

Analyzing the Perceived Relationship between Motivation and Satisfaction for Rural Tourists in a Digital World

N. P. Tsephe, S. D. Eyono Obono

Abstract—Rural tourism is usually associated with rural development because it has strong linkages to rural resources; but it remains underdeveloped compared to urban tourism. This underdevelopment of rural tourism serves as a motivation for this study whose aim is to examine the factors affecting the perceived satisfaction of rural tourists. The objectives of this study are: to identify and design theories and models on rural tourism satisfaction, and to empirically validate these models and theories through a survey of tourists from the Malealea Lodge which is located in the Mafeteng District, in the Mountain Kingdom of Lesotho. Data generated by the collection of questionnaires used by this survey was analyzed quantitatively using descriptive statistics and correlations in SPSS after checking the validity and the reliability of the questionnaire. The main hypothesis behind this study is the relationship between the demographics of rural tourists, their motivation, and their satisfaction, as supported by existing literature; except that motivation is measured in this study according to three dimensions: push factors, pull factors, and perceived usefulness of ICTs in the rural tourism experience. Findings from this study indicate that among the demographics factors, continent of origin and marital status influence the satisfaction of rural tourists; and their occupation affects their perceptions on the use of ICTs in rural tourism. Moreover, only pull factors were found to influence the satisfaction of rural tourists.

Keywords—Digital world, Motivation, Rural tourism, Satisfaction.

I. INTRODUCTION

TOURISM can be defined as the set of activities of persons travelling to and staying in places outside of their usual environment for more than a consecutive year for various purposes [1]. A further classification of tourism activities by [2] indicates that tourism can be sub-divided into different types such as cultural tourism, traditions centered tourism, scenic tourism, entrainment, and other forms of tourism. According to [3], rural tourism, the main focus of this study, may belong to any of these tourism types, and it is defined as tourism which takes place in rural areas; while [4] describes it as the use of rural lifestyles as a tourism attraction. Rural tourism is usually associated with rural development because

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it has strong linkages to rural resources. Several authors such as [3]–[7] agree that rural tourism remains underdeveloped compared to urban tourism, despite the tremendous advances made by Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), and despite the sustainability advantage of rural tourism and its ability to generate substantial benefits to rural areas in terms of rural productivity, employment, improved distribution of wealth, and conservation of the rural environment and culture. There are indeed numerous challenges faced by rural tourism, which may include, economic, environmental and socio-cultural, etc., as below stated.

Problem Statement

The main problem at the origin of this research is well highlighted by the following extract from [6:3]: “Developing rural tourism has its challenges. Any successful tourism development, whether pro-poor or not, depends on commercial, economic, and logistical issues, such as the quality of the product, accessibility and infrastructure of the destination, availability of skills, and interest of investors. In most of these aspects, rural areas may well be at a disadvantage compared to urbanized and more developed areas. These challenges may be compounded by political and institutional obstacles, particularly in developing countries, i.e. the administrative complexity of dealing with low-populated areas, the lack of policy co-ordination between rural development and tourism development, and low priority provided to rural areas by central governments. Thus, ways to deal with these challenges are needed”. This problem of the difficulties of rural tourism to grow to its full potential calls for the hereby listed research questions, aim, and objectives.

Main Research Question

What are the factors influencing the satisfaction of rural tourists and how can one improve such satisfaction levels to the point where they can significantly contribute to the full development of rural tourism?

- RQ1. Which theories can sustain the examination of the factors affecting the satisfaction of rural tourists?
- RQ2. How can one model the factors influencing the satisfaction of rural tourists?
- RQ3. How can one validate a hypothetical model of the factors influencing the satisfaction of rural tourists?
- RQ4. Which recommendations can be done for the improvement of the satisfaction levels of rural tourists

to the point where they can significantly contribute to the full development of rural tourism?

