

CONSUMER INNOVATIVE BEHAVIOR IN VACATION TRAVEL

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ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on the study of innovative behavior of tourists through the dimensions of sensation seeking. To our knowledge, few studies have explored the dimensions of sensation seeking in relation to the innovative behavior of tourists in their holiday travel decisions. Sensation seeking is defined as the desire for varied, new, and complex experiences, and the willingness to take physical, social, legal, and financial risks in order to achieve such experience. Four components of sensation seeking are identified: thrill and adventure seeking; experience seeking; disinhibition; and boredom susceptibility.

This study is based on a sample of 543 university students. The results show that innovators obtain higher scores on the total scale of sensation seeking than non-innovators, both men and women, as well as on the four dimensions of the scale. In addition, sensation seeking is a significant predictor of the consumer innovativeness in the vacation travel. It is noted that three of the four dimensions of sensation seeking (thrill and adventure seeking, experience seeking, and disinhibition) have a significant influence on the travel service innovativeness.

KEYWORDS

Sensation Seeking, Tourists, Innovative Behavior, Vacation travel, Innovativeness.

1. INTRODUCTION

Tourism marketing is responsible for the introduction and development of new tourist products, so it should analyze the consumer behavior of tourists, in order to understand the relationship between their personal characteristics and their buying behavior of new products. There is a kind of consumer who has an innovative approach, who is the most likely to try new products and is usually a risk-taker and more oriented to experience new ideas. As Burns (2007) suggests, a better understanding of consumer innovative behavior, therefore, may increase businesses ability to successfully introduce new products and/or increase the speed by which they are adopted.

Grande (2005) stated that consumers seek variety as a break from routine and that it is a process which varies in intensity according to the exploratory tendency of each individual. This variety seeking

continues until the consumers reach the level of sensation or enjoyment in the process that suits their own characteristics. People who are clearly identified with their innate exploratory tendency possess an intrinsic motivation. There is a feature of an individual's personality that leads them to explore new products and to change regardless of external stimuli. In short, as indicated by Grande (1999), innovative behavior can be understood as the tendency of people to try products on their own initiative before understanding the experiences of other consumers. As Orth and Bourrain (2008) point out, a significant part of the variance observed in consumer exploratory behavior has been attributed to individual differences in consumer sensation seeking.

According to the latest definition of sensation seeking by Zuckerman (1994: 27), it is: “a trait defined by the seeking of varied, novel and complex experiences, and the willingness to take physical, social, legal and financial risks for the sake of such experience”. The term sensation seeking was coined to describe the trait that includes a variety of risk-taking and sensation seeking behaviours and the expressed intolerance of boredom (Pizam et al., 2004). As described by Brakto and Butkovic (2003), since the construction of the first Sensation Seeking Scale (SSS) in the early 1960s, the concept of sensation seeking has been extensively researched. Galloway and Lopez (1999) indicate that sensation seeking has been found to be positively correlated with: risk-taking behaviour, tendency to disclose personal thoughts and feelings dislike of structured and formal situations, adventure travel, tendency to avoid repetition, linking of intense experiences, proneness to boredom under restrained and repetitive situations, and tendency towards disinhibition.

This paper focuses on the study of innovative behavior of tourists through the dimensions of sensation seeking. Litvin (2008) suggests that sensation seeking has often been considered by tourism researchers. This author indicates that it is widely accepted that some vacationers seek higher levels of arousal than do others and that the appropriate matching of the trait to the destination or product is an important element of successful tourism marketing. Moreover, Flynn and Goldsmith (1993) indicate that travel innovators go on vacation trips more often than later adopters. However, few studies explore the dimensions of sensation seeking in relation to the innovative behavior of tourists in their holiday travel decisions.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

During the sixties of the twentieth century, Marvin Zuckerman leads several research projects on a limited aspect of the personality, which he calls sensation seeking. As pointed out by Michel et al. (1999), the first theories of Zuckerman are based on the concept of *Optimal Stimulation Level*, where the people who seek sensations tend to reach a high level of stimulation. As argued by Wahlers and Etzel (1985), the basis for development of the sensation seeking scale is founded on, in the words of its creator (Zuckerman), the best that each individual has an optimal level of stimulation relative to his or her cognitive tendency, both active and emotional.

