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# Analysis of the impact of length of stay on the quality of service experience, satisfaction and loyalty

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## Abstract

Although length of stay is a relevant variable in destination management, little research has been produced connecting it with tourists' post-consumption behaviour. This research compares the post-consumption behaviour of same-day visitors with overnight tourists in a sample of 398 domestic vacationers at two Mediterranean heritage-and-beach destinations. Although economic research on length of stay posits that there are destination benefits in longer stays, same-day visitors score higher in most of the post-consumption variables under study. Significant differences arise in hedonic aspects of the tourist experience and destination loyalty. Thus, we propose that length of stay can be used as a segmentation variable. Furthermore, destination management organisations need to consider length of stay when designing tourism policies. The tourist product and communication strategies might be adapted to different vacation durations.

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## Keywords

Length of stay

Same-day visitors  
Quality of the service experience  
Satisfaction  
Loyalty

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## 1. Introduction

Consumers' decision-making in tourism usually assumes the classical buyer behaviour school of thought, where consumers are viewed as rational decision-makers (Cohen et al. 2014). Travel decision-making is highly complex as there are many elements of the holiday to be decided, not only before the holiday but also during it and after it. Usually before the trip, length of stay is a major issue involved in a tourist's decision-making (Decrop and Snelders 2004; Gokovali et al. 2007).

Length of stay research is crucial for determining destination management strategies and policies to offer different types of products and services according to the tourists' length of stay (Prebensen et al. 2015). In other words, length of stay could be a useful segmentation variable for destinations along with additional psychographic and behavioural variables like motivation (Bieger and Laesser 2002; Cordente-Rodríguez et al. 2014), activities provided during the visit (Hennessey et al. 2012), overall satisfaction (Ramírez-Hurtado and Berbel-Pineda 2015) and the sustainability of the destination (Dolnicar 2004; Sánchez-Fernández et al. 2016).

Studies on tourists' length of stay are increasingly relevant nowadays due to a decline observed in average stay while there is a rising frequency of trips throughout the year and increasingly more low-cost travellers (Gokovali et al. 2007; Martínez-García and Raya 2008; Barros and Machado 2010; Ferrer-Rosell et al. 2014). Although various authors underline the impact of length of stay in creating higher employment and earnings at the destination (Agarwal and Yochum 1999; Pulina 2010; Peypoch et al. 2012), few have been interested in studying the possible differences in visitors' post-purchase behaviour with different holiday durations.

As for the length of stay, some recent studies compare short-stay tourists with long-stay tourists (Neal et al. 2007; Prayag 2012) and first-time visitors with repeat visitors (Li et al. 2008; Alegre et al. 2011). However, to the best of our knowledge, this paper is the first one to analyse significant differences between same-day visitors whose trip does not include an overnight stay and overnight tourists who stay overnight, regarding their quality of service experience, satisfaction and destination loyalty. We posit that there may be differences in

tourists' post-purchase behaviour between same-day visitors and overnight tourists with longer stays. The rationale for these differences could be justified via several aspects. Firstly, same-day visitors' experience may be different to overnight tourists' experience since they spend less time sightseeing at the destination. Secondly, their expectations about their overall trip and their assessment of the tourism performance may also differ, so satisfaction differences are likely to arise between overnight tourists and same-day visitors. Finally, re-visit intention and recommendations to acquaintances may differ between the two segments because same-day visitors may feel they needed more time to enjoy themselves in the destination. Analysing these differences can be useful for destination management organisations to design strategies aimed at increasing tourists' satisfaction and loyalty while improving the performance of their own organisations.

This paper contributes to the literature on the previous topics by comparing the post-purchase behaviour of overnight tourists with same-day visitors; in this instance of 398 domestic vacationers in two Mediterranean cities: Cullera (Spain) and Latina (Italy). Both places are long-established tourist destinations combining cultural heritage and beaches. The structure of the study is as follows: First, we present the theoretical framework that will lead to the research propositions regarding tourists' service experience quality, satisfaction and loyalty according to their length of stay. Then, we describe the research method and the context of the empirical research. Finally, the results are reported and discussed along with pointers for future research and managerial implications.

