

Understanding tourism behavior



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Introduction

‘ Understanding tourism behavior involves knowledge of factors that are by no means obvious because the influences that shape tourism tastes and activities are often so deeply embedded in the individual’s personal and cultural biography that the subject is unaware of how they were formed’.
(Seaton, 1996)

This statement sets part of scene of this study and it was a starting point for the final topic to be shaped. Tourism behaviour has been studied thoroughly and many conclusions have been reached regarding the main factors that have an impact on tourist’s decision-making. Decision-making about destinations is a quite risk process because of the fact that in this kind of purchase the buyers (potential tourists) cannot see the product before they purchase it. According to most consumer behaviour books, consumer behaviour is a function of two basic factors: a.) Social influences, b.) Personal traits. Social influences include culture and subculture, social class, reference groups and influential’s, role and family influence, while personal traits involve personality, learning, motivation, perception and attitudes.

Since, as mentioned above, the tourism products are intangible and cannot be observed from the potential tourist before they purchase them, prior communication offers them the information that they need and creates images, according to which they take decisions. More specifically, regarding the information in the tourism decision-making, as Seaton (1996) suggests they can be divided into four main categories: a.) Commercially provided information, b.) Non-commercially provided information, c.) Personally provided information, d.) Impersonally provided (media) sources. The last
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category involves travel programmes, newspaper travel pages, guide books e. t. c.

However, thorough personal research and study in all these categories of influences showed that the impact of television on tourism decision-making has actually not been significantly studied before. Given the importance that the media have in our lives, their power and the fact that nowadays all people have access to them, and specially with television, it was quite impressive to observe that the study of this influence is very narrow. Thus the rationale of the narrow focus on the television was that it would be of some value to research the influence of television travel and tourism programmes about destinations on tourists decision-making about destinations. With these in mind, the aim and objectives of the research are:

Aim: To evaluate the influence of television travel programmes on potential tourists on choosing a tourism destination.

Objectives:

- To measure if and how much is the influence of travel programmes about decisions on tourist destinations on consumer
- To check if travel programmes are perceived as an informative tool or just entertainment
- To analyse the way that consumers perceive what they are seeing on these travelling programmes.

According to Malhotra and Birks (2006) the formulation of the marketing objectives can encompass two areas: organizational objectives and personal

objectives of the decision-maker. For a research project to be successful, it must serve the objectives of the organization and of the decision-maker. With these objectives it will be possible to understand if the Television tourism programmes really exert influence on the consumers in this market.

The long-term purpose is to advance knowledge, to expose more questions that could probably be answered in the future and to recognize concerns about certain things which could be further resolved or tested by more work in the future regarding this field.

There are many influences from several different sources in the environment that have an impact on the tourist's decisions about holiday. However, research seems to be inconclusive regarding the medium that is most successful at persuading an audience towards a potential tourism destination. Consumers can be affected through several influences of the environment, such as interpersonal conversations with friends and family, advertisements, television, press, brochures and internet.

On the same topic area a very interesting research has been made that compares the effects of advertising to publicity for marketing a tourism destination. This was a very important research as well because of the inconclusive results reported by previous comparison studies of advertising and publicity in the general marketplace. This research indicated that publicity is an important element in the marketing mix and that publicity messages have greater credibility than advertising and it suggests that publicity could be more effective than advertising for promoting tourism destinations.

Of all information sources mentioned, non-mediated one-on-one personal information sharing is often cited as the most persuasive (Kotler, 1993). This category involves word of mouth conversations among friends and relatives. However it is very hard for marketers to influence this kind of personal information sources as they cannot get involved in this kind of interpersonal relation. Consequently, they have to focus their efforts on other communication tools in order them to persuade potential customers to try a product, in this case a destination.

Thus, tourism organizations often rely on publicity as a communication device in order to approach an audience. However, it is still unclear if this device is effective at persuading potential tourists to visit a specific destination, what their attitude is towards destination travel programmes and what their perception is when it comes to these programmes. Despite the fact that many national tourist boards in their annual reports record the number of media in which they have achieved exposure, the amount of exposure in television is inefficient indicator of success and further research and analysis is necessary to determinate the impact of the television travel programmes on the potential tourists.

But even thus television has a huge audience do viewers really “view” television, or do they use it as background noise or a “babysitter” for their children? Do they scan it occasionally, or instead use it for security when no one is at home? (Kaufman and Lane 1994) There is no concrete proves if even with all the exposition the television, and more specifically the travel programmes, plays an important role on the decision- making on potential tourists when they are deciding a destination. The advertisings and the

television programmes can be perceived as just a merely entertainment and not as a really informative tool.

This research attempts to evaluate the perceptions and attitudes of tourists towards travel programmes about destinations contained in the British television and what the effects of these programmes are when it comes to destination decision-making, message acceptance and message response. The most important variables that are studied in this research are message strength, attitude toward the destination, perception towards destination travelling programmes, credibility and reliability, and purchase intent.