

## PARTICULAR ASPECTS OF THE TOURIST PRODUCTS CONSUMERS' LOYALTY

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### Abstract

The tourist consumption represents the expression of a very varied set of needs and motivations: rest, relaxation, escape from the every-day setting, recreation or the satisfaction of certain cultural, aesthetic, emotional aspirations, based on the principle of pleasure, of the integration of individuals in their social environment, and the relation with their own personality and family or personal experiences. Classifying the tourist products according to the motivation of travelling, we can emphasize particular aspects of the relationship between the tourist products consumers's satisfaction and loyalty.

The objective of the article is to present a study which emphasizes the fact that the consumer's satisfaction does not generally induce loyalty to the tourist destinations/tourist services. The typology of tourist products and motivation of choosing the destination plays a very crucial role. The study analyses comparatively three types of tourist products and the manner in which satisfaction determines conative attitudes, inducing loyalty/disloyalty towards the tourist destination/tourist services.

**Key words:** Consumers' satisfaction, quality, loyalty, tourism products

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The tourist consumption represents the expression of a very varied set of needs and motivations: rest, relaxation, escape from the every-day setting, recreation or the satisfaction of certain cultural, aesthetic, emotional aspirations, based on the principle of pleasure, of the integration of individuals in their social environment, and the relation with their own personality and family or personal experiences.

The consumption is the process through which the final users can appreciate the quality of products/services acquired and which will produce the consumers' satisfaction/dissatisfaction and will generate loyalty.

If, in general, the consumption is based on well-defined products and services, which will provide utility, value and satisfaction, in the case of the tourist consumption the utility can play a secondary role. The recent studies offer a new, different perspective, for the study of the consumption practices and groups of consumers (Halle, 1992; Press, 1991; Holbrook, 1994; Holt, 1995). The new trend emphasizes four particular dimensions of the consumer acts (Holt, 1995):

- **The experience** or the experiential aspects of consumption;

- **The integration** through consumption within the group;

- **The classification** through consumption, the user being described as member who adheres to a certain trend or tendencies, groups etc.

- **the consumption in terms of game**, is the most recent approach, enriching the optics according to which the consumption represents the finality, the purpose in itself, in this situation the purpose being assigned to the interaction, to the creation and consolidation of interpersonal actions.

In the previous approaches, the emphasis is laid on two fundamental concepts, around which the analysis of consumption activities is structured: **the structure and purpose of the consumption** (Holbrook, 1994, Lache, 2010).

**In terms of structure**, the consumption of tourist services comprises the actions that the consumers carry out directly, using the goods/services and the interactions with other persons, in which they represent a means, a support of the interpersonal actions (communication, socializing through the participation to sports competitions, professional communications, attending a show etc.)

In terms of purpose, the tourist consumption activities can either represent an end through the consumption act in itself, or a means for achieving further purposes. Therefore, the difference is of temporal nature. If the consumer act has an immediate goal (relaxation), it will be finalized by achieving the purpose, but if the purpose of the

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consumer activity is reaching a further objective, it can be of social or individual nature (for example the consumption of tourist products destined to professional reunions has the role of professional development, socializing and also individual personal achievement).

**The consumption in experiential terms** emphasizes the necessity of going beyond the notions of utility and use value (Holbrook, M.B., Hirschman, E.C., 1994) and the examination of the consumer behavior through methods specific to the socio-human sciences as well, respectively using the ethnological and phenomenological methods, which are capable to emphasize their subjective emotional reactions, in relation with the consumption situations.

The tourist services generate relaxation, amusement, emotions, exaltation or anger, activating imagination. These consumer experiences are based on hedonism, on obtaining satisfaction due to a variety of emotional states and social contacts which cannot be explained pertinently through the theory of utility. In this category we can also mention cultural, artistic consumption, leisure etc. contemplating natural monuments, visiting a museum or a "museum city", being the spectator of a sports event or carrying out other consumption situations which imply an intense emotional activity suppose spiritual satisfactions, profound feelings, both during the proper consumption, and also a subsequent prolongation of the state of pleasure and emotion, when they will exchange impressions with those who have the same passions or when they will tell about their experiences. The framework of subsequent references and interpretations of these experiences will refer both to the carrying-out of the actual consumer actions, and to the context, atmosphere, the global affective reaction and the share of feelings with the others (spectators, tourists, visitors, supporters).

