

**Thrilled to have ‘bagged a bargain’ or ‘bitter’ and ‘very frustrating’?**

**Exploring consumer attitudes to value and deals in the leisure travel market.**

**Abstract**

Similar to most global tourism markets, UK consumers adjusted their behavior during the global financial crisis, emphasizing value for money in travel choices. However, there is little evidence concerning consumers’ value-seeking behavior and especially how deals, discounts and other sales promotions influence tourist decision making. This project explores concepts of value consciousness and deal proneness to shed light on attitudes towards monetary value in travel purchases. Using focus groups, the study found that deals and discounts frequently underpin some tourist choices, but that value consciousness is related to deal proneness, and interactions between the two could result in negative, positive or mixed emotions. This relationship was captured through a dynamic categorization of tourists’ attitudes and behavior into four approaches to deals and value, namely deals 1) as a way of life, 2) as a bonus, 3) as a problem and 4) as toxic. The categories were dynamic in that individuals could move across them. The implications for tourism marketers are outlined.

**Key words:** deal proneness, value consciousness, emotions, decision styles, consumer attitudes, consumer behavior.

## Introduction

The tourism industry is one of the most competitive and dynamic industries in the service sector. The range of choices on offer to tourists is vast, and since tourism purchases often represent ‘big ticket’ items in discretionary household budgets, consumers are acutely aware of value determinants and quality criteria, which form an essential role in travel decision making (Chen and Chen 2010). The Internet has provided consumers with a high degree of transparency in tourism product prices, allowing greater scrutiny of offers, deals and discounts. Thus, tourists are more able to evaluate the value and quality attributes of these products and services (Buhalis and Law 2008). These contextual factors generate questions about how consumer perceptions and attitudes towards deals offered by the tourism industry are changing, and the implications arising for businesses.

Although previous research has examined the effects of price discounting on demand in the airline and accommodation sectors from an economics perspective (e.g. Granados et al. 2012; Yelkur and Da Costa 2001), relatively few studies have examined consumer perspectives on the role that discounts play in influencing consumer choices, that of Park and Jang (2016) being a notable recent exception. Within marketing, there is a lack of research on the implications of price discounting for customer perceptions of value. This is an important omission since prices play an intrinsic role in brand perceptions and service quality (Boz, Arslan, and Koc 2017; Jeong and Crompton 2017; Zeithaml 1988).

The purpose of this article is to examine customer attitudes towards price discounts and promotions in tourism and their relationship to value perceptions. The paper develops and applies theory on *deal proneness* and *value consciousness* to tourism consumption.

Specifically, the study examines these issues in the context of the domestic tourism market in England. The British tourism market is one of the most important globally, representing an expenditure of £43.2 billion in 2016 (McGivney 2017), and yet few studies have explored this

market. The present study examines English consumers' responses to pricing strategies in the tourism and hospitality sector, including explicitly their attitudes towards and perceptions of deals, and to develop a holistic understanding of the role that price plays in tourist decisions.

## **Literature review**

In marketing strategy, pricing refers to the direct monetary value of the product or service. The use of deals and discounts in marketing strategy has increased rapidly in tourism. This has been attributed to rising costs of advertising, together with the increasing number of media channels. An increase in 'noise' and 'clutter' in the media environment have led to an emphasis by tourism marketers on alternative methods to influence purchase decisions. One example is the attempt to understand the influence of customer reviews on both price anchoring and willingness to pay (Book, Tanford, and Chen 2016).

In tourism marketing, there is an apparent contradiction between an important emphasis on conveying high quality features of products and services, and the copious use of promotions and discounting to stimulate demand. Because tourism products are hedonic purchases, in which consumers are sometimes unwilling to compromise satisfactory experiences and high quality, price-related factors may have uncertain effects on tourism decisions (Kim, Kim, and Kim 2018; Tanford, Erdem and Baloglu 2012). Yet, sales promotions are often used by consumers to mitigate time pressures in decision making and, by marketers in targeting strategies. As low-cost airline carriers and budget hotel chains have proven, the value model can be a very effective strategy in tourism. Yet there is scant research on the use of sales promotions in the tourism literature. Therefore, there is a need to understand consumer attitudes towards deals and promotions in depth.

### *Price deals and tourist decision making*

Price is one of the most important factors affecting tourist decision-making (Masiero and Nicolau 2012). This is because the difficulties in evaluating intangible services mean that consumers generally link low price with low quality (Kandampully and Suhartanto 1989). We know remarkably little about the role that price plays in tourists' decisions, although evidence

does exist that contradicts simplistic assumptions between discounts and low quality. For example, cruise passengers who paid a discounted price were more likely to evaluate their cruise experience positively than those who paid full price (Petrick 2005) and in tourism adverts, price discounts attract customer attention more than other features, such as pictures of tourists or the brand/destination logo (Boz et al. 2017).

Recent research has begun to address the ways in which discounted or offer prices are perceived by tourists. It has been noted that heuristics are associated with price effects, in that odd number prices are linked to mental shortcuts that simplify decision-making, and that price framing is culturally specific to the market (Jeong and Crompton 2017). Whether tourism offers are framed as either discrete purchases or bundled into a package (often at a discount), influences consumer decisions, while price, price transparency and consumer income have negligible implications for variety-seeking in the selection of a travel package (Kim et al. 2018).

While the previous discussion has focused on the effect of pricing on holiday selection, some related studies have examined consumer attitudes and behaviors of shopping experiences in the destination, such as haggling in street markets. For example, Correia and Kozak (2016) found that perceived utility and price consciousness were related to moral values and status in a cross-cultural study of purchases of counterfeit branded goods in street markets in Portugal and Turkey. Kozak (2016) explored the bargaining behavior of British holiday makers to Turkey and found that value-for-money becomes an expectation for some tourist groups, who seek similar products at lower prices. The bargaining experience can lead to satisfaction and positive evaluations, although there are also negative associations and attitudes towards haggling and pricing in some contexts. Finally, Kozak, Correia and Del Chapia (2017) explored the role of rational and non-rational value determinants in understanding shoppers' attitudes and how they may affect repeat visits to Italy for bargain shopping. These recent

studies provide a useful basis to explore theories on perceived value and socio-psychological factors that may influence responses to price deals in the broader context of vacation decisions.

### *Deal proneness and value consciousness*

Theory on deals and value determinants has largely been driven by utility theory and has focused on two dimensions: deal proneness and value consciousness. *Deal proneness* has been defined as “an increased propensity to respond to a purchase offer because the form of the purchase offer positively affects purchase evaluations” (Lichtenstein et al. 1990, 56). It refers to the propensity to buy rather than actual buying behavior, and thus is conceived as a latent consumer trait (DelVecchio 2005) and an individual characteristic influencing consumer perceptions (Buil, De Chernatony and, Muntaner 2013). There has been an extensive debate around deal proneness as a generic concept, a domain-specific construct (around particular types of deal) or an intermediate approach (Lichtenstein et al. 1995). DelVecchio (2005) suggested that there are three main types of deal proneness – active (i.e. looking for a deal before buying), passive (i.e. taking advantage of a deal once in the store) and proneness to specific deal types (e.g. coupons) – and indeed more recently Kwon and Kwon (2013) noted that there may be heterogeneity in deal proneness, with different types of shopping for deals in the information search stage of the decision-making process. There remains a lot of uncertainty about the characteristics of deal proneness, and it has not been explored from a holistic perspective.

Understanding deal redemption requires an understanding of *value consciousness*, defined as “a concern for paying low prices, subject to some quality constraint”, meaning that “the highest value for the particular consumer is viewed as the lowest priced product that meets his or her specific quality requirements” (Lichtenstein et al. 1990, 56).

