

Tourist experience, image, security and cultural centres

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Received: 10/04/2015

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Institution awarding the Ph. D. Degree: University of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Spain

Date of defence: 10/11/2014

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Citation: Carballo Fuentes, R. (2015) Tourist experience, image, security and cultural centres. Doctoral Dissertation Summary. *European Journal of Tourism Research* 11, pp. 189-193

Goal and objectives of the dissertation

Goal

The general goal of this dissertation is to analyse tourist experience through perceived risk and the studied destinations' cultural offerings.

Objectives

This dissertation aims to satisfy the following objectives:

- To propose a methodology for creating a destination tourist experience (matrix of tourist experience).
- To identify the dimensions of risk and perceived risk weighted for each dimension, as well as factors to mitigate the perceived risk at the destination.
- To link the cultural image of the attractions at the destination with the destination's general image through the tourist experience.
- To analyse the tourist experience under a multidimensional concept, integrating the environmental aspect.

- To establish a model that integrates cultural and environmental identity in a perceived image.

- To integrate motivational segments in satisfaction and image on cultural experience.

Methodology

This doctoral dissertation consists of three different areas of field work. Due to characteristics of the items and the objectives described above, two of the field work studies employed a Structural Equation Model (SEM) to test the hypothesis and the third field work study employed an Ordinal Logit Model. Each abstract explains the methodology used.

Results

The dissertation begins with an exhaustive analysis of the tourist experience. It summarizes the key elements of a tourist experience and exposes them through a methodological application schema (the Matrix of Tourist Experience (Figure 1)), integrating destination management perspective and

tourist perspective. It is important to design a memorable experience which requires a dual approach: from the perspective of destination management, and from the consumer.

Destination management perspective.

A tourist's image of a destination is constructed based on a real reference made by the economic and sociocultural physical space characteristics of the target destination. It is also based on the environmental characteristics of the target destination. On that basis, entire tourist imagery is articulated in order to mask the most unpleasant experiences while recreating and idealising the more interesting aspects of the destination.

Tourist perspective.

As experiences are very subjective, a significant positive experience can never be

guaranteed. However, ideal conditions may be created to recreate meaningfully positive experiences.

Theoretical studies often do not provide an operational tool to implement the design of experiments. A matrix for experience design is a practical tool we propose to analyse, understand and design the elements of a memorable experience. This matrix integrates destination management perspective and tourist perspective.

Furthermore this work makes significant contributions on the topic of security in tourist destinations. We examine the perceived risk influence on a destination's image and on a tourist's future intention (Figure 2). Several hypotheses were proposed to analyse the perceived risk effect through its different

		<i>Destination:</i>	<i>Segment:</i>							
<i>Stages of travel</i>										
<i>Stages</i>	<i>Code</i>	<i>Sub stages</i>	<i>Involvement</i>	<i>Sensorial shock</i>	<i>Authenticity</i>	<i>Fun</i>	<i>Sociability</i>	<i>Personalization</i>	<i>Transformation</i>	<i>Others</i>
<i>Information and booking</i>										
<i>Arrival</i>										
<i>Transport</i>										
<i>Check-in Hotel</i>		<i>Welcome</i>								
		<i>Data request</i>								
		<i>Keys delivery and information</i>								
		<i>Room access</i>								
<i>Accommodation</i>										
<i>Leisure consumption</i>										
<i>Transport at the destination</i>										
<i>Shopping</i>										
<i>Restaurants</i>										

