Mapping Out Factors Constraining Tourist Complaints: Hints For Managers Who Wish To Hear More

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Abstract: Present study aims (i) to review how unique features of the tourism industry that may shape its consumers' complaining behaviors and (ii) to find out possible constraints of tourist complaining. Given that tourism is comparatively a new discipline most theories being used to explain this phenomenon are borrowed from mainstream disciplines. Perhaps for this reason many scholars directly use consumer behavior theories to examine tourist behaviors without considering the unique features of the tourism industry. In tourism industry where service failures are unavoidable due to its inherent nature success of any company requires hearing from their unhappy customers. To do so, managers need to understand factors stopping their customers to voice their dissatisfaction. In this vein, results of a thorough literature review suggested that there are five constraints (time, involvement, communication, familiarity and holiday mood) that managers should be mindful, if they want to receive complaints. Section on major findings of the relevant literature is followed by definitions of these constructs and presentation of the implications for the academia and industry.

Key words: Characteristics of tourism, complaining behavior, constraints, managers, tourist

INTRODUCTION

To attain and retain a pool of loyal and profitable customers, companies try to provide a flawless high quality service to their customers (Kotler and Armstrong, 2006). Nevertheless, as hard as they try, even the best service companies cannot eliminate problems utterly (Gursoy, 2007a; Hart et al., 1990). Most of the time companies only hear from few of these problems through consumer complaints (Hedrick et al., 2007; Plymire, 1991). The factor that distinguishes between few successful companies from the remaining not so successful ones is how they view these complaints as opportunities (Zemke and Anderson, 2007).

In deed for several reasons complaints should be regarded as gifts. First, if dissatisfied customers do not complain, company loses the opportunity to remedy the problem and retain a customer (Hirschman, 1970). Besides, this loss is not only the current business but also the future businesses from that particular customer. Second, the company's reputation can be harmed by negative word-of-mouth (WOM) actions taken by dissatisfied customers, resulting in the loss of current and potential customers (Susskind, 2002). Third, if a customer leaves the company without complaining, then company is deprived of valuable feedback about the quality of its product or service (Fornell and Wernerfelt, 1988), also hindering its capability to identify problems that may, and most probably will, affect other customers. Among other things, customer complaints allow an organization to pursue service recovery attempts and an opportunity to reduce customer turnover (Bodey and Grace, 2006; Tax et al., 1998). For these reasons, consumer complaints should be seen as necessary step to fix the failed services.

The process of fixing the problems is labeled as 'service recovery', a well-accepted term for what service companies attempt to offset the customers' negative reaction to the service failures (Zemke and Bell, 2000). Existing services marketing literature posits that it costs several times as much to find a new customer as it does to keep and satisfy and existing one (Zeithaml et al., 2006). CCB literature contains overwhelming amount of published work that advocate the importance and necessity of service recovery (Lovelock et al., 2002; Sparks and McKoll-Kennedy, 2001). Chief benefit of providing an effective and efficient service recovery is the creation of a range of positive customer responses such as complainant satisfaction (Hoffman and Bateson, 2006; Stauss and Seidel, 2004), loyalty and repatronage intentions (Grönroos, 2007) and the spread of positive WOM (Hart et al., 1990; Susskind, 2002). Moreover, it has also many organizational benefits like; lowering marketing costs (Kotler and Armstrong, 2006), regaining the confidence of customers (Kelley et al., 1993), maintaining customers' perceptions of fairness (Goodwin and Ross, 1992), building up and sustaining company image (Lovelock et al., 2002), preventing additional costs due to legal procedures (McCollough, 1995) so on. Findings of these and many more research show that companies need to provide an outstanding service recovery in other words 'knock your socks off service recovery' (Zemke and Bell, 2000).

Given that tourism is a hybrid service industry where the contact between companies and tourist plays a central role, service failures are frequent occurrences. Schoefer and Ennew (2004) emphasized that eliminating service failure utterly is impossible especially in tourism industry

"where the involvement of a number of different parties in service delivery may increase the potential for failure" (pp: 83). In this vein, Witt and Moutinho (1994) argued that it is very much likely for customers of tourism and travel organizations to experience dissatisfaction more frequently than any other service industry. Thus, recovering these failures effectively and efficiently is crucial for companies operating in tourism industry (Kotler *et al.*, 2002). To do so, companies need to know the factors affecting tourist complaining behaviors. Knowing what factors hinder tourists to raise their complaints can assist companies in modifying their recovery strategies. Once companies understand complaining constraints and tailor made their recovery strategies accordingly, to remedy the problem and retain their customers, to avoid negative word-of-mouth, to pursue service recovery attempts and to reduce customer turnover (Bodey and Grace, 2006; Tax *et al.*, 1998).