## 2. Literature review. Research propositions

Length of stay occurs in a pre-purchase decision-making stage, but it has great implications on post-purchase evaluations. This research focuses on tourists' post-purchase behaviour connected to their length of stay. Post-purchase is the last stage of the decision-making process in which the tourists evaluate the overall experience in terms of subjective quality, referred to as quality of the service experience in the current research. Also, after the service experience the tourist usually has a degree of feeling between dissatisfaction and satisfaction or even delight. Consequently, loyalty indicators such as the intention to return to the destination and word of mouth may appear. Our main objective is to describe how tourists' post-purchase behaviour varies according to their length of stay and specifically regarding their perception of the quality of the service experience, satisfaction and loyalty. Therefore, we define these variables and offer recent contributions to them.

### 2.1. Length of stay in tourism research

Duration or length of stay refers to the time spent during a visit measured from the standpoint of the receiving country or place (WTO, 1995). This variable allows classification of tourists into two main groups (Smeral 2006):

- excursionists or same-day visitors—domestic, inbound or outbound—whose trip does not include an overnight stay;
- overnight visitors—domestic, inbound or outbound—whose trip includes an overnight stay.

As previously mentioned, length of stay is one of the most important variables in a tourist's decision-making process (Salmasi et al. 2012), which takes place during the first stages of holiday decision-making (Decrop and Snelders 2004).

Most research on length of stay is done from a microeconomic perspective in which econometric models are used to estimate demand function models that include several determinants of vacation duration choice (Alegre and Pou 2006; Barros and Machado 2010; Alegre et al. 2011; Peypoch et al. 2012; Alén et al. 2014; Santos et al. 2014; Ferrer-Rosell et al. 2014; Grigolon et al. 2014). Some variables with a positive effect on length of stay are the visitor's nationality, their level of income and the quality and security of the destination (Gokovali et al. 2007). Other aspects under study are the type of holiday, the transit time to the destination, the price per day of the stay and their different expenditures (Esteban Talaya et al. 2011; Fleischer et al. 2011). Research is eminently descriptive about the profile of visitors with different holiday durations (Gokovali et al. 2007; Salmasi et al. 2012). Few studies have considered length of stay when analysing behavioural factors such as motivation (Thrane 2012) and destination image (Machado 2010; Royo Vela 2012). The length of stay also affects the degree of satisfaction or dissatisfaction associated with various aspects of the trip and its impact on quality of life (Neal 2003). Indeed, tourists enjoying longer vacations are more likely to enhance their satisfaction with life in general (Neal 2003).

## 2.2. Quality of the service experience

As noted by Zehrer (2009), tourism is a service-intensive industry dependent on the quality of customers' service experiences and their consequent perception of satisfaction or dissatisfaction. Tourist trips are highly memorable for travellers, so tourists' emotional reactions are particularly important for assessing their perceived quality of the service experience.

Unlike service quality, few studies have focused on the quality of the service experience (Lee, Petrick, and Crompton 2007). The quality of the service

experience is a broader concept than service quality as it attempts to include tourists' emotions and feelings (Zehrer 2009). The quality of the service experience is related to tourists' affective responses after participating in a tourism activity (Otto and Ritchie 1996). It is a psychological outcome (Otto and Ritchie 1996; Chen and Chen 2010; Ying et al. 2012) arising from direct and indirect contact with the service process, the organisation, the facilities, the firm's representatives and other customers (Walter et al. 2010). This experience is strictly personal and implies the customer's involvement on different levels (rational, emotional, sensorial, physical and spiritual) so as to create a holistic gestalt (LaSalle and Britton 2003). The visitor experience must be understood in terms of the length of stay at the destination, activities pursued and general tourist behaviour (Kruger and Saayman 2012).

