Consumer engagement in the tourism industry: new trends and implications for research

The purpose of this editorial is threefold: (i) to provide a background on new trends and implications for tourist engagement research (ii) to provide an overview of the nine papers published in this special issue; and (iii) to summarise the themes and discourse that emerged at the Academy of Marketing sponsored Tourism Marketing Special Interest Group (SIG) workshop on tourist engagement held at Heriot-Watt University, UK in December 2017. The workshop was a precursor to this special edition.

Introduction

The tourism service sector has shifted from passive consumption to a more engaging service space. Recent trends include interactive service delivery and offerings, adaptation of new technologies, and service personalisation (e.g., Glas et al., 2017; Hollebeek, Shrivastava, & Chen 2017). Tourists are in search of enjoyable, engaging and transformative activities, frequently surrounding temporary modes of being. Needless to say that the concept of engagement has received huge attention in different academic disciplines including: sociology (civic engagement), psychology (task engagement), marketing (customer engagement), and organizational behaviour (employee engagement) (Brodie et al., 2011; Taheri et al., 2014). Engagement refers to a sense of involvement stemming from the ample response to stimuli, and can emerge either alone or when participating in social consumption activities/places with others (cf. Bryce, Curran, O'Gorman, & Taheri, 2015; Curran et al., 2017; Taheri, Jafari, & O'Gorman, 2014). More specifically, engagement is defined as "a state of being involved with and committed to a specific market offering" (Taheri et al., 2014, p.322). Here, tourism is a place for interaction and the tourist engages with cultures of destination(s)/offering(s), but also creates value-in-use through their experiences in destinations/offerings (Ingram et al., 2017).

Within tourism research, determinants of engagement are manifold include, among others, perceptions of authenticity, sincerity, motivation, prior knowledge, mood regulation, cultural capital and desire for social interaction (cf. Bryce et al., 2015; Taheri et al., 2014; Taheri, Coelho, Sousa, & Evanschitzky, 2017; Taheri, Gannon, Cordina, & Lochrie, 2018). Prior research also shows positive outcomes of tourist's engagement including satisfaction, loyalty, commitment, electronic Word of Mouth, behavioural intentions and memorable tourism experience (e.g., Bore, Rutherford, Glasgow, Taheri, & Antony, 2017; Bryce et al., 2015; Taheri et al., 2014; Ingram et al., 2017). Nevertheless, given its relative importance, empirical research to understand engagement while actually experiencing tourism offerings/destinations are limited. Accordingly, this special issue addresses the role of engagement in tourism and in so doing addresses calls to advance our knowledge of customer engagement (Jaakkola & Alexander, 2014; Hollebeek et al., 2017; Venkatesan, 2017; Pansari & Kumar, 2017) in the context of service industries.

The Articles in this Special Issue

This special issue contains 9 papers and offers unique perspectives on engagement across various settings such as sports tourism, cultural events, cruise tourism, visitor attractions and UNESCO world heritage sites (WHS). The studies provide insights into tourist engagement from nine different countries: Turkey, Jordan, India, Germany, Scotland, New York (USA), Scotland, Wales and North America. Broadly, papers address the measurement, antecedents and outcomes of tourist engagement.

Adopting a rigorous approach, in the first paper Huang and Choi (2019) develop a new multidimensional scale to capture tourist engagement. The tourist engagement scale (TES) consists of four-second order dimensions: social interaction (SI), interaction with employees (IE), relatedness (RL) and activity related tourist engagement (AFE). AFE further contains the sub-dimensions of immersed involvement and novelty seeking. The TES achieved satisfactory psychometric properties in terms of reliability and validity. From a practical point of view, the new scale offers destination marketing organisations (DMOs) and service providers a tool to measure experiences and to segment tourists by level of engagement.

In the second paper, Dowell, Garrod and Turner (2019) segment consumers based on value derive from attending a cultural event. Using an existing multidimensional value framework, the authors identify four distinct groups among attendees, namely: Eisteddfod Enthusiasts, Cultural Event Aficionados, Must Have Been Dragged along and Stuck in the Middle. The four segments differ in terms of word of mouth intentions, both offline and online. Dowell, Garrod and Turner findings offer important implications for cultural organisations in terms of designing and communicating unique value propositions targeting each of the four segments.

Rather, Hollebeek and Islam (2019), drawing on the service-dominant (S-D) logic perspective, explore the antecedents and consequences of engagement among tourists in India. Results confirm place attachment and place authenticity as antecedents of tourist engagement. In turn, tourism-based customer engagement influences trust, loyalty and co-creation. The authors also show that engagement mediates the relationship between i) place attachment; ii) authenticity and the outcome variables trust, loyalty and co-creation. Results highlight the need for marketers to nurture the development of place attachment and place authenticity as important determinants of tourism-based customer engagement.

In this first of 3 papers addressing tourist engagement in the context United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) world heritage sites, Alrawadieh, Prayag, Alrawadieh and Alsalameen (2019) hypothesised relationships between self-identification, engagement, overall satisfaction and destination loyalty. The proposed model was tested using data were collected from international tourists visiting Petra, Jordan. Self-identification was a key determinant of visitor engagement (VE) but contrary to predictions, VE was not related to overall satisfaction. Overall satisfaction partially mediates the relationship between self-identification and destination loyalty. At the practical level, Alrawadieh et al. (2019) study emphasise the need for managers of heritage sites to harness the benefits of narratives and travel stories to enhance self-identification and influence visitor engagement.

