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## THE APPLICATION OF PATH MODELLING IN THE ANALYSIS OF CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR IN THE CULTURAL TOURISM MARKET

**ABSTRACT.** The aim of this article is to present consumer behaviour in the tourism market, i.e. behaviour constituting the compound effect of an individual's multi-stage reaction to multiple determinants, crowned with the after-feelings the consumer begins to develop at the earliest stage of a tourist trip. A satisfied tourist is one who recommends a given destination and expresses their will to return there. This paper seeks to present "path analysis" as a research tool used to analyse the determinants surrounding a tourist's intent to revisit a particular tourist destination. The results of the conducted research confirm both the usefulness of path analysis modelling and the undeniable influence of the preparation for a trip on the satisfaction gained by a cultural tourist.

**Keywords:** path analysis, tourist behaviour, cultural tourism.

### Introduction

The primary participants of the tourism industry are tourists. Thus, investigating their behaviour seems justified in every respect. With the huge supply of tourist products and attractions, consumer behaviour is the main source of verification of the tourist industry's market undertakings and operations. In the contemporary economy it is the tourist who, through his/her decision-making processes, acknowledges or questions the actual validity of decisions and actions undertaken by the supply-end intermediaries. Hence, the knowledge of the consumer's behaviour in the market is a key factor in determining the success of each and every service provider.

In order to find out about a tourist's intent to return to a given destination, this paper seeks to use "path analysis". Pertinent analysis is presented with the use of data obtained from the author's own research conducted in 2010 among tourists whose aim in visiting Krakow was closely linked to the cultural assets the city offers. The selected research group drew the author's attention to the issue of cultural tourism and the profile of its participants.

## 1. Literature Review

### 1.1. *Consumer behaviour in the tourist market (tourist behaviour)*

The question of consumer behaviour in the tourist market has already been described by, inter alios, Middleton (1996), Swarbrooke & Horner (2003), and Crompton (1992). The term *tourist behaviour* is understood as a consumer's entire set of (specific psycho-physical predispositions) actions, activities and conduct, connected with making choices in given economic, social and demographic conditions. Whereas the object of consumer behaviour is the individual who carries the status of a consumer (tourist), and who represents not only themselves, but also their households, the subject of this behaviour is the process of satisfying tourist needs which become revealed when the consumer starts using the functional values of tourist products in the given tourism region while on a trip. Consequently, the decision-making process referring to the tourist trip (i.e. the process of satisfying needs) consists of the following five stages: feeling the need to travel; searching for information, forming choice options for the possibilities of satisfying the needs and their assessment, the purchase of tourist products, and the feelings upon satisfying tourist needs.

The first three stages relate to the so-called pre-imaginary trip, while the fourth stage concerns the actual trip itself. During the actual trip, tourists behave according to their intellectual and emotional experiences. On completion of the trip, the tourist recalls what he or she has observed, heard and experienced, which represents the so-called "re-call" stage of the trip. A tourist's behaviour in respect to the four aforementioned stages of a given trip results from a combination of numerous factors (Niemczyk, 2012d), whilst the fifth and final stage draws on substantial scientific research which elaborates on the first four stages (Middleton, 1996; Swarbrooke & Horner, 2003; Niemczyk, 2010).

The tourist makes an overall assessment and evaluation of the total investment, with respect to their permanent place of residence. This estimation is made based on the comparison of the benefits derived from the trip (pleasure, satisfaction) with the actual financial costs. In this way, a tourist measures the overall value of the trip purchased. This assessment is conducted before, as well as during the trip. It is also carried on after consumption takes place, when the individual enters the re-called trip stage.

The re-called trip stage is a comparison made between the expected trip and the real trip. This is based, comparatively, on tourist's expectations when choosing a given destination (Hughes, 1991). As a result of the comparison two reactions can be identified, revolving around satisfaction or dissatisfaction related to the conducted trip, both of which determine the future behaviour of the consumer.

A satisfied and content tourist is an individual who has the opportunity to be able to satisfy his or her individual wants. Such a situation occurs when the expectations of a tourist towards the trip are at least equal to what they encounter during the real trip at the place of reception (Kieźel, 2008; Mazurek-Łopacińska, 2005). Therefore, satisfaction is the feeling which results from the trip, and the state which is actually formed during the trip.

