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Trip destinations, gateways and itineraries: the example of Hong Kong

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Abstract

Trip itinerary data present analytical problems because of the great diversity of routes that travelers follow and the varying significance of destinations along those routes. Most of the models that have been proposed to deal with this complexity have focused either on the total number of travelers from one country to another, or on the overall pattern of entire trips. An alternative and complementary approach is to examine the relative location of a destination within the larger itinerary pattern. Depending on their location within the overall trip itinerary, places can exhibit characteristics of one or more destination types: Single Destination, Gateway Destination, Egress Destination, Touring Destination, or Hub Destination. Data collected on international air travelers to Hong Kong exhibited the first four of these five patterns. Taiwan and Singapore residents primarily used Hong Kong as a Single Destination for short break shopping holidays and for business. US and Australian residents were the most likely to use Hong Kong as a trip Gateway and as a Touring Destination, especially as the Gateway for a trip to China, but Hong Kong also served as a Gateway for trips to destinations in East and Southeast Asia and, for US residents, to Australia. Residents of China were more likely to use Hong Kong as a trip Egress Destination than were others. Hong Kong has traditionally considered itself primarily as a 'gateway to China' and an 'Asian travel hub'. Hong Kong, and other destinations, could benefit from being more aware of their role as an Egress Destination and of their relationships with destinations that travelers visit before and after their arrival.

Keywords: Travel itineraries; Routes; Destinations; Gateways; Transportation hubs; Touring attractions; Hong Kong

Travel itineraries, travel gateways and transportation hubs are key concepts in tourism and travel. On the surface they are easy to understand. A *travel itinerary* consists of a route with one or more stops that a traveler takes. A *travel gateway* is a place that provides access to (and often travel services for) a destination place or region. A *transportation hub* is a place where more than one route for a transport medium (usually air or rail) converge and emanate. These concepts, however, have only rarely been critically examined and are only marginally understood from theoretical and empirical standpoints. The basic models that have been developed have primarily focused on the general flow of travelers from one destination to another (Matley, 1976; Pearce, 1987; Leiper, 1989) and variations in the overall form or pattern of itineraries (Gunn, 1972, 1997; Mings & McHugh, 1992; Oppermann, 1995). Both of these approaches focus on the route, with only secondary attention given to itinerary stops en route. Using empirical data from a targeted survey of international visitors to Hong Kong, the research presented here models variations in itineraries based on the impact that these have on a single destination.

We will first review past research on travel routes, along with the implications of itinerary variations and methodological challenges that they present. This is followed by a justification for a new itinerary-destination approach, upon which this research is based, along with a description of the five types of destinations that result depending on where they are situated in the overall trip itinerary. Data from a selected group of international visitors to Hong Kong is then assessed in terms of the itinerary-destination typology presented, followed by conclusions and implications.

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1. Travel route data and models

Approaches to the itinerary problem reflect two major scale issues: data aggregation and sampling limits. Data aggregation refers to the level of detailed information available to researchers. Three levels of trip itinerary data aggregation have been described:

1. *Arrivals by country of residence or nationality*. These are the most common data available to researchers and are the most widely used for basic market studies and simple comparisons. These data are gathered at most borders by immigration officials, and estimated for sub-border areas through sampling. Studies using these data sources have typically demonstrated a hierarchy of routes, centered on major regional destinations, which are strongly connected to one another, and smaller radial ties to places lower in the network hierarchy (Pearce, 1987). While highly influenced by local and regional economics, politics, transportation infrastructure and geography, the resulting patterns tend to reflect the Central Place tourism and recreation hierarchy originally suggested by Christaller (1964), with higher order leisure destinations that attract large numbers of visitors (such as major resorts) being be fewer in number and further dispersed, with smaller, lower order leisure destinations that attract fewer people (such as regional parks and museums) being more numerous and denser in the intermediate space.

2. *Main destination ratio (MDR)*. The MDR was proposed by Leiper (1989) as a way to address the limitations of arrivals by country data. To improve the level of data aggregation the MDR adds the main destination of travelers. The resulting ratio is the percentage of main destination travelers among all travelers to a destination. In Leiper's example the 1987 MDR of Australians to Hong Kong was 41, meaning that 41% of Australian visitors to Hong Kong in that year viewed it as their main destination, while 59% visited Hong Kong as a secondary destination. The problems with this method are that travelers may have multiple main destinations, and more seriously, main destination(s) data are often not available. However, it does provide an improvement over simple destination arrival data and, where it is available, it could quite easily be added to the annual global arrival data compiled by the World Tourism Organization (WTO).

3. *Full itineraries*. Full itinerary data are collected in one of two ways: (1) travelers are asked to list, preferably in order, all of the stopover places on their itinerary; or (2) travelers are asked to trace their travel route on a map, preferably indicated stopover points as well. This level of data aggregation clearly provides the most detail, though the method of data collection can influence the forms of analysis that are possible. Map-traced paths, for example, are more suited to network analysis than are simple point/place data. True network analysis, however, has seldom been performed on these types of data (cf. Lew, 1993; van der Knaap, 1999), which have primarily been used to generalize types or forms of travel routes.

Gunn (1972) was one of the first to discuss the significance of different forms of tour itineraries. He proposed two basic types, the 'Destination' trip and the 'Touring' trip, each of which required its own set of planning and marketing consideration for communities and attractions. In one of the earlier empirical studies published using route data, Mings and McHugh (1992) found four itinerary configurations in their study of paths taken to Yellowstone National Park: direct routes, partial orbits, full orbits and fly/drives (Table 1). In a purely theoretical study, Lue, Crompton, and Fesenmaier (1993) proposed five configurations for pleasure vacation trips: Single Destination, en route, base camp, regional tour and trip-chaining.

