Exploring Cruise Passengers' Demographics, Experience, and Satisfaction with Cruising the Western Caribbean

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Abstract

Each year millions of people vacation aboard cruise ships, some carrying thousands of passengers and crew members. These ships are small, floating cities that offer many options for food and entertainment and calling at various ports in the Caribbean. This study aims to explore cruise passengers experience and their satisfaction. Exploratory factor analysis was performed and revealed that the "environment factor" had the most influence on cruise passengers' experience. Subsequently, a multiple regression was conducted to identify variables that affect passengers' satisfaction; clean unpolluted environments, and sun-sea-sand continue to be the top variables affecting tourists' satisfaction in the Caribbean. Based on these findings recommendations are made to the cruise companies and Caribbean governments in order to have more effective marketing campaigns and to retain and/or attract cruise passengers through the offering of positive means in the cruise experience.

Keywords

Caribbean cruise, Demographics, Experience, Satisfaction, Cruise passengers.

Introduction

The cruise industry is the fastest-growing category in the leisure travel market. Since 1980, the industry has experienced an average annual passenger growth rate of approximately 7.2% per annum. A record of just about 20 million passengers in the world cruised in 2011, with 11.6 million North American guests. Coupled with an annual occupancy percentage that exceeded 103% in 2011, this annual passenger growth for 2011 shows an industry where demand continues to surpass supply, even in trying economic environments. In 2011 alone, 12 new ships debuted from Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA) member lines, with guest capacities ranging from 162 to 3,652 passengers sailing the world's waters for the first time. According to the Florida-Caribbean Cruise Association (FCCA), the industry's growth is headlined by the Caribbean, which continues to rank as the dominant cruise destination, accounting for 39.8% of all itineraries in 2011, versus 41.3% in 2010, 37.02% in 2009, 37.25% in 2008, 41.02% in 2007, and 46.69% in 2006. Passenger numbers continue to remain consistent and high for the Caribbean, despite other rising cruise destinations. Carnival Cruise Lines is the largest cruise line in the world based on passengers carried (3.8 million in 2009) and is the flagship brand of Carnival Corporation & plc. A total of six new ships will be added this year 2013 with again in passenger capacity of 14,074 including the 3,600 passenger Royal Princess, the 4,010 passenger Norwegian Breakaway, 2,192-guest AIDA Stella, and 3,502 berth MSC Preziosa. Looking out further, 13 more new cruise ships will add 39,297 lower berths or 8.9% to passenger capacity by the end of 2015 and is expected to generate $3.2 billion more in annual revenue for the cruise industry. The worldwide cruise passenger market can be seen in Table 1.

Despite the increasing research interest on cruising, there is rather limited research on cruise visitors' experience in Caribbean ports of call. To address past research negligence, this study attempts to provide a better understanding of cruise passengers experience and satisfaction. There are about 32 islands in the Caribbean that are populated. Many of them have developed their infrastructure and service sectors. The main cities where the cruise ports are located offer a wide range of tourist attractions, shopping, entertainment, restaurants, and bars. The Caribbean also builds its distinctive image and identity on its sun, sea, and sand. The history of the region dates back to the middle of the 15th century and its known for its rich cultural history. The region has a wide diversity of resources that are suitable for tourism, each at varying degrees of development or attractiveness. Tourism products in the cities range from cultural heritage attractions, urban visitor resources and recreational, and health resources. In terms of its architecture, the Caribbean has retained a number of historic buildings and areas that represents its past, duty-free shopping, dining, and entertainment in the Caribbean are also emerging to become a price competitive shopping destination with international quality. The main cities have developed many shopping centers including new retail formats such as hypermarkets, duty-free shopping outlets, and discount stores located at the cruise ports. Parks, recreational facilities, and the rain forests have also been promoted to attract eco-tourists from the recreational and leisure segments.

