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Empirical paper

# Desire for experiential travel, avoidance of rituality and social esteem: An empirical study of consumer response to tourism innovation

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates tourist consumption responses toward tourism innovation. To measure tourist responses, this study posits three key consumption drivers, namely social esteem, desire for experiential travel, and avoidance against rituality of tourism settings (a subscale of need for uniqueness) and models consumers' affective response within the context of tourism innovation. It involves 295 respondents in an empirical survey. The findings affirm the three drivers toward tourist consumption behavior. Avoidance of rituality reflects tourist preference toward tourism product and service innovation. Desire for experiential travel and the pursuit of social esteem signify tourism management and marketing innovation. Social esteem, need for status and creative choice have significant influence on tourists' affective responses. Acquiring unique tourist products, desire for experiential travel and seeking social esteem are important motivations for tourist consumption. The implications of the study enrich the existing literature of consumer behavior and tourist consumption in response to tourism innovation.

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## El deseo del turismo vivencial, la valoración social y evitar la ritualidad: Un estudio empírico sobre la respuesta del consumidor a la innovación en turismo

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RESUMEN

Este estudio investiga las respuestas en cuanto al consumo de turismo a la innovación en este sector. Para medir las respuestas de turistas, este estudio plantea tres motores clave del consumo, en concreto la valoración social, el deseo de realizar un viaje alternativo, y evitar

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los ritos del contexto turístico (una subescala de la necesidad de exclusividad). El estudio también modela la respuesta afectiva de los consumidores dentro de un contexto de innovación en turismo. La encuesta empírica incluyó 295 participantes. Los resultados confirman la presencia de los tres motores del comportamiento del consumo turístico. Evitar la ritualidad refleja las preferencias del turista por la innovación en cuanto a productos y servicios turísticos. El deseo de un viaje alternativo y la búsqueda de valoración social simbolizan innovación en la gestión y comercialización del turismo. La valoración social, la necesidad de lograr un estatus y contar con una capacidad creativa en la elección ejercen una influencia significativa en las respuestas afectivas de los turistas. La adquisición de productos turísticos singulares, el deseo de realizar un viaje vivencial y la búsqueda de valoración social son motivaciones importantes para el consumo turístico. Las implicaciones del estudio enriquecen la literatura existente sobre comportamiento del consumidor y consumo turístico en respuesta a la innovación en turismo.

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## Introduction

In many countries, tourism is an essential sector for economic development. With regard to tourism activities, in the view of most tourists, consumption has become the key determinant to justify and measure the attractiveness of travel destinations around the world (Swanson & Timothy, 2012; Wu, Wall, & Pearce, 2014). As such, tourism practitioners would like to elevate and label brand consumption during tours as a leading source of visiting motivation, apart from sightseeing and cultural visits (Park, Reisinger, & Noh, 2010). Interestingly, tourists tend to avoid repeated visits to a particular destination, and become less satisfied by common, regulated patterns of tourist activities. When gaining acquaintance with a visited destination, tourists would be eager for some novel, exotic and treasurable travel experience in the destination. Tourists are much aware of new experience or values in the course of repeated visits; otherwise a well tourism acquaintance would contrarily discourage tourists' desire and expectation for re-visits. Consumer psychologists explain such phenomenon from the perspective of consumers' intrinsic tendency of neophilia. So, tourism innovation becomes an imperative research issue among most tourist economies. Tourism innovation may concern service enhancement, new style exploration, and new value delivered in tourist activities. All these can be types of new process, service, policies and marketing efforts (Hjalager, 2010). Tourism innovation does not simply present a new breakthrough or perfection against existing tourism attractions and enjoyable experiences, but also differentiate tourism offerings.

No matter how, tourist practitioners and policy makers acknowledge the important role of innovation in tourism and propose a considerable amount of research to measure and justify resources for tourism innovation. Recent studies on tourism innovation have discussed the efforts of innovation in tourism industry, for example, ethical tourist behavior (Ganglmair-Wooliscroft & Wooliscroft, 2015) and the respective assessment for management and institutional efficacy (Camisón & Monfort-Mir, 2012; Carlisle, Kunc, Jones, & Tiffin, 2013; Rodríguez, Williams, & Hall, 2014; Souto, 2015). Yet, there are still lack of empirical evidence and analysis about tourist consumption within contexts of tourism innovation. Examining a consumer-based tourism innovation is vital in the development of tourism sustainability (Volo, 2006). On such premise, this study posits tourist-consumption based analysis dimensions for justifying and measuring tourist consumption experiences.

Tourists from various countries do not have the same personal motivations in consumption. The motivation depends on where the consumer lives (Hennigs et al., 2012). For instance, Americans consume a product or service most likely for self-fulfillment. French tourist consumers look for exclusivity. In European countries, consumers engaging in tourist consumption are utilitarian. Not only does tourism costs make a difference, the intrinsic values, such as travel style and status, are also perceived differently in various innovation context. Surprisingly, the questions that concern personal motivation in tourist consumption behavior have yet to receive an adequate empirical answer. Conventional tourism innovation has predominantly been assessed by (1) tourist satisfaction, such as consumption preferences, service and hotel accommodation (Lee, Jeon, & Kim, 2011; Lloyd, Yip, & Luk, 2011; Xu & McGehee, 2012) and (2) destination attributes (Chen, Chen, & Lee, 2009; Guo, Kim, & Timothy, 2007; Sparks & Pan, 2009). Hedonic benefits and tourism innovation are strongly associated with tourism consumption experiences and exert a stronger influence on tourist-related behavior, rather than anticipated utilitarian value (Yüksel, 2007).

This study draws on self-determination theories, and proposes an empirical model to investigate how social esteem, desire for experiential travel, avoidance of rituality and creative choice for counter-conformity (a subscale of need for uniqueness) influence tourist consumption, as well as affective responses to tourism innovation. It is expected that the tourism innovation data and findings yielded from this study can (1) enrich existing knowledge of tourism innovation research; (2) develop a theoretical model to justify and measure tourist consumption experiences within the context of product, service, and marketing innovation; (3) provide strategic recommendations to tourism practitioners on how to sustain the growth of tourism industry and enhance tourism

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