The relationship between happiness and the desire for hospitality mediated by tourist self-image and destination image

A relação entre a felicidade e o desejo por hospitalidade mediada pela autoimagem do turista e a imagem do seu destino

A relacion entre a felicidad y desejo por hospitalidad mediada pela autoimagem de turista y a imagem do seu destino

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Abstract: This research is **justified** by the need to broaden the theory about consumer behavior in tourism and the importance of improving commercial practices. The main **objective** of this study is to analyze the relationship between the search for happiness in the tourist experience and the desire for local hospitality, mediated by the congruence between the tourist's self-image and the destination image. A survey yielded 221 completed questionnaires. We took a **quantitative** approach to data analysis using **multiple linear regression** technique, and the **results** indicate a significant and positive relationship between the search for happiness in the tourist experience and the desire for local hospitality, mediated by the congruence of tourists self-image (how they see themselves) and tourist destination image. The **originality** of this study is to identify the self-image of the tourist and tourist destination as factors mediating the perception of local hospitality.

Keywords: Happiness. Hospitality. Tourism. Self-Image. Congruence.

Resumo: Essa pesquisa **justifica-se** pela necessidade de ampliar a teoria sobre comportamento do consumidor no turismo e a importância do aprimoramento de práticas comerciais. O principal **objetivo** deste estudo é analisar a relação entre a busca da felicidade na experiência turística e o desejo por hospitalidade local, mediada pela congruência entre a autoimagem do turista e a imagem do destino. Por meio de uma **survey** obteve-

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Rev. Bras. Pesq. Tur. São Paulo, 11(3), pp. 436-452, set./dez. 2017.

436

Aureliano-Silva, L. ; Oliveira, P. S. G. ; Alves, C. A.
The relationship between happiness and the desire for hospitality mediated by tourist self-image
and destination image

se 221 questionários respondidos. Para análise dos dados, utilizou-se **abordagem quantitativa** com o uso da técnica de **regressão linear múltipla**, e os **resultados** indicaram relação significativa e positiva entre a busca da felicidade na experiência turística e o desejo por hospitalidade local, mediada pela congruência da autoimagem do turista (como ele se vê) e imagem do destino turístico. A **originalidade** deste estudo está em identificar a autoimagem do turista e destino turístico como fatores mediadores da percepção de hospitalidade local.

Palavras-chave: Felicidade. Hospitalidade. Turismo. Autoimagem. Congruência.

*Resumen: Esta búsqueda **justifica-se** en la necesidad de ampliar una teoría sobre el comportamiento del consumidor en el turismo y un aumento en el desarrollo de los préstamos comerciales. O principal **objetivo** este estudio es una relación entre una búsqueda de la felicidad en la experiencia turística y la búsqueda por la hospitalidad local, la meditación por la congruencia entre una autoimagen de la turista y una imagen del destino. Por medio de una encuesta obteve-se 221 cuestionarios respondidos. Para la evaluación de los datos, la utilización de la **cuantitativa** con el uso de la técnica de la **regresión múltiple lineal**, los **resultados** indicaron la relación significativa y positiva entre la búsqueda de la felicidad en la experiencia turística y el deseo por la hospitalidad local, mediada por la congruencia de la autoimagen del turista (como se ve) y la imagen del destino turístico. Una **originalidad** de este estudio es identificar una autoimagen de turista y de destino mediadores de la percepción de hospitalidad local.*

Palabras clave: Felicidad. Hospitalidad. Turismo. Autoimagen. Congruencia.

1 INTRODUCTION

This study discusses the concept of happiness, as a set of positive emotions related to tourism consumption experience and its relationship with the perception of local hospitality.

According to Espinoza and Nique (2003) happiness is important to individuals and is related to positive emotions that influence behavioral intention. The argument is that tourism consumption, as hedonic experience, leads consumers to positive actions, influences the way they see themselves and how they perceive people with whom they interact (Yampey, 1980).

The term hospitality, which will also be addressed in this article, has different definitions, and is related, for example, to the provision of food and drink, maintenance of status and satisfaction of psychological needs (King, 1995; Lynch, Molz, Mcintosh, Lugosi, & Lashley, 2011). The term hospitality is also used in the field of man-

agement, whose studies refer to the hospitality and meeting the customers' needs in purchasing contexts (Bareham, 2004), hospitality, behavior and buying experience (Hemmington, 2007) and in other management dimensions (Nailon, 1982). A common point on the concept of hospitality which is observed in the literature, refers to its welcoming nature (Bareham, 2004) in order to make people feel good.

