

# MOTIVATION AND INVOLVEMENT IN INTERNATIONAL TOURISM

UDK 159.9:338.48(100) / JEL L83, D12 / ORIGINAL SCIENTIFIC PAPER

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## ABSTRACT

Using a sample of international tourists travelling in Portugal, Spain and Italy, this study identifies key issues related with tourist involvement. One of the main aspects in the consumer behavior and the decision processes' understanding is the concept of involvement (Broderick & Mueller, 1999; Dimanche et al., 1993) because it influences the decision rules used by tourists to reach the final decision (Sirakaya & Woodside, 2005). An empirical study of 600 international tourists reveals that motivation to relax influences tourists' involvement with the trip. A structural model reveals that when tourists are motivated to relax they get directly more involved with their trip (pleasure and information seeking). The motivation to relax also influences indirectly the tourist involvement with the evaluation and quality perception of the trip through its influence on involvement with the trip planning. Discussion centers on the implications of this model to theory and managerial development of tourism and services strategies. Directions for future research are also presented.

**KEYWORDS:** Motivation, Involvement, International Tourism

**Acknowledgments:** FCT and CI&DETS (PEst-OE/CED/UI4016/2011)



## 1. INTRODUCTION

Tourism decisions are considered as highly risky due to the high monetary and non-monetary costs associated (Sirakaya & Woodside, 2005), so the process of buying tourism products is very engaging, which means that tourists devote to it a considerable effort and time (Seabra et al., 2007). Additionally depending on the product or situation, tourists may be more interested, concerned or involved in the buying decision process.

In general, each buying decision process in tourism correspond to the existence of a service encounter, which typically involves interpersonal relationships between the producer and the customer. In consequence, this situation requires a higher degree of involvement by the consumer (Varki & Wong, 2003) for various reasons (Laroche et al., 2003): its production requires human interaction which introduces some uncertainty in their outcomes; the delivery, in most cases, is not possible without the participation of the consumer; there is no transfer of ownership, so the buyer cannot sell or return the product to the seller.

Involvement is, in fact, the basis of the tourist purchase decision (Zaichkowsky, 1986b) and profoundly affects the perceived value of the product and its evaluation (Bolton

& Drew, 1991). This concept is a central issue in the study of consumer behavior in general (Zaichkowsky, 1985, 1986a) and especially in the decision to purchase tourism products (Dimanche et al., 1991).

Involvement is a key issue to explain what attracts consumers to products and how they make their buying decisions allowing distinguishing types of consumers (Kassarjian, 1981). In turn involvement study can help organizations to define strategies to influence consumers' decisions.

Research on involvement has been neglected in services context, especially in tourism. Also, research should focus on what influences involvement, namely motivations. Motivations that underlie a trip have a significant influence on tourists' behaviors (March & Woodside, 2005; Morrison, 1996). Accordingly, the intrinsic forces that motivate tourists to travel, the push factors, will have a significant impact on tourists' behaviors from planning to consumption and evaluation of tourism products (Moutinho, 1987).

Motivation is the set of internal forces that push people to undertake certain actions to achieve an end, so it explains why individuals decide to do something, for how long and

with which commitment. In short, they represent the internal forces that lead individuals to action (Schiffman & Kanuk, 1997).

Motivations are an important dimension in tourism research. It is a central concept in the comprehension of consumer behavior and in the tourism decision process. Many key questions related with tourism activities can be answered through motivation study, namely those of why people travel, why do they visit some destinations and choose certain activities? The understanding of those questions helps researchers to justify the comprehension of the higher or lower investment that tourists imply in their trips. Motivation measuring allows identifying and categorizing tourists, also to understand and analyze trips patterns (Fodness, 1994).