Figure 1. Matrix for experience

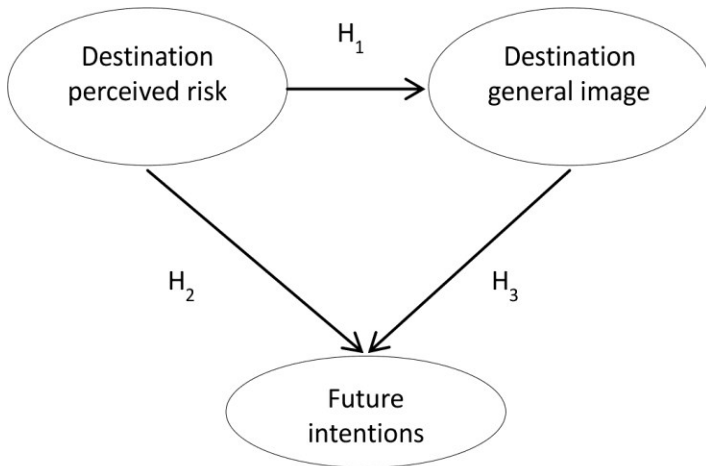


Figure 2. Proposed theoretical model

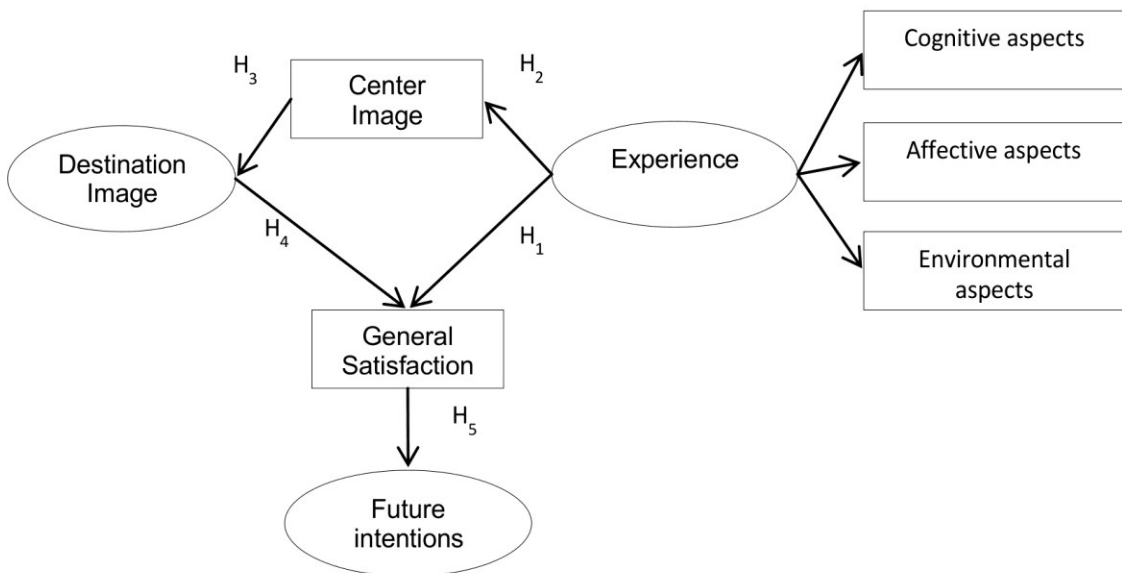


Figure 3. Proposed theoretical model

dimensions on overall image and futures intentions. Hypotheses were also proposed to analyse the destination image effect on the futures intentions.

This work also analyses the relationship between a perceived image versus the actual tourist experience in a natural and cultural heritage destination (Figure 3). An analysis of natural heritage as a multidimensional concept

(cognitive, affective and environmental) is proposed. Among the proposed hypothesis we emphasise the analysis of the visitor's experience on his or her trip satisfaction and the effect each experience has on an existing destination image.

Finally, this work examines differences in tourists' motivations and the impact of these differences to destination image and visitor

satisfaction. Visitors' motivations contribute to the perception of museum image and visitors' satisfaction. Other factors, such as a museum's cognitive and affective characteristics and visitor social demographic characteristics, are also determinants of the museum's image and a visitor's satisfaction.

Theoretical conclusions

To understand the tourist experience it is necessary to define the destination from an economic, physical and representative perspective, where the image is the basic component and the destination is the reason for the tourist's trip. This in line with Cooper et al. (1989).