Receiving complaints is vitally important for service companies in general and companies tourism industry in particular (Kowalski, 1996; Witt and Moutinho, 1994). This is where academia should assist tourism industry in explaining reasons and finding ways to enhance the utilization of complaints (Zemke and Anderson, 2007). However, extensive review of the tourism literature shows that many scholars directly use consumer behavior theories without considering the unique features of the tourism industry to explain tourists' complaining behavior (Pearce and Moscardo, 1984; Schoefer and Ennew, 2004). In this sense, this study aims to review how these unique features of the industry may shape its consumers' complaining behaviors and to find out possible constraints of tourist complaining. Results of the relevant review suggested that five constructs may; differentiate tourists' complaining from general consumers'. These constructs are as follows; time, involvement, communication, familiarity and holiday mood. Section on major findings of the relevant literature is followed by definitions of these constructs and presentation of the implications for the academia and industry.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Tourism and Tourist Behavior: Human beings are curious creatures with an endless desire to know what other places, people, cultures, animals, landforms etc. look like. McIntosh *et al.* (2006) noted that higher levels of education, increasing technology in transportation and communication, more leisure time and greater awareness motivate to people to travel, for longer periods, for several times and to further destinations. It is for this reason that, tourism, as being the world largest and most diverse industry, acclaimed as a major global economic force. According to the World Travel and Tourism Council (2007) figures, tourism generated 5.390 billion US dollars economic contribution worldwide (10.4 % of all earnings) while employing 232 million people (8.3 % of total employment) representing 1 in every 12 jobs. World

Tourism Organization predicted that in the year 2020 there will be 1.6 billion international tourist arrivals with a long-term annual forecast growth rate of 4.1 per cent through 2020 (UNWTO, 2007). These promising figures did not went unnoticed in academia, resulting the opening of approximately 3,000 institutions providing professional tourism and hospitality education and research (Chon, 2009).

However, the situation was not like this at the beginning. Jafari (2001) noted that study of tourism had difficulties in getting acceptance as a discipline. The debate of ourism as a discipline is still being questioned by scholars from other mainstream disciplines. For instance, Levi-Strauss (1976 quoted in Pearce, 1982) argued that tourism as an area of research is imited and uninteresting Similarly, Kuper (1964 quoted in Nash, 1996) argued that tourism research is arrow scoped and do not have any productive line of development In early 90 Gilbert (1991) argued that tourism is relatively a new area of study and theories are fraught with unproven assumptions, ambiguous terminology and contradictory evidence (pp: 78), thus discipline has borrowed a range of concepts from the quantitative and behavioral sciences in order to generate models of action (pp: 92).

Many of the early tourism scholars were/are from other disciplines thus used their backgrounds to come up with theories in explaining the tourism phenomenon. Consequently, tourism research and literature became a mesmerizing mixture covering a vast range of issues by using theories originated from other disciplines. These kinds of studies contributed to the development of the discipline and enhanced our understanding to a great extend. In particular, marketing literature on consumer behavior heavily relied while explaining tourist behaviors (Jafari and Gardner, 1991).

Gilbert (1991, pp: 94) noted that one of the first attempt to provide some understanding of tourism purchase behavior is to be found in the work of Wahab, Crampon and Rothfield (1976)". Indeed they are the pioneers (i) to argue that tourist is a purposeful consumer and (ii) to conceptualize the tourist buying behavior in terms of the uniqueness of the buying decision. Although, their model initially focused on decision making process before the purchase of buying any, if not all, components of their holiday, yet they outlined four unique features that distinguish tourist buying behavior [and possibly complaining behavior]. These features are as follows; - no tangible return on investment, - considerable expenditure in relation to the earned income, -purchase is not spontaneous or capricious, - expenditure involves saving and preplanning (Wahab *et al.*, 1976).

By using Clawson and Knetsch's (1966) five phases of tourist activities, Pearce (2005) summarized critical differences between tourist behavior and consumer behavior. Briefly, Pearce (2005) argued that since the activity itself is highly complex and multi-faced; (i) there is a need for more planning, (ii) some level of traveling is required, (iii) the experience is synergetic and can be

reshaped, (iv) it has long lasting effects. Gilbert (1991, pp: 94) stated that "while acknowledging that the experiential nature of tourism products make them different from commodity purchases, goes on to question the applicability of general consumer behavior models". Similarly, Wahab *et al.* (1976) and more recently Pearce (2005) questioned the applicability of overall consumer behavior models to tourism setting. McCabe (2005) also underpinned that conventional notions of tourist behaviors and attitudes began to be challenged very recently. In echoing these arguments, current study attempts to isolate and map out the tourist complaining behavior particularly aims to find out possible constraints that affects tourists complaining behavior. To do so, definitions and characteristics of ourism and ourist should be reviewed since these definitions and characteristic may shed light on the possible factors differentiating tourists from general consumers.

Methaan (2001, pp: 1) argued that ourism has been a significant factor in the developed economies ince 50 et the development of analytical approaches, which attempt an explanation of this phenomenon, is a more recent concern Similarly, Burns (1999) noted that we lack a commonly accepted definition of tourism partially because of the complexity of tourist activity and partially because different interests are concerned with different aspects of tourist activity (pp: 25). Yet, Methaan (2001, pp: 4) defined tourism simply as a global process of commodification and consumption involving flows of people, capital, images and cultures Methaan definition is focused on to the consumption, while Pearce (1982, pp: 2-3) defined tourism from an economic perspective as the loosely interrelated amalgam of industries which arise from the movement of people, and their stay in various destinations outside of their home areas

Pearce (1982, 2005) and Burns (1999) added few more characteristics as; involves some level of relationship with the host community visited, tourists are *bound with time limits*, in most occasions involves sharing of culture, creates both positive and negative effects on both tourist and host. Moreover, there are several parties involved in its execution and without their existence or without the services they provide, tourism would not be at its current stage. Some of these services are; passenger transportation services (airline, rail, cruise so on.), hospitality and related services (all sort of lodging services and food and beverage services), distribution channels (tour operators, travel agencies so on), attraction, recreation, entertainment and other related services (all range of tourist entertaining services) and organizations (world, nation, region wide bodies) (Kotler *et al.*, 2002; McIntosh *et al.*, 2006). Although, all these actors play an important role in tourism yet without the existence of ourist the phenomenon of tourism cannot be realized. Thus the focus of this work centers on tourist and tourist behavior.