Is not possible to make future decisions in marketing and promotion plans without evaluating what motivates tourists to travel and how those strengths influence their involvement on buying decision. So, it is our main goal to develop a model for measuring the importance and the influence of motivations on tourist buying involvement in an international context.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Tourists are becoming more demanding in their travel behavior, which makes its study more complex. Also, the process of purchasing tourism products has some peculiarities (Gursoy & Gavcar, 2003): consumers buy and consume the products outside the places where they live (Sirakaya et al., 1996); the decision-making process used is longer than in much of the tangible products (Gursoy & Gavcar, 2003); more often tourists don't receive anything tangible in return for their investment (Seabra et al., 2007); tourists deal with a high level of perceived risk due to their personal investment of time, effort and money (Teare, 1990); consumers plan and save money over a long period of time to be able to travel (Moutinho, 1987), which leads them to have a greater level of involvement in the decision making, selection and purchase of such products (Gursoy & Gavcar, 2003).

The purchase of tourism products requires high involvement in the decision making process (Swarbrooke & Horner, 1999), which makes involvement a central issue to understand and explain the buying and consumption of tourism products. Tourists individual features are important variables influencing involvement with buying and decision process (Hawkins et al., 1995), namely motivations.

### Tourism Motivations

Tourist motivation can be defined as "the global integrating network of biological and cultural forces which gives value and direction to travel choices, behavior and experience" (Pearce et al., 1998). Past research establishes that individuals are guided by socio-psychological motivations

variables into making travel decisions (Sirakaya & Woodside, 2005). Travel motivation relates to why people travel (Hsu & Huang, 2008) and are an important issue in explain tourist behavior because they are the starting points of the travel decision and destination choice processes (Crompton & McKay, 1997).

Travelling motivations can be divided in three major groups: knowledge, cultural and education motivations (Formica & Uysal 1996; Ryan & Glendon, 1998); social motivations (Fodness, 1994); and benefits seeking, this is escape from the daily life and sensation seeking (Mitchell, 1998).

One particular reason for people travelling to other countries is to seek different experiences or lifestyles that they cannot obtain from their usual environment (Uysal & Hagan, 1993). The contact with different environments, places and people, which is an inherent characteristic of tourism, allows a strong experience of learning (Formica & Uysal, 1996), by developing and enhancing knowledge and exploring new things and places (Fodness, 1994; Ryan & Glendon, 1998, Silva, Abrantes & Lages, 2009). Many tourists seek the unknown of each place (Lee & Crompton, 1992), they travel in order to learn something new and to see beautiful objects (Hsu & Huang 2008).

Tourism is a social phenomenon that also allows people to develop social interaction, to satisfy social acceptance, approval and integration needs. In tourism, the need for affiliation is often manifested in terms of need for social experience like meeting new people and having good times with others, friends and family. Tourism is a form of intercultural meeting and interaction (Ward et al., 2001). Therefore, social motivations are related with the internal needs that tourists have for social interaction by being entertained (Ryan & Glendon, 1998) and meeting different people (Ray & Ryder, 2003), building friendships and developing close relationships (Kim & Lee, 2002). This refers to social motives stimulating individuals to participate in activities that would satisfy also their desire of belonging according with the need for belongingness in Maslow's theory of needs (Ryan & Gledon, 1998).

On the 80's arises a new stream of studies in the research on motivations in tourism, travel, leisure and recreation: the benefits sought. This current research argues that tourist behavior are mostly motivated by the benefits they can offer. Thus, travel behavior is understood as a reward in itself, such as the activities associated with it (Mitchell, 1998).

Tourists experience the inherent need to relax when on holiday because "tourism is essentially a temporary reversal of everyday activities - it is a no-work, no-care, no-thrift situation" (Cohen, 1979, p.181). Relaxation represents a central distinguishing motivational theme (Beard & Ragheb, 1983; Kozac, 2002) and Crompton (1977) referred to it as "escaping from everyday environment". Relaxation

and getting away from routine life are the first two psychological reasons for taking a vacation (Krippendorf, 1987). In fact, tourists are motivated to travel in order to escape from their everyday life (Crompton, 1977; Hsu & Huang 2008) and to rest and relax physically and mentally (Goeldner et al., 2003).

