

Marketing Innovations for Sustainable Destinations

3 Infosource Scale: a Measure to Assess External Tourism Information Sources' Importance

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Introduction

Research in the marketing field indicates that consumers search for external information before taking the initiative of acquiring or using a service (Midgley, 1983). Within this stream of research, several models have been developed to explain how consumers search for information (e.g., Beatty and Smith, 1987; Murray, 1991; Parasuraman and Zinkhan, 2002). From a theoretical perspective, research in consumer behaviour becomes essential to decode all the activities used to develop, communicate and sell services. The optimization of services marketing activities depends on a better understanding of which sources consumers use to take their decisions before selecting and using a service. Similarly, from a practitioner perspective, marketers need to identify which information sources are preferred or rejected by consumers. In such way, it will be possible to influence consumers' choices through use of information.

When researching consumer behaviour issues in a services context, this becomes a very complex task due to the intrinsic characteristics of services, such as intangibility, inseparability of production and consumption, heterogeneity, and perishability (Zeithaml et al., 1985). Tourism is a services area of extreme importance from both public policy and managerial perspectives. The tourism activity is of extreme importance from the point of view of nations and firms. From the point of view of national governments, tourism activity is crucial because it contributes to the economic development of nations. Additionally, tourism enhances societal prosperity and helps national industries to develop, improve productivity and create new jobs, while shaping public perceptions of national competitiveness and improving the standard of living and quality of life. At the firm level, tourism provides an opportunity for national firms to become less dependent on the domestic market. By serving foreign customers, firms may also explore economies of scale and achieve lower production costs while serving clients more efficiently. Additionally, the firm may use the experience with international customers to become a stronger competitor at home.

Comprehension of consumer behaviour in the tourism arena is particularly complex because the acquisition process has an emotional component. For instance, vacation buying is the culmination of a long process of planning, choice, evaluation and assessment of alternatives. The final decision to purchase and select a tourist service presents unique aspects. The acquisition is generally prepared and planned over a considerable period

Chapter extract

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