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## Editorial

First of all, I would like to inform all our readers and authors that the Journal of Tourism and Services is indexed now in Web of Science database - Emerging Sources Citation Index (ESCI). I appreciate the support and hard work of the Editorial Board and would like to thank authors for their contributions. I am looking forward to furthering collaboration!

The present issue of the Journal of Tourism and Services contains scientific papers and a short essay.

The contributions to this issue are authored by researchers and scholars from Austria, Bangladesh, Slovakia, and the United Arab Emirates.

The paper of Manoj Kumar and Amitabh Upadhya deals with night shopping in Dubai as a tourist attraction. Dubai attracts around nine million tourists per annum; the authors were focusing on the tourists' motivations and shopping behavior for night shopping in Dubai. The study also examines the scope of night shopping as a potential attraction for a destination that will positively impact repeat visitation. The data for the exploratory research has been collected through observation and interviews using convenience sampling. Based on the research findings the authors state that the major motivation for going to night markets are exploration, leisure activities and shopping experience in the comparatively relaxed environment. The authors identified the major facilitators for tourists' night shopping as transportation facilities, amenities, and safe environment. The study indicates that the trend of night shopping is rising with growing number of tourists and increasing shopping opportunities in the city.

The study of Kristína Pompurová and Radka Marčeková approaches volunteers' projects in package tourism, which is a predominant form of outbound leisure tourism in Europe. The study aims to examine the contemporary offer of tour operators and travel agents in Slovakia and the Czech Republic with emphasis on volunteer tourism. The authors obtained the data by mystery e-mailing based on measuring reaction to e-mail inquiry of client. The members of the Slovak Association of Tour Operators and Travel Agents and members of the Association of Tour Operators and Travel Agents of the Czech Republic were addressed as well. Based on the research results the authors state that the proportion of tour operators and travel agents offering package holiday tours with volunteer activities is negligible.

Sara Sarwari deals in her paper with relationship marketing model applied in five-star hotels in Bangladesh. The author collected the data from a survey of 284 loyal guests at five-star hotels in Bangladesh and examined their perspectives as end users using structural equation modeling. The emotion, which is considered to be a vital construct here, was used for the first time to investigate the loyalty of the customers in five star hotels in Bangladesh. The findings of the author imply the need of relational bonds to increase the positive emotions of customers which in turn improve the relationship quality between the hoteliers and the customers so that more loyal customers are introduced in the five-star hotels in Bangladesh and make the hotel's pursuit more competitive advantage, and long-term profit.

The short essay of Klaus Pfatschbacher explores the characteristics of Austrian tourism in a nutshell. A very modern way of deciphering the typical features refers to a structuralist approach in literature. Following Vladimir Propp's Morphology of the Folktale the author

frames several categories of tourism that allows him to define outstanding genres of tourism including all their drawbacks and potentials.

Last but not least I would like to wish to all members of the Editorial Board, present and future authors, supporters, colleagues, and readers a Merry Christmas and a Successful New Year!

Alžbeta Királ'ová  
Chair of the Editorial Board



# Night Shopping a Tourist Attraction: A Study of Night Shopping in Dubai

Manoj Kumar, Amitabh Upadhy  
Skyline University College

## Abstract

Dubai is one of the major tourist destinations with several shopping attractions for different segments of tourists from various parts of the world. It attracts around nine million tourists per annum. The purpose of this study is to understand the night shopping behavior/pattern of tourists in Dubai. The focus is on understanding the tourists' motivations for night shopping in Dubai and their shopping behavior. In the process the study also examines the scope of night shopping as a potential attraction for a destination that will positively impact repeat visitation. The study has included in its scope various special night markets that are regularly organized on specific occasions such as during the holy month of Ramadan. The research is exploratory in nature. The data has been collected through observation and interviews using convenience sampling. The research findings suggest that the major motivation for going to night markets are exploration, leisure activities and shopping experience in comparatively relaxed environment. Many tourists preferred night shopping to avoid heavy crowds of day time. The major facilitators for tourists' night shopping were identified as transportation facilities, amenities and safe environment. The study indicates that the trend of night shopping is rising with growing number of tourists and increasing shopping opportunities in the city.

**Key Words:** Night Markets, Night Shopping, Tourism Destination, Dubai,

**JEL Classification** – Z 390

## 1. Introduction

Shopping is one of the major factors for tourism, a large number of tourists go to various destinations across the world for shopping. The growing importance of shopping as a tourist activity is clearly demonstrated by the boom of the retail trade, in tourism destination areas and all along the tourist trail (Verbeke, 1998).

Shopping is one of the top-most searched keywords for travel information seekers on destination web-sites (Pan and Fesenmaier 2006) Shopping has been recognized as the most popular activity for both domestic and international tourists. With many destinations adopting shopping as a positioning strategy, the development of shopping products is central to tourism promotion (Lehto, Chen, & Silkes 2014). As a visitor attraction and a major economic activity and income generator (Henderson et al., 2011), shopping is crucial to tourism, and there is a growing literature on shopping tourism (Timothy, 2005; Henderson et al. 2011). In the context of

tourism, shopping behavior is more complex and intriguing as a subject area of exploration. People shop and behave differently while on vacation compared to their normal patterns at home. Some non-enthusiastic shoppers at home have been found to invest significant amounts of time and money on shopping during vacation trips (Christiansen and Snepenger 2002).

In a study related to the impact of night markets on the foreign visitors, Tsai observed that “Whether experiences at night markets influence the lifestyle of foreign visitors depends on the individual visitor. Some may think about similar or different cultures in their own hometowns or feel led to examine their own lifestyle in light of their experiences in Taiwanese night markets. Others who ponder the originality of the night market concept may think of something that could be done that has not yet been implemented. Still others may experience improved relationships as a result of shopping in a night market, where they get to know the owners better and have the opportunity to interact more frequently with other customers.” (Tsai, 2013)

Tourists’ shopping includes shopping by all kinds of tourists at any point of time. Night shopping, though, refers to all the shopping activities done at night. A night market is a venue for local people to eat out, to shop and to entertain themselves in a relaxed state of mind. It is a conglomeration of native culture; applying Urry’s well-known viewpoint of the tourist gaze, street vendors perhaps become an appealing tourist attraction and it is also considered the most effective way for tourists to experience an authentic lifestyle of the local culture (Hsieh, Chang 2006). Lee et al. (2008) defined night markets as “street markets operating at night, mainly in urban or suburban areas that generally tend to have more leisure, shopping, and eating areas”.

Dubai a major tourist hub as it has grown into is known for its shopping attractions. It is one of the seven emirates in the United Arab Emirates. It’s the fastest growing city in the entire Gulf Region and despite being an Islamic state its modernized accommodative and tolerant environment attracts large number of tourists from different parts of the world. Hotels in Dubai attracted over 9 million guests in 2013, representing close to 10 per cent increase over 2012 (UNWTO-Highlights 2014). In 2016, there were 14.87 million international overnight tourists to Dubai, up from 14.2 million in 2015 (Dubai tourism, 2017). Dubai has come a long way from being a trading post in the 1960s to a modern tourist destination with the entire infrastructure in place for becoming the most favored retail destination too. The rulers of Dubai have proved to be trendsetters in an unstable part of the world and engaged themselves proactively in the infrastructural development of a modern tourist and retail destination (Peter & Anandkumar 2011). Dubai has many competitive advantages as a luxury shopping destination and has developed distinctive shopping venues and events to exploit on the importance of shopping. Creatively, Dubai has established a novelty in combining shopping and entertainment options in order to attract and relate consumers to a broad-based shopping experience. Dubai for instance, may be the only destination in the world where tourists are just a few yards away from the world’s top retail brands, can enjoy swimming with sharks and can have a break from shopping and enjoy a ski down a snowy mountain (Zaidan 2016).

Night markets are a regular feature in Dubai, round the year however hectic activities are witnessed more, during certain periods of the year that celebrate religious and or national festivals. The Holy Month of Ramadan and Dubai Shopping Festival, are a few such occasions when night markets become so attractive that visitors come to Dubai especially to shop and enjoy. There have been reports that people unaware of these festivals have prolonged their stay by cancelling their return tickets and extending their visas when they had planned to return to their home countries on the dates closer to beginning of these festivals. Large numbers of retailers from different countries come to participate in these events.

## 2. Objectives of the study

The major objectives of the study are to explore:

- Night shopping motivations in Dubai
- Night shopping trends in Dubai
- The role of auxiliary activities arranged at night markets in Dubai
- The challenges of night shopping in the context of Dubai

### 2.1 Research Question

The research questions for this study thus are:

1. What are the night shopping attractions for Dubai tourists and does the activity pose any challenges?
2. Can night shopping play a role in repeat visitation?

## 3. Review of Literature

Shopping is gradually becoming a significant component of the tourist trip (Henderson et al., 2011; Moscardo, 2004). It is a decisive factor in tourism destination selection, a vital component of the inclusive experience of travel and sometimes the principal motivation for postmodern tourists to travel. Furthermore, the linkage between vacation planning and retail experiences is becoming more evident particularly in the increased investment in shopping complexes, mega malls, and outlets across the world, which indicates that shopping is now a main theme throughout global tourism (Shankman, 2012). The World Tourism Organization Report on shopping tourism reveals that the average tourist expenditure for shopping is US\$ 920 (accounting for 22.2% of all tourist expenditure), represents the second largest tourism expenditure after accommodation (UNWTO, 2014).

There are just a few significant studies related to night shopping available in literature that too specific to a destination. Latif and Barua in their study of night markets and its environment in Selangor Malaysia found that night market has the potential to be offered as tourism attraction. The night market offers cultural uniqueness in terms of food and local craft; display of various cheaper products; time flexibility; local shopping and cultural experience (Latif & Barua, 2012). In another study, exploring the potential of night market as tourist attraction in Malaysia, Abdaziz & Lye suggested various measures like re-arranging of parking facilities to make new arrangement to standardize the entire stalls layout in term of their uniform, apron, umbrella and tablecloth (Abdaziz & Lye, 2011)

In yet another study, aimed at finding Development Strategies for Improving the Services of Tourist Night Markets through Hybrid MCDM Technique, Huang, Liou and Tzeng concluded that in the future, if night markets in Taiwan want to attract more tourists locally and internationally, they should not only maintain their strong local characteristics and human touches but also need to strengthen environmental preservation, sanitary conditions, and traffic safety. To achieve this, they proposed to set up ‘authenticity-systems’ to ensure their quality of services (Huang, Liou & Tzeng, 2009). The most important images of the night markets in Taiwan are local specialty food items, products, and price that are characteristically local in nature besides other fashionable products, diverse food and drink, low-price products, and

distinctively flavored international foods having the potential to attract international visitors (Lee et.al. 2008).