The degree of satisfaction exhibited in tourist behaviour usually occurs in the form of their loyalty to a given destination. Loyalty is a complex concept which is difficult to define unequivocally. A customer's loyal behaviour towards a tourist destination is usually analysed in two categories: recommendation and return (Baker & Crompton, 2000; Bigne *et al.*, 2001; O'Leary & Deegan, 2005). The loyalty of a tourist towards a destination might be interpreted as the degree to which a tourist consistently retains a positive attitude towards a place and maintains that interest despite alternative incentives supporting the choice of other destinations. Loyalty is a measure of the highest involvement and fidelity of the consumer.

Loyal customers use the services of a tourist destination more often, spend more money than they would in their regular place of residence in the equivalent time, recommend tested tourist products more often by word of mouth, are less likely to accept a competitor's offer, and are faithful to their service providers. A tourist expresses their acceptance for their chosen area of stay or reception, as well as for the tourist service providers of that area. Creators of destinations strive to retain the largest number of satisfied, loyal customers. Such visitors are extremely valuable for a destination, as keeping them is easier and cheaper (Kotler, 2005; Griffin, 1997) than gaining new ones.

Yet, as suggested earlier, memories of a trip may also prove to be negative. This is connected with the so-called post-purchase dissonance, herein referred to as post-trip dissonance. This is a state of tourist dissatisfaction which occurs on returning to the place of regular residence, but can also take place during the trip itself. Generally, in such situations a tourist's expectations towards the trip are much higher than the values offered by the destination. As a result a tourist feels dissatisfied, disappointed, annoyed and, sometimes, even angry because of their decision to go on a particular trip.. The awareness of the negative features surrounding the purchased product and of the potential positive features of a product that was not chosen further reinforces the post-trip dissonance. The probability of this occurrence and the level of its intensity are determined by a number of factors, including the importance of the tourist's decisions, their level of irreversibility and other (Niemczyk, 2010).

To sum up the considerations over the final stage of the decision-making process concerning a tourist trip, it should be stressed that the consumption of all product components has a significant impact on the image created in the tourist's consciousness. It would not, however, be unbiased to state that each component has equal impact on the perception of an individual. The focus of a new form of tourism on 3E values (*entertainment, excitement, education*) provides after-trip impressions that are not only generated by "hard" tourist product components, but most of all by "soft" ones, such as the atmosphere at the place of stay, as well as the attitude of the locals towards visitors. This is also clearly visible in the tourist value chain analysis (Weiermair, 1997), where the initial greeting and first impressions override the impact of the "proper" tourist service (Niemczyk & Seweryn, 2009).

## ***1.2. Cultural tourism***

In order to present the intent of cultural tourists to visit a particular place, it is again justified to present the issue of cultural tourism. The definition of cultural tourism was formed by various authors and institutions, and in the opinion of Richards (2001, p. 7) entails "not only the experience and consumption of a cultural past and historical products, but also those which include the contemporary, cultural way of life i.e. food, clothing religion and others. Cultural tourism can therefore be regarded as covering both heritage tourism and arts tourism". Fyall and Garrod (1998) believe that cultural tourism is a type of economic activity which, by means of cultural heritage, attempts to stimulate tourist demand. However, Poria *et al.* (2001) claim that it is a phenomenon based more on the motivation and perception of the visitors than on the attributes of attraction as such.

Furthermore, Kowalczyk (2008, p. 13) understands cultural tourism as "all forms of tourist behaviour connected with their authentic interest in cultural heritage (monuments, folklore, sites of important events, etc.) and their participation in widely understood contemporary cultural life." It can generally be stated – as Niemczyk (2013, p. 24) points out – that cultural tourism is a kind of travel connected with a voluntary departure from one's place of residence during one's time off work, for a continuous period of not more than 12

consecutive months. This involves the participant's greater or lesser awareness<sup>1</sup> of the place he or she is visiting, with culture – the core component of the tourist product – as the pivotal element of journey planning. As a result, the reason behind travelling is to experience the cultural wealth of the place of reception. That notion comprises elements such as: becoming acquainted with new places, communities and cultures, satisfying interest in art, architecture and history, participating in cultural and artistic events, “returning to one's roots”, and having an encounter with the *sacrum*. Thus, the tourist comes into personal contact with the specific surroundings – in particular the cultural surroundings, but also the natural ones – satisfying a wide spectrum of needs, all centered around the cultural aspect of the target place.

