Dynamics of travel decision-making between organized packaged tourists and backpackers

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Abstract: Tourists are different in terms of their purpose of travel, the tourist type, the number of days spent, and how they spend time in a destination. Tourist decision-making models attempt to conceptualize how tourists make decisions during their pre-travel, onsite experiences, and post-travel stages. These models, including the grand models of tourist behavior, have paved the way to broaden our understanding of this complex behavioral phenomenon. Despite their remarkable contributions to the existing knowledge, these models display some limitations in terms of complexity, general nature of explanations, poor empirical support, and lack of consideration of different traveler types. Further examinations are necessary to understand the dynamic nature of decisions that take place under each broader stage. This study attempted to address some of these limitations through a qualitative inquiry with a comparison of tourist decision-making between two mainstream traveler types i.e. organized package tourists and backpackers. The findings uncovered empirical evidence to propose a research proposition that a general travel decision-making model cannot be derived for different traveler types and certain alterations need to be done with reference to different traveler types. These findings contribute to the literature on tourist behavior by inviting scholars to revisit the existing models in light of different traveler types

Keywords: Tourists' Decision Making, Organized Packaged Tourists, Backpackers, Leisure Travelling

Introduction

The potential and the enormity of the tourism industry are clearly evidenced by the multiple industries benefiting from it. As a result, the contribution of the tourism industry to the economies is multi-faceted. Consisting of both inbound and domestic tourism, the sector represents a major part of the gross domestic product for many economies around the world. As a major sector of economic development in all economies, research on tourist behavior has obtained significant attention from both scholars and practitioners. Among the vast amount of research undertaken, tourists' decision-making has been a key research area up to now. Literature reports the research on tourist decision-making from diverse perspectives. Some of the profound contributions are; the five stages model by Clawson and Knetsch (1966); the Simple input-output model of Fridgen (1984); travel decisions related to image formation presented by Gunn (1988), and the six steps of the decision-making process by LeBlanc (2015).

Hunt (1975) argued that a traveler's choice of destination is subjective and multi-faceted. People collect and analyze information and subsequently select the best optimal solution (Adam, 2015; Edwards, 1954; & Neumann and Morgenstern, 1944). Woodside and Lysonski (1989) emphasize that the destination that a tourist ultimately chooses is not just a single and simple decision, but a result of many explicit and implicit decisions. Hence, the nature of the tourist decision-making process is a wide research phenomenon, and several foundational and pioneering tourist decision-making models can be found in the literature. For example, scholars such as Clawson and Knetsch (1966), Goodrich (1977), Schmoll (1977), Mayo and Jarvis, (1981), Moutinho (1987),

Woodside and Lysonski (1989), and Um & Crompton (1990) have developed decision-making models, which are more pertinent to tourism context. One of the first foundational models of travel decision-making is the model proposed by Clawson and Knetsch (1966), which depicts tourist decision-making through five phases (1) Anticipation (2) Travel to the site (3) On-site behavior (4) Return travel and (5) Re-collection. However, the main weakness of this model is it is less detailed about how the individual decisions are made at the micro-level, thus the practical application and explanatory power of the model are low (Sirakaya & Woodside, 2005). Further, empirical support for this model is low, and therefore, the model is difficult to be operationalized (Moutinho, 1987).

The model proposed by Goodrich (1977) described tourists' decision-making process as a rational decision activity. The model suggests that travelers assess the costs and benefits before making the purchase decision. A major contribution of the model is the Integration of psychological and economic theories into one comprehensive model, but the key weaknesses are relying heavily on rational decision-making assumptions and neglecting interpersonal, social, and family influences in the model (Sirakaya & Woodside, 2005). Schmoll (1977)'s model also describes the rational behavior of tourists which occurs in several successive steps, given the capabilities and limited information of the decision-maker. The model illustrates four components that affect travel decisions i.e., travel stimuli, personal and social determinants, and exogenous variables. One contribution of the model is that it has considered the influence of constraints on travel decisions.