Highlighting the gradually increasing relevance of the night markets, an important study by Hassan, Rahman & Sade concluded that “Due to the modern lifestyle, many consumers prefer to go shopping at the weekend and late evening since the majority of the shoppers work and/or study during the weekdays and daytime. It is highly recommended for the hypermarket retailers to provide a wider variety of perishable products on peak days and during peak hours.” (Hassan, Rahman & Sade, 2015).

In a study related to tourist shopping habitat, authors suggested that favorable environmental climate is associated with customer emotions and macro environment-induced pleasure is a powerful determinant of approach behavior (Yüksel, 2007). As a visitor attraction activity and generator of income (Law & Au, 2000), shopping is central to tourism, and there is a growing literature on the subject (Timothy, 2005).

In a similar study done about the role of *renao* (Chinese word for “bustling with noise and excitement”) at night market, researchers concluded that “Night markets provide a space in the community where shoppers relax with others and interact with sellers while they explore and browse for unique items at the right price. The sense of *renao* is meaningful as a mediator to the form and function of night markets and enhances the excitement and unplanned nature of shopping behaviors and satisfaction” (Ackerman & Walker 2012).

Separate studies related to night shopping have been carried out across the globe because there are visible differences in the nature of shopping including shoppers’ attitude towards shopping, kind of products being purchased, marketing-mix for night markets, retail infrastructure, and customer profiles for night shopping and so on. In one of the literature review for night market studies, Feng & Wu identified four factors of night market selection as “tangibles”, “convenience”, “food”, and “psychological fulfillment”. The top factor, “tangibles”, included attributes such as “comfortable environment”, “cleanliness”, “bustling atmosphere”, “public security”, “stall arrangement”, “friendly service”, and “reasonable price (Feng & Wu, 2016).

In a recent study about the entrepreneurial dimension of night markets, authors concluded that, in the current high unemployment society, it is difficult to find a job, so that people are motivated to open their own shops or stalls to distribute self-wholesaled merchandise. The night markets are these vendor managers’ best options, with the advantages of low costs and accumulated crowds. Everyone dreams of running their own businesses and being the boss (Liu & Fang, 2016).

There are very few studies available in literature that discuss night shopping as a catalyst to repeat visitation of tourists however there are a few significant studies exploring the relationship of shopping with that of destination loyalty and destination image. Earlier studies have attempted to understand importance of tourist loyalty for a destination (Lau and McKercher, 2004) and the correlation to a longer stay at the destination (Oppermann, 2000) however studies scrutinizing tourist loyalty towards shopping destinations are difficult to find in available literature more so reference to night shopping as an attraction that induces loyalty is almost non-existent.

#### 4. Methodology

The research design for this study is a combination of exploratory and descriptive design. The data about the locations and retail outlets were initially collected through secondary sources including promotion materials for Dubai Shopping festivals, newspapers and literature from various malls and other establishments. To confirm these locations, visits were made to these locations both during normal night hours and during the festivals when special night markets are set up.

For collecting the primary data related to motivations for night shopping, buying patterns and problems encountered by night shoppers, observations and interviews with tourists were arranged. The time period for data collection was intermittent keeping in mind the shopping festivals and occasions when night markets are specially organized by authorities and traders. Hence, a one year period during July 2016 to June 2017 was used for data collection and major portion of data were collected during Dubai Shopping Festival in months of January and February and on the occasion of Art Dubai in March and during Holy Month of Ramadan in June 2017.

The data was collected by both the main researchers with the help of two investigators. The length of the interviews with shoppers were 10 to 20 minutes with a few exceptions when interviews went for a longer period with shoppers showing interests in discussing various dimensions of shopping in Dubai.

The questions in interviews centered on geographic (mainly nationality), socio-demographic information (profession, ethnic background, education, age etc.), motivation factors for night shopping, buying patterns and problems encountered if any during night shopping and suggestions to improve night shopping experience in Dubai.

The first stage of research was to identify various locations and retail outlets through secondary data and on-site visits. The second stage was to ascertain factors that motivate people for night shopping. The third stage was to know the products and services availed by tourists at night markets, and the last stage was to analyze the problems faced in night shopping.

## **5. Findings & Discussion**

### **5.1 Locations and retail outlets for night shopping**

The locations and outlets for night shopping in Dubai can be categorized in two broad divisions-The regular night shopping areas and the occasional night shopping areas:-

The regular night shopping areas in Dubai are mostly in malls such as The Dubai Mall, Mall of Emirates, Mirdif City Centre, Deira City Centre, Dubai Festival City, Ibn Battuta Mall, Arabian Centre, Lamcy Plaza, BurJuman etc.

The occasional night shopping areas are those locations which provide ultimate shopping experience with myriad range of entertainment. These are most active during Dubai Shopping Festival (DSF), Ramadan and other special events. Some of these areas are Al Seef Street, Al Riqqa Street, Global village, Jumeirah Beach Residence, Sheikh Mohammad Bin Rashid Boulevard. Various types of cultural programmes including music, folk dances, light shows, fireworks are organized and these events are widely publicized through various online and offline media. Various fashion shows, mushairas (poetic event in Urdu), DSF Carnival are some other attractions during the festive season.

The shopping hours for regular retail outlets in malls and outside are also increased till late in night and sometimes for twenty four hours during festivals, so these regular outlets also become night shopping trade areas during these festivals.

## 5.2 Tourists' motivations for night shopping

The data regarding motivation for night shopping is based on interviews of 324 respondents. Out of these 240 were males (74%) and 84 (26%) were females. Their diversity in terms of nationality was as below in Table 1.

Table 1

**Nationality wise Distribution of Survey Respondents**

<b>Nationality</b>	<b>Number of respondents</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Saudi Arabia	23	07
Oman	23	07
Lebanon	10	03
India	110	34
Pakistan	45	14
Iran	6	02
Iraq	3	01
Jordon	3	01
Kuwait	3	01
USA	6	02
UK	6	02
CIS	13	04
Canada	6	02
European countries (other than UK)	19	06
African countries	26	08
Others	19	06
<b>Total</b>	<b>324</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Authors (for this study)

Thus, the major motivation factors for night shopping were exploration, leisure activities and shopping experience in comparatively relaxed environment (Table-2). Other factors were opportunities to see cultural activities, special attractions organized for night shopping, experiencing local culture and customs, use of time, eating out and entertainment.

Table 2

**Motivational Factors for Night Shopping**

<b>Motivation factor</b>	<b>No. of respondents citing as the most important reason</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Exploration	68	21
Leisure activities	58	18
Cultural activities	36	11
Special attraction	29	9
Shopping experience in comparatively relaxed environment	52	16
Night life in Dubai	19	6
Use of time	19	6
Eating out	16	5
Night offers and discounts	13	4
Others	13	04
Total respondents	324	100

Source: Authors (for this study)

The brief descriptions of these motivation factors in the context of night shopping in Dubai and interview sessions with night shoppers can be summed up as following:

**Exploration** - Tourists felt that visiting various locations and stalls at night will help them in exploring the other dimensions of Dubai, which is known as the business hub full of business and professional activities.

**Leisure activities** - People come to Dubai for business, as the city is very much geared towards the business traveler. More than one million people come to Dubai from other emirates and outside the country every day, which means the emirate's population during the day is far higher than at night, according to official data. (<http://www.emirates247.com/>, 2016). And those who stay in Dubai at night look for night shopping as part of their leisure activities.

**Cultural activities** - During shopping festivals, various cultural programs like folk dances, music from Arab countries, India, Pakistan and African countries are organized at various locations. The area of 'Bastakia' near Bur Dubai is famous for these activities thru the entire evening. Tourists flock the area video recording and photographing these events.

**Special attraction** - Light shows and fireworks are arranged at various locations during these shopping festivals. Daily fireworks at Al Seef Street and special fireworks at other locations along Dubai Creek create special attractions. Special stages are made and usually at 9 pm these shows begin creating special attractions for visitors. Many visitors go to different locations in the evening daily to watch these shows. Similarly, special shows for families and children by The 7

Sopranos of Australia, Bubble Gum Show, Ice Rink Show “THE SWANS”, and FURRY LIVE SHOW are other attractions.

**Shopping experience in comparatively relaxed environment** - One of the major attractions for night shopping according to respondents is the shopping experience in comparatively relaxed environment. Shoppers are free from the tensions of reaching homes or other places and the surrounding crowd is also relaxed. Hence, shoppers want to use this opportunity to buy the items where they don't want to make any hasty decisions. The products can be designer clothes, footwear, home decoration items and electronic goods etc.

**Night life in Dubai** - The non-Arab tourists that were interviewed mentioned that they want to know and experience night life in this country, and that because of the big difference between here and night life in their countries. Hotels are too close to the malls which motivate them to do their shopping at night and go back to their hotels easily. Many shows and events can take place at night in Dubai malls to entertain people and allow them to live different experiences.

**Use of time** - The common answers between most of the tourists was that they exploit morning times by doing all other activities like: visiting tourist attractions, specialty restaurants & cafes, experiencing UAE desert for dune bashing and safari and maybe attend to some business, because they are sure that the shopping malls will stay open till late night especially during festival seasons and in holidays like: Christmas and Eid.

**Eating out** - Night market is the best place for eating out. Eating out has become an important part in many people's lives (Koo, Tao, & Yeung, 1999). During the Ramadan, Eid and Shopping Festivals the night markets are full of traditional cuisines from various countries. The specialty of these events is that food is prepared by people belonging to respective countries where the cuisine belongs to. The preparation is done in open environment in front of tourists pulling shoppers to *Emirati Luqaimat*, *Omani Halwa*, *Turkish Lokum*, *Indian Jalebi*, and *Irani Felude* besides so many others.

**Night offers and discounts** - Late night shopping is quite attractive there are several bargain offers and discounts. People enjoy cinemas, entertainment, restaurants and not only retail shops fulfilling several needs of tourists at just one destination.

