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## Article

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## Empirical paper

# Desire for experiential travel, avoidance of rituality and social esteem: An empirical study of consumer response to tourism innovation



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## ABSTRACT

This study investigates tourist consumption responses toward tourism innovation. To measure tourist responses, this study posits three key consumption drivers, namely social esteem, desire for experiential travel, and avoidance against rituality of tourism settings (a subscale of need for uniqueness) and models consumers' affective response within the context of tourism innovation. It involves 295 respondents in an empirical survey. The findings affirm the three drivers toward tourist consumption behavior. Avoidance of rituality reflects tourist preference toward tourism product and service innovation. Desire for experiential travel and the pursuit of social esteem signify tourism management and marketing innovation. Social esteem, need for status and creative choice have significant influence on tourists' affective responses. Acquiring unique tourist products, desire for experiential travel and seeking social esteem are important motivations for tourist consumption. The implications of the study enrich the existing literature of consumer behavior and tourist consumption in response to tourism innovation.

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## El deseo del turismo vivencial, la valoración social y evitar la ritualidad: Un estudio empírico sobre la respuesta del consumidor a la innovación en turismo

## RESUMEN

Este estudio investiga las respuestas en cuanto al consumo de turismo a la innovación en este sector. Para medir las respuestas de turistas, este estudio plantea tres motores clave del consumo, en concreto la valoración social, el deseo de realizar un viaje alternativo, y evitar

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los ritos del contexto turístico (una subescala de la necesidad de exclusividad). El estudio también modela la respuesta afectiva de los consumidores dentro de un contexto de innovación en turismo. La encuesta empírica incluyó 295 participantes. Los resultados confirman la presencia de los tres motores del comportamiento del consumo turístico. Evitar la ritualidad refleja las preferencias del turista por la innovación en cuanto a productos y servicios turísticos. El deseo de un viaje alternativo y la búsqueda de valoración social simbolizan innovación en la gestión y comercialización del turismo. La valoración social, la necesidad de lograr un estatus y contar con una capacidad creativa en la elección ejercen una influencia significativa en las respuestas afectivas de los turistas. La adquisición de productos turísticos singulares, el deseo de realizar un viaje vivencial y la búsqueda de valoración social son motivaciones importantes para el consumo turístico. Las implicaciones del estudio enriquecen la literatura existente sobre comportamiento del consumidor y consumo turístico en respuesta a la innovación en turismo.

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## Introduction

In many countries, tourism is an essential sector for economic development. With regard to tourism activities, in the view of most tourists, consumption has become the key determinant to justify and measure the attractiveness of travel destinations around the world (Swanson & Timothy, 2012; Wu, Wall, & Pearce, 2014). As such, tourism practitioners would like to elevate and label brand consumption during tours as a leading source of visiting motivation, apart from sightseeing and cultural visits (Park, Reisinger, & Noh, 2010). Interestingly, tourists tend to avoid repeated visits to a particular destination, and become less satisfied by common, regulated patterns of tourist activities. When gaining acquaintance with a visited destination, tourists would be eager for some novel, exotic and treasurable travel experience in the destination. Tourists are much aware of new experience or values in the course of repeated visits; otherwise a well tourism acquaintance would contrarily discourage tourists' desire and expectation for re-visits. Consumer psychologists explain such phenomenon from the perspective of consumers' intrinsic tendency of neophilia. So, tourism innovation becomes an imperative research issue among most tourist economies. Tourism innovation may concern service enhancement, new style exploration, and new value delivered in tourist activities. All these can be types of new process, service, policies and marketing efforts (Hjalager, 2010). Tourism innovation does not simply present a new breakthrough or perfection against existing tourism attractions and enjoyable experiences, but also differentiate tourism offerings.

No matter how, tourist practitioners and policy makers acknowledge the important role of innovation in tourism and propose a considerable amount of research to measure and justify resources for tourism innovation. Recent studies on tourism innovation have discussed the efforts of innovation in tourism industry, for example, ethical tourist behavior (Ganglmair-Wooliscroft & Wooliscroft, 2015) and the respective assessment for management and institutional efficacy (Camisón & Monfort-Mir, 2012; Carlisle, Kunc, Jones, & Tiffin, 2013; Rodríguez, Williams, & Hall, 2014; Souto, 2015). Yet, there

are still lack of empirical evidence and analysis about tourist consumption within contexts of tourism innovation. Examining a consumer-based tourism innovation is vital in the development of tourism sustainability (Volo, 2006). On such premise, this study posits tourist-consumption based analysis dimensions for justifying and measuring tourist consumption experiences.

Tourists from various countries do not have the same personal motivations in consumption. The motivation depends on where the consumer lives (Hennigs et al., 2012). For instance, Americans consume a product or service most likely for self-fulfillment. French tourist consumers look for exclusivity. In European countries, consumers engaging in tourist consumption are utilitarian. Not only does tourism costs make a difference, the intrinsic values, such as travel style and status, are also perceived differently in various innovation context. Surprisingly, the questions that concern personal motivation in tourist consumption behavior have yet to receive an adequate empirical answer. Conventional tourism innovation has predominantly been assessed by (1) tourist satisfaction, such as consumption preferences, service and hotel accommodation (Lee, Jeon, & Kim, 2011; Lloyd, Yip, & Luk, 2011; Xu & McGehee, 2012) and (2) destination attributes (Chen, Chen, & Lee, 2009; Guo, Kim, & Timothy, 2007; Sparks & Pan, 2009). Hedonic benefits and tourism innovation are strongly associated with tourism consumption experiences and exert a stronger influence on tourist-related behavior, rather than anticipated utilitarian value (Yüksel, 2007).

