
12 Tourism luxury values: a global approach

Antónia Correia, Helena Reis and Vahid Ghasemi

The objectives of this chapter are to:

- Consider luxury tourism as a solution for the tourism and hospitality revamp;
- Understand the meaning of luxury tourism;
- Identify luxury values by its antecedents and consequents;
- Examine the luxury values in a global context;
- Recommend luxury values and their relevance to brand identity, luxury service design and culture.

Keywords: Luxury tourism, conspicuous, social values, uniqueness, mixed method

Introduction

Back in history, tourism was launched as a luxury experience only allowed to the elites. During the 18th and 19th centuries, the Grand Tour (which had originated back in the 17th century) became a very popular way of travelling for the elite and upper classes in England. The Grand Tour was an educational trip around Europe in a prechosen itinerary that could last for years, undertaken by the sons of the noble class families, accompanied by an educated and travelled tutor, to finish their education. These trips are often considered by scholars as the origin of the modern tourism (see Brodsky-Porges, 1981; Towner, 1985).

For ages, this luxury was perceived as an exception that did not deserve to be researched. Yet, the fashion industry presented the democratization of luxury and this concept started to be examined. Whereas that the meaning of luxury is still in need of further research, studies on luxury brands are crucial for the marketing and placement of luxury goods, since the awareness of consumers' motivations and behaviours may steer the brands to create what consumers most search for (Atwal and Williams, 2011; Christodoulides, Michaelidou and Li, 2008). Luxury consumption expanded to luxury tourism because consumers value some characteristics in goods as well as in destinations, such as uniqueness, conspicuousness or public display (Correia, Kozak and Reis, 2016; Correia, Kozak and Seongseop, 2018).

With the liberalization of the skies, the great ease of travelling around the globe, getting access to the most exclusive places, the luxury attained to tourism was lost, and tourism started to be perceived as a normal good. Previous research shows that, despite the democratization of tourism, luxury meanings are engrained in tourism experiences, even in places marked by over-tourism. Presently, we are living an unprecedented crisis with all the tourism destinations begging to restart the tourism concept. The coronavirus crisis may be the opportunity to rebound luxury tourism, having been pointed out by the experts as a break to relaunch the tourism industry. Therefore, today, it is more important than ever to open the discussion about luxury tourism.

The next section depicts luxury tourism as a solution for the sector, followed by the conceptual model contemplated on this study. This research aims to deepen the meaning of luxury in the five continents, through a mixed approach, where quantitative and qualitative methods thoroughly analyse the meaning of a type of tourism which may safeguard the revamp of tourism these days. Results confirm five dimensions that may help to understand luxury tourists and their search. Conclusions, limitations and avenues for further research close the chapter.

Luxury tourism, a solution to revamp the sector

The history of tourism shows that this activity has gone under many and various streams, tendencies, and stages. On the brighter side is the overwhelming development that tourism brought to the various industries of the world economies. On the darker side are the undeniable mistakes affecting the environment across the globe, from the overload of air traffic, to cruise pollution, that ruins destinations and, in more recent years, the devastating consequences of over-tourism, ranging from places which are over-pressed like Florence or Venice in Italy, Oxford in the United Kingdom and, to a smaller degree, Innsbruck, Austria, to overcrowded attractions such as the Tower of London, UK, Juliet's balcony in Verona, Italy (see Pearce, 2018)

or the Mona Lisa at The Louvre in Paris, France, just to mention Europe. The low costs offered by the tourism industry were attracting less educated markets whose ignorance was rapidly damaging the physical, cultural and social environments, acting upon the degradation of quality, services, gastronomy, places of interest, etc.

Global research is now focused in rethinking ways in which the strong and still fully unknown devastation the coronavirus effects imposed on tourism can be transformed into opportunities to resuscitate destinations, attractions, services, cultures and attributes. This urgent need to enhance research underlies the present study.

On April, 2, 2020, TRINET, an electronic discussion forum of over 3,000 tourism researchers and educators worldwide, issued a very comprehensive document suggesting global cooperation to re-evaluate the over-tourism, over-consumption and excessive greed that defined much pre-COVID-19 tourism. Among many other considerations and recommendations, TRINET advances strategic actions aiming to identify markets and market segments that have better conditions to recover more rapidly and adapt more quickly. Innovative branding strategies need to replace the ones that do not function under the present situation; the markets post-recovery have to be diversified, avoiding the dependence on one source only, bringing more stability to the destinations. In numerous locations and places, the balance between quality and quantity has to be regained, so the restauration of service quality conferring the true meaning of hospitality must be considered.

Bearing this in mind, the rebound of tourism has to surmount a higher qualification of tourism with a strategy that passes by 'less is more'. Luxury tourism appears as one of the tourism products that holds good potential to revamp tourism, considering luxury is all about privacy, uniqueness, quietness, self-esteem or the desire to be pampered.

Conceptual model

Luxury is a multidimensional concept that comprises different motivations. Research on luxury marketing brand consumption (Atwal and Williams, 2011; Stiehler, Caruana and Vella, 2016; Wu and Liang, 2009) and tourism (Correia, Kozak and Del Chiappa, 2020; Correia, Kozak and Reis, 2016; Stiehler et al., 2016; Wu and Liang, 2009) has advanced several ways to understand consumers' motivations and behaviours: perceptions and attitudes concerning luxury, conspicuous consumption patterns (Correia et al., 2016); perceptions of destination attributes (Kim, 2014; Liu, Wang, Huang and Chen, 2017); satisfaction (Prayag, Hosany and Odeh, 2013), assessing value (Wu and Liang, 2009); and measurement scales (Kim, 2014; Liu et al., 2017), among others.