**Others** - The other reason that came up during interviews from more than 20 females was security. Dubai allows them to enjoy night shopping with complete peace of mind with no fear of any safety and security issues. “More quiet and restful shopping is the one that is done at night, no much people and no many teenagers are there” (Sic.); a male opinion regarding the issue.

### 5.3 Discussion about the shoppers' buying patterns

The data collected in the study reveals that tourists buy almost everything from the shops. Apart from buying of food and beverages, the most sought after product categories are clothes, electronic devices, smart phones, and souvenirs. Each of the tourists have a budget to buy from the shops and logically these budgets are not a small ones as they are coming to Dubai and have the idea about how expensive this city is.

Clothes and fashion accessories are the most preferable shopping items from tourists especially females. That is because of the long list of luxury brands and a wide variety of retail choices. Around 45% prefer to buy clothes.



On the other hand, 25% prefer to buy electronic devices, laptops, and smart phones, because of the low custom and other duties compared to their countries. 30% preferred to buy jewelry, gold, and watches because of the variety of collections and shops.

#### **5.4 Discussion about the activities of night shoppers**

Night shopping in Dubai is not limited to eating, drinking and buying. Visitors coming to these night markets do indulge in various kinds of recreational activities. The Mall of Emirates has one of the biggest indoor skiing facility called ski Dubai and surprisingly most of the visitors interviewed near this location had experienced it and liked it. The study also revealed that families with kids loved the fireworks, lighting and various types of games and entertainments for kids. Another attractive activity to do in Dubai mall is watching one of the largest aquariums around Middle East one can dive in the aquarium and feed the Sharks, of course with support. Beside these in both the Malls of Dubai and Emirates tourists had common answers about activities other than shopping like cinemas, fancy dinning, food corners, kids' corner, and hyper markets. Thus, the highest number of respondents prioritized experiencing fireworks, music and visiting stalls set up by people from different regions during the festivals. During regular days, entertaining kids and family members seemed to be the most popular activities.

#### **5.5 Discussion about the problems faced by night shoppers**

Dubai is one of the safest places to live or visit in the world. Most of tourists didn't find any problems or difficulties while shopping at night, because of the security, information center in each mall, public transportation availability, and Metro Rail stations. The aesthetically designed and friendly environment in each mall makes the shopping any time of the day amazing in Dubai. Department of Economic Development in Dubai monitors the markets and shops, to make sure that everything is in order and everyone is satisfied without any problems, for example regular gold price updates are displayed on large screens in the Dubai Gold Souk (market in Arabic).

The only problem that some tourists faced was high transportation cost, and all that because Metro stations close at 12 mid night so the only option for them to go back to the hotels at night will be by taxi.

The percentage of respondents expressing no problem was 78 and 22% expressed high transportation cost as the problem.

In the discussion above it can be observed that shopping in Dubai is a major attraction and night shopping offers great potential as a marketing tool for tourist satisfaction that certainly will have a very positive impact on repeat visitation further boosting the destination image. A recent study on a particular shopping destination finds "strong evidence that tourist satisfaction and the destination image directly affect tourist loyalty towards a shopping destination. However, there is a significant lack of evidence in the linkage between tourist shopping satisfaction and destination image as a determinant of tourist loyalty towards a shopping destination" and the authors conclude that having satisfaction with the shopping experiences at the destination "be necessary although the image of the shopping destination continues to play a significant part in developing tourist loyalty towards a shopping destination" (Suhartanto & Triyuni2016).

### **6. Conclusion and implications**

It is evident from the discussions that night-markets in themselves could be tourist attractions for several reasons, more so in a safe and secure city like Dubai. Dubai is a welcoming city for all the nationalities from around the world that offers tourists not just sun, sand and sea but safety and shopping too. The findings show that tourists are engaged in various planned activities in daytime it is the nights they prefer for a relaxed shopping experience. Different types of shops and activities lead tourists to spend more time in the malls and specific night shopping spots in buying variety of products experiencing various activities besides getting to enjoy greater variety of cuisine. The study also identified the only challenge of night shopping being high transportation cost in Dubai. The research findings suggest that there is enough scope to expand the opportunities for night shopping. Shopping festivals can be arranged more frequently and there can be expansion of night markets on regular basis as well. Although, night markets in Dubai are not like Taiwan but the continuous presence of visitors at almost all the night shopping spots hints towards its expansion scope. Night shopping also offers opportunity to mitigate seasonality that negatively impacts Dubai during summer months because of extreme hot and humid weather conditions especially in day time. Night shopping can also develop loyalty towards destination and will invite more repeat visitation.

The major contribution of the study is a reiteration of night-markets as a distinct tourism product that can be replicated at various other tourist destinations as a potential tourist activity. During night shopping tourists get to experience a variety of local cultural products in a more relaxed and time-spaced manner developing a better understanding of the destination country and community. Dubai however adds a much larger international dimension to the erstwhile far eastern experiment of night markets and night shopping giving other destinations a clue that localization of the nature and scope of night markets is always open for more creativity. There sure is significant prospect in the idea of night markets and night shopping. The satisfied night shopper with all the advantages that the study has identified is a potential repeat visitor, as such the study also indicates that shopping in general and night shopping in particular can be an attraction, if marketed well that will boost tourist numbers at the destination. Dubai undoubtedly has earned a reputation of a great shopping destination as evident in its marketing campaigns that extend the traditional 3S framework to a 5S charm of Sun, Sand, Surf, Shopping and Safety. It is only natural, as discussed above, that shopping be marketed as a twenty four by seven attraction especially highlighting the relaxed benefits of night shopping to attract repeat visitation.

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## **Are the Volunteer Projects Included in Package Holiday Tour? Case Study Evidence from the Slovakia and Czech Republic**

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### **Abstract**

The study approaches volunteers' projects in package tourism, which is a predominant form of outbound leisure tourism in Europe. The aim is to study the contemporary offer of tour operators and travel agents in Slovakia and the Czech Republic with emphasis on volunteer tourism. Data were obtained by mystery e-mailing based on measuring reaction to e-mail inquiry of client. The members of the Slovak Association of Tour Operators and Travel Agents and members of the Association of Tour Operators and Travel Agents of the Czech Republic were addressed. The research results show that the proportion of tour operators and travel agents which offer package holiday tours with volunteer activities is negligible. None of the subjects specializes in volunteer tourism as the global growing alternative form of tourism. Tour operators and travel agents that offer volunteer projects included in package tours do so only marginally.

**Key words:** Volunteer projects, package holiday tour, tour operators, travel agents, volunteer tourism

**JEL Classification:** L83, M38

### **1. Introduction**

The form of contemporary tourism is significantly influenced by various economic, technical and social changes (Malachovský and Királ'ová, 2015). As a result of rapid growth of mass tourism and increased interest in its socio-cultural and environmental impact have emerged alternative forms of tourism, including volunteer tourism. The need to travel, to spend free time outside the residence for the purpose of learning, distraction and entertainment, participation in cultural and sporting activities, has been associated with personal free will to do activities for the benefit of others, usually for no or not expected reward.

The combination of volunteering and tourism has in practice various forms. Volunteers can participate in environmental, humanitarian and cultural projects in heterogeneous countries. Most of these projects are usually organized by non-governmental organizations, local groups, clubs or associations and local authorities, which are also called the third, non-governmental, non-profit or voluntary sector (Chobotová, 2015). These organisations play an important role in specific areas of the tourism industry. They do not perceive it as the activities associated with the satisfaction of the needs of holidaymakers, instead they see tourism as an opportunity to create new, positive values and activities for tourists as well as local communities (Lyons and Wearing, 2008). At the same time non-

governmental organizations better reflect the specific problems and requirements of the communities (Svidroňová, 2014) and help to create targeted activities and projects.

Since volunteering is predominantly the domain of the third sector, it was important to find out, whether the growing trend of volunteer tourism was also reflected in the offer of commercial entities operating in tourism.

## 2. Literature review

Despite the fact that a lot of authors consider volunteer tourism as an important trend of today, volunteer tourism is one of the least explored alternative forms of tourism (Stoddart and Rogerson, 2004 In Wearing and McGehee, 2013). According to Wearing (2001), the reason is that volunteer tourism has been the subject of selective pragmatism rather than a specific definition or method for a long period of time. However, in the last years the growing interest in volunteer tourism and the effort not only to delineate volunteer tourism, but to distinguish it from other forms of volunteering and forms of tourism has been observed.

There is no singular definition of what volunteerism entails. According to available literature (Wearing, 2001; Clemmons, 2009; Chen and Chen, 2011; Tomazos and Butler, 2012) volunteer tourism can be characterised as an integrated organized combination of volunteer service at a tourist destination and specific tourism activities, which are performed in free time, out of place of residence, in home country or abroad and that is beneficial not only to voluntourists, but also to local communities and the environment.

One of the indispensable characteristics of voluntourists is that they volunteer in an organized way to undertake holidays that might include aiding or alleviating the material poverty of some groups in society, the restoration of certain environments or research into aspects of society or environment (Wearing, 2001). Just as destinations vary, so do the volunteer activities in which people can engage (Strzelecka, Nisbett and Woosnam, 2017).

Volunteer tourism attracts not only tourists but also gets the attention of many researchers. The theoreticians are particularly interested in the motivation, value and behaviour of voluntourists (Brown, 2005; Wickens, 2011; Tomazos and Butler 2012; Coghlan, 2015, Stainton, 2016, Kontogeorgopoulos, 2017), their experience (Simpson, 2004; Chan, 2011; Wilson, 2015), their satisfaction (Brown, 2005), the impact of volunteer tourism projects on local communities (Lupoli and Morse, 2015) and sustainability of volunteer tourism (McIntosh and Zahra, 2007).

Available studies explore mostly environmental and development projects in less developed countries, whose culture is significantly different from voluntourists culture (Wearing and Grabowski, 2011; Wearing and McGehee, 2013). However, the perception of volunteer tourism as a combination of travel and volunteering only in developing countries is inadequate and short-sighted. The participation of voluntourists from developed countries to environmental, humanitarian and cultural projects in developed countries (Mwara, 2012 In Taplin, Dredge and Scherrer, 2014) is becoming more and more popular, including the countries from which voluntourists come from.

