

Motivation of Nature Tourism

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In the following essay through a behavioural perspective, which means not considering external factors, we try to understand why nature tourism is one of the fastest growing segments of world tourism. To understand why this is happening is to comprehend the intrinsic motivation "nature tourists" have to pursue this type of tourism. To recognize this motivation we must search for clues in the theories of travel motivation proposed throughout the travel research literature, and try to see if these diverse theories can actually help us identify the motivation of nature tourists and hence the growth of this tourism segment. The following essay is able to draw from several authors and their theories important conclusion on whether the models or frameworks presented can be useful to understand nature tourism and if so conclude why they are valuable. We firstly define what nature tourism is and from there we review several travel motivation theories that are applicable to this type of tourism.

To know what nature tourism is we must understand a broader classification of tourism that includes nature tourism, and that is alternative tourism. "Alternative tourism can be broadly defined as forms of tourism that set out to be consistent with natural, social and community values and which allow both hosts and guests to enjoy positive and worthwhile interaction and shared experiences" (Wearing & Neil, 1999, as cited in Newsome, Moore & Dowling, 2002). Under alternative tourism (Figure 1) we can see the presence of natural, cultural, event and other types of tourism (Newsome, Moore & Dowling, 2002). Nature tourism, called by Newsome & et al. (2002) "natural area tourism", is in short "tourism in natural settings".

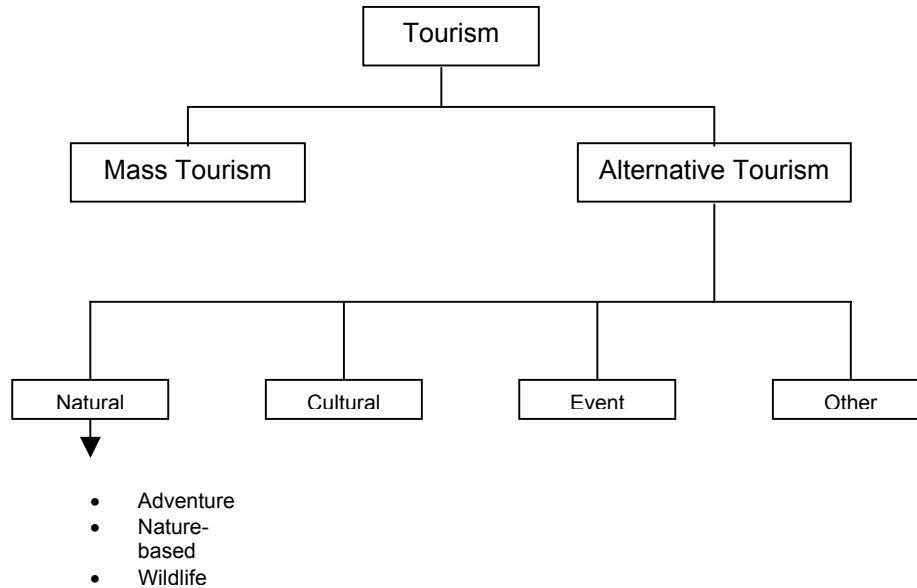


Figure 1. An overview of tourism (Newsome, Moore & Dowling, 2002)

The proposed classification of Newsome, Moore and Dowling (2002) and their conception of nature tourism is confirmed by Ceballos-Lascuráin (1996) when he defines it as "all tourism directly dependent on the use of natural resources in a relatively undeveloped state, including scenery, topography, water features, vegetation and wildlife."

Newsome, Moore & Dowling (2002) include under nature tourism: adventure, nature-based, wildlife and ecotourism. McKerchner (1998) expands the scope of nature tourism including: adventure tourism, ecotourism, alternative tourism, educational tourism, anti-tourism, sustainable tourism, responsible tourism and many other forms of outdoor-oriented, non-mass tourism. These two views of what nature tourism includes and overlap, agree, but also contradict themselves. To better understand, and conclude, what nature tourism is (for the purpose of this essay) we must understand the three relations that can occur between the natural setting and the visitor which are: in, about and for the environment (Dowling, 1977, 1979; as cited in Newsome, Moore & Dowling,

2002). So any tourism based in a natural setting and experienced in, about or for the environment will be considered 'nature tourism'.

