EXPLORING TOURISTS' 'PUSH AND PULL' MOTIVATIONS TO VISIT MAURITIUS AS A HOLIDAY DESTINATION

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This study examines the motivational push and pull factors that affect tourists' decision in their choice of a holiday destination. 200 questionnaires were completed using a face to face interview among specific groups of travellers to Mauritius (English, French, German, Italian and South African tourists) at various points on the island. The findings show that rest and relaxation are the most compelling push motivation forces followed by nostalgia, escape, novelty, social interaction. The key pull based motives were found to be climate and weather, landscape and scenery, flora and fauna, beaches, the exotic atmosphere, the Mauritian hospitality and authentic Mauritian culture. Push and pull factors between first time visitors and repeat visitors are discussed. This study contributes to our overall understanding of why holiday makers take travel decisions for long haul destinations like Mauritius and can therefore help destination marketers develop better marketing programmes to meet the specific needs. highly, while north Italian managers seem more concerned about issues of co-ordination and the quality of service provision.

INTRODUCTION

An understanding the factors that influence peoples' choices of their holiday destinations can play a key role in planning activities more effectively by the tourism authority. According to Adair (1990), motivation covers all reasons which influences the way an individual acts. Consequently, without a tourist's motivation to travel there would be no

travel industry. However, every destination is becoming more and more competitive and each individual has the opportunity and freedom to choose from several destinations (Crompton, 1992). Destination marketers and planners are making considerable efforts to study and understand the tourism process and are trying to gain insight into why people engage themselves in travelling to a particular place. This study explores the motivation of long-haul, leisure and pleasure travellers from various countries supplying tourists to Mauritius. Although motivation is only one of variable explaining tourist behaviour, it is considered to be one of the most elementary one because of its impelling and compelling force Iso-Aloha, (1982); Crompton, & McKay (1997).

In the context of Mauritius, little attention has been paid to examining the motivations of tourists visiting the island, and the reasons why tourists opt for this particular destination. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to fill this gap in providing some insights into why tourists opt for Mauritius as a tourist destination and also what attracts them. Many of the island's visitors are not at their first visit to the island. This paper also attempts to establish the reasons why some people choose to come back again to the same destination.

Mauritian tourism sector

Tourism which is the third pillar of the Mauritian economy after the Export Processing Zone (E.P.Z) manufacturing sector and agriculture, contributes significantly to economic growth. According to CSO (2010), in the past two decades tourist arrivals increased at an average annual rate of 9% with a corresponding increase of about 21% in tourism receipts. In 2009, gross tourism receipts were US$1189 million and contributed to around 11% of GDP. The tourism industry has established itself firmly as a vital economic activity on the island through its direct contribution to GDP growth and foreign exchange earnings, and, indirectly, through employment creation. The hotel and restaurant sector accounts for more than 5% of GDP, while the tourism industry generates direct skilled jobs for more than 28,753 people in large establishments and an indefinite number of indirect employment in the form of supporting services. Kassean (2010) argues that competition has become intense between similar island tourist destinations like Seychelles and the Maldives. Marketing strategies have focused on branding Mauritius and the luxurious large hotel resorts and their entertainment opportunities like golf club, casinos, deep sea fishing and the tourist spots in the island. The importance of positioning Mauritius as a tourist destination would be a

key strategy in the future and also, in the way local people who are involved in this sector benefit meaningfully from such initiatives.