Considering the nature of volunteer activities, volunteer tourism is primarily concerned with non-profit organizations. The connection with tourism and the growing demand for meaningful activities have led to the emergence of a growing number of profit making organizations in the volunteer tourism market. Corporate access to volunteer tourism market in the world is mainly provided by tour operators and travel agents. The number of tour operators and travel agents offering volunteer trips to different destinations is growing, especially in the US and UK markets.

Regarding the growing number of tour operators and travel agents abroad, which act as volunteer project intermediaries, we were interested in the situation in the Slovak and Czech markets.

### **3. Methodology**

During the past years, European tour operators have had to respond to the presumed crisis in traditional package travel by creating more diversified and individualized packages. We have been also investigating how tour operators and travel agents operating in Slovakia and the Czech Republic responded.

The aim was to examine the current offer of tour operators and travel agents in Slovakia and the Czech Republic with emphasis on volunteer tourism. The requested data was obtained by mystery e-mailing realized in summer 2017 which is based on measuring reaction of employees to e-mail inquiry of client. The regular members of the Slovak Association of Tour Operators and Travel Agents (151 tour operators and travel agents) and members of the Association of Tour Operators and Travel Agents of the Czech Republic offering tours (237 subjects) were addressed.

Obtained data were re-coded and a data matrix was created in a MS Excel spreadsheet. Relevant information was also compared with the contents of the websites of the selected subjects.

### **4. Results and discussion**

Three hundred eighty-eight tour operators and travel agents operating on Slovak and Czech market were contacted electronically. As a potential client, we were interested whether the businesses have volunteer projects in their package holiday tour offer.

#### **4.1 The Slovak market**

We have obtained the e-mail addresses of 151 entities from the up-to-date database of a professional association that reflects the interests of tour operators and travel agents and sent them a request for information. Nonetheless, nearly 6% of emails returned as a non-delivered message. Further, we have only considered the reactions of the remaining 142 subjects.

More than half (53.5%) of tour operators and travel agents surveyed did not respond to the request of a potential client (Table 1). We assume that these were businesses that do not consider the volunteer projects as permissible part of business activities. Therefore a potential client's email was irrelevant to them.

Table 1

**Tour operators and travel agents offering volunteer projects included in package holiday tours in Slovakia**

Measure	Frequency	Percent
Tour operators and travel agents that do not offer volunteer projects thereof	141	99.30
subjects ignoring the client's request	76	53.52
subjects sending a negative response	53	37.32
subjects asking for an explanation of the concepts	11	7.75
Tour operators and travel agents offering volunteer projects	1	0.70
Total	142	100.00

Source: Authors

We received a negative response from 38% of companies, of which one travel agent tried to find at least some offer from British or American tour operator specializing in volunteer tourism. Part of the subjects (7.8%) asked for an explanation of the concepts volunteer project and a tour focused on volunteering activities at visited destination. Subsequently, it admitted that it does not offer such type of tours (Table 1).

Only one tour operator, offered a volunteer program in Sri Lanka for elephant care, English lessons, or a combination of these activities, responded positively to a fictitious client's request. In addition to the organizing fee, which includes accommodation and meals, the volunteer - the visitor pays for the ticket and transfers from the airport, or to the airport in the tourism destination. The offer is not on the tour operator's website. We assume that it is a product for an individual request, and the potential candidate cannot find it without a contacting the travel agency directly.

## 4.2 The Czech market

We have proceeded equally when examining the offer of tour operators and travel agents operating on the Czech market. We have selected entities that offer and sell package holiday tours from the database of the Association of Tour Operators and Travel Agents of the Czech Republic. An email with a request from a fictitious client was sent to 238 addresses. More than 2.5% of emails returned as a non-delivered message giving us a response from 232 subjects.

More than six out of ten addressed subjects (62.93%) did not respond to email (Table 2). The extent to which tour operators and travel agents showed their lack of interest in a potential client's request is surprising. We assumed that businesses would use more ability to communicate with the client and would suggest alternatives to their own offer.



Table 2

**Tour operators and travel agents offering volunteer projects included in package holiday tours in the Czech Republic**

Measure	Frequency	Percent
Tour operators and travel agents that do not offer volunteer projects thereof	229	98,71
subjects ignoring the client's request	146	62,93
subjects sending a negative response	67	28,88
subjects asking for an explanation of the concepts	17	7,33
Tour operators and travel agents offering volunteer projects	2	0,86
Total	232	100,00

Source: Authors

The lower rate of responses of entities operating on the Czech market was outweighed by the faster responses and better quality of communication. While some of the Slovak tour operators and travel agents took five business days to answer, most Czech businesses sent the email directly to a fictitious client.

Nearly 29% of tour operators and travel agents said they did not offer products included volunteer activities. As in the case of the Slovak market, one entity tried to compensate its negative response with sending information on the volunteer projects in France. Another subject informed us about the possibility of voluntary assistance in the Dominican Republic where a visitor instead of relaxing may teach English, or help with growing cocoa, reforestation or cleaning drinking water sources. More than 7% of subjects requested clarification of the term volunteer project and tour included volunteer activities since they were not familiar with it. For example, some tour operators and travel agents thought that the term means animation programs in hotels.

We have received only two e-mails with positive responses. The first tour operator introduced a 12-day standard product of a Nepalese partner with the option to customize the tour according to individual requirements. It includes one-day voluntary help with the house reconstructions after the earthquake. The price of the package holiday tour includes the contribution for building materials. Even in this case, we assume that a potential client does not find this package tour without direct request to a tour operator.

A tour operator that specializes in tours to Africa offered a one to three month volunteer project in Tanzania with a choice of volunteer activities and with cooperation with volunteer organization You2Africa. A number of volunteer projects in South Africa (focused on working with animals, taking care of orphans, working at farm or children's education in Cape Town) with a duration of at least one week. The website does not mention the offer of package tours though.

## 5. Conclusion

Tourism in the Slovakia and Czech Republic recorded dynamic changes since the split of Czechoslovakia in 1993. As argue Kiráľová and Malachovský (2016), significant changes and modernization can be seen in tourism offer.

The aim of the paper was also to survey the present-day offer of tour operators and travel agents in Slovakia and the Czech Republic with emphasis on volunteer tourism. As a potential client, we have addressed all regular members of the Slovak Association of Tour Operators and Travel Agents and members of the Association of Tour Operators and Travel

Agents of the Czech Republic offering package holiday tours. We have received the necessary information by email and compared it with the content of websites of selected tour operators and travel agents.

We found that the percentage of the professional association members of tour operators and travel agents on the Slovak and Czech market which offer package holiday tours with volunteer activities is negligible. None of the addressed entities specializes in volunteer tourism as the fastest growing example of alternative travel experiences moving the goals of tourism away from for-profit forms of escapism towards something that will place social, cultural and ecological value on local environments and communities (Lyons and Wearing, 2008).

Tour operators and travel agents that offer volunteer projects as a part of package holiday tours do so only marginally, at the individual request of the client, while volunteer activities are not a core of package tour program.

Since not all tour operators and travel agents operating in the market under examination are associated in a professional association, we have verified the results of the mystery e-mailing. We used the researching for selected combination of volunteering, volunteer program, tour operator, travel agent and package holiday tour in the Google web search. Nevertheless, we have not found any relevant offer of volunteer activities in organized tourism.

We assume that tour operators and travel agents operating in the Slovak and Czech markets have not responded to the globally growing trend of volunteer tourism. They are also concerned about including a product designed for a specific client sub segment. As intermediaries in volunteer tourism they play a negligible role. Voluntary tourism thus remains in the domain of non-profit organizations on the Slovak and Czech markets

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# **Relationship Marketing Model – The Practice of Relationship between Hoteliers and Loyal Customers of Five Star Hotels in Bangladesh**

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## **Abstract**

This study develops a model of relationship marketing to empirically investigate: (1) the effect of relational bonds (financial, social and structural) on customer emotions; (2) emotions on relationship quality; and (3) the ultimate effect of both relationship quality and emotions on customer loyalty. Data were collected from a survey of 284 loyal guests at five-star hotels in Bangladesh and examined their perspectives as end users using structural equation modeling (AMOS 21). The emotion, which is considered to be an important construct here is used never before to investigate the loyalty of the customers in five star hotels in Bangladesh. Findings imply the need of relational bonds in service firms especially in hotels business, to increase the positive emotions of customers which in turn increase the relationship quality between the hoteliers and the customers so that more loyal customers are introduced in the five star hotels in Bangladesh and make the hotels pursue more competitive advantage, and long-term profit.

**Key words:** Relationship Marketing, Relational Bonds, Emotion, Relationship Quality, Customer loyalty.

**JEL Classification:** M31

## **1. Introduction**

Today customer relationship marketing gets more attention by academics and practitioners, because the economic as well as competitive advantages can be achieved by retaining existing customers as well as recruiting new ones (Anderson et al., 1994; Price and Arnold, 1997; Verhoef, 2003; Ndubisi, 2007). In order to remain competitive, firms need to build and enhance customer relationships by delivering value, which can't be satisfied by the core product alone (Zineldin, 2006).

For hotel businesses, loyal customers are more profitable because they are more attached to the hotel and easier to serve than those of non-loyal customers (Tepeci, 1999). Bowen and Shoemaker (1998) justify that a small increase in loyal customers can result in a substantial increase in profitability. Further, Kim and Cha (2002) argue that the more the customer stays in the hotel, the more profitable it is for the hotel. According to Reichheld and Sasser (1990), hotels could improve their profits from two to eight percent by reducing customer defections by five percent. The benefits of customer relationship marketing, however, are not limited to service firms. Customers' benefits include providing the information as needed, customization of product

and services (Crosby et al., 1990), and reduced the purchase risk and give them more psychological comfort (Bejou, 1997; Grönroos, 2004; Berry, 2002).

In this study five-star hotels had been chosen because different research indicates that relationship marketing practice are occurred more in five star hotels than in midrange or budget hotels (Kim and Cha, 2002). The focus of this study was to find out how the customers view their relationships with hoteliers.

