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Editorial

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Buying and behaving: essays on the consumer psychology of tourism

Introduction

Consumer behaviour nowadays represents the major research stream in marketing, as product choice and consumption are keys to business success and to a better comprehension of human beings. In the past decades, the study of consumer behaviour has been widely integrated into the body of tourism and leisure research. A large number of researchers have been involved in an attempt to assess the relevance and to test the validity of consumer theories/models in this context. The Consumer Psychology of Tourism, Hospitality and Leisure (CPTHL) Symposium, launched 17 years ago, has been the first conference to develop a strong focus on consumer behaviour in the field of tourism and leisure from both theoretical and practical perspectives. After a series of eight symposia held throughout the World (from Hawaii to Vienna, from Montreal to Istanbul), the Center for Research on Consumption and Leisure (CeRCLe) within the University of Namur has hosted the event in July 2015. This special issue features a selection of the best papers that have been presented during the symposium. Of course, each paper has undergone the same double-blind review process as any other paper appearing in *IJCTHR*.

The seven papers that are included in this issue refer to the symposium's theme "buying, behaving, and being". For a long time, consumer behaviour has been concerned with the activities and processes underlying the decision-making process for buying products or services. In the 1980s, the experiential aspects of consumption have been investigated as well. The issue of concern is no longer only on why and how a product is purchased but also on how it is consumed and what does this mean to consumers. This special issue covers a series of papers around those issues of buying and behaving. The first four papers deal with buying and particular aspects of tourists' decision-making process, such as the formation of destination image, the drivers that influence purchase intention or the growing problem of choice overload in vacationers' choices. The next three papers of the issue focus on behaving, considering the actual choices made by tourists as to transport mode, the emergence of flow and immersion in the tourism experience and the way travellers are expected to behave to respect others and the visited places. Most interestingly, the thrust of the selected papers refer to major environmental and societal issues, such as environmentally friendly behaviour, ecotourism choices, life stress and health involvement and codes of ethics for travellers.

Buying and tourists' decision-making

This first paper by Ana Rodrigues, Antonia Correia, and Metin Kozak aims at bringing insight from the industry side to better assess lake-destination image. Regretting the lack of research about the attributes and dimensions involved in the formation of lake-destination image, the authors explore the image attributes of Alqueva Lake in the south of Portugal. What makes their empirical study original is that they focus on the perceptions of a series of professional stakeholders (and not just tourists as is usually the case) involved with a lake tourism destination through semi-structured interviews.

Moreover, the authors combine both textual and visual data to generate relevant image attributes of the Alqueva Lake, which appears to be a promising approach as the first step in analyzing images, particularly in the case of unexplored destinations. Their findings help to strengthen the concept and dimensions of lake tourism image; they also suggest that, although image attributes are universally important, other attributes are only important for specific types of tourism.

In the second paper, Ute Jamrozy and Kesinee Lawonk explore the multiple dimensions of consumption values (i.e. functional, financial, emotional, social, epistemic and conditional) that may trigger purchase intention in ecotourism. The authors also investigate the influence of trust and perceived risk as mediators in the relationship between perceived value and purchase intention. Based on the analysis of online survey data, Jamrozy and Lawonk find that four significant predictors influence ecotourism purchase intention: emotional value, functional value, boredom alleviation value and epistemic value. Emotional value appears to have the strongest impact. In addition, trust partially affects the relationship between perceived values and purchase intention, which is not the case of perceived risk. Although multidimensional typologies of values have already been proposed in tourism studies, few papers have provided empirical support for them in ecotourism.

