

## The Effect of Culture on Holiday Recovery Experiences

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### Abstract

The aim of this research is to identify the cultural attributes of the tourists by utilizing the Hofstede' culture scale and to reveal which cultural attributes more or less make use of holiday recovery experiences, and to eventually provide some recommendations and new insights for the sector, pragmatics and academics. According to the result of the researches conducted for these purposes, uncertainty avoidance affects relaxation and control, community affects control, power distance affects detachment. However, it was found that femininity or masculinity had no effect on holiday recovery experiences and tourist did not have mastery attitude.

**Keyword:** Culture; Holiday recovery experience; Tourists' behavior; Literature of tourism

### Introduction

Culture has brought a great deal of attention to researchers. The burning question on culture is "how do the tourists' cultural features affect the tourists' consumption behaviors"? To illustrate, there have been some studies that reveal the effect of tourists' cultural features on tourists' consumption behaviors [1-4]. While Siti et al. [1] point out Malasian food culture has effect on tourists' behaviour like revisiting the destination; Jesús et al. [2] have found Asian immigrants have different travel attitudes, Pyke [3] and Manisa et al. [4] have drawn a conclusion that residents' socio cultural attitudes is so crucial for the balanced development of the destination. In addition to these, Hassan [5] has asserted that cultural factors have influences on destination image.

On the other side, there have also been some researches that examine the effect of holiday recovery experience on tourist' psychological health and tourist' quality of life [6-10]. Most of these researches have showed that there has been a positive effect of taking a trip on tourists' wellbeing. Moscardo and Murphy [11] has stated that some touristic production is needed to meet the need of tourists' wellbeing. In this regard, this study tries to evaluate the factors of visitors' wellbeing from the view point of cultural features. So, it is thought that it will detect the cultural features which support the wellbeing of tourism. From this point forth, this study has three purposes: (1) exploring whether the cultural features have influence on holiday recovery, (2) revealing which dimension of culture effects which dimension of the holiday recovery, (3) and also making suggestions for the destination management organizations, decision makers and tourism business. Accordingly, it can arguably be thought that cultural features can make holiday recovery differentiate. Consequently, this study focuses on the effect of cultural features on holiday recovery that has not been searched in the literature of tourism. Supposing that the hypothesis is scientifically proven, it would recommend that practitioners could make new package tours according to visitors' cultural features.

### Literature Review

#### Holiday recovery experiences

Meijman and Mulder [12] have stated that people who experienced physiological problems such as boredom and fatigue may have many possibilities such as relaxation and staying away from work during their holiday [13,14]. Also, Fritz and Sonnentag [13]; Lounsbury and Hoopes [15] and Chen et al. [14] have asserted that employees

who experienced work related stress have a poor psychology, which negatively affects job performance and faces mental health problems. However, those employees have higher business performance and visibly increase their wellbeing after taking holiday [13]. Recovery is used to address the basic elements of the healing literature. In particular, the need of recovery is stated as a move away from work related stress so as to restore the individual's internal resources for given period [6,16]. As in the last century, the social sciences have pointed out that people do not travel so much during their vacation and while the motivation of some of these travel is sense of wonder but the motivation of a significant part of these travel is escaping from the troubles of daily business life [17]. This manner is an evidence that the people are always in need of recovery and escaping from the troubles of daily business life. At the same time, recovery refers to a process of psychologically and physiologically disintegration which alleviates the stress level of the individual when returning from vacation [17,18]. In this regard, healing, that is evaluated as getting rid of stress, is assessed as the opposite of the tension process [19].

Meijman and Mulder [12] state the recovery as the need of recuperation after the challenging working day [17]. Holidays hold important opportunities for the recovery process [17,20]. A holiday is relatively described as an uninterrupted period of time that longs from several days to a few weeks which is undergone away from work. As to Sonnentag and Fritz [19] becoming distant from work would provide the relaxation.

