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Farm Tourists: Exploring Reasons For Visiting “Ferienhof Faust”

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FARM TOURISTS: EXPLORING REASONS FOR VISITING “FERIENHOF FAUST”

INTRODUCTION

Farm tourism is increasingly popular (Arroyo, Barbieri & Rich, 2013) and studies of travel behavior (e.g., Pesonen, Komppula, Kronenberg, & Peters, 2011) continue to suggest the need for more research on tourists' underlying motives in general. The purpose of our study is to explore “sleeping in the hay” as one of the experiences of tourists visiting Ferienhof Faust, a farm resort located in Weiden in der Oberpfalz, Bavaria, Germany. The study aims to understand farm tourists' reasons for “sleeping in the hay” and how these might differ from the conventional hotel stay. Although authenticity is a widely researched topic in tourism (e.g., Di Domenico & Miller, 2012); our study aims to contribute to the tourism literature by examining the roles experiential authenticity, escaping, seeking, and more importantly, resistance (conscious) play in the reasoning for farm tourists' visitations.

Our theoretical framework takes the form of a multi-dimensional latent construct model and includes the four motivational latent constructs of escaping, seeking, experiential authenticity, and resistance. Satisfaction with farm tourism and revisit intentions are included as outcome constructs. Ideas of creating experiential authenticity have been explored in business strategies of farm families (Di Domenico & Miller, 2012), but the extent to which this choice is a way of resisting mass tourism remains unexplored. Of particular interest is the idea that people may seek farm experiences as alternatives to mass tourism.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Escaping, Seeking, Authenticity, Resistance

Escaping, seeking, experiential authenticity and resistance are potential factors driving tourists' behavior. Tourists may escape routine environments and seek intrinsic rewards for personal and interpersonal reasons. Escaping, “the desire to leave the everyday environment behind oneself” (Iso-Ahola, 1982, p. 261), can be a reason for travel. It provides opportunities to get away (from pressures and responsibilities) and to learn new things (Fodness, 1994). Seeking, “the desire to obtain psychological (intrinsic) rewards through travel in a contrasting (new or old) environment” (Iso-Ahola, 1982, p. 261), can be another reason for travel.

Also, it has been suggested that tourists may seek authenticity when they travel. This study focuses on existential authenticity. Existential authenticity deals with the tourists' experiences including social and cultural dimensions that can signify a “state of being” (Cohen, 2010), such as being “released from the alienating conformity to the pressures of the contemporary consumer society” (Wang, 1999, p. 351). Experience-based authenticity may have nothing to do with the actual authenticity of a toured object.

More importantly, tourists are believed to consciously resist the mass tourism. The two forms of resistance are collective and individual (Shaw, 2001); they overlap because individual acts can affect others in similar surroundings (Shaw, 2001). For the purposes of this study, resistance is viewed as an act consciously made by the individual to go against mass tourism and its power structures (e.g., elites and multinational corporations). This individual act may be participation in non-conventional tourist activities, such as farm tourism. Resistance can have positive effects on self-identity and self-worth (Wearing, 1992), and therefore can influence one's satisfaction with the farm experience and future visit intentions.

Satisfaction with Farm Tourism

Satisfaction with travel experiences can enhance tourist loyalty towards travel destinations (Alexandris, Kouthouris, & Meligdis, 2006). This study adopts Oliver's (1993)

attribute-level satisfaction approach as we believe that satisfaction with farm tourism can arise from numerous factors, such as service, environment, dining, and price, as well as the satisfaction of the four factors discussed above.

Revisit Intention

The most immediate antecedents of behavior, behavioral intentions have been proved to originate from “considerations of attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control” (Crano & Prislin, 2006, p. 361). The theory of planned behavior (TPB) argues that behaviour rests on intentions and perceived control (Crano & Prislin, 2006). In the tourism context, travel intention refers to consequences of mental processes that convert motivations into behaviors and drive these behaviors (Jang, Bai, Hu, & Wu, 2009).

METHODOLOGY

Convenience sampling is utilized. The farm resort owner will email the link to a ten-minute online survey available in English and German to its 1,500 former guests. The escaping and seeking motives are measured using items from Snepenger, King, Marshall, and Uysal (2006). Existential authenticity is measured using modified items proposed by Kolar and Zabkar (2010). Resistance is evaluated using three adapted items from McQuarrie and Jackson (1997). Satisfaction is measured using a single item revised from Chi and Qu (2008). Revisit intentions are tested by items developed by Maxham and Netemeyer (2002) and Kaplanidou (2009).

Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) will be performed to determine the leading reasons for visiting the farm resort. Correspondence analysis (CA) will be conducted to identify the relationships between age groups, gender, and leading reasons for visiting. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) will be carried out using structural equation modeling (SEM) in SmartPLS 3.0 to determine the structural relationships between the latent constructs in the theoretical framework. Furthermore, SPSS 22.0 will be employed for descriptive statistical analysis, EFA, and CA.

EXPECTED RESULTS

Behavioral, motivational, and demographic characteristics of farm tourists will be analyzed. There might be some gender and age-group differences in the relative importance of reasons driving tourists to go to farm resorts. We anticipate that escaping, seeking, authenticity, and resistance are positively related to tourists’ level of satisfaction, which, in turn, would significantly influence revisit intentions. There might also be some correlation between experiential authenticity and resistance. From the structural model’s perspective, the following five paths could be established: 1) escaping →satisfaction; 2) seeking →satisfaction; 3) authenticity →satisfaction; 4) resistance →satisfaction; 5) satisfaction→ revisit intentions.

IMPLICATIONS

This research will have theoretical and practical implications. Theoretically, the testing of the proposed theoretical framework can extend the literature on authenticity, escaping, seeking, and resistance in the farm tourism context. More importantly, the differentiations among the four types of reasons will be empirically examined and delineated. Practically, identification of reasons for participation in farm tourism and the overall satisfaction with the experience can have practical implications for farm resorts.

KEYWORDS: authenticity, escaping, seeking, resistance, farm tourism

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