Author: Verena Tichy

On the road to narrowing the green purchasing gap. Let's get the backpack out of the basement and plan the trip.

31.08.2020

And we are back from the holiday break with something special. With the following posts we would like to take you on the journey of narrowing the green purchasing gap for your specific tourism company. Why, you ask? Because we care about all interested tourism organisations, companies and institutions. How, you ask? By inviting you to research your customers' current green purchasing gap and ways to narrow it. We have created a post series called „On the road to narrowing the green purchasing gap" in which we share our uncensored and raw case study process aiming at inspiring you as tourism providers to metaphorically grab your backpack and enjoy the journey. As per usual we are taking research into account. Let's get going!

Research Summary

As introduced previously in our post narrow the gap. respective tourism infrastructure is needed to enable guests to keep up their daily environmental conscious habits and routines during their consumption of tourism services (Dolnicar & Leisch 2008, Mahoney 2011, Phipps et al. 2012). This becomes even more important when considering that customers value tourism experiences subjectively in regard to whether their personal values and attitudes were met in the creation process (Vargo & Lush, 2004; Grönroos, 2011). Therefore, researching customers' subjective values is crucial in developing ways to narrowing the green purchasing gap, especially as tourists actively engage personal values while consuming tourism experiences.

„Research in leisure, recreation and tourism means a process by which new information and knowledge are produced to answer questions we deem valuable and beneficial for our purposes in a planned and systematic way that is free from personal bias" (Sirakaya-Turk et al. 2017, p.8). Developing an adequate research process helps to gather insights on guests' actual environmental conscious values. Data derived from such research forms the

© 2019 – 2020 the conscious tourism academic. All Rights Reserved.

base for a profound understanding of customers' values. According to Sirakaya-Turk et al. (2017) four crucial steps need to be considered when developing a valid research process:

1. Identification of a research idea resulting in a clear and narrow research question.
2. Identification of theory supporting the research question.
3. Identification of key components.
4. Identification of a fitting methodology.

What does it mean for the tourism industry?

In previous posts we encouraged you to get to know your customers' level of greenness or conscious values. But how is that done properly? Key take aways of the above short research summary are the following. Research needs to be:

- answering our burning questions,
- planned and systematic as well as
- free from bias.

Alright and now? By following the 4 steps by Sirakaya-Turk et al. (2017) you will be able to conduct research that is answering what you seek to know in a planned and systematic way by being free of bias.

Note: the source Sirakaya-Turk et al. (2017) is taken from a university student text book introducing research methods for leisure, recreation and tourism and proved to be a helpful guide combining theory and practice. Further resource to the topic exist, however, we chose to work with this one only for the purpose of keeping it lean and clean. If you have any questions regarding further research on this topic, please let us know via email.

But now on to planning your future research:

We have taken a great interest in detailing the process of conducting research for you. For illustration purposes we would like to introduce you to our current research project at three small to mid sized hotels in southern Germany. The hotels are located in the same city and are being managed by the same owner. The average number of rooms is twelve. Post Covid-19 the occupancy rate was very satisfactory.

© 2019 – 2020 the conscious tourism academic. All Rights Reserved.

Step one: Identification of a research idea resulting in a clear and narrow research question.

You probably know the feeling of bugging questions or ideas popping up in your head after an interesting chat to one of your peers or even your customers. Good news: research ideas can be generated in many different ways. So keep an open mind and stay curious.