While the development of the cruise business signify an extremely successful business model, the cruise sector also faces several significant challenges, such as an exceptionally competitive commercial environment, concerns about over-capacity, concerns about the marine environments, and the destinations ability to cater for new larger ships. Similarly, while destinations seek to embrace the industry's expansion, they also have to manage the often diverse needs of communities at the same time as protecting the local environment and minimizing any costs associated with being a sustainable cruise destination (Lester and Weeden, 2004). Of further consideration here is the relationship between the number and size of vessels, with effective port planning and collaborative harbor expansion

Table 1: Worldwide cruise passengers market

Year	North America	Europe	Rest of the world	Total cruise passengers	% growth worldwide
2000	4,364,470	1,947,780	901,750	7,214,000	22.94
2002	5,882,000	2,162,500	605,500	8,650,000	19.91
2004	6,328,300	2,824,200	1,307,500	10,460,000	20.92
2006	7,263,630	3,241,620	1,500,750	12,006,000	14.78
2008	9,546,295	4,260,330	1,972,375	15,779,000	31.43
2010	11,144,705	4,973,670	2,302,625	18,421,000	16.74
2012	11,616,000	6,284,000	2,160,000	20,060,000	8.90

Source: Cruise Line International Association, Florida Caribbean Cruise Association, Cruise Market Watch

hugely important for managing cruise activity, especially in popular destinations (McCarthy, 2006). Moreover, the industry's continued investment in resort-style ships highlights the enclave nature of these leisure spaces (Wood, 2000), calling into question whether it is the ship or the destination that is important to passenger satisfaction. Indeed, while destinations are integral to the cruise concept and remain a prominent factor in consumer decision-making when selecting a cruise vacation (CLIA, 2008), it is argued by some that itineraries and ports of call are playing a reduced role in the overall consumer experience (Keynote, 2008).

Literature Review: Cruise Passengers Experience

The typical Caribbean cruises make calls at different ports in the islands. All places and landscapes are individually experienced, as it is the individuals alone that see them through the lens of their attitudes, experiences, and intentions and from their unique circumstances (Lowenthal, 1961). Places are differentiated because they involve a concentration of intentions, attitudes, purposes and experience. Steele (1981) notes that the experience of place can never really be described as simply a function of its physical attributes. According to Steele (1981), the types of place experience are; immediate feelings and thoughts, view of the world, occupational experience intimate knowledge of one spot, memories, and fantasies, recognition or newness, personal identification with someone's "spot," sense of accomplishment or blockage caused by the setting, sense of enjoyment, fun, or displeasure. Steele (1981) further elaborates that an individual describes a place through these elements: (1) Physical features, immediate surrounding with physical elements; physical features affect feelings as well as activities. (2) Social features, individual's relationship with other people and social institutions; the social context helps to determine the impact of the physical setting. (3) The degree to how people differentiate places, the links between place and activity, and the expectation of finding certain people in certain places indicate how a physical location becomes a "place" rather than simply a location (Canter,1977).

Place in tourism holds a wide range of meaning as it does not only interact and relate to the locals of that particular place but also experienced by visitors that come to the place. Relph (1976) argues that "an inauthentic attitude to place is nowhere more clearly expressed than in tourism, for in tourism, individual, and authentic judgment about places is nearly always subsumed to expert or socially accepted opinion, or the act and means of tourism become more important that the places visited."

He notes that it seems for many people, traveling is less to experience unique and different places than to collect those places, especially on film. This phenomenon is due the "mass culture" that is a result of designs that are formulated from above by manufacturers, governments, and professional designers guided and communicated through mass media. Hence, products and places that are the same or similar are created. Hall and Page (1999) also describe tourist experience as the result of the tourist ability to tolerate behavior of others, context and pattern of activities, motivation, expectation, perception, level of use and social situations. As described by Ryan (1995), the tourist experience is influenced by several different factors, which area: travelling experience, destination attributes, the nature of attractions with individuals or certain groups, individual's responsive mechanism and personal factors. The character of place is part and parcel of the destination attributes. They are the elements, both tangible and intangible that offer the experience to the tourist. The tourist's personal factors, on the other hand, influence their beliefs or become the basis of what is considered important to them, in any aspects.

