

## **Benefit Perceived by Tourists. Role of the Hospitality Offered by the Tourist Destination**

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### **Abstract**

*The aim of this study is to test the relationship between the functional benefit, symbolic benefit and affective evaluation as antecedent of the hedonic benefit and consequence of cognitive perception. The aim is to test the mediating effect of hedonic benefit as an antecedent of tourist satisfaction. This objective seeks to achieve, through a methodology which includes developing scales with a degree of content validity and analyze its psychometric properties. A survey of 750 people was conducted using a non-probability sampling based on quotas, in proportion to destinations visited in Chile. The results show a significant mediating effect on hedonic benefit on tourist satisfaction. The study provides the different stakeholders of the tourist destination with relevant decision making information relevant for tourism marketing in order to provide the desired satisfaction for the tourist.*

**Keywords:** tourism, benefits, perception, mediation, hospitality

### **1. Introduction**

One of the most important factors in materializing the relationship between tourists and touristic destinations for the tourism industry is satisfaction. In fact, achieving this satisfaction will depend on their recommendation and or return to the place (Yuksel and Yuksel, 2007). This link is absolutely relevant because it generates affective, cognitive and conative loyalty towards the place (Yuksel, Yuksel and Bilim, 2008). From this perspective, some studies analyze different sources that generate satisfaction that is inherent to the tourist (Gallarza and Saura, 2006) and to the place's environment (Chi and Qu, 2008). This being said, these inherent or environmental components are still tourists' perceptions. In this sense, on the one hand, it has been argued that cognitive perception, affective evaluation, functional benefit, hedonist benefit and symbolic benefit build the image of a tourist destination and this image influences tourist satisfaction (Chen and Tsai, 2007). On the other hand, tourist's perceived value at the destination (Chen and Tsay, 2007), and perceived quality of the services offered may also influence their satisfaction (Bigné, Sánchez and Sánchez, 2001).

From this perspective, individual satisfaction achieved through interaction with several of the place's components is a path that may lead to global satisfaction (Kozak and Rimmington, 2000). In this individual relation, tourists expect to obtain hedonic benefits (Goossens, 2000), functional benefits (Tapachai and Waryszak, 2000) and symbolic benefits (Litvin and Kar, 2003) from the tourist destination that enable them to achieve the desired state of satisfaction. From this line of reasoning, although some studies suggest that the hedonic benefit is an antecedent of satisfaction (Yuksel and Yunksel, 2007), evidence on the mediating role of this benefit as an antecedent of satisfaction, and therefore as consequence of the functional and symbolic benefit, is scarce. On the other hand, while visiting a place, tourists do not only expect benefits, but they also assess it affectively (Bigné et al., 2001). Although this assessment may have a considerable impact on satisfaction (Yuksel, 2005), there is scarce evidence on the mediating effects of the hedonic benefit as an antecedent of satisfaction and consequence of affective evaluation. If the benefits and affective evaluation are not adequate, the tourist will have a cognitive perception of the place (Beerli and Martin, 2004). This perception will play an important role as antecedent of the functional benefit (Noble, Griffith and Weinberg 2005), of the symbolic benefit (Greenwald and Pratkanis, 1984) and the affective assessment (Beerli and Martin, 2004), which the tourist obtains and realizes at the place. This study proposes a causal model, where the hedonic benefit is an antecedent of satisfaction and consequence of the functional and symbolic benefits, and the affective evaluation the tourist obtains and realizes at the destination. It is also proposed that the functional and symbolic benefits and the affective evaluation are a consequence of the tourists' cognitive perception of the place.

## **2. Literature Review**

The background existing in literature of the variables that are part of this study are presented below, and include cognitive perception, functional benefit, symbolic benefit, affective evaluation, hedonic benefit and satisfaction.

### **2.1. Cognitive Perception**

Cognitive perception encompasses some processes that are related to paying attention to stimulus and events and their understanding, recalling past events, performing assessments and decision making and choosing (Mehrabian and Russell, 1974). In practice, it is the way tourists perceive physical attributes or characteristics of a tourism zone (Beerli and Martin, 2004), through the places' landscapes, attractions and built environment. From a cognitive point of view, tourist seduction is based on the beauty of architectural and natural landscapes, the comfort of the facilities and the particularity of the attractions. In fact, when destinations have an adequate level of attributes, visitors tend to develop more favorable attitudes toward the tourism destination (Yuksel and Argul, 2007).

