Planning Tourism Travel

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Traditional Planning Model for Tourism Travel

Every tourism experience can analytically be segmented into its five component phases (anticipation, outward journey, experience phase, return journey, and memory). The planning of tourism travel represents the main activity that characterizes the anticipation phase. A model proposed by Bansal and Eiselt (2004) considers travel planning as the interaction of motivations and constraints that leads first to the selection of a determined region and consequently to the transport means, accommodation, and all other complementary goods and services that compose the tourism experience.

Several studies have tried to analyze the motivations that may lead a tourist to plan a determined holiday or vacation (for a review, see Yousaf et al., 2018). A seminal paper by Maslow (1943) has proposed a general motivation theory based on five levels of needs. The first level is constituted by physiological needs (e.g., food, warm, and rest) that in the case of tourism determine the basic expectations of people traveling toward a determined destination. The second level is related to safety and security needs. It is evident that countries or destinations which do not offer adequate levels of security will experience drastic decreases in tourist demand, unless they propose some *enclaves* with physical and technological barriers between visitors and residents. These first two levels constitute the basic needs that destinations have to supply in order to be the possible target of any tourism travel planning. The third level attains the belongingness and love needs (as intimate relationships and friendships). In the case of tourism travel, this relates to the attitude, especially of neophilic tourists, to try and become familiar with the local communities of the regions that they visit. This specific need determines also the cultural tourism demand where the main aim of the travel is the desire to acquire knowledge about other cultures and countries. The fourth level relates to esteem needs. In the case of tourism, travel is performed in order to impress the group of peers or family and friends. Lastly, the fifth need is the feeling to have accomplished one's objectives (self-actualization or achieving one's potential, by also engaging in creative activities and performances). This motivates some tourists to travel to challenging destinations and to perform demanding activities. Two variants of Maslow's theory have been presented by Pearce (1988) and by Pearce and Lee (2005), listing all possible motivational factors that drive tourist travel planning.

A different theory was presented by Dann (1997) who made a division between push factors that are internal to the tourist and are related to the need to rest and escape from the everyday setting and pull factors that emerge from destinations, which present a series of attractions, amenities, activities, and ancillary services that motivate the tourists toward them.

Several authors have proposed a taxonomy of possible constraints to tourism travel planning (see, among others, Nyaupane and Andereck, 2008). It is possible to consider three possible categories of constraints: intrapersonal, interpersonal, and structural constraints. Intrapersonal constraints are related to the psychological conditions of individuals, which may change even in very short periods of time and that may lead to the willingness to avoid the participation to a travel activity. Possible examples are represented by anxiety, depression, lack of interest, or stress. Interpersonal constraints consider the situations in which an individual is part of a traveling group (family, friends, or colleagues), and consequently all travel decisions must be bargained within the group with the result that individual preferences are only very seldom met. In other cases, it may happen that a potential traveler is not able to find a traveling companion or group for her desired tourism experience. Lastly, structural constraints refer to all the external factors that are interposed between preferences and participation to a travel. The most cited examples of external constraints are the scarcity of time and money. However, many others should be considered such as adverse weather conditions (which determines a remarkable seasonality of demand for many tourism destinations), the lack of effective marketing of some countries or regions, and the low degree of accessibility that in some cases is due to the inefficient transport services and planning.

The Role of Transport in Planning Tourism Travel

One of the most important drivers of the evolution of tourism activities in the past decades is represented by the increased availability and affordability of transport services (see, among others, Schiefelbusch et al., 2007). This has led to a marked upward trend in

