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The tourist experience: Exploring the relationship between tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty

Abstract

Previous studies show that the quality of the tourist experience is affected by a large set of factors, many of which not directly related to the acquisition of specific products or services. Research also shows that tourist satisfaction is a determinant of destination loyalty. This study explores this topic by empirically analysing how the relationship between the satisfaction with the tourist experience and destination loyalty is affected by personal factors, such as socio-demographic characteristics and travelling motivations. This study is based on a small region representing an important destination in Algarve, Portugal, and uses data from a survey conducted on tourists of different nationalities during peak season. We identify the reasons leading to dissatisfaction with the tourism experience and, based on structural equation modelling, ascertain the relationship between satisfaction levels with the tourism experience and tourist destination loyalty. Then, a multiple group analysis provides a detailed overview of this relationship by establishing in which groups of tourists the relatedness between satisfaction and destination loyalty is stronger or weaker. In this sense, this study provides an important backdrop for destination managers looking to offer more effective and targeted marketing strategies.

Keywords:

tourism experience; satisfaction; destination loyalty; structural equation modelling; multiple group analysis; Portugal

Introduction

In the context of globalisation and increasing competition between organisations and tourism destinations, it is important to find out ways to differentiate specific and composite products in order to be successful. Fostering competitiveness in a tourism destination has, as one of its dimensions, the adoption of the quality approach in order to meet the balance between expectations, needs and wishes of both tourists and stakeholders that comprise the tourism system.

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These concerns have led Destinations Management Organisations to take on different challenges. These challenges imply developing a new vision regarding the operation of the tourism system and the adoption of new management paradigms that look to achieve a high level of satisfaction from all parts, both at the organisational and destination levels. In this, understanding tourism experience, based on the identification of perceptions and emotions experienced by tourists and visitors during their stay, surfaces as a central issue in terms of supply and positioning of tourism destinations to potential segments.

Although there has been considerable theoretical reflection on this issue, few empirical studies are available. One of the reasons for these results may lay in the multidimensional, complex and highly diversified construct that tourism experience represents. Another reason is related to the fact that supporting constructs, namely satisfaction, quality and value, continue to be relatively ambiguous and not always object of an integrated vision and research. Analysing the quality of the tourism experience and identifying aspects that partnerships and different tourism stakeholders need to consider to increase product competitiveness constitutes the overall objective of this study.

Theoretical background

The experience of leisure and tourism has been described as "a subjective mental state felt by participants" (Otto, & Ritchie, 1996, p. 166). While products are tangible and services intangible, experiences represent events that commit people in a particular manner and, as such, are memorable. While services end with the performance, the value of the experience is cognitively stored by the individual. The experience felt by visitors begins before arrival at a destination and ends with recollections of the experience and plans for future visits (Pine, & Gilmore, 1999).

For consumers, perception of their experience is built from many social interactions (get-togethers, social gatherings), an array of services and chain of events, rather than based on the specific products or isolated services. It is clear that tourists inevitably consume a composite or holistic tourism experience, which integrates the value of the entire service chain. Regardless of specific quality assessments and perceptions, tourists evaluate the tourism experience as a whole. This suggests that what is consumed and evaluated in a holistic way must also be produced and managed holistically (Fayos-Solá, & Moro, 1995; Weiermair, 2000).

The process by which tourists perceive, consume and remember an experience of a destination is complex and multifaceted because of the large number of actors involved in providing that experience (Uriely, 2005). Consequently, the overall experience of destination is derived from the tourism experience, separated by time and space, from initial departure to the return home. At a conceptual level, the experience of the tourist consists of a continuous flux of related and integrated services which are acquired during a limited period of time, often in different geographical areas. The majority of businesses that supply tourism products or services tend to provide package deals, which include a mix of physical items, services, interactive experiences and images.

A package is the total sum of goods, services and processes that a tourist receives at different stages and retains in memory in terms of tourism experience. Increasingly, the way packages are conceived and carried out influences the tourist experience at the destination (Albrecht, & Zemke, 2002; Ritchie, & Crouch, 1997).

