# The antecedents of word of mouth intentions about a Brazilian tourist destination

## Os antecedentes da intenção de recomendação de um destino turístico brasileiro

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**Abstract**

The purpose of this research is to assess the constructs positive affection, negative affection, service quality, hedonic value, utilitarian value and satisfaction as antecedents considered by foreign tourists in their intention to recommend a Brazilian tourist destination. The analysis was supported by structural equation modeling of a cross-sectional sample of 203 foreign tourists. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire of 22 questions, adapted from the study by Babin, Lee, Kim & Griffin (2005). Regarding the objective of this study, the results suggest that only the latent variables satisfaction and hedonic value are directly related to the intention to recommend a Brazilian tourist destination by foreign tourists. Furthermore, the analysis confirms that tourist satisfaction positively influences intention to recommend the destination, which is consistent with the hypothesis signalized by previous studies.

**Keywords**: Affection, Brazilian tourist destinations, word of mouth, structural equation modeling, satisfaction.

**Resumo**

O objetivo desta pesquisa é avaliar os construtos 'afeto positivo', 'afeto negativo', 'qualidade do serviço', 'valor hedônico', 'valor utilitário' e 'satisfação' como antecedentes considerados pelos turistas estrangeiros em sua intenção de recomendar um destino turístico brasileiro. A análise foi suportada por modelagem de equações estruturais de uma amostra transversal de 203 turistas estrangeiros. Os dados foram coletados através de um instrumento estruturado de 22 assertivas, adaptadas a partir do estudo de Babin, Lee, Kim & Griffin (2005). Em relação ao objetivo do estudo, os resultados sugerem que apenas as variáveis latentes 'satisfação' e 'valor hedônico' estão diretamente relacionadas à intenção de recomendar um destino turístico brasileiro por turistas estrangeiros. Além disso, a análise confirma que a satisfação do turista influencia positivamente a intenção de recomendar o destino, que corrobora a hipótese sinalizada por estudos anteriores.

**Palavras-chave:** Afeição, destinos turísticos brasileiros, comunicação boca-a-boca, modelagem de equações estruturais, satisfação.

## 1. Introduction

Tourism is an increasingly promising economic activity because of the widespread need for leisure in today's society, which in general demands a routine marked by intense work activity (World Tourism Organization - WTO, 2003; Vieira, Altaf & Trocolli, 2012). Lemos (2000) lists some elements of tourism promotion, among which we can highlight the decline of air fares, the increase of tourist market segmentation, the improvement in communications technology, the conversion of local elements into tourist products and falling size of families, which consequently reduces the total costs of tourism.

With respect to Ilha Grande, located offshore from the city of Angra dos Reis, Rio de Janeiro state, in addition to these justifications, the increased tourist flow can be traced to the demolition of Cândido Mendes Prison in 1994 and the island's selection by *O Globo* newspaper in 2007 as the "second-leading wonder of the state of Rio de Janeiro" (Mendonça, 2008).

According to research by the Brazilian government travel bureau, Embratur (2013), 29.9% of international tourists interviewed said they were influenced by information passed on by friends about the destination country. This form of communication, free of intent to sell, provides greater credibility to receivers, so word-of-mouth (WOM) communication has gained prominence. According to Schiffman and Kanuk (2009), the main characteristics of communication by WOM are impartiality, informality and the fact that it occurs between two or more people, none of whom represents commercial sources or gets something directly from

any sale connected to the recommendation. It is important to identify the antecedents of WOM communication in tourism and to better understand the factors influencing this phenomenon.

Thus, the main objective of this study was to verify whether the antecedent factors (positive affection, negative affection, quality of service, hedonic value, utilitarian value and consumer satisfaction) influence the positive intention of foreign tourists to recommend Ilha Grande as a Brazilian tourist destination.

Among the main contribution of this paper, we highlight the adaptation of a model, originally employed in investigating the antecedents to recommend restaurants (Babin et al, 2005) to a tourist destination context. We can also say that the analysis of constructs related to emotions, such as positive and negative affection, and constructs hedonic value and utilitarian value as possible antecedents of the WOM intentions are important contributions to the tourism field. Understanding what leads an international tourist to recommend a tourist destination seems to be of utmost importance to ensure the maintenance of local tourist demand.

