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Athens Journal of Tourism

Published by the Athens Institute for Education and Research (ATINER)

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The *Athens Journal of Tourism (AJT)* is an Open Access quarterly double-blind peer reviewed journal and considers papers from all areas of tourism and related disciplines such as culture, leisure, recreation, geography, urban planning, heritage, sports, historical cities, landscape, architecture etc. The AJT considers theoretical and empirical papers as well as case studies and policy papers. The journal's aim is to be useful to both academics of tourism research and the practitioners of the tourism industry. Many of the papers published in this journal have been presented at the various conferences sponsored by [the Tourism, Leisure & Recreation Unit](#) of the Athens Institute for Education and Research (ATINER). All papers are subject to ATINER's Publication Ethical Policy and Statement. A journal publication might take from a minimum of six months up to one year to appear. All papers are subject to ATINER's [Publication Ethical Policy and Statement](#).

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The current issue is the second of the eighth volume of the *Athens Journal of Tourism*, published by the [Tourism, Leisure & Recreation Unit](#) of ATINER.

Gregory T. Papanikos
President
ATINER



Athens Institute for Education and Research

A World Association of Academics and Researchers

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11-14 April 2022, Athens, Greece

The [Center for European & Mediterranean Affairs](https://www.atiner.gr/2022/FORM-MDT.doc) organizes the 15th Annual International Conference on Mediterranean Studies, 11-14 April 2022, Athens, Greece sponsored by the [Athens Journal of Mediterranean Studies](https://www.atiner.gr/2022/FORM-MDT.doc). The aim of the conference is to bring together academics and researchers from all areas of Mediterranean Studies, such as history, arts, archaeology, philosophy, culture, sociology, politics, international relations, economics, business, sports, environment and ecology, etc. You may participate as stream leader, presenter of one paper, chair a session or observer. Please submit a proposal using the form available (<https://www.atiner.gr/2022/FORM-MDT.doc>).

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- Abstract Submission: **13 September 2021**
- Submission of Paper: **14 March 2022**

Conference Fees

Conference fees vary from 400€ to 2000€
Details can be found at: <https://www.atiner.gr/2021fees>

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- Athens Sightseeing: Old and New-An Educational Urban Walk
- Social Dinner
- Mycenae Visit
- Exploration of the Aegean Islands
- Delphi Visit
- Ancient Corinth and Cape Sounion



Athens Institute for Education and Research *A World Association of Academics and Researchers*

17th Annual International Conference on Tourism **7-10 June 2021, Athens, Greece**

The [Tourism, Leisure & Recreation Unit](#) of ATINER organizes its **17th Annual International Conference on Tourism, 7-10 June 2021, Athens, Greece** sponsored by the [Athens Journal of Tourism](#). The aim of the conference is to bring together academics and researchers from all areas of Tourism. You may participate as stream leader, presenter of one paper, chair a session or observer. Please submit a proposal using the form available (<https://www.atiner.gr/2021/FORM-TOU.doc>).

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- Acceptance of Abstract: 4 Weeks after Submission
- Submission of Paper: **10 May 2021**

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- **Dr. Valia Kasimati**, Head, [Tourism, Leisure & Recreation Unit](#), ATINER & Researcher, Department of Economic Analysis & Research, Central Bank of Greece, Greece.
- **Dr. Peter Jones**, Co-Editor, [Athens Journal of Tourism](#) & Professor of Management, University of Gloucestershire, UK.

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Tourism Companies and Animal Welfare

By Peter Jones^{*} & Daphne Comfort[±]

Animals play an important role in a wide range of tourism activities, and animal welfare is an increasingly important issue within the tourist industry. While there is a growing volume of research on animal welfare within tourism, little work has been published in the academic literature on how tourism companies address animal welfare. This exploratory paper looks to add to, and extend, that literature by providing a review of how seven tourism companies have publicly addressed animal welfare. The paper reveals that four themes: corporate commitment to animal welfare; policies on specific animals and on experiences and contacts with animals; the role of various stakeholders in the value chain in addressing animal welfare; and monitoring and audit processes, illustrated the companies approach to animal welfare. The authors also raise a number of wider issues and offers some suggestions for future research agendas.

Keywords: *animal welfare, animal welfare statements, tourism companies, stakeholders, auditing*

Introduction

The screenshot of a western woman riding a horse at speed through a desert landscape is arguably the most striking features of an advertisement for tourism in Saudi Arabia which was shown on commercial television in the UK in 2021 (iSpot.tv. 2021). As such, the advertisement offered an exciting illustration of the role animals can play in a wide variety of tourism experiences. Fennel (2015a), for example, claimed ‘animals are used in so many different capacities to facilitate the needs of tourists and the tourism industry. One would be hard pressed to find a destination where animals were not used in some capacity for tourism purposes.’ On the one hand, animals may be part of such experiences, as for example, where animals feature in local festivals and street entertainment, or where tourists are offered opportunities to visit zoos, bird sanctuaries and prized animal habitats, or to spend time swimming with dolphins, or whale watching. On the other hand, animals may be the *raison d’être* of a tourism experience, as for example, in wildlife and big game safaris, horse riding treks and tours of animal rescue centres. Looking across the tourism industry the Association of Travel Agents (which was formerly known as the Association of British Travel Agents (ABTA) for example, claimed ‘in many tourism destinations around the world, opportunities to view or interact with animals are commonly offered and are very popular with many holidaymakers’ (ABTA 2021). At the same time, ABTA (2021) also argued that ‘these experiences can be enjoyable, educational and support conservation’, but ‘where experiences are not carefully managed, they can jeopardise animal welfare

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and your holiday experience.’ More specifically, Meyer et al. (2021) recognised that ‘wildlife tourism is growing in popularity, diversity of target species, and type of tours’, but argued ‘this presents difficulties for management policy that must balance the complex trade-offs between conservation, animal welfare, and pragmatic concerns for tourist satisfaction and economic value.’

Animal welfare is a complex and multi-faceted issue, but recent decades have witnessed growing concerns about animal welfare across many societies. As public awareness of, and concerns for, animal welfare have grown, so it has become an increasingly important issue for tourism companies which look to either include, or to centre, animal experiences into their tourism offers. On the academic side, Carr and Broom (2018) claimed that ‘the discussion of animal welfare in tourism may still be in its infancy, but over the last decade the issue has come to draw the attention of a growing number of scholars.’ While Font et al. (2019) looked to analyse if, and how, travel trade associations, had the developed and implemented animal welfare standards, little work has been published within the academic literature on how major companies within the tourism industry address animal welfare. Here published work tends to have focused on individual companies, often specialising in specific human-animal interactions (e.g., Duffy and Moore 2011, Pastrana et al. 2020). This exploratory paper looks to add to, and extend, that literature by providing a review of how a number of companies within the tourism industry have publicly addressed animal welfare. The paper includes a brief outline of the characteristics of animal welfare, a short literature review of animal welfare in the tourism industry, the method of enquiry and frame of reference employed in the paper, a review of the animal welfare statements and policies published by seven tourism companies, namely Bookings Holdings, Expedia, TUI, Flight Centre Travel Group., Trip Advisor, Intrepid Travel and G Adventures, and some concluding reflections on animal welfare in the tourism industry.

Animal Welfare

For the American Veterinary Medical Association (2010) an animal is seen to be in ‘a good state of welfare if (as indicated by scientific evidence) it is healthy, comfortable, well-nourished, safe, able to express innate behavior, and if it is not suffering from unpleasant states such as pain, fear, and distress’, and ‘ensuring animal welfare is a human responsibility.’ More popularly, commitments to animal welfare are often characterised by the ‘Five Freedoms’ framework, initially drawn up by the UK’s Farm Animal Welfare Council (2009), and also commonly described in the tourism industry as the Five Domains Model. These five freedoms or domains are freedom from hunger and thirst; freedom from discomfort; freedom from pain, injury or disease; freedom to express normal behaviour; and freedom from fear and distress. At the same time, animal welfare is a complex issue within tourism, not least in that it poses different challenges for different animals and environments.

In addressing management responsibilities, ABTA (2013) argued that 'reasonable animal welfare requires disease prevention and veterinary treatment, appropriate shelter, management, nutrition, humane handling and humane slaughter/euthanasia' and that 'suppliers, animal owners and keepers have a responsibility to the animals for which they are responsible on a permanent or temporary basis. This includes the provision of their health and welfare needs.' The pressure group Tourism Concern (2017), recognised the 'increasing awareness of animal welfare issues', but argued that 'many tourists are unaware of how their daily decisions impact both animals and local residents in tourist destinations.' At the same time, as animals are removed, in one way or another, from their natural, to a captive, environment, to provide tourism experiences, so this can cause welfare problems. ABTA (2013) for example, emphasised that 'in captivity animals potentially face a number of challenges for which evolution has not prepared them; the geographical location, climate, enclosures and vegetation may be alien to the species as it exists in the wild. Similarly, some of the survival challenges an animal confronts in the wild may be absent in captivity (hunting, foraging, territorial defence and social dominance).'

Literature Review

Relatively little work has been published within the academic literature on how companies within the tourism industry address animal welfare, and this review simply looks to highlight the content of the limited number of papers in this field. Some of this work looks to take a general view across the tourist sector. Winter (2020), for example, offered a review of published research on animal ethics and welfare in the tourism industry and suggested that millions of tourists 'participate in the "animal gaze", and increasingly, they are demanding more intense experiences' that can have 'serious welfare impacts on the animals.' von Essen et al. (2020) claimed that the emergence of new modes of animal tourism, that trade on increasingly embodied close encounters with animals, including sloth selfies, visiting cat cafes, swimming with sharks and agro-tourism petting zoos, has put animal welfare standards at risk. Here, Von Essen et al. (2020) identified a number of animal welfare challenges and concluded that 'animals become laborers in a global capitalist economy when they are conscripted into the service of the tourism industry.'

In addressing 'Tourism and Animal Welfare', Fennell (2015b) drew attention to the lack of a comprehensive treatment of animal welfare and tourism in the literature and emphasised that linking tourism and animal ethics was 'deemed essential', not least in that animal welfare 'contributes to the viability of tourism operations.' More specifically, Fennell (2015b) focussed on zoos and sled dog tourism to illustrate a number of animal welfare challenges facing tourism and concluded with a call 'to initiate programmes of research for the purpose of taking more seriously the welfare needs of animals used in tourism.' Under the title 'Tourism and Animal Welfare', Carr and Broom (2018) edited a review of animal welfare, which included individually authored case studies of Wild Bottlenose

Dolphins in Australia, shark welfare, public aquaria and zoos, and mapped out a potential path for the future welfare of animals in tourism and a linked research agenda.

In an attempt to explore approaches to animal welfare at an international level Font et al. (2019) surveyed if, and how, 62 national and international trade associations had established and implemented animal welfare standards. However, this work revealed that only six trade associations referred to animal welfare, that only three had well developed animal welfare activities, and that only one monitored its members' animal welfare standards. In conclusion Font et al. (2019) argued that trade associations have 'both the technical capacity and the moral responsibility' to develop industry consensus and raise industry standards in relation to animal welfare but suggested that acceptance of responsibility towards animal welfare was rare.

A number of studies have explored animal welfare in the context of particular species or environments, and the aim here is to offer a few examples to illustrate the range and focus of such work rather than to provide a comprehensive review. Duffy and Moore (2011), for example, used a political economy approach to examine some of the animal welfare issues associated with the development of elephant trekking in Botswana and Thailand. Here a central issue was seen to revolve around definitions of acceptable and appropriate standards for working animals and Duffy and Moore (2011) concluded that 'attempts at global regulation need to seriously engage with local level practices if global standards are to be workable and acceptable for tour operators, animal welfare NGOs, elephant camp owners and tourists alike.'

Moorhouse et al. (2016) suggested that the majority of wildlife tourist attractions had substantial negative animal welfare impacts, and that in the absence of global regulatory authority, tourist revenue has become the ultimate arbiter of what constitutes acceptable use of animals. However, Moorhouse et al. (2016) argued that tourists cannot assess animal welfare adequately and they suggested that the way forward was to empower tourists by presenting them with authoritative independent assessments of wildlife tourist attractions' impacts in an accessible format, when tourists are making their travel choices and plans. In a study conducted in Koombana Bay off Western Australia, Senigaglia et al. (2020) revealed that the practice of managed dolphin feeding designed to promote spatially and temporarily reliable encounters with tourists, was detrimental to long term dolphin welfare.

On the conceptual side, some researchers have looked to incorporate a range of theoretical approaches into their work on animal welfare within tourism, but this is not always a major feature of such work. Font et al. (2019), for example, drew on institutional theory in that it acknowledges the ways in which organisations respond to stakeholder demands depends on the institutions they operate within, and it allows animal welfare to be seen as both a scientific and a moral question, while also limiting ambiguity and reducing co-opting. Fennell and Shepard (2020) argued that ethical theory offered considerable promise in helping tourist agents to understand and evaluate justice for animals used frequently in tourism. More critically, Chang (2019) has argued that critical tourism studies can deconstruct

mainstream concepts and theorisations and give voice to the marginalised within the tourism industry. At the same time, the focus of the current paper is on how tourism companies are addressing animal welfare. As such stakeholder theory (e.g., Gavare and Johansson 2010), which posits that companies should look to create value for all its stakeholders, including shareholders, suppliers, employees, suppliers, society at large, animals and the environment, may help to shed some light on corporate approaches to animal welfare.

This literature review of animal welfare in the tourism industry suggests that the field is currently fragmented, and at a best, embryonic. While the review provides a sense of academic context, and some basic reference points for the paper, it does suggest that the tourist industry's approach to animal welfare is not yet a distinct field of research, not least in that it lacks an agreed framework, a substantial body of empirical research, and a robust theoretical foundation. However, the paucity of published research on how major tourism companies have addressed animal welfare, suggests a gap in the tourism literature that merits attention.

Methodology

In looking to undertake an exploratory review of how companies within the tourism industry had approached animal welfare, the authors chose a simple method of enquiry, which they believe to be fit for purpose. A preliminary Internet survey, conducted in February 2021, of tourism companies revealed that the animal welfare statements and policies of seven tourism companies, namely, Booking Holdings, Expedia, TUI, Flight Centre Travel Group, Trip Advisor, Intrepid Travel and G Adventures, were readily accessible. As such this was an opportunist sampling approach, but the seven companies reflect the scale and variety of the tourist industry, and the information on animal welfare they posted on the Internet provides the empirical material for this paper. In what is still an embryonic research area field, the authors believe this is an appropriate approach, which provides an exploratory review of how some of the leading companies within the tourism industry were addressing animal welfare.

This companies' animal welfare statements and policies are in the public domain on the selected tourism companies' websites and the authors took the view that they did not need to seek permission to use it. A number of authors (e.g., de Grosbois 2016) have used forms of content analysis to systematically identify themes and issues on corporate websites. However, given the exploratory nature of the paper and that the animal welfare statements and policies posted on the selected companies' websites were clearly structured, the authors were minded that content analysis was not appropriate for their review. Rather, the authors undertook a close reading of the relevant document to draw out the important issues and themes.

The review draws on quotations drawn from the selected tourism companies' websites. The aim here, is to explore how the companies publicly expressed, and provided illustrative details on their approaches to animal welfare, and the authors

took the view that this was perhaps best captured in the companies' own words, not least in that quotations could convey corporate authenticity, and offer greater depth of understanding (Corden and Sainsbury 2006). At the same time, the authors satisfied themselves that the two conditions outlined by Saunders et al. (2009), relating to the reliability of information drawn from Internet sources, namely the authority and reputation of the source and the citation of a contact on the website, were met.

Booking Holdings is the world's largest online travel company, and it owns and operates several travel fare aggregators and travel fare research engines, including Booking.co, Priceline.com, Cheapflights, and Rentalcar.com. Expedia is a US based online travel company, it has over 200 websites in some 70 countries, and operates a number of brands including ebookers, CheapTickets, Trivago, Hotels. Com and Expedia Cruises. TUI is an Anglo-German multinational travel and tourism company, and it owns travel agencies, hotels, airlines and cruise ships. Flight Centre Travel Group is an Australian travel agency, and its brands include FCM Travel Solutions, Liberty and Escape Travel. Tripadvisor is a US based online travel company and it enables customers to compare prices on hotels, flights and cruises and to book holidays and tours. Intrepid Travel, based in Australia, is the world's largest small group adventure travel company, and it offers over 1,000 adventures in some 100 countries. G Adventures is a Canadian based operator of small group tours and its tours include destinations in Asia, Africa, South America, and to Polar regions.

Results

The animal welfare statements and policies posted by the selected tourism companies effectively captured their approach to animal welfare. However rather than reviewing their individual approaches, the aim here is to identify, and draw, out a number of general themes that illustrate the companies' approaches to animal welfare. More specifically, the authors' reading of the selected tourism companies' animal welfare policies and statements enabled them to identify four general, though not universal, themes, namely, a corporate commitment to animal welfare; policies on specific animals and on experiences and contacts with animals; the role of various stakeholders in the value chain in addressing animal welfare; and monitoring and audit processes.

