

CONSUMER BEHAVIOR IN
TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY
RESEARCH

ADVANCES IN CULTURE, TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY RESEARCH

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RESEARCH VOLUME 13

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PREFACE

BUYING, BEHAVING, AND BEING: A PORTRAIT OF CONTEMPORARY TOURISTS

Alain Decrop and Arch G. Woodside

ABSTRACT

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 behavior in the field of tourism and leisure from both theoretical and practical perspectives. After a series of eight successful 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 book features a selection of the best papers that have been presented during the symposium plus two additional papers that complement and extend the theme of this volume. The core focus of this volume is on describing and interpreting contemporary tourists and their behaviors: buying behaving, and being tourists.

Keywords: Consumer; psychology; symposium; tourism

INTRODUCTION

Consumer behavior 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 behavior 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 eight chapters that are included below refer to the symposium's theme "buying, behaving, and being." For a long time, consumer behavior has been concerned with the activities and processes underlying the decision-making process for buying products or services. In the nineteen-eighties, 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. More recently, in the wake of the "Consumption Culture Theory" (Arnould & Thompson, 2005), scholars are investigating the extent to which buying and consuming a series of products and brands may also support identity construction and maintenance: consumer research should not only focus on buying and behaving but should consider being as well.

CHOICE OVERLOAD

Chapter 1, written by Nguyen T. Thai and Ulku Yuksel, deals with choice overload, which is a major current concern for both consumers and companies. In their conceptual chapter, Thai and Yuksel investigate what tourists and travel advisors may learn from choice overload research. The literature in psychology and marketing has well documented that having too many options leads to negative consequences, such as choice regret or deferral. In contrast, empirical evidence of choice overload in the tourism context is limited, even though tourists are often faced with huge choice sets when planning their holidays (e.g., destinations, airfares, hotels, tours). This chapter reviews and applies insights from the choice overload literature to tourism research. In addition, Thai and Yuksel propose a series of solutions to overcome the negative effects of choice overload.

MUNDANE PLACE CONSUMPTION

In Chapter 2, entitled "From Tourism Destination to Mundane Consumption of Place: An Asian Introspection of France," Wided Batat and Sakal Phou investigate how the image of a destination is formed through interactions between visitors and the visited places. More specifically, the authors seek to understand the processes that lead visitors to make sense of their destination experience for themselves and for others, and to transmit that image through storytelling. Subjective personal introspection and longitudinal observation have been used to collect data and acquire an insider perspective on the image of France as experienced by an Asian researcher living, working, and travelling

in France. By taking such a holistic insider's perspective, Batat and Phou show how the image of a destination may evolve from a tourism destination to a mundane (nontourist) consumption place.

RUSSIAN CULTURAL INFLUENCES ON TRAVEL PRACTICES

In Chapter 3, Ekaterina Miettinen explores the influence of Russian culture and society on travel practices during Soviet times and now, through the lens of Russian women. Based on the life-stories of six informants who lived in the USSR and worked for the government, her study analyses major themes related to traveling, including norms and rules, gender aspects, Russianness, and habitus. Miettinen's study shows how historical and social contexts shaped women's behavior and travel practices in the past and continue to be influential nowadays. The chapter draws on Consumer Culture Theory and more specifically on social reality, gender literature, Bourdieu's concept of habitus, and sociohistoric patterning of consumption to account for these travel practices.

TRAVEL-RELATED BEHAVIOR ON FACEBOOK

In Chapter 4, Sanja Božić and Tamara Jovanović examine how travel-related patterns of behavior on Facebook (FB) differ among users of different gender, age, and educational backgrounds. The authors carried out an online survey, collecting data from 793 Serbian respondents. Their results show that travel-related statuses on FB generally pertain to respondents' visited destinations and that these are more likely to post information when they have positive impressions about the destination. Women, more educated, and older people appear to be the most active in sharing travel-related information and are therefore target groups for promoting travel destinations via electronic word of mouth (eWOM).

VISITOR'S GAZE

Chapter 5 by Taketo Naoi, Akira Soshiroda, and Shoji Iijima elucidates the relationships between the elements that visitors gaze at in a historical district and the achievement of travel objectives. The authors surveyed 1,000 visitors to Takayama, Japan about whether or not they had seen 19 elements relating to the destination, and then asked to rate the impressiveness of those they had seen. Respondents also rated the extent to which seven objectives related to learning and interaction had been achieved during their visits. Noi et al.'s results suggest that visitors who gaze at various elements may strongly perceive

opportunities to achieve their objectives, that is, learning about a destination and interacting with other people. Gazing at the multifaceted aspects of a historical district appears to foster a visitor's understanding of the destination.

EXPERIENCES IN NATURAL PARKS

In Chapter 6, Anne-Marie Lebrun and her colleagues compare two protected natural parks (in France and in Taiwan) as specific contexts likely to generate different experiences for visitors. Drawing on the frameworks of the experiential consumption that *Carù and Cova (2007)* and *Pine and Gilmore (2011)* propose, the authors carried out both a qualitative study to characterize each natural park and a quantitative study to compare actual visitors' experiences on four dimensions (esthetics, escapism, education, and entertainment) in both countries. Findings of the qualitative study suggest that the Taiwanese park provides an experiential context with more extraordinary and memorable experiences while the French park provides an experiential context with more ordinary and mundane experiences. The results of the quantitative study show that visitors' experiences are characterized by more immersion through esthetics and escapism in Taiwan and more absorption through education and entertainment in France.

REDIRECTION THEORY FOR REDUCING ROAD RAGE

Road rage is expression of aggressive or angry behavior by drivers of road vehicles towards other drivers and/or pedestrians that includes rude gestures, verbal insults, physical threats, or dangerous driving methods targeted toward other drivers in an effort to intimidate, hurt, possibly kill, and/or release frustration. Road rage frequently leads to altercations, assaults, and collisions that result in serious physical injuries or even death. In Chapter 7, *Laura Herbst, Dominik Reinartz, and Arch G. Woodside* ponder whether or not the redirection theory may be useful for reducing tendencies toward road rage behavior. These authors apply asymmetric models to create algorithms regarding who engages in road and who does not. These algorithms include configurations of demographic, prosocial, and additional antisocial behaviors.

THEORETICAL ISSUES IN TOURIST BEHAVIOR

Chapter 8 closes the book by taking a broad and deep look into identifying and solving a few core theoretical issues in consumer behavior of tourism. In Chapter 8, *Arch G. Woodside* reviews studies in the literature that attempt to

solve five core theoretical issues in basic and applied fields of study: describe who is doing what, when, where, how, and the consequences of the activities; explain the meanings of activities and motivations of the actors; predict (model) what actions and outcomes will occur and the impacts of influence attempts before, during, and after engaging in tourist actions; control (influence) the beliefs, attitudes, behaviors, and assessments of tourists, local community members, and additional stakeholders; evaluate tourism service/product delivery, tourism management performance, and customer satisfaction.

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