In this way, the concepts of happiness and hospitality, are theorized and tested in an exploratory model to identify and analyze their relationship.

Another aspect that will be considered in this study, refers to the choice of the tourist destination by the consumer. In the process of choosing a destination, consumers consider not only the costs of the service, but also if the destination fits their profile. This phenomenon is called congruence (Hosany & Martin, 2012) between the consumers' self-image (as they see themselves), and the image of the selected tourist desti-

Rev. Bras. Pesq. Tur. São Paulo, 11(3), pp. 436-452, set./dez. 2017.

437

nation (Ahn, Ekinci, & Li, 2013).

Based on emotional contagion (Hatfield, Cacioppo, & Rapson, 1994), it is believed that the consumers' self-image and the tourist destination image are mediators of the relationship between the pursuit of happiness on tourist experience and the perception of local hospitality. The purpose of this research is to understand important aspects related to the choice of tourist destination, the influence of the congruence of consumers' self-image and their choices, and how these aspects influence the perception of hospitality of the tourist destination.

In addition to contributing to the literature on hospitality, tourism and marketing, this article presents substantial contributions that can be considered by managers of tour operators in customer service and applied to tourism marketing campaigns.

After this brief introduction, we present a theoretical review on happiness, as a set of positive emotions; hospitality from the perspective of hosting; and tourists' self-image (as they see themselves) and tourist destination image. Subsequently, we present the method of data analysis, the general discussion of the results and, finally, the theoretical and practical contributions and limitations of the research.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

This section present studies on hospitality, happiness, and consumer's self-image which were the basis of the study hypotheses.

2.1 Happiness in tourism

According to Espinoza and Nique (2003) the feeling of happiness is of great importance to individuals and it relates to set of positive emotions that influence behavioral intention. Nietzsche (2016) has a different vision, as he proclaims that happiness is something that humans want only to desire, but not to have it, and every individual who experiences it learns to downright pray for disquietude. This view is somewhat exploited in the marketing field, where it has been argued that consumption is a means of pursuing happiness (DeLeire & Kalil, 2010). According to Braudrillard (2008) there is an ideological system created by the market that strengthens the relationship between consumption and happiness. This vision builds on the concept of happiness proposed by Kant, in which everything takes place according to one's desire and will, i.e., consumers feel a moment of happiness when they want and buy something.

There is a theoretical corpus reported many times in the marketing literature regarding the hedonic consumption perspective (Ben-Ur, Mai, & Yang, 2015; Hirschman & Holbrook, 1982; Lacher, 1989; Neeley, Sam Min, & Kennett-Hensel, 2010; Nicolao, 2010), i.e. the consumption that generates pleasure and happiness, for example, consumption of luxury cuisine (Hemzo & Augusto, 2010), music consumption (Lacher, 1989), and the tourist consumption (Rubio Gil, 1996).

In this sense, the argument is that tourist consumption, as experience of happiness, and its hedonic nature, leads consumers to take positive actions, influences the way they see themselves and how to understand the other with whom they in-

Rev. Bras. Pesq. Tur. São Paulo, 11(3), pp. 436-452, set./dez. 2017.

438

teract (Yampey, 1980), resulting in a positive judgment on social interaction.

The importance of this aspect lies in the fact that tourism is an engine of economic growth, however the happiness generated by it and its ability to contribute to good health is only beginning to be documented (Bojanowska & Zalewska, 2016; Filep & Bereded-Samuel, 2012a; Hofmann, Luhmann, Fisher, Vohs, & Baumeister, 2014).

For this reason, Filep and Bareed-Samuel (2012b) studied among the Ethiopian immigrant community in Australia how positive holiday experiences, involving visits to friends or relatives improves mental health, relieves depression levels, and thus improves the level of happiness of people who travel. They justified this study because the tourism industry is increasingly interested in understanding how travel affects happiness of individuals, and thus improving health.

This aspect has become so important that some countries such as Bhutan, have a tourism policy fully guided by the doctrine of Gross National Happiness (GNH), which apparently is more important than other policies, thus enabling this country to gain reputation on the world tourism map. The importance of this policy lies in the fact that there has been a significant investment in socio-economic development, environmental conservation, promotion of culture and good governance (the four pillars of the policy); for people who visit the country feel happy, it is very important that the population is happy and therefore can transmit that feeling to the visitors, which is very close to the satisfaction provided by the location (Coffey, Warren, & Gottfried, 2015; Khamrang, 2013; Yang & Srinivasan, 2016).