Simon Hudson, Karen Thal, David Cárdenas and Fang Meng contribute to this special issue by investigating wellness tourism, which is one of the fastest growing segments of the industry nowadays. Their empirical study examines the relationships between behavioural intention and factors driving the growth of the wellness tourism industry in the USA. The authors estimate and test two models using the classical theory of planned behaviour, each incorporating two constructs – life stress and involvement in health – in addition to theoretically stipulated antecedents of behavioural intention. Simon *et al.* find that both constructs are significant predictors of behavioural intention. However, involvement in health proves a much stronger predictor than life stress. Their study is unique in that it compares general travellers with current/potential wellness travellers (excluding those whose sole purpose was wellness) and investigates the factors that influence their travel behaviour.

The paper by Nguyen Thai and Ulku Yuksel explores the major current issue of overload in vacation destination choices. Indeed, in our Western economies, people are often overwhelmed by information and choice options. More specifically, the authors investigate the conditions in which choice overload occurs when people select a destination. Using an experimental approach, they measure how the size of a destination set (i.e. large vs small choice-set) influences post-choice satisfaction and regret, with choice confusion and uncertainty as mediators. They find that people choosing from a large (small) portfolio are less (more) satisfied and more (less) regretful about their choice. Choosing from a large choice-set makes people confused, which then makes them less certain about their choice, and subsequently, generates less satisfaction and more regret about their decision. Thai and Yuksel's findings suggest that tour operators should be careful when providing a number of destination options to tourists. A limited number of destinations or tailored clusters of options should be offered in a travel portfolio to ease the decision-making process for travellers.

Behaving and the tourism experience

In "Environmental Commitment in Holiday Transport Mode Choice", Anja Hergesell contributes to a better understanding of environmentally friendly tourists. Her study explores transport mode perceptions and the underlying product attribute preferences that may shape holiday transport mode choices. More specifically, adopting Kaiser's General Ecological Behaviour scale, she examines how an individual's level of environmental commitment influences his/her holiday transport mode choices across lifestyle domains.

Hergesell's findings show that train users tend to be more environmentally committed and car users less so. Environmentally friendly consumers also hold more favourable views of the train. More broadly, consumers who are more environmentally committed place greater importance on environmental impact and less importance on comfort and time in their choice of a transport mode. Her study is one of the first to use an environmental scale in tourism research. It also gives a series of marketing suggestions to support the development of strategies to encourage environmentally friendly holiday choices as to transport mode.

The next paper, entitled "Digging deep into the experience: Flow and immersion patterns in a mountain holiday" by Isabelle Frochot, Statia Elliot and Dominique Kreziak, is more about the consumption experience itself. The paper provides a unique longitudinal study of a five-day tourist stay in a mountain resort to investigate what actually happens during the tourism experience in itself. Understanding how consumers evolve across a holiday stay and construct their experience dynamically is particularly worthwhile. The authors focus on the concepts of flow and immersion that lie at the heart of the experience. More specifically, their study aims at identifying how both the concepts develop within a holiday context and what strategic knowledge might be gained from their analysis. Based on a qualitative study conducted on a sample of ten individuals interviewed every day during their stay, Frochot *et al.* provide curves showing the occurrence of flow episodes. More specifically, they identify the conditions wherein flow and immersion emerge, how they evolve and how they influence one another across each day of a holiday stay. The paper brings a really innovative insight into the tourist experience progression and questions the potential linkages between flow and immersion.

A more philosophical conceptual paper closes this special issue. In his discussion about the (in)adequacy of codes of ethics in tourism, Stephen Haller contends that "Codes of ethics for travellers are not motivating". Codes of ethics indeed suffer from several problems, including inconsistency, unenforceability and the reliance on the host/ guest distinction, which is not always relevant. He advocates for the use of virtue ethics, rather than rights-based codes of ethics for directing the ethical behaviour of individual travellers. Where the latter use the language of rules and regulation, the former rely on the moral autonomy of individuals. According to Haller, the language of virtue ethics is thus more likely to inspire ethical behaviour in tourism, as travellers will identify with internal goals connected to their own goals and purposes, rather than with external rules. The author strongly advises operators and policy makers to support the development and to use the language of virtue ethics, as they show more relevance and more motivating force.