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## Stopover destination loyalty: The influence of perceived ambience and sensation seeking tendency

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## **Stopover destination loyalty: the influence of perceived ambience and sensation seeking tendency**

### **Abstract**

This paper examines the influence of sensation seeking and perceived ambience on attitudinal loyalty towards two traditional stopover destinations (Singapore, Hong Kong) and two emerging stopover destinations (Dubai, Abu Dhabi). A quasi-experimental design with two separate samples of participants shows that travelers' perceived positive ambience and attitudinal destination loyalty was higher for the traditional stopover destinations than for the emerging destinations. In addition, sensation seeking tendency moderates the effect such that travelers with lower sensation seeking tendencies have higher attitudinal loyalty towards the traditional stopover destinations while the effect is mitigated for those with higher sensation seeking tendencies. This paper contributes to the recently emerging stopover destination literature, and the findings have implications for the destination marketers and stakeholders of stopover destinations.

### **Key words**

Stopover; destination marketing; loyalty; sensation seeking; Dubai; Singapore



## 1.0 Introduction

The phenomenon of stopovers during long haul international air travel has only attracted the interest of scholars in recent years (see Pike & Kotsi 2016; Lund, Loftsdóttir & Leonard, 2017). This is surprising given the history of long haul passenger air travel dates back to the 1940s. A stopover or transit layover has been, and remains, necessary on many popular long-haul air routes. In the era of deregulated air travel and low-cost air carriers, and the resultant emergence of new routes and destinations, more research is required to enhance understanding of stopover destination attractiveness. This paper aims to make a contribution to this emerging domain, by reporting the findings of two studies showing the influence of sensation seeking (Hoyle et al., 2002; Litvin, 2008) and perceived ambience (Heide, Lærdal, & Grønhaug, 2007; Kwortnik, 2003), on attitudinal loyalty (Gartner & Hunt, 1987) towards traditional and emerging stopover destinations.

Of interest in this study is a stopover during long haul international air travel between the United Kingdom (UK) and Australia. A stopover has been defined as a stay of one to three nights at an intermediary port during long haul air travel to an onward destination (Pike, Kotsi & Gottlieb, 2018). A transit or a layover, on the other hand, is a stay of less than 24 hours without accommodation at an intermediary port, usually for the purpose of changing planes. For most of the ensuing time the traditional stopover destinations, in both directions between the northern and southern hemispheres, have been Singapore and Hong Kong. In recent years, however, a number of new stopover destinations have emerged on this route. These include other cities in Asia, such as Tokyo, Beijing, Kuala Lumpur and Bangkok, and cities in the Arabian Peninsula such as Abu Dhabi, Dubai and Doha. Although QANTAS had been offering a regular daily direct flight between Perth and London since 2018 (such direct flight has been put on hold after COVID-19 pandemic), a stopover or transit layover on the UK/Australia route is still necessary for travellers in the East Coast of

Australia.

There has been a long association between the UK and Australia with Singapore and Hong Kong, through trade, sport, and membership of the British Commonwealth. Historically, Australia, Singapore and Hong Kong were all colonies of the UK. Strategically, the Australian government views the country as being part of South East Asia, and residents have been regularly exposed to mostly positive news media coverage of many countries in the region, including Singapore and Hong Kong. By contrast, Australia has not enjoyed the same history of relationships with Abu Dhabi and Dubai in the Arabian Peninsula. Therefore, it is proposed that, in general, Australians are more familiar with Singapore and Hong Kong as traditional stopover destinations, than Abu Dhabi and Dubai as emerging stopover destinations (see Pike & Kotsi, 2016). One of the potential adverse influences on perceptions of Abu Dhabi and Dubai in the Australian travel market, is the two emirates are located in the Middle East. This is a region that has suffered from ongoing negative news media coverage of war and terrorism events (Beirman, 2003, Morakabati 2013). Since a conflict in one Middle Eastern country has spillover effects in the market for neighboring countries (Bassil, 2014), it is proposed those individuals with little cognition of, or experience at visiting, Abu Dhabi and Dubai, might stereotype the two destinations as 'Middle Eastern' (see for example Avraham & Ketter 2016, Pike, Pontes & Kotsi 2021). This in turn might lead to higher perceptions of risk at these destinations, and therefore lower attractiveness among individuals who are more risk averse, during stopover travel decision making. In this regard, the concept of perceived ambience might play a role in influencing stopover destination preferences. Ambience concerns perceptions of the background atmosphere of a service location (Bitner, 1992). This aspect of destination attractiveness has, to our knowledge, has not attracted attention from destination image researchers, and has not been applied in the context of stopover destinations.

Previous studies in the destination marketing literature have found evidence of the positive influence of previous visitation on attitudinal destination loyalty (Konecnik & Gartner, 2007; Im, Kim, Elliot & Han, 2012). Typically, attitudinal loyalty has been measured by likelihood of revisiting in the future and likelihood of recommending the destination to other people. However, there has been little research exploring the extent to which this applies to emerging stopover destinations in conflict-ridden regions such as the Middle East.

