

Tourist Behavior Analysis: An Experiential Marketing Approach

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Abstract

Nowadays, the tourism market is open to competition and all countries are trying through different marketing techniques, to promote their tourism products. Research shows that experiences are important marketing tools which are effective strategies to help promote tourism destinations. Accordingly, since the 1999 a new form of experiential tourism is taken into consideration.

The study attempts to determine the relationships among realms of tourism experiences by examining the likelihood of participation in opposing and similar realms of activities. Four realms of tourism experiences have been detected using experience economy research literature (education, esthetics, escapism and entertainment). In this study that is type of descriptive survey research, visitors of Kish Islands forms statistical society and assessment tool is questionnaire which using available sampling method have been distributed and completed among 100 Kish visitors. The data have been analyzed with SPSS and Lisrel software. Findings are as follows: Results of logistic regression to predict likelihood of participation in similar experiences (having a common point) generally show that participation in one realm increase participation in a common point realm.

Key Words: Experiential marketing, Tourism experience, Tourist behavior, Kish Island

Introduction:

In today's world consumers are in search of extraordinary and memorable experiences that 'dazzle their senses', 'engage them personally', 'touch their hearts' and 'stimulate their minds' (Schmitt, 1999). Pine and Gilmore (1998) suggest that in order to be successful, businesses should provide unforgettable, satisfactory experiences to their customers by adding value to their offerings (Berry, Carbone and Haeckel, 2002). Pine and Gilmore (1998) identify four 'realms' of consumer experiences which are differentiated at two levels: i) the degree of customer involvement (passive vs. active participation); and ii) the desire with which the customer connects or engages with the event/performance (absorption vs. immersion). The four types of experiences are entertainment (passive/absorption); educational (active/absorption); escapist (active/immersion); and esthetic (passive/immersion). This new demand for unique and memorable experiences requires firms to develop a distinct value-added provision for products and services that have already achieved a consistent, high level of functional quality. Academic investigations on the measurement of tourism experiences are very recent and more knowledge about the realms of tourist experiences is needed for the design of products and services that elucidate the best experiences. In doing so, we attempt to provide both an assessment to enhance our understanding of the tourism experience, as well as the managerial issues associated with delivering tourism experiences to destination visitors. We believe that a more comprehensive examination of research on the tourism experience could enhance the usefulness of that

review.

Defining terms

Four realms of tourism experiences

Education

In the Pine and Gilmore's (1998) framework, an education experience actively engages the mind of the consumer intrigues them and appeals to their desire to 'learn something new'. The educational experience is active and absorptive, in other words, consumers play a vital role in co-determining their experience. Today, there are a number of opportunities for companies to offer an educational experience to their customers. For example, supermarkets can provide its customers preparation and cooking guidelines on its shelves (Schmitt, 2003). Usually, consumers that engage in an educational experience, as a result, will have their knowledge increased or skills improved. Ultimately, consumers should be left with the impression that "I felt I have learnt something". In tourism literatures, a key motivating factor to travel is the desire to self-educate oneself (Prentice, 2004). The Prentice Romantic Paradigm (2004) suggests that tourists are thought to be motivated to "consume the extraordinary" partially due to a desire to learn, and subsequently report greater levels of post-consumption satisfaction when their desires are met.

Escapism

An escapist experience can be defined as the extent to which an individual is completely engrossed and absorbed in the activity (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Escapist experiences are highly immersive and require active participation. Typical examples include theme parks, adventure lands, simulated destinations and themed attractions among others. Pine and Gilmore (1998) note the rise of motion simulator rides as the ultimate form of escapist experiences. For example, The Simpsons Ride, is a new simulator ride featured at Universal Studios (Florida and Hollywood) theme parks. During a six minutes journey, riders virtually encounter various Simpsons characters and experience the sensations of this animated television series.

Tourism provides numerous opportunities for escapist experiences. Vacations are a means of "escape aids, problem solvers, suppliers of strength, energy, new lifeblood and happiness" (Krippendorf, 1987: 17). Holidaying offers a psychological escape from the daily routine of life (Uriely, 2005). Cohen (1979) further notes that one fundamental tourism motivation is the desire to look for a 'self-centre' elsewhere away from everyday activities. Tourists are in search for 'authenticity' (Boorstin, 1964) to compensate for their 'inauthentic lives' they experience at home (MacCannel, 1973). As a result, in this quest, tourists are prepared to travel around the world in the hunt for satisfying and authentic experiences (Turner, 1973).

