

6 Applying cognitive psychology to destination marketing

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When reading this chapter, you will engage with these key concepts:

- How cognitive psychology in tourism research addresses topics such as perception, attention, emotion, and memory, shaping behaviour and responses and influencing experience design.
- Cognitive psychology challenges folk psychology assumptions.
- Cognitive psychology puts emphasis on individual thought processes .
- Cognitive models highlight dual-system decision-making, where both reflective and automatic systems influence behaviour.
- Cognitive psychology explains tourism phenomena beyond behaviorist paradigms.
- Techniques utilised include eye tracking and skin conductance.
- Emotional appraisal theories, like cognitive appraisal theory, predict emotions and behaviour based on individual appraisals of experiences.
- Cognitive psychology supports tourism research on experience design.

“There is nothing more practical than a good theory” (Lewin, 1951, p. 169).

Introduction

Destination management research is difficult to implement in practice, as most destination managers are not looking for changes to their governance structures. Destination managers are generally interested in destination marketing and customer research. The problem here is that current research is based in mainstream behavioural psychology.

I have had two main research interests since completing my doctorate. The first examined tourism destinations and the organization of stakeholders in them. An initial research project was to examine how tourism in Queensland was organized and coordinated, the roles and relationships of key industry stakeholders and Tourism Queensland’s role as a lead agency in network coordination. The final report was well received, and it demonstrated that, far from being disorganised, developed destinations in Queensland such as Gold Coast