Therefore, understanding the experience and behavior of cruise passengers as they undertake activities in urban destinations is foundational to understanding the ensuing impacts that occur and how key elements of the cruise experience can serve the visitors' needs and meet their expectations. Experience and behavior issues are also linked to economic and spatial considerations of the tourism industry through product delivery and the economic benefits realized from visitors. Similarly, visitor experience and behavior will influence governance and planning issues that guide infrastructure and management aspects at the Caribbean destinations. Designing places, whether it is for public or private uses, is about the interaction of places and people. In tourism, designing tourist attractions or destinations is ultimately about the interaction of places and tourists. It is a matter of harmonizing the needs of the developers with the demands of the users. Designing tourist attractions is not just about designing buildings, cruise ports, and physical spaces, but what is also vital is the way the tangible elements of the attraction is designed that will shape the intangible visitor experience (Swarbrooke, 2002). Gunn (1994) suggests that travelers go to any destination because of its special qualities of place, as every destination possesses a varied set of geographical factors, traditions, relationship to markets and host characteristics. Numerous literatures have suggested the importance of place-making or creating a sense of place in building an identity for the attraction (Gunn, 1994; Canter, 1977; Bell, 1999; Potteiger and Purinton, 1998).

Currently, research that deals with landscape architecture and tourism is still at its infancy stage. In her study, Zakariya (2006) found that the primary factors that attract tourists to visit gardens are comfort and beauty of the gardens. Comfort and beauty include cleanliness, comfortable surroundings, ample facilities, nice scenery, architecture, landscape, and aesthetic values. In Addition, this study conducted by Asra and Asbollah (2005), only several landscape elements were found to be most important to the tourists. For example, provision of landscape elements such as gazebo, entrance, signage, jetty, lighting, walkway, rubbish bin, information board, map, and design concept was considered one-dimension elements that must be present in order to satisfy the needs of the tourists. These studies have highlighted some of the important findings that share the common ground between the field of landscape architecture and tourism, where physical design meets tourist experience and satisfaction. It is all about creating a place for tourists that they can enjoy and experience, place making is the retention of the essence of the place while giving it new physical and psychological meaning (Gunn, 1994). In creating places for tourism, it is important to focus on the characteristics of the place that appeal to the tourists, as the environment created will influence the value of the experience gained by the tourists. Therefore, a high degree of tourist satisfaction is expected to be generated from a distinct and positive tourist experience.

The Port of Call and Cruise Passengers' Experience

Vacation cruises are defined as "the transportation of pleasure-seeking travelers on ocean voyages offering one or more glamorous ports of call (Kendall, 1986). These ports of call are destinations serving multiple functions that consist the primary reasons for travelers to choose specific cruises. According to Henthorne (2000) cruise lines select particular ports providing their customers with positive in port experiences and "are willing to change itineraries and drop specific ports of call if an inordinate number of customers experience dissatisfaction (p. 247)." Thus, as dissatisfactory aspects decrease the probability of a cruise to be perceived as enjoyable by passenger's increases; this in turn will affect future return intentions (Duman and Mattila, 2005). In the words of Gabe et al. (2006): "Cruise vacations typically expose passengers to multiple ports, and characteristics of the travellers and their experience in a given port may influence the likelihood of a return visit (p. 282)." Typically, cruise passengers derive benefits from participating in activities while on a port of call, mainly because activities provide novelty or change to daily routine, relief from stress, and the possibility to escape from personal problems and/or difficulties (Andriotis et al., 2007). In other words, activities provide travelers with opportunities for certain physical, mental, and psychological reward (Ross and Iso-Ahola, 1991), and therefore, play a vital role on tourists' overall satisfaction (Euthimiadou, 2001). Along with the economic effects associated with cruise passengers and crew member expenditures, the ports of call provide the cruise passengers with a very important part of the entire cruise experience and satisfaction.

