



## Examining the relationship between tourist motivation and satisfaction by two competing methods

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### ABSTRACT

The relationship between tourist motivation and satisfaction has a long history of research, but continues to show contrary results. Based on two surveys on tourists undertaking a rafting activity while on holiday, the current study compares two approaches classified here as the Classic and Performance methods to clarify the relationship between motivation and satisfaction. The results of the Classic model which assumes a direct relationship between motivation and overall satisfaction show that motivation is not a significant determinant of overall satisfaction, if it is measured before the experience. In the Performance model, post experience motivation evaluation is introduced as the determinant of overall satisfaction. The results supported this proposition. A comparison of the models also reveals that the Performance model outperforms Classic model in terms of explaining overall satisfaction.

### 1. Introduction

Motivation, as an important determinant of tourist behaviour, has been widely investigated by academics since the 1940s. Although some researchers have attempted to explore tourism and travel motivations of tourists, others have investigated its relationships with other constructs, such as destination image (e.g. Li, Cai, Lehto, & Huang, 2010), destination loyalty (e.g. Huang & Hsu, 2009; Lee, 2010; Yoon & Uysal, 2005), destination brand personality (e.g. Murphy, Benckendorff, & Moscardo, 2007), and destination choice (e.g. Awaritefe, 2004; Devesa, Laguna, & Palacios, 2010). In particular, the motivation-satisfaction relationship has been a popular research interest of many scholars, since satisfaction has proven to have a positive influence on tourists' post-purchase behaviour such as recommendations (e.g. Hui, Wan, & Ho, 2007; Prebensen, Skallerud, & Chen, 2010) and intention to revisit (e.g. Alegre & Cladera, 2009; Bigné, Andreu, & Gnoth, 2005).

However, a literature review shows that researchers have used different approaches so far with the aim of investigating the relationship between tourist motivation and satisfaction. While one group of researchers tends to use motivation as the sole determinant of overall satisfaction (OS), a second group of researchers prefers to employ motivation and other variables together as the antecedents of OS. A third group of researchers seems to use the same items belonging to motivation for the measurement of respondents' satisfaction. All of these approaches assume that there is a linear relationship between

motivation and satisfaction. The review of previous literature obviously shows that determining the appropriate method(s) for explaining the motivation-OS relationship has become necessary today. The present paper focuses on the first and third approaches, since we did not attempt to examine any other variables (than motivation) that may have an influence on OS. We named the first approach as the Classic, and the third as the Performance methods. Accordingly, the first objective of this study is to compare Classic and Performance methods in terms of their explanatory power for OS.

Another issue with the previous studies is the measurement time of motivation. While some researchers measure the motivation construct before the subject activity, others measure it afterwards. To the best of the authors' knowledge, no published study addressed the importance of measurement time in identifying tourist motivations (whether it should be before or after the activity/experience). Thus, the need for a comprehensive study arises where the effect of measurement time of motivation on findings is particularly examined. Therefore, the second objective of this study is to investigate how motivation measurements before and after the activity affect research results.

For achieving the aims of the study, two separate studies were conducted. In the first study (Study 1), both motivation and satisfaction were assessed after the activity. In the second study (Study 2), motivation was measured before the activity, while respondents' satisfaction was determined after the activity. Such a research design enabled the authors to compare two methods (Classic and Performance), as well as

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to test the effect of measurement time of motivation on research findings.

The paper continues with the description of the motivation and customer satisfaction concepts. Following this, the literature that investigates the motivation-satisfaction relationship is summarised by clustering the studies into groups. Next, two competing methods which are derived from the literature are introduced. Then, the method of the research is explained. After the presentation of results from Study 1 and Study 2, the paper is concluded with a discussion of the theoretical and practical implications in regard to the findings.

## 2. The concept of tourist motivation and the methods used for its measurement

Pincus (2004) notes that motivation had been a popular research topic in the 'psychoanalytic studies in the 1950s and 1960s, and continued to be investigated in the era of psychophysiology (1970s and 1980s)'. However, Dann (1981) criticised the previous studies about motivation, since this concept has been defined by 'various allied terms, often employed as synonyms' and there was no consensus about its definition. He suggested that 'motivation tells us why an individual or group have behaved or are about to perform an action' (Dann, 1981). Hence, motivations are generally considered to determine why people behave in a certain way, and to occur when people expect service providers to satisfy their needs (Mill & Morrison, 1998). Conceptualisation of motivation clearly shows that need, expectation, and satisfaction are closely related concepts with motivation. In particular, satisfaction and motivation terms are often confused (Dann, 1981). Although, satisfaction and motivation are distinct constructs, there is an indirect relationship between them (Fluker & Turner, 2000).

