CHAPTER 4

National Demand

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¶ 4.01 INTRODUCTION

The demand for lodging in the United States is difficult to gauge, because it requires the evaluation of a number of economic and societal trends. Some of the most significant factors affecting lodging demand include:

- Value of the dollar. Declines in the value of the dollar enable more foreign tourists to travel to the United States while restricting the travel of Americans abroad; increases in dollar value reverse this situation.
- Automotive fuel prices. An increase in fuel prices discourages people from traveling, while a decrease permits less expensive transportation, resulting in an increase in travel and lodging demand.

- Number of dual-income households. Over the past twenty years, the increasing prominence of dual-income households has meant, for these families, greater disposable income that can be devoted to leisure travel.
- Advances in telecommunications. Increasingly sophisticated technology has enabled meetings and conferences to take place between participants situated around the globe, thereby reducing the need for business travel.
- Implementation of frequent flyer/frequent guest programs. In a number of travel-related industries, including the airline, car rental, and hotel industries, numerous incentive programs now exist that encourage travel by awarding free or reduced-cost transportation, lodging, and other financial rewards.

¶ 4.02 NATIONAL DEMAND DATA

The analysis of national trends affecting lodging demand depends in large part on pertinent data compiled by government and industry organizations. Data relating to lodging demand can be divided into four general categories:

- 1. Information regarding the actual use of transient accommodations.
- 2. Information regarding travel that may entail the use of transient accommodations.
- 3. Indicators of the general condition of the national economy and broad-based demographic trends that can have an indirect impact on the use of transient accommodations.
- 4. Information detailing specific characteristics of transient travel demand (e.g., primary reasons for leisure travel or selection of hotels).

Category 1 data provides the clearest indications of the current status of lodging demand, because the data requires little extrapolation or hypothesization. Categories 2 and 3 include information that does not directly reflect demand for transient accommodations, but from which useful inferences can nonetheless be drawn. Category 4 concerns such elements of demand as the most popular destinations for leisure travelers and preferences among the different market segments (i.e., commercial, meeting and convention, and leisure) regarding the amenities offered by lodging facilities. This sort of information indicates not overall levels of demand but rather characteristics of demand segments; it is useful for the proper planning, design, operation, and marketing of individual lodging facilities. Each of these categories of data is discussed in the following sections.

¶ 4.03 USE OF TRANSIENT ACCOMMODATIONS

Historically, the U.S. Travel Data Center has been the primary source of data regarding the use of transient accommodations and the actual dollar receipts of lodging facilities. This organization conducts monthly surveys of travelers to determine their travel patterns. In more recent years, Smith Travel Research (STR) has emerged as the definitive source of hotel industry data, providing occupancy and average rate statistics as well as supply, demand, and room sales trends on an aggregate national level and for most U.S. hotel submarkets. Several government agencies, including the Bureau of the Census and the Bureau of Labor Statistics, also compile information

regarding the use of transient accommodations in the course of preparing nationwide industrial statistics.

[1] Trends in Hotel Travel Volume

The U.S. Travel Data Center conducts monthly travelers' surveys from which a wide range of statistics are developed and hotel volume trends are tracked. Exhibit 4-1 shows the volume of travel that involved a hotel stay. This exhibit demonstrates a virtually continuous increase between 1986 and 1996.

Exhibit 4-1 U.S. I	Resident	Travel V	olumes	, 1986–	1999—	Hotel/M	otel Tra	vel				
Sources: Travel Industr	y Associatio	n's Nation	al Survey									
	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	86-96 Change
Trips	,											
Volume (millions)	247.9	282.1	273.3	290.5	291.1	291.1	325.8	329.5	318.5	316.4	334.0	35%
Share of total	47%	50%	47%	49%	49%	49%	50%	51%	48%	47%	49%	

Exhibit 4-2 shows the compounded annual growth rates for several different travel categories, including travel volume by purpose of trip and by mode of transportation.