The relationship between deal proneness and value consciousness has been explained by utility theory (e.g. Pillai and Kumar 2012), yet the two concepts have emerged independently. Deal-prone consumers value transaction utility (DeVVecchio 2005), since the internal reference price in the consumer's mind is more expensive than the deal. However, value-conscious consumers are affected by acquisition utility, where the focus is on the need-satisfying properties of the product (Lichtenstein et al 1990) (utility theory is discussed further in the next section). The acquisition–transaction utility theory approach provides a useful mechanism to differentiate value consciousness and deal proneness (Pillai and Kumar 2012). Additionally, value consciousness and deal proneness share some conceptual characteristics. Both are conceived as a continuum, from high to low (Lichtenstein et al. 1990), which suggests that they are not mutually exclusive (Pillai and Kumar 2012). The relationship between them has not been studied in depth, leading to two main omissions in the literature: first, the influence of value consciousness on consumer responses; and second, comparisons between the behavior of value-conscious and deal-prone consumers (Palazón and Delgado 2009). Additionally, most studies on consumer responses to prices and discounts have assumed a cognitive perspective, which has overlooked affective considerations. Aydinli et al. argued that *affect* is a “quicker, easier, strong conditioner of preference” (2014, 80), and identified that price promotions increase the affective response to purchase decisions. Laroche et al. (2003) proposed a cognitive–affective–behavior model and examined sensitivity in a retail context involving coupons and two-for-one promotions. Their study highlighted the salience of behavioral, cognitive *and* affective aspects of value consciousness. Yet there is little sense of how value consciousness or deal proneness produces affective responses. Furthermore, most studies in this area have been conducted from a quantitative perspective, assuming that deal proneness and value consciousness are inherent to the individual, thus neglecting how individuals make decisions contextually and consider situational factors.

Therefore, a deeper understanding of both concepts is needed to provide a more holistic understanding of how value is interpreted in the context of tourism purchase decisions, and in relation to the pricing strategies employed by firms.

*Consumer attitudes as the basis for deal proneness and value consciousness in tourism*

Existing research has approached price discounts through from various perspectives. Utility theory has been used to distinguish between the economic gain from the transaction (acquisition utility) and the psychological satisfaction from the transaction (transaction utility) (Lichtenstein et al. 1990; Pillai and Kumar 2012). Prospect theory, in tourism contexts, has been used to consider the gains and losses of value based on the perceived outcome (Kozak 2016; Park and Jang 2016). Although these theories have been very effective in explaining travel choices, they may have limited scope to provide a complete understanding of such purchase decisions. This is because they assume rationality, and so neglect emotions as well as contextual and situational factors that affect choice-processing styles and outcomes (Tanford et al. 2012; McCabe, Li and Chen 2016). It is for this reason that we argue that a focus on attitudes offers a useful and multi-faceted route to examine consumer perceptions of price deals and value.

However, unlike the study by Correia and Kozak (2016), which applied the attitude construct as a function of the belief, attitude, intention, and behavior sequence applied through the theory of reasoned action (Fishbein and Ajzen 1975), we adopt Allport's definition of attitudes. Allport defines attitude as "a mental or neural state of readiness, organized through experience, exerting a directive or dynamic influence upon the individual's response to all objects and situations with which it is related" (1935, 810). Recent research on the psychology of tourism has suggested that a renewed focus on attitudes would reap great benefits to theory on tourist experience and behavior. Pearce and Packer (2013) argued that travel experiences become embedded in an individual's memory through telling and retelling,



taking on the character of representations. Thus, attitudes are more than evaluative responses to structured survey questions, but “packages of information traded in daily life” (Pearce and Packer 2013, 9). This approach to attitudes as a construct can complement the standard approach that seeks to identify what people think and experience, by tracing how attitudes are derived, communicated and contextualized in social interaction.

Value consciousness and deal proneness possess characteristics that make them suitable objects for conceptualization as attitudes, for two key reasons. First, the widespread adoption of technology has allowed firms to offer greater customization and highly differentiated, often individualized approaches to pricing strategy. Thus, consumers’ experiences of prices and offers become part of their travel stories, which could lead to positive or negative emotions and/or satisfaction. This requires a more holistic understanding. In addition, the prevalence of individualized pricing means that consumer responses are highly contextualized, making it difficult to generalize from conventional attitudinal measures. Secondly, there is greater transparency in prices and discounts on offer in the marketplace. Transparency influences choices (Tanford et al 2012) and increases customers’ willingness to spend time comparing prices and evaluating alternatives, generally online (Buhalis and Law 2008). Therefore, over time, consumers build up experience of prices of travel products that is highly nuanced and related to a wide basket of attributes. This allows people to develop richer perceptions of prices and quality, which go beyond ideas of risk and reference pricing.

In cultures that place a high individual and social value on the ability to take holidays, socio-economic and political events, such as the global financial crisis, increase consumers’ focus on the price of goods and services and other value dimensions. Consumers fought hard to protect holiday spending throughout the recession, which led to the emergence of more value-conscious behaviors, and we suggest this was underpinned by shifts in attitudes. Modification strategies included: reducing the number of holidays taken each year, reducing the length of

stay, replacing foreign holidays with cheaper domestic alternatives, and staying with friends and relatives (Visit England 2014). Furthermore, the Association of British Travel Agents (ABTA), stated in its annual *Travel Trends Report* for 2014, that value for money was expected to remain a key consideration for holidaymakers. Indeed, Visit England (2014) predicted that the focus on value and thrift would not dissipate as the economy recovers, but are likely to become habits that will remain entrenched in consumer behavior in the long term. However, the extent to which such behaviors are the result of shifts in attitudes towards types of holidays, or the result of value consciousness or deal proneness and the interaction between them, is a crucial omission.

Attitudes are, then, “subtle summaries, shapers and modifiers of behavioral directions” (Pearce and Packer 2013, 7) rather than drivers of behavior. Thus, tourists’ accounts of their experiences can assist the understanding of attitudes towards deals. The present study examined such accounts to yield important implications for research and the tourism industry.

### **Methodology and data**

Previous research measuring deal proneness and value consciousness has assumed that they are underlying traits, inherent to each individual. However, qualitative research may be more appropriate to understand the process of deal shopping (Kwon and Kwon 2013). In this study, focus groups were used to explore attitudes to deals and value. Stokes and Bergin (2006) pointed out that amongst the many benefits of focus groups two essential qualities were group interaction and the identification and replication of social forces. Nonetheless, it is also the case that participants may feel inhibited, and social desirability bias or group dynamics can stifle the articulation of individual perspectives and lead to the emergence of consensus views (Greenbaum 1998). Of course, these pitfalls can be mitigated by careful research design and active and careful management of the interaction by moderators.

In tourism studies, focus groups have been widely used in the context of marketing research. They have been found useful for examining stakeholders' attitudes towards and perceptions of tourism development, and particularly valuable in exploring processes (Wilson, Fesenmaier, Fesenmaier and van Es 2001). Focus groups can be beneficial in dealing with complex problems, especially by drawing out a range of different opinions, or where ideas and solutions can be discussed.

The current research project aimed to probe attitudes towards deals through focus groups. The impetus came from Visit England's regular research with UK consumers on their decision processes, and intentions to visit English destinations, which revealed a growing importance attached to discounts and deals. Visit England had found that consumers consistently engaged in value-seeking and optimization strategies even though they were more optimistic about their future finances. This finding suggested that following the recession, consumer confidence or lack thereof was not the sole driver of value-seeking behaviors (Visit England 2014). Therefore, a need for a deeper understanding of the relationship between price and discounts was identified.

The present study consisted of five focus groups, which aimed to cover the spectrum of tourist consumers: young pre-family urbanites; middle-class families with children; working-class struggling households; lower middle-class families; and older empty nesters. Participants were recruited via the use of a screening questionnaire, which asked respondents to complete a short survey on their holiday booking intentions and behavior (questions are provided in supplementary files to this article). Informants entered into a draw to participate in a focus group and, if selected, they would receive an incentive payment of a £25 Amazon voucher. The screening survey (designed in close consultation with representatives of Visit England's research unit) was accessed via a QR code printed on posters and leaflets, distributed in public places (e.g. libraries, supermarkets) and, through an online link shared in social media (i.e.

Facebook, Twitter), the staff email distribution lists of the lead author's academic institution as well as through the university's social media sites and social media feeds of the local city destination management organization.