Healing is defined as psychological processes such as detachment that lead to relief [17,21]. Detachment requires not only becoming distant from duties related to work, but also keeping away from stress and expectation related to work. In the meantime, relaxation or recovery is considered as a positive effect that is characterized by effectiveness at low level such as jogging, hiking [17,19]. Work-related stress is concerning problems and tension that cannot be resolved among occupational groups. That is, this situation demands individual to enter into the process of a recovery process [22,23]. The recovery

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experience consists of four dimensions that are defined psychological detachment, relaxation, mastery, and control which are measured by 16 questions. This scale is developed by Sonnentag and Fritz [19] and is employed in many research [23,24]. In this respect, theorists who investigate in the field of management and organization are focused on recovery experiences in which employees can renew or repair their energy resources [19,23-30].

A great number of studies are focused on the effects of recreation, having holiday and life quality on recovery experience [6,19,31]. There are not, however, any investigations about the impact of culture on the recovery experience. In this regard, it is thought that this study will provide new insight to the sector, pragmatics and literature in the related field. The aim of this study is to measure the impact of the cultural characteristics of an individual on the recovery experience, and to particularly identify which cultural attributes more or less benefit from recovery experience.

Available study has revealed that having holiday has some effects such as temporary relief from job related stress, treatment the negative mood and strengthening family and friendship bonds [6,32-34]. Studies in recent years have also shown that length of the time spent for holiday affects travel satisfaction and life satisfaction [14]. However, some studies suggest that previous studies rarely investigate the stress-relieving effect of holiday recovery experiences.

### Culture

Culture is a highly controversial topic. The reason of this is not only what the scope of culture is but also how it is measured. While some scholars claim that culture is a concept that is measured at micro level, the others assert that it can be measured at macro level [35,36]. The definition made by Taylor on culture is “the complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, custom and any other capabilities and habit acquired by man as a member of society” [37]. Despite all these different viewpoints, common view about culture indicates that culture is the shared values by the members of society. These values consist of language, belief, norm, customs, art and behaviors that are learned, shared and transmitted.

Culture, the most important component of the human behavior, has attracted marketer’s attention for many centuries [36,38,39]. However, Cross-cultural studies have been made in tourism which have tried to evaluate the effect of culture on leisure activities, decision making style and tourists’ lifestyle [36]. Many of the studies show that ethnicity and race affect touristic decision making [40,41]. In this regard these studies show the gap how the culture affect holiday recovery experiences. So, this research will reveal how the tourists appraise the touristic experiences.

In this study whose focus is measuring the cultural attitudes of Turkish tourists, Hofstede’ cross-cultural scale is used. Hofstede’s scale consists of five-sub dimensions. These are uncertainty avoidance, collectivism-individualism, power distance, femininity - masculinity, short-term orientation-long term orientation. There has been lots of emphasis on the rising importance of the culture on touristic behaviors [42,43] but a little attention has been paid to how culture affects touristic experience. In this regard, suggested conceptual model is proposed as follows:

### Methodology

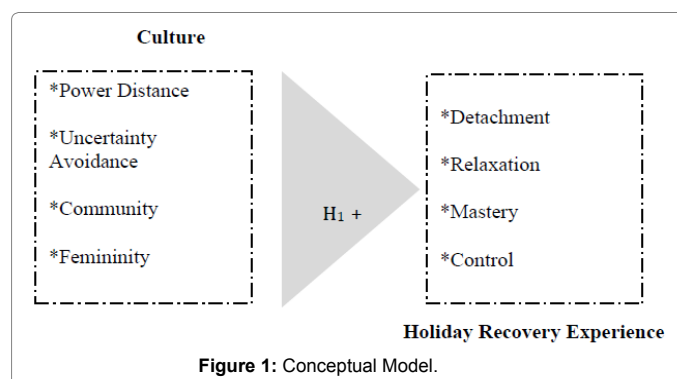
In this chapter, it has been tried to develop a conceptual model explaining the effect of tourists’ cultural attitudes on holiday recovery experience attitudes. From this point of view, in the development of

this model, the reason why Hofstede’ culture scale is used is not only it is a frequently used and comprehensive culture scale and is can be adapted to individual level studies, but also, it is a scale that gives opportunity to make comparisons [44]. The same situation is valid for holiday recovery experiences scale developed by Sonnentag and Fritz [19] which may be considered as the most common scale that measures the effect of off-job act like taking trip on getting rid of stress or holiday recovery. Thereby, given the excentricity of holiday recovery experiences offering model has been based on Hofstede’ culture scale and on rectified version of Sonnentag and Fritz’s Holiday Recovery Experiences Scale.