This study draws on self-determination theories, and proposes an empirical model to investigate how social esteem, desire for experiential travel, avoidance of rituality and creative choice for counter-conformity (a subscale of need for uniqueness) influence tourist consumption, as well as affective responses to tourism innovation. It is expected that the tourism innovation data and findings yielded from this study can (1) enrich existing knowledge of tourism innovation research; (2) develop a theoretical model to justify and measure tourist consumption experiences within the context of product, service, and marketing innovation; (3) provide strategic recommendations to tourism practitioners on how to sustain the growth of tourism industry and enhance tourism

experience; and (4) generate research insights for further studies.

## Theoretical background

### *Value of traveling consumption*

Traveling consumption brings an indulgent experience and represents extraordinary life quality. Tourists are induced to treasure new shopping goods and psychologically ready to buy luxury goods as souvenirs for rewarding travel experiences. Prestigious tourist consumption goods are unusual, authentic with psychological, symbolic and emotional values (Kapferer & Bastien, 2009; Tynan, McKechnie, & Chhuon, 2010). Tourists consume travel service and high-end brands to manifest their own social status (Strizhakova, Coulter, & Price, 2008). From the consumption perspective, luxury goods not only carry tangible meanings, but more importantly, also represent intangible meanings by which tourists satisfy both symbolic and material needs. Vigneron and Johnson (2004) stress that behavior toward luxury consumption is much related to self-expression and sociability. Luxury consumption during traveling carries some personal values, apart from the basic functional values in consumption. The luxury brand value consists of hedonic elements associated with experiential, emotional attachment and relationship.

### *Motivation theories*

In this study, tourist-consumption based motivation is grounded on self-determination theory (SDT) which focuses on individual's intrinsic psychological disposition toward personality integration as well as self-motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000). As stated in motivation theories, SDT addresses that humans are active organisms striving for psychological development and growth (Sheldon, Ryan, Deci, & Kasser, 2004). Regarding luxury goods consumption behavior, the goals of humans include self-acceptance (growth), materialistic success (money and luxury), and personal appearance and image (Kasser & Ryan, 1993, 1996). This segment of tourists tends to make use of exclusive luxury goods to satisfy psychological needs and convey private meaning. The following sections will examine in detail the related motivation-based consumption constructs and affective response within tourism innovation contexts and discuss how they often create significant managerial implications for traveling consumption.

The first construct is social esteem. This is a prominent theorized element in the perspectives of self-concept and motivation (Hogg, Cox, & Keeling, 2000). It is generally known that nature of mankind strives to boost social esteem (Crocker & Nuer, 2004). The second construct is desire for experiential travel. From the perspective of tourism innovation, desire for possessions is the synonym of desire for experiential travel. Tourist consumption outside home country creates favorable and enjoyable travel experience. As originated from interpersonal insecurity, desire for material possessions during travel enhances self-appeal (Jiang, Zhang, Ke, Hawk, & Qiu, 2015). Materialism is related to social esteem (Jiang et al., 2015) and desire for self-enhancement (Kilbourne & LaForge, 2010). The

third one is need for uniqueness. The purchase of special tourist product or service is a way to develop distinctiveness of an individual as owning unique items is an important means of defining one's sense of self (Snyder, 1992). Exclusive possessions differentiate tourists and express social image without creating an extreme social reaction which could result in deviation (Ruvio, 2008).

### *Social esteem and status consumption*

Truong and McColl (2011) consider the pursuit of social esteem as one of the important motivational dimensions that will reward tourists emotionally. Social esteem is also a basic reference point for tourists to orient their behavior, as long discussed in the marketing theories of self-other psychological meshing (Ferraro, Shiv, & Bettman, 2005). It can well be understood as a consumer's whole being of liking, respect and acceptance feelings to individual own "self" (Rosenberg, 1965). By nature, individuals strive to enhance and reinforce their own social esteem owing to human ego. Acquiring goods and service improve tourists' social esteem by inflating their ego (Pyszczynski, Greenberg, Solomon, Arndt, & Schimel, 2004). Expensive tourist product or treasurable travel experience as self-gifts can satisfy the need for social esteem. The need to improve social esteem offers psychological rewards to tourists who engage in status consumption. These ego-enhancing benefits render the consumption of status-oriented goods as an attractive affirmational option. Eastman, Iyer, and Thomas (2013) conclude that status consumption is a motivational process that enhances an individual's standing in a social hierarchy by consuming status goods with symbolic meanings. This study also emphasizes status consumption as an independent difference variable that concerns a social prestige value conferring onto corresponding consumers. Status consumption is a behavior-related need for status at whatever levels of income or social class.