Capturing Experiences

Tourists take photographs of their experiences for a number of reasons. Images convey the experience of the person who captured it because the image provides a record of how they saw and interpreted the world, the people and places in it and the meanings and associations that their experience conjured up (Markwell, 2000). Photography is often used as proof that the experience was had (Markwell, 1997). That is, it is a way in which a person can communicate an experience they have had in a particular place and time to an audience in another place and time (Crang, 1997). The image becomes a keepsake and memory of the experience; it ties the images to the real world as proof to second and third parties or to the traveler themselves (Crang, 1997; Van Dijck, 2008). In doing so the photograph forms part of their process of communication and identity formation (Van Dijck, 2008). While recording or collecting experience is one dimension of photography, Sontag (1978) also points to the more phenomenological nature of the tourists' photographic experience. Photography records also shape the cruise experience. Seeking opportunities for the "shot" changes the nature of the encounter, a change from the visual, aural, and visceral toward a more technically mediated encounter. Sontag (1978) further suggests that doing something, a type of working experience, also "appeases the anxiety which the work-driven feel about not working when they are on vacation and supposed to be having fun" (p. 10).

The purpose of analyzing tourist images is to try and understand the types of experiences that tourists have for as Sontag (1978, p. 3) notes "photographs really are experience captured." This idea draws from the notion of the "circle of representation" (Jenkins, 2003). According to Jenkins, the idea of visual images circulating within a culture and becoming imbued with particular meanings is an important part of the experience, associations, and values are not new and although it is referenced in different terms, it is common across a number of disciplines. At the center of this circle is an images projected through advertising such as an image of the Old San Juan Fortress in Puerto Rico, Dunns River Falls Ocho Rios in Jamaica, Harrison's Caves in Barbados, Brimstone Hill Fortress National Park in St. Kitts, and Bath Springs in Nevis. When people visit the destination in which they have previously seen the advertised image they are likely to capture their own image of that attraction, through the medium of photography. Knowledge gained from understanding the importance of, and meanings given to, the images people capture can inform marketing campaigns that suit the types of experiences marketers know people will enjoy and want to take home with them. However, the meaning intended by the photographer and the meaning the observer derives from the image may be different. Clearly the observer can only interpret "implied meaning" from an image. This implied meaning is both personally and culturally determined from the experience.

Factors Affecting the Cruise Experience

There are many factors that affect the cruise passenger experience, more specifically the food and beverage on the ship and at the destinations; entertainment, customer service, tours, itinerary and shopping are some of the strong predictors of the cruise experience and the subsequent overall satisfaction. According to the literature, low-experience individuals, who are focused on developing social and interpersonal relationships, are particularly attentive to interactions with other individuals

in order to understand role demands and expectations (Rapp et al., 2006). In addition, because customers interact with other customers in a relatively tightly coupled manner, they contribute more cooperative and collaborative efforts and receive more social reward (Seers et al., 1995). However, as customers gain experience, they are better able to evaluate the different service offerings given by the organization (Bell et al., 2005). In other words, high-experience customers will be able to assess and evaluate beneath the layers of the organizational offerings. Therefore, they tend to refocus their attention from social concerns to organizational issues such as service quality, loyalty programs, value for money and economic benefits. For these reasons, it is expected that customer experience will affect the relative importance of the social exchange relationship in influencing the cruise experience and satisfaction.

The highly subjective and individualistic nature of the tourist experience is gaining appreciation in recent years. It was recognized that tourism experience was not something that could be "stage-managed" by the service provider (Morgan, 2007), but rather that tourists aided in the production of their own experiences through their personal characteristics, social identity, and the agendas they brought with them to the tourist encounters (McIntosh and Siggs, 2005). This means that service providers could not sell a pre-orchestrated experience to the customers. What they can do is set the stage for tourists to create their own experiences (Morgan, 2007). This implies that the tourist experience is influenced by a wider range of factors in addition to those under the direct control of the service providers (Baker and Crompton 2000; Cole et al., 2002). These include the social-psychological state that a tourist brings to a site (e.g., mood, disposition, and needs), extraneous events (e.g., climate and social group interactions), and program or site attributes. Although an exhaustive list of these factors may be impossible, social interaction between unacquainted fellow tourists on a cruise ship could be one factor that deserves further exploration. This echoes the marketing literature on customer compatibility management and observable oral participation, which recognizes the impact of unacquainted customers on customer experience and satisfaction.

