

The influence of **motivation** in international **tourists'** **involvement**

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Keywords | Tourism, Motivations, Involvement.

Objectives | The main goal of this work is to analyze the influence of motivations in the involvement of international tourists, specifically to develop a model for measuring the importance and the influence of motivations on involvement in an international tourism context.

Methodology | The data was collected from January 2009 to March 2009. Tourists who agreed to participate in the study, were randomly selected in loco across 3 international airports: Madrid/Barajas, Lisbon/Portela and Milan/Malpensa. Only those tourists who had undertaken an international trip were interviewed. Two of the authors of this study administered the questionnaires explaining the aim of the study to the tourists at the moment after they did the check in of their return trip. The questionnaires were self-administered, which allowed us to ensure that the data was not biased and that tourists had significant knowledge about the topic. A final sample of 600 valid responses was obtained, equally divided among the three international airports.

The exploratory factorial analysis was done with SPSS. In order to assess the validity of the measures, the items were subjected to a confirmatory factor analysis, using full-information maximum likelihood (FIML) estimation procedures in LISREL 8.54 (Joreskog & Sorbom, 1996). Lisrel was also used to build a Structure Equation Model.

Main results and contributions | An empirical study of 600 international tourists reveals that motivation to relax influences tourists' involvement with the trip. A structural model reveals that when tourists are motivated to relax they get directly more involved with their trip (pleasure and information seeking). The motivation to relax also influences indirectly the tourists' involvement with the evaluation and quality perception of the trip through its influence on involvement with trip planning. From a scientific point of view, it is of most importance to understand the relationship between motivations and involvement. The Motivation/ Involvement model is thus a framework to analyze consumers' involvement with tourist products.

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For management, this instrument can be useful to define marketing and promotion actions. It may be an important basis for the segmentation and positioning within a tourist market. The Motivation/Involvement scheme can also help tourism firms to know what kind of trip motivations influence tourists' involvement and thereby also quality perceptions and satisfaction.

Limitations | There are some limitations of the presented research approach to be considered. The first limitation is that the final instrument (the questionnaire) may have created common method variance that could have inflated construct relationships. This could be particularly threatening, if the respondents were aware of the conceptual framework of interest. However, they were not told the specific purpose of the study, and all of the construct items were separated and mixed so that no respondent should have been able to detect which items were affecting which factors.

Hence, although the fit indices suggest a good fit of the model to the data, future research is encouraged to test our instrument across other tourism settings and types of travelling. To do so, we encourage researchers to add new items and factors applicable to the research setting. Second, it could be interesting to analyze the antecedents of motivation and the consequences of involvement. Thus, it is suggested to investigate how the motivation construct is associated with other variables, such as tourists' lifestyles, social, demographic and personality features.

Conclusions | Tourists are increasingly demanding in their travel behavior, making their study more complex. The purchase of tourism products and services requires high involvement in decision making processes, due to the intangibility and variability (uncertainty of outcomes) that underlie it. The acquisition of these products frequently involves multiple steps and variables (Swarbrooke & Horner, 1999).

The travel decision process is the result of an intersection of some personal (sociodemographic and psychographic), social and commercial variables (Sonmez & Graefe, 1998). Tourists are rational consumers that go through various stages in their decision making, weighing the benefits and costs in tourist choices (Sonmez, 1998).

Motivation is an important dimension in tourism research (Salazar, 2004), being fundamental to understand consumer behavior and tourist decision making processes (Iso-Ahola, 1982; Todd, 1999). The study of motivation attempts to answer some important questions: 'Why people travel?' 'Why do they choose some destinations?' 'Why do they select some activities?' (Klenowsky, 2002). Involvement influences consumers' buying decisions (Kassarjian, 1981), since will it determine the proximity of the consumer to the decision making process, from planning to evaluation (Slama & Tashchian, 1985) and is related with a big number of important activities for marketing (information acquisition, needs detection, meaning and significance of products and brands...) (Kassarjian, 1981).

Tourists' decisions and behaviors change, especially in the pre-purchase, due to many factors. Travel motivations definitely determine travel decisions and involvement typically intensifies the tourist's decision making process, the experience lived, as well as its evaluation, being also related to product/ destination loyalty. The definition of correct Marketing policies requires a deep understanding of how tourists make their buying decisions, live and evaluate their **consumption** experiences. The presented work tries to add some knowledge to this domain.

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