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# Customer Satisfaction and Behavioral Intentions: The Case of Aruba-- Small Island Nation

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# Customer Satisfaction and Behavioral Intentions: The Case of Aruba-- Small Island Nation

## **Abstract**

Tourism studies related to small island destinations have become a research stream amongst many academics in recent years. The current study investigates tourist satisfaction related to a tour operator on the island of Aruba that specializes in jeep and bus tours. As there is an increased expenditure pattern for these types of activities, companies are looking for ways to improve customer satisfaction and behavioral intentions. Results indicate that tourists are generally satisfied with the tour company; however a difference in satisfaction ratings was obtained for respondents 61 years old or above. Four factors were extracted from tourists' satisfaction attributes and three of these factors, including the overall tour value, tour guide, and sound systems used during these tours, were found to be strong predictors of behavioral intentions measured by the likelihood to rebook and the likelihood to recommend the tour company to family and friends. Operational and marketing strategies were suggested based on the findings of the study.

## **Keywords**

Small island nation, Aruba, tour operators, customer satisfaction, behavioral intentions

# **Customer Satisfaction and Behavioral Intentions: The Case of Aruba – Small Island Nation**

## **Introduction**

The importance of tourism in small island nations has been extensively addressed in the literature (Craigwell, 2007; Croes, 2006; Jackman, Lorde, & Alleyne, 2011; Lewis, 2004). External economic contributions to the small island economies are somewhat dominated by travelers to the island, comprising more than 50% of export earnings (Bull & Weed, 1999; Hutchings, 1996; Shaw & Williams, 1994). Tourism tends to be viewed as an export industry in these locations that generates foreign exchange for them, creates jobs and encourages economic diversification of the location (Lewis, 2004). Small island nations have been defined as having a population threshold of less than 1.5 million people and a small land mass; they also have smaller governments with limited resources. They are open to trade and investment and rely heavily on those to help support their economy (von Tigerstrom, 2005).

More specifically, Poon (1990) classifies islands as being small (<1 million inhabitants) and large (>1 million inhabitants), therefore creating a better benchmark for measuring tourism related impacts on small island tourism economies for this particular study. Small islands with their geographic, economic, social, and environmental characteristics have been associated with tremendous diseconomies of scale and difficulty remaining economically sustainable (Pigliaru, Brau, & Lanza, 2007).

Small island tourism economies, especially the case of the Caribbean region, have traditionally relied on the development of their tourism industry. In doing so, they have to reduce the risks associated with the depletion of its natural resources. These natural resources, which are essential to their tourism income, can be easily depleted from both a direct and indirect exploitation of their delicate environmental assets. Many local, regional and international policy makers, academics, and private entities are continuously expressing serious concerns about protecting the islands' environmental assets. One of the main reasons is that customer satisfaction rates, both for the destination and its local businesses, is considered as a critical determinant of how well it performs on a local, regional and global market (Crouch & Ritchie, 1999). Protecting the natural resources of the location can ensure that the tourism industry continues to thrive.

Therefore, the need for ensuring that tourists are satisfied and continuing to enhance the economy in these types of locations is essential. The purpose of the current study is to focus on helping to create a more complete understanding of

how customer satisfaction rates are influenced by strategic choices and decision making processes in small island economies. More specifically, it will investigate how small and medium enterprises (SMEs) on small island nations perform with their customer satisfaction rates, and what factors influence customers' behavioral intentions, measured through likelihood to rebook and likelihood to recommend the tour company to family and friends. For this study, a tour operator in Aruba will be investigated and analyzed. The results of the current study could benefit the tour company and ultimately the island of Aruba, which can then be used as a benchmark for other small island economies in the region.

Aruba, with less than one (1) million inhabitants is considered a small island that has traditionally relied on the development of its tourism industry, and this is why it was chosen as the context of the current study. In general, the island of Aruba has been remarkably successful in pursuing the strategy of tourism specialization (Algieri, 2006; Croes, 2005; Croes, 2006, Lanza, Temple, & Urga, 2003; Oyewole, 2001; Pigliaru, Brau, & Lanza, 2007). Aruba is a small island of 69 square miles located in the southern Caribbean Sea, where tourism accounts for a total of 87% of the GDP according to a World Tourism and Travel Council estimate (WTTC, 2013a) and which ranked third among 35 tourism-dependent countries based on travel and tourism's total contribution to employment (Jackman et al., 2011; WTTC, 2013b). A recent report said that the overnight visitor arrival growth of Aruba in 2012 and 2013 is 5.4% (WTTC, 2013b) and it is considered one of the islands with the highest number of repeat visitors in the region. Travel and tourism accounted for 14.8 percent of total GDP and is expected to increase its share by almost two percentage points to 16.5 percent by 2014. Aruba has such high popularity as a Caribbean island destination due to its pleasant weather, beautiful coastal areas, and safe social and political environment (Vanegas & Croes, 2003).

As a consequence, over the years, Aruba has been intensively developed to meet the increasing tourism demand. Aruba is among the fastest developing Caribbean islands in terms of population growth, which has doubled since the mid-1980s (Cole & Razak, 2011), and they had close to 1 million tourism arrivals in 2012 (Caribbean Tourism Organization, 2012). Major tourism markets of Aruba are tourists from the United States (around 65%), followed by tourists from Venezuela (11%), Europe (9%), and Canada (5%) (Caribbean Tourism Organization, 2010).

