

Outdoor recreation participants' motivations, experiences and vacation activity preferences

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Abstract

This study investigates the behavioural relationship between outdoor recreation and vacation tourism in order to facilitate the marketing of nature activities as tourism products. In determining the outdoor recreation behaviour, motivations were explored on the basis of *the recreation experience preference theory*, and experiences were explored on the basis of *the experience economy theory*. In order to determine the vacation behaviour, which is an important market segmentation variable, vacation activity preferences were investigated. The implementation was accomplished within the scope of the outdoor recreationists in Eskişehir, Turkey. The data were collected through face-to-face and web surveys and analysed with the support of structural equation modelling. As the result of the analyses suggests, significant relationships were found among outdoor recreation motivations, nature experiences and vacation activity preference structures.

Keywords

Nature experience, outdoor recreation, the experience economy, the recreation experience preference, vacation tourism

Introduction

The implementations of 'tourism' and 'recreation' are somehow intertwined as a result of postmodernity (Urry, 2009: 136). Although considered to be different phenomena, they are closely related, since both share the same sources and generate similar outputs. Hence, it is possible to find many implementations that can be evaluated both as recreation and tourism activities. This study is especially concerned with 'nature activities' within the scope of 'outdoor recreation' and 'vacation tourism'.

Outdoor activities in nature are leisure activities for individuals and groups, such as walking, climbing, nature photography, wildlife observation, amateur fishing among others. Nowadays, such activities have become widespread due to the influence of various areas such as tourism, sports and education. The study focuses on the relationship between the outdoor recreation and

the tourism behaviour within a symbiotic point of view, in order to launch and develop nature activities into the tourism and recreation markets.

It is known that there is a relationship between leisure activities and tourism behaviour (Brey and Lehto, 2007). Drawing on this line, we may also consider nature experiences as outdoor recreation, and motivations can be effective factors in tourism behaviour. We focus 'vacation market', which is also known as the 'pleasure tourism market', in order to investigate tourism behaviour. According to the findings of World Tourism Organization (2014), the amount of

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pleasure tourism market consists of 52% of the total mobility of tourism destinations.

Despite the growing amount of conceptual research about the relationship between tourism and outdoor recreation, there have been few empirical studies. Therefore, this study provides both theoretical and practical implications for tourism marketing literature. The purposes of the study are twofold (1) to examine nature experiences based on *the experience economy*, outdoor recreation motivations based on *the recreation experience preference* (REP) and vacation activity preferences based on a market segmentation approach and (2) to investigate the relationship between nature experiences, outdoor recreation motivations and vacation activity preferences.

Literature review

The experience of nature within the scope of experience economics

One of the main concepts of this study is experience. In the literature, the concept of experience coexists with the terms activity, perception, meaning, motivation and evaluation (Elands and Lengkeek, 2012: 31). It is hard to give a solid definition for experience in terms of leisure and tourism experiences, since they are 'subjective, emotional and loaded with symbolic expressions' (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982). In general, the experience of leisure and tourism can be analysed in two aspects, one with a social science approach and the other with a management/marketing approach (Quan and Wang, 2004). From a social science approach, the experience of leisure and tourism is related to motivations, activities, interest areas, attitudes and quest for authenticity. The experience as consumer behaviour, within the scope of the marketing discipline, is related to quality of experience, importance of human interaction, prior knowledge, which is acquired through past experiences, together with the role of the external stimuli (Volo, 2010: 14). We adopt the marketing view for analysing experiences. We also adopt Pine and Gilmore's (1998) 'experience economy' term, considering experience as an economic unit and integrating experience as experienced economic changes.

Pine and Gilmore (2011) explain experience within two dimensions. These are the dimension of *participation*, which may become evident in *active* and *passive* ways, and the dimension of *connection* that manifests itself as *absorption*

and *immersion*. While individuals at the dimension of absorption are pulled into the created experience by a weaker affiliation, they build a stronger relationship and are confined with the experience at the dimension of immersion by feeling the excitement and the sensation in the experience at a higher level. Through the intersection of these dimensions, four areas of experience are portrayed as entertainment, education, *aesthetic* and *escape*.

According to Oh et al. (2007), tourists actively develop their knowledge and capabilities – mentally and physically – in the touristic regions they have visited due to experiences of education. However, aesthetic experience is only related to the pleasure that the tourist gets from the environment. At the same time, the aesthetic experience is a significant determining factor in the evaluation of the preferred touristic region, and thereby significant in the experience of the tourist as a whole. The experience of entertainment is manifested through tourists watching the shows and events with either an active or passive participation. As it is well known, the experience of escape is taking place among the most frequently mentioned motivations in tourism studies because it is the case that the individual is moving away from his daily life routines. In this context, despite a touristic region highlighting different perspectives, it is expected that this would be able to make one person live through the four areas of experience (Stamboulis and Skayannis, 2003: 38).

