

Abstract for General Public:

Factors determining tourists' transport-mode choices in ten European capitals

Before the outbreak of the pandemic, many European cities, most notably Paris and Venice, saw considerable inflows of visitors. With restrictions being eased across Europe, this trend is set to continue. Crucially, tourists who visit big cities have to decide how to move around. Quite often, tourist attractions are scattered over a large area, so the question of how to reach them takes on particular significance.

Progress towards sustainable tourism requires concerted effort on the part of governments, tourism companies and holidaymakers. The problem is that tourists, when on holiday, tend to reduce their engagement in environmentally friendly behaviors. This often has to do with choosing unsustainable way of travelling to and around the destination. The way tourists travel to destination has been so far widely discussed, however when it comes to mobility at destination, there are still some gaps to be addressed.

In general, using public transport, cycling and walking are seen as environmentally friendly, while driving a (non-electric) private car is not. Since different modes of transport produce different environmental and social impacts, tourists' mobility choices at the destination are likely to have a significant effect on air pollution, traffic congestion and noise. This, in turn, is likely to negatively affect both the experience of visitors and the quality of life of local residents. However, public-transport systems, due to certain idiosyncratic characteristics, may discourage tourists from using buses or metros. This is because visitors, who usually do not speak a local language, might be put off by the systems' complexity and user-unfriendliness or, especially in a post-pandemic reality, fear to get infected with contagious diseases in small crowded spaces. It follows that the issue of how tourists move around at the destination has far-reaching implications for sustainable tourism development and thus deserves scientific scrutiny.

This research project, therefore, aims to explore visitors' motivation for public-transport use in ten European capitals (Amsterdam, Berlin, Brussels, London, Madrid, Paris, Prague, Rome, Stockholm, Warsaw), to ascertain individual and systemic factors determining transport-mode choices and to compare transport systems in these cities from the perspective of sustainable mobility.

The questionnaire survey and the service safari technique (a form of participant observation) will be employed as the principal instruments with which to gather relevant data. The computer-assisted personal survey will be conducted among the total of 5000 tourists visiting ten cities that were carefully selected to reflect their diversity in terms of modal split, transport infrastructure, tourists' influx etc. The service safari technique is expected to deliver written reports from 30 qualitative observations. Each observer will be asked to take the route between the city centre and one popular tourist attraction located out of the city centre with three different modes of transport and then to prepare a detailed report with the assessment of the transport system of the city.

Unlike most of the existing studies, which were limited to analysing tourists' travel behaviours in one city or country, this project aims to survey tourists of different nationalities, in ten different cities in different countries. This will allow for identifying not only the personal factors determining decisions regarding the modal choices, but also for determining the significance of the conditions related to a specific place and the characteristics of its transport system.

The findings from the research project will help us understand the socio-psychological mechanisms underlying tourists' mobility choices, create an index to measure the quality of transport systems from the perspective of visitor sustainable mobility and come up with a tool for assessing urban transport systems. All this will, in turn, help manage urban tourism growth in sustainable ways, thereby contributing to the progress of the Sustainable Development Goals.