Category	Compounded Annual Percent Change (1982–1993)
Total Travel	2.8%
Hotel	4.7
Pleasure	3.2
Vacation	3.4
Weekend	5.0
Business	5.2
Auto	2.0
Air	5.8

All categories showed an increase in travel volume between 1982 and 1993. As a result of the 1992 airline rate wars, the highest growth rate was recorded in air travel. Travel that involved hotel accommodations showed an impressive 4.7 percent average annual compounded growth rate during this period. The continuous increase in travel volume supports the observation that the cyclical declines in hotel occupancies in past years were a result of overbuilding rather than a reduction in the amount of travel.

[2] Trends in Total Room Sales

Another direct indicator of transient demand is the annual percentage change in room sales, which is tallied by Smith Travel Research. Exhibit 4-3 tracks room sales trends since 1987 for the United States as a whole.

Exhibit 4-3	Room Sales-	– U.S.	lotal
Source: Smith	Travel Research		

Year	Percent Change
1987	8.3%
1988	8.9
1989	9.1
1990	6.7
1991	1.2
1992	5.3
1993	6.3
1994	8.6

Consistent with trends in new hotel development, national room sales growth gained momentum during the late 1980s, peaking at 9.1 percent annual growth in 1989. Growth began to decline in 1990, and reached a relative low in 1991, when hotel room sales increased by only 1.2 percent, well below the pace of inflation. As the national economy began to recover, so did the relative health of the national hotel market. From 1992 to 1994, room revenues gradually increased to a rate of 8.6 percent, roughly on par with the sales growth levels experienced during the late 1980s.

¶ 4.04 TRAVEL INDUSTRY STATISTICS

Travel industry statistics are generally easier to obtain than information concerning the actual utilization of hotels and motels.

[1] Food and Beverage Sales

Food and beverage sales are quantified each year by the National Restaurant Association for several categories, including lodging places and hotel and motel restaurants. According to data found in the *Statistical Abstract of the United States* 115th Edition, food and drink sales at lodging facilities had a compounded annual growth of 2.3 percent between 1980 and 1992, slowing to a rate of 1.3 percent annually from 1985 to 1992. Reflecting the economic recession, food and drink sales at lodging facilities declined by 0.9 percent from 1990 to 1992. Hotel restaurants showed growth rates of 4.1 percent, 2.3 percent, and negative 0.4 percent in 1990, 1991, and 1992, respectively. Motel restaurants experienced significantly lower volumes each year, with a 7.3 percent decline from 1980 to 1992, a 6.6 percent decline from 1985 to 1992, and a 5.4 percent decline from 1990 to 1992.

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[2] Domestic Passenger Traffic

Domestic passenger traffic figures for private cars and domestic airlines, buses, and railroads also provide indirect indicators of transient lodging demand.

According to the Statistical Abstract of the United States 115th Edition (Table 1009, p. 62), from 1970 to 1993 total passenger traffic increased at varying rates between 2.0 percent and 3.0 percent annually, with the greatest period of growth occurring during the 1980s. Growth slowed from an annual rate of 2.9 percent in the period from 1980 to 1993 to a rate of 2.2 percent annually from 1990 to 1993. In general, the greatest growth rate took place in domestic air travel, which had a 5.1 percent annual increase between 1970 and 1993—even though, between 1990 and 1993, the growth rate dropped to 1.0 percent. Because air travel tends to generate a high level of lodging demand, these trends are very favorable for hotels and motels, and particularly those located at major airport destinations. Surprisingly, railroad travel increased by 2.5 percent annually between 1990 and 1993, although that mode of transportation still remained only a minor contributor to overall passenger traffic.

[3] International Travel Demand

International travel to the United States represents a growing source of hotel demand. Since 1983, international travel has been increasing at an estimated annual compounded rate of 8 percent. The low value of the dollar in relation to other currencies makes the United States an inexpensive destination for overseas travelers. Approximately 10 percent of the total U.S. hotel demand is currently generated by international travelers, and this percentage is projected to increase to 14 percent during the next three years. Surveys show that foreign visitors stay in hotels nearly twice as long as domestic travelers (7 nights as opposed to 3.6) and use hotels with nearly twice the frequency of U.S. travelers. International vacationers constitute an extremely attractive market, with an average stay of just under three weeks and per-capita spending that is six times higher than that of their U.S. counterparts.