However, despite promising numbers in terms of tourism arrivals, concerns such as the overdevelopment, capacity, and overuse of natural resource issues are broadly discussed among scholars (Cole & Razak, 2011; Croes, 2005; Vanegas & Croes, 2003). Jackman, Lorde, Lowe and Alleyne (2011) studied

eighteen small islands with developing status in the period of 2000-2007 and the results revealed that Aruba was among the eighteen islands that didn't show a strong competitive advantage at any point during the eight-year period. Based on these results, the researchers further pointed out that the tourism products offered by the islands should be upgraded as a way to improve the overall competitiveness of these small islands (Jackman, et al., 2011). According to Cole (2012), tourist satisfaction influences fluctuations in demand in small island nations. This overall satisfaction influences tourists' willingness to pay higher prices for destinations and influences whether or not they will revisit a destination (Bull & Weed, 1999).

This study will inform research on tourist satisfaction and behavioral intentions in order to expand the knowledge base regarding small island economies. Specific research questions are addressed following the review of literature. The following section describes the research that has informed the current study related to tourist satisfaction, satisfaction attributes, and behavioral intentions.

## **Literature Review**

### *Tourist Satisfaction*

Satisfaction can be generally defined as a customer's evaluation of the provision of consumption-related service and products (Oliver, 1997). According to Walker (1995), customer satisfaction is customers' subjective comparison of what the customer expected and what they perceived when they received the service or product. Customer satisfaction in the tourism context is generally referred to as tourist satisfaction. From the tourism organization's standpoint, understanding what factors create satisfaction in tourists is an ongoing challenge for tourism managers in order to help them provide and design an experience for tourists who are more likely to recommend and revisit their destination (Maunier & Camelis, 2013). As an important component of the tourism products and services provided by a location (Yoon & Uysal, 2005), tourist satisfaction could enhance a company's reputation in the marketplace, help the company obtain market share, and reduce relevant costs such as transaction costs and costs of failure (Anderson, Fornell, & Lehmann, 1994; Chi & Qu, 2008; Song, van der Veen, Li, & Chen, 2012).

In the tourism context, tourist satisfaction is traditionally measured through the comparison between tourists' expectations and their perceptions (Oliver, 1980). This expectancy disconfirmation framework perspective holds that

tourists would be satisfied if their perceptions meet their expectations prior to the experience (Berry, Parasuraman, & Zeithaml, 1994). The major criticism of this measurement is that tourists' expectations are difficult to measure, which are also influenced by factors such as their experiences of other destinations, similar products, and previous knowledge (Maunier & Camelis, 2013). Such factors could be referred to as a bundle of previous experiences to be compared to when tourists evaluate their satisfaction levels (Yoon & Uysal, 2005). The comparison between their preferred standard and their perceptions can be referred to as norm theory (Yoon & Uysal, 2005). In a similar vein, tourist satisfaction can be seen from the costs/benefits perspective, the equity theory, that tourists will be satisfied if they perceive their benefits overweight the costs of the tourism experience (Oliver & Swan, 1989).

Some other scholars (Pizam, Neumann, & Reichel, 1978), asserted that performance-only technique is a more appropriate method to measure tourists' satisfaction (Deng, 2007; Fuchs, & Weiermair, 2004), where only tourists' post-experience perceptions are measured. In these cases, an on-site survey was applied and considered as a useful tool to provide a more general understanding of tourist satisfaction (Coghlan & Pearce, 2010). In sum, previous studies have used a number of methods guided by different theories in order to measure tourist satisfaction. This study has applied the performance-only method using on-site surveys to study tourist satisfaction at a tour operator in Aruba. Tourist satisfaction is evaluated through different attributes that comprise the overall satisfaction of the trip.

### *Satisfaction Attributes*

Due to its importance in destination management and strategic planning, tourist satisfaction is emphasized in the literature and there has been an increase in the number of studies analyzing different attributes measuring satisfaction in tourism, travel, and hospitality (Chi & Qu, 2008; Kozak & Rimmington, 2000, Song et al., 2012). From the tourists' viewpoint, tourist satisfaction is evaluated through services and facilities at the tourist destination (Maunier & Camelis, 2013). Tourists receive a variety of services during the trip and each attribute measuring those services contributes to their overall satisfaction. As a specific type of tourist satisfaction, attribute satisfaction is generally defined as the customers' evaluation of attribute performance (Baker & Crompton, 2000; Spreng, MacKenzie, & Olshavsky, 1996). It is suggested that attribute satisfaction is a direct antecedent of overall satisfaction with a tourism experience (Chi & Qu, 2008), which means that attribute satisfaction could help to explain a great

amount of variance related to the overall satisfaction with a tourist destination (Chi & Qu, 2008; Spreng et al., 1996).

Different attributes that comprise tourist satisfaction continues to receive great attention. Attributes at a destination can be classified based on their different influences on tourist satisfaction (Alegre & Garau, 2010). As suggested by Song et al. (2012), tourist satisfaction is influenced by a variety of factors not limited to service quality. Other factors can be addressed in the tourist satisfaction investigations. Consistent with this perspective, Marcussen (2011) confirmed that tourist satisfaction leads to intention to return, but he also emphasizes other factors that help to predict the intention to return, such as the nearness of the destination to the market, previous experience with the destination, socio-demographics, and additional trip characteristics.