Recognizing the effects of social and psychological factors, the model put forward by Mayo and Jarvis (1981) identified four variables as predicting variables of tourist decisions i.e., travel opportunities, communication effort, customer goals, and intervening variables. Though the model has identified a combination of variables that are commonly believed to be the determinants of tourist behavior, it has low predictive ability due to internal conflicts between statements, and empirical tests are difficult due to operationalization problems (Sirakaya & Woodside, 2005). Moutinho (1987) introduced a comprehensive model by integrating several theories of consumer behavior into the model. The model has also addressed the temporal order of variables, but a major limitation of the model is its complexity.

Gunn (1988) presented a model of seven stages with a demonstration of how the image of a destination evolves during each stage. The key phases of the model are (1) accumulation of mental images about vacation experiences, (2) modification of those images by further information, (3) decision to take a vacation trip, (4) travel to the destination, (5) participation at the destination, (6) return travel, (7) new accumulation of images based on experience (Gunn, 1988). Even though these seven stages have been adopted in many tourists and leisure-related studies, the model largely emphasizes image formation during travel stages. Therefore, Gunn's model has its own gaps in the perspective of the decision-making process as it does not provide in-depth insights for identifying the dynamic nature of the decision-making process. The model presented by Woodside and Lysonski (1989) is recognized as another comprehensive model which has integrated various disciplinary knowledge into one model (Sirakaya & Woodside, 2005). However, the model has been proposed based on a study of exploratory nature and thus needs more empirical support. Um, and Crompton (1990) presented a choice set model highlighting the significant role played by attitudes in the destination choice process. The model describes how the final destination for travel is chosen by travelers by narrowing down choice sets over time. LeBlanc (2015) suggests that conceptualizing the decision-making process as a six stages theory is more appropriate. The proposed six stages are; problem recognition, passive internal search, formulation of an initial consideration set, active external search to evaluate destination in the initial consideration to late consideration set, active external search to evaluate destinations in the late considerations set leading to the selection of a destination, and post-purchase evaluation. Woodside and MacDonald (1994)in their model illustrate that tourist decisions are not always rational and the decision regarding the destination choice is one of many travel-related decisions that they make during a tour (Sirakaya & Woodside, 2005). Nicolau and Más (2005) argued that even though travel decision has many stages, it only consists of two main stages; the early stage where primary decisions such as choosing a destination are made, and then the late stages where they make a variety of decisions such as accommodation, food, facilities, and other amenities.

Despite the intense research conducted and the availability of the models and frameworks presented, these models and studies lack in terms of having a reasonable, and reliable theoretical framework for tourist decision-making (Jung-Eun Yoo Karin Weber, 2005). For instance, some models do not describe sub-decisions that tourists take in detail while some compare main stages on the surface despite the tourist decision-making process is complex and involves many sub-decisions. Hence, there is a need of doing more research on both travel stages and decisions taken under those main stages to broaden our understanding of the dynamic nature of tourist decision-making.

During the 1970s typologies based on age and economy were dominating as two non-institutionalized roles: Explorers and Drifters and institutionalized roles: Organized Packaged Tourists and Individual Mass tourists. Organized Packaged Tourists are the least adventurous tourists who remain encapsulated in an environmental bubble when buying their package holiday. This type of tourist does not engage with the host community as they remain primarily in the hotel complex (Cohen, 1972). Even though the other extreme of the tourists were named Drifters, this was recognized as Backpackers later in the 1980s with a high tendency to backpacking and its unique characteristics which were not identified in explorers or drifters. The number of re-search done on backpacking was limited by the 1970s, but it was boosted after the 1970s. Loker-Murphy and Pearce (1995) defined a backpacker as "the tourist who prefers staying in budget accommodation, spending more time traveling around, enjoying the interaction with both locals and other travelers, independently organizing their trips".

The nature of the behavior of tourists greatly depends on the characteristics on which they have been labeled as Organized Packaged Tourists or Backpackers. Being the two extremes of the tourist's typology continuum, these two groups possess extremely different characteristics in terms of their thinking pattern and behavior. For instance, Organized Packaged Tourists largely depend on travel agencies or tour planners for making travel-related decisions while Backpackers decide the whole trip independently. Cohen (1972), Plog (1974), and Qiu et al. (2018) assert that there is a strong linkage between personality traits, motivational factors, and destination choice. Empirical evidence is available to argue that tourist decisions making, and overall travel behavior may differ from one traveler type to another (Chang, 2007; Decrop & Snelders, 2005; Hyde, 2008; Hyde & Lawson, 2003; and Sung, 2004). However, there is a dearth of studies in the literature which have examined the differences between different traveler types when making travel decisions. Further investigations on this aspect deem necessary to enhance the present understanding of tourist decisions.