A new category of cultural tourism, i.e. creative tourism, is worth mentioning here. This type of travel is oriented not only towards the observation and consumption of cultural experiences, but also towards the engagement of cultural tourists in activities which give them the opportunity to develop their creative potential. This enables tourists to gain new skills at their choice of destination (e.g. through participation in different workshops), and to establish contacts with local communities whose members create an authentic culture (Richards & Raymond, 2000; Salman & Uygur, 2010; Durmaz *et al.*, 2010).

Lastly, the profile of an average participant should be mentioned, with respect to cultural tourism. Although there are many more categories of cultural tourism described in the literature (Niemczyk, 2013), it is worth pointing out here that the average cultural tourist is usually an individual who (e.g. McKercher & Du Cros, 2002; Silberberg, 2003; Kerstetter, Confer, and Graefe, 2001):

- holds a university education qualification;
- earns above the average minimum income and spends more while on holiday than in the regular place of residence in the equivalent time;
- are contract workers;
- a significant group of cultural tourist participants consists of students and pensioners;
- usually represents a high level of culture and is knowledgeable about the destination;
- is more often female than male.

In the light of the above considerations, it is interesting to research into what factors make that particular group of tourists revisit particular locations. Those determinants of the intent to return to a given destination will be presented below with the use of structural equation modelling.

## 2. Methodology

The analysis of structural equations (so-called *path analysis*) measures the direct and indirect interaction between variables and the degree to which certain variability is determined by individual causes. Path analysis is a recursive model and only allows a one-way cause relationship (Konarski, 2009). It is characterised by the following rules, resulting from a causal ordering of variables (Gołata, 1992, p. 15):

1. The dependent variable Y appears last in the chain of causal ordering. Variables causally subsequent to Y should not be considered.
2. In estimating the influence of any variable X on Y, all variables causally subsequent to X should be set.

The following formula presents the above rules:

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<sup>1</sup> [A.N.'s note] Typology of cultural tourists proposed by McKercher, Du Cros specifies five types of tourists, including the purposeful cultural tourists, who show high level of cognitive perception of the cultural content and the incidental cultural tourists, who undertake certain cultural activity while on a trip but give it little cognitive character. More in: Niemczyk (2013, pp. 24-30).

$$X_a \rightarrow X \rightarrow X_b \rightarrow Y$$

where:

$X_a$  – cluster of variables preceding  $X$ ;

$X_b$  – cluster of variables subsequent to  $X$ ;

$Y$  – dependent variable.

The starting point for the path analysis is a qualitative diagram presenting the relationships between variables. The dependencies and relationship between the variables are created on the basis of the researcher's own knowledge. It is crucial to properly identify the type of variables introduced into the structural model. These include the following variables: observable, latent, exogenous and endogenous (Cwalina, 2000).

In path analysis the cause and effect relationships between variables is expressed by means of a path coefficient. The coefficient informs which part of the variability of a dependent variable  $X_i$  (measured with the standard deviation of the standardised variable, which means it is equal to a unit) is expressed by the variability of the independent variable  $X_j$  assuming the constancy of the remaining factors (Szwarc, 2005). In other words, the path coefficient informs us as to what extent variable  $X_j$  (consecutive) changes when variable  $X_i$  (causal) changes by one unit.

It is claimed that the path analysis modelling outgrows the regression analysis and is a more proper method used for analyzing the causal relationship between the variables, especially the qualitative ones, which do not meet the classical assumptions of regression (Sagan, 2003). In this paper, the author chooses path analysis as the research tool to examine the theory, since the structure of causal dependencies to be verified occurs only as a consequence of that theory.