Otto and Ritchie's (1996) seminal work determined that the quality of the service experience consisted of four dimensions: hedonics, peace of mind, involvement and recognition. Hedonics captures tourists' perceptions of doing what they like, engaging in thrilling activities, having memorable experiences for themselves, sharing memories with others and having fun. Peace of mind relates to personal safety, privacy and comfort. Involvement refers to tourists' willingness to participate in the service, choose activities and maintain some control over the outcome. It also includes the desire to learn about activities. Recognition includes feeling important and being taken seriously by the service provider.

### 2.3. Tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty

Tourist satisfaction has been widely researched as one of the key constructs in tourist behaviour studies and there is now considerable literature on tourist satisfaction (He and Song 2009; Hosany and Witham 2010; Assaker and Hallak 2013).

There are at least nine distinct theories of customer satisfaction in the literature: expectancy-disconfirmation, assimilation, contrast, assimilation-contrast, equity, attribution, comparison-level, generalised negativity and value-perception (Oh and Parks 1997). The Expectancy-Disconfirmation Paradigm has received most attention in the satisfaction literature. According to this theory, customer satisfaction or dissatisfaction results from experiencing a service encounter and comparing perceived performance with prior expectations about how that service delivery would happen (Oliver 1980).

In the tourism context, customer satisfaction involves a cognitive evaluation and also an emotional state. Spreng and Mackoy (1996) underline that satisfaction is

an emotive response to service attributes and service information. Destination uniqueness and its degree of competitiveness also affect overall satisfaction (Meleddu et al. 2015).

Recent literature recommends that tourist satisfaction research should consider tourists' emotional states in their experiences (Coghlan and Pearce 2010; Lee et al. 2015; Tung and Ritchie 2011). Thus, the cognitive-affective model seems to merit continued research attention (Huang et al. 2014). The concept of experiential satisfaction is therefore proposed based on an experiential perspective and defined as the result of consumers' evaluation of the contents presented by service providers (Kao et al. 2008).

Oliver (1999) states that there are four sequential stages in the development of loyalty: cognitive loyalty, affective loyalty, conative loyalty and action loyalty. Only the latter phase is linked to behavioural loyalty, while the other three stages are linked to attitudinal loyalty. As regards behavioural loyalty, Zeithaml et al. (1996) identify several actions: saying positive things about the service provider, recommending the provider to other customers, spending more on the provider, and paying price premiums. Within the tourism context, customer loyalty is well-known as including the willingness to repeat visits and word-of-mouth communication (Hui et al. 2007; Chen and Chen 2010; Zabkar et al. 2010; Gursoy et al. 2014).

Crompton and McKay (1997) claim that for tourists to revisit, they must be relatively pleased with their previous experience. Similarly, Chi and Qu (2008) and Battour et al. (2012) state that tourists' positive experiences of services, products and other resources offered by travel destinations could be a source of repeat visits as well as positive word-of-mouth effects on relatives and friends. Recent studies on tourism loyalty focus on the role of emotions (Su et al. 2014; Tsai 2014; Lee et al. 2015) and other variables such as personal interactions and service atmospherics (Fakharyan et al. 2014).

## 2.4. Research propositions

On the basis that no research has previously explored the different perceptions of the quality of tourists' service experience, satisfaction and loyalty depending on their length of stay, this paper states a series of research propositions regarding tourists in two main segments: overnight tourists and same-day visitors.

Firstly, visitors that spend little time on a holiday experience have less time to enjoy the amenities of the trip. Tourists who take short holidays might visit only major attractions at the destination (Prebensen et al. 2015). Same-day visitors have significant time constraints to see the main attractions in a destination.

With so little time to enjoy the vacation experience, every minute counts for short-term visitors (Neal 2003). Same-day visitors probably select the most interesting attractions and miss the others so that their experience may be more intense and memorable. Consequently, we propose that same-day visitors have a more positive quality of service experience than tourists with longer stays.

Research proposition 1: Same-day visitors' quality of the service experience is statistically significantly higher than that of overnight tourists.

