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Authors	Yun, Dongkoo;Joppe, Marion
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## Are Tourists Who Are Not Satisfied Necessarily Dissatisfied?

Dongkoo Yun  
Tourism Research Centre  
University of Prince Edward Island

and

Marion Joppe  
School of Hospitality & Tourism Management  
University of Guelph

### ABSTRACT

*This study adopted two-factor theory in measuring tourist satisfaction by using two separate questions of 'satisfaction' and 'dissatisfaction' with the overall travel experience. It tests the premise that "tourists who are not satisfied are dissatisfied and those who are satisfied are not dissatisfied" on the basis of one-factor theory of consumer satisfaction, suggesting that there exist "tourists who are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied" and "those who are both satisfied and dissatisfied." This implies that adopting the two-factor theory may be an advanced, more useful approach to study tourist satisfaction according to the research purposes and scopes.*

**Keywords:** *dimension of tourist satisfaction, one-factor and two-factor theories of satisfaction.*

### INTRODUCTION

Tourist satisfaction has been defined in connection with motivations, activities, preferences, psychological outcomes, and experience expectations (Baker & Crompton 2000; Bultena & Klessig 1969; Dann 1981; Iso-Ahola 1980; Lounsbury & Polik 1992; Lounsbury & Hoppes 1985; Mannell & Iso-Ahola 1987; Manning 1986; Stankey 1972; Van Raaij 1986, 1987; Weber 1997; Williams 1988). In this study, satisfaction is defined as a post-trip evaluative judgment and affective feeling concerning a travel experience. The former is based on expectancy-disconfirmation (Churchill & Surprenant 1982; Oliver 1980) and desire-congruency (Spreng & Olshavsky 1993; Spreng, MacKenzie, & Olshavsky 1996) theories suggesting that tourists make a post-trip comparison between pre-trip expectations/desires and the performance received. The latter is based on affective feelings as a two-dimensional construct (positive and negative affectivity) (Mano & Oliver 1993), suggesting that positive or negative feelings about the trip are antecedent to, and necessary for, satisfaction (Yi 1990).

The early marketing literature reflects controversy about whether satisfaction and dissatisfaction are on the same continuum or dual-factor continua (Czeipiel, Rosenberg, & Akerele 1974; Herzberg 1965; Maddox 1981; Leavitt 1977; Pfaff 1973; Swan & Combs 1976) in measuring tourist satisfaction, but arguments about this issue have not been raised in recent years. Nonetheless, in this study, two-factor theory was considered as an advanced model of tourist satisfaction due to the complexity of travel itself and multi-staged experiential realms. For example, tourists typically travel to and within a destination using various transports, participating in diverse activities, consuming a number of products and services, seeing and meeting similar and/or different people, encountering expected or unexpected situations, experiencing positive or negative feelings, and so on, during their trip. Presumably, it is expected that this type of experiential consumption is quite different from consuming general products.

Most of the prior studies have focused only on satisfied and/or dissatisfied tourists using a single satisfaction-dissatisfaction measurement scale. However, this study adopted two-factor theory in measuring tourist satisfaction by using two separate questions of 'satisfaction' and 'dissatisfaction' with the overall travel experience. Therefore, many aspects or outcomes of the travel experience can be compared between other possible tourist groups based on the level of satisfaction and dissatisfaction. These groups include tourists who are both satisfied and