Entertainment

Entertainment is probably one of the oldest forms of experience and usually involves a passive involvement of the individual. Pine and Gilmore (1998) note that companies are now a 'stage' used to 'delight and entertain patrons'. Some common examples of entertainment include variety shows and live concerts. In essence, entertainment remains an essential component of the tourism product (Hughes and Benn, 1995) with some tourist destinations famous for the level, variety and quality of their entertainment. Las Vegas, often referred to as 'The Entertainment Capital of the World', for instance, is a destination with entertainment at the core of its tourist offering. Undoubtedly, the key attraction of Las Vegas remains gambling but it is also associated with live spectacular shows. Over the years, Las Vegas has broadened its appeal to include family-oriented entertainments such hotels with

theme parks and virtual reality experiences. Furthermore, The Forum shops at Caesar's Palace, offer customers a unique form of entertainment while shopping. The Forum shops feature an hourly show with talking Greek statues, erupting volcanoes and shooting water fountains.

Esthetic

The esthetics dimension refers to consumers' interpretation of the physical environment around them. Bitner (1992) classified physical environment in terms of three dimensions: 'ambient conditions'; 'spatial layout and functionality'; and 'signs, symbols and artifacts'. A number of studies recognise the role of esthetics in consumer behaviour, decision making and service evaluations (e.g. Turley and Milliman, 2000; Brady and Cronin, 2001). In the tourism and hospitality literature, Bonn et al., (2007) note that the physical environment of heritage attractions play an important role in determining visitors' attitudes, future patronage intentions and willingness to recommend.

Research Question

Jurowskire search supports the hypothesis that Activities in a tourist destination cannot be classified in the four realms of experience (education, escapism, entertainment, esthetics). Pine and Gilmore (1999) propose that active absorption experiences (education) incorporate some similar elements with passive absorption experiences (entertainment) and active immersion experiences (escapism) are similar with passive immersion (esthetic). The similarity may be between education and entertainment as well as between escapism and esthetics because each of them shares one of the four theorized realms of experiences. This research seeks to uncover to what extent similar experiences can affect on each other. Jurowski research in Verde Valley revealed that visitors who participate in esthetic activities are likely to participate in education activities (opposite activities). The purpose of this paper is to identify are those who participate in education activities (active absorption) likely to participate in entertainment experiences (passive absorption)? Are individuals who participate in escapism (active immersion) likely to participate in esthetics (passive immersion)? This research tests the following hypotheses:

H1: Individuals that participate in educational activities are likely to participate in entertainment activities.

H2: Individuals who participate in escapism activities are likely to participate in esthetic activities.

Method

Data were collected from passengers on a trip to Kish Island, a popular tourism Island with unique natural and cultural resources including geological features, beach and spa experiences and shopping. The two-page survey was designed to obtain information on visitors' activities in this Island. The surveys were self-administered, i.e., lodging or attraction staff handed the survey to visitors who completed and returned it to staff. A total of 100 questionnaires were collected. The survey instrument asked visitors how interested they were in participating in a list of activities and whether or not they had participated in or planned to participate in each of these activities. The list of activities with participation rates is presented in Table 1. To test hypotheses several steps were taken. This research closely

followed Jurovski's (1979) procedure. Principal component factor analysis with varimax rotation was performed to uncover the underlying dimension in the list of tourist activities. Next, a series of binary regression analyses were performed to predict the likelihood of tourists participating in activities in one factor grouping based on their participation in a similar factor group. Activities in the education factor grouping were regressed against those in the entertainment factor grouping. Participation in activities in the esthetics factor grouping was regressed against activities in the escapism factor grouping. Regression coefficients were estimated through an iterative maximum likelihood method. The models are expressed with the exponential coefficients ($\exp \beta$) which represent the change of odds ratio corresponding to the change of independent variables (Field, 2000). Table 1 presents the results of the factor analysis with associated statistics. Four factor groupings resulted from the factor analysis each of which can be intuitively related to one of the four realms of experience proposed by Pine and Gilmore (1999). The Esthetics grouping included hiking in Green tree complex, Kariz underground city, Visit beach, bird watching, Coral islands, Glass bottom boat voyage. The second factor was Escapist factor which includes the following activities: Cycling, Bowling, Swimming, Golf, Jet ski, Glider flights. The third factor group was named Education included Shopping, Meditation and yoga experience, Visit fishing process, Spa and massage. The last factor grouping (Entertainment) incorporated just two of the activities: Music concert, Kish dolphin scenic tour.

Table 1 Principal Component Factor Analysis of Participation in Activities

Components					Questions
Entertainment	Education	Escapism	Esthetic		
	0 / 53			Shopping	1
	0 / 68			Meditation and yoga experience	2
	0 / 53			Diving Class	3
	0 / 53			Visit fishing process	4
	0 / 65			Spa and massage	5
			0 / 50	Visit beach	6
			0 / 79	Coral islands	7
			0 / 57	Visit Kariz underground city	8
			0 / 47	Hiking in Green tree complex	9
			0 / 67	Bird watching	10
			0 / 70	Glass bottom boat voyage	11
		0 / 36		Cycling	12
		0 / 75		Golf	13
		0 / 70		Bowling	14
			0 / 73	Visit Greek ship	15
		0 / 34		Swimming	16
		0 / 52		Jet ski	17
0 / 52				Music concert	18
0 / 54				Kish dolphin park scenic tour	19
		0 / 63		Glider flights	20

In order to test the likelihood of participation in Education experiences as a catalyst for Participation in entertainment experiences a binary regression model was used. Significant (at the 0.05 level) relationships were uncovered between one of items in the entertainment factor grouping (Music concert) and 2 items (Visit fishing process, Meditation and yoga experience) in the education factor grouping. Participants in visiting fishing process were two times more likely to enjoy a Music concert. However, the likelihood of participation in the other activities in the factor grouping being a catalyst for the train experiences was weak as depicted in table 2. Regarding Scenic tour in Kish dolphin park no education activity shows the likelihood of participation.