## 2. Theoretical Background

### 2.1. Positive and Negative Affections

When studying the subject affection, researchers invariably encounter the concept of emotion (Solomon, 2002; Schiffman & Kanuk, 2009; Sheth, Mittal & Newman, 2001; Hawkins, Mothersbaugh & Best, 2007). Grönroos (2009) notes that emotions are related in many ways to the cognitive perception

of service processes and cites the importance of taking into account affective functions in the management of service quality. For Sheth, Mittal and Newman (2001), emotions are the sense of the occurrence of some physiological arousal followed by a behavioral response. Emotions can be divided into three components: physiological, behavioral and cognitive. While the physiological component, also called autonomous arousal, is linked to bodily reactions to a stimulus, the cognitive component occurs after the physiological and serves as an interpretation or analysis of the meaning of that stimulus. Thus, the behavioral component can be understood as a physiological response to cognitive interpretation (Sheth, Mittal & Newman, 2001).

The precursors of measurement of these states were Mehrabian and Russell (1974), who in attempting to understand the interactive processes between humans and environmental variables, based their study on a stimulus-organism-response (SOR) model and developed a scale to measure affective attitudes, called Pleasure, Arousal and Dominance (PAD).

### 2.2. Utilitarian and Hedonic Values

Besides emotions, the study of consumer behavior also considers the value attributed to their purchases. The literature divides this value in two major groups: utilitarian value and hedonic value. Utilitarian value, usually represented by utilitarian needs, relates to the basic functions and material benefits. For Strahilevitz and Myers (1998), the utilitarian perspective is based on functional thinking centered on the product or service, that is, consumption is understood as a way to do something defined in advance.

Hedonic value is associated with hedonic needs, in other words, the desire for pleasure and self expression. Sheth, Mittal and Newman (2001) associate hedonic value to the value attributed to the use of products and services for the intrinsic pleasure they provide, not their ability to resolve problems. Hedonic value is tied to sensory pleasure, or the value attributed to products and services that provide pleasure through fantasies and emotional stimuli.

Some examples of hedonic consumption of goods and services are buying diamonds, taking trips and engaging in sports and cultural events. Among the elements of the hedonic value, the same authors emphasize sensory pleasure, aesthetic pleasure, emotional experience and fun. Mowen and Minor (2003) agree with these authors in defining hedonic consumption as satisfaction of the needs that consumers have to use products and services that provide fantasies and emotions.

Allen (2000) mentions vacationing and the associated travel as an example that can clearly be classified as hedonic consumption, because it involves emotional desires, with imaginative and mental representations with meanings and intangible attributes, complemented by tangible attributes. Swarbrooke and Horner (2002) contribute in this respect by proposing a model with six intrinsic motivations for tourists regarding travel - cultural, physical, status, personal development, emotional and personal goals, and stress the hedonic value assigned by tourists to the chosen destination.

### 2.3. Quality of Services

Gouvêa and Masano (2008) argue that although services are at the heart of economic activities in the modern world, studies about service quality and its inclusion in managers' agendas are recent, having started in the 1980s. Fitzsimmons and Fitzsimmons (2000) propose that service quality should be evaluated throughout the process of providing service as a result of each customer's contact, understood as a *moment of truth*, namely an opportunity to satisfy the customer. For Zeithaml (1988), quality can be broadly defined as superiority

or excellence, and by extension, perceived quality can be defined as consumers' decisions regarding the superiority or excellence of a product or service.

Schiffman and Kanuk (2009) and Grönroos (2009) argue that perceived quality is composed of extrinsic factors besides intrinsic ones to the service. Extrinsic factors are generally products of customers' expectations, formed by marketing actions, and imply an impact on the expected quality. For the latter author, the total perceived quality, besides being comprised of experienced quality and expected quality, is influenced by direct image. According to Grönroos (2009), image plays a central role in customer perception of service quality and is just as important for a services company as for any other firm.

