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Do the Policies Implemented in Protected Natural Areas in Europe Allow for Pro-Environmental Behaviour of Their Stakeholders?

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Abstract : Despite the expressed willingness to reduce its impact on the environment, The tourism industry is one of the main threats to 50% of the world's 252 natural world heritage sites. As Europe is the most visited destination in the world and given the intensifying pressure on protected natural areas, this article seeks to define how to improve pro-environmental behaviours in natural protected areas by stakeholders in Europe. For that purpose, this paper aims to address how European policies influence stakeholders' motivation to implement these strategies and their pro-environmental behaviours. This paper highlights that the main tools for implementing sustainable development policies in protected natural areas are information, knowledge, norms, and values. This paper reports part of the early stages of a PhD research, and the results reported are therefore theoretical and point to a knowledge gap. These are expected to inform the empirical part of the PhD research, to be conducted during the second year of the PhD, and therefore not reported in this paper.

Keywords: Motivation, pro-environmental behaviour, policy, implementation, sustainable tourism, protected natural areas.

1. Introduction

Despite the tourism industry's expressed willingness to reduce its impact on the environment and society, its footprint is increasing (Gössling & Higham, 2020; Lenzen et al., 2018). Some academics believe that this disconnect may be partly related to policymakers becoming facilitators of economic activities rather than adjusters of desirable changes (Dredge & Jamal, 2015, p. 1044) by adopting a utilitarian approach to sustainable development as a tool for growth (Sigala, 2020).

Nevertheless, the interest in sustainable tourism is increasing, especially in nature-based destinations (Silva et al., 2019). According to a 2019 reports by the N2K group, nature-based tourism accounts for 20% of international travel worldwide. Its market share is growing six times faster than the conventional tourism market (Silva et al., 2019). Natural protected areas are highly attractive destinations with nearly 8 billion visits per year worldwide (Balmford et al., 2015) and an estimated 9-10 billion visits by 2050 (Leun et al., 2018). This rise in visitation is coupled with higher pressure on ecosystems and a greater need for access and infrastructure (Sharma et al., 2021). According to the IUCN (IUCN, 2020, p. 30), the management and the state of 50% of the world's 252 natural world heritage sites could be compromised due to legislative frameworks, site boundaries, relations with local people and tourism. As Europe is the most visited region in the world, its national parks and protected areas are not spared. Indeed 24% of European protected areas are reported to be damaged by tourism, and 46% to be under poor or seriously compromised management (IUCN, 2020, p. 61).

By determining the trade-offs between nature, economy, and socio-cultural issues, policies can modulate the impact of consumptive and non-consumptive human activities (van Riper et al., 2019) on protected natural sites' socio-ecological systems. The successful implementation of sustainable tourism policies is believed to be based on the management of collaborative relationships, relational politics (D'Arco et al., 2021; Dredge & Jamal, 2015) and effective participation of stakeholders (Waligo et al., 2013). In this context, according to Torkington et al. (2020), a paradigm shift in tourism policy-making towards greater sustainability and SDGs can occur only if policymakers accept to use a broader range of knowledge, embrace new knowledge and review how knowledge is legitimised. However, policies will not produce the intended outcome of conservation and sustainability if their target population does not act pro-environmentally.

Given the intensifying pressure on protected natural areas, this article seeks to define how to improve the implementation of sustainable strategies in natural protected areas by stakeholders in Europe.

2. Literature review

One of the key problems that threaten national park is the non-compliant and environmentally harmful behaviours of visitors (Alessa et al., 2003; IUCN, 2020). Therefore, it is crucial first to understand the precedents of stakeholders' pro-environmental behaviours (PEB). Secondly, to understand how policies and stakeholders'

motivation to be compliant and engage in PEB interplay. Finally, to understand what the main barriers to the implementation of policies are in protected natural areas.

2.1 The precedents of pro-environmental behaviour of visitors in National Parks

The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) and Value-Belief-Norm based on (Norm Activation Model, e.i. NAM) are theories that seek to understand the pre-determinant of PEB in nature-based destinations have been used independently or in combination in several studies (Esfandiar et al., 2021; Ghazvini et al., 2020; Li & Wu, 2019) and have proven their relevance in predicting pro-environmental behaviour (Garg & Pandey, 2020).

TPB and VBN theories highlight that values, norms, information and knowledge are the main antecedents, boosters and inhibitors of the individuals' motivation and intention to implement a PEB or a policy (Liobikiene & Juknys, 2016).

However, Juvan & Dolnicar (2017) show that these antecedents are not universal and differ depending on the desired outcome. Also, they exercise different influences depending on the personal context, for example, Li and Wu (2019) show in their study that local and non-local visitors of park present different frame for PEB and different process of decision-making: some based on morality (NAM), some on rationality (TPB). This implies that to increase the probability of implementation of policies and PEBs, policymakers should have an accurate and holistic view of the expected and required behaviour of their different stakeholders and their associated drivers. Despite the extensive use of TPB and VBN theory, the results of norm-based studies remain inconsistent (Juvan & Dolnicar, 2017), indicating a need for clarification in this area of research.