Sensation seeking is also related to cognitive processes (Ball and Zuckerman, 1992), physiological responses (Zuckerman, 1990; Smith et al., 1992), genetic factors (Eysenck, 1983; Zuckerman, 1993) and to environmental factors (Zuckerman, 1979). The theory of sensation seeking has the appeal of common sense. It is easy to accept the idea that people differ in their need for excitement and risk, change and adventure. We may describe our own level of sensation seeking and make a fairly accurate view of that level in our friends and relatives by considering the activities they enjoy or avoid. In short, the personality of individuals with high scores in sensation seeking corresponds to having a high degree of autonomy, expressing their emotions openly, being non-conformist, taking risks, acting independently from social conventions and from the needs and attitudes of others and organising their

lives in order to maximize the opportunities of self-fulfilment. Zuckerman (1991) considers it probable that those who actively participate in sensation seeking work well under conditions which include an excess of stimulation, although antisocial behaviour can also be produced in less demanding situations. People who take little part in sensation seeking adapt better to the majority of everyday situations, whereas they can be thrown off balance when these situations become more intense.

The sensation seeking scale is composed of four dimensions (Zuckerman, 1983): (1) experience seeking (ES), which represents the seeking of experience through the mind and senses, manifested as travel and a non-conforming lifestyle; (2) boredom susceptibility (BS), representing an aversion to repetition and routine, and restlessness when things are not changing; (3) thrill and adventure seeking (TAS), expressed as a desire to engage in sports or other activities involving speed or danger; and (4) disinhibition (Dis), which represents the desire to be socially and sexually uninhibited.

Studies indicate that sensation seeking varies depending on several sociodemographic variables. For example, significant differences were found with age (v.g. Zuckerman & Neeb, 1980; Haapasalo, 1990; Zuckerman, 1993), gender (v.g. Zuckerman, Eysenck & Eysenck, 1978; Hartman, 1992; Galloway & Lopez, 1999) and race (Zuckerman, 1994; Schultz & Schultz, 2003). In contrast, there are no significant differences regarding education. In general, sensation seeking begins to decrease during the third decade of life (Zuckerman, 1993). In addition, several authors suggest that the downward trend of this concept is independent of gender (Eysenck y Eysenck, 1987; Zuckerman, Eysenck & Eysenck, 1978; Haapasalo, 1990; Giambra, Camp & Grodsky, 1992; Carton et al., 1992). However, the search component of experience seeking continues to grow up to age 39 for women (Ball, Farnhill y Wangeman, 1984) and decreases less than in men (Haapasalo, 1990). Men also show higher scores in three dimensions: thrill and adventure seeking, disinhibition and boredom susceptibility. In contrast, women dominate in the dimension of experience seeking (Zuckerman, 1993). Zuckerman (1994) explains this by justifying that experience seeking is the dimension most influenced by educational and social aspects. On the other hand, the excitement and adventure seeking component increases in the case of men aged between 20 and 29, whereas women show a linear decrease, remaining below levels of male gender at all ages (Haapasalo, 1990).

The aim of this study is to analyze the relationship between sensation seeking and consumer innovativeness in vacation travel. Midgley and Dowling (1978) argue that innovativeness is the extent to which a person is receptive to new ideas and to making innovative decisions independent from the experience conveyed by others. These authors affirm that innovativeness toward a single product is the most specific level of innovative behavior.

As Steenkamp and Baumgartner (1992) indicate, consumer research has confirmed behavioral differences correlated with different levels of sensation seeking indicate that an individual's personality has a significant influence on their situation-specific exploratory behavior. Therefore, this study will specifically address whether there are significant differences between innovators and non-innovators with respect to the four dimensions of sensation seeking that define individual preferences for vacation travel.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study is based on a sample of 543 university students. The sample is divided into 350 women (64.5%) and 193 men (35.5%). Furthermore, we have identified 442 individuals overall sample indicating an innovative profile. Among them, there are 294 women (66.5%) and 148 men (33.5%).