Research in service marketing recognises that, although the performance of services is supported by deliverables, in the case of tourism, what is purchased or acquired by tourists is the experience; that is, a vast set of interactive interpersonal processes that result from the various contacts that are established between providers and tourists during their stay (Frochot, & Hughes, 2000; Ritchie, & Crouch, 2000; Weiermair, 2000).

The experience is affected by a large set of factors, many of which are not directly related to the acquisition of a specific service. It is the combination of inherent factors and associated satisfaction in terms of acquired and consumed services during the holistic tourism experience which determines the overall satisfaction level of tourists. The quality of the experience is generally recognised as more subjective in nature as opposed to the quality of services, which is often more objective. This broader concept and the wider temporal horizon of the "quality of experience" context highlights the hedonistic relational component that visitors establish with the tourism destinations (Ritchie, & Crouch, 1997).

During their stay, tourists consume not only reality but also representations and symbols of reality; supporting what Lutz and Ryan (1993, p. 356) define as the emergence of "consumption aesthetics". In this sense, "the emotions and confusions they reveal are themselves part of the phenomenon called tourism, and attempts to attribute rationalism to the tourist experience may mislead our understanding of tourist motivation and behaviour" (Ryan, 1995, p. 215). The paradigm of experimental vision analyses the consumption of the experience as "…a primarily subjective state of consciousness with a variety of symbolic meanings, hedonic responses and aesthetic criteria (...) focused on each individual's affective responses including (but not limited to) fantasies, feeling and fun" (Otto, & Ritchie, 1995, p. 38).

Tourists expect to obtain operational and symbolic benefits as well as life experiences through the activities and services that comprise the tourism experience. Indeed, all tourism experience represents a continuum of reality, capable of achieving quality when reality co-occurs with consumer expectations. However, consumers are different and hold different expectations, making the concept of quality a relative attribute. There is not a single quality, but several qualities for different market segments (Vega, Casielles, & Martín, 1995).

According to Yu and Goulden (2006, p. 3) "understanding tourist's levels of satisfaction with and reaction to their experience in the destination is thus essential to destination managers for improving products and services, and effectively promoting to target markets for new and repeat tourists." Satisfaction may be defined as "a judgment that

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a product or service feature, or the product or service itself, provides a pleasurable level of consumption-related fulfilment" (Oliver, 1997, p. 13). On the other hand, MacKay and Crompton (1990, p. 48) define satisfaction in a similar way by focusing on the "psychological outcome which emerges from experiencing the service". Although there are many definitions of satisfaction it is frequently perceived from a cognitive perspective, that is, as a post-purchase construct that is related to how much a consumer likes or dislikes a service or product after having experienced it (Fornell, 1992; Gundersen, Heide, & Olsson, 1996). According to recent research in the tourism area, satisfaction is understood as "an individual's cognitive-affective state derived from a tourist experience" (Bosque, & Martín, 2008). This state result from the judgments and emotions developed during the tourist experience (Bigné, & Gnoth, 2005).

The amount of research which has been developed to measure tourist satisfaction of destinations has increased over the past decade (Bramwell, 1998; Danaherm & Arweiler, 1996; Kozakm & Rimmington, 2000; Pizam, Newman, & Reichel, 1978; Rodríguez del Bosque, & San Martín, 2008; Qu, & Li, 1997). Tourist satisfaction is important for a destination to be regarded as successful because it influences the choice of destination, the consumption of products and services, and the decision to return (Kozac, & Rimmington, 2000). Satisfied tourists tend to communicate their positive experience to others (word of mouth) and tend to purchase the product repeatedly (Beeho, & Prentice, 1997; Bigné et al., 2005; Hallowell, 1996; Kozac, & Rimmington 2000; Lee, & Lee, 2005; Pizam, 1994; Ross, 1993). Overall, previous studies reveal that customer loyalty is influenced by customer satisfaction (Bitner, 1990; Bosque, & Marín, 2008; Dick, & Basu, 1994; Gallarza, & Saura, 2006; Oliver, 1999; Yoon, & Uysal, 2005), and satisfaction is affected by travel motivation (Bramwell, 1998; Mannel, & Iso-Ahola, 1987; Ross, & Iso-Ahola, 1991; Yoon, & Uysal, 2005). The tourism literature also shows that personal variables such as socio-demographic characteristics and travel motivations can influence travel decisions (Gnoth, 1997; Yoon, & Uysal, 2005; Um, & Crompton, 1992; Weaver et al., 1994; Zimmer, Brayley, & Searle, 1995).

