



In search of the pro-sustainable tourist: A segmentation based on the tourist “sustainable intelligence”



Yaiza López-Sánchez^a, Juan Ignacio Pulido-Fernández^{b,*}

^a University of Jaén, Department of Economics, D3-273, 23071 Jaen, Spain

^b Laboratory of Analysis and Innovation in Tourism, University of Jaén, Department of Economics, D3-273, 23071 Jaen, Spain

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 14 November 2015

Accepted 8 December 2015

Keywords:

Sustainable intelligence

Sustainable tourism

Segmentation

Latent class analysis

Western Costa del Sol

ABSTRACT

It is suggested in this paper that in any debate about sustainable tourism, it is essential to focus on the visitor. The paper reports findings derived from a latent class analysis premised on the concept of “sustainable intelligence” on the part of the tourist. Using this method, three segments were found to display differing levels of commitment, attitude, knowledge and/or behaviour with regard to sustainability; these parameters being measures of “sustainable intelligence”. Data were derived from 1188 respondents who had stayed at least one night in Western Costa del Sol (Spain), a mature sun and sand tourism destination currently undergoing rejuvenation. Three tourist segments were identified – the reflective, unconcerned and prosustainable tourist; thereby not only identifying implications for destination management and a discussion of how sustainability may be purchased, but also contributing to the literature by demonstrating the viability of the concept of “sustainable intelligence”.

© 2015 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

Currently, a competitive destination is one in which those actors involved in its management know what they want to offer and who they want to address; thus, they decide, in a coordinated manner, to encourage sustainable strategic management.

Sustainability has traditionally been regarded as a key factor for competitiveness in tourism destinations. Indeed, the concept of sustainability appears to be present in many decisions and government actions that have led to the drafting of tourism plans (on different territorial scales) associated with this topic. Currently, there are numerous tourism destinations that are in an advanced maturity stage that require a long process for a complete renovation. Given this impasse, the future of these destinations will depend more than ever on tourism policies that are committed to sustainable management (Bramwell & Lane, 1993; Dodds & Butler, 2009; Kozak & Martin, 2012; Ritchie & Crouch, 2003, among others).

If a mature and saturated tourism destination seeks to become more sustainable but cannot overcome pressure induced by growing numbers of tourists, then one possible solution is to attract a differing market sector that displays more sustainable behaviours (Miller, Rathouse, Scarles, Holmes, & Tribe, 2010). However, extant research has adopted an approach to understanding sustainable tourism that has marginalized the voices of tourists. One of the most important limitations is considering that the sustainability of destinations could be improved

exclusively from the supply perspective; however, tourists play a key role in achieving sustainable tourism. Therefore, it appears advisable to know which tourist behaviour/attitudes may be considered sustainable, particularly when addressing a mature and obsolete tourism destination (as in the case studied in this article) that is attempting to restructure itself as a competitive and sustainable tourism destination.

Knowing the meaning of sustainability from the tourists' perspective and the real importance they attach to it is key to achieving the transformation towards a new tourism model whose central value is sustainability. In fact, a shift of focus from sustainable tourism supply to demand has already been proposed by certain authors (Budeanu, 2007; Cohen, Higham, Gossling, & Peeters, 2014; Kastenholtz, 2004; Weeden, 2013), making this a currently trending topic. Considering these previous studies on pro-sustainable tourists, the main contribution provided by this paper is that the researcher's methodological improvement of research in this field delves further into this conceptualization.

Segmenting the tourism market before running or undertaking certain actions or policies ensures that these are the most appropriate and tailored to the needs of the market. Therefore, if a destination's objective is to position or reposition itself in the market as a sustainable tourism destination, it is logical and necessary to determine the consumer heterogeneity to distinguish segments based on the behaviours, attitudes and values associated with the sustainability philosophy to be analysed. Additionally, determining the importance and size of each class or segment is crucial for the design of strategies and marketing planning.

In sum, the academic debate regarding tourists' consumer behaviour and the true economic implications of sustainability issues are intense and controversial. This paper highlights that researchers continue to

* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: ymlopez@ujaen.es (Y. López-Sánchez), jipulido@ujaen.es (J.I. Pulido-Fernández).

have minimal consensus regarding who pro-sustainable tourists actually are. Thus, there are opportunities for research on the real implications of tourists' behaviour with regard to sustainability, including an interdisciplinary analysis of the consumer to provide more in-depth knowledge on sustainable consumption in the tourism field.

This article hypothesizes that, when analysing demand, for tourism, the incorporation of certain variables related to sustainability can prove that there is a trend towards sustainable behaviour in certain segments of demand, which shows their "sustainable intelligence". Consequently, any competitive positioning strategy or repositioning of a destination should consider not only the perspective of supply but also demand. Focusing on a perspective that incorporates demand variables allows for knowing the "sustainable intelligence" of the tourist and acting in response to the challenges generated by this type of tourist demand. To validate this hypothesis, an emblematic coastal tourism destination recognized as mature by the scientific literature has been chosen, Western Costa del Sol (Andalusia, Spain). In recent years, this area has undergone a series of actions to renew its patterns of tourism development, in search of a new model based on quality, innovation and sustainability. This fact underlies the final decision to select this destination for the methodological application of this research.

