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CHANNELING LIFE SATISFACTION TO TOURIST SATISFACTION: NEW CONCEPTUALIZATION AND EVIDENCE

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Abstract

This study developed a model that predicts tourist satisfaction with a destination based on their life satisfaction in their home country. The model was grounded on an assumption that tourist consumption does not necessarily entail consuming commodities, on which the expectancy-disconfirmation framework is built. The model was tested with 1,048 inbound tourists in Switzerland from eight countries. We found that among all the structural relationships, those between life satisfaction, positive affect, destination image, and tourist satisfaction were the most significant and robust across all nine models. This suggests that life satisfaction at home boosts tourist satisfaction at the destination through the mediations of positive affect and destination image. By contrast, all structural relationships related to negative affect were either nonsignificant or extremely weak. We conclude that life satisfaction at home can be channeled to the destination through experience-based affect and destination image, which eventually affects tourist satisfaction.

Keywords: happiness; life satisfaction; tourist satisfaction; destination image; Chinese tourists; Switzerland

1 INTRODUCTION

Tourist satisfaction is a vital indicator of service performance in various tourism and hospitality sectors as well as the competitiveness of a destination (Song et al., 2012). Previous research on tourist satisfaction was grounded on the expectancy-disconfirmation framework (Oliver, 1980), in which tourist satisfaction is nothing more than customer satisfaction derived from the discrepancy between consumers' expectation for, and perceived performance of, a product (Chan et al., 2003; Song et al., 2012). In this conceptualization, tourist consumption is relegated to the consumption of merely fragmented products and services at the destination. Yet tourist consumption is more complex as it is intertwined with enormous hedonic and transcendent experiences that may have little to do with specific products and services, nor with service performance of the industry (Gillet, Schmitz, & Mitas, 2016; Kler & Tribe, 2012; Tsaur, Yen, & Hsiao, 2013). The assumption that customer satisfaction entails an expectation as a prerequisite is problematic in the tourism context, since the expectation itself cannot be anticipated when a vacation is improvised, an activity is haphazard, or even the destination itself is rather obscure. These issues cast doubt on the validity of the expectancy-disconfirmation framework in explaining tourist satisfaction despite its wide application in consumer behavior research.

Empirical evidence has shown that tourist satisfaction is culturally biased, with Western tourists stubbornly more satisfied than their Eastern counterparts (Song & Chon, 2015). This cultural difference might be owing to the disparities of the *ex-ante* life satisfaction that varies across cultures and nationalities. In other words, tourist satisfaction with a destination might be determined prior to a vacation or travel activities at the destination. Studies suggested that tourist satisfaction with a particular destination (Hong Kong) tends to increase over time

(Chen et al., 2016; Song & Chon, 2015), which might be mirrored in tourists' growing life satisfaction at home. While life satisfaction at home and tourist satisfaction with a destination are divided, the fact that vacation becomes instrumental in shaping people's daily life lends support to the causal relationship between the two. On the one hand, vacation can boost positive affect and life satisfaction (Chen & Li, 2018; Neal, Sirgy, & Uysal, 1999, 2004; Neal, Uysal, & Sirgy, 2007) and, on the other, research has shown that happy people tend to project an optimistic view on the products they bought, the people they interacted as well as the decisions they made (Adaval, 2003; Forgas, 1990; Forgas & Ciarrochi, 2001; Wright & Bower, 1992). These studies suggest that tourist satisfaction with a destination is, at least in part, internalized in life satisfaction at home.

Vacation boosts happiness and life satisfaction because people's satisfaction with vacation as a specific life domain can spill over upward to their general life domain (Neal et al., 1999, 2004, 2007). We argue that life satisfaction can spill over downward to affect people's satisfaction in their specific life domains, including their evaluation of a trip or a leisure activity, and therefore determines tourist satisfaction at the destination. We aim to examine whether and how people's life satisfaction at home can predict their satisfaction with the destination, namely tourist satisfaction. Since tourist consumption at the destination is filled with experiences that can evoke either positive affect (such as excitement and joyfulness associated with transcendent experiences) or negative affect (such as anxiety and stress associated with fatigue and burnout) (Fritz & Sonnentag, 2006; Gilbert & Abdullah, 2004; Steyn, Saayman, & Nienaber, 2004), we look further into whether and how positive and negative affect can mediate the relationship between people's life satisfaction at home and their satisfaction with the destination.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Life Satisfaction, Happiness, and Consumer Evaluation

Life satisfaction and happiness have been used interchangeably in the literature to refer to subjective well-being as opposed to material well-being, or gross domestic product (GDP) (Deaton, 2013; Stiglitz, Sen, & Fitoussi, 2009). As an objective measure and statistic of both a nation's wealth and living standard for almost a century up to date, GDP has, since the last decade or two, been discredited as being insufficient to measure the genuine quality of life and well-being (Stiglitz et al., 2009). Economists have been considering alternative measures that include subjective well-being in order to more accurately assess a nation's economic prosperity and social progress (Deaton, 2013; Stiglitz et al., 2009). Empirical research on happiness, though, was originated in positive psychology but has gone on to penetrate a wide range of social sciences, from economics, sociology, to political sciences (Easterlin, 2001, 2004, 2013; Johns & Ormerod, 2007). When it comes to tourism, research has confirmed the positive effect of vacation and leisure on life satisfaction and happiness, which is robust across different travel or leisure activities (Neal et al., 1999, 2004, 2007).