Within the literature on tourist behavior, different typologies of tourists exist. Cohen (1972) proposed a fourfold typology of tourists: (a) the organized mass tourist (b) the individual mass tourist (c) the explorer and (d) the drifter. The central notion behind this classification was a tourist's preference towards familiarity or novelty-seeking from their travels. Hence, arguments have been made that the decision-making process can vary for different types of travelers. Though there is plentiful research conducted in the examination of the decision-making process of tourists and the availability of such decision-making models, less emphasis has been given to examining such decisions across different traveler types. Thus, more scientific scrutiny on this aspect is important because various traveler types may demonstrate differences when they make travel decisions at different travel stages. A literature gap is evident in terms of the usage of evidence-based approaches in developing travel decision-making models. More empirical research is needed to address these gaps and the insights gained by such research can further fertile the existing models of travel decision-making in the light of different traveler types. The present study was undertaken as an attempt to fill this research gap, aiming to shed light on the empirical-based evidence for enhancing our understanding of tourists' decision-making. The study exam-ined the tourist decision-making between two traveler types i.e., organized package tourists and backpackers with a proposition that a general tourist decision-making model cannot be derived due to the different characteristics of different traveler types. Hence, the research questions that underpinned the present study were:

1. What are the major travel decisions that organized packaged tourists and backpackers make when they travel on a leisure purpose tour?
2. Are there differences in travel decisions made by the two traveler types and if so, how?

The paper proceeds by first presenting a discussion of the relevant literature on the topic with the argument that more research is needed to examine the tourist decision-making process across different traveler types. This is followed by a description of the research methodology adopted for the study. Thereafter, the findings and the discussion of the results are presented. Then, the study's emerging implications in terms of extensions to the literature on the travel stages are discussed.

Methodology

A qualitative approach was opted for due to the exploratory nature of the study. The qualitative method is recognized as the most appropriate approach to uncovering tourists' detailed descriptions of their physical and psychological behavior. In-depth interviews were conducted for obtaining deeper insights into the study phenomenon (Clarke & Braun, 2013). Authors such Li (2015), and Chen (2019) have also used in-depth interviews in their studies which are similar to the methodology of the current study. For the smooth operation of interviews, an interview guide was developed and pre-tested with three participants before using it for the final data collection. Fifteen (15) participants were selected to be interviewed for the study by using a few criteria: (1) the participants should be inbound international tourists who had visited Sri Lanka for leisure purposes, (2) the participants should either be organized packaged tourists or a backpacker, and (3) participants can communicate in the English language. Seven were chosen from the 'organized packaged tourists' category and the remaining eight were backpackers. Face-to-face interviews were conducted at the point of departure of the Bandaranayake International Airport, Sri Lanka. All the interviews were tape-recorded after obtaining the consent of the participant and transcribed. Thematic analysis was performed by using the six-steps approach recommended by Clarke and Braun (2013). In order to secure the trustworthiness of the results, coding and deriving categories and themes were done by two researchers separately and compared.

Informed participation was ensured by explaining the purpose of the study and declaring that their decision to participate in the study is totally voluntary. Prior to completing the questionnaire, the participants were informed of the procedures and the average time that it takes to conduct an interview. Confidentiality was secured through confidential and secured data handling, data storing, and reporting of the findings.

Participants belonging to the organized packaged tourists were from Germany, the United Kingdom, Ireland, and Malaysia and their age categories varied between 29 and 76. The participants chosen from Backpackers represent the countries of the United States of America, India, Belgium, Thailand, Australia, Russia, and Germany, and their age categories varied between 23 and 40.

Results and Discussions

Thematic analysis was used to analyze data as this has been identified as an appropriate method for under-researched areas (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Once the data was prepared, the analysis was started by narrowing down the broad set of data following the six steps below.

Familiarization with the data: reading the transcripts at least once is recommended before initiating the coding. The researcher herself transcribed the data manually and therefore, the researcher was familiar with the data set.

