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## A Conceptual Model of Tourism Consumer Behaviour

### Introduction

- There is an abundance of research on tourism “images”.
- Also : Attitudes
  - Culture
  - Expectations
  - Motivations
  - Perceptions
  - Satisfaction



- All these concepts are fundamental to tourism marketing.
- They are reasonably well defined – although understood to varying degrees.
- They are used in different mixtures often only loosely related to a marketing purpose.
- The most common link in their use is to establish, measure or understand “destination image”.

## Objective

To use an extensive literature review, to conceptualise a model of consumer behaviour, based upon the relationships between these human behavioural concepts, as they relate to, and can be used to measure, “destination image” with the purpose of determining consumer demand.



## Destination Image

Destinations are the focus of most tourism marketing and they can be places, hotels, ships, cities or even countries.

It is argued that the marketplace develops a mental image of destinations.

Alternatively, good marketing develops unique images in the minds of potential customers.

Therefore, the fundamental objective is to create demand in a competitive market. To gain competitive advantage.

The capacity to be unique is getting harder, and this is placing increasing pressure upon local cultures to provide the edge.

## The Question

How does all this research rotating around image using consumer behaviour driven by attitudes, perceptions, motivations, expectations and satisfaction relate conceptually?

What is the theoretical relationship between these concepts, and how do they relate to image, and in turn how is this relevant to consumer behaviour and the demand for tourism?

Firstly, let us examine each concept in turn.

Simply in alphabetical order.



## Attitudes

Voss divides attitudes between Hedonic and Utilitarian.

Fishbein et al. distinguish between beliefs and attitudes.

Most studies dating back over 50 years state attitudes are either favourable or unfavourable.

“A person’s general feeling of favourableness or unfavourableness for that concept”

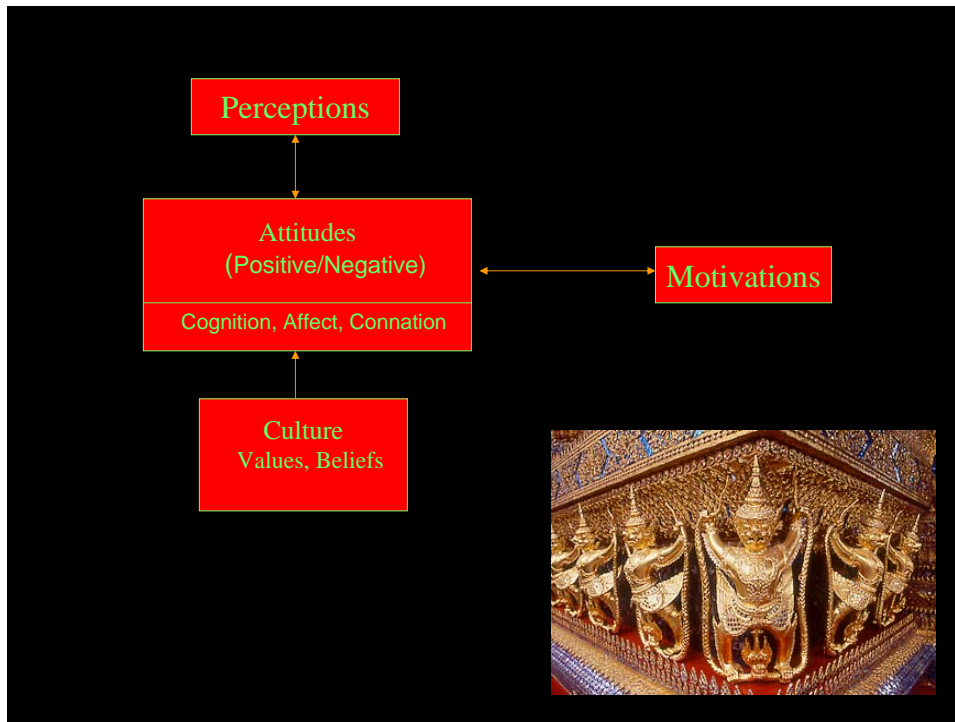


So attitudes are not motivations, beliefs or values but simply an individual's judgement on whether performing a behaviour (going on a particular holiday) is good or bad.

There is a link to motivation. The more favourable the attitude the more motivated to perform the behaviour.