Here two five stars hotels in Bangladesh were included among the three five star hotels in Bangladesh (Pan Pacific Sonargaon hotel, Radisson Water Garden hotel and Westin hotel): Pan Pacific Sonargaon hotel, Radisson Water Garden hotel. To fulfill the requirements of a five star hotel, these three five star hotels in Bangladesh try to provide as much facilities as possible to their customers. This help the hotels to get on an average 35% to 55% repeated visitors in a year vary on the basis of hotel's facilities. This study will help managers of these hotels to deal with more different types of guests, with relevant information and can improve their relationship marketing programs and can increase the percentage of repeated visitors every year.

This study is concerned with advancing the understanding of the long-term relationships, focusing on loyal customer within a hospitality service. Furthermore, for the first time linkages between relational bonds – financial, social and structural – and emotions, emotions and relationship quality have been integrated into one relationship model in Bangladesh context. This addresses a gap in the literature by providing a more complete model within the context of relationship marketing of five star hotels in Bangladesh. This is consistent with Anderson and Kumar (2006), who argue that even though many scholars have attempted to explain the development of buyer-seller relationships, few have paid attention to the role played by emotions in this process. In accordance with Anderson and Kumar (2006), this study then seeks to contribute to the existing literature by investigating the integration of emotions as an important component in buyer-seller relationship development. Though Shammout (2007) investigate the relationship among these variables but his research is based on Arab five star hotels only. In Bangladesh no research is based on five star hotels and no theses is done to show the link between relational bonds, relationship quality and customer loyalty and the effect of emotion on them in hotel businesses in Bangladesh.

Within the relationship marketing literature, relational bonds including financial, social, and structural bonds have been treated as main components in buyer-seller relationships (i.e., Arantola 2002; Håkansson, 1982; Liang and Wang, 2005; Lin, Weng, and Hsieh, 2003). Bonds have been defined as “psychological, emotional, economic, or physical attachments in a relationship that are fostered by association and interaction and serve to bind parties together under relational exchange” (Smith, 1998, p. 78). Here the author discuss about these three types of bonds, before moving on to a discussion of the outcomes of increased relational bonds.

## **1.1 Financial Bonds**

Financial bonds are referred to as frequency marketing or retention marketing, where the service provider uses economic benefits to secure customer loyalty (Berry and Parsuraman, 1991; Berry, 1995). Sometimes non-monetary, time savings are also proposed as ‘financial’ bonds, (Lin, Weng, and Hsieh, 2003). An example of financial bonds is a hotel chain providing free or discounted travel services to frequent guests through loyalty programs (Berry and Parsuraman, 1991). In Bangladesh, five star hotels try to provide discounts to those customers who always prefer their hotel to stay and during their check in, this kind of financial bonds are mostly

provided. Berry and Parsuraman, (1991) and Berry (1995) point out that the problem associated with financial bonds is that they are the easiest type of bond for competitors to imitate.

## **1.2 Social Bonds**

Social bonds represent personal ties between the consumer and organization, i.e. interpersonal relations, friendships and identifications. Berry and Parasuraman (1991) and Berry (1995) referred to social bonds as intermediate level where the service provider goes further than price incentives to build lasting relationships with the customer, building social bridges for securing customer loyalty. Liang and Wang (2005) also point out that firms build friendship by giving gifts to their customers, which serves to build stable relationships and enhance relationship quality. In Bangladesh five star hotels provide different types of gift for their loyal customers such as, as a member of Global Hotel Alliance, Pan Pacific Sonargaon hotel provide their customers with different types of traditional saris like Mosline, Jamdani. That's why the author prefers social bonds for this study.

## **1.3 Structural Bonds**

Structural bonds are considered the highest level of relationship marketing as companies can maintain their relationships with customers through adding structural ties in addition to the financial and social relationship (Berry and Parasuraman, 1991, Berry, 1995). For example, the Scandic hotel chain introduced WAP-based technologies (i.e. web based communication) to improve communication with their customers (Louvieris, Driver, and Powell-Perry, 2003). Regular guests were provided with a WAP-enabled device, on which to access reservation and other information, which provided value-adding services for customers that were not readily available elsewhere. In Bangladesh, though the hoteliers can't provide WAP facilities, but try to provide the respected and renowned persons with personalized services.

## **1.4 Relationship Quality**

Relationship quality has been used as one of the relationship outcomes in the proposed model in this study. Relationship quality has been viewed as "an overall assessment of the strength of the relationship and the extent to which it meets the needs and expectations of the parties based on a history of successful encounters or events" (Smith, 1998). While there is no specific components comprising relationship quality construct, there is general agreement that customer satisfaction with the service provider's performance, trust in the service provider, and commitment to the relationship with the service firm are key components of relationship quality (Palmer and Bejou, 1994; Dorsch et al., 1998; Smith, 1998, Hennig-Thurau, 2002; Palmatier et al., 2006; Wang et al. 2006). While there is no specific components comprising relationship quality construct, there is general agreement that customer satisfaction with the service provider's performance, trust in the service provider, and commitment to the relationship with the service firm are key components of relationship quality (Palmer and Bejou, 1994; Dorsch et al., 1998; Smith, 1998, Hennig-Thurau, 2002; Palmatier et al., 2006; Wang et al. 2006). Parsons (2002) acknowledged that RQ should contain at least two dimensions including trust and satisfaction. By

integrating different viewpoints, Chakrabarty et al. (2007) assessed that RQ is measured through trust, commitment, culture, interdependence, and communication. The importance of relationship satisfaction, trust and commitment can be linked together as an overall indicator of the higher-order construct of relationship quality. It is assumed that better relationship quality is accompanied by greater satisfaction, trust, and commitment, although these three attitudinal dimensions are distinct, consumers tend to view and evaluate them as a group together (Ruben, 2007; Gerrard M. and Lawrence S.L., 1997; Nelson, 2007b; Julie, 2006; Roger, 2007; P. Rauyruen & K.E. Miller, 2007). Therefore, trust, satisfaction, and commitment are intimately interconnected in the conceptualization of relationship quality (Yang & Wu, 2008). As pointed out by Garbarino and Johnson (1999), these three dimensions (or evaluations) can be used to summarize a consumer's knowledge and experience with a particular service provider and lead to subsequent consumer actions. Palmatier et al. (2006) identified that trust; commitment and satisfaction are the dimensions of relationship quality that most often studied. As these three dimensions form the basis for in depth understanding of relationship quality in this study, they are discussed separately below:

#### *1.4.1 Trust*

Trust is an important factor in affecting relationship marketing and customer loyalty. If one party trusts another, such a party is willing to develop a positive relationship with other party. The more the customers trust the service provider, the more they satisfied with them and committed for the organization, which ultimately create loyalty. Trust as an element of customer loyalty has an influence on building customer loyalty (Aydin & Ozer 2005: 146; Chen & Xie 2007: 64; Du Plessis 2010: 91–92).

#### *1.4.2 Satisfaction*

Roberts-Lombard (2009: 73) defines customer satisfaction as “the degree to which a business's product or service performance matches up to the expectation of the customer. If the performance matches or exceeds the expectations, then the customer is satisfied, if performance is below par then the customer is dissatisfied”. There is a direct link between relationship quality and satisfaction (Balaji 2009: 54–55). If a customer feels that he has a satisfying relationship with the organization, he may continue his relationship with that organization. (Rootman 2006: 77).

#### *1.4.3 Commitment*

According to Morgan and Hunt (1994), commitment comes from trust, shared values and the belief that it will be difficult to find another one that can offer the same value. Customers who are committed to a relationship might be act in a same way because they need to remain consistent with their commitment (Liang & Wang 2005: 66). More committed customers tend to form a positive overall impression of the total duration of the relationship, including different transactions, positive and negative, and these customers exhibit strong intentions to stay in the relationship (Du Plessis 2010: 96).



## 1.5 Emotion

Emotion is considered to be an important variable in customer relationship development. No theses consider this factor as an important one for the customers of five star hotels in Bangladesh before. The bonds used in this study make hotels capable to establish relationship that can transform hurried, stressed group of business persons into relaxed, comfortable and loved individual. Numerous researchers (Westbrook & Oliver, 1991; Matilla & Wirtz, 2000; Smith & Bolton, 2002) have conducted research around consumption emotions in the service industry and specifically in the hospitality industry. As a result of their research efforts, consumption emotion has been defined as a set of emotional responses elicited specifically during product usage or consumption experiences. Each of their research efforts explores various elements of emotion as described either by the distinctive categories of emotional experience, expression (joy, anger and fear), or by the structural dimensions underlying emotional categories, such as pleasantness/unpleasantness, relaxation/action, or calmness/excitement emotions (Westbrook & Oliver, 1991). When looking at consumption emotion, recent literature clearly indicates that the customer associates both positive and negative emotions with the service encounter; which in turn, plays a significant role in the customer's degree of satisfaction, loyalty and future behavioral intention (Allen, Machleit & Kleine, 1992; Oliver, 1993; Richins, 1997 Barsky & Nash, 2002).

## 1.6 Customer loyalty

Customer Loyalty is considered as the most important part of relationship marketing (Palmer, 1994); and central to the paradigm of relationship marketing (Hart et al., 1999). The significance of this loyalty came from the idea that maintaining a customer is more profitable than winning a new one because: (1) the cost is less in serving loyal customers than other customers (2) A very few loyal customers are price sensitive, and (3) loyal customers spend more with the company than others (Berry and Parasuraman, 1991; Dowling and Uncle, 1997; Bowen and Shoemaker, 1998; Tepeci, 1998; Noon et al, 2003). Customer loyalty is also one major driver of success in the hospitality industry (the context of this thesis). Pullman and Gross (2004) acknowledge that loyal customers are the key to success in the hospitality setting. Bowen and Shoemaker (1998) also maintain that a small increase in loyal customers can result in a substantial increase in profitability. Further, Kandampully and Suhartano (2000) claim that, for the future survival of hotel organizations, customer loyalty is a necessary prerequisite. Furthermore, Tepeci (1999) found that loyal customers are more profitable because they are easier to serve than non-loyal customers. From a customer perspective, Reichheld (1996) maintains that customers are willing to invest their loyalty in businesses that can deliver superior value relative to competitors. Similar to this, Yang and Peterson (2004) also acknowledge that there is a tendency for customers to avoid searching, locating, and evaluating purchase alternatives, which predisposes them to be loyal to one company. That is, when customers become loyal, they tend to avoid such processes that consume the time and effort required to be accustomed to new vendors.

