



HOLIDAY ATTACHMENT: THE CONSTRUCT AND ITS MEASUREMENT

(Ataşamentul de locurile de vacanță: cum îl construim și îl măsurăm)

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Rezumat

Dat fiind că nu componentele individuale ce constituie o vacanță în izolare sau în simple relații adiționale, sunt cele care determină satisfacția turistului cu privire la acea vacanță, absența unui instrument care să capteze efectul experienței de vacanță este, în totalitatea sa este ciudată. Și nu numai atât, abordarea curentă de implicare a întregului complex al experienței de vacanță ca simpla sumă a cunoștințelor despre părțile sale componente, este de asemenea problematică. Începând cu un scurt inventar al abordărilor curente cu privire la măsurătorile atașamentului față de locuri care sunt folosite de către cercetători pentru a evalua atașamentul turiștilor față de destinațiile de vacanță, articolul de față încearcă să dezvolte un instrument mai holistic, și anume Atașamentul de Locurile de Vacanță, care poate măsura pe deplin atașamentul turiștilor la experiența de vacanță. Instrumentul de măsurare a atașamentului de locurile de vacanță a dovedit cu succes testele esențiale de validitate și încredere. Articolul se încheie cu o scurtă referire la limitele curente și dimensiunile de dezvoltare a instrumentului, precum și implicațiile sale și posibilele aplicații.

Cuvinte cheie

- Atașamentul de locurile de vacanță;
- Utilitatea vacanței;
- Identitatea vacanței;
- Dezvoltare la scară;
- Validitate și încredere;
- Implicații de scară.

Abstract

Given that it is not the individual components constituting a holiday in isolation or in simple additive relationship that determines tourists' sense of satisfaction with that holiday, the absence of an instrument to capture the effect of the holiday experience in its entirety is but odd. Not only that, the current approach of inferring the whole complex of holiday experience as the simple additive sum of the knowledge of its constituent parts is epistemologically problematic, too. Beginning with a brief inventorying of the current approaches to the measurement of place attachment, which is being used by researchers to assess tourists' attachment to holiday destinations, the present paper attempts to develop a more holistic instrument, Holiday Attachment, which can comprehensively measure tourists' attachment with the composite holiday experience. The holiday attachment instrument has successfully demonstrated the essential tests of validity and reliability. The paper is concluded with a brief discussion of the current limitations and the developmental dimensions of the instrument, as well as its implications and potential applications.

Keywords

- Holiday attachment;
- Holiday utility;
- Holiday identity;
- Scale development;
- Validity and reliability;
- Implications of the scale.

1. Introduction

Serious attempts have been made to construct a reasonably valid and reliable scale to measure residents' and tourists' attachment to places (Moore and Graefe 1994; Williams and Roggenbuck 1989). Also, instances can be cited where the place attachment scale is employed to measure tourists' attachment to holiday destinations. However, a destination is just a component, how-much-so-ever important a component may be, of the complex chain of products and services that structure the holiday experience of the tourist. In addition, the approach of knowing an integrated whole as the mere sum of its parts is criticized as fundamentally flawed at an epistemological level. For Piaget (1973), such an act is a cruel mockery of the nature of social reality. This being the case, it may seem quite strange that nobody has attempted to define and measure a construct broader in scope than place attachment that encompasses tourists' attachment to the integrated holiday experience as a singular whole. In the present paper, an attempt is made in that direction and the resultant is the development of a construct and a standardized, general, valid, reliable, multi-item, multi-dimensional instrument to measure it, to which the name Holiday Attachment is given.

We understand a holiday as the name for that integrated and fully inclusive tourism product that encompasses the experiences of the tourist before, during, and after the trip (Uzzell 1984). Holidays may be regarded as society's institutionalized means of enabling fantasy and reality to be imperceptibly mixed. Holidays could be alternatively conceived as narratives, myths, empirical network relationships, marketing objects, and production, information, and consumption systems.

From this standpoint, holiday attachment encompasses the collection of meanings, beliefs, symbols, values, and feelings that tourists associate with particular holidays.

The tourism industry provides holiday seekers with a complex bundle of tangible objects and intangible experiences designed to satisfy their needs and wants (Leiper 1995). This bundle includes facilitation of sorts; primarily, in the realization of the moment-of-truth experience at the destination; then, in fulfilling the different information needs (categorized temporally as ongoing, pre-purchase, planning, en-route, and after-trip needs of information) of the tourist; and then, those activities aimed at extending customer relationships beyond the immediate peripheries of a holiday. The information provision serves the function of a surrogate of the moment-of-truth experience, by which the travel industry is weaving around the tourist a framework for the positive reception of the holidaying experience.