Strategic corporate commitment was expressed in a variety of ways. Expedia (2015), for example, reported 'we help people to go places and help them to do so with respect for the people, animals, and natural environments of our planet', and claimed 'when done responsibly and thoughtfully, activities involving animals can instil a deeper connection with the natural world, promote conservation, enhance the human experience, and drive interest in the treatment and survival of all animals.' Booking Holdings (2021) asserted its mission 'to empower people to experience the world', and its belief that this mission should be fulfilled 'with respect, humility and awareness for the world's people, animals, communities and the environment.' G Adventures (2020) emphasised 'our vision is for a world

where tourism benefits both animals and people', and that 'we care about animals and we work with organisations that share our vision and are working to make it a reality.' Flight Centre Travel Group (2021) claimed 'the welfare of animals is very important to us', and 'we believe all animals should live in a reasonable state of welfare and are committed to doing our part to make this a reality.'

A number of the selected companies looked to enshrine their approach to animal welfare within the Five Freedoms/Five Domains Model outlined above. Intrepid Travel (2021), for example, suggested that 'travel is an opportunity to experience different cultures, meet new people, taste weird and wonderful foods and - for many - get close to wildlife' and claimed its animal welfare guidelines were framed around the Five Domains Model. Here the company's focus was on 'animal welfare basics', defined as nutrition, environment, health, behaviour and mental state. Nutrition, for example, was seen to include factors that involve an animal's access to sufficient, balanced varied and clean food and water, while health relates to factors enabling good health through absence of disease, injury, impairment and good fitness levels. In a similar vein, Booking Holdings (2021) claimed 'we take our lead on animal welfare from the Five Freedoms for the basic needs of animals under human care.'

Secondly, the selected companies provided details of their policies on specific animals and on experiences and contacts with these animals. Elephant rides are not included in any of Intrepid Travel's itineraries, for example, not least because the company believes that preparing captive elephants to take part in such activity involves cruel, painful and intense training that forces the elephants to accept human control and that the hooks used to restrain the animals while they are being ridden can cause serious injuries. More generally, Booking Holdings emphasised that it does not promote animal performances, shows or circuses, which involves dolphins, elephants, bears, lions, tigers, cheetahs, leopards, orangutans and sloths, wild animal rides, facilities such as crocodile, turtle or snake farms, where animals are purposely bred to produce commercial products, and venues where visitors can buy products sourced from wild animals. Tripadvisor (2021) claimed the company 'will not sell tickets or generate booking revenue for specific experiences where tourists come into physical contact with captive wild animals unless certain exceptional circumstances apply.' These circumstances include aquarium touch pools and invertebrate touch and feel experiences, used under supervision for educational purposes, feeding programmes in a captive environment and where the animals have not been drugged or intimidated into compliance, and volunteering to protect endangered species at zoos, aquariums and sanctuaries.

Expedia (2015) published guidelines on zoos and aquariums, physical contact with animals, animal rides, animal performances, animals in sport, venues hosting wild animals, and wild animals in natural or semi natural habitats. In addressing physical contact with animals, Expedia (2015) reported 'intentional contact will not be permitted with wild and exotic animals', including elephants, lions, tigers, bears, alligators and snakes, but 'petting zoos, falconry demonstrations and educational and therapeutic interactions with a variety of species under strict supervision adhering to the Expedia Group animal welfare and guest welfare principles, are permitted.' Expedia (2015) also outlined its position on 'animal

performances', namely that the company 'will not support experiences where wild animals are required to perform in a demeaning, unnatural manner for entertainment purposes', while 'snake charming, roadside animal displays magic/cabaret shows that utilize wild animals as part of the act' are also prohibited.

Some companies look to provide guidance to tour leaders on animal interactions. In providing guidance on 'Riding & Using Animals for Transport', Intrepid Travel (2021), for example, asserted its belief that 'domesticated working animals, such as horses, donkeys/mules and camels which are used for transportation on tours should have a decent life, where they are properly cared for and the positive aspects of their existence outweigh the negative.' Further, in addressing 'Riding Camels and Donkey Mules', Intrepid Travel (2021) claimed these animals were only offered in itineraries where 'the wellbeing of animals has been previously established', but the company also advised tour leaders to check on specific operators. Here tour leaders were encouraged to check, for example, that animals carried no more than approximately half their own body weight, and less during extreme heat or on steep inclines, and that the animals should not be fed by the tourists. More specifically, in checking on camels, tour leaders are advised to consider if the camels coats were in good condition and they are free from sores around the mouth, shoulders, spine and stomach, and that handlers did not use physical force to control or manoeuvre the animals.

Thirdly, some of the selected tourism companies recognised the role some of the stakeholders in the tourism value chain played in addressing animal welfare. On the one hand, some companies stressed that they effectively relied on the integrity of their suppliers to ensure animal welfare standards. Expedia (2015) for example, reported that the company 'requires all its supply partners to represent and warrant that their products are, and will remain compliant with this Animal Welfare Policy' and that it 'will notify a supplier if it believes that all or part of its products violate this Animal Welfare Policy.' Further Expedia (2015) asserted 'if, at Expedia's sole discretion, the supplier fails to make changes for its products to comply with the Animal Welfare Policy, Expedia may remove all, or part, of the supplier's products from Expedia sites.'

In focusing on 'whale and dolphin seaside sanctuaries', Tripadvisor (2021), emphasised that 'seaside sanctuaries must adhere to a strict nobreeding policy, must not train their animals to perform in any shows or performances for public display, and must prohibit all forms of physical interaction between guests and the animals, including any in-water guest experiences.' Some tourist companies recognised that their employees have a role to play in protecting animal welfare. TUI (2021), for example, reported 'we train our colleagues in destination on animal welfare in excursions.'

Flight Centre Travel Group (2021) reported 'we are engaging and will continue to engage with employees across the business to benefit from their front-line experience' and that 'our goal is to use our influence wherever we can to end the practice of cruel animal attractions.'

On the other hand, customers are also seen as important stakeholders in animal welfare. In emphasising that 'excursions involving animals remain very popular with our customers', Tui (2021), for example, reported 'our market

research shows that the protection of wild animals is important to the majority of holidaymakers who also believe that animal-related excursions should meet global welfare standards.' Expedia (2015) acknowledged its customers had a role to play in safeguarding animal welfare, and the company recommended ways in which tourists can develop a discerning awareness of the differences between ethical, and problematic, wildlife experiences. Flight Centre Travel Group (2021) claimed 'we do not seek to vilify customers interested in animal attractions, but rather to educate them about potential problems, and where appropriate, to provide them with suitable alternatives.'

Fourthly, there were commitments to monitoring and auditing designed to ensure animal welfare. TUI (2021) for example, claimed 'our rolling programme of audits is the most extensive among tour operators with over 150 independent audits carried out since 2016', and that 'by the end of 2018, 76% of our animal excursion suppliers have been audited on-site by a 3rd party, and more than 50% of the suppliers audited, have made improvements in terms of animal welfare.' Further, TUI (2021) asserted its belief that 'auditing, combined with a close supplier working relationship, enables us to meet customer expectations on animal welfare standards in excursions', and that 'wherever possible we prefer to engage with our suppliers on improvement plans, but we also remove venues from the programme if standards are not met.' Expedia (2015) reported introducing a review-monitoring policy to scour customer reviews for animal welfare concerns.

Reflections

While all the selected tourism companies publicly addressed the issue of animal welfare and looked to provide details of their commitment to it, a number of sets of issues merit reflection and discussion. The companies were arguably at their most emphatic in emphasising their strategic commitment to animal welfare, but tourist companies have a wide geographical and cultural reach and fulfilling their animal welfare commitments presents a number of challenges. While the tourism companies' approach to animal welfare may strike a sympathetic chord with current western attitudes, and with western tourists, in many tourist destinations in less developed countries, local communities may have very different attitudes to animal welfare and may simply see the animals as providing an opportunity to generate an income, with little concern for their wellbeing.

At the same time, the tourism companies' commitments to animal welfare are at least one step removed from their own operations, not least in that companies and operators in their supply chains provide animals and facilities for animal experiences enjoyed by tourists, and this certainly reduces the tourism companies' control over animal welfare management. That said, some, but not all, of the selected tourism companies emphasised that their approach to animal welfare was underwritten by independent monitoring and auditing of their suppliers. However, the companies that did report monitoring and auditing did not publish any data, for example, on key performance indicators or targets, or on the outcomes of the monitoring and auditing processes. Thus, all the selected tourism companies'

commitments to animal welfare effectively have to be taken at face value, in that their animal welfare policies do not include evidence from independent assessments of welfare standards.

At the same time more general concerns have been expressed about the efficacy of the audit process in safeguarding animal welfare.’ LeBaron et al. (2017), for example, argued ‘the growing adoption of auditing as a governance tool is a puzzling trend, given two decades of evidence that audit programs generally fail to detect or correct labor and environmental problems in global supply chains.’ More specifically, in reviewing the role of ‘audit in animal welfare’, Escobar and Demeritt (2017) highlighted the ‘tendency for audit processes to become decoupled from the qualities they are meant to assure.’ As such, there is the danger that the audit exercises become a routine reporting end in themselves, rather than a means, to an end.

More generally, tourism companies face strident criticisms of their approach to animal welfare. World Animal Protection (2018), for example suggested that ‘a shockingly high number of the world’s travel trade associations are lagging in providing animal welfare guidelines to travel companies’ and that ‘the majority are doing nothing to prevent wildlife cruelty in tourism.’ World Animal Protection’s (2020) report entitled ‘Tackling the Travel Industry’, claimed ‘throughout the world, wild animals are taken from the wild, or bred in captivity to be used as entertainment in the tourism industry. In most cases they are separated from their mothers at an early age, exposed to harsh training that causes physical and psychological damage. They experience harm, stress and discomfort in their unsuitable living conditions at entertainment venues. They are exploited for commercial gain.’ More specifically, the report suggested that tourism companies ‘are generally not transparent about their animal welfare commitments targets and that they are not publicly reporting their performance against these targets and that companies are not as explicit as they could be about the standards they set for their suppliers’ (World Animal Protection 2020).

Under the banner ‘Animal Abuse for Tourism is Happening Now, Right on our Doorstep’, Four Paws (2021), a global animal welfare organisation, claimed ‘from festivals, to zoos, circuses or for selfies, across Europe animals are suffering for our entertainment.’ Further, Four Paws (2021) suggested ‘few tourists are aware, however, that these animals have not adapted to be around humans but are usually sedated or psychologically “beaten” down to the point of submission’ and that ‘they go back to small cages, where they spend the rest of their lives, with no access to proper food, nature or even light.’ At a time when social media is becoming an increasingly important force in energising public opinion, it remains to be seen how well tourism companies will be able to assuage public concerns about the animal welfare issues associated with tourism.

At the time of writing, it is impossible to consider animal welfare in the tourism industry without some reference to COVID-19, not least because the travel and tourism sector of the economy has been severely affected by the pandemic. Thams et al. (2020), for example, reported ‘major market players in all areas of the touristic value chain, i.e., airlines, tour operators, hotels, cruise lines, and retailers, have either minimized or even completely stopped their production for an

undefined period of time.’ The United Nations World Tourism Organisation (2020) estimated a 72% decline in international tourist arrivals between January and October 2020, compared to the previous year, and that a return to 2019 levels could take up to four years. In the wake of this dramatic decline in international tourism, and the attendant decline in the demand for animal attractions and experiences, there are fears that many animals will be abandoned and/or mistreated.

Looking to the future, and to the re-emergence of tourism in a return to what at best seems likely to be a new sense of normality, it remains to be seen if the major tourism companies will continue to commit the financial resources required to fulfil their commitments to animal welfare, or if they will concentrate their resources on looking to rebuild their core businesses, with animal welfare becoming a secondary consideration. That said the COVID-19 pandemic may have heightened tourist awareness that animals may harbour diseases that can be transmitted to humans, and this may both reduce tourists’ appetite for animal experiences and their concerns about animal welfare. More positively, while World Animal Protection (2020) recognised that ‘the COVID-19 pandemic continues to be devastating for the travel industry’, the pressure group argued, ‘with it comes the opportunity to build back better, as a resilient, responsible and sustainable tourism sector’, but a belief that the COVID-19 pandemic offers an opportunity to reimagine and reform tourism without exploiting animals may, simply be a pipe dream.

Conclusion

This paper has provided an exploratory review of how a number of companies within the tourism industry have publicly addressed animal welfare within their animal welfare statements. As such the paper adds to the limited retail literature on animal welfare within the tourism industry. Four themes captured the spirit of the selected companies animal welfare statements, namely a corporate commitment to animal welfare; policies on specific animals and on experiences and contacts with animals; the role of various stakeholders in the value chain in addressing animal welfare; and monitoring and audit processes. The authors argued the selected tourism companies were at their most emphatic in emphasising their strategic commitment to animal welfare, but tourist companies have a wide geographical and cultural reach and fulfilling their animal welfare commitments presents a number of challenges. Further, the authors argued that the selected tourism companies’ commitments to animal welfare are at least one step removed from their own operations and they raised concerns about the nature of the auditing processes employed by the tourism companies to underwrite these commitments.

The authors recognise that the paper has its limitations, not least that its empirical material is drawn exclusively from the corporate websites of a small number of tourism companies, and that it does not include any face to face interviews, or focus group sessions, with representatives from those companies or with other stakeholders in the tourism value chain. However, the authors believe

that their simple method of enquiry and frame of reference are fit for purpose for an exploratory paper, that it makes a modest contribution to the limited literature on tourism companies and animal welfare, and that it offers a valuable platform for future research.

More specifically, animal welfare offers a variety of potential research agendas for tourism scholars. At a conceptual level, researchers may look to explore how tourism companies have responded to stakeholder demands for improvements in animal welfare within the tourism industry, and to test, refine and develop institutional and stakeholder theories. At the same time, analysis of potential changing stakeholder perceptions of the importance of animal welfare, including changes in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, will also contribute to stakeholder theory. A range of empirical research opportunities can also be identified. At the corporal level, research may help to increase understanding not only of why, and how, tourism companies develop their policies on animal welfare, and how they look to elicit stakeholders' opinions, but also of how they take account of wider pressure group campaigns in formulating such policies. At the consumer level, many research questions arise, including, how animal welfare tourism companies are incorporating animal welfare into their marketing messages, and if consumer awareness of the tourism companies' approach to animal welfare influences tourists' behavior.

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The Interplay of Stakeholder Theory and Blind Spot Theory in Rural Tourism Development

By Per Åke Nilsson* & Jessica Aquino[±]

This paper explores the emergence of Stakeholder Theory and Blind Spot Theory over time from two distinct points of views in rural tourism development. After World War II, community development in most rural European areas have been challenged by negative demographic situations caused by centripetal economic development. In order to stabilize vital economic development, new or well-established initiatives have adopted different rural tourism development projects. Most of these projects include local stakeholders from both the private and public sectors. Using a longitudinal multiple case study analysis combined with a comparative method, this study reveals two points of views (stakeholder theory and blind spot theory). Three cases have been chosen in sparsely populated areas in Mid Sweden. This longitudinal study describes outcomes, measured by an estimation of their degree of development success or failures regarding their demographic situation over a span of thirty years. Implications are discussed concerning the rural tourism development process with recommendations of a best practice approach.

Keywords: community development, rural tourism, stakeholder theory, blind spot theory, Nordic periphery

Introduction

The backdrop for this research is the ongoing depopulation of peripheral Nordic regions. After World War II, community development in most rural European areas have been challenged by negative demographic situations caused by centripetal forces moving economic development towards the center (or bigger cities). Strengthening of centripetal forces can lead to economic conflicts and political problems (Bondarenko et al. 2017). The larger market of bigger cities would be able to attract additional economic activity to the center while the periphery would lose business (Dluhosch 2000). In order to stabilize vital economic development in the rural countryside, our cases describe how communities have had to adopt different rural tourism development projects.

An industrial development boom occurred during the 1950s in most of the European industrial regions as a result of the reconstruction after World War II (Apostle and Barret 1992, Hall and Gieben 1992). In Scandinavia, this was done by a rationalization of small agricultural entities, often by relinquishing them, materialized by moving people from the north to the south. This resulted in substantial drainage of people in active ages in these areas (Adey 2010, Nilsson

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2013). During the 1970s, this development was counteracted in both political and economic manifestations by domestic public opinions (Gustafsson 1991) and by international researchers (Armstrong and Taylor 1993). In the 1980s a so-called “green” movement occurred where a large amount of mostly young people moved to rural areas in the north (Getz and Nilsson 2004, Dahlström et al. 2006). However, this counteraction of development did not stop the on-going brain drain from the countryside (Aarsæther and Børenholdt 2001, Granquist et al. 2019).

Our longitudinal case study analysis of three Swedish periphery municipalities that tried to roll back their negative development and find a new future reveals the emergence and interplay of two distinct theories (stakeholder theory and blind spot theory) in rural tourism community development projects. Most of these projects include local stakeholders from both the private and public sectors. This paper aims to see how these two theories unintentionally can match or disturb each other by coping with the challenges small rural villages face in sparsely populated regions threatened by total extinction. The main research question for our multiple case study was, “What are the outcomes or interactions of two distinct points of views (stakeholder theory and blind spot theory) in community development or revitalization projects of three Swedish periphery municipalities?” Implications are discussed concerning rural tourism development process with recommendations of a best practice approach.

