

Overall quality of the tourist experience as a transformer of lifestyle and its effects on the tourist's quality of life and their behavioural intention

Bárbara Sofía Pasaco-González ^{1*}

¹ Universidad de Extremadura, Spain. Email: sofiap@unex.es

* Corresponding author

Supervisors: Dr. D. José Manuel Hernández Mogollón, Dra. D^a. Ana María Campón Cerro

Institution awarding the Ph. D. Degree: Universidad de Extremadura, Spain

Date of defence: 13th of June 2022

Citation: Pasaco-González, B.S. (2024). Overall quality of the tourist experience as a transformer of lifestyle and its effects on the tourist's quality of life and their behavioural intention. *European Journal of Tourism Research* 38, 3819. <https://doi.org/10.54055/ejtr.v38i.3152>

Publication history:

Received: 23/01/2023; Revised: 28/11/2023, 17/01/2024; Accepted: 14/04/2024; Published online: 01/08/2024; Volume date: 01/10/2024

Coordinating editors: Faizan Ali and Stanislav Ivanov



© 2024 The Author(s)

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY 4.0). To view a copy of this license, visit <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

Goal and objectives of the dissertation

Goal

The main objective of this dissertation consists of examining the determinants and consequences of the overall quality of the tourism experience. As determinants, service quality, experiential quality, authenticity and destination attractiveness are examined. As outcomes, lifestyle and quality of life are analysed as results linked to the personal sphere of tourists. Satisfaction and behavioural intentions are assessed as marketing results. This study is applied to the context of nature-based and cultural tourism experiences.

Objectives

This research has five specific objectives:

- To identify the gap in the literature through a review of the main theoretical and empirical contributions to the quality of the tourism experience and the factors associated with it.
- To examine the quality of the tourism experience from a global perspective by simultaneously evaluating the functional attributes through the service quality and the emotional attributes through the experiential quality.
- To assess the influence of tourists' perceived authenticity in increasing the destination attractiveness and determine the contribution of these factors to the delivery of quality tourism experiences.
- To determine the effect of overall quality of the tourism experience on tourists' lifestyle and quality of life, and to establish the impact of these on satisfaction and behavioural intentions.
- To verify differences in the structural model by the type of tourism experience, cultural and nature-based.

Methodology

This study adopts an exploratory approach and a quantitative methodology. Data collection was carried out through an online survey. A structured questionnaire was prepared in English, French, Italian, Portuguese and Spanish. A pre-test and a pilot test were conducted before the survey's dissemination. The variables were measured by adapting scales tested in previous studies and their order of measurement was modified to prevent the common method variance (CMV) (Podsakoff et al., 2003). For data collection, a non-probabilistic convenience sampling method was employed. Using a statistical power analysis (Hair et al., 2019), 85 observations were determined to be the minimum sample size required. A set of 60 cultural and 64 nature-based tourism experiences were identified based on aspects of the Pine and Gilmore (1998) model. The sample was composed of tourists who took part in one of the experiences selected. To contact the participants, the Facebook page of the 124 experiences identified was employed to send a message with the survey. Besides, of the 124 experiences identified, 8 tourism companies collaborated by disseminating the survey among their customers. A final sample of 367 respondents was obtained.

Prior to data analysis, the homogeneity of the sample and the absence of the CMV were confirmed. The statistical power of the final sample was also evaluated. The results indicated that the data collected reached a statistical power of 0.99 which was higher than the recommended threshold of 0.80 (Cohen, 1988). It is therefore adequate to estimate the proposed model. After checking the suitability of the data, the PLS-SEM technique was used to examine the model and hypotheses testing. An importance-performance map analysis (IPMA) and a multigroup analysis (MGA) were also performed with PLS-SEM.

