



Environmental engagement of costumer in the tourism industry

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

1. Introduction and objectives

Previous studies corroborate that environmental awareness by consumers is key for marketing strategies, paying attention to the deteriorating environment (Gázquez, Jiménez, Mondéjar, & Cordente, 2011). These authors state that markets punish those companies that fail to consider environmental concerns in their marketing strategies. Therefore, if we capture responsible consumers for the environment we would improve the benefits for the firm and their stakeholders. In this context, this paper contributes to a better understanding of tourists' environmental attitudes distinguishing when they decide to go on holiday domestically or abroad. Previous studies on these issues, focused on eco-tourism and nature tourism, have shown that environmental activists at home display an attitude-behaviour gap when they go on holiday (Juvan & Dolnicar, 2014). However, our study is carried out in a more general context, using an international sample for European tourists, which allows to analyze the regional heterogeneity. This approach represents an interesting starting point to reduce environmentally unsustainable behaviour in the tourist field.

2. Methodology

The analysis is conducted for EU-27 countries, combining micro-data, correspond to the Flash Eurobarometer 281 drawn from the European Commission and data from the European Value Survey, and macro-data from different international sources. The paper takes advantage of multilevel approach because destination choice may affect pro-environmental attitudes of tourists heterogeneously across European countries. In fact, environmental attitudes vary across societies and cultures (Inglehart, 1995). Since the individuals are nested into countries, it is inappropriate to analyze data using traditional methods of regression or because of the violation of the independence assumption and the nested nature of the data. Mixed model specifically may take into account such hierarchical data structure considering simultaneously individual and contextual variables (Rabe-Hesketh & Skrondal, 2012).

3. Results

Descriptive analysis reveals that 48.7% of the interviewees have considered environmental issues when making decisions about their holidays. However, the relative frequencies at the aggregated level differ widely according to the origin country. In fact, a general finding from the estimates indicated that significant variance exists within and among nations in the level of environmental support. This finding is congruent with the necessity of simultaneously assessing the effect of individual and country levels variables on environmental support across the European countries. Different hypotheses regarding the contextual and compositional effects allow us to explain such heterogeneity. The study concludes that the environmental concerns of tourists when travelling domestically were around 15% higher than those travelling abroad. Additionally, the random slope variance regarding destination choice parameter is statistically significant, which allows us to explore the underpinning behind the heterogeneous pattern across countries. In fact, tourists from The Netherlands, Ireland or Spain do not show significant differences in their behavior when traveling outside or within borders.

4. Conclusions

This article contributes to a better understanding of tourists' environmental concerns, assuming that distance from the place of residence is relevant. This paper demonstrates that people who are actively involved in protecting the environment at home do not maintain this type of behavior when they go on vacation, which may have negative environmental consequences on destinations, albeit involuntarily. Our results can be of great importance to minimize the negative environmental impacts when traveling, and represents an interesting starting point to reduce the environmentally unsustainable behaviors in the tourist field. This information may be very useful from the point of view of public planning and firms' marketing strategies, as it can be used to create tourist profiles depending on the tourists' country of origin and destination choice.

Key words: Tourist's environmental attitudes, multilevel analysis, country of origin, destination choice.

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