Aim and Objectives

The aim of this study is to examine the factors affecting the satisfaction of rural tourists, in an attempt to contribute towards solving the problem of the underdevelopment of this type of tourism. This aim is further articulated by the hereby listed research objectives:

- a) To select suitable theories that can explain the perceived satisfaction of rural tourists.
- b) To design a conceptual model of the factors affecting the perceived satisfaction of rural tourists.
- c) To empirically test the planned conceptual model of the perceived satisfaction of rural tourists.
- d) To recommend measures to be taken for the improvement of the satisfaction levels of rural tourists to the point where they can significantly contribute to the full development of rural tourism.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Most of the literature reviewed in this section was obtained through Internet search around the four objectives of this study.

A. Theories

Theories on the perceived satisfaction of rural tourists within an ICT driven world were found from existing literature using Internet with the search keywords “travel satisfaction”+ “theories” + “ICT”. This Internet search led to the identification of papers [8]–[20] recognizing that travel satisfaction is affected by travel motivation. One could therefore conclude that motivation theories are suitable to explain the perceived satisfaction of rural tourists. A new Internet search was therefore conducted using the key words “tourism motivation theories”. This new Internet search led to the identification of a paper [21] listing the seeking/escaping theory, the push/pull theory, and the hedonic motivation theory, as three of the most important tourism motivation theories.

Seeking and Escaping

The seeking and escaping theory claims that people travel for two main personal and interpersonal reasons: to seek for personal rewards as they escape from their personal environment, and to seek for interpersonal rewards as they escape from their interpersonal environment [9]. Personal rewards may include self-determination, a sense of mastery, challenges, exploration, learning, and relaxation. Interpersonal rewards are generated from social interactions, and they may include social contacts, a sense of belonging, and sharing. Personal and interpersonal environment problems that one may want to escape from include daily life routines and stress.

Push and Pull Theory

This theory suggests that tourists are motivated to travel because of both by Push and Pull factors [10]. Pull factors are those which attract the tourist to a destination, and Push

factors refer to “the tourist as subject and deal with those factors predisposing him to travel” [21:17]. This theory further argues that push factors are social-psychological motives, such as escaping from a perceived mundane environment, exploration and evaluation of self, relaxation, prestige, regression, enhancement of kinship relationships, and facilitation of social interaction. Pull factors on the other hand are those attractions aroused by tourism destinations, such as novelty and education [11].

Hedonic Motivation Theory

This theory places an emphasis on the personal intrinsic rewards of consumers. Its application to tourism suggests that tourists are pushed by their emotional needs and pulled by their emotional benefits [12].

B. Conceptual Models and Frameworks

Models on the perceived satisfaction of rural tourists were found from existing literature using Internet with the search keywords “travel satisfaction models”. This Internet search led to the identification of a paper [13] listing the following models as three of the most important tourism satisfaction models: the Service Quality and Customer Value Satisfaction Model, the Perceived Service Quality and Satisfaction Model, and the Expectancy Disconfirmation Model.

Service Quality and Customer Value Satisfaction Model

One of the approaches used to measure tourists’ satisfaction is through the assessment of service quality, customer value, and customer satisfaction [14] as shown by Fig. 1.

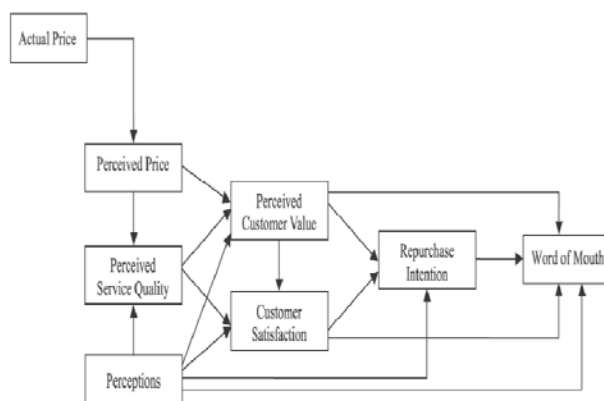


Fig. 1 Service Quality, Customer Value Satisfaction Model

This model mainly focuses on post purchase decision processes, and it considers word of mouth communication intentions as a direct, combined function of perceptions, value, satisfaction, and repurchase intentions.