Morley (1990) argued that for a person, to be rightly labeled as tourist, s/he should satisfy two conditions [being] away from home for less than one year pend money in the place they visit without earning it there (Morley, 1990, pp: 4). World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2007, pp:?) defined tourists "as people who travel to and stay in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes not related to the exercise of an activity remunerated from within the place visited". Smith (1989, pp: 1) provided a simpler definition a temporarily leisured person who voluntarily visits a place away from home for the purpose of *experiencing* a change McIntosh *et al.* (2006) advocated that people who visit a particular place for sightseeing, visiting friends and relatives, taking vacation with the aim of participating to various psychic and/or physical experiences, can be considered as tourist.

Why Consumers chose not to Complain: It is very well established in CCB literature that consumers, in general, are reluctant to complain and only a very low percentage of them complain (Hedrick *et al.*, 2007; Maheswaran and Shavitt, 2000). Some studies reported that between 60 percent (Andreassen, 2000) to 70 percent (Ekiz and Arasli, 2007) of all dissatisfied consumers take no action. In addition, research demonstrates that businesses are never hearing from 96 percent of their unhappy customers (Plymire, 1991). Then, 'why consumers do not complaint?'. This question kept -and still keeping- many scholars uneasy. To solve the mystery behind this, scholars proposed and tested several constraints, such as; cost involved in complaining, not being easy, attitude towards complaining, cultural factors and so on (Chebat and Slusarczyk, 2005; Kowalski, 1996; Stephens and Gwinner, 1998; Voorhees *et al.*, 2006).

Some early research underscored the financial loss to explain why people choose not to voice their dissatisfaction (Diener and Greyser, 1978; Day, 1984; Gilly and Gelb, 1982). They concluded that the consumers tend to first consider the costs such as time, money, psychological issues etc. and benefits like full redress, partial atonement, discount etc. and perform a simple calculation in their mind, and then they decide whether or not to complain (Susskind, 2002). High cost of presenting complaints to service providers and/or to other potential complaint handlers can be one of the most important constraints. Cost of complaining includes additional effort and investment of time spent filling in a feedback/complaint form or talking to front office manager of a hotel. Financial investment, in form of the need for going back to travel agency to present your case, or psychological burden, such as embarrassment (Zeithaml *et al.*, 2006) are among other investments. Lee and Sparks (2007) explored the cultural values that Chinese consumers hold in service failure and recovery occasions and they found out that the most reason not to complain is ace protection - being concerned with the protection of one own and other people reputation (Lee and Sparks, 2007, pp: 510).

Specifically, the following reasons may provide further clarification why majority of the customers do not chose to voice their dissatisfaction to the service provider. First, sometimes it may be hard to complain due to the fact that customers simply may not know how to lodge their complaints (Plymire, 1991; Sanes, 1993). Second, failure may be perceived insignificant to be voiced and/or the loss may be perceived as bearable thus a dissatisfied customer may think that complaining is not worth his/her effort (Chebat *et al.*, 2005). Third, consumers may think that complaining will do no good. In other words, consumers may feel that their complaint will not change anything or they may not see any benefit of doing so (Ekiz, 2003). Fourth, not all employees and companies want to hear bad news, thus they rarely encourage feedback from their customers (Zemke and Anderson, 2007). Fifth, customer may think that complaining will make him/her look cheapp: Stephens and Gwinner (1998) conducted a serious of in-depth interviews with elderly consumer and reported that desire to not look heap and rap like are some reasons why people avoid confronting the service providers, especially when the problem caused negligible amounts of financial losses.

Furthermore, several researchers tried to find a link between the industry in which the failure occurred (Grainer *et al.*, 1979) or product type like goods versus services (Grönhaug and Zaltman, 1981) and likelihood of complaint. Even though, there was no consensus among their findings, meaning that different industries produced different results, yet all were call for further investigation as a choir (Andreassen, 2000; Day and Bodur, 1978).

Tourist Complaining Constraints: On top of above discussed constraints, this paper argues that, the unique characteristics of tourism industry will add more constraints on complaining behavior. To find out these additional constraints, both theoretical and empirical studies are needed. However, so far tourists are used as respondents on consumer behavior theories driven research (Gursoy *et al.*, 2007b; Kim and Lee, 2000; Kozak and Tasci, 2006; Mattila, 2000) without focusing the nature of their holiday consumption (Christiansen and Snepenger, 2000; Josiam *et al.*, 2005; Tsang and Ap, 2007). Thus, there is only handful of research investigated purely tourist complaining behavior, surely Pearce and Moscardo (1984) research is one of these. They underlined that although tourist complaints can be used productively as part of the visitor evaluations exercise and benefit the company, industry and thus country economy, yet there are a few systematic accounts in tourism literature on visitor evaluation [of complaints] ince the problem of dealing with tourists complaints is not fully covered in the tourism literature (Pearce and Moscardo, 1984, pp: 20).