### *Desire for experiential travel and status consumption*

Desire for experiential travel is a synonym of materialism in tourism innovation context. As a personality trait, desire for possessions combines acquisitiveness, non-generosity and envy (Belk, 1985; Richins & Dawson, 1992). These studies conceptualize materialistic possession as a centrally held personal belief in human life, and it consists of three aspects – acquisition centrality, success and happiness. Acquisition centrality refers to a psychological "extant" that a consumer succeeds to hold with respect to materialistic ownership, thereby functioning as a life goal. Such success is based on how far a person can measure his/her own material possessions. Happiness refers to the respective psychological reward that a person can gain through the ownership or acquisition of the desired possessions. In such course, happiness and better well-being exist. Possessions of higher involvement products, such as clothing and jewellery, are found to be the source of happiness because publicly displayed products express higher levels of symbolic meanings and provide deeper impressions to significant others (Lertwannawit & Mandhachitara, 2012). Highly materialistic tourists have a preference to spend more time and energy on consumption during travel and spending

to impress others (Fitzmaurice & Comegys, 2006). Prior studies have reported that the desire for possessions has direct effect on status consumption (Kim, Ko, Xu, & Han, 2012). Tourists seeking for treasurable traveling goods and substantial tourist experience do not only demonstrate material ownership and superiority, but also express social status (Amaldoss & Jain, 2005).

### *Need for uniqueness and traveling consumption*

Snyder and Fromkin (1977) set forth its seminal discussions on desire for uniqueness, which manifests itself in the courses of material pursuits and differentiated self-image (Simonson & Nowlis, 2000). The need for uniqueness is where a person shows the need to pursue products and service to express differentness and achievement. It can also be embodied by acquisition, utilization, and disposition of goods during travel (Tian, Bearden, & Hunter, 2001). The study comes up with three related dimensions: (1) avoidance of similarity, (2) creative choice for counter-conformity, and (3) unpopular choice for counter-conformity. The latter refers to a situation in which tourists use deviant products to differentiate themselves. Yet, some studies show that unpopular choice for counter-conformity is a weak measurement for the need for uniqueness owing to its low factor loadings (less than 0.50) (Bian & Forsythe, 2012). Therefore, only the first two dimensions are considered in the present study.

### *Avoidance of rituality*

Similarity avoidance is a synonym of avoidance of rituality within the context of tourism innovation. It describes a tourist preference that they try to avoid tourist products and services that are seemingly popular and common. Tourists tend to discontinue these popular travel consumption and activities to avoid replication or “being the same” to others. Gierl and Huettl (2010) also discuss the effect of scarcity consumption leading to the suitability of product for conspicuous consumption. When it involves exclusive luxury goods that enhance status, the value of product scarcity increases, because of limited supply.

### *Creative choice for counter-conformity*

For creative choice-oriented tourists, even if they want to express self-identity by consuming new and exclusive tourist products, they might still want to follow social norms (Knight & Kim, 2007; Tian et al., 2001). In order to present a distinctive image and at the same time, be accepted by others, traveling with a unique style and in a limited opportunity is the best for offering distinguishing attributes. Innovative traveling offering unusual attributes, such as novel experience and exclusivity, is appealing to the tourists who demand this kind of traveling preference.

### *Status consumption and affective response*

In considering tourist consumption behavior, the antecedents of status consumption are proposed to be social esteem, desire for experiential travel, avoidance of rituality and creative

choice counter-conformity. The value of luxury goods involves personal preferences that take into consideration personal characteristics, such as hedonism and identity (Wiedmann, Hennigs, & Siebels, 2009). These personal consumption preferences are more evident in tourists who evaluate tourist products and travel experience with individual-based standards, and derive self-directed pleasure. The consumption of luxury goods facilitates the affective response of tourists as personal reward and fulfillment (Shukla, 2008; Tsai, 2005). Status-conscious tourists are affected by symbolic meanings and feelings evoked by a brand and make affective judgments (Agarwala & Malhotra, 2005; Shukla, 2008). These psychological benefits indicate one's self-gratification and satisfaction obtained from a certain product and the related consumption experience during travel. Particularly for tourist travel experience outside home country, the satisfaction of new place and activity treasuring is significantly related to affective behavioral responses, especially in terms of expenses.

## **Proposed conceptual model**

Based on the afore-discussed theoretical background, the present study proposes a theoretical model and has generated five research hypotheses:

- H1: Social-esteem directly influences the status consumption of tourists.
- H2: Desire for experiential travel directly influences the status consumption of tourists.
- H3: Avoidance of rituality directly influences the status consumption of tourists.
- H4: Creative choice counter-conformity directly influences the status consumption of tourists.
- H5: Status consumption directly influences the affective response of tourists.

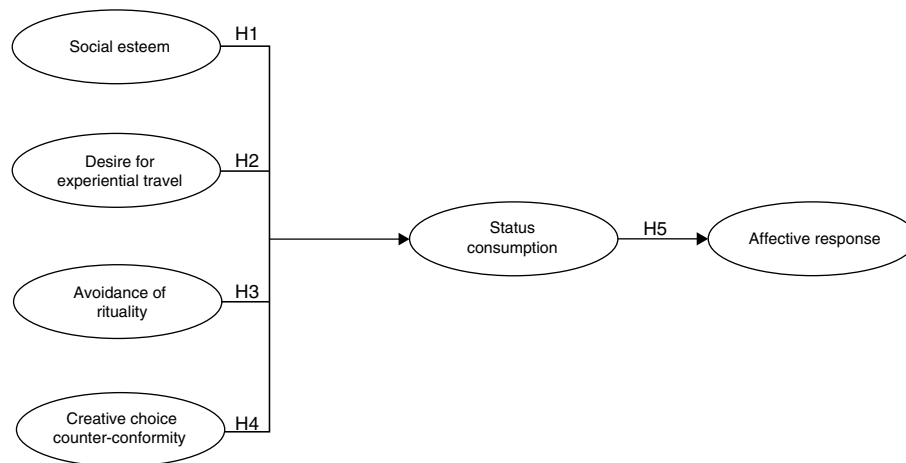
Fig. 1 shows the proposed conceptual model (M<sub>A</sub>).

