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Asymmetric Importance-Performance Analysis: Measuring classification changes of destination attributes into basic, performance and excitement factors according to the segmentation criterion

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Abstract

Studies combining Asymmetric Importance-Performance Analysis (AIPA) with segmentation are scarce and no study measures the magnitude of the changes in AIPA results when using different data sets: data sets belonging to general tourists and market segments. Consequently, no study evaluates whether one segmentation criterion produces greater changes in AIPA results than another. This study quantifies classification changes of destination attributes in AIPA results according to the previous visit and the origin of the visitors. Based on a sample of 409 tourists in Puerto López (Ecuador), results showed that “nature”, “adventure”, “sun and beach”, and “culture” were basic factors, while “gastronomy” was a performance factor. However, this classification differ considerably when different data sets are used, and especially, when considering segments by origin of the visitor.

Keywords

destination attributes, satisfaction, asymmetric impact-performance analysis, market segments, three-factor theory of customer satisfaction

Introduction

Destinations seek visitors' satisfaction in order to obtain greater tourism success. This satisfaction is generated by a combination of various destination attributes (e.g. Bartikowski & Llosa, 2004; Meng, Tepanon, & Uysal, 2008). In this light, local authorities must identify clearly which specific destination attributes need to be improved to increase visitors' satisfaction. According to several studies, the relationship between the performance of an attribute and the overall satisfaction of customers is asymmetrical (Johnston, 1995; Matzler & Sauerwein, 2002; Mittal, Ross & Baldasare, 1998; Ting & Chen, 2002). This asymmetry is considered by the Three-Factor Theory of Customer Satisfaction. Specifically, this theory classifies the attributes of a product into basic, performance and excitement factors by considering their asymmetrical influence on overall satisfaction (Johnston, 1995; Kano, Seraku, Takahashi, & Tsuji, 1984; Matzler & Sauerwein, 2002)

The Three-Factor Theory have been employed in a number of research fields, such as banking services (Johnston, 1995; Arbore & Busacca, 2009), health services (Matzler & Sauerwein, 2002), business-to-business relationships (Falk, Hammerschmidt & Schepers, 2010; Šerić, Mikulić & Gil-Saura, 2018) and human resources (Matzler & Renzle, 2007). Moreover, in the hospitality and tourism industry, several studies have also explored these asymmetric relationships, including hotel services (e.g., Albayrak & Caber, 2015; Bi, Liu, Fan & Zhang, 2020; Davras & Caber, 2019), travel agencies (e.g., Caber, Albayrak & Loiacono, 2013), congress services (Lee & Min, 2013), restaurant services (Chen, 2012), casinos (Back & Lee, 2015), incentive travel (Lee, Choi & Chiang, 2017) ski resorts (Füller & Matzler, 2008) and shopping (Albayrak & Çömen, 2017). However, there is limited research on the application of this theory to the attributes of tourism destinations (Alegre & Garau, 2011; Albayrak & Caber, 2013;

2016; Fuchs & Weiermair, 2004; Lee & Choi, 2020; Mikulić et al., 2015; Pawitra & Tan, 2003; Tan & Pawitra, 2001; Yuan, Deng, Pierskalla & King, 2018).

Several methods have been used to identify the three factors, including the Asymmetric Importance-Performance Analysis (AIPA) that was proposed by Caber et al. (2013) as an extension of Martilla and James's (1970) Importance-Performance Analysis (IPA) and of Mikulic and Prebezac's (2008) Impact Asymmetry Analysis. Studies using AIPA are scarce. AIPA has only been used in the following research areas: hotels (Albayrak & Caber, 2015; Bi et al., 2020), rock climbing areas (Albayrak & Caber, 2016), tourist shopping (Albayrak & Çömen, 2017) and urban areas (Yuan et al., 2018).

