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An Examination of an Integrated Tourist Satisfaction Model: Expectations and Desires Congruency

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ABSTRACT

This study proposed an extended integrated tourist satisfaction model based on two theories, expectancy-disconfirmation and desire-congruency, and empirically tested the model by using 643 surveys collected through three consecutive surveys (travel intentions and pre- and post-travel surveys). As a result, goodness-of-fit measures from the measurement and structural equation modeling indicated that the model was highly acceptable and applicable for interpretation. The results suggest that tourists encode satisfaction as important synopses of the product consumed. Further, the study helps clarify the role of expectations, motivations/desires, perceived quality of performance (evaluation of the destination's attributes), and perceived quality of experience (achievement of travel desires and motivations) on overall satisfaction, and the effect of overall satisfaction on complaining behaviors and future behavioral intentions.

Keywords: *tourist satisfaction, expectancy-disconfirmation, desire-congruency.*

INTRODUCTION

Due to the increased competition for tourists, destinations should be interested in examining how the tourist product and destination branding are related to the probability of visitation (Stevens 1992). To do this, an understanding of the relationship between a destination's products and attributes and visitors' perception of quality, value, and satisfaction is required (Baker and Crompton 2000; Murphy, Pritchard, and Smith 2000). Understanding the relationship would assist a destination's policy makers in dealing with the increasingly competitive tourism environment. Examining the relationship between a destination's products and visitors' impressions of them would provide the opportunity to evaluate visitors' perceptions of satisfaction, quality and value, and how these factors combine to influence future behavioral intentions (Oppermann 2000).

Tourist satisfaction has been defined in connection with destination and experience expectations, motivations/desires, activities/experiences, perceptions, preferences, and psychological outcomes, (e.g., Dann 1981; Iso-Ahola 1980; Lounsbury and Polik 1992; Manning 1986; Van Raaij 1986, 1987; Weber 1997; Williams 1988). In this study, satisfaction is defined as a post-trip evaluative judgment and affective feeling concerning travel experience (Otto and Ritchie 1995). These are based on expectancy-disconfirmation (Churchill and Surprenant 1982; Oliver 1980) and desire-congruency (Spreng and Olshavsky 1993) theories suggesting that tourists make a post-trip comparison between pre-trip expectations/desires and the performance received.

The causal relationships among expectations of destinations' attributes, desires/motivations for traveling, perceived quality of performance (evaluation of the destination's attributes), perceived quality of experience (achievement of travel desires and motivations), expectations disconfirmation, desires/motivations congruency, satisfaction, complaining behaviors, and future

behavioral intentions were developed based on theories and literatures in the areas of social psychology, marketing, and leisure, recreation, and tourism. This study develops an integrated tourist satisfaction process model and then empirically tests the model.

THEORY FOUNDATION AND THE MODEL

Antecedents of Tourist Satisfaction

According to the theories of expectancy-disconfirmation and desire-congruency in consumer satisfaction research, 'expectations and the disconfirmation of expectations' and 'desires and desire-congruency' are the antecedents of satisfaction (Churchill and Surprenant 1982; Olshavsky and Miller 1972; Olson and Dover 1979; Yi 1990). Although expectations are often similar to desires in prior satisfaction research, this study attempted to distinguish clearly between expectations and desires/motivations at the conceptual level (Spreng, MacKenzie, and Olshavsky 1996). Expectations are beliefs about the likelihood that the destination is associated with certain attributes, benefits, or outcomes by considering the theory of destination attributes, whereas desires are evaluations of the extent to which those attributes, benefits, or outcomes lead to the attainment of a person's motivations to travel or values by applying the travel motivation theory. This study examines that these constructs are empirically distinguishable by evaluating the discriminant validity of the measures of expectations and desires and determining whether these two constructs have differential effects on satisfaction.