The importance of satisfaction/dissatisfaction of consumers arises from the assumed impact of repeat purchase behaviour and brand loyalty. In marketing and tourism analyses, repeat visits have generally been regarded as desirable (Oppermann, 2000) because, among other things, it is thought, first, that the marketing costs needed to attract repeaters are lower than those required for first-time tourists; second, a return is a positive indicator of one's satisfaction; third, an inertial attitude of high repeaters increases their likelihood to return (Chi, & Qu, 2008; Hong, Lee, Lee, & Jang, 2009).

Several studies have focused on the heterogeneous nature of tourism experiences that includes both cognitive (more tangible) and affective (more intangible) components (Urry, 1990; Botterill, & Crompton, 1996; Ryan, 2002). Therefore, the satisfaction with the tourism experience should be perceived as a comprehensive concept and assessed by the feeling of enjoyment with the destination's different attributes (the various aspects of the destination) as well as by the overall feeling (gratification or displea-

sure) about the experience (Reisinger, & Turner, 2003; Chen, & Chen, 2010; Alegre, & Garau, 2010).

While analysing the quality of the tourism experience in the tourists' perspective represents the overall purpose of this paper, the specific objectives are threefold. Firstly, this study intends to assess the tourists' perceptions about the destination attributes, to compare them with satisfaction felt in terms of the same attributes and to provide an overall assessment of tourism experience.

Secondly, this paper establishes the relationship between tourist satisfaction with the tourism experience and destination loyalty and explores this relationship by identifying personal mediator variables in the connection between these constructs. The personal variables considered are socio-demographic characteristics (age, education and nationality) and motivations regarding the destination choice (socialization, health, business and leisure). Specifically, this study tests whether or nor the relationship between satisfaction with the tourism experience and destination loyalty is equally strong in all socio-demographic groups. Accordingly, the following research hypotheses are formulated:

- Hypothesis 1 *(H1)*: The relationship between tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty is different according to age of tourist.

- Hypothesis 2 *(H2)*: The relationship between tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty is different according to level of education of tourist.

- Hypothesis 3 *(H3)*: The relationship between tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty is different according to nationality of tourist (foreigner tourists versus Portuguese tourists).

- Hypothesis 4 *(H4)*: The relationship between tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty is different whether the tourist's main motivation to travel is related to social activity or not.

- Hypothesis 5 (H5*)*: The relationship between tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty is different whether the tourist's main motivation to travel is related to health or not.

- Hypothesis 6 *(H6)*: The relationship between tourist and destination loyalty is different whether the tourist's main motivation to travel is related to business or not.

- Hypothesis 7 *(H7)*: The relationship between tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty is different whether the tourist's main motivation to travel is related to leisure or not.

Research design

CONTEXT

This study is conducted in Algarve – the southernmost region of mainland Portugal and the main Portuguese tourism destination. It consists of sixteen municipalities of which this study focuses on a sub-region ARADE, formed by four neighbouring councils: Lagoa, Monchique, Portimão and Silves (Figure 1). In a dynamic joint effort

by these councils, through public-private partnerships (four town councils and twenty-three private organisations), a venture was undertaken to collectively promote the region as a tourism product in order to reverse signs of weakening competitiveness. With the ARADE River as the main agglutinating element, and comprising an area of about 30% of the Algarve province, the sub-region holds 30% of the local population and about 25% of the Algarve tourism supply.