### 2.4. Satisfaction with Services

Kruel, Daronco and Dill (2008) argue that the theme satisfaction has been extensively covered in literature, especially in the study of consumer behavior, which has led to numerous advances in the knowledge of the antecedents of this state, providing a better understanding of the satisfaction-dissatisfaction dichotomy. Although the literature provides many definitions of satisfaction, the concept proposed by Oliver (1997) stands out, according to which satisfaction is a response of a consumer regarding a feature of a product or service that provides a higher or lower level of contentment.

Marchetti and Prado (2001) argue that the literature contains two types of definitions of satisfaction: one focusing on the outcome for the consumer and the other the process itself. Hoffman, Bateson, Ikeda & Campomar (2011), in turn, evaluate satisfaction based on the difference between perceptions and expectations, so that when perceptions exceed expectations, there is satisfaction with the service offered.

### 2.5. Intention to Recommend

Hawkins, Mothersbaugh and Best (2007) believe that about two-thirds of all consumer decisions are influenced by WOM communication or recommendation. For Solomon (2002), this form of communication tends to be more reliable than the recommendations obtained through the formal marketing channels. Schiffman and Kanuk (2009) believe that the effectiveness of communication by WOM is due to the influence of people who have more knowledge or credibility on a particular subject. Mowen and Minor (2003) observe that some people provide information more frequently than others. For them, such behavior or attitude can influence the purchasing decisions of others. Matos (2011) explains the importance of WOM communication in the service sector because services are intangible in nature and thus cannot be tested before the purchase itself. Thus, the consumer seeks other references, such as price, corporate image and references (WOM) from friends and relatives.

Studies have sought greater understanding of the factors that influence the intention of recommending particular product or service to someone, in a variety of contexts. For example, Heitmann, Lehmann and Herrmann (2007), in a study of customers of electronic products, defined such elements as sense of fairness, trust, anticipatory grieving, evaluation of costs and final negative effect as directly affecting customer satisfaction and therefore loyalty and intention to recommend. McKee, Simmers and Licata (2006) analyzed the beliefs of customers about their ability to participate in services, in other words, the use of self-sufficiency in the choice of services, as well as the effect on the response to the service. Harrison-Walker (2001) mentioned affective commitment and quality of consumer services as potential antecedents of positive WOM communication.

Lam and So (2013) assessed the mediating role of life satisfaction on the relationship between leisure satisfaction

and WOM, in the intention to recommend. In their study they proposed that satisfaction has its importance on mediating both constructs, however, it is not always leading to a WOM, due to many other reasons.

Martin and Lueg (2013) evaluated the importance of WOM in the consumer purchase decision, having concluded that characteristics of both the WOM speaker (trustworthiness, experience, and evidence) and the WOM listener (self-perceived knowledge and purchase involvement) affect the intention to recommend, as well as whether the WOM is face-to-face or online.

## 2.6. Tourism and the Tourist Destination Studied

According to Molina (2001), tourism has advantages over other economic activities, by not relying on technological resources, since man predominates over machine, requiring less financial outlay. According to Cruz (2001), geographical space is the main object of consumption of tourists, who go to the "product" to be consumed, the tourist destination. Because of this characteristic, tourism involves transformations to at least three parts of geographic space: flow origins, travel space and flow destinations.

In Brazil, tourism has been expanding above the world average and setting new records for the country (Embratur, 2006). According to data from the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2006), in 2004 and 2005, average growth in arrivals of foreign tourists in the world was 5.5%. In Brazil, growth was around 12.5% during this period, demonstrating the potential of the country with regard to this activity.

The city of Angra dos Reis, an internationally known tourist destination, gained prominence after the construction of Highway BR101, which connects the coastal cities of Rio de Janeiro and Santos, in the 1970s (Luchiari, 1999). In addition, the demolition of Cândido Mendes Prison on Ilha Grande in 1994 accelerated the flow of tourists to this location (Mendonça, 2008). For this author, the growth in tourism also gained strength due to the mention of Ilha Grande in *O Globo* newspaper in 2007 as the "second-leading wonder of the state of Rio de Janeiro."