Table 2 Exponential β based on Logistic Regression of Participation in Education Experiences against Entertainment Experiences.

Scenic tour		Music concert		Entertainment
Sig.	β	Sig.	β	Education
0/44	0/003	0/078	0/018	Shopping
0/79	0/007	0/24	-0/010	Spa and massage
0/40	0/003	0/77	-0/003	Diving Class
0/39	0/009	0/04	0/011	Yoga & Meditation
0/84	0/008	0/027	2/03	Visiting fishing process

* Significant at the .05 level

When the items in the escapism factor group were regressed against those in the esthetic factor grouping, several relationships were insignificant (sig. <0.05). Those who participated in Jet ski were more likely to visit Coral islands and enjoy beach. Those who enjoyed Cycling were more likely to experience Glass bottom boat tour and do hiking in Green tree complex. Birdwatching is less likely to be experienced after Escapism activities than the other esthetic experiences. The Golf experience only minimally encourages esthetics experiences. Table 3 displays the exponential β and significance levels of the logistic regression analyses of participation in escapism experiences regressed against participation in esthetic experiences.

Table 3 Exponential β based on Logistic Regression of Participation in escapism Experiences against Esthetic Experiences

Greek ship		Bird watching		Kariz underground city		Glass bottom boat		Coral islands		Hiking in Green tree		Visit beach		Esthetic
Sig.	β	Sig.	β	Sig.	β	Sig.	β	Sig.	β	Sig.	β	Sig.	β	Escapism
0/53	-0/005	0/16	-0/011	0/78	0/002	0/006	-0/029	0/068	0/015	0/047	-0/017	0/25	-0/0120	Cycling
0/040	0/025	0/15	0/017	0/044	0/024	0/39	0/010	0/74	0/004	0/23	0/014	0/36	-0/0130	Glider
0/075	-0/024	0/52	-0/008	0/49	-0/009	0/37	-0/012	0/66	-0/006	0/56	0/007	0/49	0/011	Golf
0/55	0/006	0/09	0/017	0/77	0/003	0/15	-0/015	0/024	0/024	0/10	0/016	0/005	-0/0340	Jet ski
0/28	0/010	0/55	-0/005	0/39	-0/008	0/20	0/013	0/97	0/001	0/36	-0/009	0/69	0/005	Bowling
0/39	-0/008	0/24	-0/011	0/56	-0/005	0/79	0/003	0/049	-0/019	0/18	-0/013	0/81	0/003	Swimming

Discussion

In this study, the factor analysis was conducted on designed questions and discovered the aesthetic, education, entertainment and escapism factors. The data support two hypotheses; it was observed that the results obtained from the study combined with those of the study by Jurowski (2009) confirm that tourists enjoy a mix of activities in tourism destinations. The Regression results showed that people who experience educational activities, meditation and yoga tend to participate in Music concert (Entertainment experience). Participation in Jet Ski an escapist activity increased the Likelihood of participation in visiting beach, an Esthetic activity. Cycling increases the Likelihood of participating in Glass bottom boat tour and hiking in Green tree complex. Cycling properties may be able to encourage extra day stays by providing experiences related to the mentioned activities. Jet Ski experience is likely to be a catalyst for Visiting beach and coral islands. Marketing that incorporates glider opportunities or art galleries and wineries could be effective for attracting the Greek ship and Kariz underground city market. Understanding the relationship between different types of tourist experience can be helpful for tourism planners and operators in adopting new marketing strategies.

Conclusion and Future Research

This study examined the experiences of a common point. Results may be useful in identifying a mix of activities which helps tourists to enjoy more. For example, as if there is a market which incorporates cycling, golf, bowling and concerts. Marketing that focuses on the shopping may not attract those interested in entertainment activities. Concerts along the visiting fishing process can create a unique experience. Based on the findings that there was no significant relationship between bird-watching and other activities, we can conclude that they are special groups not interested in other activities. Further research should examine tourism decision motivation and behavior, tourists' expectations about their experiences before entering the destination effect of tourism experiences on their willingness to recommend the destination to others. Do the same combinations of activities satisfy all kinds of visitors? Tour planners, tour operators, Resort managers and researchers may use this organizational framework to evaluate the mix of activities in Kish Island. However, Further analysis is needed to reveal other interesting results.

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