

Tourist motivations: Case Tatacoa desert - Colombia

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Abstract – This article identified the motivations of national and foreign tourists who visited the Tatacoa desert in Colombia, based on the theory of push and pull motivation factors. For the above, a quantitative instrument was built - Likert-type survey - made up of nine dimensions, between push and pull factors. In this regard, reliability was measured with Cronbach's Alpha and validity through Confirmatory Factor Analysis, both of which were satisfactory. The construct was evaluated through a structural equation model using SPSS AMOS software. As a result, a good fit of the hypothesized model was obtained, while in the evaluation of the motivations, the higher level of motivation stands out in national tourists over international ones. Likewise, a high rating was obtained in the push factors, above the attraction factors, which denotes the strength of the tastes and preferences of tourists in the case.

Keywords – Tourism, motivation, push factors, pull factors, Colombia.

1. Introduction

Tourism is generally interpreted as an event with social, economic and cultural nuances that implies the physical movement of people to new places, driven by personal, professional or business factors. People who do tourism are called visitors or tourists [1].

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Bull [2] points out that “tourism is a special product in which consumers must physically go to the place of production to acquire the product, in which the trip is part of the product itself” (p.12).

According to Barroso and Flores [3], the tourist phenomenon, in recent years, has become a structural phenomenon, whose role in the international economy is increasing, surpassing, in many cases, some traditional economic sectors, such as agriculture, mining, fishing, manufacturing, among others.

In this regard, three factors that influence tourist activities are identified: geographical, personal and economic. The geographical element refers to the space or territory in which the tourist activity takes place; the personal element is represented by the purchasing behavior of tourists; and the economic element is the formed tourist organizations that intervene in the business [3].

According to Figueroa [4], tourism can integrate and favor all aspects of development, since it acts as a stimulus for the conservation of cultural heritage and natural wealth; it transforms the perception of the resident population and multiple interest groups regarding the use of natural resources; promotes environmental quality in tourist centers; dynamizes and generates impacts on the local economic base; offers employment opportunities and alternative sources of income to all levels and segments of the population, especially to population groups with limited qualifications; allows greater investment in the conservation of natural spaces; promotes linkages and spillover effects to other sectors and economic activities; and accelerates the provision of infrastructure and public services that allow increasing the levels of well-being of the local community.

The foregoing shows that tourism is a tool for social transformation, contributing to local and national economic growth, the increase of social welfare, the generation of wealth and promotes the conservation of natural resources in tourist destinations or regions and their areas of interest influence.

There are multiple studies that seek to establish the relevant factors that are decisive for the decision to travel within the framework of people's tourist activity. Gnoth [5] and McCabe [6] state that, for a long time, research on travel motivators, within the framework of tourism, was studied from a single construct, either from cognitive factors or from emotional factors. However, after the year 2000, and currently, studies on motivation in tourism tend towards comprehensiveness when analyzing the motivating factors. Thus, there have been multiple studies related to the motivation to carry out various types of tourism such as tourism in exotic places [7], attraction tourism [8], rural tourism [9], sports tourism [10], cultural tourism [11], [12], [13], religious tourism [14], ecotourism or ecological tourism [15], [16], [17], [18] gastronomic tourism [19], sun and beach tourism [20], protest tourism [21] and health tourism [22], [23], among others.

In the present investigation, the factors that motivate national and foreign visitors to explore the Tatacoa desert, located in southern Colombia, were evaluated. The Tatacoa desert is an attraction of national and international interest due to its peculiarities and conditions of Very Dry Tropical Forest. Generally, this tourist attraction is visited annually by thousands of national and international visitors. It is estimated that, prior to the mobility and confinement restrictions derived from the pandemic, generated by Covid-19, more than 250 thousand visitors entered per year, including national and international tourists [24]. For the years 2020 and 2021, the figure was reduced to about 50 thousand tourists, a phenomenon that has been improving for the year 2022, in line with the national situation [25].

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. *Tourism and its Modalities*

Tourism, in all its modalities, has become a business and a social phenomenon with profound implications in the 21st century panorama [26]. Indeed, many countries consider it as an industry that makes a vital contribution to their economies, since it generates a significant number of jobs and opportunities for development [27].

In general, there is a wide range of tourism modalities; however, tourist activity is classified according to its spatial, temporal component or according to the purpose of the trip, and in general they are grouped into two large groups: traditional tourism and alternative tourism [28].

