

## The Impact of Visualization and Expectation on Tourists' Emotion and Satisfaction at the Destination

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**The Impact of Visualization and Expectation  
on Tourists' Emotion and Satisfaction at the Destination**

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**ABSTRACT**

As tourist satisfaction is a clear goal in the tourism industry it is important to examine the consumers' psychological process during the pre or post consumption experience including visualization, expectation, emotion and satisfaction of the destination. The current study seeks to show how novelty seekers who engage in visualization create expectations about a destination, and how it can enhance their positive arousal and emotion about the overall trip, ultimately leading to satisfaction with the destination. Managers should recognize how satisfaction, motivation, visualization, expectation, arousal and emotion are associated in order to provide a satisfying experience to tourists.

**Keywords:** *visualization, expectation, arousal, emotion, satisfaction, destination research*

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## **The Impact of Visualization and Expectation on Tourists' Emotion and Satisfaction at the Destination**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Given that the tourism product is identified as the most experiential service, it is important to examine the consumers' psychological process during the pre or post consumption experience with the inclusion of the visualization, expectation, emotion and satisfaction of the destination. Tourist satisfaction is a clear goal in the tourism industry as when a consumer judges their travel experiences as satisfying, the tourist will be more likely to revisit the destination, encourage others to visit, and have positive behavioral intentions towards the destination (Chi & Qu, 2008; Rodriguez, San Martin, & Collado, 2006). Within the tourism context, satisfaction can result from the expectations, emotions, attitudes of the tourist (Bigne, Andreu, & Gnoth, 2005; Bowen, 2001; Rodriguez et al., 2006; Voss, Parasuraman, & Grewal, 1998), the perceptions of performance and attributes of the destination or company involved (Baker & Crompton, 2000; Chi & Qu, 2008; Voss et al., 1998; Wang & Hsu, 2010). Novelty seeking motivation has figured prominently as a cultural motive for travel (Crompton, 1979) or as part of the push and pull factors related to decision making of the travel (Iso-Ahola, 1989). Novelty seeking motivation and the relation to tourist behavior such as destination choice, intentions, satisfaction and loyalty has long been explored in the tourism field (Crompton, 1979; Goossens, 2000; Iso-Ahola, 1989; Lee & Crompton, 1992; Li, Cai, Lehto, & Huang, 2010). In addition to contributing to the literature on the motivation factors and the relations to tourists' behavior, the current study seeks to show how novelty seekers who engage in visualization can more concretely create expectations about a destination, and how it can enhance their positive arousal and emotion about the overall trip and ultimately lead to satisfaction with the destination. Given that satisfaction with travel is linked to consumers' reaction to motivation, visualization, expectations, arousal and emotion, managers should recognize how the variables are associated in order to provide a satisfying experience to tourists.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Visualization or imagery has been operationalized in different ways, with and without stimulation, and also by asking individuals to imagine certain experiences. MacInnis and Price (1990) conducted research on undergraduate students on spring break, looking at whether or not imagery processing (i.e. visualization) and experience had an impact on trip satisfaction. Employing both pre and post tests, the authors asked how students used imagery prior to their spring break trip. Did they spend a lot of time thinking about what they would do on spring break? Did they envision the "sights, smells, and/or sounds of the activities" (p. 43) they would participate in on spring break? In his study, Goossens (2000), compared imagery to daydreaming and identifies two types of imagery; non-enactive and enactive imagery. Enactive imagery suggests that individuals use their imagination or put themselves into an experience to imagine certain actions. Goossens proposed that instructing respondents to use enactive imagery had potential to "intensify the consumer's emotional responses, appraisals, and behavioral intentions" (p.314). In the current study, to capture the trip planning component of the process, respondents were asked to recall what they visualized Fiji would be like in their mind when they looked at ads about Fiji.