### **2.2. Functional Benefit**

The functional benefit is generated through the response to the individuals' cognitive needs as consequence of adaptation to their environment and may be considered as utility acquired through functional value (Babin, Darden and Griffin 1994). The functional benefit, therefore, may be acquired through experience with the main characteristics or attributes of the place (O'leary and Deegan 2003, 2005) and arises from the assumption that people, driven by the search for solutions, tend to choose the alternative with the best traits according to their needs (Babin et al., 1994). From this point of view, the tourists will obtain the best functional benefit as the destination attributes are more practical according to their needs. In general, the better the response capacity to the multiple needs expressed during the tourists' stay, the greater the impact (Sirgy and Su, 2000). In practice, the more functional the place's characteristics or attributes in relation to tourists' needs, the more attractive it will be to visit it (Hosany and Gilbert, 2010).

### **2.3. Symbolic Benefit**

The symbolic benefit is the benefit obtained by the multiple components of the self-concept, which is largely the result of the assessment of others, whether real or not (Solomon, 1983), and it is made up of an array of representations of each person, which are linked to a particular set of social circumstances (Sirgy and Su, 2000). Traditionally, four aspects of self-concept are used to explain and predict people's behavior in the act of consuming: the real self-concept, the ideal self-concept, the social self-concept and the social ideal self-concept (Sirgy, 1982). Self-concept is the way people see themselves, while the ideal is how they would like to be. Social self-concept, in turn, is how people think other important individuals see them; the social ideal self-concept is how people would like to be seen by other important individuals (Sirgy and Samli, 1985). In this sense, tourists may choose to direct their behavior in the place toward reinforcing or improving their self-concept.

Similarly, they may try to go to tourist sites that communicate a symbolic meaning to themselves and to other people (Hosany and Gilbert, 2010).

#### **2.4. Affective Evaluation**

Affective evaluation is based on the basic premise of environmental psychology: people respond emotionally to different places (Mehrabian and Russell, 1974). From this perspective, affective evaluation is considered as a feeling about a certain place (Gartner, 1993) that, for some authors, depends on and is directly related to cognitive perception (Lin, Morais, Kerstetter and Hou, 2007). In this sense, better or worse cognitive perception tourists have of a place will be directly related with better or worse affective evaluation they make of it (Hong, Kim, Jang and Lee, 2006). This way, how tourists perceive access paths, facilities, landscapes, will influence the affective evaluation they make in their interaction with the tourist site.

#### **2.5. Hedonic Benefit**

Hedonic benefit is that which arises as a result of psycho-sensorial experiences, especially from the need for stimulation and seeking sensations (Hirschman and Holbrook, 1982). From this perspective, the hedonic benefit is the pleasure obtained through an experience with the service, associated to people's fantasies and feelings (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982), therefore, it represents global multi-sensorial experiences. These multi-sensorial images are activated by stimulating different senses of the organism. As tourist sites are essentially aesthetic and depend on recognition through visual stimuli, tourists' first visual contact with the place's landscape is very important. On the other hand, tourist sites are places that are a mix of tourist products and services (Buhalis, 1999), full of events, that stimulate different senses in the visitor, with the sole purpose of offering pleasurable sensorial experiences. Therefore, the better the tourists' multi-sensorial experiences, the greater the pleasure experienced during their stay at the place (Snepenger, Snepenger, Dalbey and Wessol, 2007).

#### **2.6. Satisfaction**

The traditional disconfirmation paradigm (Oliver, 1981), one of the currents most commonly used by researchers, defines customer satisfaction as the result of an assessment that compares performance, according to customers' perception, with their expectations and wishes (Bassi and Guido, 2006). In the same line, satisfaction may be defined as an equation in which the experience was at least as good as it was supposed to be (Ryu, Han and Kim 2008). It may also be defined as an assessment of the benefits received by tourists at the site (Yoon and Uysal, 2005). Thus, it may be considered a subjective opinion based on the assessment made by tourists after having lived an experience at the tourist site. Tourist satisfaction is based on the benevolence of the relationship between the expectations they have at the site (Churchill and Suprenant, 1982) and the relative performance perceived through the experience in it. In general, it is the result of the comparison between previous images tourists have formed of the site and what they obtain during the visit to it (Chon 1989).