This is corroborated by the study of Kaliterna-Lipovčan, Brasjša-Žganec and Poljanec-Borić (2014) that suggests that the quality of tourist destinations is related to the subjective well-being of people living in those destinations. The authors studied two sets of data: one that mentioned the well-being of the citizens of Croatia and the other that mentioned the quality of tourist destinations in the country. Through an analysis of covariance, they found that the higher the level of happiness and satisfaction of citizens, the greater the quality of the tourist destination (Kaliterna-Lipovčan et al., 2014).

Nawijn and Peeters (2010) studied the happiness from the tourists' point of view and realized that what affected directly the indexes of happiness of those tourists was the freedom that they perceived when they moved in the destination, thus the authors concluded that if public policies restrict this freedom, this will negatively affect the happiness of the tourist and possibly the probability that this tourist will return to the destination.

This perception is in line with studies by Loubser and Steenekamp (2017) and Spruk and Kešeljević (2016). The authors researched the correlation between happiness and democracy and freedom in the countries they studied and have noted a correlation between happiness and the high levels of security provided by the fact that they are democratic locations and on the other hand, lower satisfaction levels in locations with political and economic changes, which suggests that the greater the freedom, the higher the level of happiness of

Rev. Bras. Pesq. Tur. São Paulo, 11(3), pp. 436-452, set./dez. 2017.

439

Aureliano-Silva, L. ; Oliveira, P. S. G. ; Alves, C. A.
The relationship between happiness and the desire for hospitality mediated by tourist self-image
and destination image

tourists.

Nawijn (2010) observes that the importance of studying these aspects lies in the fact that the tourism industry pays little attention to the traveling mood of tourists and how it affects their life satisfaction and how that aspect relates to the increase in revenues of tourism companies.

It is also important to pay attention to the fact that there are subtle differences in the perceived happiness according to the gender social and cultural conditions, the country of origin, religion, and place of residence (rural or urban). Although subtle, it is interesting for tourism operators to pay attention to these differences in order to provide a better service to travelers (Meisenberg & Woodley, 2015).

However, the travelers' change of mood and happiness indexes are temporary aspects that must be always emphasized, but this change occurs to a greater extent in people that travel than in those who do not travel, which can be explained by the fact that the positive memories positively affect the lives of people (Nawijn, 2011).

2.1.2 Hospitality

The term hospitality is reported in the literature in different ways and covers a variety of situations, for example, in the provision of food and drink to the guest, the maintenance of status in social relations and the satisfaction of psychological needs (King, 1995; Lynch et al., 2011). The term hospitality can also be found within the management field, whose studies refer, for example, to the hospitality and meeting the customers' needs and the factors in purchasing behav-

ior (Bareham, 2004), hospitality, behavior and buying experience (Hemmington, 2007) and in other management dimensions (Nailon, 1982). From this perspective, the common point between these studies is the importance given to hosting people to meet their physiological, psychological, and social needs (Bareham, 2004; Hemmington, 2007; Nailon, 1982), i.e. making the consumers feel good emotionally about the buying experiences.

To meet these requirements, tourism companies are facing a real challenge. During the last decades, there have been profound changes as well as the development of countries, due mainly to economic and technological advances (Chand, 2016).

These changes have posed a series of challenges to the educational system, including the curriculum of educational institutions, learning materials, etc. The tourism and hospitality industry plays a central role in this scenario, because people travel more and more, which leads to new perceptions of hospitality, in addition to the fact this is a labor-intensive industry, which requires skilled and qualified labor in large numbers, which creates an additional challenge for countries (Chand, 2016).

Hospitality educational institutions are considered a key factor for the supply of skilled labor for the industry, contributing significantly to the growth of the operations in this area (Alhelalat, 2015).

However, Yap et al. (2015) point out that in the hospitality industry, it is important to develop the students' skills via traditional education and contemporary methods, mostly regarding the managerial aspects since this area is mainly based on

Rev. Bras. Pesq. Tur. São Paulo, 11(3), pp. 436-452, set./dez. 2017.

440

Aureliano-Silva, L. ; Oliveira, P. S. G. ; Alves, C. A.
The relationship between happiness and the desire for hospitality mediated by tourist self-image
and destination image

customer contact and the key feature of the service is provided face-to-face, often requiring creativity and managerial skills.