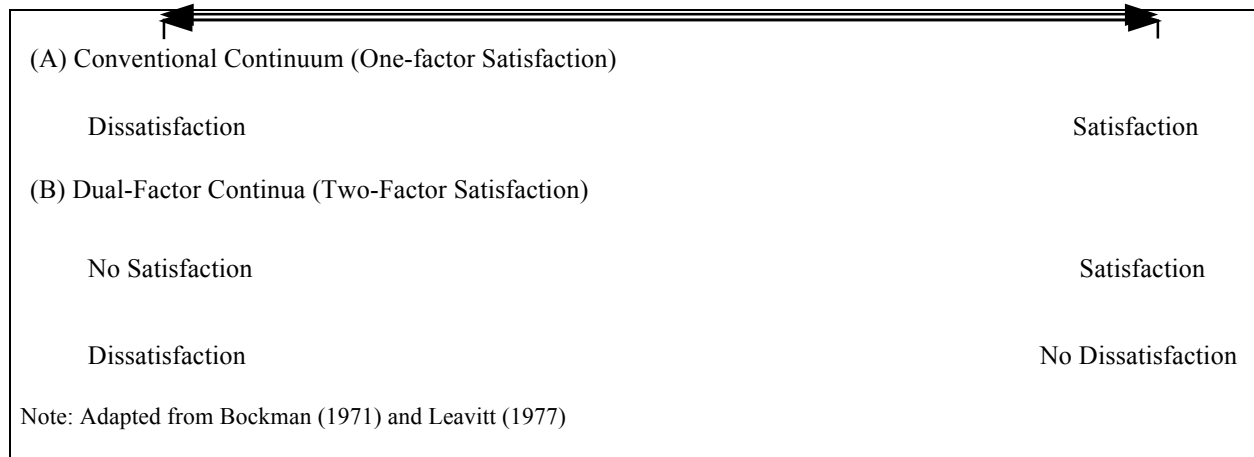
dissatisfied with their travel experience and those who are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. The main objectives of the study are to: (1) cluster four tourist groups based on the two separate satisfaction and dissatisfaction measures, (2) examine the differences in antecedent variables (disconfirmation, affect, and performance in this study) of satisfaction/dissatisfaction between the groups selected according to the hypothesis proposed.

## THEORY FOUNDATIONS AND HYPOTHESES

### Dimension of tourist satisfaction

Traditionally, consumer satisfaction – as a field of study adapted from studies of job satisfaction – was defined as a unidimensional concept (Brockman 1971; Wood & LeBold 1970). One-factor theory postulates satisfaction and dissatisfaction as opposites on a single, bipolar continuum as shown in Figure 1, while Herzberg’s Two-Factor (motivator-hygiene) theory (Herzberg, Mausner, & Snyderman 1959) holds that satisfaction and dissatisfaction are different constructs. One’s level of satisfaction is independent of the level of dissatisfaction; an individual may simultaneously be very satisfied and very dissatisfied. Should tourist satisfaction and dissatisfaction be understood as independent constructs or as points on a single dimension? The answer to this question may have significant implications for the marketer and practitioner. The two-factor theory position was considered to be sufficiently plausible to influence the design of this study.

**Figure 1**  
**Conventional and Dual-Factor Continua of Customer Satisfaction Measurement Scale**



### Disconfirmation

In the satisfaction research literature, disconfirmation arises from discrepancies between prior expectations and actual performance (Tse & Wilton 1988). It is presumably the magnitude of the disconfirmation effect that generates satisfaction and dissatisfaction (Churchill & Surprenant 1982). This implies that while tourists who have high levels of disconfirmation will be more likely to cognitively evaluate their satisfaction and dissatisfaction processes, those who have low levels of disconfirmation will not. Based on this view, the following hypotheses are proposed:

- H<sub>1-1</sub>: Tourists who are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with their travel experience will be less likely to perceive a ‘disconfirmation’ level than those who are dissatisfied.
- H<sub>1-2</sub>: Tourists who are both satisfied and dissatisfied with their travel experience will be less likely to perceive a ‘disconfirmation’ level than those who are satisfied.

## **Affect**

Hunt (1977) argued that satisfaction results from processing the affect in a consumption experience and this is empirically supported by previous studies, including Westbrook (1987), Westbrook and Oliver (1991), and Mano and Oliver (1993). On the contrary, a low level of emotional feelings regarding a product was not an antecedent of satisfaction. Studies by Duberrioux (1990) and Westbrook and Oliver (1991) revealed that the unemotional pattern was linked to moderately high levels of satisfaction: a more cognitive or 'cool' state of satisfaction, suggesting that this type of satisfied customers might be considered 'not dissatisfied.' In the context of the two-factor approach, this implies that there exist tourists who are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied if they do not experience enough emotional feelings about their travel. Otherwise, if tourists experience strong positive and negative feelings simultaneously, they will be less likely to be controlled by one-sided feelings (positive or negative) but more likely to experience both satisfaction and dissatisfaction. These speculations give rise to the second set of hypotheses tested in this study.

- H<sub>2-1</sub>: Tourists who are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with their travel experience will be less likely to experience 'affective perceptions' than those who are dissatisfied.
- H<sub>2-2</sub>: Tourists who are both satisfied and dissatisfied with their travel experience will be less likely to experience 'affective perceptions' than those who are satisfied.
- H<sub>2-3</sub>: Tourists who are both satisfied and dissatisfied with their travel experience will be less likely to experience 'affective differences' between positive and negative feelings than those who are satisfied.

