

An approach on **place attachment, involvement** and **behavioural** intentions in **cross-border tourist regions**

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Objectives | This study aims at gaining a deeper understanding of customer profiling and behaviour in cross-border tourism destinations. The study is developed under a niche marketing perspective. It is our view that niche marketing is not confined to the limits of national markets. Previous studies suggest that cross-border regions are an attractive notion, yet they require further theoretical and empirical research. There is still a gap in the understanding of destination management in cross-border regions and the customer profile and motivations. Overall this research attempts to produce a deeper understanding of the profile and behaviour of consumers in tourism settings, addressing the predisposition for the destination in specific contexts (cross-border tourism regions).

Methodology | Based on an interdisciplinary literature review, it is developed a theoretical model specifying the antecedents of satisfaction and loyalty in cross-border tourism regions. The study proposes influencers of customer behaviour and attitudes (e.g., involvement, place attachment and tourist satisfaction) in the context of cross-border tourism destinations. This research brings together inputs from marketing, tourism and local economics.

Main results and contributions | This study focuses on cross-border regions as tourist destinations capable of catering for specific market needs. Although, cross-border regions are an attractive and desirable idea, the new configuration of many cross-border regions calls for a debate on issues concerning their development. This study constitutes a preliminary contribution to better understand the relationship between place attachment and the attitudes, emotions and feelings towards a destination, in the context of cross-border regions. Evidence suggests that place attachment, as a multidimensional construct, may be significantly predictive of visitors' satisfaction. This rationale is transposed to cross-border tourist regions, because cross-border regions offerings are tailored to specific market niches, place attachment will be a particularly relevant variable. The study further proposes that involvement directly affects consumer satisfaction and that consumer satisfaction affects destination loyalty, in the context of cross-border tourist regions.

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The model underlines that the performance of a tourist destination and visitors' satisfaction is of great relevance to the destination competitiveness since the level of the experience is likely to influence visitors' future behaviour. Investigating causal relationships between place attachment and other related variables is beneficial for current researchers and marketers since results can help predicting how and why individuals are involved in travel and how travel decision making processes are made regarding preferred destinations for vacation or leisure.

Limitations | This study endures the limitations of theoretical models. In particular the model proposes place attachment and involvement as antecedents of customer satisfaction. Future studies should consider addressing other possible causes of satisfaction and loyalty. In addition, this research only reports theoretical relationships. Future research ought to develop an empirical study to test the relationships addressed in the research model. It would be relevant to identify specific profiles of tourism consumers - exploring motivations, determinants and purchase decision.

Conclusions | This work constitutes a preliminary contribution to better understand the relationship between place attachment and the attitudes, emotions and feelings towards a destination, in the context of cross-border regions. Following an interdisciplinary perspective, the research proposes that place attachment and involvement directly affect consumer satisfaction and that consumer satisfaction affects destination loyalty, in the context of cross-border tourist regions. The model underlines that the performance of a tourist destination and visitors' satisfaction is of great relevance to the destination competitiveness since the level of the experience is likely to influence visitors' future behaviour. Thus, understanding tourism consumer behaviour in specific contexts may provide valuable information into destination planning and decision making. Such knowledge would have managerial implications as, for example, improving the elements that most influence tourist satisfaction.