Rosoolimanesh, Noor, Schuberth, and Jaafar (2019) study of tourists visiting the Kinabalu Park WHS in Malaysia investigates the direct and indirect influence of engagement through satisfaction on destination loyalty. Unlike Alrawadieh, Prayag, Alrawadieh and Alsalameen, the authors found strong support for the relationship between TE and satisfaction. Satisfaction also mediates relationship between TE and loyalty. Rosoolimanesh et al. (2019)'s study offer unique methodological insights and support the modelling of tourist engagement as a second-order composite construct consisting of 5 dimensions: enthusiasm, attention, absorption, interaction and identification. The authors suggest local authorities to focus on tourists' emotional and cognitive experiences and the psychological aspects of tourist engagement.

The third paper on tourist engagement in the context of WHS, Bergel and Brock propose a model linking customer engagement, affective attitude, customer loyalty and price perception. Using data collected from visitors at a national forest park listed under the UNESO WHS, the study shows that engaged customers display more positive attitudes, leading to increased loyalty and higher willingness to pay. Also, the effect of customer engagement on loyalty and willingness to pay was

partially mediated by affective attitude. Bergel and Brock (2019) encourage tourism marketers to design strategies to enhance consumer engagement and to build affective and emotional ties.

Cordina, Gannon, and Croall (2019) tap into an under-researched are and investigate the determinants and manifestation of spectator sport tourism engagement at a football match, with emphasis on the role played by local fans. Semi structured interviews with international tourists who attended Celtic FC match reveal that sincere interactions with local fans play a vital role in shaping tourist overall experiences. The authors strongly suggest professional sports teams to use local fans to engage international spectators in order to create authentic, memorable and enjoyable experiences.

In the next paper, analysing user generated data (reviews) on social brand communities (Facebook pages of 10 chosen attractions in New York), Kesgin and Murthy (2019) explore the relationship between social currency (SC), online ratings and loyalty (revisit and recommend intention). Their study identifies six dimensions of social currency, namely: conversation, information, advocacy, affiliation, utility and identity. Social currency is relevant in predicting review ratings and at explaining loyalty. Kesgin and Murthy's study posits that attractions should encourage customers to share their experiences on social media and identify brand advocates to help with co-creating the brand image.

The last paper in this special issue is Bayighomog and Arasli (2019)'s study focus on the under researched topic of spiritual leadership in the hospitality industry. Data were collected among 5-stars hotels full-time frontline employees in Antalya, Turkey Advancing social exchange and social identity theories, the authors found support for the influence of spiritual leadership on employee customer-oriented boundary spanning behaviours (COBSBs), mediated by spiritual survival and spiritual well-being. The paper highlights the need for managers to invest in employees' COBSBs to deliver superior customer experiences.

Emerging Themes from Academy of Marketing Tourism Marketing SIG Workshop

The Academy of Marketing Tourism Marketing SIG workshop on "Tourist Engagement in the Tourism Industry: New Trends and Implications for Research" was held at Heriot-Watt University in December 2017. The workshop offered an opportunity for participants to present their work and to discuss emerging themes on tourist engagement and related concepts. **Table 1** presents a summary of emerging themes in tourist engagement research as identified at the workshop.

Table 1. Emerging themes in tourist engagement research

Themes	Related question	Possible answers
New research methods	What are the new qualitative and quantitative research methods?	✓ Mixed-methods and multi-methods ✓ Application of Big Data ✓ Modelling using Bayesian network and Qualitative Comparative Analysis
	What are the methodological challenges?	✓ Hierarchical Linear and Multilevel Modelling ✓ Q Method ✓ The innovative use of netnographic data sources ✓ Neuroscientific methods ✓ Developing scales/constructs to capture demon of tourist engagement in different areas e.g., sport tourism, gastronomy, creative tourism
Contextual gap	Can researchers use the same overarching theory/conceptual model to	✓ It is clear that in relation to tourist engagement, one size does not fit all, and service organisations in different geographical places

	capture tourist engagement in different contexts?	will have an interest in tourist engagement for differing reasons and face barriers to implementation. Hence, research on tourist engagement in one context is unlikely to be directly applicable across similar contexts, let alone across other continents.
New emerging concepts	What is next?	✓ Tourist experience management ✓ Tourists journeys ✓ Service encounter 2.0 and role of technology in tourist engagement ✓ Role of tourist touchpoints in smart tourism destinations and experiences ✓ E-lienation and tourist engagement ✓ the conceptual domain of actor engagement (AE) in networks ✓ Tourist disengagement ✓ Tourist-to-tourist interactions ✓ Tourist engagement in sharing economy and smart cities

Concluding remarks

The papers in this special issue offer important insights to tourism researchers and managers. Tourists are seeking new ways to engage with tourism offerings. Together, the papers included in this special issue and emerging themes compiled from the Academy of Marketing Tourism Marketing SIG workshop offer policy-focused implications, and establish that tourism scholarship has much to offer to better understand tourist engagement. The guest editors of this special issue hope that the collection of articles will inspire future work from scholars with background in, for example, consumer behaviour, services marketing, logistics and education. Moreover, we hope that articles in this special issue act as a starting platform to encourage tourism scholars move this field of research forward by addressing current issues and trends in tourist engagement. We would like to express our appreciation to Professor Levent Altinay for the opportunity to host this special issue in The Service Industries Journal. Last but the least, we would like to thank the reviewers for providing constructive feedback during the review process. The authors and special issue guest editors appreciate the efforts of their peers for providing timely reviews.

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