## **Research method**

### *Procedure*

Semi-random sampling was applied in the recruitment of every tenth tourist consumer who shopped in retail stores or carried shopping bags in famous buying attractions in Hong Kong. All of the respondents were screened for only those who indicated tourism innovation as the main reason in their trip and were more willing to shop, no more than three days before the date of the survey. The respondents were invited for a self-administered survey questionnaire. The respondents were so located in different places and times in order to maximize external validity against geographic and temporal bias. A total of 316 respondents completed the questionnaires. After data cleaning and screening, 21 cases (respondents) were deleted because of missing data or inconsistent responses, which left 295 samples for study. The data were examined and modeled by confirmatory factor analysis, and structural equation modeling using SPSS AMOS v.21.





**Fig. 1 – Proposed study model.**

### Instrument development

The survey measurement accessed ratings in a 7-point Likert-scale, which ranked a “strongly agree” in scale (7) and “strongly disagree” in (1). Considering the time taken to complete the questionnaire, we select reliable items with higher factor loadings. Social esteem was based on the Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965). This study borrowed 5 items with loadings exceeding 0.70. Desire for experiential travel was measured by using Materialism scale from Richins and Dawson (1992) with some modifications to meet the research purpose. For tourist consumption, two items from each dimension (acquisition centrality, success and happiness) with high factor loadings over 0.70 were adopted (Richins & Dawson, 1992). Avoidance of rituality and creative choice for counter-conformity were measured by adjusted constructs initially in Tian et al. (2001). Two items with factor loadings higher than 0.70 were adopted (Tian et al., 2001). Status consumption measure was based on the scales in Eastman, Goldsmith and Flynn (1999) with some amendment. This study adopts five items from their scale showing strong reliability (Lertwannawit & Mandhachitara, 2012). Affective response was measured by the 5-item consumer perceived emotional value, as referred to Sweeney and Soutar (2001). Altogether, there are 25 question items developed in the measurement instrument (Table 1).

### Reliability and validity

Cronbach's alpha reliability tests were conducted to ensure measurement scale reliability, and eliminated those items with scores lower than 0.50 corrected item-to-total correlation. The overall alpha score of item set was 0.863 when no additional item, if deleted from the scale set, could significantly improve the scale reliability. The Cronbach's alpha coefficients for each dimension were greater than 0.73, above the suggested threshold of 0.70 as acceptable score of construct reliability (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). A Harman's one-factor test was assessed for the results of the common method effect on our variables (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee,

& Podsakoff, 2003). The analysis cross-checked if common method variance existed; it might be either because of a single factor emerging in a factor analysis, or because of one general factor that accounted for the majority of covariance among all the variables. At the beginning, exploratory factor analysis results showed the largest factor not accounting for the variance in majority. Empirically, no general factor was apparent and significant. Then, all the variables were loaded onto a factor to examine the regression fitness. If the one-factor model fit the data well, the resultant factor model had a poor fit. The common method variance was not an issue against the result interpretation.

### Findings

The sample consisted of 295 respondents with 98% of Chinese tourists and 2% from other countries (America and Australia). About 73% of the respondents were female, and 84% were between ages of 20 and 39. Most of them were educated, with approximately 85% who attained a university degree or above, and worked in managerial positions (40%). The respondents' personal monthly income mostly ranged from USD 3000 to 8000.

### Confirmatory factor analysis

The study proceeds the analysis with the maximum likelihood method to finalize the measurement, and assesses a number of fit indices: GFI, goodness-of fit index, AGFI, adjusted goodness-of-fit index, NFI, normed fit index, CFI, comparative fit index and TLI, Tucker–Lewis index, which have to be greater than 0.9. RMSEA, root mean square error of approximation, has to be less than 0.08. The  $\chi^2$  value to the degree of freedom ( $\chi^2/\text{df}$ ) should not exceed 3. Table 2 shows a final measurement model of six dimensional constructs from 17 scale items. All the factor loadings are above 0.5, and significant ( $p < 0.001$ ). The model fit indices demonstrate an acceptable fit with:  $\chi^2$  (df) = 250.968 (102);  $\chi^2/\text{df}$  = 2.46;  $p$  = 0.000; GFI = 0.9; NFI = 0.90; AGFI = 0.87; CFI = 0.94; TLI = 0.92; and RMSEA = 0.07.