Studies, on the other hand, have shown that happiness affects individuals' personal development, decision making, as well as judgement (Lyubomirsky, King, & Diener, 2005a; Mogilner, Aaker, & Kamvar, 2012). Lyubomirsky et al. (2005a) found that happiness is not only associated with, but can also predict, personal success. A wealth of research also showed that having a positive mood—a component of happiness—can affect people's choice through influencing their cognitive processing of information in decision making (Mogilner et al., 2012; Schwarz & Clore, 1983). Lyubomirsky, Sheldon, and Schkade (2005b) found that

people feeling happy are more likely to make better choices both in their personal (e.g., drinking less alcohol, smoking less) and professional lives (e.g., behaving in less retaliatory ways to coworkers, searching for and securing more job interviews). Numerous studies have shown that people in a positive mood tend to be optimistic about favorable events occurring as well as to evaluate people and objects in a more favorable way (Adaval, 2003; Forgas, 1990; Forgas & Ciarrochi, 2001; Wright & Bower, 1992), which indicates that happiness leads to satisfaction as well as a tolerance of dissatisfaction.

2.2 Effects of Vacation on Happiness

The relationship between life satisfaction and vacation is mainly about whether and how vacation can boost life satisfaction and happiness (Gilbert & Abdullah, 2004; Kim & Woo, 2014; Lounsbury & Hoopes, 1986; Nawijn et al., 2010). This line of research articulated the differences in life satisfaction between vacationers and non-vacationers (Gilbert & Abdullah, 2004; Lounsbury & Hoopes, 1986). Gilbert and Abdullah's (2004) study showed that vacationers experience higher subjective well-being in both pre- and post-travel periods compared to non-vacationers. According to Gilbert and Abdullah (2004), vacation participation can enhance happiness, especially for those who enjoy and value travel. While no significant difference was found between vacationers and non-vacationers in their post-trip happiness, Nawijn et al.'s (2010) study found that the former have higher pre-trip happiness. Although travel can lead to burnout and fatigue (Steyn et al., 2004), Gilbert and Abdullah (2004) concluded that vacation would, after all, not make people physically worse off.

While a number of sociodemographic variables, such as income, marital status and

employment, can affect happiness either positively or negatively, vacation can somewhat mediate the relationships between these sociodemographic variables and happiness (Lounsbury & Hoopes, 1986; McCabe & Johnson, 2013; McCabe, Joldersma, & Li, 2010). Even after controlling for the effects of these sociodemographic variables on life satisfaction, vacation can still have a significantly positive effect on life satisfaction (Lounsbury & Hoopes, 1986). While low life satisfaction is normally associated with low income (Cone & Gilovich, 2010), people who are economically disadvantaged also see their happiness increase through vacation participation. This argument was evidenced in a community of the United Kingdom, where low-income households reported an increase in their life satisfaction after taking a sponsored vacation (McCabe et al., 2010; McCabe & Johnson, 2013).

2.3 Tourist Experiences and Happiness

Tourist consumption is more associated with mood and happiness than generic consumption (Nawijn, 2010b; Strauss-Blasche, Ekmekcioglu, & Marktl, 2000). Nawijn (2010b) found that mood is generated and can fade at different phases of travel, and mood climaxes around the completion of 70% of a holiday. Nawijn et al. (2010) found no difference in post-trip happiness between vacationers and non-vacationers, but vacationers report higher pre-trip happiness. This is perhaps because vacationers' anticipation of their holiday brings them positive affect concluded by Nawijn et al. (2010). Strauss-Blasche et al. (2000) found that compared to the pre-vacation period, tourists reported improved mood in the post-vacation period. The fact that mood and emotion are volatile has led some researchers to conclude that the effects of vacation on happiness are transitory, meaning that its effect on life satisfaction is inconclusive (Nawijn, 2010a; Nawijn et al., 2010). Nawijn (2010a) argued that vacation only has a marginal effect on the hedonic level of happiness, implying that vacation affects

some dimensions of happiness, such as emotions, mood, and affect. This is perhaps because vacationing is positively reminisced, and is thus more associated with positive affect (Nawijn, 2010a).

Travel experience is also associated with health complaints and burnout, which in turn affect tourist satisfaction, yet the effects of travel experience, along with negative affect at the destination, have not been addressed in conventional customer satisfaction frameworks. Fritz and Sonnentag (2006) found that vacationers' health complaints and burnout first decline approximately one week before vacation and plummet when the vacation is about to conclude, and then increase in the post-vacation period. This indicates that the negative effect of vacation fades during the whole trip. It was found that recuperation is negatively associated with the number of stressful days at home after vacation while positively associated with the length of vacation and the number of non-stressful days (Strauss-Blasche et al., 2000).