Available evidence from tourism research implies that tourists' choice set or its structure is not static, but varies across both consumers and circumstances (Dommermuth 1965; Rewtrakunphaiboon and Oppewal 2003). However, within this general understanding, Ryan (1997) explores society's earlier attitudes towards holidaying; motivations for holidays; interaction with service providers as they affect the quality of the tourist experience; and the nature of the holiday location and the events that occur there. Dimanche, Havitz, and Howard (1993) presents an examination of the current literature related to four prevalent topical areas associated with holidaymakers' decision behavior: ego involvement; loyalty and commitment; family decision making; and, novelty seeking. Then, there are specific attempts to categorize tourists' purchase decision

behaviour on the basis of the type of holiday motivation (Thomas 1964; Gray 1970; McIntosh and Goeldner 1995).

Essentially, a holiday is about the purchase of a benefit, which could be an emotional, intellectual or spiritual experience (Nickerson and Ellis 1991). Sometimes, the holiday experience can be cathartic due to its potential to sustain or change peoples' lifestyles (Hyde 2003).

According to Havitz and Dimanche (1999), the quintessence of a holiday is the psychological state of motivation, arousal, or interest between an individual and recreational activities or related equipment, tourist destinations, and those various amenities offered, characterized by the perception of the elements of importance, pleasure value, sign value, risk probability, and risk consequences. Gray (1970) identified wanderlust and sun-lust as two important motivators triggering touristic pursuit. Krippendorf's (1989) search for balance, Dann's (1977) anomie and ego-enhancement, Cohen's (1979) search for authenticity, Mannell and Iso-Ahola's (1987) two-dimensional motivational forces of seeking and escaping, and Pearce's (1982) travel career ladder are some of the other noteworthy attempts to structure tourist disposition, motivation, and behavior.

However, there is little agreement found among researchers regarding the relative positioning of any specific motivator vis-à-vis others or relative importance among these in inspiring tourists of different categories to make holiday purchases.

Besides these, Mathieson and Wall (1982) also attempted to categorize the motivational factors that determine tourists' holidaying behavior. Their typology is an expansion of Crompton's (1979) two categories of motivation: socio-physical or push motivator (a combination of the natural and social environments) and cultural or pull

motivator. They identified physical, cultural, personal, and prestige-related motivations. These are the tourism specific variants of the generic benefits sought by a typical customer, known in the general marketing literature by wide-ranging names as: (1) functional, practical, and emotional play off (2) instrumental and expressive (3) functional and psychological (4) use, convenience in use, integrative, and economy (5) functional, experiential, and symbolic (Parry, 2000; *See also* Woodside and Lysonski, 1989). Holidaymakers are expected to appreciate their holiday more or less along these dimensions (Gilbert and Abdullah, 2002).

In Mathieson and Wall's classification presented above, the physical motivators are the search for improvement of mind and body: convalescence for health problems; exercise through golfing, playing tennis, and hiking; and relief from psychological enervation by searching out the exciting, the romantic, or the entertaining. Cultural motivations derive from curiosity about unusual places and foreign locales. The main personal motivation for taking a holiday is to visit family or friends. Other personal motivations include the desires: to experience new places and people, to make new friends, to escape a mundane social environment (to leave the house behind, to escape for the weekend, or to reduce stress and relax), and to travel. Leiper (1990) notes that there is no evidence that any destination or attraction ever pulled any tourist in the absence of push factors. That is, the beginning of tourism is with push factors and tourist motivation and decision-making behavior has to be studied necessarily in terms of the buyers' personal values. Though not originally indented by Mathieson and Wall, along with personal motivators may be added the concept of self or identity. This is because tourists often seek in

holidays those concepts existing in their conceptual structures that they believe as truly characterizing them (Lee-Hoxter and Lester 1988). Russel Belk notes that external objects to which individuals are affectively attached and which are considered as parts of individuality comprise the extended self (Belk 1988) and these objects are highly congruent with the individual's sense of self. When every holiday in the choice list offers the same utility or meta-experiential options, consumer behavior becomes an identity project (Thompson and Tambiah 1999) and identity almost wholly determines the purchase decision (Holcomb 1999).

Holidays are purchased and experienced in a meta-experiential setting, though this background itself does not form the experiential product. This background may at the best structure consumer experience in unique ways. It broadly dictates what is preferable and what is to be experienced (Steele 1981).

