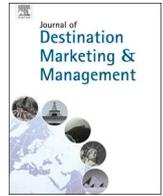




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journal homepage: [www.elsevier.com/locate/jdmm](http://www.elsevier.com/locate/jdmm)

## Research Paper

## Conveying pre-visit experiences through travel advertisements and their effects on destination decisions

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## ARTICLE INFO

## Keywords:

Consumption vision elaboration  
Pre-visit experience  
Experience economy  
Tourism advertising  
Emotional response

## ABSTRACT

Potential travelers need to anticipate their vacation experiences when making their travel destination choices. Advertisements are used as external stimuli to support the process of consumption vision elaboration by evoking emotions and communicating specific experience dimensions. Using a generic experience economy framework, this paper differentiates between travel experiences with passive and active participation, as well as between those with immersion and absorption experiences. The findings show that the effects of advertisements on arousing travelers' visit interest and fulfilling their information needs depend on the specific type of envisioned travel experience. Travelers' emotional response to advertisements has a partially mediating effect on their effectiveness. Suggestions are provided for marketing practitioners and effect modelers.

## 1. Introduction

Tourism is a service sector uniquely shaped by the consumption of experiences (Pine & Gilmore, 1999). The role of businesses in the tourism industry is to provide customers with memorable experiences (see Stamboulis & Skayannis, 2003; Wirtz, Kruger, Scollon, & Diener, 2003; Xu, Morgan, & Song, 2009). The shaping of tourists' experiences is also key for companies' market success, as this experience is a predictor of tourists' future behavior (Manthiou, Lee, Tang, & Chiang, 2014). Experiences should thereby be provided at every touchpoint along the customer journey (Norton & Pine, 2013). A typical customer journey, particularly in the tourism industry, comprises both direct and indirect touchpoints (Stickdorn & Zehrer, 2009). Before a visit, promotional materials (e.g. website, brochure, tourist guide books, and word of mouth) provide indirect touchpoints. The increasing competition in the tourism business, which offers people multiple options, requires offers of tourism products and services to distinguish themselves (Park & Jang, 2013; Pine & Gilmore, 1999). Hence, the successful provision of pre-visit experiences through imagination-evoking advertising stimuli could be key in influencing visitors' decisions to choose a certain tourism destination (Walters, Sparks, & Herington, 2007).

The experience economy proposed by Pine and Gilmore (1999) is a recently established framework for understanding business sectors that offer consumers experiential products or services (Manthiou et al., 2014). Pine and Gilmore's framework consists of four types of experience: education, entertainment, escapism, and esthetics. This typology

is perfectly suited to the tourism industry's experiential nature. However, research has to date only adopted Pine and Gilmore (1999) four realms in the post-event context (see Manthiou et al., 2014). Conversely, Pine and Gilmore (1999) framework can be implemented in all stages of the consumer's consumption journey, starting with the pre-visit stage, continuing to the visit stage, and ending with the post-visit stage. The pre-visit stage is the stage when tourists start constructing their consumption visit, during which they imagine being part of a tentative future consumption situation (Phillips, 1996).

Numerous researchers have paid attention to the effectiveness of using imagery-evoking advertising strategies to influence tourism consumers' responses (e.g. Petrova & Cialdini, 2008; Miller & Marks, 1997; Walters et al., 2007). However, no research has to date incorporated Pine and Gilmore (1999) experiential economic framework into the design of advertising stimuli. Consequently, no research has yet investigated the effects of evoking different consumption visions before visit. The present research is therefore the first to establish and test a framework that differentiates between the influence of education, escapism, entertainment, and esthetics as elements of advertising stimuli on consumption vision elaboration. This paper investigate the influence of these elements on tourism consumers' interest and intention to visit a tourism destination.

This study focuses on the communication of travel experiences in a pre-event context. It incorporates the four realms of Pine and Gilmore (1999) experiential economic framework into tourism promotion material in order to influence prospective travelers' mental imagery of potential tourism destinations. This paper thereby transforms the

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<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdmm.2018.12.005>

Received 23 April 2018; Received in revised form 19 September 2018; Accepted 21 December 2018

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generic dimensions of Pine and Gilmore (1999) experience economy into specific advertisement designs in order to elicit a specific tourist pre-visit experience. Consumers' emotional responses, their destination interest, and the fulfillment of their information needs serve as the specific effects that this study investigates. This paper applies causal effects modeling to a data sample to test theoretically derived hypotheses.

## 2. Theoretical framework

### 2.1. Concept of consumption vision

According to Walker and Olson (1997) p.27, a consumption vision is a visual image that 'consist(s) of concrete and vivid mental images that enable consumers to vicariously experience the self-relevant consequences of product use'. In the tourism context, the tourists-to-be face a difficult decision task when planning their holiday. They may have substantial uncertainty about the desirability of various destination choice alternatives. They might create consumption visions of possible destinations, such as of beach scenes, museums, mountain views, gardens, castles, etc, to help them with their travel decision. Within each of these simulated consumption situations, the tourists-to-be imagine themselves consuming various tourism products, and experiencing the consequences of this consumption with their family or friends. Such a consumption vision allows tourists to form a cognitive and affective basis for their preferences (Walters et al., 2007). Constructing several consumption visions for alternative travel options could help tourists choose one of the tourism destination alternatives, for example, the place, the activities provided, the accommodation, etc. The absence of the direct physical environment is therefore no problem for potential travelers, as they can still evaluate the targeted destination through the image in their mind when they envision their consumption experience (Walters et al., 2007).