Literature Review

Rural Tourism Development in the Nordic Periphery

Living in small rural areas often has associated stigma linked to perceptions of poverty or lack of education and cultural un-refinement. For example, as discussed by Salvatore et al. (2018, p. 42) that “... the meaning of the term ‘periphery’ itself has carried social, political and economic implications, often becoming a synonym for marginalization...” Many rural peripheral areas are at an economic disadvantage because of centripetal forces both from economic development and migration towards the center (Nilsson 2013). Because of their remoteness, rural areas are often excluded from development policies which are written in cities or the capital area. Adequate infrastructure, such as education, health care, recreation (Jana and Marián 2012) and technological infrastructure (Salvatore et al. 2018) is also often lacking causing a negative decline in population. Rural areas are more vulnerable to out migration as young individuals and families move to larger cities for work or for education.

Rural tourism has been seen as a way of cultural transformation of the rural peripheries moving it from a place of abandonment to a place of quality (Salvatore et al. 2018) while tourism has been used for regional development and helping rural farming families maintain their way of life (Aquino and Burns 2021). Furthermore, tourism employment in peripheral areas has been found to be a pull factor of skilled workers creating a more dynamic and vibrant community (Thulemark et al. 2014). The benefits of ‘in-movers’ (a person who has moved to

the area for the first time) and back-movers (a person who has left the area and then moved back) (Nilsson et al. 2011) is that they counteract the negative effect of the decline of human capital from a persistent outmigration of young people. Although not always a success story, tourism is seen as a way of overcoming obstacles to regional development by capitalizing on their remoteness and the idea of wilderness (Brouder 2013), sense of place (Aquino and Kloes 2020), and cultural heritage experience (Salvatore et al. 2018). However, tourism alone cannot be the sole driving force for regional development, rather it should be part of a larger plan that helps to strengthen community assets.

Theories

Stakeholder Theory

Stakeholders as a concept is defined as a pressure group within a community or a destination, who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organization's objectives (Freeman et al. 2010). Such alliances can be loose arrangements or separate organizations, that form prerequisites for a successful development processes (Terpstra and Simonin 1993, Jamal and Getz 1994, Cancino 2014). The local political system often acts as a convenor, or organizer, with inherent interests in the continuous development of the destination (Baldacchino and Milne 2000, Martin 2001, Timur and Getz 2002, Freeman 2010). These stakeholders can also convey interdependency between actors (preferably all) in order to gain collective benefits for the whole destination. This is especially relevant for small family businesses (Ankre and Nilsson 2016, Richardson 2015).

Stakeholder theory can also contribute to a change of identity of a destination by developing new attributes with collective and regional identity (Backman 2015). Bauman (2017) complicates the theory by stating that every development is an eternal repetition of previous conditions, but with different winners and losers; and without Hegel's presumption that the development advances from good to better. For example, Brooks (2020, p. 5) describes a Hegelian-inspired interpretation of stakeholders as "not merely bound by their institutions and laws, but they give them life through their active engagement." An extended type of stakeholder theory is the *Triple helix model*, where governments, universities, and industry cooperate deliberately and with regulated forms as stakeholders for a desired development (Granquist and Nilsson 2016) with the community as the convenor (Nilsson 2007a).

Blind Spot Theory

Blind spot theory is based on the blind spot of the eye where the optic nerve enters the globe, which makes it impossible to see a whole panorama. Frequently, the viewer believes that she or he sees the whole view, especially if the surroundings are already well known and experienced. Cognitive physiologists have studied the understanding of some cognitive biases that affect decision making. These biased, or distorted reasoning, can have disastrous consequences. The bias blind spot described by cognitive psychologists is a tendency to recognize bias in others but not in oneself (Symborski et al. 2014). However, the blind spot

theory that we describe, with regards to community development, is the failure to see multiple viewpoints. By missing such an impression, decision-makers sometimes fail to see hidden possibilities and angles representing alternative openings for development (Ricoeur 1981, Atkinson 1991). A variety of viewpoints helps developers and managers address possible flaws or take advantage of assets and link them to a larger development plan. However, to mitigate this blind spot in planning, a possible solution would be to engage in critical evaluation and self-awareness along with direct and equitable dialogues with multiple stakeholders. This sudden insight of missing such impressions may emerge as unintended drivers of development (Pronin et al. 2002, Cavanagh 2013, Nilsson 2017), opening for identifying developing processes. Such a shift of focus is often based on unintended, irreversible actions, connected to unpredictable causes (Nilsson 2007a, Schön 2010).

The blind spot theory can be used if there is readiness for decision-makers to back up group decisions. Alternatively, combined with disillusionment towards a change of the state, decision-makers can question firmly rooted and often imperturbable infrastructure, often consisting of networks and substantial investments (Abbasian 2016). An engagement in affectivity, cognition, and physical change can result in such a process (Geus et al. 2016, Olsen et al. 2016).

Chaos theory also forms the base for the blind spot theory, by its appearance of spontaneous and irreversible actions (Prigogine 1996, Kuhn 2012), and by its interest for centrifugal forces (Tol 2009). Chaos theory was discovered in the natural sciences in the field of nonlinear dynamics, while in the social sciences it is used in the understanding of the unpredictability, uncertainties, and nonlinearities of social systems behavior (Elliott and Kiel 1996). These forces may develop unintended directions resulting in change, often by a background of a mix of social and natural science within planning theory (Porter, 1990) linking clusters within different societal contexts (Baldacchino 2008, Rodger et al. 2009).

Perceptions of injustice, disorganization, and threats to quality of life caused by fast urbanization in the twentieth century pushed the evolution of planning while the academic field arrived only in the last quarter of the twentieth century (Healey 2001). Although centripetal forces left many rural peripheral areas at a disadvantage, however, a fast growing population in urban areas also led to complex social and governmental issues. Planning theory helped to provoke social and political movements in attempts to transform city governments to cope with systemic issues. In the early twentieth century, planning was generally understood as focused on how cities could and should be. However, by the end of the twentieth century an increasing awareness of new economic and social realities (Healey 2001), coupled with an interest in the quality of life and community development in both rural and urban regions, further developed the scope of planning theory. It is difficult to have one definition of planning theory. For example, Allmendinger (2017) described planning theory as 1) drawing from approaches in the natural and social sciences while acknowledging that one approach is not superior to the other; 2) there are multiple and competing views of planning; 3) and it recognizes the relationship between power and knowledge.

Methodology

Our research investigates three cases over a longitudinal time frame over thirty years in a community context. The cases were selected based on first hand experiences within these particular communities and have been chosen as examples of the incremental development processes, especially the interplay between the two theories (stakeholder theory and blind spot theory) and the outcome of that interplay. Over time, through research and following up of each case, new evidence began to emerge. Multiple-case studies may have a distinct advantage and is described as being more robust (Herriott and Firestone 1983). Case study research is a research strategy focused on understanding the underlying forces involved (Eisenhardt 1989) in which the researcher explores a case or multiple cases over time and it can discuss explanatory, exploratory, and descriptive studies (Yin 2009). Approaches used for case study research can be qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods and involves the processes of collecting detailed, in-depth data involving multiple sources of information (Creswell 2007).

The methods used for our longitudinal study involved a process of detailed, in-depth qualitative data collection and field observation within each village during the span of thirty years. Finally, a deeper analysis using qualitative interviews with villagers in each case was used to dive deeper into uncovering the final results of each community project following different outcomes of two theories—stakeholder theory and blind spot theory. Overall, the project is investigated by public documents, qualitative interviews, and newspaper articles. Each case was analyzed as a single case using both blind spot theory and stakeholder theory. Then a comparative method was used to see how these theories interacted with each other to facilitate coping strategies for some of the challenges that small rural villages face in sparsely populated regions.

In particular, for our empirical study, longitudinal analysis of specific events within the communities studied, significant findings began to emerge once the cases were analyzed together. It also describes how small organizations implemented rural tourism development projects while also describing the outcomes of each event as either a success or a lesson learned. Therefore, a multiple-case study approach was chosen because it was able to uncover a deeper understanding of the trends being investigated. In contrast, a single case study would not be able to uncover the patterns of the propositions fully. Our research emerged *posteriori* to help focus our work of the developing theories that were emerging. The case studies were chosen based on a Swedish peripheral geographical location, sparse and declining population, and the use of tourism as a community development or revitalization strategy.

The cases are reported separately in the results section in a chronological way allowing for the story of each case to be unfolded by the reader (Gustafsson 2017). In the discussion section, we will then make a comparison of each case tying together some evidence from published literature. Although there is limited literature on the concept of the blind spot theory; and our current longitudinal study may be one of the first to look at the interplay seen between stakeholder

theory and blind spot theory. Nonetheless, in the conclusion section, we use the comparison of each case to help fully understand the overall findings.

Results

Gillhov, Sweden

This first case involves outcomes of launching a wolf symposium in Gillhov, a village with less than 50 inhabitants, located in the middle of Northern Sweden in the Berg Municipality with a population of 7,100 inhabitants (Statistics Sweden 2019). The community's primary industry is tourism, along with some wood-based manufacturing (Bergs kommun n.d.).

In the 1950s, a period of development optimism bloomed in Sweden, and the number of inhabitants in Gillhov rose to over 200, and the community decided to build a new spacious schoolhouse. With its substantial red brick walls and big rooms, the schoolhouse became a sign of modernity and the future. However, in the 1960s, the optimism faded away and inhabitants started to abandon Gillhov, similar to the rest of Northern Sweden. Over time, the last pupils disappeared and there was a discussion of whether to tear the schoolhouse down. Nevertheless, in 1991, the community decided to use it for national courses in nature studies, which became a successful activity during the 1990s (Sammanträdesprotokoll, Bergs kommun 1991).

A board was established at the school-house with ambitions to connect national nature field studies during summer and autumn (Sammanträdesprotokoll, Bergs kommun 1991). Students from elementary schools were invited, along with other people interested around Sweden to acquire more knowledge about nature. The nearby Mid Sweden University in Östersund was engaged and two researchers started to teach at the school in zoology and in tourism. A body of about ten researchers with experience from nature studies and political science was established (Vargssymposiet. Landsarkivet, Östersund n.d.). Besides the schoolhouse, there was a shop and a bus company.

One night in February 1994, four staff members gathered in the schoolhouse sauna. They were a zoologist, a tourism researcher, a manager of the field school, and a local wildlife tracker. The tracker reported that he had found wolf tracks just outside the village. From this information, the zoologist stated that Gillhov now had become the only place in Sweden where all four predators are found in the same area—bear, wolverine, lynx, and wolf. The tourism researcher saw the potential of establishing a wolf symposium in the schoolhouse. Having wolves around in the village was, however, not a popular idea among the villagers. Nonetheless, the zoologist contacted a world-renowned Canadian wolf researcher and invited him to coordinate the Wolf Symposium in Gillhov. After some time, the wolf researcher agreed and the National Nature Conservation Authority of Sweden supported the idea which bolstered the Wolf Symposium project.

The first wolf symposium was launched in March of 1994 with 78 visitors, including people from public boards in Sweden and Norway, representatives from

different nature protection organizations, researchers from universities, and staff from the police authority (Vargsymposiet. Landsarkivet, Östersund n.d.). Local and national media covered the symposium, while the BBC covered it internationally. From the very start of the symposium it was open to everyone, even those who disliked the idea of wolves in the area, therefore the discussions could be rather fierce, and violence was not far away. Still, the broad-minded administration of the event made it easy for discussions and, luckily, no violence occurred. During evening dinners, people sat together at the same table regardless of their differences in views. In Gillhov, the community accepted the symposium despite the fear of wolves (Nilsson 1996). Many functions were carried out by local people including people from the municipal administration. For example, the bus driver received many tour orders, households in the villages had opportunities to host symposium visitors, and the village shop received a considerable increase in sales.

In 1998, the leader of the symposium moved away and a new leader was appointed. However, instead of connecting with the Wolf Symposium, he created a 'nature showroom' to give information for tourists and locals. The links to the community weakened and after a couple of years, he moved the nature showroom away from Gillhov. The move took the spirit away from the community as convenor of the symposium. In 2018, the symposium was closed, 14 years after the start (Östersunds-Posten 2018).

The question returned, "What to do with the schoolhouse?" In 2003, it was sold to a Dutch entrepreneur based in Holland (personal communication with Anders Englund, Department of Industry and Commerce, Berg, 3 April 2017). After that, there have been few activities in Gillhov. The owner aimed to offer conferences and rent out the schoolhouse to tourists and similar activities. However, by 2017, happenings were very scarce at the schoolhouse (personal communication with Eugène Jonai, Gillhov Education Center, 1 April 2017). The development of Gillhov has dwindled to a halt and the community administration staff does not recognize the word "wolf symposium" (personal communication with Anders Englund, Department of Industry and Commerce, Berg, 19 July 2017). The bus driver's son lives in the community but now works for a company for school bus driving (personal communication with resident in Gillhov, 17 April 2019). Of the 20 remaining houses in Gillhov, most are used as summer houses while the rest seem to be empty. The primary use of the schoolhouse occurs during the autumn when international berry pickers come to the village. The rest of the year, the owner is generally in Holland. The place seems to be doomed to a slow but irreversible extinction.

Gimdalen, Sweden

Our second case involves the outcome of launching a tourist establishment in Northern Sweden called the Country Club Gimdalen that was planned in the village of Gimdalen with a population of around 100 inhabitants (Statistics Sweden 2019). Gimdalen is located in Bräcke Municipality with a population of nearly 6,300 inhabitants (Statistics Sweden 2019). The primary industry in the

municipality is tourism, along with some wood-based manufacturing. Gimdalen is a traditional settlement with forestry and small agriculture plots. A considerable attraction is a river with an abundance of fish, especially river trout and grayling. In 1968, the river became a national custody district for fishing, and in 1989 it joined the first district for catch and release angling in Sweden.

Bräcke Municipality administration is an active stakeholder in community development, including both politicians and staff members. Among local people in Gimdalen, there are individual stakeholders. For example, a famous photographer and a representative for fishing activities in the river Gimån with the assets of tarn fish. They have, together with many others, a vital readiness to do something for their village. An example of this was a plan for further development of Gimdalen, presented together with the community in 1995 (*Projektidéplan över Gimdalsnäset* 1995). The plan required an acquisition and exploitation of a piece of forest on an isthmus close to the river, just 100 to 200 meters to the village settlements. The fundamental idea was to develop resources based on what the river Gimån could offer and led by local landowners in Gimdalen. In 1995 with the help of a German entrepreneur, Erhard Zimmer, who was supported by a German travel organization, *Der Part*, and with local landowners' cooperation (Nilsson 2007b) they started a local tourism company called *Gimdalen Upplevelser och Äventyr* (Gimdalen Experiences and Adventure) to develop a holiday village idea called the Country Club Gimdalen (*Projektidéplan över Gimdalsnäset* 1995). The expected target groups were thought to be tourists from Scandinavian countries and Germany (Nilsson 2003).

After some years, a revised version of the plan was done and was presented to the villagers, supported by money from the Swedish governmental administration to cover any unfinanced costs. The overall plan was launched *by* villagers, *with* villagers and *for* villagers with financial support from Zimmer. Twelve landowners from Gimdalen were prepared to lease the area and, together with Zimmer, would have a majority of the stocks (Nilsson 2003). Since the Kälarne region (including the village of Gimdalen) was transferred from the municipality of Ragunda to the Bräcke municipality during the 1974 reform, politicians in Bräcke realized that they had to do something for the area to feel welcomed to the new reorganized municipality (Nilsson 2007b). Gimdalen was experiencing depopulation trends over time and wanted to develop tourism in the area as a form of revitalization efforts. However, because of the remoteness of the village it was difficult to market and find financing for the tourism project. Therefore, when a local from Gimdalen introduced Zimmer to the project as an entrepreneur with financial backing the local cooperative were pleased.

The Gimdalen Experiences and Adventure (GEA) project's plan for the holiday village included hotel service facilities—between 30-50 high quality cottages with occupancy of four to six people. Each cottage would represent different periods of Swedish history (Nilsson 2003) and would be managed by the local landowner (Nilsson 2007b). Information on local customs would be available in the cottages. The facilities would contain a restaurant, lounge, library and conference hall. Additionally, it would be run and operated by locals which were estimated at 20-30 people employing about 40% of the adult inhabitants (Nilsson

2007b). The initiative was described by politicians and planners as a gift from heaven, especially since the financing was clear (Nilsson 2003).

After the GEA project plan was presented by the community at a meeting with the villagers, it was at first met with enthusiasm by most of the participants. Nevertheless, after a while, some villagers criticized the large scale of the project, insufficient anchoring among the villagers, and fear of German influence in the village. A campaign started in the local newspaper with criticism and xenophobic arguments, based on a fear of a German invasion—calling forth a picture of Germans as a people who caused problems wherever they go (Länstidningen 25 March 1995a, Länstidningen 27 March 1995, Länstidningen 15 May 1995). Interviews conducted in 1995 (Nilsson 2003) showed that there was both negative and positive support for the GEA project. Positive responses to the project were connected to feeling that the project had an almost unbelievable chance (Länstidningen 25 March 1995, Länstidningen 4 April 1995, Länstidningen 9 May 1995). However, the negative responses reflected xenophobic sentiments expressed in the local papers at the time.

