

[Working] Title of Paper: Domsday Tourism – is it all doom and gloom?

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Abstract:

The aim of this research is to investigate the reasons behind tourists visiting destinations which are disappearing due to climate change. The study will address the research gaps in tourist perceptions (of climate change and of the impacts of tourism related travel) within the context of values, knowledge, beliefs and motivations and the relationship that these have with ethics. The qualitative methodology will predominantly employ projective techniques to obtain underlying, hidden or unspoken meanings. The sample will be split so as to determine any differences in responses between Svalbard or Venice (selected due to the distinct contrasts as destinations).

Introduction

Based on the aims and objectives, this paper will provide a brief overview of the literature in this area before reviewing the gaps and those to be addressed. This will be followed by consideration of the gaps and findings in previous data collected. The data collection for this research is then justified in two sections (approach and method; sample and location) before consideration of analysis and interpretation of the research.

Research Aims & objectives

The aim of this research is to investigate the reasons behind tourists visiting disappearing destinations.

The objectives are:

- To determine the values and motivations that underpin tourists decisions to visit disappearing destinations
- To examine tourists beliefs and knowledge of climate change and the associated impacts on destinations

Literature Review

Climate Change is an emerging area of research, although there is clear evidence to indicate that climate change will affect destination environments (Scott et al., 2008). Tourism is widely discussed as being part of the problem that causes climate change (Becken, 2002; Dubois & Ceron, 2006). The paradox of travelling to see destinations before they disappear is that travel creates carbon emissions that cause climate change and destinations disappear ever more rapidly. To mitigate the problems caused by tourism, policies and legislation are likely to be introduced, impacting on the number of tourists visiting these destinations (Amelung et al., 2007; Gössling & Hall, 2006; Peeters, 2008). Ethical purchasing behaviour and environmental awareness have been considered by research, but individual concern for the environment tends to be unrelated to holiday behaviour. Deontological and teleological theories help explain individual ethical decision-making and how individual interests can be at odds with collective interest. These can account for the free-riders of co-operative systems (often explored through metaphors such as the Tragedy of the Commons) and the failure to engage in ethical and responsible behaviour because of ignorance, confusion or lack of motivation (Fennell, 2006; Hardin, 1968). Asking individuals directly about an ethical dilemma is a poor predictor of behaviour (attitude-behaviour gap, words-deeds inconsistency) (Devinney et al., 2010). Consumer behaviour approaches include psychodynamics, behaviourism, cognitive and humanistic. The consumer decision process 'grand models' and the internal variables of tourism models have four common fields: values, beliefs, knowledge and motivation.

Gaps in the Literature Review and Gaps to be Addressed

Gaps in climate change literature include tourist perceptions of the environmental impacts of tourism related travel and of the perceptions of tourists on climate change impacts at destinations (such as lost or diminished glaciers and coral bleaching). Ethical research has failed to focus on the range of all consumers and there has been a general failure to understand motivations, constraints, values and beliefs in the purchasing context. Further research is needed in the area of ethical decision-making and Vitell et al. (2001) particularly highlights the need for scenarios involving higher social costs (such as recycling and excess energy consumption) to be used with the Hunt-Vitell model. In consumer behaviour research few studies appear to have examined the ethical beliefs of consumers, whilst there appears to have been limited values research conducted in tourism. There is a need for further research into conflicting and competing ethical messages which cause consumer confusion. This study will seek to address the research gaps in tourist perceptions (of climate change and of the impacts of tourism related travel) within the context of values, knowledge, beliefs and motivations and the relationship that these have with ethics.

Gaps and Findings in Data Collected

Positivism is the dominant research paradigm in marketing research and academia. Therefore there is a tendency for many studies to use quantitative, rather than qualitative methods which provide rich data and answer the question 'why?'. Direct questions in ethics research tend to result in respondents 'saying one thing and doing another', or answering more sensitive questions as they believe they 'ought to' (social desirability). Meanwhile, in motivation research respondents may not know, or be able to verbalise why they do something. Therefore to obtain underlying, hidden or unspoken meanings, it is necessary to avoid direct questions and to use other techniques (such as projective techniques) to elicit information. The projective technique types are association, construction, completion, expressive and choice ordering, which have been used variously to test learning, beliefs and influences. Although criticised for a lack of reliability and validity, qualitative market researchers continued to use projective techniques despite widespread disuse in many social science disciplines during the 1960's and 1970's (Soley & Smith, 2008). Projective techniques are also found in values and ethics models. The List of Values uses a choice ordering projective technique which requires only the two most important values to be identified. Nonetheless, it is criticised by Thompson (2009) as individuals may lack complete awareness of their values and therefore, without descriptors this may result in it being an invalid measure of values. The Hunt-Vitell model uses an expressive projective technique (third person projection) to measure ethical or unethical behaviour and the resulting positive or negative consequences. Limitations to be addressed include the need to randomise scenarios within the model because of order bias and to measure consumers experience with similar situations to their real-world.