On the other hand, one of the most attractive tourism characteristics is the ability to provide different and intense experiences. Tourism is an experimental phenomenon (Botterill & Crompton, 1996; Frochot & Morrison, 2000) where experiences are sought in relation to feelings of motivation (den Breejen, 2007). There is a new generation of travelers emerging. Instead of a tourist, the traveler has become a searcher – pleasure and sensation seeker (Moutinho, 2000). A sensation seeker is seen as a person who needs varied, novel, and complex sensations and experiences to maintain an optimal level of arousal (Zuckerman, 1979). Sensation seeking is therefore a tourism motivation which is “a trait defined by the seeking of varied, novel, complex and intense sensations and experiences, and the willingness to take physical, social, legal and financial risks for the sake of such experience” (Zuckerman 1994, p. 27). Thus, sensation seeking motivations include novelty seeking (Crompton, 1979; Rowland et al., 1986), challenge abilities (Andersson, 2007), use imagination and physical skills in sport (Ryan & Glendon, 1998).

In this study we consider four main motivations: (1) knowledge, (2) relaxation, (3) sensation-seeking and (4) social motivations (Fodness, 1994; Moutinho 1987; Ryan & Glendon, 1998).

### **Involvement**

Involvement is the degree in which consumers are committed in different aspects of the process of consumption: product, demand for information, decision making and the purchase (Broderick & Mueller, 1999; Zaichkowsky, 1985). It is the basis of the purchase decision (Zaichkowsky, 1986a) and affects profoundly the perceived value of products and its evaluation (Bolton & Drew, 1991).

Involvement in tourism was defined as “a psychological state of motivation, arousal and interest between an individual and a recreation activity, tourist destination, or related equipment at any given time, characterized by the perception of the following elements: importance, pleasure value, symbolic value, probability risk and consequences of risk” (Havitz & Dimanche, 1990, p.180).

The same authors later proposed another simpler definition: involvement as the unobserved state of motivation, arousal and interest in respect of a recreational activity or associated product. It is evoked by a particular stimulus or situation. Therefore, involvement refers to what tourists think about leisure and recreation and that affects their behavior (Havitz & Dimanche, 1997).

Tourist products are highly engaging due to their intangibility and inseparability (Swarbrooke & Horner, 1999). And

when consumers are involved, they give attention, perceive the importance and behave in a different way than when they are not (Zaichkowsky, 1986b). Involvement is related to all stages of purchase, from the pre-purchase standards to the subsequent evaluations (Shaffer & Sherrel, 1997).

Involvement is a set of stages, all related from the involvement with the product to its evaluation:

- Involvement in pre-purchase or with the generic product: involvement occurs at the individual level and results from the interaction with products (Zaichkowsky, 1985). The focus in this research area relies on the relevance or importance that a product has for consumers, particularly the relevance that products have to the consumers’ needs and values (Zaichkowsky, 1986a).
- Involvement with the decision to purchase the product: is the commitment to the decisions regarding the purchase or simply with the buying act. It is conceptualized as the behavior that occurs when the consumer faces the situation of acquisition or consuming as personally relevant or important. When the buying is considered as important, consumers will spend more efforts to obtain information in order to reduce uncertainty (Zaichkowsky, 1986b). Tourists use various amounts and types of information sources in response to internal and external contingencies to facilitate trip planning decisions for primary and secondary decisions (Fodness & Murray, 1997).
- Involvement with the products’ consumption: tourism involvement level can be faced from the perspective of affection, in that it can be defined as “the intensity level of interest or motivation” (Ratchford & Vaughn, 1989, p.28) with a specific tourism product and with certain consequences. This perspective assumes that involvement can be measured, directly or indirectly, by its consequences (Lehto et al., 2004).
- Involvement in product evaluation or post-purchase: involvement is strongly correlated with the product evaluation activities. Several empirical studies have confirmed the influence of involvement in the processes of post-purchase. If the consumer is highly involved, products are evaluated in a deeper way (Richins & Bloch, 1991). The overall assessment in the post-purchase tourist experience includes the experience of travel or duration of stay, the perceived quality, perceived value and overall satisfaction with the intentions of future behavior (Bolton & Drew, 1991).

In this study the concept of involvement is considered in all stages of the tourist buying process, according to the Theory of Information Processing (Bettman et al., 1998) where the process is understood as an optimal alternative individual choice by a series of rational steps (Chen, 1997), from the pre-purchase stage, through the decision, consumption and to evaluation or post-purchase.