The importance of tourism to some countries is vital, as in the case of Taiwan for example, mainly because it is a source of revenue and creates jobs in hospitality, and leads these countries to develop the transportation and communication systems promoting the increase of visitors, whether for business or leisure (Chen, 2015).

Hospitality is the core of many societies; however, the term has many meanings and is interpreted in different ways in different countries, according to the ideology, and relationship with God or Gods in some cases (Munasinghe, Hemmington, Schänzel, Poulston, & Fernando, 2017).

For this reason, many countries are being affected, including those who were considered closed and so conservative in the past, such as China, which is facing a big challenge currently, due mainly to its rapid modernization. This country is now focusing on diversity management in its school program in terms of hospitality in order to meet the new demand, especially when it comes to understand the perceptions of students (future managers) about the importance of diversity in order to generate a sense of hospitality for the client (Yap, Ineson, Tang, & Fong, 2015).

Focusing on the study of diversity is important because customer satisfaction in the hospitality industry is closely linked to the concepts that involve feelings of well-being and pleasure that are a result of what the customer wants and expects from products and services. Customer satisfaction can also be based on the results and also on

processes, but above all the perception determines the quality which is currently delivered by the establishment and thus it is essential for corporate survival, in general, the aspects perceived by customers: courtesy and efficiency of staff, supplies and amenities to guests, courtesy and friendliness, overall condition of the room, room temperature, restaurants, service quality, quality and variety of the meals (Gupta & Sharma, 2016; Hornsby & Scott-Halsell, 2015).

In this context Sangode (2016) analyzes the parameters of satisfaction, which are formed primarily by aspects such as: customer service, quality of the food served, the identification of customers' future expectations and the customer self-assessment generate different views in relation to the hotel, causing a positive view of hospitality.

These aspects are a huge challenge for the sector, as Lashley (2015) argues, the concept of Hospitality is something quite ephemeral, and can be proven by the fact that until the end of the 20th century, restaurants used to be synonymous with accommodation, which also led to point out cafes, cafeterias, canteens, school meals as locations that aimed to provide hospitality, and that only from the 1980s, the word started to be used to describe all these establishments and the services provided by them.

Poulston (2015) offers a definition a little more diffuse about hospitality, arguing that it varies according to the characteristics of the hotel, the way the customer feels during accommodation and also the various aspects relating to catering service, classifying the hospitality as a gift and a moral obli-

Rev. Bras. Pesq. Tur. São Paulo, 11(3), pp. 436-452, set./dez. 2017.

441

Aureliano-Silva, L. ; Oliveira, P. S. G. ; Alves, C. A.
The relationship between happiness and the desire for hospitality mediated by tourist self-image
and destination image

gation for the company willing to offer this type of service.

Due to the reasons presented, Luo et al. (2013) argue that strategies to promote staff commitment and employee/leadership relationship are important to enhance the positive behavior of employees, as well as the clear objective to improve the quality of services provided in the hospitality industry, through mainly the behavior of employees with regards to assistance and support to customers, thereby increasing the possibility of improving the customer perception in relation to hospitality and happiness of consumers during the consumption of products and services such as: accommodation, catering, travel etc.

Regarding the commitment of the staff, hospitality employment is not always considered as a valid career option, even if it is a developing industry. Thus, it is important to convince young people otherwise, so that industry can develop and attract more professionals (Williamson, 2017).

According to Mooney (2016), most people do not consider hospitality as a valid career because a large proportion of young people perceive that industry as something ephemeral due to temporary employment and the high levels of turnover, thus young people do not feel attracted. Another aspect is the fact that they feel that their work is not appreciated.

A possible solution might be strengthening the connection between universities and hospitality companies; these can offer a view of the market and the existing possibilities, and in turn schools provide the state of the art and academic capacity that companies lack (Albano, 2013)

The importance of making people see hospitality as a career is to form a better-quality workforce and therefore invest in the improvement of the quality indicators of accommodation through the provision of services that delight the customer and make them feel welcomed (Gupta & Sharma, 2016).

For achieving this goal, Awadzi-Calloway, Awadzi and Awadizi (2016) claim that the collective knowledge and the contributions of the organization members serve as a driving factor for the success of the tourism industry and that companies must be able to polish rough diamonds, i.e. training and selecting employees, aiming to enhance their skills so that they become vital resources for the organization and contribute to change the tourism industry itself.