Investigating how personality traits influence travelers' stopover destination decision making is important as it will provide destination marketers a way to segment target markets. While there is a paucity of research examining the individual difference factors in the stopover context, see an exception of Pike et al. (2020) which examines how regulatory focuses influences traveler's brand loyalty towards stopover destinations. The present research looks at sensation seeking as a new individual difference factor. Sensation seeking is a dispositional risk factor defined as (Zuckerman, 1979, p. 10): "The need for varied, novel, and complex sensations and experiences and the willingness to take physical and social risks for the sake of such experiences". It is particularly relevant in the current study context as it may influence travelers' perceptions of emerging stopover destinations in the Middle East. In addition, assessing this personality trait factor also answers Litvin's (2008) call for the application of sensation seeking in tourism research.

Therefore, the aim of this project was to examine the influence of sensation seeking and perceived ambience on attitudinal loyalty towards two traditional stopover destinations (Singapore, Hong Kong) and two emerging stopover destinations (Dubai, Abu Dhabi). The following three research questions are proposed:

- Q1: Are there differences in travellers' attitudinal destination loyalty towards traditional and emerging stopover destinations?

- Q2: How does perceived ambience influence the formation of attitudinal loyalty?
- Q3: How does sensation seeking moderate the effect of stopover type on attitudinal loyalty?

## **2.0 Literature Review**

### *2.1 Attitudinal destination loyalty*

Loyalty is the dependent variable in modelling brand performance measurement (Aaker, 1991, 1996; Keller, 1993, 2003). This has been well documented in modelling of consumer-based brand equity (CBBE) in tourism, such as in the case of hotels (Huang & Cai, 2015; Liu et. al., 2017). CBBE is particularly useful in measuring brand performance for destination marketing organisations (DMO), where an intangible financial asset value of a destination brand on the balance sheet would generally be meaningless. Instead, CBBE measures consumers' perceptions, which underpin any financial valuation (Aaker, 1996). Studies of destination CBBE, which have used attitudinal destination loyalty as the dependent variable, emerged in 2006 (see Konecnik, 2006; Pike, 2016, p. 326; Tasci, 2018). The term attitudinal loyalty was first introduced by Oppermann (2000) who argued that destination loyalty focused more on a longitudinal perspective instead of a cross-sectional perspective. Building on this, later research operationalises attitudinal loyalty as intention to recommend and to revisit the destination (see for example Chen & Phou, 2013; Lee & Xue, 2000). It should be noted this does not represent customer loyalty in terms of actual revisitation. However, attitudinal loyalty is important for attracting visitors, repeat visitors and word of mouth recommendations (Gartner & Hunt, 1987; Li & Petrick, 2008). Research has found some correlations between destination-related factors on attitudinal destination loyalty. For example, Tang, Weaver, and Lawton, (2017) found that unique attractions in the stopover destination have a strong link with revisit intention. Kotsi, Pike, and Gottlieb,



(2018) found that destination brand awareness, brand image, and brand value all positively related to attitudinal destination loyalty. Masiero, Qiu, and Zoltan, (2020) found a positive effect of frequent-flyer membership on revisit intention. Specifically, those who revisit a long-haul destination are more likely to revisit a stopover destination. Pike et al. (2020) found that previous visitation to a destination increases attitudinal destination loyalty through enhanced brand image. Following this line of research, it is argued that travellers are more familiar with traditional stopover destinations than emerging stopover destinations. The likelihood of previous visitation to the traditional stopover destination is higher than that to the emerging stopover destination. Therefore, we argue that travellers have higher attitudinal stopover loyalty towards the traditional than emerging stopover destination. Formally we propose the hypothesis 1.

- H1: The type of stopover destinations has an impact on individuals' attitudinal destination loyalty, such that individuals have a more positive attitudinal destination loyalty towards traditional stopover destinations than emerging stopover destinations.

## *2.2 Stopover destination perceived ambience*

The attractiveness of a destination plays a critical role in the intangible nature of travel decision making (Stylidis, Shani & Belhassen, 2017). In this study we analyse destination attractiveness through the lens of perceived ambience. Heide, Lærdal, and Grønhaug, (2007) was the first research discussing the concept of perceived ambience in the context of tourism and hospitality industry. They defined perceived ambience from the perspective of an interaction between individual and elements in their environment. These elements pertain to the intangible background environment such as temperature, odour, and sound (see Ryu & Jang, 2008). Indeed, much research has revealed that perceived ambience influences consumers decision making. In the context of retailing, Roggeveen et al., (2020)

proposed that ambient elements together with design elements, social people present, and trialability in a store all influence shopping behaviour through both affective and cognitive paths. In the service context, Jani and Han, (2014) found an interaction effect between hotel ambience and social comparison on affect and guest satisfaction. That is, positive ambience makes the social comparison effect stronger while low ambience makes such effect weaker. Han (2013) investigated in-flight ambience and space on air travellers' decision and found that ambience significant induces cognitive and affective evaluation and satisfaction. In the tourism context, research has found that the positive perceived airport ambience will lead to travellers recommending Dubai as a stopover destination (Pike, Pontes, and Kotsi, 2021). Following this steam of literature, the present research proposes that traditional stopover destinations may have different pervieved ambience than emerging destinations. For one, the familiarity of a traditional destination helps to create a safe and comfortable atmosphere. For another, the cultural differences of Middle East destination and also some negative media attention about conflicts around this region may possibly lead to negative perceived ambience of emerging stopover destination. Further, the link between perceived ambience on attitudinal loyalty has been established by Pike, Pontes, and Kotsi, (2021). Based on this, we propose the second hypothesis:

- H2: Perceived ambience mediates the relationship between type of stopover destination (Traditional vs. Emerging) and attitudinal destination loyalty.

