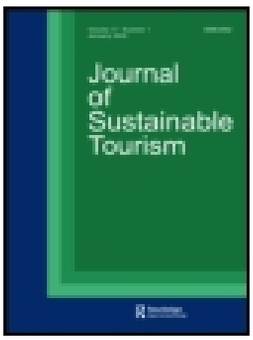

Journal of Sustainable Tourism

ISSN: 0966-9582 (Print) 1747-7646 (Online) Journal homepage: http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rsus20

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To cite this article: Xavier Font & Scott McCabe (2017): Sustainability and marketing in tourism: its contexts, paradoxes, approaches, challenges and potential, Journal of Sustainable Tourism, DOI: 10.1080/09669582.2017.1301721

To link to this article: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09669582.2017.1301721

JOURNAL OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM, 2017
https://doi.org/10.1080/09669582.2017.1301721

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INTRODUCTION

Sustainability and marketing in tourism: its contexts, paradoxes, approaches, challenges and potential

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ABSTRACT

Tourism marketing has typically been seen as exploitative and fuelling hedonistic consumerism. Sustainability marketing can, however, use marketing skills and techniques to good purpose, by understanding market needs, designing more sustainable products and identifying more persuasive methods of communication to bring behavioural change. This article summarises the latest research on the theories, methods and results of marketing that seeks to make tourist destinations better places to live in, and better places to visit. It explores sustainability marketing's two fundamental approaches, that of market development, using market segmentation, and that of sustainable product development. It introduces a Special Issue of the *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* on sustainable marketing, sharing evidence on the motivations, mechanisms and barriers that businesses encounter, and on successes in changing consumer behaviour and pursuing sustainability goals. Particular attention is given to the methodologies of sustainable tourism marketing, to the subject's breadth and complexity, and to its many innovations. Further research is called for to fully understand what contextual aspects influence these pro-sustainability interventions to achieve which outcomes in other settings, in order to validate some of the exploratory studies discussed, and establish the feasibility of scaling up pilot studies for more general use.

ARTICLE HISTORY
Received 8 February 2017
Accepted 28 February 2017

KEYWORDS
Sustainable tourism; responsibility; ethics; marketing; communication; consumer behaviour

Introduction

There has never been a more opportune or important moment in which to address issues of marketing in sustainable tourism. At the time of writing, news agencies around the world reported that 2016 was officially the warmest year on record. A press release from the UK Met Office in conjunction with the University of East Anglia's Climate Research Unit stated that a particularly strong El Niño event was partly responsible; however, "…the main contributor to warming over the last 150 years is human influence on climate from increasing greenhouse gases in the atmosphere" (The Met Office, 2017). This coincided with the eve of Donald Trump's inauguration as the 45th President of the United States, who according to Ian Johnston writing in the UK newspaper, *The Independent*, has previously claimed "that climate change is a Chinese hoax, has appointed climate science deniers to key positions and spoken about withdrawing the US from the Paris Agreement on climate change" (Johnston, 2017). There is a sense that global politics and the world itself is at a precipitous moment in history, that decisions made in 2017 will significantly influence the direction of travel of businesses, consumer thinking and demand, and global governance for decades to come. The paradoxical nature

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of recent events, personified by the rise to power of more "sceptical" leaders, despite more powerful and concrete evidence on the damaging effects of human activity on the environment, point to an urgent need to evaluate practices, actions, theories and assumptions in every sphere of life. The role of tourism, both the industry and tourists as consumers, in shaping or responding to competing global forces is important for a number of reasons, including on the negative side, tourism's contribution to global carbon emissions, its impact on Indigenous and heritage cultures, its impacts on nature, "traditional" landscapes and townscapes and, on the positive side, its role in fostering peace, transferring wealth, creating jobs and developing stronger inter-cultural relations.

