teaching note

Building Familiarity with a New Market: Motivations for Chinese recreational vehicle tourists in Australia

Summary of the Case Study

The broad appeal of this case study lies in identifying, in an innovative way, the motives and behaviours of a new market segment undertaking a specialist activity. Globally, there is a mounting awareness that the outbound Chinese market is large and growing rapidly. It is desirable for destination managers who seek to promote sustainable tourist behaviour and community well-being to be aware of the motives and needs of this key tourism group. Insightful, research–derived information on the views of the market can be a key to superior management. The case study highlighted an individual blog as well as blog postings of an influential set of Chinese tourists who share on-line their recreational vehicle (RV) travelling experiences in Australia. It was found that the Chinese RV tourists were motivated to undertake RV driving because it is seen as a flexible, economic, travel style and the country has good supporting facilities. These characteristics mesh with the push factors for the independent, technology aware, younger Chinese whose psychological motives include relationship enhancement, self-development, novelty and special interests. The blog analysis material from one individual helps personalise the market for those unfamiliar with Chinese tourists and paves the way for further market research to shape local destination management and marketing.

Target Audience

The case study is intended for undergraduate students in tourism marketing, tourism research methods and tourist consumer behaviour classes.

Teaching and Learning Objectives

An overall learning objective is to build an action oriented awareness of researching and managing an emerging new tourism market. More specifically this overall objective is delivered through student and educator cooperation by enabling students

1. *To identify the findings of the research in a concise way*. Here one sentence which uses 8 words from the blogs can be required (these sentences are sometimes called mapping sentences). These key words can be drawn from the quotations cited in the case or from the summary diagrams. This objective helps readers form their own clear integrated overview of the case.
2. *To consider how an emerging market is defined*. What factors have to be present for a new market to be as a worthwhile focus for attention from destination managers and visited communities? In this discussion notable factors to discuss include the growth percentages which have been recorded for this market, the nature of the expenditure pattern which might make the market worth pursuing, the potential for the market to continue to grow and the acceptability of the market to the visited community.
3. *To reflect on the motives used to define and describe tourist interests in a new destination and for a novel activity*. This objective can be met by an interactive in-class activity by asking students to assess their own motives for travelling if they were to undertake a 2 week driving holiday in a country where they have not previously travelled. These motives should be cast into the kind of push and pull diagram featured in the case study with any facilitating intervening variables linking the motive categories also identified.
4. *To develop an appreciation of the strengths and weaknesses of blog based research for a new market (see more in the notes on blog analysis)*. This objective is met by having the student readers create a table which consists of listing the perceived strengths and weaknesses of the blog analysis and comparing these strengths and weaknesses with one of the following methods (focus groups, surveys or interviews) which might also be used to monitor the views of tourists in an emerging market.
5. *To differentiate between the characteristics of emerging and familiar markets*. Building on the results of this initial study and using the references about senior RV tourists from the reference list OR the students' own direct experience of RV tourists in their region, students can specify the main ways in which the traditional senior RV market (White & White, 2006; Hardy, Hanson, & Gretzel, 2012) and the younger Chinese tourists differ.
6. *To suggest the implications of the study for constructing and developing facilities and support mechanisms which would boost the on-site experiences of the Chinese RV tourists*. This objective involves a close reading of what motivates the RV tourists and an assessment of their physical and psychological needs for. Key topics might include safety, signage, interpretation and social communication issues.
7. *To create a marketing communication addressing the motivational needs for this market*. To meet this objective the student can either design a 1 page A4 flyer for distribution at airports which highlights the features of a specific RV company or design the home page of a web based communication which meets the research-derived needs of a Chinese RV traveller.

Recommended Teaching Approach and Strategy

The teaching objectives are arranged in a hierarchy of increasing cognitive sophistication and student engagement. The teaching plan for this case is constructed to move through the stated objectives in a planned order so that students are prepared for the next objective by having completed prior objectives. The approach is consistent with learning and teaching theory in higher education on the "scaffolding" of curriculum, notably the work of Biggs (Biggs, J. B. (2003). Teaching for quality learning at university. Philadelphia, Pa: Society for Research into Higher Education). The teaching and learning are cast for an up to 3 hours of student time. These steps are:

1. *To identify the findings of the research*. A building block for using the material in the case study is for students to have a sound knowledge of the basic components of the case. An introduction to the objectives of studying the case - specifically a statement by the educator that the session is concerned with how to identify the motives and interests of new and emerging markets - is followed by the students reading the case. They are then set the task of writing a mapping sentence. In no more than one 60 word sentence and using 8 words or phrases from the case they should form their own "mapping sentence" summary of the material. The task requires a careful reading of the task so that the basic points are then used in the sentence and core meanings of the work established.