Secondly, we propose that the length of stay can give rise to differences in satisfaction. Satisfaction depends on the perceived difference between expectations and performance after the service consumption. The decision made on the amount of time spent at a destination may reflect the expected attractiveness of that destination. Visitors who spend most of their holiday time at one destination may attach more importance to that destination than visitors who spend less time in the same destination (Uysal 1998). Thus, overnight tourists' expectations may be high and it is probably difficult to meet them all. Conversely, same-day visitors may have less ambitious expectations than overnight tourists about the destination, so they are likely to be highly satisfied with their trip. In this vein, Prayag (2012) found that tourists staying longer had more dissatisfying experiences in comparison with those staying fewer days. Additionally, Eugenio-Martin (2003) posits that the last days in a destination do not provide the same satisfaction as the first day travelling. Thus, we propose:

Research proposition 2: Same-day visitors' satisfaction is statistically significantly higher than that of overnight tourists.

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Finally, we propose that there may be differences in destination loyalty between same-day visitors and overnight tourists. As mentioned before, overnight tourists have the opportunity to have more experiences at the destination so they probably enjoy most of the facilities and services at the location while on vacation. This could lead to unwillingness to re-visit the place if overnight tourists consider that there are no additional activities remaining. Conversely, same-day visitors may consider that there are further activities to be done in future so their intention to return increases. According to Neal (2003), the more satisfied tourists are with the destination services, the more they will demand that service, so highly satisfied same-day visitors will express higher intentions to repeat their visit. Consequently:

Research proposition 3: Same-day visitors' loyalty is significantly statistically higher than that of overnight tourists.

## 3. Research method

### 3.1. Data collection

In order to explore the quality of the service experience, satisfaction and loyalty of same-day visitors and overnight tourists, information in two Mediterranean tourist cities—Cullera (Spain) and Latina (Italy)—was gathered. Respondents had just finished their visit to an important heritage site in one of those two Mediterranean cities. We selected these cities because both of them usually combine visits from same-day visitors and tourists. Additionally, they offer a homogeneous tourist experience in terms of historical sites and beach. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire with two main parts using a convenience sample. A set of measurements was drawn up about the main variables under study, namely: the quality of the service experience, satisfaction and loyalty, and questions regarding demographic data.

We pre-tested the questionnaire through a qualitative study in order to revise items to ensure the content's validity. All items were measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5).

In order to test the proposed research questions, we employed a descriptive analysis with univariate and multivariate techniques such as ANOVA analysis.

### 3.2. Measurement instruments

The measurement instruments are reputed in the literature and have been widely used. Tourists' quality of the service experience is assessed by Otto and Ritchie (1996)'s scale. This scale is highly reputed and it has been recently employed by Astrapellos et al. (2010), Chen and Chen (2010) and Schlesinger et al. (2015). Satisfaction and destination loyalty were measured through scales adapted from Kao et al. (2008). Experiential satisfaction represents the integrated evaluations of consumers' consumption and contentment with regard to the entire consumption process. On the basis of the existing literature, repurchase and recommendation intentions are selected here as measurements of loyalty intentions (Kao et al. 2008). Repurchase intention is the willingness to keep a transaction relationship with the service provider after a purchase, which is operationalised here as a willingness to return to the destination in future. Recommendation intention pertains to a willingness to suggest other people transact with the service provider, so in this case it is related with suggesting other people to visit the destination.

The reliability of these scales in the current research was assessed through Cronbach's alpha, whose values are shown in Table 1.