The assumption of the research, undertaken for the purpose of this article, was based on the identification of those determinants which are of importance in a cultural tourist's decision to return to a given, previously visited destination. It was also aimed at finding the determining dependencies between them, as well as the future intent of cultural tourists to return. Simultaneously, the direct, indirect and total effects are also specified. In the hypothetical model (see *Figure 1*), determinants  $X$  and  $Y$  were specified, where  $X$  are variables influencing  $Y$ , with  $Y$  being the dependent variable of the intent to return:

1. The role of culture is understood here as the importance of cultural assets when planning to travel to a tourist destination (Niemczyk, 2013).
2. Preparations for the trip are understood as substantive preparations, such as learning about the traditions and history of a visited place and learning certain vocabulary, expressions characteristic to a destination, which appear to be of a specific domain among those who travel in order to become acquainted with the culture at the choice of destination (more in e.g. Niemczyk, 2012c, where it is shown that the distance between the place of residence and the destination influences the way a cultural purpose trip is organized and pursued).
3. Quality is understood as the assessment of a city's components (here: the tourist product), which can be specified based on the view expressed among cultural tourist polled. The city's components include the core product as well as the expanded product (more in e.g. Niemczyk, 2012b, where the assessment of particular components of the city of Krakow as a regional cultural tourism product was presented from the perspective of different groups of tourists – domestic, international and those distinguished according to their motive behind participation in cultural tourism).
4. Satisfaction is treated as the level of fulfilment gained during the stay at a given tourist destination.

The model (see *Figure 1*) involves one exogenous variable  $x_1$  and four endogenous variables  $y_1, y_2, y_3, y_4$ . Structural coefficients linking the exogenous variables to endogenous variables are marked with  $\gamma_{ij}$ , where the first subscript is reserved for endogenous variable, and the second subscript defines exogenous variable. The structural parameters linking endogenous variables to other of the same kind are marked with  $\beta_{ij}$ , where the first subscript refers to a dependent variable, whilst the second – to independent variable. Residual components of the dependent variables are marked respectively  $\zeta_1, \zeta_2, \zeta_3, \zeta_4$  (Konarski, 2009, p. 42).

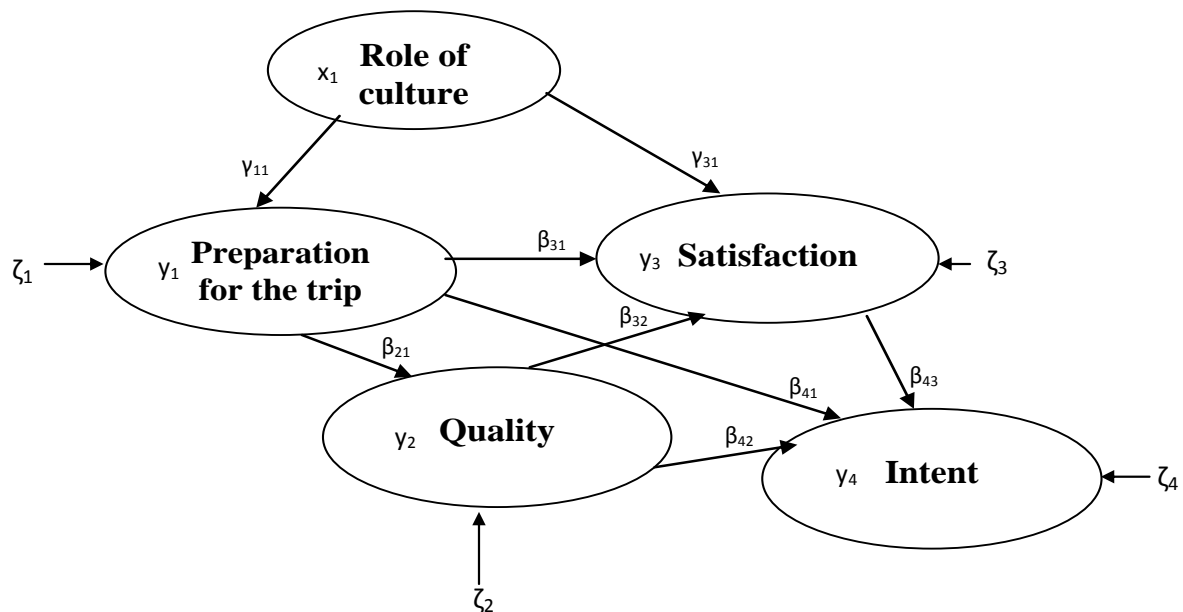


Figure 1. A path diagram revealing the determinants of a cultural tourist's future intent  
*Source:* Own compilation.