The experiential aspects must be taken into account and analyzed for all the categories of tourist services, including for those which can be analyzed from the utility point of view (the balneary tourism) and situated in a well-defined functional register. The utility is diluted in all the luxury tourist products, where the atmosphere, the peripheral services, the physical evidence of the environment, the posture and professional training, and the design as well, are able to produce profound emotional reactions. However, the importance that must be given to experiences aspects differs according to the category of products or the typology of services, and also according to the classification of users.

**The consumption in terms of integration** describes the manner in which the consumers acquire and use the tourist services, beyond utility, according to the symbolical significance that they assign. The integration can be achieved through several modalities, in the case that the tourist products consumers, predominating the adherence to sports clubs and leisure centers, the personalization of members with the association symbols, the use of a material basis by mutual consent, complying with the same regulations, sharing the same values.

**The consumption in terms of game** is defined by the fact that it emphasizes, for the first time, that the interaction represents a purpose in itself. The interaction may be achieved in two ways: communication and socializing. Communication means sharing the same consumption experiences, formally or informally, verbally or non-verbally, through gestures and body language. Socializing supposes an exchange of opinions.

**The consumption in terms of classification** is focused on the means in which the consumers use the goods and services, classifying them into different categories, according to the importance that they give to the different consumption aspects. By classification, people can affiliate to a consumer segment or to a group, and in addition, distinctive elements can be emphasized, which personalize and individualize it within the group. In table 1, we present the typology of consumption practices, adopted according to (Holt, 1995), structured and exemplified on the particular case of tourist services.

Table 1  
**The typology of tourist consumption, adapted according to Holt, 1995**

The purpose of the consumer act			
The structure of the consumer act		End (actions by themselves)	Means (instrumental actions)
	Actions Objects	Consumption as experience (visiting a new tourist destination, tasting a new culinary dish)	Consumption as integration (learning a new foreign language, information etc.)
	Inter-personal actions	Consumption as game (attending a show, concert)	Consumption in terms of classification (using fashionable, luxury products)

The typology of the tourist consumption has important consequences on the consumers' satisfaction and loyalty towards a tourist destination or tourist reception facility.

In the specialty literature there are numerous and different definitions of the consumer's

satisfaction, however some were particularly emphasized, namely:

- the Howard-Sheth concept – appreciates satisfaction/dissatisfaction as a psychological state, which reflects the adequacy/inadequacy of the effort made by the buyer, to acquire certain products and/or services. With his expectations as regards the quality-price ratio (Howard J.A., Sheth J.N., 1969);

- Cadotte, Woodruff and Jenkins concept, 1987 appreciates satisfaction as the feelings developed as a result of the evaluation of a consumer experience (Cadotte, Woodruff and Jenkins, 1987).

- Hunt concept appreciates satisfaction as an evaluation based on the consumers' knowledge and experience, which, according to them, supposes a qualitative level for the respective product/service (Hunt, S.D., Morgan, R., M., 1994.)

We appreciate that the satisfaction of the tourist services consumers is equally a psychological,

emotional, affective and cognitive response, which is developed during the consumption, through the global evaluation of the multitudes of consumption services and experiences which make up the tourist product, and also by focusing the evaluative judgments towards the attributes of each and every service or experience.

There can be a direct relationship between the satisfaction of the tourist products consumer and his fidelity towards the trademark, service providers, tourist distributors or destination: the more satisfied the consumer, the more inclined to look again for the trademark of the tourist services provider which gave him this satisfaction, from the point of sale where he felt treated as a important client, from the seller who treated him with amiability and respect. This relationship is represented in figure 2 (Moulin, J.L., 1998).

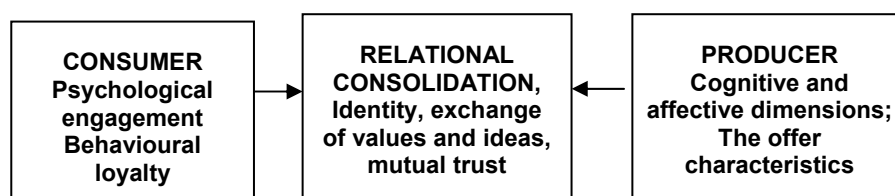


Figure 1 Relational loyalty

However, despite the satisfaction obtained and the pleasant experience, the tourist products consumer can be disloyal to a destination or a service provider, particularly searching the variety and novelty of a consumer experience.