Diener et al. [45] has stated that cultural qualities such as uncertainty avoidance could explain distinctness in the level of subjective wellbeing. As to Stevan E. Hobfoll [46] it is stated that managing the stress is connected with family, culture and community. Prebensen et al. [47] indicate “active participation and involvement in an experience leads to increased value. In this regard, the tourist owns resources and behaviors, i.e. skills and knowledge, physical, social and cultural resources, acts as influencers of the tourist involvement in the conception and design of their experiences”. On the other hand, Arnould and Price argue that pleasant sensation come to existence by means of activities that are taken up by tourists culturally, clubbily, sensuously. In the light of the things, it can be said that culture affect holiday recovery experiences attitude of tourists. The hypothesis desired to be tested is as noted below. In addition to this, recent searches have indicated that cultural trait has effect on tourist behaviors [48-50]. From this point of forth, it can be said that culture affects holiday recovery (H<sub>1</sub>: Culture effect holiday recovery experiences) (Figure 1).

Before the model was formed, the related literature review has been made. As a result of the literature review made about holiday recovery, the variables effecting the holiday recovery and the frequency of repetition of variables were examined. As a result of scanning, some gaps were observed. Because of this, the research model that is shown in Figure 1 is proposed.

The questionnaire conducted in this research, consists of two parts. In the first part, there are four questions about gender, age, the aim of travel. In the second part, there are 21 items of culture scale of Hofstede and 16 items of recovery experiences scale of Sonnentag and Fritz [19]. In other words there are totally 42 items in this survey. While the first part consists of 5 demographic questions, five point likert scale is used in the other 37 attitude questions in the second part. In addition to this, there was not any classification in these 37 items in order to prevent the prejudice of the participants? 1 stands for strongly disagree and 5 is strongly agree in Likert Scale. For the analysis of data and SPSS 20 and AMOS is used.



Due to time and resources costs, this research is conducted in Istanbul, Edirne, Kirklareli, Tekirdağ, Çanakkale, Kocaeli and Yalova. These cities are located in Marmara District which is the most developed region in Turkey. Participants were asked to respond the questions considering their last holiday experiences. So as to identify the attitude of visitors, 400 question forms were distributed, but 378 of them were obtained. So, 378 samples were analyzed in this research that was conducted in 2017. First of all, in order to identify the factor structure and discriminant - convergent validity, factor analysis was applied for each scale in SPSS, then, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was carried out in SEM (Structural Equating Modeling). Later, proposed model was analyzed with SEM.

Std. coefficient, Cr, Ave and error variance value of the each scale and each item has been shown in Table 1. In consequence of the factor analysis that was done in SPSS, the dimension of femininity was omitted from the culture scale, because of the low communalities value (.50). In a similar manner, the dimension of mastery was omitted from the recovery experience scale due to the low communalities. After having applying the factor analysis, Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) in SEM was made for the each scale. In accordance with the result of the EFA, the sub-dimensions defining the variance in culture scale

respectively were determined as uncertainty avoidance, community and power distance. As for the scale of holiday recovery experiences, the sub-dimensions defining the variance in the scale respectively were determined as control, relax and detachment. The composite reliability value of the all variables was found greater than critical threshold (.80). The factor loading of items in Table 1 were found statistically significant ( $p < .001$ ). Composite reliability (CR) value of the each dimensions were found greater than .70. According to Fornell and Larcker [51], CR value indicating reliability of the variables should be greater than .70. Beside to this, they have argued that AVE value being indicator of the convergent validity should be greater than .50. CR value of each dimension was found greater than .70, and also AVE value of each dimension was found greater than .50. Taking all of these into account, it can be said that all variables were reliable ( $CR > .70$ ) and the items measuring the same dimension had high correlation between each other ( $AVE > .50$ ). According to Hair et al. [52] CR value should be bigger than AVE value for the face validity ( $CR > AVE$ ;  $AVE > 0.5$ ). In the light of these, it can be asserted the variables in research model met the assumption of reliability and validity (Figure 2) [53].