Tourism promotional material provides such external stimuli, thereby proactively influencing the development of potential travelers' consumption vision (Mittal, 1988; Walters et al., 2007). Consequently, marketers in the tourism destination sector need an understanding of the most effective usage of such external stimuli. Previous research, particularly in the stream of marketing communication, has examined various external stimuli, which Unnava & Burnkrant (1991) summarized. These authors mentioned three basic forms of external stimuli that elicit mental imagery effectively: pictures, concrete words, and instructions to imagine. The combination of these three forms of external stimuli drew the attention of researchers such as Babin and Burns (1997), who proposed that concrete words are more effective at eliciting mental imagery than just a concrete picture. Furthermore, Walters et al. (2007) and Escalas (2007) argued that the only technique designed to arouse self-generating imagery is instructions to imagine, but which also advise potential tourists to imagine themselves in a particular tourism destination. Consequently, this paper develops scenarios in the form of brochures with concrete pictures and instructions to imagine. We develop the information content of instructions to imagine by employing Pine and Gilmore's (1999) four realms of experience economy.

### 2.2. Dimensions of the experience economy

The experience economy that Pine and Gilmore (1999) propose is an important concept for understanding the four historic steps of evolving value propositions: commodities, goods, services, and experiences. Nowadays, experiences are especially important in creating a competitive advantage for businesses. The framework consists of four components of experience: education, entertainment, escapism, and esthetics. Despite its inherent limitations due to a "powerful (over-)simplification," the conceptual framework has successfully served the broad marketing community (see a review in Carù & Cova, 2003).

Fig. 1 provides an illustration. On the horizontal axis, which represents customer participation, customers' passive participation in a

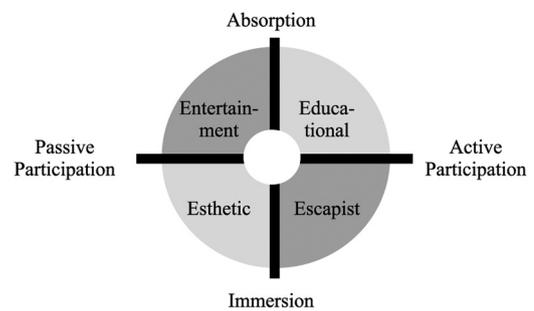


Fig. 1. The four realms of experience. Source: Pine and Gilmore (1999).

tourism destination offering characterizes the entertainment and esthetics dimensions. The educational and escapist dimensions represent active participation. Tourists who participate actively in events during a visit to a tourism destination become part of these events, while tourists who just passively enjoy their holiday have no influence on the events occurring (Oh, Fiore, & Jeoung, 2007). The vertical axis spans the destination's absorption and immersion characteristics. Tourists absorb the experience when they engage in an entertainment or an education activity, whereas those who participate in an esthetics or escapist activity are likely to immerse themselves.

Fig. 1 previous research has incorporated Pine and Gilmore's four realms in various contexts. The framework was successfully transferred to specific fields, for example, luxury branding (Atwal & Williams, 2009) and to a few research topics in the tourism sector, for example, bed-and-breakfast accommodation experiences (Oh et al., 2007) or festivals and museums (Methmetoglu & Engen, 2011). Finally, very recently it was found that the four experience economy dimensions (education, entertainment, esthetics, and escapism) influence brand prestige significantly in the luxury cruise industry (Hwang & Han, 2016).

### 2.3. Conveying pre-visit consumption visions about travel experiences

As mentioned, Pine and Gilmore's (1999) experience economy comprises four realms of consumer experience based on the level of consumer participation and on consumers' connection to the environment. Given that the experience economy is a meaningful framework in the tourism industry, this paper discusses the four types of experience in more detail in the context of pre-visit consumption visions.

Consumers generally have well-constructed memorable experiences in mind (Larsen, 2007; Manthiou et al., 2014). Walters et al. (2007), as well as Miller, Hadjimarcou, and Miciak (2000), argue that tourists' expectation of their future consumption experience might also have a major influence on their decision making. Expanding this line of thoughts, Chang (2017) recently found that the loss value of (anticipated) experiences weighs more than gains. It is therefore very important that marketers convince potential tourists throughout their customer journey from the pre-visit to post-visit stages. Gaining an understanding of anticipated experiences' effects is of high importance, particularly in the pre-decision stage when consumers start searching for information about the destination they intend to visit.

Tourists exhibit a desire for educational experiences long before they visit a destination (Ritchie, Carr, & Cooper, 2003). In pre-visit educational experiences, tourists absorb information through any information materials. They may learn about a village's historical background from, for example, brochures with all the pertinent information, illustrated with pictures. "Learning something new" is the keyword in Pine and Gilmore (1999) education realm. Consequently, by means of brochures as pre-visit information sources, tourists can actively engage their mind and increase their knowledge of their destination (Pine & Gilmore, 1999).

