

Marketing Innovations for Sustainable Destinations

8 Push Motivations for Tourism Mountain Destinations

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Contents

Introduction	2
The Mountain Tourism Push Motivation Scale	3
Methodology	5
Data Analysis	6
Conclusion	7
Limitations and Directions for Future Research	8
References	8

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Introduction

Tourism is a social phenomenon of contemporary society (Urry, 2002) that intends to improve people's lives (Furchtgott and Furchtgott, 1999). Tourism has become an important element in a process of social change in which human systems, values and communities are being integrated towards global social and economic systems (Saarinen, 2004). Motivation for tourism is considered crucial for understanding society behaviour because tourism expresses significant social behaviours through which contemporary society can be understood (Cohen, 1993; MacCannell, 1989).

Until recently, tourism had been characterized as a mass phenomenon by the standardization, homogenization and inflexibility of the product. This type of tourism treats tourists as a homogenous group, ignoring their specific and unique demands (Wang, 2000). The consequences of tourism massification and the active life style of contemporary societies are leading to the saturation of traditional tourism destinations (Davidson, 1992). Likewise, in consequence of society values change, new tourist motivations emerge. These values represent new learned beliefs about novel preferred ways of being (Schwartz, 1994), such as a demand for nature-based, educative, culturally and environmentally sustainable places (Blamey and Braithwaite, 1997). Within the context of tourism, it has been noted that the values tourists hold can affect their choice of destination (Muller, 1991), namely alternative tourism proposals such as mountain destinations.

The current context of globalization and the fast social changes call for a reassessment of the questions as to why people travel and why they choose a particular tourism destination (Harrill and Potts, 2002), particularly when considering alternative destinations such as mountain places. Mountain tourism presents itself as an alternative type of tourism through which people intent to satisfy new social desires of challenge experiences associated with nature, learning and status enhancement. Tourists that search for this new kind of tourism seek for both natural and social environment consistent with the life style of local communities (Smith and Eadington, 1995).

Mountain tourism has become one of the most attractive tourism types (McCool, 2002) as demonstrated by the fact that mountain tourism constitutes 20% of the global tourism (Mountain Agenda, 1999). Mountains represent 24% of the earth's land surface (Kapos, Rhind et al., 2000) in which 12% of the global population lives (Huddleston et al., 2003). Also, 14% of the earth population is estimated to live around mountains regions (Meybeck et al., 2001). Beyond tourism areas, mountains are also important as sources of water, as centers of biodiversity and recreation (Messerli and Ives, 1997).

Chapter extract

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