In an effort to summarize these past efforts, Oppermann (1995) proposed seven patterns, including two single destination (S) patterns and five multiple destination (M) patterns, which he used to compare tour itineraries of outbound travelers from Malaysia. These ranged in complexity from a single destination itinerary along a single route (S1) to a circular touring itinerary that has one or more smaller circular itineraries emanating from one or more en route hub destination (M5). Table 1 compares Oppermann's model with earlier efforts.

Unfortunately, mapped route data are rarely obtained and difficult to analyze. Somewhat more common, though no less difficult to assess, are listings of planned destinations or stopovers in an itinerary. Because network linkages between destinations are not provided and must be assumed to be direct, these data are more aggregated than are mapped itineraries. Such data is quite adequate, however, for international air travel where routes are generally less important in traveler decision making than the collection of destinations. Sriram and Lew (2002) and Oppermann (1995) used this form of data based, respectively, on cities visited and countries visited.

In addition to the data aggregation, another major issue is that of the sample limits. This has some distinct considerations when applied to itinerary data. Small side roads cannot be demarcated on a map of the entire US, such as that used by Mings and McHugh (1992), and so that level of data, which could be valuable for local tourism development planning, is often lost. In addition, map boundaries inherently leave out route segments and destinations located beyond the map area. For lists of places visited, there is often a limitation on the number of destinations that the survey instrument can accept, forcing a truncation of the itinerary information. Analysis of itineraries with unusually large numbers of

Table 1
Comparison of tourist itinerary models

Description	Pattern name
Same route to and from destination with no stopovers or destination area day trips	
Gunn (1997)	Destination
Mings and McHugh (1992)	Direct route
Lue, Crompton, and Fesenmaier (1993)	Single Destination
Oppermann (1995)	Single Destination (S1)
Same route to and from destination with day trips out from destination	
Gunn	Destination
Mings and McHugh	Direct route
Lue, Crompton, and Fesenmaier	Base camp
Oppermann	Base camp (S2)
Same route to and from destination with stopovers	
Gunn	Destination
Mings and McHugh	Direct route
Lue, Crompton, and Fesenmaier	En route
Oppermann	Stopover (M1)
Full circular route starting and ending at origin/home with stopover destinations	
Gunn	Touring
Mings and McHugh	Full orbit
Lue, Crompton, and Fesenmaier	Regional tour
Oppermann	Full loop (M2)
Same route to and from a destination area with a full circle route in the destination region	
Gunn	Touring
Mings and McHugh	Partial orbit (auto) Fly/drive (air & auto)
Lue, Crompton, and Fesenmaier	Regional tour
Oppermann	Destination area loop (M3)
Different routes to and from a destination area with a partial circular route at the destination area	
Gunn	Touring
Mings and McHugh	Full orbit
Lue, Crompton, and Fesenmaier	Regional tour
Oppermann	Open jaw loop (M4)
Full circular route with day trips or separate circular trips out from stopover destinations[a]	
Gunn	Touring
Mings and McHugh	Full orbit
Lue, Crompton, and Fesenmaier	Trip chaining
Oppermann	Multiple destination area loop (M5)

[a] This last pattern is typical of extended round-the-world trips with stopovers and separate itinerary forms taken in different regions. Oppermann (1995) describes this as an 'M2' pattern that incorporates 'M3' or 'M4' patterns in different destination regions.

destinations also becomes problematic both logistically (e.g., in setting up the database) and because they typically involve a very small sample size. Sample size also becomes a sensitive issue with trip itinerary data because of the great diversity of routes and destinations that travelers take. For example, Oppermann (1995) had several types of itineraries with fewer than five cases out of a sample of 1000 for Malaysia, while Sriram et al. (2002) found many itineraries with fewer than a handful of cases out of a sample of 10,000 international visitors to Singapore. In addition, long itineraries (such as those often taken by youth backpackers) are almost always idiosyncratic because the individual routes taken easily become very divergent.

The two earlier empirical studies that are reviewed here both used models of the entire trip pattern to form their basis for further analysis of visitors to the destinations in question. In the first, Mings and McHugh (1992) segmented their traveler data by the four tour patterns they described. In the second, Oppermann (1995) segmented his traveler data into the seven types of his model. While this approach provides valuable information on the destination's market, that information can be confused because, except for the Single Destination pattern, *it is not clear where the destination lies within the larger tour itinerary* and there is no indication of what the significance is of being situated in one part of an itinerary versus another part. In particular, the models that have been proposed thus far, whether theoretically or empirically derived, do not take into account place concepts such as *travel gateway* and *transportation hub*. Arrival by country data, while more aggregated, can provide more insight into the gateway and hub functions of places, but has not been integrates with more detailed itinerary models.

The research presented here does not attempt to address all of these issues, however, it does provide a different perspective by focusing on a single destination, Hong Kong, and its relationship to traveler itineraries. This results in a set of itinerary-based destinations, which complement the itineraries summarized in Table 1 and help to operationalize the itinerary approach to market segmentation.

2. Modeling itinerary destinations

In their most simple configurations, we propose that itineraries and the places that they pass through can be modeled as lines (routes) and points (destinations) (van der Knaap, 1999). While the overall itinerary pattern can be simple (origin—destination—origin), for any individual traveler the pattern can quickly become very complex, possibly crossing back and forth over itself, and sometimes with numerous returns to central hub locations. This complexity, however, may be largely irrelevant from the point of view of any destination point within an itinerary. We doubt that it matters whether Hong Kong is the fourth, ninth or 12th stop on

an itinerary. What is more important is its relationship to the travelers home place and possibly to the main destination of the trip. To model how an itinerary appears from the perspective of a single destination we need the following:

1. a point representing the trip origin, along with any non-destination transit stopovers to and from the origin ();
2. a point representing the destination of interest to the analyst ();
3. a point representing one or more other destinations of interest to the traveler (); and
4. the linkages in between these points ().