Perceived Service Quality and Satisfaction Model

The perceived service quality and satisfaction model by [15] is a modification of the model initially proposed by [16]. This model generally attempts to enhance the understanding of the relationships between the following constructs on the overall service quality and customer satisfaction [17]: expectations, perceived performance desires, desired

congruency, and expectations' disconfirmation.

The Expectancy Disconfirmation Model

The expectancy disconfirmation Model as proposed by [18] is shown by Fig. 3. It can be conceptualized in four stages. The first stage is the expectation from a product. In the expectation stage, each consumer has a different knowledge level about a product, which leads to a different estimation of the product's performance. This is the second stage in which each consumer develops certain attributions on the product's performance. The third stage is disconfirmation, where the perceived product's performance is compared with their initial expectations. Disconfirmation happens when there are discrepancies between initial expectations and actual performance, and that leads to dissatisfaction among consumers. The final stage is the satisfaction stage which only happens when the perceived product's performance matches consumers' expectations [19].

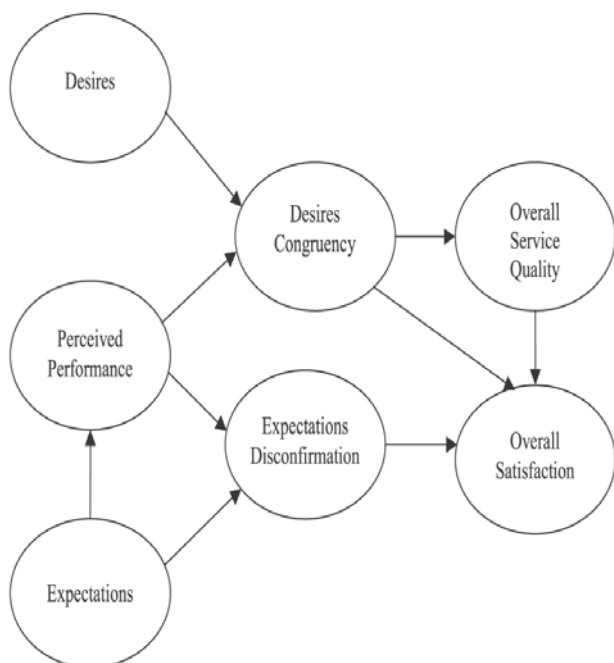


Fig. 2 Perceived Service Quality and Satisfaction Model

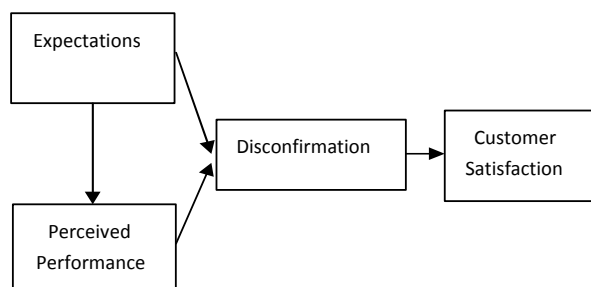


Fig. 3 The Expectancy Disconfirmation Model

C. A New Conceptual Model

What is surprising from the above review of tourists' satisfaction models is that none of them shows a link between

tourism motivation and tourism satisfaction, despite evidence from literature that tourism satisfaction is influenced by tourism motivation. It is also surprising that these models are silent on the impact of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) on tourists' satisfaction despite the fact that this world is highly digital. This study therefore hereby proposes a new tourists' satisfaction model that takes into account the usefulness of ICTs in today's world within the relationship between motivation and satisfaction. In this new model presented by Fig. 4, motivation is measured according to the push and pull theory, and the perceived usefulness of ICTs for rural tourism experiences also forms part of push and pull factors.

D. Empirical Studies

This section presents an overview of a few empirical studies on the satisfaction of rural tourists. The selected studies are the ones who cover much of the research variables identified in the model of section C. All these studies are based on surveys whose data was collected through questionnaires in different countries: Malaysia [22]-[24], and Spain [25].