In total, 184 completed surveys were received. An analysis of the demographic details and other information yielded a pool of 60 potential participants for the focus groups, who lived within a reasonable travel time of the venue. A total of 36 people attended one of the five group sessions, held in May 2015. As Table 1 shows, the gender mix of participants was heavily skewed towards women, who are the primary decision makers in family travel (Mottiar and Quinn 2004), with only four male participants. However, the sample was quite balanced in terms of age, marital status, parental situation, and working and occupational status.

INSERT TABLE 1 HERE

The focus groups were designed to explore attitudes to holiday pricing generally and to discounts in particular, and their use of online sites such as Voucher Codes, Groupon and social media sites to source deals. We designed two written exercises to facilitate discussion, and a range of question routes, building on the enquiries raised by Visit England and our review of the literature. We used conversational sentences to guide a natural discussion leading from one question to another (Krueger and Casey 2014). Written exercises comprised an ice-breaker activity using sticky notes on which informants wrote their favorite holiday places, and a set of adverts with different types of deals to obtain detailed opinions on different aspects of deals. These exercises aimed to ensure that participants were all fully involved, to minimize negative group dynamics and to avoid the confirmation effect of the most popular answer (Greenbaum 1998). The subsequent discussion explored the use of discounts for particular types of holiday purchases, the interplay between searching, planning

and buying holidays of different types, the habitual or infrequent use of discounts, and the emotional response that discounts engendered in consumers.

The focus groups were organized around an attempt to have a diversity of people (primarily in terms of age and marital status) and situations, to enable a rounded discussion with different opinions, although expediency and availability inevitably constrained our efforts. The lead author moderated each discussion while the co-researcher took notes to record the inter-group dynamics and body language, occasionally interjecting in the discussion to probe particular issues. In order to avoid interruptions and create a relaxed atmosphere, researchers booked a quiet university meeting room and provided refreshments. The duration of the group discussions ranged from 1 hour to 1.5 hours. The resulting audio-recorded data were professionally transcribed and analyzed independently by each researcher. The data analysis followed the streamlined *codes-to-theory* approach to progress from the “particular reality” of our data (i.e. empirical observations) to the thematic and theoretical understanding (Saldaña 2016: 14). Analytic codes generated by each researcher were compared until agreement was reached. Subsequent rounds of analysis compared and reduced the data into themes using standard thematic analysis based on grounded theory techniques (Corbin and Strauss 2008), as illustrated in Table 2.

INSERT TABLE 2 HERE

## **Findings and discussion**

Although the study was specifically designed to probe the contexts and use of deals in tourism decision making, what was initially striking was the emphasis placed by almost all participants on the role of monetary value in decision making. Participants talked about the amount of effort they put into searching for value, deliberating on deals and other promotional offers made by the travel industry and, evaluating the value propositions of packages, airlines and other providers.

Yet for many of the participants, the search for value, including deals, seemed to be habitual and an underpinning consideration in tourism choice, even when a deal is not possible or available. This suggests that planning ahead and undertaking complex information search and evaluation involve value-seeking dimensions in addition to destination selection. However, some participants felt that some tourism decisions were too much of an investment value to be of particular concern. They felt that, in those contexts, the potential negative consequences of going for value options were too great and instead they placed their emphasis on destination attributes or package features. This enabled us to classify tourist decisions as being characterized by either high or low value consciousness.

We identified four categories of attitudes towards deals by comparing consumers' deal proneness and value consciousness (see Appendix 1), thus addressing Lichtenstein et al.'s (1990) call to understand how high/low degrees of deal proneness and value consciousness relate to each other and uncovering the complexity of this relationship. Specifically, we identified: 1) deals as a way of life, 2) deals as a bonus, 3) deals as a problem and 4) deals as toxic, for consumers (Figure 1). We furthermore captured the dynamic nature of this categorization by showing how individuals can move from one category to another as their attitudes and circumstances change.

INSERT FIGURE 1 HERE

#### *Deals as a way of life*

Deals as a way of life reflect attitudes among consumers who love (and actively look for a deal), but which must also fit their needs, and so value consciousness and deal proneness are both high. Respondents in this category of attitudes had often signed up to email alerts for deals via websites such as Groupon, and actively searched for and responded to deal offers. They identified themselves as 'bargain hunters', and active deal-takers, who looked at a

destination or holiday product they had not previously considered because of the availability of a deal. This category largely applied to younger individuals, single or in a relationship, and without children. The following is an example of the type of behavior associated with this approach:

*“I would, quite often, deliberately pick a deal when I wasn’t even thinking of going away anyway, just because it seems like a great... if it’s a really, really cheap deal and it’s somewhere I’d never thought of going for and we find we’re taken to places that we discover new things by doing that. Just lots of weekend breaks, really. So, there’s a sense of discovery and little treasure hunts, really, getting these little deals.”* (Group 1)

In this category, advertised deals and discounts can trigger holiday ideas, research and booking. Email advertising can act as a prompt for ‘window shopping’.

*“Yeah. Yes, you’ve got to love Groupon especially having a look and seeing what’s on. Subscribing to them if you know that you’re heading that way as well. There’s always some restaurant that’s going to be doing free desserts or two-for-one mains or you get a free bottle of wine, we’ve had that before... That’s always useful to have but also if you’re buying a package in certain hotels you can get free dinner or you could get a free upgrade.”* (Group 5)

This type of attitude might relate to a particular type of deal consumer, who tends to be prone to deals encountered incidentally (i.e. unplanned), defined as “encounters” by Kwon and Kwon (2013). Their attitude to tourism deals is deeply ingrained, and relates to specific behaviors (searching for deals, taking deals and offers) and a high level of value consciousness. Their attitudes suggest they are likely to take advantage of unplanned offers, and actively search for deals, which may relate to both value-mining and price-mining characteristics (Kwon and Kwon 2013). Price is always factored into the search and decision

process. These individuals tried hard to obtain the best possible value and searching for deals was an important part of the process.

*“No, absolutely, deals are the first place and then once you’ve found that first deal, it’s a starting point to see how much lower you can get it. There are some really great comparison websites of deals. Another one I use, Travel Republic and that Trivago, the one that’s always advertising online. Those ones I find are fantastic...to make it as cheap as possible.”* (Group 2)

This type of attitude and the associated behavior confirm the idea that these consumers spend increasingly more time online, on comparison websites for example, looking for exceptional value for money (Buhalis and Law 2008; Tanford et al 2012). Although research suggests that price promotions reduce deliberation time (Aydinli et al. 2014), for people whose attitudes suggest high deal proneness and value consciousness, information search is likely to be lengthy and yet a positive and value-enhancing process.

A number of people in each focus group also mentioned that, in order to obtain the absolutely best deal, they would haggle and/or take additional steps to ensure the lowest price for their trips. The following extract epitomizes this approach:

*“Yes, I mean, I tend to... In the UK, I’ll either look at Groupon and then I’ve sometimes gone direct to the hotel and tried to haggle the deal. I don’t tend to use Groupon in that way. I’ll haggle the deals with the hotel. I’ve literally sat one night and ping-ponged between two different hotels until I got the best deal. I’m a bit mad that way but I’ll hammer them down.”* (Group 1)

Furthermore, these consumers’ positive attitudes towards deals are not always dependent on their income, as the following excerpt suggests:



*“I think it’s weird, because I’m now better off than I was a year ago, but it’s almost like you get into the habit of looking for the best value. It’s weird when you continue to do that, even though you’re more comfortably off.”* (Group 2)

This suggests that consumers expressing this type of attitude are willing to ‘engineer’ deals (Kwon and Kwon 2013), using haggling and going beyond conventional search processes to find the best possible deal, which influences the type and timing of holiday purchases. People who think about deals as being important and part of their way of life may be more open to intuitive, affect-driven decision styles, especially in specific holiday contexts, including short-break domestic UK holidays or low-cost airline tickets. This may imply an emphasis on transactional utility, where past experience and confidence are related to high deal proneness (Lichtenstein et al. 1990).