### **3. Hypothesis**

#### **3.1. Cognitive Perception-Functional Benefit**

Having a positive cognitive perception of the place is very important for tourists to obtain the expected functional benefit. This hypothesis arises because, from a marketing perspective, the functional benefit is predominantly instrumental and cognitive in nature to the customer (Noble, Griffith and Weinberber, 2005). Moreover, literature shows that the functional benefit may arise in response to one of the tourist's cognitive needs (Babin, Darden and Griffin, 1994). In this regard, positive cognitive perception of the place's attributes and components may lead to better functional benefits for the tourist. From this perspective, the following hypothesis may be stated:

**H1:** The better the cognitive perception of a tourist site, the greater the functional benefit for the tourist.

#### **3.2. Cognitive Perception- Symbolic Benefit**

An excellent cognitive perception of the destination is of particular importance for the tourist to achieve the desired symbolic benefit. Literature demonstrates that obtaining the customer's symbolic benefit may be cognitive in nature (Greenwald and Pratkanis, 1984). In this sense, each one of the self-concept representations depends on the tourists' cognitive perception of the place (Anderson and Bower, 1974), so they are able to recreate this self-concept not only from what they know, but also from what they are about to know (Markus and Wurf, 1987). Thus, the tourists' positive cognitive perception of the place will stimulate the expected symbolic benefit.

From this point of view, the following hypothesis may be suggested:

**H2:** The better the cognitive perception of a tourist site, the greater the symbolic benefit for the tourist.

### **3.3. Cognitive Perception – Affective Evaluation**

Having an optimum cognitive perception of the place is pivotal for tourists to accurately perform an affective assessment of it. From the perspective of tourism, tourist cognitive perception is an antecedent of the affective representation they create of the place (Beerli and Martín, 2004) and it will have a positive effect on the affective evaluation of the destination (Lin et al., 2007). Literature has revealed that this perception is a very important antecedent of the affective evaluation visitors make of the tourist site (Baloglu and Brinberg, 1997). Thus, the tourists' positive cognitive perception of the destination will depend on the affective evaluation they make of the place. Based on these statements, it is possible to propose the following hypothesis:

**H3:** The better the cognitive perception of a tourist site, the better the affective evaluation by the tourist.

### **3.4. Functional Benefit – Hedonic Benefit**

By obtaining the expected functional benefit, the tourist will have more options of receiving the desired hedonic benefit. It has been argued that the functional benefit is positively related to the hedonic benefit acquired by the client (Babin, Chebat and Michon, 2004). In fact, it is an antecedent of the hedonic benefit conferred to the tourist at the place (Dhar and Wertenbroch, 2000). In this sense, achieving the desired functional benefit will be decisive in obtaining the hedonic benefit expected by the tourist while visiting the place (Khan, Dhar and Wertenbroch, 2004). This way, the disposition of the destination's attributes and components aimed toward meeting the tourists' requirements are the base for attaining the desired hedonic benefit. From this point of view, the following hypothesis may be suggested:

**H4:** The greater the functional benefit obtained tourists at the tourism destination, the greater their desired hedonic benefits.

### **3.5. Symbolic Benefit – Hedonic Benefit**

Obtaining the desired symbolic benefit may contribute significantly in obtaining the hedonic benefit expected by the tourist. The hedonic consumption process may be activated though the clients' symbolic consumption (Hirschman and Holbrook, 1982). In this regard, symbolic signals may generate multi-sensorial images (Solomon, 1983) as part of the tourists' leisure experience. Therefore, the nature of the symbolic consumption experiences is an antecedent of the hedonic benefit that may be attained by tourists while visiting a place (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982). This way, a destination that interprets tourists' symbolic signals will contribute to achieving the expected hedonic benefit. From this perspective, the following hypothesis may be stated:

**H5:** The greater the symbolic benefit obtained by tourists at the tourism destination, the greater their desired hedonic benefits.