In the present study, two measurement scales have been used. One scale measures the innovativeness of individuals in the field of tourism services and another scale measures sensation seeking. The first one is the level of innovativeness of Flynn and Goldsmith (1993), which contains six items. This scale is adapted from the scale of Goldsmith and Hofacker (1991). Those authors have developed and validated a short, reliable Likert scale suitable for measuring consumer innovativeness for a specific product category. Roehrich (2004) indicates that this type of scale has been expressly designed to measure innovativeness as a tendency to buy new products. A seven-point Likert innovativeness scale has been used. The average score for each subject in the six items was considered to select the sample and divide it into innovators and non-innovators. Innovators equal or exceed 4.5 points, while non-innovators obtained 3.5 or less. Values between 3.5 and 4.5 were not included in the study sample.

On the other hand, the Brief Sensation Seeking Scale (BSSS) is used. This scale was created by Hoyle et al. (2002) by adapting items from the SSS-V (Zuckerman et al, 1978). The BSSS is a viable measure of sensation seeking for adolescents and young adults and each of the four primary dimensions of sensation seeking is represented by two items (Hoyle et al., 2002). All items were measured on a seven-point Likert-type scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7), with the midpoint labelled neutral. The psychometric properties of the BSSS has been confirmed by other studies (v.g., Eachus, 2004; Litvin, 2008; and López-Bonilla and López-Bonilla, 2010).

4. RESULTS

Table 1 shows the sensation seeking data of innovators and non-innovators in tourist services, divided by gender. In each case, the average value and the value of its standard deviation in parentheses are indicated. First, it is observed that the innovators achieve higher scores on the total scale of sensation seeking (women 5.34 versus 4.61 and men 5.55 versus 5.56), and in all subscales compared to non-innovators. The experience seeking subscale reaches high scores for both men and women. In contrast, the disinhibition subscale is the one with greater differences between both genders in the innovators group (women 5.27 versus men 4.31).

Overall, previous studies have shown that men typically obtain a higher score for sensation seeking than women. In this study, this is confirmed for the whole sample on the total scale, as discussed above, where men achieve higher scores than women. In contrast, when studying the group of innovators, women obtain higher scores than men in experience seeking subscale (women 6.62 vs. men 6.57).

Table 1: Descriptive data of sensation seeking in innovator and non-innovator tourists

Variable	Women	Men	Women	Men
	Mean (DT)	Mean (DT)	Mean (DT)	Mean (DT)
Experience Seeking (ES)	6.62 (0.73)	6.57 (0.68)	6.15 (1.01)	5.82 (1.29)
Boredom Susceptibility (BS)	5.07 (1.33)	5.09 (1.28)	4.57 (1.59)	4.32 (1.26)
Thrill and Adventure Seeking (TAS)	4.94 (1.46)	5.27 (1.24)	4.10 (1.67)	4.28 (1.59)
Disinhibition (Dis)	4.31 (1.65)	5.27 (1.55)	3.62 (1.64)	3.83 (1.95)
Total Scale (TS)	5.34 (0.95)	5.55 (0.87)	4.61 (1.08)	4.56 (1.10)

Source: The authors

In Table 2 the results are shown of the logistic regression applied to the whole sample. As stated by Hair et al. (2004), two statistical contrasts exist for proving the significance of the model. First, the Chi-squared contrast for the change in the value of the -2LL from the base model is comparable to the F global contrast of the multiple regression. In our model, this reduction is statistically significant to a level of 0.000. Furthermore, the overall-fit measure of Hosmer and Lemeshow sets out a statistical contrast which indicates that there is no significant statistical difference between the observed and predicted classifications. These two measures, in combination, lend support to the acceptance that it is a significant logistic regression model and is adequate for use in a test.