LITERATURE REVIEW

There are a number of studies on motivation in the tourism and travel industry: Gray's Sunlust and Wanderlust (1970) typology of tourists, Dann's (1977) Pull and Push Theory, Optimal Arousal Theory (Iso-Aloha, 1980), Pearce (2002)'s (1988) Travel Career Ladder, among many others and adapted versions. Motivation can be considered as a viable method to decrypt human behaviour, more specifically that of travellers. However, referring to both the demand (tourists) and supply (destination) side, Push and Pull Theory has been used by several authors to explain the subject matter. Correia *et al,* (2004) and Money & Crotts, (2003), attempted to explain why people travel to exotic places among Portuguese travellers using push and pull motivations. The results showed the influence of push and pull factors on the way tourists perceive the destination and allowed comprehension about why tourists adopt specific behaviours. Another research by Sangpikul (2007) applied the push and pull motivations to investigate travel motivations of Japanese senior travellers to Thailand. The study identified the influencing needs and wants of the Japanese senior travellers while examining these with regards to socio-demographic variables and psychological well-being factor. Both studies used the push and pull theory to explain underlying concepts of why travellers opt for a particular destination and comprehensively viewed salient features of both travellers from different market segments and the destination.

Lee (2000) argues that the identification of motivations can be considered as critical in order to understand the different desires of travellers and to segment markets. Crompton and McKay (1997) identified that there are three key reasons for putting in effort into research on tourist motivation:
- First, motives are the key to designing offerings for tourists;
- Second, motives directly relate to the subsequent satisfaction that the tourist assesses;
- Finally, identifying and prioritizing motives allows tourism marketers and planners to understand visitors' decision processes.

Motivation

Mill and Morrison (1998) argue that motivation arises when an individual wants to satisfy a need. According to Moutinho, (2000) motivation is a situation which drives an individual towards an action that is likely to bring satisfaction. In psychology and sociology, the concepts of motivation are directed towards emotional and cognitive aspects (Awaritefe, 2003) or internal and external motives (Gnoth, 1997). Internal motives are associated with drives, feelings and instincts whereas external motives involve mental representations such as beliefs or knowledge (Uysal and Yoon 2005), (Sonmez *et al.* 1999). These factors all exert pressures on the human mind which influence the individual to carry out an activity to satisfy a need.

Maslow's (1970) hierarchy of needs theory can be seen in a hierarchy of five categories. The most basic category of needs is that of physiological consisting of items such as hunger, thirst and sleep. Ascending stepwise the other needs are safety, social belongingness and love, esteem, and self-actualization. Human needs normally follow this order while satisfying the lower level need first and then moving to a higher order need. However, there may exist cases where higher level needs prevail even though lower level needs have not been met. Despite these criticisms Maslow's theory is often used explain the hierarchy of human needs. (Cosenza & Davis,1981).

Motivation for travel

Motivation for travel is considered as a key factor in explaining tourist behaviour (Mansfield, 1992; Fodness 1994; Crompton and McKay 1997; and Gnoth 1997). Motivation being an important factor influencing an individual into action, it would be useful to understand how a particular decision is arrived at.

Examples of definitions relating to travel motivations are:
- The set of needs and attitudes which predispose a potential tourist to act in a specific goal-directed way" (Pizam et al., 1979).
- "People's motivations to travel begin when they become aware of certain needs and perceive that certain destinations may have the ability to serve those needs" (Lubbe, 1998).
- Lundberg (1976) points out that what travellers call their motivations "maybe only reflections of deeper needs, needs

which he himself does not understand, may not be aware of, or may not wish to articulate."

In literature related to motivation, it has been acknowledged that certain forces drive an individual to act. Dann (1977) coined these forces as push and pull forces leading people to travel. The push forces are related to the desire to travel of the tourist while pull forces are associated with the qualities of the destination which tend to attract the tourist.

PUSH FACTORS

According to Uysal and Hagnan (1993), push and pull forces act separately and people travel because they are pushed by motivation variables into making travel decisions. Yoon and Uysal (2005) added that the push motivations are emotional and internal aspects of the individual which lead to travel decisions. Push motivations can to be socio-psychological influences onto leisure travellers about their choice of a destination. Dann (1977) suggested two factors as push travel motives: anomie and ego-enhancement. Anomie means the desire to transcend the feeling of isolation obtained in everyday life, where the tourist simply wishes to run away from routine. On the other hand ego-enhancement originates from the need of recognition, which is gained through the status conferred by travel (Fodness, 1994). Crompton (1979) developed a conceptual framework based on Dann's (1977) study that would integrate push motivations of travellers. The influencing factors he found were: the desire for escape from a perceived mundane environment, rest and relaxation, prestige, regression, health and fitness, adventure and social interaction, enhancement of kinship relationships, exploration and evaluation of self, and excitement. Yuan and McDonald (1990) identified five push factors from 29 motivational items in their study throughout four countries. The push dimensions were escape, novelty, enhancement of kinship relationships, prestige, and relaxation/hobbies. The findings showed that the most important factors in pushing the individual to travel for an overseas holiday were firstly novelty and followed by escape.