### *2.3 Sensation seeking*

Sensation seeking is a dispositional risk factor, defined as “the need for varied, novel, and complex sensations and experiences and the willingness to take physical and social risks for the sake of such experiences” (Zuckerman, 1979, p. 10). Sensation seeking is a popular concept used by tourism researchers (Litvin, 2008). It has been used to underpin a diverse

range of studies such as travellers' attitudes about novelty seeking (Lee & Crompton, 1992), adventure holidays (Gilcrest, Povey, Dickenson & Povey, 1995), national parks (Galloway & Lopez, 1999), choice of activities and travel arrangements (Pizam, Reichel & Uriely, 2001), preferred activities as young adults (Pizam, Jeong & Reichel, 2004), types of holiday (Eachus, 2004), receptiveness to volunteer tourism offerings (Wymer Jr, Self & Findley, 2010), storm chasing (Xu, Barbieri, Stanis & Market, 2011), risk perceptions as backpackers (Fuchs, 2013), and women's perceptions of sexual risk during travel (Berdychevsky & Gibson, 2015). This concept has also been applied to the destination research context. For example, Li and Tsai, (2013) found a link between international tourism experience and sensation seeking using a sample from Taiwan. They found travellers with international tourism experience tended to have a higher level of sensation seeking than those without such experience. Of relevance to the present study, Lepp and Gibson, (2008) found individuals with higher sensation seeking tendencies are more likely to visit international destinations perceived as risky. Later research by Sharifpour, Walters and Ritchie, (2013) further shows that high sensation seekers are more likely to be willing to visit Arabia compared with low sensation seekers. Research has also found that matching message sensation value in advertising with the consumer sensation seeking trait has a positive effect on perceived destination image and behavioural intentions (Lu, Chi, & Lu, 2014). Following this line of research, we argue that there is congruency between the perceived ambience of emerging stopover destinations with high sensation seeking tendency. That is, travellers higher in sensation seeking may feel an emerging stopover destination to be more novel and exciting. Thus, they may show more positive attitudinal destination loyalty than those lower in sensation seeking. We propose hypothesis 3, a moderating role of sensation seeking on the effect of stopover type on attitudinal loyalty:

- H3: Sensation seeking tendency moderates the relationship between type of stopover

destination (Traditional vs. Emerging) and attitudinal destination loyalty through destination ambience, such that the relationship is weaker for travellers high in sensation seeking tendency than for travellers low in sensation seeking tendency.

The conceptual framework is shown in Figure 1. In this framework, we propose that there is a main effect of stopover destination type on attitudinal destination loyalty; that is, travellers have more attitudinal destination loyalty in terms of revisit intention and recommendation towards traditional stopover destinations. This effect is driven by perceived ambience; that is, travellers perceive positive ambience towards traditional stopover destinations and in turn have higher attitudinal destination loyalty than emerging stopover destination. This effect is moderated by sensation seeking tendency; that is, for travellers with higher sensation seeking tendency, the main effect is weaker while for those with lower sensation seeking tendency, the main effect is stronger.

[Insert Figure 1 about here]

### **3.0 Study 1: Establishing the main effect**

#### *3.1 Design*

We used a static group quasi-experimental design to investigate travellers' actual experience with traditional and emerging stopover destinations. Similar to true experimental design, quasi experiments aim to test descriptive causal hypotheses of manipulated variables with both control and experimental conditions. However, different to true experimental design, quasi-experiments lack random assignment; that is assignment to cells is based on self-selection (Shadish, Cook, & Campbell, 2002). The reason why we did not use true experimental design is that given we have four different stopover destinations, it is too

difficult to obtain enough participants who have travel experience in all four destinations of interest. Using quasi-experimental design is popular and an accepted method in tourism research (see Pak, 2020; Veréb & Azevedo, 2019).

### *3.2 Procedure and measures*

We selected four popular stopover destinations during long-haul travel between the UK and Australia. Two were traditional stopover destinations (Singapore and Hong Kong) and two were emerging (Dubai and Abu Dhabi). This study utilizes convenience sampling and we recruited 356 participants from Amazon's Mechanical Turk who met the following criteria: (1) interested in travelling to another country; (2) from one of the following English speaking countries: USA, Canada, UK, Australia, and New Zealand; (3) have ever had a stopover in at least one of the four cities: Singapore; Dubai; Hong Kong; and Abu Dhabi; (4) likely to travel to another country with a stopover in the future. Demographic characteristics of the sample are presented in Table 1. The most visited destination by participants was Singapore (60%), followed by Hong Kong (55%), Dubai (50%), and Abu Dhabi (24%).