Different tourist activities are associated with different facets of happiness (Kler & Tribe, 2012; Tsaur et al., 2013; Voigt, Howat, & Brown, 2010). Based on the classification of travel experience on a spectrum from hedonism to eudaimonia, Voigt et al. (2010) found that spa visitation is on the hedonic end, spiritual retreat experiences are on the eudaimonic end, and lifestyle resort experiences are somewhere in between. The facets of eudaimonia were found to be associated with highly-engaging travel activities, such as scuba diving, which can provide participants with meaning and fulfillment through learning and personal growth (Kler & Tribe, 2012; Matteucci & Filep, 2017). Matteucci and Filep (2017) argued that tourists' experience of flamenco music and dance in Spain is eudaimonic as the pursuit of flamenco involves hardship, sacrifice as well as an enthusiastic craving for self-discovery, all of which

are obscured in commonplace travel activities. Tsaur et al. (2013) surveyed mountain climbers and found that mountain climbing is filled with transcendent experience, which boosts hedonic enjoyment and happiness, especially for professional climbers. Hosany (2012) argued that appraisals of pleasantness, goal congruence, and internal self-compatibility are the main drivers of positive emotions.

2.4 Spillover Effects: From Tourist Happiness to Life Satisfaction

The mechanism by which tourist satisfaction or happiness can increase life satisfaction is based on the spillover theory (Neal et al., 1999, 2004, 2007; Neal, 2000). This theory regards life satisfaction as a hierarchy that builds on people's satisfaction with a wide range of specific life domains, including leisure and vacation (Neal et al., 1999, 2004, 2007; Neal, 2000). Since the leisure domain is placed at the bottom of the hierarchy, satisfaction with leisure and vacation spills over upward to superordinate domains, and eventually affects life satisfaction (Neal et al., 1999, 2007). With a comprehensive literature review on the linkages between leisure and happiness, Newman, Tay, and Diener (2014) proposed five core psychological domains that can explain why leisure can boost happiness, which are detachment-recovery, autonomy, mastery, meaning, and affiliation (DRAMMA). These five psychological domains are the most relevant and applicable to life satisfaction with leisure and, to a larger extent, with tourism. The DRAMMA model was based on a re-conceptualization of leisure on two dimension. One is the structural dimension, which distinguishes between leisure and obligated work, and the other dimension is subjective, indicating people's perceived engagement in leisure activities (Newman et al., 2014)

2.5 From Life Satisfaction, Customer Satisfaction to Tourist Satisfaction

Customer satisfaction theories are built upon the expectancy-disconfirmation framework, which consists of four interconnected constructs: expectation, perceived performance, disconfirmation, and satisfaction (Fornell, 1992; Oliver, 1980). This framework has been widely applied in customer satisfaction research in various contexts, including tourism and hospitality where tourism and even a destination are seen as a product (Chan et al., 2003; De Ruyter, Bloemer, & Peeters, 1997a; Song et al., 2012). Underlying this framework is a conjecture that consumers develop expectations of a product prior to purchase, and then compare its actual performance with their expectations. As such, customer satisfaction is essentially consumers' evaluation of the perceived discrepancy between their expectation of a product before consumption and perceived performance of the product after consumption (Churchill & Surprenant, 1982; Halstead, Hartman, & Schmidt, 1994). This framework, along with a wealth of research that builds on it, suggests that customer satisfaction depends on the assessed value of the product which, in turn, is measured by the price paid by consumers versus the quality delivered (De Ruyter et al., 1997b; Rust & Oliver, 1994).

Despite the widespread application of the expectancy-disconfirmation framework, some assumptions that make the framework function in a generic consumption context may not apply to tourist consumption. First, tourists are not obliged to purchase a product to fulfil their travel goals; if anything, they actually purchase a combination of products and services from a wide range of suppliers to generate a holistic travel experience. Thus, customer satisfaction that builds on a single product or service may not work well in the tourism context. Second, product- or service-based customer satisfaction may obscure the discriminability between satisfaction and service quality, leading some studies to interchangeably use service quality and customer satisfaction (Mattsson, 1992; Spreng &

Singh, 1993). Third, tourist consumption is nothing but experience creation despite the fact that products and services help build such experience (Andersson, 2007). In some travel activities such as backpacking, pilgrim, and dark tourism, the creation of tourist experience entails no presence of specific, commercialized products or services. In Cohen's (1970) tourist typology, drifters simply avoid commercial tourism establishments during their travel in order to obtain an authentic travel experience. Finally, since tourist consumption occurs in different travel phases, expectation becomes elusive as tourists pass through one phase to another during the whole trip. Therefore, the boundary between expectation and perception is blurred, so is the disparity between them, which affects customer satisfaction.

Studies aiming at unraveling the effects of vacation on happiness concluded that vacation can bring happiness and positive emotions (Chen & Li, 2018; Neal et al., 1999, 2004, 2007). Nevertheless, little is known about how life satisfaction would affect tourist consumption and, in particular, tourist satisfaction at the destination. Tourist satisfaction, especially with a destination, has more to do with tourist experience than separate tourism products and services. Whether tourists value travel and see travel as a means of self-fulfillment also matters to their satisfaction with the destination, which in turn can be predicted by their life satisfaction before a vacation actually takes place. Yet these issues, which pertain specifically to tourist consumption, have not fully been accounted for by conventional customer satisfaction frameworks, nor has empirical evidence been provided for this matter.