## **Performance**

The primary importance of performance in the satisfaction literature has been as a standard of comparison by which to assess disconfirmation (Olshavsky & Miller 1972; Olson & Dover 1976), and as an antecedent variable of satisfaction (Churchill & Surprenant 1982; Wilton & Tse 1983). Therefore, tourists who are satisfied or dissatisfied will tend to be easily identified by their perceived performances related to destination attributes or motivational desires, while tourists who are both satisfied and dissatisfied or neither satisfied nor dissatisfied will be less likely to be found by their performance. The preceding discussion suggests the following study hypotheses:

- H<sub>3-1</sub>: The level of overall quality of performance and experience perceived by tourists who are satisfied with their travel experience will be higher than that of those who are both satisfied and dissatisfied.
- H<sub>3-2</sub>: The level of overall quality of performance and experience perceived by tourists who are dissatisfied with their travel experience will be higher than that of those who are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.

## **METHOD**

### **Sampling**

Data was collected via an online survey that was distributed to individuals who contacted Tourism Prince Edward Island (PEI), the provincial government department that manages tourism marketing for the province of PEI, during 2010 to request tourist information. Only those individuals who provided Tourism PEI with an e-mail address and indicated that they were willing to be contacted were considered part of the population for the survey. In total, 158,964 e-mail addresses were collected from January 2010 to November 2010, of which 5,000 were used for the sampling frame. These email addresses were randomly selected using a stratified sampling method based on the inquirer's place of residence.

The online survey was launched November 30, 2010 and closed December 30, 2010. During this period, three reminders were sent to those who had not completed the survey, thus a total of four contacts were made with the sampling frame. During the survey period, 1,273 individuals (25.5% of the population) started the survey, but 1,045 (20.9% of the population) surveys were completed. Of these, 84.7% (885) were visitors to PEI. For this study, only the 476 respondents who visited PEI between July and August were selected and used for further analysis.

## Measures

Five constructs were examined in this study: (1) performances for destination attributes and (2) motivational desires, (3) disconfirmations against expectation and desires, (4) affects (positive and negative feelings), and (5) satisfaction-dissatisfaction. All items were measured on a 7-point Likert type scale. To test the proposed hypotheses, multi-item scales including 25 destination attribute-specific items (1=very poor; 7=excellent), 21 experience measures based on motivational desires (1=strongly disagree; 7=strongly agree), and 12 affective items (six positive and six negative items ranging from 1=not at all to 7=very much) were summed to generate each construct score for the overall quality of perceived performance, overall quality of perceived experience, positive feelings, and negative feelings (Crompton 1979; Dann 1981; Hu & Ritchie 1993; Kozak 2002; Mano & Oliver 1993; Pyo, Mihalik, & Uysal 1989; Smith 1991; Uysal & Jurowski 1994).

Two disconfirmation perceptions were framed relative to expectations of destination attributes and motivational desires (Baker & Crompton 2000; Oliver 1980; Spreng & Olshavsky 1993; Tse & Wilton 1988). The former was rated by using 'did not meet my expectations (-3),' 'met my expectations (0)', and 'exceeded my expectations (3)' and the latter by using 'much worse than I desired/wanted (-3),' 'same as I desired/wanted (0)', and 'much better than I desired/wanted (3).' Separate satisfaction-dissatisfaction scales (Leavitt 1977) were asked by using 'not at all satisfied (1)' and 'completely satisfied (7)' for the overall satisfaction level and 'totally dissatisfied (1)' and 'not at all dissatisfied (7)' for the overall dissatisfaction level. It should be noted that for the analysis, total affect scores were calculated by adding the average summed positive and negative feelings, thus giving scores out of 14.

## Analysis

To group respondents based on the levels of satisfaction and dissatisfaction, cross-tabulation analysis with Chi-Square statistics was used. On the basis of the proposed hypotheses, this study essentially aimed to determine whether variables in satisfaction-dissatisfaction groups differed. For hypothesis 1, independent-samples *t*-tests were analyzed on two disconfirmation perceptions. A series of univariate analysis of covariate (ANCOVA) were tested on three affective measures ( $H_2$ ) and multivariate ANCOVAs were performed on overall quality of perceived performance and overall quality of perceived experience ( $H_3$ ).