Generating initial codes: Most of the codes were driven based on the data and some from the relevant theory. For example, the codes such as revisit, and word of mouth were recognized as codes of behavioral intention from the literature. Coding was done manually on hard copies and Excel sheets by using the reviewing and commenting option. It was more convenient to change the codes, highlight to see relationships, and continue with the next stages.

Creating themes: At this stage, sorting different codes into potential themes and collating all the codes analyzed under the identified themes was done. Sub-themes also emerged from the data. For instance, the evaluation of alternative destinations was recognized as a sub-theme under the theme of selecting the destination. Similarly, the codes such as (1) invitation from friends, (2)

suggestions from the family, (3) internal desire, etc emerged from the previous stage of coding and were identified as one theme called "recognizing the need to travel".

Reviewing and defining themes: At this stage, the adherence to the themes and sub-themes was carefully revised, and thematic patterns were formed. Careful analysis of the data was done by considering whether themes represent the entire data set by looking at how the themes work both within a single interview and across all the interviews.

Defining themes: Themes were recognized as the final set of themes after many modifications were made to the themes and discussions with the supervisory panel, peer experts, and the literature.

Producing the report: An analytic narrative writing style was maintained in producing the below section of results and discussion.

Results

Travel Decisions of Organized Packaged Tourists

Findings revealed that the tourists like other customers tend to have a need or problem recognized before they start their initial trip planning process despite their traveler type. The need for traveling seems to be based on either their internal desires or certain external stimuli exposed (Durko & Petrick, 2016). Accordingly, the need for traveling is influenced by a motivational factor such as a suggestion made by children, a friend's invitation or to celebrate special occasions like birthdays. The majority of the participants expressed that they had identified the need for a tour before planning the rest. For example, one respondent affirmed that saying: "…we are retired now. And after a long time, we haven't been to a country. So, this actually came up as a suggestion from my daughter. So, we agreed" (Respondent 2, male, 69 years, UK). Another similar claim was "Well, I wasn't quite sure where I should go for the trip or if I should go on a trip. My friend called me and asked if I like to join them too. They had decided all and just asked. So, I said OK" (Respondent 1, male, 76 years, Germany). Such claims suggest that the trip would not happen if their need for traveling was not aroused based on external or internal factors. Therefore, it is evident that the need for traveling is recognized first, and thereafter the other decisions are taken by travelers.

Once the decision to have a tour is made, a particular destination or a combination of destinations is selected by travelers (Gurdogan, 2022). However, the choice-making process and the factors affecting the destination selection process do not seem to be alike to each other even among organized package tourists. Some participants stated that they have been planning their next international trip for a long time and that their decision to travel to a specific destination is influenced by external factors to a greater extent. Simply, informal discussions or hearing others' stories made them interested in a particular destination. Three participants affirmed this way of deciding their destination for the next tour. However, while some participants, for example, participants 3 and 5, had made the destination selection decision in conjunction with the recognition of the need to travel, some participants (e.g. participants 2,3 and 4) had not had a clear idea about the choice of destination, but considering other factors such as budget available and the wife's suggestions, they had selected the destination for their next tour. It seems that these participants had gone through the choice set approach i.e. through the awareness set, early consideration set, and evoked set, they had made the final selection. For example, Thailand, Kerala in India, and Sri Lanka were in the evoked set of respondent 2 and she had finally decided to visit Sri Lanka. Furthermore, a few participants (Respondent 7 for example) had met travel agents to decide the destination based on the travel budget available whereas some participants had not made any decision and agreed to a friend's invitation, for example, participants 1 and 5 had agreed to their friend's invitation to visit Sri Lanka.

> "I had never thought of coming here before. I don't know why. But when my friends asked to come, I was mm yeah. And we looked up what SL is like. Where it is and what's there, and decided to give it a try. – Respondent 5 (Male, 58 y, Ireland).

It is obvious that all the organized package tourists had decided on the entire trip or most of the elements of it planned by a travel agent. Before planning with the travel agent, travelers had selected the travel agent whom they should coordinate with. This had happened in ways such as meeting the usual travel agent or from a recommendation of their friends when they were asked.

Planning with the travel agent, however, seems to be different from traveler to traveler depending on the extent that they had used the travel agent. There were some participants who had met the travel agent after doing prior research about the destination (Respondents 3, 5, and 6) while some participants had told the respective travel agent about their interests and desired type of locations to visit at the destinations chosen.