Tourist motivation can be defined "as the global integrating network of biological and cultural forces which gives value and direction to travel choices, behavior and experience". (Pearce, Morrison & Rutledge, 1998) The general motives underlined by research of why nature tourism is the fastest growing segment internationally in tourism are: widespread changing environmental attitude, development of environmental education, development of environmental mass media. (Lindberg, Wood & Engeldrum, 1998) Pearce, Morrison and Rutledge (1998) present ten trends which represent important issues of content in describing tourist motives, we can mention four which are related to nature tourism motivation: motive to experience the environment, motive to rest and relax in pleasant settings, motive to pursue special interests and skills (scuba-diving, fishing), and motive to be healthy and fit. These motives are good starting points to discuss motivation of nature tourism, but some appear to be just social changes or reasons that have affected in some way the motives of the tourist. These motives do not give us clues in how to identify human motivation towards travel, for that reason it cannot be applied to further studies. So it is necessary to undertake an analysis of travel motivation theories.

When assessing a theory of tourist motivation and deciding if it is good for our purpose we must identify seven requirements: it functions as a true theory, it appeals to different users, it is easy to communicate, it suggests ways to measure motivation, it allows for many motives, it is dynamic and, it accounts for intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (Pearce, Morrison and Rutledge, 1998). This essay will not review all theories of motivation and afterwards decide if they are pertinent to our purpose, which is to understand the motivation of nature tourism. The scope of this essay will only include theories, which have been reviewed and might have relevance to our purpose. In the reviewing process of motivation theories applied to nature tourism we searched for the seven requirements proposed by Pearce, Morrison and Rutledge (1998), and also took into consideration if they were applicable to understand nature tourism motivation.

People who live in cities, for example, are motivated to travel as tourists to wilderness areas because they need to escape from an artificial, monotonous environment (Dann, 1977; Matley, 1976; as cited in Mansfeld 1992). Gray's travel-motivation theory, although an oversimplification of motivation as noted by Mansfeld (1992), gives us two motives which can help explain why people go to natural settings. The first motive is the desire to go from a known to an unknown place, called in Gray's theory 'wanderlust'. Secondly, a place "which can provide the traveler with specific facilities that do not exist in his or her own place of residence", referred in Gray's theory as 'sunlust'. (Mansfeld, 1992) It appears that the wanderlust-sunlust motives do help us understand why nature tourists search for settings which are different from the city-work-home routine and that enable the nature tourist to participate in activities in unknown territory and that are possible in those natural settings and not at home.

The problem with this theory is that it "represents a confusion between person-specific motivations and resort-specific attributes" (Mansfeld, 1992). For this same reason we will not consider 'Push & Pull' factors as relevant to the study of motivation. For this reason Gray's model only partially might help us understand what motivates a person to participate in nature tourism. Several other theories such as Crompton's nine motives and Iso-Ahola personal-interpersonal motives also work under these 'Push and Pull' factors which means that they focus not only in the intrinsic motivation to travel to natural settings, but also in the characteristics and benefits these settings might appear to offer (pull factors) to satisfy a need. For this reason of not focusing purely on the motivation of tourists, we will not consider them relevant to understand nature tourism motivation.

An interesting finding, while not considered a theory, is the one by Krippendorf after analyzing eight theories of travel motivation found in the literature on tourism. Through his research he saw a common place in these theories. "Firstly, travel is motivated by 'going away from' rather than 'going towards' something; secondly travelers' motives and behavior are markedly self-oriented" (Witt & Wright, 1992). So it seems that the

pull factors are not so important, hence the benefits offered by the natural settings and their operators are of second importance in deciding to travel. There is more power in the intrinsic motive of self-indulgence and personal care, physically and psychologically, and by the so called 'escape' motive, than by pull factors considered in the mentioned motivation theories.

