



CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR AND DEMAND RESPONSE OF TOURISTS TO CLIMATE CHANGE

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Abstract: The influence of climate change on tourism demand patterns will be shaped by the response of tourists to the complexity of mitigation policy and its impacts on transportation systems, the wide range of climate change impacts on destinations, as well as broader impacts on society and economic development. Tourists have the largest adaptive capacity of elements within the tourism system because of their flexibility to substitute the place, timing and type of holiday, even at very short notice. Consequently, understanding tourist perceptions and reactions to the impacts of climate change is essential to anticipating the potential geographic and seasonal shifts in tourism demand, as well as the decline or increase of specific tourism markets. Yet, despite a wide range of publications assessing reactions of tourists to various environmental and climate-related changes, little is actually known about the complexity of demand responses. The paper reviews and discusses existing studies, and provides a framework for a better understanding of perceptions of change, as well as identifying major current uncertainties and research needs. **Keywords:** behaviour, climate change, demand responses, perceptions, travel motivation. © 2011 Published by Elsevier Ltd.

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INTRODUCTION

Climate, the natural environment, income and discretionary wealth, personal safety, and travel costs are key factors in travel motivations and destination choice (Hall, 2005). Because all of these factors appear likely to be affected by climate change (Scott, Hall, & Gössling, 2012), the implications for tourist behaviour and patterns of demand at local, national and international scales could be profound. Understanding tourist perceptions and reactions to the impacts of climate change is therefore essential to anticipating the potential geographic and seasonal shifts in tourism demand, changes in specific tourism markets, and the overall competitiveness of businesses and destinations. Yet, despite increasing numbers of publications on tourism and climate and environmental change, substantial knowledge gaps remain with respect to demand responses (Gössling & Hall, 2006a; Gössling & Hall, 2006b; Hall, 2008a). This paper therefore aims to systematically review existing studies in order to develop a coherent outline of major current uncertainties and research needs.

TYPES OF CLIMATE CHANGE IMPACTS ON TOURISM

Because the impacts of climate change on tourism operations and destinations are closely entwined with tourist behaviour, four major types of climate change impacts on tourism demand can be distinguished: direct impacts of a changed climate; indirect impacts of environmental change; mitigation policy and tourist mobility; and societal change related to reduced economic growth, consumer cultures and social-political stability. The majority of literature focuses on the direct and indirect consequences of climate change. There appear to be no studies that provide direct behavioural evidence of how reduced economic growth or social and political stability linked to climate change would affect tourism, and few studies that assess the consequences of mitigation policy in tourism (cf. Scott et al., 2012). The following section discusses examples of relevant studies regarding tourist responses to a changing climate, climate-induced environmental change, and mitigation policy, together with a discussion of their shortcomings or prevailing uncertainties. Building on this discussion, the paper goes on to present a model for the assessment of demand responses along with a systematic review of research gaps.

Tourist Responses to a Changing Climate

There is considerable evidence demonstrating the intrinsic importance of weather and climate for tourist decision-making, including motivations, destination choice and timing of travel, as well as experience (Scott & Lemieux, 2010). Consequently, changes in the spatial and temporal distribution of climate resources will have important consequences for tourism demand at various scales. Changes in global demand patterns have been assessed in top-down simulation models

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