The concepts of situationality developed by Bloch and Richins (1983) and later modified by Deborah and Richard (2000) and the working or activated self concept of McGuire and McGuire (1988), suggest that individuals focus on whatever aspects of themselves that is most relevant in a particular social setting or situation. Cranach (1992) illustrates each one's cultural context as the background with reference to which touristic experiences are interpreted. To raise one's prestige or status is an oft-cited reason for purchasing a holiday.

Again, it is the socio-cultural context that predominantly defines what is prestigious. Normally, prestige is accomplished by fostering socially preferable associations with people, places, or events. Prestige enhancement may also be through the pursuit of hobbies, continuation of education, ego enhancement, and sexual indulgence.

Furthermore, this motivation could also include simply doing what is in fashion. In this regard, Bourdieu's (1984) reflection that consumption in modern societies acts as a symbolic statement about consumers as individuals and about their lifestyles and in this way consumption encourages differentiation based on symbolic capital is extremely significant.

To fulfill the aforesaid motivational needs, holidaymakers can purchase a pre-packaged holiday or can even purchase in units and then bundle them together. Packaged holidays are standardized, quality controlled, repeatable offers comprising two or more elements of transport, accommodation, food, destination attractions, other facilities, and services such as travel insurance (Middleton 1994). Independent holidaymakers essentially purchase the same thing, with the only distinction that they feel for themselves the ownership of the bundling effort as well as the risks and benefits associated with that effort. But, there is no reason to expect that there will be the emergence of any new dimension of purchase motivation in *kind* for this self-help holidaymaker's vis-à-vis the buyers of a fully inclusive holiday. The differences will only be in *degrees* along the already existing dimensions, say, if there is any motivational value involved in bundling the holiday elements oneself.

In other words, the performance evaluation of holidays by holidaymakers should be invariant to the specific nature or characteristic of the holiday.

Continuing with the preceding discussion, dimensions of holidaymakers' motivation may be thought of as composed of function or utility; emotion, self or identity; and, symbolism or context. Individuals by and large must be deriving sense of their holiday consumption along these three

dimensions. Moreover, it must be along these dimensions that holidaymakers evaluate what they think the holiday can do for them. Zaichkowsky (1985) also seems to be arguing along the same direction while discussing about her involvement construct, developed to capture the concept of individuals' perceived relevance for products based on inherent needs, values, and interests.

Taking cues from Bloch and Richins (1993) and Houston and Rothschild (1978) she categorized involvement into physical, personal, and situational. In fact, it was pondered enough a propos using the phrase 'holiday involvement' instead of 'holiday attachment' for the proposed scale since what was envisaged was to measure something like involvement for the product-service bundle, namely a holiday; but noticing that a critical mass of related studies in the area of leisure, recreation, and tourism has already employed the term 'attachment', it was decided to settle down for the present terminology, holiday attachment. Most of the above mentioned studies are about the place attachment construct (Bricker and Kerstetter 2000; Proshansky, Fabian, and Kaminoff 1983; Moore and Graefe 1994; Stokowski 1991; Vaske and Kobrin 2001; Warzecha and Lime 2001; Williams and Roggenbuck 1989) which measures the meanings, beliefs, symbols, values, and feelings that individuals or groups associate with a particular locality (Tuan 1977), say, a tourist destination (Moore and Scott 2003). Additionally, it was felt that supplementary studies could posit holiday attachment as a logical extension of the existing literature on place attachment in particular and the more generic attachment theory (Goldberg and Kerr 1995) available in the psychology literature. Again, as Schultz, Kleine, and Kerman (1989) argues, attachment, as opposed to involvement, is directly

associated with the fundamental self-developmental processes that span the entire life cycle and the temporal element of attachment has no counterpart in involvement. Attachment often has to do with memories and previous self-definitional experiences as well as current or anticipated ones whereas involvement concerns mostly with the present only. So it is the variable of customer satisfaction, as it is operationalized in the mainstream literature. For instance, the HOLSAT scale (Tribe and Snaith 1998) developed to capture satisfaction with holidays has most of its item statements aimed to measure tourists' instantaneous and immediate impressions of holidays.

2. Holiday Attachment and its Dimension

Following the literature available, holiday attachment was anticipated by the author as a three-dimensional construct and defined it in terms of the significance of the holiday to the individual traveler. It may be noted that widely accepted measures of place attachment in fact included only two dimensions: place dependence and place identity (Proshansky et al 1983; Williams, Anderson, McDonald, and Patterson 1995; Williams and Roggenbuck 1989). However, some of the items that were initially generated (given in Appendix-A) as part of the holiday attachment scale development process gave adequate suggestion that these could better form a meaningful third block and hence these items were tentatively grouped together and named as holiday contextuality. Thus, for the purpose of scale development, the following definition of holiday attachment was used:

A tourist's perceived significance of a holiday based on its ability to fulfill his or her utility, identity, and contextual needs.

