

EXPLORING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SATISFACTION WITH TOURISM SERVICES, REVISIT INTENTION AND LIFE SATISFACTION

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ABSTRACT

The main purpose of this research is to explore the relationship between satisfaction with tourism services in different stages of a trip and satisfaction with general trip experience. Also explored is how satisfaction with general trip experience contributes to tourists' intention to revisit a tourist destination and to their general life satisfaction. Based on previous research a questionnaire was prepared and an empirical research was conducted on a purposive sample of 669 tourists. The results show that respondents are satisfied with all service aspects, but satisfaction with destination services is somewhat lower than satisfaction with services in other travel stages (pre-trip, en route, return trip). Satisfaction with travel/tourism services have a positive but, in terms of magnitude, different influence on satisfaction with general trip experience depending on different travel phase. Additionally, satisfaction with general trip experience contributes to revisit intentions and life satisfaction. Originality of this research is found in providing empirical evidence that is important to invest in service quality in tourism, especially in services provided at the tourist destination level. Also, this research contributes to exploring influences from tourism to life satisfaction. This research can serve as a basis for tourist destination marketing managers as well as travel agencies in developing their tourism offerings.

Keywords: *leisure, life satisfaction, revisit intention, tourism services, travel experience*

1. INTRODUCTION

As the tourism industry has been growing rapidly in recent decades, many scientists are studying the impact of tourism on the quality of life of the tourism community as well as on the quality of life of tourists. In the focus of this research is the impact of satisfaction with the trip experience on travellers' life satisfaction and their behavioural intention to revisit a tourist destination. Namely, many studies have established that leisure time has a positive and significant impact on subjective quality of life, i.e. on general life satisfaction (Andrews and Withey, 1976; Eusebio and Carneiro, 2014). Also, the effect of vacation, as a part of leisure time, has been investigated by several authors (Dolnicar, Yanamandram and Cliff, 2012; Sirgy, Kruger, Lee and Yu, 2011). Additionally, Sirgy, Kruger, Lee and Yu (2011) proved the existence of a spill-over effect of travel trips on all domains of life satisfaction and, in turn, on overall life satisfaction. At the same time, many scientists have found evidence supporting the positive impact of satisfaction with travel experience on revisit intention to a specific tourist destination (Ali, Ryu, and Hussain, 2015; Triantafillidou and Petala, 2015; Baker and Crompton, 2000; Kim, Woo, and Uysal, 2015), which is particularly important in tourist

destination management. However, the question that is still not answered is: Which factors determine tourists' satisfaction? Since a journey takes place in several phases, does each phase have the same impact on travellers' satisfaction with the experienced tourism services? Neal, Sirgy and Uysal (1999) developed a model to explain the impact of satisfaction with different aspects of tourism services (satisfaction with pre-trip, en route destination, and return trip services) on satisfaction with travel/tourism services. Following that study, Neal, Uysal and Sirgy (2007) confirmed the impact of satisfaction with the service aspects of travel phases on satisfaction with travel/tourism services, satisfaction with tourism experiences and satisfaction with leisure life and life in general. However, opposed to previous studies, this study explores the direct impact of satisfaction with tourism services in different stages of travel on satisfaction with the general trip experience and its impact on revisit intention and travellers' life satisfaction. More specifically, this paper seeks to address three main research questions: (1) Does satisfaction with tourism services in the various travel phases affect satisfaction with the general trip experience? If so, which phase of a trip has the greatest impact on travellers' satisfaction? (2) What is the impact of travellers' satisfaction with general trip experience on the revisit intention? (3) What is the impact of travellers' satisfaction with general trip experience on travellers' life satisfaction? The paper is structured as follows. The section following the introduction focuses on conceptualisation and hypotheses development. Section 3 then explains the methodology employed and section 4 discusses research findings. The last section of the paper draws conclusions, outlines managerial implications, notes limitations and suggests further research ideas.