Satisfaction is influenced by perceived quality of performance which is operationalized by using a destination's attributes (e.g., Baker and Crompton 2000; Olshavsky and Miller 1972) and by perceived quality of experience which is conceptualized by using travel motivation theories (Chon 1989; Fielding, Pearce, and Hughes 1992; Fodness 1994; Mannell and Iso-Ahola 1987; Ross and Iso-Ahola 1991; Yoon and Uysal 2005). In addition, it has been known that the extents of congruency or disconfirmation for pre-trip expectations and desires/motivations are the factors that influence tourists' overall satisfaction (Churchill and Surprenant 1982; Oliver 1980; Spreng and Olshavsky 1993). Therefore, it is proposed that perceptions or judgments of overall satisfaction are positively related to the levels of perceived quality of the destination's attributes and achievement of benefits sought through travel experiences and is also influenced by the extents of congruency for pre-trip expectations and desires/motivations.

Consequences of Tourist Satisfaction

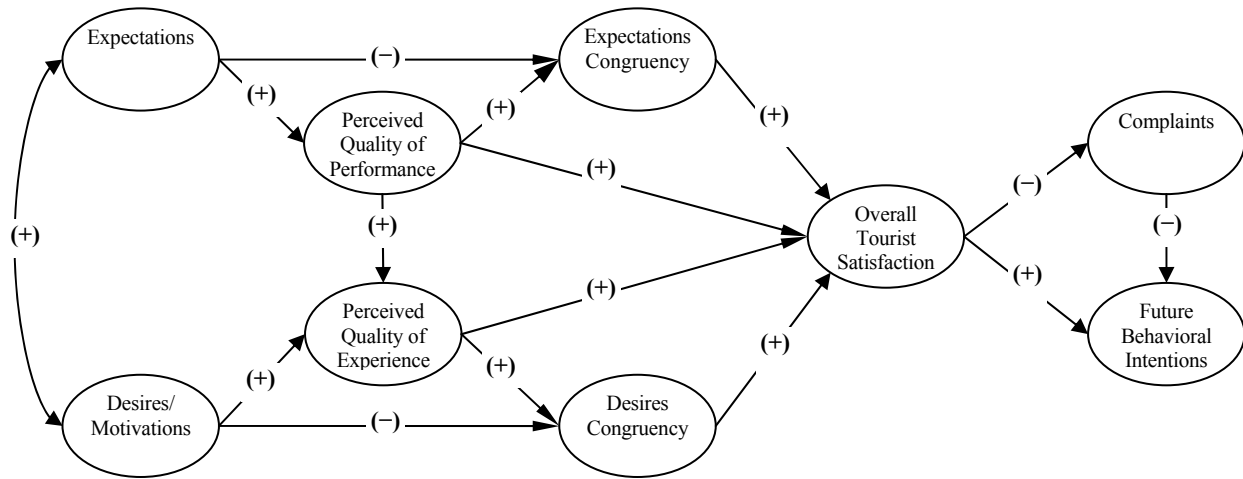
Behavioral intentions and experiencing problems at destinations or having destination-related complaints are the consequent variables of overall tourist satisfaction. Many studies have revealed that satisfaction is often negatively related to complaining behaviors (Swan and Trawick 1980) and positively related to future behavioral intentions (Baker and Crompton 2000; Cronin, Brady, and Hult 2000; Duman and Mattila 2005; Oh 1999; Oliver 1980; Petrick, Morais, and Norman 2001; Tian-Cole, Crompton, and Willson 2002; Yoon and Uysal 2005). The results of these many studies support the influential role the level of satisfaction and complaints have in consumers' repurchase intentions and in how the purchase experience is represented to others (word-of-mouth intentions). Therefore, once tourists evaluate overall level of satisfaction of a destination, the proposed model suggests that these views will influence their future behavioral intentions.