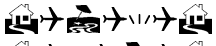
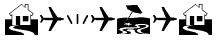
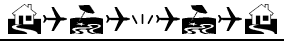
In accordance with accepted norms of international travel data collection, travelers would be required to spend at least one night in a place for it to be considered a destination in the model proposed here. Transit points are not considered destinations. Because destination points and itinerary lines all have specific geographic locations, they also have specific and measurable relationships with the home location of travelers. It is likely, for example, that travelers from more distant locations have different itinerary patterns than do travelers from a neighboring place (McKercher, 1998a, b). Thus, the relationship between the home place and a destination may be more important than is the destination's relationship to other destinations. It is also easier do measure and differentiate.

For each destination place/point on an itinerary there are five basic geometric patterns that can define its fundamental relationship to all other places/points in the itinerary (Table 2). The relationship that the destination of interest has to the rest of the itinerary defines the type of destination it is, which is arguably the most important factor that tourism development and marketing organizations are interested in. The overall trip itinerary can be viewed as a totality of experience of awayness from home. That all encompassing experience has different stages of evolution and change that progress as the trip progresses. Thus, the linear location of a destination within the overall trip itinerary has a psychic significance, which can be enhanced through the functional services provided by a destination's travel, tourism and hospitality industry. The five types of itinerary-destinations, and the significance of their roles, include:

Single Destination: The Single Destination pattern involves a traveler going from a home or origin point to a single main destination and then returning to the home or origin point. From a marketing and development perspective, single destination places typically require a larger and more diversified mix of attractions and activities for visitors than other forms of destinations (Gunn, 1997). This is the only destination pattern that can safely be assumed to be the sole main destination because its primacy is unchallenged. For all of the other patterns, primacy can be shared by more than one place or challenged by secondary destinations.

Gateway Destination: In the Gateway Destination pattern the place is the first destination encountered after the traveler begins a multiple destination itinerary. The Gateway may or may not be the main destination, but what is most important is that it is the first place encountered and therefore is a liminal point of transition where the embodiment of the non-home experience becomes situated in place (as opposed to 'in transit'). As such, it has the potential to exert at least some influence over the rest of the itinerary. For example, some or all of the remaining trip could be shadowed by good or bad experiences in the Gateway Destination. From a functional perspective, international Gateway places

Table 2
Five forms of relationship of places to route itineraries

Type of destination	Relationship pattern	Itinerary[a]
Single Destination		
1. Single Destination		S1,S2
Multiple destinations		
2. Gateway Destination (Point of access/entry)		M1–M5
3. Egress Destination (Point of embarkation)		M1–M5
Mixed multiple destinations		
4. Touring Destination (Through point)		M3–M5
5. Hub Destination (Point of return)[b]		M3, M5

Keys: = trip origin place, including transit stopovers.
= destination focus.
= other destination places.
= travel link.

[a] See Oppermann in Table 1.

[b] Any destination that is visited more than once in a multiple destination itinerary can be considered a Hub Destination.

typically require exceptional transportation facilities and services. Other places visited early in the itinerary can serve similar Gateway functions in conditioning tourists for the experience of subsequent destinations. They could be part of what Gunn (1997) has called the main destination's 'zone of enclosure', imbued with elements of both the profane (non-attraction) and the sacred (attraction). As such, Gateway function can help to reduce the 'culture shock' of an exotic main attraction.

Egress Destination: Egress Destinations are the last places visited before traveling home in a multiple destination tour itinerary. The Egress Destination has the opportunity to provide a sense of closure and preparation to re-enter the home place after a long tour itinerary. It may also be the main destination of the trip, or it may not be directly related to the main destination in any way. However, like the Gateway Destination, it provides a liminal space (if only on the airplane gangway) where one prepares to shed one embodiment for another. It is the last experience of transitory being—a point and space of preparation for the transit back to a situated home. Touring Destinations that are situated after the journey's main destination may serve similar Egress functions. Unlike the Gateway Destination, they can serve to debrief the traveler. The Egress function can reduce the 'reverse culture shock' that is experienced to some degree after a lengthy journey. Tourists in Gateway and Egress Destination may even seek out spaces and experiences that are supportive of the liminal role that these places play; places that provide a mix of home and away, of safe anticipation in a Gateway and of nostalgic memory and return in an Egress Destination. Egress Destinations typically have very good transportation systems and services, and as such may serve as Gateway and Hub Destinations, as well.

The three destination types above (Single, Gateway and Egress) are simple patterns. Places that serve these functions have the advantage of easily identifying their markets and targeting their needs because they have a direct, physical transportation connection to the traveler's origin. Administering surveys and interviews and studying market conditions in the source region could provide considerable insight for tourism market development. The two remaining itinerary-destination patterns are considerably more complicated because they may include mixtures of the Gateway and the Egress, along with varying degrees of the main destination primacy that is most clearly associated with the Single Destination.

Touring destination: When a place of interest is located after the first stopover place and before the last stopover point, it is a Touring Destination. This only occurs on multiple destination tours with three or more overnight stopovers. A Touring place does not necessarily require major Gateway or Egress transportation facilities and services, though it can also take on these roles for a main destination beyond itself. On the other hand, it may be the main destination on the journey. However, because at least two other destinations are included in the trip, the primacy of being a main destination can be diminished. A diminished primacy would be even more likely with additional trip destinations, which in turn could reduce the economic benefits that such primacy might otherwise offer. Either way, because they hold only a share of the entire itinerary, most Touring Destinations do not require as comprehensive a mix of attractions to hold visitor interests over a long of a period of time, as is typical of Single Destinations.