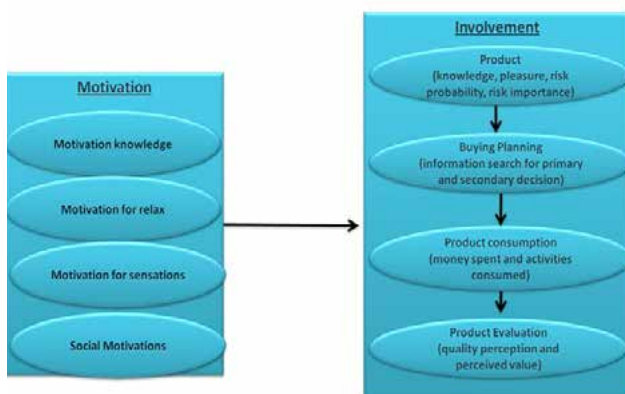
### 3. CONCEPTUAL MODEL

Involvement and motivation are very close concepts since involvement is defined as interest in something or like a motivational state. Involvement is a motivational state observably induced by an association between an activated attitude and the consumer ego concept. It is considered as an intermediate step in the explanation of the relationship between consumers' individual characteristics and behaviors (Bloch, 1982).

Consumers' specific characteristics are considered as background to the consumer involvement. The individuals' system of values, experiences and motivations determine their greater or lesser degree of involvement with a product (Zaichkowsky, 1986b). Involvement with a particular product or class of products relates strongly with motivational aspects related to the purchase (Dholakia, 2001).

In line with the above we propose the following model:

Figure 1: Conceptual Model



### 4. METHODOLOGY

The research setting refers to a survey approach, applied in three European countries – Portugal, Spain and Italy –, in an international tourism context, more specifically in an international air travelling context.

#### Sample and data collection

The final data was collected from January 2009 to March 2009. Tourists were randomly selected in loco across 3 international airports: Madrid/Barajas, Lisbon/Portela and Milan/Malpensa, from those agreeing to participate in the study. However, only tourists who had undertaken an international trip were interviewed. The questionnaires were self-administrated, which allowed us to ensure that the data was not biased. We obtained a final sample of 613 questionnaires and a total of 600 valid ones, equally divided among the 3 international airports.

#### Measures

We sourced measures from the literature and adapted them to the current research context (see Churchill, 1979).

Constructs were first order, and we measured them with multi-item scales.

To measure the motivation to travel respondents were asked to rate the importance of several types of motivation from four dimensions: Motivation to Knowledge, Motivation for Relax, Motivation for Sensations and Social Motivation. We used scales adapted from Beard and Ragheb (1983), Fodness (1994), Goossens (2000) and Ryan and Glendon (1998).

Involvement, as explained before, was considered in four different facets.

- Involvement in pre-purchase or with the generic product. Respondents rated their level of agreement with statements regarding their knowledge, pleasure/interest, risk probability and importance attributed to and prestige related with tourism products, namely travelling (adapted from Park et al., 1994 and Gursoy & Gavcar, 2003).
- Involvement with the decision to purchase the product. We considered involvement with the decision to purchase the product in terms of information that tourists sought for preparing the trip. So, respondents had to classify the importance of several information sources to take the primary and secondary trip decisions. This scale is composed of 13 items regarding personal sources, marketing communication sources, neutral and experience information sources and were adapted from Assael (1998), Fodness and Murray (1998) and Seabra et al., (2007).
- Involvement with the product's consumption. As far as tourism product consumption is concerned, we considered the money tourists spent with many items during their trip. Also the activities that tourists engaged in during their trip were considered (Lehto et al., 2004).
- Involvement in product evaluation or post-purchase. Respondents had to rate their quality perception regarding four specific items of their trip namely hospitality, attractions, transportation and infra-structures (Chen & Tsai, 2007). The perceived value was the other scale used to measure involvement with evaluation (Bolton & Drew, 1991)

#### Survey instrument development

After selecting the scales from the literature, they were discussed with experts. The initial scales were translated into three languages: Portuguese, Spanish and German and then the instrument was back-translated to English. After revision, we used a pre-test sample of 30 international travellers in order to test the scales' reliability (through Cronbach's alpha). The pre-test results were used to further refine the questionnaire.