## MATERIAL AND METHOD

Table 2

The characteristics of samples

The characteristics of samples	A		B		C	
	Nr.	%	Nr	%	Nr	%
Total sample	150	100	120	100	60	100
Sex :						
- female	117	78.00	59	49.12	38	63.33
- male	33	22.0	61	50.88	22	36.67
Age						
-15-24	15	10.00	0	0	39	65.00
-25-54	50	33.33	78	65.00	9	15.00
-55-64	42	28.00	30	25.00	12	20.00
-over 64	43	28.67	12	10.00	0	0
Studies:						
-General	8	5.33	0	0	6	10.00
-High-sch.	96	64.00	0	0	36	60.00
-Higher ed.	46	30.67	120	100.0	18	30.00
Citizenship						
-Romanian	124	76.00	106	88.88	52	86.67
-Foreign	36	24.00	14	11.12	8	13.33

The research proposes to emphasize the fact that the tourist products consumers' satisfaction does not necessarily represent a factor that induces loyalty, the notion of loyalty being moreover

correlated with the typology of tourist products and the motivations associated with selecting a type of services and making the purchasing decision.

The study proposes the comparative analysis of the clients' levels of satisfaction for three types of tourist services and the analysis of their consequences on loyalty. The three types of tourist services analyzed, according to the motivations of the interviewed persons, are:

1. medical tourism, balneary treatment (A);
2. cultural tourism, recreation, socializing (B)
3. participation to an event (theatre festival) (C).

We used three distinctive samples, A, B, C, one sample for each type of tourist type of product, as we present in table 2.

The study was achieved in the North-East region, during the period May 1<sup>st</sup>–September 30<sup>th</sup>2010.

The research hypothesis is that the different tourist motivations generate different conative attitudes, the response to satisfaction not being necessarily identified in the future purchasing intentions. Thus, the satisfaction does not generate loyalty for all the types of tourist products, the motivation representing the decisive element.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The degree of loyalty to the tourist destination/ tourist reception facilities, in accordance with the visiting frequency is presented in table 3.

Table 3  
**The frequency of the destination visiting by tourists**

Visiting frequency	Sample A	Sample B	Sample C
At the first visit	18 /12	109/90.8	8 /13.33
At the second visit	23 /15.33	11/ 9.2	13/21.67
At the third visit	22/14.67	0	42/60
Annually	87/58	0	0
TOTAL	150 /100%	120 /100%	60 /100%

The analysis of data presented in table no. 3 reveals the fact that 87/58% of the interviewed persons annually visit the tourist destination/tourist complex using the balneary treatment services, while in the case of a visit to know new places, enriching from the cultural point of view and relaxing, the first visit is predominant, respectively 119/90.8% of the respondents. In the case of sample C, where the respondents participate to an event (theatre festival), the majority are at their third participation, respectively 60% of the interviewed persons.

Table 4  
**The consumers' level of satisfaction regarding the destination image and the quality of tourist services**

The tourists' level of satisfaction	Sample A	Sample B	Sample C
Very satisfied (+5)	33 /22	88/73.33	5 /8.33
Satisfied (+3)	25 /16.66	32/ 26.67	10/16.67
Neither/nor (indifferent)(+1)	52/34.67	0	45/75
Rather satisfied (-3)	40/26.67	0	0
Totally dissatisfied (-5)	0	0	0
TOTAL	150/100%	120 /100%	60 /100%