The *two-dimensional experience model* of Pine and Gilmore has been empirically analysed within the scope of different leisure and tourism implementations. Initially, Oh et al. (2007) apply the experience theory to the touristic experience and suggest a scale of experience economy. The results of their study show that the aesthetic dimension is prevailing, although the earlier studies suggest that the expectation that the prevailing expected dimension is escape. Pikkemaat et al. (2010) conducted a research on the visitors of the South Tyrol Wine Route in Italy from a tourism perspective. They found that, while the *aesthetic* dimension was observed as the most significant dimension of experience, the least important dimension was found to be *education*. Mehmetoglu and Engen (2011) tested the experience economy model of Pine and Gilmore in the scope of two distinct tourism events, one music festival and one museum visit, using the scale of Oh et al. (2007). While the *escape* and *aesthetic* dimensions were found out to be

significant, regarding the festival experience, *education and aesthetic* dimensions were significant with respect to the museum experience. In another study, Kang and Gretzel (2012) focused on tour experiences taking place in Padre Island National Park located in the Texas State of the United States. The most predominating dimension – which was found as a result of the study – was education followed by entertainment and finally the escape dimension.

There are a vast number of factors influencing experiences. However, it is acknowledged that the motivation directing an individual to certain behaviour is effective in shaping the experience itself (Prentice et al., 1998). According to Manfredro et al. (1996), motivations are key concepts in determining and understanding the reasons for leisure time activities of individuals and leisure time processes. In this respect, the focus is placed on motivations in order to understand the outdoor recreation behaviour. As a matter of fact, it is also emphasized in the literature that the factors representing the experience are closely related to motivations and that there is a need for studies investigating the relationship between motivation and experience (Mehmetoglu and Engen, 2011; Oh et al., 2007).

Outdoor recreation motivations within the scope of REPs

Motivations ‘as the process of directing people to act in a certain way’ (Jansson-Boyd, 2010: 115) have a widespread coverage in the leisure time models. This topic has long been a development studied from the *hierarchy of needs model* of Maslow to the REP model of Driver and Tocker (1971). The *expectation model*, first proposed by Victor Vroom (1964), is among the significant models within the *models of expectation*; it is accepted that individuals decide on their actions by consciously evaluating the outcomes of their behaviour (Solomon, 2009: 157). Within this framework based on expectation, the recreationists are satisfied, by acting rationally when experiences satisfy their expectations (Aasetre and Gundersen, 2012: 196). As a result of all these approaches, recreation was conceptualized as a psychosocial experience, which is a way of self-rewarding with free choices (Manfredro et al., 1996: 189). There is a stockpile of research investigating the reasons why individuals participate in outdoor recreation, and they concluded REP as the result (Walker et al., 2001: 264).

Driver and Tocker (1971) developed REP, which has an important place in the outdoor recreation literature, in order to measure objectives intended to be attained with respect to participation in the leisure activities (Manfredro et al., 1996: 188). The model suggests that recreation behaviour is enacted in order to fulfil certain psychological and physical objectives. According to findings, expectations related to the recreation activity will enable the performance, which would bring about the outcomes that the individual is intending to attain.

Manfredro et al. (1996) claim that the REP scale is valid and reliable depending on the meta-analysis of the 36 studies, which reviews the scale. However, it is also observed that the REP model is being criticized based on certain aspects (Skår et al., 2008: 38). Primarily, the criticism is about the fact that the participants will not be able to articulate their own motivations, needs, roles and emotions, which is a common criticism for any social measurement model. Another criticism is that the concepts and the scale may not be suitable for people from different cultures. Despite its deficiencies, the REP model is frequently adopted in different countries and geographies (Mills, 2001; Payne et al., 2004; Raadik et al., 2010; Skår et al., 2008; Walker et al., 2001; Weber and Anderson, 2010).

Based on the REP model, motivations are closely related to the experiences. Drawing on this line, the first hypothesis of this study to investigate the relationship between nature experiences and outdoor recreation motivations is as follows:

H1: There is a relationship between outdoor recreation motivations and nature experiences.