**Table 1**

Reliability of the measurement tools: Cronbach's alpha

	<b>Cronbach's alpha</b>
Quality of the service experience	0.969
Hedonics	
On this trip I am doing something I really like to do	
I am doing something memorable	
I am doing something thrilling	
I am having a "once in a lifetime" experience	
I can share my experience with others later on	0.952
I am being challenged in some way	
My imagination is being stirred	
I feel like I am on an adventure	
This trip provides me with fun	
On this trip I am doing something new and different	
Peace of mind	
On this trip I feel physically comfortable	
My property is secure	0.899
I feel relaxed	
On this trip I have a sense of personal safety	
Privacy is assured	
Involvement	
I am involved in the process of this trip	
There is an element of choice in the process	0.937
I have control over the outcome of this trip	
I am being educated and informed on this trip	
On this trip I have a sense of cooperation	
Recognition	
On this trip I feel that I am taken seriously	0.874
On this trip I feel that I am important	
Satisfaction	

	<b>Cronbach's alpha</b>
This trip goes beyond my expectations	0.940
I really enjoyed this trip	
I really liked this trip	
It is worth coming here	
Loyalty	0.956
I am willing to revisit this place	
I am willing to recommend it to my relatives/friends	
I am willing to encourage others to visit this place	
If I had to choose again, I definitely would	

## 4. Results

### 4.1. Sample

The size of the overall sample is 398; we surveyed 198 tourists in Cullera and 200 in Latina. We merged the data from both cities as a bigger sample is preferred even for exploratory studies like this one. The overall sample is quite homogenous if we compare the overall valid percentages of its composition with those of the Cullera and Latina samples. The comparison of the features for the overall sample and the subsamples are shown in Table 2. The overall sample is made up of domestic tourists in both cities whose average age is 40 years old. Females are 52.4% of the total sample and 63.5% of respondents hold basic and average education. Tourists' education is higher in Latina as 75.7% of the overall sample indicating higher education were surveyed in this city. As for overall expenditure, 37.2% of tourists spend less than 50 euros per person and day, while 42.8% spend between 51 and 100 euros. A majority of tourists in Latina (62.9%) are included in the latter interval of average expenditures.

**Table 2**

Main features of the overall sample

	<b>Overall sample N = 398</b>	<b>Overall sample Valid %</b>	<b>Cullera sample N = 198</b>	<b>Latina sample N = 200</b>	<b>Proportion of Cullera in overall sample</b>	<b>Proportion of Latina in overall sample</b>
Average age (st. deviation)	40.09 (13.86)		41.07 (14.51)	39.15 (13.17)		

	<b>Overall sample N = 398</b>	<b>Overall sample Valid %</b>	<b>Cullera sample N = 198</b>	<b>Latina sample N = 200</b>	<b>Proportion of Cullera in overall sample</b>	<b>Proportion of Latina in overall sample</b>
<b>Gender</b>						
1. Female	207	52.4	106	101	51.2%	48.8
2. Male	188	47.6	90	98	47.9%	52.1
Missing values	3		2	1		
<b>Education</b>						
1. Higher	136	36.5	33	103	24.3	75.7
2. Average	174	46.6	86	88	49.4	50.6
3. Basic	63	16.9	55	8	87.3	12.7
Missing values	25					
<b>No. nights</b>						
0	138	21.2	87	51	68.5	31.5
1	68	20.6	36	32	52.9	47.1
2	67	20.3	28	39	41.8	58.2
3	71	21.5	24	47	33.8	66.2
4 and more	54	7.0	23	31	42.6	57.4
<b>Average expenditure</b>						
Below €50	145	37.2	85	60	58.6	41.4
Between €51 and €100	167	42.8	62	105	37.1	62.9
Between €101 and €150	59	15.1	27	32	45.8	54.2
Over €151	19	4.9	18	1	94.7	5.3
Missing values	8		6	2		
<b>Nationality</b>						
Italian	199	50.0	2	197	1.0	99.0

	Overall sample N = 398	Overall sample Valid %	Cullera sample N = 198	Latina sample N = 200	Proportion of Cullera in overall sample	Proportion of Latina in overall sample
Spanish	153	38.4	153	0	100.0	0.0
Others	46	11.6	43	3	93.5	6.5

In order to describe the profile and the perception of respondents according to their length of stay, we divided the sample into two groups: 137 same-day visitors and 258 overnight tourists. According to the data in Table 3, same-day visitors' education is mainly average (54.54%) and only 29.54% of them indicate higher education. In contrast, 42.362% of overnight tourists hold average education while 40.24% hold higher education. Also, 59.56% of same-day visitors spend less than €50 per person and day while 52.36% of overnight tourists spend between 51 and 100 euros; 22.44% of tourists spend even more.