Following the confirmation of the reliability and validity of the each scale, the research model was tested with the structural equating

Factor Items		Std. Coeff.	CR	AVE	Error Variance
Culture					
1. Power distance					
P1	People in higher positions should make most decisions without consulting people in lower positions.	.535		.684	
P2	People in higher positions should not ask people in lower positions too frequently.	.578			.090
P3	People in higher positions should avoid social interaction with people in lower positions.	.941			.194
P5	People in higher positions should not delegate important tasks to people in lower positions.	.683			.135
2. Uncertainty avoidance					
U1	It is important to have instructions spelled out in detail so that I always know what I'm expected to do.	.535		.654	
U2	It is important to closely follow instructions and procedures.	.578			.128
U3	Rules and regulations are important because they inform me of what is expected of me.	.941			.212
U4	Standardized work procedures are helpful.	.683			.175
U5	Instructions for operations are important.	.535			.179
3. Community					
C1	Individuals should sacrifice self-interest for the group (either at school or the work place).	.533	.823	.653	
C2	Individuals should stick with the group even through difficulties.	.746			.139
C3	Group welfare is more important than individual rewards.	.856			.152
C4	Group success is more important than individual success.	.780			.140
C5	Individuals should only pursue their goals after considering the welfare of the group.	.485			.114
C6	Group loyalty should be encouraged even if individual goals suffer.	.521			.120
Holiday Recovery Experiences					
1. Control					
C1	I decided my own schedule	.897		.653	
C2	I determined for myself how I would spend my time.	.922			.153
C3	I took care of things the way that I wanted them done	.793			.169
C4	I felt like I could decide for myself what to do.	.882			.153
2. Detachment					
D1	I didn't think about work at all	.701	.827	.782	
D3	I distanced myself from the demands of work.	.806			.090
D4	I got a break from the demands of work.	.840			.090
4. Relaxation					
R1	I used the time to relax.	.851	.883	.843	
R2	I did relaxing things.	.926			.053
R3	I took time for leisure	.753			.053

Table 1: Validity and Reliability of the Model.

modeling [54]. According to the results in Table 2, the model has good fit. Standardized of regression weights of the model were shown in Figure 2. Structural equations showing relations between variables were demonstrated in Table 3. According to the these consequences, community explains 29.3% of the variability in control; uncertainty avoidance explains 29.2% of the variability in control, uncertainty avoidance explains 30.4% of the variability in relax; power distance explains 45.1% of the variability in detachment and lastly uncertainty avoidance explains -14.6% of the variability in detachment.

### Conclusion

- Taking into consideration that the culture scale has made up of uncertainty avoidance, community and power distance, it can be asserted that the attitude of the visitors having these cultural traits have influence on the attitude of holiday recovery experience. In other words, the visitors who have the attitude of community, power distance and uncertainty avoidance are more likely to control their own holiday and to move away from the stress of business life more easily.
- In the point of the fact that power distance has strong effect (.45) on detachment, the visitors coming from the culture

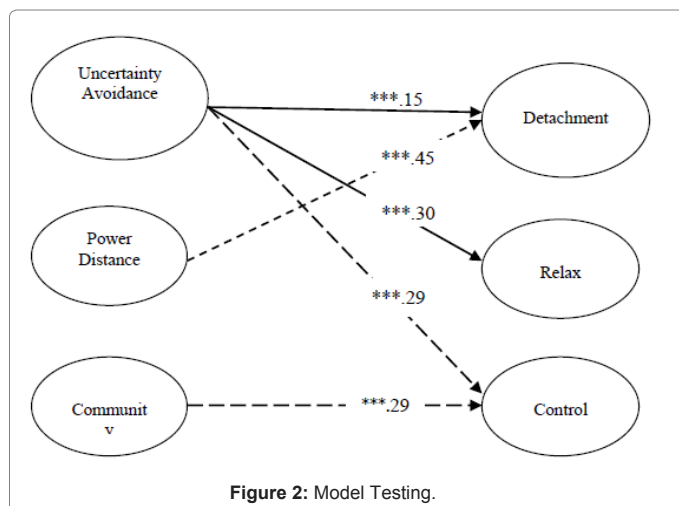


Figure 2: Model Testing.