3 RESEARCH METHODS

3.1 Model and Hypotheses

We assume that tourist satisfaction at a destination is rooted in people's life satisfaction at home. Given that tourist experience is created by various travel activities at the destination, we examine how both positive and negative affect would influence tourist satisfaction. Tourism research has shown that destination image affects tourist evaluation of the destination, such as tourist satisfaction and loyalty (Bigné, Sánchez, & Sánchez, 2001; del Bosque & Martín, 2008) and can therefore affect their destination choice (Bigné et al., 2001; Telisman-Kosuta, 1989). In particular, Bigne et al. (2001) confirmed that destination image has direct effects on tourist satisfaction and behavioral intentions. Chen and Li's (2018) study found that not only does destination image affect tourist satisfaction, but it also affects life satisfaction and emotions. As argued by del Bosque and Martín (2008), destination image is one of the key drivers of tourists' commitment to the destination. We therefore hypothesize that destination image is influenced by tourists' affect at the destination as well as their life satisfaction at home. Figure 1 shows the conceptual model that consists of nine hypotheses:

$H_{1\text{-}1}$: Life satisfaction has a positive effect on positive affect at the destination.

$H_{1\text{-}2}$: Life satisfaction has a negative effect on negative affect at the destination.

$H_{1\text{-}3}$: Life satisfaction has a positive effect on destination image.

$H_{1\text{-}4}$: Life satisfaction has a positive effect on tourist satisfaction with the destination.

$H_{2\text{-}1}$: Positive affect has a positive effect on destination image.

$H_{2\text{-}2}$: Positive affect has a positive effect on tourist satisfaction with the destination.

$H_{3\text{-}1}$: Negative affect has a negative effect on destination image.

$H_{3\text{-}2}$: Negative affect has a negative effect on tourist satisfaction with the destination.

H_4: Destination image has a positive effect on tourist satisfaction with the destination.

Figure 1. The Conceptual Model.

3.2 Research Design

In order to test the effect of tourists' life satisfaction on tourist happiness, we need to ensure that life satisfaction cannot be affected by tourist experience at the destination, in other words, life satisfaction is exogenous in the model. We adopted a two-phase research design to dictate the sequence of the questions regarding life satisfaction (pre-travel phase) and tourist satisfaction (post-travel phase) being asked. In the first phase, respondents were required to provide information about their life satisfaction at home and how they viewed their life prior to their most recent trip to the destination (Switzerland). In this phase, respondents were unware of both the questions regarding their travel experience at the destination and the relationship between the two sets of questions. This was to ensure that information collected for life satisfaction was not affected by their most recent travel experience. In the second phase, respondents were required to provide information about their travel experience, ranging from their travel activities, emotions, happiness, to their satisfaction with the destination. It was plausible under this research design, as we hypothesized, that respondents' experience at the destination would not affect their life satisfaction at home.

In order to account for the differences of respondents' life satisfaction that varies with their nationalities, we adopted a quota sampling approach for surveying tourists from eight countries (Germany, the United Kingdom, France, Italy, the United States, Canada, China, and Japan), which were the eight largest source markets of Switzerland measured by hotel room nights at the time of this study (Federal Statistical Office (FSO), 2014). We excluded one-day visitors and transit travelers in our survey as they did not experience the destination thoroughly, and therefore could not accumulate sufficient travel experiences that served the

purpose of this study.

3.3 Data and Measurement

Life satisfaction was measured with the *Satisfaction with Life Scale* developed by Diener et al. (1985), and extended by Pavot and Diener (2008). This scale consists of five statements: (1) “In most ways my life is close to my ideal,” (2) “The conditions of my life are excellent,” (3) “I am satisfied with my life,” (4) “So far I have gotten the important things I want in life,” and (5) “If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing.” Destination image was used to capture tourists’ perception of a destination, including environmental quality, political security, social connectivity, and economic affordability (Chen & Li, 2018), which shape tourists’ experience and influence their satisfaction and happiness. The items pertaining to destination image were drawn from del Bosque and Martín (2008) and Jenkins (1999). Tourist satisfaction was measured by three indicators: overall satisfaction, comparison with expectations, and comparison with the ideal (Chan et al., 2003; Conner & Sparks, 1996; Fornell, 1992; Song et al., 2012). Positive affect included relaxation, contentedness, joy, and excitement, while negative affect included anxiety, stress, depression, and sadness, both of which were drawn from the measurement of subjective well-being suggested by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2013). All these indicators were measured on an 11-point Likert scale, with 0 indicating tourists’ complete disagreement with a statement and 10, complete agreement.

We employed a cross-sectional study to collect information on tourists’ most recent trip in Switzerland. Data were collected from tourists from the eight countries aforementioned, who traveled to and stayed overnight in Switzerland between January and December 2015. A

questionnaire incorporating the questions about tourists' life satisfaction before their trip and their satisfaction with Switzerland after the trip was administered to respondents in January 2016 by a professional market research firm. Data collection began with the link of the questionnaire sent to the respondents in a panel database of the firm. Based on the speeding check results, of the 4,607 respondents who started the survey, 1,450 completed it, including 1,048 international tourists from the eight countries, and were used for analysis.

3.4 Data Analysis

A structural equation modeling (SEM) approach was used to test the hypotheses of the study, and a partial least squares SEM (PLS-SEM) was used to analyze the model (Hair et al., 2017). We adopted the variance-based SEM to analyze the data as we focused on the explanatory power of the model in explaining tourist satisfaction instead of confirming an existing theory. We expected that the predictors, particularly life satisfaction at home, have considerable power in predicting tourist satisfaction at the destination. Data analysis consisted of testing and verifying a model that ran on the aggregate sample of all respondents and eight models on eight national samples respectively. This two-stage process allowed us, on the one hand, to check whether the whole model was valid or not and, on the other, to examine whether the structural relationships between life satisfaction and tourist satisfaction were stable and robust across the eight national samples.