[Insert Table 1 about here]

Participants completed a self-administered online questionnaire which began with several filter questions to identify respondents who met the criteria. Qualified participants were then asked to recall their recent experience in each of the four stopover cities they had been to, including the year visited, number of nights spent, and activities undertaken during their stay. We used the self-reported stopover experience for treatment assignment. Specifically, those who reported having experience in either Hong Kong or Singapore are considered as a control group and those who reported having experience in either Dubai or

Abu Dhabi are considered as a treatment group. Interestingly, 90% of participants stayed between one and three nights at the destination, which supports the definition of a stopover proposed by Kotsi, Pike, & Gottlieb, (2018). Next we measured attitudinal destination loyalty in terms of their revisit intention ( $\alpha = .91$ ; single factor loaded with 85.03% variance explained) and recommendation of the stopover city to other people ( $\alpha = .92$ ; single factor loaded with 86.43% variance explained), both using the same three-item seven-point bipolar scale (not likely/very likely; not probable/very probable; not possible/very possible). To capture the perceived ambience of the stopover destination, participants were asked to indicate their agreement towards a battery of six stopover destination attributes: ‘cleanliness’, ‘friendly people’, ‘safe environment’, ‘women are treated with respect’, ‘nice airport’, and ‘English is spoken’ (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree;  $\alpha = .83$ ; single factor loaded with 55.35% variance explained). These ambience attributes were drawn from Pike & Kotsi, (2020b)’s 3A’s of stopover destination attractiveness model, which proposes attractions, ambience, and access as three factors of stopover destination influencing attitudinal stopover destination loyalty. Follow up research supported the validity of this model (Pike, Pontes & Kotsi, 2021). It is worth noting that in Pike & Kotsi, (2020b)’s 3A model, there are seven attributes in ambience, on top of the six attributes used in the present research, “not too crowded” is an additional attribute. All of these seven attributes were identified in a three-staged process, including personal interviews to identify all relevant attributes (see Pike and Kotsi, 2016; Pike, Kotsi, and Tossan, 2018), online surveys to test the importance of each attribute identified (see Pike and Kotsi, 2018), and a refined online survey (see Pike and Kotsi 2020b) based on 2,000 participants in four countries to finalize the attributes. Given the longitudinal nature and robust finding based on this stream of literature, we adopt these attributes as acceptable measure of ambience. The reason why we omitted the additional attribute is because it was originally elicited only from UK and New

Zealand sample but not from Australian sample as reported in Pike & Kotsi, (2020b). Given that in this study, Australian participants constituted of 27.8% of sample size relatively to 3% of UK and New Zealand sample and also in Study 2 all the participants were from Australia, we decide not to use this attribute. The final section asked participants demographic questions.

### 3.3 Results

*Attitudinal destination loyalty.* We combined the data of Singapore and Hong Kong for traditional stopover destinations, and combined the data of Dubai and Abu Dhabi for emerging stopover destinations. A t-test revealed that participants were more likely to revisit ( $M = 6.14$ ,  $SD = 1.01$ ) and recommend the traditional stopover destination ( $M = 6.20$ ,  $SD = .99$ ) than the emerging stopover (revisit intention:  $M = 5.85$ ,  $SD = 1.25$ ,  $t(462) = 3.08$ ,  $p < .01$ ; recommendation:  $M = 5.90$ ,  $SD = 1.20$ ,  $t(471) = 3.38$ ,  $p < .01$ ). This result indicated that the type of stopover destination influenced travelers' attitudinal destination loyalty. Therefore, the hypothesis 1 was supported.

*Perceived ambience.* A t-test revealed that participants perceived more positive ambience for traditional stopover destinations ( $M = 5.77$ ,  $SD = .89$ ) than for emerging stopover destinations ( $M = 4.43$ ,  $SD = 1.02$ ,  $t(493) = 4.40$ ,  $p < .001$ ). This result indicates the type of stopover destination influences perceived ambience.

*Mediation analysis.* We conducted a mediation test using Hayes's (2013) PROCESS macro (Model 4; with 10,000 bootstrapped sample) by including perceived ambience as a mediator, and revisit intention and recommendation as dependent variable separately. Results showed the indirect effect of the type of stopover destination on attitudinal destination loyalty, through perceived ambience (revisit intention:  $b = .21$ ,  $SE = .05$ , 95% CI = [.11, .31]; recommendation:  $b = .21$ ,  $SE = .05$ , 95% CI = [.11, .32]). This result indicated

that hypothesis 2 was supported. In other words, perceived ambience mediates the effect of the type of stopover destination on attitudinal destination loyalty.

#### **4.0 Study 2: Testing the moderation effect**

##### *4.1 Design, procedure and measures*

The objectives of Study 2 were to replicate the findings from Study 1 and to test the moderating role of sensation seeking tendency. As in Study 1, we used a quasi-experimental design to investigate travelers' actual experience with traditional and emerging stopover destinations. For this study we recruited 159 Australian participants through a large commercial online panel of who met the following criteria: (1) travelled to the UK or Europe from Australia; (2) have ever stopped over for at least one night in either Singapore or Dubai; (3) are likely to travel to the UK or Europe with a stopover in the future. Two participants did not pass the initial screening and were removed from further analysis, leaving 157 participants for the final analysis. Participants' demographic characteristics are presented in Table 2.

