

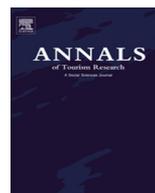


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Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Annals of Tourism Research

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/atoures



Tourism marketing research: Past, present and future



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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 9 July 2013

Revised 4 March 2014

Accepted 22 March 2014

Available online 7 May 2014

Keywords:

Tourism marketing

Marketing knowledge

Promise management

Big data

Tourism marketing knowledge grid

ABSTRACT

This paper creates a Tourism Marketing Knowledge Grid and uses it as a framework for the review. The grid reveals that extant tourism marketing research has primarily focused on how service promises are made and kept, and has mostly generated frameworks to improve managerial decision making or provided insights about associations between constructs. Strategic principles, underpinned by the understanding of cause-effect relationships, are rare. These findings point to exciting opportunities for future research, including increased attention on enabling promises made to tourists and development of strategic and research principles; increased use of experimental, quasi-experimental and longitudinal research designs, as well as unstructured qualitative designs; and an increased focus on the study of actual behavior.

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Introduction

Our review of articles published between 2008 and 2012 in the leading tourism journals indicates that 337 out of 1,088 articles (31%) cover marketing-related content. The *Journal of Travel Research* has published the highest proportion of tourism marketing research (49%), followed by *Tourism Management* (32%) and *Annals of Tourism Research* (14%). But what is the contribution of these articles? Have all forms of marketing knowledge been adequately addressed? What type of marketing research

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methodology will best contribute to tourism marketing knowledge in the future? These questions stand at the center of the present review article.

A framework of tourism marketing knowledge, the *Tourism Marketing Knowledge Grid*, is developed and used to both take stock of past tourism marketing research and develop a future research agenda. The grid classifies marketing-related tourism studies by content area (for example, research into destination image) and the form of knowledge (for example, associations between constructs).

Content areas are based on Grönroos' (2006) conceptualization of marketing as a process that consists of making, enabling, and keeping promises to consumers. Grönroos is one of many marketing scholars to have questioned traditional perspectives on marketing in recent decades. Grönroos proposes a clear definition of marketing which consists of three content areas, making it particularly suitable for classifying tourism marketing contributions.

For the purpose of the grid, forms of knowledge are taken from Rossiter (2001, 2002) who postulates the existence of five categories of marketing knowledge: concepts, structural frameworks, empirical generalizations, strategic principles and research principles. Rossiter's is the only existing systematics of knowledge in marketing knowledge.

The review of tourism marketing knowledge is structured as follows: first, the two key constructs used in this review (marketing and marketing knowledge) are discussed and defined. Next, the *Tourism Marketing Knowledge Grid* is introduced. It combines marketing content areas and marketing knowledge areas and creates a framework for the review of tourism marketing research. After describing the approach taken, a stock take is presented, starting with early pioneering work which provides the building blocks for subsequent contributions. The section presents both an overview of tourism marketing research contributions and prototypical contributions in all cells of the *Tourism Marketing Knowledge Grid*. Finally, a section is dedicated to key areas of future work in the area of tourism marketing.

What is marketing?

Marketing matches consumer needs and market offers (Lilien & Rangaswamy, 1998). How marketing is perceived by consumers and suppliers is critical, because a discipline that aims to connect consumers and organizations must be perceived as advantageous by both sides (Grönroos, 2009) to be effective. However, the predominant perception of marketing is negative. As Farmer (1967) puts it: nobody wants their daughter to marry a marketing man. "*For the past 6,000 years the field of marketing has been thought of as made up of fast-buck artists, con-men, wheeler-dealers, and shoddy-goods distributors*" (p. 1), "*What is "visible" about marketing is not the intriguing, truly exciting research work in a variety of behavioral and technical areas. Instead, it is the picture of some pitchman selling hair spray on television!*" (p. 2). The roots of this disrespect can be traced back all the way to Plato and Aristotle who felt marketers made money without adding value (Cassels, 1936).

The "marketing men" themselves traditionally viewed marketing as a toolbox for selling products, and perceived themselves as mixers of ingredients who engage in "*fashioning creatively a mix of marketing procedures and policies in his efforts to produce a profitable enterprise*" (Borden, 1964, p. 7). Borden also argues that marketing managers mix 12 ingredients: product planning, pricing, branding, distribution channels, personal selling, advertising, promotions, packaging, display, servicing, physical handling, fact finding, and analysis. A shortened version is now widely known as the 4Ps, where *product* is understood to encompass the development, design, branding, modification and elimination of products, *price* stands for setting the price for products considering costs, demand and competition, *promotion* covers advertising, sales, promotion and public relations and *place* refers to distribution channels decisions (McDonald, 2007).

Although Borden emphasizes the importance of the marketing manager understanding the market and the reaction of the market ("*The skillful marketer is one who is a perceptive and practical psychologist and sociologist,*" p. 9), the interaction with the customer was not traditionally seen as being the key to success. Instead, marketing was seen as primarily product based and transaction oriented (Grönroos, 1996).

The past few decades have been characterized by an ongoing debate about what marketing theory is, which philosophical orientation is most appropriate, and whether it is art or science

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