**Table 3**

Demographic data according to length of stay

	Same-day visitors N = 138	Overnight tourists N = 260	Chi square (Sig.)	ANOVA F (Sig.)
Gender				
Female	74	133	0.218	
Male	63	125	( $p = 0.359$ )	
Missing value	1	2		
Average age	38.19 (13.74)	41.08		3.881**
(St.dev.)		(13.85)		( $p = 0.050$ )
Education				
Higher	39	97	5.527	
Average	72	102	( $p = 0.063$ )	
Basics	21	42		
Average expenditure				
Below €50	81	64	46.874***	

	Same-day visitors N = 138	Overnight tourists N = 260	Chi square (Sig.)	ANOVA F (Sig.)
Between €51 and 100	34	133	( $p = 0.000$ )	
Between €101 and €150	14	45		
Over €151	7	12		
Chi square analysis. ANOVA analysis				
* $p < 0.1$ , ** $p < 0.05$ , *** $p < 0.001$				

The next analysis aims to find out if there are statistical links among these demographic data related to the length of stay. Thus, we calculate the statistic Chi square when the two variables under analysis are non-metrical. We calculate the F statistic of ANOVA to analyse the relationship between the variables age and length of stay, as the former is metrical while the latter is non-metrical. This analysis is shown in Table 3.

According to the results shown in Table 3, there is not a statistical relationship of gender and being a same-day visitor or overnight tourist. However, there is a statistical link regarding age. Same-day visitors are younger than overnight tourists. The former are 38 years old while the latter are 41 years old on average. There is a statistical relationship between education and length of stay. Overnight tourists claim average and higher education more frequently. There is also a statistical significant link between length of stay and average expenditure. Same-day visitors spend less money per day during their trip than overnight tourists.

## 4.2. Analysis of research propositions

Descriptive statistics regarding the quality of the service experience, satisfaction and loyalty perceptions according to the length of stay are shown in Table 4.

**Table 4**

Descriptive statistics for same-day visitors and overnight tourists

	Same-day visitors. Mean (st.dev.)	Overnight tourists. Mean (st.dev.)
Quality of the service experience	3.46 (0.65)	3.29 (0.77)

	<b>Same-day visitors. Mean (st.dev.)</b>	<b>Overnight tourists. Mean (st.dev.)</b>
Hedonics	3.39 (0.73)	3.09 (0.84)
Peace of mind	3.60 (0.67)	3.61 (0.92)
Involvement	3.49 (0.69)	3.41 (0.83)
Recognition	3.49 (0.81)	3.39 (0.86)
Satisfaction	3.54 (0.76)	3.40 (0.93)
This trip goes beyond my expectations	3.47 (0.85)	3.27 (1.00)
I really enjoyed this trip	3.42 (0.79)	3.35 (1.01)
I really liked this trip	3.60 (0.81)	3.50 (0.97)
It is worth coming here	3.68 (0.93)	3.48 (1.01)
Loyalty	3.72 (0.74)	3.42 (0.96)
I am willing to revisit this place	3.69 (0.79)	3.41 (1.06)
I am willing to recommend it to my relatives/friends	3.72 (0.79)	3.41 (0.97)
I am willing to encourage others to visit this place	3.72 (0.82)	3.40 (0.96)
If I had to choose again, I definitely would	3.75 (0.83)	3.47 (1.06)

Regarding the quality of the service experience, we observe that the perceptions of same-day visitors are always higher except for the Peace of Mind dimension. In other words, same-day visitors attached more positive feelings to their visit; they get involved and feel important during their visit. In contrast, overnight tourists feel slightly more comfortable and relaxed than same-day visitors during their longer stay. Satisfaction and loyalty are also higher for same-day visitors than overnight tourists. In order to find out if there are any statistical differences between the means obtained for same-day visitors and overnight tourists, an ANOVA analysis was applied.