Vacation activity preferences within the scope of market segmentation in tourism

Market segmentation is an important stage of a consumer-oriented marketing strategy. Market segmentation can be realized based on various variables. However, it is difficult to determine the most important variables for tourism marketing, due to the fact that the variables frequently overlap and support each other (Sung et al., 2000: 4). Dolnicar and Kemp (2009) analyse the tourism market segmentation studies in a holistic perspective and they state that the psychographic and behavioural variables are the most frequently

used segmentation variables. Swarbooke and Horner (2007) also point that the behavioural segmentation is frequently adopted as far as the implementation is concerned. Another important variable is activity-based segmentation, which is used for behavioural market segmentation and carried out based on the activity in which the tourist prefers to participate.

Activity-based segmentation relies on the assumption that different types of tourism activities can address different tourist types that are defined by their preferences for activities or by their types of visits (Schneider et al., 2006: 4). Activity-based segmentation can be used together with other psychographic, demographic and/or social variables in order to effectively segment, define and differentiate the target market. Different factor structures were encountered in activity-based market segmentation, implemented in different periods and in different geographies (Choi et al., 2011; Choi and Tsang, 2000; Hsieh et al. 1997; Lehto et al. 2004; Morrison et al., 1995).

In our study, we question the preferences of vacation for nature experiences in the outdoor recreation activities with tourism demand, within this context. Our hypothesis to determine the relationship between the activities preferred within the scope of the vacation tourism by the outdoor recreationists and the nature experiences is as follows:

H2: There is a relationship between nature experiences and vacation activity preferences.

When it is considered that the vacation tourism is a leisure time activity, it is necessary to present the connection between the outdoor motivations with the vacation activity preferences. Concurrently, this would enable a comparison between the motivations and the experiences, within the scope of explaining the vacation activity preferences. Within this context, the last hypothesis of this study is formed as follows:

H3: There is a relationship between outdoor recreation motivations and vacation activity preferences.

Methodology

Study area

The implementation of this study was conducted in Eskişehir, Turkey. The city is quite rich in terms of outdoor recreation supply (Eskişehir

Governorate, 2011). Eskişehir is ranked as seventh in The Research of Socioeconomic Ranking of the Provinces and Regions 2011 report (Ministry of Development, 2013). The research population consists of the local residents as the recreationists who participate in nature activities, individually or as a group.

Measurement

The questionnaire was mainly based on the measures found in earlier research. In the determination of the outdoor recreation motivations, 34 question statements were positioned by taking advantage of the REP scale of Driver and Tocker (1970). Oh et al. (2007) used the two-dimensional experience model for the measurement of nature experience. We used the *vacation activity scales* proposed by Lehto et al. (2004). We asked for an expert opinion to test the draft questionnaire and the preliminary pilot implementation.

Data collection

Face-to-face and web survey techniques were implemented for the data collection in the study. The field implementation of the research was carried out between the dates 3 December 2012 and 1 May 2013, including the pilot test. During the implementation process, first we obtained a contact for the nature activity groups in Eskişehir and informed the members of the group and leaders about our questionnaire. Some portion of the data was obtained through face-to-face interviews during the activities or group meetings accompanied by the group leaders. Group websites, social media networking pages and e-mail groups were used to obtain data through the Internet. We also reached the persons who individually participate in nature activities through social media groups and special interest pages. Respondents were selected using random sampling. A total of 349 questionnaires were obtained, among which 153 were effectuated by face-to-face and 196 via the Internet.

Data analysis

Given the fact that it is important to work with qualified data in order to obtain valid results, the outliers, missing data and normality were analysed, respectively.

Univariate and multivariate analyses were carried out in order to determine the outliers,

which may arise due to reasons of 'data entry errors, the fact that the respondent is not a member of the population from which the sample is drawn, and/or the fact that the respondent is different to the rest of the sample' (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2011: 73). Questionnaires that had outliers were taken out of the analysis, and the remaining 313 interview data were analysed.

Despite the fact that the ratio is quite low, missing data was encountered in the data set (the highest missing data is 1%). As the result of the Little's Missing Completely at Random (MCAR) test – applied to determine whether or not the missing data was portraying a random distribution – it was observed that the missing data was not indicating a random distribution. New appropriate values were assigned for the missing values, by applying the expectation–maximization method, which was especially arranged as a modelling method to be used for a way of solution for the non-random missing data structure.

The normality of data was analysed on the basis of both single univariate and multivariate. It was observed that the skewness and kurtosis values, which are analysed on the basis of univariate normality, are within the ± 2 interval and that they presented a normal distribution (Cameron, 2004: 544; George and Mallery, 2003: 98). As for multivariate normality, the distribution of Mahalanobis χ^2 values was used, and it was determined that the multivariate normal distribution was assured.

In order to analyse the relationship among outdoor recreation motivations, nature experiences and vacation activity preference structures, the structural equation modelling (SEM) method was used. First, explanatory factor analysis (EFA) was applied for the determination of the structure validity of the scales. In order to verify the factor structures, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was used.