On the other hand, deal taking involves effort, including haggling and extensive search for lower-priced offers. This effort, though, is not generally perceived as a ‘cost’, but as value enhancing. This group expressed attitudes that were linked to higher levels of confidence in their decision making, and a sense of power and achievement, related through the stories they told of obtaining bargains. They were frequent travelers, and expressed very positive emotions about their deal-buying experiences. These respondents ‘loved’ deals, and an ability to obtain a deal elicited strong, favorable emotions. The following are just a few examples illustrating this outcome:

*“I think it makes you feel more relaxed about not having to really make the most use of your time. If you’ve spent so much money on it, you feel very kind of... not smug, but confident that you’ve got yourself a good deal and that adds to the pleasure of the holiday.”* (Group 3)

*“For me the fact it’s come down is part of the appeal. I like a discount. I like to think I bagged a bargain...”* (Group 4)

*“I do...I am a bargain hunter, I’m a sale buyer. I was raised by a very shrewd mother. I’m very proud of that, so that for me is like a badge of honor really.” (Group 4)*

Thus, deals as a way of life could be linked to experiences of specific behaviors and positive emotions that reflect a high deal-prone and high value-consciousness set of attitudes, which were quite distinct.

#### *Deals as a bonus*

The category ‘deals as a bonus’ reflects, on the one hand, a high level of value consciousness and yet, on the other, low deal proneness. People expressing this type of attitude were not willing to sacrifice or compromise on particular aspects of their tourism experience, which suggests a higher emphasis on acquisition utility (Lichtenstein et al. 1990). In those circumstances, a deal, if it can be obtained, is an added bonus rather than essential. Deals are not acceptable at any cost. We observed this type of attitudes towards deals mostly in middle-aged and mature participants who were married or in a relationship. The importance attached to value and price considerations was dependent on the holiday context. For example, people with these attitudes expressed differences in value perceptions for ‘main’ holidays abroad and UK short breaks. Deals were seen as a bonus (sometimes an unexpected bonus) and were evaluated within those contexts. Holidays in England were sometimes seen as a bonus – something additional to holidays abroad.

*“I wouldn’t say it’s searching for a deal, I would say it’s just looking up the prices and we will always look for value for money and for me it’s value for money, not the cheapest. So, we would never just go for the first price that we saw: we’d always do a bit of research. Look at where the location is, look at what we want to do when we’re there and how close it is. So, we see it as research and we see it as good value for money. If there’s a deal as well it’s a bonus.” (Group 4)*

*“I personally wouldn't say it was essential for me. I would definitely see it as a bonus and it's something I would actively look for, but if I couldn't get a deal, that wouldn't prevent me from going on holiday. I would just go for the cheapest one I could find.”* (Group 3)

There was some discussion around the notion of reference prices. Participants expressing this type of attitude often stated that they had a budget in mind when searching for holidays or breaks, and made comparisons based on alternative value propositions.

*“I think everybody's got the budget to work to. You know in your own mind what you want to go up to, and the quality that you want, so there's a compromise there of doing it, whereas you might see something, think, 'Oh, that looks great,' then you look at the price and it's £1,000 a week. No way am I paying that, so you just dismiss it. Well, I would, because I think it's just ridiculous. So, I go back to looking at something reasonably priced that is in the budget that we could afford.”* (Group 3)

Consumers frequently mentioned a constant search for value, which was mainly interpreted as being the lowest possible price, but not at any cost. Quality was also a determinant in decisions about value in addition to low cost. Some respondents expressed the view that their holidays were ‘rewards’ and this determined an expectation of luxury, or at least good standards of quality, which might be unnecessarily compromised by taking a deal or discount. Other respondents stated that their holiday decisions were destination driven, and therefore deals or discounts were secondary considerations.

*“Yeah, I think for us, we think, okay where do we want to go? Then we think, okay, well what time off can we get? Then we say, well, what's the best price that we can get for that location at that time? If something pops up for ... So, we'll keep looking for best price at this place and we'll go for the best price that works with our dates. So, we're driven by the location.”*

(Group 4)

Participants also expressed the opinion that despite value being intrinsic to the holiday search, some deals were perceived to be high risk. Risk was associated with destination context (UK or abroad) and price.

*“I’m slightly nervous about too-cheap self-catering in Britain, having been burnt. This is before kids, but me and my husband went to Bridlington and stayed in a self-catering flat that was really awful. There were teabags still in the teapot that had gone moldy and I know when I told my mother how much we were paying she was very dubious.”* (Group 3)

High value consciousness could also be linked to deliberative information search and complex evaluation behaviors. For example, when we showed the deal adverts to participants, some of them struggled to decide because they felt they needed more information about the destination before making a decision, and this uncertainty was not welcomed:

*“I’ve not got all the information I need [...] I have to make an assumption that I have three nights that I could go [...] time availability is a key factor in this decision-making process [...] the £99 one [deal][...] I would be a bit dubious about why it’s been reduced; so some issues there potentially about quality, which is why then I want to click through and find out where it was, what the hotel was [...] so for me, the price isn’t everything [...] the deal is important but not necessarily the cheapest price.”* (Group 3)

As a consequence of the somewhat ambivalent attitude towards deals, the emotional aspects of this type were also mixed, including anxiety about whether they had actually obtained the very best deal:

*“I think the lead-up to searching and booking, there’s always an element of excitement, but I think what I find is once I’ve committed and paid my money, there’s then that anxiety of, ‘Did I get the best deal or could I have found something that was elusive, hiding something in the ether?’ Do you know what I mean? It’s just ridiculous really.”* (Group 2)

This excerpt reflects the mixed emotions experienced at different stages of the decision-making process, highlighting the enjoyment found in the search process, followed by post-purchase angst. This could be linked to post-purchase counterfactual thinking, leading to negative emotions, as investigated in recent studies (Park and Jang 2016).

### *Deals as a problem*

For some respondents, and in some contexts, price was not a key factor, because other considerations drove decisions (e.g. pets, refusal to compromise on holiday quality). Moreover, people in this category, and especially families with children living at home, often perceived that deals were impossible to obtain. Indeed, the majority of attitudes in this category were linked to an inability to take deals, mainly due to the situational characteristics of participants. Although people in this category would be open to deals, and actively searched for them, they were largely, and frustratingly, unobtainable. A lack of flexibility was often combined with negative emotions and a refusal to compromise on a much-needed, if too expensive, break.

*“You have to book up... if you want a deal you have to book up much earlier in advance. Because of the school holidays they don’t have to give you a deal. So, you could be looking at 15 months in advance in order to get those child free places that are so touted and are very hard to track down. And things like half term [when] the price hike is extraordinary. If you want to ski in February half term it will be twice the price and now the schools have got so sticky about taking [children] out. You really are very restrained.” (Group 4)*

*“We’re going to Center Parks in May half term and paying an arm and a leg for the privilege but when you have children of school age you don’t really have a choice.” (Group 3)*

We noted that this participant was not very happy with his holiday choice and mentioned that, although it was not ideal, the holiday was more about the children, and being able to provide them with experiences.

For many of these participants, the holiday destination was of primary importance, which trumped the availability of a discount or deal. Location, in terms of either being able to choose the destination for the holiday, or having the option to select the location of the hotel in a particular city, was far more important than getting a deal. Participants talked about concerns that hotel deals were often for locations that would not be of interest to them.

However, others were open to such deals:

*“... some of the overseas deals that you can get say that you'll be in a three-star hotel somewhere and they're often cheaper or discounted because of that. I would never do that, because I would want to know where I'm going, I want to be able to, you know, the days on the internet looking up and having a good look around to see what there is. So even though it might be cheaper going to the one that I like the look of, I wouldn't do it, because I want to know where I'm going.”* (Group 3)

For consumers in this category, deals were sometimes necessary in order to facilitate purchase, and so they were highly deal prone, and also aware of the value options, and yet their circumstances meant that value consciousness was low. However, this placed a much higher emphasis on acquisition utility (i.e. on completely satisfying their needs), due to the expense.