Hub Destination: The hub concept is well defined in the transportation industry as a transit point that allows economic efficiencies through concentrations of service and economies of scale. However, from an overnight destination perspective, for which the physical transportation route is largely irrelevant, any place that is visited more than once in a multiple destination itinerary can be considered a Hub Destination. Gateway, Egress and Touring Destinations can also be Hub Destinations. Because Gateway Destinations and Final Destinations often have superior transportation facilities, they are more likely to serve as Hub Destinations for travelers.

If we use Hong Kong as an example of a destination, residents from some places will use it as a Single Destination, others will it as a Gateway, Egress, or Touring Destination, and some of them will also use it as a Hub Destination, based in large part on the absolute and relative geographic relationship between their home and Hong Kong. Physical geography still does matter, though so do political and cultural relationships (especially among Asian countries with large ethnic Chinese populations) and the regulated international systems of air, land and sea transportation. Understanding how different people use a place in an itinerary, can have a significant influence on place marketing and positioning strategies, as well as on understanding the human experience of non-home places.

The destination types presented here relate to previous itinerary models to varying degrees. There is a direct relationship between the Single Destination and the 'Destination/Direct Route/S1' itinerary pattern and characteristics of the Single Destination itinerary and Single Destination place are fundamentally indistinguishable. Assuming that destination visits require an overnight visit, then the 'Base Camp/S2' itinerary would also correlate directly with the Single Destination place. All of the Multiple Stopover (M) itineraries consist of at least one Gateway Destination and one Egress Destination. The 'Enroute/Stopover/M1' itinerary and the

'Full Orbit/Full Loop/M2' itinerary do not have Hub Destinations and, in their simplest form, can exist without Touring Destinations. Touring Destination are required for the more complex itineraries, including the 'Partial Orbit/Area Loop/M3,' the 'Open Jaw Loop/M4' and the 'Trip Chaining/Multiple Area Loop/M5.' Hub Destinations are necessary for the 'Partial Orbit/Area Loop/M3' itinerary and the 'Trip Chaining/Multiple Area Loop/M5' itinerary pattern.

3. Hong Kong itineraries

The travel itinerary data examined here were collected in a survey of visitors to Hong Kong in Fall 1999 (Hui & McKercher, 2001). The survey targeted six key Hong Kong market segments based on the residency of the traveler and was administered in the language of the country: Australia, China, Singapore, Taiwan, UK, and USA. This paper focuses on residents of five of these countries; the UK was excluded due to a low representation of travelers from that country. The survey's focus on air travel resulted in an undercount of international visitors who use Hong Kong as a rail gateway into China, as well as the many mainland China residents who use Hong Kong as a Egress Destination after which they take the train back home to China. The selection of flights involved both judgment and practical considerations in conducting an international visitors' survey with finite resources. Because there were a limited number of daily flights to the USA, Australia and Singapore, all direct flights to these locations were sampled repeatedly over the study period. By contrast, there were numerous flights to China and Taiwan, so the survey focused on flights to the primary destinations of Beijing and Shanghai in China and Taipei and Kaohsiung in Taiwan, which were sampled at times that did not interfere with flights to other destinations. (Sampling the UK market proved problematic as no direct flights were scheduled until the interviewers had completed their evening shift.) A systematic method was utilized to select potential respondents on each flight. This method was found to be applicable on flights to the United States, Australia and Singapore, however, a convenience sample was found to be more suitable in selecting passengers on flights to China and Taiwan (cf. Hui & McKercher, 2001).

Participants were interviewed if they passed three qualifying questions (non-Hong Kong resident, non-transit passenger and a resident of one of the target source markets), regardless of the destination of the flight. Thus an American resident would qualify, if embarking on a flight to Australia. This technique was used to capture a range of passengers using Hong Kong as a Gateway, Touring or Hub Destination. By its very nature, the approach tended to be biased towards tourists using Hong Kong as an Egress point for their flight home. As a result, the data were suitable for 'within category' comparisons, but not for 'between category' or aggregate comparisons. For example, the data could be used to compare how residents of the five source markets viewed Hong Kong as a Single Destination, or as a Gateway Destination (cf. Fig. 1); but the data could not tell us if more visitors used Hong Kong as a Single Destination than as a Gateway Destination. Likewise, it must be recognized that the selection