Interviews conducted with villagers in 2017 showed that respondents felt that the criticism was found mostly among part-time residents with summer houses in the village, by those who worked outside the village, and by some young people (personal communication with residents, 24 May 2017). It was hard to know if the people who were negative towards the GEA project were in the majority. However, they dominated the press and the criticism was supported by a community official (Nilsson 2003). As a result of the negative opinion, however, Zimmer relinquished the idea. He described his decision in an interview in the local newspaper by saying that during the entire process, he met mostly positive reactions from politicians and residents, so he could not understand the criticism exposed in the newspapers and why it started (Länstidningen 27 September 1995). After the GEA project ceased, a period of inactivity started.

The focus of the original project was the Gimå River that is still running through the village. Soon, a villager and his wife revived possibilities to use the river as a draw for tourism to the area and leased a portion of the land near the river. The angling is still seen as an asset of the village but instead of a hotel to accommodate guests, they are now placed in huts or by local families (personal communication with residents, 24 May 2017). At the municipality office, the GEA is almost unknown today (personal communication with Liv Edström, Bräcke municipality 24 May 2017). The xenophobic expressions are found incomprehensible, and not one of the community staffers can believe that this had happened. Instead, they declare that Gimdalen, today, is a multicultural and prospering village (personal communication with community chairman Sven-Åke Draxten, 24 May 2017). The angling activities have attracted domestic and foreign in-movers. The population has increased, employment has developed, and there is only one empty house. Several of the stakeholders who initiated the GEA from the start are still living in the village; however, they are not active any longer with community development (personal communication with residents, 24 May 2017).

Bispgården, Sweden

Our third and final case involves the outcome of launching the King Chulalongkorn memorial, also known as the Royal Thai Pavilion in northern Sweden, built in the 1990s in Utanede with a population of around 460 inhabitants (Statistics Sweden, 2020). Utanede is just outside Bispgården in the Ragunda Municipality (5,300 inh.) (Statistics Sweden 2019). The area is known for its beautiful nature, but also negatively impacted by socio economic problems, an aging population, and out-migration (Carlfjord, 2017). The main industry activity is the production of electric power generated from the river Indalsälven—one of the most exploited rivers in Sweden for hydroelectric power providing Stockholm with about half of the electric energy consumed. However, Ragunda municipality receives very little financial support from this industry which is considered creating national, but not local economic benefits. For example, all nine hydroelectric power plants are owned from outside of the community, employees are few and maintenance services are subcontracted from elsewhere (Carlfjord 2017). The primary economic industry of Ragunda is tourism with some wood-based manufacturing.

Dedicated stakeholders in Ragunda Municipality, besides the community board, are rare and are mostly active around tourism development. The community has today, besides the Royal Thai Pavilion, a dry waterfall due to a natural catastrophe called *Döda fallet* (the Dead Fall). The Royal Thai Pavilion is the only one of its kind outside of Thailand (Thailändska Paviljongen 2020). It is a very popular tourist attraction with a theater tribune that rotates around different scenes, used for performances during the summer season with famous national actors (Ragunda kommuns hemsida 2020). There is also a hydro-energy museum in Krångede, showing the development of the production of electricity over centuries (Ragunda kommuns hemsida 2020). These attractions require service from hotels, restaurants and private facilities. In Bispgården, there is a factory producing lifts for trucks, with a worldwide market that requires accommodations (personal communication with residents, 24 May 2017).

The background for this research is formulated from personal communication with residents on 24 May 2017. The story begins in 1897 by a visit of the Siamese King Chulalongkorn, who made a trip to the northern coastal part of Sweden. The Siamese king wanted to learn more about forestry since he had encouraged his people in Thailand to start a domestic forestry industry. His visit ended in Bispgården where he stayed over-night. By horse drawn wagon, he traveled the next day a couple of kilometers to Utanede where a riverboat was waiting for him to bring him to his trip's final destination in Sundsvall. The gravel road he traveled on was, in the 1940s, used for transport of timber to a hydroelectric power station at the river. Although the road had no official name it was called Chulalongkorn by locals and a road sign was put up with that name.

In 1992, some tourists from Thailand saw the sign and were told about the story of their king's visit. They became very excited and kissed the road and explained to a local politician in Ragunda that this road is holy for Thai people since King Chulalongkorn had used it. This politician saw possibilities to make the

road a tourist attraction and decided, together with the local Thai people, to send an invitation to a Thai dancing group to Utanede. However, he forgot to authorize the invitation by the community board (personal communication with residents, 24 May 2017).

In Thailand, the invitation was erroneously seen as a royal invitation from Sweden, supported by the royal court and the king. A delegate of Thailand was sent to the municipality of Ragunda in 1993 with an offer to the Swedish king: a pavilion with a statue of King Chulalongkorn. It was impossible for the Swedish court to reject and King Karl Gustav had to accept it. Since the Swedish government did not wish to be involved, they delegated it to the royal representative in the region of Jämtland, who directly delegated it to the mayor of Ragunda. The mayor had, however, no funding possibilities from the Swedish government to receive such a gift (personal communication with residents, 24 May 2017).

As a result of the lack of coordination between both the Thai and Swedish governments, Sweden had to do something. It decided, together with the Thai government, in 1998 to establish a pavilion with the Thai king in Utanede, financed by the State of Thailand. Since then, it has been the responsibility of the municipality of Ragunda to care for the maintenance of the pavilion, even though the original decision had not been taken legally, stretching the already strained financial budget of an impoverished community (personal communication with residents, 24 May 2017).

After a fantastic start, the interest of the pavilion with the statue of Chulalongkorn faded away—since the novelty of the statue goes away once you have already seen it once. Visitation soon diminished. This was also due to restrictions from the Thai-Swedish organization that forbid all sorts of activities around the pavilion, which made the visit a bit boring. After a while, this has changed and there are activities around the pavilion but not enough to bear its costs, especially since the golden plates have to be cleaned, and the community has no money for the expense (personal communication with residents, 24 May 2017).

A meeting with local stakeholders took place in April 2019, and it was decided to revisit the Thai Embassy in Stockholm (Jämtlands Tidning 14 March 2019). A new meeting was held in May 2019 in Utanede with the Thai ambassador and the Ragunda chairman. This meeting resulted in the creation of a plan, financed by both the Thai and Swedish governments (Jämtlands Tidning 26 September 2019). In October 2019, a committee was established to finance and maintain the pavilion and in July 2020 during the 123rd commemoration of King Chulalongkorn's visit to Ragunda discussions continued between Thailand and Ragunda municipality on ways to preserve the memorial in cooperation between governments, public, and private sectors in a sustainable way (Tingstam 2020).

Discussion

Theoretical Reflections

Using a longitudinal case study analysis, this article tries to illuminate how the use of two theories—stakeholder theory and the blind spot theory—can establish development by an interplay between them. The blind spot theory is, however, not viable alone and the stakeholder theory can have a clear advantage by an interference between the two theories.

Blind Spot Theory and Stakeholder Theory

Blind spot theory is the idea that “the human mind has cognitive shortcomings... [therefore] ...not capable of finding the right development trend alone” and may lead to shortcomings because of the inability in seeing alternative solutions (Nilsson 2017, p. 153). However, it may also lead to positive outcomes if the community development project is also backed by the right stakeholders (Nilsson 2007a). Some rural areas had local forces that focused on an idea and hope for positive development that lead to ‘planning with uncertainty’ or collective planning based on ‘liberty’ to help find a rational way forward (Nilsson 2017). The communities highlighted from our case studies continue to face a negative economic trend, out-migration, and an aging population which created a need for advocates of positive community development (or community development for local good).

Prigogine (1996), speaking about chaos theory, states that we cannot avoid the feeling that we live in an age of transformation. Nevertheless, this transformation is sometimes unexpected with dramatic consequences, e.g., the standard example of a wing-beat of a butterfly in the Caribbean Sea creating a storm in Europe. We can also see these consequences on a much smaller scale if we are observant. The three examples in this article illuminate this. However, they also illuminate the apparent fact that positive change may not always appear—perhaps it very seldom does. The presented cases do not give a complete answer to the outcome of unintended effects of deliberate decisions and assumptions but they can give a hint of the unpredictable world we live in.

Community development based on blind spot theory seems to be successful at the start of the project’s inception, but not decisively lasting over time. For example, the Wolf Symposium in Gillhov is a visible indicator of that. The start is totally according to Prigogine’s (1979) observations of unintended development directions but the project itself did not last. The fundamental problem was a non-active surrounding in the form of a lack of stakeholders. The entire project was dependent on one person and when this person disappeared, the symposium continued—it is true—but at another location and a different theme entirely. The devastating consequence resulted in a further spiral of decline for the village. The result showed that a blind spot theory is not enough to aid in success when dedicated stakeholders are absent.

When the cases are compared, the interactions between stakeholder theory and blind spot theory help us to draw important conclusions on the predictability

of the success of community development initiatives. For example, each of our cases show that the original aim of each initiative was to create a sustainable positive development for their village. Unfortunately, the Wolf Symposium suffered internally from a lack of resiliency when the leader of the symposium moved away and the new leader changed the original concept from a wolf symposium to a nature showroom. The lack of active stakeholder to act as a convenor and stop the change of identity of the original project ultimately led to the project's termination.

When the case of Gimdalen is compared with Utanede we can see that the GEA project in Gimdalen was anchored in the village with multiple stakeholders and local support at the start. By that, it can be labeled as a typical stakeholder project. The only blind spot theory that interplayed with the project's outcomes was the coincidence that a German entrepreneur, Zimmer, wanted to finance the project. However, this ultimately led to xenophobic fears that created vociferous criticism which led to lack of support that finally terminated the project. In this case, stakeholders' conflicts with the project and lack of support by the local authorities led to the demise of the GEA. However, the outcome of the Royal Thai Pavilion started as a pure blind spot effect, but, like the GEA project, it was not supported by interested and active stakeholders at first, or rather the responsibility was delegated until responsibility came to a mutual accord years later. The Thai association had a decisive impact on the development but had no further ideas of how to make it sustainable at the start, until recently. The only active stakeholder at the start of the project was the community politicians, but they had no means as an active convenor to help towards financing. The outcome of the Royal Thai Pavilion shows how, at last, local interests saved the project with commercial influences, including the Thai government, the Swedish state, and the Thai Embassy in a collective decision to finance the project in the future. The project has become resilient.

Conclusion

The blind spot theory can form the background and becomes a key object for the study with the stakeholder theory as its litmus-paper of ability for success. The result shows that the blind spot theory can, by being subversive in a positive way, give overwhelming results. However, it can also be, in reality, a blind alley. In order to avoid this, the result shows that stakeholders are necessary, not just as starters, but also as supporters leading to resiliency of the overall project. Therefore, the key point is the blind spot theory and its relation to the stakeholder theory. For example, the Royal Thai Pavilion in Utanede, Sweden resulted in an unauthorized decision by a single person, followed by an invitation from royal officials from Thailand, which led to a misunderstanding between the two countries, resulting in an unwanted (and illegal) decision, which was later delegated to the Jämtland county governor, who then delegated it to the last link in the chain: the mayor of the municipality of Ragunda. However, nearly 30 years in

the making, the Royal Thai Pavilion seems to be on the right path towards resiliency.

Results show that a convenor is necessary for long-term sustainability. Key stakeholders play a pivotal role in providing leadership and community development. Local authorities can help with governance and policies that can help with effective coordination of tourism development along with management of multi-stakeholder groups, financial and human resources, and community engagement (Salama 2018). As seen in our three case studies, a best practice approach for rural tourism development is to strive toward active engagement of the community as a convenor because grassroots leadership proves for a wide range of necessary development and promotion of tourism, as well as management of its potential impacts. Development based on a blind spot theory can be successful but obviously, it cannot depend on only one devoted person. It is necessary to have a group of devoted stakeholders, especially the community as a convenor must be involved. However, if a primary stakeholder disappears or changes the terms, someone else has to take the lead, to help maintain the integrity of the original concept. Since this did not happen in the case of the Wolf Symposium in Gillhov, Sweden the village is now almost depopulated.

For the case of the GEA project in Gimdalen, if the project had been supported by the municipality administration without faltering as a conscious convenor, the project may have proven to be successful. The new fishing project owners have anchored the development in the community center very well. The village is now recognized as a lucky example of a multicultural village with twelve different nationalities, partly due to in-movers with relatives both to the village and internationally (personal communication with Liv Edström, Bräcke municipality 24 May 2017). Although the positive outcomes of the Royal Thai Pavilion in Bispgården Municipality took the span of 30 years, the case study supports the fact that the blind spot theory has to be supported by interested and active stakeholders in order to be sustainable and, above all, be supported by a strong convenor.

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Can Social Characteristics Confine the Use of Airbnb Platform? A Case Study of Aswan and Wahat in Egypt

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Airbnb became the largest share economy platform in the world with an expected 500 million guests deriving 3 billion dollars profits in 2020. In many destinations, the Airbnb platform provides the umbrella for private dwellings owners to participate in the global tourism movement. Aswan and Wahat are two Egyptian destinations where private dwellings are in use in isolation from this platform as well as any governmental cover despite their existence. Neither the Ministry of Tourism "MoT" nor the Egyptian Tourism Federation "E.T.F" provide any umbrella for this activity despite its existence and popularity. PESTEL is a model that is geared toward exploring the adequacy of destinations for projects. This paper uses this model to find out the impact of social and demographic elements of the model to differentiate between destinations about their adequacy to adopt the Airbnb platform. Findings indicate that local, social and demographic disputes may make the difference in adequacy, albeit all other PESTEL factors conformity.

Keywords: private dwellings, Airbnb platform, social and demographic characteristics, PESTEL

Background

Airbnb is considered a trustworthy website for those who want unique accommodation to list, explore, and book around the world (Airbnb 2016). It is an online platform where common people rent their premises for visitors. Usually, such rooms include a whole house (for example an apartment or home) or a private space in a residence that also includes the host. Therefore, a very limited percentage of Airbnb's listings are shared rooms (for example, a guest can sleep in the living room on a futon). The numerous inventories of Airbnb often range from very modest to highly luxurious. Nevertheless, in the 2012 Companies factsheet, 57% of their lists were entire homes, 41% private and 2% shared spaces (Airbnb 2012). Airbnb does not include a precise breakdown. This general overview has been supported by a more recent independent data review taken from the Airbnb website.

Tom Slee (2013) noticed that 56% of the New York City listings about Airbnb were the entire household, with two-thirds of the listing of Airbnb in New York City with at least one comment being whole residences. In February 2016, data from the Airbnb website for 32 major global cities showed that on average 64% of

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the cities listed by Airbnb were for whole houses, 34% for private rooms, and 2% for shared premises. Airbnb operators (i.e., "hosts") lease one or more Airbnb lists as permanent short-term rentals, a second house, or even one or more Airbnb lists. Approximately 90% of Airbnb hosts are renting their primary house (Airbnb 2016), but hosting (apparently "professional") hosting is a proportionately greater share of Airbnb's overall listings and reservations (Clampet 2014, Schneiderman 2014, Tom Slee 2014, Coldwell 2016, O'Neill and Ouyang 2016, Popper 2015).

Airbnb has recently been trying to attract business travelers who only represent a small part of Airbnb visitors, create a dedicated travel platform with custom search results and expense management instruments, partner with several corporate travel companies, and launch a "Business Travel Ready" badge, which can be obtained via listings that have certain characteristics. Little information on user demographics is available, but Airbnb reported that in 2012 for example some 40% of its guests were from the US, with the remainder of Europeans comprising the majority of the rest (Taylor 2012). Just over the half was in Europe at the time, and just over a quarter was in North America (Taylor 2012), with more than half of the entries in Europe only confirmed at the start of 2015 (Shead 2015). A summer-in 2015 study by Airbnb also found that its average visitors' age was 35 (Airbnb 2015) and the average visitor age was 14 to 36 (Williams 2014) and that during the summer 2015 survey, 54% of the guests were female (Airbnb 2015).