2. *To consider how an emerging market is defined*. This component part of the session is planned as an interactive in-class activity where suggestions from the class are taken by the educator. The questions to ask are What is the meaning of the term emerging? How many tourists does it take before the word emerging can be applied? Who defines the word emerging? When does an emerging market matter? Are all emerging markets likely to become significant markets? If not, why might an emerging market not thrive and grow in a destination? Is it possible to have multiple emerging markets in the one destination?

Answers can be written on a board or screen and used as an agreed on summary for subsequent discussion.

3. *To reflect on the motives*. The engagement of the students in the topic may be boosted at this stage by making it more personal and linked to their own lives and experiences. The task for this step is to ask students to assess their own motives for travelling if they were to undertake a 2 week driving holiday in a country where they have not previously travelled. These motives should be cast into the kind of push and pull diagram featured in the case study with any facilitating intervening variables linking the motive categories also identified.

This could be an item for assessment.

4. *To develop an understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of blog based research.* Students create a table which consists of listing the perceived strengths and weaknesses of the blog analysis and comparing these strengths and weaknesses with one of the following methods (focus groups, surveys or interviews)

The table can be based on an in class discussion with the educator preferably subdividing the class into small 3-4 person groups. The groups each do a different comparison (blogs versus focus groups, blogs versus surveys, blogs versus interviews). A summary by the educator after the groups report their perceived differences can integrate the activity for students.

5. *To differentiate between the characteristics of emerging and familiar markets*. The educator provides one of three references (see Educator resources for market comparisons) about other kinds of RV travel to small groups of students. Each group is then asked to draw up a Table of similarities and differences with attention to the following descriptors of the two market segments

Demographics including age, gender mix, employment areas, socio-economic status and income level if available.

Travel characteristics including number of people in the travel party, length of trip, daily length of trip in terms of miles or kilometres covered, accommodation preferences, destination routes

Psychological profile including suggested motives, interests and activity preferences.

6. *To suggest the implications of the study for constructing and developing facilities*. To meet this objective students need to identify with the role of a destination manager, more specifically it is useful to consider what the facilities should be for RV tourists from this emerging market at both a national park and at a cultural site such as a church or museum An assessment of the needs of the market at the physical and psychological level is required. Key topics might include safety, catering, signage, interpretation and social communication issues. One way to structure the task is to see the work as fitting into a grid with four sections

7. *To create a marketing communication addressing the motivational needs for this market*. While step 6 addresses the supply side issues for the case, step 7 considers in a small way the further stimulation of the market through beginning the process of providing tailored marketing information. The student can either design a 1 page A4 flyer for distribution at airports which highlights the features of a specific RV company or design the home page of a web based communication from the destination which meets the research-derived needs of a Chinese RV traveller. Time restrictions on the fundamental use of the case might restrict this important activity to a draft or schematic outline of the approach. The objective here involves the application of the research findings thus marrying research insights, an under-

standing of the case with its potential usefulness.

This could be an item for assessment.

8. *Proposed assessments*. It is a pivotal issue in constructing and benefiting from case studies that the educator signals to the student that the material matters. A key way to create such signals is to assess at least parts of the activity, preferably immediately and close in time to the completion of the case.

Immediate short term: Students are given a grade on their participation in the component parts of the case by handing in the completed sections proposed for steps 3, 6 and 7.

Longer term: (1)In an exam format students are asked a question which requires them to recall key aspects of the case and its strengths and weaknesses; (2) In an exam format students are required to identify the actions from a demand side and a supply side which could stimulate this emerging market.

Additional Notes for Educators

The emic-etic distinction: Whose perspective?

Being alert to ideological and status driven commentary on tourists is a useful item to include in any preparation for studying the new markets' behaviour and experiences. The challenge of defining perspectives can be employed in tourism studies can introduce the Step 3 activity. Wiseman (2007) suggests undertaking a small personal test. The educator can use the Q test to introduce the Step 3 task.

The task can be conceived as a brief act of student/ educator involvement. Using the tip of your finger, trace the Capital letter Q on your forehead. Now you have done that; which way did the tail of the Q face? Was it over your right eye or over your left eye?

It is suggested that this is a quick test as to how you are oriented to others. If the tail is over your right eye you have effectively drawn it so you can read it - possibly indicative of putting your own feelings and needs first. If you have drawn the tail of the Q facing over your left eye you are already sensitive to how others see you and perhaps you are thinking about their perspective. The Q test serves to introduce the fundamental emic and etic distinction in social science research. The emic view means to adopt the perspective of the participant, to see the world not from your point of view but from the point of view of the other. The etic perspective by way of contrast consists of imposing your perspective, your definition of reality on the observed phenomenon. The Q test analogy here is that the emic approach corresponds to drawing the letter Q so others can read it, while the etic view is to see the world only through your own eyes. An emic approach to research, as opposed to an etic approach, was first suggested in 1967 by Pike, an anthropologist and linguist. The foundation idea is that emic research should be carried out so insider's perspectives, beliefs, thoughts and attitudes can be fully articulated. Pike's concept was further elaborated by researchers in a wide range of areas. Emic work has had a particular impact in observational methods in cross-cultural psychology and psychological anthropology (Flaherty, et al., 1988). Some scholars have suggested that the emic approach is useful in all cross-cultural studies, as well as for many studies that deal with human relationships including tourism (Berry, 1999; Niblo & Jackson, 2004).