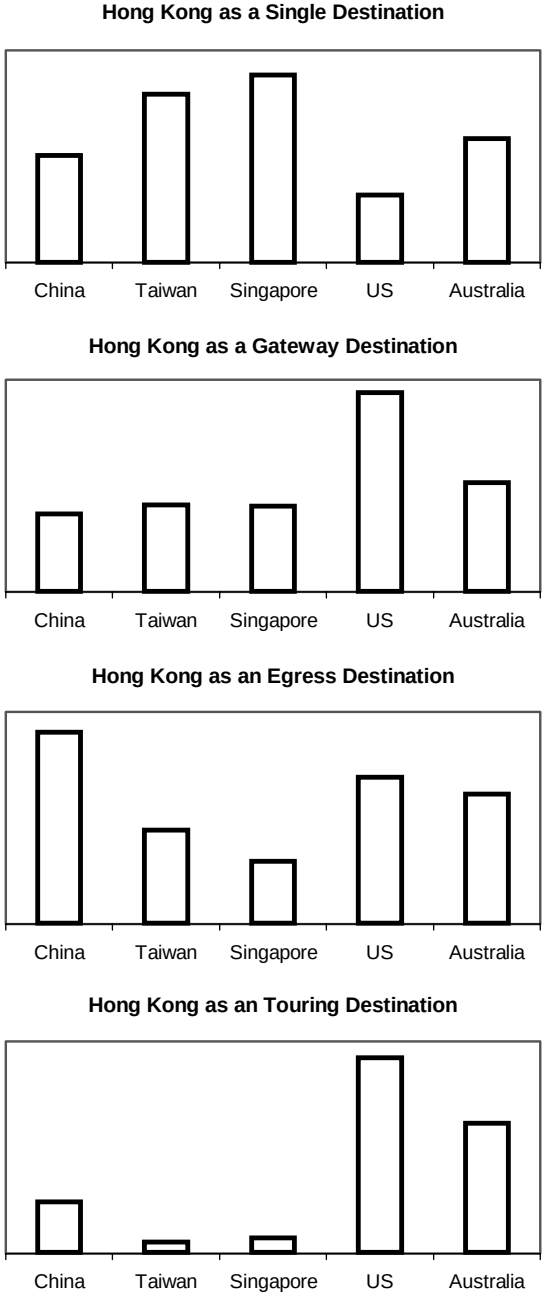


Fig. 1. Relative proportion of selected Hong Kong visitors who used Hong Kong as a Single Destination, Gateway Destination, Touring Destination and Egress Destination, 1999.

process targeted onward flights to a limited number of possible countries. As such, there was a bias toward a more comprehensive documentation of pre-Hong Kong itineraries.

In the survey, travelers were asked to list the countries they visited for at least one night before and after Hong Kong, with up to five responses in each direction (before and after) allowed. The resulting valid sample population to this question was 1843, with the country samples being: 390 Australia residents, 221 China residents, 369 Singapore residents, 260 Taiwan residents, and 613 US residents. Although respondents were allowed to indicate Hong Kong as a place visited more than once in their itinerary, none of them did this. It is unclear whether this was a result of bias on the part of the survey's administration or because so few international travelers used Hong Kong as a Hub Destination. Hong Kong is clearly a major air transportation hub for several airlines, including Cathay Pacific and United Airlines, but it does not appear to be a Hub Destination for travelers, as defined above, so this aspect was not examined.

Overall, among the groups surveyed, 26.2% of multiple destination travelers considered Hong Kong as their main destination.

Respondents were also asked to indicate their main destinations for multiple destination itineraries. This ranged from 16.6% of China residents, 24.0% of US residents, 27.4% for Taiwan, 34.1% for Australia, and 66.6% of Singapore residents (derived from Table 3). Combined with Single Destination travelers, Hong Kong is clearly the dominant destination for all visitor groups surveyed. For other main destinations the response rates were too low (with many non-responses) to make definitive generalizations, except to say that the others tended to reflect the regions that were most visited (Tables 5–7). The low and non-response rate to this question may have been due to multiple main destinations, which would support the contention that a destination's primacy factor is diminished on many multiple destination journeys.

3.1. General patterns

For residents of US, China and Australia, Hong Kong was more likely to be part of a multiple destination itinerary than their sole destination (Fig. 1 and Table 3). The similarity among these three countries, however, is only superficial. For China residents this pattern is shaped by infrastructure. Although the number of direct international air linkages to China is growing (Yu & Lew, 1997; Mak, 2002), many residents of China still use Hong Kong as a Gateway to the rest of the world or as the point of Egress, and an opportunity for shopping, after having gone abroad (Zhang, Jenkins, & Qu, 2002). For North American residents, the issue is distance. Because of the long cross-Pacific haul, Hong Kong is more likely to be part of a longer itinerary, and more likely to serve as a Gateway, Touring or Egress Destination. At the other extreme, residents of Singapore and Taiwan were far more likely to view Hong Kong as a Single Destination, often for short, packaged shopping trips and for business trips. Both physical and cultural distances are less for these travelers, who therefore perceive and use Hong Kong in a different way (as Single Destinations). The overall distribution of types for Australia resembles that of China (Fig. 1), but for reasons that are more similar to the US, though the haul is not quite as long. The lower Gateway Destination pattern for Australians, in comparison to Americans, may be due to the intervening opportunities for stopovers in Southeast Asia en route to Hong Kong and the rest of East Asia.

Characteristics of travelers segmented into the four destination types is another area that allows itinerary comparisons. The length of the different trip types is an example (Table 4). Those for whom Hong Kong was their Single Destination had the shortest average trip lengths, although even here we see the impact of the long haul travel for US and Australian residents, as well as some China residents, all of whom had longer trips. Those for whom Hong Kong was a Touring Destination had the longest trips, by far, though travelers who used Hong Kong as a Gateway also had fairly extensive

Table 3
Hong Kong in single and multiple destination itineraries

Residence	Itinerary type		HK		Total 1999 Visitors *N* (%)[a]
	Single (%)	Multiple destinations (%)	Main (%)[a]	Sample *N*	
China	40.3	59.7	50.2	221	3.083 m (28.9)
Taiwan	63.5	36.5	73.5	260	2.000 m (18.7)
Singapore	70.7	29.3	90.2	369	0.352 m (3.3)
USA	25.5	74.5	43.4	613	0.808 m (7.5)
Australia	46.7	53.3	64.9	390	0.281 m (2.6)
All	49.3	50.7	62.6	1843	10,678,460 (100)

[a] HK main = Single Destination combined with multiple destination travelers who indicated Hong Kong as their main destination. Source for 'Total 1999 Visitors': HKTA (2000).