## 3. Research Method

We gathered data relevant to the determination of the following latent variables or dimensions: positive affection, negative affection, service quality, hedonic value, utilitarian value, satisfaction and intention to recommend. The data on these variables were collected through a structured questionnaire consisting of 22 questions. The original model (Babin et al., 2005) used several scales, such as Likert and semantic differential. In this study, we adapted the model, only using a five-point Likert scale. This adaptation aimed to facilitate understanding of the respondents, given the great diversity and intellectual differences among tourists. Furthermore, to obtain a better fit of the model to the problem studied, we reduced the number of indicators from 27 to 22.

The survey instrument was presented in Portuguese, English and Spanish. The questionnaires were given to a sample of foreign tourists at the time of their return trips from Ilha Grande, which is generally by boat. This sampling technique, besides being simpler than going to the island to seek out respondents, also provided a more representative sample because it did not discriminate among any particular hotel or tourist resort on the island, although the sample was still not random. For the treatment of data we mainly used structural equation modeling (SEM), that were analyzed by the AMOS® 16.0 program. In the model adopted (Figure 1), we followed the recommendation of Babin et al. (2005) to determine the path diagram, with some adaptation.

According to estimates of the Angra dos Reis Tourism Foundation, about 330,000 tourists visited Ilha Grande in 2007 (TURISANGRA, 2007). According to Hair, Anderson, Tathan & Black (2009), the proper use of structural equation modeling requires a minimum sample of 100 valid questionnaires, and the ideal value is 200 valid questionnaires. Our sample had 203 valid questionnaires (95% of the total of 213 applied).
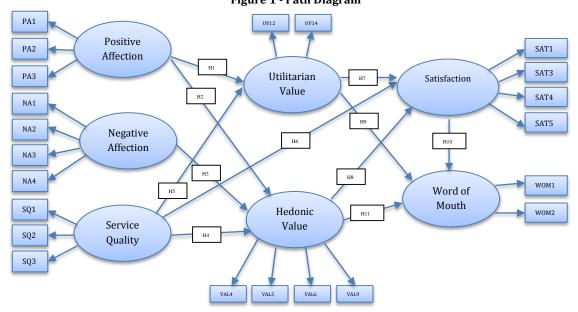
### Figure 1 - Path Diagram



**Source: Babin et al. (2005: 133-139).**

## 4. Hypothesis Specification

On the subject of consumer attitudes, Blackwell, Miniard and Engel (2005) characterize the cognitive components (related beliefs) and affective (associated feelings) as determinants of such attitudes. Dhar and Wertenbroch (2000) show that goods or brands with hedonic characteristics are better suited to premium pricing strategies, although utilitarian elements, such

as medicines, can also display these characteristics, since they have some emotional attachment (Huerta & Urdan, 2006). Babin and Attaway (2000) found that positive affection leads to an increase in hedonic and utilitarian values. Babin and Darden (1996) asserted that negative affection mainly influences hedonic value and found no significant changes in utilitarian value. Lee, Lee & Choi (2011) examined the role of emotions on utilitarian value.They showed that even consumers with a high degree of negative feelings maintained the same level of spending as buyers less susceptible to negative moods. Based on the assumptions, we formulated the following hypotheses:

*H1: Positive affection positively influences utilitarian value.*

*H2: Positive affection positively influences hedonic value.*

*H3: Negative affection negatively influences hedonic value.*

Oliver (1999) and Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1988) argue that perceived quality of services is an antecedent to satisfaction. Corroborating this assertion, Lucian and Moura (2008) show the effect of service quality in the context of a soccer game, related to consumer satisfaction, validating the hypotheses of those authors. Hepp (2008), besides corroborating these findings, created a model that shows a strong influence of the perceived quality variable on the perceived value variable. Babin, Darden and Griffin (1994) proposed a two-dimensional scale, called Personal Shopping Value (PSV), to reflect the implications of perceived quality in hedonic and utilitarian values, showing a relationship between the constructs. In the field of tourism, it highlighted the work of Lee, Jeon & Kim (2011), which also suggests that the quality of tourism services is an antecedent of tourist satisfaction. Based on this theoretical framework, we formulated the following hypotheses:

*H4: Service quality positively influences hedonic value.*

*H5: Service quality positively influences utilitarian value.*

*H6: Service quality positively influences tourist satisfaction.*

Babin, Darden and Griffin (1994) developed a scale to measure two types of results of human behavior. The first is related to utility and conscious search for a specific purpose, while the second is related to spontaneous responses, in other words, hedonic or symbolic aspects. By this scale, these authors established a way to evaluate the hedonic and utilitarian benefits related to customer satisfaction at a shopping mall. The relation among hedonic value and satisfaction also was employed by Grappi and Montanari (2011) to analyze the role of social identification in Italian tourism. We thus formulated the following hypotheses:

*H7: Utilitarian value positively influences tourist satisfaction.*

*H8: Hedonic value positively influences tourist satisfaction.*

Several authors (Szymanski & Henard, 2001; Lloyd, Yip & Luk, 2013; Kim, Sun & Kim, 2013),argue that WOM recommendation is closely related to the need for social acceptance of consumers, linked to the need to communicate their consumption patterns, whether utilitarian or hedonic. Babin et al. (2005) proposed that hedonic and utilitarian values function as mediators of satisfaction and intentions to communicate by WOM, being directly influenced by affective states. Thus, we formulated the following hypotheses:

*H9: Utilitarian value positively influences intention to recommend.*

*H11: Hedonic value positively influences intention to recommend.*

Blackwell, Miniard and Engel (2005) argue that satisfaction or dissatisfaction is characterized as a condition precedent to communication by WOM. Matos (2011) validated the positive and significant effect of satisfaction on WOM. Besides these authors, several others have also proposed the construct validity of satisfaction as a previous construct of recommendation (e.g. Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner & Gremler, 2002; Lee, Jeon & Kim, 2011; Nursair, Parsa & Cobanoglu, 2011). Thus, to evaluate the validity of the relationship between tourist satisfaction and intention to recommend based on proposals in the above theoretical framework, we formulated the following final hypothesis:

*H10: Tourist satisfaction positively influences intention to recommend.*

## 5. Analysis of Results

The sample, composed of 203 respondents, was delineate according to information on gender, age, education level, and information about the number of nights spent at the tourist destination, whether it was the first visit and how the tourist learned of the destination. We only applied the questionnaire to foreign tourists over 18 years old who and had remained for more than a night on Ilha Grande. The majority of the responding foreign tourists chose not to inform their nationality (33%), followed by British tourists (20%), Americans (10%) and tourists from other countries. Regarding missing data, we found during the tabulation the existence of 10 incomplete questionnaires or questionnaires with multiple answers on questions that permit only one answer, out of a total of 213 questionnaires. We chose the full-case approach (Hair et al., 2009) and we excluded the 10 incomplete questionnaires, so that the final number was 203. The internal consistency of the questionnaire was assessed by measuring the Cronbach's alpha. We found a coefficient of 0.903 for the 22 variables. According to Hair et al. (2009), this measure ensures the validation of the construct and allows assuming that future research would give similar results. The correlations between constructs as well as information about each of them are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1. Correlations between the Constructs and others Measures**

| Constructs | Number of Indicators | Mean | Standard Deviation | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Word of Mouth | 2 | 4.35 | 0.78 | **0.950** | | | | | | |
| Utilitarian Value | 2 | 3.81 | 1.01 | 0.256** | **0.817** | | | | | |
| Satisfaction | 4 | 4.23 | 0.81 | 0.481** | 0.472** | **0.925** | | | | |
| Hedonic Value | 4 | 3.99 | 0.81 | 0.460** | 0.419** | 0.517** | **0.921** | | | |
| Service Quality | 3 | 3.76 | 0.82 | 0.345** | 0.350** | 0.549** | 0.396** | **0.853** | | |
| Negative Affection | 4 | 2.28 | 0.92 | -0.088 | 0.018 | -0.149* | -0.049 | -0.152* | **0.879** | |
| Positive Affection | 3 | 3.88 | 0.79 | 0.423** | 0.128 | 0.481** | 0.447** | 0.485** | -0.190** | **0.892** |