Some literature argues values are more strongly related to behaviour (Rokeach 1973) but this remains contested and unclear.

The research on values relates values to culture and basic inner self. Whereas attitudes are simpler judgements (good or bad) that may well be influenced by core values.



## Culture

Culture has been defined many times but really as the same concept, summarised as :

“that complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, art, morals, law, customs, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society” (Tylor, 1924).

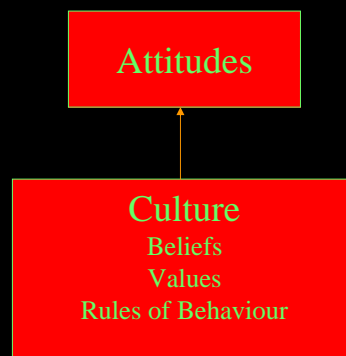
“Culture consists of patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behaviour acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups, including their embodiments in artefacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional (i.e. historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values; culture systems may, on the one hand, be considered as products of action, and on the other as conditioning elements of further action”

- Culture is both the starting and ending point of human endeavour.
- The purpose of culture is to guide the individual through life, to provide values that guide relationships, solve problems and order one's life.
- However, as life progresses new knowledge changes values and hence culture becomes the ultimate product of events and happenings. This becomes a new starting point for new generations.

Culture derives attitudes because values and beliefs contribute strongly to the judgement of good or bad.

Therefore, attitudes are learned within particular cultural contexts.

However, values and beliefs are more stable through time than attitudes that can be affected more readily by extrinsic aspects of life such as motives.



## Expectations

Expectations are “benefits sought” a term derived in early market research into segmentation.

They are benefits expected but not necessarily achieved. Sometimes they are referred to as “gains”.

Expectations are specific, forward directed with intentional charge and driven by motives.

They have been divided into components including :

- Forecast components (what the individual believes will occur).
- Normative components (what is feasible to occur).
- Ideal components (the highest level of expectation).
- Minimum tolerable components ( the lowest level of performance acceptable).



## Images

Image can be of the tourist but here it is about the destination.

The large literature includes articles that provide numbers of definitions :

“Images form the basis of the evaluation or selection process and thus provide the link between motivations and destination selection.” (O’Leary and Deagan, 2002)

Image has also been related to quality, and the quality of the destination, and its environment, as well as services and host encounters.

Image is also a pre-consumption factor – “the antecedent of expectation”



However, there is also separate literature that links images to perceptions.

“Image ... is defined as the result of a psychological process where a destination image is the sum of the perceptions of many attribute items. Images are themselves intangible (e.g. value image), comprised of perceptions ...” (Bignon et al. 1998)



It is possibly overly simplistic to have a reliance on only one concept to derive images. A well accepted definition :

“The sum of beliefs, ideas and impressions that a person has of a destination”

Is more encompassing and relates back to culture and attitudes.

Images are also discussed in terms of components largely described as attributes of various forms. But as with the previous concepts the components are not the focus here.

Images also change over time. Perhaps from advertising, perhaps from culture or age, perhaps from experience, perhaps from the occurrence of significant events (e.g. Olympics).

There is also a direct link between image and demand for the product. Although there are no studies that attempt to measure demand using image. As such the image will as an outcome be either positive or negative.

Images are also seen to relate to satisfaction.

The theory is that unless the image of the destination is matched to the expectation of the destination to a reasonable degree there will be no satisfaction.

The argument above conflicts with disconfirmation theory (as per Parasuraman) stating that satisfaction results from the match between expectations and experience.



There is also an argument that satisfaction or lack thereof can affect image.

The affect is to either reinforce positively or to detract negatively.