Table 4
Itinerary type by length of trip (median nights) for Hong Kong visitors from selected countries

	China[a]	Taiwan	Singapore	US	Australia	Mean
Single	5	3	4	7	6	5.00
Gateway	14	9.5	6	14	13	11.30
Egress	14	3	4	7	6	6.80
Touring[a]	14	[a]	[a]	15	21	16.67
Mean	11.75	5.17	4.67	10.75	11.50	9.94

[a] The small number of 'Touring Destination' cases from Taiwan, Singapore and China (see Fig. 1) were combined under the China column to minimize data idiosyncrasies.

journeys. Taiwan and Singapore residents were the least likely to participate in long haul travel, while China and Australia residents made, overall, the longest trips. The significance of the relatively short trip length among those who use Hong Kong as an Egress Destination (except for China residents) was unclear. This could reflect shorter trips to China, perhaps on business, that involved a stopover in Hong Kong on the way out. In addition to geographic location, other factors that could influence how travelers used Hong Kong in their itinerary include the travelers' life cycle and socio-economic situations. For example, US residents tended to be older (mean age of 41), and the wealthiest, followed by Australia residents (age 39), China residents (age 34), Taiwan residents (33) and Singapore residents (age 31). Travelers using Hong Kong as a Touring Destination were also the oldest, on average, no matter which country they came from, and were often the wealthiest, reflecting the high cost of this type of travel. Other differences in age and income among travel types were less significant.

4. Hong Kong in the multiple destination network

Itinerary data also provide information on which places were visited and this is summarized in Tables 5–7 for each of the multiple destination types. Although country data were provided in the original dataset, except for China, only world regions are listed to conserve space. Even at this level many of the cells are already quite small and information at the individual country level can quickly become idiosyncratic and meaningless. These tables list the total number of countries visited in each region after Hong Kong (Gateway Destination pattern, Table 5), the total number of countries visited before Hong Kong (Egress Destination pattern, Table 6), and the total number of countries visited before and after Hong Kong (Touring Destination pattern, Table 7). At the bottom of the columns the overall mean number of countries visited is provided, which gives a sense of the degree of variability in itinerary length. Averages closer to '1' indicate that most of the residents of that country visited only one other country in addition to Hong Kong and the geographic distribution shown (by percentages) reflects where the countries visited were located.

4.1. Gateway destination

Travelers who visited Hong Kong as the first stop in their multiple destination itinerary experienced it as a Gateway to their journey and to other places. The most common other place was China, and for many Taiwan residents in particular, their trip consisted of a stop in Hong Kong and then a trip to China (Table 5). This is not surprising given the difficulty of traveling from Taiwan to China. If and when direct flights between Taiwan and China are initiated, the number of Taiwan residents using Hong Kong as a Gateway to China is likely to decline precipitously. Many Singapore residents also used Hong Kong as a southern Gateway into China, as well as to other East Asian countries. The transportation linkages that Hong Kong offers to all parts of China, and to southern China in particular, contributes to its high Gateway usage among Singapore residents, which would probably be reflected among other travelers from Southeast Asia, as well.

US and Australia residents were more mixed in where they were going when they used Hong Kong as a trip Gateway. While China was still clearly the most common place visited after Hong Kong, these travelers also went on to visit destinations in East and Southeast Asia after Hong Kong. Many US residents used Hong Kong as a Gateway point on a trip to the Pacific (mostly to Australia, despite its great distance from Hong Kong), while Australia residents used Hong Kong as a Gateway to Europe, though it was probably more of a stopover break on that long flight.

Although the situation has opened up considerably in recent years, Chinese citizens still have a number of restrictions on their freedom to travel internationally (Lew, 2000). Pure leisure travel is restricted to countries that have been designated as legal for travel by China's central government. Most of these are in Southeast Asia, though Australia, New Zealand and South Korea were added to the list in mid-1999. It is not surprising,

Table 5
Number of countries visited in major regions after Hong Kong as the Gateway (First) Destination

	Traveler's country of residence					Mean
	China	Taiwan	Singapore	USA	Australia	
Total no. of country visits after Hong Kong as a Gateway Destination	48	42	61	252	98	
Percentage of visits in each region (%)						
China	×	85.7	75.4	39.7	46.9	*61.9*
E Asia	12.5	7.1	14.8	13.9	13.3	*12.3*
SE Asia	62.5	0	3.3	20.6	18.4	*10.6*
Pacific	6.3	0	1.6	21.0	0	*5.7*
S&W Asia	6.3	0	0	3.2	3.1	*1.6*
Europe	4.2	2.4	3.3	0.8	14.3	*5.2*
N America	8.3	4.8	1.6	0.8	4.1	*2.8*
Africa & Latin America	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total no. of respondents	**27**	**37**	**52**	**201**	**70**	
Average no. of other countries visited, excluding Hong Kong	1.8	1.1	1.2	1.3	1.4	*1.2*

Table 6
Number of country visits in major regions before Hong Kong as an Egress (Final) Destination

	Traveler's country of residence					Mean
	China	Taiwan	Singapore	USA	Australia	
Total no. of country visits before Hong Kong as an Egress Destination	147	63	60	313	211	
Percentage of visits in each region (%)						
China	×	79.4	68.3	38.0	14.9	*50.2*
E Asia	12.9	3.2	20.0	15.0	6.3	*11.1*
SE Asia	29.9	11.1	5.0	40.3	17.6	*18.5*
Pacific	13.6	0	1.7	1.3	0	*0.8*
S&W Asia	6.1	0	0	2.9	3.6	*1.6*
Europe	16.3	4.8	0	2.2	42.1	*12.3*
N America	10.2	1.6	5.0	0	9.5	*4.0*
Africa	7.5	0	0	0.3	5.0	*1.3*
Latin America	3.4	0	0	0	0.9	*0.2*
Total no. of respondents	**95**	**57**	**54**	**211**	**119**	
Average no. of other countries visited, excluding Hong Kong	1.5	1.1	1.1	1.5	1.8	1.4

Table 7
Number of country visits in major regions before and after Hong Kong as a Touring (Middle) Destination