The two primary sources of international travel to the United States are Canada and Mexico. Together, these countries represented more than 55 percent of the total international arrivals in 1994. Because of economic problems, travel from Canada to the United States has remained fairly level during the past several years. Travel from Mexico, however, has increased sharply. The passage of the NAFTA agreement is likely to engender a further influx of visitors from these two countries, which should have a favorable effect on the U.S. lodging industry.

According to data from the U.S. Travel and Tourism Administration, there was little change in the volume of international travel to the United States during the first part of the 1980s. As the dollar weakened in value against foreign currencies during the mid- to late 1980s, international travel increased significantly.

Offsetting the benefits of international travel to the United States is the outbound travel to international destinations by U.S. citizens. Between 1989 and 1994, foreign travel to the United States rose by 28 percent, while U.S. travel to international destinations increased by only 13 percent. Between 1989 and 1994, U.S. travel to Canada declined by 3 percent, while U.S. travel to Mexico rose by 5 percent. Total international travel by U.S. citizens has been increasing slowly.

¶ 4.05 ECONOMIC AND DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS

Category 3 data, which indicates general economic health and broad-based demographic trends that can indirectly affect lodging demand, is readily available to analysts and investors. The most useful data of this type pertains to the gross domestic product and the contributions made to it by the wholesale and retail trade and the service industries. Gross domestic product, which is the broadest measure of economic activity, is a relevant indicator for both business and leisure travel.

Wholesale and retail trade generates about 15 percent of the nation's lodging demand, so the economic health of this segment of the economy has particular importance for the lodging industry. In constant 1987 dollars, the gross domestic product (GDP) had a compounded annual growth rate of 1.6 percent between 1987 and 1992. During this same period, the combined wholesale and retail trade grew at 2.1 percent, and services increased by 2.6 percent annually. Slower GDP growth occured from 1990 to 1992 than in the period from 1987 to 1992, largely reflective of the national economic recession.

¶ 4.06 CHARACTERISTICS OF TRAVEL DEMAND

Category 4 data is quite different from the first three categories of data in that it does not assist in quantifying lodging demand, but rather provides information about the characteristics of the demand—for example:

- The reasons commercial travelers select a particular hotel
- · The usual lead time for booking an association training seminar
- The most popular destinations for pleasure travelers
- · Why people travel
- The hotel amenities that travelers request most and the amenities that travelers actually use most

Although Category 4 data does not directly reflect overall hotel demand, an understanding of this information is essential for planning a lodging facility and operating it in a manner that attracts a sufficient level of demand. Exhibit 4-4 contains data regarding the characteristics of an average trip along with the number of nights per trip for the period from 1984 to 1993.

Exhibit 4-4 Characteristics of an Average Trip Source: U.S. Travel Data Center										
										-
	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993
Persons per trip	1.62	1.62	1.59	1.57	1.58	1.60	1.62	1.65	1.63	1.64
Nights per trip	5.20	5.40	5.20	5.00	4.90	4.60	4.40	4.10	4.00	4.20

As the exhibit shows, the number of persons per trip has remained relatively flat during the past ten years—approximating 1.6 persons per trip—although during the late 1980s, the figure dipped slightly. As the late 1980s was a period of rapid economic expansion, the slightly lower statistics during that time might indicate an increase in individual business travel. The number of nights per trip has generally decreased from

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a 1985 peak of 5.4 nights per trip to 4.2 in 1993. Business travel budgets have been reduced, particularly during the recessive early 1990s, having a direct impact on the length of business trips, and increasing number of flight options and lower airfares have led to more short "commuter" flights.

With the increase in dual-income households, vacations have changed over the past decade. Mostly gone is the single, multi-week family vacation each summer; today, an increasing number of couples and families prefer shorter but more frequent vacations.

Category 4 data can be made more useful by being broken down into individual segments based on the unique characteristics of the travelers making up a particular segment. The most logical method for performing this operation is to use the purpose of the trip as a distinguishing characteristic. Three primary segments are (1) commercial demand, which consists of individual business people traveling for a business purpose; (2) meeting and convention demand, which consists of groups of people (more than three) traveling for the purpose of having a meeting of some type; and (3) leisure demand, which consists of individuals traveling for pleasure.