[Insert Table 2 about here]

The procedure for completing the questionnaire was identical to Study 1. Participants completed a self-administered online questionnaire which began with the filter questions. Qualified participants were then asked to recall their experience in each of the two stopover cities they had previously visited, the year of visitation, number of nights, and activities undertaken. Singapore had been previously visited by 71% of participants, while 68% of participants had previously visited Dubai. Almost identical to Study 1, 91% of participants stayed between one and three nights. Next we measured attitudinal destination loyalty in



terms of their revisit intention ( $\alpha = .95$ ; single factor loaded with 91.61% variance explained) and recommendation of the stopover city to other people ( $\alpha = .96$ ; single factor loaded with 92.94% variance explained). To capture the perceived ambience of the stopover destination, participants were asked to indicate their agreement towards the same six stopover destination attributes that were used in Study 1 ( $\alpha = .87$ ; single factor loaded with 62.13% variance explained). Finally, participants completed the Brief Sensation-Seeking Scale (BSSS) (see Hoyle et. al., 2002; Eachus, 2004), before answering the demographic questions.

#### 4.2 Results

*Attitudinal destination loyalty.* We first ran an exploratory factor analysis of the BSSS scale items, and found that it was necessary to drop one item due to low factor loading. After omitting this item, all items were loaded onto a single factor, with 50.65% variance explained. We then ran the moderation analysis using Hayes's (2013) PROCESS Macro (Model 1; with 10,000 bootstrapped samples). Results showed the main effect of the type of stopover destination on revisit intention ( $b = 1.42$ ,  $SE = .51$ ,  $t(157) = 2.79$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and recommendation to others ( $b = .11$ ,  $SE = .42$ ,  $t(157) = 2.62$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Participants were more likely to revisit ( $M = 6.31$ ,  $SD = .95$ ) and recommend the traditional stopover destination ( $M = 6.40$ ,  $SD = .91$ ) than the emerging stopover destination (revisit intention:  $M = 5.84$ ,  $SD = 1.47$ ; recommendation:  $M = 6.11$ ,  $SD = 1.10$ ). This result again indicated that the type of stopover destination influenced travelers' attitudinal destination loyalty. The hypothesis 1 was supported again. Results also showed a significant interaction effect between type of stopover destination and sensation-seeking tendency on revisit intention ( $b = .30$ ,  $SE = .15$ ,  $t(157) = 2.01$ ,  $p = .045$ ) and recommendation to others ( $b = .26$ ,  $SE = .12$ ,  $t(157) = 2.09$ ,  $p = .04$ ). As shown in Figure 2a, the floodlight analysis indicates that when the sensation seeking tendency score was below 3.44 (i.e. less sensation seeking;  $B_{JN} = -.39$ ,  $SE$

= .20,  $p = .05$ ), participants were more likely to revisit the traditional stopover destination than the emerging stopover destination. Similarly, as shown in Figure 2b, when the sensation seeking tendency score was below 3.08 (i.e. less sensation seeking;  $B_{JN} = -.32$ ,  $SE = .16$ ,  $p = .05$ ), participants were more likely to recommend the traditional stopover than the emerging stopover.

[Insert Figures 2a and 2b about here]

*Perceived ambience.* Results of moderation analysis using Hayes's (2013) PROCESS Macro (Model 1; with 10,000 bootstrapped samples) showed the main effect of the type of stopover destination on perceived ambience ( $b = 1.33$ ,  $SE = .41$ ,  $t(157) = 3.22$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Participants perceived more positive ambience for the traditional stopover destination ( $M = 6.05$ ,  $SD = .93$ ) than the emerging stopover destination ( $M = 5.56$ ,  $SD = 1.04$ ,  $t(155) = 3.15$ ,  $p < .01$ ). This result again suggested that the type of stopover destination influences perceived ambience. Results also showed a significant interaction effect between the type of stopover destination and sensation-seeking tendency ( $b = .26$ ,  $SE = .12$ ,  $t(157) = 2.17$ ,  $p = .03$ ). As shown in Figure 3, the floodlight analysis indicates that when the sensation seeking tendency score was below 3.79 (i.e. less sensation seeking;  $B_{JN} = -.34$ ,  $SE = .17$ ,  $p = .05$ ), perceived ambience was more positive for the traditional stopover destination than for the emerging stopover destination.

[Insert Figure 3 about here]

*Moderated mediation analysis.* We then conducted a moderated mediation analysis using Hayes' (2013) PROCESS Macro (Model 8; with 10,000 bootstrapped samples) with

perceived ambience as the mediator and attitudinal destination loyalty as the dependent variable. We found the mediating effect of perceived ambience on both revisit intention ( $b = .18$ ,  $SE = .08$ ; 95% confidence intervals (CI) = [.02, .34]) and recommendation to others ( $b = .19$ ,  $SE = .08$ ; 95% CI = [.02, .35]), and that this mediating effect was moderated by sensation-seeking tendency. That is, the indirect effect through perceived ambience was insignificant for participants with higher sensation-seeking tendency (for revisit intention:  $b = .11$ ,  $SE = .15$ , 95% CI = [.42, .17]; for recommendation:  $b = .12$ ,  $SE = .17$ , 95% CI = [.48, .19]). These findings indicated that hypotheses 2 and 3 were supported.

