Do tourist typologies have any relevance in the understanding of tourist motivation?

**Introduction**

Pearce (2005) stated that we need to avoid “the sin of homogenisation” when discussing the tourist, we should not merely generalise. However, theorists have been evaluating and considering the differences between tourists for many years and have looked into the type of tourist they can be categorised as – though to some extent this still generalises by placing tourists into one category or another – and what motivates individual tourists to undertake tourism activities. Throughout this essay I will look at tourist types from Cohen’s (1972), Plog’s (1974) and Pearce’s (1982) work before looking at tourist motivation including Pearce’s (1993) career ladder. From that I shall conclude how the two are interrelated, if in fact they are and to what extent typologies can help with the understanding of motivation.

**Define/explain tourist typologies**

Considerable work was done in the 1970’s in an attempt to understand tourists and classify them into a number of different typologies. It was thought that this typology research would be of use for market segmentation including marketing and promotion directed to the target market as well as with complex policy decision making such as tourism planning. Cohen (1972) undertook some of the earliest work on tourist typologies and suggested that tourists could be “classified on the basis of similar observable behaviours” (Foo, 2008). He outlined four different types of tourist that existed. Firstly, the organised mass tourist who preferred and sought out highly organised package holidays that has minimal contact with the host community. These tourists holiday within an environmental bubble. The independent mass tourist uses similar facilities to the organised mass tourist but also wants to break away from the norm and visit other sights not covered on organised tours in the destination. The explorer arranges their travel independently and wishes to experience the social and cultural lifestyle of the destination. Finally, the drifter does not seek any contact with other tourists or the organised tourism industry, preferring to live instead, with the host community. This type of classification however, is problematic as it does not take into account the increasing diversity of holidays undertaken and the different locations that are now open to tourists.

Just two years later Plog (1974) identified two opposite types of tourist at each end of a continuum. Allocentrics are tourists who seek adventure on their holidays and are prepared to take risks. As such they prefer holidays in more exotic locations and prefer to travel independently. At the other extreme are psychocentrics. These tourists look rather inwardly and concentrate their thoughts on the mall problems in life. On holiday they are not adventurous but prefer locations that are similar to their home environment. Such tourists may repeatedly return to the same destination where they have had a satisfying experience safe in the knowledge of the familiar. In between these two extremes Plog classifies three other types of tourists; near allocentric, midcentric and near psychocentric. The main problem with Plog’s typology is that both tourists and destinations change over time, for example a young adult may well be allocentric at certain stages in their lifecycle and more midcentric at other stages.

Ten years after Cohen, and basing his work on that of Cohen’s, Pearce (1982) developed 15 tourist roles which by using statistical techniques he identified five major tourist types from; environmental, high contact, spiritual, pleasure first and exploitative travel. In more recent times, Gibson and Yiannakis (1992) derived a comprehensive classification of leisure tourists which suggested that individuals enact preferred tourist roles in destinations which provide an optimal balance of familiarity-strangeness, stimulation-tranquillity and structure-independence. In other words some types of tourist on holiday seek unusual environments where others seek familiar ones, some want peace and quiet where others want activity and some require an organised holiday or itinerary whereas others do not.
There is considerable overlap between the works of a number of theorists with Yiannakis and Gibson (1992) suggesting where some of Pearce’s (1982) 15 tourist roles would fit in within their classification. For example they claimed that Pearce’s archaeologist and seeker prefer strange environments in their strangeness-familiarity classification whilst sports tourists prefer familiar environments.

Define/Explain tourist motivation

Like tourist typologies, tourist motivation has been a subject researched and studied in depth by theorists and equally it is important from a management perspective as it enables market segmentation and the planning and development of destinations. Mountiho (1987) argued that motivation is “a state of need, a condition that exerts a push on the individual towards certain types of action that are seen as likely to bring satisfaction”. Motivations are the hidden values of forms of tourism, not simply the travel motives which include anything from business to health. Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs is perhaps the earliest illustration of motivations that can be linked to tourism, though perhaps loosely. Maslow (1943) argued that our individual needs fall into five broad categories (physiological needs, safety needs, belonging and love needs, esteem needs and self-actualisation needs). Maslow suggested that these five categories formed a hierarchy beginning with lower order physiological needs moving through to higher order self-actualisation needs. This is based on the premise that each of the needs expressed in a category would be satisfied before the individual sought motivation for the next category of need.