According to Beard and Ragheb (1983) who developed a model called the Leisure Motivation scale, motivators had been attempted to be classified into four categories:
- Intellectual
- Social
- Complete mastery
- Stimulus avoidance

The different categories proposed by the researchers help to find out the various reasons why people engage in leisure activities, thus travelling for leisure purposes can be classified as same, while the different categories acting as push influences (Floyd & Gray, 2004).

Firstly, the intellectual component assesses the extent to which individuals are motivated to engage in leisure activities involving mental deeds such as learning, discovery, thought or imagery. As for the social component, it reviews the degree to which individuals engage in leisure activities for social reasons. Furthermore it includes two basic needs, firstly the need for friendship and interpersonal relationships while the second is the need for the esteem of others. The complete mastery component is mainly of physical nature which assesses the extent to which individuals engage in leisure activities in order to achieve master, challenge and competition. The stimulus avoidance component assesses the desire to escape and get away from over stimulating life situations. It can also be the need for some individuals to avoid social contact, to seek solitude and calm conditions whilst for others it can be looking for rest and relaxation. The model can be said to have been adapted from Maslow's hierarchy of needs, recognising human needs are not same for everyone. The different categories illustrated may act independently or as an amalgam of such motivators operating as driving forces for the individual to travel. The travel career ladder proposed by Lee and Pearce (2002), Green *et al,.* (2003) emphasize the range of socio-psychological motivations for seeking out holiday experiences and considers five levels of needs. These are relaxation, safety and security, relationships, self-esteem and development, and self-actualization/fulfilment. From the travel career ladder, Lee and Pearce (2002) suggest that people progress upward through motivation levels with accumulated travel experiences. A framework developed by Pearce (2002), Fig 1 identified as the travel career patterns, may be referred as an adjusted version of the travel career ladder though quite different. The two frameworks were empirically tested and generated very similar motivation factors. A total of 14 motivators out of 74 were obtained with slightly different mean ranking orders when segmenting high and low travel groups. These factors were ordered as: novelty, escape/relaxation, self-actualization, nature, self-enhancement, romance, kinship-belonging, autonomy, self-development (host-site involvement), nostalgia, stimulation, isolation and recognition.

Figure 1 Travel career patterns concepts (Pearce (2002), 2005)
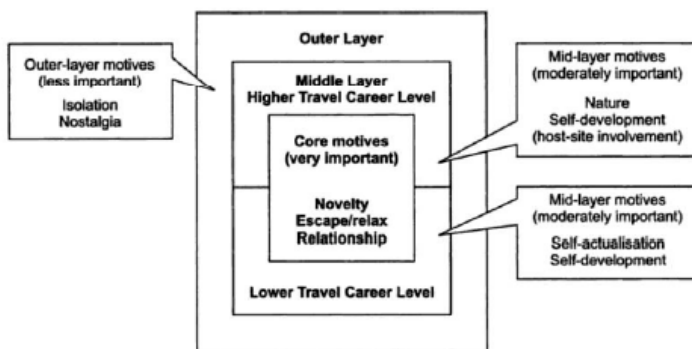
Source: Lee and Pearce (2002): socio-psychological framework

Through the different above typologies on travel motivations, push factors are these driving forces that compel the traveller to satisfy a need. They may be classified in different orders due to the complexity of human nature where each individual has specific needs to be satisfied while travelling.