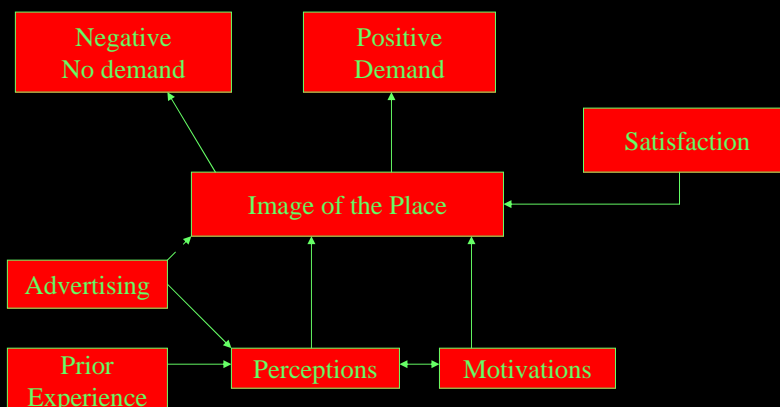
This does not conflict with Parasuraman and disconfirmation theory because ultimate satisfaction may simply change image over time.

This in turn is consistent with Gunn's idea that images change through time.

The relationship between motivation and image is less clear.

Some studies suggest motivations affect images, or at least some types of images (Gartner 1993, Dann 1996), but other studies find this relationship as weak (Baloglu et al. 1999 and Beerli et al. 2004).

Finally, advertising can also affect image, especially in the pre-consumption stage (Perry 1976; Bojonc 1991; Butler 1990).



## Motivations

There is a large body of literature focussed on why people travel.

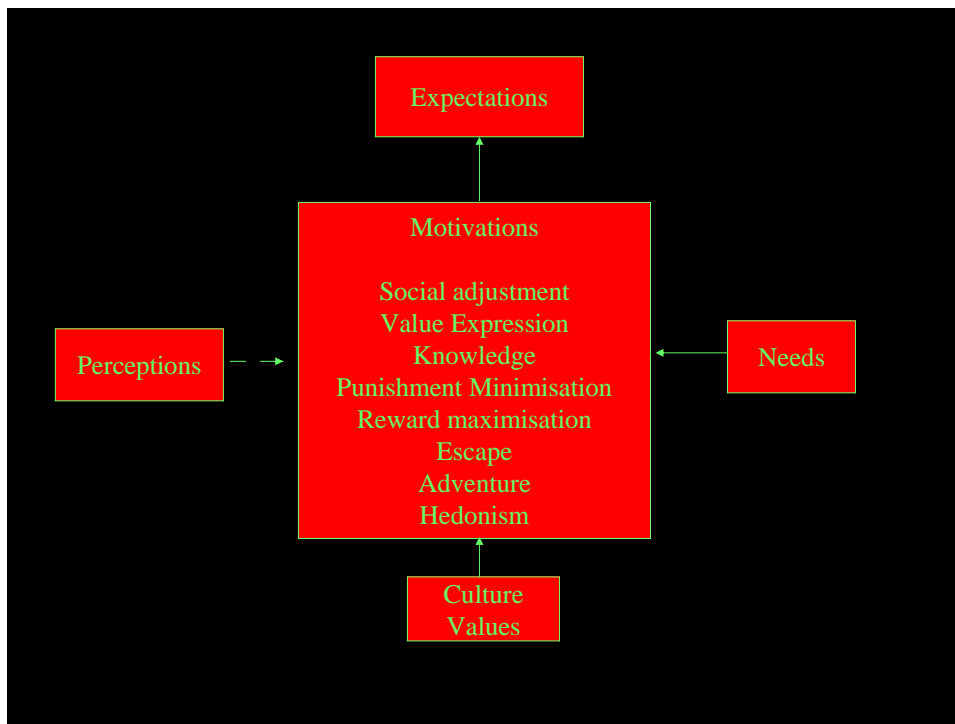
Early studies divided between needs based and values based motivations.

Needs can only provide a limited explanation and the greater body of studies focus upon values and attitudes.

Fodness (1994) argues internal psychological processes generate tensions which cause individuals to act to reduce the tension. In this way motives drive or push the individual.

Motivations are also related to preferences (perceptions) or desires (needs) to act.

As such the two aspects collaborate to create behaviour, the motive for change or 'something new' creating the desire to travel.