Our Case: We wanted to identify our hotel guests' environmental conscious values. We suspected them to have some but we could not be sure. Do they incorporate such values in their daily life? A lot of them or just a few? Examples are recycling, buying regional and seasonal products, making decisions based on fair production chains etc. As you might have read in some of our previous blog posts literature supporting research on the topic of green, as well as conscious tourists exist. However, it is unclear to us whether such green or conscious tourists are among our own guests. So the research idea resulted in the following research question: Are my hotel guests (the guests of the mentioned three hotels) environmental conscious or respectively green? * *Throughout this post we use environment as a synonym for social, cultural, and natural environment*

Step two: Theory supporting the research idea

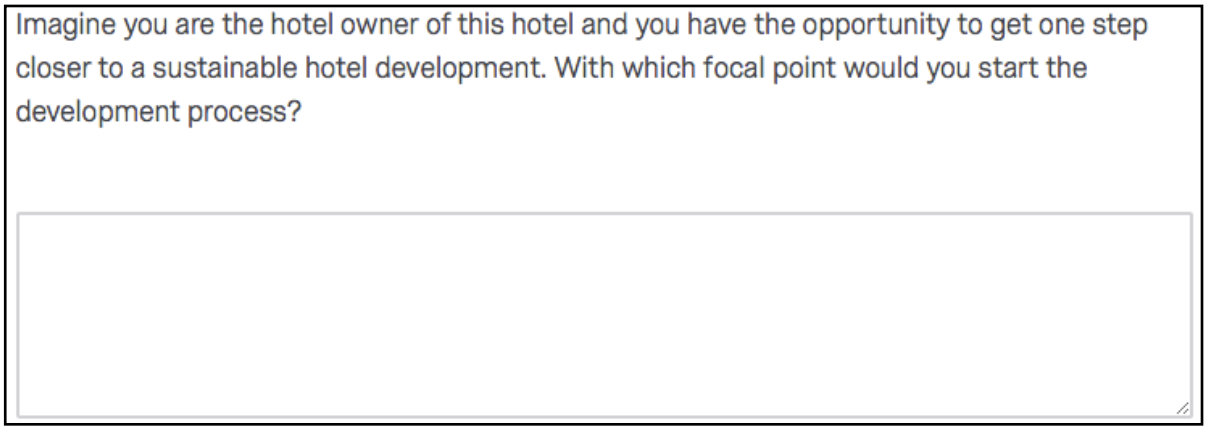
When talking about theory, a differentiation needs to be made between deductive logic and inductive logic (Sirakaya-Turk et al. 2017). Deductive logic refers to a general formal theory that one would try to validate within one's research question. Meaning, one would zoom in from the bigger picture to the specific case. Inductive logic on the other hand refers to the lack of a general formal theory that one could explore in order to answer a given research question. Therefore, one leverages case studies that provide insights which could be incorporated (e.g. by combining different case study insights) into a bigger picture, potentially leading to one formal theory.

Our Case: We do not know any deductive logic which could explain to 100% how customer's environmental conscious values can be identified. However, a theory exists giving way to the existence of conscious and green values of individuals as stated in our post's research summary. Consequently, incorporating inductive logic next to deductive logic is essential in our case to determine our hotel guests' environmental conscious values in their daily life. In conclusion we use a mixed methods approach since some key factors support a deductive logic and some do not. Due to this, we use a mix of open and somewhat closed questions. The somewhat closed questions guide the surveyed person in a specific topic, and therefore do not allow the person to answer something completely

© 2019 – 2020 the conscious tourism academic. All Rights Reserved.

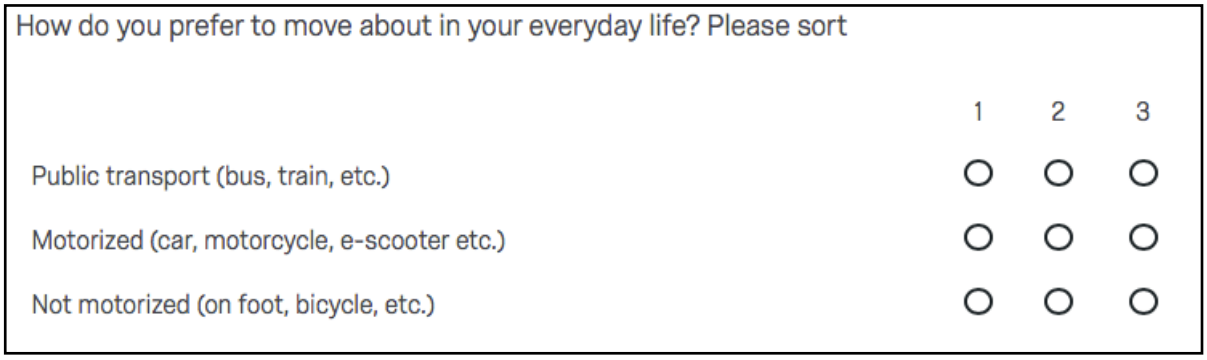
different. The inductive questions are open to customers suggestions and allow them to let their minds be unguided.