Based on different contexts, satisfaction attributes are customized to reflect the specific features at a destination. For example, tour guides can be an important attribute to help and communicate with the tourists during their trips and provide the image for the destination. Tour guides' performance is a critical factor that influences tourists' satisfaction and behavioral intentions (Huang, Weiler, & Assaker, 2014). Reisinger and Waryszak (1994) included "satisfaction with the tourist guide" as a satisfaction attribute in a study of Japanese tourists visiting Australia, and found that Japanese tourists are generally satisfied with the services of Australian tourist guides, but they perceived that they are not informative enough to meet their expectations. Farís (2010) also found that the role of tour guides and their communication with the customers is critical in developing the relationship between the tour company and the tourists through activities such as touring, exploring, and visiting the destinations. In a recent study of Huang et al. (2014), tour guides' performance was found to positively impact tourist satisfaction and behavioral intentions in a context of heritage destination. They contributed to the literature by directly linking the tour guides' performance to tourist satisfaction. Therefore, tour guides' performance has taken an important role in investigating tourists' satisfaction, especially in the experience of package tours where tour guides generally lead them through the overall experiences (Huang, Weiler, & Assaker, 2014). The following section will discuss behavioral intentions and the relationship with satisfaction.

### *Behavioral Intentions*

One important theory in explaining individuals' behaviors is the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB). First proposed by Ajzen (1988, 1991), the Theory of Planned Behavior states that individuals' actual behaviors could be predicted

through behavioral intentions as well as their perceived behavioral control. It is believed that if properly measured, behavioral intentions are very strong indicators of most social behaviors (Ajzen, 1988). Three constructs are considered as antecedents of behavioral intentions: attitudes, subjective norm, and perceived control. Following this widely accepted theory, many studies have been conducted in the hospitality and tourism industry to understand behavioral intentions in order to predict tourists' actual behaviors of visitation to a tourist destination or tourist attraction (Baker & Crompton, 2000; Buttle & Bok, 1996; Lam & Hsu, 2006; Hsu & Huang, 2012).

Apart from the powerful predictor related to actual behavior, advantages of behavioral intentions are discussed and summarized in the previous studies. According to Zeithaml, Berry, and Parasuraman (1996), behavioral intentions have positive associations with customer retentions. Tourists who expressed positive behavior intentions are more likely to provide positive word-of-mouth information about the location, recommend the location to other customers, revisit the destination (repurchase behavior), and pay premium prices (Anderson et al., 1994; Chi & Qu, 2008; Kozak, 2001; Kozak & Rimmington, 2000; Yoon & Uysal, 2005). In other words, these effects are components of destination loyalty, and therefore behavioral intentions are major antecedents of loyalty (Chi & Qu, 2008). Repeat tourists on the other hand have been found to perceive a revisited destination more positively than a first time visitor. An example of this was found in Kozak and Rimmington's (2000) study of tourist satisfaction in Mallorca, Spain, a popular off-season holiday destination, where they determined that first time tourists to the destination expressed lower satisfaction level with all assessed attributes than that of repeat tourists to the location.

In the tourism context, research has been focused on the tourists' behavioral intentions and recommendation intentions. A handful of recent studies have investigated the role of behavioral intentions in the tourism sector (Chi & Qu, 2008; Kozak, 2001; Kozak & Rimmington, 2000; Yoon & Uysal, 2005; Yu & Goulden, 2006; Williams & Soutar, 2009). Also, Petrick (2004) contributed to the literature by finding satisfaction, quality, and value were all strong predictors of cruise passengers' behavioral intentions. In addition, return intentions were found to positively and significantly influence passengers' intention to recommend to others (Petrick, 2004).

Lam and Hsu (2006) tested the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) among potential Taiwanese travelers to Hong Kong and confirmed the partial utility of TPB applied in a destination context. Subjective norm and perceived behavioral control rather than attitude were predictors of behavioral intentions. In a similar manner, Hsu & Huang (2012) studied relationship between behavioral intentions



and actual behaviors of the tourists from Tier I cities in China. They proposed an extended planned behavior model by adding the motivation construct as an antecedent. The empirical results further confirmed the validity and usefulness of TPB and concluded that subjective norm has the most impact on behavioral intention, followed by perceived behavioral control and attitude, respectively (Hsu & Huang, 2012).

Hutchinson, Lai, and Wang (2009) studied the structural relationships among perceived quality, value, satisfaction on behavioral intentions among golf travelers. They found that tourist satisfaction and value have significant influences on behavior intentions. They contributed to the literature by dividing behavioral intentions into three independent constructs: revisit intentions, word-of-mouth intentions, and search for alternatives. Among these three constructs of behavioral intentions, word-of-mouth was found to be most influenced by satisfaction.

Consistent with this finding, Chen and Chen (2009) studied heritage sites in Taiwan and also found that tourists' satisfaction and perceived value have a direct impact on behavioral intentions. Tourist satisfaction served as a mediation factor between experience quality and behavioral intentions. In a similar vein, Baker and Crompton (2000) investigated the mediation effect of tourist satisfaction between perceived quality and behavioral intentions and suggested that though tourist satisfaction is a useful predictor of behavioral intention, it is not as strong as perceived quality (Baker & Crompton, 2000).