Figure 1
ALGARVE AND ARADE MAP

| | Monchique | | Lagoa | | Silves | | Portimão |
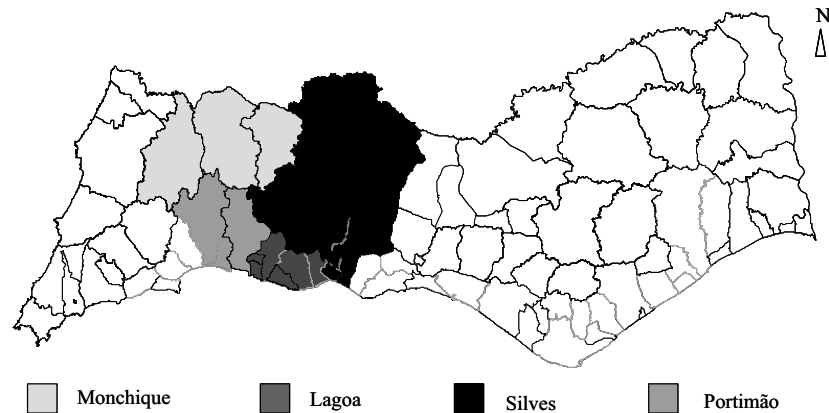
In terms of the main tourism products of this sub-region, it should be highlighted that Portimão and Lagoa, being located on the coast, represent a place of sun and beach tourism. Monchique and Silves, on the other hand, are interior regions and rely on nature and historical-cultural heritage as its main tourism assets.

QUESTIONNAIRE
The questionnaire consisted of five parts, containing mostly close-ended questions. The first part contained a set of questions that look to capture general information regarding travel and stay. In this sense, this part includes questions about the locations and type of accommodation, length of stay, repeat visits to ARADE and Algarve, the main sources of information used to decide on destination, the motivations, the places visited and the transport used. The second part included a list of thirty attributes relating to the tourist experience. These attribute were measured through the Likert-type scale ranging from 1 – totally irrelevant to 5 – extremely important. In the third part, the degree of tourist satisfaction was assessed according to the thirty attributes previously listed. In this case, the scale of answers ranged from 1 – very unsatisfied to 5 – very satisfied.

In the final section of the questionnaire, a general assessment of the tourist experience undergone at the ARADE tourism destination was asked. Besides close-ended questions, we also included an open-ended question in order to provide a space for respondents to articulate their opinion freely in terms of their stay in ARADE. In addition to the questions related to the degree of overall satisfaction with the experience, respon-

dents were asked about return intentions, recommendation intentions and unfulfilled expectations (expectation measures) at the destination. Finally, questions aimed at determining socio-demographic characteristics of the respondent were included. The questionnaire was provided in Portuguese, English and Spanish.

SAMPLING METHODS

All tourists staying in the ARADE region during July and August 2004 were defined as the population for this survey. A quota sample method was used. The number of tourists for each quota was proportionally defined according to the type of target tourist population (Portuguese tourist versus foreign tourists) and also in terms of distribution according to the councils under analysis. For defining quotas, data from INE (2003) were used in terms of guests in hotel establishments, lodgings and tourist apartments for 2002.

In total, 486 surveys were completed through personal interviews during the months of July and August 2004, based on the structured questionnaire described above. The interviewers were proficient in at least one foreign language. Respondents were divided almost equally by gender (female 53.6%; male: 46.4%), 50% belonged to the 25-44 age category and 30.9% were older than 45. About 6% of the respondents possessed elementary educational qualification and about 50% had a college degree. Almost ¾ of the respondents were foreigner, of which 45% were from the UK.

DATA ANALYSIS

In a first stage, statistical treatment relied on descriptive statistics regarding the variables measuring importance and satisfaction with the tourism experience. Then, a structural equation modelling approach (using the Package AMOS 6) was used to explore the relationship between satisfaction and destination loyalty, as specified by the hypotheses defined at the end of the literature review. To test the role of socio-demographic factors and motivation in the overall satisfaction and destination loyalty, multiple group analyses was used, also available in AMOS.

