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The Relationship between Types of Tourist and Destination Authenticity

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ABSTRACT

Since the 1960s and 1970s, the issues of both types of tourist and authenticity in tourism have been popular topics among tourism academics. However, their socio-cultural approaches and contributions have been limited to the theoretical stage. These arguments need to move to the next level of debate for tourism literature. The purpose of this study is to determine the relationships between the types of tourist and authenticity in tourism based on a summary of three decades of tourism literature. The findings of the study are expected to reveal a new approach to tourism destination segmentation supported by strong theoretical foundations.

Keywords: *types of tourist, authenticity, tourism destination*

INTRODUCTION

Since the 1960s and 1970s, when sociologists began arguing for a correlation between the types of tourist and authenticity in tourism – the quest for real things or originality -- the issues of both types of tourist and authenticity in tourism have been popular topics among tourism academics. In addition to early sociologists like MacCannell (1973), Cohen (1972, 1979, and 2002), Turner and Turner (1978), later scholars such as Krippendorf (1992), Wang (2000), Urry (2002 and 2003), Rojek (1995 and 2000), Rojek and Urry (1997), Ritzer (1993 and 1998), and Reisinger and Steiner (2006) have also made a great contribution to opening the theoretical debates over types of tourist and authenticity in tourism literature. However, their socio-cultural approaches and contributions have been limited to the theoretical stage. These arguments will not be settled any time soon, but they need to move to the next level of debate for tourism literature. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to determine the relationships between the types of tourist and authenticity in tourism based on a summary of three decades of tourism literature. This study will also investigate whether the relationships between the types of tourist and authenticity in tourism are significantly correlated with tourists' previous experiences in tourism destinations and their socio-demographics. The findings of the study are expected to reveal a new approach to tourism destination segmentation supported by strong theoretical foundations.

BRIEF LITERATURE REVIEWS

Although much research associated with the types of tourist and tourism authenticity has published in the tourism literature, the authors determined to have Cohen's (1972) tourist types and Wang's (1999) authenticity category for this study because Cohen's (1972) study was more pioneering and Wang's (2000) was rooted in the sociology literature.

Cohen (1972), a sociologist of tourism, classifies tourists into four types, based on the degree to which they seek familiarity and novelty: the drifter, the explorer, the individual mass tourist, and the organized mass tourist. Table 1 depicts the characteristics of these four types.

Table 1
The Types of Tourist

| Type | Familiarity | Novelty | Others |
|-----------------------------|-------------|---------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| The Drifter | Lowest | Highest | Highly adventurous; lives within the local community |
| The Explorer | Lower | Higher | Travels alone; seeks comfortable accommodations and reliable transportation |
| The Individual Mass Tourist | Higher | Lower | Not bound to a group; somewhat controlled time and itinerary |
| The Organized Mass Tourist | Highest | Lowest | Follows a tour guide; follows an itinerary fixed in advance |

Wang (1999) postulates that tourists' experience with tourism destinations can categorize authenticity in tourism in terms of three levels (or through three formats): objective, constructive, and existential. Both objective and constructive authenticity are object-related, but existential authenticity is activity-related. Table 2, presenting information offered by Wang (2000), shows each category of authenticity in tourism experiences.

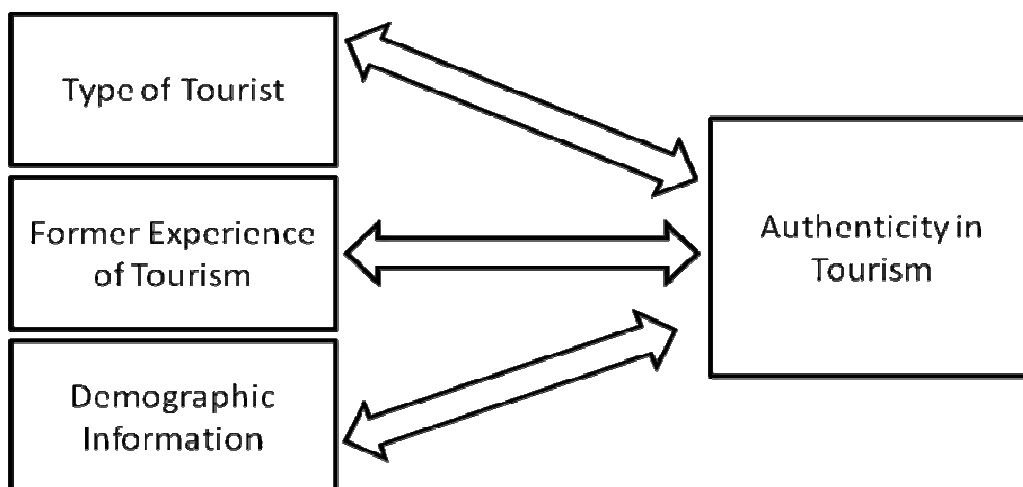
Table 2
Three Types of Authenticity in Tourism Experiences