Why Tourists Choose Airbnb

A handful of studies have begun the process of understanding why tourists choose Airbnb. To begin with, Lamb (2011) used phenomenological life-world interviews to examine the motivations behind Couch Surfing and Airbnb hosts and guests, focusing on their desire for authentic interpersonal experiences. He found that Airbnb guests were primarily attracted to the service by their desire for such experiences, but Lamb also noted financial savings played a small role in their decisions. Lamb's predetermined focus on authentic interpersonal experiences permitted a rich examination of that topic, but it also prevented a more comprehensive assessment of the motivations behind Airbnb use. Also, Lamb's study devoted comparatively more attention to Couch Surfing than to Airbnb, and only involved a handful of interviews with Airbnb guests. Guttentag (2015) examined Airbnb through the conceptual lens of disruptive innovation, and he proposed three key appeals of Airbnb based on a review of the relevant academic and media literature, i.e., price, household amenities, and authenticity. However, Guttentag's paper is conceptual rather than empirical, so no data beyond a cost comparison of Airbnb and hotels are offered to support the three motivating factors he proposes. Tussyadiah (2015) surveyed users focusing on motivations drawn from the collaborative consumption literature. An exploratory factor analysis grouped these motivations into three factors that are; Sustainability, Community, and Economic Benefits. She found that all three factors had an influence, with economic Benefits being the most significant. However, Tussyadiah's grounding in the collaborative consumption literature may have restricted

the scope of her analysis, as she devoted significant attention to matters of sustainability but failed to consider practical motivations beyond cost or to explicitly consider authenticity (which she found some respondents mentioned in an open-ended item). However, Tussyadiah only surveyed U.S. users in general, instead of just Airbnb. Because some major PSR companies offer primarily second homes that are located in traditional vacation rental markets, these services' appeal may be distinct from Airbnb's. In a somewhat similar study, Tussyadiah and Pesonen (2015) examined motivations of use among American and Finnish users. The authors used 12 motivation statements rooted in the collaborative consumption literature, and exploratory factor analysis revealed two factors that are: social Appeal and economic Appeal – plus several items (including location convenience and search efficiency) that did not load onto either factor. However, the authors did not indicate the strength of agreement with the different motivational factors but rather used the factor scores as independent variables in a multiple regression looking at how the use impacts different travel decisions. Also, this study exhibits some of the same limitations as the Tussyadiah (2015) study, namely that practical benefits were not broadly considered, authenticity was not explicitly included, and the respondents were users of any PSR service. Quinby and Gasdia (2014), surveyed users and found the top three reasons they chose were home-like amenities, more space, and better value, in the same order they are mentioned (Hennessey 2014). However, like the studies of Tussyadiah (2015) and Tussyadiah and Pesonen (2015), Quinby and Gasdia (2014) looked at PSRs in general instead of Airbnb specifically. Nowak et al. (2015), working for Morgan Stanley, surveyed U.S. and European travelers to gauge Airbnb's potential threat to hotels and online travel agencies. The respondents who used Airbnb within the previous year were asked about the factors that led them to do so. 55% indicated "cheaper price", 35% indicated "location", 31% indicated "authentic experience", 25% indicated "own kitchen", 24% indicated "uniqueness of unit", 23% indicated "easy to use app/site" and 17% indicated "large party accommodation". However, this study examined total Airbnb use instead of the choice to use Airbnb on a specific trip, which may have complicated the findings because one's reasons to use Airbnb may vary between different trips (e.g., a leisure trip versus a business trip). Finally, Airbnb has produced economic impact reports focusing on about two dozen different major worldwide destinations, and these reports provide occasional insights into why guests choose Airbnb. Numerous reports have indicated that roughly 90% of Airbnb guests were looking to "live like a local" (Airbnb 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016), a couple of reports stated that roughly 80% of Airbnb guests used it because the location was more convenient than that of a comparable hotel (Airbnb 2014, 2015), and several reports claimed that about 80 to 90% of Airbnb guests chose it for the amenities (Airbnb 2015). However, in addition to potential biases with research commissioned by Airbnb, it is difficult to interpret patterns between the reports because they are not perfectly consistent in the variables covered, making it unclear if some findings are being excluded from some reports.

Proposed Motivations to Use Airbnb according to Innovation Concepts

The disruptive innovation and diffusion of innovations literature do not provide a precise framework for understanding the motivations that attract guests to Airbnb, but in combination with the existing Airbnb and tourism accommodation choice literature, the two innovation concepts still provide a very useful lens through which to recognize and understand these motivations. Based on this combined literature, potential motivations to use Airbnb were proposed as relating to six different dimensions – price, functional attributes, unique and local authenticity, novelty, bragging rights, and sharing economy ethos.

Price

As previously described, low cost is a classic characteristic and appeal of disruptive innovations (Christensen 1997), and Adner's (2002) analysis of consumer demand for disruptive innovations stressed the critical importance of price. Likewise, innovation diffusion research recognizes that financial cost is a very common aspect of relative advantage; indeed, economic factors are the very first variety of relative advantage that Rogers (2003) described. As was also previously discussed, in their studies of Airbnb and PSR users, Tussyadiah (2015) and Nowak et al. (2015) both found financial savings were the principal reason guests use Airbnb and PSRs, and Guttentag (2015) and Lamb (2011) also both recognized the importance of this appeal. The attraction of Airbnb's low cost also has been highlighted in countless media stories on the company (Ennion 2013, Harwell 2014, Pilon 2014, Rosenberg 2014, Schoettle 2015). As was also mentioned, the price has additionally been identified as a key factor in hotel choice (Chu and Choi 2000, Dolnicar and Otter 2003). Moreover, based on their previous research on Zipcar, they argued that the sharing economy is driven primarily by a desire for cost savings and convenience, also, Hamari et al. (2015) similarly found that economic benefits were a significant motivator for intention to use the sharing economy services. Numerous analyses have indicated that Airbnb accommodations tend to be inexpensive in comparison with hotels, even though they may be more expensive than hostels (Busbud.com 2016, Guttentag 2015, Haywood et al. 2016, Hockenson 2013). However, some recent research somewhat surprisingly disputes the common notion that Airbnb generally offers significant cost savings.

Functional Attributes

As earlier discussed, the disruptive innovation literature takes the perspective of Lancaster (1966) that products can be viewed as the sum of their various attributes (Christensen 1997, Adner 2002). In practice, such attributes (aside from price) have almost exclusively been functional ones; for example, the concept of disruptive innovation originated in research on computer disk drives for which the primary attributes were size and storage capacity (Bower and Christensen 1995). Tussyadiah and Zach (2015) found the location was important for both hotels and

PSRs, even though hotel guest reviews tended to focus on a location's convenience and PSR reviews tended to focus on a location's more general desirability.

Unique and Local Authenticity

The appeal of a more "homely" atmosphere emphasizes the importance of looking beyond strictly tangible attributes to additionally consider the experiential aspects of an Airbnb stay. Ahuvia and Izberk-Bilgin (2011) built on this idea by suggesting that this discontent is inspiring a consumer embrace of "e-Bayization". This countertrend to McDonaldization describes how information technology is transforming consumer society by permitting especially high levels of variety, unpredictability, and market-mediated control (e.g., online reputational systems). These three characteristics perfectly encapsulate Airbnb, and one of Airbnb's co-founders has even likened the company to eBay (Buhr 2014). Other authors have used different terminology to describe this same general trend. Gilmore and Pine (2011) stated that a process of commoditization has expanded from goods to services, meaning many competing service brands are virtually indistinguishable and compete primarily on price. The authors argued that customers seek memorable experiences via the emerging "experience economy", and are therefore increasingly unwilling to accept such standardization for reduced costs. The facilitation of authentic local experiences is also sometimes mentioned in guidebook references to Airbnb (St. Louis 2012, Williams et al. 2015), and is frequently stated in media stories about the company (Cadwalladr 2013, Capellaro 2013, Bradbury 2014, Vaccaro 2014, Weisleder 2014). As was described before, the importance of authenticity and interpersonal experiences as a motivation for Airbnb stays has also been noted by Lamb (2011), Guttentag (2015), and Tussyadiah (2015).

Novelty

The previously discussed concept of personal innovativeness (one's tendency to adopt innovations more quickly or slowly than others) (Rogers 2003), which is a major topic within the diffusion of innovations, is very closely related to the notion of novelty-seeking. Likewise, Khare et al. (2010) viewed the two constructs jointly in a study of online shopping behavior among Indian youth. Novelty-seeking also has been used by numerous other tourism scholars to better understand tourist choices and behavior. For example, Snepenger (1987) segmented the Alaskan vacation market using novelty-seeking roles rooted in Cohen's (1972) work; Chang et al. (2006) segmented visitors to Taiwanese aboriginal attractions based on novelty-seeking motivations; Jang and Feng (2007) found novelty-seeking was positively associated with mid-term revisit intentions among international French tourists; and Aaker (2011) found novelty-seeking among European travelers was associated with lower immediate revisit intentions but higher long-term revisit intentions. As an innovative form of tourism accommodation, it seems natural to consider the novelty of Airbnb as a motivation influencing Airbnb choice. Firstly, novelty seekers could be drawn to Airbnb

simply because it is a novel form of tourism accommodation. Secondly, as related to the broader experience that Airbnb provides, Airbnb accommodations could be perceived as facilitating a more novel overall travel experience than could be had in a traditional form of accommodation.

Bragging Rights

Rogers (2003) highlighted that social prestige is often a key component of the relative advantage that innovation can offer. Indeed, Rogers noted that over a century ago, Gabriel Tarde, one of the originators of diffusion thinking, identified status-seeking as the main reason for people to imitate the innovative behaviors of others. Travel bragging and social status have also been considered as a motivating factor in Cha et al. (1995) study segmenting Japanese overseas travelers; Sirakaya et al.'s (2003) study segmenting Japanese travelers to Turkey; Kim and Prideaux's (2005) study on the travel motivations of visitors to Korea; Kim et al.'s (2007) study on the travel motivations of U.S. university students; and Lee et al. (2002) study on the travel motivations of German international tourists. Although the tourism research on bragging rights and social status has focused chiefly on general travel motivations, the diffusion of innovations literature demonstrates that this concept is relevant and possibly important to understanding the adoption of specific tourism product innovations like Airbnb.

Sharing Economy Ethos

When considering the diffusion concept of compatibility, which highlights an adopter's values and beliefs (Rogers 2003), it seems important to recognize the values of the broader sharing economy in which Airbnb resides. Key values in the sharing economy include sustainability, local consumption, and trust between strangers (Botsman and Rogers 2010, Chase 2015, Gansky 2010, Pricewaterhouse Cooper 2015). Airbnb fully endorses such values, as illustrated by its economic impact reports that often feature sections related to both environmental and social benefits. Furthermore, as was previously summarized, studies by Tussyadiah (2015) and Tussyadiah and Pesonen (2015) found that motivations directly relating to the sharing economy play an important role in influencing PSR use. These studies included fairly similar items covering motivations such as supporting residents, reducing resource consumption, and preferring Airbnb's sustainable business model, which loaded onto factors termed "Sustainability" (Tussyadiah 2015) and "Social appeal" (Tussyadiah and Pesonen 2015).

Negative Sides of Airbnb Alternative Accommodations

A recent study explored sources of distrust in the Airbnb. The study focused on Airbnb customers' negative reviews posted in English on Trustpilot's website. Two main findings were found. i.e., poor customer service and host unpleasant

behavior. Eventually, the study called for more care on service and a higher trust-based relationship between host and guests.

Customers of the sharing economy—like, Airbnb—are exposed to other risks than monetary loss (Ert et al. 2016), and guests may be confronted with unreliable hosts or even personal security (Huurne et al. 2017). In most cases, the host rents rooms to strangers (Ert et al. 2016), and the host competence defines the accommodation service quality (Zhang et al. 2017). As a result, many unexpected incidents may occur, as guests cannot determine one another's reliability in advance (Sun et al. 2019). For instance, a recent unfortunate incident involved the sexual assault of a nineteen-year-old boy by his Airbnb host during his stay in Madrid (Lieber 2015). Although the notion of sharing assumes trust between the two parties, host and guest (Lee et al. 2015, Parigi and Cook 2015), such unpleasant experiences may certainly occur, and eventually causes distrust, and might discourage travelers from staying at Airbnb accommodations (So et al. 2018). Recent studies identified distrust as one of the major barriers surrounding consumers' use of Airbnb (Tussyadiah and Pesonen 2018) and, in some cases, the only constraint that significantly predicts the overall consumer attitude towards Airbnb (So et al. 2018).

Aside from monetary risks, additional risks do also exist in sharing economy platforms like Airbnb Ert et al. (2016). The authors stress that "the mere act of sharing a home with a stranger can be risky" (Ert et al. 2016). Such risks and unpleasant experiences may lead to distrust and discourage travelers from choosing Airbnb as an alternative to conventional accommodation types (So et al. 2018). From another perspective, since Airbnb is a third-party platform that offers online accommodation services between sellers and buyers, the risk is always there. However, Airbnb consumers have one choice but to estimate the risk of their transactions from the available information and communications because they cannot experience the actual service before they arrive at their chosen properties (Liang et al. 2018). In the same context, most P2P accommodation platforms are suffering flimsy trust (Ert et al. 2016, Wu et al. 2017). Recent studies indicate that distrust is the most frequently cited barrier to P2P accommodation in a sharing economy, which includes the basic mistrust among strangers and privacy concerns (So et al. 2018, Tussyadiah and Pesonen 2018).

Poor Customer Service from Airbnb

In a recent study, of the two hundred and sixteen negative reviews posted, 89.81% were associated with poor customer service experiences that caused distrust in Airbnb. Notions on poor customer service included: "there is no phone/email support", "simply ignored", "can't get any help from Airbnb", "contact with this organization is virtually impossible", "Airbnb failed to help us in any useful way", "Airbnb made no effort to make things right for me", "can't refund the money", "customer service is a nightmare", "wait for a response...usually weeks", "I no longer can place any trust in...even their customer service", "Airbnb...they do not care", "customer service team just doesn't exist", "no one from Airbnb contacted me", "was not resolved until 26 hours after my initial submission", "just

denied that was their problem", "Airbnb will not help you", "dismissed my claims", "worst customer service", "bad customer service", and "customer service is poor". I would not use Airbnb or recommend Airbnb to anyone else.

On experiencing a service quality failure, customers usually complain to service providers to alleviate their stress and get protection. In this background, many Airbnb guests contacted the company's customer service department; however, Airbnb's gave inadequate responses and poor interactions, this designated a low level of benevolence from the customer service staff towards their customers, in turn, this caused high levels of ambivalence and uncertainty among customers that were expressed in psychological distress (Moody et al. 2017). As a result, guests' distrust in Airbnb was amplified, to the point that some customers noted they would stop using the service. This decision can be linked to institution-based reasons; in other words, these guests practiced what they considered as an unsatisfactory reaction and referred to weak regulations.

PESTEL Outcomes Effects on Project Performance

The PESTEL Analysis is used as a tool of situational analysis for business evaluation purposes and is one of the most used models in the evaluation of the external business environment that is highly dynamic (Perera 2017).

PESTEL model is one of the most recent models that are used to evaluate the adequacy of a locality, a destination, or a country to accommodate new projects. It has six dimensions as explained in the next section.

Political Factors

These factors are all about how and to what degree a government intervenes in the economy or a certain industry. All the influences that a government has on your business could be classified here. This can include government policy, political stability or instability, corruption, foreign trade policy, tax policy, labor law, environmental law, and trade restrictions. Furthermore, the government may have a profound impact on a nation's education system, infrastructure, and health regulations. These are all factors that need to be taken into account when assessing the attractiveness of a potential market.

Economic Factors

Economic factors are determinants of a certain economy's performance. Factors include economic growth, exchange rates, inflation rates, interest rates, disposable income of consumers, and unemployment rates. These factors may have a direct or indirect long term impact on a company since it affects the purchasing power of consumers and could change demand/supply models in the economy. Consequently, it also affects the way companies, price their products and services.

Social Factors

This dimension of the general environment represents the demographic characteristics, norms, customs, and values of the population within which the organization operates. This includes population trends such as the population growth rate, age distribution, income distribution, career attitudes, safety emphasis, health consciousness, lifestyle attitudes, and cultural barriers. These factors are especially important for marketers when targeting certain customers. Besides, it also says something about the local workforce and its willingness to work under certain conditions. In some cases, social factors are divided into social and demographic factors to be more precise and conclusive.

Technological Factors

These factors pertain to innovations in technology that may affect the operations of the industry and the market favorably or unfavorably. This refers to technology incentives, the level of innovation, automation, research, and development (R&D) activity, technological change, and the amount of technological awareness that a market possesses. These factors may influence decisions to enter or not enter certain industries, to launch or not launch certain products, or to outsource production activities abroad. By knowing what is going on technology-wise, you may be able to prevent your company from spending a lot of money on developing a technology that would become obsolete very soon due to disruptive technological changes elsewhere.

Environmental Factors

Environmental factors have come to the forefront only relatively recently. They have become important due to the increasing scarcity of raw materials, pollution targets, and carbon footprint targets set by governments. These factors include ecological and environmental aspects such as weather, climate, environmental offsets, and climate change which may especially affect industries such as tourism, farming, agriculture, and insurance. Furthermore, growing awareness of the potential impacts of climate change is affecting how companies operate and the products they offer. This has led to many companies getting more and more involved in practices such as corporate social responsibility (CSR) and sustainability.

Legal Factors

Although these factors may have some overlap with the political factors, they include more specific laws such as discrimination laws, antitrust laws, employment laws, consumer protection laws, copyright and patent laws, and health and safety laws. Companies need to know what is and what is not legal to trade successfully and ethically. If an organization trades globally this becomes especially tricky since each country has its own set of rules and regulations. Besides, you want to be

aware of any potential changes in legislation and the impact it may have on your business in the future. Recommended is to have a legal advisor or attorney to help you with these kinds of things.

Brief PESTEL Summary of Egypt

Egypt is a transcontinental country spanning the northeast corner of Africa and southwest corner of Asia, via a land bridge formed by the Sinai Peninsula. Most of its territory of 390,000 square miles lies within the Nile Valley of North Africa and is bordered by the Mediterranean Sea to the north, the Gaza Strip and Palestine to the northeast, the Gulf of Aqaba to the east, the Red Sea to the east and south, Sudan to the south and Libya to the west.

Travel and tourism, transport, ICT, insurance & finance, petroleum crude oil, machinery, agriculture, gold, electrical goods, electronics, and textiles are major industries of Egypt. In 2017, the Agriculture industry contributed 11.7% to the GDP of Egypt. Manufacturing had a share of 34.3% while the services industry had a share of 54% of GDP in 2017.

