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# Recreational Novelty and Aesthetic Motives: Relationship with Hedonia in the Context of the Covid-19 Pandemic



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## **Abstract**

This study aims to understand the relationships between hedonia and the motivations of museum visitors. In this context, the relations between novelty and aesthetic appreciation, pleasure and avoidance were examined. The data of the study were collected from individuals who visited the Odunpazarı Modern Art Museum during the period of pandemic when the restrictions were streched. Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was used to analyze the data. The study findings show that visitors' motivations of novelty seeking and aesthetic appreciation positively and directly affects their hedonia. Therefore it is recommended for tourism enterpreneurs to ensure reviewing the servicescape with an understanding of tourists' changing motivation.

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## INTRODUCTION

Today, the bans and the perceived risk level due to the COVID-19 pandemic (Landry et al., 2020) have created an unprecedented disruption in daily lives (Mateer et al., 2021) and also caused a change in recreational habits and individual motivations. Therefore, the individual is motivated by the psychological needs without being aware of, or has created motivations that turn into psychological needs by internalizing social values, norms and pressures (Heitmann, 2011). The aim of this study is to examine the relationship between motivations that direct individuals to recreational activities during the pandemic process and hedonia consisting of pleasure and avoidance structures.

This study has some theoretical and practical contributions. Restrictions of travel and lockdowns caused self-isolation, and limiting the leisure and recreation habits of individuals, hence entailed a serious decline in the leisure and recreation industry (Fang et al., 2021). However, individuals have developed psychological and social motivations to perform various recreational behaviors. Understanding these psychological and social motivations is a requirement for directing and managing the recreational behaviors of individuals in crises that may arise worldwide. This study is carried out in order to fill this gap in the literature and makes a theoretical contribution to the literature. In addition, knowing the factors that motivate potential consumers makes it easier for marketers and recreation managers to develop products or programs that meet the needs and desires of individuals (Kim, 2007). Therefore, with the research questions developed in this study, it is aimed to enrich the knowledge of recreation managers and marketers.

This study carried out in four sections. In the first part the definitions and relationships of the variables are explained by reviewing the literature. Then, the methodology employed in the research, and the research findings are presented. Lastly, results are disccused.

## **Literature Review**

As a dynamic process motivation (Fodness, 1994), enables the release of internal psychological factors such as needs, desires and goals that create a disturbing level of tension in the minds and bodies of individuals with designed actions (Fodness, 1994). It can be interpreted as the driving force behind behaviors (Fodness, 1994; Prentice, 2004). According to Heitmann (2011) motivation is a state of need or a situation that causes the tourist to take action. In leisure studies, motivation is defined as a need, reason or satisfaction (Crandall, 1980) that encourages participation in a leisure activity with internal and external stimuli (Chen & Pang, 2012). As a state of need or situation, motivation helps to understand why the individual travels, the reason behind traveling to a certain place and participate in certain activities or events (Heitmann, 2011; Chen & Pang, 2012).

Being motivated includes feeling of strength or inspiration, energizing towards a goal, and taking action to do something (Ryan & Deci, 2000). In this context, researchers try to identify the motivational sources behind the behaviors of individuals within the scope of models that include multiple motivations rather than a single dominant force (Pearce & Lee, 2005). According to Bello and Etzel (1985), individuals have a set of benefit expectations from participating in an activity. For example, some travelers prefer trips that involve only minor behavioral changes; while others prefer more radical activities such as spending above normal, exposure to unfamiliar environments, and new social relationships reveal motivations based on individual expectations. These expectations can be explained clearly by the motivation theories.

Research on motivation theories reveals the distinction in the reflection of intrinsic and extrinsic motivations on human behavior. Ryan and Deci (2000) define intrinsic motivation as doing something because it is inherently interesting or enjoyable, and extrinsic motivation as doing something because it leads to a result. Visitors are influenced by many internal and external stimuli and act in accordance with push and pull motivations (Crompton, 1979; Kim, 2007). According to Bello and Etzel (1985) in the analysis of motivations, the socio-psychological factors of the individual are conceptualized with push factors such as climatic features, natural attractions and historical places, and the motives evoked by the destination are conceptualized with pull factors. In other words traditionally, push factors are thought to constitute the desire to travel and pull factors are thougt to explain the actual destination choice. Kim (2007) states that individuals are pushed by potentially invisible travel desires and then attracted by tangible attractions or resources. Tourist choices and selections are carried out within this continuum (Bello and Etzel, 1985). Within this study, aesthetic appreciation is examined within the scope of the pull factor, while novelty is a push factor.