Chosen Criterion	Good Fit	Acceptable Fit	Value of Model
$\chi^2$ (CMIN)			13.896
$\chi^2/df$ (CMIN/df)	$\leq 3$	$\leq 4-5$	1.544
GFI	$\geq 0.90$	0.89-0.85	.988
CFI	$\geq 0.97$	$\geq 0.95$	.976
RMSEA	$\leq 0.05$	0.06-0.08	.038
NFI	$\geq 0.95$	0.94-0.90	.937
RMR	$\leq 0.05$	0.06-0.08	.035
IFI	$\geq 0.95$	0.94-0.90	.977

Table 2: Fit Indices of the Model.

Structural Equations	Estimate	T. Value	P
Control <--- Community	.293	6.298	***
Control <--- Uncertainty Avoidance	.292	6.219	***
Relax <--- Uncertainty Avoidance	.304	6.181	***
Detachment <--- Power Distance	.451	9.922	***
Detachment <--- Uncertainty Avoidance	-.146	-3.207	.001

Table 3: Structural Equations.

with narrow power distance can more easily forget about responsibilities related job during steering away from job. In this respect, the enterprises in tourism sector should incentivize tourist not to be connected with their own job during their holiday. In addition to these, according to some research, using smart phone during all vacation long can make stress relief duration difficult.

- Considering the effect of uncertainty avoidance on relax (.30), tourists having uncertainty avoidance attitude are more likely to feel relaxed. In other words, in order to be able to feel relaxed after the holiday, every detail of the holiday should be planned and tourist should not face with unexpected, amorphous, extraordinary situations. In this sense, tour operators and travel agencies should make personalized travel plans, should not skip any detail.
- Considering the effect of uncertainty avoidance on control (.29), tourists having uncertainty avoidance attitude are more likely decide their own holiday plan, they do what they want and are more likely to be determined about how to spend their time.
- Community societies are more related to social goodness. In the view of the effect of community on control (.29), the tourists having community attitude tend to plan their own holiday and control every detail during the holiday.
- Taking into consideration the negative effect of uncertainty avoidance on detachment, it can be thought that uncertainty avoidance and detachment are negatively correlated (-.14) between each other. In other saying, as the attitude of uncertainty avoidance of tourists increases, tourists more likely not to forget the job responsibilities during their holiday. So recovery process will have a negative impact in this circumstance.
- Practitioners and academics in tourism sector, especially tour operator and travel agencies can make use of these results. Also, organizations and human research management can benefit from these results for the employees' occupational wellbeing. Particularly tour operator, travel agencies and hotel organizations should not miss out stressful circumstances that tourists may face. In this regard, customer complaints in social media tools like trip advisor, Facebook etc. should be investigated meticulously. Precautions aimed at these complaints should be taken.
- Considering the powerful effect of uncertainty avoidance and power distance on the attitude of holiday recovery experience, it is thought that practitioners in tourism sector and marketing experts should pay attention to these cultural attitude of tourists in the services provide and in each element of their marketing mix.

### Limitations

Some suggestions for the future researches are presented below.

- In order to provide a better comprehension the effect of culture on recovery experiences, future research can consider some socio demographic traits like occupation, income, and gender.
- This research model was conducted on tourists, future research might bear in mind conducting on employees in tourism industry.

- A great deal of data was obtained from Turkish tourists in this research. So, the results can be generalized just for the Turkish tourists. Future research might consider carrying out this model for the different nationalities.
- This research is planned momentary; future researches might consider implementing it as a periodic research.

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