Yet, it may at first appear that the concepts of marketing and sustainability are antithetical, mutually incompatible (Jones, Clarke-Hill, Comfort, & Hillier, 2008; Smith, 1998). Marketing has been defined as the activity, set of institutions and processes for creating, communicating, delivering and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners and society at large (American Marketing Association, 2013). This holistic definition suggests a benign view of marketing. Yet, it can be contrasted with an alternative, more maleficent perspective, which is critical of marketing's role in fanning the fires of consumer culture (see McDonagh & Prothero, 2014). Jones et al. (2008) point out that some commentators argue that marketing encourages unnecessary consumption, promoting a culture of materialism and a relentless search for unattainable lifestyles, to and by people who cannot afford them and for which ultimately their attainment would not make them happier. Furthermore, some areas of marketing activity, particularly advertising, have been criticised specifically for spurious claims in the promotion of sustainability, epitomised in the practice of "greenwashing"- misleading consumers about a company's environmental performance for business gains (Delmas & Cuerel Burbano, 2011; Laufer, 2003).

Tourism is most often conceived as a "want" rather than a "need", a luxury or a reward, as a non-essential, hedonic, aspirational consumption activity (reflected in advertising messages), such that tourism marketing is more readily associated with the more malign view of marketing practice. Indeed tourism is sometimes conceived as essentially pure marketing, as it is often based on packaging existing resources and assets of a destination, and subsequent promotion to new markets (McCabe, 2014). Additionally, the ubiquity of marketing in contemporary society, providing the wallpaper to social life, both online and off, plays into the notion that marketing is responsible for fuelling irresponsible levels and types of consumption. Yet, marketing is fundamental to tourism businesses and destinations. Thus, for example, effective marketing is largely responsible for the number, types and origins of tourists found in a destination, and for ensuring viable destinations which provide a valuable contribution to economic development and growth. Whilst the role of government and the industry in creating and shaping destinations is critical to the achievement of sustainability, marketing has an important function in determining how successfully destinations achieve their aims and objectives, in both the short and medium terms.

Sustainability on the other hand, whilst also, like marketing, plagued by varying interpretations and contrasting viewpoints, is generally associated with a more positive moral standing in academic discourse and social understanding. Sustainability provides a long-term view of the future, one that focuses attention on a set of ethical values and principles, which guides action in a responsible and harmonious way, incorporating the environment and societal consequences of actions, as well as economic goals. It is concerned with a balanced and holistic approach that recognises the role of all stakeholders and both present and future generations' entitlement to the use of resources. Sustainability has become an imperative: McDonagh and Prothero argue that; "*We have finally recognised that at our current levels of consumption the planet cannot sustain us or its carrying capacity for humanity ad infinitum*" (2014, p. 1186). It has become a "mega trend", spawning rafts of legislation from supranational and national governments, collective and individual actions by industries and individuals. McDonagh and Prothero cite GE, Marks and Spencer, Pepsico and others as spearheading sustainability initiatives in recent years. Additionally, they refer to the plethora of terms to describe consumer actions, such as; voluntary simplifiers, downshifters, ethical and sustainable consumers, to highlight the popularisation of

responsible or alternative modes of consumption, or at the very least, an awakening of a critical consumer consciousness in global marketplaces.

Yet, the extent that true sustainable development is attainable is also questioned. Some argue the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) (http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/), introduced in 2015 to replace the Millennium Development Goals, are too broad and diffuse. One example is the goal to reduce inequality within and among countries. This certainly appears to be unattainable in the light of recent statistics showing ever-increasing concentration of wealth among an ever-smaller number of global elites (Oxfam, 2017). Tourism also characterises these contrasts between ideals and realities. Some destinations are far from sustainable, based on short-term mass development models and with poor infrastructure to deal with environmental problems. Consumers may see sustainable alternatives as unappealing or too costly (involving sacrifices and inconvenience), or as "Catch 22" alternatives that could be encouraged even further by media reports of threatened ecosystems or species, to make perhaps damaging visits to destinations before they disappear forever (e.g. the Great Barrier Reef, or travel to the polar regions for polar bear viewing). And then there is the question of air travel and its contribution to carbon emissions.

