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Research Paper

Factors influencing domestic tourist attendance at cultural attractions in Andalusia, Spain

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ABSTRACT

The recent economic downturn has forced the tourism industry to focus their attention on attracting domestic tourists to cultural attractions, which are considered to be one of the most prominent attributes of tourist destinations. This paper studies 10 different types of cultural tourist attraction based on a survey of 4223 residents of Andalusia, Spain. Through cluster analysis, these 10 types of tourist attraction are grouped into three clusters. It is intended that this will contribute to better-informed decision making by the industry. This study thus offers new insight into socio-demographic variables (such as gender, age, marital status, education, and monthly income), psychographic variables (self-identified political ideology, government support and funding preference), and geographic variables (city size) that may be used as effective predictors of attendances at cultural attractions. Managers of tourist attractions should focus their efforts on one or more facets of these visitor profiles in order to attract more tourists to their specific location.

1. Introduction

Cultural attractions play an important role in tourism and have become a significant aspect of attracting visitors to tourist destinations (Richards, 2002); however, there is no generally accepted definition of what cultural attractions exactly are (Leask, 2010). This is due to their complex nature, as well as the changing meaning of the term 'culture' (Altunel & Erkut, 2015; Barbieri & Mahoney, 2010). Furthermore, prior research has included within its remit not only permanent sites (Bonn, Joseph-Mathews, Dai, Hayes, & Cave, 2007; Garrod, Leask, & Fyall, 2007) but also temporary events (Barbieri & Mahoney, 2010; Kim, Cheng, & O'Leary, 2007; Richards, 2002). Following a broad definition of cultural tourism (Barbieri & Mahoney, 2010; Silberberg, 1995), this study refers to cultural attractions in terms of facilities, sites or events that motivate tourists to visit due either to the attraction's historical, artistic, scientific, or heritage value, or else simply due to lifestyle preferences. Researchers acknowledge that a broad range of attractions could be considered cultural attractions. For instance, Bonn et al. (2007) include a number of facilities focusing on heritage (i.e. museums, aquariums, art centers, archeological or historic sites, theaters, monuments, castles, architectural relics, religious centers, and zoos), while other researchers also consider other types of attractions (i.e. music festivals, concerts, operas, ballets, book festivals and fairs) to be cultural attractions (Kim et al., 2007). According to Leask (2010), most research on cultural attractions focuses on location, product type, management issues, and visitor experience. Little attention has been paid to characteristics of domestic tourists (Kim et al., 2007). For the purposes of this study, the term 'domestic tourists' refers to residents of a certain region who attend cultural attractions in locations other than their home city.

Cultural attractions are often a primary motivation for domestic tourists to visit a destination (Richards, 2002; Wu, Wall, & Zhou, 2014). Analyzing domestic visitor attendance at cultural attractions can provide new insights into understanding tourist behaviors at various different tourist attractions (Barbieri & Mahoney, 2010; Kim et al., 2007). Since domestic tourism has been found to have a strong influence on regional growth (Cortés-Jiménez, 2008; Xiao, 2013), a better understanding of domestic tourist behaviors would be useful both to regional policy makers and to business managers, who could use this information to manage visitors' needs and maximize the return on investment by targeting the most profitable visitors (Perdue, 1996).

The benefits of segmentation in destination marketing have been widely acknowledged as a means of helping managers to develop effective strategies (Stepchenkova, Shichkova, Kim, Pennington-Gray, & Rykhtik, 2015; Tkaczynski, Rundle-Thiele, & Beaumont, 2009). A significant number of studies have analyzed the profiles of people who

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attend cultural attractions, although they usually focus on only one type of attraction (e.g. Felsenstein & Fleischer, 2003; Hanquinet, 2013; Su & Wall, 2015; Wen & Cheng, 2013). Despite the potential interest of a broader vision of consumer profiles for different cultural attractions and a comparison between the users' profiles, only a few studies have analyzed profiles of domestic visitors at a variety of cultural attractions (Borowiecki & Castiglione, 2014; Kim et al., 2007; McKercher, Ho, and du Cros, 2005). Furthermore, since the literature indicates that consumers with a certain profile may visit more than one type of cultural attraction (Barbieri & Mahoney, 2010; Katz-Gerro & Jæger, 2013; Richards & van der Ark, 2013), it is necessary to group the attractions in a smaller number of categories based on domestic tourist behaviors. Until now, few studies have defined profiles for tourists who attend various types of cultural attractions within a certain category (Kim et al., 2007), which would not only facilitate the interpretation of the results, but also collaboration among the managers of cultural attractions within each group, since they are visited by users with similar profiles. This study assists in addressing this gap by examining the characteristics of domestic visitors at 10 different types of cultural attraction in Andalusia, Spain. The specific objectives of the paper are: (1) to establish clusters of cultural attractions in order to categorize these attractions into different groups, and (2) to identify the impact of different types of segmentation variables (socio-demographic, psychographic and geographic) on consumers' inclination to visit cultural attractions.