The implementation of factor analysis requires fulfilling certain assumptions. Primarily, the Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) test was used in order to test whether a sufficient sample size was reached. The KMO measures were 0.88 for outdoor recreation motivations, 0.74 for nature experiences and 0.76 for vacation activity preferences, above the recommended value of 0.60 (Pallant, 2011: 187). It was observed that there is a linear relationship ($p = 0$) between variables and that the data is fulfilling the required assumptions for the factor analysis, as a result of the Bartlett test, which was implemented for each structure.

The factors, with eigenvalue over 1, were maintained to decide on the number of factors

at EFA and the 'scree plot' graphic was used. The maximum likelihood technique was utilized as the factoring method, which is used for those cases where the data were distributed normally. For the EFA implementation, the rule of having the factor load of the items, under a single dimension, to be at least equal to or greater than ± 0.33 , was taken into consideration (Ho, 2006: 207). The items, with factor load values, on more than one dimension, closer than 0.10 were taken out of the analysis due to the reason for having comorbid factor loads (Hair et al., 2010: 118). The item-total correlation values were used as well as a criterion of reliability (Tinsley and Brown, 2000: 81). It was determined that the item-total correlation values were over 0.30 and that each item was serving to the scale (Pallant, 2011: 100). In the determination of internal validity of the factors, the Cronbach α test was utilized.

The covariance matrix, as an input matrix to CFA and maximum likelihood, was used. It has been taken into consideration that the standard load values, which provide insight about how well each item at CFAs is standing as representative of its own implicit variable, would be either under 1 or over -1 (Hair et al., 2010: 713). Another criterion in the analysis was used to explore the t values, which aims at portraying the significance of items on the dimension of factors, intended to be over 1.96 ($p = 0.05$). Furthermore, a vast number of the goodness of fit indices were applied for the interpretation of the significance of the results.

Findings

The characteristics of the participants, with respect to their participation in nature activities, are presented in Table 1, besides their demographic characteristics. As for the demographic characteristics of the participants, the majority of the participants are male; their level of education is high, and the age and income status shows a great variety. In terms of the characteristics related to the participation in outdoor recreation activities, it is observed that more than one activity has been realized. What is more, the most widely practiced activity is hiking. Despite the fact that the level of the annual spending for the activities shows a great variety, it is observed to be at a level of 15001 on the average. Besides this, the rate of the participants who join the activities, within the nature groups, is approximately 80%. Furthermore, as the participants join more than three activities within one month, the average spending for the activities within a year is 1500.

Table 1. Characteristics of the participants.

Variable	n	Percentage	Mean	Standard deviation
Gender (<i>n</i> = 313)				
Female	97	31.0		
Male	216	69.0		
Education status (<i>n</i> = 313)				
Middle education and lower	92	29.4		
Upper secondary education and associate (undergraduate)	153	48.9		
Graduate	68	21.7		
Age	305		43.77	12.4886
Monthly average household income	276		3110 Turkish Liras	2022
Type of activity				
Nature walk	255	81.5		
Bicycle trips	173	55.3		
Mountain climbing	109	34.8		
Nature photography	101	32.3		
Sportive fishing	68	21.7		
Water sports (diving and so on)	47	15.0		
Cave investigation	19	6.1		
Air sports	21	6.7		
Other activities	12	3.8		
The nature groups membership status (<i>n</i> = 309)				
Exists	246	79.6		
Doesn't exist	63	20.4		
Monthly average activity count	296		3.530	3.356
Annual average activity spending	258		1494 Turkish Liras	1634

Table 2 illustrates the EFA results of nature experiences. At the beginning, there were 12 items at the experience scale representing four dimensions, namely, education, aesthetic, entertainment and escape. However, the items related to entertainment dimension were omitted from the analysis because they carried co-morbid factor loads. As a result, a three-factorial structure was obtained with nine items. The explained variance is 0.60, which is considered as a high value, a possible rate obtained at social science studies (Dunteman, 1989). On the other side, the internal consistency of the scale is ensured with the Cronbach α value over 0.70 (Hair et al., 2010: 127). The CFA results of nature experiences are also illustrated in Table 2. The standard loads of the scale are high, the *t* values are significant ($p = 0.05$, t value > 1.96) and the error variances are low. As the fit indices were examined, it is observed that the fit values of the scale are beyond the acceptable rates (Table 3).