The above diagram can be described by the following set of equations:

$$\begin{aligned} y_1 &= \gamma_{11}x_1 + \zeta_1 \\ y_2 &= \beta_{21}y_1 + \zeta_2 \\ y_3 &= \gamma_{31}x_1 + \beta_{31}y_1 + \beta_{32}y_2 + \zeta_3 \\ y_4 &= \beta_{41}y_1 + \beta_{42}y_2 + \beta_{43}y_3 + \zeta_4 \end{aligned}$$

In order to verify the above dependencies, the findings of the research carried out by the author between May and October 2010 have been integrated into this work. The evidence is empirical and was collected by means of personal interviews. The author's questionnaire surveyed 600 tourists visiting Krakow with the purpose of: visiting monuments, museums (the first sample group), taking part in 'high culture' events (the second sample group), and also to encounter the *sacrum* (the third sample group). The sampling selection was based on quota sampling (Brzeziński, 2003) and equal in number for each sample group, specified by the motive of participation in cultural tourism. The tourists participating in the research were singled out randomly in selected parts of Krakow<sup>2</sup>.

In the statistical procedure carried out for the purpose of the aforementioned research, observable exogenous and endogenous variables underwent a procedure of standardisation as some of the qualitative indicators were presented on the ordinal and nominal scale (Sroka,

<sup>2</sup> More in Niemczyk, 2013.

2009). With the use of the SEPATH module (STATISTICA), path analysis was applied to determine the dependencies between particular variables,<sup>3</sup> concerning their occurrence and strength, as well as direction (Korol & Szczuciński, 2005).

### 3. Results and discussion

Out of the accepted hypothetical dependencies between the variables used in the model there was only one which proved to be irrelevant, i.e. *The role of culture vs. Satisfaction*, verified negatively – see dashed line in *Figure 2*. This implies that there are no grounds for the claim that the significance of culture in making a decision to travel to a place has any impact on the satisfaction of a cultural tourist. It cannot, however, be said that the above element does not influence satisfaction, yet in this particular model such a dependency is revealed as statistically irrelevant. The remaining relationships are statistically relevant at a level where  $p < 0.05$  (see *Table 1*).

Table 1. Selected results of structural equation modelling – direct, indirect and total effects of interplay between variables

Variables	Parameter $\beta$	Standard error	Statistics $t$	$p$
<b>Role of culture → preparation for the trip</b>	0.997	0.004	249.25	0.000
<b>Role of culture → satisfaction</b>	0.440	0.462	0.952	0.341
<b>Preparation for the trip → satisfaction</b>				
- direct effect	0.722	0.303	2.380	0.017
- indirect effect	0.440	-	-	-
- total effect	1.162	-	-	-
<b>Preparation for the trip → quality</b>	0.833	0.018	46.28	0.000
<b>Preparation for the trip → intent</b>				
- direct effect	0.471	0.051	9.235	0.000
- indirect effect	0.426	-	-	-
- total effect	0.897	-	-	-
<b>Satisfaction → intent</b>	0.294	0.052	5.653	0.000
<b>Quality → satisfaction</b>	0.529	0.057	9.281	0.000
<b>Quality → intent</b>				
- direct effect	0.103	0.031	3.323	0.001
- indirect effect	0.155	-	-	-
- total effect	0.258	-	-	-

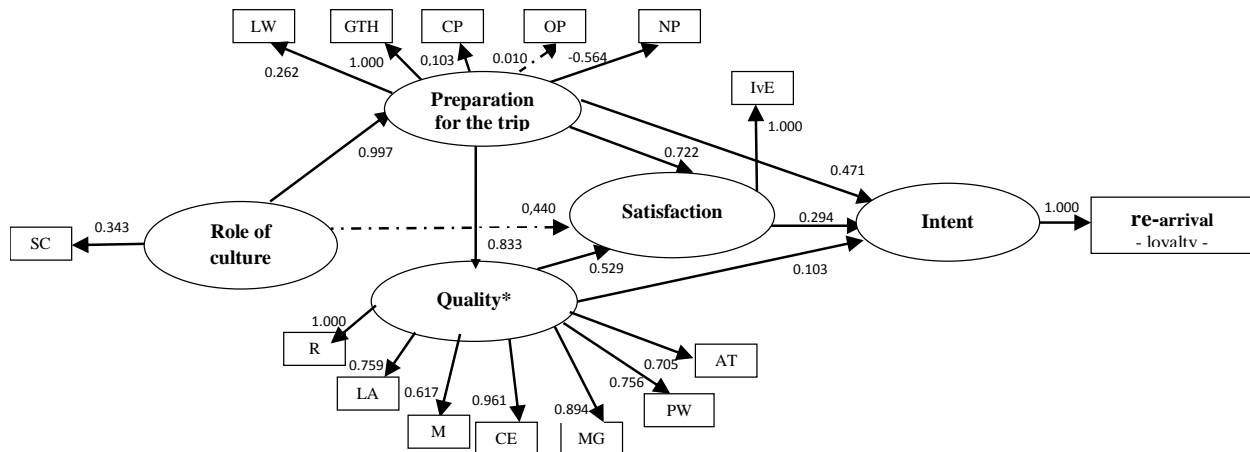
Source: Own compilation.