**Table 1 – The initial scale of measurement.**

Construct	Scale items	
Social esteem	E1	I feel I do not have much to be proud of. (Reversed scale item)
	E2	I take a positive attitude toward myself.
	E3	On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.
	E4	All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure. (Reversed scale item)
	E5	I feel I am a person of worth, or at least on an equal plane with others.
Avoidance of rituality	U1	I often try to avoid tourist products or service that I know are bought by the general population.
	U2	The more commonplace a tourist product or service is among the general population, the less interested I am in buying it.
Creative choice counter-conformity	U3	Consuming a new tourist product or service that is interesting and unusual assists me in establishing a distinctive experience or cultural understanding.
	U4	I'm often on the lookout for new tourist products or service that will add to my creative choice counter-conformity.
Desire for experiential travel	<i>Acquisition Centrality Subscale</i>	
	P1	I try to keep my life simple, as far as tourist experience and products are concerned. (Reversed scale item)
	P2	I like a lot of various substantial tourist experience and products in my life.
	<i>Possessions Defined as Success Subscale</i>	
	P3	I admire people who own special tourist experience and souvenirs.
	P4	I do not place much emphasis on the amount of special tourist experience and products that people have as a sign of superiority. (Reversed scale item)
	<i>Acquisition as the Pursuit of Happiness Subscale</i>	
	P5	My life could be better if I owned certain tourist experience and products that I do not have.
Status consumption	P6	It sometimes bothers me quite a bit that I cannot afford to buy all the tourist products or service that I like.
	S1	I would engage in tourist consumption just because it shows my status.
	S2	I am interested in new tourist products or service with higher social status.
	S3	I would pay more for tourist products or service if it represents social status.
	S4	The status shown by a tourist product or service is irrelevant to me. (Reversed scale item)
Affective response	S5	A tourist product is more valuable to me if it has some snob appeal.
	A1	New travel exploration experience is the one that I would treasure and enjoy.
	A2	Traveling would be a part of life preference.
	A3	Traveling is one that I would feel relaxed.
	A4	Traveling would make me feel good.
	A5	Traveling would give me pleasure.

Convergent validity as an internal consistency is the degree of interrelatedness among the observed items, i.e. the unidimensionality and AVE, average variance extracted. In this study, convergent validity is an AVE ranging from 0.576 to 0.701 (Table 2). All indicators of AVE for each item exceed the suggested cut-off value of 0.50 for the convergent validity. The study evaluates construct validity using standardized factor loadings within each construct, AVE, and correlation between constructs (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988; Bagozzi & Yi, 1988). The standardized factor loadings on the latent construct are greater than 0.5 for meaningful and interpretable model results. All the loadings on all the latent constructs are satisfactory, thus indicating satisfactory item convergence on the intended dimensional constructs. The CR, composite reliabilities in the measurement scale were greater than 0.70, thus exceeding the suggested cut-off of 0.70. Table 3 shows the descriptive statistics, correlations and AVE for the measurement scale. Social esteem has the highest mean score and the lowest standard deviation among the six factors. The squared correlation between constructs is less than the individual AVEs, that confirms discriminant validity. In summary, the scale items of measurement fit the data reasonably well, thus demonstrating good reliability and validity.

### Structural equation modeling

The theoretical model consists of four exogenous variables, namely social esteem, desire for experiential travel, avoidance of rituality, and creative choice counter-conformity, and two endogenous variables, status consumption and affective response.  $M_A$  shows a fair fit (Table 4):  $\chi^2/df$  ratio = 2.71;  $p < 0.001$ ; GFI = 0.90; CFI = 0.92; TLI = 0.90; RMR = 0.075; and RMSEA = 0.076. The model fits the data well with  $\chi^2/df$  ratio less than 3, CFI above 0.90 and RMSEA less than 0.08. The estimate of standardized path coefficient ( $P$ ) indicates that the relationship between social esteem and status consumption (H1) is positively significant ( $P = 0.24$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Desire for experiential travel has the strongest positive impact on status consumption ( $P = 0.50$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), which supports H2. The relationship between avoidance of rituality and status consumption is also highly significant and positive ( $P = 0.35$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), thus supporting H3. However, the path between creative choice counter-conformity and status consumption (H4) is not supported. The confirmation of H5 indicates the relationship between status consumption and affective response positive and highly significant ( $P = 0.54$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). The  $R^2$ , squared multiple correlation coefficient measures how well the observed outcomes can be replicated by the

**Table 2 – Confirmatory factor analysis results for final measurement scale.**

Scale items		Std. loadings	Critical ratio
<i>Affective response [AVE = .576, CR = .844]</i>			
A5	Traveling would give me pleasure.	.814	10.317
A1	New travel exploration experience is the one that I would treasure and enjoy.	.792	10.299
A4	Traveling would make me feel good.	.774	8.762
A3	Traveling is one that I would feel relaxed.	.644	–
<i>Social esteem [AVE = .616, CR = .828]</i>			
E2	I take a positive attitude toward myself.	.821	13.042
E3	On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.	.787	–
E5	I feel I am a person of worth, or at least on an equal plane with others.	.744	11.934
<i>Status consumption [AVE = .650, CR = .848]</i>			
S1	I would engage in tourist consumption just because it shows my status.	.849	–
S2	I am interested in new tourist products or service with higher social status.	.798	14.348
S3	I would pay more for tourist products or service if it represents social status.	.770	13.241
<i>Desire for experiential travel [AVE = .671, CR = .859]</i>			
P2	I like a lot of various substantial tourist experience and products in my life.	.874	14.911
P5	My life could be better if I owned certain tourist experience and products that I do not have.	.791	13.860
P3	I admire people who own special tourist experience and souvenirs.	.789	–
<i>Creative choice counter-conformity [AVE = .611, CR = .758]</i>			
U4	I'm often on the lookout for new tourist products or service that will add to my creative choice counter-conformity.	.786	–
U3	Consuming a new tourist product or service that is interesting and unusual assists me in establishing a distinctive experience or cultural understanding.	.777	8.295
<i>Avoidance of rituality [AVE = .701, CR = .825]</i>			
U1	I often try to avoid tourist products or service that I know are bought by the general population.	.841	–
U2	The more commonplace a tourist product or service is among the general population, the less interested I am in buying it.	.834	10.728

Note: All standardized loadings significant at  $p < 0.001$ , AVE = average variance extracted, CR = composite reliability.

proposed model, pertaining to the percentage of total variance explained by latent variables. The  $R^2$  for status consumption is 0.66, indicating that 66% of the total variance in status consumption can be explained by the four antecedent variables. About 29% in affective response can be explained by the other five variables.

