

Este es un manuscrito aceptado de un artículo publicado por Taylor & Francis en Current Issues in Tourism el 6 de agosto de 2018, disponible en: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13683500.2018.1505835>

The impact of daily tour service quality on tourist satisfaction and behavioral intentions in an island context: A study on tours to Isla de la Plata, Ecuador

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This study assesses the impact of daily tour service quality on tourist satisfaction and behavioral intentions in an island context. Using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), the analysis of data collected from 195 participating in a daily tour to Isla de la Plata (Ecuador) showed that all the services examined (transportation by boat, food and beverage, tourist guide and visits) had a significant direct impact on tour satisfaction, having the transportation the highest impact. Moreover, the indirect effect of the daily tours services on behavioral intentions mediated by the satisfaction with the tour was also significant.

Keywords: service performance; satisfaction; behavioral intentions; daily tours, islands

Introduction

Daily tours (DTs), a type of package tours that do not last longer than 24 hours and contain no overnight stays (Caber & Albayrak, 2016), can generate substantial revenues and foster the development of potential tourist destinations (Stetic, Simicevic & Stanic, 2011). However, a limited number of studies have analyzed DTs in academic literature (Caber & Albayrak, 2016; Stetic, et al., 2011; Wong & McKercher, 2012), and there are no studies on DTs to islands.

Caber & Albayrak (2016) and Stetic et al. (2011) analyze DTs general structure and main dimensions. There is no consensus among researchers on the best way to partition tourist services, but it is generally accepted that tourist services can be divided into different components, which can also be analyzed independently (Chan, Hsu & Baun, 2015; Huang et al., 2010). DTs ordinarily include transportation by coach, food and beverage, tourist guides, and visits to cultural, natural or sport sites, depending on

the theme of the tour. Moreover, the tour can include additional services such as shopping or stopovers (Caber & Albayrak, 2016). However, depending on the characteristics of the destination, the services may vary (Stetic et al., 2011). For example, DTs to islands contain maritime transport and do not usually include shopping or stopovers, especially in ecotourism context.

Although DTs have shorter durations and tend to contain a lower number of services than other package tours, they consist of different service encounters that are expected to have an impact on the tourist experience (Caber & Albayrak, 2016). Tourists that participate in package tours are frequently looking for a total experience (Chan et al., 2015). Therefore, a perceived deficiency in any service of a DT may entail tourist dissatisfaction or drop out.

In tourism literature, it is widely accepted that service quality affects tourist satisfaction and their behavioral intentions (e.g. Um, Chon & Ro, 2006). However, there is a considerable number of studies that has focused on assessing the performance of a specific component of the service, such as restaurant services (Han & Ryu, 2009), and little has been done to segment tour services into different components and examine the individual impact of those on tourist satisfaction and behavioral intentions (Chan et al., 2015). Considering Caber & Albayrak's (2016) call for research to examine the relationships between the DT service quality and its consequences, this study aims to examine the impact of DT service quality on tourist satisfaction and behavioral intentions in an island context. According to the literature review, a research model was developed and the following hypotheses (H) were proposed (Figure 1):

H1: Tourist satisfaction with the DT is determined by the transportation service performance.

H2: Tourist satisfaction with the DT is determined by the food and beverage service performance.

H3: Tourist satisfaction with the DT is determined by the tourist guide service performance.

H4: Tourist satisfaction with the DT is determined by the visits service performance.

H5: Tourist satisfaction with the DT determines behavioral intentions.

Take-in-Figure-1

In package tour literature, several studies have analyzed tourist satisfaction (Bowie & Chang, 2005; Geva & Goldman, 1991; Rääkkönen & Honkanen, 2013), as well as its link to behavioral intentions (Chan et al., 2015; Hsu, 2000; Lee, Jeon & Kim, 2011), but the performance of the services in DTs and their consequences has not been studied yet.

