



Visitors' satisfaction at managed tourist attractions in Northern Norway: Do on-site factors matter?



Øystein Jensen ^{a, b, *}, Yuan Li ^c, Muzaffer Uysal ^d

^a Faculty of Social Sciences, Norwegian School of Hotel Management, EAL H-204C, University of Stavanger, 4036 Stavanger, Norway

^b Nord University Business School, Universitetsalléen 11, NO 8026, Bodo, Norway

^c Department of Hospitality & Tourism Management, Pamplin College of Business, Virginia Tech, 295 West Campus Drive, Blacksburg, VA 24061-0429, United States

^d Department of Hospitality & Tourism Management, Isenberg School of Management, Flint Lab - 90 Campus Center Way, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, MA 01003, United States

HIGHLIGHTS

- Presentation platforms have discriminating effects on visitor satisfaction among different attraction sites.
- Visitors who make a major stop at a site put more weight on presentation platforms than those who just drop by the site.
- Overall satisfaction does not differ significantly between visitors who make a major stop at a site and who drop by the site.

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 24 September 2016

Received in revised form

3 May 2017

Accepted 23 June 2017

Keywords:

Managed tourist attractions

Presentation platform

Support services

Visitors' satisfaction

Attraction type

Type of visit

ABSTRACT

A plethora of research has studied the antecedents of visitor experience in destinations and tourist attractions. Few studies have systematically analyzed the discriminating effects of different types of on-site factors (presentation platform and support services) on tourist satisfaction at different attraction sites. To fill the gap, the current study examines whether and to what extent it is possible to identify some distinct sub-categories of on-site factors with discriminating effects on visitors' perceptions and evaluations of the site, while taking into consideration the impact of attraction type and visitor type. The findings of a paper-and-pencil survey among 632 visitors at four attraction sites in Northern Norway suggest that visitor perceptions of presentation platform and support services differ significantly by attraction site and type of visit. Also, technological and oral/traditional presentation platforms have discriminating effects on visitor satisfaction among the four sites. The results offer some new research insights into the role of different presentation tools at visitor attractions. Several important practical implications for attraction managers and marketers to drive visitor satisfaction are also provided.

© 2017 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

A plethora of research has studied the antecedents of visitor experience in destinations and tourist attractions. One example is how antecedents, such as expectations, motivation, and pre-knowledge among visitors, can be linked to the measurement of psychological, social, and behavioral dimensions of tourist experience (Prebensen, Woo, Chen, & Uysal, 2013). Surprisingly, there is a

lack of systematic analysis aiming to explore the discriminating effects of different types of on-site factors on tourist satisfaction at various attraction sites. The research attention has predominantly been subject-oriented (psychological) and less object-oriented (Jensen, 2014) and more oriented toward inner-directed values and motivations and less oriented toward outer-directed values (Gnoth, 1997).

An object-orientation focuses on on-site attraction properties that embrace both the fixed parts of an attraction (e.g., constructions, displays, artifacts, technology, and available information) and the processes (e.g., the performance of activities, flow-charts, and special events; Jensen, 2014), and is of great value to attraction operators as they have direct control over what objects to offer and

* Corresponding author. Faculty of Social Sciences, Norwegian School of Hotel Management, EAL H-204C, University of Stavanger, 4036, Stavanger, Norway.

E-mail addresses: oystein.jensen@uis.no (Ø. Jensen), yuanli@vt.edu (Y. Li), muyisal@isenberg.umass.edu (M. Uysal).

how they are offered. While attraction operators can drive visitor satisfaction through manipulation of relevant objects, little research has studied the type of objects that may affect visitor satisfaction. Thus, the focus of this paper is on visitors' evaluation of on-site factors, including presentation tools of the attraction phenomena and support services tools of visitation facilitation.

Also, while it is understandable that different types of attractions may present their themes differently, little is known about how visitors evaluate the same presentation approach at different attractions. In other words, different attractions may share similar attributes and amenities, but express different themes and create different experiential value for visitors. Along the same lines, different visitors may have different perceptions of the same presentation approach at the same attraction. Given that individual characteristics of attraction sites and visitor needs influence visitor satisfaction and management effectiveness (Leask, 2010), a basic question is whether and to what extent it is possible to identify some distinct sub-categories of on-site factors with discriminating effects on visitors' perceptions and evaluations of the site, while taking into consideration the impact of attraction type and visitor type. To that end, the current research contributes to the literature by identifying a list of important on-site factors that are both attraction type and visitor type specific and that affect visitor satisfaction and attraction operations.