The transformation of the tourism industry and the organization, aiming at the satisfaction of the employees, affects their ability to be good hosts and thus create moments of hospitality in their daily interaction with tourists (Bethmann, 2017).

For this reason, the aspects related to employees' and travelers' welfare characterize the process of emotional contagion, theorized by Hatfield et al. (1994).

The investment in the development of a managerial vision on the part of employees is important for going beyond serving, being able to anticipate the situations and thus meeting the needs of the guests. Thus, it is necessary that universities promote management-based curricula and companies develop training courses to address the gap (Nunkoo, Gursoy, & Ramkissoon, 2013; Samkange & Dingani, 2013; Sisson & Adams, 2013).

Rev. Bras. Pesq. Tur. São Paulo, 11(3), pp. 436-452, set./dez. 2017.

442

Aureliano-Silva, L. ; Oliveira, P. S. G. ; Alves, C. A.
The relationship between happiness and the desire for hospitality mediated by tourist self-image
and destination image

According to Hemmington and Gibbons (2017), the importance of the deconstruction of the hospitality and employee training investment lies in the fact that the perception of the tourist about welfare is very related to reciprocity, generosity, and ability of interaction between the organization members and visitors and for this reason it has managerial implications, becoming an emotional contagion process.

Based on the emotional contagion process theorized in *Emotional Contagion*

(Hatfield et al., 1994) and in the study on hospitality (King, 1995), we present the first study hypothesis: **H[1]** - there will be a positive and significant relationship between the pursuit of happiness in the tourist experience (set of positive emotions) and the desire for local hospitality (projection of positive emotions about the place). Table 1 below shows the studies used for the creation of hypothesis **H[1]**.

Table 1 –Theoretical framework for hypothesis **H[1]**

Authors	What they analyzed
Hemmington & Gibbons (2017)	Wellness and reciprocity
Bojanowska & Zalewska (2016)	Tourism and happiness
Coffey, Warren, & Gottfried (2015)	Happiness and local satisfaction
Kaliterna-Lipovčan, Brasjša-Žganec and Poljanec-Borić (2014)	Tourist destination and subjective well-being
Gouveia (2013)	Tourist destination and psychological demands
Hatfield et al., (1994)	Wellness and emotional contagion

Source: The authors (2017)

2.1.3 Congruence between the self-image of the tourist and the image of the tourist destination

When choosing a tourist destination, one considers not only the costs of acquisition of the service, such as transportation, food, and other activities that may be involved, but also the consumer judgment about the ability of the tourist destination to meet psychological demands (Carvalho, Salazar, & Neves, 2011; Gouveia, 2013). The psychological demands, refers to the perception of how consumers see themselves, their self-image, and as they see the tourist destination, in which they project their self-image in the moment of choice (García, Mo-

rales, & Gonzalez, 2007). For example, introspective individuals tend to choose tourist destinations that are quieter, including also other activities that at the location.

Nawijn (2010) observes that these aspects are relevant because the tourism industry pays little attention to the mood of tourists when they are traveling and how it affects their life satisfaction and how that aspect relates to the increase in revenues of companies.

However, this change of mood and the happiness indexes of travelers are temporary aspects that must be always emphasized, but this change occurs to a greater degree in people that travel, than those who do not travel, which can be explained by the

Rev. Bras. Pesq. Tur. São Paulo, 11(3), pp. 436-452, set./dez. 2017.

443

Aureliano-Silva, L. ; Oliveira, P. S. G. ; Alves, C. A.
The relationship between happiness and the desire for hospitality mediated by tourist self-image
and destination image

fact that the positive remaining memories positively affect the lives of people (Nawijn, 2011).

This phenomenon is called congruence (Hosany & Martin, 2012), i.e. consistency between consumers' self-image (as they see themselves), and the image of the tourist destination of their choice (Ahn, Ekinci, & Li, 1994), that can positively influence the evaluation (Kamins & Gupta, 1994). The second hypothesis of this study is the following: **H²** - there will be a positive and significant relationship between the pursuit of happiness in the tourist experience (positive emotion) and the congruence between the self-image of tourists (as they see themselves) and the image of the tourist destination.