In 2018, Services industry exports were valued at USD 23.6 billion for Egypt. Electronics export accounted for USD 1.82 billion, machinery for USD 349 million, vehicles for USD 131 million, chemicals for USD 5.72 billion, metals for USD 2.56 billion, minerals for USD 9.33 billion, stones for USD 2.71 billion, textiles for USD 3.64 billion, and agriculture for USD 5.66 billion in 2018¹.

Egypt Hotels Market Analytics to 2023: Rooms and Revenue Analytics report is published on May 11, 2020, and has 69 pages in it. This market research report provides information about Hotels & Lodging, Food Service & Hospitality, Country Overview, and Food & Beverages industry. It covers Egypt market data and forecasts.

Egypt had an estimated population of 90.2 million in the year 2016 and is expected to reach 103.386 million by 2022. Egypt's unemployment rate was 12.571% of the total labor force in the same year. Egypt's real gross domestic product (GDP) was around EGP 1917.20 billion in 2016 whereas the nominal GDP was EGP 2708.30 billion. This resulted in a GDP deflator of 141.263. Per capita GDP was estimated at USD 3684.57 whereas purchasing power parity (PPP) based per capita GDP was estimated to be at USD 12553.94. In 2016, the Egyptian government's revenue was EGP 564.843 billion whereas the expenditure was EGP 890.143 billion. This resulted in the Egyptian government's net lending/borrowing negative at EGP 325.3 billion in 2016 indicating that enough financial resources were not made available by the government to boost economic growth. The current account balance for Egypt was estimated to be negative at USD 18.659 billion for the year 2016 and is expected to decrease at a CAGR of 53.17%. Scope of Egypt – PESTEL Analysis Report.

In 2020 Egypt is estimated to have a population of 101.493 million and is expected to reach 112.244 million by 2024, growing at a CAGR of 2.48%.

¹<https://www.marketresearchreports.com/countries/egypt>. [Accessed 2 September 2020]

Egypt's real gross domestic product (GDP) was EGP 2221.457 billion in 2019 and due to the COVID-19 outbreak, it is estimated to grow by 1.952% to be around EGP 2264.82 billion in 2020.

Egypt's unemployment rate was 8.612% of the total labor force in 2019. Due to the slowdown in global economic activity due to the COVID-19 pandemic the unemployment is expected to increase by 16.34% and reach 10.294% in 2020.

Egypt's per capita GDP was estimated at USD 3,019.72 whereas purchasing power parity (PPP) based per capita GDP is estimated to be at USD 14,028.03 for the year 2019.

In 2019, the Egyptian government's revenue was estimated to be EGP 1,083.46 billion whereas the expenditure is estimated to be EGP 1,543.26 billion. This resulted in the Egyptian government's net lending/borrowing negative at EGP 459.808 billion in 2019 indicating that not enough financial resources were made available by the government to boost economic growth.

The current account balance for Egypt was estimated to be negative at USD 7.119 billion for the year 2019 and is expected to further increase at a CAGR of 9.91% and reach USD - 4.223 billion by 2024. This negative current account balance indicates that Egypt will remain a net borrower from the rest of the world till 2024.

In the World Bank's ease of doing business ranking, Egypt was ranked 114 out of 190 countries in 2019. Egypt's ease of doing business ranking has improved from the 120th position in 2018².

Aswan is a city in the south of Egypt, and is the capital of the Aswan Governorate. Aswan is a busy market and tourist center located just north of the Aswan Dam on the east bank of the Nile at the first cataract. The modern city has expanded and includes the formerly separate community on the island of Elephantine. Aswan is a large tourist city where a current population is 1,568,000 (Egypt Statistics 2018).

Aswan is a Nubian city in the south of Egypt located on the east bank of the Nile river connected to Cairo with train stations, railways, and domestic flights; it is a population of almost about 900,000, The city of Aswan is about 85 meters above sea level, it is 879 km from Cairo, and its area about 34,608 km².

The city also is known as the land of gold because it was like a huge necropolis for the pharaohs and their treasures for thousands of years. The originals of Aswan are the Nubian representing 30% of the citizens and they speak their Nubian language the rest are Arabs who came after the Islamic invasion speaking the Arabic language.

Aswan is characterized by its warm climate and rare plant islands, also there are rock Nile islands around the city extended from the high dam to the north of Edfu, some people of the Nubian villages and islands counts on farming and handmade items as a source of living and some already took place in governmental jobs, not only the main city of Aswan that has full services but also, the surrounding islands provided by hospitals, schools, and transportations, some of the islands are uninhabited because it is considered to be an archaeological area like the crocodile island and elephantine island which was a region linking the South and the North

²<https://www.marketresearchrepor ts.org/countries/Egypt>. [Accessed 2 September 2020]

in the trade between Egypt and the rest of Africa. Aswan also is considered a huge economical source for the country's economy.

Private Dwellings Vacation Rentals in Aswan Governorate, Egypt

Elephantine - Taharka
The mango guest house (Syaha house)
Farm House
The Mango Guesthouse
Guesthouse Bet el Kerem Aswan Egypt
Nubian Lotus
Farm House 1
Otasho Nile View House
Farm House 2³

Aswan Attractions

Aswan is full of ancient pharaonic civilization and many touristic destinations including pharaonic, Islamic, and Nubian monuments.

Many tourist activities can be practiced in Aswan. Some areas on the banks of the Nile in Aswan is suitable for swimming, others for sailing boats also, as well as travel to visit the islands of plants, museums, and temples on the islands of the middle of the river, such as⁴:

- The Temple of Philae
- Elephantine island
- The Upper Dam
- The Aswan reservoir
- The Tabiya Mosque
- The Nile Museum
- The Princess Ferial Park
- The West Suhail area
- The Nile Islands
- kom Ombo temple
- The twin temple of Abu Simbel

³<https://trip101.com/article/Airbnbs-in-aswan-governorate-egypt>.

⁴<https://www.traveltoegypt.net/discover-egypt/aswan-attractions/aswan-Information>.

El-Wahat el-Bahariya or el-Bahariya

Al-Wāḥāt al-Baḥrīya, "the Northern Oases"; Diwah Ēmbemdje, "Oasis of Bemdje", from Egyptian *dsds* is depression and oasis in the Western Desert of Egypt. It is approximately 370 km away from Cairo. The roughly oval valley extends from northeast to southwest, has a length of 94 km, a maximum width of 42 km and covers an area of about 2000 km².

The valley is surrounded by mountains and has numerous springs. Located in Giza Governorate, the main economic sectors are agriculture, iron ore mining, and tourism. The main agricultural products are guavas, mangos, dates, and olives.

Bahariya consists of many villages, of which El Bawiti is the largest and the administrative center. Qasr is el-Bawiti's neighboring/twin village. To the east, about ten kilometers away are the villages of Mandishah and el-Zabu. A smaller village called el-'Aguz lies between El Bawiti and Mandishah. Harrah, the easternmost village, is a few kilometers east of Mandishah and el-Zabu. El Hayz, also called El-Hayez, is the southernmost village, but it may not always be considered as part of Bahariya because it is so far from the rest of the villages, about fifty kilometers south of El Bawiti. There is an oasis at El-Hayez, where mummies have been found on which genetic studies have been conducted (Kujanová et al. 2009).

Private Dwellings Vacation Rentals in Wahat Governorate, Egypt

Ahmed Safari Camp white desert trips Bahariya Oasis
Desert Rose Eco Lodge, Hostel in the Oasis
New Elysium
Badry's Sahara Camp
Ahmed Safari Camp and hotel
Badry's Sahara Camp2
Campsite in Bahariya Oasis
Hany safari
Black and white desert safari
Cave in Mandishah⁵

Wahat Attractions

- White desert
- Sahara Souda – Black Desert
- The Crystal Mountain
- The Museum of Golden Mummies
- Gebel Magharafa

⁵https://www.Airbnb.co.in/s/El-Wahat/homes?refinement_paths%5B%5D=%2Fhomes&source=structured_search_input_header&search_type=search_query&tab_id=home_tab&query=%20Baharia%2C%20egypt.

- Lake Almarun
- Bawiti and Qasr
- Bannentui and DJED-ANKH-AMUN-IUF (ZED-AMUN)
- Gebel Al Ingleez
- Bir Sigam
- Valley of Agabat

As the background shows, the two destinations investigated enjoy plenty of attractions that are unique in nature and type; natural attractions that are not available anywhere else in the world. The review also revealed that PESTEL analysis of Egypt despite suffering some weaknesses, still permits and encourages the tourism industry and paves the way for the introduction of new applications like Airbnb in some Egyptian destinations with unique attractions like Aswan and Wahat Bahareya. It is worth mentioning that a few shelters are already offered in these two destinations for rent online. This might lead to the conclusion of the suitability of those two destinations for the application of Airbnb.

Methodology

A questionnaire form was developed, piloted, and corrected for reliability and validity. Alpha Cronbach test was applied. The reliability value calculated was 0.87 and validity 0.89. This form was distributed on survey monkey for guests who previously visited designated areas (Aswan and Wahat) and stayed there. The questionnaire was administered during the period from March to August 2020. The same form was used for 109 tenants from Aswan and 118 from Wahat. Data collected were analyzed using SPSS version 20. t.test, f.test, and ANOVA tests were used to detect variances among groups that are investigated social and demographic elements of the PESTEL model.

Results and Discussion

Table 1. *Guests Responses to Social Adequacy of Destinations Investigated towards Airbnb Listings*

	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Neither agrees or disagree		Agree		Strongly agree		Total	Weight Average	Rank
	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F			
Population size and growth rate fits.	73.25	293	22.5	90	1.50	6	1.75	7	1.00	4	400	1.35	8
Wealth distribution fits.	0.00	0	0.25	1	4.25	17	35.0	140	60.5	242	400	4.56	4
Social classes fit.	0.00	0	0.50	2	4.25	17	33.2	133	62.0	248	400	4.57	3
Lifestyles fit.	0.25	1	0.00	0	4.00	16	33.7	135	62.0	248	400	4.57	3
Health consciousness fits.	72.50	290	24.25	97	1.00	4	1.50	6	0.75	3	400	1.34	9
Attitude towards government fits.	0.50	2	0.25	1	4.25	17	36.25	145	58.75	235	400	4.53	5
Attitude towards work fits.	0.00	0	0.25	1	3.25	13	36.25	145	60.25	241	400	4.57	3
Ethical concerns fit.	72.00	288	21.75	87	2.25	9	2.25	9	1.75	7	400	1.4	7
Cultural norms and values fit.	0.00	0	0.00	0	3.75	15	34.25	137	62.00	248	400	4.58	2
Education level fits.	0.25	1	0.25	1	4.26	17	36.84	147	58.40	233	399	4.53	5
Crime levels fit.	0.25	1	0.75	3	4.00	16	34.25	137	60.75	243	400	4.55	4
Attitudes towards leisure time fit.	0.00	0	0.00	0	3.50	14	35.00	140	61.50	246	400	4.58	2
Attitudes towards product quality fit.	0.00	0	0.00	0	4.25	17	34.75	139	61.00	244	400	4.57	3
Attitudes towards customer service fit.	0.00	0	0.00	0	5.75	23	34.00	136	60.25	241	400	4.55	4
Discrimination laws fit.	0.00	0	0.75	3	3.75	15	30.75	123	64.7	259	400	4.60	1
Antitrust laws fit.	71.50	286	23.25	93	1.50	6	1.75	7	2.00	8	400	1.4	7
Consumer protection laws fit.	0.25	1	0.50	2	3.75	15	38.50	154	57.00	228	400	4.51	6
Health and safety laws fit.	0.25	1	0.00	0	4.25	17	36.00	144	59.50	238	400	4.55	4
Data protection laws fit.	0.50	2	0.25	1	5.25	21	35.50	142	58.50	234	400	4.51	6
											400		

Table 1 shows most social elements fit for Airbnb application as seen by guests and most elements weighted average revolved around 4.60 to 4.51 with very little dispersion around their mean ($m=4.55$). However, four elements namely, population size and growth rate, health consciousness of residents, ethical concerns of residents, and antitrust laws distorted the data. The calculated mean for these four elements is ($m=1.37$). This later mean is far lower than the rest of the elements investigated. This means that guests see the context of these elements as un-fit for the application of Airbnb in the investigated destinations. To further explore whether these elements are common in both destinations Anova test was carried out as displayed in the Table 2.

Table 2. ANOVA Test for Symmetry between Aswan and Wahat Tourist Destinations

Summary of Data						
	Treatments					
	1	2	3	4	5	Total
N	22	22				44
$\sum X$	68.53	74.53				143.06
Mean	3.115	3.3877				3.251
$\sum X^2$	229.219	270.5481				499.767
Std.Dev.	0.866	0.9274				0.8974
Result Details						
Source	SS	df	MS			
Between-treatments	0.8182	1	0.8182	$F = 1.01641$		
Within-treatments	33.8087	42	0.805			
Total	34.6269	43				

The f-ratio value is 1.01641. The p-value is 0.319145. The result is not significant at $p < 0.05$.

The abovementioned Anova test results indicate there are significant differences among Aswan and Wahat ($p=0.319145$) about adequacy to apply Airbnb applications and the use of private dwellings of residents for that purpose.

To further explore the case, tenants' viewpoints in both destinations were checked against those of guests. The Anova test was used for that purpose. Table 3 shows the viewpoints of tenants in Aswan. These viewpoints are based on their responses to the questionnaire forms conducted face to face with them during the same period of study as previously mentioned.

Table 3. Aswan Tenants on Social Elements Fit for Airbnb Application

	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Neither agree nor disagree		Agree		Strongly agree		Total	Weight Average	Rank
	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F			
Population size and growth rate fits.	58.72	64	33.03	36	7.34	8	0.92	1	0.00	0	109	1.5	14
Age distribution fits.	1.83	2	0.92	1	50.46	55	30.28	33	16.51	18	109	3.59	3
Wealth distribution fits.	1.83	2	0.92	1	49.54	54	29.36	32	18.35	20	109	3.61	1
Social classes fit.	1.83	2	0.0	0	51.38	56	34.86	38	11.93	13	109	3.55	7
Family size and structure fit.	1.83	2	0.92	1	49.54	54	31.19	34	16.51	18	109	3.6	2
Lifestyles fit.	1.83	2	0.00	0	51.38	56	31.19	34	15.60	17	109	3.59	3
Health consciousness fits.	51.38	56	40.37	44	7.34	8	0.92	1	0.00	0	109	1.58	11
Attitude towards government fits.	1.85	2	1.85	2	49.07	53	36.11	39	11.11	12	108	3.53	8
Attitude towards work fits.	1.83	2	1.83	2	50.46	55	27.52	30	18.35	20	109	3.59	3
\$ Buying habits fit.	1.83	2	0.92	1	52.29	57	33.03	36	11.93	13	109	3.52	9
Ethical concerns fit.	54.13	59	38.53	42	5.50	6	1.83	2	0.00	0	109	1.55	13
Cultural norms and values fit.	1.83	2	0.92	1	51.38	56	33.03	36	12.84	14	109	3.54	6
Sex roles and distribution fit.	1.83	2	0.92	1	52.29	57	24.77	27	20.18	22	109	3.61	1
Religion and beliefs fit.	1.83	2	0.92	1	53.21	58	31.19	34	12.84	14	109	3.52	9
Racial equality fits.	53.21	58	40.37	44	4.59	5	0.92	1	0.92	1	109	1.56	12
Education level fits.	1.83	2	0.92	1	49.5	54	35.78	39	11.93	13	109	3.55	5
Minorities fit.	49.54	54	43.12	47	6.42	7	0.92	1	0.00	0	109	1.59	10
Crime levels fit.	1.83	2	0.92	1	48.62	53	35.78	39	12.84	14	109	3.57	5
Attitudes towards leisure time fit.	1.83	2	0.92	1	49.54	54	32.11	35	15.60	17	109	3.59	3
Attitudes towards product quality fit.	1.83	2	0.92	1	47.71	52	33.03	36	16.51	18	109	3.61	1
Attitudes towards customer service fit.	1.83	2	0.92	1	50.46	55	29.36	32	17.43	19	109	3.6	2
Attitudes towards foreign people fit.	1.83	2	0.00	0	49.54	54	35.78	39	12.84	14	109	3.58	4
												109	

Table 3 displays how Aswan tenants see social and demographic elements in their destination fit for the Airbnb application. Those dwellings owners expressed that most elements fit. Major fitting elements grouped had a mean of ($m=3.56$) where all these elements had little dispersion around this mean. However, the elements of population size, health consciousness, ethical concerns, minorities distorted the data since this group's arithmetic mean is much less than the former where ($m=1.54$). Issues like minorities and discrimination may have arisen due to the historical Nuba residents' problem that the Egyptian Government is working on. The population problem is a temporary issue since many residents left Aswan to other governorates due to high fluctuations in Tourism demand for this destination for the past decade due to many political, economic, and endemic reasons. Health consciousness elements are also temporary since it is impacted by depression due to lack of tourism demand and absence of health insurance plans among most Aswan residents who mainly work in the private sector which traditionally does not support or supports limitedly health insurance plans. The ethical element is the main issue of concern here since it points out to lack of awareness. This awareness is the outcome of the Ministry of Tourism "MoT" and the Egyptian Tourism Federation "E.T.F" awareness plans that are absent for the past two decades.