tourism travel, both in terms of volumes and distances. As an example, international tourists have passed from 25 million in 1950 to 1.4 billion in 2018. The drastic increases in tourism travel and mobility have determined momentous consequences for the natural and human environments where the transit regions have borne the burden of transport externalities without any sensible economic advantage. It would then be important to plan tourism travel by taking into consideration all possible measures that may lead to sustainable management of transport activities. Such measures would likely fall in one or more of the following six categories: alternative fuels/energy sources, improved energy efficiency and technology, investments in infrastructure, operational measures, behavioral measures, and taxes and subsidies (Peeters et al., 2019). However, sustainable transport measures should also take into account the effects of a reduction in the number of trips, given that tourism represents an important source of revenues, jobs, and gross domestic product growth. More sustainable tourism travel (which may imply slower journeys and longer periods of staying once at destination) may be feasible only for a limited, privileged, share of citizens. Most of the population may deem these sustainable tourism travel activities either as undesirable or unaffordable in terms of time and/or of economic budget. It is then evident that the development of tourism travel depends on the degree of accessibility of a determined area and of the planning activities that have been undertaken to increase it. Litman (2008) has proposed a taxonomy of all the factors that affect accessibility and, in the case of tourism, determine the likelihood of people to choose a determined destination in their planning activities. The next subsection will offer a general description of each of these factors and will then contextualize them to the case of tourism travel planning.

Factors Affecting Accessibility and Planning in Tourism Travel

The following is a description of the factors affecting accessibility and that are of paramount importance when planning tourism travel. One of the factors considered in Litman's taxonomy, mobility substitutes or the telecommunications and mobility services that substitute for physical travel, will not be considered given the lack of relevance in tourism travel. The general descriptions will be based on Litman (2008), while the discussions of their relevance for tourism travel are the author's elaborations.

- *Transport demand* refers to the amount of mobility and access that people would choose. In the case of tourism travel, it considers the amount of tourism demand for a determined destination. For the large majority of destinations, it is important to consider the seasonal pattern of demand, characterized by peak periods, shoulder periods, and low demand periods. For planning purposes, it is important to forecast tourism demand. This can be accomplished by using time series analysis, autoregressive moving average methods, support vector machines, or neural networks models.
- *Mobility* considers the travel speed and the distance to be covered. In general transport literature, this topic has been considered as travel time and travel reliability. In the case of tourism travel, this issue has two possible meanings. On the one hand, it may be related to the amount of time that is necessary to reach the desired tourism destination (mobility toward tourism destinations). On the other hand, it may be directed at accounting for the amount of time required to move within the destination in order to perform the activities that characterize a tourism experience.
- *Transport options (modes)* indicates the quality of the various transport options, including walking, cycling, public transport, and private motorized transport modes. In the case of tourism travel, the availability of various transport modes has to be carefully considered given that at the tourism destinations there may be options that are not normally part of the possible choice set in everyday life. Moreover, during holiday periods, the amount of discretionary travel increases substantially with respect to required or forced travel activities.
- *User information* represents the availability of reliable information on mobility and accessibility options. The availability of information is a particularly important topic to consider when analyzing the planning of tourism travel. In this context, both information and communication technologies (ICT) and smart technologies and social networks have assumed pivotal roles. Their relevance will constitute the object of the analysis in the following section "The Current Trends in Planning Tourism Travel."
- *Integration* denotes the degree of connectivity among transport system links and nodes. In the case of tourism travel, it is very important to create an integrated transport system that allows for tourists to reach their desired destination in a reasonable amount of overall traveling time. This is because the travel from the place of residence to destination requires the use of multiple transport modes (e.g., plane and bus, plane and train, and so on), unless people decide to travel with their own private motorized vehicle. In this context, the coordination and the partnerships between private stakeholders and public administrations can determine positive synergies and enhance the degree of integration among transport modes.
- *Affordability* refers to the cost of mobility for individuals as a share of their relative incomes. This increased economic affordability has most probably been the main determinant to move tourism from a luxury activity available only for a very limited share of the overall population to a possibility for the vast majority of people in developed countries with the ensuing development of mass tourism travels.
- *Land use factors* consider how land use density and mix affect travel distances and costs. Within tourism, the land use affects the degree of satisfaction of tourists once they are at destination. Moreover, it is an important element of the relationships between tourists and residents. In some cases, these two categories share the same places, with the emerging positive and negative externalities. In other destinations, according to the social exchange theory, land use planning determines a clear distinction between the areas where tourists interact with each other and the zones where residents go to in order to avoid tourists.
- *Transport network connectivity* concerns the density of roads and path connections and then the directness of travel between destinations. This is an issue where tourism travel is only part of a more general planning activity by the public administrations

that need to take into account the needs and requirements of a large number of stakeholders. This is a long-term concern where it is possible to observe a remarkable path dependency. In the case of tourism, accurate investments may favor the growth of complementary forms of tourism with sensible externalities for all the interested adjoining areas.

