

Abstract

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| Title: THE ATTITUDE-BEHAVIOUR GAP IN SUSTAINABLE TRAVEL - ENVIRONMENTAL ATTITUDES AND TRAVEL BEHAVIOUR OF YOUNG TRAVELLERS | |

Abstract:

The behaviour of travellers contributes significantly to the detrimental environmental effects of tourism. Against this background, Generation Y, which represents the dominant travelling group for the following decades, has the reputation to be more environmentally conscious than preceding generations. Even though it could be intuitively assumed that travellers with a positive attitude towards the environment would behave in a more environmentally responsible manner, it has been commonly observed that a positive environmental attitude is not always transferred into actual pro-environmental behaviour on vacation. This discrepancy between attitude and behaviour is called the attitude-behaviour gap. It is well established that general attitudes, like environmental concerns, only have a weak impact on the behaviour. The aim of this thesis is to examine the attitudes of Generation Y travellers towards environmental issues and analyse whether these can be a strong enough driver for pro-environmental behaviour in a holiday context.

In order to test the links between different types of environmental attitude and travel behaviour a quantitative research design in form of an online survey has been applied. The findings suggest that Generation Y travellers have a positive attitude towards the environment and sustainable tourism. However, linear regression analysis indicates that these environmental attitudes only have a weak impact on their travel behaviour. This impact further depends on the specificity of the attitude and the type of behaviour that is examined. While Generation Y travellers with stronger environmental concerns and a positive attitude towards environmentally sustainable tourism might engage in general pro-environmental practices on vacation more frequently, they do not seem to reduce their number of vacations or flights based on their environmental consciousness. Moreover, a positive attitude towards environmentally sustainable tourism has a stronger effect on pro-environmental travel behaviour than general environmental concerns.

Based on these results it could be argued that there is in fact an attitude-behaviour gap among Generation Y travellers since their environmental attitudes only partly result in a more environmentally responsible behaviour on vacation. As even the most environmentally concerned travellers do not seem to reduce their number of vacations or flights, it remains questionable whether the environmental consciousness of Generation Y is a strong enough driver to reduce the negative environmental impacts of tourism.

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