### Evaluation on competing models

This study analyzes and compares several competing models, similar to the approach adopted by Chi and Qu (2008). The assessment of competing models is to compare  $M_A$  (Fig. 1) with other models which serve as alternative explanations. The aim is to decide the best fitting model among a set of competing

models. The present study proposes two alternative models for comparison purposes (Fig. 2):  $M_B$  and  $M_C$ .

As shown in  $M_A$ , the flow path between 'status consumption' and 'creative choice for counter-conformity' is insignificant. As a subscale of 'need for uniqueness', 'creative choice for counter-conformity' positively affects attitude and emotional value (Kumar, Lee, & Kim, 2009). Therefore,  $M_B$  excluded the insignificant path (H4) and added a direct path between 'creative choice counter-conformity' and 'affective response' (H6). In building personality profile, social esteem is related to self-liking in cognitive-affective regulatory process (Tracy, Cheng, Robins, & Trzesniewski, 2009). Based on this,  $M_C$  further included a path between 'social esteem' and 'affective response' (H7). Table 4 shows the SEM results for all three models.

**Table 3 – Correlations of final measurement scale.**

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1 Affective response	5.42	1.02	<b>.576</b>	.482	.434	.346	.346	.402
2 Avoidance of rituality	4.94	1.20	.232	<b>.701</b>	.428	.416	.505	.114
3 Creative choice counter-conformity	5.22	1.08	.188	.183	<b>.611</b>	.242	.373	.439
4 Desire for experiential travel	4.81	.98	.120	.173	.059	<b>.617</b>	.577	.024
5 Status consumption	4.95	1.06	.120	.255	.139	.333	<b>.650</b>	.259
6 Social esteem	6.00	.86	.162	.013	.193	.001	.067	<b>.616</b>

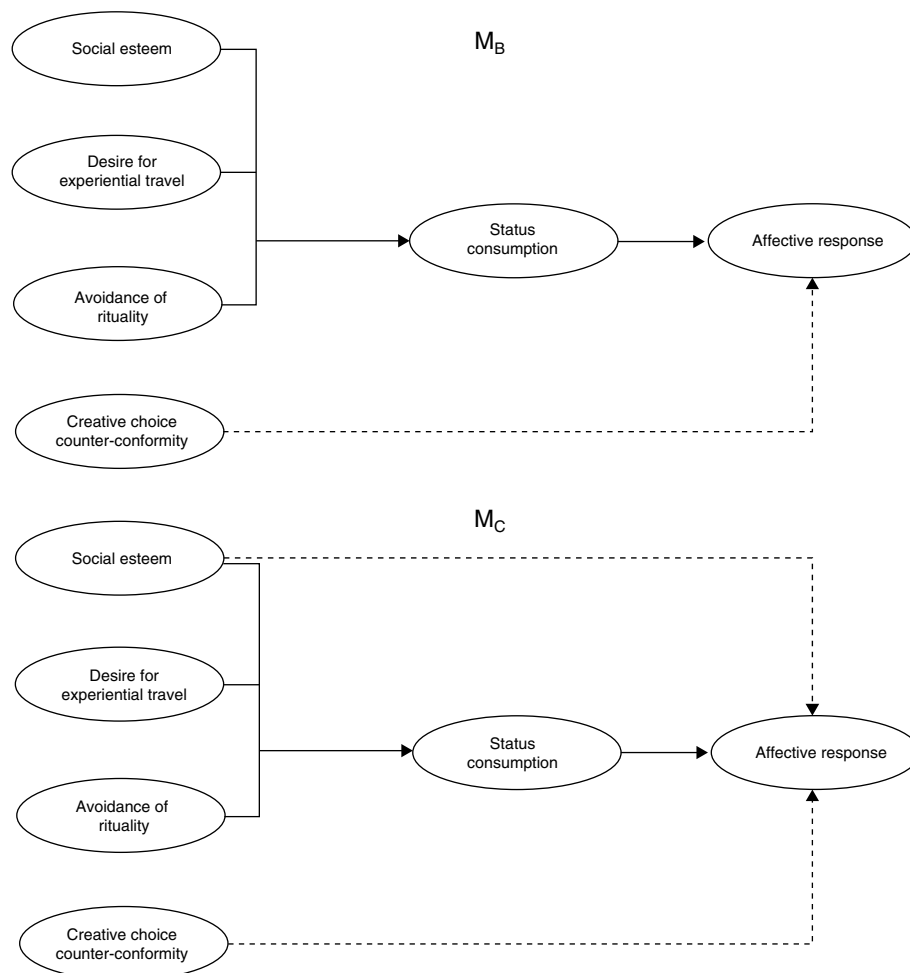
Note: SD = standard deviation. The bold numbers on the diagonal are the average variance extracted (AVE) for each construct. The scores in the upper diagonal are correlations. The scores in the lower diagonal are square of the correlations. Coefficient is significant at  $p < 0.001$ .