Yet, tourism is both desired and required by developed and by many developing nations to enable development and to achieve sustainable economic growth. Tourism is often cited as a "green" industry, and rightly so in the context of extraction-based alternatives. It is these paradoxes and contrasts particularly that pose an important set of challenges and opportunities for debate on sustainability issues in tourism marketing. The idea that tourism marketing and sustainability can perhaps learn from each other may appear counter-intuitive. Marketing is generally associated with competitive business strategy, short-termism, and a profit imperative, promoting consumer choice in a way that advocates the benefits of self-gratification and instant satisfaction, which seems at odds with the ideals of sustainability. It is both despite and because of the inherent difficulties in reconciling sustainability issues with marketing theories, strategies and practices in a tourism context that more focused research is needed that seeks ways forward for theory development *and* practical solutions. This is the main purpose of this special issue. By focusing in on some of the most paradoxical and irascible issues, it may be possible to develop new ideas and propose research agendas to shape and direct future action. Whilst there is a rich seam of research and practice in the overall marketing literature on sustainable issues and responsible consumption (c.f. McDonagh & Prothero, 2014; Ulusoy, 2016; Wymer & Polonsky, 2015), this is less-well developed in tourism, but the wider literature attests to the potential role of marketing to understand and encourage consumer behaviour that is more sustainable, create and promote more sustainable tourism offerings, and ensure that tourism businesses operate in a more ethical way, congruent with the concerns of all stakeholders. We define sustainability marketing as the application of marketing functions, processes and techniques to a destination, resource or offering, which serves the needs of the visitor and stakeholder community today and ensures the opportunities of future visitors and stakeholders to meet their needs in the future. We follow the eighteenth-century cry (often attributed to radical church leaders in the UK from that period) "why should the devil have all the best tunes": we believe that sustainable tourism should and must be marketed if the concept is to make progress. Yet, before going on to explain how sustainability marketing can address issues and offer opportunities to deliver a more sustainable tourism, the context of marketing and sustainability is outlined.

Sustainability marketing in the tourism context

Although marketing has been criticised as fuelling irresponsible consumption, it is important to contextualise marketing as a function of corporate strategy and decision-making. There are two components to this, the extent that sustainability is commensurable with corporate strategy and the ability of marketing to influence corporate decisions. Some critical management scholars point out that

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is poorly aligned to corporate capitalism. Prasad and Holzinger (2013) quote Milton Friedman's position on this: "[T]here is one and only one social responsibility of business—to use its resources to engage in activities designed to increase its profits so long as it stays within the rules of the game, which is to say, engages in open and free competition without deception or fraud" (Friedman, 1970, cited in Prasad & Holzinger, 2013, p. 1915). Prasad and Holzinger (2013) point out that CSR has become embedded within corporate culture and practice. Partly this is driven by legislation that has attempted to encourage firms to address social and environmental considerations alongside profit as part of the triple bottom line approach to firm strategy. In turn, this legislation has been a consequence of international treaties and laws on climate change, which has attempted to set limits on future carbon emissions. However, the critical management studies perspective argues that there is a fundamental tension at the heart of all CSR initiatives that are part of corporate marketing. That is the impossibility of caring for people who are at a great distance from the day to day activities of the firm. Globalisation has brought the distant into the everyday and yet it is perhaps beyond the capabilities of ordinary people to effect real changes for people who are far removed from them. Whilst we may argue that tourism brings these two sets of stakeholders together more readily than in other consumer contexts, the level of interaction and/or connections between them are inevitably limited and at the surface level. It is in this sense that sustainability marketing in a CSR context will undoubtedly fall open to accusations of greenwashing, however laudable the intentions (for more discussion on greenwashing, see Delmas & Cuerel Burbano, 2011, Smith & Font, 2014).