Considering that consumers can assess more positively tourist destinations that fit their self-image (García et al., 2007) and that the perception of congruence between self-image and tourist destination generates positive emotions (Choi & Rifon, 2012), it is stated that the phenomenon of congruence will mediate the relationship between the pursuit of happiness on tourist experience and the perception of local hospitality. Thus, we present the third hypothesis of this study: **H³** - the congruence of the consumers' self-image and the image of the destination will be a mediator of the relationship between the pursuit of happiness on tourist experience and the perception of hospitality of the tourist destination. Table 2 below shows the studies used for the creation of the hypotheses **H²** e **H³**.

Table 2 – Theoretical framework for hypothesis **H²** and **H³**

Authors	What they analyzed
Gouveia (2013)	Tourist destination and psychological demands
Ahn et al., (2013)	Image of tourist destination
Hosany & Martin (2012)	Congruence
Nawijn (2011)	Positive memories
Carvalho, Salazar, & Neves (2011)	Tourist destination and psychological demands
Zhang & Bloemer (2008)	Congruence in the choice of brands
García, Morales, & Gonzalez (2007)	Psychological demands, self-image, and tourist destination
Kamins & Gupta (1994)	Tourist destination image and consumer review

Source: The authors (2017)

3 METHOD

Data were collected by a survey with the use of an online research instrument available on the social network *Facebook*. The instrument was composed of 12 statements, 4 of which measured the pursuit of happiness in the tourist destination: <When

I choose a tourist destination, I think of happiness; When I think of a tourist destination, I feel happy; I seek happiness when I choose a tourist destination; For me, choosing a tourist destination is to seek happiness> (Cronbach's alpha = 0.754). Four statements assessed self-image congruence and the image of the destination <I prefer tourist

Rev. Bras. Pesq. Tur. São Paulo, 11(3), pp. 436-452, set./dez. 2017.

444

Aureliano-Silva, L. ; Oliveira, P. S. G. ; Alves, C. A.
The relationship between happiness and the desire for hospitality mediated by tourist self-image
and destination image

destinations that have everything to do with me; I choose tourist destinations that reflect my image; I choose tourist destinations that speak about me; I choose tourist destinations that reflect my lifestyle> (Cronbach's alpha = 0.895); and 4 statements that measured desire for local hospitality <When I choose a tourist destination, I prefer those with friendly people; When I choose a tourist destination, I prefer those where local residents enjoy exchanging experiences with tourists; When I choose a tourist destination, I prefer those in which locals like to interact with tourists; When I choose a tourist destination, I prefer those where local residents are welcoming> (Cronbach's alpha=0.823).
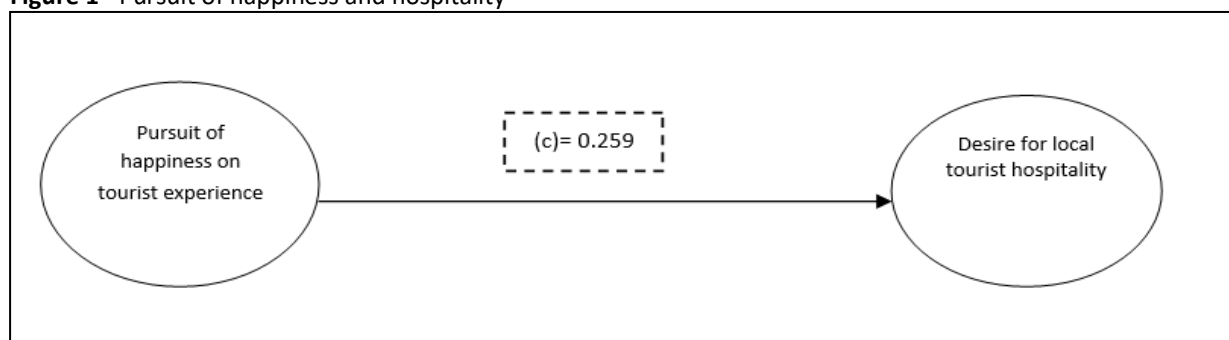
4 RESULTS

The sample of the study consisted of 221 respondents being 166 women and 55 men. The average age of respondents was 33 years old, and they have traveled, on average, 3 times during 2016. After checking the conditions for the use of the regression technique (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2010), the analysis of the data was carried out.