Although, it is possible to argue that the most part of tourist complaining behavior, hence complaining constraints, may be explained by the existing theories in overall consumer complaint behavior (CCB) literature, yet

some factors may probably not. The logic behind this belief is the unique characteristics of tourism industry, coming from both being a service industry (Lovelock *et al.*, 2002; Kotler *et al.*, 2002) and more importantly from its definition, nature and practice (Burns, 1999; Nash, 1996). In other words, the nature of the industry creates some additional constraints for its participants (tourist) and limits their complaining capabilities, perhaps intentions. Most of the constraints discussed in CCB literature overlap with the ones in tourism context, such as; magnitude of failure, type of failure, situational factors and experience of the consumer, so on. Yet some factors may be different in the case of tourists. These factors proposed to be; *time*, *familiarity*, *communication*, *involvement* and *holiday mood*. The following section will focus on explaining and justifying these factors as possible tourist complaining constraints.

Time: Although, the notion of time said to be intuitive and subjective, for instance if you are bored while waiting your order, you feel like time is not passing at all, on the contrary time flies if you are enjoying your holiday. Morley (1990) argued that there are two types of time available; first one is *clock time* or *objective time* which can be measured with some absolute terms (seconds, minutes etc.), the second *one mental time* or *personal time* where people use their preferences or experiences as subjective measurement norms. By using clock people make time manageable and represent with absolute terms. However, in case of holidays, where there is usually a predetermined time, people highly likely lose the track of time (van der Knaap, 1997). Time, in this study, is conceptualized as duration of period spent in the holiday destination. Although, it changes according to aim of the travel or the activities involved, for instance attending a conference may only requires few days where a family vacation after one year of constant work may last few weeks.

In CCB literature, having limited time is underlined to be one of the important factors that affect complaining behavior (Grönhaug and Zaltman, 1981; Swanson and Kelly, 2001). Swanson and Kelly (2001) further argued that time limitation is particularly effecting service industries where the co-existence of customer and service provider is needed generally. For instance, Morel *et al.* (1997, pp: 467) investigated motivation, capacity and opportunity to complain in France restaurant setting and used time availability having enough time and not in any hurry versus having little time and in a hurry as a manipulation check, to create different failure scenarios. They found available time to be closely linked to the probability of complaint behavior (Morel *et al.*, 1997). Furthermore, Kotler *et al.* (2002) emphasized that time availability may affect consumer behavior (their choices of channels, reactions, and justice perceptions).

By its definition tourist has limited time available in a destination, which affects their complaining behaviors. Imagine a tourist staying in a hotel for two days and have

a problem about the fridge that is not cooling properly. He/she may think "I am here only for two nights, why bother myself and complain?". Indeed, Woehler (2004) in his book chapter discussed the issues like 'leisure time' and 'vacation time' and noted that;

> "vacations are determined by speed and regulation due to the characteristics of leisure industry and its time regime…time is considered a scarcity during vacations…the effect of lack of time during vacations is experienced as speed…time scarcity during vacations stems from the pressure to consume as many options (offers) as possible in order to find self-fulfillment" (Woehler, 2004, pp: 88-90).

Correspondingly, Cohen-Hattab and Kerber (2004) urged that having limited time negatively affects activities tourists join, places they visit and even their overall holiday satisfaction. Yuksel and Yuksel (2007) noted that within the limited time spent in a destination, tourist tend to choose the easiest activities to experience a local culture and to utilize their limited time effectively. McKercher (1998) investigated the effect of market access on destination choice and found out that travelers with limited time will tend (i) to drive directly to the destination, (ii) to select the most proximate destinations, to seek destinations with very strong market access. These findings imply that time is a noteworthy issue affecting tourists decisions. Morley (1990) underlined the time factor and posited that time of tourist is limited. This may affect his/her behaviors, including complaining, during their holiday experience. Above discussion leads to construction of the following proposition.

P₁: Having limited time, as a constraint, affects tourists' tendency to complain negatively.
Familiarity: Familiarity, as a research topic in consumer behavior, received ample attention since being familiar to a product or service (mostly its brand) increases its probability of being purchased. Söderlund (2002) limited his definition of familiarity only with number of product-related experiences accumulated by the customer. Day (1984) argued that the less knowledgeable [familiar in this case] consumer will be less able to judge product performance and evaluate the goods and services as he consumes...also he will be unfamiliar with procedures for seeking redress and in registering complaints. They further noted that geographical and ethnic factors may be possible reasons for the disparity of consumers knowledge (Day and Bodur, 1978). Consistent with their findings, Morel *et al.* (1997, pp: 467) used familiarity, in the meaning of having knowledge of and experience with [French] language and customs as a manipulation check, to create different failure scenarios. They found that complaint behavior is significantly associated with being familiar to the surroundings, which the customers are in (Morel *et al.*, 1997). In other words, they argued that if a

customer is familiar with practices, rules and processes in action, they become more confident to express their satisfaction and/or dissatisfaction to the company.

