

Editorial

Marketing for Sustainable Tourism

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In the last twenty years, the tourism industry has been transformed by several global trends [1–3]. Among these, sustainability has become a priority for both the scientific community (countless international conferences, academic journals and research projects have been devoted to the subject) and for international organisations. The UN’s “Sustainable Development Goals” are a vital part of this picture, and sustainable tourism has been flagged up as having a potentially valuable role to play in their attainment: “Tourism has the potential to contribute, directly or indirectly to all of the goals. In particular, it has been included as targets in Goals 8, 12 and 14 on inclusive and sustainable economic growth, sustainable consumption and production (SCP) and the sustainable use of oceans and marine resources, respectively” (<http://tourism4sdgs.org/tourism-for-sdgs/tourism-and-sdgs/>).

The tourism industry involves multiple sectors, from hospitality to transport; from commerce to entertainment; from tourist agents to ICT, to mention but a few. Hence, the industry cannot avoid the question of sustainability and must work on two fronts: both to encourage the organisations and businesses with which it engages to adopt sustainable practices (best practice research) and to motivate consumers/tourists to consume and behave as sustainably as possible. This is the context currently shaping the World Tourism Organisation’s plans and activities (see for example [4,5]). Policy makers, organizations and businesses which adopt a sustainable tourism approach find themselves having to rethink their development and/or business models: the triple bottom line approach [6] and a focus on the medium and long-term are key to the creation of a lasting reciprocity between the economic benefits of tourism and the conservation of the non-renewable resources upon which tourism depends [7,8]. A territory’s tourism development thus influences the local development model and involves choices around the use of resources, the production methods and degrees of social and business change, all of which involve the resident population. As such, sustainable tourism must find a happy balance between the needs of the different local stakeholders (organisations and public entities, businesses, the community) and the tourists who come to the area [9–13]. The quest for this balance highlights at least two of the issues driving the current scientific debate and the efforts of international organisations: overtourism and global warming.

The uncontrolled growth of tourist flows and the failure to regulate or manage their access has impoverished many territories and allowed the businesses in their tourism chains to continue to operate inefficiently; the quality of life of local residents has, moreover, invariably deteriorated (for a review see [14–16]). Overtourism has also increased tourist dissatisfaction levels [17] with tourists finding it impossible to experience the authenticity of the “hospitality atmosphere” [18], or the “host–guest relationship” [19,20].

Turning to global warming, it is indisputable that rising temperatures are affecting how tourist destinations manage their offers [21]. The impact on Alpine winter tourist destinations is paradigmatic [22]. Climate change is modifying the current and future accessibility of ski stations, the latter’s capacity to guarantee snow, their water management choices (and the issue of competing claims for water resources)—these are only the most obvious effects to date [23]. In the face of these changes, businesses and organisations are having to assess all available environmental management practices (regarding

water and energy conservation, waste management, etc.), to plan for partnerships with other firms in order to introduce new services (i.e., integrated transport), or to identify new tourist products (so that the winter tourism offer includes more than just downhill skiing, for example). The need to consider new realities and to reimagine tourist offers and traditional business models is not confined to mountain areas: these trends are being experienced globally, and in diverse environments (see the research by [24] on the Coral Reefs and the study by [25] on Mediterranean, among others).

The transversality of sustainable tourism emerges clearly from the above overview. This feature is also evident in the multiplicity of arguments dealt with in the contributions to the Special Issue which focuses on the most critical of today's main concerns around marketing for sustainable tourism, for both territories (i.e., tourism destinations, protected areas, parks and/or natural sites, UNESCO World Heritage Sites, rural regions/areas, etc.) and tourism enterprises and/or organisations (i.e., destination management organisations, hospitality and restaurant enterprises, cableway companies, travel agencies, etc.). In destinations where natural resources are pull factors for the development of tourism, the relationships among local actors (public, private, the community), and the marketing choices that these actors make, are crucial elements in the creation of sustainable tourism products.