In sum, previous studies have acknowledge the importance of behavioral intentions in the tourism context, and considerable studies have generally reached the consensus that tourist satisfaction has a direct impact on behavioral intentions (including intention to revisit and word-of-mouth recommendations) (Chi & Qu, 2008; Kozak & Rimmington, 2000; Yoon & Uysal, 2005; Williams & Soutar, 2009). Therefore, understanding customer satisfaction and how that relates to behavioral intentions are critical for destination marketing and tourism planning, especially for the small island nations where tourism generates the majority of revenue and jobs in the destination. Taking guidance from the abovementioned studies the purpose of the current study is focused on helping to create a more complete understanding of the tourism industry in Aruba by investigating customer satisfaction and behavioral intentions related to SMEs related to tourism related tour operators. The study also provides operational and marketing strategies for the private sector in Aruba's tourism economy in order to provide some insight for other regions of the Caribbean or small island nations. Specifically the current study will assess customer satisfaction and its relationship

to behavioral intentions, measured through likelihood to rebook and likelihood to recommend the tour company to family and friends.

The research questions guiding the current study are as follows:

1. What are tourists' perceptions regarding a variety of attributes of a tour company that provides jeep and bus tours in Aruba such as friendliness of guide, safety of tour, sounds system, value of tour, etc.?
2. What are the dimensions of tourist satisfaction attributes for bus and jeep tours in Aruba?
3. Are there any statistically significant differences in tourists' satisfaction level related to various demographic factors?
4. Do the different attributes of a tour company that are related to customer satisfaction predict behavioral intentions (tourists' likelihood to rebook, and likelihood to recommend a tour with the company to family and friends)?

## **Methods**

### *Research Design*

For the purpose of this research, the questionnaire was developed which contained close-ended questions such as: a) satisfaction attributes of the tour; b) intentions to book another tour; and c), intentions to recommend the tour to other people, in order to examine the level of tourists' satisfaction and their behavioral intentions related to the tour and the tour company. A 6-point Likert type scale was applied in this survey, with 1= very dissatisfied and 6= very satisfied. The researchers chose this type of scale in order to have respondents commit to either the positive or negative side of the scale. A 6-point Likert scale can provide a higher trend of discrimination as well as higher reliability than that of 5-point or 7-point Likert scales (Chomeya, 2010). Additionally, 6-point Likert scales also have higher reliability and validity than 4-point Likert scales (Chang, 1994). Other questions asked included respondents' demographics, the type of tour they participated in, and open-ended comments about the tour.

### *Study Site*

The data of the current study was collected from one of tour companies in island of Aruba, a small island in the southern Caribbean Sea. In particular, a local bus and jeep tour company was approached and the researchers requested to

measure their visitors' customer satisfaction ratings related to the services they provide. This local company is selected as the study site because it was considered one of the major tour operators in Aruba, which has a fifty-year history of operation. Further, it provides a wide range of services for tourists, including underwater tours, sailing, and bus and jeep tours. Bus tours (island tours) include the Aruba sightseeing bus tour and the Discover Aruba bus tour and the jeep tours (off-road tours) contain tours of a local beach named Baby Beach and the Natural Pool (a naturally made cove formation with beautiful blue ocean water).

This study used simple random sampling method to collect data. During the month of March of 2011, the tour operator allowed researchers to randomly survey guests that were scheduled to take part on their bus and jeep tours. There were 28 randomly selected tours throughout the month representing each day of the week (Monday-Friday) that were used to collect data. During the data collection process, all customers were approached and were asked to complete a short survey related to the satisfaction ratings about the tour they just participated immediately after each tour.

A total of 322 surveys were handed out with a total of 182 completed surveys for a response rate of 56.52%. To answer the four research questions, the data was then analyzed using descriptive statistics, Exploratory Factor Analysis, ANOVA and Independent Samples T Test, and Hierarchical Multiple Regression analysis using SPSS version 20 accordingly. Specifically, descriptive statistics was used to understand tourists' perceptions on the bus and jeep tour in Aruba, Exploratory Factor Analysis was used in order to determine the dimensions or factors of tourist satisfaction, which then shows the relationships between various attributes or items. ANOVA and Independent T Test were used in order to determine if there were statistically significant differences between the tour attributes as they related to a variety of demographic factors, and Hierarchical Multiple Regression was used in order to determine if the tour attributes and customer satisfaction related to those attributes predicted behavioral intentions of the tourists.

## **Results**

### *Tourists' Perceptions of Bus and Jeep Tour*

Table 1 shows the demographic profile of the respondents. Most of the tourists were from North America, with the largest majority of tourists from the United States (n=200, 73.3%) and Canada (n=45, 16.5%), followed by 5.5% who

were Latin American tourists, and 2.6% who were European tourists. Most of the respondents were older than 40 years old, with 48% of them between 41-60 years old and 21% of them 61 years and above, representing a relatively older age population. First-time tourists make up to 80% of the respondents, 16.5% of the tourists have visited Aruba between 2-4 times, 0.7% were 5-6 times visitors, and 2.9% had visited seven times or more. Four types of jeep and bus tours were provided and surveyed, with 17.9% of respondents taking the Aruba Sightseeing bus tour, 20.5% taking the Baby Beach Jeep tour, 30.8% of respondents taking the Discover Aruba bus tour, and another 30.8% taking the Natural Pool Jeep tour.