Note: **. Correlation is significant at 0.01 (2-tailed)
*. Correlation is significant at 0.05 (2-tailed) Cronbach's alpha shown in boldface in the diagonal

## 5.1. Structural Equation Modeling

The structural equation modeling (SEM) technique is an extension of several other multivariate techniques, such as exploratory factor analysis and multiple regression (Hair et al. 2009; Garson, 2002). For multivariate analysis, specifically one that uses structural equation modeling. We did not find any outliers among the responses. Data normality was assessed by skewness, which must be less than 3, and kurtosis, which must be less than 8. It was found that all results were within established limits. We analyzed linearity through Pearson's linear correlation matrix and found that the distribution has linear. Regarding homoscedasticity, according to the Levene test, of the 22 variables in the model, 10 reflected a slight degree of heteroscedasticity, an undesired by but acceptable situation. However, four variables showed homoscedasticity at a significance level of p = 0.000, three showed homoscedasticity at p = 0.005; one showed homoscedasticity at p = 0.01 and one at p = 0.05.

In evaluating the fit of a model developed by the SEM technique using software, the researcher is faced with a series of coefficients. Garson (2008) warns that the researcher must not engage in a hunt for coefficients, and that reporting of all indexes is unnecessary. Kline (2011) recommends the use of at least four tests (Chi-square, GFI, NFI and CFI). For this paper, we chose Chi-square (Cmin); degrees of freedom (DF); goodness-of-fit index (GFI); normed fit index (NFI); Tucker-Lewis index (TLI); comparative fit index (CFI); and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA).

The model was estimated by maximum likelihood estimation (MLE), which according to Codes (2005) is the most used method for evaluation in SEM. It involves calculating all parameters of the model at once. The method stands out by assuming model parameters with population values, not just sample ones. The final model can be classified as recursive and reflexive and was composed of 55 variables. Of these variables, 22 were observed and 33 latent (also considering the variables related to the errors). We found that of all the variables studied, 29 were classified as exogenous and 26 as endogenous. Moreover, the model showed a Chi-square value of 269.287, with 195 degrees of freedom.

Structural equation modeling has only one statistic test of significance, the Chi-square test that compares obtained Chi-square value with tabled values for given degrees of freedom. Because the Chi-square statistics tends to be substantial when the model not hold and when the sample size is large, researchers developed fit indices. One of the fit statistics to address this problem was the Chi-squared/degrees of freedom ratio, which appears as CMIN/DF.

To evaluate the model and test its adherence, or fit (goodness of fit), we used the ratio Chi-square/degrees of freedom as one of the indexes. This index should be below 5. In the model estimated, this value was 1.381, indicating good fit. The GFI was above 0.89, indicating a medium fit. The TLI, NFI and CFI indexes had reasonable magnitudes, all being above 0.90, as recommended in the literature. The RMSEA was below 0.05, also demonstrating acceptable fit. The values found are summarized in Table 2.

### Table 2 - Model Fit Indexes

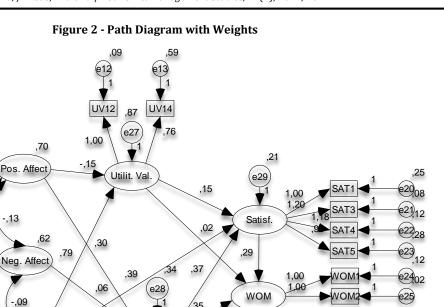| Model | CMIN | P | DF | CMIN/DF | GFI | NFI | TLI | CFI | RMSEA |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Default Model | 269.287 | 0.000 | 195 | 1.381 | 0.894 | 0.921 | 0.972 | 0.977 | 0.043 |

Source: Authors.

As noted in Table 3, out of 11 proposals by the initial assumptions of the model, three (utilitarian value <--- positive affection; hedonic value <--- negative affection and intent to recommend <--- utilitarian value) fall below the minimum critical ratio value (|1.96|), indicated in the column with the symbol CR. Moreover, the three relationships were not statistically significant, leading to rejection of the corresponding hypotheses. The relationship between the constructs satisfaction <--- utilitarian value and intent to recommend <--- satisfaction, were not below the minimum critical ratio value, enabling their consideration at a significance level of 0.005, which is fairly representative. Figure 2 shows the path diagram with the respective weights.