The 14 papers in the Special Issue analyse the marketing strategies adopted by tourism destinations and/or tourism enterprises to avoid overtourism, to manage mass sustainable tourism (as defined by [26]) and to encourage and promote sustainable tourism in marginal areas.

In the papers, topics are analysed from two different perspectives: five of the contributions focus on the themes of the special issue, analysing the choices and strategies of the actors involved in the tourist offer (contributions 2, 5, 9, 10, 14), the other nine examine the choices, behaviours and/or satisfaction levels of tourists, in order to identify the factors that can support and/or redefine business and destination marketing strategies (contributions 1, 3, 4, 6–8, 11–13).

Evidencing the current scientific interest in the subject of Marketing for Sustainable Tourism, the papers provide a wide range of case studies conducted in very diverse international tourist destinations, including territories in Europe (Spain, Italy, Portugal, Poland), the USA (Florida, Indiana) and Asia (China, Taiwan, South Korea).

Many different research methods have been employed. Some contributors have adopted the quantitative approach, reflected in their choices and criteria (i.e. Luque Martínez et al.; Zhang and Cheng; Choe et al.), others have adopted a qualitative approach (Ecker and Pechlaner; García-Madurga et al.; Santos et al.; Szromek and Herman).

The analysis techniques, too, are multiple, and include, for example, content analysis (Kim et al.), structural equation modelling (Ryu & Park), regression analysis (Choe et al.; Zhang & Cheng), interpretive structural modelling (ISM) (Mi et al.) and Partial Least Squares Structural Equations (Vázquez-Martínez et al.).

Among the papers which investigated the themes of the special issue from a supply side perspective, Ecker and Pechlaner (contribution 2) presented the case of Lanzarote (Canary Islands) and examine complementary strategies towards achieving sustainable tourism. The data collected by interviewing tourism stakeholders were analysed according to the GABEK®-method (German abbreviation for "GAnzheitliche BEwältigung von Komplexität": holistic coping with complexity). The research shows the negative impact on the island of mass tourism and suggests alternative product development as a new approach towards sustainability in tourism.

Luque Martínez et al. (contribution 5) focus on mountain and snow tourism. Specific attention is given to ski-resorts and to their marketing management practices. The research carried out at ski resorts in Spain and Italy highlights the strengths and weaknesses of their marketing management and discusses social media usage. The research classifies different resort types on the basis of their performance against indicators from Twitter and Facebook, makes recommendations for the marketing management of ski resorts.

Santos et al. (contribution 9) discuss the role of cruise terminal ports on destinations' economic and socio-cultural sustainability. This qualitative study analyses the dynamics that can facilitate

sustainable cruise-land visit. The field research considers two key transit ports in the Mediterranean: Lisbon in Portugal and Livorno in Italy. The results from both destinations, while demonstrating differing patterns, reveal genuine concern for sustainability and reduced congestion.

The study by Szromek et al. (contribution 10) discusses the basic types of business transformations in post-industrial heritage sites. The field study was carried out in Poland, investigating 42 post-industrial tourism objects on the Industrial Monuments Route (part of the European Route of Industrial Heritage). Three types of business model transformation were identified, of which the post-production organization model appears to be the most popular. The authors underline that businesses and cultural institutions built on this model today service tourists only. In light of the research results, the valorisation of this kind of heritage is coherent with a sustainable development approach.

One other contribution, by Zhang and Cheng (contribution 14), analyses marketing for sustainable tourism from a supply side perspective. Their study investigates whether and how tourism can stimulate economic growth after a disaster like an earthquake. The observed case is the Wenchuan Earthquake in the P.R.C. and its effects in the years 2008–2016. The empirical results show that tourism significantly contributes to economic growth (different conditions of tourism specialization and industrial structure produced diverse results). Differences among the 36 disaster-stricken counties are also revealed through the lens of the Tourism Area Life Cycle theory (TALC). Theoretical and practical implications are discussed and the study makes suggestions on how policymakers can support economies in disaster-affected destinations.