PULL FACTORS

Pull motivations are external, situational, or cognitive aspects to the tourist that compel the latter to travel to a destination (Yoon and Uysal, 2005). To be more explicit the tourist is attracted by the destination attributes effecting from publicity or promotion or any other means thus giving a perceived image of the particular destination. Indeed, it is evident that pull motivations play an important role into shaping the tourist travel motivations. In fact this may boost up the needs of the individual to have an experience at the particular destination as indicated by Dann (1981) who argued that pull factors of the resort such as sunshine, relaxed tempo, and friendly natives both respond to and reinforce push factor motivation. McGee et al. (1996) confirmed that pull motivations are those that are inspired by a destination's attractiveness such as beaches, recreation facilities, cultural attractions, entertainment, natural scenery, shopping and parks which may stimulate and reinforce inherent push motivations.

In a study carried out from 53 attraction items, Yuan and Mc Donald (1990) identified seven pull factors: budget, culture and history, ease of

travel, wilderness, cosmopolitan environment, facilities and hunting. The findings indicated that individuals from each country might travel for the same reasons but reasons for choosing a particular destination and the level of importance attached to the factors might differ among the countries due to the varying nature of each destination. Furthermore the pull factors in the form of driving forces are described as positive ones which boost an individual to travel to specific destinations and negative ones such as fears and aversions which lead not to travel to certain destinations (Gilbert and Terrata, 2001).

Relating pull motives further to the destination, potential activities offered to the traveller may be referred as key attributes of the destination. Several researches suggested linking activities between travellers and destinations (Gunn, 1994; Mansfeld, 1992 and Canter, 1977). Additionally You et al. (2000) attach travel infrastructures together with environment quality and safety as major dimensions of destination attributes. Obviously, when including these dimensions as destination attributes further reinforce pull motives hence be more destination specific. Without a doubt, pull factors are closely related to the destination and are those factors inferred to the traveller in form of a brand image or perceived destination experience. It is therefore essential to have a look onto what forms part of a tourist destination, as perceived by the traveller to better understand the to-be traveller's necessities while opting for a particular destination. In contrast to consumer products, place products are more complex thus representing a significant challenge to define a destination (Morgan et al., 2002). Mill and Morrison (1998), describe the destination product as predominantly "a bundle" of services and experiences which is convergent to Buhalis's (2000) definition stating that the tourist destination is as an amalgam of tourist products, services and public goods consumed under the same brand name, thus offering the consumer an integrated experience. An attempt from Crouch et al (2000), comprehensively summarize the various factors that together contribute to a tourist destination. They highlighted that the service infrastructure and destination environment are important categories in building the tourist destination experience. Furthermore, the service infrastructure and destination environment consists of dimensions, completing the tourist destination as illustrated in the figure 2 below:

As such the perceived destination experience conceptualizes fully the pull factors which will affect the traveller. Pearce et al (1998) gave some insight on pull factors which may fulfil people's motives for travelling. They argue that assigning motivation power to pull factors is tricky due to fact these attributes are often translated into socio-psychological push-

based motives. For example, one individual may find scuba-diving suiting his needs for adventure and excitement, while another may find it as a form of novelty and a third as escape from a mundane environment. Therefore, one single attribute or activity may represent a mix of motives which serves as an attempt to satisfy the needs of the individual.