2.2. *Tourism Motivations*

In general, motivation corresponds to a psychological factor that explains a person's drive to perform an action or activity [29], [30], [31]. In this understanding, within the framework of tourist

activity, motivation translates into an accumulation of desires that push individuals to carry out multiple tourist activities [32], [33]. Likewise, within the phenomenon, aspects such as the motivation of the tourist or visitor are contemplated as the sum of physical, social and cultural elements that condition their behavior [34], [35], [36].

The reasons that determine the trip are linked to a series of determining needs of the selection and execution of the tourist activity [33] and is related to something that the individual lacks and that its satisfaction results in the trip [37].

Thus, tourists plan their trip for different reasons [38]. In a previous work by Crompton [39], he considered that the motivations of the visitor are grouped into nine types: escape from the everyday, knowing different things or exploration, release of tension or relaxation, prestige and status, regression, improvement of relationships, relationship social, education and novelty. Subsequently, the types of motivation were reduced to physical, cultural, interpersonal, and status and prestige factors [40].

On the other hand, Ryan and Glendon [41] found four dimensions of travel motivations in the United Kingdom: social domain, relaxation domain, intellectual domain, and competition domain. Similarly, Hanqin and Lam [42] identified five motivating factors for visitors to Hong Kong: knowledge, prestige, improved human relations, relaxation, and novelty (thrill-seeking attributes).

Likewise, Cleaver et al. [43] managed to establish six dimensions in their research: self-improvement, new emotions, self-discovery, social status, experiencing memories and escape from everyday life. Furthermore, Goeldner et al. [44] included a dimension of spirituality or metaphysics as a tourist motivation factor, while Loker and Perdue [45] identified factors based on the benefits perceived by tourists: escape from everyday life, emotion and evasion, search for exciting emotions, recommendation of family and friends, enjoy the natural environment and the search for multiple benefits.

In general, there is abundant empirical evidence about the motivating factors that influence people to carry out tourism activities. In relation to the reasons for the trip and the specific choice of a destination, the concept of motivation was classified by Dann [37], [46] into two broad categories: the "escape" needs and the "search" need [47]. Thus, tourists are encouraged to travel by internal factors of the person or attracted by the characteristics of tourist sites. Consequently, push factors are internal and emotional, such as the desire to escape from everyday life, rest and release tension, adventure or social relationships, while pull factors are linked to external, cognitive and situational aspects, such as

local attractions, recreational infrastructures, or cultural and natural environments [48], [49].

In short, push factors should be understood as internal forces that condition people to make the decision to travel [37], [46], that is, they are linked to the internal and emotional aspects of the individual [50]. For their part, pull factors represent the characteristics of the destination that persuade the person [51], [52] and, unlike push forces, are related to external and cognitive aspects [52], [50].

In this regard, Uysal and Jurowski [53] consider that “push” factors are internal to people. In this regard, aspects such as the desire for escape, rest and release of tension, relaxation, prestige and status, health and fitness, adventure and social relations stand out. Likewise, the factors of "attraction" are external, that is, they are found in the environment and are attributed to the tourist destination such as tangible resources and the perception of benefit that the visitor has.

In this logic, Lee et al. [54] classified “push” factors into six groups namely: escape, novelty seeking, relaxation, bragging travel, hedonism, and family togetherness; and seven clusters of “pull” factors: environment and safety, nature/green places, ease and value, arts/culture and shopping, weather, unique people, and family outdoor activities.

Likewise, Jang and Cai [55] found that the tourist's motivations to travel can be framed in five “push” dimensions: novel experience, escape, search for knowledge, fun and excitement, rest and relaxation, and family and friends togetherness; and five “attraction” dimensions: natural and historic environment, cleanliness and safety, easy access and economy, outdoor activities, and sunny and exotic environment.

Regarding the pull factors, Abuamoud et al. [56], consider that, among the determining aspects to make a visit to places characterized by their tourist importance, are the services offered. Similarly, for Vong and Ung [57], the development of tourism in each of the destinations is established, among other things, by the facilities and infrastructures that tourists find to reach the destination and in the place itself.

In the same sense, the tourist destination is conceived, from the psychological level, as a mental construction based on the evaluation from multiple sources of information [58], [59], [60]. This process is called the image of the destination, a concept approached with attention in numerous investigations in which it is considered a definitive factor in the selection of tourist places [61], [62], [63], [64], [65], [66].