2. CONCEPTUALIZATION AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

2.1. Tourist satisfaction with tourism services and trip experience

Customer satisfaction is a well-researched topic. It is usually defined as the result of a cognitive process described by the disconfirmation of expectations theory (Bearden and Teel, 1983; Oliver, 1980). Moreover, Zeithaml and Bitner (2003) define customer satisfaction as a customer's evaluation of a product or service in terms of whether that product or service has met the customer's needs and expectations. In a tourism context, satisfaction is primarily defined in relation to pre-travel expectations and post-travel evaluations (Chen and Chen, 2010). Tourists use many services during their travels and accordingly gain a plethora of different experiences. In a leisure and tourism context, experience is seen as "a subjective mental state felt by participants" (Otto and Ritchie, 1996, p. 166). It is achieved through active engagement with travel and tourist participation in the given context of tourism settings, as well as through the emotional senses of touch and affect (Park and Santos, 2017) during travel. Numerous factors influence tourism experience. For example, Da Costa Mendes, Do Valle, Guerreiro and Silva (2010) argue that the combination of inherent factors and associated satisfaction, in terms of acquired and consumed services during the holistic tourism experience, determine the overall satisfaction level of tourists. Tourist satisfaction is of great importance to tourism service providers and to the management of tourism destinations since scholars have found that tourists' experiences and their revisit intentions are positively related (Chang, Backman and Chih Huang, 2014). Satisfaction with different aspects of services during travel has a significant role in determining overall satisfaction with travel/tourism services (Neal, Uysal and Sirgy, 2007). Moreover, satisfaction with travel/tourism services is derived from satisfaction with the different service aspects of travel/tourism phases, that is, pre-trip services, en route services, destination services and return-trip services (Neal, Sirgy and Uysal, 2004). Hence, it is likely that general travel satisfaction can be influenced by satisfaction with diverse services experienced by tourists in different travel phases. Therefore, we propose: H1: Satisfaction with travel/tourism services related to the (a) pre-trip affects satisfaction, (b) en route trip, (c) destination site, (d) return trip, affects satisfaction with the general trip experience.

2.2. Revisit intention

Numerous studies show that tourist experience satisfaction influences post travel behaviour and intention to revisit the same tourist destination (Um and Crompton, 1990; Baker and Crompton, 2000; Oppermann, 2000; Chen and Tsai, 2007; Chi and Qu, 2008; Kim, Ritchie and McCormick, 2012; Tsai, 2016; Barnes, Mattsson and Sørensen, 2016; Agapito, Pinto and Mendes, 2017; Zhang, Wu and Buhalis, 2018). Previous studies have examined the effect of memorable tourism experiences on behaviour intention, loyalty and revisit intention in different contexts. Chen and Tsai (2007) argue that experience quality has a direct influence on satisfaction and behavioural intentions. Following from that, memorable tourism experiences are found to be the key element for destination competitiveness and the main reason for future destination choices. A destination's ability to provide memorable tourism experiences positively enhances the probability of tourist revisits to that destination (Oppermann, 2000). Similarly, Tsai's (2016) research indicates that memorable tourism experiences have a direct as well as indirect effect on tourists' behavioural intentions. Experiences that are longer remembered, that is, experiences that create long-lasting memories for tourists, have the strongest impact on revisit intentions (Barnes, Mattsson and Sørensen 2016). Kim, Ritchie and McCormick (2012) developed one of the most recognized memorable tourism experience scales based on seven dimensions: hedonism, refreshment, local culture, meaningfulness, knowledge, involvement and novelty. They pointed out that the memorable experiential components of involvement, hedonism and local culture positively affect behavioural intentions to revisit the same destination. Zhang, Wu and Buhalis (2018) used the seven-dimension scale of Kim, Ritchie and McCormick (2012) in their study and provide additional evidence to support the claim that memorable tourism experience is a very important factor that influences revisit intention to the destination among international tourists. In their research, Zhang, Wu and Buhalis (2018) approach revisit intention as revisit propensity, revisit willingness and revisit probability in the near future, similar to many other studies (e.g. Hung, Lee and Huang, 2014; Wang and Wu, 2011) that include both affective and behavioural elements. Researchers argue that a memorable tourism experience is the best predictor of future destination choices. Only those destinations that provide memorable tourism experiences to tourists can attract a greater number of repeat-visit tourists. According to these arguments, we posit: H2: Satisfaction with trip experience has a positive effect on revisit intention.