So if this 'Push and Pull' approach does not succeed in understanding motivation maybe we can try another approach, for example focusing in factors that influence motivation such as 'needs'. Pearce presents a hierarchy of travel motives based on Maslow's theory of motivation combined with the idea of a career ladder (Pearce, 1988; 1990; as cited in Pearce, Morrison and Rutledge, 1998). "The career ladder emphasizes that people have a range of motives for seeking out holiday experiences" (Pearce, Morrison and Rutledge, 1998). The travel career ladder with its different levels allows for many motives, it is dynamic and to sum up it covers the seven requirements presented before. On the other hand analyzing the different levels, especially the relationship needs, self-esteem/development needs, and fulfillment needs presents possible clues to understand the motivation of nature tourism.

By comparing the needs described in different levels of the career ladder such as 'need for achievement', for example, and then consider nature tourism activities like hiking, tramping and mountaineering where the tourist proves its competence and if successful achieves a goal, it can be concluded that the travel career ladder is a helpful theory to understand nature tourism motivation. Another comparison can be drawn from the self-esteem needs level. The "need for mastery, control and competence" can be a motivation for a nature tourism activity such as scuba diving. Where mastery is required to undergo the activity successfully and safely, as well as competence, and control is basic in case of extreme scenarios underwater conditions.

So can the 'Travel Career Ladder' be the most appropriate theory to understand nature tourism motivation? If we consider the vast use of Maslow's Theory and sometimes overestimated usefulness considering it only concentrates in needs as the only driving

forces to understand motivation, as well as its origin from a study of neurotic people, the answer is no. "Maslow's theory of needs largely ignores more recent developments in motivation theory" and only concentrates on needs it is a work considered a partial theory, which "tend[s] to concentrate in one particular aspect of motivation" (Witt & Wright, 1992).

Travel motivation cannot be understood by concentrating on one of the factors as mentioned before in the case of needs. It requires a complete knowledge of "the processes whereby these needs are transformed into motivated behavior and, in particular, of the way in which people's expectations give motivated behavior its direction" (Witt & Wright, 1992). Witt and Wright (1992) present a very complete and interesting "Expectancy Theory" applied to tourist motivation, based on Vroom's theory of work motivation. It is a theory that finally is able to include all the concepts involved in the motivation process by creating a theoretical framework. It includes the needs which are important to understand motivation, but also the "decision making involved in choosing whether to go on holiday" (Witt & Wright, 1992). Together with this it is able to consider 'push and pull' factors, as well as reasons of travel. In conclusion the expectancy theory provides a framework for the analysis of tourist motivation. With all this good points taken into consideration the expectancy theory fails one of the requirements set by Pearce, Morrison and Rutledge (1998) when deciding on a good motivation theory and that requirement is it must be "easy to communicate". This is concluded as well by Witt and Wright when they say "the complexity of expectancy theory also makes it difficult to use the model to predict individual behavior", and so complex that they suggest using the framework in training travel advisers to ask the proper questions to deliver the information best suited for a customer.

Taking into account the positive attributes of this framework, as well as the negative, let us use the framework to understand nature tourism motivation. Vroom proposes two equations; the first can be used to understand the motivation of travel or not to travel and the second formula to know why a tourist has chosen a certain destination. For our purpose we will concentrate on the first equation, which states that an individual's

behavior is determined by his/her belief that the attractiveness and valence of an outcome (a type of holiday taken) is useful to attain another outcome (eg., relaxation, spiritual growth, knowledge) with greater attractiveness and valence. In other words the need of a person will be searched for depending on the value attached to that need, maybe Maslow's hierarchy of needs is useful here, and its attractiveness, through the lived experience of the instrumental outcome considered as a chosen holiday. The belief that going to a natural setting to experience the environment is seen as an outcome with certain intrinsic value and attractiveness, but above all useful (instrumental) to attain physical and psychological recovery from stress. This framework includes important variables to understand motivation: needs, values, and beliefs. The equation is also able to tell us that a tourist to natural setting does not go only to have an encounter with nature, but also to achieve a further self-indulgent goal.