### Table 3. Situation of the Hypotheses

| Hypothesis | | Estimate | S.E. | C.R. | P | Label |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Utilitarian Value <-- Positive Affection** | **H1** | **-0,152** | **0,112** | **-1,351** | **0,177** | **Reject** |
| Hedonic Value <-- Positive affection | H2 | 0,304 | 0,074 | 4,123 | *** | No Reject |
| **Hedonic Value <-- Negative affection** | **H3** | **0,056** | **0,062** | **0,902** | **0,367** | **Reject** |
| Hedonic Value <-- Service Quality | H4 | 0,788 | 0,143 | 5,500 | *** | No Reject |
| Utilitarian Value <-- Service Quality | H5 | 0,358 | 0,090 | 3,962 | *** | No Reject |
| Satisfaction <-- Service Quality | H6 | 0,392 | 0,081 | 4,831 | *** | No Reject |
| Satisfaction <-- Utilitarian Value | H7 | 0,147 | 0,046 | 3,185 | 0,001 | No Reject |
| Satisfaction <-- Hedonic Value | H8 | 0,366 | 0,068 | 5,422 | *** | No Reject |
| WOM <-- Hedonic Value | H9 | 0,351 | 0,091 | 3,875 | *** | No Reject |
| WOM <-- Satisfaction | H10 | 0,292 | 0,100 | 2,916 | 0,004 | No Reject |
| **WOM <-- Utilitarian Value** | **H11** | **0,022** | **0,052** | **0,412** | **0,680** | **Reject** |

Note: *** p-value < 0,001.
Source: Authors.

**Figure 2 - Path Diagram with Weights**



Source: Authors.

## 6. Conclusions

The main objective of this study was to determine whether the antecedent factors (positive and negative affection, quality of service, utilitarian and hedonic values and consumer satisfaction) influence the intention to recommend Ilha Grande (Angra dos Reis, RJ), as a Brazilian tourist destination for international tourists. We found that three out of the eleven hypotheses were rejected. The rejection of the first of these hypotheses (H1 - positive affection positively influences utilitarian value) refutes the argument of Babin et al. (2005), that there should be a positive relationship between the variables positive affection and utilitarian value. We believe that the tourists who go to a destination such as the Ilha Grande already have high expectations of its natural beauty, beyond the symbolic (or hedonic) elements present.

Activities such as a dinner by the seaside, a walk through the rainforest or a boat trip along the coast reinforce the symbolism of the journey and the symbolic sense of pleasure felt by tourists, bringing good memories and experiences of the location. However, when faced with a utilitarian need, such as buying medicine, the tourist sees the situation much more like a problem – an interruption that subtracts from leisure time – than a positive experience. Thus, even a visitor who is in a positive emotional and affective state does not perceive the utility of mundane purchases as a positive experience.

The rejection of the second of these hypothesis (H3 - negative affection positively affects hedonic value) contradicts the belief that tourists are affected by emotional states and suffer negative emotional influence on their perceptions of hedonic (or symbolic) value related to their stay on Ilha Grande. The rejection of this hypothesis allowed an interesting conclusion: even with altered moods and/or emotions, tourists still attribute a symbolic value to the trip. In other words, although a person shows negative emotions – such as irritation, annoyance or boredom – we believe he or she still intrinsically values the tourism experience out of a symbolic vision. We

believe that hedonic value is maintained because of trips are linked to dreams and desires, so are carefully planned. This can translate into unique experiences, leading tourists, even when in a bad mood, to keep believing in the symbolism of the experience. With the rejection of this hypothesis, the negative affect factor ceased to be important in this work, since it is assumed that this factor acted only as an antecedent of hedonic value, and that was not linked with any other latent variable.