The Proposed Model

The proposed model identifies the causal relationships between the constructs of concern in the paper (Figure 1). In brief, overall satisfaction is influenced directly by expectations and desires congruency, perceived quality of performance, and perceived quality of experience and influenced indirectly by expectations and desires. Further, the level of overall satisfaction

directly effects on experience of having complaints or complaining behaviors and future behavioral intentions. Behavioral intentions are directly influenced by experience of having complaints.

Figure 1
Proposed Model of the Integrated Tourist Satisfaction Process



METHODOLOGY

Sampling

As presented in Table 1, samples were collected via three online surveys (monthly travel intentions survey and pre- and post-travel surveys) distributed to individuals who contacted Tourism Prince Edward Island (TPEI), Canada, during 2010 to request tourist information. Based on the monthly travel intentions survey in June, 3,159 respondents reported that they highly intended to travel to PEI between July and September. These intended travelers were used for the sampling frame for pre- and post-travel surveys. A total of 1,866 (59.1%) respondents completed the pre-travel survey in July. Of these, 1,000 (53.6%) people completed the follow-up post-travel survey in October. In total, 643 respondents (64.3% of 1,000 intended travelers) completed the three surveys and had visited PEI between July and September for the purpose of pleasure, holiday, or vacation. These were used for further analysis.

Table 1
Data Collection Process and Samples

	Samples collected/used	Use Rate
Travel Intentions Survey	3,159	
Pre-travel Survey	1,866	59.1%
Post-travel Survey	1,000	53.6%
Data merged (used for this study)	643	64.3%

Measures

Forty destination attribute-specific items were measured on a 7-point Likert type scale. These multi-item scales were used for measuring the levels of expectations and perceived quality

of performances (1=very poor or not at all available; 7=excellent or widely available). In addition, 42 motivation/desire items were used for testing the levels of desires (1=not at all; 7=very much) and perceived quality of experiences (1=strongly disagree; 7=strongly agree) (Crompton 1979; Dann 1981; Hu and Ritchie 1993; Kozak 2002; Mano and Oliver 1993; Pyo, Mihalik, and Uysal 1989; Smith 1991; Uysal and Jurowski 1994).

Two disconfirmation perceptions were framed relative to expectations of destination attributes and motivational desires (Baker and Crompton 2000; Oliver 1980; Spreng and Olshavsky 1993; Tse and Wilton 1988). The former was rated by using ‘did not meet my expectations (1),’ ‘met my expectations (4),’ and ‘exceeded my expectations (7)’ and the latter by using ‘much worse than I desired/wanted (1),’ ‘same as I desired/wanted (4),’ and ‘much better than I desired/wanted (7).’ For the overall satisfaction level, four scales (Oliver 1980) were asked by using ‘terrible-delighted’, ‘unfavorable-favorable’, ‘very disappointed-very pleased’, ‘very dissatisfied-very satisfied’. As consequence variables of satisfaction, one items of experience of complaints while travelling (yes=1; no=0), three items of likelihood of word-of-mouth behavior, and one item of likelihood of revisiting were used in this study.

RESULTS

Measure Validation

Prior to LISREL estimation, the study measures were validated by employing the method of scale refinement, purification, and validation procedures recommended by Singh and Rhoads (1991). As a result, several items of each construct were deleted from the original scale items because of the low corrected item-to-total correlations, low reliability Cronbach’s alpha scores, low factor loadings and communalities of exploratory factor analysis (EFA), and non-significant *t*-values of confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). The expectation and perceived quality of performance variables were reduced to 23 items from the initial 40, while the desire and perceived quality of experience variables were reduced to 29 items from the initial 42. The CFA results provided reliability improvement (Jöreskog 1971), established convergent validity (Anderson and Gerbing 1988), and confirmed unidimensionality (Anderson, Gerbing, and Hunter 1987; Gerbing and Anderson 1988; Kumar, Stern, and Achrol 1992) in each construct as compared to the first-order analysis. Accordingly, it is clear that the purified measures of the four constructs are valid to use in this study.