Table 4. ANOVA Test on Differences among Guests and Tenants in Aswan towards Airbnb Application

Summary of Data						
	Treatments					
	1	2	3	4	5	Total
N	22	19				41
$\sum X$	68.53	73.82				142.35
Mean	3.115	3.8853				3.472
$\sum X^2$	229.219	318.8136				548.033
Std.Dev.	0.866	1.3334				1.1597
Result Details						
Source	SS	df	MS			
Between-treatments	6.0488	1	6.0488	$F = 4.94025$		
Within-treatments	47.7514	39	1.2244			
Total	53.8002	40				

The f-ratio value is 4.94025. The p-value is .032106. The result is significant at $p < 0.05$.

Significant differences arise between guests from one side and tenants of Aswan private dwellings towards how social and demographic elements fit for use of these dwellings as Airbnb listings since p-value ($p=0.32106$) as in Table 4. Tenants were the reason behind this difference since they exceeded guests in criticizing elements (included minorities issues) in their judgment. Since Aswan is an old well known Egyptian destination that was renowned centuries ago, this places a responsibility on the government of Egypt to speed up the resolution of Nuba and minorities issue to make the way clear for tenants of private dwellings to willingly use them under the umbrella of Airbnb, the step that can boost inbound tourism to the destination specifically and the state of Egypt on the whole.

Table 5. ANOVA Test on Differences among Guests and Tenants in Wahat towards Airbnb Application

	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Neither agree nor disagree		Agree		Strongly agree		Total	Weighted Average	Rank
	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F			
Population size and growth rate fits.	38.14	45	58.47	69	2.54	3	0.85	1	0.00	0	118	1.66	11
Age distribution fits.	2.54	3	13.56	16	8.47	10	56.78	67	18.64	22	118	3.75	9
Wealth distribution fits.	1.71	2	8.55	10	11.97	14	53.85	63	23.93	28	117	3.9	4
Social classes fit.	0.85	1	10.17	12	11.86	14	55.93	66	21.19	25	118	3.86	6
Family size and structure fit.	0.85	1	10.17	12	12.71	15	53.39	63	22.88	27	118	3.87	5
Lifestyles fit.	0.00	0	14.41	17	14.41	17	43.22	51	27.97	33	118	3.85	7
Health consciousness fits.	41.53	49	51.69	61	0.00	0	5.08	6	1.69	2	118	1.74	10
Attitude towards government fits.	0.00	0	11.02	13	11.02	13	57.63	68	20.34	24	118	3.87	5
Attitude towards work fits.	0.85	1	11.0	13	9.32	11	55.08	65	23.73	28	118	3.9	4
Buying habits fit.	1.69	2	13.56	16	10.17	12	54.24	64	20.34	24	118	3.78	8
Ethical concerns fit.	46.61	55	45.76	54	4.24	5	2.54	3	0.85	1	118	1.65	12
Cultural norms and values fit.	1.69	2	11.02	13	8.47	10	56.78	67	22.03	26	118	3.86	6
Sex roles and distribution fit.	0.85	1	10.17	12	6.78	8	60.17	71	22.03	26	118	3.92	3
Religion and beliefs fit.	0.85	1	11.86	14	10.17	12	49.15	58	27.97	33	118	3.92	3
Racial equality fits.	44.07	52	43.22	51	5.93	7	5.08	6	1.69	2	118	3.87	5
Education level fits.	1.69	2	9.32	11	7.63	9	60.17	71	21.19	25	118	3.9	4
Minorities fit.	38.98	46	52.54	62	2.54	3	3.39	4	2.54	3	118	3.87	5
Crime levels fit.	0.00	0	11.86	14	6.78	8	55.93	66	25.42	30	118	3.95	2
Attitudes towards leisure time fit.	0.85	1	11.86	14	11.02	13	54.24	64	22.03	26	118	3.85	7
Attitudes towards product quality fit.	0.85	1	13.56	16	5.08	6	48.31	57	32.20	38	118	3.97	1
Attitudes towards customer service fit.	0.85	1	12.71	15	9.32	11	53.39	63	23.73	28	118	3.86	6
Attitudes towards foreign people fit.	1.69	2	10.17	12	8.47	10	53.39	63	26.27	31	118	3.92	3
												118	

Tenants of private dwellings in Wahat see that most social and demographic elements of their destination make it possible for their dwellings to be used as rent listings under the Airbnb umbrella. The mean of this group of elements is ($m=3.86$) with little dispersion around this mean for this group of elements. Population, health consciousness, and ethical concerns had a different mean ($m=1.37$) as seen in Table 5. The population is limited in this governorate because little economic activities take place there. The Health consciousness element is also since most residents work for the private sector as in the case of Aswan. Ethical concerns refer to the same previous findings, i.e., lack of awareness campaigns provided by "MoT" and "E.T.F". To further explore the case of Wahat, the Anova test was carried out. Table 6 displays the results of this test.

Table 6. ANOVA Test on Differences among Guests and Tenants in Wahat towards Airbnb Application

Summary of Data						
	Treatments					
	1	2	3	4	5	Total
N	22	19				41
$\sum X$	74.53	73.82				148.35
Mean	3.3877	3.8853				3.618
$\sum X^2$	270.548	318.8136				589.362
Std.Dev.	0.9274	1.3334				1.1466
Result Details						
Source	SS	df	MS			
Between-treatments	2.5237	1	2.5237	$F = 1.96598$		
Within-treatments	50.0643	39	1.2837			
Total	52.588	40				

Table 6 indicates there are no significant differences between viewpoints of Wahat tenants and guests towards how social and demographic elements are adequate for the use of private dwellings as Airbnb rent listings. Both guests and tenants agreed that this is possible in Wahat. Both groups also agreed on the elements that may hinder this, i.e., population, health consciousness, and ethical concerns.

Conclusion

Albeit the multiple pros and cons Airbnb remains a good platform that allows private dwellings owners to take part in the global tourism movement being available in 151 states around the world. As the largest sharing economy platform worldwide, Airbnb with 500 million visitors and more than 3 billion us dollars profit in 2020 can introduce a golden chance for many destinations around the world. In one place, namely Paris, more than 78,000 Airbnb listings are available there. Destinations like Aswan and Wahat in Egypt can get huge benefits from such a platform. Tenants of private dwellings in these two Egyptian destinations

already rent them online to tourists. This is taking place away from the "MoT" or "E.T.F" umbrella. Moreover, this is also taking place apart from Airbnb platform albeit being online. PESTEL model analysis was instituted to check the readiness of these destinations to adopt the Airbnb platform. In the case of the state on the whole, all dimensions proved to fit, except for the social one in Aswan, despite being an old renowned tourist destination however, it proved to be less ready than Wahat to adopt the Airbnb platform. Surprisingly, this is because of very local, social and demographic issues that relate to what Nubian residents believe, is a sort of "discrimination and racial disputes". Other factors included population, health consciousness, and ethical issues which are temporary in nature due to the current situation of damped tourism demand. This means that social and demographic factors did hinder the use of the Airbnb platform in this destination which can lead to a boom in bed capacity and visitors at the same time for their authenticity, price and, novelty. It also proves the capacity of such factors to hinder the progress and development of tourism to destinations it is a government mandate to clear up the resolution of the Nubian dispute (that Nubians look at as a discriminative act) to pave the way for Airbnb adoption. This sheds the light on the fact that minor social and demographic issues on the micro-level can hinder or even block down tourism-related activities and the adoption of shared economy platforms. Social and demographic issues might constitute the only nonpolitical dimension in the PESTEL model that can confine the readiness of the destination for progress since other dimensions are unified across the country, but not this one. Using a macro-vision the same concept applies to government investments in developing tourism destinations albeit the existence of such issues could mean the waste of governmental investments in such destinations.

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How to Measure the Touristic Competitiveness: A Mixed Mode Model Proposal

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In 2018, according to the World Tourism Organization (WTO), the number of arrivals of international tourists worldwide reached 1.4 billion, which represents enormous potential for the sector and global economies. According to WTO, Italy is in the top ten of the countries with the greatest tourism competitiveness thanks above all to its natural and cultural resources. Today, in the globalized world, tourists are pressed by the opinion of travelers, the number of times that a location is mentioned and in which way influencers marketing consider it. The aim of this work is to create a composite indicator that allows us to evaluate the tourist competitiveness of Italian cities by evaluating both the data on the receptivity and the opinions of travelers. To do this, the official data of Istat have been taken together with Big Data, in particular information from the main holiday home platform and the opinions of travelers expressed on Twitter. Subjective and objective indicators have been produced. The results allow us to build a rating list of Italian touristic cities.

Keywords: tourism, composite indicator, Big Data, Open Data, ranking

Introduction

The year 2018 marked a new record for Italian tourism: 428.8 million customers in accommodations (Istat 2019a, b), up by two percentage points compared to the previous year.

Tourism revenues in Italy mainly come from nearby countries, whose residents have the advantage of less distance to travel and, in the case of states, which are part of the European Monetary Union, a common currency (Alivernini et al. 2014).

Traditionally, Germany is the main market for Italy's international tourism. The United States is the second country of origin in terms of tourism revenues for Italy and France is the third most important origin of Italy's incoming tourists.

Holidays are the purpose most frequently cited by international travelers. Nearly 60 percent of the overnight foreign travelers in Italy and half of the Italian overnight travelers abroad were on holiday trips.

Rome is the most popular city with 29 million visitors, followed by Venice and Milan (both with 12.1 million). The first city from the south of the country sits at the eleventh place in the ranking, and it is Naples with 3.7 million presences.

In the past, the choice of the destination of a trip depended by word of mouth, the offers proposed by the agencies, the photos in the catalogs. With the advent of

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the internet and social networks, travelers find more and more inspiration from influencers, who, by sharing their experiences, through a bottom-up participatory promotion approach, suggest destinations to the tourists.

For this reason, knowing people's opinions on a touristic destination provides qualitative information that drives travelers' choices. From this point of view, social networks have opened a new frontier: from the analysis of the posts, it is possible to understand, beyond the numbers, which are the destinations people like best and for what reasons.

One of the most popular social networks is Twitter. It contains some information as the number of comments, the number of retweets, the number of likes, that are useful to build indicators to evaluate which emotions could have stimulated a holiday destination, how many users have talked about it, where they came from and what influence they have on internal social network.

The aim of this research is the construction of a composite index using official data (objective information) and Big Data from social network (subjective data), in order to evaluate the competitiveness of touristic cities also from the point of view of the traveler. After the extraction of the information from Twitter, the Sentiment Analysis of the tweets was carried out to evaluate the opinions of users on cities. The other information was used to build indicators capable of determining the tweet's weight, its visibility and, where possible, its geographical origin.

The results make it possible to build a ranking of favorite touristic cities. To test the index, it was decided to build it on the main Italian touristic cities: Rome, Venice, Milan and Florence, as well as the city of Naples, the first city in the south of Italy for presences. The tweets of July, the month in which is recorded the peak of tourist presences in Italy, were analyzed.

Literature Review

In an increasingly demanding and competitive tourism market, it is necessary to apply new techniques of investigation in order to improve processes of governance and contribute to the sustainability of tourism destinations (Zerba 2018).

Using data from official sources, it is possible to investigate a phenomenon exclusively from a quantitative point of view, but for the purpose of a more accurate investigation, it is also necessary to take into account qualitative information.

In this context, it is important to introduce the use of Big Data for statistical purposes. These data provide potentially relevant complementary information compared to the standards, because they are based on quite diverse sets of information, they are also available in real time (or almost).

By Big Data we mean a collection of data so extensive in terms of volume, speed and variety that it requires specific analytical technologies and methods for the extraction of value (Curry 2016).

The transition from Big Data to data is possible thanks to the growth in power of today's systems and their computational capacity. More popular, easier, and

faster connections, is key to this step. The three main characteristics of this data source are traditionally called the "3 V":

- Volume, a huge amount of data.
- Velocity, the speed with which the data becomes available is so high that it is necessary to use new tools.
- Variety, diversity of sources and formats due to their lack of structuring.

Taking into account the "reviews" of people help us to understand what can attract to a specific city and what are the related problems, giving an immediate feedback at a very low cost, especially taking into account how much this kind of survey, would cost if carried out with traditional methods.

Big Data seem very useful, but they bring with them new challenges starting from data access. Since the quality of the analysis depends on the quality of the information analyzed, one of the main challenges in the use of Big Data is to cope with the enhancement of the "care" of such data in order to simplify its usability (Freitas and Curry 2016). If in statistical surveys it is possible to control each phase of the collection, the use of big data makes it necessary metadata availability (Gozzo et al. 2020).

In this contest, artificial intelligence (AI) will beget social and economic changes far more profound than any other technological revolution in human history (CINI National Lab 2020). Italian community of researchers in AI, are ready to cooperate with the priorities defined by Italian institutions in terms of industrial needs and societal challenge. These aspects must take into account ethical values and ensure respect for human rights and democratic values, following OECD Principles on AI¹.

The AI experiences are various and different. The availability of a platform with data automatically retrieved from the Web sites of TripAdvisor and Google Maps, for example, could be useful for the integrated tourism, defined as the kind of tourism which is explicitly linked to the localities in which it takes place and, in practical terms, has clear connections with local resources, activities, products, production and service industries, and a participatory local community (Lisi and Esposito 2015). The availability of all this information in associated form would be very important for tourism studies. Unfortunately, these integrated platforms are still in an experimental phase and not available globally.

The analysis of the source from which the data comes is therefore essential. Unfortunately, the ownership of many Big Data is of private suppliers or connected to private aspects, so to evaluate the potentially useful sources of Big Data, it is necessary to evaluate the cost of the information, the presence of metadata that can provide additional information and at the same time avoid privacy violations.

Definitely, we cannot think of conducting a survey based on the mutual exclusivity of traditional source or the Big Data. It is important to find a

¹<http://www.oecd.org/going-digital/ai/principles/>.

compromise that can lead to increasingly precise estimates by compensating for the failures of one source through another.

Numerous studies examined several ways of collecting twitter text messages, classified the topics discussed and looked at the usability of the information from an official statistics point of view, especially for social statistics studying the opinions, attitudes, and sentiments shared in social media could be interesting (Daas et al. 2012).

Twitter messages are publicly available, meaning that people that are not a member of the sender's network are able to read it, making it a very attractive source of information (Laniado and Mika 2010).

In this paper, it is shown how is possible to summarize, through a set of objective (via official and open source) and subjective indicators (via Twitter), the preferences towards the main touristic destinations.

In this experimental phase, it was decided to focus the attention on main Italian tourist destinations, according to the results of the Italian Institute of Statistic (Istat) survey: Rome, Venice, Milan, Florence and Naples.

For the evaluation of the cities, it was decided to use a composite index, called Competitive City Index for Travelers (CCIT).

The use of composite indices to analyze touristic phenomena is well established in the literature. The World Trade Organization publishes every two years the Travel & Tourism (T&T) Competitiveness Index (WTO 2019).

It compares the T&T competitiveness of 140 economies and measures the set of factors and policies that push up the sustainable development of the T&T sector, which in turn contributes to a country's development and competitiveness. It consists of 4 sub-indices (Development Capacity, Policy, Infrastructure, Natural and cultural resources), 14 pillars and 90 indicators distributed in the different pillars.

Methodology

The aim of this work is to synthesize, which, among the main Italian tourist destinations, are the most chosen ones according to a set of objective and subjective indicators.

For what concerns the primary experimental phase, we just focused the attention on the most visited among Italian destinations, that is to say Rome, Venice, Milan, Florence and Naples in accordance with the results of the Italian Institute of statistics survey "Occupancy of tourist accommodation establishment".

For the cities' ranking, we decided to use, in a methodological point of view, a synthetic index, the Competitive City Index for Travelers (CCIT).

The sources used, the summary methodology chosen for the construction of the CCIT and the choice of indicators are specified and analyzed below.

The Official European Data

From a quantitative point of view, the National Statistical European Institutes, through the "Trips and holidays survey" and the "Occupancy of tourist accommodation establishment survey" (Regulation for Tourism Statistics 692/2011), provides numerous information with a city detail.

The "Occupancy of tourist accommodation establishment survey" survey is carried out every month. The monthly statistics are regularly processed by Istat since 1956 and represent the main source of information on domestic tourism available in Italy.

The survey quantifies, for each month and for each city, the arrivals and presences of customers (resident and non-residents) according to the category of establishment and the type of structure and according to the foreign country or the Italian region of residence.

This is the unique official survey allows the availability of touristic data at the municipal level for all Italian cities. It allows both to estimate the tourist movement and the relevance of the sector at the local level. Unfortunately, direct surveys that collect important information such as traveler spending or the weight of international tourism on GDP do not disseminate data at the local level (Bank of Italy 2020). For this reason, it was decided to use only this statistical source at this stage.

The most interesting aspect of the data lies in the possibility of articulating the tourist movement of customers according to all the possible combinations of the variables considered, in order to allow an in-depth analysis of the relationships between them. Istat also calculates the utilization rates of beds and rooms in hotel-type accommodation facilities.

The survey units are the accommodation establishments present on the national territory, divided between hotel facilities and extra-hotel facilities:

- Hotel establishments: hotels classified into five categories divided by number of stars and tourist-hotel residences.
- Non-hotel establishments: campsites, tourist villages, mixed forms of campsites and tourist villages, rental accommodation managed in an entrepreneurial form, farmhouses, youth hostels, holiday homes, mountain refuges, bed and breakfasts and other accommodation establishments.