Utility refers to the physical components of the holiday that tend to cause dependence or functional association with the holiday. It refers to the more intrinsic advantages of the service consumption and usually corresponds to the product related attributes. It may be operationalized in terms of how the current holiday compares with alternatives in satisfying the activity level needs of tourists or its ability to facilitate behavior stemming from such needs.

Identity stands for one's inherent values, beliefs, interests, or needs that constitute one's conception of own self and that motivate one toward certain types of holidays since such holidays are assumed to be symbolic of these values, beliefs, interests, or needs. Holiday identity implies affective or emotional attachment with a holiday. Putting it slightly differently, it refers to what it "feels like" to partake in the holiday. Identity may be operationalized in terms of a combination of attitudes, values, thoughts, beliefs, meanings, and interpretations that tourists associate with a certain holiday and the behavioral tendencies branching from these.

Contextuality refers to something that increases one's interest towards the holiday due to contextual particularities. Context is the information available to a particular individual on a particular occasion for use in the meaning ascription process (Clark and Carlson 1981). It refers to advantages extrinsic and not immediate to the process of consumption. Its correspondence is to the extra-product related necessities like the need for societal approval and outer-directed self-esteem (Wallendorf and Arnould 1988), or at times the facilitatory conditions for the actual consumption experience. It may be thought of as those meta-features,

which influence the selection of a holiday, but do not form bases for the immediate holiday experience. Individuals as decision makers recognize and work within the constraints of the known contextualities in order to achieve the desired outcomes. Individuals may value the prestige, exclusivity, or fashionability of a brand because of how it relates to their outward directed-self (Snyder 1974; George and Mekoth 2004). They may behave in manners preferable to the societal context, for instance, and if certain holiday types have higher social preference values in the current context, they may develop attachment towards such holidays.

The above categorization is congruent with the multifaceted, but enmeshed concept of the human self in its enfolding. Note that holiday utility and contextuality stand more along the performance dimension (what the object is "for") while holiday identity stands more along the attribute dimension (what the object "is") of the self. But, holiday contextuality is distinguished from holiday utility in that it is not the intrinsic physical or activity based needs *per se* that causes attachment in the former case, but rather, the situational particularities working behind these needs. Again, since holiday contextuality constitutes the attempts made by individuals for self-cultivation within the context provided by the external environment (Csikszentimihalyi and Rochberg-Halton 1981), there is some comparison apparent between holiday contextuality and holiday identity, except for the notable difference that the former is about the propagation of a socially suitable self or about the enhancement of the self-concept through the transfer of socially accepted meanings of products or brands to oneself while the latter is about attempts to experience the

intrinsic self as reflected in the objects of consumption.

To sum up, attachment, a relationship orientation variable, is a multidimensional property representing the types and degrees of linkages between an individual and the object of his consumption, existing neither in him, not in the object, nor in the context, but rather in the intersection of the three (Schultz et al 1989). Holiday attachment is a holidaymaker's overall bond of association with a holiday based on the above three components. These components brew together the salient beliefs individuals have (Myers 1985) about a holiday and their evaluative judgments about those beliefs and are expected to form an important basis for understanding their intentions and behavior, especially loyalty and repurchase behavior.

3. The Scale Development Process

The procedure commonly adopted to develop a preliminary measure involves the following steps at a minimum (Jackson 1971; Zaichkowsky 1985; Ruekert and Churchill 1985): defining the construct to be measured; generating items that pertain to the construct; judging the content validity of the generated items; determining the internal reliability of the items; determining the temporal stability of the internally reliable items; measuring the content validity of the selected items as a whole; measuring the criterion-related validity; and, testing the construct validity of the scale.

An important question in any scale development is how many items does it take to measure a construct. A construct with a wide domain and multiple dimensions will require more items to adequately tap the domain and

dimensions than a construct with a narrow domain. However, this concern often gets moderated due to the need for scale brevity, given that scales are self-administered and respondent fatigue and non-cooperation is higher for longer questionnaires (Bearden, Netemeyer, and Mobley 1993). Initially, a list of 74 items (See Appendix-A) was generated moving back and forth the literature and our own case study inferences with a view to tap the domain of the construct. This is, according to us, a judicious mix of rational and empirical approaches to generate items.