However, firms do not engage in CSR initiatives solely because they are legislated to do so. Much previous research has highlighted the market-based imperative for more sustainable corporate actions, including to meet increasing interest in, and levels of demand for, "green" products and services. On the one hand, there is a consumer push and on the other there is the influence of greater sustainability on firm performance (i.e. profits) or as a means through which they can satisfy some investors, or even justify their existence. Wymer and Polonsky (2015) summarise these competing dimensions underscoring the role of green marketing. They conclude that, whilst there is evidence to suggest that a greening of production can lead to cost-savings or to greater profit through adding value or increasing the competitiveness and attraction of the firm to the market, the profit motive is necessarily limited in scope. Similarly, whilst many firms understand and subscribe to the societal benefits of their actions, it would be contrary to good business sense to adopt a pure sustainable approach, which would impact negatively on profit, and so it is not a priority for firms. In terms of green consumerism, Wymer and Polonsky argue that despite much research on the potential of harnessing consumer's pro-environmental values and preferences, and the potential link to premium pricing, the actual uptake in the mass market has been limited. Greater sustainability would be achieved if consumers could be encouraged to adopt more responsible lifestyles and behaviours (Sheth, Sethia, & Srinivas, 2011). They argue that much more research is required to understand how to assist consumers in improving their decision-making, and how to increase the preference for green products in the mass market rather than in just the green consumer segment (2015, p. 255). While much is being learned about methods to nudge consumers to buy more sustainable tourism products (see, for example, Araña & León, 2016), the environmental psychology and behavioural economics literatures (e.g. Cialdini, 1993) have made little impact on the tourism literature (with the recent exception of Hall, 2014).

Two approaches can be broadly identified in sustainability marketing, the market development and product development approaches. Essentially, market development aims to increase sustainability-driven consumerism by selling products that are very sustainable to a small but growing market, and the efforts are primarily in finding ways to change the behaviour of the consumer so they purposefully purchase more sustainable products. In contrast, the product development approach aims to design and market products that are incrementally more sustainable to the entire market, as we explain below.

The market development approach

Much effort has gone into identifying market segments that have pro-sustainability values, beliefs and behavioural intentions, and finding persuasive methods to convince consumers in general to buy products identified as sustainable specifically because of such characteristics. Researchers are beginning to apply innovative psychological and sociological techniques to improve our understanding about the paradox between what consumer's state as their preferences, attitudes and intentions, and their actual behaviour as tourists, in order to identify market segments that are willing to purchase more sustainable products or behave in a more environmentally friendly way while on holiday, as shown by Babakhani, Ritchie and Dolnicar (2017) in this issue. A great deal of research has suggested that tourists value the environment, would like to act responsibly and favour greater sustainability (Miller, Rathouse, Scarles, Holmes, & Tribe, 2010). Some have suggested that tourists would even be willing to pay higher prices for more sustainable tourism experiences (Dolnicar, Crouch, & Long, 2008). Therefore, sustainable tourism segments could be targeted by tourism operators and destinations. In addition, if consumers are sympathetic to sustainable issues, this suggests that their behaviour could be steered towards more pro-environmental actions, or that the right types of marketing appeals (communications) could be effective in eliciting more sustainable consumption behaviour (Mair & Bergin-Seers, 2010). The mix and type of interventions or messages is important and can dramatically increase (or decrease) the effectiveness of pro-environmental appeals (Baca-Motes, Brown, Gneezy, Keenan, & Nelson, 2013).

Qualitative studies have attempted to understand the complex ethical and moral dilemmas facing those tourists who actively wish to act in a more responsible way. Recent studies have shown that responsibility in tourism is not something that has fixed meanings and definitions. Caruana, Glozer, Crane, and McCabe (2014) found that self-proclaimed responsible tourists thought that "responsibility" could be translated into many different dimensions, including "honest marketing" at one end of a spectrum and deeply immersive cultural and educational exchanges with locals people at the other. Not only does this show that there are varying levels of awareness about what concepts such as sustainability and responsibility mean to consumers, but it highlights the malleability of the ideas and ideals behind them, and demonstrates that consumers can adopt a range of styles and positions on different occasions and in different situations, highlighting the challenges of identifying specifically sustainable market segments. This makes the task of marketers and marketing more complex and calls for a better understanding of the varying "shades" of sustainability in the market.

A sustainability consumerism approach means that firms and social organisations will aim to meet the needs of consumers with relevant pro-environmental or responsible offers, often by highlighting their firm's sustainability based on certain criteria. This approach faces numerous challenges, such as raising awareness of consumers, often at a time when they are not predisposed to it, and convincing them that the alternative offered will fulfil their needs. It assumes that marketing and communication can make sustainability relevant to the decision-making and purchasing behaviour of the consumer. There is much evidence that shows this is weak in tourism, through evidence showing how ecolabels have not reached sufficient market impact (Chong & Verma, 2013) or because they have not been sufficiently market relevant (Rex & Baumann, 2007).