Figure 2 The tourist destination experience founded by Crouch *et al* (2000)
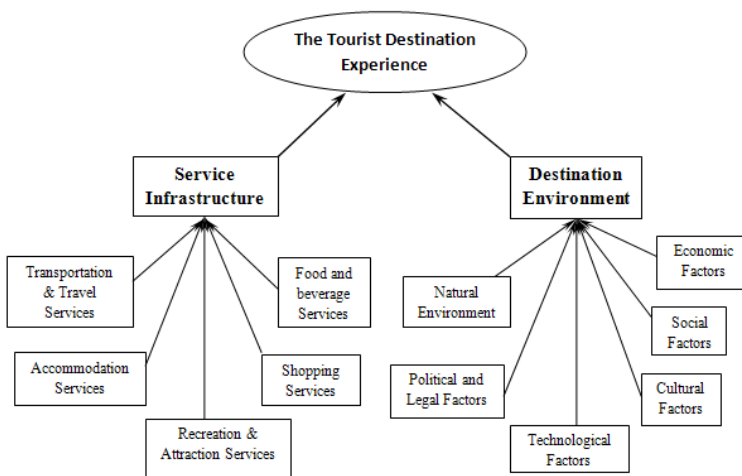
METHODOLOGY:

A sample of 200 questionnaires were completed using a face to face interview among specific groups of travellers to Mauritius (English, French, German, Italian and South African tourists) at various points on the island.

Mansfeld, (1992) argues that there is no variation among those visiting a destination for the first time or more in push based motives.

> **H1**: *There is a significant difference between first time and repeat visit in push based motives to same destination.*

McGee et al. (1996) state that there is no difference between first time travel to a destination, and repeated ones in pull based motives.

H2: *There is a significant difference between first time and repeat visit in pull based motives to the same destination.*

FINDINGS

Considering the push motives which compelled the tourists to take a holiday and to travel to Mauritius are described in descending order in terms of their mean score are shown on the figure 3 below:

**Figure 3** Mean score of push-based motives
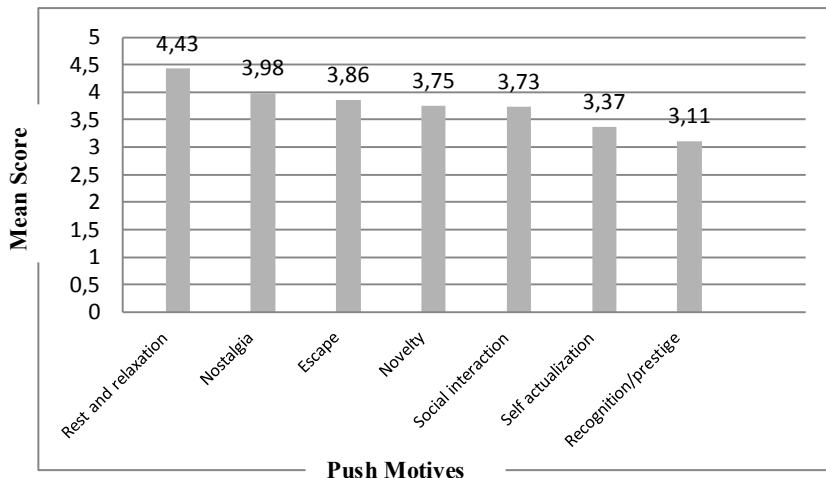
The most important motives were rest and relaxation followed by nostalgia followed by nostalgia, escape, novelty, social interaction, self-actualization and recognition and prestige.

Rest and relaxation accounted for 90% of the survey population. Other views expressed were: a need to go on a holiday, the majority of information gathered were in-line with the push-based motives such as "Discovering and exploring a new place." and "Discover people while resting." forming part of novelty and rest and relaxation. The desire to travel were also to fulfil their wishes "Gift to my wife who deserve to see the best place in the world.", "Who would not want to go to a paradise like Mauritius?", "Mauritius and Maldives considered as most beautiful places in the world." and "Doing kite surf is my passion" which indicate

that the respondents were longing to travel to Mauritius, forming part of nostalgia and self-fulfilment. However, there were diverging responses which included: "To party", "Need a sun tan" and "Appropriate timing during school holidays".

