

## ANALYSIS OF SHORT AND LONG BREAK PROFILES OF LEISURE TOURISTS IN BARCELONA

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The improvement in our knowledge of markets and consumers throws into relief the many substantial ways in which the profile of the tourist consumer has changed, and how these changes require tourist destinations to be competitive, and to adopt segmentation strategies. In tourism-related research, the length of the tourists' stay stands out as particularly relevant for the management of tourist destinations (Martínez-García y Raya, 2008). What is more, this key tourist behaviour variable enables us to define tourist segments.

In this sense, the so-called short-break holidays are regarded as a distinct type of trip, on the basis of the number of days the tourist stays, although there is no broad consensus in this regard. The most widely accepted definition refers to a stay of fewer than 4 nights, coupled with a recreation-related purpose (Murphy, Niininen y Sanders, 2010). The groups used for the purposes of this article are: short-stay travellers, or "short-breakers", and long-stay travellers, or "long-breakers".

The article analyses the effect of the length of stay in relation to the concepts of motivation, satisfaction, image, repeat visits and recommendation, for each group of the moderating variable, length of stay: short break and long break.

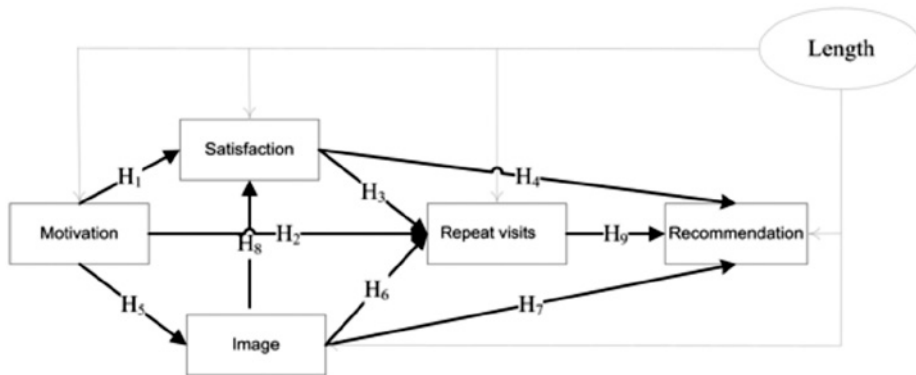
On the basis of a review of the literature of previous studies, the following hypotheses are put forward:

Hypotheses		Path	
H1	Motivation	→	Satisfaction
H2	Motivation	→	Repeat visits
H3	Satisfaction	→	Repeat visits
H4	Motivation	→	Recommendation
H5	Motivation	→	Image
H6	Image	→	Repeat visits
H7	Image	→	Recommendation
H8	Image	→	Satisfaction
H9	Repeat visits	→	Recommendation

The effect of this relationship will vary depending on the length of the stay

The different hypotheses allow us to develop a causal model for the behaviour of tourists. In the theoretical model, the motivation construct includes push factors (internal) and pull factors (external). Previous studies explored the influence of motivation on satisfaction (Oliver 1999), motivation on the image of the destination (Mohammed and Som, 2010), and the image on satisfaction (Chon, 1991). Therefore, the causal model proposed analyses the relationships between motivation, satisfaction, image, repeat visits and recommendation, its main contribution being that of using the length of stay variable (short break and long break) as being a discriminatory one in the multi-group.

### PROPOSED STRUCTURAL MODEL



In order to test this causal model, the tourists chosen are visitors to the city of Barcelona. Currently, Barcelona is regarded as one of the most attractive tourist destinations in Europe (Valls et al, 2013). Most of the 7.8 million tourists who stayed in hotels in the city during the year 2014 generated more than 17 million overnight stays (Turisme de Barcelona, 2014). These figures situate Barcelona in the top 6 European destination cities (ECM, 2013). Furthermore, the city's success, thanks to the combination of cultural strategies of urban regeneration and governance, has resulted in a successful model known as The Barcelona Model (Degen and García, 2012).

For the evaluation of the causal model, the starting point was the survey carried out by Turisme Barcelona among tourists in Barcelona during the years 2009, 2010 and 2011. The discriminatory variable that makes it possible to carry out a multi-group analysis is length of stay: the first group, referred to as short stay, the length of stay or intended stay being 2 to 4 nights in Barcelona, and a second group referred to as long stay, with a length of stay, or intended length of stay, of more than 4 nights in Barcelona. It should be borne in mind that, in keeping with the definitions of short break, the sample analysed is based on leisure or holiday tourism.

The characteristics of the tourist visits point up some distinctive aspects of the short-break segment, such as, for example, the preference they reveal for hotel accommodation. Another distinctive feature is the fact that the percentage of repeaters is higher among short-stay tourists.