Methods

A survey was conducted for participants in DTs to Isla de la Plata (Ecuador). This island forms part of Machalilla National Park, and it is an ideal destination for ecotourism. The DTs start in the Tourist Port of Puerto López to take the boat to the island. The boats allow a maximum capacity of 16 people, and they take approximately an hour and a half to reach the destination. Before arriving to the island, a snack is provided in the boat. The walking tour in the island offers the opportunity for sea bird watching and to enjoy the island's landscapes. In the return walking tour, lunch is provided. Later, two activities can be done: snorkeling and whale watching. The DTs finish with the return trip by boat to Puerto López.

In order to measure the DT performance, this study uses an adaptation of DAILYSERV, a scale to measure DT service quality (Caber and Albayrak, 2016).

Particularly, an experts' discussion resulted in a total of 18 items organized according to 4 dimensions (transportation, food and beverage facility, tourist guide, and visits). Customer satisfaction and behavioral intention were measured as proposed by Caber and Albayrak (2016) and Xu and Chan (2010), respectively. A 5-point Likert scale was used for the 6 constructs (1=totally disagree; 5=totally agree).

The questionnaire was personally administered via convenience sampling from December 2016 to January 2017. A total of 215 surveys was issued, of which 195 were valid. The data analysis was carried out by using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM).

Results

Sample Description

The sample was balanced in terms of gender, with a slight predominance of women (50.26%). The majority of the sample was young people, aged between 18 and 30 years (66.15%), single (73.06%), and with university studies (86.15%). A high percentage of the respondents works for an employer (30.55%) or is a student (24.35%), with an income higher than \$1000 per month (75.41%).

Most of the sample was international tourists (83.59%). They mainly come from Argentina (13.85%), USA (12.82%), Germany (12.31%) and United Kingdom (7.69%). In most cases, moreover, they are first-time tourists (89.18%).

Model Estimation

A two-step procedure is used for testing the model, as suggested by Anderson & Gerbing (1988).

Measurement Model

The reliability analysis of the indicators showed that all of them have loading over 0.707, the recommended threshold, except TG1 and TG2 (Table 1). However, loadings of 0.50 or 0.60 can be acceptable in studies in which scales previously validated have been applied in different contexts (Barclay et al., 1995).

Take-in-Table-1

Internal consistency for each construct was confirmed with composed reliability values (greater than 0.7). Convergent validity was confirmed with both the Cronbach's coefficient α (greater than 0.7) and the value of average variance extracted (AVE) (greater than 0.5). And discriminant validity was confirmed since the square root of AVE for each construct exceeded the correlations between the construct and all other constructs.

Structural Model

Figure 1 shows the results of the model evaluation. Satisfaction and behavioral intentions present a moderate-substantial R^2 (0.6725 and 0.6125, respectively) and the analysis of the signification of the paths shows that the hypotheses are statistically significant.

Take-in-Figure-2

Conclusions

All the services examined in the DT had a significant direct effect on satisfaction with the tour, having the transportation the highest impact ($\beta=0.383$; $p<0.001$). Moreover, the indirect effect of the DT services on behavioral intentions mediated by the satisfaction with the tour was also significant.

In our island context, unlike other studies on DTs and package tours, the transportation is by boat. This may be the reason why transportation has a more relevant role in tourist satisfaction with the tour. Nevertheless, it would be interesting to analyze to what extent the duration of the transportation service in comparison with the duration of the whole tour could also influence the impact of this service on tourist satisfaction. In general, the relative duration of the transportation service in DTs with respect to the total duration of the DTs is higher than in all-inclusive package tours, except for those tours that include traveling several days by coach. Chan et al. (2015) found that core services, like transportation, do not have a significant effect on tourist satisfaction with all-inclusive package tours. However, Hsu (2000), when analyzing packages of coach tours for senior tourists, found that tour satisfaction was determined by 6 attributes of the package tour, and 2 of them were related to the transportation service.

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Table 1. Assessment of the measurement model.