We will calculate the arithmetical mean in order to establish the central tendency as regards the level of satisfaction of the tourist products consumers towards the image of the destination and the quality of tourist services. The score of satisfaction for each category of tourists (SC) is:

$$SC_{\text{sample A}} = 5 \cdot 33 + 3 \cdot 25 + 52 \cdot 1 + 7 \cdot (-3) / 150$$

$$SC_{\text{sample A}} = 165 + 75 + 52 - 21 / 150 = 1.15$$

$$SC_{\text{sample B}} = 5 \cdot 88 + 3 \cdot 32 / 120$$

$$SC_{\text{sample B}} = 440 + 96 / 120 = 4.46$$

$$SC_{\text{sample C}} = 5 \cdot 5 + 3 \cdot 10 + 45 \cdot 1 / 60$$

$$SC_{\text{of the personnel}} = 25 + 30 + 45 / 60 = 1.66$$

The score obtained reveals the fact that the tourists from sample A (score 1.15) and sample C (score 1.66) are relatively satisfied with the image of the destination and the quality of services from the hotels and restaurants, however, in order to have an average satisfaction we should have

obtained a score of at least 2.5 points. In exchange, the tourists from sample B (score 4.46) are very satisfied with the quality of tourist services and the destination image. In tables 5,6,7 we present the intentions of using the same tourist services/ tourist destination, for each type of tourist service.

Table 5  
**The distribution of the re-purchasing intention sample A**

The tourists' level of satisfaction	Certain	Do not know	Certainly no	Sample A
Very satisfied (+5)	33	0	0	33/22
Satisfied (+3)	25	0	0	25/ 16.66
Neither/nor (indifferent) (+1)	35	11	6	52/34.67
Rather satisfied (-3)	27	8	5	40/26.67
Totally dissatisfied (-5)	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	120/80 %	19/12.66 %	11/7.34%	120/100 %

As it results from the data presented in table 5, although the number of consumers satisfied and very satisfied with the image of the destination and the tourist services ensured is rather small (38.66%), and the satisfaction score is under the average value (1.15), 80% of the sample A respondents express their intention to re-purchase the tourist product. We appreciate that this is due to the utility characteristics of the medical balneary treatment services, the consumers appealing frequently, annually, to these services due to the therapeutic effects and less due to the satisfaction offered by the destination image, the hotel and food services.

Table 6  
**The distribution of the re-purchasing intention sample B**

The tourists' level of satisfaction	Certain	Do not know	Certainly no	Sample B
Very satisfied (+5)	0	21	67	88/73.33
Satisfied (+3)	0	9	21	32/ 26.67
Neither/nor (indifferent) (+1)	0	0	0	0
Rather satisfied (-3)	0	0	0	0
Totally dissatisfied (-5)	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	0	30/25%	90 /75%	120/100%

As it results from the data presented in table 6, although the number of satisfied and very satisfied consumers with the destination image and the ensured tourist services is very large (100%) and

the satisfaction score is above the average value (4.46%), 75% of the respondents of sample B appreciate that they will not re-purchase the same tourist product. We appreciate that this is due to the epistemic necessities and the motivation to know and visit new places.

Table 7

**The distribution of the re-purchasing intention  
Sample C**

The tourists' level of satisfaction	Certain	Do not know	Certainly no	Sample C
Very satisfied(+5)	5	0	0	5/8.33
Satisfied (+3)	5	3	2	10/ 16.67
Neither/nor (indifferent)(+1)	34	10	1	45/75
Rather satisfied (-3)	0	0	0	0
Totally dissatisfied (-5)	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	44/73.33 %	13/21.67 %	3/5%	60/100%

As it results from the data presented in table 7, although the number of satisfied and very satisfied consumers with the destination image and the tourist services ensured is relatively small (25%) and the satisfaction score is under the average value (1.66), 73.33% of the respondents from sample C appreciate that they will re-purchase the same tourist product, if they will have the opportunity. We appreciate that this is due to the special interest that the event (theatre festival) arouses, generating a lasting involvement.

## CONCLUSIONS

The consumers' satisfaction is associated with the expected quality, and usually, it generates loyalty. In the particular case of tourist services, the motivations are very different, being associated with the epistemic, diversity needs, of environmental change, of knowledge and they generate different responses, the quality of services offered and the consumers' quality not being necessarily identified in their conative attitudes. The image of tourist destinations and their adequate promotion will lead to attracting the potential consumers, and their satisfaction will be transposed in the fact that they will recommend the tourist services to other consumers as well. A client pleased with the tourist services offered and the image of the destination is the most important promotional factor.

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