Watching and listening to a singer or watching a magician perform are examples of entertainment – two of the oldest forms of experience, and among the most developed and pervasive in today's business

environment. An entertainment experience occurs when people passively observe others' performances (Manthiou et al., 2014); however, logistics require the offered event to be understood in advance and that it engages tourists' attention before the performance begins (Oh et al., 2007). When tourists have to recall their memories of a visit, they very often mention entertainment as an important post-visit experience (Cole & Chancellor, 2009). Nevertheless, little if any research has to date focused on the effects that elaborating on an entertainment experience during the pre-visit stage could have on influence tourists' intention to visit a particular destination.

Embarking on a voyage to specific destinations are characteristics of an escapist experience (Pine & Gilmore, 1999). Getz (2007) argued that seeking changes and a novel experience are the main reasons for tourists wishing to escape their everyday life and environment. Tourists often engage in different experience settings, such as restaurants or theme parks, to escape their daily routine and rejuvenate their lives (Manthiou et al., 2014). The anticipation of the joy of escapism during the pre-visit stage is thus a key element for tourists seeking an escapist experience. Creating such an experience through tourism communication tools has become an important challenge for marketers.

Finally, esthetic experiences emerge from the enjoyment of being at a destination and experiencing the physical environment or the overall atmospherics (Oh et al., 2007; Pine & Gilmore, 1999). The servicespace or atmospherics concept for service marketing reflects this indulgent immersion in the environment (Bitner, 1992; Lovelock & Wirtz, 2004; Oh et al., 2007). Servicespace is defined as an environment's influence on consumer emotion and behavior (Manthiou et al., 2014) and is of core importance for the lodging industry (Oh et al., 2007). Accordingly, in the pre-visit stage, marketers try to evoke tourists' feeling of esthetics through their communication material. Zhou (1997) showed that brochures can increase respondents' interest in visiting a destination. Hence, the design of a brochure presenting an esthetic experience is crucial for marketers if they wish to provide tourists with a memorable journey even before they visit the destination.

### 3. Hypotheses

By means of a causal effects model, this study tests whether a single advertisement can induce consumption visions in potential travelers, thereby evoking emotions and ultimately fostering their travel interest, or even fulfilling their information needs. In the following, specific hypotheses are derived regarding the hypothesized sequence of effects.

#### 3.1. Evoking consumption visions

Previous marketing communication and mental imagery research provided insights into providing ex-ante experiences. Miller and Stocia (2003) revealed that photographic images are effective at evoking mental imagery. Goossens (2000) found that tourism destination advertisements must contain photographic images and vivid information to evoke mental imagery and an emotional response. Furthermore, Walters et al. (2007) revealed the importance of imagery and text for eliciting tourism consumers' consumption visions, with the most effective combination being a concrete style picture and textual content comprising instructions to imagine. Given the importance of concrete pictures to elicit tourism consumers' consumption vision, the current study incorporates Pine and Gilmore (1999) four-realm experience economy as themes in the brochures' pictorial pictures. The brochures cover four themes: education, entertainment, escapist, and esthetics.

Contrary to Walters et al.'s (2007) most effective combination above, a less effective usage combination of stimuli in brochures is textual concrete words without a picture. It is therefore proposed that a well-designed single advertisement can address all experiences.

**H1.** A single advertisement with pictorial and textual elements elicits stronger consumption visions in potential travelers than one without textual elements.

#### 3.2. Creating emotions

Emotions are characterized as a sequence of intense feelings related to a specific situation (O'Shaughnessy & O'Shaughnessy, 2002) and tend to activate a specific behavior response (Cohen & Areni, 1991). In the tourism sector, emotional responses are a determining factor of tourists' attitudes towards holiday objects (Gnoth, 1997) and of their decision behavior (Goossens, 2000). Understanding which stimulus evokes a tourist's emotional response at every touchpoint on the journey has therefore become a crucial component of a meaningful tourism experience.

Some scholars have undertaken studies on emotional responses, for instance, emotional response to advertising (Edell & Burke, 1987), product use (Holbrook, Chestnut, Oliva, & Greenleaf, 1984), and hedonic holiday destinations (Hosany & Gilbert, 2010). Other studies have investigated consumer behavior caused by their emotional response, such as their behavioral intention (Hosany & Prayag, 2013) and their product interest (Walters, Sparks, & Herington, 2012). Emotional responses that a stimulus elicited in the pre-visit stage of a tourism process are the focus of the present study.

Tourists may envisage and anticipate the consequences of visiting a certain tourism destination by envisioning themselves performing a particular behavior or engaging in various activities. In an advertising context, consumption vision may be facilitated by addressing those themes within the advertisement as external stimuli (Phillips, 1996; Walters et al., 2007). Given the universality of emotion-related findings due to advertisement exposure, it is proposed that any type of communicated experience can evoke an emotional response in potential travelers:

**H2.** A single advertisement is sufficient to evoke an emotional response in potential travelers.

#### 3.3. Fostering interest

Travel-related stimuli, such as advertisements, can elicit interest in visiting a tourist destination. Previous studies by Choi, Tkachenko, and Sil (2011), Zhang, Xiaoxiao, Cai, and Lu (2014) argue that destination advertisements can play an important role in generating destination awareness, thus influencing tourists' intention to visit a destination. Furthermore, previous studies found that consumption visions influence a person's level of interest in a destination (Lubbe, 1998). In addition, Chang (2012) found that consumption vision elaboration not only fosters interest in a destination but also shapes a person's attitude to it significantly.