Most studies exploring asymmetric relationships have analysed aggregate data (Füller & Matzler, 2008). However, the target population is usually heterogeneous (Bruyere, Rodriguez & Vaske, 2002) and expectations differ from tourist to tourist. Thus, destination attributes which prevent tourist dissatisfaction (basic factors) or create tourist delight (excitement factors) could be different for each market segment. What for one segment is found to be a basic factor, can be a performance or an excitement factor for others (Füller & Matzler, 2008). As a result, combining AIPA with segmentation provides more powerful results to managers and tourism planners. Without segmentation, AIPA results can be misinterpreted. Nevertheless, studies combining AIPA with segmentation are scarce (Albayrak & Caber, 2016; Albayrak & Çömen, 2017; Bi et al., 2020; Yuan et al., 2018) and no study measures the magnitude of the changes that occur in the categorization of attributes when using aggregated data and data from different market segments. Consequently, no study evaluates whether one segmentation criterion produces greater changes in AIPA results than another. Thus, the objectives of this study are:

- 1) To test the differences in the perceptions of the attributes of a given destination among different market segments, according to the previous visit and according to the origin of the visitors.
- 2) To classify destination attributes (into basic, performance and excitement factors) according to their asymmetrical influence on the overall satisfaction of the visitors belong to different market segments (by their previous visits and origins).
- 3) To identify and measure the differences in destination attributes' classification by market segments.

Literature review

Asymmetric impact-performance analysis

To assess the asymmetrical relationship between the performance of an attribute and the overall satisfaction of customers, Penalty Reward Contrast Analysis, which uses dummy variables in regression analysis, has been widely used due to its advantages over other methods (Matzler & Sauerwein, 2002; Bartikowsky & Llosa, 2004; Mikulic & Prebezac, 2008). Nevertheless, the categorization of product attributes into three groups (basic, performance and excitement factors) according to their asymmetrical effect on satisfaction is necessary, but not enough to suggest management implications to the local authorities. So, in recent years a series of new visual techniques have been proposed, such as AIPA (Caber et al., 2013). AIPA classifies product attributes according to their asymmetric influences on overall satisfaction and their performance levels. The performance levels of the attributes are directly obtained from customers'

evaluations, while the value of impact asymmetry is calculated through two steps (Caber et al., 2013; Mikulic & Prebezac, 2008) and quantifies the extent to which an attribute has a satisfaction-generating potential in comparison with its dissatisfaction-generating potential (Mikulic & Prebezac, 2008). With AIPA matrix, local authorities may take strategic action for each of the destination attributes which are ultimately expected to increase visitors' satisfaction.

Segmentation

According to expectation-disconfirmation paradigm (Oliver, 1980), tourist satisfaction is the discrepancy between tourist's expectations and the perceived performance. Considering that the tourists' expectations vary with different market segments, the asymmetric relationship between attribute performance and visitor satisfaction also varies across different segments (Füller & Matzler, 2008; Matzler & Renzl, 2007). For example, previous research on destination studies show that first-time and repeat visitors have different experiences, expectations and motivations that influence their satisfaction regarding a destination (Lew & McKercher, 2006; Weaver & Lawton, 2011). In the same way, visitors from different regions may have different cultural backgrounds (Wong, McKercher & Li, 2016) and, the differences among visitors' regions and cultural backgrounds influence their preference and expectations for destination attributes, affecting their satisfaction (Albayrak & Caber, 2013). Thus, previous research on tourism destinations shows that AIPA results differ for segments by previous visit (Albayrak & Caber, 2016; Yuan et al., 2018) and nationality (Albayrak & Çömen, 2017) as well as by age, gender and motivation (Yuan et al., 2018). However, no study examines whether one segmentation criterion produces greater changes in AIPA results than another. More specifically, no study analyses whether differences among visitors regions and cultural backgrounds generate greater or smaller changes than differences based on previous experiences.

Method

In order to achieve the objectives of the study, a questionnaire was designed to understand the tourism market in Puerto López (Ecuador) with reference to the perception of the visitors about the performance of various destination attributes and the effects of these attributes on overall satisfaction. More specifically, the perceived performance was measured for five attributes of Puerto López (nature, adventure, sun and beach, culture, gastronomy) (Table 1), which had been previously identified as priority attributes for the whole Ecuador coastline by the Ecuadorian Ministry of Tourism. Moreover, an item to measure overall satisfaction with the tourist destination (Yoon & Uysal, 2005) was included in the questionnaire. All the items were measured by a 5-point Likert scale (1 = very low; 5 = very high). The questionnaire also included questions about sociodemographic characteristics.