### **3.6. Affective Evaluation – Hedonic Benefit**

Performing a good affective evaluation at the tourism destination is an antecedent that enables tourists to obtain the expected hedonic benefit. It has been argued that the affective evaluation directly influences how the hedonic benefit may be obtained by the consumer during the process of choosing a product or service (Babin and Attaway, 2000). Here, emotions are the main mechanisms for creating hedonic value for the customer (Babin and Attaway, 2000). The affective source of consumer experience is crucial in order to obtain the expected hedonic benefit (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982) by tourists while visiting a destination. A place with a positive affective evaluation will contribute to obtaining the tourists' desired hedonic benefit. From this point of view, the following hypothesis may be suggested:

**H6:** The better the affective evaluation of a tourist site, the greater the hedonic benefit obtained by the tourist.

### **3.7. Hedonic Benefit - Satisfaction**

From the point of view of tourism, the ultimate aim of tourists' leisure experiences is to obtain the desired hedonic benefit as the main antecedent of their satisfaction. According to Babin et al., (2005), the hedonic benefit has a significant positive effect on the client's satisfaction. Therefore, the hedonic nature of the consumption experiences is an antecedent of the satisfaction that may be attained by tourists while visiting a place (Ladhari, 2006).

In fact, the tight link with the hedonic benefit as an antecedent of satisfaction has been demonstrated (Yuksel and Yuksel 2007). Therefore, a place with the necessary attributes and components for tourists to obtain the hedonic benefit they expect will help them reach their desired satisfaction. From this perspective, the following hypothesis may be stated:

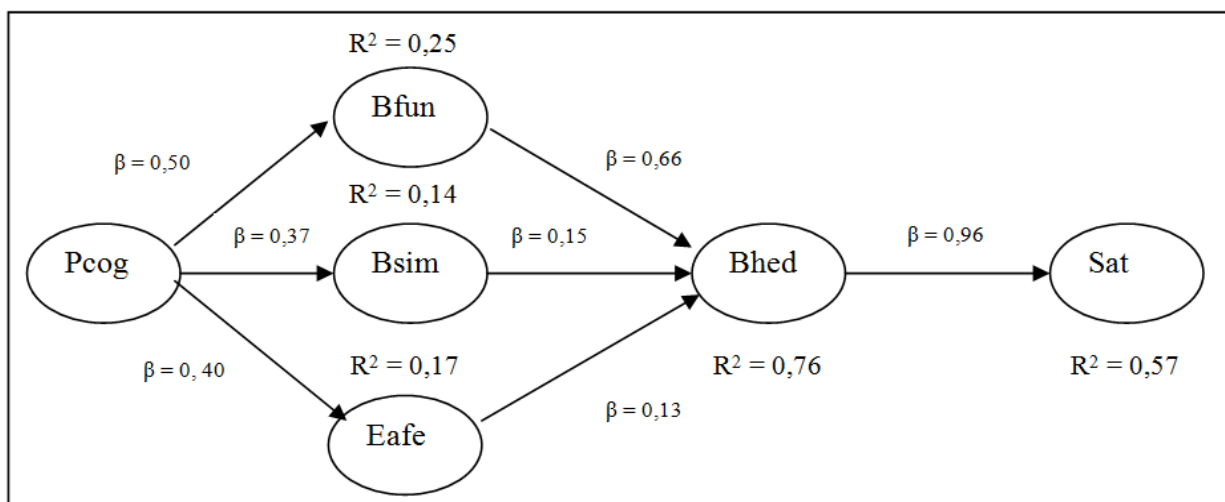
**H7:** The greater the hedonic benefit obtained by tourists at the tourism destination, the greater their level of satisfaction