## 2. Problem Formulation

Today globally the hospitality industry is facing a more competitive environment that is forcing it to develop more loyalty opportunities and sustain them, the question is then that whether there is any successful component of a relationship marketing, which can lead to enhance loyal customers? This question leads to develop a thesis on customer relationship marketing, which can be used in securing customer loyalty in five star hotels.

The more the bonding is provided to the customers, the more committed the consumer will become. Though there is empirical evidence that suggest that relational bonds are associated with relationship quality (Smith, 1998; Wang et al., 2006), a number of critical research gaps remain there and one of these gaps is a lack of systematic investigation into the impact of relational bonds – financial, social and structural - on customer emotions in five star hotels in Bangladesh.

Today the emotional response of customers is becoming an important part in relationship marketing. Barnes (1997, p.774) argued that, “a relationship cannot be thought to exist without emotional content.” Hence, this study proposed a relationship marketing theory in which relationship quality was not only the variable influenced by relational bonds – financial, social and structural-but customer emotions was also hypothesized to be an important variable.

Furthermore, this study also investigates the affect of emotions on relationship quality, as this association is important in customer relationship development. Although Shammout (2007) is the only researcher who investigate the association between emotions and relationship quality, but he did it only to find out the link between emotions and relationship quality in the Middle East five star hotels not anywhere else. This suggests that there was another gap in the literature that needs to be explored. Accordingly, the following four questions set out the problem of this study:

1. What are the common characteristics of successful relationship marketing programs that lead to customer loyalty?
2. What is the significant influence of relational bonds on relationship quality and customer emotions for customers of five-star hotels in Bangladesh?
3. Do emotions of customers influence relationship quality and customer loyalty?
4. Is relationship quality important in determining the loyalty that customers have with five-star hotels in Bangladesh?

## 3. Methodology

The samples of the study— loyal guests of two five-star hotels in Bangladesh — were purposively chosen. Here loyal guests were chosen on basis of those who have stayed three nights or more a year on that hotel and revisited the same hotel almost every year. The results indicate differences in the demographics of the respondents including gender, age, educational qualification, and number of nights. As can be seen, the analysis of the final sample profile showed a higher number of male (211) respondents than female (73), representing a ratio of 74.5% and 25.5%, respectively. The mean age of the respondents was within the range 45-54 years.

In regard to the guests' employment, the highest percentages were for the guests employed in business, commerce and finance (almost 60%). With respect to education, the respondents were mostly completed an undergraduate degree (58%) and postgraduate education (i.e., 25 % had a university degree). In terms of the length of stay, the guests who stayed in the range between 5-9 nights were 60%, those who stayed 10-above nights were only 5%. In the case of purpose of visit, the conducting business was 45%, percentage of guests seeking leisure was 15%, and attending conferences was 13.5% (respondents could indicate more than one purpose of a visit).

Five-star hotels were selected because, as previous research indicates, five-star hotels use relationship marketing practices more frequently than mid-range or budget hotels (Kim and Cha, 2002).

Questionnaires were given out to the guests who were staying on those hotels. Using this procedure, 400 questionnaires were distributed in two hotels (Pan Pacific Sonargaon hotel, Radisson Water Garden hotel), i.e., 200 questionnaires per hotel. The questionnaires were given to the guests through the front desk at each participating hotel chain (Pan Pacific Sonargaon hotel, Radisson Water Garden hotel). Using this method, all the guests were given a questionnaire when they checked in, and returned them again when they checked out. In this case, the guests had the chance to fill out the questionnaire at any time during their stay. According to Zikmund (2003), this method is called drop-off, because the researcher traveled to the respondents' locations to drop-off the questionnaires, and picked them up after they had finished. After 6 months data collection 284 samples were collected. The questionnaire was developed using 5-point Likert type scale, where for relational bonds, relationship quality and customer loyalty, the author use strongly agree to strongly disagree (1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= neither/nor, 4= agree, 5 = strongly agree) and for emotion, never to very often that means (1= never) to (5= very often). A total of 17 items (i.e., four items for financial bonds, five items for social bonds, eight items for structural bonds) 7 items from the relationship quality, 8 items from the customer loyalty were adapted from previously tested scales. A total of 14 emotion items were included, with positive emotion and negative emotion. The instrument was pre-tested to ensure that the questions were clearly understood and there was no ambiguity in questions.

Reliability in this study was firstly measured by using Cronbach's (1951) coefficient alpha and then using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). As for Cronbach's coefficient alpha, Table 1 shows that all the constructs were equal or exceed the suggested level of .70 (Nunnally, 1978). For using confirmatory factor analysis, CR and AVE were calculated from the CR formula and AVE formula given by Fornell and Larcker (1981). Bagozzi and Yi (1988) recommended that CR should be equal to or greater than .60, and AVE should be equal to or greater than .50. Based on these assessments, measures used within this thesis were within the acceptable levels supporting the reliability of the constructs (see Table 1) As Bagozzi (1980) argued, construct validity is a necessary prerequisite for theory testing. In this study, results obtained from goodness of-fit indices confirmed construct validity (Hsieh and Hsiang, 2004). As for convergent validity, evidence has been found in which all factor loadings for items measuring the same construct are statistically significant (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988; Lin and Ding, 2005; Holmes-Smith et al., 2006). As indicated in Table 1, all factors included high loadings (greater than .50) and were statistically significant ( $P < 0.001$ ). The results of AVE presented in Table 1 provide an additional support for convergent validity.

Table 1

**Measures of the Constructs and Descriptive Statistics**

<b>Items</b>	<b>Standardized Loading</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>	<b>Cronbach's alpha (<math>\alpha</math>)</b>	<b>C.R</b>	<b>AVE</b>	<b>Deleted items</b>
<b>Financial Bonds</b>				.73	.92	.53	
<b>FB1</b>	.70	4.50	.567				FB2
FB2	.51	4.35	.512				FB4
<b>FB3</b>	.76	4.33	.584				
FB4	.54	4.31	.501				
<b>Social Bonds</b>				.71	.87	.51	
SOB1	.42	4.41	.590				SOB1
SOB2	.40	4.36	.515				SOB2
<b>SOB3</b>	.68	4.37	.564				
<b>SOB4</b>	.69	4.34	.551				
<b>SOB5</b>	.77	4.35	.583				
<b>Structural Bonds</b>				.74	.89	.50	
<b>STB1</b>	.74	4.33	.507				STB3
<b>STB2</b>	.78	4.38	.578				STB5
STB3	.24	4.38	.549				STB6
<b>STB4</b>	.62	4.33	.514				STB7
STB5	.55	4.33	.529				
STB6	.26	4.21	.442				
STB7	.53	4.46	.527				
<b>STB8</b>	.61	4.48	.573				
<b>Relationship Quality</b>				.77	.94	.66	
<b>RQ 1</b>	.97	4.36	.593				RQ 2
RQ 2	.54	4.17	.598				RQ 4
<b>RQ 3</b>	.95	4.20	.504				RQ 5
RQ 4	.58	4.14	.596				RQ 7
RQ 5	.44	4.24	.594				

<b>RQ 6</b>	.34	4.30	.574			
RQ 7	.54	4.21	.550			
<b>Emotion</b>				.72	.87	.50
Angry	.03	1.44	.583			Angry
Love	.61	4.38	.589			love
<b>Welcome</b>	.68	4.26	.560			Uneasiness
<b>Pleased</b>	.65	4.37	.589			Relaxed
<b>Satisfied</b>	.69	4.33	.561			Ignored
Relaxed	.60	4.36	.555			Comfortable
Ignored	-.52	1.37	.553			Disappointment
Comfortable	.61	4.36	.548			Letdown
<b>pleasantly</b>	.81	4.10	.559			Embarrassment
<b>surprise</b>						
<b>Happiness</b>	.69	4.36	.569			Pampered
Disappointment	-.51	1.41	.534			Delighted
Embarrassment	.06	1.26	.448			
Pampered	.80	4.08	.563			
Delighted	.51	4.25	.547			
<b>Customer Loyalty</b>				.70	.92	.52
<b>CL1</b>	.87	4.44	.545			
CL2	.46	4.30	.501			CL2
<b>CL3</b>	.91	4.40	.572			CL4
CL4	.39	4.32	.571			CL7
<b>CL5</b>	.48	4.36	.562			CL8
<b>CL6</b>	.53	4.39	.582			
CL7	.63	4.33	.520			
CL8	.58	4.33	.527			

Source: Author

The hypotheses that the author proved were as follows:

- H1a: Financial bonds will positively affect relationship quality.
- H1b: Social bonds will positively affect relationship quality.
- H1c: Structural bonds will positively affect relationship quality.
- H2a: Financial bonds will positively affect emotions.
- H2b: Social bonds will positively affect emotions.
- H2c: Structural bonds will positively affect emotions.
- H3: Customer emotions will influence relationship quality.
- H4: Customer emotions will influence customer loyalty.
- H5: Relationship quality positively affects customer loyalty.

#### 4. Problem Solution

The indices for goodness-of-fit demonstrate that this model fits the data adequately, even though chi-square was significant ( $\chi^2 = 583.64$ ,  $df = 334$ ,  $P = .000$ ,  $N = 284$ ). The GFI was .880, AGFI = .850, CFI = .900, RSMEA = .051,  $\chi^2 / df = 1.74$ . The results obtained from goodness-of-fit indices show that model fit the data adequately, despite the chi-square being significant. This chi-square estimate rejecting valid model in large sample size is commonly accepted (Bagozzi and Yi, 1988).