To test the proposed hypotheses, it was necessary that respondents be grouped, first, by using two separate measures: levels of 'satisfaction' and 'dissatisfaction' with the overall travel experience. When the levels of 'satisfaction' and 'dissatisfaction' measured on 7-point scales were partitioned into two categories (not satisfied vs. satisfied; dissatisfied vs. not dissatisfied), median values were used rather than mean scores or midpoints of the scale (Martilla & James 1977) as a number of previous satisfaction studies in marketing and tourism literature indicated that self-reports of customer satisfaction invariably possess distributions that are negatively skewed and exhibit a positivity bias (Peterson & Wilson 1992).

## RESULTS

### Clustering respondents

Table 1 summarizes the result of the cross-tabulation analysis for grouping respondents. Significant differences showed at better than the 0.001 level between the four groups based on the two categories of satisfaction and dissatisfaction ( $\chi^2=89.096$ ;  $d.f.=1$ ). The result clearly shows that 476 respondents could be neatly partitioned into four groups. Of the total, 267 (56.1%) reported ‘high’ satisfaction and ‘low’ dissatisfaction with their overall travel experience; they are termed ‘*satisfied tourists*.’ In addition, 81 (17.0%) respondents expressed ‘low’ satisfaction and ‘high’ dissatisfaction and they are identified as ‘*dissatisfied tourists*.’ A further 109 (39.9%) reported that they were not only satisfied with their overall travel experience but also dissatisfied. Assuming that they had experienced both pleasant (satisfactory) and unpleasant (dissatisfactory) experiences (for whatever reasons) during their trip, they are labeled as ‘*both satisfied and dissatisfied tourists*’. Finally, only 19 (4.0%) of the respondents indicated that they were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with their travel experience and are named ‘*neither satisfied nor dissatisfied tourists*’.

**Table 1**  
**Result of Clustering Respondents based on the Levels of Satisfaction and Dissatisfaction**

	Not Satisfied	Satisfied	Total	Chi-Square Statistics
Dissatisfied	81 (17.0)	109 (22.9)	190 (39.9)	$\chi^2= 89.096$ (d.f. = 1); $p = 0.000$
Not Dissatisfied	19 (4.0)	267 (56.1)	286 (60.1)	
Total	100 (21.0)	376 (79.0)	476 (100.0)	

Note: Each number in parentheses indicates percent of total respondents.

### Hypotheses tests

Table 2 provides the results of all hypotheses’ tests. Hypothesis 1 was examined using a series of independent samples *t*-tests. Before testing  $H_1$ , negative disconfirmation scores were re-coded to positive scores because absolute disconfirmation perceptions, regardless of positive and negative disconfirmation levels, are probably more suitable for testing a dependent variable between the two groups selected (Tse & Wilton 1988); thus -3 was re-coded to 3, -2 was re-coded to 2, and -1 was re-coded to 1. Regarding  $H_{1-1}$ , no significant differences were found in disconfirmation perceptions between the two selected groups (tourists who were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied vs. those who were dissatisfied), indicating that sub-hypotheses  $H_{1-1a}$  and  $H_{1-1b}$  were not supported.

In contrast, statistically significant differences were found in two disconfirmation variables between the two groups ( $M=1.46$  for tourists who had experienced both satisfaction and dissatisfaction vs.  $M=2.18$  for those who were satisfied). Levels of disconfirmation perceptions by tourists who had both satisfactory and unsatisfactory experiences during their trip were significantly lower than for those who had only satisfactory experiences, thereby supporting  $H_{1-2a}$  and  $H_{1-2b}$ .

Three hypotheses,  $H_{2-1}$ ,  $H_{2-2}$ , and  $H_{2-3}$  were tested by a series of univariate analyses of covariate (ANCOVA) instead of performing *t*-tests because levels of affective experiences can be influenced by levels of disconfirmation perceptions (Anderson 1973; Woodruff, Cadotte, & Jenkins 1983). Thus, the univariate ANCOVA model included disconfirmation perception scores fixed as the covariate variable. According to the results of the tests ( $H_{2-1}$  and  $H_{2-2}$ ), there were no statistically significant differences in total affective experiences (positive + negative affects) between each of the groups ( $M=6.39$  for tourists who were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied vs.

$M=6.51$  for those who were dissatisfied;  $M=7.37$  for tourists who had experienced both satisfaction and dissatisfaction during the trip vs.  $M=7.40$  for those who had experienced only satisfaction), thus sub-hypotheses  $H_{2-1}$  and  $H_{2-2}$  were not supported.