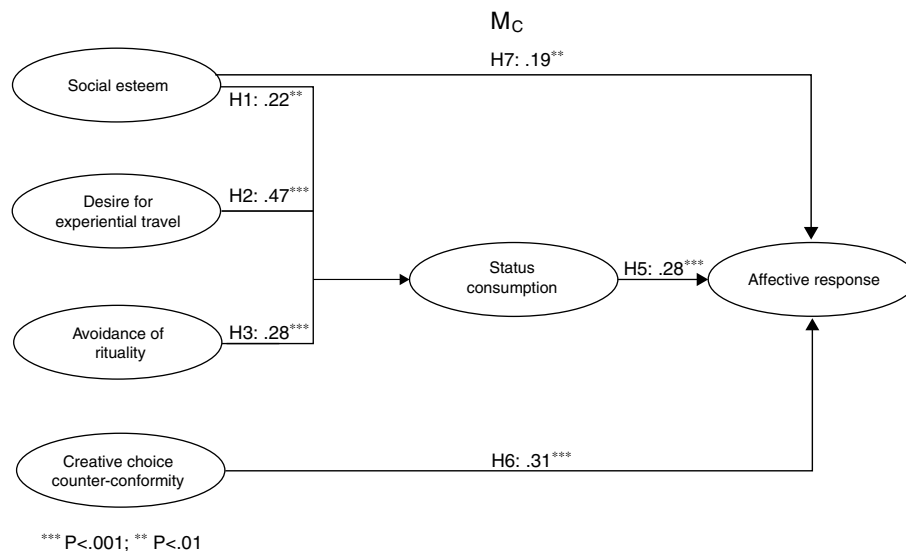


**Table 4 – Standardized structural equation estimates for all the competing models.**

Goodness of fit indices for measurement models	Criteria	M <sub>A</sub>	M <sub>B</sub>	M <sub>C</sub>
Chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) of estimated model	–	281.76	269.48	263.22
Degree of freedom (df)	–	104	103	102
Chi-square/degree of freedom ( $p = 0.000$ ) ( $\chi^2/df$ )	$\leq 3$	2.71	2.62	2.58
Root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA)	$\leq .08$	.076	.074	.073
Root mean square residual (RMR)	$\leq .07$	.075	.064	.065
Comparative fit index (CFI)	$\geq .90$	.92	.93	.93
Goodness of fit index (GFI)	$\geq .90$	.90	.91	.91
Tucker–Lewis index (TLI)	$\geq .90$	.90	.91	.91
Akaike information criterion (AIC)		379.76	369.48	365.22
Expected cross-validation index (ECVI)		1.30	1.26	1.24
Social esteem → Status consumption (H1)		.24***	.23***	.22***
Desire for experiential travel → Status consumption (H2)		.50***	.47***	.47***
Avoidance of rituality → Status consumption (H3)		.35***	.28***	.28***
Creative choice counter-conformity → Status consumption (H4)		.08 <sup>ns</sup>	–	–
Status consumption → Affective response (H5)		.54***	.30***	.28***
Creative choice counter-conformity → Affective response (H6)		–	.40***	.31***
Social esteem → Affective response (H7)		–	–	.19**

Note:

\*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ .\*\*  $p < 0.01$ ; ns = not significant.**Fig. 2 – Competing SEM models.**



**Fig. 3 – Finalized SEM model with parameter estimates. Note: \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.01$ .**

This study employs CFI difference tests and sequential chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) difference tests (SCDTs) to compare the nested structural models. The  $\chi^2$  difference test between  $M_A$  and  $M_B$  ( $\Delta\chi^2 = 12.29$ ;  $\Delta df = 1$ ) suggests that  $M_B$  performs significantly better than the theoretical model  $M_A$ . The  $\chi^2$  difference test between  $M_B$  and  $M_C$  ( $\Delta\chi^2 = 6.25$ ;  $\Delta df = 1$ ) suggests that  $M_C$  performs better than  $M_B$ . This analysis achieves a significant improvement in fit. CFI differences exceeding 0.01 between models would indicate loss of fit in a nested model. The study also assesses Akaike information criterion (AIC) and expected cross-validation index (ECVI) to confirm the choice for the best fitting model. The preferred model is the one with the lowest AIC value. The model with the smallest ECVI exhibits the greatest potential for replication.  $M_C$  has the lowest AIC and ECVI among the three models and is preferred. The above assessment indicates that  $M_C$  performs better than  $M_A$  and  $M_B$ .

The path linking creative choice counter-conformity and status consumption is not significant in  $M_A$ . This implies that there is no direct relationship between creative choice for counter-conformity and status consumption. Therefore, this path is excluded and the extra path is included in  $M_B$ . This model confirms that the relationship between creative choice counter-conformity and affective response is highly significant and strong (**H6**:  $P = 0.40$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). The fit indices of  $M_B$  are better than those of  $M_A$ . As shown in Table 4, the model fits the data well:  $\chi^2/df$  ratio = 2.62;  $p < 0.001$ ; CFI = 0.93; TLI = 0.91; GFI = 0.91; RMR = 0.064; and RMSEA = 0.074. The  $\chi^2/df$  ratio is less than 3. Both CFI and GFI are larger than 0.90. The RMSEA is less than 0.08, thus showing a closer data fit. With the exception of creative choice counter-conformity, the magnitude and direction of other antecedent variables on status consumption are very similar. Again, desire for experiential travel has the strongest positive impact on status consumption ( $P = 0.47$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), followed by avoidance of rituality ( $P = 0.28$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and social esteem ( $P = 0.23$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). For the value of  $R^2$ , about 48% of the total variance in status consumption in  $M_B$  can be explained by social esteem, desire for experiential travel

and avoidance of rituality. Approximately 34% in affective response can be explained by the other five variables.

