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Tourism Motivation

Introduction

Tourists are motivated to be involved in tourism for a variety of reasons. An obvious motivation is to have an enjoyable experience, but there are many different ways to achieve this. Some people will be happy to lay in the sun on a beach and do very little, however, others may want to be very active and spend time climbing a mountain. Getting away from the 'normal' environment of home or work, in other words, following the dictum, 'a change is as good as a rest' can be another reason for being involved in tourism. In reality, it is often a combination of factors that leads people to travel, although some of these may be more important than others. In the first part of this chapter, tourism motivation is discussed; the second section is concerned with how motivation can be converted into demand.

Key perspectives

In any tourism journey, there is likely to be at least one factor, and quite possibly a number of reasons which, when combined, can be considered as the motivational factors for the trip. These can be characterized as *push* and *pull* factors. The *push* factors are a number of perceived negative factors about the location in which the potential tourist currently finds himself or herself and which will contribute to a desire to leave this place. The *pull* factors are perceived positive factors of a potential or real destination. The nature, extent and significance of particular push and pull factors will vary according to the particular tourism context.

The use of the terms *push* and *pull* is linked closely with the psychological model of tourism motivation developed by Iso-Aloha (1980), who was one of the first researchers to investigate tourism motivation in depth and detail. The two dimensions in the model can be summarized as *seeking* motives and *escaping* motives (Pearce, 1993). In Iso-Aloha's model, individuals seek personal and interpersonal rewards, which they hope to find in the place that is exerting the pull, and at the same time wish to escape personal and interpersonal environments, or what can be considered as the push aspect of the current location of the potential tourist.

The main criticism of Iso-Aloha's model is that with only two dimensions, it is somewhat limited. Having only the concepts of push and pull may oversimplify a complex process. However, investigating motivations in an attempt to understand the behaviour of tourists has always been important in tourism research (Ryan, 1997). Understanding what motivates tourists can help with their categorisation, as well as provide a better understanding of their impacts. Knowing the motivations can also help link the desires of tourists with where they wish to travel to and the activities in which they want to engage, which is important for tourists themselves and the tourism industry.

Tourist behaviour can be influenced by a number of demographic factors, including gender, age and ethnicity, but also cultural conditioning, social influences, perception and education can be very significant (Mason, 2016). However, as Crompton and McKay (1997) indicated motives generally precede the decision-making process that leads to particular types of behaviour.

Psychological and sociological theories

The related fields of psychology and sociology have provided the foundations for many researchers to develop significant theories on motivation. For example, in the field of cognitive psychology, motives are viewed as largely a function of what will happen when humans behave in a particular way, or putting this more formally, the expected consequences of future human behaviour (Dunn-Ross and Iso-Aloha, 1991). In this sense, motives can be considered as internal factors that have initially aroused a person, and following on from this internal reaction, these factors then direct the individual's behaviour (Iso-Aloha, 1980). In summary, it is possible to suggest that the key components of a general psychological model of motivation are:

- i) *needs and motives*,
- ii) *behaviour or activity*,
- iii) *goals or satisfactions* and
- iv) *feedback* (Harrill and Potts, 2002).

The link between these concepts are as follows: *motives* (or needs) drive behaviour, this behaviour has certain *goals*, the overarching one of which is to achieve *satisfaction*.

The concept of feedback relates to whether satisfaction has been achieved, or not, in the particular context. Mannell and Kleber (1997: 190) indicated the conceptual relationships very well, when they stated:

People who have a strong need or desire to be with others (motive) may attempt to engage in leisure activities, such as going to bars and drinking, that allow them to increase their interactions with other people (behaviour) in hopes of developing more friendships (goal and satisfaction).

The feedback element of the conceptual relationship is concerned with whether or not the initial needs and motivations have been achieved (Harrill and Potts, 2002). Hence, during an activity, an individual interacts with the environment in which the activity takes place and possibly with others involved in the activity and this may then result in new, or perhaps, different motivations.

