

Outdoor recreation motivations and nature experiences: the case of Eskişehir

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Introduction

Human nature activities based on outdoor recreation are considered as a social phenomenon having various effects in different areas such as tourism, sport and education. The behavioural relations form an important aspect in order to understand in what ways nature activities are related to outdoor recreation in theory and to examine its' relation to leisure marketing. This study aims at examining the relation between nature experience and outdoor recreation motivation as an important determinant of experiences.

Basically, motives and experiences are similar terms. In the literature it is emphasized that the factors symbolizing experiences correlate with factors of motives closely, and we need more research to explain the relationship between motives and experiences (Mehmetoglu and Engen, 2011; Oh, Fiore and Jeung, 2007). Our research specifically focuses on the question of what dimensions these factors correlate with. For this purpose, *Experience Preferences Theory (REP)* was applied to determine the outdoor recreation motivation and *Experience Economic Theory* was applied to determine the nature experience.

Theory

Experiences are considered as economic values in modern economy. Pine and Gilmore's Experience economy model is tested to explain the nature of experience. The dimensions of the model are the customer *participation* occurring as active and passive and *connection* occurring in the form of absorption and immersion. Four areas of experience, namely *entertainment*, *education*, *aesthetics* and *escape* have emerged with these dimensions. Rich experiences consist of the features of these four areas.

In the outdoor recreation literature, Driver and Tocker (1971) developed *REP* for measuring desired goal status that are attained through participation in leisure (Manfredo et al, 1996:188). The basis of the theory is to realize particular psychological and physical aims of the recreation behaviour. According to the model developed based on the expectation theory, the expectations relating to the recreation activities provided to realize performance which a person wants to achieve.

Methodology

The sample of the study included those who perform outdoor activities such as trekking, mountaineering, cycling, handling fishing, nature photography, and water sports individually or as a group in Eskişehir, Turkey. *Two-Dimensional Experience* scale developed by Oh et al. (2007) and *REP* scale developed by Driver and Tocker (1970) were used for the purpose of the study. The main survey was completed from December 2012 through May 2013, and 349 questionnaires administered personally and an internet survey was conducted. Data were assessed by examining outliers, missing data, normality, multi-collinearity, singularity and problematic questionnaires were excluded from the further analysis. In total, 313 questionnaires were analysed and explanatory factor analysis, confirmatory factor analysis and structural equation modelling were applied.

Results

The exploratory factor analysis of 24 items showed that participants were motivated by *relaxation, learning and sociality, independence and personal development, achievement* factors in outdoor recreation activities (Cronbach Alpha: 0,908, Explained Variance: 46,206) and nature experience consists of *aesthetic, education* and *escape* dimensions (Cronbach Alpha: 0,781, Explained Variance: 60,692). On the other hand, *entertainment* dimension, which was passively absorbed, was not statistically significant. Factor structures were verified by confirmatory factor analysis. Motivation factor structure demonstrated acceptable fit (χ^2 /df: 2.71, RMSEA: 0.074, NFI: 0.93, NNFI: 0.95, CFI: 0.95, SRMR: 0.064). Nature experience factor structure demonstrated good fit (χ^2 /df: 2.5, RMSEA: 0.071, NFI: 0.96, NNFI: 0.96, CFI: 0.97, SRMR: 0.045).

The relationship between the experience factors and the motivation factors was tested by structural equation modelling. As seen in Figure 1, a positive significant relationship was found between *education* experience and *learning and sociality* motivation ($\gamma = 0.96$, $t = 7.66$, $p < 0.001$). *Learning and sociality* motivation explains 96 per cent of *education* experience. *Education* experience was negatively related to *relaxation* motivation ($\gamma = -0.28$, $t = 2.48$, $p < 0.001$). This relationship is statistically significant but weak. On the other hand, a positive significant relationship was found between *aesthetic* experience and *learning and sociality* motivation ($\gamma = 0.47$, $t = 3.81$, $p < 0.001$). Finally *escape* experience was positively and significantly related to *independence and personal development* motivation ($\gamma = 0.41$, $t = 3.04$, $p < 0.001$). Based on fit indicators (χ^2 /df: 2.184, RMSEA: 0.08, NFI: 0.90, NNFI: 0.95, CFI: 0.95, SRMR: 0.06), the measurement model appeared to fit the sample data acceptable level.

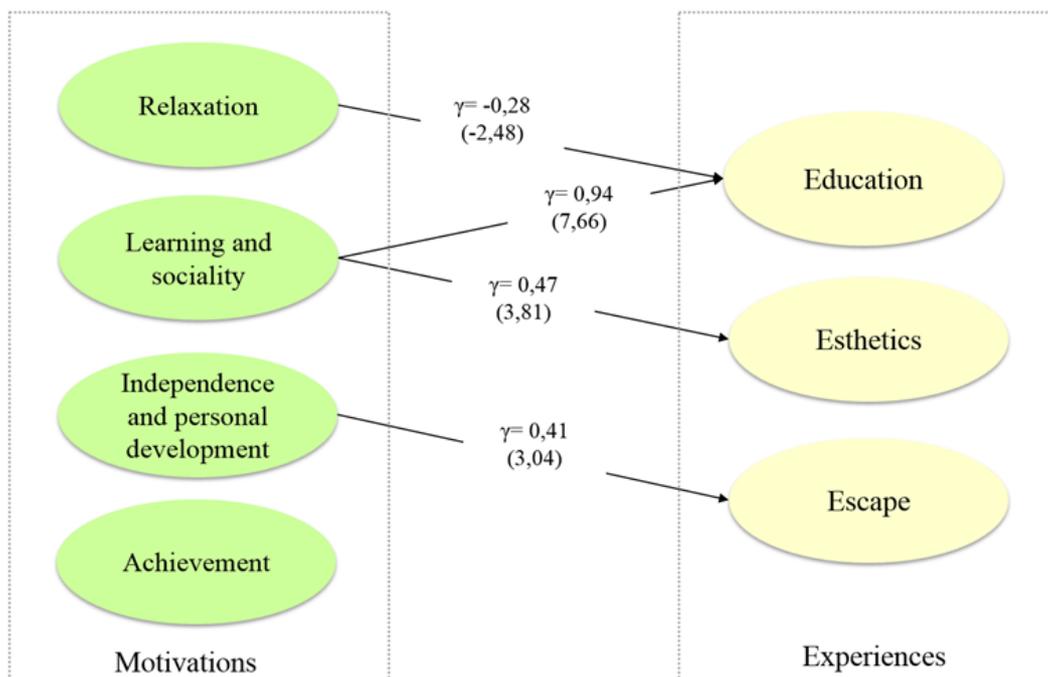


Figure 1. Relationships between outdoor recreation motivations and nature experiences

Conclusions

This study focused on the relationship between motives and experiences. According to *REP* theory used to measure motives, experience is an intended psychological output. Hence, it is seen that experience and motivation factors are related. However, *achievement* motive does not directly correlate with the nature experiences.

Study results can be useful for both recreation and tourism practitioners to improve exchange relation in market. In this vein, the relationship of the factors' structure should be taken into consideration while designing the nature experiences for the target markets.

References

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