Out of the variables involved in the analysis, preparation for the trip proves to be the most influential factor in determining the intent to repeat the visit ( $\beta = 0.471$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ). The subsequent factor contributing to the intent is the satisfaction with the stay ( $\beta = 0.294$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ) and the quality of the product, here – the assessment of the components of the city as a product ( $\beta = 0.103$ ;  $p = 0.001$ ).

The received results (see *Table 1* and *Figure 2*) allow to observe some other dependencies, too. Preparation for a trip has a positive influence over quality, with the assessment of a given city, and the assessment of its cultural components, in particular ( $\beta =$

<sup>3</sup> In the accepted model, the latent exogenous variable represents the role of culture; subsequently, latent endogenous variables are: preparation for the trip, quality, satisfaction and intent.

0.833;  $p = 0.000$ ) and satisfaction with the stay ( $\beta = 0.722$ ;  $p = 0.017$ ). Moreover, path analysis enabled the exposure of the positive influence and significance of culture in both planning the trip and preparing for it ( $\beta = 0.997$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ). It is worth highlighting that the analysed model is a structural equation model for cultural tourists, a specific group of travellers whose preparation for the trip is usually content-wise, which later results in greater satisfaction with the trip, which the results of the model emphasise.



**\* assessment of cultural components**

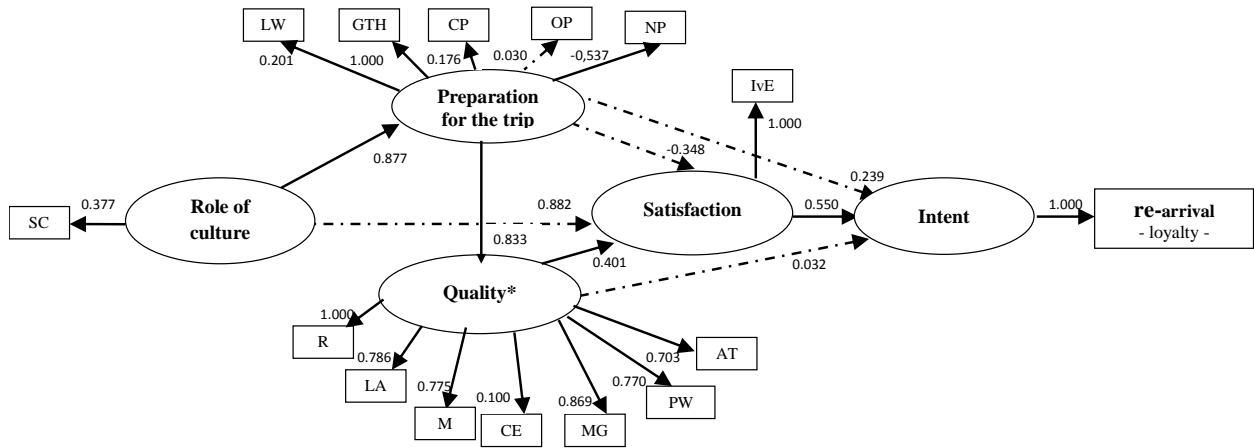
- LW – learning a few words in the local language
- GTH – getting acquainted with the traditions and history of the visited place
- CP – checking prices at the destination
- OP – other preparations
- NP – no preparation
- IvE – post-impressions vs. expectations
- SC – significance of culture in planning the trip

- R – residents
- LA – landscape/architecture
- M – monuments
- CE – cultural events
- MG – museums, galleries
- PW – places of worship
- AT – atmosphere of the city

Figure 2. A path model of relationships between the role of culture, preparation for the trip, quality, satisfaction and future intent of cultural tourists  
 Source: Own compilation.