Söderlund (2002, pp: 863) claimed that being familiar brings more elaborated cognitive structure to the purchasing process and provides the customer with a different frame of reference for evaluations compared to a low level of familiarity He further stressed that 'high familiarity customer tend to accept extreme events (both really high and really low performance events) easier. What Söderlund (2002) possibly meant by eally low performance event is high magnitude service failures. In the tourism context, Wickens (2002) referred familiarity as the knowledge one has of another social group and its cultural pattern. Familiarity (usually in its negative form as 'unfamiliarity') is studied as a motivational factor to be the opposite end of 'novelty' a continuum. The most famous of these continuums is Cohen's (1972) 'Strangeness-Familiarity Continuum'. Many researchers cited in their research while investigating the travel patterns of their respondents (for instance; Wickens, 2002; Yiannakis and Gibson, 1992). Yiannakis and Gibson (1992) advocated that, in this continuum, strangeness implies newness, change and low environmental predictability and requires a variety of coping skills for managing in new and unfamiliar situations.

Although, Currie (1997) claimed that individuals tend to seek activities, which continue their familiar routines thus avoid from the unknown, yet many tourism researchers argued that visiting unfamiliar places, doing something different from daily routine are important reasons that push people to travel (Au, Ekiz and Huang, 2007; Baloglu and Uysal, 1996; Hsu and Lam, 2003). In addition, Prentice (2004) underlined that people travel to experience unfamiliar cultures, stay in unusual places, eat exotic food and participate different activities. McKercher and Law (2003) found uncertainty, risk and unfamiliarity to be the factors that influence the distances people are willing to travel to a destination.

O'Neill and Mattila (2004) draw attention to familiarity issue in service recovery in their attempt to develop a lodging service specific recovery strategy. They stated that consumer expertise or familiarity with a product category is directly linked to the concept of expectations moreover, familiar customers perceptions of service failures and recovery outcomes might be different from consumers with relatively low levels of familiarity (O eill and Mattila, 2004, pp: 53). Cohen (1979) stated that lack of cultural familiarity - having idea about each others cultures - precludes any meaningful social exchange between the tourists and the hosts thus affect tourists overall holiday experience. In align with this, Urry (2002) highlighted the importance of cultural familiarity and argued that being familiar to a place requires both a temporal and spatial permanence. However, as discussed above, most of the time tourists do not have enough to do so.

Findings of above studies are similar in concluding that being familiar to a destination will affect tourists purchase decision process before they make up their mind. However, comparatively less attention paid on the possible effects of unfamiliarity in tourists buying behavior in the destination. Furthermore, to extend of the researchers knowledge no study particularly focused on the probable link between familiarity and tourist complaining behavior. Thus, in an attempt to fill this gap, present study highlights the need of creating a tourist specific complaining construct (which will include familiarity) and to examine the possible effect of familiarity on tourists justice perceptions of service recovery efforts. In the light of the above discussion following proposition is constructed.

P$_2$: Being not familiar to a destination, as a constraint, affects tourists' tendency to complain negatively.
Communication: Communication is an inseparable part of human nature and vitally important in peoples' daily social interactions. Although, the full account of such a broad issue is well beyond the aim of this research, yet one needs to know basic definitions and components before investigating the barriers that is created by communication or miscommunication. Schiffman and Kanuk (2004, pp: 293) defined communication as: "the transmission of a message from a sender to a receiver via a medium, or channel, of transmission" Communication can be inform of auditory, such as speaking or singing, or physical means, such as sign language, touch, or eye contact. These forms further classified as verbal communication (communicating by the use of sound, words, speaking and/or language) or non-verbal communication (the act of imparting or interchanging thoughts, posture, opinions or information by using gestures, sign language, facial expressions and body language) (Bonvillain, 2003; Cohen, 1992; Findlay, 1998). Schiffman and Kanuk (2004) underlined that there are four basic components of an effective communication; *sender* (initiator of the communication), *receiver* (to whom communication is directed at), *message* (the content of the communication) and *medium* (channel of communication).

Verbal communication language plays a significant role in human communication. In an interaction if both parties are capable to understand each other, this will increase the efficiency of the communication. Language as a systematic means of communicating by the use of sounds or conventional symbols forms the bases of communication between human beings. Bonvillain (2003,) defined language as "a communicative system consisting of formal units that are integrated though processes of combining components of sound, structure and meaning". Findlay (1998, pp: 103) detailed the 'communicative system' and underlined the conditions of any system to be accepted as a language should contain "minimal symbolic units that convey meaning…a full grammar…and ways of rear-arranging word patterns to produce a wide variety of meanings".

UNWTO predicts that in the year 2020 there will be 1.6 billion international tourist arrivals where the ratio between intraregional and long-haul travel will shift from around 82:18 in 1995 to close to 76:24 in 2020 (UNWTO, 2007c). This means more and more people will be in direct contact with other people speaking different languages. For instance, since China is predicted to be the number one tourist generating country in the year 2020 (UNWTO, 2003), it may not be foolhardy to predict possible pitfalls of the increase in use of Chinese language. Therefore, being able to speak and understands ones language will gain even more importance.

Kim and Gudykunst (1988) underpinned the importance of language competence and noted that "it increases individuals ability to cope with uncertainty during [especially] intercultural encounters (pp: 135) and lack of knowledge of other groups subjective culture, which includes their language, increases the anxiety associated with interaction with members of those groups" (pp: 136). Moreover, Eric Cohen in his highly cited work (Cohen, 1979) claimed that the lack of knowledge of foreign languages precludes any meaningful social exchange between the tourists and the hosts, including service provision and/or recovery. For this reason, current study considers language as an important factor of communication between service provider and consumer. Particularly, in a service failure encounter where both parties need to communicate either in order to voice their dissatisfaction through complaining or to fix the problem through effective recovery.

