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Does eco certification sell tourism services? Evidence from a quasi-experimental observation study in Iceland

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Abstract

Eco labelling of tourism services has been studied extensively in the past. Yet, there is no agreement on two key points: (1) whether or not eco certification increases tourist demand for a product among the general tourist population, and (2) whether or not there is a specific market segment whose purchase decisions are influenced by eco labels. Lack of agreement is partially due to the wide variety of different research approaches used. Most studies have in common, however, that they rely solely on tourist self reports of either behavioural intentions or past behaviour. The present study re-investigates these two questions using a quasi-experimental design based on actual observed behaviour and objective knowledge testing. Results indicate that (1) eco labelling does not have a big impact on general tourist demand, but (2) a niche market exists which is influenced by eco labelling when choosing among alternative tourist

providers. The research design used in the present study offers a useful alternative for investigations of tourist purchase decisions. It leads to more reliable results because it is based on the observation of actual displayed behaviour, thus avoiding a range of answer biases. Other eco-certified products now need research on similar lines.

[illegible]

[illegible]1[illegible]2[illegible]1[illegible]2[illegible]3[illegible]

Keywords:

eco certification · eco label · whale watching · quasi-experiment · intention-behaviour gap · tourist behaviour

[illegible]:

[illegible]

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Disclosure statement

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Additional information

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Logi Karlsson is a postdoctoral researcher at The University of Queensland (UQ) Business School. He holds a PhD degree in marketing and a Master degree in business administration from University of Wollongong, and a Bachelor's degree in psychology from University of Iceland. Previously he worked as a marketing manager for Arctic Adventures, the largest adventure tour operator in Iceland.

Sara Dolnicar

Sara Dolnicar is a research professor of tourism at The University of Queensland. She holds degrees in business administration and psychology. Sara's research interests are the improvement of market segmentation methodology and measures used in social science research. She applies her work primarily to tourism, but also social marketing challenges, such as environmental volunteering, foster care and public acceptance of recycled water. Sara is an ARC Queen Elizabeth Fellow and an elected fellow of the International Academy for the Study of Tourism and the International Association of Scientific Experts in Tourism (AIEST).

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