A literature review by Kay (2003) shows that four main approaches were followed by the researchers in the examination of motivation: needs-based, values-based, benefits sought or realised, and expectancy theory. The needs-based approach suggests that a wide variety of needs motivate behaviour. The best-known examples of this school are Maslow's (1943; 1970) hierarchical needs theory, Murray's (1938) classification of needs theory, and McClelland's (1955) theory of learned needs. A values-based approach attempts to clarify motivations through the investigation and measurement of personal values. That approach enables researchers to predict the influence of personal values on motivation or behaviour, and to make market segmentations. A 'benefits sought or realised' approach considers an association between motivations and sought benefits from a purchase decision. These benefits may be attribute-based (e.g. tangible attributes of a destination), psychologically-based (e.g. emotional benefits expected from the service), or a combination of both. Expectancy theory, which is formulated in the work motivation context (Vroom, 1964), has been adapted to tourist motivation research. According to this approach, 'people's motivation to perform an activity is a function of the expectation that they will be able to perform the activity and obtain the desired outcomes, and the personal value of all outcomes associated with that activity' (Hsu, Cai, & Li, 2010). Such a perspective enables the researchers to clarify which motivations related to values and expectations affect tourists' travel decisions and satisfaction.

In addition to the above-mentioned approaches, the pull-push framework (Dann, 1977) has been one of the most popular methods for identifying tourist motivations. In this theory, people are assumed to travel while they are 'pushed by their own internal forces (push/intrinsic factors), and pulled by the external forces of destination attributes (pull/extrinsic factors)' (Khuong & Ha, 2014). In the tourism motivation studies that adapt a pull-push framework, 'demand refers to motives (push factors) that sustain tourists' desire, while supply relates to destination's characteristics (pull factors)' (Mohammad & Som, 2010). Similarly, Iso-Ahola's (1982) motivational theory, which is known as Optimal Arousal Theory, suggests that people 'seek' activities that provide novel experiences and psychological rewards (internal/

seeking factors), allowing them to 'escape' from personal problems in their interpersonal world (external/escaping factors). This theory proposes a multi-motive approach, since both seeking and escaping motivations have personal and interpersonal components (Biswas, 2008). Iso-Ahola also suggested linking the internal factors to potential satisfaction (Wolfe & Hsu, 2004).

In the tourism and travel literature, tourist motivations are seen as determinants of tourist activities in respect of (i) the reasons for travelling, (ii) why a specific destination is selected, (iii) and the overall satisfaction with the trip (Castaño, Moreno, García, & Crego, 2003). Herewith, tourist motivation measurement is seen as the key to satisfying current visitors, to attracting more visitors, to predicting future demand, and to developing products to meet tourists' needs (Wolfe & Hsu, 2004). However, Bright (2008) notes that tourist motivation is an extremely complex area of research within the context of psychological theories. For this reason, theories of tourist motivation should be dynamic and flexible across situations and tourists' individual circumstances (Pearce, 1993).

## 3. The concept of satisfaction and the methods used for its measurement

Similar to the definition of motivation, there is no consensus regarding the definition of satisfaction. Tian-Cole and Crompton (2003) noted two approaches in the conceptualisation of satisfaction, where the first is needs-based, and the second is appraisal-based. According to the needs-based definition, suggesting a close relationship between motivation and satisfaction, satisfaction 'results from corresponding needs or motives being met' (Tian-Cole & Crompton, 2003). This approach emphasises satisfaction as a static state of fulfilment of needs or motives. For example, researchers (e.g. Herzberg, 1968) who suggest that employees' satisfaction is highest when job structures and duties are consistent with their personality needs, conceptualise job satisfaction as a need fulfilment (Hurlbert, 1991).

In contrast, the appraisal approach does not consider motivation-satisfaction relationships. In this perspective, satisfaction has long been seen as 'a comparison process between the expected and perceived experiences derived from participation in activities' (Bultena & Klessig, 1969). This perspective gave inspiration to the expectancy-disconfirmation paradigm (Oliver, 1980), in which satisfaction or dissatisfaction has been measured by positive (confirmation: satisfaction) or negative (disconfirmation: dissatisfaction) gaps between expectancy and outcome levels. This approach suggests that satisfaction is a psychological outcome of a process where tourists compare their expectations to their experiences or perceived benefits. Therefore, satisfaction is described by the followers of appraisal theories as 'an emotion resulting from appraisals (including disconfirmation, perceived performance, etc.) of a set of experiences' (Babin & Griffin, 1998).

Researchers have proposed several satisfaction theories (Oh & Parks, 1997), whereas Oliver (1980; 1981), and LaTour and Peat (1979) played leading roles in early literature (Woodruff, Cadotte, & Jenkins, 1983). One of these theories is Oliver's (1980) expectancy-disconfirmation paradigm, as previously mentioned. Equity theory, which concerns people's sense of fairness, represents satisfaction as the 'trade-off between what the customers sacrifice and what they obtain' (Oliver & Swan, 1989). Attribution theory indicates a consideration of the locus. Other relevant theories are assimilation or cognitive dissonance, contrast, assimilation-contrast, comparison-level, generalised negativity, and value-precept (Pizam & Ellis, 1999).

In accordance with these theories, satisfaction construct can be conceptualised within both cognitive and emotional perspectives. While the cognitive perspective considers satisfaction as a post-experience evaluation (which includes the antecedents of expectations, performance, disconfirmation, attribution, and equity/inequity) (Bowen & Clarke, 2002), the emotional perspective considers it as a

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