2. Literature review

2.1. Managed tourist attractions

Managed visitor or tourist attractions are “enclavic” places controlled and managed by regimes that impose their own ideas, norms, views, approaches, rituals, models of space, etc (Edensor, 2000, p. 328). A typical managed tourist attraction involves a short stay/visit and is frequently patronized by tourists on individual or organized roundtrips or by destination visitors who like supplementary attraction experiences of a temporary nature (part-/whole-day visits; Gunn & Var, 2002). From a functional perspective, visitor attractions can be regarded as “those developed locations that are planned and managed for visitor interest, activity, and enjoyment” (Gunn & Var, 2002, p. 41). On a micro level, visitor attractions are frequently understood as individual sites that have a single location-specific feature (Leask, 2010; Swarbrooke, 2002; Weidenfeld, Williams, & Butler, 2010), although many times attractions constitute more than one foundational characteristic. A great proportion of the managed or contrived attractions (Cohen, 1995) can be categorized as “Human-made buildings, structures and sites that are designed to attract visitors and are purpose-built to accommodate their needs” (Swarbrooke, 2002, p. 5). Besides the core phenomenon or the nucleus (Gunn & Var, 2002; Gunn, 1988) that initially attracts visitors to the attractions, complementary service offerings are needed to make the attractions “places in which the entire array of physical features and services are provided for an assumed capacity of visitors” (Gunn & Var, 2002, p. 42).

Effective management of tourist attractions requires identification of appropriate management approaches (Leask, 2010). Generally speaking, a management approach assumes that attractions and attraction activities can be designed to create or facilitate particular on-site visitor experiences by applying different types of management tools or platforms. While some sets of platforms will be directed at the presentation of the main phenomena or themes of the attraction, or “interpretation” in the heritage attraction setting (Moscardo, 2003; Poria, Butler, & Airey, 2003; Weaver, 2008), other sets will be reserved for creating the complementary visitor service offerings or support services and facilities (Jensen & Lindberg, 2000; Jensen, 2002). Obviously, the theme-presentation

factors and support services factors have different purposes and nature with regard to their assumed contributions to the visitor experience (Gunn & Var, 2002; Jensen, 2002; Swarbrooke, 2002).

A few attempts have been made regarding the overall classifications of tourist or visitor attractions (Geissler & Rucks, 2011; Gunn & Var, 2002; Kerstetter, Confer, & Bricker, 1998; Leask, 2010; Swarbrooke, 2002; Wanhill, 2002, 2008; Wong & Cheung, 1999). Despite the fact that no universally agreed classification exists to date, theme parks/amusement parks, museums and galleries, natural, animal, visitor centers, religious sites, and heritage attractions are among those generally accepted categories (Leask, 2010). Leask (2010) argues that to appropriately classify tourist attractions, researchers should consider the purpose of classification, compare prior research findings, and identify possible success factors among different attractions in destinations with heterogeneous structural characteristics as well as varying mission statements and core themes.

2.2. The presentation approach to visitor experiences

In recent years, the quality of the performance elements of managed attractions, such as various forms of presentation and interactions with visitors, as well as the ways in which these elements can produce positive or valuable visitor experiences, has gained increasing research attention (Jensen, 2014). The seemingly expanding use and the corresponding growing appreciation of dramatized performances and modern presentation technology in managed heritage attractions demonstrate what has been denoted as the “performance turn”, characterized as an orientation toward “embodied, collaborative and technologized doings and enactments” (Bærenholdt, Haldrup, & Larsen, 2008, p. 178). The synergy between educational and entertainment values in the presentation of heritage sites, including the use of multimedia technologies (Calver & Page, 2013; Hertzman, Anderson, & Rowley, 2008), themed simulations with artificial elements (Reichel, Uriely, & Shani, 2008), and staging within, for example, different types of Viking heritage sites (Halewood & Hannam, 2001), has long been achieved in attraction settings (Jensen, 2014; Jensen, Lindberg, & Østergaard, 2015).

Such presentation factors can be conceptually embraced within the wider servicescape framework (Abubakar, 2002; Arnould, Price, & Tierney, 1998; Bitner, 1992; Dong & Siu, 2013). Dong and Siu (2013) argue that service experience evaluation in theme parks are “influenced by both the substantive staging of the servicescape (its functional and mechanical clues) and its communicative aspects (its human clues)” (p. 542). Communicative staging is understood as the way the service environment is presented and interpreted. Binkhorst and Den Dekker (2009), on the other hand, emphasize on the co-creation aspect of the tourist experience and state that the traditional top-down approach has been replaced by dialogues between equal partners, which gives the customers more power and control. Moreover, visitors' social interactions on-site, both with companions and strangers, can influence how they look at the exhibits and how they evaluate the attractions (Vom Lehn, 2006). By focusing on the role of the exhibition environment, Forrest (2013) points out the importance of museum atmospherics and visitor environment dynamics on the understanding of overall visitor experience.

2.3. Expressive and instrumental attributes of visitor satisfaction

Built on Swan and Combs' (1976) study, Noe (1987), Gnoth (1997), and Noe and Uysal (1997) are among the few who present a model for classifying on-site attraction factors by their assumed discriminating effects on visitor experience. Their models take on a

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/5108550>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/5108550>

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