2.3. Life satisfaction

The concept of life satisfaction has been in the focus of researchers for a long time. It refers to the degree to which a person positively evaluates the overall quality of life (Veenhoven, 1996). Life satisfaction is part of the wider concept of subjective well-being, which includes life satisfaction as a cognitive component, along with positive and negative feelings as affective components. This involves judging the fulfilment of one's needs, goals and desires (Sirgy, 2012, pp. 13). There are many life domains in which quality of life can be experienced (Andrews and Withey 1976; Cummins, 1996). Several scholars have established that leisure time has a positive and significant impact on subjective quality of life, i.e. on general life satisfaction (Andrews and Withey, 1976; Eusebio and Carneiro, 2014). The influence of vacationing, as a significant component of leisure time, has also been investigated by different authors (Dolnicar, Yanamandram and Cliff, 2012; Sirgy, Kruger, Lee and Yu, 2011), and many of them have confirmed the role of tourism in improving the quality of life of tourists and life satisfaction in general (Kim, Woo and Uysal, 2015; Moscardo, 2009; Neal, Uysal and Sirgy, 2007; Neal, Sirgy and Uysal, 2004). Furthermore, Sirgy, Kruger, Lee and Yu (2011) showed that positive and negative memories generated from the most recent trip do not contribute only to overall satisfaction in leisure life but also to satisfaction in other life domains, such as, among many different aspects, social life, family life, love life, work life, health and safety, and travel life.

Also, they showed that leisure travel makes a significant contribution to tourists' life satisfaction. Further, Kim, Woo and Uysal (2015) revealed that satisfaction with travel experience is a significant predictor of quality of life. Accordingly, we can argue that life satisfaction can also be influenced by trip experience. Hence, we propose: H3: Satisfaction with trip experience has a positive effect on life satisfaction. Figure 1 illustrates a conceptual model based on the previously stated hypotheses.

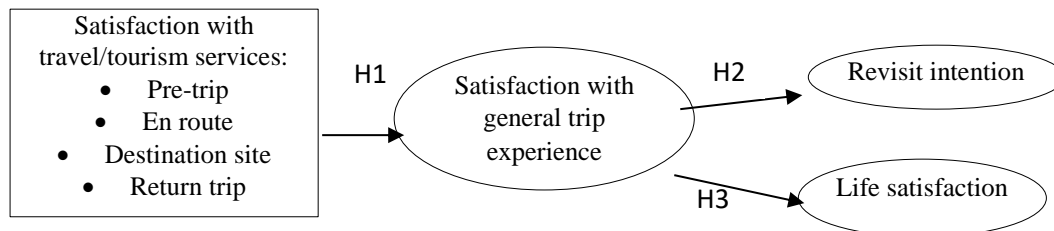


Figure 1: Conceptual model (The authors)

3. METHODOLOGY

This study takes a quantitative approach to measuring tourists' perceptions toward satisfaction with tourism services related to different phases of the trip, satisfaction with the general trip experience, revisit intention and travellers' life satisfaction. The survey method was applied to collect data. A paper-and-pencil questionnaire was designed using previously established scales. In addition to demographic questions and those concerning the behaviour of tourists, the questionnaire included constructs which were measured by items taken from the existing literature. Satisfaction with travel/tourism services relating to different stages of the trip was measured using twelve items taken from a study by Neal, Uysal and Sirgy (2007) and referred to pre-trip services, en route services, destination services and return-trip services. Three statements borrowed from Neal, Uysal and Sirgy (2007) were used to measure the respondents' satisfaction with the general trip experience. The construct revisit intention was measured using four items taken from Kim, Woo and Uysal (2015). Furthermore, four statements that measure the travellers' life satisfaction were based on existing literature (Kim, Woo and Uysal, 2015; Sirgy, Kruger, Lee and Yu, 2011). All items were measured on a five-point Likert-type scale, ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree". The questionnaire was created in English and translated into Croatian. The research was conducted in January 2016. A purposive sample was used. The initial number of questionnaires was 1000. A total of 669 valid questionnaires were collected, accounting for 66.9% of the distributed questionnaires. Data processing and analysis applied univariate and multivariate statistical methods in SPSS ver 25. Results of the research are presented below.