Vroom's Expectancy Theory has proven its value, but there is another interesting concept to consider such as intention influencing behavior, that according to Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) is influenced by attitudes and subjective norms. This model was called the 'Theory of Reasoned Action'. Ten years later they updated their model including 'perceived behavioral control' as another element influencing intention, calling this new model 'Theory of Planned Behavior'. According to this theory changing beliefs will produce a change in behavior, but this might not be enough if attitudes and/or subjective norms do not change (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). Attitudes "can be viewed as enduring general evaluations of people" (Pearce, Morrison & Rutledge, 1998). Subjective norms are what we expect other people will think of us if we carried out a certain action, in other words social pressure. The model states that beliefs influence attitudes and the perception of subjective norms, at the same time these attitudes and subjective norms influence intention, and intention determines behavior.

How does this model become useful to understand nature tourism motivation? It becomes relevant and useful if we relate it to the New Environmental Paradigm and also to the general motives presented at the beginning of essay of why nature tourism has become so popular. The New Environmental Paradigm presents a new set of

beliefs and values, including the desirability of restricting growth, of protecting the integrity of ecosystems, and of securing more harmonious relationships between man and nature (Albrecht, Bultena, Hoiberg & Nowak, 1982). Relating the Theory of Reasoned Action with the New Environmental Paradigm can be a clue to understand how this change of beliefs in society are affecting the motivation of people in their travel habits resulting in a desire to visit natural areas. The general motives presented by Lindberg, Wood and Engeldrum (1998): widespread changing environmental attitude, development of environmental education, and development of environmental mass media, seem more like reasons rather than motives, but are good reasons to understand this shift to a New Environmental Paradigm. If we include this new paradigm as a new set of beliefs rising in our post-modern world, which are influencing, according to Theory of Reasoned Action, the attitudes and subjective norms then we can understand why the intention of practicing nature tourism has become such an important trend world-wide.

Through the combination of the New Environmental Paradigm and the Theory of Reasoned Action we have found a framework that includes several components of how behavior is constructed together with actual contemporary trends in environmental beliefs. It also succeeds in covering all the requirements set beforehand to consider a theory a good travel motivation theory. For these reasons we can conclude that these combinations of perspectives are useful to understand nature tourism motivation. Another conclusion to this approach of combining the theory and the paradigm can be that motivation, while it is an intrinsic process, when influenced by beliefs and these beliefs are a product of a social shared Environmental Paradigm then motivation becomes a socio-psychological process, influenced by external factors.

The revision of different theories under a scheme of requirements to find a proper one, we have come across a needs-oriented theory (Travel Career Ladder), we have disregarded any push and pull factors-based models, interpreted an all-inclusive framework of motivation (Expectancy Theory), and ended with a simple but comprehensive interpretation of the motivation of nature tourism through the

complementation of the New Environmental Paradigm and the Theory of Reasoned Action. In conclusion we can say that a proper revision of travel motivation theories can help us understand what motivation is, and what elements must be considered to understand it, and then interpret the different findings to understand the motivation of a certain type of tourist. One important consideration is that when investigating what motivates a person to travel in a certain type of way we must concentrate on finding the intrinsic motivation while not distracting our attention to the “pull factors” of a specific destination. On the other hand we must say, as found while combining the Theory of Reasoned Action and the New Environmental Paradigm, that the trend of nature tourism becoming more popular can be better understood through a socio-psychological perspective, taking into account the influence of external factors, such as a new set of beliefs constructed by our post-modern western society. It is then proved that the behavioral perspective might not be enough and a psycho-sociological perspective gives us a better understanding.

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