In the multiple group analysis, the sample covariance matrix for each group is correspondingly compared with the implied covariance matrix. This evaluation is equally performed for all groups of two different models: the model that allows all parameters to be different among the groups (also referred to as the unrestricted model) and the model which establishes that some (or all) parameters are equal for the groups (also called the restricted model). The closer the two matrices are for all groups for both analyses, the better the fit for the corresponding model. Each of these analyses provides a chi-square statistics for all groups. The statistical significance of the difference in the chi-squares of the two models, which is in itself a chi-square statistic, indicates whether the imposed constraints should be rejected or not. Therefore, the seven research hypotheses proposed were tested through the multiple group analyses.

VARIABLES AND MEASUREMENT

In order to carry out the multiple group analysis a simple path model linking the constructs *satisfaction with the tourist experience* and *destination loyalty* was firstly specified. In this model, the first construct was measured using two indicators or observed variables. The first indicator is *overall satisfaction (OS),* which captures the general perception of the tourist experience, and is measured using the Likert-type scale from 1 (very unsatisfied) to 5 (very satisfied); the second indicator, named *attribute satisfaction (AS),* results from the evaluation of the diverse elements that compose the tourist offer and is measured as an average of the satisfaction level with thirty attributes associated with the tourist experience. Attribute satisfaction is measured with the same five-point Likert-type satisfaction scale.

The second construct, destination loyalty, is measured using two indicators: *revisit intentions (RI)* and *willingness to recommend (WR)* the destination to friends and family. In both cases, the same three-point scale was used ((1 = no, 2 = maybe, 3 = yes).

Results

OVERALL ASSESSMENT OF TOURISM EXPERIENCE

In order to understand the value that tourists assign to a combination of attributes of a tourist destination, a set of questions aimed at measuring the degree of importance of the tourist experience in the region was included. These attributes were also evaluated in terms of satisfaction. Table 1 reports the main results of these analyses.

The median level of importance assigned to the set of attributes with the exception of *spas*, varied between 3 (reasonably important) and 4 (important), with *restaurants, landscape, authenticity, beaches, cleanliness, competence and courtesy, public safety, food,* and *lodging* representing greater importance. Median satisfaction, in turn, is mostly concentrated around the value 4 (satisfied). Exception are *beaches* (median = 5) and *traffic* and *urban planning* (median = 2). The last column of Table 1 also shows that the majority of respondents are satisfied or very satisfied with most of the attributes. However, higher levels of satisfaction were verified on items such as *restaurants, lodging, competence and courtesy, landscape, hospitality* and *beaches*. In terms of these attributes, the percentage of responses at the levels 4 (satisfied) and 5 (very satisfied) strongly exceed the average overall percentage in these levels (69.3%). Contrarily, the attributes *urban planning, traffic, accessibilities, parking* and *traffic signs* registered low satisfaction levels, clearly exceeding the average overall percentage at the levels 1 (very unsatisfied) and 2 (unsatisfied) (9.7%). Special concern should be devoted to *traffic signs* and *parking* in which median attribute satisfaction is lower than median attribute importance.

When asked about whether respondents expected to find something that, at the end, they did not find, 83.6% of respondents said *no*. This aspect constitutes an overall satisfaction indicator of initial expectations of visit for the majority of those interviewed. However, we should not ignore the fact that 16.4% of tourists expected more from their visit.