**4. Methodology**

**4.1. Scale Construction, Survey Design and Data Collecting**

In order to identify the best scales to measure the different causal relationships proposed in this study with a good degree of reliability, validity and dimensionality, a process was developed at different stages (Deng and Dart, 1994). The first stage was to build scales with a degree of content validity. To this end, an exhaustive literature analysis was conducted, considering scales built in several previous studies: Beerli and Martín, (2004); Chi and Qu, (2008); Baloglu and Brinberg, (1997); Walmsley and Young, (1998); Babin and Darden, (1995); Park, (2004); Chitturi, Raghunathan and Mahajan, (2008); Sirgy, Grewal, Mangleburg, Park, Chon, Claiborne, Johar, and Berkman, (1997); Kim, Forsythe, Gu and Moon, (2002); Babin, Darden and Griffin, (1994); Babin and Darden, (1995); Mathwick, Malhotra and Rigdon, (2001) and Oh, Fiore and Jeoung, (2007). Later, a study of critical incidents was conducted, where people were requested to describe the factors that were part of the analyzed constructs. In the study, 40 people were selected through a non-random convenience sample. With these procedures, prior scales for affective assessment, functional benefit, symbolic benefit, cognitive perception, hedonic benefit and satisfaction were obtained. Subsequently, a second depuration process was conducted following the procedure recommended by De Wulf and Odekerken-Schröder, (2003). In practice, a series of focus groups were conducted, made up of habitual tourist from different areas of Chile, and also different interviews were held with tourism experts and sales executives from tourism agencies. These analyses enabled, on one hand, to add indicators that best reflected each of the dimensions within the context of the study, and on the other, to re-assess and/or eliminate indicators that were conflicting or redundant. Specifically, for this analysis, a modification of the method by Zaichkosky, (1985) was used. Each expert was required to qualify each of the items according to their dimension, considering three alternatives: clearly representative, somewhat representative and unrepresentative. Finally, it was decided to keep the items that had a high level of consensus (Lichtenstein, Netemeyer and Burton, 1990). With these analyses, the scales used (see Figure 1) to elaborate the survey were obtained.

**Figure 1: Causal Relations Results**



**Pcog:** Cognitive Perception; **Bfun:** Functional Benefit; **Bsim:** Symbolic Benefit; **Eafe:** Affective Evaluation; **Bhed:** Hedonic Benefit; **Sat:** Satisfaction

In the second stage, the final questionnaire was elaborated. With this preliminary quantitative questionnaire, a pre-test was conducted on a random sample of 40 people.

Subsequently, with this data, an exploratory factor analysis was performed, calculating the Cronbach's Alpha for each of the dimensions. With this prior analysis, the existence of each of the dimensions resulting from the preceding analysis was confirmed. The items were written as statements and were to be answered using a Likert 7 point scale. They were all written in such a way they could be understood and responded by all respondents. In the third stage, data was collected. The survey was administered to a total of 750 people, considering the last tourist destination they spent the night as reference. A non-random quota sampling was used, in proportion to tourist destination sites visited in Chile according to the National Tourism Service (SERNATUR, for its name in Spanish), whose data is presented in Table 1. The surveys were applied during the months of May and June, 2009, in Chilean cities such as Santiago, Arica, Iquique, La Serena, Viña del Mar, Curicó, Talca, Concepción and Temuco.

**Table 1: Sampling**

Tourist Sites with Most Overnight Stays Summer		SERNATUR Data	This Study	
Destinations	Types of Destinations	Percentage of Visits	No. of Surveys	%
Valparaíso and Viña del Mar La Serena and Coquimbo Valparaíso Concepción Algarrobo-Santo Domingo	Beaches	36%	270	36%
Calafquén Panguipulli and Ranco Villarrica and Pucón Budi and Temuco Llanquihue and Todos los Santos	Lagos	25%	187	25%
Santiago and Farellones Salto del Laja and Antuco Chillán and Las Trancas Chiloé Valdivia Rancagua and Cachapoal Valley La Campana National Park Elqui Valley	Other Tourist Attractions	39%	293	39%
<b>Total</b>		<b>100%</b>	<b>750</b>	<b>100%</b>

#### 4.2. Psychometric Data Analysis

With the resulting data, a psychometric analysis was performed to obtain scales with adequate reliability, validity and dimensionality. To this end, an exploratory factor analysis, confirmatory factor analysis (SEM) and several reliability analyses using Cronbach's Alpha, Construct Reliability and Variance Extracted (AVE). In order to identify the components that did not adhere to their dimension, factor analysis was performed on the main components using "Varimax" rotation (Hair, Anderson, Tatham and Black, 1998). According to this procedure, it was not necessary to eliminate the analyzed scale indicators (see Table 2), because they all had a good degree of unidimensionality, with factor loadings comfortably exceeding 0.4 (Larwood, Falbe, Kriger and Miesing, 1995).