> "….and then the travel agent that we usually go to, we went to him and said we just want to go to Sri Lanka soon. He recommended the places for us and intro-duced tour packages that they have already prepared. They organized everything for us as a group tour. We liked it. We didn't do anything, we just looked up the pictures, places, and hotels to book, that's all and that was easy" -Respondent 4 (Female, 55y, UK).

It seems that every organized packaged tourist tends to use travel agents at different degrees, where they give the freedom for the agent to organize the trip considering the criteria they have provided or make slight changes to the package by changing the itinerary. Therefore, planning the tour with a travel agent need to be recognized as one crucial decision made by organized packaged tourists during their trip planning process.

Planning the tour with a travel agent does not mean that everyone decides to take the trip. Travelers make their final decision thereafter which is affected by factors such as family influence, friends' comments or recommendations, or situational factors such as news about destinations or some incidents in the country that they plan to travel. Good evidence for this is the number of tour cancellations that happened after the Easter bomb attack on April 21, 2019, in Sri Lanka. These situational factors might encourage or discourage the decision to take the trip leading the tourists to have second thoughts about proceeding with the trip. One participant, for example, clarified that though they had heard about the Easter attack and were advised to cancel the tour, they eventually decided to come to Sri Lanka.

> "….but, when our friends, and relatives heard about our visit to SL, they said no. Don't go. And it was because of the attack. But we came. And we are with a group of people from the same country, so we had nothing to worry about. –Respondent 2 (Male, 69, UK).

Though tourists make some preparations for their tours from the day that they thought of going on a trip, the real preparation commences from the moment that they decided or confirmed the trip. From this point, tourists start getting prepared both physically and mentally for the trip. For example, a female traveler, in a happy mood, mentioned that during the four months before the trip, the trip was the main motivation for her to work.

> "…During the preparation days, I just talked to my Sri Lankan friends who are working here and they gave me a lot of advice and information about Sri Lanka.". – Respondent 3 (Female,65, Ireland)

Once a traveler visits the destination, the on-site stage of the tour unfolds, which is also comprised of a series of decisions. However, organized package tourists tend to make many of the on-site stage-related decisions even prior to the start of the tour while planning with travel agents. Deciding on the itinerary before visiting the destination can be provided as an example. Further, these decisions can be identified as collaborative decisions as Organized packaged tour-ists make tour-related decisions together with the travel agent. However, Respondent 7 was frustrated about the decision of meeting a travel agent and coming as a group as she couldn't go out of the plan. This claims that Organized packaged tourists have less chance of making their own decisions on the trip at the on-site stage as their decisions are in particular with the itinerary prepared.

Once the tourists finish the tour at the destination, the departure stage occurs. At the departure, what is common to all the participants was thinking of future activities or plans that they intend to do when traveling back to their home country. Imagining the next tour, sharing their experience of the present tour with others and the formation of revisit intentions are the typical activities that tourists do after ending their tour to a particular destination. Some participants clearly stated that they would like to recommend Sri Lanka to their families and friends (Respondent 1,3,5,6).

> "..I will come back and encourage others to come here. It's definitely positive. There's so much to see and we want to come back and see it. Definitely coming back -Respondent 5 (Male,58y, Ireland).

Travel Decisions of Backpackers

In considering the early decisions made by backpackers, recognizing the need for a tour, and deciding on a destination to visit seem to be the first main decisions that backpackers make, however, which decision comes first is uncertain. Some participants disclosed that they recognized the need for another tour immediately after completing their previous tour:

> "Actually, as soon as the last trip was over, I remember my husband asked, "Where to next?". It was at the airport. All I wanted was to travel to somewhere new" -Respondent 12 (Female, 22y, Australia)

Though some participants (Respondents 12 and 13 for example) had first recognized the need and then decided on the destination, some other participants clarified that they first choose or have the next destination in mind and then wait till they recognize the need to travel (Respondents 8 and 9).

> "I thought it was time to take a break. And so, I decided on coming to Sri Lanka. Because I had always wanted to come to Sri Lanka. As I said, a visit to Sri Lanka was one of my aspirations because it is something that I had dreamed about and I had heard about it through stories and cricket"- Respondent 9 (Male, 30y, India).