Cruise passengers experience encompasses all aspects of the end-user's interaction with the tourism company and its services, transportation, the airport and sea ports and the climate to name a few. Interactions refer to multiple channels, touch points, etc. A good cruise experience can assure the following advantages to the cruise company: Increased sales, increased tourist satisfaction, product/service differentiation, valuable competitive advantage, improved brand perception, increased market share. Tourists will choose from the multitude of deals present on the tourism market. The cruise purchased will be the one that maximizes the value in relation with the costs involved in searching the products, coupled with the limited mobility, knowledge, and income they possess. As a consequence, customers will appreciate whether the deal reaches the expected value level, which will influence the satisfaction and the probability to buy in the future. The two most important things for delivering the best tourist experience are: A great product that emotionally connects with the tourists and fulfills a basic need or desire; and a deep understanding of the traveler not just demographics but also psychographics, an

understanding that allows the firm to anticipate what they need better and sooner than they know themselves.

Methodology
Questionnaire design
Given the scarcity of data on most aspects of cruise visitors' experience in the Caribbean this current study was conducted. Following discussion with travel agents on issues related to cruisers experiences, hospitality, and tourism professors, a review of past studies, such as Duman and Mattila (2005) and Qu, et al. (1999), Andriotis and Agiomirgianakis (2010), a self-completed questionnaire was designed. The cover letter provided information about the general purpose of the study, detailed instructions for administering the questionnaires, the data collection procedure, and a request to fully complete the questionnaire. The questionnaire comprised of three sections and was pilot tested (n = 50) with cruise passengers a year earlier, their comments were used to revise and clarify the statements in the survey, the final version was then edited. The first section contained questions about respondents' profile utilizing socio-demographic variables (age, gender, marital status, education, income, employment status, and geographic origin), travelling party and major source of information used to book the cruise. The second section asked respondents to indicate their level of satisfaction, while the third section dealt with attributes, which affect the cruise experience, a 5-point Likert-type scale, ranging from "5 = extremely satisfied" to "1 = very dissatisfied" was used to assess respondents agreement with a set of statements.

The population of this study consisted of cruise passengers who were aboard the cruise ship Carnival Imagination on a four nights cruise to the Western Caribbean from the port of Miami stopping in the Florida Keys and Cozumel Mexico in October 2009. The ship was full with capacity about 2,052 cruise passengers and 920 crew members. It is very difficult to gather information about cruise passengers, therefore, this sample of passengers does not represent a probability sample but was a convenient sample of 218 participants. This represents approximately 10.6% of the 2,052 passengers on board the ship during this particular cruise. In more detail, the researcher and 15 students from a tourism class undertook the four nights excursion on this cruise ship. The students were trained in class on how to solicit participation from cruise passengers. The reason for this was to observe activities and behaviors of passengers on board and at the destinations and to enable the researcher and students to experience directly the ways in which passengers were experiencing the cruise.

In an attempt to understand the influences on cruise passengers experience and the relationships with cruisers' satisfaction, this study was conducted aboard a ship cruising the Western Caribbean. A number of statistical procedures were carried out for this paper using the statistical package SPSS version 19 and Microsoft Excel 2010 from Microsoft Corporation for statistical analysis. First, descriptive statistics (frequency distributions, percentages, standard deviations, and means) were calculated where appropriate. Second, an exploratory factor analysis was used to discover simple patterns in the pattern of relationships among the variables. The factor analysis results attempts to discover the unexplained factors that influence the cruise

experience. Third, a multiple regression analysis was conducted to identify the extent to which different quality variables affect cruise passengers satisfaction.

Results and Discussions

The results of this study are consistent with recent trends. The demographic and travel characteristic profile of respondents are presented in Table 2. The typical cruise passenger used to be older, wealthy and predominantly North American.