Results

The analysis of the demographics indicates that most participants in the sample were female (71.8%), aged between 26 and 45 years old (51.5%), resident in Mexico (20.0%), Spain (14.3%) and Chile (11.5%), and obtained a university degree (76.9%). For the analysis of the proposed model, as the constructs were measured reflectively and formatively, the specific criteria for the evaluation of the measurement model in each case were applied (Hair et al., 2019). Following Hair et al. (2019) guidelines, for reflective constructs the results of the measurement model confirmed adequate levels of individual reliability (external loadings between 0.70 and 0.60), internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability and Dijkstra-Henseler > 0.70), convergent validity ($AVE > 0.50$) and discriminant validity (HTMT and Fornell-Larcker criterion were fulfilled). For formative constructs, problems of collinearity were not detected ($VIF < 5$), and statistical significance of the weights was demonstrated ($p < 0.01$). For the structural model assessment, most of the proposed hypotheses found empirical support, except those that establish an influence of lifestyle on satisfaction and behavioural intentions. Generally, the findings show that an adequate construction of quality tourism experiences requires the application of a comprehensive approach that, on the one hand, includes the joint evaluation of functional and emotional elements of the experience and, on the other hand, determines the degree to which other factors influence the quality of the tourist experience perceived by individuals. This holistic vision allows to achieve higher levels of satisfaction that encourage tourists to repeat the experience, to recommend it or to spread positive word-of-mouth and, in addition, contributes to providing benefits within the tourist's personal sphere. Regarding the multigroup analysis, the results highlight that the type of tourism experience, cultural and nature-based, does not change the strength of the relationships between the constructs of the model. From the IPMA analysis, it was obtained that satisfaction, overall quality of the tourist experience and authenticity are the most relevant factors to increase the intentions of tourists to repeat the experience, recommend it or make positive comments about it.

Theoretical conclusions

From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to the experience economy framework by demonstrating that managing quality in an experiential context requires a holistic approach that should imply the affective component of the economic offering. Thus, service quality and experiential quality are critical factors to establish a more comprehensive conceptualisation and measurement of the quality of the tourism experience. Simultaneous analysis of both measures has the potential to identify tourists' perceptions of functional and emotional attributes of the experience together. Authenticity and destination attractiveness influence the overall quality of the tourist experience. Thus, a framework for evaluating the quality of the tourist experience with a broader scope must include the assessment of both its internal component and the evaluation of other factors. This contributes to achieving better results for the provision of quality experiences to consumers.

Managing the quality of the tourism experience from a comprehensive approach by providing adequate performance at a functional and emotional level helps to achieve better marketing results (Culha, 2020). Specifically, the overall quality of the tourist experience is the main antecedent of satisfaction, and this last one is the most important predictor of behavioural intentions. Providing high-quality tourism experiences also contributes to promoting changes in people's lifestyles and enhancing their quality of life. These both represent consequences of the tourism consumption process that reflect the orientation of individuals towards the search for benefits that profoundly impact their lives. These findings contribute to the Transformational Tourism framework given that it is considered the next step in the progression of the economic value (Pine and Gilmore, 2013). Therefore, the analysis of the outcomes derived from the tourism experiences should point in this direction.

Practical application of the dissertation

The findings obtained in this research can help tourism professionals establish some management, planning and marketing strategies capable of strengthening the quality of the tourist experience offered. Such actions may include that business and destination managers integrate service quality and experiential quality for the delivery of tourism experiences. For service quality, professionals should ensure the configuration of an easily accessible and safe environment, the provision of adequate infrastructure, and trained staff to provide the desired experience and individualised attention. For experiential quality, companies must stimulate positive emotional responses in visitors. This could be achieved by, for example, designing activities that imply a learning component and the active participation of individuals. Besides, managers should focus on increasing destination attractiveness by providing excellent infrastructure, facilities, and equipment to meet the desires of consumers. Perceptions of authenticity can be increased by allowing visitors to interact with the local population. While these strategies should be directed to obtain higher levels of satisfaction and behavioural intentions (Altunel and Erkut, 2015), these should also influence tourist's lives by promoting changes in their lifestyle and improving their quality of life. This can be achieved through the inclusion of activities that allow the attainment of skills, knowledge and perspectives which then can be implanted by tourists in their lifestyle. In addition to this, marketing strategies must communicate to tourists the benefits that tourism experiences provide at an individual level.

Content of the dissertation

This dissertation is structured into nine chapters:

Abstract of Chapter 1

It makes a general presentation of the topic under study to give a general overview of the study of the quality of the tourist experiences, its determinants and consequences. Subsequently, it describes the relevance of the research from both a theoretical and a practical perspective.

Abstract of Chapter 2

It presents the purpose of this study which has been reflected in the description of the general and specific objectives. Subsequently, it exposes a description of the methodology employed to carry out this work and describes the structure used for the organization of the contents addressed.