On the assumption that motives differentiate the behaviour of tourists (Niemczyk, 2012a; 2013), path analysis was conducted for sample tourist segments separately. Therefore, for tourists who want to get acquainted with the cultural heritage of a city i.e. monuments, see *Figure 3*, for those participating in highly rated cultural events, see the events segment in *Figure 4*, while for those who travelled for religious and pilgrimage reasons, see *Figure 5* – the segment representing religion.

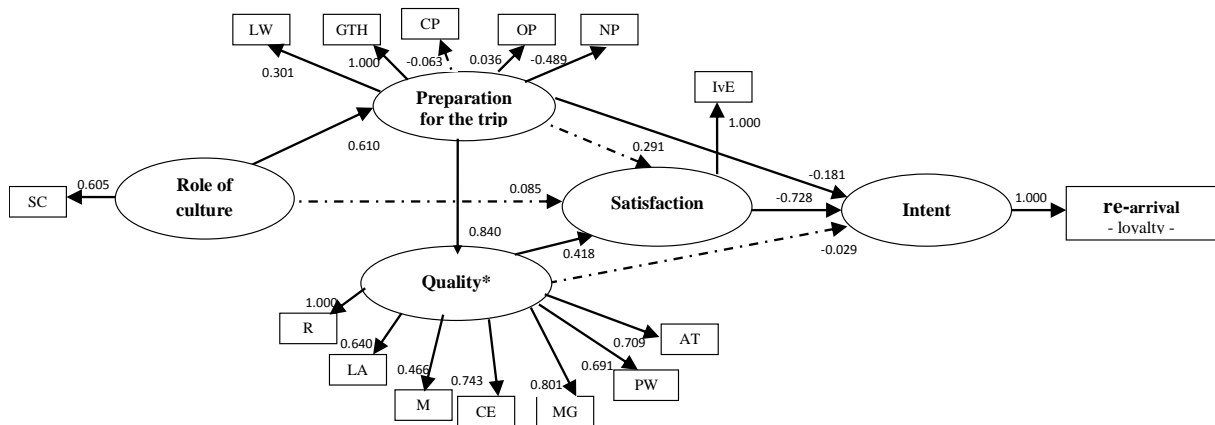




Abbreviations analogical to Figure 2.

Figure 3. A path model of relationships between the role of culture, preparation for the trip, quality, satisfaction and future intent of cultural tourists represented by the monuments segment

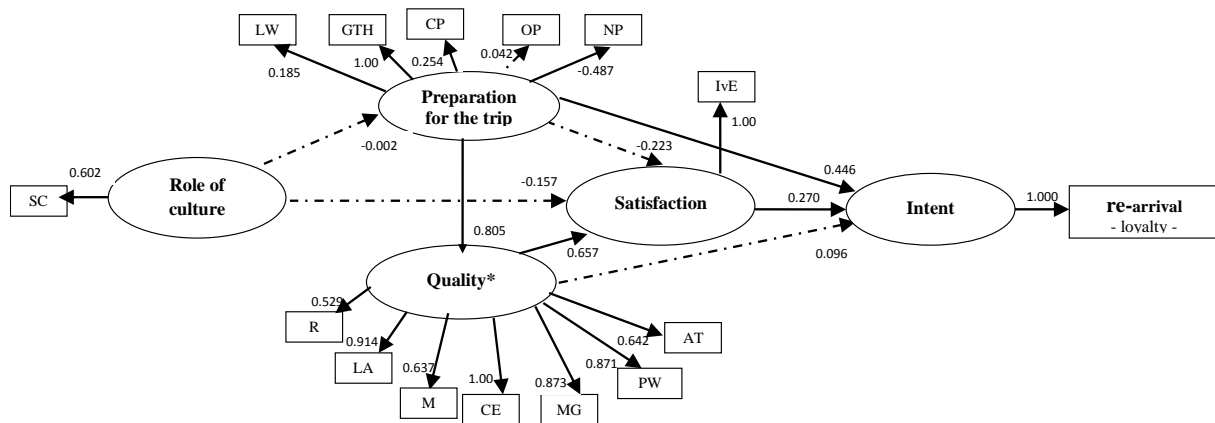
Source: Own compilation.



Abbreviations analogical to Figure 2.