**Table 2: Exploratory Factorial Analysis of Scales**

Sub-scale	Variable	Factorial weigh	Explained Variance (%)	Intrinsic Value
Satisfaction	Sat1	0.82	73.76	3.69
	Sat2	0.87		
	Sat3	0.88		
	Sat4	0.84		
	Sat5	0.88		
Cognitive perception of facilities	Cogin1	0.85	72.16	2.17
	Cogin2	0.83		
	Cogin3	0.87		
Cognitive perception of the environment	Cogma1	0.79	75.59	2.27
	Cogma2	0.91		
	Cogma3	0.90		
Cognitive perception of events and recreation	Cogeyr1	0.86	75.64	3.03
	Cogeyr2	0.88		
	Cogeyr3	0.91		
	Cogeyr4	0.83		
Affective Evaluation	Eafe1	0.89	72.46	2.90
	Eafe2	0.87		
	Eafe3	0.76		
	Eafe4	0.88		
Functional Benefit	Bfun1	0.86	73.55	2.94
	Bfun2	0.91		
	Bfun3	0.86		
	Bfun4	0.80		
Symbolic Benefit	Bsim1	0.88	74.97	2.99
	Bsim2	0.90		
	Bsim3	0.89		
	Bsim4	0.79		
Hedonic Benefit of Visual Attractions	Hedav1	0.88	74.85	2.99
	Hedav2	0.89		
	Hedav3	0.86		
	Hedav4	0.83		
Hedonic Benefit of Recreation	Hedesp1	0.79	69.51	2.78
	Hedesp2	0.88		
	Hedesp3	0.81		
	Hedesp4	0.85		
Hedonic Benefit for Escaping the routine	Hedesc1	0.84	68.18	2.04
	Hedesc2	0.91		
	Hedesc3	0.89		

Considering the different scales included in this study, a Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was carried out, through a structural equation model, to verify if the indicators or variables were adequate to achieve a good fit of the model. The three criteria proposed by Jöreskog and Sörbom, (1993) were considered. Statistic package SPSS AMOS.19 was used for this process. For this analysis, no indicators according to any of the three criteria were eliminated. The fit indices of the CFA were acceptable: IFI 0901; CFI 0.900; RMSEA 0.066; Normed  $\chi^2$  4.2. Once the optimal model was verified, the reliability of each of the scales included in this study was verified.

Three tests were applied for this: Cronbach's Alpha (limit 0.7), Composite Reliability Construct (limit 0.7) (Joreskog 1971), and Variance Extracted Analysis (limit 0.5) (Fornell and Larcker 1981). The results show that in all the cases the established minimum reliability parameters are met. Finally, content validity and construct validity were verified. The scales included in this analysis show an adequate degree of content validity because a deep literature review and a study of critical incidents with tourists were carried out. Later, the scale was rectified through focus groups and in-depth interviews with different tourism agency experts and business executives. On the other hand, in order to comply with construct validity, the rectified proposed scale was analyzed to verify if convergent validity and discriminatory validity were confirmed. Convergent validity was confirmed by observing that all standardized coefficients of the confirmatory factor analysis were statistically significant at 0.01 and over 0.5 (Bagozzi and Yi, 1988). To test discriminatory validity, the trust interval test (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988) was used. This test is to construct resulting trust intervals of the correlations between the different latent variables that make up the confirmatory factor analysis. According to this test, the model has discriminatory validity, because none of the trust intervals was equal to 1. Therefore, with this background, it may be concluded that the proposed model has a high degree of general validity.

### 5. Model Results

The hypotheses in this study were tested using a structural equation model (Bagozzi 1981). The fit indices of the model are acceptable: IFI 0.91; CFI 0.91; RMSEA 0.063; Normed  $\chi^2$  3.9. As we can see, through standardized  $\beta$ , the hedonic benefit has a direct and positive effect on tourists' satisfaction ( $\beta=0.96$ ;  $p<0.001$ ;  $R^2=0.57$ ). Functional benefit ( $\beta=0.66$ ;  $p<0.001$ ), symbolic benefit ( $\beta=0.15$ ;  $p<0.001$ ) and affective assessment ( $\beta=0.13$ ;  $p<0.001$ ) have a direct and positive hedonic benefit ( $R^2=0.76$ ). Finally, cognitive perception has a direct and positive effect on the functional benefit ( $\beta=0.50$ ;  $p<0.001$ ;  $R^2$  0.25), symbolic benefit ( $\beta=0.37$ ;  $p<0.001$ ;  $R^2$  0.14) and affective assessment ( $\beta=0.40$ ;  $p<0.001$ ;  $R^2$  0.17). These results fail to reject the 7 previously established hypotheses. As shown, 96% of tourist satisfaction is explained by the hedonic benefit. The hedonic benefit, in turn, is explained by 66% of the functional benefit, 15% of the symbolic benefit and 13% of the affective evaluation, evidencing the importance of the functional benefit compared to the other two variables (four times greater), in achieving tourists' hedonic benefits. In turn, cognitive perception explains 50% of the functional benefit, 37% of the symbolic benefit and 40% of the affective evaluation. Clearly there are significant and positive correlations between the constructs. Thus, the hedonic benefit may play a mediating role, as antecedent of satisfaction and consequence of the functional benefit, symbolic benefit and affective evaluation. It has been argued that the mediating effect is produced when a third variable (MeV), is able to influence the relation between the independent variable (IV) and another dependent variable (DV) (Barón and Kenny, 1986).