One important reason for looking at Category 4 data on the basis of individual demand segments is that different types of demand usually exhibit different characteristics that are useful for lodging facility planners and managers to know. For example, commercial demand exhibits a low double-occupancy rate, while leisure travel generates a much larger number of people per room; leisure travelers typically have a longer average stay than commercial patrons; and growth rates in commercial travel are often dependent on the local economy, whereas growth rates in meeting and convention patronage are most often affected by national economic trends. These characteristics can have a significant effect on the operating results of a lodging facility, so any analysis of lodging demand data should begin by dividing the data into individual segments.

[1] Commercial Demand Segment

As shown in Exhibit 4-5, Business Trips increased from 1986 - 1996 by 17%. The total volume of business travel by person-trips increased even more by 26%. This indicates that the travel party size increased over the time period.

												86-96
	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	Change
Trips												
Volume (millions)	164.4	185.0	182.8	199.3	182.8	176.9	210.8	210.4	193.2	207.8	192.8	17%
Share of total	31%	33%	31%	34%	31%	30%	32%	32%	29%	31%	29%	
PERSON-TRIPS												
Volume (millions)	200.1	218.3	224.1	245.6	221.8	224.0	278.0	275.4	246.7	275.2	251.2	26%
Share of total	24%	24%	24%	26%	23%	23%	26%	26%	22%	23%	22%	
Travel Party Size												
(People)	1.22	1.18	1.23	1.23	1.21	1.27	1.32	1.31	1.28	1.32	1.31	

Although business travelers who take 10 or more trips per year make up the smallest segment, this group of travelers has grown in size during the past decade. Hotel chains develop marketing plans aimed at these frequent travelers in an effort to develop brand loyalty. Today, most major commercial hotel chains offer a traveler incentive program, and according to U.S. Travel Data Center, approximately 16 percent of business travelers actively participate in a frequent lodger program. Exhibit 4-6 shows the average number of nights spent per business trip. Most businesspeople spend between two and three nights away from home, while only 13.6 percent of corporate travelers spend more than ten nights on the road.

Exhibit 4-6 Nights Spent per Business Trip

Source: U.S. Travel Data Center

Number of Nights	Percentage of Commercial Travelers
0	13%
1	21%
2-3	38%
4-9	22%
10+	.6%

The typical business traveler is always of interest to hotel investors and operators. Exhibit 4-7 shows some of the most important characteristics of the commercial segment.

Exhibit 4-7 Demographics of Business Travelers							
Source: U.S. Travel Data Ce	nter						
	Men	69%					
	Age 25-55	45%					
	College graduate	43%					
	Professional or managerial	57%					
	Income \$40,000+	68%					
	Two or more wage earners	53%					
	Average miles per trip	834					
	Average nights per trip	8.2					
	Uses airline for trip	35%					
	Stays in hotel or motel	67%					

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Exhibit 4-8 shows the types of transportation used by commercial travelers.

Source: U.S. Travel Data	Center	
	Primary Type Used	
	Car travel	62%
	Airline	35%
	Bus/motorcoach	1%
	Company plane	0.5%
	Train	0.5%
	Other	1%

According to the U.S. Travel Data Center, the ten most important factors in hotel selection for commercial travelers are the following:

- 1. Convenient location
- 2. Clean, comfortable rooms
- 3. Room rates
- 4. Recommendations
- 5. Previous experience
- 6. Meeting facilities
- 7. Restaurant—food service
- 8. Company policy
- 9. Travel agent
- 10. Frequent guest program

Predictably, a convenient location is the key factor in the selection process. Clean, comfortable rooms are next on the list, followed by cost.

Commercial travel is distributed fairly evenly throughout the year for both frequent and infrequent travelers, although there is less activity during the months of December, January, and February. Business travel peaks during the spring and fall months, with a slight dropoff noted during the summer months. Exhibit 4-9 lists the distribution of business travel by month throughout the year.

In general, business travelers tend to be less price sensitive than other travelers; furthermore, they travel on a more regular basis, and their demand is fairly predictable. For these reasons, owners and operators of lodging facilities consider the commercial demand segment an extremely important component of the overall demand for lodging.