**Table 1 Demographic profile of the respondents**

	Frequency	Percent		Frequency	Percent
<b>Country of Origin</b>			<b>Age</b>		
USA	200	73.3	Under 20	9	3.3
Canada	45	16.5	20-40	71	26.1
Latin America	15	5.5	40-60	126	46.2
Europe	7	2.6	61 and above	56	20.5
Aruba	1	.4	Total	262	96
UK	1	.4			
Other	3	1.1			
Total	272	99.6			
<b>Time Visited</b>			<b>Type of Tour</b>		
1st visit	218	79.9	Aruba Sightseeing Bus	49	17.9
2-4 times	45	16.5	Baby Beach Jeep	56	20.5
5-6 times	2	.7	Discover Aruba Tour Bus	84	30.8
More than 7 times	8	2.9	Natural Pool Jeep	84	30.8
Total	273	100.0	Total	273	100.0

The means of customer satisfaction levels related to various attributes are shown in Table 2. In general, tourists provided positive evaluations regarding most of the attributes of customer satisfaction. The highest rating by tourists was the ‘friendliness of tour guide’ (M=5.8), followed by the ‘knowledge of the tour guide’ (M=5.77), and the ‘safety of the tour’ (M=5.64). The only attribute that was rated below 3.5 (considered as neutral to negative) is “hearing guide clearly” (M=3.48). Similar to the ratings of ‘hearing guide clearly’, tourists also rated “understanding the tour guide” as mediocre (M=3.86). It is interesting to note that

tourists consider the bus tour as neither educational (M=3.59), nor as very entertaining (M=3.67). In addition, tourists expressed positive views on their likelihood to recommend the tour company to a friend or family member (M=5.46), and the likelihood to rebook a tour with the same company (M=5.33).

**Table 2 Customer satisfaction levels related to tour attributes**

<b>Satisfaction Attributes</b>	<b><i>n</i></b>	<b><i>M</i></b>	<b><i>SD</i></b>
Friendliness of guide	270	5.80	.543
Guide's knowledge	273	5.77	.549
Guide's overall presentation	272	5.67	.687
Safety	269	5.64	.717
Condition of Vehicle	272	5.58	.824
Comfort of vehicle	273	5.48	.858
Overall experience of tour	273	5.48	.728
Length of tour	265	5.41	.769
Price/Value vs. expectations	272	5.22	.893
Sound system	269	5.15	1.178
Food	223	4.78	1.197
Understood guide	273	3.86	5.810
Heard guide clearly	269	3.48	.694

#### *Dimensions of Satisfaction Attributes*

To answer research question 2, Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was performed to investigate the attributes that comprise tourists' satisfaction when taking bus and jeep tours in Aruba. As indicated, EFA can help to identify an underlying structure among a set of variables, and to describe the relationships among observed variables and the relative importance of each factor (Field, 2013). In particular, maximum likelihood method with Varimax rotation and Kaiser Normalization was performed to simplify the factors by maximizing variance of loadings (Field, 2013). A total of 13 tourists' satisfaction attributes were included in EFA analysis, and item loadings lower than 0.4 were eliminated. Two items, the 'food provided during the tour', and 'understanding the guide during the tour', were eliminated due to low loadings. As shown in Table 3, four factors were extracted and neatly distributed, with all factors internally consistent and well defined by the variables. About 73% of the total variance was explained by the four factors. Interpretive labels for each factor were suggested and added for each factor: overall tour value, tour guide, vehicle condition, and sound

system. The Cronbach's alpha of each factor was conducted and it showed that all factors reached the satisfactory level at 0.7.

**Table 3 Dimensions of tourists' satisfaction**

Variable	Factor Loadings			
	F1.Overall Tour Value	F2.Tour Guide	F3.Vehicle Condition	F4.Sound System
Price/Value vs expectations	.861			
Overall experience of tour	.755			
Length of tour	.747			
Friendliness of guide		.759		
Guide's knowledge		.721		
Guide's overall presentation		.680		
Safety		.494		
Condition of vehicle			.972	
Comfort of vehicle			.798	
Heard guide clearly				.827
Sound system				.810
<b>Eigenvalue</b>	5.78	1.36	1.28	1.06
<b>Total Variance Explained(cumulative)</b>	44.48%	54.95%	64.81%	73.01%
<b>Alpha</b>	0.88	0.86	0.91	0.78

#### *Differences among Tourists of Different Demographics*

To answer research question 3 which examines the differences related to attribute satisfaction levels among different demographics, an ANOVA was conducted with country of origin. Due to the imbalanced size of country of origin where North American tourists dominate the Aruba tourists, only tourists from first three countries: American, Canadian, and Latin American were compared. The results found three variables significantly different among tourists of these three countries: 'overall experience' ( $F=5.5$ ,  $p<0.05$ ), 'safety' ( $F=6.0$ ,  $p<0.05$ ), and 'price and value were as expected' ( $F=4.45$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). Follow up Tukey test was conducted and the results were shown in Table 4. Latin American ( $M= 5.04$ ) perceived safety significantly lower than those of American ( $M=5.67$ ) and Canadian ( $M=5.76$ ). Further, Latin American ( $M=4.60$ ) also perceived price and value as expected significantly lower than those of American ( $M=5.24$ ) and Canadian ( $M=5.38$ ). Last, Latin American ( $M=4.93$ ) rated the overall experiences significantly lower than those of American ( $M=5.49$ ) and Canadian ( $M=5.64$ ),

representing the differences of tourists from different countries having different expectations in the tour.