**Table 2**  
**Results of Hypothesis Tests**

Hypothesis Group	Dependent Variables	Mean	<i>t</i> -value ( <i>F</i> -value)	<i>p</i> -value
$H_{1-1a}$ <sup>a)</sup> <i>Neither S nor DS Dissatisfied</i>	Disconfirmation (compared to Expectations)	0.95 1.02	-0.357	0.722
$H_{1-1b}$ <sup>a)</sup> <i>Neither S nor DS Dissatisfied</i>	Disconfirmation (compared to Desires)	0.74 0.99	-1.112	0.269
$H_{1-2a}$ <sup>a)</sup> <i>Both S and DS Satisfied</i>	Disconfirmation (compared to Expectations)	1.46 2.18	-7.632	0.000
$H_{1-2b}$ <sup>a)</sup> <i>Both S and DS Satisfied</i>	Disconfirmation (compared to Desires)	1.27 1.88	-5.907	0.000
$H_{2-1}$ <sup>b)</sup> <i>Neither S nor DS Dissatisfied</i>	Affects (Positive + Negative Affects)	6.39 <sup>adj.</sup> 6.51 <sup>adj.</sup>	0.134	0.715
$H_{2-2}$ <sup>b)</sup> <i>Both S and DS Satisfied</i>	Affects (Positive + Negative Affects)	7.37 <sup>adj.</sup> 7.40 <sup>adj.</sup>	0.110	0.740
$H_{2-3}$ <sup>b)</sup> <i>Both S and DS Satisfied</i>	Affects (Positive - Negative Affects)	4.48 <sup>adj.</sup> 5.23 <sup>adj.</sup>	60.364	0.000
$H_{3-1}$ <sup>c)</sup> <i>Satisfied</i>	Overall Quality of Perceived Performance	6.25 <sup>adj.</sup>	129.597	0.000
$H_{3-1}$ <sup>c)</sup> <i>Both S and DS Satisfied</i>	Overall Quality of Perceived Experience	5.60 <sup>adj.</sup>	127.432	0.000
$H_{3-2}$ <sup>c)</sup> <i>Dissatisfied</i>	Overall Quality of Perceived Performance	5.55 <sup>adj.</sup>	0.017	0.897
$H_{3-2}$ <sup>c)</sup> <i>Neither S nor DS Dissatisfied</i>	Overall Quality of Perceived Experience	5.57 <sup>adj.</sup>	8.510	0.004
$H_{3-2}$ <sup>c)</sup> <i>Neither S nor DS Dissatisfied</i>	Overall Quality of Perceived Experience	4.59 <sup>adj.</sup>		
$H_{3-2}$ <sup>c)</sup> <i>Neither S nor DS Dissatisfied</i>	Overall Quality of Perceived Experience	5.33 <sup>adj.</sup>		

Note: <sup>a)</sup> examined by independent-samples *t*-tests; <sup>b)</sup> tested by univariate analysis of covariate (ANCOVA); <sup>c)</sup> tested by multivariate ANCOVA; <sup>adj.</sup> indicates 'adjusted mean scores' controlled by covariate(s) ('disconfirmation' in this study).

Although Peter, Churchill, and Brown (1993) argued that using difference scores in consumer research may result in some critical problems in terms of low reliability of the scales, this study used arithmetic difference scores between positive and negative affective scores (Johns 1981) as the dependent variable for the purpose of testing the hypothesis 2-3. Again, disconfirmation perception scores were inputted in the multiple ANCOVA model as the covariate variable. In contrast with the results from  $H_{2-1}$  and  $H_{2-2}$ , level of affective difference scores between positive and negative feelings perceived by tourists who were both satisfied and dissatisfied with the overall travel experience was significantly lower than those of respondents who were satisfied ( $M=4.48$  and  $M=5.23$ , respectively), thereby supporting  $H_{2-3}$ . This result indicates that while satisfied tourists tended to be governed by positive affective feelings, tourists who were both satisfied and dissatisfied were less likely to be governed by only a one-sided affect (positive or negative feelings) but rather more likely to experience strongly mixed positive-negative affective feelings.

