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Tourists of the Future

Introduction

Today, more and more people are travelling than ever before, with 1.5 billion international tourist arrivals recorded in 2019 and the forecasted 1.8 billion international arrivals set to be reached well before its predicted 2030 (UNWTO, 2019; 2020). Traditionally, the wealthier industrialised world has predominately been responsible for both the supply and demand of tourism. However, in recent years a gradual shift has occurred with new destinations beginning to challenge these traditional destinations. There is the expectation that 57% of all international tourist arrivals will be in emerging destinations by 2030 (UNWTO, 2017). The rise of the middle class has resulted in more of the world's population gaining access to leisure time and the means to increased international travel. Travel experiences in the past have typically consisted of sun, sand and surf type holidays. Tourists are no longer content with these passive activities, rather seeking more experiential and engaging travel experiences instead. This suggests a change in demand from the mass tourism holidays of the 1970s and 1980s to more individualised tourist experiences (Sharpley, 2005). Drivers of change contributing to these changes in travel demand include increased globalisation along with a variety of economic, social, political, technological and environmental trends (Dwyer *et al.*, 2008). Chapter 2 discusses the key drivers of change, along with several trends considered to have an impact on the future development of the international tourism industry. This chapter explores some of these trends further in the context of future tourist behaviour, namely smart tourism, virtual tourism, smart boredom, super sabbaticals and solo travellers.

Smart tourism

Gretzel *et al.* define tourism as a 'social, cultural and economic phenomenon involving the movement of people to countries or places outside their usual environment for personal or business/professional purposes' (2015: 180). This comes as no surprise to Gretzel *et al.* who see the concept of 'smart' being suitably applied to the tourism phenomena, 'given its information-intensity and the resulting high dependency on information and communication technologies' (2015: 180). Li (2017) observes that smart technology includes technology with a degree of smartness that supports new forms of collaboration and value creation that leads to further innovative, entrepreneurial and competitive changes driven by new technologies. Gretzel *et al.* (2015: 180) specify that smart tourism 'involves multiple components and layers of smartness supported by information and communication technologies (ICTs)' inclusive of hardware, software, groupware, networkware and humanware, as the synergies of these systems help:

...facilitate operational and strategic management of organisations by enabling them to manage their information functions and processes as well as communicate interactively with their stakeholders for achieving their mission and objectives (Neuhofer *et al.*, 2014: 341).

Neuhofer *et al.* add that 'ICTs have become key elements in all operative, structural, strategic and marketing levels to enable interactions among suppliers, intermediaries, and consumers on a global basis' (2014: 342). Smart tourism involves multiple components and layers of smart supported by ICTs inclusive of the destination, tourism experience and local businesses (Gretzel *et al.*, 2015). Lyon and Helsinki were jointly crowned European Capitals of Smart Tourism for 2019 by the European Jury based on the evaluation factors relating to city image, accessibility, sustainable tourism, digitalisation in tourism services as well as cultural heritage and innovativeness in tourism offerings.

At its base, smart tourism refers to 'smart' destinations 'that apply smart principles to urban or rural areas with consideration for both residents and tourists in their efforts to support mobility, resource availability and allocation, sustainability and quality of life/visits' (Gretzel *et al.*, 2015: 180). In addition to the destination component, there is the 'smart' experience component which Gretzel *et al.* defines as one that 'specifically focuses on technology-mediated tourism experiences and their enhancement through personalisation, context-awareness and real time monitoring' (2015: 181). In the years following the development of Web 2.0 and the rise of social media, people have played a more active role in the creation of experiences. An experience rich in meaning

results in tourists feeling more empowered, the notion of co-creation builds on this very principle (Neuhofer *et al.*, 2014).

The third component, smart business, refers to the complex network 'that creates and supports the exchange of touristic resources and the co-creation of the tourism experience' (Gretzel *et al.*, 2015: 181). A distinct aspect of this component is the public-private collaboration involving governmental departments adopting a technology-focused approach as providers of data and supporting infrastructure (Gretzel *et al.*, 2015). Importantly, Gretzel *et al.* observe that smart tourism spans three layers across these key components (2015: 181). First, the 'smart information layer that aims at collecting data; a smart exchange layer that supports interconnectivity; and a smart processing layer that is responsible for the analysis, visualisation and intelligent use of data'. In considering these important components, Gretzel *et al.* (2015: 181) therefore define smart tourism as:

...tourism supported by integrated efforts at a destination to collect and aggregate/harness data derived from physical infrastructure, social connections, government/organisational sources, and human bodies/minds in combination with then use of advanced technologies to transform that data into on-site experiences and business value-propositions with a clear focus on efficiency, sustainability and experience enrichment.

In terms of digital media and adoption of new technology, the arrival of social media has fundamentally changed the nature of business communication with the customer. In today's modern world, and particularly in the realm of tourism, this has reshaped how local businesses and other service providers communicate with the tourist. Bolan and Simone-Charteris define social media as 'a type of media dispersed through online social interactions that can take a variety of forms including social networking sites, blogs, wikis, podcasts, photo and video sharing, social bookmarking and virtual environments' (2018: 730). The modern traveller now avidly utilises social media pre-trip to inform their decision-making, and increasingly uses such platforms during their holiday to enhance their experience and share aspects of their experience with others (Bolan and Simone-Charteris, 2018). Nowadays, tourists' smartphones and tablets receive interpretative and experiential information that signage, leaflets/brochures, guidebooks, maps, and tour guides once provided (Bolan and Simone-Charteris, 2018). In terms of consumption, tourists are no longer passive recipients of information; instead, they are actively engaged in peer-to-peer product recommendations and electronic word-of-mouth (Qiuju and Zhong, 2015).