The absorption versus immersion of an experience is a dichotomy in the experience economy's conceptual framework. In the former, travelers absorb an experience and do not influence the experience being presented or performed directly (Pine & Gilmore, 1999). This dichotomy can also be transferred to envisioned travel experiences: Whereas esthetic and escapist events are considered to lead travelers' high immersion, educational and entertainment events are mainly absorbed in a consumption experience.

States of absorption are inherently more distant from a person than states of immersion (Carù and Cova, 2006). We therefore argue that an anticipated immersion is more likely to lead to a specific interest in a product (Escalas, 2004) – the travel destination – than an anticipated state of absorption. In the latter situation of lower involvement, an advertisement needs to also emotionalize (Holbrook & Batra, 1987) potential travelers in order to evoke their specific interest in a travel destination.

**H3a.** Consumption visions of immersion experiences (esthetic, escapist), generated by a pre-visit exposure to an advertisement, can directly steer travel destination interest of potential travelers.

**H3b.** A pre-visit exposure to an advertisement evokes an emotional response that mediates the effect of consumption visions of absorption experiences (entertainment, educational) on travel destination interest.

### 3.4. Fulfilling information needs

Travelers use external information to explore future benefits, such as consumption value gratification (Punj & Staelin, 1983). Creating and delivering superior information value to travelers has therefore become an important marketer task. Moreover, the search for information is basically multi-dimensional, comprising more than functional values (Vogt & Fesenmaier, 1998). The hedonic value components include multisensory, fantasy, and emotional aspects of the consumer experience (Hirschman and Holbrook (1982). In accordance with Hirschman (1983), Pine and Gilmore (1999) therefore highlight the importance of the tourism marketer providing travelers with experience throughout their journey, starting with providing pre-visit experiential information.

Pine and Gilmore's (1999) framework differentiates experiences according to their degree of traveler participation. Whereas educational activities and escapism are based on the prospective traveler's rather active participation, entertainment activities and esthetic events constitute more passive experiences (Lehto et al., 2008). In this respect, it is reasonable to assume that experiences requiring active participation are easier to imagine than those based on passive participation (e.g. Phillips, Olson, & Baumgartner, 1995). Unknown surroundings influence the latter experiences or a still unfamiliar service provider pre-sets them. It is therefore reasonable to assume that potential travelers cannot imagine their future service experience in much detail if they are only given a single advertisement's information.

It is expected that a single advertisement can fulfill potential travelers' information needs directly if it addresses active participation (educational, escapist) experiences. Conversely, it is expected that the upfront communication of passive experiences (entertainment, esthetic) is more difficult to implement and depends strongly on the advertisement's achieved degree of emotionality. If an advertisement evokes a positive emotionality, this might overcome the inherent deficiencies regarding grasping such events intuitively. It can therefore be expected that potential travelers' anticipation of active experiences will have a direct effect on the fulfillment of their information needs, whereas it is expected that emotionality will have a mediating effect on the linkage between passive advertised experiences and the fulfillment of information needs (Fig. 2).

**H4a.** The pre-visit consumption visions of active participation (educational, escapist), that potential travelers' pre-visit exposure to an advertisement generates can fulfill their information needs directly.

**H4b.** The emotional response evoked by an advertisement mediates the effect of potential travelers' consumption visions of passive participation (entertainment, esthetic) on the fulfillment of their information needs.

## 4. Method

An experimental study was undertaken with the objective of investigating all the hypotheses. Using an experimental design, we manipulated the four realms of Pine and Gilmore's experiential framework, i.e. entertainment, educational, esthetic, as well as escapist experiences and the two information setting (advertising pictorials with information versus pictorials without information). The study respondents received two of eight simulated print advertisement designs depicting a fictional island holiday scene.

The stimuli were in the form of print advertisements or a brochure, which is a basic form of printed promotional material designed to communicate with existing or potential tourists (Molina & Esteban, 2006). In this study, we use a prototype advertisement to assess how Pine and Gilmore's four realms can be implemented as communication themes to provide pre-visit consumption experiences. Neither the model nor the results are thought to be limited to such a basic communication setting, but they might guide more sophisticated advertisement stimuli, such as websites, YouTube videos, and even word-of-mouth activities.

### 4.1. Survey setup and scenario

An experimental design was applied to focus on the variables of interest and to ensure an unbiased estimation of effects (by avoiding any correlation between the independent variables) and exclude possible random noise due to situational effects and/or different social environments. The study was set up to be as realistic and specific as possible to limit an unrealistic impression (a potential drawback of experiments).

The eight realistic visualization scenarios were each presented in the form of a simulated print advertisement. The scenarios' focal interest was Pine and Gilmore's (1999) four realms of experience. An entertainment experience occurs when people passively enjoy others' performance. In addition, their connection to the event is more through absorption than immersion. The visualization of a temple setting therefore served as a prototypical representation of the entertainment stimulus (Appendix 1). In the escapist experience, tourists strive for the unique and, somehow, unusual in order to escape their routine (Pine & Gilmore, 1999). Outdoor settings (Appendix 2) allowing tourists to be actively involved and immersed in the experience were therefore used as the prototypical advertisement. A village (Appendix 3) served as the prototypical printed advertisement for the education experience that allows tourists to improve their knowledge and/or skill during the visit. According to Pine and Gilmore (1999), tourists' immersion in the environment characterizes an esthetics experience, therefore a beach (Appendix 4) was deemed well-suited for this kind of experience. The