3. Methodology

3.1. Scope Investigation

The present investigation was of a quantitative nature due to the way in which the dimensions of the motivation variable were approached. Likewise, the study was analyzed from the deductive method to the extent that the approaches on push factors and pull factors were taken for their understanding, and descriptive because their characteristics of the phenomenon were examined [67].

3.2. Population and Sample

The studied population corresponded to tourists, men and women of legal age, nationals and foreigners, visitors to the Tatacoa desert who were in the area, for which the information was collected physically in the facilities of hotels, restaurants, common and other open spaces in the vicinity of the desert. The sampling used in the research was non-probabilistic for convenience and 200 questionnaires were applied.

In this regard, 54% of the sample corresponded to men, while the remaining 46% were women. The predominant age range for both sexes was between 31 and 50 years, with the majority having professional training (see Table 1).

Table 1. Biographical aspects of the sample

Gender	%	Age			Scholarship	
		< 30	31-50	> 50	Bachelor	Professional
Male	54	34	50	24	13	95
Female	46	30	48	14	10	82
Total	100	32%	49%	19%	11%	89%

3.3. Operationalization of the Variable

The instrument for measuring the variable of motivation of tourists in the desert was developed by the researchers based on the process of theoretical monitoring, subjected to a process of validity and reliability. The questionnaire is made up of 23 items grouped into 9 dimensions: rest, fun and entertainment, knowledge, socialization, prestige, access and infrastructure, local attractions, image and economy. For all the questions, the respondents responded on a Likert-type scale with a five-point alternative (see Table 2).

Table 2. Operationalization of the motivation variable

Dimen-sions	Description	Items
Push M1. Rest (Correia <i>et al.</i> , 2005; Jang and Cai, 2002)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Rest and relax. ▪ Disconnect, change the environment, and get out of the daily routine. ▪ Relieve accumulated stress and tension. 	1. I like to disconnect from everyday life. 2. I like to relieve stress and accumulated tension. 3. I like quiet environments.
Push M2. Fun and Entertainment (Jang and Cai, 2002)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Search for new experiences. ▪ Enjoy the stay in different places. ▪ Entertain yourself with landscapes and shows. 	4. I enjoy the beauty of natural landscapes. 5. I enjoy stargazing and constellations. 6. I am an adventure seeker. 7. I enjoy trying foods from other places.
Push M3. Knowledge (Correia <i>et al.</i> , 2005; Fodness, 1994; Oh <i>et al.</i> , 1995; Cha <i>et al.</i> , 1995)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Know paradisiacal places. ▪ Know spiritual aspects. ▪ Contact with the environment. 	8. I like to see new and different things. 9. I am interested in the history of the places I visit. 10. I like to know and experience local cultures. 11. I like the contact with the flora and fauna of the place.
Push M4. Socialization (Correia <i>et al.</i> , 2005; Turnbull and Uysal, 1995; Crompton, 1979; Uysa and Jurowski, 1994)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Meet new people. ▪ Look for fun, adventure and/or emotions. 	12. I like to be with people who enjoy the same things I do. 13. I like to enjoy free time with my family and/or friends. 14. I enjoy meeting people from different parts of the world.
Push M5. Prestige (Crompton, 1979; Yuan and McDonald, 1990)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Go to trendy destinations. ▪ Tell stories to relatives and acquaintances 	22. I visited the Tatacoa desert for its fame and tourist reputation.
Pull M6. Access and infrastructure (Sirayaka and McLellan, 1997; Vong and Ung, 2012).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ease of access to destinations. ▪ Security of the environment. 	15. The Tatacoa desert is an easily accessible place.
Pull M7. Local attractions (Jang and Cai, 2002)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Natural attractions. ▪ Cultural attractions. ▪ Climate. 	16. The Tatacoa desert is an exciting place. 17. I like the desert landscape. 18. The Tatacoa desert is an exotic and attractive place.
Pull M8. Image (Gunn, 1972; Baloglu and McCleary, 1999; Traverso, 2007; Perera and Echari, 2012)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Information available on the tourist destination. 	19. Internet advertising or social networks were decisive for visiting the Tatacoa desert. 20. Advertising by magazines or newspapers was decisive for visiting the Tatacoa desert. 21. References from friends/relatives were decisive for visiting the Tatacoa desert.
Pull M9. Economy (Lee <i>et al.</i> , 2002)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Low cost of destinations. ▪ Little investment in the trip. 	23. The Tatacoa desert is a cheap tourism option.