Measurement Model Estimation

A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed with the nine constructs and the 25 measurement variables combined into a single factor. The robust Maximum Likelihood was selected for an estimation of LISREL using the variance-covariance matrix of the measured variables as input (Jöreskog and Sörbom 1993). The overall CFA resulted in a fit that is acceptable (Table 2) and the scale reliability is verified. Therefore, the items proposed for measurement of the latent variables are providing consistent measures.

Table 2
Goodness-of-fit Statistics of the Measurement Model

Absolute Fit Measures				Incremental Fit Measures			Parsimonious Fit Measures			
Chi-square	GFI	RMR	RMSEA	NULL Chi-square	AGFI	NNFI	PNFI	CFI	IFI	RFI
$\chi^2_{244} = 279.561$	0.962	0.067	0.022	$\chi^2_{300} = 6322.146$	0.949	0.993	0.777	0.9994	0.994	0.946
$p = .000817$				$p = .00$						

Structural Equation Modeling

A structural equation modeling provides all direct and indirect relationships in the model are estimated simultaneously. Thus, the method allows all the interrelationships among the variables to be examined in the same decision context. Based on the proposed model, 14 direct path coefficients were estimated (Figure 2). Table 3 provides goodness-of-fit measures, with all at very acceptable levels. This confirms that the data was a good fit for the model and that all nine constructs had nomological validity (Hu and Bentler 1995).

Table 3
Goodness-of-fit Statistics of the Structural Model

Absolute Fit Measures				Incremental Fit Measures			Parsimonious Fit Measures			
Chi-square	GFI	RMR	RMSEA	NULL Chi-square	AGFI	NNFI	PNFI	CFI	IFI	RFI
$\chi^2_{265} = 527.725$	0.936	0.051	0.041	$\chi^2_{300} = 6322.146$	0.921	0.951	0.810	0.956	0.957	0.906
$p = .00$				$p = .00$						