Data collection is entrusted to the intermediate bodies. The survey is conducted according to the rules contained in the Istat annual circulars.

The Open Data

Istat data allow us to have a general view of tourism trends in Italy. The AirBnb data (AirBnb is widely adopted among the under 50s) make it possible to obtain further information on the choices of tourists, considering a type of accommodation not included among the observation units of the Istat survey.

Through the "Inside AirBnB" platform it is possible to obtain a lot of information about the accommodations in the most important Italian tourist destinations, including Milan, Rome, Venice, Florence and Naples, which are the subject of the survey.

Furthermore, it is easy to represent these BnBs graphically on a geographic map of the reference city, if there is a need to consider the location, perhaps to relate it to the price (it is reasonable to think that accommodation located in the city center are less economical than those in the suburbs). Figure 1 shows the dynamic graphic representation of the Naples map of AirBnB accommodations classified by color according to type (whole house, single room or shared room). There are also data on the number of accommodations and average prices per night.

Figure 1. *Dynamic Localization of AirBnb Structures*



Source: AirBnB data.

Twitter as Informative Source

To obtain representative data of popular opinion, it is useful to retrace the scraping procedures of social networks.

By scraping we mean the extraction of data from a website through the use of software or algorithms designed for this use.

Several social networks are very restrictive regarding the release of data, especially after the 2016 Cambridge Analytica scandal involving Facebook. Since then, it has been almost impossible to obtain data from platforms belonging to Mark Zuckerberg such as Facebook or Instagram, however there is still a rather available social network regarding scraping: Twitter.

In fact, Twitter lends itself perfectly to this procedure thanks to the very limited character threshold and its purely textual posts. Furthermore, it is possible to request access to the API through a form that can be filled in directly on the site, without having to resort to third parties. The form requires a very specific compilation and numerous data to be entered, but within a reasonable time, and with the right reasons, you can get access to the developer account, which allows you to develop your own scraping app. However, it is necessary to specify that access to free APIs suffers from various limitations, including, particularly as an

obstacle to the investigation, that of the possibility of accessing only tweets dating back to a maximum of 7 days prior to the search.

In this case, all the IT procedures such as scraping, sentiment analysis, etc. were carried out through algorithms written in Python (Mitchell 2018). Python is an object-oriented programming language created with the aim of being easier to understand and use than its competitors such as Java.

Its strength lies precisely in its versatility and ease of learning; it is also equipped with a rather large community of users that offers open-source libraries capable of performing numerous functions.

There are several variables that can be observed in a tweet, not all are fundamental in the data collection phase, each variable can be more or less useful depending on the purpose pursued. However, it is useful to analyze them:

- The length of the tweet (currently the maximum number of characters is 280).
- The number of comments.
- The number of retweets.
- The number of likes.
- The hashtags.
- Whether or not there is a multimedia element (photo/video/gif).
- The language in which it is written.
- If activated by the user, the geolocation of the tweet.
- Date and time of publication.
- Number of followers and following of the profile that tweeted.
- Number of tweets of the profile he tweeted.

Through an algorithm written in Python it was possible to collect all this information from a large number of tweets, selecting them based on the city thanks to two factors:

- The geolocation of the tweet.
- Hashtags.

It was useful for the research also to take in consideration the use of hashtags regarding the reference city as several tweets did not always come from the geolocated city (for example, some geolocated tweets in Naples actually concerned Sorrento).

Through two Python libraries, TextBlob and Pandas, it was possible to analyze the sentiment coming from each tweet.

Sentiment Analysis, also known as Opinion Mining, is a field within Natural Language Processing (NLP), the purpose of which is the analysis of a text with the aim of identifying and classifying the information present in it. Usually, in addition to identifying the opinion, these systems extract the attributes of the expression such as:

- Polarity: positive or negative opinion.

- Subject: what we talk about.
- Opinion holder: the person or entity who expresses the opinion.

In other words, sentiment analysis is used to learn about brand perception (where brand means any object about which you want to express an opinion) through user interaction exchanges on social networks or more generally on the web.

It was necessary to select the most useful information among those extracted, in order to construct the subjective synthetic indicators that will be subsequently analyzed, this information concerns:

- The text of the tweet.
- The number of followers and following of the account author of the tweet.
- The number of posts published by the account author of the tweet.
- The number of retweets.
- The number of likes.
- The sentiment that comes from the tweet.

The texts were subjected to an important pre-processing, necessary for the processing of the same for statistical purposes. In addition to empty spaces, links and symbols, the so-called stop words have been removed, i.e., the set of words commonly used in any language, such as conjunctions and adverbs, which create "noise" in the analysis.

The Composite Indicator

A composite indicator is formed when individual indicators are compiled into a single index on the basis of an underlying model. The composite indicator should ideally measure multidimensional concepts which cannot be captured by a single indicator, e.g., competitiveness, industrialization, sustainability, single market integration, knowledge-based society, etc. (OECD 2008).

A composite indicator is easier to interpret than a battery of many separate indicators, even if it may invite simplistic policy conclusions.

The literature on composite indicators is vast and almost every month new proposals are published on specific methodological aspects potentially relevant for the development of composite indicators.

It's interesting to mention in this context a recent work, the Semantic Brand Score (SBS) (Fronzetti Colladon 2018). This synthetic index measures the importance of a brand when it is possible to analyze textual data sources (particularly geared towards big data).

Taking advantage of graph theory, text mining and social network analysis, this measure combines three fundamental indicators (by making a standardized sum between them):

- Prevalence (measures how much a brand is mentioned in a speech).
- Diversity (heterogeneity of the brand's textual associations).

- Connectivity (the connecting power of the brand, what is at the heart of the speech).

All the indicators considered have the same importance and only combined are useful for measuring the importance of a brand. Many concepts can be considered as brand (politicians, areas, etc.) and be analyzed in order to assign a value to the concept.

As it is known, the applicable methodology for the construction of any synthetic index involves the following phases:

- a) Defining the concept. The definition should give the reader a clear sense of what is being measured by the composite indicator.
- b) Selecting variables.
- c) Normalization of data. Normalization is required prior to any data aggregation as the indicators in a data set often have different measurement units.
- d) Weighting and aggregation. In any case, equal weighting does not mean "no weights", but implicitly implies that the weights are equal.

The aggregation methods are usually based on additive, geometric models, or non-compensatory multi-criteria approach (MCA).

Relevant for the study analyzed is the Mazziotta-Pareto Index (MPI), based on additive approach. It is based on a non-linear function which, starting from the arithmetic mean of the normalized indicators, introduces a penalty for the units with unbalanced values of the indicators (De Muro 2011).

Two version of the index have been proposed: (a) MPI, and (b) adjusted MPI (AMPI). The first version is the best solution for a 'static' analysis (e.g., a single-year analysis), whereas the second one is the best solution for a 'dynamic' analysis (e.g., a multi-year analysis).

The composite index is given by:

$$MPI_{i+/-} = M_{zi} +/- S_{zi} CV_i$$

Where:

M is the mean of normalized matrix values for unit i.

S is the standard deviation.

CV is the coefficient of variation.

The sign +/- depends on the kind of phenomenon to be measured. If the composite index is 'increasing' or 'positive', i.e., increasing values of the index correspond to positive variations of the phenomenon (e.g., socio-economic development), then MPI- is used. On the contrary, if the composite index is 'decreasing' or 'negative', i.e., increasing values of the index correspond to negative variations of the phenomenon (e.g., poverty), then MPI+ is used. In any cases, an unbalance among indicators will have a negative effect on the value of the index.

The synthesis of the indicators using MPI_i allows to realize, in a simple and immediate way, descriptive analyses aimed at temporal and space comparisons beyond the state of complex phenomena.

The Indicators Chosen

Once the data from the institutional sources and the Big Data from Twitter were collected, simple indicators were built, divided into two categories: subjective and objective.

The subjective indicators were built through the data collected by Twitter, in order to obtain direct feedback from tourists on the cities they visited:

- Popularity of the source: followers/account followed (indicates how popular the author's account of the tweet is and can consequently affect a large number of people).
- Profile regularity: number of posts published (a more active profile is a more authoritative profile; his tweets are more visible to the public and are more credible).
- Diffusion: (retweet + like)/total number of tweets (a tweet with a high number of likes and shares appears in different profiles and can gather consensus and influence the thinking of others).
- Profile engagement: (likes + retweet)/number of followers (the ability of a profile to generate interest in its followers through a tweet).

The objective indicators are the result of the data collected through Istat surveys and the information available on the "Inside AirBnB" site:

- Accommodation density: number of beds/km² (the possibility of a tourist city to accommodate more or less tourists).
- Economic results: number of presences/number of beds (per year) (how much the available beds in the city yield during the year).
- Social sustainability: number of presences/populations.
- Average accessibility to BnB: average opening days out of 365/average price of Air BnB.

These indicators have contributed to the construction of the CCIT.

Results

The results of the objective indicators show that the cities with the greatest tourist flow have the highest accommodation density, i.e., Milan and Rome, while the city with the fewest beds per square kilometer is Naples (Table 1).

Related to the social sustainability indicator, the city of Venice has the largest tourist flow compared to the resident population, a situation that obviously drags the ordinary activities of residents. The analysis of the economic results achieved

is interesting: the city of Naples, despite having a smaller number of tourists, counted, in 2018, 1,021 guests for each bed, a result that confirms the tourist growth trend that the city is living in recent times.

Table 1. *Objective Indicators for Cities, Year 2018*

Cities	Accommodation density	Economic results	Social sustainability	Accessibility average BnB
Milan	39.6	251.9	4.1	1.5
Venice	20.4	725.1	18.6	1.9
Florence	12.9	337.3	9.6	2.2
Rome	34.3	175.5	5.3	2.4
Naples	11.8	1,020.8	4	3.9

Source: Our processing on Istat and AirBnb data.

The average accessibility to BnB shows that the city of Naples is the most competitive related to the average number of days of occupied structures compared to the price of the single structure (3.8).

For the sentiment analysis, the tweets published in the first week of July 2020 were taken into account. It was decided to study this month since July is the favorite month for Italian tourism. Obviously, in the year under consideration, the advent of the pandemic led to a reduction in both local and, above all, foreign tourists. For this reason, it was decided to focus the attention on the tweets in Italian language.

Altogether, about 1,000 tweets were analyzed, mainly relating to the city of Milan (36%), followed by Rome (24%), Florence (17%) and Naples and Venice, both with 11%.

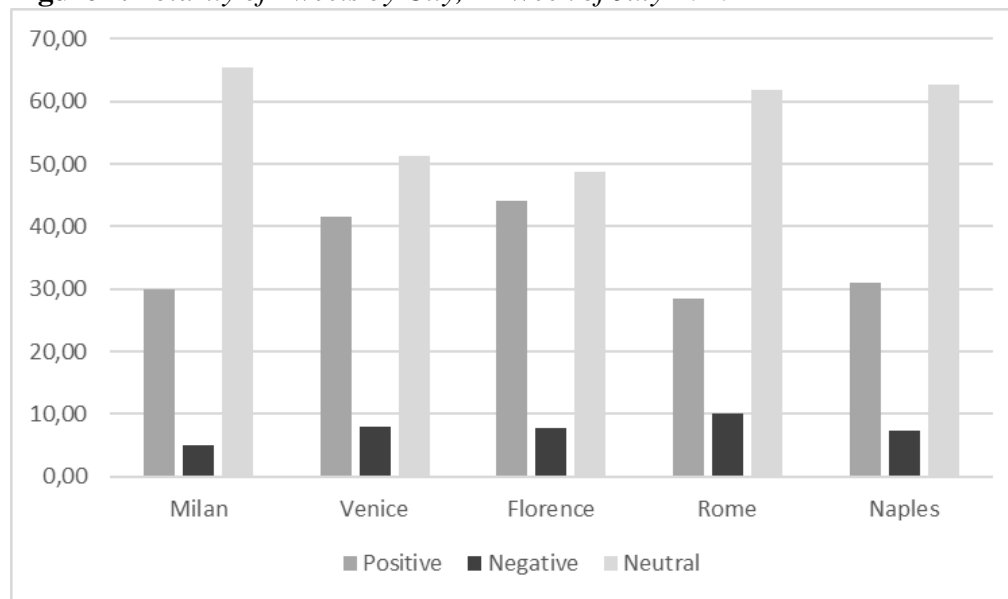
Considering the polarity of the tweets, which is how the cities visited in the period considered were expressed, it tends mainly to neutrality. In fact, if we consider the total number of tweets, in 60% of cases users have expressed themselves with words that express neither enthusiasm nor disapproval.

The cities for which users have shown the most positive feelings are Florence (44%) and Venice (42%), while the one for which a negative sentiment prevails compared to the total number of tweets is Rome (10%) (Figure 2).

Table 2 shows the results of the subjective indicators considered. The polarity has been summarized in a single indicator that expresses the number of positive tweets on the total tweets for each city.

Starting from the first indicator, popularity of the source, it is clear that the most popular users, in the period considered, have mentioned the city of Naples. They are also the most authoritative users, because the profile Regularity indicator shows that the users considered also have a greater presence on the social network in terms of published tweets.

The tweets most retweeted, and with the greater number of users, are related to the city of Venice, followed by Rome and Naples. In any case, the tweets considered did not raise great interest (Engagement indicator); slightly higher values for the cities of Milan and Rome.

Figure 2. *Polarity of Tweets by City, 1st Week of July 2020*

Source: Our processing on Twitter data.

Table 2. *Subjective Indicators by City, 1st Week of July 2020*

City	Source popularity	Users regularity	Polarity	Diffusion	Engagement
Milan	7.27	22,164.34	0.29	1.53	0.02
Venice	8.71	11,141.61	0.42	9.96	0.01
Florence	4.39	25,316.52	0.44	1.37	0.01
Rome	4.6	15,930.01	0.29	5.32	0.02
Naples	11.14	26,766.46	0.31	5.18	0.01

Source: Our processing on Twitter data.

The summary of the indicators obtained with the MPI index with negative penalty, allows us to obtain the final ranking of Italian cities based on the CCIT.

All indicators have a positive sign, because they contribute positively to the composite indicator. The only negative sign is for social sustainability since high values of the indicator show the presence of a tourist flow that may not be bearable for the resident population.

In the period analyzed, the city of Naples was the favorite destination for travelers, followed in order by Milan, Rome, Venice and Florence.

The cities are compared with eight different methods: the Mazziotta-Pareto Index (MPI) in the two variants (positive and negative); the taxonomic method of Wroclaw (Wroclaw); the mean of the mean of the standardized values (M1Z); the ranking method (Grad.RNK); the method of relative indices (IR); the method of the arithmetic mean of the basic average index numbers (ANIM); the method of the geometric mean of the basic mean index numbers (GNIM); the method of the square mean of the basic mean index numbers (QNIM). The results are similar for each method used.

Conclusion

The work shows how subjective aspects, thanks to the high informative and analytical value, can contribute to analyzing phenomena such as tourism.

Subjective indicators are complementary to strictly objective indicators, as they allow us to assess any divergences between what people report and what by objective indicators captured. The observation of these indicators allows us to have a more articulated and complete vision of the phenomena.

In this specific case, according to official data, Rome is the main Italian tourist destination, followed by Milan and Venice. Considering the opinions of travelers, the first city is Naples, which would otherwise be the eleventh if we considered only the tourist flow.

Unfortunately, the results were influenced by the pandemic that drastically reduced world tourism; however, the results underline the objective tourist growth of the city of Naples greater than the main Italian tourist destinations.

The aim of the work was the construction, as an explorative exercise, of a tourism competitiveness index at the municipal level. This limited the choice of statistical sources by forbidding the use of strictly economic data. In the future, other sources could be used by evaluating the practicability of small areas estimation techniques, based on the use of linear models with mixed effects referred to the unit or small area level (Rao 2013). Another possibility could be to integrate the survey micro data with administrative data available locally or with the statistical register of active companies in order to integrate the index with economic indicators.

The social network used for the sentiment analysis is Twitter. It has 330 million monthly active users in the world. In Italy, according to the telecommunications guarantees authority (Agcom), it has about 13 million of members, a little number compared to Facebook's 38 million, but as previously specified, it has not restrictive policy regarding the release of data and the limited size of the number of tweets characters makes Twitter better than other social networks for the sentiment analysis application. Obviously, the opinions of twitter users are spontaneous and concern a reduced number of tourists, but this is the limit of any social network. However, in the analysis described, the number of indicators chosen is small, due to the limitations posed by the use of free APIs in data scraping.

A paid version would allow to use a greater number of variables and therefore to build additional subjective indicators. It would also allow downloading information not limited to a week, but relating to an entire year, making the analysis of user opinions more reliable. In this manner, it would be possible to use the subjective indicators referring to the same reference period as the objective ones, which inevitably suffer from diffusion delays compared to the survey period.

Ultimately, for the future development of the CCIT it will be necessary to limit scraping to real tourists and non-residents commenting on the city in which they live. However, the information on the city of residence sometimes is not expressed by users and could represent a limitation for the study.

In any case, the results of the research have shown that Twitter represents the ideal source for this type of analysis: first of all, for the privacy policy of the site which leaves the public nature of the information as a default setting; secondly for the great potential of hashtags that tag each tweet based on the topic to which it refers, giving the possibility to gather discussions related to the same topic, even if started by users who have no connection with each other.

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