Demographics

According to [22], the gender, the age, and the occupation of a rural tourist affect his or her satisfaction with his or her rural tourism experience. Both [22] and [24] also agree on the effect of the country of origin on the satisfaction of rural tourists. Moreover, according to [22], qualifications and marital status do not affect the satisfaction of rural tourists.

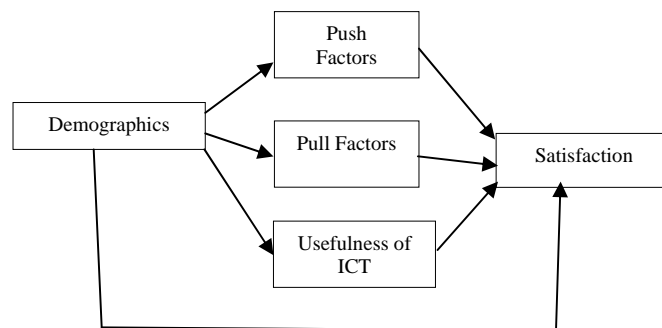


Fig. 4 Conceptual model

Push Factors

According to [23] and [24], rural tourists are pushed into rural tourism destinations that offer certain expected activities, and they are satisfied when these expectations are met. Both [24] and [25] also agree that rural tourists are satisfied with destinations that meet their expectations to rest, relax, enjoy, and escape from their daily routines. According to [23], rural tourists are also motivated by the quest for exciting adventures with nature.

Pull Factors

According to [22], beautiful landscapes at a rural tourism destination affect the satisfaction of rural tourists. It is highlighted by [23] that rural tourists are attracted and satisfied by destinations that are peaceful, hassle free, and

affordable. It is also mentioned by [25] that natural attractions play a vital role towards the satisfaction of rural tourists.

Tourists' Satisfaction

According to [22]–[24], overall, rural tourists' are satisfied with the quality of services and food as well as with the friendliness of the locals. They are also satisfied with the fact that they are being exposed to the customs and culture of the locals. It is also mentioned by [25] that rural tourists are usually satisfied with the weather at the rural tourism destination.

III. RESEARCH DESIGN

The objectives of this research will be reached using approaches both from qualitative (objectives a, b, and d) and quantitative (objective c) research methods.

A. Content Analysis in the Form of a Literature Review

The methodology used for research objectives a, b, and d consists of the analysis of content obtained from existing literature on the motivation factors of rural tourism.

B. Survey of Rural Tourists from the Malealea Lodge, Mafeteng District, Lesotho Kingdom

The new conceptual model proposed by this study will be empirically validated through a survey of rural tourists selected from the Malealea Lodge, located in the Mountain Kingdom of Lesotho.

Population and Sampling

The population of this survey is therefore made up of all rural tourists in Malealea Lodge which is located at Mafeteng District, in the Mountain Kingdom of Lesotho. The total sample size of this survey is calculated according to the formula sample size (1) proposed by [26] for finite populations, where n' is the sample size, Z is the confidence level, P is the estimated proportion, and d is the precision or acceptable margin of error. The value of n' was estimated using the following parameters: $Z=1.96$, $P=0.05$, $N=1296$, and $d=0.051$; which gives a sample size of 67.

$$n' = \frac{NZ^2P(1-P)}{d^2(N-1) + Z^2P(1-P)} \quad (1)$$

Research Variables and Data Collection

The research variables for the third objective of this study can be seen on Fig. 4 which is synonymous with the following hypotheses.

- Ha0. There is a direct relationship between the demographics of a rural tourist, and his or her satisfaction with his or her rural tourism experiences.
- Hb0. There is a direct relationship between the demographics of a rural tourist, and the motivating factors that are pushing him or her towards rural tourism.
- Hc0. There is a direct relationship between the demographics of a rural tourist, and the tourism destination motivation factors that are pulling him or her into rural tourism.