4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Respondent Profiles

Table 1 presents the sociodemographic profiles of the respondents. Of the 1,048 respondents surveyed, more than 55% were males. Married tourists accounted for nearly two-thirds of the respondents. The respondents were relatively young, with a combined 65.5% of the respondents between 25 and 44 years old, and a combined 21% or so between 45 and 64 years old. The respondents were well educated, with nearly 60% having obtained a college/university education and more than 25% having obtained a postgraduate education or above. As for occupation and employment, a vast majority of the respondents (82.5%) reported that they were employed before or during their most recent trip in Switzerland. Since the respondent samples from different countries were aggregated, which significantly reduced income disparities across these countries, the distribution of household income was relatively even compared to that of other sociodemographic attributes.

Table 1. Sociodemographic of the Respondents (N = 1,048).

4.2 Reliability and Validity of the Models

Table 2 presents the results of the measurement model tested on the aggregate sample. The factor loadings of all constructs were statistically significant and above the threshold value of .70, suggesting that the indicators exactly measured their corresponding constructs (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988; Hair et al., 2014). The Cronbach's αs of all constructs far exceeded .70, indicating satisfactory internal consistency of the constructs (Nunnally, 1978; Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Composite reliability was also used to assess the internal consistency of the constructs as Cronbach's α tends to underestimate the internal consistency (Hair et al., 2014). The results show that the composite reliability of the four constructs exceeded the threshold value of .70 (Hair et al., 2014), indicating high levels of internal consistency. All four

dependent constructs, except negative affect, were explained, to a substantial degree, by their predictors in the model. Specifically, 79.4% of the variance in tourist satisfaction was explained by its four predictors, namely life satisfaction, positive affect, negative affect, and destination image; 71.2% of the variance in destination image was explained by the three predictors; and 31.4% of the variance in positive affect was explained by life satisfaction.

Table 2. Reliability of the Measurement Model (N = 1,048).

Table 3 shows that the AVEs of all constructs far exceeded the cutoff value of .50 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Hair et al., 2014), indicating that the constructs had adequate and satisfactory convergent validity. Table 3 also shows that the square roots of all the constructs' AVEs were larger than the corresponding inter-construct correlation coefficients, indicating that the measurement model achieved satisfactory discriminant validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Hair et al., 2014).

Table 3. Validity of the Measurement Model (N = 1,048).

4.3 Effects of Life satisfaction on Tourist Satisfaction

Table 4 shows the path coefficients of the nine models, namely one model on the aggregate sample and eight models on the eight national samples. All paths in the aggregate model were statistically significant and had expected signs. We found that four structural relationships were supported across almost all nine models, which were the associations between life satisfaction and positive affect, between positive affect and destination image, between positive affect and tourist satisfaction, and between destination image and tourist satisfaction.

However, there was no compelling evidence to suggest that life satisfaction directly affects tourist satisfaction as this relationship was confirmed in three models only (aggregate, USA, and China). Even though in these three models the direct effects of life satisfaction on tourist satisfaction were statistically significant, the magnitude of these effects were negligible. Therefore, we conclude that there is no direct effect of life satisfaction on tourist satisfaction. The effects of life satisfaction on positive affect were statistically significant and strong, indicating that life satisfaction brings about positive emotions. In other words, happy tourists tend to generate more positive emotions through vacation participation at the destination.

Table 4. Path Estimates.

4.4 Effects of Affect on Tourist Satisfaction

The direct effect of life satisfaction on tourist satisfaction was not verified probably because of the mediation effects of positive affect and destination image in the model. We found that life satisfaction had a statistically positive effect on positive affect (Table 4). Among all the significant structural relationships was the positive one between life satisfaction and positive affect, which was pronounced in all nine models, indicating that happy tourists tend to have positive affect at the destination. Also, happy tourists were more likely to project a favorable image of the destination, and the relationship between life satisfaction and positive affect was among the strongest in the results. It is worth noting that there was a positive yet weak relationship between life satisfaction and negative affect, indicating that happy tourists may also encounter negative affect. This finding has been confirmed by a number of studies, suggesting that negative affect helps to strike an emotional balance that ultimately leads to happiness (Liu, Wang, & Lü, 2013; Moriwaki, 1974; Ryff, 1989).

We found that positive affect had strong effects on both destination image and tourist satisfaction with the destination (Table 4), indicating that positive affect helps tourists project a favorable image of the destination as well as makes them more satisfied with the destination. On the other hand, the effects of negative affect were either nonsignificant in some models or negatively associated with destination image (Table 4). Note that negative affect had a positive effect on tourist satisfaction, despite that the effect was negligible. In addition, we found that destination image had a statistically positive effect on tourist satisfaction. While travel activities may end up with negative emotions, which are either physically (such as fatigue), psychologically (sadness), or socially (loneliness) related, we found that these negative emotions, if anything, had negligible effects on tourist satisfaction.

As Figure 2 shows, among all the structural relationships, those between life satisfaction (LS), positive affect (PA), destination image (DI), and tourist satisfaction (TS) (LS → PA → DI → TS) were the most significant and robust across all nine models. This result suggests that life satisfaction at home affects tourist satisfaction at the destination only through the mediations of positive affect and destination image. By contrast, all structural relationships involving negative affect were either nonsignificant or extremely weak. As argued by Chen and Li (2018), tourists are reluctant to link their travel experience to negative affect, despite the fact that vacation can bring about negative emotions.