4. FINDINGS

4.1. Sample characteristics

The socio-demographic structure of the sample is shown in Table 1. The majority of the respondents are females (67%) from 21 to 25 years of age (48.9%). Most of them are students (42.6%) or employees (41.4%) with income from 5000 to 10000 HRK (approx. 666-1333 EUR) (40.2%). Almost half of the respondents (45.5%) have secondary school qualifications and they mostly live in a family of four members (43.8%).

Table following on the next page

Table 1: Socio-demographic profile of respondents (n=669) (Research results)

Characteristics	Respondents	
	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	221	33.0
Female	448	67.0
Age		
18 – 20	54	8.1
21 – 25	327	48.9
26 – 30	67	10.0
31 – 35	45	6.7
36 – 40	25	3.7
41 and more	151	22.6
Occupation		
Employed	277	41.4
Entrepreneur	36	5.4
Unemployed	71	10.6
Student	285	42.6
Level of education		
Primary school	9	1.3
Secondary school	311	46.5
College	268	40.2
University	75	11.2
Masters	5	0.7
Doctorate	1	0.1
Family members		
one	21	3.1
two	63	9.4
three	125	18.7
four	293	43.8
Five or more	167	25.0
Income (HRK)		
Up to 3500 (466 EUR)	32	4.8
3501 – 5000 (467-666 EUR)	136	20.3
5001 – 10000 (667-1333 EUR)	269	40.2
10001 – 15000 (1334-2000 EUR)	165	24.7
above 15000 (2001 EUR)	63	9.4
Unknown	4	0.6

The study also provided some additional information on the travel behaviour of respondents. The results are illustrated in Table 2.

Table following on the next page

Table 2: Travel behaviour of respondents (n=669) (Research results)

<i>Description</i>	<i>Respondents</i>	
	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
<i>Travel duration</i>		
2 days	133	19.9
3-7 days	380	56.8
8 or more days	156	23.3
<i>Type of travel</i>		
City travel in Croatia	80	12.0
City travel abroad	156	23.3
Touring vacation	102	15.2
Outdoors vacation	23	3.4
Sun and sea vacation	163	24.4
Skiing and winter vacations	19	2.8
Cruise	13	1.9
Visiting friends and relatives	60	9.0
Business travel	29	4.3
Other	24	3.7
<i>Accompanying person</i>		
Alone	58	8.7
Family	149	22.3
Partner	182	27.2
Friends	184	27.5
Organized group (tour, church, school, etc.)	77	11.5
Other	19	2.8
<i>Frequency of travel</i>		
Once a month or more	27	4.0
Once in three months	91	13.6
Twice a year	215	32.1
Once a year	252	37.7
Less than once a year	84	12.6
<i>Information sources</i>		
Through a travel agency	53	7.9
Through other travel organizers (schools, associations...)	60	9.0
Radio or TV	8	1.2
Press	8	1.2
Internet	168	25.1
Social networks	15	2.2
Personal contact (friends or relatives)	232	34.7
Previous experience	113	16.9
Other	12	1.8

The respondents who completed the questionnaire usually choose the sun and sea vacation (24.4%) or city travel abroad (23.3%) and touring vacation (15.2%). They mostly stay in the destination from 3 to 7 nights (56.8%). In most of the cases the respondents travelled with friends (27.5%) or a partner (27.2%). The frequency of their travel is once (37.7%) or twice (32.1%) a year and they mostly use information from personal contacts (34.7%). After analysing the sample structure, the respondents' answers were analysed using descriptive statistics. Also, the sample was checked for reliability using Cronbach's alpha. Results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Descriptive statistics and reliability analysis (Research results)