Today, the cruise market caters for all types of needs, ages, and purchasing abilities. Cruising has become more of a leisure product than a transportation mode. The stereotype of a cruise passenger has been changed to a highly segmented market. In our study, 41% (89) of the respondents were age 34 or younger, 21% (45) at age 35-44, 20% (44) at age 45-54 and 16% (36) 55

years and older. Moscardo et al. (1996) showed that cruising had a clear marketing advantage with its all-inclusive product, which minimized any inconvenience for customers to almost zero. He further stated that the product was seen by passengers as highly beneficial. The CLIA, 2011 market profile study indicated that of the current total US population of about 304,130,000 people, not quite half 44% (132,947,000) were prime cruise candidates of age 25 years and older with annual household incomes of $40,000 and higher. In our study, Table 2, 32% (70) of the respondents had annual incomes of $50,000 or less while about 55% (120) had incomes of more than $50,000 annually.

In the CLIA 2011 study, of the target population, 55% (73,121,000) of the people did take a cruise before, and somewhat fewer than half of those (32,838,000) did so within the past 3 years with 60% repeat cruisers. In our study, this was

Table 2: Demographic profile of cruise passengers (N=218)

Items	Frequency (N)	Percent
Country of current residence (N=218)		
USA	168	77.1
Canada	22	10.1
Australia	9	4.1
Europe	10	4.6
Other	9	4.1
Age (years)		
18-24	38	17.4
25-34	51	23.4
35-44	45	20.7
45-54	44	20.2
55-64	20	9.2
65-74	16	7.3
75 and older	4	1.8
Gender		
Missing	9	4.1
Male	98	45.0
Female	111	50.9
Education		
High school	25	11.5
College	68	31.2
BS degree	76	34.9
MS degree	39	17.9
PhD degree	8	3.6
Other	2	0.9
Household income		
Missing	28	12.8
<$50,000	70	32.1
$50,000-$79,000	65	29.8
$80,000-$120,000	46	21.1
$120,000+	9	4.1

Contd...

Table 2: Contd...

Items	Frequency (N)	Percent
Major source of information		
Cruise company brochure	10	4.6
Cruise company website	49	22.5
Travel agent	43	19.7
Other travel websites	24	11.0
Friends/relatives	71	32.6
Advertising: TV, newspaper, magazines	20	9.2
Other sources	1	0.4
Cruise booking method		
By phone with Cruise company	52	23.9
Cruise company website	66	30.3
Travel agent	50	22.9
Other travel websites	48	22.0
Other method	2	0.9
Have you been on a cruise prior to this voyage?		
Yes	138	63.3
No	73	33.5
Missing	7	3.2
What type of shore excursions did you participate in?		
Island tour	38	17.4
Rainforest tour	18	8.3
Beach	96	44.0
City tour	23	10.6
Other	38	17.4
Missing	5	2.3
Would you recommend a Caribbean cruise to someone?		
Yes	205	94.1
No	9	4.1
Missing	4	1.8

the first cruise experience for about 34% (73) of the respondents, while almost 63% (138) indicated they had previously been on a cruise. Respondents major sources of information used to book the cruise were the cruise company website 23% (49) and talking to friends and relatives 33% (71). However, when the time came to actually book the cruise, respondents prefer to use the cruise line company either by telephone or the cruise line website, 54% (108), using travel agents for booking accounted for 23% (50) while others prefer other travel websites like Travelocity, Orbitz, Expedia, Kayak etc., 22% (48). The two main types of shore excursions for those passengers who left the ship were going to the beach and taking an island tour. The CLIA study indicated that a majority of cruisers still book at least some of their cruises with travel agents, although that proportion declines to 68% in 2011 from 74% in 2008. Some portion of the decline is attributed to consumer confusion regarding online resources used and travel agents. With continued travel agency adoption of online resources, some customers attribute an online planning/booking when in fact that online resource is sourced to a travel agency. Overall, 45% of travelers most frequently name the Caribbean as their cruise destination of choice.