Table 1. Scales and literature sources used in the questionnaire construction

Construct	References	Items
Nature	Adaptated from Lin, Morais, Kerstetter and Hou (2007)	Beautiful landscapes Beautiful natural parks Variety and uniqueness of flora and fauna Cleanness of the environment
Adventure	Adapted from Chi and Qu (2008)	Exciting sporting activities

		Exciting water sports Enormous opportunities for outdoor recreation
Sun and beach	Adapted from Chen and Tsai (2007)	Good weather Great beaches Cleanness of beaches
Culture	Adapted from Chen and Phou (2013)	Cultural attractions Cultural activities Way of life & customs
Gastronomy	Adapted from Füller, Matzler and Faullant (2006)	Quality of food and beverages Variety of food and beverages Atmosphere in bars and restaurants Seating capacities in bars and restaurants

The target visitors were selected using a convenience-sampling approach. The questionnaire was conducted by a well-trained student from the university. Specifically, the survey was conducted face-to-face to visitors in different tourist attractions of Puerto López from November 2016 to January 2018. A total of 409 valid questionnaires were completed.

An AIPA matrix was constructed both for the total sample and for market segments according to the previous visit and the origin of the visitors. To quantify position changes of the attributes according to the segmentation criterion, the Euclidean distance was used.

Results

The survey was completed mainly by women (57.43%). Most of the respondents were between 18 and 35 years old (65.51%), single (51.75%) and had previously visited the destination (69.88%). Regarding the origin, 76.9% of visitors were from Ecuador, 12.7% of visitors were from other Latin-American countries, and 10.4% of visitors were from other countries.

In order to test the differences in the perceptions of attribute performance for the segments analyzed, a variance analysis was used. The results of this analysis are shown in Table 2. On the one hand, significant differences were found between first-time visitors and repeat visitors in the evaluation of nature. This attribute was the best valued by first-time visitors. Regarding overall satisfaction, however, significant differences were not found. Nevertheless, some studies state that first-time visitors are more easily satisfied with a destination than repeat visitors (McKercher & Wong 2004), while others state the opposite (Li, Cheng, Kim & Petrick, 2008).

On the other hand, there were significant differences in the attributes of culture and gastronomy among the three segments differentiated according to the origin (national visitors, visitors from other Latin-American countries, and visitors from countries other than Latin-American countries). Significant differences were also found in overall satisfaction. In general, national visitors were more satisfied with the different attributes and at the global level than visitors from other Latin-American countries and from other countries. The reason may be that national visitors share lifestyles (Ko et al., 2007), values, beliefs, norms and behaviour guidelines (which are maintained and transmitted from the national culture to individuals) (Leung et al., 2005) with the inhabitants of the destination.

Table 2. Perceptions of attribute performance by previous visit and origin

	Nature	Adventure	Beach	Culture	Gastronomy	Overall satisfaction
First-time visitor	4.455	3.974	4.333	3.778	3.948	4.064
Repeat visitor	4.269	3.832	4.381	3.612	4.079	3.945
Sig.	0.027*	0.187	0.572	0.178	0.221	0.067
National visitor	4.358	3.926	4.392	3.824	4.191	4.056
Visitor from other Latin-American countries	4.240	3.755	4.360	3.122	3.694	3.746
Visitor from other countries	4.225	3.550	4.171	3.250	3.487	3.739
Sig.	0.401	0.055	0.222	0.000**	0.000**	0.000**
Total sample	4.317	3.874	4.368	3.661	4.041	3.978

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.001$.

Later, the AIPA matrix was constructed both for the total sample and for each segment. Figure 1 shows the AIPA results for the total sample (0), for the segment of first-time visitors (1), and for the segment of repeat visitors (2). Figure 2, on the other hand, shows the AIPA results for the total sample (0), for national visitors (3), for visitors from other Latin-American countries (4), and visitors from countries other than Latin-American countries (5). As expected, AIPA results show differences for first-time and repeat visitors (Albayrak & Caber, 2016; Yuan et al., 2018) and for the three segments differentiated according to the origin (Albayrak & Çömen, 2017).