The outdoor recreation motivations EFA and CFA results have been summarized in Table 2. During the EFA phase, two items were taken out of the outdoor recreation motivations scale, which

consisted of 34 items at the beginning due to the fact that their total correlation values were low, and another eight items were removed from the analysis, because they had co-morbid factor loads. As a result, a four-factor structure was obtained with 24 items. The variance, which is explained by the scale, is 0.46 and it is within the acceptable limits (Dunteman, 1989). The Cronbach α value, which shows the internal consistency of the scale, is 0.90, which is quite high. The first factor was labelled as *achievement*; then the factors were, respectively, ranked as *learning and sociality*, *independence and personal development* and *relaxation*. The outdoor recreation motivations, according to the CFA results, have scales with standard loads of 0.40, which is at an ideal level, with significant *t* values ($p = 0.05$, t value > 1.96) and with low error variances. It is observed that the scale has acceptable fit indicators, outside of the GFI value (Table 3). It is possible to state that the GFI resulted in a low value because of the size of the sample and due to the fact that the model was complicated (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2011: 724).

Table 2 illustrates the EFA results of the scale, related to the vacation activity preferences. One

Table 2. Explanatory factor analysis and confirmatory factor analysis.

Factors and items*	Explained variance	Eigenvalue	Mean	Standard deviation	Item-total correlation	Factor loads	Standard loads	t values	Error variance
Nature experiences									
Education ($\alpha = 0.897$)	33.855	3.047	4.114	0.767	0.636	0.977	0.97	22.27	0.059
It is an educating experience.			4.129	0.770	0.614	0.816	0.83	17.36	0.311
It encourages my willingness to learn new things.			4.051	0.774	0.558	0.774	0.80	16.64	0.360
It increases my knowledge level.									
Aesthetic ($\alpha = 0.775$)	13.949	1.255	4.609	0.578	0.409	0.936	0.90	16.92	0.190
The natural environment gives pleasure in sensual terms (seeing, hearing, tasting and so on).			4.677	0.488	0.407	0.737	0.75	13.81	0.438
It is pleasurable to be within the natural landscape.			4.507	0.675	0.384	0.549	0.61	10.94	0.628
It is pleasurable to observe the wild life.									
Escape ($\alpha = 0.711$)	12.889	1.160	3.792	1.049	0.500	0.751	0.76	12.25	0.422
It makes me feel like I'm living in a different time and place.			2.941	1.186	0.428	0.650	0.66	10.76	0.564
It makes me feel like I'm another person.			3.891	1.016	0.404	0.613	0.60	9.85	0.640
It enables me to escape the reality of the daily life.									
Total ($\alpha = 0.781$)	60.692								
Outdoor recreation motivations	31.174	8.036	3.725	1.174	0.607	0.832	0.77	15.43	0.407
Success ($\alpha = 0.821$)			3.532	1.206	0.611	0.742	0.79	15.98	0.376
To test my endurance			4.076	0.970	0.492	0.636	0.62	11.47	0.616
To test my capacity			3.862	1.057	0.647	0.501	0.73	14.22	0.467
To get excited			4.434	0.676	0.512	0.409	0.50	8.93	0.750
To develop my capabilities and skills			4.212	0.854	0.380	0.400	0.39	6.71	0.848
To be healthy			2.520	1.235	0.500	0.377	0.55	10.01	0.698
To stay physically fit			3.041	1.196	0.414	0.346	0.45	7.89	0.798
To show other people, what I can do									
To observe other people									
To observe other people									
Learning and socialization ($\alpha = 0.801$)	6.350	1.978	4.261	0.797	0.570	0.700	0.70	13.04	0.510
To learn more about the nature			4.162	0.793	0.489	0.684	0.65	11.58	0.578
To get information about the visited place			4.048	0.930	0.453	0.551	0.54	9.45	0.708
To be with my friends			3.929	0.958	0.486	0.545	0.53	9.26	0.719
To be with the people, who share similar values with me			4.421	0.738	0.517	0.413	0.68	12.49	0.538
To explore new and different things			4.129	0.860	0.523	0.342	0.67	12.26	0.551
To learn more about the activity I do									

(continued)

Table 2. (continued)