The rejection of the third of these hypotheses (H9 - utilitarian value positively influences intention to recommend) runs counter to the idea cited by Babin et al. (2005) that a good assessment of the utilitarian value positively influences the intention to recommend a tourist destination. However, since this survey was limited to a sample of foreign tourists, we believe they may have planned their trips with low expectations about the structure of essential services offered in the place. This belief is based on Brazil's poor reputation abroad with respect to development and civility. In addition, tourists who come to Brazil, and specifically to Ilha Grande, are generally looking enjoy its natural attractions, not caring if they will have to sleep in camps or eat in a tent on the beach. Thus, one cannot attribute importance to utilitarian value as a prominent element for recommendation of destination. In other words, the findings here suggest that international tourists visiting Ilha Grande in general care little for matters linked to utilitarian value. This assumption is based on the rejection of two hypotheses related to this construct and the belief that tourists specifically seek to enjoy the natural attractions (attached directly to the point hedonic value), caring little about whether this will be accompanied by the discomfort of sleeping in a tent or having to eat at a lunch stand (utilitarian aspects).

Although the utilitarian value construct functioned as a mediating variable between the constructs of service quality and satisfaction (H5 and H7), we believe, based on the literature, that this construct makes little (if any) difference in

this situation, considering that the perception of quality is a natural antecedent of satisfaction. Thus, we feel that in this context, utilitarian value has little relevance to international tourists and is a dispensable construct in this model.

According to the results, perceived quality of services is as an important variable, since it is an antecedent of two other latent variables of the model: hedonic value (H4) and satisfaction (H6), as well as utilitarian value, already mentioned. The dimension of the hedonic value has two antecedents: positive affection, legitimized by the non-rejection of H2 (positive affection positively influences hedonic value) and quality of service, validated by the non-rejection of H4 (quality of service positively influences hedonic value). While on the one hand, negative emotional states do not influence the formation of hedonic value (H3), on the other positive affective states act as significant antecedents to the composition of this value. We assume, through the validation of H2, that enthusiasm, happiness, satisfaction and good disposition improve tourists' symbolic perception of the location. Although other positive affective states were not tested, it can be stated that for tourists, generally in a good mood to begin with, tend to have a better perception about hedonism and symbolism regarding the destination.

With respect to the central aim of this study, we found that only the latent variables satisfaction and hedonic value are directly related to the intent to recommend Ilha Grande by tourists (H10 and H11). Our results for H10 (tourist satisfaction positively influences intention to recommend) have also been found in several other studies.

Among the various important points of this work is the demonstration of the irrelevance of negative affection in a model of intention to recommend. According to the survey results, this affective state does not interfere in the recommendation process, as opposed to positive affective state, which directly impacts the formation of hedonic value. This study therefore strengthens the position that positive and negative affective states are different constructs and are not part of a continuum, as also suggested by Mehrabian and Russell (1974) and Mowen and Minor (2003).

For the tourism industry, this study provided important information, not only to managers and owners of lodging facilities, but also for the whole chain of services related to tourism, such as food, entertainment, and transportation companies. Furthermore, it provides important information for decision making in government. We stress the importance of striving for excellence in service, especially for foreign tourists, who as a rule are used to a higher standard of care compared to Brazilians.

In relation to government, the paper shows that to international tourists in general, it matters little whether they will stay in a luxurious resort or go camping on the beach. Tourists that visit destinations such as Ilha Grande are generally interested in seeing the natural beauty. Thus, the government should heighten efforts for environmental preservation. For this type of target market, is more important to stay in a small hotel without so many amenities but is environmentally friendly than in a grandiose resort that ignores environmental preservation.

Although this assessment enhances our knowledge on the experiential concept, it has some limitations which have to be taken into account when interpreting the results. The findings are limited to the foreign travelers experience on visiting Ilha Grande during a specific period of time. While respondents were representative in terms of sample size and demographic profile, findings cannot be generalized to the wider tourist population. Further research may assess the validity of the experience construct in other service contexts.

One important restriction of this study is due to not having taken into account the effects of the foreign traveler involvement on the evaluation of overall experiences, satisfaction and intention to recommend. The involvement during consumption directly impact on the quality of the perceived experience and plays a significant role in explaining consumer behavior. Further research should enhance this study by replicating the model under different levels of involvement.

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