Moreover, the literature has been critical of the methodologies used in studies that attempt to measure PEB. First, most studies use self-reported behaviours by interviewees, which lacks objectivity (Geiger et al., 2019). Second, most studies use Pro-Environmental Behaviour Intention (PEBI) as a proxy of PEB. However, some researchers are critical of the link between PEBI and the PEB described in the TPB theory (Davies et al., 2002). Furthermore, to avoid "desirability bias" and other cognitive bias, intention, should be measured independently of the intended behaviour; however, most research does not make this distinction in their interview methodologies (Davies et al., 2002). Finally, as Maurer & Bogner (2020) mentioned, the measurement of environmental behaviour does mean that this behaviour has been realised for an environmental reason.

2.2 The interplay of policies and stakeholders' behaviours

Despite the role of governments and public institutions in achieving the SDGs, few studies consider the role of external norms on stakeholders' PEB (Lavergne et al., 2010). This gap is all the more important to fill as the literature has found that tourism policies do not seem to be up to the challenge of achieving the SDGs (Becken et al., 2020; Dredge & Jamal, 2015).

Regulations and policies are normative and present things not as they are but how "they ought to be" (Kietäväinen & Tuulentie, 2013, p. 847). Therefore, Knowledge and representation of knowledge related to the organisation and government's official position on sustainable tourism is not politically neutral and reflect particular sustainability and human/Nature relationship approach (Hall, 2013; Olwig, 2021; Torkington et al., 2020). Coles (2021) points out that the study of the potential consequences of this "de-emphasis" of specific knowledge and narrative on the tourism body of knowledge is lacking. In this line, Khol & McCool (2016) call for a holistic approach in visitors management, allowing for more inclusiveness (Dredge & Jamal, 2015) and the integration of an integral worldview (Gale et al., 2019).

Other authors like Bramwell et al. (2017) call for assessing how tourism governance and policies can guide society toward more or less sustainable tourism through the re-shaping of "societal relations, social rules and values, and also socio-technical systems" (p. 3). Also, Kornilaki et al. (2019) highlight that companies create socio-industrial norms through observation to compare with other companies their performance in terms of sustainable practices. Thus, the information gathered from the observation of others is used as guidelines for individual behaviours. This implies that protected natural areas institutions must be credible and lead by example both in the content of their policies and strategies and in their enforcement. Also, institutions could increase the perceived need for action and stakeholders' self-efficacy by setting up strategies, providing them with the knowledge of "what to do" (Antimova et al., 2012). Although possibly influenced by the norms set by the policies, stakeholders have their own view of reality determined by their prior knowledge, values and personal norms (see section 2.1).

2.3 Obstacles to the implementation of sustainable strategies and policies by stakeholders

Tourism operators are mainly SMEs that will have to arbitrate the allocation of their limited resources (Romão, 2020) thus tourism entrepreneurs face a paradox: while companies are aware of their natural capital's endangerment, the loss of economic benefits that represents environmental preservation "create tension between tourism development and sustainable tourism" (Moeller et al., 2011). Also, they can face a lack of skills, knowledge and awareness of action required to implement a sustainable policy (Kornilaki et al., 2019).

The local Hosts can refuse to support a sustainable tourism project because there no perceived positive impacts on their community (Lee, 2013). The tourism industry has been criticised for its expected "trickle-down effect", which failed to provide the anticipated outcomes for the host communities (Boluk et al., 2019; Pollock, 2016). Criticism is levelled at development strategies that lead to segregated enclaves and "shadow states" (Mbaiwa & Hambira, 2020, p. 2), with high benefits for the elite and politicians but minimal benefits for local communities and often very negative social, cultural, and environmental impacts (Mbaiwa & Hambira, 2020).

The tourism industry is based on hedonism (Sørensen & Bærenholdt, 2020) and consumerism (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2010); hence tourists allow themselves greater resource-intensive consumption on holiday compare to their domestic habits (Williams & Ponsford, 2009). Also, travelling became a right that must come cheaply (Pollock, 2016). In this context, Higgins-Desbiolles et al. (2019) propose that "The right of tourist to travel must be weighed as inferior to the right of environmental and social rights", while Pollock (2012) propose and shift in mindset from consumer tourism to ethical and conscious travel.

Finally, whatever the stakeholder, fear to fail, task difficulty, poor self-efficacy, and high perceived cost of cooperation can prevent engagement and motivation (Deloitte, 2018; Kornilaki et al., 2019) and produce negative spill-over in PEBs (Yang et al., 2021).

3. Conclusion

In the present context of increasing pressure on protected natural areas, it is crucial to practice the notion of 'use without abuse" (Ghazvini et al., 2020, p. 100295). As shown in section 2. well thought and informed policies and sustainable strategies in protected natural areas can increase the probability of stakeholders' PEB and reduce non-compliant behaviours. For this purpose, the main levers that policymakers could use are information and knowledge and; norms and values.

Also, this paper justifies the current work in progress of the author to realise an empirical study allowing to explore how policies, stakeholders' motivation and behaviour interrelate in protected natural areas in Europe.

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