Hd0. There is a direct relationship between the demographics of a rural tourist and his or her perceptions on the usefulness of ICTs during his or her rural tourism experiences.

He0. There is a direct relationship between the motivating factors pushing a rural tourist towards rural tourism, and his or her satisfaction with his or her rural tourism experiences.

Hf0. There is a direct relationship between the tourism destination motivation factors that are pulling a rural tourist into rural tourism, and his or her satisfaction with his or her rural tourism experiences.

Hg0. There is a direct relationship between the perceptions of a rural tourist on the usefulness of ICTs during his or her rural tourism experiences, and his or her satisfaction with his or her rural tourism experiences.

These hypotheses were tested through a survey whose data was collected using a questionnaire made up of items grouped according to the research variables on Fig. 4. Items for the demographic variables include common biographical data such as age, gender, marital status, education level, etc. The items for all the other variables were adapted from questionnaires' scales available from existing literature. The following scales were adapted for the design of the questionnaire used by this study: a scale from [27] for the push factor items, a scale from [28] for the pull factor items, a scale from [29] for the items on the perceived usefulness of ICTs, and a scale from [30] for the satisfaction items.

IV. RESULTS

This section presents the results of this study on the factors affecting the perceived satisfaction of rural tourists. Data collected from the questionnaire was analyzed using the SPSS software package within a quantitative research approach. First, data was tested for reliability and validity. Thereafter, demographic attributes together with the reliable and valid Likert-scale based research variables were analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequencies and means) to reflect the characteristics of the survey's respondents with regards to the variables under study (push factors, pull factors, ICT usage, and satisfaction).

A. Data Validity and Reliability

Results from Table I shows that the data collected by this questionnaire based survey is reliable (all Likert-scale based research variables have a Cronbach's alpha (α) greater than 0.7 except for one whose value is however closed to 0.7).

TABLE I
 RELIABILITY TABLE

Research Variable	No of items	Cronbach's Alpha (α)
Push factors(travelers attribute)	10	0.829
Pull factors(destination attribute)	4	0.764
ICT usage	10	0.682
Tourists satisfaction	10	0.780

B. Descriptive Statistics

This section presents the descriptive statistics on the demographics of the respondents according to the research variables identified by Fig. 4.

TABLE II
DEMOGRAPHICS

A	Demographics	Percentage
A1	Male	64.2
	Female	35.8
A2	18-24	23.9
	25-30	29.9
	31-40	25.4
	41-50	13.4
A3	Above 50	7.5
	Africa	77.6
	Europe	13.4
	North America	3.0
	South America	1.5
	Asia	4.5
A4	Pre- University	22.4
	Diploma/certificate	23.9
	Baccalaureate	26.9
	Post graduates	26.9
A5	None	43.3
	Low	16.4
	Middle	31.3
A6	Top	9.0
	Student	16.4
	Employed	62.7
	Pensioner	4.5
	Other	16.4
A7	Single	55.2
	Married	37.3
	Divorced	4.5
A8	Other	3.0
	Once a year	49.3
	More than once a year	50.7
A9	2 days or less	35.8
	3-7days	43.3
	8-30days	19.4
A10	More than 30days	1.5
	2 days or less	56.7
	3-7days	28.4
	8-30days	13.4
	More than 30days	1.5

Demographics

Descriptive statistics on the demographics of the respondents of this study are evenly distributed for the vacation frequency, management experience, and qualifications items. However, the majority of the participants were male, Africans, and aged below 40 years old.

Travelers' Characteristics for Push Factors

There is a strong agreement among the respondents that their motivation to travel is triggered by push factors.

TABLE III
TRAVELERS ATTRIBUTE

B	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	Mean	SD
B1	8	6	11	20	22	3.63	1.347
B2	1	4	10	27	25	4.06	.952
B3	1	6	6	22	32	4.16	1.024
B4	1	5	5	27	29	4.16	.963
B5	1	4	7	31	24	4.09	.917
B6	0	6	9	29	23	4.03	.921
B7	1	6	14	29	21	3.88	1.008
B8	4	6	21	23	13	3.52	1.092
B9	0	9	8	28	22	3.94	.998
B10	2	2	8	27	28	4.15	.957
	1.9	5.2	9.9	25.9	23.9		

Travelers' Characteristics for Full Factors

There is a strong agreement among the respondents that their motivation to travel is triggered by pull factors.