Factors and items*	Explained variance	Eigenvalue	Mean	Standard deviation	Item-total correlation	Factor loads	Standard loads	t values	Error variance
Independence and personal development	4.846	1.706							
To be at a place, where I can make my individual choices			3.607	1.110	0.610	-0.803	0.75	14.30	0.438
To be at a place, where my control power is high			3.524	1.112	0.595	-0.719	0.69	12.76	0.524
To feel myself being independent			3.927	1.058	0.569	-0.591	0.73	13.86	0.467
To think about my life			3.162	1.225	0.515	-0.542	0.59	10.56	0.652
To gain self confidence			3.618	1.130	0.595	-0.414	0.64	11.61	0.590
To develop myself in spiritual terms			3.583	1.151	0.505	-0.377	0.51	8.91	0.740
Relaxation ($\alpha = 0.790$)	3.835	1.466							
To make a change, by getting far from routine life cycles			4.441	0.727	0.500	-0.691	0.75	14.19	0.437
To escape the stress of the urban life			4.373	0.718	0.489	-0.578	0.70	13.06	0.510
To be peaceful			4.437	0.713	0.505	-0.562	0.73	13.68	0.467
To get rid of strain			4.596	0.559	0.454	-0.505	0.61	10.91	0.627
Total ($\alpha = 0.908$)	46.206								
Cultural activities ($\alpha = 0.792$)	21.262	3.648							
To visit the museum and art galleries			3.324	1.149	0.485	1.010	0.69	11.17	0.524
To visit the cultural heritage sites			3.789	1.056	0.475	0.661	0.54	9.03	0.708
To visit the national parks			3.480	1.062	0.464	0.554	0.80	11.34	0.360
To participate in art events, such as concerts, or musical			3.130	1.154	0.467	0.508	0.81	11.59	0.344
Outdoor activities ($\alpha = 0.761$)	16.373	1.952							
Camping			3.479	1.243	0.410	0.840	0.72	12.99	0.482
To join the walking and mountaineering activities			3.610	1.214	0.510	0.743	0.86	15.02	0.260
To observe the wild life			3.603	1.072	0.435	0.675	0.76	12.62	0.422
To participate in sports events			3.246	1.126	0.387	0.412	0.43	7.50	0.815
To make water sports (rafting, diving and so on)			2.954	1.439	0.466	0.411	0.46	8.02	0.788
Entertainment activities	9.603	1.477							
($\alpha = 0.610$)									
To entertain at night clubs			2.424	1.188	0.321	0.805	0.60	8.71	0.640
To visit conceptual/amusement parks			2.844	1.073	0.366	0.528	0.67	9.61	0.551
To join commercial tours			2.095	1.087	0.344	0.402	0.49	7.25	0.760
Total ($\alpha = 0.786$)	46.055								

*Measured on a five-point scale where 1 = Not at all; 5 = Always.

Table 3. Goodness of fit indexes.

Index	Acceptable	Outdoor recreation motivations	Nature experiences	Vacation activity preferences	SEM	Evaluation rationale
χ^2	N/A	657.85	61.72	144.83	1918.90	N/A
df	N/A	242	24	48	960	N/A
χ^2/df	$0 \leq \chi^2/SD \leq 3$	2.71 ($p = .00000$)	2.5 ($p = .00004$)	3.01 ($p = .00000$)	1.99 ($p = .00000$)	Kline (2005)
RMSEA	$0 \leq RMSEA \leq 0.08$	0.074	0.071	0.080	0.057	Hooper et al. (2008)
SRMR	$0 \leq SRMR \leq 0.08$	0.064	0.045	0.073	0.073	Brown (2006)
NFI	$0.90 \leq NFI \leq 1.00$	0.93	0.96	0.91	0.90	Thompson (2004)
NNFI	$0.90 \leq NNFI \leq 1.00$	0.95	0.96	0.92	0.95	Tabachnick and Fidell (2011)
CFI	$0.90 \leq CFI \leq 1.00$	0.95	0.97	0.94	0.95	Tabachnick and Fidell (2011)
GFI	$0.90 \leq GFI \leq 1.00$	0.85*	0.96	0.93	0.79*	Schumacker and Lomax (1996)

*Beyond acceptable values due to sample size and high number of parameters.
SD: standard deviation; SEM: structural equation modelling.

item was taken out of the vacation activity preference scale, which consisted of 20 items at the beginning due to the fact that its total correlation value was low, and another seven items were removed from the analysis, because they had co-morbid factor loads. As a result, a three-factor structure was obtained with 12 items. The variance, which is explained by the scale, is 0.46 and it is within the acceptable limits (Dunteman 1989). The Cronbach α values are over the acceptable limit, which is 0.60 (Hair et al., 2010). It is observed that this structure ensures the desired conditions with its standard loads, significance of the t values ($p = 0.05$, t value > 1.96) and low error variances. Some corrective suggestions were applied in order to attain better adaptive fit values in the structure. As a result, it is observed that the goodness of fit indices of the scale show an acceptable fit (Table 3).