The pursuit of happiness in the tourist experience presented positive relationship and significant desire for local hospitality R^2= 0.067; F(1.219)=p<0.001. Similarly, a positive and meaningful relationship was identified between the pursuit of happiness in the tourist experience and congruence of the tourist's self-image and tourist destination R^2= 0.240; F(1.219)=p<0.001, and also, mediation effect of the tourist's self-image and tourist destination in the relationship between pursuit of happiness and desire for local hospitality R^2= 0.115; F(2.218)= p<0.001. It was observed that the relationship between the pursuit of happiness in tourist experience and hospitality presented p=>0.05, therefore, not significant, when the variable of the congruence of the tourist's self-image and the local hospitality desire is added. Figures 1 and 2 present the respective betas of each relationship.

Figure 1 - Pursuit of happiness and hospitality

Source: The Authors

Rev. Bras. Pesq. Tur. São Paulo, 11(3), pp. 436-452, set./dez. 2017.

445

Aureliano-Silva, L. ; Oliveira, P. S. G. ; Alves, C. A.
The relationship between happiness and the desire for hospitality mediated by tourist self-image
and destination image

Figure 2 - Mediation of the congruence of the self-image of the tourist and tourist destination
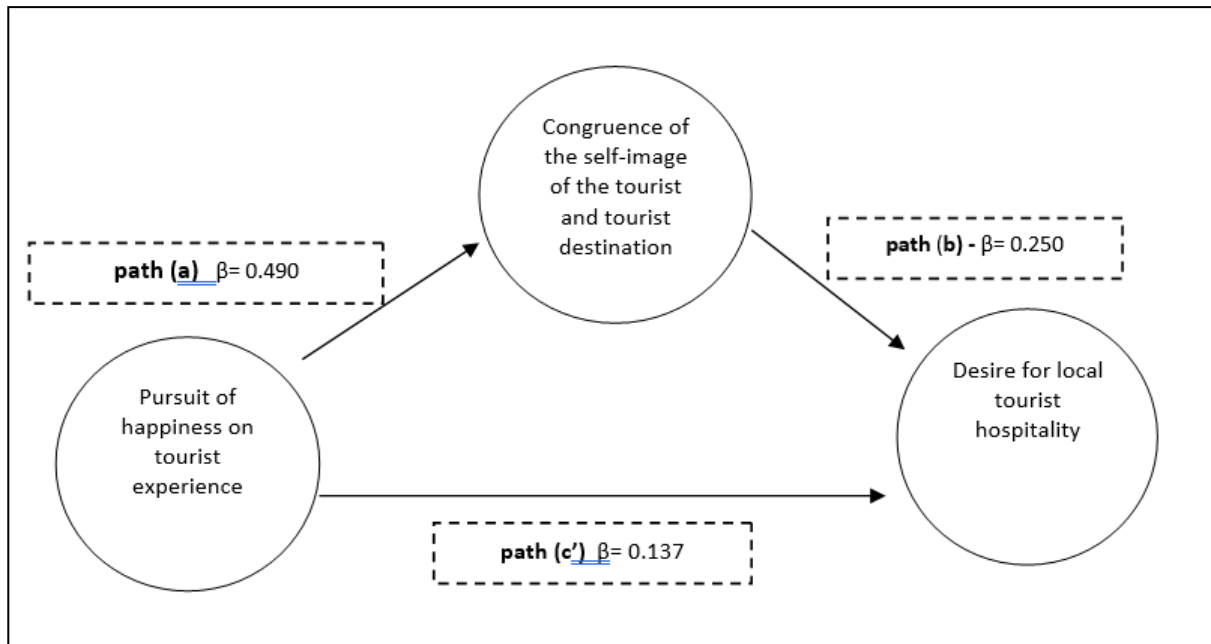
Source: The Authors

As we can see, the values of the betas indicate the nature and strength of the relationship between each item in the model. All betas presented positive values, which indicate positive correlations between the items measured and the strength of their influence on the other items in the model, according to the direction of the relationship.

5 GENERAL DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

The concept of happiness is subjective in nature and we will hardly reach a single definition for that feeling. Given its importance it became an object of study in this article. Thus, we sought to present the relationship between the pursuit of happiness in the tourist experience and the choice of a tourist destination, whose main characteristic was the hospitality of the place visited. It is worth mentioning that the term

hospitality, in this study, is used in the sense of accepting the possibility of social interaction and exchange of experiences between tourists and residents in the destination.

The analyses show that the pursuit of happiness through tourism has a positive relationship with the desire of hospitality in the tourist destination, in other words, this relationship indicates there is an emotional projection of tourists into the place and on those who receive them. The analysis of the beta of this relationship strengthens this argument (β= 0.259), Figure 1. This finding is consistent with the theoretical explanation already consolidated in *Emotional Contagion* (Hatfield et al., 1994), in which the individuals when in a state of positive emotion tend to project themselves into other situations and different contexts.