TABLE IV
DESTINATIONS ATTRIBUTE

C	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	Mean	SD
C1	1	2	4	31	29	4.27	.827
C2	1	2	8	31	25	4.15	.857
C3	1	0	9	32	25	4.19	.783
C4	1	1	8	27	30	4.25	.841
	1	1.25	7.25	30.25	27.25		

Travelers' Perceived Usefulness of ICTs

There is a strong agreement among the respondents that Information and Communication Technologies are very useful to their rural tourism experiences, except for laptops and radio whose usefulness is judged to be average.

C. Correlations

The results from Tables VII and VIII are summarized by Fig. 4. The interpretation of Fig. 4 combined with the initial hypotheses gives the following results

TABLE V
ICT USAGE

D	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	Mean	SD
D1	1	6	5	15	40	4.30	1.045
D2	3	6	12	19	27	3.91	1.164
D3	4	12	14	18	19	3.54	1.247
D4	2	14	18	15	18	3.49	1.185
D5	4	12	17	19	19	3.43	1.196
D6	5	8	13	25	16	3.58	1.195
D7	5	12	12	17	21	3.55	1.306
D8	3	10	16	19	19	3.61	1.180
D9	1	7	17	22	20	3.79	1.038
D10	1	7	15	22	22	3.85	1.048
	2.9	9.4	13.9	19.1	21.7		

Tourists' Satisfaction

There is a strong agreement among the respondents that they are satisfied with their rural tourism experience.

TABLE VI
TOURISTS SATISFACTION

E	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	Mean	SD
E1	0	1	8	23	35	4.37	.756
E2	0	0	4	25	38	4.51	.612
E3	1	1	9	25	31	4.25	.859
E4	0	2	15	22	28	4.13	.869
E5	0	3	9	26	29	4.21	.845
E6	0	1	7	24	35	4.39	.738
E7	0	2	9	17	29	4.39	.834
E8	1	1	4	20	40	4.48	.804
E9	0	11	6	21	39	4.46	.725
E10	1	0	5	28	33	4.37	.756
	0.3	1.2	7.6	23.1	34.8		

TABLE VII
CORRELATIONS BETWEEN DEMOGRAPHICS AND VARIABLES

		B	C	D	E
A1	Pearson Correlation	.241*	.102	.072	-.086
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.049	.412	.568	.492
	N	67	67	66	66
A2	Pearson Correlation	.059	-.106	-.183	.237
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.636	.394	.141	.055
	N	67	67	67	67
A3	Pearson Correlation	.106	-.064	-.142	.300*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.392	.606	.255	.015
	N	67	67	67	67
A4	Pearson Correlation	.004	-.004	-.036	.191
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.977	.974	.776	.125
	N	67	67	67	67
A5	Pearson Correlation	.155	-.127	.014	.050
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.210	.306	.914	.691
	N	67	67	67	67
A6	Pearson Correlation	.085	-.034	-.249*	.405*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.494	.788	.043	.001
	N	67	67	67	67
A7	Pearson Correlation	.069	.008	-.202	.262*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.581	.949	.105	.034
	N	67	67	67	67
A8	Pearson Correlation	-.220	-.076	-.144	.226
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.073	.539	.248	.069
	N	67	67	67	67
A9	Pearson Correlation	.034	.014	-.085	-.050
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.788	.912	.496	.690
	N	67	67	67	67
A10	Pearson Correlation	-.102	-.125	-.151	-.221
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.413	.312	.228	.074
	N	67	67	67	67