Sociological theories have also been developed to try to explain tourist motivation. One of the earliest was that of Cohen (1972) who sub-divided tourists into four types, based on motivation. He argued that the two main factors forming the basis of his theory are *strangeness* versus *familiarity*. Cohen developed a continuum based on this two-fold classification, and indicated that at one end was the 'organized mass tourist', who wanted some degree of familiarity in holiday surroundings, while at the other end, the 'drifter', (the term he created), is willing to accept far more strangeness and actually wants to become absorbed by the local culture and possibly settle in the new location. Between these two are two groups – one group who wish to have some freedom, but a degree of organisation for their tourist experience and Cohen referred to these as 'independent mass tourists', and a second group who want, to some extent, the unfamiliar/strange in terms of where they go to, but still desire a number of the comforts of the mass tourist, and Cohen termed such tourists as 'explorers'.

Cohen developed his theory to investigate how various types of tourist might interact with host communities. This approach also influenced Plog (1973) who devised a continuum, using two concepts that he created. He indicated at one end of the continuum were *allo-centrics* and at the other *psycho-centrics*. Plog suggested that psycho-centric individuals are inhibited and relatively non-adventurous and are concerned primarily with the self. In terms of tourist behaviour, psycho-centrics want the familiar in relation to people and places, and are unlikely to travel great distances to their chosen tourism destinations. At the other end of the spectrum, Plog asserted allo-centrics seek out the unfamiliar when travelling and are confident and naturally inquisitive. Such tourists will be prepared to travel significant distances, wish to meet new people and desire unusual experiences.

Despite the fact that Plog's theory is largely psychological and Cohen's sociological, there are similarities in terms of the concepts of familiarity and strangeness that each author uses in their respective theories. Also the resultant classification of different types of tourist share some features, in that Cohen's 'organised mass tourists' would probably fit into Plog's psycho-centric conceptualisation, whilst Cohen's explorers would most likely fit within Plog's allo-centric classification. Both Cohen's (1972) and Plog's (1973) theories have been tested, but with varied success and have not met with universal acceptance. Nevertheless, they remain as key theories in relation to tourism motivation, although both are largely descriptive rather than explanatory (Harrill and Potts, 2002).

Motivation categories

It may appear in relation to sociological and psychological theories, that motivation tends to be a fairly static concept. However, Pearce (1988), using the concept of a *travel ladder*, suggested that motivations are multivariate and dynamic. He suggests that demographic factors are important and motivation will change particularly as a result of ageing and life-cycle stage. He also suggested that fashion can affect motivation and individuals can be affected by other people's ideas and activities. Pearce acknowledged that he was influenced by the work of the psychologist Maslow (1954), who created a hierarchical range of needs from low level, primarily physical needs, to high level intellectual needs. Maslow termed these needs, in ascending sequence, as physiological, safety, social, self-esteem and self-development. Pearce, using Maslow's (1954) ideas, proposed the following tourism motivation categories:

- Relaxation,
- Excitement and thrills,
- Social interaction,
- Self-esteem and development,
- Fulfilment.

In attempting to summarize the major motivations of tourists, Ryan (1991) drew on the work of Cohen (1972), Crompton (1979) and Matthieson and Wall (1982) and presented eleven major reasons for tourist travel. These are as follows:

- 1 Escape
- 2 Relaxation
- 3 Play
- 4 Strengthening family bonds
- 5 Prestige
- 6 Social interaction
- 7 Sexual opportunity
- 8 Educational opportunity
- 9 Self-fulfilment
- 10 Wish fulfilment
- 11 Shopping.

This list of eleven motivations for tourist journeys can also be seen to be linked to the concepts of push and pull factors with, for example, *escape* certainly a push factor and *prestige* clearly a pull factor. These eleven factors are very varied and several appear quite different from others, for example *social interaction* and *play* will involve tourists being fully engaged and active, whilst others such as *relaxation* are more contemplative and less likely to involve active participation. However, some of the eleven factors may be linked, such as *strengthening family bonds* and *social interaction*. Nevertheless, this list indicates that there are potentially many different motivating factors that could influence tourism activity.