Figure 2. Estimated model (N = 1,048)

5 CONCLUSION

This study has shown that the effects of life satisfaction on tourist satisfaction were almost completely mediated by both positive affect and destination image. The strongest paths in the models were found between life satisfaction, positive affect, destination image, and tourist satisfaction. This result suggests that life satisfaction at home can be channeled to the destination through two mediators (experience-based affect and destination image) that are specific to tourist consumption. It also suggests that life satisfaction eventually affects tourist satisfaction. On the one hand, we found that life satisfaction was strongly associated with tourists' positive affect, and on the other hand, it lends support to the pivotal role of positive affect in determining tourist satisfaction at the destination. Not only does positive affect directly influence tourist satisfaction, but it also influences tourist satisfaction through affecting destination image. The pivotal role of positive affect is largely due to the fact that vacation is hedonic by its nature, and thus is strongly associated with positive affect. The hedonic nature of tourist consumption can also explain why negative affect has no role to play in our model: it does not affect tourist satisfaction even though negative affect is indeed associated with travel activities at the destination.

5.1 Theoretical Implications

We have provided an alternative approach to studying customer satisfaction in general and tourist satisfaction in particular. This approach conjectures that tourist satisfaction evoked at the destination is originated from life satisfaction at home, and is augmented by positive affect at the destination. We conclude a series of mediations: LS (life satisfaction) → PA (positive affect) → DI (destination image) → TS (tourist satisfaction). This framework conceptualizes customer satisfaction in the tourism context, in which intangible experiences triumph over tangible commodities. It implies that tourist satisfaction might be independent

of service performance at the destination, a view that differs drastically from conventional customer satisfaction frameworks, which see satisfaction as being built upon the consumption of concrete commodities and a consequence of service quality. Our study has shown that tourist satisfaction can be seen as a spillover of life satisfaction associated with the destination. Since tourist consumption, above anything else, is a process and experience, transferring life satisfaction into tourist satisfaction requires tourists to experience the destination. Since tourist satisfaction is rooted in people's life satisfaction, it can be stationary across destinations but varies across the nationalities of tourists. Tourist satisfaction may also deviate from life satisfaction because tourists' affect and destination image vary from one destination to another.

Given the crucial role of affect in mediating the relationship between life satisfaction and tourist satisfaction, conventional customer satisfaction frameworks that do not encompass emotions may be insufficient to assess the outcome of tourist consumption. Therefore, recent studies in tourism advocate that tourist happiness might be a better measure of tourist fulfillment at the destination (Chen & Li, 2018; Filep, 2008; Filep & Deery, 2010). Since emotions are always associated with different travel experiences at the destination, the product/transaction-based satisfaction scale has little power in explaining tourist satisfaction without emotions at play. Recent research has shown that emotion, affect, and eudaimonia are the defining elements of tourist consumption (Chen & Li, 2018; Fritz & Sonnentag, 2006; Hosany, 2012; Kler & Tribe, 2012; Matteucci & Filep, 2017), which are absent in conventional consumption settings. Also, tourist experience is not necessarily associated with commercial hospitality establishments, which renders conventional customer satisfaction frameworks less applicable in the tourism context. Our study has shown that destination image matters to tourist satisfaction, which entails no transactions between tourists and

suppliers at the destination.

5.2 Practical Implications

This study suggests that customer satisfaction is not entirely determined by consumers' perception and expectation when they purchase a product or engage in a particular transaction. Customer satisfaction, at least in part, is rooted in people's life satisfaction prior to any consumption or experience, and therefore can be independent of product or service provision. Not only has this point been shed light on by happiness research in relation to the effect of happiness on consumer judgement (Lyubomirsky et al., 2005a; Mogilner et al., 2012), this study also provided evidence in the tourism context. This requires managers to factor life satisfaction in measuring customer satisfaction and tourist satisfaction, and thus assess to what extent tourist satisfaction, in particular, can be attributed to a product or service which managers can control. On the other hand, manages need to better understand life satisfaction of consumers and further segment tourists based not only on visible sociodemographic profiles but also on the levels of life satisfaction. A lot of happiness reports and statistics, such as the *World Happiness Report* and *Gallup Life Satisfaction Survey*, to name a few, have already provided the information to the industry and firms.

Managers also need to bear in mind that the extent to which life satisfaction affects tourist happiness depends on the product or service that tourists consume or the travel activities that tourists undertake. We tested the model in the tourism context simply because tourist consumption can easily invoke emotion and is strongly associated with tourist happiness (Chen & Li, 2018). Studies also show that tourist experience with different activities can be measured on a continuum from hedonism to eudaimonia (Voigt et al., 2010), consumption or

activities closely related to eudaimonia, for instance, would end up with higher levels of tourist satisfaction and happiness. Thus in product development, managers should focus on eliciting the eudaimonia dimension of a product or service offering, especially for consumers with higher life satisfaction in the first place. This helps channel life satisfaction at home to tourist satisfaction at the destination, and eventually augment tourist satisfaction.