Take-in-Figure-1

Take-in-Figure-2

To quantify position changes of the attributes according to the segmentation criterion, the Euclidean distance was measured for each attribute, between its position in the matrix for the total sample and its position in the matrix for the segment analyzed. Moreover, the Euclidean distance between the position in the matrix of the various segments was also calculated. Table 3 and Table 4 show these measures, as well as the changes in the classification (basic, performance or excitement) of the attributes for the segments according to the criterion of previous visit and origin of the visitor, respectively.

Table 3. Segmentation according to the previous visit: Changes in attribute positions and classification

Attributes	First-time visitors (segment 1)		Repeat visitors (segment 2)		Segments 1 and 2
	Distance to the total sample	Change in classification	Distance to the total sample	Change in classification	
Nature	0.170	B → B	0.071	B → B	0.192
Adventure	0.362	B* → B*	0.137	B* → P*	0.499
Sun and beach	0.096	B → B	0.085	B → B	0.180
Culture	0.241	B* → P*	0.110	B* → B*	0.350
Gastronomy	0.288	P* → B*	0.194	P* → E*	0.481
Mean	0.231		0.119		0.340

Note: B = Basic; P = Performance; E = Excitement. * Attribute with a performance value lower than the average.

Table 4. Segmentation according to the origin of the visitor: Changes in attribute positions and classification

Attributes	National visitors (segment 3)	Visitors from other Latin-American	Visitors from countries other than Latin-	Segments 3, 4, 5
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			countries (segment 4)		American countries (segment 5)				
	Distance to the total sample	Change in classification	Distance to the total sample	Change in classification	Distance to the total sample	Change in classification	Distance between segments 3 and 4	Distance between segments 4 and 5	Distance between segments 3 and 5
Nature	0.294	B→B	0.855	B→E	0.650	B→E	1.149	0.209	0.944
Adventure	0.086	B*→P*	0.714	B*→B*	1.062	B*→E*	0.791	1.727	1.015
Sun and beach	0.160	B→B	0.645	B→E	0.471	B→B	0.488	1.090	0.627
Culture	0.168	B*→B*	0.568	B*→P*	0.553	B*→E*	0.735	0.230	0.706
Gastronomy	0.158	P*→P	0.610	P*→B*	0.884	P*→B*	0.743	0.279	1.021
Mean	0.173		0.678		0.724		0.781	0.707	0.863

Note: B = Basic; P = Performance; E = Excitement. * Attribute with a performance value lower than the average.

At the aggregate level, nature, adventure, sun and beach, and culture are basic factors, while gastronomy is a performance factor. However, these classifications change depending on the market segment. In particular, when analysing differences for first-timers and repeaters, 3 attributes change in classification; while when analysing differences for visitors from different origin, all 5 attributes change in classification. In general, the results show that the segmentation criterion “previous visit” produces a lower variability in AIPA results than the segmentation criterion “origin of the visitor”. The distance between segments is much higher for the second segmentation criterion. In this light, when analysing differences in AIPA results for first-timers and repeaters, Albayrak and Caber (2016) found differences in the classification of 2 attributes, from a total of 4 attributes analyzed, in a rock climbing context; while Yuan et al. (2018) found differences in the categorization of 4 urban tourism attributes, from a total of 5 attributes analyzed. However, when exploring differences in AIPA results for visitors from different countries (German, Dutch and British tourists), Albayrak and Çömen (2017) found changes in the classification of all 3 factors analyzed.

