

Chapter 15

Barriers to Responsible Tourist Behaviour: A Cluster Analysis in the Context of Italy

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ABSTRACT

Responsible tourism is an increasingly observed phenomenon. This study offers new insights into the factors that prevent tourists from travelling responsibly. In particular, a sample of 837 Italian travelers was profiled based on the main impediments toward responsible tourism. Findings of the study suggested that impediments toward responsible tourism are related to five main categories: 'lack of accessibility', 'unwillingness', 'lack of trustworthiness', 'stress', and 'price'. Cluster analysis revealed the existence of four tourist segments: the 'existential pessimists', the 'distrustful and accessibility seekers', the 'mindless', and the 'accessibility and time-saving seekers'. Furthermore, a series of distribution tests (χ^2) showed that significant differences exist between the segments only based on the level of education, whereas no differences were found related to gender, age, marital status, employment status, monthly household income, or association membership. Finally, managerial implications of the study are discussed, along with recommendations for future research.

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INTRODUCTION

In the last few decades, tourism has experienced rapid, continuous, and virtually uninterrupted expansion worldwide (WTO, 2015). The total number of international tourist arrivals rose from 25 million globally in 1950 to 1,133 million in 2014, with a revenue surging from US\$ 2 billion in 1950 to US\$ 1,245 billion in 2014 (WTO, 2015). In 2014, 9% of the worldwide GDP was generated by the tourism and travel sector (WTO, 2015). Tourism forecasts reveal that international arrivals are expected to increase by 3.3% a year between 2010 and 2030 and to reach 1.8 billion by 2030.

Based on these figures, it is evident that tourism is playing a relevant role in the economy of many countries around the world. On the other hand, tourism flows are found to further worsen individuals' impacts on the ecosystems (e.g., global warming) with intentional and unintentional travel behaviours that directly or indirectly damage the environment of many tourist destinations (e.g., Lee, Jan, & Yang, 2013). Interestingly, the increasing knowledge on environmental degradation is triggering tourists' awareness of the negative economic, socio-cultural, and environmental impacts that their travelling produces, such as in the hosting tourism destinations (e.g., Weeden, 2002). Currently, the consciousness of the impacts of tourism has generated growing interest and efforts also from a supply-side perspective. Recent international reports reveal that consumers' interest in tourism products and services that protect the environment and respect local cultures is growing constantly (TripAdvisor, 2012). According to Nielsen Wire (2012), two thirds (66%) of consumers around the world prefer to buy products and services from companies that have implemented programmes to give back to society, 46% are willing to pay extra for products and services from socially responsible companies, and a majority (51%) of those under 40 are willing to do so. It is remarkable that consumers have a high level of ethical consciousness and tend to prefer companies that consider environmental and socio-cultural issues in their marketing objectives (e.g., Gázquez-Abad, Mondéjar-Jiménez, & Vargas-Vargas, 2011).

In such a scenario, responsible tourism has been considered as a framework and a set of practices (Husbands & Harrison, 1996) that maximises the benefits to local communities, minimises negative social or environmental impacts, and helps local people to conserve fragile cultures and habitats or species ('Cape Town declaration on responsible tourism in destination,' 2002; CREST, 2013). It has often been considered as linked to, and overlapping with, a wide variety of initiatives, such as alternative tourism, ecotourism, rural tourism, ethical tourism, and pro-poor tourism (Chettiparamb & Kokkranikal, 2012; Del Baldo, 2016). Hence, responsible tourism has become a proper way to conceive holidays (e.g., Stanford, 2008) and an important part of an individual's lifestyle (e.g., Budeanu, 2007). During the last few years, the scientific literature has aimed at analysing consumers' perceptions, attitudes, and behaviours toward responsible tourism. For instance, the theory of reasoned action (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975) postulates that attitudes and subjective norms predict consumers' intention to behave and their final actual behaviour. Despite this, several studies on responsible tourist behaviour, consistently with the broader literature on ethical consumption (e.g., Bray, Johns, & Kilburn, 2011; Carrington, Neville, & Whitwell, 2010), show that several discrepancies between attitudes toward responsible tourism and actual behaviours can often be observed (e.g., Budeanu, 2007; Chafe, 2005; Goodwin & Francis, 2003). For instance, Del Chiappa and Lorenzo-Romero (2014), in their study on a sample of Italian travellers, show that the main inconsistencies in attitude-behaviour (the so-called 'word-deed' gap: e.g., Carrington et al., 2010) occur in the areas of denouncing improper and damaging behaviours to competent authorities, favouring small local businesses and environmentally friendly accommodation, and, finally, asking tour operators for written codes of conduct to guarantee good working conditions, protection of the environment, and support to the local community of the host destination.

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