To test if the hedonic benefit plays a mediating role, three mediating structures were proposed: 1) functional benefit – hedonic benefit – satisfaction; 2) symbolic benefit – hedonic benefit – satisfaction; 3) affective evaluation - hedonic benefit - satisfaction. These structures were evaluated based on some mediating conditions, demonstrated through the analysis of two mediation paths (Baron and Kenny 1986). The following steps have been evaluated in isolation: if IV significantly affects MeV (1), if IV significantly affects DV, without the presence of MeV (2), if Me has a unique and significant effect on DV (3), or if assessed jointly, the effect of IV on DV decreases after incorporating MeV (4). A mediating role may exist in the hedonic benefit if the  $\beta$  estimates obtained as a result of the relationships (IV-MeV), (IV-DV) and (MeV-DV) (in the first three steps), and if value  $\beta$  obtained as the result of the relationship IV – DV, in the fourth case, decrease in the presence of MeV. In turn, it was necessary to apply the Sobel, Aroian and Goodman statistic measurement tests that prove the mediating strength between IV and DV (Anabila, Narteh and Kodua, 2012). Significant  $\beta$  values ( $p<0.001$ ) for all mediation models (first three steps) were obtained. Reduced impact of the independent variable on the dependent variable was observed (see  $\beta$  values in Table 6) in presence of the mediating variable (step four). Thus, when the functional benefit - hedonic benefit - satisfaction relation does not exist in presence of the hedonic benefit, the effect of the functional benefit on satisfaction is  $\beta=0.83$  ( $p<0.001$ ). On the other hand, the result obtained by incorporating the hedonic benefit as mediator is different, because the impact of the functional benefit on satisfaction is reduced to  $\beta=0.60$  ( $p<0.001$ ;  $\Delta$  0.23). The same situation applies for the symbolic benefit-hedonic benefit-satisfaction relation: Without the presence of the hedonic benefit, the impact  $\beta=0.61$  ( $p<0.001$ ); consideration of the hedonic benefit reduces the impact by 0.43 ( $\beta=0.18$ ;  $p<0.001$ ;  $\Delta$  0.43). Finally, in the affective evaluation – hedonic benefit – satisfaction, the impact without the hedonic benefit is  $\beta=0.56$  ( $p<0.001$ ), but with the hedonic benefit, it drops to  $\beta=0.37$  ( $p<0.001$ ;  $\Delta$  0.19).



Therefore it may be stated that the hedonic benefit absorbs much of the impact of the functional and symbolic benefits, as well as the affective evaluation on satisfaction, evidencing the importance of the mediating role of these relations. The Sobel, Aroian and Goodman statistic measurement tests, with their respective Z values  $\neq 0$  and low associated statistical significance, indicate strong evidence of mediation in the hedonic benefit of the assessed relations. According to the proposed theoretic model, calculations were made of the indirect effects. The indirect effects were produced due to the presence of a third variable in that relationship. The resulting standardized  $\beta$  values, are evidence of the direct and significant impact of the functional and symbolic benefits, as well as the affective assessment on tourist satisfaction at tourist destinations. The hedonic benefit is in the middle, between the indirect relationship between functional benefit-satisfaction, symbolic benefit-satisfaction and affective evaluation-satisfaction. In this case, the mediating effect and the indirect effect occur between a DV and an IV, although this coincidence does not always occur.