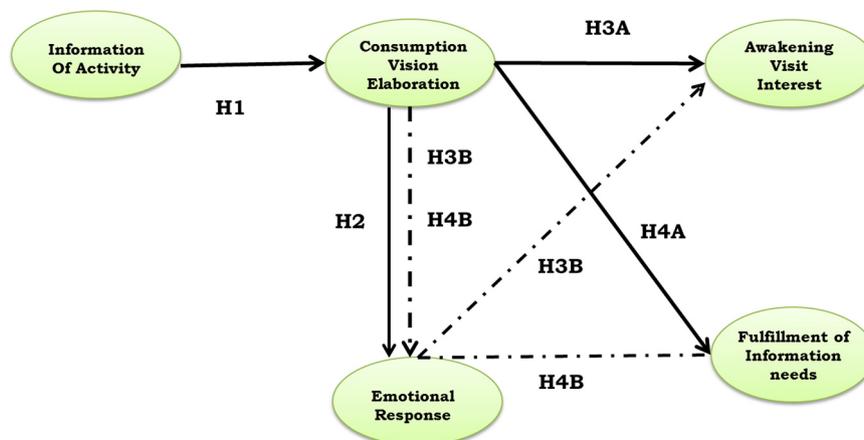


Fig. 2. The structural model.

eight different printed advertisements featured one of two pictorial options: one explicitly describing a possible tourist activity during a visit and one only presenting a destination image without further explanation of specific activities (see the two examples in Appendix 1–4, detailed activity information was either added or removed in the other two scenarios). Prior to the experimental commencing, an advertising practitioner evaluated the printed advertisements to ensure the realism and appropriateness of the manipulated variable.

#### 4.2. Measures

In addition to the experimental factors, four measurement constructs were included in the model: consumption vision elaboration, emotional response, awakening visit interest, and fulfillment of information needs. A scale adopted from Walters et al.'s (2007) Consumption Vision Elaboration measured the participants' visionary response to the advertisements. The seven items included statements such as "I could actually see myself in this scenario".

Measurement items adopted from previous studies (Emmons, 1986; Etzioni, 1988; Keller & McGill, 1994; Walters et al., 2012) and modified for this research context were used to assess emotional responses to the stimuli. Two of the emotional responses included in this research were: "I feel an emotional attachment to the featured destination" and "This advertisement stimulates a desire within me to experience the featured destination". For a comprehensive overview of the measurement of emotional response, please refer to Table 2.

Finally, the respondents' need to obtain information on the featured destinations and the awakening of their visit interest were used to measure their verdicts. The utilized measurement scales were adopted from Walters et al. (2012) and Machleit, Allen, and Madden (1993). Some of the items employed in this research were: "I would like more information about the destination featured in advertisement" and "I would simply go ahead and select the vacation featured in the advertisement without seeking information about and alternative destination."

#### 4.3. Data collection

An online survey was conducted based on a convenience sample of Indonesian university students. In general, this group has significant spending power, but demands a distinct set of value propositions for their money (Kueh and Ho Voon, 2007), especially with regard to vacation offerings (Lehto et al., 2008). Students are digital natives and educated consumers who are willing to spend the time on conducting extensive research before making a purchase. Millennials already account for almost 35% of the US\$600 billion that Asians spent on international travel in 2013 (Singapore Tourism Board, 2013). It is also very common for Indonesian parents to support their children financially until they are married, which contributes to students' relatively strong purchasing power.

The survey resulted in a net response of 400 participants. Each respondent participated in two scenarios of the eight, leading to a raw data set of 800 observations. For quality reassurance, a manipulation check assessed a full understanding of the presented scenarios at the individual respondent level. The respondents were asked to validate the communicated meaning of the presented scenarios by means of a set of two questions. A dichotomous scale assessed both the perceived information content and the experiential quality of the stimulus, leading to a set of four alternative categorizations. The vast majority of answers (80%) led to a categorization as intended. Miscategorization occurred almost equally often (38/48/32/42 observations) across the four scenario categories, partly accompanied by "click-through-patterns." Miscategorized observations were excluded from further analyses – thus only 640 responses were utilized. The high number of total responses allowed us to use such a conservative approach without incurring any SEM modeling issues due to a loss of degrees of freedom.

## 5. Analyses

The proposed hypotheses were analyzed using AMOS SEM to obtain parameter estimates for the measurement and structural model. Following the verification of both the measurement and of the structural effects model, each hypothesis was tested. Multi-group comparison was used to investigate the path coefficients' context dependency. To do so, four groups were compared based on the travel vision communicated in the advertisement (entertainment, educational, esthetic and escapist experiences).

### 5.1. Model fit

A multi-group comparison of the measurement model reveals the measurement model's invariance. A single measurement model was therefore applied to the dataset. Table 1 summarizes the further measures concerning the quality of the construct measurements. As proposed by Nunnally and Bernstein (1994), the composite reliability scores of all the constructs exceed the cut-off value of 0.7. Furthermore, in line with Fornell and Larcker (1981), all the obtained AVE values exceed the cut-off value of 0.5. We conclude that the measurement model is adequate. Table 2 shows a complete list of the measurement items.