In psychology, novelty is the degree of contrast between current perception and past experiences (Jang & Feng, 2007, p. 582). With reference to the new and previously unrecognized features (Berlyne, 1971, p. 142), novelty is defined as unexpected, surprising, new and unknown (Russell and Mehrabian, 1976). In the tourism literature, novelty and novelty seeking have been examined as one of the main travel motives (Cohen 1972; Crompton, 1979; Lee & Crompton, 1992; Dann, 1981; Yuan & McDonald, 1990). Visitors' perception of novelty in a destination is expressed by the degree of unknown and surprising elements associated with objects, places, environment, atmosphere or other people (Lee & Crompton, 1992). Hence, in the tourism literature, novelty is accepted as one of intrinsic drivers and a source of motivation to try new and extraordinary things (Zhang et al., 2020; Kitouna & Kim, 2017; Jang & Feng, 2007). Jang and Feng (2007) evaluate novelty seeking as a central component of travel motivation and the opposite of familiarity, and state that the importance of novelty seeking theory in the decision-making process is an innate source of motivation. Similarly, Pearce and Lee (2005) argue that in overseas holiday preferences, the pursuit of novelty comes to the fore as the dominant motive, as well as the purpose of enjoyment. According to Kitouna and Kim (2017), the pursuit of novelty as a motivational element is to increase the positive experiences of visitors, leading to satisfaction and revisit intention.

Aesthetics sheds light on a philosophical positioning that reveals the reality and nature of what it means to be human, and fuels the pursuit of happiness by purging it from goals and intentions (Thompson, 2018). Beauty in a space is appreciated without any other purpose or expectation (Richards, 2001) and aesthetic value is sought in the elegance of simplicity and the value of being away from confusion (Lomas et al., 2017). Matthews (2002) mentions that aesthetic appreciation can emerge as a result of our emotional concentration by opening ourselves to the stimuli of nature. The relationship between aesthetics and motivation is seen as one of the pull factors because aesthetic elements in the place may be under the control of businesses and organizations (Scott, 1995, p. 128; Dann, 1981). According to Kim et al. (2020), individuals are motivated towards approaching hotels, objects and places that are pleasing to them in their aesthetic perception. Accordingly, especially for city dwellers, the beauty of a natural place is seen as a source of motivation (Calvo, 1971, p. 9 cited in Dann, 1981) that leads to a positive and hedonic experience.

Hedonia is considered within the scope of pleasure and personal interests with the aim of humans to pursue their desires, feelings, and pleasures (Ryan & Deci, 2001), dependent on the view that a good life should be an enjoyable life (Veenhoven, 2003, p. 437). Hedonia emerges when individuals who can understand more than one point of view, are open to novelty, and appreciate interaction with the environment and other individuals more (Loureiro et al., 2019). Moreover it emerges when individuals rearrange themselves physically and mentally (Ngnoumen & Langer, 2016) in the touristic place. This is generally depend on the fact that tourists perceive various features of the place they are in or they experience (Rubin et al., 2011). By this way visitors reflect the attention and love they need to the place or experience (Hanh, 2009), and develop emotions in the form of flexible or adaptive responses (Makowski et al., 2019). The psychological context of Hedonia is a motivational doctrine that assumes people engage in certain behaviors for pleasure and avoidance (Young, 1936, p. 319).

From the moment they are born, people perform many activities to obtain a pleasant feeling or to avoid them (Young, 1936), and novelty is seen as an important source of motivation in this context (Snepenger, 1987; Skavronskaya et al., 2020). For instance, Yuan and McDonald (1990) state that novelty, which is among the push factors, is an important source of motivation that directs individuals to travel for pleasure. From another point of view, Bello and Etzel (1985) state that daily routines cause low levels of arousal in individuals' lives. On the other hand seeing and doing different things increase the level of pleasure and arousal by encouraging novelty seeking. Similarly, avoidance is also influenced by novelty motivation. According to Berlyne (1950), escaping from monotony and boredom to a new form of arousal is an unavoidable human urge. Lee and Crompton (1992) explain this situation by the fact that individuals act according to their degree of boredom, and novelty is an important source of motivation to avoid boredom caused distress. From these points:

H1: Novelty positively influences visitor pleasure

H2: Novelty positively influences visitor avoidance

Traditionally, aesthetic objects primarily aim to give pleasure to the visitor (Hong and Hsu, 2020) to deepen the pleasure (Kneller, 2017). Horng and Hsu (2020) stated in their research on restaurants that creating a harmony affect the emotions and pleasures of individuals by improving an aesthetic experience in the place. Moreover, even the multi-sensory aesthetic elements inherent in eating can lead to well-being and pleasure by increasing the subjective value that an individual assign on food (Batat et al., 2019). Avoid is associated with aesthetic appreciation, as individuals are motivated to experience peace or tranquility in a particular place (Home et al., 2012). Studies conducted in this direction often focus on nature and natural beauties. Capaldi et al. (2017) states that since the perception of beauty develops connectedness with nature, it can enable individuals to move away from or avoid stressful environments.

H3: Aesthetic positively influences visitor pleasure

H4: Aesthetic positively influences visitor avoidance

## Methods

In this study, all constructs were measured using a 7-point Likert scales (ranging from 1 being strongly disagree to 7 being strongly agree) adopted from previous studies. The aesthetic dimension was operationalized using six

items adopted from Chen et al., (2017). Three items for novelty were borrowed from Lee & Crompton (1992) and Feng & Jang (2007). Lastly, the six items for pleasure and avoid constructs were adopted from Lengieza et al., (2019).

Since present research was carried out in Turkey and original scales were English, back-translation method were adopted to check the translation accuracy. The research was undertaken at the Odunpazarı Modern Muze (OMM) in Eskişehir, Turkey under COVID-19 pandemic conditions between July and August, 2020. The research data were collected from the dwellers and foreigner visitors of the museum. The 398 sample of the study completed the questionaries effectively. Structural equation modeling-partial least squares (SEM-PLS) method was used to analyze measurement and structural models. SmartPLS 3.3.3 software was used to evaluate factor loads and path coefficients through the application of the bootstrapping technique. The measurement scale was discussed by internal consistency reliability, convergent reliability and discriminant validity. On the otherhand the structural model showed the results of the hypothesis with R2, Q2, f2 and path coefficients.

# **Findings**

## **Measurement Scale**

We assessed the measurement model through internal consistency reliability (composite reliability-CR and Cronbach alpha), convergent reliability (indicator reliability and average variance extracted), and discriminant validity (heteroit-monotrait). All loading values of the indicator variables (.749-.938), composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha values of all constructs exceeded the recommended .70 threshold level (Hair et al., 2017). Also, all constructs' average variance extracted (AVEs) values were higher than 0.50 (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988), revealing evidence of satisfactory convergent validity.

Table 1. The Measurement Scale

Constructs/Items	Loadings	Cronbach Alpha	CR	AVE
Aesthetic		.914	.933	.701
AA1	.833			
AA2	.749			
AA3	.852			
AA4	.833			
AA5	.885			
AA6	.865			
Novelty		.845	.905	.761
NOV1	.808			
NOV2	.906			
NOV3	.901			
Pleasure		.883	.928	.811
HEP1	.938			
HEP2	.861			
HEP3	.902			
Avoid		.880	.925	.805
HEV1	.905			
HEV2	.899			
HEV3	.888			

As indicated in Table 2, the square root of each structure's AVE value (diagonal values) was greater than the correlation coefficients, indicating sufficient discriminant validity. Also, HTMT results (Table 2), which can be seen

in the parentheses, show that the correlation values corresponding to the respective constructs did not violate HTMT0.85 (Kline 2011), indicating that a discriminant validity had been achieved.

Table 2. Discriminant validity

	1	2	3	4
Aesthetic	.837			
Avoid	.626 (.692)	.897		
Novelty	.573 (.638)	437 (.492)	.873	
Pleasure	.669 (.664)	.611 (.688)	.580 (.656)	.901

## The Structural model

We analyzed the structural model was analyzed through bootstrapping using 500 iterations. As shown in Table 3, the Stone-Geisser's Q2 value (cross-validated redundancy approach) for endogenous constructs is above zero (Hair et al., 2017), which provides validation of the predictive relevance of the model. In addition, the R2 values of all the latent variables in the model are above 0.10, as suggested.