3.4. Information Analysis

The information was analyzed using the SPSS version 26 quantitative software and its AMOS structural equations complement. The measurement of Cronbach's Alpha was performed in order to evaluate reliability, obtaining an acceptable level of reliability because Cronbach's Alpha was greater than 0.70 (Motivation, 0.920).

Likewise, Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was used to evaluate the validity of the hypothesized model for the motivation variable, since it is a variable with several dimensions: composed of nine dimensions. Table 3 shows the values obtained for the goodness-of-fit indices of the hypothesized model. The chi-square achieved was significant ($\chi^2 [221, N = 200] = 853.128; p < 0.00$), while the other indices such as GFI, AGFI and CFI obtained outstanding values. Finally, the RMSEA margin of error was reduced.

Table 3. Adjustment indices - Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Index	Estimated model	Acceptance level
CHI SQUARED	853.128	P < 0,00
DF	354	
CMIN/DF	2,925	< 3,00
CFI	0,902	> 0,90
TLI	0,874	> 0,90
IFI	0,905	> 0,90
RFI	0,899	> 0,90
NFI	0,901	> 0,90
GFI	0,876	> 0,90
AGFI	0,816	> 0,80
RMSEA	0,075	≤ 0,08

4. Results

The results of the study are presented below, which are divided into three aspects: The first part consists of the descriptive analysis; in the second, the level of motivation obtained by dimension of the construct is evidenced, and in the third, the hypothesized motivation construct is evaluated.

4.1. Descriptive Analysis

In Table 4 it can be established that, of the total number of people surveyed, 67% were Colombians, of which 38% traveled to the Tatacoa desert with their family and 80% stayed for up to 2 days. Also, the number of visitors, 34% were foreigners, of which 50% traveled with their partner, and 68% stayed for up to 2 days.

Table 4. Generalities

Source	Total	%	Travels			
			Single	Your partner	Family	Friends
National	134	67	16	39	51	28
Foreign	66	34	9	33	12	12
Total	200	100	12%	36%	32%	20%

Likewise, an acceptable level of reliability was obtained for the push factors (Cronbach's Alpha: 0.81) while the evaluation mean was 4.40. The scores obtained in the dimensions associated with the motivational push factor were as follows: Knowledge (4.57); Rest (4.51); Fun and entertainment (4.50); Socialization (4.49) and Prestige (3.96). The highest average was reached by the dimension of knowledge, which glimpses the environmental load that makes up the attraction (see Table 5).

Table 5. Descriptive analysis - Push factors

	Dimensions					A
	Knowledge (K)	Rest (R)	Fun and entertainment (F-E)	Socialization (S)	Prestige (P)	
Average (A)	4,57	4,51	4,50	4,49	3,96	4,4
Median	4,21	4,32	4,38	3,98	3,67	4,1
Standard deviation	0,456	0,632	0,412	0,398	0,472	0,5
Variance	0,391	0,344	0,310	0,236	0,278	0,3

On the other hand, an acceptable level of reliability was obtained for the pull factors (Cronbach's Alpha: 0.83) while the mean evaluation of the motivation variable was 3.99. The ratings obtained in the dimensions associated with the motivational factor of attraction were as follows: Local attractions (4.49); Access and infrastructure (4.12); Economy (3.96); Image (3.42). The highest average was obtained by the dimension of local attractions, which can glimpse the beauty of the Tatacoa area (see Table 6).

Table 6. Descriptive analysis – Pull factors

	Dimensions				A
	Local attractions (A)	Access and infrastructure (A-I)	Economy (E)	Image (I)	
Average (A)	4,49	4,12	3,96	3,42	3,9
Median	4,30	3,91	3,75	3,29	3,7
Standard deviation	0,347	0,652	0,419	0,582	0,5
Variance	0,287	0,306	0,286	0,399	0,3

4.2. Motivation Level

In Table 7 the variables that achieved the highest rating by national and foreign tourists who visited the Tatacoa desert were: M4. I enjoy the beauty of natural landscapes (4.77); M8. I like to see new and different things (4.73); M17. I like the desert landscape (4.62); M11. I like the contact with the flora and fauna of the place (4.60); and M13. I like to enjoy free time with my family and/or friends (4.59).