The ANOVA results shown in Table 5 reveal that there are statistical differences between the means for Hedonics with same-day visitors and overnight tourists. The descriptive statistics shown in Table 4 reveal that same-day visitors have a higher score in this variable. Thus, same-day visitors' perceptions of hedonic aspects of the trip are significantly more positive. Compared to overnight tourists, same-day visitors agree more on considering that their trip has been

memorable, fun, different and worth sharing with acquaintances. There are no statistical differences in satisfaction according to length of stay. In contrast, there are statistical differences between same-day visitors and overnight tourists as regards loyalty. According to the descriptive statistics in Table 4, same-day visitors score higher than overnight tourists in their willingness to revisit the place, to recommend it to relatives and friends and also to encourage others to visit the destination.

**Table 5**

Testing the research propositions. ANOVA results

	ANOVA: F	Sig.
Quality of the service experience	5.025	0.026**
Hedonics	12.664	0.000***
Peace of mind	0.003	0.959
Involvement	0.860	0.354
Recognition	1.307	0.254
Satisfaction	2.341	0.127
This trip goes beyond my expectations	3.919	0.048**
I really enjoyed this trip	0.522	0.470
I really liked this trip	1.011	0.315
It is worth coming here	3.621	0.058*
Loyalty	10.315	0.001**
I am willing to revisit this place	7.296	0.007**
I am willing to recommend to my relatives/friends	10.839	0.001**
I am willing to encourage others to visit this place	11.111	0.001**
If I had to choose again, I definitely would	7.723	0.006**
* $p < 0.1$ , ** $p < 0.05$ , *** $p < 0.001$		

## 5. Discussion of results

Given the need for segmentation strategies in destination marketing for DMOs, this paper aimed at a deeper analysis and comparison of the post-purchase behaviour of same-day visitors and overnight tourists in two Mediterranean destinations: Cullera (Spain) and Latina (Italy). We also compared the demographic features of the sample in order to find statistical differences

between same-day visitors and overnight tourists. The results showed that overnight tourists are older than same-day visitors and mainly have average and higher education. These results are consistent with those reported by Alegre and Pou (2006) and Barros and Machado (2010). Additionally, same-day visitors were found to be younger and spend less money than overnight tourists at the destination. In line with our findings, several authors report that longer stays give visitors the opportunity to have more experiences at the destination and positively influence the amount of money they spend on holiday (Kozak 2001; Gokovali et al. 2007). However, there are contradictory findings in the literature about this aspect. Some authors conclude that the shorter the length of stay, the higher the expenditure at the destination (Barros and Machado 2010; Esteban et al., 2011; Thrane 2012). Therefore, we conclude that the link between expenditures according to length of stay is still a controversial issue in the literature. According to our results, overnight tourists' higher impact on revenues justifies the efforts of destination managers to extend the average length of stay. Given the originality of the main topic in our paper—length of stay and post-purchase behaviour—comparisons with previous research are difficult to make. Nevertheless, the analysis of same-day visitors' post-purchase behaviour offers a new perspective on their role in the tourism industry. Same-day visitors score higher than overnight tourists in most of the aspects under study, and some statistical differences were found regarding hedonics-related aspects of their trip and loyalty. The overall tourist experience is relatively low in both segments: same-day visitors and overnight tourists. However, it is given more importance by same-day visitors, who especially highlight hedonic aspects of their experience. Their satisfaction is also higher than that of overnight tourists. Further aspects related to the trip such as the accommodation facilities may also lessen overnight tourists' satisfaction. Same-day visitors tend to visit only the major tourist attractions, while longer-stay tourists visit a greater range of attractions, explore more peripheral regions, and generate more diverse economic, social and environmental impacts (Barros and Machado 2010). All in all, these results are similar to Prayag's (2012), who found that tourists staying longer had more dissatisfying experiences.