Bonvillain (2003) stressed that people not only communicate by language but also through gestures, facial expressions, body postures and use of space and argued that these aspects of communication are vitally critical in daily interpersonal relationships. Sayre (2003) investigated the relationship between sign language, as part of non-verbal communication and tourist experience and concluded that it has considerable effect on tourists' overall experience satisfaction. Cohen (1992), in his book titled *Body Language in Relationships*, also underlined the crucial importance of non-verbal communication especially in inter-cultural service encounters, which most of the tourism experience is all about.

Both verbal and non-verbal communications are vitally important in tourism setting, since tourist needs to communicate with the hosts, service providers and lack of it may affect interaction (Cohen, 1979; Pearce, 1982b). In echoing, this current study will consider lack of communication as a potential constraint in tourist complaining behavior. Above discussion calls for the construction of the following proposition.

P$_3$: Lack of communication, as a constraint, affects tourists' tendency to complain negatively.
Involvement: Involvement received considerable attention in consumer behavior literature. Mittal and Lee (1989) argued that involvement has played an

increasingly important role in explaining consumer behavior and proven to be significantly related to] extensiveness of decision-making process and on-going product-related behaviors such as word-of-mouth communication It can be considered as a goal oriented stimulation capacity where a consumer spends extra psychological and physical effort. Bodey and Grace (2006) argued that involvement as an internal state of arousal, comprising three dimensions; *intensity* - the level of motivation, *direction* - the object producing the motivation and *persistence* - the duration of the intensity. Park (1996) found that in general, when the consumers are highly involved (whose motivational intensities are high); (i) they tend to react more strongly to certain aspects of the company behavior, in the case of this research it is service recovery efforts and (ii) their post purchase (and consumption) behaviors, loyalty and WOM tend to be stronger. Josiam *et al.* (2005) investigated the tourists shopping behavior in malls and concluded that involvement is a significant predictor of overall satisfaction with a shopping center. Similarly, Havitz and Dimanche (1999) found involvement to be an effective mediator in purchase and participation in leisure services where they argued that involvement is nherent and mportant Their findings suggested that the more one is involved in a product or service, the more severe will the failure be perceived by him/her. Thus, in this research it is assumed that a failure in tourism services, which is argued to be important for overall satisfaction of the tourists experience, will be perceived severe since it engrosses high involvement.

In tourism literature there are comparatively fewer studies investigating the possible effects of involvement in purchase behavior. Definitely, Cai, *et al.*, (2004) study is an exception where they investigated tourist purchase decision involvement within the context of information preferences. They concluded that involvement plays a noteworthy role in re-trip stage of the decision making process (Cai *et al.*, 2004). Although, this finding is an important one, yet it does not answers how involvement affects tourists behaviors, particularly complaining behaviors, while they are in the destination. This discussion leads to the following proposition.

P$_4$: Being highly involved, as a constraint, affects tourists' complaining behaviors.

Holiday Mood: Urry (2002) argued that consumption of tourist services is important yet by no means easy to understand and explain. In attempt to understand it, many researchers focused on motivational factors (Baloglu and Uysal, 1996; Dann, 1981; Hsu and Lam, 2003; Maoz, 2006; Uysal and Jurowski, 1994). Overwhelming amount of tourism psychology and motivation studies investigated travel motivations of tourist travel and provided several typologies of tourist roles (Cohen, 1979; Jafari, 1987; Pearce, 1982a, etc). These researches were very enlightening in understanding tourism phenomenon, yet most of them purely based on a socio-economic approach.

As noted by Iso-Ahola (1982), tourists' psychological situation in general, and their mood in specific, has to be taken into consideration while investigating tourists' behavior. Likewise, Lowyck *et al.*, (1992) and Liljander and Mattsson (2002) insisted that a psychological approach is crucial in any attempt to understand tourism consumer behavior.

Voase (1995) argued that one of the basic psychological motives behind the travel act is escape from trying, not stimulating and routine everyday life. Similarly, Mill (1990) stated that people need to have at least several days holiday to tune-out their everyday lives and relax mentally. Cohen (2004, ppp: 67-68) stated that people travel to "temporary reversal of everyday activities - it is a no-work, no-care, no-thrift situation…escape the duties imposed upon him… relief from tensions within his life space…seek recreation". In this vein, Wood and House (1991) asserted that most of the tourists make up their minds and convince themselves that their holiday will be a positive experience. Likewise, McIntosh *et al.* (2006) and Pearce (1982b) pointed out that tourists seek a hassle free experience, so even though problems exist, they tend to stay positive. Yiannakis and Gibson (1992) underlined that "driving pleasure from the trip is a central and clearly noninstrumental concern for the tourist" (pp: 288) and to do so, they "enjoy taking it easy" (pp: 291).