Table 2

#### Results of hypotheses testing

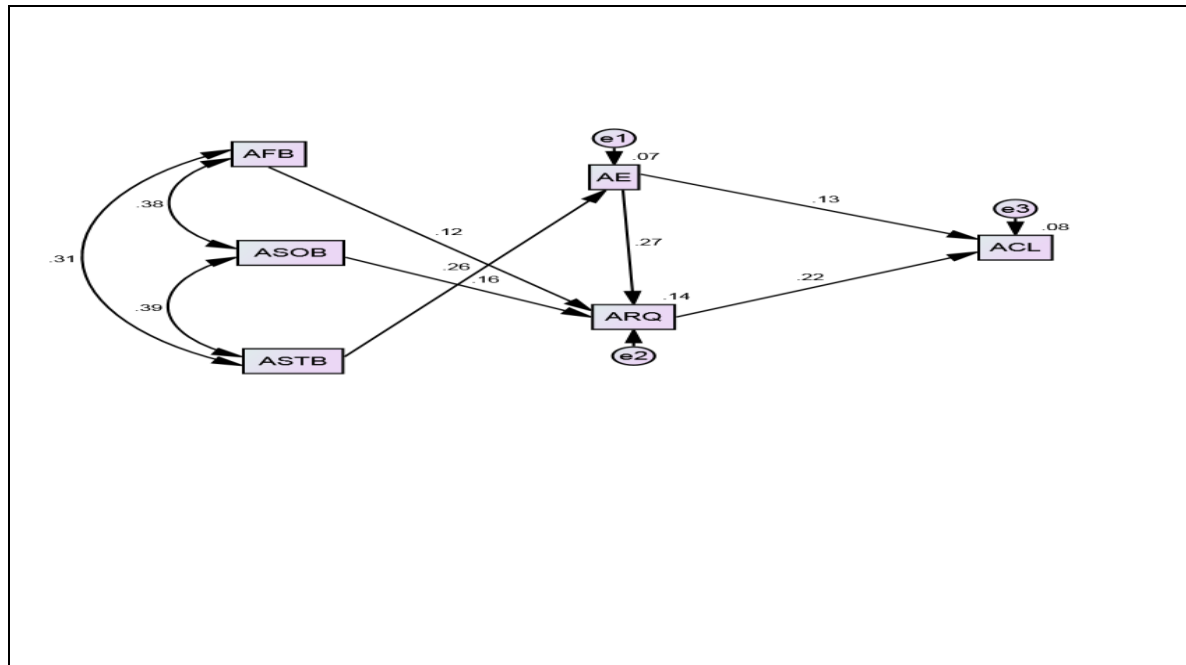
Hypotheses Relationships		Estimate	S.E	C.R	p
H1a	Financial bonds → Relationship Quality	.305	.146	2.089	.037
H1b	Social bonds → Relationship Quality	.341	.125	2.733	.006
H1c	Structural bonds → Relationship Quality	-.073	.164	-.444	.657
H2a	Financial bonds → Emotions	.195	.138	1.411	.158
H2b	Social bonds → Emotions	.003	.119	.022	.982
H2c	Structural bonds → emotions	.569	.152	3.749	***
H3	Emotions → Relationship Quality	.297	.063	4.753	***
H4	Emotions → Loyalty	.116	.034	2.105	.035
H5	Relationship Quality → Loyalty	.072	.031	3.746	***

Source: Author

Notes: \* indicates  $P > .05$ , \*\* indicates  $P < .05$

Figure 1

#### The Structural Model



Source: Author

AFB- Composite Financial Bond, ASOB- Composite Social Bond, ASTB- Composite structural Bond, AE- Composite Emotion, ARQ- Composite Relationship Quality, ACL- Composite Customer Loyalty

In total, nine hypothesized relationships are examined (see Table 2). The analyses of these results are discussed here:

#### **4.1 Relational bonds (Financial, Social and Structural) and Relationship Quality**

As shown earlier, the three hypotheses H1a, H1b, and H1c explain the relationships between the exogenous variables (relational bonds) and endogenous variable relationship quality. As outlined in Table 2, two of these three hypothesized relationships (H1a and H1b) were found to be significant ( $\beta = .305$ ,  $t$  value = 2.089,  $\beta = .341$ ,  $t$  value = 2.733, respectively). Thus, these were supported. However, the hypothesis representing the relationship between structural bonds and relationship quality (H1c) was not supported, as the parameter estimates were non-significant ( $\beta = -.073$ ,  $t$  value = -.444,  $p = .659$ ).

#### **4.2 Relational bonds (Financial, Social and Structural) and Emotions**

The three hypotheses (H2a, H2b and H2c) explain the relationship between relational bonds as exogenous variables and emotions as an endogenous variable. Results in Table 2 indicate that one of the hypotheses was statistically significant. The structural bonds (H2c) to emotions were significant ( $\beta = .569$ ,  $t$  value = 3.749). Thus, this hypothesis was supported. According to Table 2, the hypothesis explaining the relationship between financial bonds and emotions (H2a) and social bonds and emotions were rejected because they were not found to be significant in the hypothesized direction ( $\beta = .195$ ,  $t$  value = 1.411,  $p = .158$  and  $\beta = .003$ ,  $t$  value = .022,  $p = .982$  respectively).

#### **4.3 Emotions and Relationship quality**

Hypothesis three (H3) is the relationship between emotions and relationship quality. Both of these variables were treated as endogenous. As hypothesized, emotions were found to be positively related to relationship quality. Results showed a significant path ( $\beta = .297$ ,  $t$  value, 4.753), and thereby H3 was supported (see Table 2).

#### **4.4 Emotions and Loyalty**

Hypothesis H4 represents the relationship between the two endogenous variables, emotions and loyalty. According to the results presented in Table 2, it had been found that this hypothesis was statistically significant ( $\beta = .116$ ,  $t$  value = 2.11), and thus accepted.

#### **4.5 Relationship quality and Loyalty**

The hypothesis H5 represents the relationship between relationship quality and loyalty. This hypothesized relationship was found to be significant ( $\beta = .072$ ,  $t$  value = 3.746), supporting this hypothesis.

## 5. Findings

### 5.1 The Consequences of Relational Bonds

This study found mixed results for the relationship between the three types of relational bonds and relationship quality.

#### 5.1.1 Relational Bonds and Relationship Quality

While financial and social bonds were found to have a good positive relationship with relationship quality, but structural bonds did not. Hence, these results provide evidence to support H1a and H1b. These findings suggest that loyal guests possibly rely more on financial bonds (i.e., price discounts) and interpersonal aspects (i.e., social bonds) than on structural bonds. This suggests that these loyal customers are more affected by financial incentives and interpersonal relationships to enhance the quality of their relationships. Indeed, it might be also mean that the effect of each type of these relational bonds depends on the type of customer. That is, customers who stay less frequently (i.e., less than 5 nights) might be more affected by these kinds of financial incentives when the price becomes an issue. These results appreciate Smith (1998), who found a significant relationship between functional (i.e., financial), social bonds and relationship quality, but not structural bonds.

#### 5.1.2 Relational Bonds and Emotions

One of the objectives of this study is to determine whether relational bonds will positively affect customer emotions. Therefore, three hypotheses (H2a, H2b, and H2c) representing the relationship between relational bonds – financial, social and structural – and emotions, respectively. The results of this study demonstrate that customer emotions are influenced by the implementation of only structural bonds, but not financial and social bonds. Hence, these results provide evidence to support H2c. A potential explanation for this might be that loyal guests already expect that financial incentives (i.e., discounts or cumulative points) are in place, and thus these economic offers do not affect their emotions. Social bonds are not important for loyal guests of Bangladesh because such bonds include aspects that make these guests personally attached to the organization and feel they are in a special relationship with their hoteliers but those who visited these hotels are mainly businessman and their rooms are most of the time booked by the company, so it does not affect their emotion. Thus, a significant relationship between structural bonds and emotions is implied when innovative products or different ways of interaction are provided by hoteliers to their loyal guests. Therefore, structural bonds affect loyal guests' emotional responses to their hoteliers, and thus strengthen their relationships.

### 5.2 The Consequences of Emotions

This section explains the results of testing the hypotheses related to the linkage between emotions and relationship quality, and between emotions and customer loyalty. These two linkages aimed to answer the second research question.



### *5.2.1 Emotions and Relationship Quality*

This study has aimed to examine the positive influence of customer emotions and relationship quality. Consistent with expectations, the results of this study demonstrated that the emotions construct is an important variable in predicting relationship quality, showing the reason to support H3. More specifically, these results demonstrate that once positive emotions of loyal guests are enhanced, these guests have a higher level of relationship quality as measured by trust, satisfaction, and commitment. The results of this study are to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between emotions and relationship quality, which has been identified by empirically investigating both relationship quality and emotions as consequences of relational bonds and antecedents of customer loyalty in a single model. Furthermore, while it is not its purpose, new support has been provided by this study for those who have only found a significant link between emotions and one dimension of relationship quality: trust (i.e., Dunn and Schweitzer, 2003; Anderson and Kumar, 2006), satisfaction (i.e., Daube' and Menon 2000) or commitment (i.e., Steenhaut and Van Kenhove, 2005).

### *5.2.2 Emotions and Loyalty*

Furthering the aim of investigating emotions as a consequence of relational bonds and antecedent of relationship quality, it was hypothesized that emotions will ultimately influence customer loyalty. Therefore, hypothesis H4 was formulated to examine this relationship. As hypothesized, the results support emotions influencing customer loyalty (H4). That is, customers become more loyal, depends on how they feel towards relationships with hoteliers. This suggests that loyal guests in five star hotels are more likely to stay more at a hotel chain when they feel positive about that hotel chain. Emotions of loyal guests will lead them to stay more and most likely also resist switching to another hotel chain. In answering the above research question to fulfill the second aim of the study, this study makes a further contribution to relationship marketing theory by providing evidence of the linkage between emotions (combining positive and negative) and relationship quality (measured by trust, satisfaction and commitment). Importantly, the use of emotions as a predictor of relationship quality in one single model has been found to provide a more complete understanding to the development of relationships between customers and their service providers. Consequently, this study has confirmed that an emotions construct is a necessary antecedent of customer loyalty.

## **5.3 The Consequence of Relationship quality**

This study hypothesized that relationship quality is an important determinant of the future of relationships, and aims to examine whether relationship quality evokes customer loyalty. The relationship was tested using hypothesis H5.

### *5.3.1 Relationship Quality and Loyalty*

As was expected, relationship quality was found to be a strong determinant of loyalty. The results indicate that the more loyal guests have a higher level of relationship quality with their hoteliers, the more they are likely to be loyal to them. In this case, this study confirms that in addition to emotions, relationship quality is also an important variable in predicting the future of the relationship between customers and service providers. Within the particular context of hotels,

Kim and Cha (2002) found that relationship quality is critical for hoteliers attempting to increase share of purchases through hotel usage, frequency, cross selling, and to achieve positive impact of relationship continuity and WOM. This study confirms that this linkage is better captured when relationship quality is linked to customer loyalty. Finally, this study found support for the above research question that fulfils the third aim, by providing significant evidence on the significance of the relationship quality construct being a prerequisite of customer loyalty.