## Perceptions

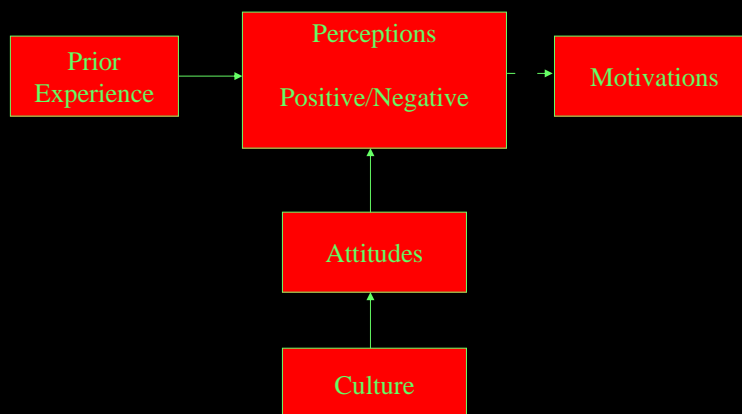
Perceptions are commonly seen as the desire to satisfy motivations.

As such perceptions are developed separately to attitudes and motivations.

Where attitudes are learned from original knowledge (culture) perceptions are self-created and induced by motivations.

Cohen most strongly argues that perceptions also depend upon culture and shaped by values and experience.

Cohen's argument is that different cultures teach people to perceive things differently. He argues that culture creates attitudes that ultimately influence perception and experiences.



## Satisfaction

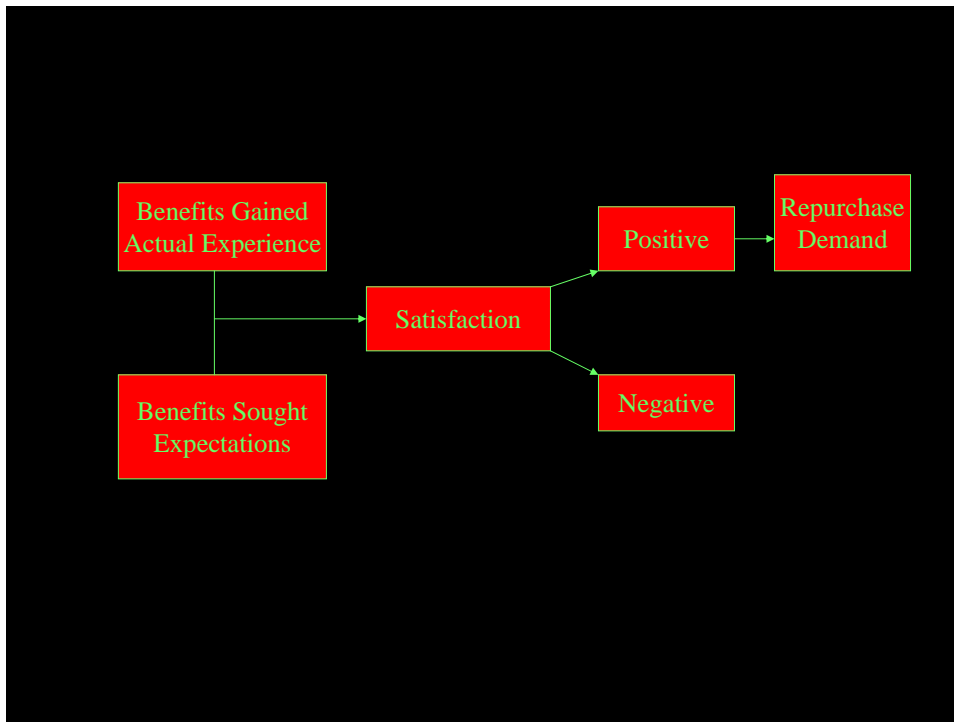
- Greater consensus on the meaning of and how satisfaction is measured.
- “a function of the degree of congruency between aspirations and the perceived reality of experiences” (Bultena, 1969)
- Most readily measured and described as disconfirmation theory.

This approach ignores the possibility of “mindlessness”, that is there are no expectations before purchasing.

This seems reasonable for expensive and largely luxury travel goods.

The further argument is that if experience exceeds expectations, the satisfaction that results, will lead to re-purchase. Hence demand is determined by satisfaction.