Abstract of Chapter 3

It addresses the conceptual background regarding the determinants of the quality of the tourism experience. The literature review consisted, first, of analysing the definitions of the experience concept applied to tourism and examining the components of a tourism experience that must be evaluated in terms of quality. Subsequently, the concepts of service quality and experiential quality were reviewed as measures that evaluate the functional and emotional elements of the experience, respectively. Finally, authenticity and destination attractiveness were examined as factors that influence the evaluation of the quality of the tourist experience.

Abstract of Chapter 4

It examines the results derived from the quality of the tourism experience. On the one hand, lifestyle and quality of life are proposed as outcomes associated with the subjective sphere of tourists. The lifestyle concept is approached from a transformative perspective and quality of life consists of a sociopsychological benefit derived from tourists' participation in tourism experiences. Finally, satisfaction and behavioural intentions are included as marketing-oriented outcomes.

Abstract of Chapter 5

It defines the structural model that is intended to be tested empirically which has been proposed based on the theoretical model defined based on the literature review. Subsequently, the structural relationships of the model are specified, and the research hypotheses are justified based on the conceptual background, both theoretically and empirically. Finally, the measurement scales for each variable are established and adapted from previous studies.

Abstract of Chapter 6

It focuses on the procedures, methods and techniques used to carry out this study. Firstly, a description of cultural and nature-based tourism as research contexts of this work is presented. Subsequently, the research approach, the methodology, the technique for data collection, the procedures for data analysis, and the evaluation of the suitability of the sample are determined.

Abstract of Chapter 7

It is dedicated to the analysis of the empirical data obtained. First, a descriptive analysis that includes the specification of the sample profile and the description of the variables analysed is presented. Subsequently, the structural model is evaluated with the PLS-SEM technique, following the two-stage process that involves the evaluation of the measurement and the structural model. The results of the measurement model have made it possible to confirm that the measures of the constructs are valid and reliable, while the results of the structural model have allowed the testing of the study hypotheses.

Abstract of Chapter 8

It discusses the results of the study trying to elucidate their meaning in the context of cultural and nature-based tourism experiences. It consisted of verifying the proposed hypotheses and contrasting the findings with those from previous studies. The discussion is presented in two sections. First, the findings regarding the determinants of the overall quality of the tourism experience are analysed and, second, the consequences derived from the overall quality of the tourist experience are addressed.

Abstract of Chapter 9

Based on the results obtained, this chapter presents the final conclusions and the contributions at a theoretical level for the tourism literature and some practical contributions for the professional sector. Finally, the limitations of the study are specified, and some future research lines are proposed.

Acknowledgements

Project co-financed by the European Social Fund and Junta de Extremadura within the framework of the “Financing aids for pre-doctoral contracts for the training of Doctors in the public R&D centers of the System of Science, Technology and Innovation of Extremadura for the year 2018” (Reference No. PD18013).

References

- Altunel, M., & Erkut, B. (2015). Cultural tourism in Istanbul: The mediation effect of tourist experience and satisfaction on the relationship between involvement and recommendation intention. *Journal of Destination Marketing and Management*, 4(4), 213–221. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdmm.2015.06.003>
- Cohen, J. (1988). *Statistical power analysis for the behavioral sciences* (2nd ed.). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Culha, O. (2020). The effect of food festival quality on place attachment and destination recommendation intention through festival experience and festival satisfaction: The case of the

Overall quality of the tourist experience as a transformer of lifestyle and its effects on the tourist's quality of life and their behavioural intention

Didim International Olive Festival. *Journal of Convention & Event Tourism*, 21(5), 387-416. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15470148.2020.1775743>

Hair, J., Ringle, C., Sarstedt, M., Castillo, J., Cepeda, G., & Roldán, J. (2019). *Manual de Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM)* (2nd ed.). SAGE Publications.

Pine, J., & Gilmore, J. (1998). Welcome to the Experience Economy. *Harvard Business Review*, 97-105.

Pine, B. J., & Gilmore, J. H. (2013). The experience economy: Past, present and future. En J. Sundbo & F. Sorensen (Eds.), *Handbook on the Experience Economy* (pp. 21-44). Edward Elgar Publishing.

Podsakoff, P., MacKenzie, S., Lee, J., & Podsakoff, N. (2003). Common Method Biases in Behavioral Research: A Critical Review of the Literature and Recommended Remedies. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 88(5), 879-903. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.88.5.879>