- *Transport management* designates how the rules and regulations issued at the various administrative levels impact on the accessibility of a determined destination. This is a complementary issue with respect to land use factors and transport network connectivity. An appropriate transport management ensures that the most efficient (and possibly environmentally and socially sustainable) alternative is available for tourists at the right place and at the right time. Tourist transport management is, in general, connected to public administration activities, but it can also stem from private initiative.
- *Prioritization* implies strategies that favor more efficient travel activities. This constitutes an important element in the overall tourism development strategies, given that the prioritization of specific infrastructures and services can determine the development path of the tourism phenomenon in a destination.
- *Inaccessibility* denotes the value of inaccessibility and isolation, which in some cases requires to limit the access possibilities. For some niches of the tourism travel, such as adventures and elite forms of tourism, the inaccessibility is considered as a positive asset. In all other cases, the degree of inaccessibility should be reduced as much as possible so that the destination can increase its market share and the satisfaction of tourists.

A review proposed by Van Truong and Shimizu (2017) has ascertained that, despite the relevance of all these factors for the development of tourism travel, very few studies have taken them into consideration when estimating the effect of transport on tourism travel. Some studies have considered infrastructure improvements, information provision, and travel costs while most of the others described factors have been neglected and would deserve to be included in the analysis of tourism travel planning.

The Current Trends in Planning Tourism Travel

The passage of most of the goods and services that compose the tourism activities from experience goods to search goods is one of the most relevant methodological shifts that have characterized the tourist sector in the past decades. An experience good is a consumption good (or service) whose quality and peculiar characteristics can only be asserted by the tourist only after its consumption. On the other hand, a search good is a consumption good (or service) whose quality and peculiar characteristics can be asserted by the tourist before its purchase and consumption. This shift has momentous consequences on the planning of tourist travel. Two of the most important determinants of this trend are represented by the diffusion of ICT and by the increased relevance of social networks and user-generated content, originating from the use of these new technologies. The following two subsections will present a discussion of these two factors, emphasizing their role in the planning activities of tourists.

The Role of ICT for Tourism Travel Planning

A study by Money and Crotts (2003) has stated the principle that the amount of activities devoted to the acquisition of information is limited to the point in which, coherently with general economic theory, the marginal benefit of a further act of search is higher than the marginal cost. Moreover, search is partitioned in internal search (which identifies the retrieval of previously acquired information) and in external search. In the latter case, the sources of information can either be: (1) personal (e.g., previous experiences of friends and relatives), (2) marketing or advertisements, (3) neutral by third parties who are not directly interested in the act of purchase (see section "The Relevance of Social Networks and User-Generated Content for Tourism Travel Planning"), or (4) experiential through direct contacts with the retailer. Important sources of external search that may in some cases be linked to marketing and advertisement practices and in others to the neutral information sources and that have taken a leading role in tourism travel planning are the ICT and the smart technologies (Steen Jacobsen and Munar, 2012). Their main benefit for the tourist who has to plan the travel is represented by the reduction of search costs and the consequent possibility to perform a larger number of searches in a determined period of time. Moreover, they allow the option to double-check the information obtained through traditional channels, such as travel agents and guidebooks. Xiang et al. (2015) have characterized the use of ICTs for travel planning as an adaptive behavior that tries to take advantage of the new opportunities provided by these new search tools. They have then identified various trends that have emerged from the use of ICTs for travel planning. The first one considers that the use of ICTs for travel planning is saturated and represents the main source of information. Within all products that compose the tourism experience, ICTs are particularly used for the choice and purchase of travel tickets, accommodation, and car rental. The problems that had marked the early phases of ICT adoption for tourism travel planning (e.g., poor usability and lack of personalized services) appear to have been overcome by their evolution. The second trend is related to the use of ICT for planning purposes by all age cohorts, although the younger ones appear to be more engaged, and to choose from a wider range of options. A further trend is constituted by the adoption of ICT tools also for the search and purchase of secondary products (e.g., museum tickets and tourism shopping). Derrick Huang et al. (2017) have clarified that the main attributes of ICT for travel planning are informativeness (quality and trust of information), accessibility (easiness to access appropriate information), interactivity (real time feedbacks and active communications), and personalization (possibility to obtain information that is coherent with personal travel planning needs). They then conclude that the use of ICT allows to consider a much wider range of alternatives and to enhance the satisfaction of tourists. The issue of tourists' satisfaction linked to the use of ICTs has also been carried out by Woo Yoo et al. (2017). They conclude that the level

of satisfaction and the quality of information obtained by using ICTs for travel planning is positively correlated with the skills and confidence of ICTs possessed by the tourist who use them.