The paper is structured into five sections. Following this first section, which describes the background of this research, Section 2 presents a literature review of domestic visitor attendance at cultural attractions. Section 3 explains the research design used in this study, which is based on cluster analysis and multinomial logistic regression. Section 4 presents the study's empirical findings, and this is followed by Section 5, which explains the study's theoretical implications. Section 6 presents the study's conclusions and practical implications. Finally, Section 7 discusses the limitations of the study and makes some suggestions for future research.

2. Literature review

2.1. Categorization of cultural attractions

The growth of cultural tourism in recent decades has played a crucial role in the promotion and preservation of cultural attractions, as well as the socio-economic development of host communities (Leask, 2010). As cultural attractions increase the attractiveness of tourism destinations (Kim et al., 2007; Richards, 2002), it is important to understand the complex interconnections between cultural attractions and domestic tourist behaviors in order to maximize a destination's power of attraction.

A literature review was conducted that reveals that most studies analyzing tourist behaviors focus only on one cultural attraction. For instance, heritage sites (Wu et al., 2014), museums (Sheng & Chen, 2012), local festivals (Felsenstein & Fleischer, 2003; Matheson, Rimmer, & Tinsley, 2014), cultural festivals (Herrero, Sanz, Bedate, & Barrio, 2012), oriental medicine festivals (Song, You, Reisinger, Lee, & Lee, 2014), religious music festivals (Tkaczynski & Rundle-Thiele, 2013), philharmonic orchestra festivals (Saayman & Saayman, 2016), zoos (Therkelsen & Lottrup, 2015), and national parks (Marques, Reis, Menezes, & Salgueiro, 2015). This clearly illustrates the limitations of prior research, since tourists usually base their decision of which destination to visit on a wide range of different cultural attractions (Barbieri & Mahoney, 2010). It would therefore be interesting to categorize the different kinds of cultural attractions based on consumer behavior.

A number of studies have categorized cultural attractions based on different criteria (i.e. the type of resource, the site's primary purpose, the attraction's main features, and the type of ownership). According to Leask (2010), these general categories include: theme parks/amusement parks, museums and galleries, natural parks, visitor centers, religious sites, and heritage sites. Nevertheless, while this type of classification makes sense from a statistical or descriptive perspective, it is not very useful for studying tourist behavior, since tourists usually attend various diverse attractions. Kim et al. (2007) suggest categorizing cultural attractions based on tourist attendance by grouping them according to the profiles of the consumers that are most likely to visit them. The results include the classification of a large number of attractions into four categories, showing the different sociodemographic characteristics of the visitors in each group. However, this general classification has its limitations since domestic tourist demand is influenced by the different characteristics of the specific country or region in question (Wu et al., 2014; Xiao, 2013). It should therefore be noted that the findings on cultural consumption for any one country or region cannot be generally applied to other locations without first testing the validity of such generalizations (Kirchberg & Kuchar, 2014). The present study therefore opts for a focus similar to the study by Kim et al. (2007) insofar as it aims to determine the number and composition of groups of cultural attractions in Andalusia.

2.2. Segmenting consumption patterns for cultural attractions

It is important to understand the different characteristics of domestic tourists in order to establish appropriate planning, management and operations of cultural attractions (Su & Wall, 2015). There is a general consensus that different marketing strategies should be developed in order to attract tourists with different characteristics (Hughes & Allen, 2005).

Market segmentation offers a better understanding of visitor behaviors and profiles, making it easier to identify niche markets (Arimond & Elfessi, 2001). Since the second half of the nineteenth century, studies have been developed based on various theoretical approaches regarding attendance at cultural attractions. The Homology Thesis claims that cultural consumption patterns can be explained by the 'habitus' concept and structural homology (Bourdieu, 1984). Habitus is considered to be a cultural structure in the consumer's mind that shapes their behaviors, while structural homology is based on the assumption that a consumer's cultural tastes are directly related to their social class. DiMaggio (1987), however, has determined that taste is more important than social status in classifying consumers. Peterson (1992) further explores differences in cultural consumption based on social class and status, showing that groups with higher social status exhibit positive attitudes towards both elitist and non-elitist types of attractions (omnivore), while groups with lower social status only show a positive attitude towards non-elitist attractions (univore). In line with the homology concept, Bauman (1988) suggests that individuals in contemporary society develop their own self-identity through taste and consumption patterns. DiMaggio (1996) provides evidence that art museum visitors have different socioeconomic characteristics and socio-political attitudes. Todd and Lawson (2001) subsequently segmented New Zealand residents into seven clusters based on activities, interests and opinions in order to describe their behaviors visiting museums and galleries.

Several authors have recently demonstrated the importance of individuals' demographic and socioeconomic characteristics in explaining attendance at cultural attractions (e.g. Wen & Cheng, 2013). Researchers have found evidence that gender influences people's attendance at cultural attractions (Erickson, 1996; Katz-Gerro & Sullivan, 2010; Muñiz, Rodríguez, & Suárez, 2014). Erickson (1996) argues that said gender differences depend on the type of activity in question. Accordingly, women have been found to have a stronger inclination to attend more upscale cultural attractions (López-Sintas & García-Álvarez, 2002; Warde & Gayo-Cal, 2009), which are associated with creative expression through higher forms of art and more sophisticated taste. In contrast, Katz-Gerro and Sullivan (2010) argued