No.	Construct / Item	Mean	SD	Cronbach alpha
SATISFACTION WITH TRAVEL/TOURISM SERVICES RELATED TO THE PRE-TRIP		4.0211	0.71454	0.68
1.	I was satisfied with the quality of service provided by travel and tourism professionals (e.g. travel agents, ticket agents, hotel reservation clerks) while planning the trip.	3.943	0.9273	
2.	Making travel and accommodation arrangements for this trip was basically problem-free	4.328	0.8321	
3.	The cost of the services provided by travel and tourism professionals in helping me with the travel logistics was reasonable and well worth it.	3.797	0.9852	
SATISFACTION WITH TRAVEL/TOURISM SERVICES RELATED TO THE EN ROUTE TRIP		4.2445	0.64932	0.62
4	I was pleased with the quality of the services provided in transit to the vacation site.	4.144	0.8787	
5	My travels to the vacation site were basically problem-free.	4.417	0.8786	
6	The cost of travel to the vacation site was reasonable and well worth it.	4.168	0.8261	
SATISFACTION WITH TRAVEL/TOURISM SERVICES AT THE DESTINATION SITE		3.9833	0.69413	0.73
7	Tourism services at the vacation site were of high quality. These services made a richer experience for me.	3.951	0.8646	
8.	Tourism services provided at the vacation site were basically problem-free.	4.161	0.8212	
9.	The cost of tourism services at the vacation site was reasonable and well worth it.	3.828	0.9068	
SATISFACTION WITH TRAVEL/TOURISM SERVICES RELATED TO THE RETURN TRIP		4.1714	0.67272	0.71
10	I was satisfied with the quality of the services provided by those who assisted me on the way home (e.g. bus drivers, ticket agents).	4.043	0.8639	
11	My return travels were basically problem-free.	4.364	0.8418	
12	The cost of travel home from the vacation site was reasonable and well worth it.	4.106	0.8257	
SATISFACTION WITH THE GENERAL TRIP EXPERIENCE		4.4219	0.68933	0.84
13.	All in all, I feel that this trip has enriched my life. I am really glad I went on this trip.	4.446	0.7869	
14.	On this trip I accomplished the purpose of the vacation. This experience has enriched me in some ways.	4.466	0.7880	
15.	This trip was rewarding to me in many ways. I feel much better about things and myself after this trip.	4.347	0.8080	
REVISIT INTENTION		4.3641	0.74880	0.84
16.	I would like to recommend others to visit this destination.	4.490	0.8090	
17.	Revisiting the destination would be worthwhile.	4.451	0.8597	
18.	I will revisit the destination.	4.202	1.0058	
19.	I would like to stay more days in the destination.	4.316	0.9503	
LIFE SATISFACTION		4.0839	0.73058	0.85
20	Overall I felt happy upon my return from that trip.	4.398	0.8227	
21.	My satisfaction with life in general was increased shortly after that trip.	4.022	0.9553	
22.	Overall, this trip was memorable, having enriched my quality of life.	3.868	0.9928	
23.	Overall, I felt happy upon my return from that trip	3.937	0.9927	
24.	I am generally happy with my life	4.179	0.8534	

Research results in the above table indicate that all constructs are reliable and satisfactory (Taber, 2018), having Cronbach alpha coefficients between 0.62 and 0.85. Also, the constructs' average values are above 3.98, indicating that respondents on average positively evaluate their satisfaction with travel/tourism services, satisfaction with the general trip experience, revisit intention and life satisfaction. Multiple regression analysis was performed to answer the posited research questions concerning how, and to what extent, satisfaction with tourism services in various trip stages affects satisfaction with general trip experience. In this analysis satisfaction with general trip experience is used as a dependent variable, and the Enter method was used for entering independent variables into the multiple regression analysis. Results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Multiple regression analysis for variables predicting satisfaction with general trip experience (Research results)

<i>Independent variables</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>Beta</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Constant	1.654	0.176		9.413	0.000
Pre-trip services	0.095	0.041	0.098	2.331	0.020
En route services	0.095	0.049	0.089	1.928	0.054
Destination services	0.326	0.041	0.324	7.945	0.000
Return-trip services	0.161	0.046	0.156	3.480	0.001