Figure 4. A path model of relationships between the role of culture, preparation for the trip, quality, satisfaction and future intent of cultural tourists represented by the events segment

Source: Own compilation.



Abbreviations analogical to *Figure 2*.

Figure 5. A path model of relationships between the role of culture, preparation for the trip, quality, satisfaction and future intent of cultural tourists represented by the religion segment  
Source: Own compilation.

The results generated from the application of these structural models for particular cultural tourist segments disclose a greater number of irrelevant dependencies between the variables used in the model than in the case of the entire population of sampled cultural tourists. The largest number was observed in the monuments segment.

The comparison of the above models (see *Figure 3-5*) leads to the following conclusions:

- The importance of culture when planning a trip is the highest in the events segment, whereas the lowest in the monuments segment;
- In all three segments preparation for a trip is observable (what is observed is the reverse dependency between the preparation for a trip and lack of such preparation);
- Also, in all three segments, getting to know the tradition and history of the visited place is the most significant factor in the preparation-for-a-trip stage;
- What is particularly characteristic of the tourists travelling with religious-pilgrimage purpose is the investigation into prices applicable in a given destination, done as a part of preparation process before the trip takes place;
- Determining factors in the assessment of the quality of product (city) in the three segments are: locals, museums and galleries in the monuments segment, locals, museums and galleries and cultural events in the events segment and cultural events, landscape/architecture, museums and galleries and places of worship in the religious segment;
- In all three segments preparation for a trip influences the quality of the product to a similar extent (path coefficients are within the limits from 0.805 to 0.840; for  $p = 0.000$ );
- The quality of the product appeared to be the most influential factor determining the satisfaction with the stay in all segments. Path coefficients beginning with the highest value, are:  $\beta = 0.657$  for the religion segment,  $\beta = 0.418$  for the events segment, and  $\beta = 0.401$  for the monuments segment; for  $p = 0.000$ .

When analysing the major problem of modelling, we can observe, that the most influential factors related to the intent of a tourist to repeat a visit are:

- monuments segment – satisfaction ( $\beta = 0.550$ ;  $p = 0.000$ );
- events segment – satisfaction but with negative influence ( $\beta = -0.728$ ;  $p = 0.000$ );
- religion segment – preparation for the trip ( $\beta = 0.446$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ).

What should be considered is the negative value of path coefficient observed in the events segment. Upon analysis of the data gathered from tourists representing this segment, it is concluded that for the majority (85%) of visitors it was not their first time in Cracow, which suggests a degree of loyalty. Approximately  $\frac{3}{4}$  of tourists surveyed in this segment declared that their expectations were met and fulfilled, and declared their intent to return. In the light of the latter, the negative dependency gained from the application of path analysis actually reveals that, with higher satisfaction, fewer people are certain to repeat their visit; a mere nine people expressed the opinion that they would not return, therefore customer feedback was distributed between those who intended to repeat the visit and those who were reluctant. As a result, it can be stated that returning (loyal) tourists who are aware of a particular destination, (package tour) plan to return. First-time visitors reveal uncertainty, though do not tend to declare their unwillingness to come again. Considering the data gathered, it is advisable to be wary of the results obtained for this segment in the context of determinants of a repeated visit. Apparently, the results received constitute the source of information on the subject matter. However, repeating this kind of research, possibly on a larger research sample, would enable verification of the disclosed research problem. The results obtained in this way in the events segment may become the triggering factor for subsequent research.

## Conclusion

The results of the conducted research confirm, on the one hand, the usefulness of path analysis modelling, while on the other, the undeniable influence of the preparation of a trip on the satisfaction gained by a cultural tourist at the place of stay. It is that satisfaction which later results in a future intent to repeat the visit. Such a situation is observed in the case of three specific cultural-tourist segments. Nevertheless, the strength of influence does not have the same impact in each case.

Managers engaged in areas of tourist receptions and destinations should draw useful lessons from the analysis carried out and apply them while performing their respective, local-level tasks. What should be considered in the first place is good communication with both current and prospect tourists, who after gaining compelling information about a given destination may start appropriate preparations for a visit. As mentioned earlier, identification of consumer behaviour is the key to success for each supply-end intermediary whose ability should be to 'listen' to the customers and above all take care of maintaining good relations with the already satisfied customers. Establishing good rapport may result in tourists' loyalty, which should be pursued by the creators of tourist products as something beneficial.

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