The objective is to show that, in these mature sun-and-sand tourism destinations, it is possible to identify one or more segments of demand that have a high level of commitment, attitude, knowledge and/or behaviour regarding sustainability. To achieve this goal, this article segment on the tourism demand of Western Costa del Sol considers a latent variable called "sustainable intelligence". (This concept is exposed, defined and justified in the following sections of this article.) Finally, this article proceeds to analyse the demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of the identified segments (age, sex, education level, and income level).

2. Theoretical framework

Because documents such as the First Report of the Club of Rome (The Limits to Growth) (1972) and the Brundtland Report (1987) showed the unprecedented complexity of the relation between the economy, society and environment, the international community has generated more proposals and tools (Rio Declaration, 1992; Agenda 21, 1994; and Rio +20, 2012) that have generated debate on various aspects related to sustainability. Additionally, many initiatives and experiences have emerged based on the philosophy of sustainability, for example, time banks, fair trade, ethics and solidarity banking, corporate social

responsibility, Agenda 21 for local sustainability, codes of conduct, and "slow travel".

This emergence provides proof that defending the ideals of sustainable development can be found in many different areas and represents initiatives in different social sectors, including tourism. In fact, sustainable tourism development has also been discussed and promoted internationally (Manila Declaration, 1980; Tourist Code, 1985; Global Code of Ethics for Tourism, 1997; Declaration of the Hague, 1989; The European Charter for Sustainable Tourism Protected Areas, 2001; and Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria, 2013) and by the scientific community since the 1980s. This widespread discussion shows that there has been a significant and growing scientific, academic, corporate and social interest in issues related to sustainability and ethics, including sustainable consumption.

Overall, tourist behaviour is a fundamental issue in tourism studies (Swarbrooke & Horner, 2007), and, in particular, pro-sustainable tourist behaviour is a thriving field of study (Budeanu, 2007; Cohen et al., 2014; Weeden, 2013). In the literature on sustainable development, it is common to use the term "ethics consumers" for consumers who prefer products or services that are less harmful in terms of environmental and social issues (Harrison, Newholm, & Shaw, 2005; Newholm & Shaw, 2007; among others). Moreover, in the marketing literature, these same consumers are called "green consumers", which similarly includes consumers interested in ethical issues.

Reviewing the literature, it is observed that there are many definitions that have been developed around this term. Certain authors claim that "green consumers" are those who are becoming more aware of and concerned about environmental problems (Soonthorsmai, 2007), relating them solely to pro-environmental attitudes. Other authors extend the implications of the "green consumer" in a holistic view of a sustainable lifestyle (Gilg, Barr, & Ford, 2005).

In sum, although these discourses use different terms, all are used to identify people who embrace ideals of sustainable consumption. Thus, these consumers appear to respond to market changes linked to sustainability and ethics. Table 1 shows a brief definition of each concept by quoting some of the most relevant authors and emphasizing studies that apply these concepts to tourism.

Tourists who promote and consume sustainable tourism are sensitive to the impacts that this activity can generate and therefore attempt to protect the destination. Furthermore, as noted by Darnall, Ponting, and Vazquez-Brust (2012), sustainable consumption is often perceived as a business opportunity. In fact, recent studies demonstrate the true potential of "sustainable" consumers in different types of companies directly linked to tourism (hotels, restaurants, and transportation

Table 1
Consumers related to sustainability.
Source: In-house.

	Definition	Authors
Green consumer	Most of the scientific literature linking the green consumer only with pro-environmental attitudes, claiming that these consumers are those increasingly aware and sympathetic to the environmental problems. This definition agrees with the theoretical definition of environmental or ecological consumer. In fact, in many cases both terms are used interchangeably, especially in the field of "green or eco-marketing", which is identified as being a consumer concerned about environmental problems.	<i>General literature:</i> Diamantopoulos, Schlegelmilch, Sinkovics, and Bohlen (2003), Elkington, Hales, and Makower (1990), Fraj and Martínez (2007), Peattie (1995), Soonthorsmai (2007). <i>Tourism literature:</i> Bergin-Seers and Mair (2009), Hedlund (2013), Swarbrooke and Horner (2007).
Ethical consumer	The distinction between green and ethical consumption is important due to the fact that ethical consumption encompasses more than merely environmental issues and, therefore, includes a complex decision making process for consumers. Ethical consumption is linked to personal and intimate issues, matters of conscience, as the ethics of each individual are related to their own personal values, which is considered "good" or "right" from their particular vision of issues of such complexity as moral criticism, justice, and social welfare.	<i>General literature:</i> Bateman, Fraedrich, and Iyer (2002), Carrigan and Attalla (2001), Harrison et al. (2005), Lewis and Potter (2011), Shaw and Shiu (2002). <i>Tourism literature:</i> Fennell and Malloy (1999), Ruhi and Gurel (2006), Weeden (2013), Wheeler (1995).
Sustainable consumer	Sustainable consumption aims to safeguard fundamental values such as honesty, integrity, compassion, justice, freedom and peace against the supremacy of greed, fraud, excess and violence. It also pursues the efficient and intelligent use of natural resources to ensure the maintenance of the resource base for existence, a higher quality of life and equitable economic and social development.	<i>General literature:</i> Gilg et al. (2005), Hobson (2002), Roundtable (2006), Sanne (2002), Spaargaren (2003), UNDP (2010). <i>Tourism literature:</i> Budeanu (2007), Werhrlri et al. (2011).

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/1013607>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/1013607>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)