	Traveler's country of residence			Mean
	China, Taiwan & Singapore[a]	USA	Australia	
Total no. of country visits before & after Hong Kong as a Touring Destination:	15	143	60	
Percentage of visits in each region (%)				
China	26.7	23.8	18.3	*22.9*
E Asia	20.0	23.8	5.0	*16.3*
SE Asia	40.0	42.7	60.0	*47.6*
Pacific	6.7	2.8	1.7	*3.7*
S&W Asia	0	1.4	0	*0.5*
Europe	0	4.9	10.0	*5.0*
N America	6.7	0.7	3.3	*3.6*
Africa	0	0	1.7	*0.6*
Latin America	0	0	0	*0.0*
Total no. of respondents	**7**	**45**	**17**	
Average no. of other countries visited, excluding Hong Kong	2.1	3.2	3.5	3.0

[a] The small number of 'Touring Destination' cases from Taiwan, Singapore and China (see Fig. 1) were combined under the China column to minimize data idiosyncrasies.

therefore, that a large proportion of mainland China residents used Hong Kong as a Gateway to Southeast Asia. What is distinctive for China residents is the comparatively high number of countries visited after Hong Kong, averaging close to two countries per trip. It is also apparent that China residents (mostly from south China) used Hong Kong in planning their trips throughout Asia, and to Europe and North America.

4.2. Egress destination

Travelers who visit Hong Kong as the last stop on their multiple destination itinerary before returning home used it as a Egress Destination. Again, China was the most frequently cited pre-Hong Kong destination overall, but at lower rates across all categories in comparison to the Gateway travelers (Table 6). However, China was not at the top for all groups. US residents cited Southeast Asian countries just as frequently, while Australia residents were far more likely to list European countries, though both of these are regions and so reflect multiple countries instead of just one. What it does show is that Hong Kong was used as an Egress Destination for trips that involved a greater variety of places and more destinations overall than was the case of Hong Kong's use as a trip Gateway. This was generally true for all of the visitor groups in this study, even residents of China who listed countries in Europe with the second highest frequency behind Southeast Asia.

Overall, in comparison to travelers who used Hong Kong as a trip Gateway Destination, those who used Hong Kong as an Egress Destination were more likely to do so for trips involving Southeast Asian countries and European countries. China was an exception in that Hong Kong had higher rates as a Gateway to Southeast Asia than as an Egress Destination after a Southeast Asia trip. A couple of other noticeable differences include:

- For Taiwan residents, Hong Kong was an Egress Destination for their trips to Southeast Asia, but is not a Gateway for such trips.
- For US residents, Hong Kong was a trip Gateway to the Pacific (Australia), but is not an Egress Destination for trips that included the Pacific.

4.3. Touring destination

The total number of respondents for whom Hong Kong served as a Touring Destination, with at least one destination before and at least one after Hong Kong, was quite low (Table 7). However they did reveal several noteworthy findings. Only seven (0.8%) out of a combined total of 840 respondents among China, Taiwan and Singapore residents used Hong Kong as a Touring Destination. That compared with 7.3% of US residents and 4.4% of Australia residents. In addition, those Asian travelers typically only visited one country before Hong Kong and only one after in their itinerary. Removing the three China residents from the combined Asian category results in all of the remaining four having included China as one of their destinations either before or after Hong Kong. US residents similarly included China as a destination (75.6% went to China and at least one other country), but few Australia residents did (only 17.6%). Southeast Asian countries were the most frequently cited as being visited before or after China, though many East Asian countries were also included. Again, Australia residents deviated from this, citing few other East Asian countries and including more European countries.

5. Summary and conclusions

Although travel itinerary data is not difficult to collect, it does present analytical challenges because of the great diversity of routes that travelers follow and the different scales that can be applied in defining destinations. Most of the models that have been proposed to deal with these issues have focused either on general flows from one country to another, or on the overall pattern of entire trips. An alternative and complementary approach is to examine the relative location of a destination within the larger itinerary pattern. From a market study perspective, this approach could prove more valuable in understanding the different ways that travelers perceive and experience a destination as part of their itinerary and how a destination, such as Hong Kong, can best position itself relative to its major markets. Places on an itinerary can be one of five types: Single Destination, Gateway (first) Destination, Egress (last) Destination, Touring (middle) Destination, or Hub (multiple visit) Destination. Note that the terms Gateway and Egress here refer to the first and final overnight destination on the entire trip. Touring and Hub destinations can also serve Gateway and Egress functions for regions and places embedded within a larger trip, which makes these forms of destination usage much more complex. The main destination's primacy on any itinerary can be considerably diminished as the number of destinations in an itinerary increases.

Data collected on international air travelers to Hong Kong exhibited four of these five patterns. The Hub Destination pattern, while theoretically possible, did not appear in the sample data. Although Hong Kong serves as a regional transportation hub for airlines and other transportation services, it does not function as a trip itinerary Hub Destination (as defined in this paper) for most people. In fact, there are probably very few cities that do serve this function for individual air travelers,

due to the relatively high cost of airline travel. This would indicate that theoretical itinerary patterns that require a Hub Destination (Partial Orbit/M3 and Trip Chaining/M5 in Table 1) are also quite rare for the majority of individual travelers. For multiple destination air itineraries, the Full Loop/M2 and Open Jaw Loop/M5 with one or more Touring Destinations is more economical both in time and money. At a less macro level, however, McKercher (2001) has found that Hong Kong does serves as a ground-base Hub Destination for overnight trips to Macau and neighboring Guangdong Province.

The five countries that the survey targeted demonstrated many distinct characteristics in their itinerary patterns. Probably the most significant differentiation was between short haul and long haul travelers (cf. Shen, 2002). Intra-Asian, short haul travelers from Taiwan and Singapore primarily used Hong Kong as a Single Destination for short break shopping holidays and for business. Even when Hong Kong was part of a multiple destination itinerary for Taiwan and Singapore residents, the itinerary form was very simple, with only one other country (usually China) involved. For residents of the other three countries in the survey, Hong Kong was more likely to be part of a complex multiple destination itinerary.