5.3 Limitations

This study has a few limitations. First, since we adopted a cross-sectional research design, in which both life satisfaction in the pre-travel phase and tourist satisfaction in the post-travel phase were asked in a single survey after tourists concluded their travel activities, their responses to the questions of life satisfaction might still be affected by their travel experience at the destination. Despite the fact that we tried to avoid the reverse causality between life satisfaction and tourist satisfaction by dictating the sequence of the two types of questions, the reverse causality may still exist. If so, what we examined might be the effects of vacation and tourist satisfaction on life satisfaction, a predominant theme in tourist happiness studies (Chen & Li, 2018; Hoopes & Lounsbury, 1989; Kim & Woo, 2014; Neal et al., 1999, 2004, 2007). Second, while this study aimed to provide an alternative framework for customer satisfaction in the tourism context by referring to life satisfaction, the measure of tourist satisfaction was still grounded on the expectancy-disconfirmation framework. Therefore, the predictors in the model supposed to account for the new conceptualization of tourist satisfaction may not fully explain tourist consumption per se. Third, despite culture being closely related to life satisfaction, nowhere did we carry out a cross-cultural analysis of the relationship between life satisfaction and tourist satisfaction.

From a theoretical point of view, we would like draw the relevance of technology advancement to the study of life satisfaction at home and of tourist satisfaction at the destination. A perplexing issue is that on the one hand, people's high reliance on technology at home might be detrimental to their pursuit of happiness and life satisfaction—the antecedent of our conceptualization of customer/tourist satisfaction; on the other hand, people crave the convenience that technology, such as Wi-Fi connection and mobile payment, brings while traveling. Studies on the one side have indicated the adverse effect of technology that leads to depression and anxiety, thereby decreasing life satisfaction (Roberts & David, 2016), while on the other side have shown that tourists, especially Chinese, see technology as one of the most important elements in determining their satisfaction at the destination (Lee & Mills, 2007; Wang, So, & Sparks, 2017). As a matter fact, mainstream life satisfaction and happiness statistics, such as the *World Happiness Report*, have not yet to include technology as one dimension on which people's happiness at home is based. Future research should look at whether, and why, people view technology at home and at the destination differently in relation to their life satisfaction and tourist satisfaction, and, importantly how their views affect their travel experience at the destination.

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Table 1. Sociodemographic of the Respondents (*N* = 1,048).

Category	*N*	*%*	*Category*	*N*	*%*
Gender			Primary/elementary school	10	1.0
Male	579	55.2	Secondary/high school	150	14.3
Female	469	44.8	College/university	616	58.8
Marital status			Postgraduate	254	24.2
Single	315	30.1	Other	13	1.2
Married	652	62.2	*Occupation*		
Divorced	26	2.5	Employed	865	82.5
Separated	10	1.0	Unemployed	23	2.2
Widowed	15	1.4	Retired	41	3.9
Other	30	2.9	Student	54	5.2
Age			Housewife	40	3.8
15–24	103	9.8	Other	25	2.4
25–34	402	38.4	*Household income*[1]		
35–44	284	27.1	Less than US$20,000	62	5.9
45–54	145	13.8	US$20,000–39,999	188	17.9
55–64	82	7.8	US$40,000–59,999	253	24.1
65 +	32	3.1	US$60,000–79,999	228	21.8
Education			US$80,000–99,999	149	14.2
No formal education	5	.5	US$100,000 or more	163	15.6

Notes: Missing values for household income.

Table 2. Reliability of the Measurement Model (N = 1,048).

Indictor	Factor loading	rho_A	Composite reliability	Cronbach's α	R^2
Life satisfaction		**.944**	**.948**	**.931**	
Life close to ideal	.906***				
Conditions of life were excellent	.923***				
Satisfied with life	.913***				
Gotten the important things	.884***				
Would change almost nothing	.796***				
Positive affect		**.938**	**.954**	**.936**	**.314**
Relaxed	.914***				
Content	.935***				
Joyful	.934***				
Excited	.881***				
Negative affect		**1.000**	**.978**	**.970**	**.006**
Anxious	.926***				
Stressed	.959***				
Depressed	.978***				
Sad	.967***				
Destination image		**.943**	**.954**	**.943**	**.712**
Environment	.879***				
Landscape	.871***				
Weather	.855***				
Safe and secure	.899***				
People reliable and trustworthy	.910***				
People friendly and hospitable	.874***				
Tourist satisfaction		**.915**	**.942**	**.908**	**.794**
Overall satisfaction	.935***				
Comparison with expectations	.889***				
Comparison with ideal	.934***				

Notes: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Table 3. Validity of the Measurement Model (N = 1,048).

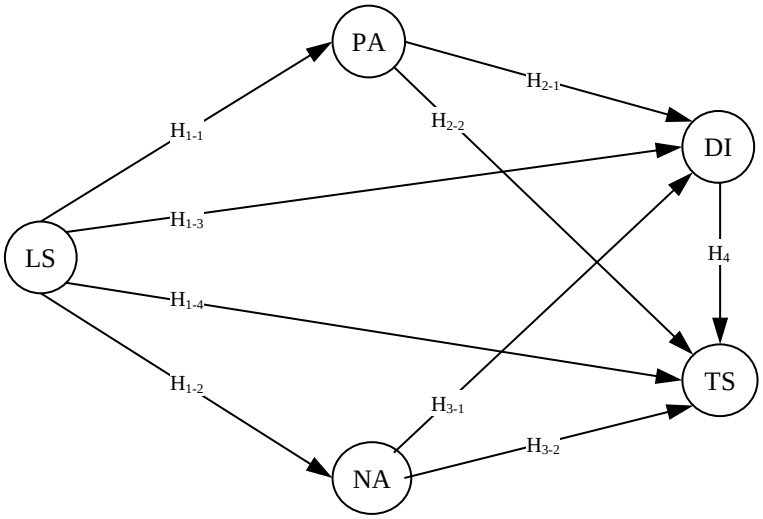
Construct	LS	PA	NA	DI	TS
Life satisfaction (LS)	(.886)				
Positive affect (PA)	.561	(.916)			
Negative affect (NA)	.077	-.128	(.958)		
Destination image (DI)	.558	.830	-.188	(.881)	
Tourist satisfaction (TS)	.559	.848	-.104	.853	(.919)
Average Variance Extracted (AVE)	.785	.840	.917	.777	.845