The relationships between validated structures were analysed with SEM methodology. The obtained findings are presented in Figure 1. As for the first hypothesis of the study, the relationship between the outdoor recreation motivations and the nature experiences has been analysed. According to this, there is a strong statistically significant relationship between the outdoor recreation motivations and the nature experiences

($\gamma = 0.98$; $p = 0.05$, t value > 1.96). The second hypothesis of the study is related to the relationship between the nature experiences and the vacation activity preferences. According to the obtained findings, there is a statistically significant relationship between the nature experiences and the vacation activity preferences ($\gamma = 0.68$; $p = 0.05$, t value > 1.96). As for the last hypothesis of the study, a statistically significant relationship between the outdoor recreation motivations and the vacation activity preferences has been found ($\gamma = 0.61$; $p = 0.05$, t value > 1.96). When the goodness of fit indices of the model were examined, it can be concluded that the GFI values were low, due to the fact that they were sensitive towards the size of the sample. (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2011: 724). In general, the relational model has acceptable goodness of fit indices (Table 3). At the end of the analysis, all three hypotheses of the study were accepted, by determination of relationships between structures.

Discussion

For the measurement of the nature experiences, which is considered as a product within the scope of the experience economy, the two-dimensional experience model was implemented, developed

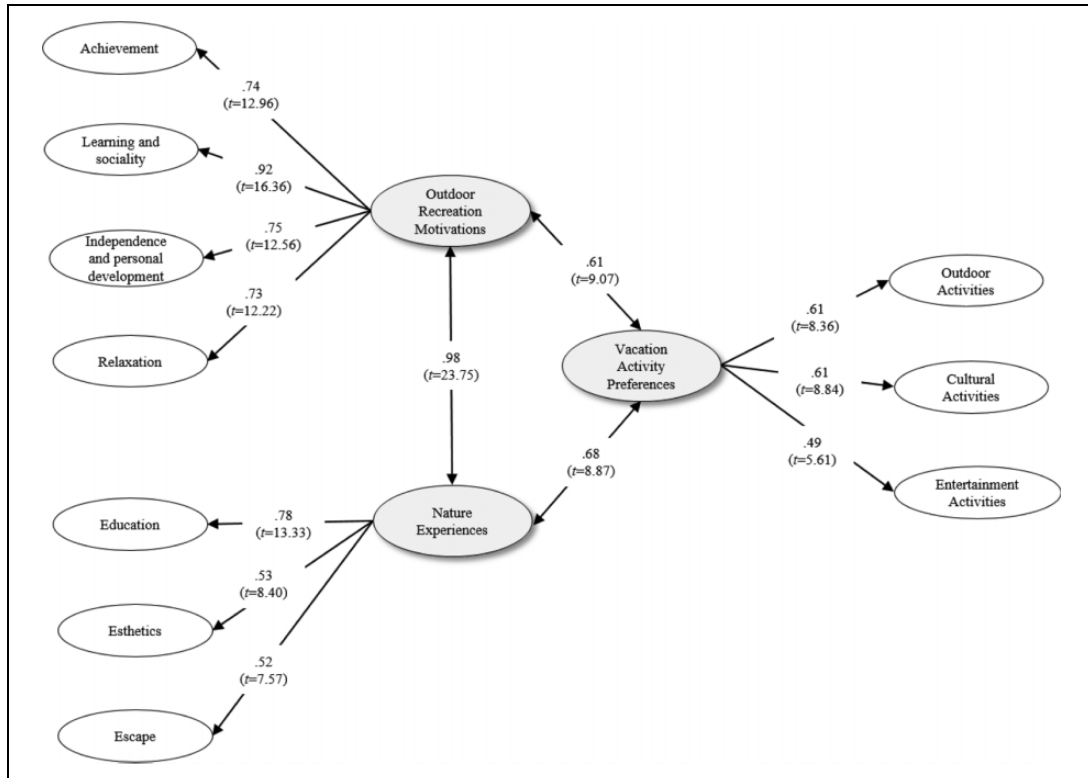


Figure 1. Structural equation modelling.

by Oh et al. (2007). At the end of the study, the analysis was attained that the nature experiences of the Eskişehir outdoor recreationists were composed of the dimensions, aesthetic, education and escape, in the respective rank of importance. As it was the case for other studies in the literature (Mehmetoglu and Engen, 2011; Oh et al., 2007; Pikkemaat et al., 2010), it is observed that the aesthetic experience was the most dominating dimension in this study. The entertainment dimension, which is passive experience, was not found to be statistically significant. According to Pine and Gilmore (2011: 84), many experiences were being effectuated through four areas, and then these limits are being transcended. This situation might be interpreted as nature experiences within the scope of the study population not encompassing the entertainment dimension. On the other hand, it is possible that the entertainment dimension was not understood well within the scope of the sample of the study or that it was not possible to have a culturally fit association due to the fact that a scale was used, which was translated from a foreign language. However, the study of Mehmetoglu and Engen (2011) implemented the two-dimensional experience model, and no significant relationships were encountered with respect to the entertainment

dimension. This situation might provoke doubts towards the model; however, it does not provide sufficient evidence that the model is weak.