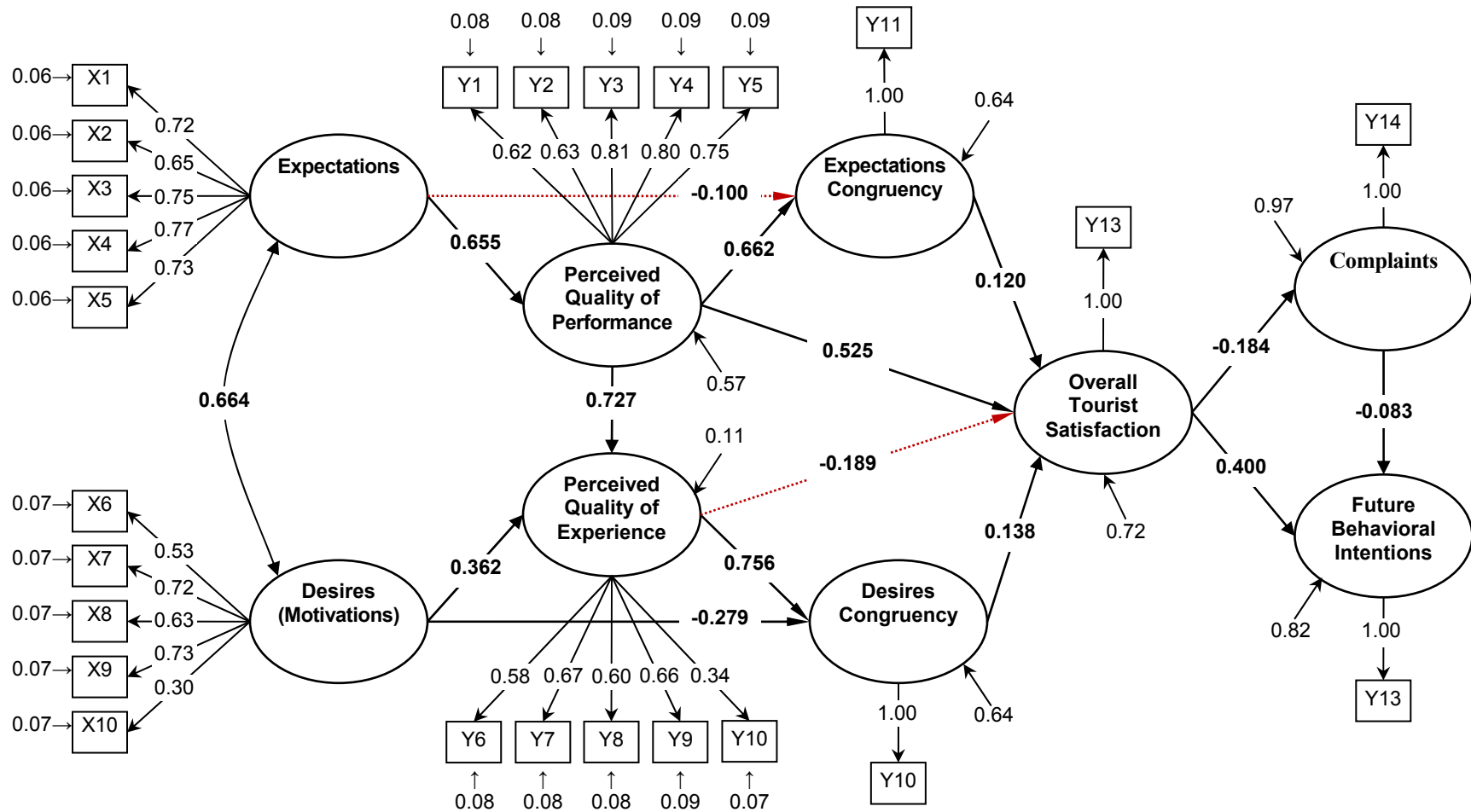
Out of the 14 direct paths proposed, two direct paths were not significant. Expectations have a significantly positive effect on the perceived quality of performance but the relationship between expectations and the disconfirmation of expectations was not significant. Nonetheless, the findings represent that expectations and desires play significant roles in serving as one of the strongest comparative norms when travelers evaluate their perceived quality of performance regarding the destination's attributes including products, services, and prices and their perceived quality of experience at the destination in comparison with their desires/motivations before travelling. There is no direct relationship between the perceived quality of experience and overall satisfaction. Interestingly, overall satisfaction was positively, directly influenced by the level of perceived quality of performance rather than the perceived quality of experience. This result indicates that the perceived quality of experience has a positive *indirect* effect on overall satisfaction along with the level of perceived quality of performance and/or with the level of desire congruency.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The study developed and examined an extended integrated tourist satisfaction model by using theories of the disconfirmation of expectations and desires congruency. The empirical results of this study provide strong support for the relationships between the constructs in the proposed model. This study revealed that expectations, motivations/desires, perceived quality of performance, perceived quality of experience, and satisfaction are very useful concepts to use when marketing destinations. The results suggest that tourists encode satisfaction as important synopses of the product consumed. Furthermore, the study helps clarify the role that desires, expectations, perceived quality of performance (evaluation of the destination's attributes) and perceived quality of experience (achievement of travelers' desires and motivations) have on overall satisfaction. It also examined the effects of overall satisfaction on complaints and future behavioral intentions.

Tourism planners and marketers may increase their customers' level of satisfaction with their product/service and positively impact intentions by improving perceived quality (by adding high quality products and services and benefits sought or desires motivated) and/or lowering perceived price (by reducing monetary or non-monetary costs). It seems that such efforts will have a positive impact on a destination's tourism industry. A further effort should be made to clearly investigate the relationship between here-relevant theoretical constructs and tourist satisfaction.

Figure 2
LISREL Estimates of the Integrated Tourist Satisfaction Model



Note: Bold numbers indicate the standardized parameter estimates; Black dashed arrows are significant at $p < .05$, whereas red dotted arrows are not significant.

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