There were frequent mentions of negative emotions resulting from holiday deal offers by the industry and consumers' constraints. Sometimes these were reflective of the transparency of prices at high season and low season:

*Researcher* “When you look at the difference between the school holiday prices and the out-of-season price, how does it make you feel?”

*Sarah* Bitter.

*Sarah* Bitter yeah.

*Sarah* Why, why is it when we’re having the same place?

*Suzy* I do understand supply and demand, I understand the economics of it but it’s just ripping you off.” (Group 5)

Participants’ negative emotions were related to the unavailability of offers at times and dates people when would be able to access them.

#### *Deals as toxic*

Although the proportion of the opinions on this issue was smaller than those of deal taking and value seeking, all the focus groups did reveal interesting negative associations attached to deals in holiday contexts. Indeed, deals were sometimes so negatively evaluated that they were perceived as toxic. Here, deals were treated with suspicion and the perception that they entail too many compromises.

*“Yes, I think I’d be suspicious of anything with an add-on or an upgrade or something, I think, where you are still charging me for that, payment for that, some other way really.”*

(Group 2)

*“I think usually if it’s really, really, really cheap I start to get a little bit suspicious as to why it’s so cheap and that’s when I’m more likely to start really scanning the reviews to try and find out exactly what’s wrong with this hotel. As long as they are just cheap and there’s nothing wrong at all....”* (Group 2)

When presented with the deal adverts, these informants expressed their negative perceptions about deals. This range of attitudes supports the idea that some consumers are worried about perceived behavioral control in a deal scenario because they fear lower levels of service (Boon 2013). A benefit that looks too good can prompt people to consider cancelling the purchase altogether, supporting the findings of Park and Jang (2016). Searching for the best deals can be time consuming and lead to the adoption of coping strategies, such as opting for convenience over price. This did not relate to domestic breaks however, which were very often sought with value as a high priority.

The sacrifices in time and effort required to obtain an offer at the best value can sometimes result in negative feelings.

*“There’s almost a sort of extra pressure with all the information available on something like TripAdvisor that you sort of feel like if you end up in a bad hotel it’s your fault rather than it being the hotel’s fault. You should have been able to see it.”* (Group 5)

The negative emotional outcomes can include status anxiety or concern associated with being perceived as a ‘discounter’ by the hotelier/business owner:

*“When we went to Windsor recently I was saying the hotel was usually over £100. We ended up paying only £67 so we had mixed feelings. We were proud that we’d got that deal and we were happy when we got there – it looked really fancy and we were a little bit, like, out of place, like we don’t belong here.”* (Group 4)

This supports the arguments made by Boon (2013), who suggested that consumers’ attitudes towards deals are generally positive, although they are concerned about “looking cheap” by taking a deal. This type of status anxiety and its role in pushing consumers towards particular types of price decisions has yet to be explored in tourism and offers much potential.



Other negative emotions were expressed about advertised deals, in terms of either online, targeted advertising, or relating to hidden costs:

*“I was just researching flights to Canada for Christmas and they were advertising this from quite a good price and I eventually found the one that they were talking about and there were four connections. I was, like, no, that doesn’t count, it takes so much time ... it’s, like, no, they’re just wasting your time. Very, very frustrating, so I much prefer that sort of honesty about ‘here’s how much it costs’ and I do find that airlines are the worst for it.” (Group 4)*

#### *Dynamic nature of attitudes towards deals*

As mentioned, the holiday decision context is crucially important to value perceptions and to the role that deals play in influencing specific decisions. Rather than a fixed trait, our data suggest that individuals flexibly adopt attitudes towards value consciousness or deal proneness, depending on the *holiday context*, *stage in the life cycle* and *previous experiences*. This dynamic understanding of attitudes addresses the call for tourism researchers to explore attitudes more holistically (Pearce and Packer 2013).

Regarding *holiday context*, when traveling abroad many participants considered deals “as a bonus” and yet in England deals were perceived “a problem”, since obtaining value for money was ‘difficult’, as illustrated below:

*“I’d actually try and get as much value for money when you go somewhere [outside England]. [...] In England, you can’t get as much value for money, so it’s kind of psychological, I know exactly how much everything costs [...]. Abroad, especially using foreign currency it’s all a bit, ‘oh, it doesn’t matter how much it costs, it’s not real money’”.*

(Group 1)

For many people, deals were “a way of life” when travelling abroad, while in England deals were not important:

*“When I am going abroad, I’m like ‘right, I’m looking for the deals’, but if I’m in England, I’m, ‘Ooh, that looks like a nice B&B; I’ll go there’, and I don’t bother looking elsewhere [for deals].” (Group 1)*

In a similar way, in relation to *stage in the life cycle*, our data suggest that people may move from “deals as a way of life” to “deals as a bonus” when their family situation changes:

*“I have done it in the past [...] we’ve effectively taken breaks that we wouldn’t have been intending to take, because the deal was there [...] Where can you go for the £99 deal? Northampton. Well, we’ll go there. Just for a couple of nights, because I’m perfectly interested in seeing anywhere [...] [Now] I think it is the kids that put me off. I want to know for sure where I’m going with the kids.” (Group 3)*

*Previous experiences* are a third element that triggered changes from one category of attitudes to another, as in the excerpt below:

*“It was a few years ago now but it was like 129 or 150 quid for the week and we thought, well, even if it’s rubbish it’s like 150 quid, do you know what I mean? So we just took the chance. It was actually fine, there was no problem, but I just wouldn’t do it in the UK. I think I’ve had too many fingers burnt.” (Group 5)*

Destination type was associated with varying value perceptions. Attitudes towards deals were more likely to be favorable in particular contexts, such as short-break domestic holidays as opposed to ‘main’, longer holidays. These ‘supplementary’ holiday breaks were perceived generally to carry fewer risks, with some participants agreeing that if the holiday failed, or the deal compromised quality and satisfaction, it would be easy to abandon the trip and go home. Holidays abroad were perceived as higher risk, but also a greater investment in terms of the experience sought and the expectations of satisfactory outcomes (Hales and Shames 1991). In addition to supplementary breaks, deal-taking behavior was also apparent when participants

had flexibility on departure dates, time or other criteria, in order to take advantage of offers or deals. This type of activity is supported through extensive search behavior involving price comparison sites.

There were many diverse opinions expressed in terms of participants' attitudes towards, and experiences of, deals and discounts and the role they played in current behavior patterns.

Discounts and deals were sometimes instrumental in that the savings made enabled spending on other value-enhancing aspects of the holiday experience, such as luxury food and drink or additional events. Our research supports the findings of Kwon and Kwon (2013), who identified different types of deal shopping and sources of gratification, albeit exclusively at the information search stage, and the benefits that deals conferred in the context of product shopping.

## **Conclusions**

Pricing is an intrinsic aspect of the marketing strategy for tourism, yet little is known about the effects of these strategies on consumers' attitudes and buying behavior, beyond the impact on sales performance and profitability. Our focus groups with a range of UK consumers have shown that deal proneness and value consciousness in the tourism industry require an understanding of cognitive, affective *and* behavioral dimensions that underpin product choice and evaluation.

### *Theoretical contribution*

At a theoretical level, the study contributes to knowledge in three ways. First, our research discovered that, in tourism, deal proneness and value consciousness are not necessarily inherent to the individual and can be operationalized as attitudes. In fact, the relationship between deal proneness and value consciousness can change depending on the type of holiday

(e.g. main holiday/short break), stage in life cycle (e.g. children/no children) and other factors (e.g. previous experience). This challenges one of the main assumptions of studies that have measured deal proneness as an underlying characteristic (e.g. Lichtenstein et al. 1997; Pillai and Kumar 2012). Furthermore, the analysis proposes a new dynamic framework comprising four categories of attitudes towards deals which can be characterized by different cognitive, behavioral and affective features: 1) deals as a way of life, 2) deals as a bonus, 3) deals as a problem and 4) deals as toxic. These categories explain the relationship between different levels of deal proneness and value consciousness and extend existing research (Kwon and Kwon 2013), that has assumed a trade-off between deal taking and value consciousness (Lichtenstein et al. 1990; Pillai and Kumar 2012), by demonstrating the complexity of the interactions between different levels of these constructs.