For  $M_C$ , an additional path between social esteem and affective response was included.  $M_C$  fitted the data well (Table 4):  $\chi^2/df$  ratio = 2.58;  $p < 0.001$ ; CFI = 0.93; TLI = 0.91; GFI = 0.91; RMR = 0.065; and RMSEA = 0.073. This set of indices meets the model fit criteria. As compared with  $M_B$ , the strength and direction of other causal paths in  $M_C$  are similar with the exception of a few disparities. The relationship between social esteem and affective response is positively significant (**H7**:  $P = 0.19$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). This suggests that there should be a direct path between social esteem and affective response. The  $R^2$  values for status consumption (0.48) and affective response (0.34) in  $M_C$  are the same as  $M_B$ . With significant difference in  $\chi^2$ , the lowest AIC and ECVI,  $M_C$  provides the best fit among all the tested models. This study achieves a significant improvement in model fit. Fig. 3 illustrates the final SEM model in the study.

## Discussions and conclusions

Within the context of tourism innovation, there are six constructs of tourist-consumption based factors in measuring tourist consumption preference, including affective response, social esteem, status consumption, desire for experiential travel, creative choice for counter-conformity and avoidance of rituality. The measurement model demonstrates a reasonable fit. The SEM results demonstrate that  $M_C$  is preferred as opposed to both theoretical models,  $M_A$  and  $M_B$ . Social esteem, desire for experiential and avoidance of rituality create direct and significant influence on the status consumption of tourists. Affective response is influenced by both social esteem and creative choice counter-conformity. On the contrary, the causal path between creative choice counter-conformity and status consumption is not significant.

The top driver of status consumption is the desire for experiential travel. The study indicates that personal tourist

consumption preference concerning the pursuit of material possessions and substantial travel experience during travel is the strongest predictor of status consumption. This implies that tourists indulge in extraordinary tourist consumption experience and products as life goal. They think that they would have an improved quality of life when they own tourist product or experience that they do not currently own, or admire people who own special tourist products. Consumption and exploring goods and service in travel activities can help them to differentiate and symbolize themselves with social standing, and ultimately create an experiential travel journey. The second strong personal factor is the avoidance of rituality. Very often, most tourists prefer to spend and consume during traveling because some unique tourist experience or products are only available in certain travel destinations. This enhances the private value of prestige-enhancing tourist goods. When they discover certain tourist products and service during travel too common in their social groups, they immediately discontinue consumption. Unexpectedly, the study reveals that creative choice for counter-conformity does not influence status consumption in tourism innovation context. It implies that tourists prefer consuming unique goods that are different from others, but not the goods or travel experience that project extreme and unusual creativity. The third significant factor is social esteem. It indicates that tourist consumption is for enhancing social esteem, elevating social standing in a society, developing positive attitude toward themselves and facilitating affective response.

This study offers implications for managing tourism innovation and predicting consumption behavior in the global marketplace. It also provides valuable inputs in terms of tourist product, service, marketing and management innovations for tourist development. It shows that maintaining social esteem and acquiring of more unique, non-common tourist products and service are important personal motivations for tourist promotion. Spending is a perceived behavior to demonstrate individual personal achievement. Development in tourist sector is recommended to put forth innovative marketing efforts on the materialistic attributes of spending during traveling. Policy makers can think about how innovative traveling could signify achievement of personal happiness in the course of creating favorable experiential journey and special souvenirs for tourists. Tourists are motivated to consume non-common goods and activities. Therefore, branding exclusivity of tourist activities is an effective way to attract these tourists. Advertising campaigns should project new value of innovative travel to develop and enhance social esteem. Affective response is important because positive affective response is a major source of tourist satisfaction. Marketers are suggested to convey a feeling of pleasure and enjoyment in tourism innovation.

The theoretical tourist-consumption based model proposed in this study not only creates a breakthrough in measuring tourist consumption preference by using empirical data within tourism innovation contexts, but also helps tourism business and practitioners to make innovation in terms of product, service, marketing and management to meet the needs of worldwide travelers. The results provide recommendations to companies for developing competitive

managerial strategies that sustain the development and growth of tourism industry.

In response to growing competition, it is vital for marketers to discover more about tourism innovation and understand the importance of the experiential qualities of tourism offerings and travel experience. Effective tourism promotion strategies should target the personal motives of travel and create favorable consumption experiences.

### Limitations and direction for further research

Because of limited time and resources, this study poses its limitations. Despite of the fact that semi-random sampling is employed, the data may be biased. Not all tourists are willing to participate in this study during travel. It is advised to conduct the research according to demographic profiles and make comparison between tourist consumer groups with different background (e.g., gender, nationality, age and spending power). It is believed that the resulted measurement models and SEM models would provide stronger practical implications for industry practitioners and predictive theories for academic researchers to participate tourism innovation.

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