Currie (1997, pp: 884) suggested that "tourists' behaviors often differ from those in the home environment… individuals remove themselves from their day-to-day environment and place themselves within a tourism environment" where they behavior differently. One possible explanation to this incident can be their unique psychology which is characterized by their changed social roles and the temporary nature of their stay in the travel destination (Jafari, 1987). Furthermore, Iso-Ahola (1982) stated that being in a novel, unfamiliar and foreign environment characterizes some tourist behaviors. More recently, Yagi and Pearce (2007) underscored that for tourists' behaviors at a destination can diverge from those of their home since they see vacation as a time-out in an extraordinary place where they can be playful, relaxed, not constrained by the rules of their home country. This playful, relaxed and non-constrained environment triggers positive emotions and good moods which in return may increase the tolerance towards service failures (White, 2005). If this happens tourist may be more forgiving in cases of service failures.

Before discussing how the effects of emotions and moods on tourists' behaviors, these terms should be define and distinguished from each other. Both terms are used to define specific mental feeling processes. Bagozzi *et al.* (1999a, pp: 184) defined emotion as "a mental state of readiness that arises from cognitive appraisals of events or thoughts; has a phenomenological tone; is accompanied by physiological processes; is often expressed physically; and may result in specific actions to affirm or cope with the emotion". Following are some of the definitions of mood. Liljander and Mattsson (2002) defined them as

affectively charged conscious, stimulus specific, pervasive, relatively enduring and self-informational experiences that have motivational and behavioral implications. Mood is discussed to be "a mild, transient, and generalized affective states" (Sarikaya *et al.*, 2004, pp: 520) and "a state of mind reflecting one's feelings at any particular moment" (Comer 1980, pp: 229).

Kowalski (1996; 2002) and Bagozzi *et al.* (1999b) distinguished emotions from moods by stating that moods tend to be lower in intensity than emotions and are generally unintentional. De Rojas and Camarero (2008) stressed that moods can be caused by the human system (sickness, fatigue or good health) or pharmacological agents, general conditions of the environment and side effects of activities (heat, noise, changes in surroundings). Correspondingly, Manrai and Gardner (1991) asserted that individuals, in general, treat moods as inputs for making judgments after their consumptions. Hoffman *et al.* (1995) reported that positive moods, due to one or more of these causes, create favorable environment which results with positive evaluations of encounters.

The relationship between one's emotional situation and his/her behaviors is well established in psychology and marketing literatures (Pritchard and Morgan, 1998; Smith and Sherman, 1993; Swinyard, 1993; Watson, 2000). On one hand, negative emotion and/or bad mood of a customer during a transaction found to be cause of dissatisfaction, complaining and negative WOM intentions (George, 1989; Mattila, 2000; Susskind, 2002). On the other hand, same customer with positive emotions and good mood may well have positive behavior toward the company or product/service (George, 1991; Pritchard and Morgan, 1998; Westbrook, 1987). Indeed, Josiam *et al.* (2005) found shoppers, who were in a good mood, to be more involved in shopping and judge the shopping experience more favorably.

Forgas (1995) found out that peoples' mood significantly influences cognitive processes related to their consumption judgments. Wong (2004) claimed that mood swings are fundamental attributes in consumer satisfaction and complaining. Voorhees *et al.* (2006) concluded that feeling bad, being in a bad mood, makes people to complain more. In same vein, Bodey and Grace (2006) noted that consumers' moods affect his/her complaining behavior. In addition, Zins (2002, pp: 3) not only demonstrated that "attribute based evaluations [moods] are significant determinants of satisfaction [but also] in a multiple-encounter service environment like tourism [they] are antecedent to the final cognitive evaluation of the entire consumption episode". Cohen (2004) argued that consumers' affective responses influence post-consumption evaluations. Babin *et al.* (2005) found that consumers experiencing relatively high positive moods reported increasing spending levels than those shoppers with substantially lower positive moods. Christiansen and Snepenger (2002) also found out that positive mood encourages tourists to shop more and complain less. Consumers' mood status not only effects

their perceptions on the initial service - that is before the failure, but also their perceptions towards the recovery efforts - after the service failure (Bagozzi *et al.*, 1999a; Zins, 2002). Results of Chebat and Slusarczyk's (2005) research showed that moods mediate the effects of perceived justice on loyalty in service recovery situations.

Pearce (1981) examined the changes in tourists' moods during the course of their holiday on two small Australian tropical islands and reported significant relationships, like positive mood and satisfaction from the activities participated. Particularly, Beesley (2005), Gnoth *et al.* (2000) investigated the relationships between emotions, mood and travel, and concluded that afore mentioned two affect travel related behaviors. Similarly, Sirakaya *et al.* (2004) examined role of mood on tourism product evaluation by using cruise vacationers as their sample, where they found that "a significant relationship between satisfaction with a product or service and mood states during evaluation...tourists with lower mood evaluations tended to have lower satisfaction levels with the cruiseship's services" (pp: 533). As opposed to Westbrook's (1987) negative affect which he defined as "consciously experienced subjective state of negative feelings that tends to accompany moods and emotions" (pp: 259), some tourism scholars argue that tourists, in general, are motivated with positive feelings (Cohen, 2004; McIntosh *et al.*, 2006; Mill, 1990; Yiannakis and Gibson, 1992). These positive feelings are labeled as 'holiday mood' in present study and they are argued to effect complaining behavior of tourists.