Second, our data identified for the first time a link between attitudes towards deals and affective responses. We found that people expressed a whole range of emotions in describing their attitudes to value and deals offered by the travel industry. Positive, negative and mixed affective responses were associated with deal offers and linked to previous experiences. This extends previous studies, which have focused on the information search (e.g. Kwon and Kwon 2013) and post-purchase (Park and Jang 2016) stages, and responds to Aydinli et al.'s (2014) call for greater understanding of how emotions affect consumer preferences in the tourism context.

Finally, the study contributes a holistic analysis by bringing together: the meanings consumers attribute to deals; consumers' attitudes to value; situational and contextual factors influencing deal taking, as well as the positive and negative emotions associated with deals and value seeking behaviors.

### *Implications*

In terms of managerial implications, the four categories of attitudes proposed could be used for efficient segmentation, drawing on specific cognitive, behavioral and affective aspects of each type. A better understanding of the types of decision contexts in which deals might be more readily accepted could lead to better-targeted marketing campaigns. Additionally, businesses need to know which types of deal are more likely to be eschewed or taken up by specific segments. Firms can then alter the presentation and message structure of deals, or can create bespoke offers for specific target segments.

The fourfold categorization of consumer attitudes proposed here might help marketers to offer a range of deals and discounts to different target groups at different points in the travel decision cycle or season. For instance, making price discounts available for those segments that find it difficult to access deals at particular times could help capture market share and increase the effectiveness of capacity planning, and increase customer loyalty.

Affective responses could be used in advertising appeals to target particular consumers. For example, specific types of deals may be perceived as toxic by some consumers, despite being legitimate offers of high-quality services. Discounts and offers could be presented in a more detailed and informative way to reduce uncertainty or suspicion amongst the target market. Alternatively, offers targeting deal lovers could be framed to appeal to positive emotions such as excitement, thrill and delight.

### *Limitations and future research*

One of the limitations of this paper is that it is based on a holistic analysis of a small number of consumers. Future research should consider quantitative and experimental studies to delve into attitudes towards, and behavioral responses to, deals and offers. Quantitative research could test whether other factors can shift consumer's attitudes towards levels of deal

prone to deal and value consciousness. Additionally, further studies should evaluate whether the four proposed attitudinal categories have stable features across different cultural contexts.

Much further research is needed to explore the emotions derived from deals and their effects on intentions and behaviors. Additionally, future studies should explore the relationships between affective, cognitive and behavioral drivers behind deal proneness and value consciousness. It is clear that the price paid for a holiday plays a crucial role in mental processes in tourism decision making, as well as in the overall social psychology of tourism. Prices and value perceptions inform not only what, how, when and how much people buy, but also how consumers think they will be perceived by others. There is great potential for further research on the role of loss aversion and risk as factors affecting deal taking, for example.

Future research could investigate the relationships between certain types of deal contexts and decision styles. Since deal proneness and value consciousness have been developed as theoretical constructs of individuals' characteristics, future research could also investigate the possible relationships between individual and/or cultural traits and propensity towards value seeking and deal taking. This paper highlights the important interplay within a tourism context between the two constructs, which offers a new approach to tourist decision making. This type of research could be of strategic importance to the tourism industry to enable it to target consumers better, with relevant offers at appropriate times, and to understand which contexts best stimulate demand.

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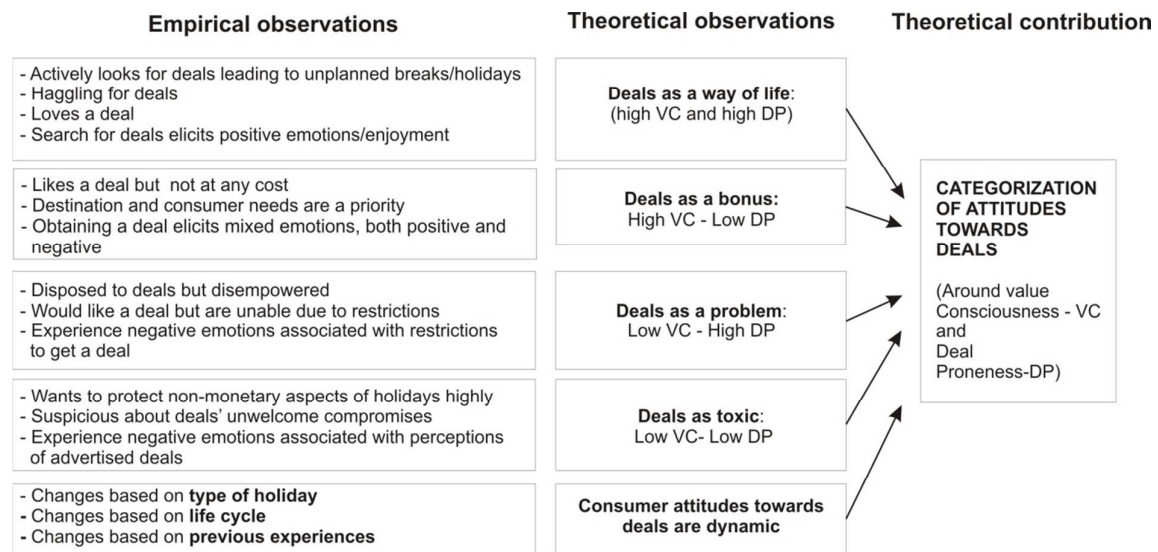


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Table 1: Profile of participants

Sample characteristics	Number of informants	% of sample	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	Group 5
<b>Gender</b>							
Male	4	8%	2	1	1	0	0
Female	32	92%	8	6	6	5	7
<b>Age</b>							
Young [18-34]	14	38%	6	3	3	2	0
Middle-aged [35-54]	19	53%	4	4	3	3	5
Older [+55]	3	8%	0	0	1	0	2
<b>Marital status</b>							
Single	8	22%	4	1	3	0	0
Married or cohabiting	25	69%	6	5	4	4	6
Divorced or widow(ed)	3	8%	0	1	0	1	1
<b>Parental situation</b>							
Children under 18 living with them	9	25%	0	2	2	1	4
Children over 18 living with them	2	6%	1	0	0	0	1
Children of any age living away	3	8%	0	1	1	0	2
Without children	22	61%	9	5	4	4	0
<b>Working status</b>							
Working full time	26	72%	9	5	4	4	4
Working part-time	9	25%	1	2	3	1	2
In other situation	1	3%	0	0	0	0	1
<b>Occupational status</b>							
Working in high management positions	2	6%	0	0	1	1	0
Working in supervisory/junior manag. positions	22	61%	9	4	2	3	4
Working intermediary manag.positions	7	19%	1	1	1	1	3
Skilled manual workers	1	3%	0	0	1	0	0
Students	4	11%	0	2	2	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	36		10	7	7	5	7