#### Data profile

Tourists in this study sample were from 41 countries, from all over the world. The sample was mainly composed of

men (56%), with ages mostly under 35 years (56%). Approximately 74% had university education, 22% were middle and senior management, 20% were businessmen, about 19% were freelancers/self-employed and 15% students. The average income ranged from 2000 to 3000 Euros per month. The sample was mainly composed of frequent travellers, who had undertaken, on an average, seven international trips in the last three years, lasting nine days each. There was a relatively high degree of familiarity with the destination visited; since tourists had in average visited the destination 3.5 times before. Each tourist used, on the average, 15 days to plan the trip, and referred to reservations planning with a period of 25 days in advance.

## 5. DATA ANALYSIS

To refine the measures and assess the reliability and validity of the constructs, the items were subjected to an exploratory factor analysis followed by a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), using full-information maximum likelihood estimation procedures in LISREL 8.8 (Jöreskog & Sörbom 1996).

### Measurement model

To assess the adequacy of the measurement model, we examined initially the Cronbach's alphas from each construct of the conceptual model. In result, several factors were eliminated were not included in the measurement because they presented alphas less than .65 and / or for revealing no significant values when tested to incorporate the final model.

We also examined individual item reliabilities, convergent validity, and discriminant validity (see Appendix A). We assessed item reliabilities by examining the loadings of the individual items in the respective constructs.

In this model, each item is restricted to load on its priori specified factor, with the factors themselves allowed to correlate with one another. The overall chi-square for the model is significant ( $\chi^2=213.69$ ,  $df=59$ ,  $p<0.00$ ). Four measures of fit were examined: the comparative fit index (CFI=.96), the incremental fit index (IFI=.96), the Tucker-Lewis fit index (TLI=.95), and the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA=.066). The results suggest that the scale measures are internally consistent, able to provide a good fit of the factor model to the data.

Internal consistency was evidenced by composite validity ( $\rho$ ) (Bagozzi, 1980). All the constructs passed the minimal acceptable values of .7 (Nunnally, 1978) and are valid presenting internal consistency above .80 and Cronbach's alphas of .80. Convergent validity is evidenced by the large and significant standardized loadings of each item on its intended construct (average loading size was .78). Discriminant validity among the constructs is stringently assessed using the Fornell & Larcker (1981) test; all possible pairs of constructs passed this test. Appendix A presents all the constructs, scale items and reliabilities.

Discriminant validity was assessed by observing the construct intercorrelations. The root of AVE for each construct was compared with the shared variance between constructs. The square root of the AVE should be greater than the correlation between a construct and any other construct (Chin, 1998). Table 1 provides an overview of the means, standard deviations, and correlation matrix among the constructs. Adequate discriminant validity is evident since the square root of AVE between any two constructs (diagonal) is greater than the correlation between those constructs (off-diagonal).

**Table 1.** Means, standard deviations, and correlations among constructs<sup>a,b</sup>

Construct	Mean	Standard deviation	1	2	3	4
1. Motivation to relax	4.86	1.38	<b>0.77</b>			
2. Involvement with the pleasure to travel	5.20	1.40	0.43	<b>0.82</b>		
3. Involvement with the trip planning	2.05	1.15	0.18	0.16	<b>0.78</b>	
4. Trip evaluation involvement	4.85	1.30	0.13	0.22	0.15	<b>0.76</b>

<sup>a</sup> All correlations are significant at the 0.05 level.

<sup>b</sup> The diagonal (in bold) shows the square roots of the average variance extracted.

### Structural equation model

The conceptual framework depicted in Fig. 1 was tested using structural equation modeling. Specifically, this model contains four constructs, 13 observable indicators, measurement and latent variable errors, and inter-correlations between the latent constructs. The results suggest a good fit of the model to the data ( $\chi^2=216.15$ ,  $df=61$ ,  $p<0.00$ , CFI=.96, IFI=.96, TLI=.95, RMSEA=.065).