Figure 4 Mean score of pull-based motives
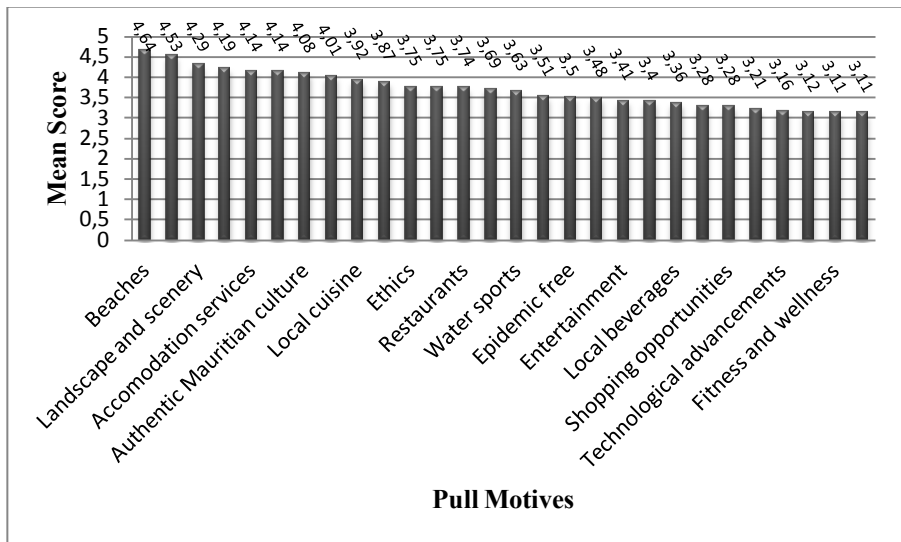
The findings in Figure 4 above show that on average, the tourists expressed high levels of agreement towards items of the destination environment including beaches, the climate and weather, and landscape and scenery. These may be considered as the core elements influencing the travellers to opt for Mauritius. Onto the other side, the Mauritian hospitality and accommodation services were the most agreeable factors driving the tourists to the island on the side of the service infrastructure. It can be observed that the least compelling factors were fitness and wellness and nightlife.

Concerning the respondent's views, "a safe and comfortable environment for small children", "paradise", "tropical destination giving an exotic treat" and "friendly and helpful people" were the most cited and reliable comments with regards to the destination environment made giving insight about the destination choice of the travellers which are in-line with the pull-based motives.

H1: There is a significant difference between first time and repeat visitor push based motives to the same destination.

Since this hypothesis asks for comparison between two groups, first time and repeater visitors, and their different motives, Mann-Whitney Test was carried out to sort out whether there are significant differences between push based motives of the two categories of visitors.

Table 1 Mann-Whitney Test for the push based motives

	Visitor ...	Sig.	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Escape	First timer		106.09	10609.00
	Repeater		94.91	9491.00
	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.152		
Nostalgia	First timer		86.53	8653.00
	Repeater		114.47	11447.00
	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		
Novelty	First timer		117.94	11793.50
	Repeater		83.06	8306.50
	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		
Social interaction	First timer		87.53	8753.00
	Repeater		113.47	11347.00
	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.001		
Self actualization	First timer		98.99	9899.00
	Repeater		102.01	10201.00
	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.701		
Recognition/prestige	First timer		95.51	9551.00
	Repeater		105.49	10549.00
	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.211		
Rest and relaxation	First timer		107.24	10723.50
	Repeater		93.76	9376.50
	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.064		

The results in Table 1 above show that there is a significant difference for only three of the push-based motives: nostalgia (p=.000), novelty (p=.000) and social interaction (p=.001) between first time visitors and repeat visitors, where the asymptotic significance (Asymp. Sig.) is less than the 0.05 significance.