Table 2: Data structure and analysis process

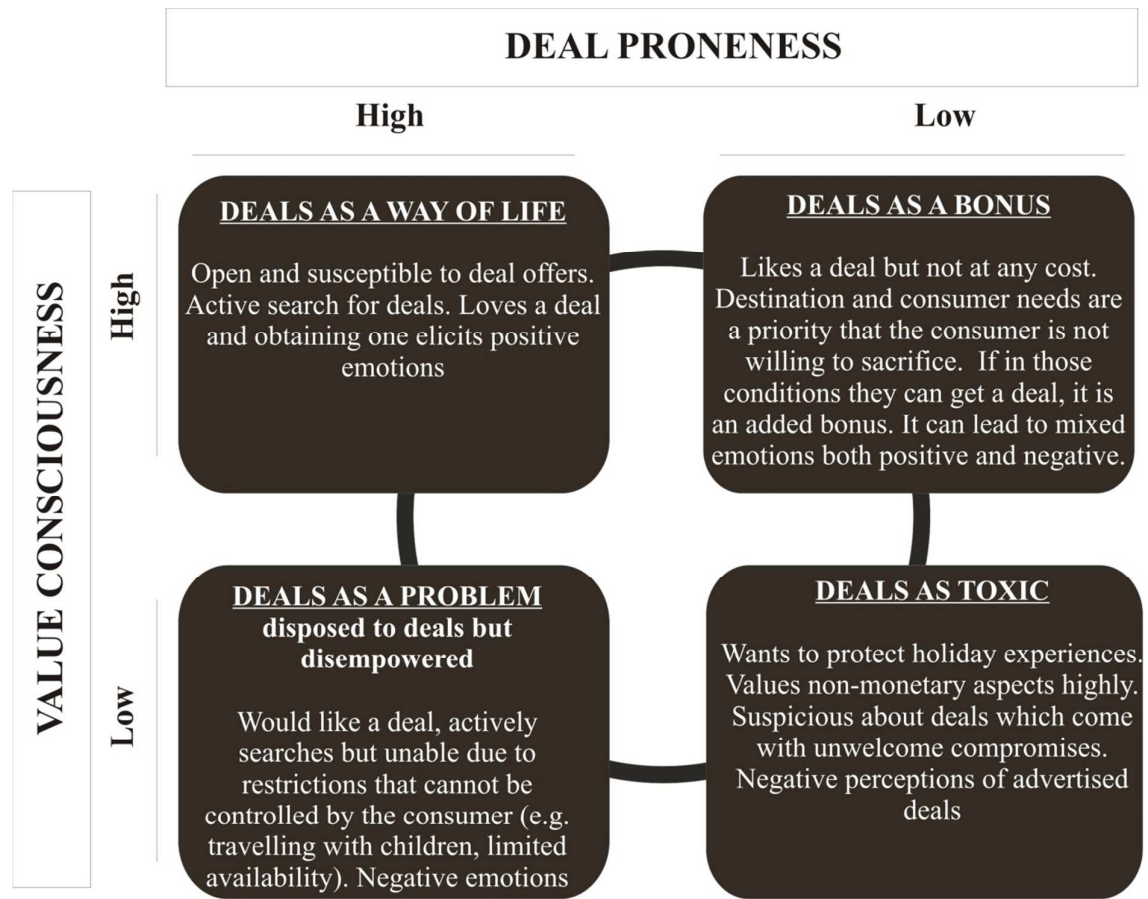


## Appendix 1: Categorization of attitudes towards deals

Raw data	Codes	Themes	Theory
<p>"I have weekly email alerts with Travelzoo and they send through quite a few deals. A lot of them are abroad, but there are quite a few in the UK as well. [...] I'll often find that I'll look at the deal and go, 'Oh that's a really good deal, and then I start looking elsewhere and find I can get it even cheaper if I book it directly. It often will give me the idea to start looking in the first place [...] I almost end up booking it quite spontaneously if it is quite a good deal" (Group 2).</p> <p>"With the Groupon thing I've found but this dead cheeky but if there's a deal on Groupon I'll often phone the place itself and say I've seen this Groupon deal have you availability x, y, z? Well do you want me to buy the Groupon or pay you direct and a lot of them will say pay me direct [...] They'll match it. They'll match it because then they get all the money" (Group 5).</p> <p>"I booked mine to Israel for my hotel, but I still check on the website if I can get it cheaper so I can send a letter to Expedia and get the difference refunded. Just like when I'm bored. 'Oh yes, I forgot, I didn't check today.' Just keep looking. It's probably going to be a little difference, but I still like to know. If I have a spare 20 minutes I can just fill it out" (Group 3).</p> <p>"- You look at other people and talk to them and they've booked it for so much more and then you feel really good about yourself, really smug [...] I think a lot of people would think me quite stingy for how long sometimes I spend looking for these deals. - It's the thrill of the chase, it is" (Group 2).</p>	<p>Actively looks for deals leading to unplanned breaks/ holidays</p> <p>Haggling for deals</p> <p>Loves a deal</p> <p>Search for deals elicits positive emotions/ enjoyment</p>	<p><b>Deals as a way of life:</b></p> <p>high VC high DP</p>	<p><b>CATEGORIZATION OF ATTITUDES TOWARDS DEALS</b></p> <p>(Around value Consciousness - VC and Deal Proneness-DP)</p>
<p>"I'm hoping to go to my mum, to York, but we haven't put any date in the diary [...] it's not a big deal if we can't find the best deals possible. It'll be because both our schedules have suddenly fit together, we can actually do this. So for me [a deal] it'll definitely be an added bonus, because I don't get to see my mum as often as I like, which means that I sacrifice a little bit more money sometimes to be able to get that chance" (Group 2).</p> <p>"If we go abroad we'll book it individually, so we'll book the flights and then we'll find the accommodation separately, but I suppose, yes, you look for the best value, I search around to find the best flight, but I wouldn't go somewhere just because the flight was cheap [...] So you pick your destination and then obviously look and see who's offering the best flights [...] the cheapest" (Group 2).</p> <p>"I'd go for what I perceived as the value so, as I say, it's the overall price for what you're getting that I would rather regard as acceptable or unacceptable. If there's a deal built into it I would feel more chuffed than if there wasn't a deal, but it would be the bottom line price, irrespective of the deal, for me to make the decision" (Group 3).</p>	<p>Likes a deal but not at any cost</p> <p>Destination and consumer needs are a priority</p> <p>Obtaining a deal elicits mixed emotions both positive and negative</p>	<p><b>Deals as a bonus:</b></p> <p>High VC Low DP</p>	
<p>"If you want a deal you have to book up much earlier in advance because of the school holidays they don't have to give you a deal. So you could be looking at 15 months in advance in order to get those child free places that are so touted and are very hard to track down. And things like half term the price hike is extraordinary, if you want to ski in February half term it will be twice the price and now the schools have got so sticky about taking them out. You really are very restrained" (Group 4).</p> <p>"We're going to Center Parcs in May half term and paying an arm and a leg for the privilege, but when you have children of school age you don't really have a choice [...] So we've got four nights, so that would be a holiday, at Center Parcs at the end of May half term. Obviously no discounts because they're heavily in demand at that time" (Group 3).</p> <p>"I remember that other weekend was in Yorkshire and it was a holiday cottage and it was a minimum three nights and I went with a group, there were seven of us. Nobody could actually stay the Sunday night we all had to get back to work on Monday morning but it was still cheaper to get this holiday cottage and just leave the place empty for the last day. It felt really bizarre to have to pay for three nights but only be able to use it for two" (Group 4).</p>	<p>Disposed to deals but disempowered</p> <p>Would like a deal but are unable due to restrictions</p> <p>Experience negative emotions associated with restrictions to get a deal</p>	<p><b>Deals as a problem:</b></p> <p>Low VC High DP</p>	
<p>"I know where I'm going, I enjoy being there. It's an area that I love being, it's like almost going home [...] the place that I have been for the last ten years, you know, it was a fair enough standard. I'm not looking for terribly swish, but over the years the landlady has improved it. Okay, that's improved, makes no difference, it's the place that I am that's important to me [...] It's a privately-owned house, so there are no discounts to be had" (Group 3).</p> <p>"I think I'd be suspicious of anything with an add-on or an upgrade or something I think, where you are still charging me for that, payment for that, some other way really" (Group 2).</p> <p>"It's just so frustrating [...] I was just researching flights to Canada for Christmas and they were advertising this from quite a good price and I eventually found the one that they were talking about and there were four connections. I was like no that doesn't count, it takes so much time and you've gotten in your head that this might be possible, this might be doable and it's like no they're just wasting your time. Very, very frustrating so I much prefer that sort of honesty about 'here's how much it costs' and I do find that airlines are the worst for it" (Group 4).</p>	<p>Wants to protect non-monetary aspects of holidays highly</p> <p>Suspicious about deals' unwelcome compromises</p> <p>Experience negative emotions associated with perceptions of advertised deals</p>	<p><b>Deals as toxic:</b></p> <p>Low VC Low DP</p>	