To obtain the evaluation on the cruise experience from the cruise passengers, it was necessary to employ the factor analysis to summarize the perception items specifically (Table 3). Before the factor analysis, 11 items regarding their impact on the experience were tested by the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO), and Bartlett's test of sphericity to check their reliability. The result showed that the value of approx. Chi-Square was 1811.622 and p-value was 0.000, which was smaller than 0.001, which is to say, the data could be adopted for the factor analysis. The value of KMO was 0.927, indicating the factors were correlated significantly. This study adopted the exploratory factor analysis, the initial factors were then rotated using varimax rotation to explore the dimensionality in the data set. Finally, the three factors explained 88.056% of the cumulative variance and the reliability alpha were 0.891, 0.863 and 0.840, higher than the 0.5 (Nunnally, 1987), indicating the study results were highly reliable.

The first factor "the environment" had strong comprehensiveness and with an Eigenvalue of 7.003, it was the only factor with an Eigenvalue bigger or equal with 1. Not surprisingly, the "Caribbean relaxing destinations" was evaluated highest on this factor (M = 3.84, SD = 1.10). Cruise passengers felt that the Caribbean had the best beaches in the world (M = 3.25, SD = 1.22); good safety and security (M = 3.60, SD = 1.08) and clean and unpolluted environments (M = 3.67, SD = 1.12) were the other impact items within the first factor. This is indicating that cruise passengers had the highest expectation on this aspect of the cruise experience and from the results, factor 1 strongly influenced this experience (Table 3). To satisfy this customer category, island destinations should consider additional resources to maintain or improve the "environmental" variables. In this regard, Caribbean destinations need to ensure that the islands reflect this market positioning opportunity well. They should place more emphasis on environmental cues when designing advertising and promotional activities thus using this success in their marketing campaigns.

A regression analysis was conducted on the key 11 determinants of satisfaction of the cruise experience to determine their relative importance in contributing to the level of satisfaction of cruise passengers. In this study, the overall satisfaction level is used as the dependent variable, which allows us to explain the relationship between the dependent (satisfaction level) and the independent variables (the 11 determinant variables). The dependent variable was a Likert-type item with five response choices; there were 11 Likert-type independent variables also with five response choices each included in the analysis. Table 4 lists those 11 items and the resulting statistical significance associated with each. As can be seen in Table 4, five of these items were statistically significantly related (at p < 0.05) to cruisers' satisfaction associated with the cruise experience: "The Caribbean - best beaches in the world"; "Clean unpolluted environments"; "The availability of great food on the islands"; "The availability of great beverages on the cruise ship" and "The availability of great beverages on the islands." Together, these variables explained roughly 18% of the variability in

Table 3: Exploratory factor analysis on the influences of the cruise experience (N=218)

Impact variables	Factor loading	Eigen-value	Variance %	Mean	SD
F1: The environment				7.003	82.324
Relaxing destinations	0.876	3.84	1.10		
Best beaches in the world	0.739	3.25	1.22		
Good sense of safety and security	0.783	3.60	1.08		
Clean unpolluted environments	0.783	3.67	1.12		
F2: Exploration				0.742	3.502
Adventure and excitement	0.787	3.69	1.10		
Natural landscape and scenery	0.807	3.72	1.09		
Unique history and culture	0.753	3.57	1.06		
F3: Food and beverage				0.705	2.230
Great food on the ship	0.778	3.48	1.30		
Great food on the islands	0.835	3.57	1.23		
Great beverage on the ship	0.830	3.67	1.26		
Great beverage on the islands	0.798	3.66	1.20		