A detailed analysis of the push and pull factors shows some of the elements that motivate tourists coming to the city. Rest and holidays are the main push factor for tourists in Barcelona. This reason for travelling is associated with the desire to “get away from it all” or “escaping”. Iso-Ahola and Allen (1982) conceptualises this type of motivation as “avoidance”, going on holiday to get away from something or someone. They also demonstrate that travellers are tired of their habitual routines, and who need to rest/unwind by carrying out some activity or other, depending on their own interests, visiting monuments, going to cultural events, etc. The second and third and third most common reasons for travelling are associated with the desire to get to know the city, and Spain. Crompton (1979) considers that culture and knowledge-related factors are the main reasons why tourists travel.

Among the main pull factors the most important appears to be “Barcelona is cool”, followed by “the city’s architecture and monuments”, “Many opportunities to see things / many things to see”, “Gaudí” and “Culture”. The latter are closely related to the city of Barcelona as an urban destination. The “Good prices / low cost” factor is directly related to the low-cost airlines phenomenon. These companies have greatly increased the population’s access to international travel, and have particularly led to an increase in the number of travellers in Europe, which has triggered a dramatic change in the tourism market. Another reason worth mentioning is the allure of programmed events in the city, such as “See a football match”, “Opera”, among others. A large number of trips include football, concerts, festivals, exhibitions or trade fairs as part of the package. These results highlight the variety and the multi-motivational character of the city of Barcelona.

The results contained in the table reflecting the relationship between the push and pull motives on the one hand and the length of the stay on the other (short and long break) show that this relationship is statistically significant ( $\chi^2=5.871$ , degree of freedom,  $p\text{-value}=0.015$ ). That is to say, the reasons for the visit are not independent of the length of stay. On the whole, the pull factors do not seem to be as important or as often mentioned as the push factors, and the short break tourists are comparatively more motivated by the pull factors, while the long stay visitors tend to be motivated by push factors.

The results of the analysis of the causal relationships, through structural equations between motivation, satisfaction, image, repeat visits and recommendation of the destination, with a multi-group analysis, makes it possible to interpret the different hypotheses according to the short and long break segments, with differentiated needs and characteristics. This way of representing the segments has important implications, in relation to both the planning and the management of tourism in Barcelona, and in particular to strategies for the marketing and development of tourist products associated with the destination.

Of the nine initial hypotheses, only one,  $H_1$ , is not accepted, as the relationships between motivation and satisfaction are not significant, either for short or long break tourists. Short break tourists have an effect, or a more intense relationship, for the  $H_2$ ,  $H_3$ ,  $H_4$ ,  $H_5$ ,  $H_6$  and  $H_7$  hypotheses, while for long break tourists the relationship between the constructs is stronger in the case of  $H_8$  and  $H_9$ .

The main differences between the short and long break groups were found to be the following. For the short break group, the relationships between motivation and repeat visits ( $H_2$ ), between satisfaction and recommendation ( $H_4$ ), between motivation and image ( $H_5$ ),

and image and repeat visits ( $H_6$ ), between image and recommendation ( $H_7$ ), and between image and satisfaction ( $H_8$ ) are accepted hypotheses with a high degree of fulfilment. Those responsible for the management of the destination should pay particular attention to the image of the destination, as that is what has the most direct impact on the repeat visits, recommendations and satisfaction of tourists. The push and pull factors have a direct effect on the likelihood of repeat visits and on the image of Barcelona as a destination. In the same way, there also turn out to be important positive causal links between satisfaction and recommendation, in that the more satisfactory the experience of the tourists is, the more the destination is recommended.

For the short break tourists, push and pull factors are not decisive in predicting the general satisfaction of the visitors ( $H_1$ ), so that those who come because of the city or for personal reasons can be understood to be equally satisfied. As regards repeat visits, there is a clear low intensity negative connection with recommendation ( $H_9$ ), in that a moderate increase in the number of repeat visits results in a decline in the extent to which tourists recommend the destination. In this regard, promoting short visits could be considered to contribute to tourist loyalty, in terms of recommendations and repeat visits. To conclude this group, it is significant that the most satisfied tourists are those who are least likely to repeat ( $H_3$ ).

The most prominent specific feature of long break tourists is the significant difference in intensity in the negative proportion between satisfaction and repeat visits ( $H_3$ ). Consequently, tourists with a higher level of satisfaction, repeat less. Likewise, in regard to the relationship between repeat visits and recommendation, the further the repeat visits, the lower the recommendation ( $H_9$ ). Finally, the last two distinctive features of long break tourists are: the fact that there is a link between image and repeat visits ( $H_6$ ), albeit to a lesser extent than in the case of the short break visitors, and the lower degree of intensity in the relationship between motivation and image ( $H_5$ ).