	Mean	Standard deviation	Loading	Cronbach's α	Composite reliability	AVE
TR:Transportation				0.807	0.874	0.634
TR1:The boat was clean	4.809	0.506	0.761			
TR2:The boat was comfortable	4.610	0.642	0.775			
TR3:You felt safe in the transfer by boat	4.788	0.556	0.845			
TR4:The appearance of the captain of the boat was neat and clean	4.755	0.622	0.801			
TG:Tour Guide				0.781	0.852	0.540
TG1:The tour guide gave information about the tour	4.692	0.639	0.684			
TG2:The tour guide spoke my language fluently	4.518	1.003	0.537			
TG3:The tour guide answered to the participants' questions	4.799	0.587	0.747			
TG4:The tour guide was friendly and kind	4.814	0.493	0.841			
TG5:The tour guide solved the problems occurred	4.720	0.620	0.822			
FB:Food and Beverage				0.913	0.935	0.742
FB1:In general, the place where the food was taken was adequate	4.577	0.776	0.866			
FB2:In general, the place where the food was taken was clean	4.651	0.680	0.861			
FB3:Food and beverage were enough	4.459	0.929	0.860			
FB4:The food was of good quality	4.495	0.799	0.862			
FB5:The time to take the food was adequate	4.582	0.699	0.856			
VA:Places visited and activities carried out				0.832	0.888	0.665
VA1:In general, the places we visited were clean	4.769	0.519	0.859			
VA2:I did not feel that the places were overcrowded	4.661	0.612	0.817			
VA3:The routes or paths were safe	4.746	0.584	0.823			
VA4:The time allowed to visit the place and carry out the activities proposed was enough	4.744	0.522	0.761			
ST:Satisfaction				0.878	0.925	0.804
ST1:I am satisfied with this tour	4.716	0.570	0.891			
ST2:I am pleased with this tour	4.672	0.668	0.906			
ST3:I have had a favorable experience from this tour	4.701	0.602	0.892			
BI:Behavioral Intentions				0.828	0.899	0.747
BI1:It is probable that I will repeat the tour	4.000	1.347	0.728			
BI2:I would recommend the tour to other people	4.552	0.853	0.920			

BI3:I will talk well about the tour to other people	4.580	0.775	0.929
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Figure 1. Proposed Model.

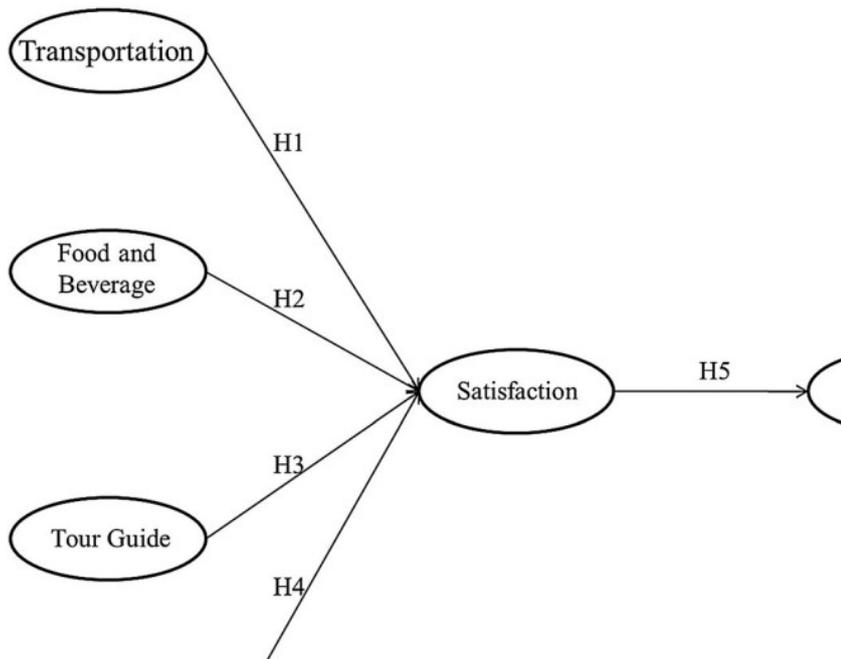


Figure 2. Results of the PLS analysis.