The Relevance of Social Networks and User-Generated Content for Tourism Travel Planning

The transformation of the informal word of mouth channels to retrieve efficient information for the tourism travel planning to a formal set of websites, apps, and social networks has been one of the effects of the widespread use of Internet (Cox et al., 2009). One of the main issues originating from the diffusion of this new tool to acquire information was related to the degree of trustworthiness that the provided information may have. This is evident for both consumers and suppliers of tourism goods and services. The latter must take into account the increasing popularity of these new planning tools and must consequently monitor the information provided about their firms, services, and establishments. A study by Fotis et al. (2012) has shown that social media are used throughout the entire process of travel planning and that their influence is higher on the destination and accommodation choices. The degree of trustworthiness is second only to the information gathered through friends and relatives. Lastly, it appears evident that there is a high rate of heterogeneity depending on the various considered national markets. Another source of heterogeneity has been proposed by Simms (2012) who has highlighted that some of the trip characteristics (i.e., location of the destination, familiarity with the destination, and travel party composition) influence the engagement of tourists in user-generated content for travel planning. Ayeh et al. (2013) have suggested that ease of use, perceived enjoyment, and positive attitude play an important role in the use of social media and user-generated content for travel planning. On the other hand, complexity and the perceived effort have negative effects on the likelihood of travel information searches through social media (Chung and Koo, 2015). A last important factor is represented by the perceived similarity of interests between the generator and the user of relevant information. A general theory has been proposed by Mendes-Filho et al. (2018) by jointly taking into account psychological empowerment and technology acceptance. The former considers the capacity of people to develop efficient decision making and the discretion to carry out a specific behavior. The latter comprises perceived usefulness and ease of use of the technological tools.

A different tourism travel planning issue has been studied by Cenamor et al. (2017) who have proposed a possible tourism tool that mediates between social networks and smart travel technologies. The system would create personalized excursions and tourism routes, based on a series of parameters introduced by the tourist (e.g., length of stay and specific cultural interests), by using the consumer-generated information gathered in a traveling social network. This interaction of technology and social networks may represent an important evolution that may greatly enhance the tourism travel planning options based on the specific preferences of the individuals.

Conclusions

The article has shown that tourism travel planning is based on the interactions between motivations and constraints, which lead to the selection of a determined destination and of the activities to perform once it is reached. Motivations may be categorized either as a multilayered series of needs or as the interaction of push and pull factors. On the other hand, constraints can either be intrapersonal, interpersonal, or structural. Within the latter category, transport constitutes a pivotal element in planning tourism travel. The past decades have been characterized by a remarkable increase in the availability and affordability of transport services that have allowed a wide diffusion of tourism activities and that have called for an effort to enhance the share of sustainable tourism travel activities. A related important issue is the degree of accessibility of tourist regions, in terms of travel both toward and within the destination. All factors affecting accessibility (transport demand, mobility, transport options, user information, integration, affordability, land use, transport network connectivity, transport management, prioritization, and inaccessibility) represent topic elements in tourism travel planning for both private actors and public administrations. They are particularly important elements to consider in periods marked by disruptive events, such as the COVID-19 pandemic whose effects on transport and tourism have started to be manifest in 2020. In this context, ICTs, social networks, user-generated content, and their interactions may demonstrate to be more and more essential, given the degree of informativeness and of interactivity that they allow to achieve. Moreover, they permit to reduce the search costs for the best possible alternative, and they are characterized by a high degree of trustworthiness among users. All the aforementioned factors of accessibility would deserve to be jointly considered in the future analyses of tourism travel planning in order to propose robust models and sound evaluations of current practices and activities.

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