This case study, obtaining perceptions through Chinese tourists' daily based self-reported rich blogs, is an emic study. It is argued that an emic approach is helpful in generating voices from the research respondents and therefore, for a better representation.

Notes on blog analysis

Ethical issues: using blogs in tourism research: The conventional approaches to research ethics which can involve the systematic approval of studies by committees and the use of such tactics as informed consent of the participants do not easily fit internet studies. Some travellers use pseudonyms which effectively makes direct contact with them for approval a very difficult or impossible process. Some researchers, such as Sudweeks and Rafaeli (1995) and Langer and Beckman (2005), argue that the posting of blogs is a public act and can be treated in the same way as other information in the public arena. In this view no ethical issues are raised when citing blog statements or interpreting actors' behaviours and experiences. When there is actual participation in the online community such as suggested in some of the foundation work on analysing online records by Kozinets (2002), it can be suggested that disclosing the researcher's presence and intentions to community members is required. Sometimes blog sites note how to approach those who have posted their stories. For example, attached to all the blogs on the www.travelblog.org site is a generalised statement which reads as follows: The text and photos of this article remain the copyright of the author. Under no circumstances should the photos or text be used without the express permission of the author. If you wish to use the text from this article or publish photos please contact the author.

Insightfulness: The insightful nature of blog analysis is proposed by several authors. A number of authors report that there are several advantages prompting researchers to study internet travel stories. Schaad (2008), considering the perceptions of Scandinavia in internet travel accounts, highlights the point that they are open and democratic-both in the sense that anyone with basic computer skills can contribute to their production and to their consumption. Schaad also suggests that the Internet fosters "an authenticity in the accounts that retain the style, idiosyncrasies and biases of the writers while at the same time allowing for the free expression of perceptions without artistic affectation" (2008:201). Langer and Beckman (2005:189) support this view noting that the possibility to mask one's identity also allows contributors to describe situations and report reactions to events in an honest fashion thus avoiding the distortions created by researcher directed investigative techniques.

One aspect of travel stories which is of particular interest to the present case is the assertion that internet travel stories can reveal affective responses and intense moments of emotion (Morgan and Watson, 2009). These intense moments may not always be the authentic, existential moments in travel which interest many tourism researchers but instead can include stories of traveller confusion, self-doubt and depression. Additionally as White and White (2007) report, the communication of travel stories can be an intimate process as a dominant use of the medium is to connect people in close relationships. Such close and continuing communication, of which travel blogs are a part, reduces the psychological distance between those at home and those who are away. For researchers, the particular attraction of travel blogs to the present interest in travellers' RV choices lies in the ready access to natural, unaffected, emotionally rich reasons for and reporting on their Australian holidays.

Key References

Langer, R. & Beckman, S. (2005). Sensitive research topics; Netnography revisited Qualitative Market Research, 8(2), 189.

Morgan, M. & Watson, P. (2009). Unlocking the shared experience In M. Kozak and A. DeCrop (eds.) Handbook of Tourist Behavior. (pp.116-132). New York: Taylor & Francis group.

White, N. R. & White, P.B. (2006). Home and Away Tourists in a Connected World. Annals of Tourism Research, 34(1), 88-104.

Schaad, E. (2008). Perceptions of Scandinavia and the rhetoric of touristic stereotypes in Internet Travel Accounts Scandinavian Studies, 80(2), 201-239.

Additional Reading

De Crop, A. (2004). Trustworthiness in qualitative tourism research. In J. Phillimore & L. Goodson (Eds.), Qualitative research in tourism (pp. 156-169). London: Routledge.

Kozinets, R. V. (2002). The field behind the screen: Using netnography for marketing research in on-line communities. Journal of Marketing Research, 39(1), 61-73.

Educator Resources for Market Comparisons

The three references which can provide comparative information and which can be made available to students for the task are:

Hardy, A., Hanson, D., & Gretzel, U. (2012). Online representations of RVing neo-tribes in the USA and Australia. Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change, 10(3), 219-232.

Onyx, J., & Leonard, R. (2005). Australian Grey Nomads and American Snowbirds: Similarities and differences. Journal of Tourism Studies, 16(1), 61-67.

White, N. R. & White, P.B. (2006). Home and away: Tourists in a connected world. Annals of Tourism Research, 34(1), 88-104.