Visualization has been linked to tourists' motivation, destination choice as well as satisfaction (Dann, 1996). Furthermore, visualization by the consumer may influence behavior

as the suggestion of doing a certain behavior that results in visualization by the consumer, can have a powerful impact by encouraging an individual to engage in that behavior (Petrova, P. K. and Cialdini, R. B. Haugtvedt, C. P. , Herr, P. M. and Kardes, F. R. (eds.), 2008). Consumption visions, as Phillips, Olson and Baumgartner (1995) refer to visualization are visual images, which an individual has about a certain consumption behavior. Visualization can be thought of as the processing of visual images in working memory (MacInnis & Price, 1987). These images or visualizations may help the consumer plan, make decisions, form expectations about experiences, enhance emotion, achieve goals related to consumption or impact satisfaction. In research conducted by MacInnis and Price (1990) results showed that imagery processing led to trip satisfaction and travelers who did not engage in imagery processing had lower levels of trip satisfaction. Similarly, Goossens (2000) determined that consumption visions not only help individuals plan, but the consumption visions can help in making purchase decisions which can lead to satisfaction in that decision. Phillips et al. (1995) also discovered thinking about a consumption vision elicited good emotions from the consumer. They suggest the consumer uses the vision “to escape from the mundane aspects of life” (p. 5).

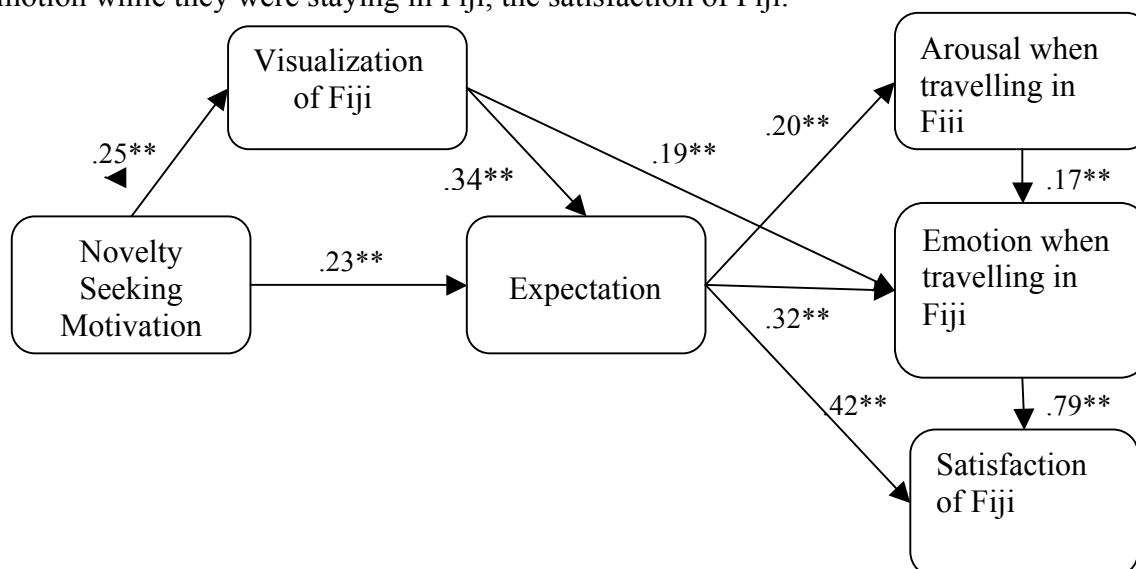
Expectations also play a powerful role in the proposed model and visualization in the consumer context as presented here is connected to the formation of expectations. Visualization helps a consumer to understand what an experience will be like. Expectations have also been shown to impact satisfaction (Oliver, 1980; Pizam & Milman, 1993). Positive arousal and emotions or pleasures may also affect satisfaction (Bigne et al., 2005). These terms are different as arousal refers to how individuals might find themselves excited and engaged and can be defined by terms such as cheerful, active or enthusiastic, while emotion or pleasure is defined as “the degree to which a person feels good, joyful or happy in a situation” (Bigne et al., 2005, p. 834).