Outdoor recreation motivations are important indicators of recreation behaviour. The REP scale, which is frequently used in the literature, was utilized in the determination of the outdoor recreation motivations in the Eskişehir case. It is possible to state that the scale is valid, which has attained a four-factorial structure at the end of this analysis. These factors are listed in the respective rank based on their degree of importance as *relaxation, learning and sociality, achievement and independence and personal development*. There are a vast number of varieties of the scale, with different usages in other studies in the literature. A different factor structure has been attained as well in this study. Despite the fact that the factor labels would be different, given the fact that the components portray similarities, it is still possible to compare the results of the study to the earlier findings in the literature. In this context, the solitude and tranquillity components, which take part in the *relaxation* factor, were ranked in the first place in terms of importance, with respect to other studies as well (Mills, 2001; Payne et al., 2004; Raadik et al., 2010). Similarly, the component,

introspection in *independence and personal development* factor, was ranked in the last place in terms of importance, when compared to other studies (Mills, 2001; Payne et al., 2005; Raadik et al., 2010). The results of our study also represent similarities to studies carried out in Sweden, Canada and the United States, presenting hints about the claim that motivations are similar in different geographies and cultures.

The scale initially employed by Lehto et al. (2004) determined the vacation activity preferences. The obtained vacation activity preferences were factorized as *cultural vacation activities*, *outdoor vacation activities* and *entertainment activities*. This factor structure portrays similar aspects with other studies where the same scale was not used at all (Choi and Tsang, 2000; Hsieh et al., 1997; Mehmetoglu, 2007). The participants prefer to join the *cultural activities* in vacations as stated in this study, which is similar to other studies in the literature. The *outdoor activity* preference is ranked as the second.

Conclusion and implications

According to results, the vacation activity preferences were in a strong and significant relationship with outdoor recreation motivations, besides nature experiences. It was observed that the vacation activity preferences and experiences have a stronger relationship when compared with the motivations. Due to the fact that the base of the product of recreation and tourism is experience, it can be concluded that the nature experiences explain the vacation activity preferences with much stronger relationships.

It has been determined that outdoor recreation motivations and nature experiences were quite similar. In real terms, experience and motivations are concepts that are hardly distinguishable from each other. While the motivations within the framework of the REP model consist of objectives useful for the effectuation of certain behaviours, the experience covers the psychological outputs acquired at the end of the behaviour with respect to the measurement of the motivations in the study. When considered within a process, while previous experiences are effective in terms of the formation of motivations, the motivations are inputs for experiences. In other words, it is possible to state that motivations and experiences are formed as a result of influencing each other.

The study points to the fact that the outdoor recreation participants are closely linked to the vacation tourism market. Therefore, the outdoor

recreation demand is a particular concern to the tourism sector. Within this context, it is worthwhile to consider the outdoor recreationists within the scope of the tourism market. As it is understood from the interviews and observations in the fieldwork, the participants conduct such activities, which they define as outdoor recreation, where they go a long distance and that last about one week. At this point, it can be stated that a tourism event takes place, which is not formal. Actually, this situation points to the fact that recreation and tourism are intertwined and the boundaries between them are flexible.

According to the approach of the experience economy, it is possible to develop and manage nature experiences, which provide competitive advantage in the market. Therefore, the results of the study can be useful for both recreation and tourism practitioners to improve exchange relations in market. In this vein, the relationship of the factors' structure should be taken into consideration while designing the nature experiences for the target markets. It is possible that the dominating experience and motivation aspects would lead the individuals to certain tourism activity preferences. Consequently, the outdoor recreation motivations, nature experiences and vacation activity preference aspects can be a source of reference for each other in the development of products related to nature activities.

Study limitations and suggestions for future studies

The vacation activity preferences were examined within the scope of tourism behaviour for the determination of the relationships between recreation and tourism behaviour in the study. Besides activity preferences, in the future, variables related to structural vacation preference types could be included into the model of the study. Furthermore, the relationships tested in our research could be examined on the basis of a single activity, which would enable more homogeneous samples to be achieved. In addition, it is expected that the similar factor structures of the outdoor recreation motivations and nature experiences would be closely related as well. Therefore, it would be worth determining the relationships between motivation factor components and experience factor components in further studies.

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Note

1. One US dollar equals about 2.8 Turkish Lira.

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