Table 7. Results level of motivation

Items	Nationals	Foreign	Average
M1 I like to disconnect from the everyday	4.54	4.26	4.45
M2 I like to relieve stress and accumulated tension	4.69	4.21	4.54
M3 I like quiet environments	4.67	4.32	4.55
M4 I enjoy the beauty of natural landscapes	4.74	4.83	4.77
M5 I enjoy stargazing and constellations	4.65	4.30	4.53
M6 I am an adventure seeker	4.31	4.11	4.24
M7 I enjoy trying food from other places	4.52	4.35	4.46
M8 I like to see new and different things	4.71	4.76	4.73
M9 I am interested in the history of the places I visit	4.59	4.35	4.51
M10 I like to know and experience local customs	4.49	4.33	4.44
M11 I like the contact with the flora and fauna of the place	4.60	4.61	4.60
M12 I like to be with people who enjoy the same things that I do	4.54	4.18	4.42
M13 I like to enjoy free time with my family and/or friends	4.65	4.48	4.59
M14 I enjoy meeting people from different parts of the world	4.45	4.44	4.45
M15 The Tatacoa desert is an easily accessible place	4.21	3.94	4.12
M16 The Tatacoa desert is exciting	4.43	4.27	4.37
M17 I like the desert landscape	4.62	4.64	4.62
M18 The Tatacoa desert is an exotic and attractive place	4.49	4.48	4.49
M19 Internet advertising or social networks were decisive to visit the Tatacoa desert	3.63	3.36	3.54
M20 Advertising by magazines or newspapers was decisive to visit the Tatacoa desert	3.09	2.88	3.02
M21 References from friends/relatives were decisive for visiting the Tatacoa desert	4.09	2.92	3.71
M22 I visited the Tatacoa desert for its fame and tourist reputation	4.13	3.61	3.96
M23 The Tatacoa desert is an economic tourism option	4.18	3.53	3.96
Average	4.39	4.14	4.31

On the other hand, it is possible to determine that the variables that had the lowest rating by national and foreign tourists in the motivation dimension were: M20. Advertising by magazines or newspapers was decisive for visiting the Tatacoa desert (3.02); M19. Internet advertising or social networks were

decisive for visiting the Tatacoa desert (3.54); and M21. References from friends/relatives were decisive for visiting the Tatacoa desert (3.71); It is worth noting that, in the latter, nationals had a higher rating (4.09) compared to the rating given by foreigners (2.92).

4.3. Model Validation

Table 8 shows a positive and significant relationship between the push factors (0.72; $p < 0.00$), the pull factors (0.81; $p < 0.00$) and the construct of motivation of tourists, nationals and foreigners, visitors to the Tatacoa desert. From this, it can be inferred that the more the perception of the push and pull factors increases, the greater the perception of motivation of the tourists of La Tatacoa. The correlations of the push factors were significant, especially in the case of Fun (F) (0.82; $p < 0.00$) and Socialization (S) (0.78; $p < 0.00$), while the correlations of the most significant attraction factors were presented in Access and Infrastructure (A-I) (0.82; $p < 0.00$) and Local attractions (L) (0.77; $p < 0.00$).

Table 8. Correlations between the variables and their dimensions

Relationship	Estimate
Knowledge ← Push Factor	,764***
Rest ← Push Factor	,821***
Fun and entertainment ← Push Factor	,612***
Socialization ← Push Factor	,783***
Prestige ← Push Factor	,707***
Local attractions ← Pull Factor	,773***
Access and infrastructure ← Pull Factor	,817***
Economy ← Pull Factor	,657***
Image ← Pull Factor	,691***
Push Factor ← Motivation	,718***
Pull Factor ← Motivation	,812***

5. Conclusions

In conclusion, it can be mentioned that the hypothesized model on the motivation construct of national and international tourists who visit the Tatacoa desert in southern Colombia had a good performance, in terms of validity and reliability, obtaining acceptable rates. Likewise, nine dimensions of motivation in tourists were determined, grouped into push factors and attraction factors, with a higher level of qualification over the former, which leads to the inference that, to a great extent, the preferences and tastes of people weigh more when determining the place of visit.

In general, a higher average rating level was obtained in the various dimensions by national tourists over the perceptions of foreigners. Based on the results, it is likely that the inherent conditions of the desert landscape - pull factors - are more

determinant in the rating given by foreigners, although the values are slightly higher.

Finally, this model is the first construct that is built in the region for the evaluation of the motivation of tourists and it is imperative to develop broader studies to determine its behavior with other tourist scenarios.

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