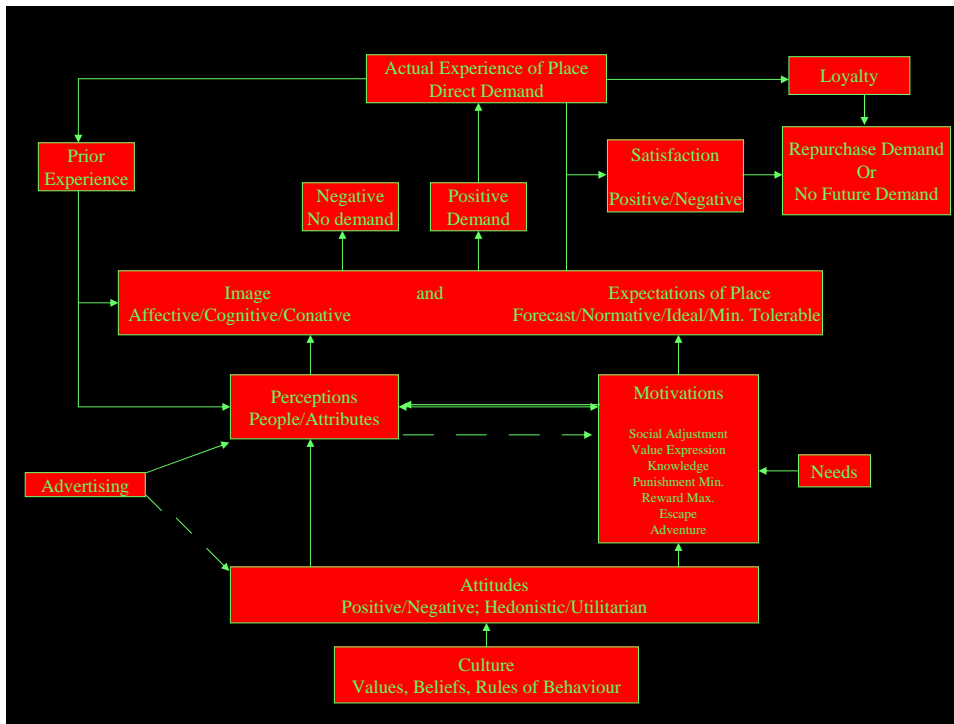
This process of demand requires satisfaction to influence future image.



One new element of this conceptual framework is the distinction between new and old demand. As such, direct tourist arrivals are seen to be a result of a positive image expectation; and the main drivers of tourist demand are seen to be positive image, and positive expectations.

Satisfaction can recycle demand but is not seen as fundamental to initial tourist arrival demand. It is the positive expectation or image that is important for direct demand.





## Implications

Important for predicting demand.  
 Important for structuring past research to highlight future directions.



- Culture is basic to market research into consumer behaviour in tourism. Research that fails to account for culture is likely to be biased.
- Definitions of the terms used (when they relate to concepts) are essential to establish meaning.
- There is a difference between needs and motivations. Needs are more basic.

**More research is needed on the difference between and the strength of motives generated by needs; attitudes and perceptions.**

- There is probably no need for further research on the components of concepts – attitudes, perceptions, motivations, images and expectations. Most of these components are translated from early psychological research.

**More research is needed into how the conceptual components differ (e.g. between cultures) and what the significance of the different components are for tourism.**

Perhaps the most uncertain aspect of this proposed framework is that images and expectations work together to determine demand.

This suggests that the selection of a destination is best determined by having a close match between expectations and the destination image. Direct demand flows to those destinations that project an image that will potentially meet the expectations of the individual.

Therefore, the proposal here is that images are not determined by expectations, but that images and expectations are determined separately, but in parallel as a result of two different, and not necessarily inter-related processes based on perceptions and motivations.

As such it is not images that are created but “expected images”.



## Relationship between Experience and Satisfaction

Demand is not seen to result primarily from satisfaction, but primarily from the match between image and expectations.

So, a change in image could well lead to a future mismatch between expectations and image, regardless of the level of satisfaction achieved as a result of benefits sought and benefits gained. Such a changed situation may result from experience.

## The Relevance to Demand Forecasting

The forecasting of demand is currently based on economic factors that are readily measurable, and relate fundamentally to price.

However, a subtle indicator of what has been termed “habit persistence” in current demand modelling, that weights future demand based on past demand, may possibly be found in a measure of satisfaction or loyalty.

Moreover, a subtle demand variable to measure “fashion” or “popular trend” may be found in image or the balance between image and expectations. However, the task of measuring these variables is a difficult question and yet to be answered.



THANK YOU