[2] Meeting and Convention Demand Segment

One of the best sources of national demand data concerning the meetings and convention market segment is *Meetings and Conventions* magazine, a nationally recognized authority on all types of meetings and conventions. Every two years, the publishers of this periodical conduct a detailed survey of their readership to develop data related to the meetings and convention market in the United States, and then publish the information in a book titled *Meetings Market*.

Exhibit 4-9 Distribution of Business Trips by Month

Source: U.S. Travel Data Center

Percentage of Total

	Frequent Travelers	Less Frequent Travelers
January	6.4%	5.6%
February	3.6	5.3
March	8.4	9.1
April	10.8	11.1
May	8.0	9.1
June	11.5	9.9
July	8.4	9.7
August	7.5	9.0
September	9.6	7.9
October	er 9.4 8.7	
November	9.5	8.6
December	6.9	5.9
Total	100.0%	100.0%

Meetings Market divides the meetings and convention market into three segments: corporate meetings, conventions, and association meetings. Exhibit 4-10 shows the important characteristics of corporate meetings.

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Type of meeting	Average attendance	Average number of days' duration	Number in past year	Percentage of total	Average number of months' planning lead time
Management Meetings	43	2.7	159,900	20%	4.9
Sales Meetings	64	2.98	133,900	17	8.2
Training Seminars	67	2.6	261,000	33	2
Incentive Trips	81	6.5	60,200	8	4.6
Stockholder Meetings	82	1.6	10,300	1	4.7
Professional/Technical Meetings	86	4.6	101,000	13	3.3
New Product Introductions	98	2.3	30,500	4	1.5
Other Meetings	<u>107</u>	2.1	44,500	6	9.4
Average/Total	69	3.2	801.300	100%	5.1

Corporate meetings typically have a fairly small attendance (the average is approximately 69 people) and range in duration from 1.6 days for stockholder meetings to 6.5 days for incentive trips. The average length of a corporate meeting is 3.2 days. Training seminars make up the largest number of corporate meetings, roughly one-third

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of all, followed by management meetings and regional sales meetings. The planning lead time for corporate meetings ranges from a low of 2 months to a high of 9.4 months. The length of lead time is an important consideration for new hotels that must pre-sell meeting space early enough to capture this element of the lodging market.

Major conventions typically consist of groups of 1,000 or more. A unique characteristic of conventions is the amount of time for which they are booked in advance. Exhibit 4-11 shows that as the size of a meeting increases, the number of months lead time required for booking arrangements also increases, to the point at which the average convention of more than 500 people is booked more than four years in advance. This finding demonstrates the need for a long pre-selling program for new hotels that plan to capture large meetings.

Exhibit 4-11 Advance Time Required to Book Meetings

Source: Meeting Planners Survey

Number of Attendees	Months
10-50	10
51-150	13
151-300	25
301-500	33
500+	55

Association meetings are generally composed of smaller groups that meet periodically to conduct the business of the association. These events consist of work sessions similar to corporate meetings but also generally involve some leisure-oriented and socially oriented activities. Exhibit 4-12 provides basic information about such meetings.

Exhibit 4-12 Characteristics of Association Meetings

Source: 1994 Meetings Market Report

Type of Meeting	Average Attendance	Average Duration (Days)	Number in Past Year	Number of Month's Lead Time
Board Meeting	35	1.8	62,500	6.3
Educational Seminars	102	2.1	57,000	9.2
Professional/Technician	111	2.3	35,700	7.2
Regional/Local Chapter	98	1.9	33,500	11.7
Other	<u>178</u>	<u>2.4</u>	<u>17.800</u>	9.2
Average/Total	91	2.1	206,500	10

Association meetings include such functions as board meetings, seminars, and local chapter meetings. They typically attract an average of 91 people, which is larger than the average corporate meeting, but the duration is somewhat shorter—on average, 2.1 days. Planning lead time for association meetings is generally somewhat longer than for corporate meetings, ranging from 6.3 months to 11.7 months.

The time of year of meeting and convention demand is an important consideration when planning a hotel oriented to this market segment. The meetings and convention market has strong seasonal swings in demand, with the high point coming in the late spring and the low point in the middle of winter. Exhibit 4-13 shows the percentage of major conventions held by month.