According to the results of the total sample, it would be necessary to invest mainly in the attributes culture, adventure and gastronomy. The two first are basic factors that are not sufficiently well valued; the third is a performance factor that also have a score lower than the average. But, for example, if we focus on the segment “repeat visitors” (segment 2), it would be necessary to invest in the attributes culture (basic factor that does not work sufficiently well) and adventure (performance factor that is not sufficiently well valued). The attribute gastronomy would be an excitement factor – and if resources are available, it would have to be improved in order to delight visitors. Moreover, if we focus on the segment “visitors from countries other than Latin-American countries” (segment 5), it would be necessary to invest firstly in the attribute gastronomy (basic factor that does not work sufficiently well), and secondly in the attributes adventure and culture (excitement factors that are not sufficiently well valued) to delight visitors if resources are available.

Conclusions

To the best of our knowledge, no study measures the magnitude of the changes in AIPA results when using aggregated data and data from different market segments and, consequently, no study evaluates whether one segmentation criterion produces greater changes in AIPA results than another. In order to fill this research gap, an AIPA matrix was constructed both for the total sample and for market segments according to the

previous visit and the origin of the visitors by using a sample of 409 tourists in Puerto López (Ecuador). The results highlighted the need to go beyond of the AIPA of the total sample and to consider segmentation options.

As theoretical implication, our findings advance the understanding of perception variations of destination attributes between general tourists and market segments. Although the Three-Factor Theory of Customer Satisfaction has been widely applied in a number of research areas, there is limited research on its application to the attributes of tourism destinations (Albayrak & Caber, 2013) and most studies have analysed aggregate data (Füller & Matzler, 2008). This study verified that the asymmetrical influences of destination attributes on overall satisfaction vary across different data sets: general tourists and market segments. In particular, when considering segments by origin of the visitor, the magnitude of the changes is greater than when considering segments by previous visit. That is, the differences among visitors' regions and cultural backgrounds generate greater changes than differences based on previous experiences. In this line, literature on tourism destinations using AIPA shows a lower variability in AIPA results for segments by previous visit (Albayrak & Caber, 2016; Yuan et al., 2018) than for segments by nationality (Albayrak & Çömen, 2017).

As methodological implication, our study shows that AIPA produces more meaningful results by considering market segmentation. Studies using AIPA are scarce (Yuan et al., 2018). The sensitivity of AIPA was detected by examining aggregate data and market segments and quantifying position changes of the attributes using Euclidean distance. Our findings show that AIPA results vary depending on the data used. The categories of the destination attributes differ considerably when different data sets are used.

As managerial implications, by knowing that the categorization of destination attributes differs according to the previous visit and the origin of the visitors, managers and tourism planners should adopt individual strategies for each market segment.

Finally, this research has some limitations. First, the study sample was obtained from a single area. This may limit the potential to generalize the findings. Thus, more studies should be conducted in other areas. In addition, this study only investigates the asymmetrical relationship concerning five attributes. Some other attributes could be considered in the future.

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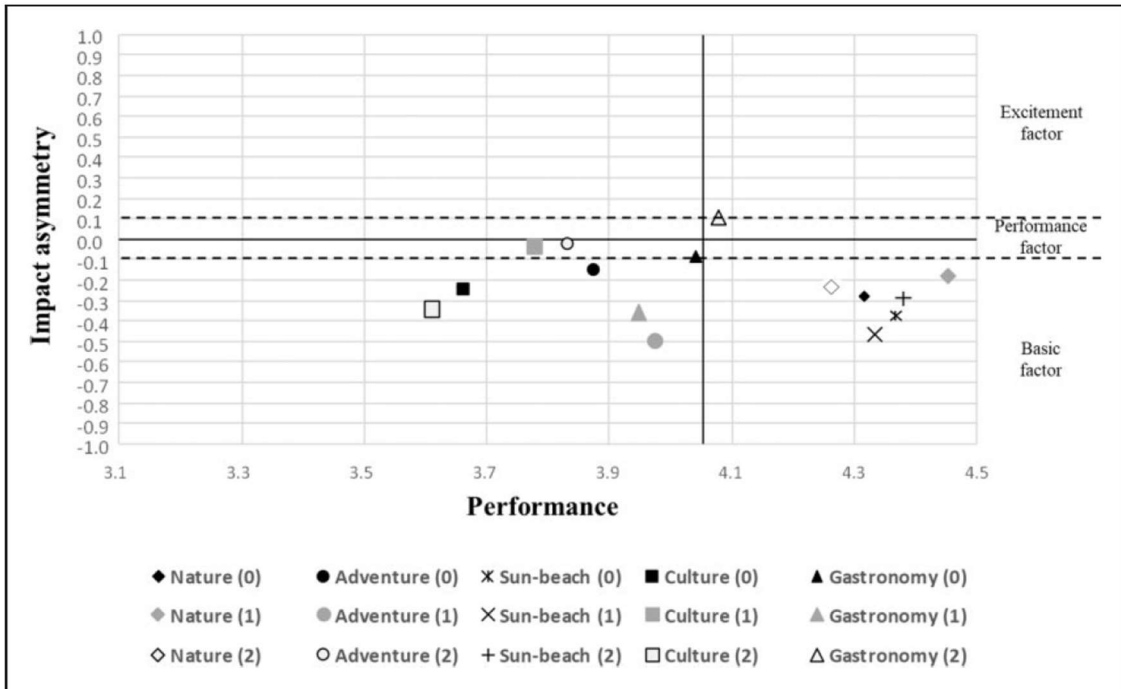