A multivariate ANCOVA model was used to test Hypothesis 3: overall quality of perceived performance and perceived experience as the dependent variables and disconfirmation perception scores as the covariate variable. Regarding the result of  $H_{3-1}$ , statistically significant differences were found in both overall quality of perceived performance and perceived experience between tourists who were satisfied and those who were both satisfied and dissatisfied, thereby supporting  $H_{3-1}$ .

As for the result of H<sub>3-2</sub>, there was no significant difference in overall quality of perceived performance between tourists who were dissatisfied and those who were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. Meanwhile, statistically significant differences were found in overall quality of perceived experience between tourists who were dissatisfied and those who were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. However, the difference between the two groups appeared to be a reverse result of the proposed hypothesis. It was expected that tourists who are dissatisfied would have higher perceptions of their travel experience than those who are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, but the result indicates that the level of overall quality of perceived experience (performance) by tourists who were dissatisfied was lower than that of those who were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study adopted the two-factor theory in measuring tourist satisfaction by using two separate variables of 'satisfaction' and 'dissatisfaction' with the overall travel experience and examined the differences in disconfirmations, affects, and overall performances between the two groups selected out of all four groups on the basis of the levels of satisfaction and dissatisfaction. Each result based on the three major hypotheses proposed is discussed as follows.

First, although there were no statistically significant differences in disconfirmation perceptions between the two selected groups (tourists who were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied vs. those who were dissatisfied), it is interesting to note that disconfirmation scores ( $M=0.95$ ) by tourists who were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied are slightly lower than those ( $M=1.02$ ) of respondents who were dissatisfied (although there were no statistically significant differences). In contrast, tourists who were both satisfied and dissatisfied with their travel experience ( $M=1.46$ ) were less likely to perceive a 'disconfirmation' level than those who were satisfied ( $M=2.18$ ). Further, it is interesting to see and compare the disconfirmation scores between the four groups presented in Table 2: the lowest disconfirmation scores are for tourists who were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, the second lowest scores for those who were dissatisfied, while the second highest scores were for those who were both satisfied and dissatisfied, and the highest scores for those who were satisfied. This result implies that if tourists perceived relatively low levels of disconfirmation after travel, comprehensive, selective evaluations of satisfaction may not be judged well. The study reaffirmed that disconfirmation perceptions cannot be evaluated if the levels of disconfirmation are in an 'indifference zone' (Anderson 1973; Woodruff, Cadotte, & Jenkins 1983).

Second, although there were no statistically significant differences in total affect scores (positive + negative feelings) between the two sets of groups, it is also noted that total affective feelings by tourists who were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied are slightly lower than for those who were dissatisfied. This result implies that tourists who had not experienced highly emotional feelings while travelling in a particular destination may be less (or least) likely to perceive levels of satisfaction/dissatisfaction. On the contrary, tourists who were both satisfied and dissatisfied with their travel experience were less likely to experience 'affective differences' between positive and negative feelings than those who were satisfied. This result implies that while satisfactory tourists tended to be governed by positive affective feelings, tourists who were both satisfied and dissatisfied were less likely to be governed by only one-sided affect (positive or negative feelings) but more likely to experience strongly mixed positive-negative affective feelings.

Third, based on the results between satisfied tourists and those who are both satisfied and dissatisfied, the study suggests that the satisfaction level perceived by satisfied tourists was more likely to be influenced by a positive evaluation of destination attributes and the level of accomplishment of their experience than that of those who had experienced both satisfaction and dissatisfaction during the trip. However, the difference in overall quality of perceived experience (performance) between the two groups (dissatisfied tourists vs. neither satisfied nor dissatisfied tourists) appeared to be a reverse result with the proposed hypothesis. This may have resulted from the small number of samples of tourists who were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied which may have caused a problem when calculating summated construct scores.



In conclusion, this study gives careful attention to a premise that “tourists who are not satisfied are dissatisfied and those who are satisfied are not dissatisfied” on the basis of one-factor theory of consumer satisfaction. It suggests that there exist tourists (consumers) who are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied and those who are both satisfied and dissatisfied; implying that adopting the two-factor theory may be an advanced, more useful approach to study consumer satisfaction according to the research purposes and scopes. This study is exploratory, not explanatory and experimental. Nonetheless, this study includes several limitations regarding sampling method (lagged survey timing, online survey, etc.) and small sample size for specific groups, defining the constructs, and so on. Thus, future research may be needed to revise the research design and method reflecting the limitations. The results of this study should also be verified by further research.

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