Table 1
DEGREE OF ATTRIBUTE IMPORTANCE AND SATISFACTION – SUMMARY

Attributes	Median		% in categories 1 and 2 (low importance/ satisfaction)		% in categories 3 and 4 (high importance/ satisfaction)	
	Impor-tance	Satis-faction	Impor-tance	Satis-faction	Impor-tance	Satis-faction
Beaches	4	5	8.3%	2.8%	68.3%	93.7%
Spas	2	4	74.2%	6.1%	10.3%	62.1%
Hospitality	4	4	6.9%	5.7%	65.8%	81.7%
Authenticity	4	4	7.1%	6.3%	55.1%	77.9%
Accessibilities	4	4	8.3%	13.3%	68.3%	69.0%
Historical centres	3	4	74.2%	11.1%	10.3%	62.0%
Traffic	4	4	6.9%	21.7%	65.8%	54.3%
Means of transportation	3	4	7.1%	11.9%	55.1%	64.0%
Sporting facilities	3	4	10.5%	6.4%	51.7%	63.8%
Landscape	4	4	23.7%	6.3%	36.2%	79.2%
Monuments	3	4	24.5%	8.5%	39.2%	57.0%
Urban planning	3	3	26.8%	19.4%	32.1%	47.7%
Restaurants	4	4	43.1%	6.6%	26.8%	83.2%
Traditional architecture	3	4	8.1%	9.6%	58.0%	58.1%
Animation	4	4	31.1%	4.8%	32.8%	75.4%
Lodging	4	4	28.0%	4.6%	36.0%	85.4%
Shopping areas	3	4	8.9%	6.5%	65.8%	75.6%
Cultural events	3	4	26.5%	10.7%	34.4%	61.4%
Tourist information	3	4	20.2%	8.8%	50.0%	68.2%
Food	4	4	8.5%	4.5%	71.4%	85.8%
Leisure areas	4	4	22.4%	4.1%	41.4%	78.9%
Public safety	4	4	14.7%	4.9%	39.9%	75.1%
Gardens/green spaces	4	4	12.5%	11.5%	48.6%	67.3%
Pedestrian areas	3	4	8.7%	12.6%	64.3%	61.8%
Competence and courtesy	4	4	9.8%	6.5%	55.0%	81.1%
Parking	4	3	8.2%	23.0%	69.5%	54.0%
Water supply system	4	4	8.7%	8.5%	55.5%	75.2%
Waste collection system	4	4	17.4%	10.7%	47.9%	68.2%
Cleanliness	4	4	7.9%	14.5%	71.9%	63.7%
Traffic signs	4	3	21.4%	20.4%	47.9%	48.0%
Average overall	--------------	--------------	19.5%	9.7%	49.2%	69.3%

Similarly, this is reflected on the overall satisfaction level with the tourism experience. The majority of respondents were satisfied (57.4%) or very satisfied (30.5%) with the experience during their stay in the region. The main reasons indicated by dissatisfied respondents included: too much commerce, bad quality-price relation, urban chaos, lack of cleanliness of access routes to beaches, lack of professionalism of hotel personnel, excessive charge for parking and pollution.

Related to the general level of satisfaction in terms of type of tourist, we verified that foreign tourists were overall more visibly satisfied than the Portuguese tourists. A rather larger proportion of foreign respondents, 37.1%, was very satisfied while only 12.6% of Portuguese respondents felt this way. A statistically significant relationship was noted between the type of tourist and the level of satisfaction of tourism experience (chi-square independence test: $p = 0.000$).

Following the overall evaluation of the tourist experience, it is also important to analyse return intentions to ARADE. The findings obtained indicate that 94.6% of interviewed tourists considered returning in the future to the same place. More specifically, 51.6% of respondents indicated intentions of returning while 43% stated possible intentions of returning. Only 5.4% responded that they did not intend to revisit ARADE.

To complement this analysis, it is important to mention the statistically significant dependent relation between overall satisfaction with the tourism experience and return intentions (chi-square independence test: $p = 0.000$). The highest percentage of respondents that did not intend to return to ARADE was among tourists that were generally dissatisfied with the tourist experience. Equally, about 66% of unsatisfied respondents admitted having intentions of revisiting the ARADE destination. When asked about reasons for not wanting to return to ARADE, respondents referred to lack of leisure areas for children, depletion of traditional heritage, overly touristy, of little cultural interest, bad quality-price relation, urban chaos, noise pollution and high costs.

SATISFACTION AND DESTINATION LOYALTY

The model establishing the relationship between the latent variables *satisfaction with the tourism experience* (S) and *destination loyalty* (DL) was estimated and the most important findings are reported in Table 2. The first finding to note is that the chi-square statistics is non-statistically significant at 1% level ($p > 0.01$), suggesting that the model adequately fits the data. The other fit measures also indicate a good fit.