## **5.0 Conclusion**

### *5.1 Summary of results*

The destination marketing literature to date has largely ignored the phenomenon of stopovers during long haul international air travel. This present study used a quasi-experimental design with two separate samples of participants, all with previous long haul travel experience, future intention to travel long haul, and previous visitation experience at one of the destinations of interest, to examine the effects of the type of stopover destination, perceived ambience and sensation seeking tendencies, on attitudinal destination loyalty. We found that travelers are more likely to revisit and recommend a traditional stopover destination than an emerging stopover destination. Importantly, we found that the effect of the type of stopover destination on attitudinal destination loyalty was mediated by perceived ambience and moderated by sensation-seeking tendency. Specifically, participants with less sensation-seeking tendency have more positive perceived ambience for the traditional stopover destination, and therefore have more positive attitudinal destination loyalty than for the emerging stopover destination. However, this effect was mitigated for those participants with higher sensation-seeking tendencies.

## *5.2 Theoretical contributions*

First, this research contributes to stopover destination marketing literature by comparing the attitudinal loyalty between traditional and emerging destinations. Past research focused on examining traveler's attitudes towards emerging stopover destination such as Dubai and showed how past visitation influences attitudinal loyalty through airport ambience (Pike, Pontes, and Kotsi, 2021) and brand image (Pike et al., 2020). In a very limited number of studies comparing two types of stopover destinations, Pike and Kotsi, (2020a) examined how determinant attributes differ in the traditional and emerging destinations. The present study extends this research by showing that on top of attribute differences, travelers' attitudinal loyalty in terms of revisit intention and recommendations does differ.

Second, this research enriches the application of sensation seeking in tourism research. Past research has revealed that travelers differ in terms of sensation seeking tendency and thus matching this trait to the destination is crucial to successful tourism marketing (Litvin, 2008). Our research is the first to assess sensation seeking in the context of stopover destinations. Specifically, we confirm the findings by Lepp and Gibson, (2008), showing individuals with higher sensation seeking tendencies are more likely to visit international destinations perceived as risky, and also the findings by Sharifpour, Walters, and Ritchie, (2013) showing that high sensation seekers are more likely to be willing to visit Arabia compared with low counterparts. For another, we assess sensation seeking from a different angle than Sharifpour, Walters, and Ritchie, (2013) which look at sensation seeking as a mediator between risk perception and decision behaviour. We consider sensation seeking as a moderator of stopover type on perceived ambience. Together with Sharifpour, Walters, and Ritchie, (2013), the present research draws a complete picture of the role of sensation seeking on travellers' decision making of different types of stopover destinations.

### *5.3 Managerial implications*

There are two practical implications of the findings from the two studies. Firstly, the results can be used to guide destination positioning marketing communications. As we show that the effect of stopover type on attitudinal loyalty is driven by perceived ambience, stopover destination marketers should focus on ambience-related factors when conducting marketing campaigns. Specifically, for traditional stopover destinations this could mean reinforcing the positively held perceptions of ambience, while the emerging destinations could do more to enhance perceptions of ambience. Some suggestions could be simultaneously maintaining the exotic atmosphere and also creating a home-like feeling. This could be done by addressing travelers' safety concerns by employing more security staff, training airport ground staff English culture and language to reduce cultural differences, and promoting an image of equality and respect of gender.

Decisions could also be made about whether or not to make trade-offs by targeting groups with lower or higher sensation seeking tendencies. Therefore the second implication is the need for market research to identify the potential characteristics of those with high and low sensation seeking tendencies, to evaluate the potential for segmenting target markets. One way to identify travelers' sensation seeking personality is to study the media habits of consumers. For example, the readers of media featuring adventure and thrills could be more likely to be high sensational seekers. Thus, promoting the emerging stopover destination on this type of media could be effective. Further, it might be possible to reach social media influencers and celebrities whose channels are featuring some high-risk activities such as bungee jumping and skydiving to promote emerging stopover destination. Another way to identify traveller's personality is to use associated demographic factors. A meta-analysis has shown that men score higher than women on sensation-seeking scale (Cross, Cyrenne, &

Brown, 2013). So, it is suitable to segment target markets based on the gender factor. In this regard, the findings are relevant for DMOs and stakeholders responsible for promoting either emerging destinations in other parts of the world, or destinations that could be potentially stereotyped due to a specific geographic location.

#### *5.4 Limitations and future research directions*

There are four limitations of the present research. First, we only considered two example cities for each stopover destination type. Although the two example cities are adopted from past research (see Kotsi, Pike, & Gottlieb, 2018; Pike & Kotsi, 2020a), it could be argued that these may not be fully representative to make a conclusive statement. Future research may consider assessing travellers' attitudinal loyalty towards more stopover cities for each category. Second, we used participants self-report as criteria for treatment assignment. It could be argued that self-report may have social desirability bias. Future research could consider using a true experimental design to replicate our findings. Third, although we selected the ambience measure based on past research (see Pike and Kotsi 2020b), we acknowledge that there are different ways to measure ambience (e.g., Kirillova, et al, 2014). Future research may use different operationalization of ambience to replicate our findings. Last but not least, our research only considered sensation seeking tendency as a moderator. Future research could consider other situational or personality trait factors and test how these factors may influence the effect of stopover type on attitudinal loyalty.