Long haul travelers from the US and Australia were more likely to use Hong Kong as a trip Gateway and as a Touring Destination. Several reasons exist for this. Hong Kong is a major transportation center for Asia in general, and for China in particular. Therefore, for long haul travelers, such as those from Australia and the US, flights into Hong Kong were more readily available, making it a convenient starting point (Gateway) or stopover point (Touring Destination) on an Asian itinerary. Because they were traveling a longer way, and into a cultural region that is different from their own, US and Australian residents tend to make longer trips and visit more destinations. For most, Hong Kong was a Gateway to China. But Hong Kong also served as a Gateway to destinations in East and Southeast Asia and, for US residents, to an Asia-Pacific trip that included Australia. Residents of China used Hong Kong as a Gateway to Southeast Asia, though this could change with an increase in direct international flights between China and other countries. Few respondents used Hong Kong as a Touring Destination, and those that did tended to spend less time (and less money) in Hong Kong.

Residents of China were more likely to use Hong Kong as an Egress Destination than were residents of the other countries included in the survey. For China residents, Hong Kong offers a familiar, yet still different, experience that allows re-familiarization with Chinese culture after an extended international journey, as well as a shopping opportunity just prior to returning home. Singapore and Taiwan residents used Hong Kong as a trip Egress Destination after visits to China, while many Australia residents did so after trips to Europe. Americans often made a final stop in Hong Kong after a trip to Southeast Asia.

Hong Kong has traditionally considered itself primarily as a 'gateway to China' and an 'Asian travel hub'. Indeed, most major travel centers hold similar perceptions of themselves as a 'gateway' to somewhere and as a 'travel hub' for some region. The results of this research indicate that for Hong Kong these self-definitions, while correct, tell only part of the story. Travelers come through Hong Kong on many different itineraries, of which there is only vague awareness among those who service the city's visitors and potential visitors. Hong Kong, or any other comparable place, could benefit from being more aware of their role as an Egress Destination, giving travelers a more clear opportunity to unwind and reflect upon their experiences, and perhaps some last minute purchasing to bring home. Emphasis on the mix of East and West, for example, could be accentuated, which is not difficult to do in Hong Kong.

The ideal scenario to maximize the economic benefits of tourism is to be a Single Destination, which Hong Kong is for many short haul travelers. Because this is difficult to do for long haul markets, Hong Kong, and most other places, could benefit from being more aware of their relationships to the destinations that travelers visit before and after their arrival. Promoting the Hub Destination concept is the typical approach in that major transportation cities take in marketing themselves to the long haul market. The evidence from Hong Kong indicates that this approach is very difficult to actualize as most multiple destination travelers actually prefer not to double-back if they can avoid it. Destinations could probably do better to jointly promote touring itineraries with places that may currently be considered competitors. Existing relationships could be strengthened through joint marketing, as has been seen within ASEAN in Southeast Asia (Lew, Wee, & Ahmed, 1999), and new relationships could be explored to develop new products. This is typically how travel agencies plan the itineraries for their long-haul package clients. In addition, for the long-haul market it may be easier to concentrate expanding the total number of visitors, rather than their length of stay because of a desire to see more for this market segment. Perhaps Hong Kong, Bangkok and Singapore could do better to cooperate in marketing to the long-haul North American and European markets. And although Hong Kong has made some efforts at regional tourism promotion in the Pearl River Delta, stronger ties could be made with major destinations further afield in China, such as Guilin, Kunming, Xi'an, or even Hong Kong's principal economic rival, Shanghai.

Alternatively, itinerary knowledge combined with sociodemographic data on travelers can help destinations to better understand their competitive advantages over rival destinations and to better position themselves in the destination and itinerary pattern for different market segments. It may be that a destination is better situated for short haul, single or simple itinerary visitors. An emphasis on a Single Destination development scenario may, in that case, be justified. However, this could also make a destination vulnerable to changing market conditions. Most places serve several different market segments based on factors including distance/accessibility, attraction/product mix, and social/cultural relationships (Lew, 1987). These different segments will have different Single, Gateway, Egress, Touring and Hub needs. Strengthening a diversity of market segments can help a destination through periods of market fluctuations.

Collecting macro-level itinerary data from international travelers is not difficult and can be incorporated into traditional port-of-entry visitor surveys quite easily. Complications can ensue when trying to ascertain entire itineraries due to the great variety of responses possible, the large number of destinations in the itineraries of a small proportion of travelers, and the large number of cases necessary to generalize overall itineraries. An emphasis on destination type, as proposed here, resolves most of these problems because it is not necessary to know the entire itinerary to know a destination's position in it. The key elements are the point(s) of origin and return, and destinations visited just before and just after the place in question. Further knowledge can be gained by listing all overnight destinations visited before and all visited after the destination, though this does not need to be in a full itinerary order. Combining this information with demographic and behavioral profiles will then allow a segmentation of Single, Gateway, Egress, Touring and Hub Destinations, from which competitive and cooperative marketing and development schemes can be developed.

Travel itinerary data offer an intriguing venue for analysis. Itinerary questions, however, are seldom asked in travel surveys, and when they are asked they are often not assessed because the analysis can become complex very quickly. This study, as well as that by Oppermann (1995), was limited to region level data. Developing tools to collect and assess country and city itineraries in an efficient and meaningful manner could encourage more itinerary data collection and its use as a tourism development and marketing tool. The impact of different types of itineraries on destinations and visitors, why people choose different of itineraries and destinations, and how the changing transportation infrastructure and information technology impact travel itineraries are further questions that can offer a wealth of insight into contemporary travel.

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