of their own political ideological standing but also their political perceptions of the area the destination resides (Chaffee, Zhao, & Leshner, 1994; Feldman, 1982; Popkin & Dimock, 1999; Sirgy & Su, 2000). Third, individuals attempt to appeal to their ideal-self image, in this case reported political ideology when

engaging in consumer behavior (Walters, 1978). Destination managers may look to certain media outlets to sway travelers political perception of how they view the area the destination resides. By swaying political perception of the area that the destinations reside thus may allow the destinations to reach certain marketing segments that did not previously view the area in a politically positive light. In addition, by campaigning through media outlets it may allow destination managers to even influence how travelers politically view their own political ideology standing. This may allow the destination managers to influence travelers' perception of their own political ideology to become more aligned with the region that the destination resides. The results show that closer alignment correlates with influencing travelers pick of a given destination.

Destinations in politically moderate regions may look to keep their political ideology similar to the region, since being center of the liberal / conservative spectrum gives these destinations a larger market for attracting travelers. Even though destinations that are politically moderate may reach a larger market base, destinations located in politically moderate regions that are struggling to build up a core patron base may look to operational, marketing and policy efforts that vary politically from the rest of their regional competition. These operational and marketing efforts tied with political issues will move the destination out of a moderate political ideology standing and more into a niche market.

This can be accomplished through a number of initiatives. The destinations looking to move more into a liberal market may want to market the destinations by promoting green initiatives and sustainability because reported liberals and somewhat liberals are more likely in favor of environmental laws as shown in Table 3. In addition, destinations may look at veteran discounts for attracting travelers who view themselves as more politically conservative as reported conservatives and somewhat conservatives were in favor of Iraq War and against the closure of Guantanamo Bay.

On the other side, destinations in dominantly liberal or conservative areas that are trying to appeal to the mass market may want to market themselves counter to their regions' political standing. This can be accomplished through either toning down the political overtones of the destination to appeal to a broader market or by emphasizing political overtones that is opposite to the greater area's political ideology standing. Destinations in a dominantly liberal region could still attract conservative leaning tourists by offering more outdoor activities geared towards hunting as reported somewhat conservatives and conservatives were against gun-control laws.

As with any study the current one has some limitations. The survey was administered through an online format as opposed to conventional methods. While it did receive 0.58% response rate which is in the normal range for online surveys, the response rate is considered low in comparison to other survey administering methods. Other survey administrative methods with higher response rates may allow other researchers to conclude differing results with a differing sample. Since this study was conducted looking at interstate travel within the United States, the results may change if tested in other countries or regions.

While this study looked at introducing political ideology as a destination choice variable, further studies may want to investigate the effect of political ideology on the choice of international destinations, as countries may hold greater differences in political ideology and laws than states within the United States. These greater differences may allow political ideology to hold a greater effect on the destination choice of travelers. In addition, distance was shown to play a moderating role on political ideology's influence in destination choice, future studies may want to focus more on this moderating effect. Lastly, given the results of the fit tests, future research may want to include political ideology variables, most notable actual congruity in destination choice models for a more parsimonious predictive model.

Note

1. Calculation of approximated distance formula: We first created a variable called x by taking the quotient of 3960 miles and 180 degrees, $3960 / 180 = 69.1$, and multiplied that figure by the difference in latitudes between the two cities, $69.1 \times (\text{latitude}_2 - \text{latitude}_1)$. Next we created a variable called y by taking 69.1 and multiplying it by the difference in longitudes between the two cities, $69.1 \times (\text{longitude}_2 - \text{longitude}_1)$. Then we took this figure and multiplied it by the cosine of quotient of the latitude of the first city and 180 degrees divided by pi, $69.1 \times (\text{latitude}_2 - \text{latitude}_1) \times \cos(\text{latitude}_1 / (180 / \pi)) = y$. For the final step, we took a scalar product to determine the length between the two points x and y (Davidson & MacKinnon, 2004), by taking the square root of the summation of x squared plus y squared, $(x^2 + y^2)^{1/2}$.

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