Therefore, it is evident that the first decision that backpackers make could be either 'need recognition' or 'deciding on the destination'.
When it comes to the preparation for travel, comparatively, backpackers do not spend much time, or effort but preparation can be identified as a compulsory requirement (Hartmann, 1991 cited in Locker Murphy and Pearce, 1995: 829). The preparation efforts are generally limited to the search for information about the essentials and accommodations as clarified by participants 8, 9, 14, and 15. For instance, one participant said, "…but before I came here, I was reading a lot of stuff, the language, and food, stuff like that, I was like how am I going to learn" (Participant 8). It was obvious that no participant belonging to the backpacker category had planned the tour with a travel agent. Backpackers generally are thrilled with exploring new things, unlike the Organized Packaged Tourists and their travel characteristics deny the use of travel agents (Cohen, 2004; Hindle et al., 2015; Wilson, Fisher, & Moore, 2008) Participants revealed that they prefer variety seeking (Respondent 12), have a preconceived interest like surfing (Respondent 13), and usually make impulsive decisions to feed their emotions and curiosity.

> "We have a Facebook group of people who traveled to Sri Lanka. And we chatted in the group. Where to eat, where to sleep, where to go surfing, and everything."
> – Respondent 13(Female, 29y, Russia)
> "I actually didn't prepare much. Because we planned to go to a country first and wait to see learning. We usually don't try to learn much early. Just visit the country and then learn. See. I know Ayubowan now". – Respondent 10 (Male, 27y, Beligum).

After preparation by themselves, backpackers usually travel to their destination. Traveling can be either by airlines operated by the destination country or other airlines. The exit point of traveling can be either the traveler's home country or another country where they have completed their previous backpacking. For instance, participant 8 had visited Sri Lanka from her previous destination, Norway while Respondent 10 had traveled from Thailand and Respondent 15 from China. In comparison, all other participants had visited directly from their home country. Hence, for those who traveled from the previous destination, the trip to Sri Lanka was another destination in their annual travel plan.

It is obvious that regardless of the traveler type, every tourist makes decisions regarding traveling and arrival to a destination (Pizam & Sussmann, 1995; Stephanie, Wijaya, & Semuel, 2021), but the manner of arrival and the way they experience during a tour can vary. Most commonly, backpackers usually set out to their accommodation first, but their exploration begins simultaneously. They usually find food, buy essentials, and plan where to go with the help of the locals and others. However, this could also vary from one to another, for example, Respondents 8, 9, and 12 had directly headed to the accommodation whereas Respondents 10, 11, and 15 had directly started exploring and finding accommodation.

When compared with organized packaged tourists, backpackers tend to make more onsite decisions and they have more freedom to choose their own journey, including itinerary, places, and accommodations (Adongo, Badu-Baiden, & Boakye, 2017). For instance, some participants claimed that they decided to stay for another week in Sri Lanka than the duration they had initially planned (Respondents 11 and 15). They further clarified that they had visited different touristic spots with no prior plan (Respondents 8, 9, and 14). Therefore, backpackers can be recognized as more independent decision-makers throughout the traveling process.

At the end of the present tour, most of the backpackers of the sample were traveling back to their home country while a few of them such as participants 8, 10, 14, and 15 were traveling to other destinations such as Japan, Cambodia, Thailand, and Taiwan. What mostly matters here is that they demonstrate independence in making decisions i.e., whether traveling back to their home country or another.

Typically, upon departing the country and having either traveled back to the home country or to another destination, backpackers' traveling process of the present trip would rarely come to a sudden ending. Previous research and literature manifest that travelers engage in post-travel activities that are still related to the previous trip (Clawson & Knetsch, 1996; Gunn, 1998; & Paris, 2010). According to what the participants revealed, such activities can be deciding to revisit the destination (Respondent 9,10,14), recommending the destination and places to others (Respondents 8,9,10, 11,13, 15), making a video, and promoting the destination (Respondents 8 and 15), use different flavors and recipes in the mother country (e.g. Sri Lankan curries) and even use them for their businesses purposes (Respondent 11). Some participants further stated that they had decided to help kids in Sri Lanka in the future (Respondent 12). This is an excerpt from a participant who is willing to recommend Sri Lanka to others:

> "I think SL is an amazing country. I would recommend everyone to come to SL and explore. Because it is very interesting. Beautiful and the people are very nice. I recommend of course" -Respondent 13 (Female, 29y, Russia).