The complete findings of the structural model are summarized in Table 3. The path coefficients between aesthetic and pleasure ( $\beta$ = .800) and avoid ( $\beta$ = .559) were found to be significant. Furthermore, the findings supporting a significant link between novelty and pleasure ( $\beta$ = .121) and avoid ( $\beta$ = .116). In addition to, we analyzed f2 and Q2 in the assessment of the reflective inner model. Table 3 shows that the relationship between aesthetic and pleasure (f2 = 1.835) and avoid (f2 = .351) have a large effect; the relationship between novelty and avoid (f2 = .015) and pleasure (f2 = .042) have a low effect. Also, Q2 for avoid and pleasure are .313 and .766, respectively, indicating acceptable predictive relevance.

Table 3. Structural model

Hypothesis	Relationships	β	t-value	$f^2$	Decision
H1	Aesthetic→ Avoid	.559	11.014	.351	Supported
H2	Aesthetic→ Pleasure	.800	22.770	1.835	Supported
Н3	Novelty→Avoid	.116	1.967	.015	Supported
H4	Novelty → Pleasure	.121	3.094	.042	Supported
Avoid $R^2$ =.401, $Q^2$ =.313; Pleasure $R^2$ =.766, $Q^2$ =.610					

## Conclusion

The effects of restrictions, lockdowns, closures of recreational areas and recreational trip cancellations due to COVID-19 on recreation practitioners and visitors are still unclear (Landry et al., 2020). However, it is already known that this pandemic has a negative impact on participation in leisure and recreational activities, and the impacts will emerge over time (Fang et al., 2021). In this study, it has been investigated how museum visitors' novelty seeking and aesthetic appreciation motivations affect their hedonia during the Covid-19 pandemic process. Due to the

findings of this research visitor motivations with the emphasis of novelty-seeking and aesthetic appreciation positively affects their hedonia. This finding is corralated with the findings of previous studies.

Motivation is accepted as a key element in the emergence of psychological needs and desire to visit (Chen & Pang, 2012; Crompton & McKay, 1997; Kim, 2007). As a matter of fact, visitors' behavior and decision-making process are affected by intrinsic, distinctive features such as motivation, personality, and attitude (Yoo et al., 2018; Hsu et al., 2010). When evaluated in terms of museums, the main source of motivation is to experience rich cultural services and entertainment (Brida et al., 2016, p. 262). However, the findings obtained in this study shows that individuals visit museums with the motivation of seeking novelty and aesthetic appreciation during the pandemic process. The importance of these motivations can be related to the fact that the unique qualities that reveal the cultural structure trigger the sense of curiosity in the individual and create a driving force against beauties that will arouse appreciation.

The findings obtained within the scope of this study reveals that there is a relationship between motivation and hedonia. During the COVID 19 pandemic, visitors who are struggling with restrictions, directed to the museums with the motivations of novelty seeking and aesthetic appreciation with the desire to increase their hedonia. Liu (2013) suggests that regardless of the motivation, there is the desire to be happy beneath all kinds of activities and efforts that people perform. This situation can be clearly understood from the conceptual definitions of recreation that relates with the purpose of self-renewal, resting and tranquility. Therefore, recreation, which is based on entertainment and rest, is identified with the feeling of happiness.

Lastly, the findings obtained in this study contribute to the enrichment of information content in the literatüre. However there is still a need for some in-depth studies. In times of crisis, it is necessary to examine from a broader perspective what behaviors lead to visitor motivations and how they develop those motivations. In this context, it is needed to examine visitor profiles depending on the broader scope of motivation. In addition, it is considered important to carry the study beyond the context of museums and analyze the motivations and hedonia in different recreation areas. In order to disseminate the findings obtained in this study to a wider area, recreational motivations should be comprehensively addressed. For instance the motivations of going to cafes can be evaluated within the scope of motivations such as entertainment, hunger, rest, escape, as well as novelty seeking and aesthetic appreciation. While the Covid-19 restrictions have just been lifted, the motivation of mingling with the dense crowd of people in cafes will create a more detailed foresight regarding social and psychological structures of the populations in the times of crisis.

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