Given below are some of the sample talks from interviews from tourists that gave broad indication of the dimensions:

"The beaches here are so clean...calm...and the best for swimming".

"Traveling by that bullock-cart was great...I enjoyed sitting back and taking the stunning rural scenery...I can show these photos to my friends back home".

"Well, the timings were wonderfully synchronized...everything was arranged perfectly...nice stay, good food...and what not!"
(Indicative of holiday utility)

"This holiday was a pilgrimage for me...now I know who I am".

"It's something which I have been carrying along with me from childhood in my most cherished dreams...now I discovered it...or, it discovered me!"

"Heey...I don't know how to tell about this experience...but, I can heed my heart singing tunes in its praise".
(Indicative of holiday identity)

"Most in my friends'-circle have been here...I was feeling ashamed to tell them I haven't been yet".

"Look here...this is my darling...it was for her that I'm here too. She loves this holiday to her heart and swayed me".

"As for me, my first and final concern is that I should reach back home safely. Everything else is secondary."
(Indicative of holiday contextuality)

These initial items were refined and edited for judging the content validity by a group of four experts who were faculty members or doctoral candidates in the area of consumer behaviour with domain expertise in tourism. The judges were asked to rate each statement in terms of its ability to represent holiday attachment in general and its proposed three dimensions in particular. Each statement was rated on the following three-point scale:

- (a) Clearly representative of holiday attachment;
- (b) Somewhat representative of holiday attachment;
- (c) Clearly unrepresentative of holiday attachment.

Average rating for each statement was calculated. Statements that were rated as clearly not representative of holiday attachment were dropped right away and those rated as clearly representative of holiday attachment were accepted. Those statements that came under the somewhat representative category were given for brainstorming at a session (all referees were brought together in a chat-room), some of them were accepted and remaining ones rejected based on broad consensus. Some suggestions from the judges intending to reduce the net number of items while not compromising face validity were incorporated into the re-

coining of the statements. In the end, 21 items passed the judgment. Same procedure was adopted to judge the allocation of these items across the proposed dimensions too. A few of the statements were judged as constitutive of another dimension as the one originally anticipated by the researcher and reorganization of statements was done accordingly. As expected, most divergent views among judges in this regard propped up in the matter of certain items, which, according to some judges, belonged to the holiday utility dimension while others argued that they constituted the holiday contextuality dimension. Again, a final decision about the fate of these items was kept on pending till data collected and confirmatory factor analysis that had been done.

In the next stage, the selected items were administered among eighty graduate students of the university who have recently taken part in different types of holiday activities, to examine the scale reliability and further assessment of validity. Six point likert-type scales were used for the statements. A six point scale comprising of strongly agree to strongly disagree was used to indicate the degree of a respondent's agreement or disagreement with each item expressed in the form of statements. Positive statements are scored from 1 to 6 for "strongly agree", "agree", "agree a little", "disagree a little", "disagree", and "strongly disagree" responses and negative statements are reversed in scoring from 6 to 1 on responses of "strongly agree" to strongly disagree".

The questionnaire was re-administered among the graduate students after a gap of one month to see the temporal consistency. They were asked to recall the same holiday about which they responded previously and reply. Data

analysis and results are presented in chapter 4.

The aggregate and component-wise responses of a few student respondents who are known to have been religiously adhering to certain holidays and purchased the same were further examined to see if both tallies. This was to check *known group validity*. The results were rechecked with them for verification. However, this remained as a simple, informal, qualitative procedure, with no claim of statistical significance for the results.

To test *discriminant validity*, place attachment scale (Williams 1989) was found to be a reasonably good choice. In the statements constituting the original place attachment scale, wherever the word "place" appeared, was substituted with the word "holiday" and was administered among the same students.

Some of the above graduate students were respondents to another

study conducted by the researcher involving the HOLSAT construct. The HOLSAT scale developed by Tribe and Snaith (1998) is informed by the P-E gap paradigm and is an improvement upon the existing holiday satisfaction measures. It offers a valid measurement of tourist satisfaction with holidays. The data collected from this previous survey was put to use to examine *convergent validity*. It was hypothesized to have a strong, positive correlation between these two constructs.

Test of nomological validity was done upon the assumption that holiday attachment will significantly predict holiday loyalty; or, holiday attachment will be an important antecedent of holiday loyalty. Nomological validity would be demonstrated if the holiday attachment scores are positively and significantly correlated with the scores on the loyalty construct for the same respondents.

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