These positive feelings, holiday mood, effect tourists consumption and post-purchase evaluation processes and have been shown to be elicited during satisfaction judgments and complaining behavior (Gnoth *et al.*, 2000; Salamone, 1997; Smith and Sherman, 1993; Voorhees, *et al.*, 2006). Tourist may think that complaining on vacation may ruin the spirit of the mood and atmosphere tourists expected to have and for which they have paid (Swarbrooke and Horner, 1999; White, 2005; Yagi and Pearce, 2007). Thus, they may be more tolerant towards service failures and may react differently compared to their responses at their homes. This discussion calls for the construction of the following proposition.

P₅: Being in a holiday mood, as a constraint, affects tourists' tendency to complain negatively.

SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

Summary and Hints for Managers: Complexity of the tourism industry makes it challenging to comprehend consumption of tourist services in general. Comparatively, less attention paid on post-consumption tourist behavior and even less effort is made to understand how unique characteristics of the tourism industry are affecting tourists complaining behaviors (Cohen, 2004). In this sense, present study has reviewed how these unique characteristics of the industry may shape its tourists' complaining behaviors and what possible

constraints affect of complaining behavior. In doing so, the authors have attempted to address a notable gap in consumer complaining behavior literature, namely the lack of research concerning tourist behaviors.

Previous studies have considered tourist behaviors under overall consumer behavior umbrella, which to a certain extend was relevant and useful, yet to some other extend was limited in capturing some unique characteristics of the industry (Pearce, 2005; Swarbrooke and Horner, 1999; Zins, 2002). This paper argues that by considering these characteristics, some constructs can be generated to differentiate tourists from general consumers. In this vein, a thorough review of the relevant tourism, marketing and psychology literatures have been carried out. Results generated five promising constructs, namely; time, familiarity, involvement, communication and holiday mood.

Limited time affects tourists consumption related decisions. More specifically, having restricted ime for tourist activities, itself is a limitation moreover along with time spent during failure and time needed for recovery makes it a prominent constraint for complaining behavior (Kotler *et al.*, 2002; Morel *et al.*, 1997). Significance of 'familiarity' and information need for consumption related decisions cannot be overestimated. In most cases, tourists are not familiar enough to the destinations they visit. This situation, by hindering their abilities to give proper judgments particularly in the cases of service failures, affects their complaining behaviors (O eill and Mattila, 2004; Voorhees *et al.*, 2006). 'Communication is an import activity in coping with uncertain encounters. Many scholars noted that, in a service failure incident both parties need to communicate in order to either voice their dissatisfaction through complaining and to fix the problem satisfactorily. This is especially vital in tourism industry where most of the interaction occurs are between culturally different groups (Cohen, 1979; Schiffman and Kanuk, 2004). Taking part in and being attached to any purchase decision results in direct involvement. Overwhelming amount of evidence suggest that nvolvement plays an increasingly important role in explaining consumer behavior. In this vein, it may not be wrong to think that involvement in the planning and consumption of tourist services, where extra psychological and physical effort is needed on consumers side, will have an effect on its evaluation stage (Cai *et al.*, 2004; Havitz and Dimanche, 1999). Most of the tourists are motivated to relax and enjoy themselves during their holidays in other words they are motivated to be in good mood. When one is in a good mood, s/he tends to be more forgiving (Watson, 2000). For this very reason, this study argues that their oliday mood affects their consumption patterns as well as complaining behavior (Gnoth, *et al.*, 2000; Sarikaya *et al.*, 2004).

Implications and Limitations: Despite its explanatory potential, to this date there is no research conducted on the possible effects of unique characteristics of tourism on complaining behavior. In an attempt to fill this gap, present study reviewed relevant literature and came up with five constructs. There is supporting evidence to consider time, involvement, communication, familiarity and holiday mood as possible constraints on complaining behavior in tourist related services (Cohen, 1992; Cohen-Hattab and Kerber, 2004; Kotler *et al.*, 2002; Yagi and Pearce, 2007; Zins, 2002).

Present study provides some implications to both industry and the academia. On the industry side, knowing what factors hinder tourists to raise their complaints can assist companies in modifying their complaint handling strategies; particularly focus on the ways to encourage their customers to voice their complaint. Once companies understand complaining constraints and tailor made their recovery strategies accordingly, to remedy the problem and retain their customers, to avoid negative word-of-mouth, to pursue service recovery attempts and to reduce customer turnover (Tax *et al.*, 1998). On the other hand, existing tourism literature heavily depends on consumer behavior theories in explaining tourist behaviors (Pearce, 2005). This study argues that characteristics of tourism industry may create a need for tailor made theories to explain various tourist behaviors. In this sense, five constructs proposed as ourist complaining constraints namely; time, involvement, communication, familiarity and holiday mood, contribute the existing literature by being industry specific constructs.

Moreover, the propositions mentioned above are based on purely literature review thus need empirical support. In other words, a scale is needed to measure these constructs (Hinkin, 1995). To do so, Churchill's (1979) eight-step methodology can be followed. Briefly, these steps require, literature review, item generation and purification of these items hence the measurement scale. Only, after then a reliable and valid scale can be generated to investigate the possible relationships between these newly proposed complaining constructs and tourist complaining behavior.

The preceding propositions and discussion aim to highlight the possible effects of tourism's differentiating characteristics on complaining behavior. Results of the literature review generated five potential constructs. Future research is needed to test and support the applicability of these 'tourists complaining constraints'.

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