The hypotheses defined in the conceptual model that linked those eliminated constructs presenting low Cronbach's alphas and not included in the measurement model were not tested (H1a, H1c; H3). The hypotheses relating the constructs fixed in the CFA model were tested. The following are the results (see Figure 2 and Table 2) through measures of standardized coefficients and t-values.

Figure 2: Final Model

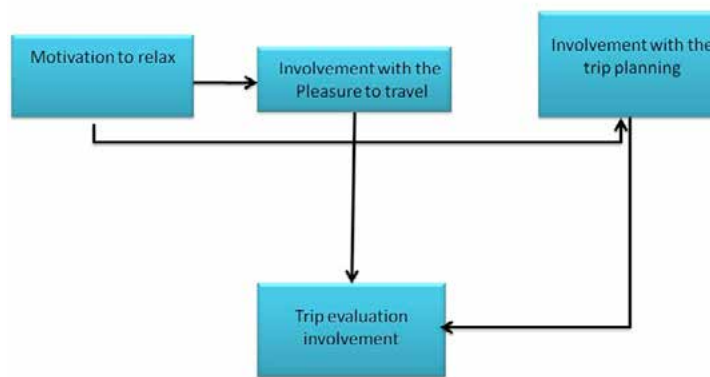


Table 2. Testing results

Causal path	Standardized loading (t-value)
Motivation to relax → Involvement with the pleasure to travel	0.43 (9.23**)
Motivation to relax → Involvement with the trip planning	0.19 (3.72**)
Involvement with the pleasure to travel → Trip evaluation involvement	0.21 (4.35**)
Involvement with the trip planning → Trip evaluation involvement	0.12 (2.43*)

\*\*p<0.01, \*p<0.05

## 6. DISCUSSION

In this work we undertook a literature revision of two important concepts in tourism study: motivation and involvement, namely in natural areas study.

Results indicate that motivations are effectively related with involvement. Also, involvement can be related with some phases of consumer behavior decision.

Motivation to relax influences involvement with the pleasure to travel and with the trip planning. Motivation to relax implies personal involvement with the product in the pleasure dimension. When tourists travel motivated to relax, they face the tourism product as a gift that they buy with careful implying extra efforts in the planning stage namely searching for information. Relaxation is an important motivation that leads tourists to prepare and plan their trips in a more committed way. Tourists that want to relax mental and physically, to avoid the hustle and bustle of daily life, and to be in a calm atmosphere are more involved with the pleasure to travel and with the trip planning.

Tourists motivation to relax influence positively their search for information in sites like travel clubs, books, magazines, reports in TV, radio, press, and in welcome centers. In this circumstances tourists experiment more pleasure when they buy a vacation to them, it is to like buy a personal gift. Involvement with the pleasure to travel contributes positively to the trip evaluation involvement. When tourists

are involved with tourism products and when they faced them as something with great meaning to them, they will be more critical in evaluation.

The results confirmed also the significant relationship between involvement with the trip planning and trip evaluation involvement. When tourists prepare their trips in an extensive way, they create high expectations. So, they will be more involved in the trip evaluation. Specifically, those related with general infrastructures, travel information, and with local signs and indicators.

Therefore, the selection of a strategy for tourism depends on how tourists connect with products and destinations. It is expected that through the understanding of how motivation and involvement are connected, tourism organizations may better understand the type of connection that tourists establish with tourism and what its impact on tourists' decision making. They may, as a consequence, use a framework to develop and implement strategies to increase the value associated with destinations and their services. These results may provide some guidance on how to better pursue an information-oriented business strategy. By identifying tourists' levels connection with tourism it becomes possible to make choices regarding the best marketing strategies to address, such as identifying different market segments and corresponding differentiated strategies, or improving the destination's positioning.

Finally, the model developed here can be an important basis for the segmentation of a tourist market.

There are some limitations of the research to be considered. The first limitation is linked to the characteristics of the sample, which may restrict the generalization of the results to a certain extent. We include travelers that used only three European airports. Future studies with larger samples could

allow for a comparison between tourists from different regions of the world, using multi-groups methodology.

Moreover, we need further research on the antecedents of motivation to relax and consequences of trip evaluation involvement, namely intention to buy. We also suggest the implementation of the conceptual model to other services and other regions.

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