Same-day visitors also score higher than overnight tourists as regards their loyalty to the destination. To the best of our knowledge, there is no previous evidence about this particular aspect. However, we could expect that same-day visitors with high satisfaction will also score high on loyalty as the tourism literature shows the positive link between satisfaction and loyalty (Cronin et al. 2000; Neal 2003; Bigne and Andreu 2004; Petrick and Backman 2004). Consequently, the post-purchase behaviour of same-day visitors is indeed interesting as it suggests not only a repeat visit in future but also a recommendation to acquaintances. Thus, same-day visitors' direct impact on



revenues at destination are lower than that of overnight tourists in the short term, but their intention to re-visit the place and their positive word of mouth may produce revenues in future.

## 6. Managerial implications and limitations

Destination management organisations (DMOs) should be aware of these results since the length of stay appears to be a relevant attribute for determining management strategies and policies. Investigating the amount of time tourists spend on visiting a destination aids tourism authorities to decide on the type of tourism experiences they will offer and the type of tourism demand they intend to attract (Gokovali et al. 2007). Therefore, tourists' length of stay should be considered when designing tourism policies aimed at fostering satisfaction and subsequent destination loyalty.

Same-day visitors and overnight tourists have different perceptions about their tourist experience and different post-purchase behaviour, so we underline the role of length of stay to be used as a segmentation variable in tourism. The tourist product must be adapted to the amount of time that tourists spend at a destination (Martínez-García and Raya 2008). For example, DMOs could offer particular activities addressed to young visitors whose holiday duration is short; short activities fostering hedonic aspects to stir visitors' imagination, promoting a feeling of escape from routine. In contrast, older and highly educated visitors will probably stay longer and spend more money at a destination.

Complementary activities for these visitors are required to occupy their longer stays at the destination. Tourists would like to participate in these activities while feeling important and comfortable. Furthermore, communication campaigns should also be adapted to the tourist's length of stay to be successful (Martínez-García and Raya 2008). For example, in order to attract overnight tourists instead of same-day visitors, advertising could refer to privacy and security aspects at the destination (which is connected with the Peace of Mind dimension of the tourist experience). In contrast, adventurous scenarios and dynamic people could appear in advertising campaigns in order to attract young same-day visitors.

Despite higher scores for same-day visitors, this study shows that the average results for the tourist experience, satisfaction and loyalty are quite low for both segments. These may be due to a combination of factors related to what is provided at the destinations being researched. Destination management organisations should design the tourist product and other policies to improve tourists' perceptions of these variables, considering that the overall assessment of the trip varies according to the length of stay of the visit.

The economic impact of tourism on destinations depends to a large extent on the length of stay because tourists are likely to spend more money as the opportunities to have more experiences at the destination increase (Gokovali et al. 2007). However, enhancing the experience of same-day visitors may produce benefits in the future, as satisfied and loyal same-day visitors may result in higher return visits, and more intensive, positive word-of-mouth dissemination. Same-day visitors may also have longer stays in forthcoming visits. Thus, although shorter stays represent greater costs for some companies in the tourist industry, same-day visitors provide benefits to the tourist industry in the short term but also in the long term.

Same-day visitors give better opinions than longer ones about their experience, satisfaction and loyalty. This implies that the length of stay cannot be underestimated when DMOs conceive tourists' experiences in their destinations. This is particularly relevant for certain destinations whose tourist base is made up of same-day visitors. Not only must length of stay be considered when designing the core tourism on offer, but also complementary services should be conceived as key ingredients in the pre-, during and post-consumption tourist value chain and also in the value co-creation processes.

Several limitations are evident and require comment. The size of the sample could be enlarged to generalise the current results. Replication in other contexts is also required to understand the influence of holiday duration. Further variables could also be included to analyse tourists' purchasing behaviour according to the length of stay, such as the destination's image and perceived value.

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