Table 4: Regression analysis on satisfaction of the Cruise experience

Independent variables	Regression coefficients	Std. error	t value	p value
Intercept	2.839	0.226	12.555	0.000
Relaxing destinations	0.037	0.095	0.385	0.700
Best beaches in the world	0.174	0.065	2.696	0.008*
Good sense of safety and security	−0.014	0.078	−0.180	0.858
Clean unpolluted environments	0.127	0.077	1.644	0.102*
Adventure and excitement	0.042	0.080	0.527	0.599
Natural landscape and scenery	0.042	0.086	0.482	0.631
Unique history and culture	−0.036	0.076	−0.477	0.634
Great food on the ship	0.042	0.062	0.660	0.510
Great food on the islands	−0.101	0.080	−1.269	0.206*
Great beverage on the ship	0.116	0.079	1.470	0.143*
Great beverage on the islands	−0.110	0.083	−1.322	0.188*

Multiple R-squared: 0.18. *Variables statistically significant. F statistic: 4.121 with 11 and 207 degrees of freedom; the P value is 0.00

respondents' satisfaction of the cruise experience. The multiple Correlation coefficient is 0.425, this indicates that the correlation among the 11 items independent variables and the dependent variable (satisfaction) is positive. Qu et al. (1999) indicated that the major travel motivation factors of cruise ships were escape from normal life, social gathering, and beautiful environment and scenery; moreover, tourists report a high satisfaction level with food, beverages, facilities, quality, and staff performance on board cruise ships. The results of this regression are consistent with Qu et al. (1999) findings. From the tourists' point of view, the main reasons to purchase this kind of trip are entertainment and trying out the cruise experience. It is clear that satisfaction of the cruise experience involve quality variables on the cruise ship as well as the island destinations themselves.

Conclusion

Today, the cruise market caters for all types of needs, ages, and purchasing abilities. Cruising has become more of a leisure product than a transportation mode. The stereotype of a cruise passenger has been changed to a highly segmented market. The results of this study can be very useful to cruise lines companies, as well as other stakeholders such as the Caribbean Islands governments tourism units and destinations management companies. Tourists who travel on these cruise ships to this region can now be classified into at least three main market segments; baby boomers born 1946-1964, generation X born 1965-1980 and generation Y born 1981 and after. There are differences in beliefs about food, dress, motivation, lifestyles, and loyalty to name a few, however, all these market segments are present on the cruise ship at the same time. The cruise companies and the destinations must meet or exceed these different market segments needs, wants and desires. The Caribbean model of the sun, sea, sand persists because the beach is one of the main activities in which tourists intend to engage. An exploratory factor analysis discovered the unexplained factors that influence the co-variation among multiple observations. These factors represent underlying concepts that cannot be adequately measured by a single variable. The results of the analysis revealed that the factor "the environment" had strong comprehensiveness and strongly influenced the cruise experience. Further, a regression

model was used to examine the relative importance of each of the eleven determinant variables and ascertain the satisfaction levels of cruise passengers. Sun, sea, and sand - the best beaches in the world and clean unpolluted environments were the most influential variables on cruise passengers' satisfaction. Success in the cruise business depends on understanding the major influences on the cruise experience along with the key variables that determine customer satisfaction, ensuring that the business meets or exceeds customers' expectations. Real positive customer experience comes from tourism companies that show they care about the customer. Companies that have a memory (so travelers don't have to tell their story repeatedly) and really provide ongoing value to a traveler understand that travelers are truly the most valuable entity of any business in the hospitality industry. Those companies treat their customers as not only their only source of revenue but as a scarce, valuable resource. When companies work this way, we are more likely to see really terrific tourists' experiences. The future cruise tourism industry will be an exciting global market of growth demanding leadership, partnership and professional management to handle: the fast development of technology, where all traveling starts on the Internet, destination development, customer orientation, leadership, and management. Cruise companies and destination must understand that providing the tourists with a superior experience is the only sustainable advantage that the business may have in this highly competitive cruise industry. This paper brings to light factors, which affect cruise marketing with respect to the cruise passengers experience and levels of satisfaction. However, the conclusions drawn should be analyzed with an awareness of the limitations faced. The results of this study need to be cautiously generalized because the sample is limited to one cruise ship; however, it is important for managers of cruise companies and island destinations to use this kind of information for marketing promotion to attract customers. Future research might explore samples from a number of cruise ships.

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