Table 2

RESULTS OF THE ESTIMATED MODEL

Model	Path	Parameter estimates and p-values	Fit analysis
Structural model	S –> DL	0.81 ($p = 0.00$)	Chi-square = 12.27 ($p = .013$); RMSR = .015; RMSEA = 0.071; AGFI = 0.93; NFI = 0.91; TLI = 0.87; IFI = 0.92; CFI = 0.94
Measurement model	OS –> S	0.69 ($p = 0.00$)	Construct reliability = 0.87
	AS –> S	0.68 ($p = 0.00$)	Variance extracted = 0.69
	RI –> DL	0.57 ($p = 0.00$)	Construct reliability = 0.82
	WR –> DL	0.85 ($p = 0.00$)	Variance extracted = 0.77

The results of the measurement model in terms of the constructs' reliability and variance extracted are also reported. These measures are higher than the advised levels of

0.7 and 0.5, respectively, for both *satisfaction with the tourism experience* and *destination loyalty*. Results also show significant standardized loadings for each indicator on the corresponding constructs ($p = 0.00$). Another important result regards the structural model where a high and significant loading between the two constructs was found (lo-ading = 0.81; $p = 0.00$). This finding supports that satisfaction positively affects tourist loyalty intention.

Hypotheses *H1* to *H7* were tested through the multiple group function which AMOS incorporates. Table 3 reports the results from the simultaneous modelling of the relationship between *satisfaction with the tourism experience* and *destination loyalty* for each group. These results were then compared with those of a restricted model of similar form but with imposed restrictions that all groups share the same factor loadings (i.e., the coefficients of the measurement model) and the same regression weight of *satisfaction with the tourism experience* on *destination loyalty*. The third column of the Table shows the difference between the two models for each multiple group analysis. As can be observed, this difference is statistically significant for all cases ($p < 0.05$). Thus, the hypotheses of an invariant group pattern on the relationship between *satisfaction with the tourism experience* and *destination loyalty* is not supported, suggesting that the connection between these two constructs is mediated by socio-demographic characteristics and motivational factors.

In summary, *H1* to *H7* should not be rejected. By observing the regression weights in the second column of Table 3, other findings should also be noted: that the relationship between *satisfaction with the tourism experience* and *destination loyalty* is stronger among older tourists, tourists possessing higher education and Portuguese tourists. In addition, the association between the two constructs is also clearer among tourists that are mainly motivated by business and social reasons but weaker among those that visit the destination motivated by health or leisure needs. In other words, this type of analysis allows for the identification of two segments of tourists in terms of the relation between satisfaction and destination loyalty.

Table 3
RESULTS FROM THE MULTIPLE GROUP ANALYSES

Multiple group analysis	Regression weight of satisfaction with the tourism experience on destination loyalty	Chi-square difference and p-value	Comment
According to age category	Tourists younger than 37: 0.77	14.6 ($p = 0.01$)	*H1* is not rejected
	Tourists older than 37: 0.83		
According to educational level	Tourists with primary education: 0.72	12.1 ($p = 0.03$)	*H2* is not rejected
	Tourists with high school education: 0.64		
	Tourists with college education: 0.84		
According to nationality	Portuguese tourists: 0.81	12.5 ($p = 0.03$)	*H3* is not rejected
	Foreign tourists: 0.73		

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Table 3 **CONTINUED**

Multiple group analysis	Regression weight of satisfaction with the tourism experience on destination loyalty	Chi-square difference and p-value	Comment
According to main travel motive: "social"	Tourists mainly motivated by "social" motives: 0.77 Tourists not mainly motivated by "social" motives: 0.75	11.6 (p = 0.04)	*H4* is not rejected
According to main travel motive: "health"	Tourists mainly motivated by "health" motives: 0.75 Tourists not mainly motivated by "health" motives: 0.80	11.8 (p = 0.04)	*H5* is not rejected
According to main travel motive: "business"	Tourists mainly motivated by "business" motives: 0.82 Tourists not mainly motivated by "business" motives: 0.71	15.3 (p = 0.00)	*H6* is not rejected
According to main travel motive: "leisure"	Tourists mainly motivated by "leisure" motives: 0.76 Tourists not mainly motivated by "leisure" motives: 0.84	13.1 (p = 0.02)	*H7* is not rejected