Structural equation modeling (SEM) was performed to assess the structural model fit and to test the hypothesized relationship between the constructs. The SEM results with four subgroups indicate a good model fit with a  $\chi^2/df$  ratio: 3.6; CFI = 0.81; NFI = 0.79; IFI = 0.82; TLI = 0.80; RMSEA: 0.06.

### 5.2. Hypotheses testing

Hypothesis 1 proposed that information provided on possible vacation activities induces the travelers' consumption vision elaboration. The result is consistent in all the experience settings, namely education ( $\beta = 0.39$ ,  $P \leq 0.01$ ), entertainment ( $\beta = 0.28$ ,  $P \leq 0.01$ ), and escapist ( $\beta = 0.54$ ,  $P \leq 0.01$ ) ( $\beta = 0.34$ ,  $P \leq 0.01$ ). Hypothesis 1 is therefore confirmed.

Furthermore, a significant positive effect was identified between consumption vision elaboration and emotional response in all the experience settings: education ( $\beta = 0.90$ ,  $P \leq 0.01$ ), entertainment ( $\beta = 0.90$ ,  $P \leq 0.01$ ), escapist ( $\beta = 0.77$ ,  $P \leq 0.01$ ), and esthetic ( $\beta = 0.86$ ,  $P \leq 0.01$ ). This implies that any printed advertisement settings comprising Pine and Gilmore's (1999) experience setting can evoke travelers' emotional responses. Hypothesis 2 is therefore supported.

In pre-visit "immersive" setting experiences (escapist, esthetic), travelers' positive consumption vision elaboration is expected to awaken their interest in a visit. The result shows significant positive effects in both the escapist ( $\beta = 0.50$ ) and esthetic ( $\beta = 0.65$ ) experiences. This is in accordance with Hypothesis H3a. Conversely, consumption vision elaboration has no observed direct effect on the interest in a visit when travelers are exposed to advertisements framing the "absorbive" setting of experience (either entertainment or education).

Consumption vision elaboration can not only directly influence potential travelers' interest in a visit, but their emotional response can also mediate this. Hypothesis 3b proposed that travelers' visit interest can be awakened if their consumption vision elicits an emotional

**Table 1**  
Composite reliability and average variance extracted.

Construct	Construct Reliability & Validity	
	AVE	CR
Consumption Vision Elaboration	0.75	0.95
Emotional Responses	0.62	0.93
Fulfillment of Product Need	0.73	0.92
Awakening of Visit Interest	0.62	0.89

AVE: Average Variance Extracted; CR = Composite Reliability.

**Table 2**  
Measurement instruments.

Items	Standardized Factor Loading
<b>Consumption Vision Elaboration</b>	
The mental images that came to mind formed a series of events in my mind in which I was part.	0.80
The mental images that came to mind made me feel as though I was actually experiencing the destination featured in this advertisement.	0.86
This scenario / advertisement made me fantasize about having the opportunity to experience the featured destination.	0.76
I could easily construct a story about myself and the featured destination based on the mental image that came to mind.	0.84
It was easy for me to imagine being at this destination.	0.69
Whilst reviewing this brochure, I found myself daydreaming about the featured destination.	0.81
I could actually see myself in this scenario.	0.62
<b>Emotional Response</b>	
This advertisement stimulated a desire within me to experience the destination.	0.88
This advertisement stimulates my interest in the destination.	0.80
I feel an emotional attachment to the destination	0.71
I can actually feel what it would be like to experience the destination	0.77
<b>Awakening of Visit Interest</b>	
I would like more information about this destination.	0.72
Learning more about this destination would be useful to me.	0.82
I'm curious about this destination.	0.90
I am intrigued by this destination.	0.89
<b>Fulfillment of Information Needs</b>	
I have all the information I need to inform my decision on whether or not I would like to purchase this vacation.	0.76
I would simply go ahead and select the vacation featured in the advertisement without seeking additional information about the product or further pre-purchase consideration.	0.86
I would simply go ahead and select the vacation featured in the advertisement without seeking information about alternative destinations.	0.88
I am confident that this vacation is the right choice for me.	0.83

response. This result is consistent in all the experience settings. With  $P \leq 0.05$ , path coefficients of 0.51 and 0.72 were obtained for education and entertainment respectively. In respect of the escapist and esthetic setting, path coefficients of 0.59 and 0.62 were obtained with the  $P \leq 0.01$ . The result therefore supports Hypothesis 3b.

Hypothesis 4a proposed that the consumption vision elaboration can influence the fulfillment of travelers' information needs. Such a phenomenon is observed when the brochures addresses escapist experience settings ( $\beta = 0.65$ ,  $P \leq 0.01$ ). In other experience settings (i.e. education, entertainment, and esthetic), an insignificant result was obtained. Hypothesis 4a is therefore only partially supported. To complement the previous hypotheses, an emotional response was proposed as a mediating variable between consumption vision elaboration and fulfillment of information needs. The results indicate that travelers only ask for more information if their consumption vision elaboration stimulates their emotional response. This result holds true for all the experience settings: education ( $\beta = 0.68$ ,  $P \leq 0.01$ ), entertainment ( $\beta = 0.60$ ,  $P \leq 0.01$ ), escapist ( $\beta = 0.69$ ,  $P \leq 0.01$ ), and esthetic ( $\beta = 0.38$ ,  $P \leq 0.01$ ) (Table 3)

## 6. Conclusion and implications

### 6.1. Conclusion

This study demonstrates the importance of the pre-visit experience in terms of Pine and Gilmore's (1999) experience economic concept. Such an experience can be described across two dimensions. The first characterizes the connection or environmental relationship that links travelers with an environment or event (Pine & Gilmore, 1999, 2011). This connection spectrum is denoted as absorption and immersion. The second characterizes customer participation, which is described as either active or passive participation. Joining these two experience dimensions, four broad categories can further be differentiated: education, entertainment, escapist, and esthetic experiences.