## **METHODS**

The questionnaire was composed of six dimensions measuring a conceptual model: antecedent concepts (novelty motivation, tourists’ visualization and expectation, their arousal and emotion while traveling Fiji) and tourists’ satisfaction of the destination of Fiji. All items were measured using five likert-type scales and were adapted and modified based on previous studies. The scales included: 1) novelty seeking motivation (1=not at all important 5=extremely important) (Jang & Feng, 2006); 2) visualization (1=Strongly disagree 5=Strongly agree) (Gershon & Page, 2001); 3) expectation of the destination attributes (1=not at all expected 5=highly expected) (San Martin & del Bosque, 2008); 4) the extent how tourists felt (arousals and emotions) when they are traveling in Fiji (5-point semantic differential scale) (Bigne, Andreu & Gnoth, 2005); 5) tourists’ satisfaction with their visit to Fiji (1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree) (Lee, Lee, Lee & Babin, 2008). The questionnaire was administered in June 2009 at two Coral Coast Hotels and in the departure lounge of the Airport in Fiji. A purposive sampling procedure was used, and every third person was approached. Out of 250 people approached only 10 people declined to complete the survey. Additionally, six other surveys were unfinished, as the participants had to leave before they completed the full questionnaire. The usable sample size for this study was 234 indicating a response rate of about 94%. Descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, path analysis were utilized.

## **RESULTS**

The current study included six total constructs including novelty seeking motivation, visualization of Fiji, expectation of the destination (Fiji), Tourists' feeling of arousal and emotion while they were staying in Fiji, the satisfaction of Fiji.



**Figure 1. Results of Path Analysis (\*\* p<.01)**

Based on the value of all the correlation estimates between the associated constructs, all values fell in the acceptable range ( $p < .85$ ,  $p > .10$ ), which indicated that the discriminant validity of the constructs was supported. The internal consistency reliability of each construct was measured by Cronbach's alpha reliability score, which was ranged from .75 (Visualization) to .95 (Satisfaction of Fiji). Since each construct was above the cut off value 0.6 (Bagozzi and Yi, 1988), it suggested that the reliability of the scales could be accepted. Once the scales were validated, a path analysis was conducted to test the hypothesized relationships using SPSS Amos 16.0 software with the ML estimation method (Arbuckle, 2007). All of the goodness-of-fit measures in the study fell into acceptable ranges with scaled  $X^2/df = 2.4$ ,  $CFI = .97$ ,  $GFI = .93$ ,  $NFI = .96$ ;  $RMSEA = .07$ , thus it can be claimed that the path model for this study provided an excellent fit to the data. Furthermore, the regression coefficients of all proposed paths were positive and significant as shown in Figure 1, which indicated that all hypothesized relationships between constructs were supported in this study. More specifically, tourists' novelty seeking motivation had a significant relationship with the expectation of the destination directly ( $\beta = .23$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and indirectly through the visualization of the destination ( $\beta = .25$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $\beta = .34$ ,  $p < .01$ ). In particular, this study demonstrated that the generated visualization of the destination had a strong influence on the expectation of the destination. As shown Figure 1, the formed expectation contributed enhancing tourists' arousal and emotion ( $\beta = .20$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $\beta = .32$ ,  $p < .01$ ). More interestingly, this established expectation not only had a direct relationship with the satisfaction of the destination ( $\beta = .42$ ,  $p < .01$ ), but also had an indirect influence on the satisfaction of the destination through the tourists' arousal and emotion ( $\beta = .17$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $\beta = .79$ ,  $p < .01$ ). On the other hand, it was also indicated that the evoked visualization had an impact on tourists' emotion ( $\beta = .19$ ,  $p < .01$ ), which showed a very strong link with the satisfaction of the destination.

## CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The model presented in this study demonstrates the strength of visualization and expectation in influencing consumer satisfaction. Visualization is a key variable as it has been shown here to impact not only satisfaction but also the expectations and emotions of the tourist. A clearer understanding of the process the tourist goes through when planning a trip and the most influential variables on trip satisfaction can greatly help managers create a better platform to market trip experiences, which encourage visualization. In addition, managers would be able to evaluate their current marketing communication strategies concerning novelty seeking motivation, visualization and expectations. With the knowledge presented in this study, managers and tourism providers may, for example, provide opportunities for consumers to engage in storytelling or visualization through website tools or other media thereby setting expectations, impacting the emotions of the tourist and ultimately resulting in greater trip satisfaction. In conclusion, understanding the impacts of this motivation and promotional stimuli on visualization and how this relates to expectations and satisfaction is an important factor for managers to consider.

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