Data Collection Justification – Approach and Method

The research paradigm selected is a phenomenological approach which studies experience from the individual perspective. A descriptive approach will assess the current status of the given phenomenon. A deductive-inductive approach will move from the testing of general theory (through the use of a theoretical framework that will help to organise and direct the data analysis) to a reanalysis of the data inductively and construction of theory after the research has been completed. The data collection approach will be a qualitative method which is interpretive and naturalistic. Projective techniques are useful for studying learning, meaning, motivation and attitudes. They have been specifically selected as questions of an ethical (or highly personal) nature often elicit exaggerated or socially desirable answers, whilst for motivations respondents may not know the answers. The projective techniques planned include; collage technique (to determine which external influencers influence respondent perceptions of climate change); choice ordering (as part of the List of Values this is to determine the most important values of the respondent which influence decisions); word association (to determine learning and knowledge on climate change), photo-interviewing (to determine beliefs on climate change and impacts on destinations); photo-expression (to determine the motivations of visiting disappearing destinations) and third person technique (as part of the Hunt-Vitell model this will determine the ethical decision-making of the respondent). Computer-assisted technology in the form of a tablet is selected because of its interactive ability, portability and relative novelty. The built in microphone will allow the recording of responses to the photo-elicitation questions using the SHOWED technique. The touchscreen will accommodate the collage technique using drag and drop, whilst the choice ordering, word association and third-person techniques can be completed using either an on-screen keyboard, a stylus (for hand-writing) or a mini manual keyboard attached through a USB port. The operating system (Windows 7 Professional) is compatible with other computers and the Digivey software program (intuitive questionnaire design for interactive survey creation, which respondents can touch their way through).

Data Collection Justification – Sample and Location

Research using projective techniques tends to use small to moderate sample sizes. Limited recent examples found in tourism and marketing include; 85 for destination specific personality traits; 61 for consumer brand associations research (using free associations, storytelling and collages); and 50 for volunteer-employed photography in exploring place perception. For this research a non-probabilistic sampling technique will use purposive sampling and a sample size of 30, which previous research shows leads to data saturation (Mason, 2010). The sample will be selected with the assistance from tour operators (co-operating with the study) who have programmes operating to disappearing destinations (such as Venice and Svalbard).

Given the social nature of tourism, the sample takes account of the likelihood that a named respondent may be joined by a partner in the interview process and joint interviews are conducted they will be classified as a sample of one. To determine if responses differ depending on when the interviews are completed in the customer journey : (a) a sample of ten will be interviewed pre-visit and post-visit to Venice or Svalbard, (b) a sample of ten will be interviewed mid-visit in Venice, (c) a sample of ten will be interviewed mid-visit in Svalbard. Svalbard and Venice have been selected due to their contrasts as destinations; Svalbard is natural, whilst Venice is a built environment; the ice is melting in Svalbard, whilst the waters are rising in Venice; Svalbard has a small population, whilst Venice has a high population; Svalbard has a growing tourism market, whilst the Venice market is mature.

Analysis and Interpretation

Theme development is central to the qualitative analysis of the projective techniques in this research and each projective technique will be analysed in its own right, before a holistic analysis is taken. As the phenomenological approach focuses on the subjective meaning of phenomena, the emphasis is on the understanding of words, narrative, images and concepts, rather than measurement. Following completion of the analysis of each technique (for each respondent) and then across the sample, summary reports will be produced to show key insights and verbatim quotes. These summary reports will then be analysed against each other, with emerging patterns and themes (or synergies) across all the projective techniques again being summarised and then interpreted to provide a holistic overview. To provide context to the overview (and to the respondents), limited demographic data (including age, gender, education level, occupation and culture) will play a supporting role.

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