Among the papers that examine this special issue topic from the demand side, García-Madurga et al.'s (contribution 3) analyses tourist demand in order to determine optimal positioning strategies for destinations. The authors carried out exploratory research using secondary data and focus group sessions with the aim of defining the positioning axes of Aragón (Spain) as a sustainable tourist destination.

The study by Choe et al. (contribution 1) analyses differences in tourist behaviours across seasons, discussing the case of Northern Indiana. The aim is to understand seasonality at both the aggregate market and individual traveller levels. In the light of their collected data, the researchers emphasize the importance for destination marketers of understanding the influence of seasonality on traveller behaviour and travellers' responses to advertising. Knowledge of tourist behaviours enables destinations to define tourism products/services appropriate to current and potential target markets.

Many of the papers focus on customer satisfaction (CS) analysis. Mi et al. (contribution 6) explore the determinants for improving a hot spring's CS by analysing online reviews about Nanjing Tangshan Hot Spring Resort in China. The study has adopted a novel methodological approach. Its findings reveal implications for hot spring management and suggest practices to attract new customers and retain current demand. Meanwhile, Yeh et al. (contribution 13) focus on CS, experiential marketing and service innovation in an investigation of tourism factories in Taiwan which takes the Changhua County Rice Museum (a tourism factory of rice) as a case study. The research reveals that experiential marketing and service innovation have positive effects on CS and suggests ways in which a corporation's image and product packaging can be designed in order to strengthen purchase intentions. Park et al. (contribution 7) also consider CS in their analysis of the structural relationships between destination image, tourists' multi-attraction travel behaviour patterns, their satisfaction and their behavioural intentions (to revisit and recommend). The survey involves tourists visiting multiple attractions in Seoul (Korea). Indices of social network analysis (density and degree centrality) were applied as indicators of tourists' multi-attraction travel behaviour. Indicators are positively related to tourist satisfaction: the academic and practical implications of this are discussed. Ryu and Park's case study (contribution 8) on the Incheon International Airport (IIA) in South Korea considers the dimensions of satisfaction, pleasure and image. The authors surveyed IIA users to explore the effects of the airport's experience economy on the three dimensions. Their findings highlight the positive effects of (aesthetic and escapist) experience on pleasure, of pleasure on satisfaction and airport image, and of satisfaction on airport image. In light of the above, implications for the future activities of airports are presented.

Kim et al. (contribution 4) and Vázquez-Martínez et al. (contribution 11) investigate tourist perceptions of some key destination attributes/factors. The former examines destination attributes perceived as impacting positively on tourist experience, analysing online tourist reviews (comments on TripAdvisor). The case study is a historic tourist site on the north east coast of Florida: it is known as the Nation's Oldest City and it is listed as a National Historic Landmark by the National Park Service. Among the destination attributes investigated, the (high) quality of the tour guide (as a storyteller and re-enactor) is the most important and has a positive influence on tourist intentions to revisit and recommend the destination. The findings' contribution from a theoretical point of view are pointed out (referring to the literature on co-creation in tourism) and their managerial implications are discussed. Vázquez-Martínez et al., in turn, devote themselves to gastronomy, and whether and how food tourism can play a role in sustainable tourism. The research considers the case of Spain. Data were collected through an online survey designed to investigate tourist perceptions of Spanish gastronomy. The findings confirmed the research hypothesis that Spanish gastronomy impacts positively on the Spanish country brand. The managerial implications focus on the opportunities for the sustainable development and strengthening of Spain's brand.

Finally, Xu et al. (contribution 12) discuss the determinants and mechanisms of environmentally responsible tourist behaviour in China. The methodology is based on an extended Value-Identity-Personal (VIP) model. Data were collected through self-reported questionnaires on an online survey platform. Five latent variables were investigated: biospheric values (BV), environmental self-identity (ESI), personal norm (PN), environmental self-efficacy (ESE) and tourists' environmentally responsible behaviour (TERB). Specific items were identified for each variable. All the research hypotheses were supported by the collected data. Any managerial implications for practitioners (including government authorities and DMO managers) of relevance to sustainable development in tourism destinations were highlighted.

List of Contributions

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