To evaluate the differences among first-time and repeat tourists, the variable ‘time visited’ (on Aruba) was further dummy coded as first-time visitor and repeat visitors (visiting 2 or more times). Independent samples t test was conducted to compare the two groups, and ‘Sound system’ was found significantly different between two groups ( $F=5.71, p<0.05$ ), with repeat visitors’ rating ( $M=5.48$ ) higher than those of first-time visitors ( $M=5.07$ ).

When the ANOVA was conducted with age groups, the results showed that a statistically significant difference was found in the variable ‘heard tour guide clearly’ ( $F =3.23, p<0.05$ ). No statistically significant differences were found in other variables related to age groups. Follow-up tests were conducted to evaluate pairwise differences among the age groups using Tukey analysis. As shown in Table 4, there was a significant difference in the means between age group 20-40 and age group 61 and above ( $p=.015$ ), but no differences were found between other pairwise groups.

**Table 4 Post hoc Tukey comparison of satisfaction attributes by demographics**

<b>Item</b>			<b>Standard Error</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
	<b>Country of Origin</b>			
<b>Overall Experience</b>	Latin American	American	.1927	.012
		Canadian	.2147	.003
<b>Safety</b>	Latin American	American	.1896	0.004
		Canadian	.2112	0.002
<b>Price and Value as expected</b>	Latin American	American	.2373	.022
		Canadian	.2643	.009
	<b>Age</b>			
<b>Heard Guide Clearly</b>	Under20	20-40	.242	1.000
		41-60	.235	.872
		61 and above	.245	.494
	20-40	41-60	.103	.199
		61 and above	.123	.015
		41-60	.110	.427

### *Satisfaction Attributes and Behavioral Intentions*

To investigate research question 4, hierarchical multiple regression was applied to further investigate to what extent each factor contributes to tourists' behavioral intentions (likelihood to rebook and likelihood to recommend). Hierarchical regression allows the order of entry of variables based on theoretical considerations (Field, 2013). As presented earlier, the relative importance of each factor was identified among tourists' satisfaction items, the order of entry is determined based on the EFA results. Therefore hierarchical regression analysis was appropriate for the current study which allows for the control of each factor. As shown in Table 5, the first step involves overall tour value, and the second step includes both overall tour value and tour guide. Then vehicle condition and sound system were added to the model in step 3 and step 4, respectively, to test the tourists' satisfaction factors on tourists' likelihood to rebook. Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) and Tolerance were examined and the concern of multicollinearity was not detected based on the recommendation of tolerance value above 0.1 and VIF below 10 (Hair et al., 1998).



**Table 5 Results of hierarchical multiple regression testing tourists' satisfaction factors on likelihood to rebook**

<b>Model</b>		<b>SE</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
<b>Step1</b>	Price/Value vs expectations	.087	.211	<b>.015</b>
	Overall experience of tour	.101	.281	<b>.001</b>
	Length of tour	.084	.232	<b>.001</b>
<b>Step2</b>	Price/Value vs expectations	.085	.189	<b>.025</b>
	Overall experience of tour	.110	.140	.116
	Length of tour	.082	.226	<b>.001</b>
	Friendliness of guide	.132	.069	.372
	Guide's knowledge	.129	-.160	<b>.042</b>
	Guide's overall presentation	.104	.247	<b>.003</b>
	Safety	.075	.109	.074
<b>Step3</b>	Price/Value vs expectations	.087	.173	<b>.045</b>
	Overall experience of tour	.111	.148	.098
	Length of tour	.084	.222	<b>.002</b>
	Friendliness of guide	.132	.074	.343
	Guide's knowledge	.136	-.183	<b>.028</b>
	Guide's overall presentation	.106	.257	<b>.002</b>
	Safety	.083	.086	.198
	Condition of vehicle	.101	-.015	.877
<b>Step4</b>	Comfort of vehicle	.103	.073	.474
	Price/Value vs expectations	.088	.182	<b>.038</b>
	Overall experience of tour	.113	.136	.136
	Length of tour	.084	.213	<b>.003</b>
	Friendliness of guide	.133	.087	.265
	Guide's knowledge	.137	-.184	<b>.028</b>
	Guide's overall presentation	.107	.244	<b>.004</b>
	Safety	.085	.061	.375
	Condition of vehicle	.101	-.003	.972
	Comfort of vehicle	.104	.054	.597
	Sound system	.059	.010	.900
Heard guide clearly	.094	.077	.304	

The hierarchical regression model shown in Table 5 revealed that the overall tour value accounted for 42.2% of the variance, with all three variables statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ). This means that tourists with a higher satisfaction rating for overall price and value tend to have higher intentions to rebook another bus and jeep tour in Aruba. After controlling for the first factor,

tour guide (friendliness of tour guide, guide's knowledge, overall presentation, and safety) accounted for an additional 4.8% of the variance in likelihood to rebook the bus and jeep tour. Guide's knowledge ( $\beta = -.16, p < .05$ ), guide's overall presentation ( $\beta = .25, p < .05$ ) were statistically significant predictors of intention to rebook. Step 3 and step 4 added vehicle condition and sound system factors respectively, and the results revealed that these four variables were not statistically significant predictors of the likelihood to rebook. This means that even though these four variables were important factors in explaining tourists' satisfaction, they were not necessarily important factors in predicting the likelihood to rebook the bus and jeep tour.