Exhibit 4-13 Distribution of Conventions by Month

Source: 1994 Meetings Market Report

Month	Percentage of Meetings
January	5%
February	6
March	6
April	8
May	10
June	9
July	6
August	6
September	10
October	20
November	10
December	4
Total	100%

The process by which meeting planners select a hotel is also important information for owners and operators of lodging facilities. According to the U.S. Travel Data Center, the primary factors in hotel selection for meetings and conventions are the following:

- 1. Food service
- 2. Meeting facilities
- 3. Billing procedures
- 4. Guestrooms
- 5. Meeting coordination
- 6. Audio-visual equipment
- 7. Recreational facilities
- 8. Convenient transportation
- 9. Exhibit space
- 10. Number and caliber of suites

Meetings and conventions are unquestionably an important market for the lodging industry. Most of these events make use of all of the facilities within a hotel, including meeting rooms, banquet rooms, lounges, restaurants, and recreational facilities. In addition, some groups are willing to meet on weekends and holidays,

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thus complementing commercial demand, which falls off during these periods. Another advantage is that meeting plans are typically made by a small committee that can consolidate and facilitate a hotel's marketing and selling activities. In addition, group arrangements such as banquets, centralized booking, check-in, and billing increase the efficiency of convention hotel operations.

As the economy of the United States becomes increasingly service oriented, the need for meetings and conventions should continue to grow. Offsetting this trend, however, will be the greater use of video communications, which will, over time, decrease the need for meetings.

[3] Leisure Demand Segment

Leisure travel is important to the lodging industry because it creates demand that is negatively correlated with commercial demand. In other words, leisure travel is strong during weekends, holidays, and summer, when commercial demand is weak; during periods when commercial demand is strong, leisure travel is generally at a low level. Hotels that can attract both leisure and commercial demand generally enjoy higher levels of occupancy without the peaks and valleys that plague operations that can cater to only one segment of demand.

Exhibit 4-14 contains demographic data pertaining to leisure travelers.

rce: U.S. Travel Data Center	
Men	55.0%
Age 25-44	41.0
College graduate	40.0
Professional or managerial	32.0
Two or more wage earners	43.0
Use airline for trip	18.0
Use rental car	9.0
Stay in hotel or motel	40.0
Use travel agent	8.0
Average miles per trip	858
Average nights per trip	4.0
Average household members p	er trip 1.8

[4] Comparison of Demand Characteristics

Exhibit 4-15 contains listings of customer preference items, which have been ranked according to the importance with which they are regarded by the three main demand segments (1 being most important and 6 least important). The six preference items surveyed are price, travel time, quality, management, amenities, and image. Price simply represents what is charged by lodging facilities for their guestrooms. Travel time is the time it takes to travel to the facility if it is not the primary destination of the traveller, and is primarily a measure of convenience. Quality is a measure of the grade of the accommodations offered by a facility; a high-quality hotel generally has larger

guestrooms, better furnishings, and more personalized service. Management is largely responsible for a lodging facility's atmosphere, which can affect guest comfort and the perceived status of the facility. Amenities are items provided above and beyond the normal necessities found in a lodging facility; they usually become more elaborate as the level of quality rises. Image is an intangible that describes the feeling that is created by a facility and its management and that is augmented through marketing and guest experience.

		Class of Hotel	
Demand Segment	Economy	Midrate	Luxury
Commercial	1. Price	Travel Time	Image
	2. Travel Time	Quality	Quality
	3. Quality	Price	Managemen
	4. Management	Image	Travel Time
	5. Amenities	Management	Amenities
	6. Image	Amenities	Price
Meeting and Convention	1. Price	Amenities	Image
	2. Amenities	Quality	Amenities
	3. Quality	Price	Quality
	4. Management	Image	Managemen
	5. Travel Time		Travel Time
	6. Image	Travel Time	Price
Leisure	1. Price	Amenities	Image
	2. Amenities	Quality	Amenities
	3. Quality	Price	Quality
	4. Management	image	Management
	5. Travel Time	Management	Travel Time
	6. Image	Travel Time	Price