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

TABLE VIII
CORRELATION BETWEEN VARIABLES

		B	C	D	E
B	Pearson Correlation	1	.247*	-.054	.010
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.044	.668	.937
	N	67	67	67	67
C	Pearson Correlation	.247*	1	-.004	.378**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.404		.978	.001
	N	67	67	67	67
D	Pearson Correlation	-.054	-.004	1	-.105
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.668	.978		.404
	N	67	67	67	67
E	Pearson Correlation	.010	.378**	-.105	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.937	.001	.404	
	N	67	67	67	67

Tables VII and VIII highlight the following correlations between the research variables of this study as represented by Fig. 5:

- Fa. There is a direct relationship between the following demographics of a rural tourist, and his or her satisfaction with his or her rural tourism experiences: continent of origin, occupation, and marital status.
- Fb. There is no direct relationship between the demographics of a rural tourist, and the motivating factors that are pushing him or her towards rural tourism.
- Fc. There is no direct relationship between the demographics of a rural tourist, and the tourism destination motivation factors that are pulling him or her into rural tourism.
- Fd. There is a direct relationship between the occupation of a rural tourist, and his or her perceptions on the usefulness of ICTs during his or her rural tourism experiences.
- Fe. There is no direct relationship between the motivating factors pushing a rural tourist towards rural tourism, and his or her satisfaction with his or her rural tourism experiences.
- Ff. There is a direct relationship between the tourism destination motivation factors that are pulling a rural tourist into rural tourism, and his or her satisfaction with his or her rural tourism experiences.
- Fg. There is no direct relationship between the perceptions of a rural tourist on the usefulness of ICTs during his or her rural tourism experiences, and his or her satisfaction with his or her rural tourism experiences.

V. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This paper can be summarized as follows:

- a) The literature reviewed by this paper [21] supports that the motivation theory can facilitate the understanding of the factors that affect the satisfaction of rural tourists.
- b) It is possible to use the tourism motivation factors reviewed by paper [21] to design a model linking tourists' demographics, their satisfaction with their rural tourism experiences, and the following constructs from the motivation theory: seeking and escaping, push and pull, and hedonic motivation.

- c) According to the results of the survey conducted by this study, the satisfaction of rural tourist is affected by their continent of origin, by their occupation, and by their marital status. Moreover, rural tourists are also satisfied because of pull factors prevailing in rural tourism destinations. Finally, the occupation of a rural tourist has an influence on the use of ICTs by that tourist during his or rural tourism experiences. All these findings are in agreement with existing literature on the fact that the

occupation [22], continent of origin [22], [23], and pull factors [22], [23] and [25] affect tourists' satisfaction with rural tourism destinations.

- d) The main recommendation from the findings of this study is to keep on encouraging rural tourism destinations to prioritize the quality of the services that they offer so as to keep their customers happy and grow their businesses.

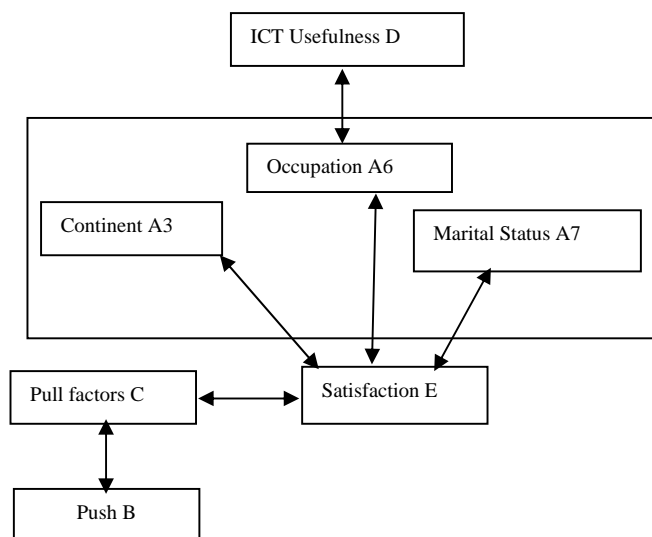


Fig.. 5 New model

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