Notes: Values in parentheses are the square roots of the AVEs of the corresponding constructs.

Table 4. Path Estimates.

Path	All (N = 1048)	Germany (N = 105)	France (N = 105)	Italy (N = 105)	UK (N = 105)	USA (N = 157)	Canada (N = 157)	China (N = 157)	Japan (N = 157)
LS → PA	**.561*****	**.533*****	**.625*****	**.433*****	**.346****	**.460*****	**.551*****	**.731*****	**.480*****
LS → NA	**.077***	.016	.083	**.253***	.153	.115	**.204***	-.041	.065
LS → DI	**.158*****	.127	**.205****	.163	.073	.071	**.328*****	**.126***	.120
LS → TS	**.050***	.010	.087	-.082	.046	**.093***	.062	**.104***	.078
PA → DI	**.727*****	**.670*****	**.719*****	**.761*****	**.616*****	**.809*****	**.609*****	**.814*****	**.778*****
PA → TS	**.431*****	**.363*****	**.303****	**.391****	**.431*****	**.410*****	.174	**.623*****	**.656*****
NA → DI	**-.107*****	**-.206*****	.037	**-.111***	**-.226****	**-.090***	**-.185*****	-.022	-.039
NA → TS	**.037****	**.118****	**.134****	.077	-.080	**.117****	-.014	-.041	.025
DI → TS	**.474****	**.586*****	**.550*****	**.587*****	**.419*****	**.463*****	**.703*****	**.241***	**.238***

Notes: LS = Life satisfaction, PA = Positive affect, NA = Negative affect, DI = Destination image, TS = Tourist satisfaction. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.



Notes: LS = Life satisfaction, PA = Positive affect, NA = Negative affect, DI = Destination image, TS = Tourist satisfaction.

Figure 1. The Conceptual Model.

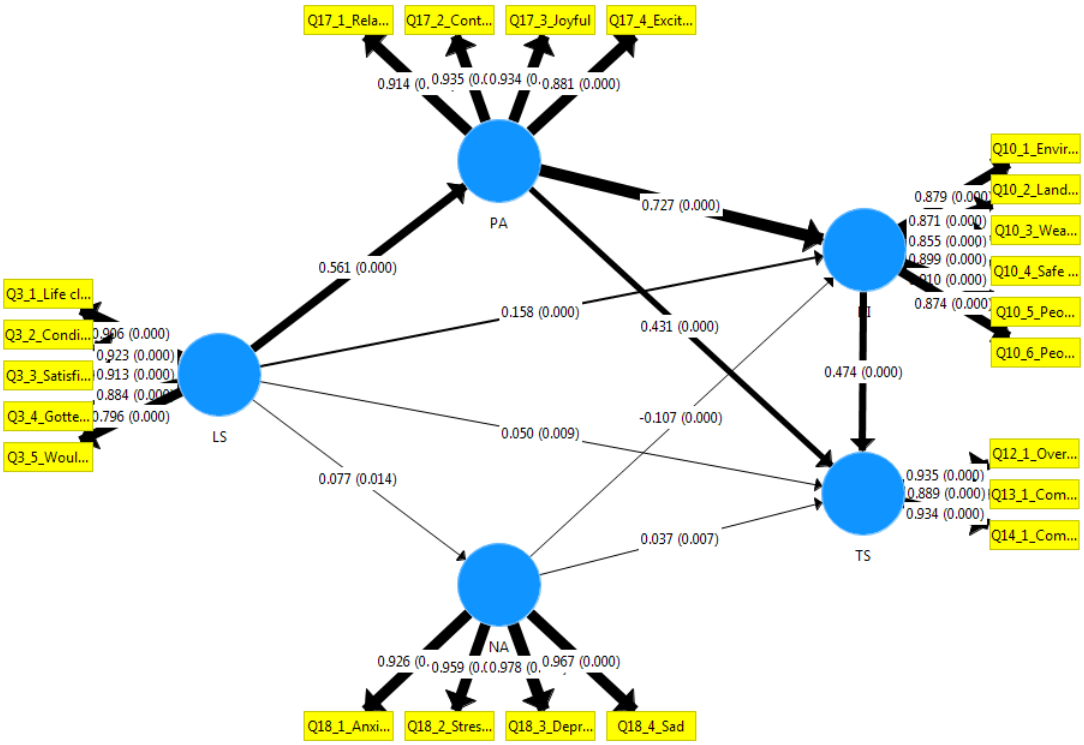


Figure 2. Estimated model (*N* = 1,048)