Perceived risk, through its different dimensions, has a significant and negative effect on a destination's overall image and on a visitor's subsequent desire to return in the future. A specific dimension affects overall perceptions of a destination's perceived risk to different degrees. Some factors can mitigate perceived risk on destinations (police presence, security alarms, accessible health centres and whether or not services are delivered to a tourist in his native language). Risk factors that influence the decision to visit a destination include: the trip does not meet expectations, risk of damage to the environment or risk of personal image by traveling to a destination. Also, the destination, a tourist's country of origin and socio-demographic characteristics exert a moderating effect on the perceived risk of a destination. This is in accordance with Gibson and Yiannakis (2002), Cohen (1973) and Adler (1985).

Culture and identity destination denote authenticity to a tourist experience; this is supported by previous studies (Caldwel, 2002; Rowley, 1999). Cultural heritage should be examined in detail through a multidimensional concept (cognitive, affective and environmental) as this influences image, satisfaction and futures intentions.

A visitor's satisfaction and a museum's image depend on a tourist's motivations. Tourists' motivations vary depending on their sociological and psychological needs, as has

been mentioned in previous studies (Um and Crompton, 1992).

Practical application of the dissertation

Tourist destinations must go beyond the physical aspect and establish a 'promise' of experience. Tourism marketing should create an expectation upon arrival – or what sensory pleasures can be found upon arrival.

Additionally, it would be advisable for tourist destinations to project an image depending on risk dimension (health risk, crime risk, accident risk, environmental risk and natural catastrophe risk). Understanding how tourists perceive risk may help in formulating marketing strategies for a tourist destination and may help to establish mechanisms or strategies through which the perception of risk is mitigated or reduced to a minimum.

It is important that the destination considers its natural and cultural identity, as it contributes to the tourist experience. Cultural and artistic experience must be managed as critical factors for attractive and sustainable destinations. These factors have a direct effect on a visitor's satisfaction and on the futures intentions.

Museums can configure their actions and activate the elements that influence improving its image and visitor satisfaction. Museums should identify their visitors by type, as they cannot offer all kinds of products for all types of people. The range of visitors varies and the image of the museum is complex.

Content of the dissertation

Abstract of chapter one

The study makes a deep theoretical review of a topic of growing interest: experience. Understanding the tourist experience, how to analyse it and how to develop and communicate a tourist experience demands critical attention when branding and envisioning promotional events. The main contribution of this paper is to analyse and identify the status of research on tourism experiences. It ends with a proposed Matrix experience design which we may use for practical implementation of experiences in a destination.

Abstract of chapter two

This study is a cross-cultural comparison of risk perceptions among international tourists. The different risk factors on destination, strategies to reduce and a destination's image for each segment of tourists, serve as a basis for recommending marketing strategies to attract potential tourists and create a competitive and sustainable destination.

The purpose of this chapter is to identify the dimensions of perceived risk and the impact it has on the image and tourist behaviour in the choice of destination. A total of 1212 questionnaires were analysed using multiple regressions with a system of structural equation modelling (SEM). Questionnaires were answered by internet in the country of tourist origin: UK and Germany. Six destinations were tested: Canary Islands (Spain), Morocco, Egypt, Indonesia, Brazil and Colombia. The results indicate that perceived risk, through its various dimensions, has a direct impact on destination image and tourist behaviour.

Abstract of chapter three

This chapter analyses visitor experience in a cultural centre and its influence on destination image and visitors' satisfaction. A total of 453 usable questionnaires were collected and we applied Structural Equation Model (SEM) to test the hypothesis. The results confirm that experience has a direct and significant effect on visitors' satisfaction and on a centre's image. Results also confirm the effect of satisfaction on future intentions.

Abstract of chapter four

This study explores the theoretical and empirical evidence on the causal relationships among museum image, visitor attributes and overall tourist satisfaction. The objective of this study is to analyse the role of visitors in predicting motivation factors, visitor's image perception and the occurrence of satisfactory

experiences when visiting museums. Further, this study does this comparison with tourists and residents: they are the main target demographic of this work. A total of 252 questionnaires were obtained and we applied an Ordinal Logit Regression to test the hypothesis. Test results suggest that several differences between tourists and residents exist after their respective museum visits. The model also examines the influence of affective component and visitors socio-demographic characteristics during these studied museum visits.

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