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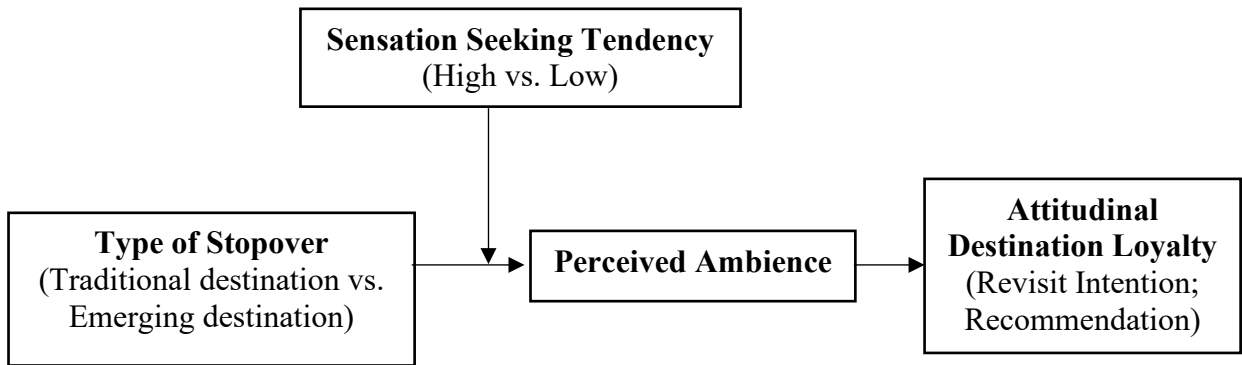
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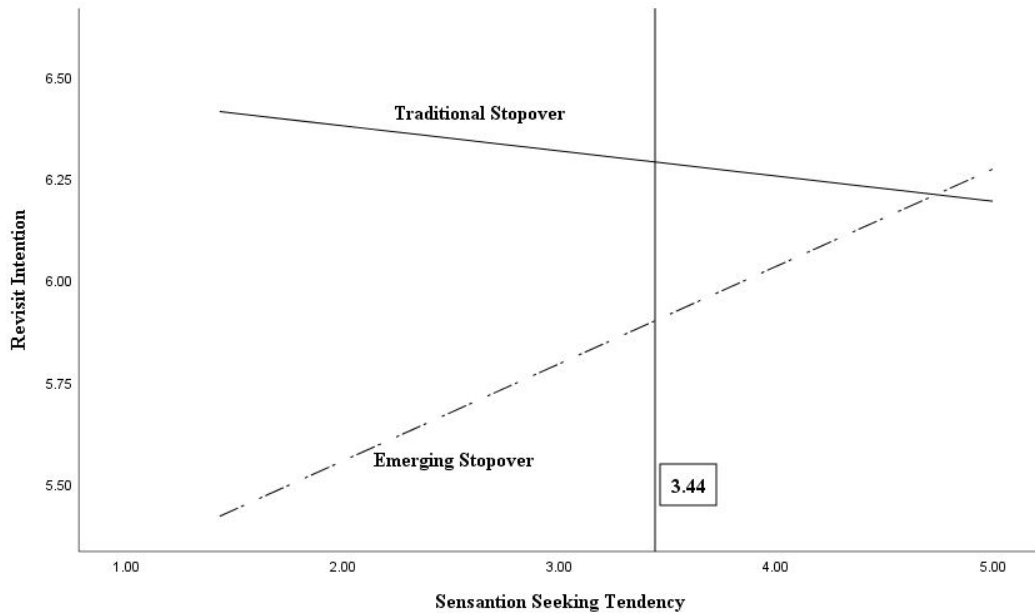
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**Figure 1 - Conceptual Framework**