Discussion and conclusions

The set of relationship emerging from the literature review in terms of tourist experience and tested on the sample of ARADE tourists lead us to the following reflections. Firstly, it is important to bear in mind that the tourism product depends on an adequate and efficient link to resources and facilities. This will determine satisfaction levels of the tourist experience. Secondly, the quality of the environment and territory of tourist destinations like ARADE are decisive elements in articulating fundamental factor in the tourism market, such as those related to promotion, distribution and price. In fact, it is important to consider that the best promotion of a destination is a testimonial on the part of tour operators and tourists. Thirdly, the tourist product is understood as a whole in terms of demand. Tourists purchase concrete offers but expect experiences and benefits of resources (what to see? what to discover?), services, facilities (what facilities are available?) and activities. Satisfaction that is achieved from this product is the key to tourism competitiveness.

Besides the analysis of the satisfaction with the tourism experience, this study explores the relationship between this construct and destination loyalty intention. In fact, through multiple group analyses, we concluded that the relationship between the two constructs is moderated by socio-demographic characteristics and by motivations.

According to *H1* to *H7*, the relationship between satisfaction and loyalty is stronger among tourists who are older, Portuguese and bearers of higher educational qualifications travelling mainly for business reasons or social visits (friends and relatives). A second segment of tourists has an opposite demographic profile and travels primarily for leisure, recreational or health purposes. Younger tourists, holding fewer educational qualifications, though satisfied with the tourism experience, are less certain about re-

turning to the destination as this would imply not visiting a different destination, that is, it would have a very high opportunity cost. The weaker relationship between satisfaction and destination loyalty among tourists travelling motivated by leisure and emotional needs is also not surprising. In fact, these motives suggest that even the most satisfied tourist can get similar experiences and satisfaction by visiting other destinations.

Two considerations result from these findings. First, it is fundamental to improve the overall quality of the tourist experiences, especially focusing on those attributes that report lower levels of satisfaction such as *urban planning*, *traffic*, *accessibilities*, *parking* and *traffic signs*. Second, future marketing strategies should consider the two segments of tourists separately, since they do not report similar behaviour in terms of the relationship between satisfaction with the tourist experience and loyalty. Actually, tourism destinations should direct their marketing strategies towards target tourist groups that present higher probability levels of revisiting and groups that can affect potentially new tourists. As this study shows, there are significant differences between the two groups concerning socio-demographic features and motivations. This information allows destination marketers to define more targeted marketing strategies.

The two segments are very coherent and internally homogeneous. The marketing message for the first target (tourists who are older, Portuguese and bearers of higher educational qualifications travelling mainly for business reasons or social visits) should be different than the message aimed at foreigner tourists that travel to this destination essentially for leisure or recreational purposes. For tourists in the first segment, the message should focus on looking forward to other return visit. For tourists in the second segment, in which satisfaction and loyalty are linked though weaker, the message should be centred on recommending the destination (word of mouth). These are two different segments that should be targeted with specific messages in order to increase the destination competitiveness.

Finally, it is important to underline that the development of strategies in mature tourist spaces, as with the case of ARADE, forces a social commitment between the different public and private agents with a view, among other measures, to limit and control the growth of supply, reorganise saturated areas through urban planning, protect and recover the environment and landscape, construct infrastructures and facilities and diversity the tourist product. In this particular case, and from a global approach, the coordination between environmental management and tourist harnessing will become strategic vectors in an effort to overcome challenges related to sustainability, competitiveness and quality.

The issue of creating value to tourist, expressed in terms of quality of tourism experience, is only possible with the innovative development of products based on potential resources and competences of human resources. If most supply is work performed by businesses, devising authentic products that are sustainable and competitive, demands a management model (private-public partnership) suited to each destination and based on stakeholder consensus.

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