Hierarchical multiple regression was applied again (as shown in Table 6) to test to what extent each tourists' satisfaction factor contributed to likelihood to recommend the tour company to friends and family. No multicollinearity concern was detected among the independent variables. Step one accounted for 57.4% of the variance indicating the overall tour value and price ( $\beta = .22, p < .05$ ), and the overall experience of the tour ( $\beta = .54, p < .05$ ), were strong predictors of the likelihood to recommend. Step 2 added 5% of the variance, including significant predictors of friendliness of guide, guide's overall presentation, and safety. Step 3 added condition of vehicle and none of the two variables were significant predictors. Step 4 examined the sound system with all of the other factors controlled, and the results revealed that 'heard guide clearly' ( $\beta = .17, p < .05$ ), is a significant predictor determining likelihood to recommend.

**Table 6 Results of hierarchical multiple regression testing tourists' satisfaction factors on likelihood to recommend**

<b>Model</b>		<b>SE</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
<b>Step1</b>	Price/Value vs expectations	.069	.222	<b>.003</b>
	Overall experience of tour	.080	.536	<b>.000</b>
	Length of tour	.066	.050	.415
<b>Step2</b>	Price/Value vs expectations	.065	.207	<b>.004</b>
	Overall experience of tour	.085	.382	<b>.000</b>
	Length of tour	.064	.028	.631
	Friendliness of guide	.102	.151	<b>.022</b>
	Guide's knowledge	.100	-.106	.111
	Guide's overall presentation	.081	.141	<b>.040</b>
	Safety	.058	.128	<b>.013</b>
<b>Step3</b>	Price/Value vs expectations	.067	.210	<b>.004</b>
	Overall experience of tour	.085	.380	<b>.000</b>
	Length of tour	.065	.021	.724
	Friendliness of guide	.102	.150	<b>.023</b>
	Guide's knowledge	.105	-.096	.170
	Guide's overall presentation	.082	.144	<b>.038</b>
	Safety	.064	.118	<b>.038</b>
	Condition of vehicle	.078	.066	.426
	Comfort of vehicle	.080	-.051	.548
<b>Step4</b>	Price/Value vs expectations	.066	.232	<b>.001</b>
	Overall experience of tour	.085	.351	<b>.000</b>
	Length of tour	.063	.004	.952
	Friendliness of guide	.100	.180	<b>.006</b>
	Guide's knowledge	.103	-.096	.161
	Guide's overall presentation	.081	.119	.083
	Safety	.064	.064	.256
	Condition of vehicle	.076	.093	.253
	Comfort of vehicle	.079	-.092	.274
	Sound system	.044	.003	.956
	Heard guide clearly	.071	.173	<b>.005</b>

In summary, respondents in Aruba positively evaluated different attributes of customer satisfaction. The variable 'heard guide clearly' was found to be statistically significantly different among the age group of 20-40 years and age group of 61 years and above. Four factors were extracted from tourists' satisfaction attributes, including F1-overall tour value, F2-tour guide, F3-vehicle

condition, and F4-sound system. Additionally, overall tour value, tour guide and sound system were found to be strong predictors of behavioral intentions (the likelihood to rebook and the likelihood to recommend the tour company).

## **Discussion and Implications**

As indicated in the results, tourists were generally satisfied with the jeep and bus tours provided by the tour company where the surveys were distributed on Aruba. They believed that the tour guides were friendly and knowledgeable, but at the same time tourists, aged 61 or above, expressed their concerns about hearing the guide clearly. Furthermore, tourists expressed the same concern in understanding the tour guides, especially during the tour.

Operational strategies are drawn from these results. Tourists from Latin American countries in general perceived their overall experiences, safety, and price and value as expected significantly lower than Americans and Canadians. It is suggested that tour managers should pay more attention to these factors on Latin Americans. Further, repeat customers rated “sound system” significantly higher than those of first time visitors, indicating more tolerant level for repeat customers than those of first time tourists. Besides the improvement of sound system, more attention should be paid to first time tourists in order to cater their needs and wants. Given the fact that many of the tourists were older (61 years and older) who may not have outstanding hearing abilities, as younger tourists might, tour guides should pay special attention to the volume of their voices, the quality of their sound systems used in the buses and jeeps, and to ensure that they are heard and understood by all of the tourists.

In addition, tour companies may also want to consider using an advanced sound system and headphones in the jeeps and buses that people can wear while on the tours to provide a more isolated sound system during the tour. They could also provide a written script to people in order to ensure that people on the tour receive all of the information about the history and highlights of the island. These could also be strategies touted in marketing campaigns in order to help people select the correct tour company during their visit on the island. There are several tour companies on Aruba and this could help to create a competitive advantage for them to implement better sound systems in the vehicles.

It is interesting to note that tourists rated the satisfaction level close to the neutral or negative rating with regards to the tours being educational or entertaining. This means that the jeep and bus tours as service products do not have a clear image to the tourists taking the tours. Building a clear image is

important for destinations and tour operators in order to help differentiate themselves from other destinations and tour companies, and also help tourists to create a memorable travel experience.