Table 2: Variables in the total sample equation

Variable	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sign	R	Exp(B)
ES	0.5599	0.1238	20.4564	1	0.0000	0.1798	1.7505
BS	0.0123	0.0932	0.0174	1	0.8950	0.0000	1.0421
TAS	0.2014	0.0912	4.8734	1	0.0273	0.0709	1.2231
Dis	0.1848	0.0789	5.4857	1	0.0192	0.0781	1.2029
Constant	-4.0569	0.7882	26.4906	1	0.0000	--	--
Change in-2LL at a significance level of 0.001							

Source: The authors

As this Table shows, the model explains that significant differences exist between innovator and non-innovator tourists with respect to three dimensions: experience seeking (ES), at a significance level of 1% (P=0.0000); thrill and adventure seeking (TAS), at a significance level of 5% (p=0.0273); and disinhibition (D), at a significance level of 5% ((p=0.0192). However, there are no significant differences with respect to boredom susceptibility (BS).

Similarly, two more logistic regressions for men and women have been carried out. In both cases, the models also present a good fit. Tables 3 and 4 show the data. It is proven that there are significant differences in sensation seeking according to gender. On the one hand, there are significant differences between innovators and non-innovators of tourist services in the group of men (Table 2) with respect to the size of experience seeking (ES) and disinhibition, both at the significance level of 0.1%. On the other hand, there are significant differences in the group of women, in the dimension of experience seeking (ES) and thrill and adventure seeking (TAS), at the significance levels of 0.1% and 5 %, respectively.

Table 3: Innovator versus non-innovator tourists: Men

Variable	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sign	R	Exp(B)
ES	0.6837	0.2082	10.7814	1	0.0010	0.2047	1.9812
BS	0.0135	0.1743	0.0060	1	0.9381	0.0000	1.0136
TAS	0.1220	0.1714	0.5068	1	0.4765	0.0000	1.1298
Dis	0.3787	0.1381	7.5206	1	0.0061	0.1623	1.4604
Constant	-5.4785	1.3442	16.6119	1	0.0000	--	--
Change in-2LL at a significance level of 0.001							

Source: The authors

Table 4: Innovator versus non-innovator tourists: Women

Variable	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sign	R	Exp(B)
ES	0.4762	0.1580	9.0871	1	0.0026	0.1401	1.6100
BS	-0.0007	0.1132	0.0000	1	1.0000	0.0000	0.9999
TAS	0.2397	0.1088	4.8501	1	0.0276	0.0888	1.2708
Dis	0.0978	0.1005	0.9466	1	0.0276	0.0888	1.2708
Constant	-3.2162	0.9961	10.4242	1	0.0012	--	--
Change in-2LL at a significance level of 0.001							

Source: The authors

5. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the fact that so many travel, tourism, and leisure studies have incorporated the sensation-seeking trait, it is evident that researchers in the field consider this an important variable (Litvin, 2008). This paper analyzes sensation seeking as a personality trait of tourists in innovative behavior.

The results of this study show, first, that innovators obtain higher scores on the total scale of sensation seeking than non-innovators, both men and women, as well as on the four dimensions of the scale. The scores of sensation seeking differ across gender. In general, men score higher than women (eg Zuckerman et al., 1978, Zuckerman and Neeb, 1980; Hartman, 1992; Carton et al., 1992, Zuckerman, 1994, Galloway and Lopez, 1999, Michel et al., 1999). However, innovative women reach higher scores than men in the dimension of experience seeking. These results are consistent with those obtained by Zuckerman (1993) and are justified by the fact that experience seeking is the dimension that receives higher socio-educational influences (Zuckerman, 1994).

In addition, it was found that sensation seeking is a significant predictor of the consumer innovativeness in the vacation travel. Note that three of the four dimensions of sensation seeking have a significant influence on the travel service innovativeness. The exception is the scale of susceptibility to boredom. Likewise, we conclude that men and women have two different innovative profiles. Thus, innovative women tourist services are influenced by their experience and thrill and adventure seeking. And, in contrast, men are influenced by their experience seeking and disinhibition. In both genders, the tendency to seek new sensations and experiences when traveling prevails. However, women also seek physical activities that involve risk, novelty and challenge, while men prefer to look for uninhibited social activities. These two Profiles should be considered by tourism organizations in their strategies of market segmentation and communication. As Litvin (2008) suggests, tourism marketers should understand the sensation-seeking desires of their guests and visitors and should not only tailor their advertising and promotional efforts to the desired level of arousal of their market but also adapt their environment to best satisfy these desires.

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