Several tourism researchers have applied Maslow's model in the context of tourism motivation, most notably Pearce (1993) with the travel career ladder. Pearce claims that individuals have layers of travel motivations; core (pursuit of novelty, escape relaxation and the desire to enhance relationships), inner (where moderately important travel motives exist such as self-actualisation) and outer (less stable motives which are of less importance). He stated that individuals start out at different levels on the career level and are likely to change levels as they progress through the various lifecycle stages and can be constrained from progressing by money, health and other people. Pearce’s travel career ladder moves through relaxation needs, stimulation, relationship, self-esteem and development and finally fulfilment. Pearce claims that people tend to ascend the ladder as they become older and more experienced. However, this model is not without its issues. It is concerned with the ordering of motivations and assumes that all tourists will progress in the same way and have the same needs. It ignores the complexity of needs and the effects of socialisation.

Dann (1977) described push and pull factors as a form of motivation. Push factors are those that propel a desire to travel (individual related) and pull factors are those which influence which destination is selected (destination related). Sharpley (1994) stated “the motivation to satisfy needs, combined with personal preference pushes the tourist into considering alternative products; the final choice depends on the pull or alternative holidays or destinations”. Finally Pearce (2005) created an extensive list of 14 main travel motivations.

Yes/how typologies have relevance in understanding tourism motivation

It seems clear to me that tourist typologies and tourist motivations are clearly linked and further than merely linked tourist typologies can have significant relevance in understanding tourism motivation. The work of the three leading theorists on typologies (Cohen, Plog and Pearce) place tourists into a category at a particular stage in their lifecycle. The typologies themselves establish what the individual gets out of their holiday
depending on which category they fall into which then links to their original motivation. For example, drifters (Cohen, 1972) and allocentrics (Plog, 1974) both get some form of adventure out of their holiday which links to Pearce’s (2005) main travel motivations of nature, possibly autonomy and even self-actualisation. On the other hand the organised mass tourist (Cohen, 1972) and psychocentrics (Plog, 1974) seek out the familiar which could be for travel motivations such as relaxation and nostalgia.

Cohen (1972) when outlining his tourist categories suggested that “the relationship between a tourists motivation and the resulting behaviour is reflected in the enactment of tourist roles” (Foo, 2008), as such Cohen felt that his own typologies had relevance for understanding tourism motivations.

The criticisms of the above

Whilst typologies do have some relevance to the understanding of tourism motivation, it is important to remember that generally an individually does not remain under the same tourist typology their entire life and nor do their tourism motivations remain the same throughout their lifecycle. However, in some ways this goes further to support the argument that typologies are of relevance, as through knowing the typology of a tourist at certain stages in his/her lifecycle you can understand their motivations at a specific point in their lifecycle as well.

Although generally well known in tourism research, Plog’s model neither explains tourist motivations nor predicts tourist behaviour. Some researchers criticize Plog’s model because tourists travel with different motivations on different occasions. For example, holidaymakers may take a winter skiing break in a destination appealing to the allocentric travellers; however, their main holiday is a psychocentric destination. McKercher (2005) criticizes the validity of Plog's model argues each tourist is drawn to a destination due to a unique relationship with the destination and the destination can exist at multiple stages along Plog's allocentric/psychocentric continuum simultaneously. However, it can be argued that tourism motivations and tourist typologies exist within the same continuous circle as to devise tourist typologies you must first understand their motivations.

Conclusion

In conclusion I think that tourist typologies do have relevance in understanding tourism motivation, though perhaps to a limited extent. When presented with a tourist typology it is possible to deduce a range of possible motivations that person has which caused them to be categorised into that typology. However, it does not enable us to understand the extensive range of possible motivations for a particular tourist or the main overriding motivation, as Prentice states (2004) “No single typology is likely to have more than specific relevance”. In addition, tourism motivation can only be fully understood when presented with all tourist typologies at the ends of all spectrums. To some degree however, it is also only possible to understand tourist typologies through understanding tourism motivations – each is reliant on the other to some extent for full understanding.

Discuss the key management issues facing coastal resorts in the UK

Introduction

Towner (1996) described the coast as the “most impressive manifestations of the power of leisure to create new landscapes, to shape new patters of activity and to create new social and economic relationships”; this