The importance of this result lies in the fact that tourism is very important for the economic growth of many countries.

Rev. Bras. Pesq. Tur. São Paulo, 11(3), pp. 436-452, set./dez. 2017.

446

Also, it can contribute to the improvement of general health of the people. This aspect has been little studied as evidenced by Filep and Bereed-Samuel's (2012a) work on a community of Ethiopian immigrants in Australia, that shows the relief of depression levels and the improvement of mental health of these participants.

This finding corroborates the policy adopted by Bhutan, which base its tourism policy on a strategy fully guided by the doctrine of the Gross National Happiness, because they believe that the increase of this index contributes to the increase of the tourist flow, promotes good governance and culture, and the happiness of both visitors and visited (Gupta & Sharma, 2016; Khamrang, 2013; Yang & Srinivasan, 2016).

These ideas are corroborated by the studies of Lipovčan, Brasjša-Žganec and Poljanec-Borić (2014), Gomes, Pinto and Almeida (2017) and Zucco et al. (2017) which show that the quality of destinations are very much related to the perception of happiness of the residents of the locations that are being visited, demonstrating that the higher the perceived happiness, the greater the quality of the tourist destination.

It stands out as the main contribution of this study the identification of the self-image of tourists (as they see themselves) and the image of tourist destination (local characteristics and activities), influencing the perception of hospitality. Some evidence of these phenomena has already been reported (Femenía Millet, 2011; Menezes, 2010).

This psychological phenomenon shows that one of the most important factors in the choice of tourist destination is the relationship between the pursuit of happiness and the self-image of the tourist and destination (path (a) **β**= 0.490), Figure 2. It can be said that the pursuit of happiness is linked to the way the tourists see themselves (self-image) and it is enhanced by the image of the tourist destination. This consistency between both can be explained by studies that have addressed the phenomenon of congruence (Meyers-Levy & Tybout, 1989; Witt & Bruce, 1972).

The congruence of the self-image of the tourist and the tourist destination in relation to the perception of hospitality in the destination presented path (b) **β**= 0.250. It is the second strongest relationship, indicating that the congruence of self-image and destination are important antecedents of the perception of local hospitality.

Finally, it is observed that the pursuit of happiness and hospitality of tourist destination has the smallest beta (path (c') **β**= 0.137), when the mediator congruence of self-image and tourist destination has been added to the model 2, indicating to be a mediator of the relationship, i.e., if tourists perceive the destination consistent with how they see themselves, they will feel that local residents are more hospitable. The overall effect of (**a**) * (**b**) = **0.12**, show that the model explains 12% of the perception of hospitality of the tourist destination.

5.1 Theoretical and practical implications and limitations

Theoretically, this study contributes to the understanding of the role of the congruence between the tourist's image and the tourist destination image on the percep-

Rev. Bras. Pesq. Tur. São Paulo, 11(3), pp. 436-452, set./dez. 2017.

447

Aureliano-Silva, L. ; Oliveira, P. S. G. ; Alves, C. A.
The relationship between happiness and the desire for hospitality mediated by tourist self-image
and destination image

tion of hospitality. Therefore, this study advances the understanding of the cognitive process of consumers in the choice of tourist destination on the influence of positive feelings, and the behavior of the consumer of this type of service.

Regarding the practical implications, tourism managers must identify the motivation for the trip, and the emotional state of the consumer when the tourist destinations and costs are presented. Managers should be able to present alternative tourist destinations aligned to the way tourists see themselves (self-image).

We acknowledge the limitations of this study, for example, the use of the term happiness, because it is subjective, it can lead to different interpretations on the part of the respondents of the survey. Another limitation is the use of only two explanatory factors in the model, therefore, future research may add other factors to improve the explanatory power of the theoretical model tested in this study.

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448

Aureliano-Silva, L. ; Oliveira, P. S. G. ; Alves, C. A.
The relationship between happiness and the desire for hospitality mediated by tourist self-image
and destination image

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449

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The relationship between happiness and the desire for hospitality mediated by tourist self-image
and destination image

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451

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The relationship between happiness and the desire for hospitality mediated by tourist self-image
and destination image

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Rev. Bras. Pesq. Tur. São Paulo, 11(3), pp. 436-452, set./dez. 2017.

452