Example of an inductive logic inspired survey question:



Source: own survey 2020.

Example of a deductive logic inspired survey question:



Source: own survey 2020.

Step three: Identification of key components

When working with a deductive logic there is a need to translate the theoretical constructs into measurements for research questions to be answered. This process is called operationalisation.

Our Case: Key factors that can be measured are „environmental conscious attitudes“ of our customers as well as „daily life routines“ of our customers. We chose these key factors as Dolnicar & Leisch (2008), Mahoney (2011) and Phipps et al. (2012) point out that individuals in fact do posses green attitudes and values which they

© 2019 – 2020 the conscious tourism academic. All Rights Reserved.

incorporate in their daily routines. Otherwise there would not be a need for matching tourism services accordingly.

When planing the operationalisation we need to take the chosen study subjects into account, who will they be?

Our Case: In our case we are choosing our former hotel guests as they represent our clientele.

How will we collect our data?

Our Case: We are going for an online questionnaire created with „Qualtrics“

(Note: google poll works as well and is free).

Step four: Deciding on a methodology

Methodology describes the way you want to reach out to your participants and in what time frame. Be sure to know the reasons behind your methodology.

Our Case: We decided on a voluntary online questionnaire, targeting our guests via a follow-up e-mail to their stay in the set time frame August 2020 - October 2020. The survey period of 3 months was chosen in alignment with the hotel's peak season. We set an incentive by a 100€ hotel-voucher that will be drawn randomly to one participant after the survey period ends.

We hope we could provide you with an insight into how you can start researching ideas that matter to you and your tourism company. As always stay tuned for future posts explaining possible data gathering difficulties, evaluation techniques and interpretation of the results. Our introduced example is a real case study which is being researched as we write this post. We are very excited and know one valuable piece of information already: Do not underestimate the time factor that comes with research. This is not a complaint but a valuable lesson learned and we are excited to hear about your lessons learned along your journey of researching topics that matter to you. If you have any questions concerning starting your own research, let us know! We are very happy to help.

© 2019 – 2020 the conscious tourism academic. All Rights Reserved.

References:

- Dolnicar, S., Leisch, F. (2008). An investigation of tourists' patterns of obligation to protect the environment. Journal of Travel Research, 46 (4), 381-391.
- Grönroos, C. (2011). Value co-creation in service logic: A critical Analysis. Marketing Theory, 11 (3), 279 – 301.
- Mahoney, S. (2011), Study: green gap is bigger than ever, Retrieved from www.mediapost.com/publications/article/148938/study-green-gap-is-bigger-than-ever.html, viewed 03.05.2020.
- Phipps, M., Ozanne, L.K., Luchs, M.G., Subrahmanyan, S., Kapitan, S., Catlin, J.R., Gau, R., Naylor, R.W., Rose, R.L., Simpson, B., Weaver, T. (2012). Understanding the XI inherent complexity of sustainable consumption: a social cognitive framework. Journal of Business Research, 66 (8), 1227-1234.
- Sirakaya-Turk, E., Uysal, M., Hammitt, W. E., & Vaske, J. J. (Eds.). (2017). Research methods for leisure, recreation and tourism. CABI.
- Vargo, S. L., Lusch, R. F. (2004). Evolving to a new dominant logic for marketing. Journal of Marketing, 68, 1−17.

© 2019 – 2020 the conscious tourism academic. All Rights Reserved.