In response to the paucity of a strong image, alliance of new products and projects to the existing geographic tourism area are encouraged not only to diversify the offerings to the tourists, but also to prevent new burden to the intensively developed island (Razak, 2007). In particular, marketing strategies are suggested to initiate a theme of these tours as educational, entertaining, or culturally oriented to better serve the tourists.

Specific to the bus and jeep tour, more parts of the bus tour could be designed to enhance the themes, such as a short movie introducing the tour, and retail opportunities that sell the theme related products. By describing the tours as educational, entertaining, or culturally oriented, companies can help tourists choose the tour that most fits their interests. In addition, a clearer image of Aruba could be introduced during the tour, including the culture and history of the island in order to add to the educational, entertaining, or culturally oriented components of the tourist experience. This could also help to focus the tour company on the components of the tour that most fit the needs of their specific customer relative to the type of tour that they choose (educational, entertaining, or culturally oriented).

As mentioned earlier, Aruba is a small island with limited capacity and resources, thus enhancing the existing tourism products and services rather than constructing new projects is the key for sustainable development. Continuous improvements on the quality of tourist experiences aligned with slowing down the growing pace are possible avenues for future tourism development in Aruba (Cole & Razak, 2011). Following this line of thought, the current study has found four key factors of tourist satisfaction attributes in the jeep and bus tour. Specifically, the overall tour value account for up to 45% of the variance, representing strong indicators of tourists' satisfaction. Four factors together explained 73% of the total variance, which demonstrates that the overall value of the tour, as well as overall experience have a strong impact on tourists' satisfaction.

Three factors of tourist satisfaction: overall tour value, tour guide, and sound system, have been found to be strong indicators of behavioral intentions. The vehicle condition was an important factor in tourists' satisfaction, but it's not a predictor of behavioral intentions. The results were consistent with many of the studies in the destination literature where tourists' satisfaction was the antecedents of the behavioral intentions (Chi & Qu, 2008; Chen & Chen, 2009; Kozak, 2001; Kozak & Rimmington, 2000; Yoon & Uysal, 2005). In this study the four factors

are found to explain 47.8% of the variance of the likelihood to rebook, and 57.4% of the variance of the likelihood to recommend, which are considered as strong to capture customer behavioral intentions.

In particular, the current study has confirmed the importance of overall value in predicting behavioral intentions, as suggested by previous studies (Chen & Chen, 2009; Hutchinson et al., 2009). This study also further highlighted that Latin Americans perceived 'price and value as expected' significantly lower than those of North Americans. It is recommended that marketing strategies should be made on the overall value of the bus and jeep tours to attract more tourists, and pay special attention to Latin American tourists. This is in line with the idea that more products and services should be created and provided to the tourists so that more value is added to the existing tourism products. As another important factor of tour guide, this study also supported the findings of Farás (2010) and Huang et al. (2014) that tour guides play a critical role in building the relationship between the tour company and the tourists; and quality of the communications should be ensured to facilitate the service. The overall sound system is found to be another strong indicator to predict behavioral intentions. This factor can be considered as more related to the specific context of bus and jeep tour in Aruba. As discussed earlier, destination managers need in Aruba need to pay special attention of sound system to especially serve the need of older tourists.

## **Conclusions**

This study has investigated tourist satisfaction and behavioral intentions using the case of Aruba as a small island destination. With limited space and resources available, Aruba should implement long-term tourism development strategies to address the sustainable issues facing the small islands. Focusing on economic factors alone is not sufficient in examining the elements influencing tourism demand (Ridderstaat, Oduber, Croes, Nijkamp, & Martens, 2014), Aruba should fully utilize existing facilities to make it more sustainable and competitive.

The current study has confirmed the importance of tourist satisfaction on the behavioral intention in a tourist context, especially for Small Island Tourism Economies. It has supported previous studies of overall value and tour guide as important attributes in predicting behavioral intentions. The sound system, in addition, is pointed out to be another attribute that need to be addressed in the bus and jeep tours in Aruba. The results further showed that the marketing strategies still need to focus on the different attributes of tourist satisfaction to attract repeat tourists. Given the fact that about 20% of the respondents in the survey are repeat tourists to the island, which is considered fairly high; it becomes crucial for the

tour company to encourage repeat customers and to spread the positive word-of-mouth.

### **Limitation and Future Research**

This study is not free of limitations. The management team of the tour company designed the questionnaire and several demographic characteristics such as gender and household income, were not reported. Future studies may include these important factors and provide a more comprehensive view on the tourists' demographics. In addition, the survey was given to people specifically taking a jeep or bus tour on Aruba; therefore the results may not be generalized to other small island tourism destinations.

Future directions for research of tourism on small islands can generate a questionnaire that covers other satisfaction attributes such as accommodation, restaurants, and transportation related to the destination and not just the tour companies. The current Central Bureau of Statistics (2013) report that is disseminated by the island nation of Aruba is also not specific enough to illustrate a more elaborated purpose of visit of tourists visiting the island. General terms such as "vacation", "honeymoon", "visit friends" etc. are listed on their questionnaire. It is suggested to add other related activities that tour operators provide on the island such as snorkeling, scuba diving, wind surfing, jeep safari, kayaking, and other recreation activities be added so that a more detailed survey of tourist satisfaction can be done.

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