$R^2 = 0.545$; Adjusted $R^2 = 0.297$; Standard error = 0.583; F ratio = 67.714 ($p < 0.000$)

As evident, satisfaction with travel/tourism services in the various stages of travel was statistically significant in estimating satisfaction with the general trip experience and explained a total of 54.5 % variance of tourist satisfaction ($R^2=0.545$) with general trip experience. Among four independent variables, three significantly influenced satisfaction with the general trip experience of tourists, whereby destination services ($\beta=0.324$, $p=0.000$) had the most significant impact. The impact of pre-trip services ($\beta=0.098$, $p=0.020$) and return-trip services ($\beta=0.156$, $p=0.001$) on satisfaction is minor, while the impact of en route services is very small and marginally significant ($\beta=0.089$, $p=0.054$). To examine whether there is a connection between satisfaction with the general trip experience and revisit intention, and between satisfaction with the general trip experience and life satisfaction, we carried out a correlation analysis by applying Pearson's correlation coefficient.

Table 5: Correlation coefficients (Research results)

	Satisfaction with trip experience	Revisit intention	Life satisfaction
Satisfaction with trip experience	1	0.614*	0.671*
Revisit intention		1	0.584*
Life satisfaction			1

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed).*

A positive correlation was observed ($r=0.61$, $p=0.000$) between the variables satisfaction with the general trip experience and revisit intention. Also, a positive correlation was established between the variables satisfaction with the general trip experience and travellers' life satisfaction ($r=0.67$, $p=0.000$).

5. CONCLUSION

Our research contributes to exploring the relationship between satisfaction with tourism services in different stages of trip and satisfaction with general trip experience. Furthermore, it also explores how satisfaction with general trip experience contributes to tourists' intention to revisit a tourist destination and to general life satisfaction. Research results indicate that respondents are satisfied with all service aspects, but it can be noted that satisfaction with

destination services is somewhat lower than satisfaction with services in other travel stages (pre-trip, en route, return trip). This is probably due to the fact that tourists, when selecting a travel destination, have high expectations relating to the destination's offering and future experiences in that chosen destination. Satisfaction with travel/tourism services in a destination has the highest influence on satisfaction with general trip experience. This is reasonable as the majority of travel experience is gained and encountered in this phase. Similar results were obtained by Rääkkönen and Honkanen (2013) who found that tour operator services at the destination and accommodation services explain the success of a vacation experience. Also, while staying at a destination, tourists will be largely influenced by their contact with tourism service providers and by the services they receive (Su, Huang and Chen, 2015). Our research also proved that satisfaction with general trip experience is positively related with revisit intention, similar as in previous research (Chang, Backman and Chih Huang, 2014; Da Costa Mendes, Do Valle, Guerreiro, & Silva, 2010). Additionally, satisfaction with general trip experience is positively related to life satisfaction, which is also consistent with previous research (Neal, Sirgy and Uysal, 1999; Neal, Uysal and Sirgy, 2007). This paper contributes to the research stream related to exploring the influence of tourist experience on life satisfaction and on intention to revisit a specific destination. It contributes by providing quantitative evidence to tourism managers concerning the importance of investing in service quality in tourism, especially in services provided at the tourist destination level. This is underscored by research findings indicating that the intention to revisit a destination is more likely in satisfied tourists. If we take into account that tourists, when selecting a destination to visit, are influenced by friends, relatives and acquaintances, we can easily conclude that it is of the utmost importance to invest in service quality in a specific destination as well as to deliver value to tourists during their stay in that destination. The limitations of this paper are related to the mostly female sample and to the great number of young tourists, but this could be resolved by including older respondents in further research. Also, further research could focus on comparing satisfaction with travel/tourism services among different tourist segments based on demographic characteristics, length of stay or travel motivation. Hence, managers in destinations should focus on providing better tourist experiences by developing service quality related to the tourism offering in a tourist destination, as this contributes not only to satisfaction with general trip experience but also to revisit intention and life satisfaction.

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