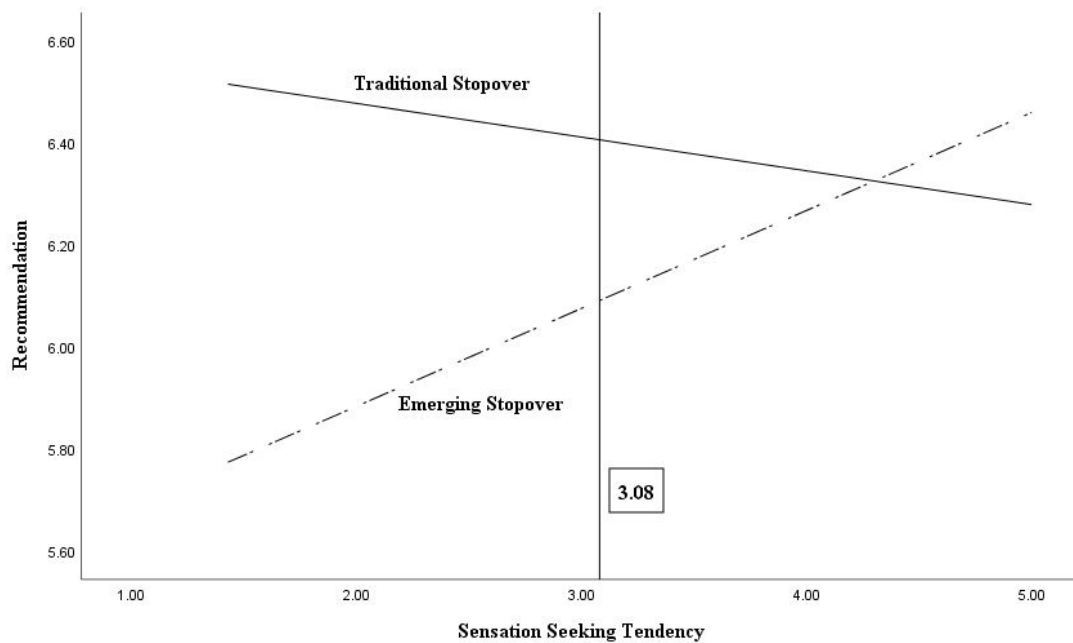


**Figure 2 - Floodlight Analysis Indicating Johnson-Neyman Point of Significance on**

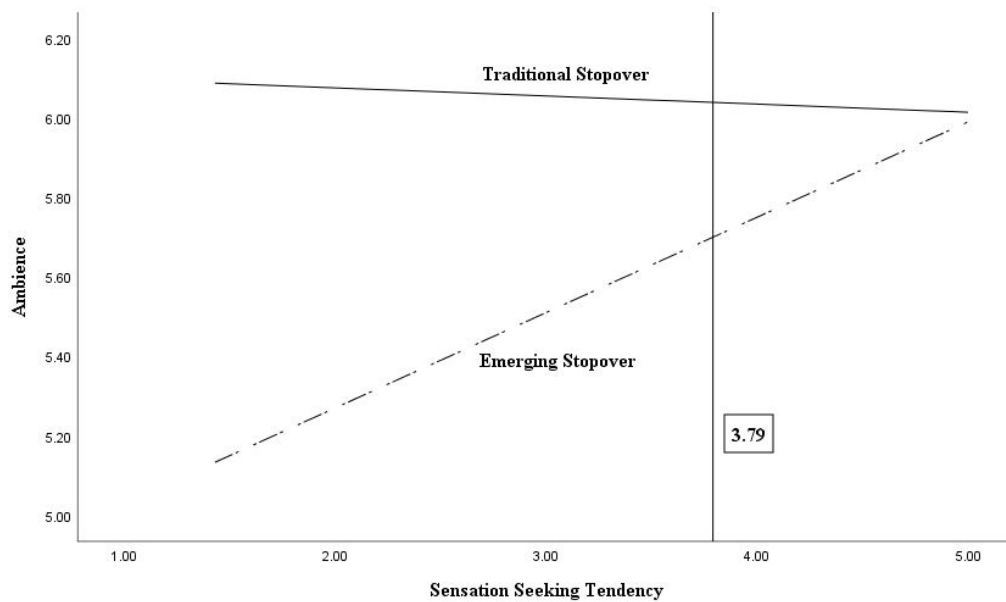
**2a. Revisit Intention**



**2b. Recommendation**



**Figure 3 - Floodlight Analysis Indicating Johnson-Neyman Point of Significance on Perceived Ambience**



4

**Table 1 - Characteristics of Study 1 participants (N = 356)**

<b>Country</b>		
USA	241	67.7%
Canada	5	1.4%
UK	8	2.2%
Australia	99	27.8%
New Zealand	3	.8%
<b>Age</b>		
18-25	69	19.4%
26-34	155	43.5%
35-49	108	30.3%
50-64	19	5.3%
65+	5	1.4%
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	237	66.6%
Female	118	33.1%
Other	1	0.3%
<b>Marital status</b>		
Single	162	45.5%
Married/permanent partner	184	51.7%
Separated/divorced/widowed	10	2.8%
<b>Dependent children</b>		
0	219	61.5%
1-2	122	34.3%
3+	15	4.2%
<b>Education</b>		
High school	45	12.6%
Professional qualification	36	10.1%
University graduate	200	56.2%
University post-graduate	75	21.1%
<b>Stopover</b>		
Singapore	215	60.4%
Dubai	178	50.0%
Hong Kong	197	55.3%
Abu Dhabi	84	23.6%
<b>Year visited</b>		
2018-2019	67	18.8%
2016-2017	180	50.6%
2014-2015	63	17.7%
2012-2013	19	5.3%
2010-2011	10	2.8%
2008-2009	10	2.8%
Before 2008	7	2%
<b>Nights</b>		
1	178	50%
2	96	27%
3	46	12.9%
4	17	4.8%
More than 4	19	5.3%



**Table 2 - Characteristics of Study 2 participants (N = 157)**

<b>Age</b>		
18-25	20	12.7%
26-34	43	27.4%
35-49	53	33.8%
50-64	18	11.5%
65+	23	14.6%
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	59	37.6%
Female	98	62.4%
<b>Marital status</b>		
Single	41	26.1%
Married/permanent partner	105	66.9%
Separated/divorced/widowed	11	7.0%
<b>Dependent children</b>		
0	87	55.4%
1-2	59	37.6%
3+	11	7.0%
<b>Education</b>		
High school	25	15.9%
Professional qualification	41	26.1%
University graduate	63	40.1%
University post-graduate	28	17.8%
<b>Stopover</b>		
Singapore	111	70.7%
Dubai	106	67.5%
<b>Year visited</b>		
2018-2019	75	47.8%
2016-2017	44	28.0%
2014-2015	29	18.4%
2012-2013	6	3.8%
2010-2011	2	1.3%
Before 2008	1	.6%
<b>Nights</b>		
1	75	47.8%
2	39	24.8%
3	29	18.5%
4	8	5.1%
More than 4	6	3.8%
<b>State</b>		
New South Wales	52	33.1%
Queensland	22	14%
South Australia	12	7.6%
Tasmania	5	3.2%
Victoria	49	31.2%
Western Australia	16	10.2%
Australian Capital Territory	1	.6%