In the pre-visit stage, brochures that elicit travelers' consumption visions are an important factor. By incorporating Pine and Gilmore's experience spectrum into brochures, this study revealed that advertisements featuring a destination that allows travelers to immerse themselves in the activities and in the environment (escapist and esthetic experience), are more likely to directly awaken their interest in a visit.

However, consumption vision elaboration does not always awake travelers' visit interest directly. Travelers exposed to brochures containing destination information that allows them to absorb all of a visit's activities and scenery are more likely to lead to a visit interest if an emotional response is elicited. Consequently, besides directly influencing travelers' visit interest, an emotional response can also mediate the effects of consumption vision elaboration. This result is in line with findings by Walters et al. (2012), who also stated that emotional response mediates between consumption vision elaboration and tourist's product interest.

Imagining oneself engaged in a consumption vision is a specific type of mental imagery that advertisement exposure can trigger (Chang, 2012). Printed advertisements in the form of brochures can be created as stimuli to provide potential travelers with an engaging pre-visit experience. Incorporating Pine and Gilmore's (1999) four-realm experience economy as brochure themes is one way of helping travelers develop their consumption vision. A successfully elaborated consumption vision can either directly generate an interest in visiting the advertised destination or it can initiate a request for more information about the destination. It is important that the advertisement evokes an emotional responses in travelers in order to make them realize that they need more information on the destination presented in the brochure. An emotional response acts thereby as a mediator in all experience settings (education, entertainment, escapist, and esthetic).

Furthermore, the statistical analysis revealed that textual content accompanying a concrete picture in a brochure evokes consumption vision elaboration. This result is comparable with that of Walters et al. (2007); however, according to Babin and Burns (1997), compared to only a concrete picture, concrete words alone may be more effective, because travelers are forced to imagine the objects or scenarios that the text describes. The present study thus complements these scholars' results.

### 6.2. Implications

This paper contributes to the existing scientific literature and managerial issues in various ways. A holistic view of the effect of particular experience settings was provided as the focal point of brochures on travelers' consumption vision elaboration, which ultimately leads to decision making. This paper contributes a new point of view by incorporating Pine and Gilmore's (1999) experience economy setting as the focal point of the stimulus.

**Table 3**  
Result for the structural model (standardized beta coefficients).

		Pre-visit experience communicated in ad stimulus:				Conclusion
		Group 1: Education	Group 2: Entertainment	Group 3: Escapist	Group 4: Esthetic	
<b>Estimated causal relationship among constructs</b>						
H1	Information of Activity → Consumption Vision Elaboration	0.39***	0.28***	0.54***	0.34***	Support of H1
H2	Consumption Vision Elaboration → Emotional Response	0.90***	0.90***	0.77***	0.86***	Support of H2
H3A	Consumption Vision Elaboration → Awakening Visit Interest	n.s.	n.s.	0.50***	0.65***	Partially Support of H3
H3B	Consumption Vision Elaboration → Emotional Response → Awakening Visit Interest	0.51**	0.72**	0.59***	0.62***	Support of H4
H4A	Consumption Vision Elaboration → Fulfillment of information needs	n.s.	n.s.	0.50***	n.s.	Partial Support of H5
H4B	Consumption Vision Elaboration → Emotional Response → Fulfillment of information needs	0.68**	0.60**	0.69**	0.38***	Support of H6

In tourism research, a previous study showed that textual details in advertisements can successfully complement pictorials by generating potential tourists' consumption visions (Walters et al., 2007). This study not only investigates the effects of advertisement through pre-visit experiences on consumption vision elaboration, but also on the fostering of travelers' interest in visit a destination and on the fulfillment of information needs. In this respect, the present study extends the previous findings by means of a multi-layered causal-effects model, thereby enhancing earlier findings by insights about indirect effects, which are of special relevance for destination marketers.

Previous research also suggested that travelers with a vivid and clear mental image are more likely to have stronger interest in a product featured in a brochure (Petrova & Cialdini, 2008; Walters et al., 2012). The current study complements those findings by adding a contingency perspective. It shows that travelers' response depends on the specific experience setting (i.e. education, entertainment, escapist, and esthetic). The decision-making process is different across experience settings, depending on whether it is to awaken travelers' visit interest or to fulfill their need for more information. The present study provides insights into all four experience settings, thus allowing marketers to better understand how to respond to each one.

Besides contributing to scientific knowledge, this study has several practical implications. It provides tourism marketing with valuable information about the design of a pre-visit experience through advertisements. We show that Pine and Gilmore's (1999) experience economy can serve as a central concept to create advertising stimuli by taking the combination of a pictorial picture and concrete text into account.