| Object-Related Authenticity | Activity-Related Authenticity |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>Objective authenticity refers to the authenticity of originals. Correspondingly, an authentic tourist experience equates to an <i>epistemological</i> experience (i.e., cognition) of the authenticity of originals.</p> <p>Constructive authenticity refers to the authenticity projected onto toured objects by tourists or tourism producers in terms of their imagery, expectations, preferences, beliefs, powers, etc. There are various versions of objects' authenticity. Correspondingly, authentic experiences in tourism and the authenticity of toured objects are constitutive of one another. In this sense, the authenticity of toured objects is a symbolic authenticity.</p> | <p>Existential authenticity refers to a potential existential state of Being that is activated by tourist activities. Correspondingly, authentic experiences in tourism activate this existential state of Being within the luminal process of tourism. Existential authenticity is largely unrelated to the authenticity of toured objects.</p> |

Note. Adapted from *Tourism and modernity: A sociological analysis*, by Wang, 2000, p. 49.

Based on Cohen's (1972) and Wang's (2000) definitions, this study will identify relationships among types of tourist, previous experiences of tourism, socio-demographic information, and authenticity in tourism.

Figure 1
Purpose of This Study



RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Integrating the two concepts, this study answers the following questions:

1. Is there any relationship between types of tourist and authenticity?
2. Does a tourist's previous tourism experience affect his or her pursuit of authenticity?
3. Is there any other relationship between socio-demographic variables (e.g., gender, income, and age) and authenticity in tourism?

HYPOTHESES

Three research hypotheses are selected to guide this study:

Hypothesis 1: the types of tourist will pursue different types of authenticity in tourism.

Hypothesis 2: a tourist's previous experiences will affect the types of authenticity in tourism.

Hypothesis 3: a tourist's socio-demographics will affect the types of authenticity in tourism.

METHOD

A questionnaire will be developed to address types of tourist and types of authenticity in tourism. This study will employ a convenient sample method to collect the data. Undergraduate students attending three universities located in the U.S. will be asked to complete an online survey (www.qualtrics.com). At least 400 samples will be collected within a month.

In order to determine whether statistically significant differences exist in destination authenticity with respect to types of tourist and tourists' socio-demographics, a series of cross-tabulation and an analysis of variance will be employed because the independent variables are measured as a nominal scale, whereas the dependent variable is measured as an ordinal scale. Additionally, a discriminant analysis will be used to discover a relationship between previous experiences of tourism and type of authenticity in tourism.

EXPECTED FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS

First, it is expected that each type of tourist may pursue a different type of authenticity in tourism. For instance, the drifter may prefer existential authenticity, whereas the individual mass tourist and the organized mass tourist may prefer constructive authenticity. These kinds of findings will assist tourism destination marketers and practitioners with their destination market position to determine how well their destination products and services meet target market members' needs in comparison to how well their competitors' products and services meet those needs.

Second, a tourist's previous tour experiences will affect his or her pursuit of authenticity. In other words, the more frequently people travel, the more objective authenticity they will want; similarly, the less frequently people travel, the less objective authenticity they will want. This finding will be used to access the destination market characteristics that enable marketers to meet those members' needs and relate to them through customized events and activities.

Finally, gender, income, and age may reveal significant differences in pursuing tourism authenticity. For instance, a group of females might seek more objective authenticity in tourism than a group of males would. This finding will be used to develop the profiles of tourists who

react differently to promotion, communication, pricing and other variables of the destination marketing mix.

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