Figure 1. AIPA results of the total sample (0), first-time visitors (1), and repeat visitors (2).

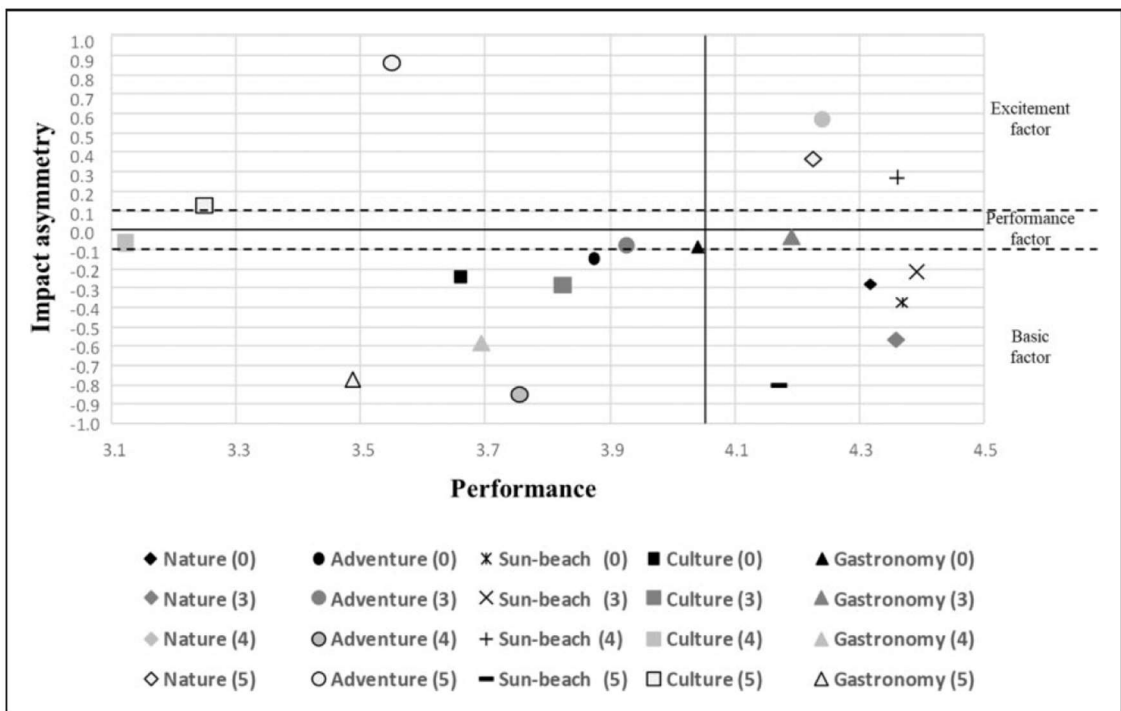


Figure 2. AIPA results of the total sample (0), national visitors (3), visitors from other Latin-American countries (4), and visitors from countries other than Latin-American countries (5).