Raw data	Codes	Themes	Theory
<p>"- You kind of know where you want to go and like you say, if there's a deal, that's really good but kind of you're going to go anyway, whereas like abroad, "Well, what can I get for my money?" That's over two weeks, unless you've got a destination for a reason. I look at deals then.</p> <p>- I'm the other way round, really. I tend to think that abroad, you kind of want your abroad holiday and you're almost like prepared to... you find the best deal you can, obviously and look around, check the deals and all the rest of it but ultimately, you think, 'Well, that's my main holiday or whatever; I'm still going to go, whatever'. Whereas the England ones are a bit more added extra bonuses, really. So I'm going for the cheaper things to add on" (Group 1).</p> <p>"Well, pre-dog we did used to go, like I say, with the last-minute holidays abroad and it was... we quite liked the surprise element. We knew we were going to get a three or a four star hotel through Thomson, say, and we knew that it would probably be alright and it was" (Group 3).</p> <p>"I'm slightly nervous about too-cheap self-catering in Britain, having been burnt. This is before kids, but me and my husband went to Bridlington and stayed in a self-catering flat that was really awful. There were teabags still in the teapot that had gone mouldy and I know when I told my mother how much we were paying she was very dubious. I did decide she was obviously right and I should actually have a minimum that I should accept to expect something that's half-reasonable"(Group 3).</p>	<p>Changes based on <b>type of holiday</b></p> <p>Changes based on <b>life cycle</b></p> <p>Changes based on <b>previous experiences</b></p>	<p><b>Consumer attitudes towards deals are dynamic</b></p>	<p><b>CATEGORIZATION OF ATTITUDES TOWARDS DEALS</b></p> <p>(Around value Consciousness - VC and Deal Proneness-DP)</p>

Figure 1: classifying attitudes towards value consciousness and deal proneness





Holiday deals and discounts focus group schedule 11-13<sup>th</sup> May 2015:

Introduction: **5 mins** Welcome, offer tea, coffee, provide label and pen to write name badge, sort out parking receipts, read participant information sheet, sort out payment incentive, sign attendance register.

- Get everyone seated, thank them for coming, introduce ourselves, explain about the digital recorder and the need to speak clearly and only one person at a time.
- Explain the purpose of the focus groups:
  - The purpose of the focus groups is to understand what drives holiday decision making particularly in relation to England, and to understand the specific role that price discounts and value added deals play in decision making.

Post it exercise: **5 mins**: write down on a post it; your favourite English destination, one word describing what you love about it, and one word describing how you feel about it. Moderator discussion, what is great about England? What types of qualities does it represent and what emotions does it elicit?

Introduction about deals/discounts: **10 mins**.

- Who stated that they had already taken a short break or long holiday this year in England? In the other UK countries? Abroad?
- Where did you go? What was great about this holiday/break? Was this a regular trip for you at this time of the year? Or unusual?
  - Refer to the screening survey results – tell them how many had said discounts and how many had deals and so on.
- Did you use a deal or discount for this trip? Yes/no – show of hands.

Post it exercise: **10 mins**: Write down on the post it what type of deal/discount you had for this trip and post it on the board. Moderator: look at the answers and ask if these are typical of the types of deals and discounts used by the group in holidays.

- Was the deal/discount the main factor in the decision?
- If not, what effects did the deal/discount have on your decision.
  - Made you change your planned destination
  - Made you change your dates and times.
  - Made you change your choice of operator/service provider
  - Others...?
- Explore differences in opinion, any other points of view?
- What made that particular type of deal more attractive or unattractive?
- Does your family situation affect the way the way you look on deals or your deal sensitive?
- Do any other people influence the way you look at deals?

Thinking about your holidays in England more generally (**15 mins**):

- How many are planning a holiday or break in England later in the year (show of hands - refer to the screening questionnaire results – ask them to remember/identify their responses – discuss)
- Do you use a deal/discount for every holiday in England?
- Which types? Are there any situations in which a deal/discount becomes more attractive as a driver?
- What types of deals/discounts are favoured?
  - Discounts
  - Gifts
  - Coupons
  - Upgrades
  - Other...?
- Which types of deals/discounts are not attractive? Can you identify any and explain?
- What represents a 'good' deal in terms of holidays in England?
  - Value? Quality? Reward for loyalty?
- Is getting a bargain important when it comes to holidays? (more or less than for other products and services?)
- Is it more or less important to get a deal or discount for a holiday or a short break?
- Is it more important to get a deal or discount for a holiday/break in England than a break/holiday in the rest of the UK?
- Is it more important to get a deal or discount for a holiday/break in England than a break/holiday abroad?
- Do deals and discounts say something about you as a person?

Influence of deals/discounts at different points? **15 mins.**

**Advert exercise:** please look at the piece of paper with the four different adverts. Rank the ads in order of your preferences, explain and discuss your choices.

- When do you generally notice a deal?
  - When it is the focus of an advert?
  - As a response to a direct marketing campaign from a trusted brand?
  - Do you search for deals before destinations?

Post it exercise: **10 mins** – write down as many words as you like about how getting a deal or a discount for a holiday makes you feel. Post them on the board. Moderator: look at the answers and explore further. Who said what, can you explain what you meant and the reasons behind your choice?

Wrap up: **5 mins:** We are drawing towards a close, so to finish can you summarise your opinions and attitudes towards deals and price discounts in holiday decisions for English breaks/holidays?



Could deals and pricing be made more effective?

Is there anything more you want to add?

Many thanks for your valuable input into the study.

## SCREENING QUESTIONNAIRE

### Past holidays: Length - Destination

Did you take a long break in England in 2015?  
Did you take a SHORT break in England in 2015?  
Did you take a long break OTHER in the UK in 2015?  
Did you take a long break OTHER in the UK in 2015?  
Did you take a long break abroad in 2015?  
Did you take a long break abroad in 2015?

### Past holidays: Length – Destination – Deal existence

Did your long break in England in 2015 involve a DEAL?  
Did your SHORT break in England in 2015 involve a DEAL?  
Did your long break OTHER in the UK in 2015 involve a DEAL?  
Did your SHORT break OTHER in the UK in 2015 involve a DEAL?  
Did your long break abroad in 2015 involve a DEAL?  
Did your SHORT break abroad in 2015 involve a DEAL?

### Past holidays: Length – Destination – Deal type

Which type of deal did your long break in England involved?  
Which type of deal did your SHORT break in England involved?  
Which type of deal did your long break OTHER in the UK involve?  
Which type of deal did your long break OTHER in the UK involve?  
Which type of deal did your long break abroad involved?  
Which type of deal did your long break abroad involved?

### Past holidays: Length – Destination – Deal impact

How important was the deal in your decision to take a long break in England?  
How important was the deal in your decision to take a SHORT break in England?  
How important was the deal in your decision to take a long break OTHER in the UK?  
How important was the deal in your decision to take a SHORT break OTHER in the UK?  
How important was the deal in your decision to take a long break abroad?  
How important was the deal in your decision to take a SHORT break abroad?

### FUTURE PLANS FOR HOLIDAYS: Length - Destination

Are you planning to take a holiday in 2015?  
Are you planning a long break in England in 2015?  
Are you planning a SHORT break in England in 2015?  
Are you planning a long break OTHER in the UK in 2015?  
Are you planning a SHORT break OTHER in the UK in 2015?  
Are you planning a long break in abroad in 2015?  
Are you planning a SHORT break in abroad in 2015?

### Attitudes towards deals in general

I would take my holiday based on a deal  
I associate deals with low quality  
I always look for deals  
I am not the type of person using deals  
Sometimes I ask for better prices  
Seeing a good deal can make me change my plans  
I would not change my plans for a deal

### DEMOGRAPHICS

Gender  
Age group  
Marital status  
I have children <18 living with me  
I have children >18 living with me  
I have children of ANY age living away  
I have NO children  
Occupational group  
Employment situation  
Interest in the study