Several implications can be drawn for the tourism industry, particularly for destination marketers. The findings provide a new perspective on how advertisements can evoke a particular experience setting in a pre-visit situation: information about possible activities in destination brochures can elicit travelers' consumption vision elaboration. Marketers can use Pine and Gilmore's four realm dimensions (education, entertainment, escapist, esthetic) as specific brochure themes with the objective of eliciting travelers' emotional response, thereby strengthening their interest in visiting the destination. Emotionally-laden information about specific activities should therefore be integrated into generic image brochures.

Destination brochures addressing the themes escapist experience (e.g. rock climbing) and esthetic experience (e.g. lying on the beach) can directly awaken potential travelers' visit interests. Consequently, escapist and esthetic experiences should be communicated as core tourism brochure themes if marketers aim to immediately influence traveler's interest in visiting a destination. A mere vision elaboration is not sufficient if absorptive experiences need to be addressed, whether these are entertainment or educational experiences. In this context, it is important to also evoke strong emotions in order to ultimately steer potential travelers' destination interest.

The study also reveals that travelers exposed to an escapist experience theme do not necessarily need more information, as a single advertisement can fulfill their information needs by achieving a consumption vision elaboration. Therefore, a tourism brochure with an escapist theme (e.g. trekking, mountain biking) that already contains pictorials and activity information do not need additional information material. More and repeated advertisements are, however, needed to communicate the other consumption experiences in order to fulfill consumers' overall information needs.

From this study, marketers can also gain a better understanding of how travelers mentally process advertising stimuli, thus improving their ability to target and capture potential travelers. By understanding the characteristics of each experience setting and how travelers elaborate the vision they receive from stimuli, marketers can prepare the right stimuli to lead directly lead to a decision or the design stimuli most likely to induce travelers' emotional responses.

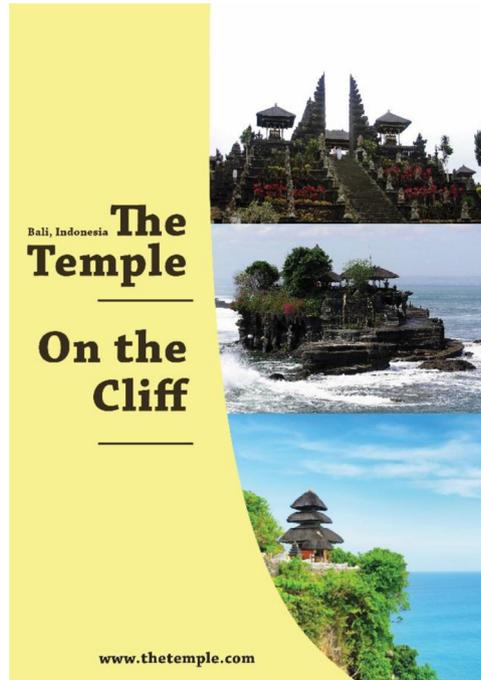
The results of this research should be considered in light of some limitations. The sample is a key limitation: The pilot test and the main

study used a convenience sample of university students. The generalizability of findings to all potential consumers might therefore be limited. It is suggested that future research should use a more heterogeneous sample. Even though the advertisement used in this study worked well, different pictorials or another advertisement might improve the effects on potential travelers.

Traditional print advertisements were purposefully chosen as a purified experimental setting to test the proposed model. More complex

media, especially videos, can be expected to improve the communication of pre-visit experiences. A future study could therefore assess the relative effectiveness of, for example, YouTube advertisements. In addition, below-the-line communication might be a valuable alternative to successfully communicate pre-visit experiences. For example, fostering vivid word-of-mouth virals might be superior to above-the-line advertisements, even if these limit marketers' influence on the communicated content (Reckmann & Teichert, 2016).

**Appendix 1. Entertainment scenario (without activity information)**



**Appendix 2. Escapist Scenario (with activity information)**

**Garden Tour on Horse**  
 Take a horse ride around the garden like our grand father always did to finish the day. Dont forget to have a cup of tea afterwards.

**The Apple of The Mountain**  
 The garden is located on the foot of the mountain. it covers more than 4 hectares area. The air fresh and the scenery is wonderful. You can buy variety of apple based food and beverages.

**Apple Plucking**  
 imagine being a farmer in day. Grab your basket and you are ready to go. Enjoy the fresh air while plucking the apple of your choice.

Price : USD 10/person  
 Including : Equipment, 2kg of apple, hat  
 Duration : 2 hours

Price : USD 15 / pax  
 Inclusion : Horse riding, a guide and a cup of tea

## Appendix 3. Education scenario (with activity information)

**The Dance**  
Price : USD 15/PAX  
Duration : 2 HOURS  
Learn our dynamic dance, we believe everyone can dance  
Price : USD 15/PAX  
Duration : 2 HOURS

**The Weaving**  
Price : USD 15/PAX  
Duration : 2 HOURS  
Learn to make our serving that we called Banten. It is an eloquette art of weaving

**The Village**  
The village with hundreds year of wisdom  
www.thevilla.com

## Appendix 4. Esthetic Scenario (without activity information)

Feel the ocean breeze and the warm sands on your feet. Let the ocean and the coconut trees recharge your soul.

**THE BEACH**

WHERE THE WHITE SANDS MEET THE BLUE OCEAN...

For farther information and reservation :  
(055) 896 777 8000  
www.thebeach.com

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