Discussions

Travelers make different decisions at different points in time can be identified as the stages at which crucial decisions are being made. It cannot be entirely agreed to the fact that travelers decide to take a vacation according to Gunn's explanation (1988) because the decision of taking a trip does not happen at once, but after many considerations are met. The findings of the current study made it clear that there are numerous decisions made by travelers regardless of their traveler type before deciding on a trip. It is also a misconception that all tourists make the same decisions during their travels. Hence, in order to obtain more insights into these gray areas of tourist decisions making across different traveler types, this study examined the nature of travel decisions made by organized packaged tourists and backpackers with an argument that travel

decisions made by the two traveler types may vary thus, we cannot provide a general travel decision-making theory to all tourists

Comparison between the travel decisions of the two traveler types revealed that both types of travelers make the same decisions to a certain extent albeit backpackers demonstrate differences in terms of two pre-travel decisions i.e. planning the tour with a travel agent and decision of confirming the trip. Backpackers' need for flexibility negates the pre-scheduled itinerary, which is typically embedded in organized package tours. By nature, backpackers are impulsive adventure seekers who do not need an itinerary or the support of a travel agent to plan their tours (Cohen, 1972; Wilson, 2003; Noy, 2015; and Marphy & Pearce, 1995).

The second of the two pre-travel decisions which Backpackers do not make as would an Organized Packaged Tourist is the decision where the trip is confirmed. This, as discussed is where the possibility of the trip proceeding as planned is still questionable to some extent. Again, their travel characteristics described supports this contention. Other than these two main decisions, both Organized Packaged Tourists and Backpackers make all other decisions in common but to different extents. These findings support the proposition that a general tourist decision-making model or a theory cannot be developed pertinent to every tourist.

Furthermore, the current study suggests incorporating a decision point called "recognizing the need for travel" into the tourist decision-making process. When compared with the previous theories and models such as the scholarly work of Clawson and Knetsch (1966) and Gunn (1988), the identification of 'recognizing the need for travel' as a new decision point is a novel contribution to the existing knowledge on the tourist decision-making process since it has not been identified as a crucial decision made by tourists in the previous models.

Next, the study suggests that 'planning with a travel agent' should be considered an important decision point of the tourist decision-making process of 'organized package tourists. Existing literature does not strongly support 'planning with the travel agent' as a separate travel decision, which may be due to the lack of consideration being given to exploring the travel behavior of different traveler types Moreover, 'deciding/confirming the trip' is also suggested to be considered as a decision point of the decision-making process of 'organized package tourists. This has also been scarcely identified as a separate and crucial decision phase in the literature while models developed by Clawson and Knetsch (1966), Gunn (1988), Li (2012), etc., have included this as an activity under the broader stage of anticipation of their models. These findings further support our research proposition that a common tourist behavior model cannot be generalized to different types of tourists.

With reference to the post-visit phase, behavioral intention is identified as a key element of tourist behavior (Clawson & Knetsch, 1996; Gunn, 1988; and Chen, 2019). Recollecting memories/accumulation of images of the trip has been accepted as a basic stage by the models developed by Clawson and Knetsch (1966) and Gunn (1988) but our argument is that it is only one activity coming under the 'behavioral intention' stage. The findings of this study further propose to include 'experimenting with the new things learned at the destination toured' by travelers after visiting their home country as another component of the 'behavioral intention' stage in addition to commonly known components such as the formation of re-visit intention, sharing the experience with the others, and recommending the destination to others. The behavioral intention may also be involved in deciding not to revisit the same destination again as they doubt the pleasant memories of the first-time visit will be damaged by the experience during the second visit (Chandralal & Valenzuela, 2013).

Conclusions

This study aimed to broaden our understanding of the tourist decision-making process by exploring travel decisions made by two traveler types i.e. organized package tourists and backpackers with a proposition that a general tourist behavior model cannot be derived for different traveler types. Qualitative in-depth interviews were conducted with the potential participants belonging to both 'organized package tourists' and 'backpackers' categories. The findings of the study supported the proposition mentioned above and thus suggest making some amendments to the decision-making process of the two traveler types. These exploratory findings also suggest several future research areas on the topic.

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