## 6. Limitation and further study

This study was conducted with 284 respondents, the reliability and validity could be improved if the sample size is larger than the collected one. The other limitations are as follows:

First, the number of loyal Bangladeshi customers who stayed in five star hotels in Bangladesh was very low. For recreation and business purpose they didn't prefer to stay in five star hotels in Bangladesh.

Second, one of the most important limitations of this study is related to the criteria used in selecting loyal guests (the sample of this study). Guests who had stayed three nights or more a year with a hotel chain were identified as loyal. This criterion was used because there is no consensus among academics and the industry on definite standards to identify loyal customers. For example, Kim and Cha (2002) used twenty nights to identify loyal customers at five-star hotels, while Bowen and Shoemaker (1998) considered those visiting the hotel at least three times as loyal. In the industry, some hotels consider guests who stay 50 qualifying nights as loyal (i.e., Holiday Inn hotel), while others are defined as loyal after staying one night (i.e., Hyatt hotel). Given that there is no agreement in the academic literature nor industry reporting on what constitutes loyal guests at five-star hotels, some may caution as to whether the criteria used in this study is definitive.

Third, most of the customers in the five star hotel chains in Bangladesh were businessman as a profession. As a result some of their answers were almost similar and their preferences of bonds were almost same. It was become difficult to get variety of answers due to their profession.

Fourth during the data collection time there was a political unrest. So it became difficult to get enough customers for survey. As a result the researcher had a little opportunity to get back enough surveyed questionnaires and choose the best ones.

Fifth, though five star hotel chains try to maintain their worldwide hotel facilities same but a country's economic development has a great impact on all the sectors even in the hotel chains. As a result the amount of facilities that a loyal customer expect from the five star hotels in another countries, doesn't expect here, which ultimately affect the result in this paper.

Although this study has developed a model that provides an effective relationship marketing program, several recommendations for future research are remained there.

By adapting this research into the hotel context, other researcher could see whether customers in small hotel chains (i.e., 3-star) perceive more interpersonal relationships than they do in five-star hotel chains or not.

Future research could explore the role of relational bonds in other service settings to see if indeed the results are generalisable across other premium services. Comparisons could be undertaken to explore differences between premium and other services, as financial bonds may be more important when price is integral to the purchase context.

Emotions could be further described by arousal, more specifically in terms of high and low-arousal. Thus, four emotions groups could be explored within an expanded model where higher arousal positive emotions might include excitement and delight; lower-arousal positive emotions may include contentment and relaxation. High-arousal negative emotions might include rage and anger and low- arousal negative emotions might include sadness and disappointment. Each of these four groups may have different antecedents and consequences in a relationship marketing model beyond simply positive and negative effect.

## 7. Conclusion

Because relationship marketing theory and practice is built to provide benefits to both customers and service providers through their relationships so the aim of the theory is to build and maintain customer loyalty. In this context, this study makes a significant contribution to the relationship marketing literature by proposing a model that empirically investigates loyal customers' perspectives of their relationships with hoteliers at five-star hotel chains in Bangladesh. This model provides a deeper understanding for the relationship between service providers and their customers by examining the association between relational bonds, relationship quality, emotions, and loyalty in one single model. Although there could be constructs other than those incorporated in this model, this research includes constructs that have provided a successful relationship marketing program. In particular, this study has extended the research of relational bonds – financial, social and structural – by investigating their impact on relationship quality (as measured by trust, satisfaction, and commitment) and emotions (positive and negative). Results have revealed that financial bonds (discount, cumulative points), social bonds (i.e., friendship, interpersonal interaction) and structural bonds (i.e., value-adding services), are important in building positive relationship quality and customer emotions.

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## A Structuralist Account of Austrian Tourism

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### Abstract

How can you present the characteristics of Austrian tourism in a nutshell? Such a question appears to be pro-eminent as it not only presents essential benchmarks but also showcases areas suitable for improvement. A very modern way of deciphering the typical features refers to a structuralist approach in literature: Following Vladimir Propp's *Morphology of the Folktale* we are going to frame several categories of tourism allowing us to define outstanding genres of tourism including all their drawbacks and potentials. This might lead to innovative visions of how to perceive touristic offers in Austria.

**Key words:** structuralism, archetypes, culture, Austria, tourism, culture

**JEL Classification:** Z (other special topics)

How can you present the characteristics of Austrian tourism in a nutshell? Such a question appears to be pro-eminent as it not only presents essential benchmarks but also showcases areas suitable for improvement. A very modern way of deciphering the typical features refers to a structuralist approach in literature: Following Vladimir Propp's *Morphology of the Folktale* we are going to frame several categories of tourism allowing us to define outstanding genres of tourism including all their drawbacks and potentials. This might lead to innovative visions of how to perceive touristic offers in Austria.

The main component in a folk story is represented by the hero who experiences unusual adventures and fascinates people by special deeds. This also ties in with tourism-related aspects of a country. In this context Austria plays the role of the hero who impresses others for example thanks to its Alpine landscape, its superior taste for classical music or because of striking monuments dating back to the Habsburg Empire.

The stunning traits of such a hero make a country memorable and allow it to play a decent role on the touristic world market. It acts as a serious competitor and people admire it because of its exceptional standards. However, the hero also has to face challenges caused by the villain. In tourism the latter becomes tangible in the setbacks a region has to suffer. All the necessary investments which have been neglected so far, all the mandatory improvements which have not been tackled and the potential which has not been exploited yet, must be considered in such a scenario.

Examples of the villain part, for instance, refer to the lack of service provided to the visitor. In Austria, people rely too much on the notion of "Gemütlichkeit" (cozy and laid-back atmosphere) which prevents waiters or hotel staff from establishing real contact with the guests who are sometimes left to their own devices. Another drawback arises in Austrian bureaucracy which has turned out to be too massive, discouraging visitors from satisfying activities such as fishing (compared to Norway Austrian regulations prove to be a real obstacle). A last setback of Austrian efforts could relate to climate changes which force

entrepreneurs to change their business plan and to invest into more sustainable projects compensating for the lack of snow in many low-altitude resorts.

These disadvantages have to be dealt with. Their list could be elongated and made exhaustive: the role of the comparison to literature always consists in delivering a pattern of illustration which makes insights more relevant and comprehensible as a network of associations and parallels are uncovered.

In popular tales the love story plays an important role; it allows the reader to feel with the hero more easily involving him/her emotionally. A love story provides ample opportunity to appeal to the inner feelings of the public, drawing upon irrational aspects which tend to be extremely influential when it comes to evaluating a product: If the love story component is well developed, the reading will be dragged in necessarily. This also applies to the emotional sides of tourism. Austria prides itself on numerous ways of touching the tourist's heart: classical music events, hiking in unspoiled nature or skiing down adventurous slopes in the Alps point the way for attracting a large number of clients. The question which surfaces in the given context revolve around increasing the emotional impact in order to constantly evolve into a more fashionable tourist destination: possible answers for instance range from organizing stunning events of classical music in exotic locations (for example the concert given by the Philharmonic Orchestra in front of Schönbrunn Palace – a possibility for worldwide destination marketing) to specially designed hiking trails (open to all age and health groups) in hidden Alpine paradises and developing authentic types of accommodation using local materials and architecture (following the Norwegian and Swedish way of preserving their typical wooden chalets).

The role of the helpers in folk tales appears to be outstanding as well. In tourism this aspect relates to areas where entrepreneurs and the state can invest tremendously. Helpers in literature contribute to reaching the hero's goal. They collaborate in many ways, rescuing the protagonist, accompanying him in dangerous situations or giving useful advice. In tourism the task of helpers becomes manifest when it comes to offering the best service: staff members in a hotel can for instance seek to put the hero's vision of perfectly catering for the guests into practice. The government or regional authorities, on the other hand, could also emerge as an institution providing aid: by constructing mandatory infrastructure, lowering social security taxation or rendering working hours or hiring regulations more flexible. The most important feature all the helpers share is their commitment to a common target they identify with and which they aspire to at any price. Subsequently, keeping employees motivated ranks among the essential tasks of a professional. Without the helper's support the hero cannot proceed to superior levels of success.

Examples of helpers in Austria pertain to efforts made by the government to constantly enhance infrastructure. New motorways have been built, thus completing a dense network of roads which limit travel time extraordinarily and facilitate access to remote areas. Regional authorities, on the other hand enabled the construction of an impressive number of hotels and conference centers, for instance at the venue of the Alpine Skiing Championships 2015 in Schladming. Probably the most striking influence of helpers becomes visible in the numerous skiing resorts: over the last few years Austria's range of lifts and cabin cable cars has been overhauled (the country prides itself on the stunning modernity of the facilities), areas have been considerably enlarged (making certain villages such as Saalbach rank among the largest skiing domains in the world) and booking accommodation in the mountains has proved to be surprisingly simple thanks to the affiliation with the big platforms on the Internet.



The ending naturally marks the architecture of a fairy tale. If we apply this feature of the story to tourism we come to the conclusion that endings can be classified as goals and visions: where should tourism head to? How will it develop in the next few years? Which challenges does it have to react to quite rapidly? Possible scenarios in Austria appear to be positive: due to climate change and rising temperatures all over Europe Austria will become more and more attractive to tourists looking for opportunities to actively spend their holiday without suffering from the scorching heat. In addition, Austria will benefit from its well-developed facilities and infrastructure which will entail a positive response in the luxury segment, an area which will prosper in the future at astounding rates. Finally, Austria's position as a kind of relatively safe harbor in a world shaken by terrorism will figure among the main reasons for coming to the country. Marketing efforts will at least indirectly touch upon the topic of security which will prove to be decisive in many people's mind.

The short overview of Austrian tourism based on the dominant structure of popular folk tales could act as a guideline for the future analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of a tourist destination. It could provide a first aid kit which allows professionals to rapidly come to grips with the challenges a nation has to face, as it constitutes a simple but very reliant pattern (tested and proved by thousands of folk stories) and thus helps experts understand the complexities of a touristic situation much better. In terms of scientific approaches, our paper fits in with the linguistic or narrative turn in tourism research, regarding the hospitality sector as a long text which unfolds its true meaning through the methods of literary analysis. So let us wait for the next structuralist accounts of other touristic landscapes.

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