

Weather and Tourism – Issues, Methods, and Results: an Overview.

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Abstract

This paper introduces different research approaches to better understand the relation between weather in a destination and tourist behavior and proposes a preliminary conceptualization based on a literature review and empirical findings. Weather and climate are important aspects of touristic activity and of tourists' decision-making. Both exert more or less influence on the level of attractiveness of a destination, on destination choice, timing of travel, individual's actual or planned behavior in situ, and, ultimately, on the satisfaction of the overall holiday experience and on return intention.

In addition, weather is expected to alter with climate change processes during the next decades which in turn may influence behavior patterns of consumers. Reliable knowledge on the relations between weather and tourists' pre- and on-trip choices, activities, and evaluations may be useful both for the tourism industry and for researchers. Methodological approaches include the analysis of statistical data from meteorological and tourist sources (e.g. rain and number of overnights in a given region, quantitative and qualitative consumer surveys (covering e.g. weather perceptions and evaluations; reported behavior; concepts like weather related preferences, attitudes, beliefs, images, satisfaction, intentions, and the perceived links between such aspects etc.), or a combination of both, meteorological and survey data, and experimental settings which allow for the controlled variation of independent variables.

The paper gives examples for different research approaches from different empirical studies carried out in different frameworks and different destinations (e.g. a visitor survey in the archipelago of the Vesterålen in Northern Norway, or a qualitative explorative study in a helio-centric destination, La Martinique, an island of the Lesser Antilles). Referring to these findings a conceptual model is proposed which offers a structure to analyze the intertwined links between weather in a destination and tourist behavior dynamics and the underlying concepts. Tourists respond to *climate* (general weather) in their pre-travel decisions (choice of destination and timing of trip) and to *weather* during the vacation in their day-to-day choice of activities, places to visit etc.

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