## **6. Discussion**

This study has shown that for the tourist, it is important to associate the desired satisfaction in their leisure experiences with the hedonic benefit obtained in the tourist destination. The hedonic benefit plays an important mediating role as an antecedent of satisfaction and perceived consequence of functional, symbolic benefits and emotional evaluation achieved and performed by tourists at the site. Tourists may have the best cognitive perception of the place, however, this becomes irrelevant if they fail to perceive the functional and symbolic benefits of it and even less if the affective evaluation of their stay is negative. For tourists to achieve the desired satisfaction levels at the destination, their leisure experiences must be as pleasant as possible. The state of pleasure could help tourists better connect the perception of functional, symbolic benefits and affective evaluation with satisfaction. In turn, obtaining functional and symbolic benefits and a positive affective evaluation by the tourist will help them better connect cognitive perception of place with the hedonic benefits they obtain from it. For the destination, it would be very useful for tourists to reach the desired level of satisfaction, as they could recommend it to others or return to it. The challenge for the main stakeholders of the tourism industry should be to ensure pleasure for the tourist as a means to achieve their satisfaction with the place. Notwithstanding, the destination must be perceived as a place that provides high standards functional benefits. This is more relevant for tourists than the perception of symbolic benefits and affective evaluation that could be made of the place.

To this end, availability and ease of access to basic facilities offered by the destination are of great help. Environment security provided at the site for participating in recreational events is also very helpful. Thus, the functional benefit becomes the main anchor for obtaining the hedonic benefit. An example would be the case of the city of Viña del Mar, Chile. Not only the combination "sun and sand" would be part of the functional benefit expected by the tourist, but also appearance and hygiene of its food and facilities, availability and ease of access to ATMs and expeditious availability of transportation. Inevitably, destinations are not perceived as places that give symbolic benefits. Therefore, the main stakeholders should know the leisure profile of visitors to make available products and services that will enhance their self-concept. It has been indicated that tourists pay attention to the views of others and thus try to find confirming signals within the destination. For example, the city of Sao Paulo in Brazil is not only characterized as "sun and sand" but also is internationally known for the scenic and cultural attributes of its surroundings. This way, the natural attraction "Pico de Jaragua" or the "Sao Paulo Art Museum" may become valid alternatives for tourists to strengthen their diverse self-concepts. In particular, the place's diversity of attractions will be helpful for tourists to strengthen their own selves through their active participation in leisure activities. In the same sense, it is very important for the destination to succeed in obtaining a positive affective evaluation by the tourist. To this end, it is important to consider that obtaining a positive evaluation, as long as the tourist has a good cognitive perception of the place. Proof of this is the city of Arica (Chile) that along with providing good facilities, an enviable environment and a variety of recreation events for visitors, it is a place that is known for being entertaining, very pleasant, which certainly helps to obtain a better affective evaluation of it. It is also significant that it is perceived that at the place, hedonic benefits are easily obtained, which are the main antecedents of satisfaction. For this, it is necessary for stakeholders to make every effort in taking care of the aesthetic details of the destination and to address both design and shapes to maintain a balance between natural and the man-made environment to help the visual aspect. Similarly, different entertainment amenities that allow tourists to escape the daily routine will be needed. Such is the case of Pucón (Chile) where not only events for distraction and escape from routine are available.

In this city, the main public and private stakeholders in the regional tourism industry have made a commendable effort to combine care for the environment with development by harmonizing even taxi cab and public transportation with the environment. From this perspective, this study will serve as input for structural analysis of tourist destination marketing for both local authorities and companies, as the main perceptions that influence the tourist satisfaction during the visit to a tourist destination are disclosed. Tourism marketing strategies should prioritize the features and attributes associated with major products and services offered by the site. It is vitally important for authorities to be able to establish public policies with the mission of supporting destination marketing strategies in this direction. For academics of tourism marketing, this work is an important conceptual point of reference, since the mediating effect of hedonic benefit is evaluated as an antecedent of satisfaction and consequently the functional and symbolic benefits, as well as the affective evaluation. Additionally, the role of cognitive perception as an antecedent of functional and symbolic benefit, and affective evaluation is analyzed. An important limitation of the study is circumscribed to the sample considered for conducting the survey, for example, it does not allow inference of the tourism behavior of families or senior groups. Another limitation is the peculiarity of the geographical area where these surveys are applied (tourist destinations in Chile) that, due to national geographic characteristics, could make it difficult to extrapolate results to other destinations outside this country. This restriction leaves open the possibility for replicating this model elsewhere in the world, mainly in Latin America, to verify the usefulness of the proposed model.

## 7. References

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