Table 2 Two independent sample test showing significance under Mann-Whitney Test for the pull based motives

Pull-based motives	Visitor category
	Asymp. Sig.
Ease of access	.589
Modes of transport	.700
Accommodation services	.265
Water sports	.001
Nightlife	.037
Entertainment	.010
Land based sports	.132
Attractions	.901
Fitness and wellness	.016
Shopping opportunities	.147
Arts and crafts	.003
Restaurants	.011
Local cuisine	.000
Local beverages	.035
Climate and weather	.008
Landscape and scenery	.721
Flora and fauna	.013
Beaches	.015
Exotic atmosphere	.686
Epidemic free	.949
Politically stable	.696
Safety and security	.336
	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
Technological advancements	.295
Historical and cultural sites	.368
Authentic Mauritian culture	.000

Comparing the mean ranks of the just-mentioned valid motives, the results further demonstrate that repeat visitors were more motivated to go on a holiday to Mauritius for: firstly, social interaction (mean

rank=113.47) as opposed to first-time travellers (mean rank=87.53) and secondly they had been longing to travel to the island out of nostalgia (mean rank=114.47) as opposed to first-time visitors (mean rank=86.53).

As for first time visitors, experiencing something new (mean rank=117.94) defined as novelty push-based motive was subject to greater motivation force to come for a holiday at the destination as opposed to repeaters (mean rank=83.06).

The concluding remark for the first hypothesis (H1) after analysis is that the hypothesis is partially accepted.

H2: There is a significant difference between first time and repeat visitor pull based motives.

This hypothesis required Mann-Whitney Test to be carried out to enable finding out whether there is a significant difference among the pull-based motives of the first time and repeat visitors. Table 2 below shows the results of the test:

From the outcome illustrated in Table 2 above, Water sports(p= .001), Nightlife(p= .037), Entertainment(p= .010), Fitness and wellness(p= .016), Arts and crafts(p= .003), Restaurants(p= .011), Local cuisine (p =.000), Local beverages(p =.035), Climate and weather(p= .008), Flora and fauna(p= .013), Beaches(p =.015), Mauritian hospitality(p= .000), Ethics(p= .000) and Authentic Mauritian culture(p= .000) were the motives which differs from first time and repeat visitors. The previously mentioned significant motives all show that they were those with highest motivation forces to repeat visitors as opposed to the other pull-based motives which did not obtain sufficient evidences to differ between first timers and repeaters, therefore, hypothesis H2 is partially accepted.

DISCUSSION

The research was in line with the findings of Dann's push and pull theory (1977). As opposed to Yuan and McDonald (1990) who stated that novelty, followed by escape were the most influencing motives, this research showed that the push-based motives were classified in the following order: rest and relaxation, nostalgia, escape, novelty, social interaction, self-actualisation and recognition/prestige. Push-based motives cannot always be in line with a previous research studies. Each individual has his personal reasons to take a decision and same may be applied to a particular market segment. From the surveyed population, it can be inferred that the travellers perceived the destination as a place to

rest and relax prior to their other needs. However, the other motives were consistent with the findings of previous studies.

With regards to pull factors, it can be argued that the different destinations have different levels of attraction for different individuals. In the case of Mauritius, the first five top ranked attributes were beaches, climate and weather, landscape and scenery of the island, Mauritian hospitality and accommodation services proposed to the travellers. With regards to first time visitors and repeat visitors, it was found that there repeat visitors were more motivated to go on a holiday to Mauritius for social interaction as opposed to first-time travellers and secondly they had been longing to travel to the island out of nostalgia as opposed to first-time visitors.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

This study contributes to the overall understanding of why holiday makers take travel decisions for long haul destinations. Based on the push and pull theory from Dann (1977), motives of travellers were assessed both in terms of their socio-psychological variables and destination attributes of the island of Mauritius. In general, the research findings show that rest and relaxation are the most compelling motivation forces for those visiting Mauritius. This result is similar to the findings of Andreu *et al* (2005) who carried their studies in Turkey among British travellers, where rest and relaxation gathered the highest score. On the side of the destination attributes, the first five top ranking attributes of the island were: beaches, climate and weather, landscape and scenery, Mauritian hospitality and accommodation services. These factors may be considered as the core products and services viewed from the perspective of English, French, German, Italian and South African travellers.

Additionally, the research attempted to conceptualize differences between first time and repeat visitor groups. It has also been possible to identify specific motives between first time travellers and repeat visitors, illustrating genuine motivational influences of the travellers.

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