A further strand of related research and practice is that which attempts at influencing consumers to behave more sustainably. This special issue represents a coordinated effort to study the potential for behaviour change towards more sustainable tourism. Truong and Hall stand out for their previous contributions on this topic, and in their paper in this issue, they have studied 14 programmes that they consider to share some behavioural change strategies typical of social marketing. They found that despite the banner of social marketing, most programmes in practice are used to achieve business objectives (eight of the 14 seek to reduce water and energy consumption and improve waste management for example, which reduce operational costs for business), while those with clear altruistic benefits focus on a range of issues including preventing litter, preventing drug and substance abuse, reducing demand for rhino horn, and eating better and exercising more (Truong & Hall, 2017).

This special issue attempts to study in more detail the effectiveness of different social marketing interventions (Villarino & Font, 2015; Wehrli et al., 2014). We have learned so far that sustainability messages that appear overly moralising are off-putting to consumers. Messages based on fear, including campaigns highlighting potential consequences of climate change, have been shown to be less effective than other types of messages, since consumers cannot relate to those messages personally, and they find it difficult to envisage future scenarios. Despite the fact that companies know this, they lack the skills to write differently (Kreps & Monin, 2011). Emphasis needs to be on providing alternative desirable experiences that deflect consumers' attention from buying the most unsustainable products and actions by making them less attractive, particularly in situations where sustainability arguments are seen as a threat to one's freedom as consumer (Bögel, 2015; Font & Hindley, 2016; Petty & Cacioppo, 1986).

Some research has suggested that marketing messages should focus on empowering consumers' own capacities for change in order to be more effective (Van der Linden, 2014). Businesses and destinations are more likely to achieve behaviour change by using messages showing that they are on the same side as the consumer, by putting the emphasis on doing things together for an altruistic or collective benefit. This is because many direct sustainability messages which compel consumers to change their behaviour may backfire, since assertive messages are counterproductive when they are seen as an infringement of the consumer's freedom of choice (Dillard & Shen, 2005; Kronrod, Grinstein, & Wathieu, 2012), particularly when promoting sustainable behaviour (Meneses & Palacio, 2007). Examples of social marketing in tourism show how a range of positively and negatively framed messages, i.e. those highlighting benefits for the consumer and those asking the consumer to not do something bad (Truong & Hall, 2017), can be effective, despite the evidence that negatively framed messages turn off less environmentally conscious consumers (Huang, Cheng, Chuang, & Kuo, 2016). Studies in this issue provide specific examples of how to frame messages in a way to achieve better outcomes and choices, building on a nascent literature in tourism (Hardeman, Font, & Nawijn, 2017; Villarino & Font, 2015; Wehrli et al., 2014).

For example, Knežević Cvelbar, Grün, and Dolnicar (2017) provide a detailed account of different approaches reported in the literature to nudge consumers towards making more sustainable choices including educational approaches, or targeting segments more likely to behave sustainably either because of socio-demographic characteristics or internal factors. Borden, Coles, and Shaw (2017) found that social marketing initiatives requiring time and investment, or that were seen to potentially disrupt the customer experience, were not favoured by accommodation managers, while they generally found providing positive messages to be more acceptable, in three ways: by including some environmental explanation in the initial welcome introduction, by using feedback cards in the bedroom for customers to suggest further actions, and by using child focused messaging in the hope this also influences adults. We then delve deeper to study how interventions informed by specific theoretical constructs affect consumers. Babakhani et al. (2017)) demonstrate the importance of increasing attention and emotional arousal, together with broadening the range of benefits to include social norms, increase response to broader environmental concerns (Schultz, 2001); Mossaz and Coghlan (2017) show the potential of normalising the selection of sustainability suppliers, and focusing on the benefits of the consumer experience. Ponnapureddy, Priskin, Ohnmacht, Vinzenz, and Wirth (2017) find that general trust in others, specific trust in the hotel and the perceived usefulness of the hotel's brochure content are positively and significantly related to intentions to book a sustainable hotel. Babakhani et al. (2017)) found that textual messages fail to attract attention, whereas messages with images of people and the environment fared better.

While we have made much progress, the limitations of a market-led approach to sustainable tourism are numerous. The proportion of travellers that actually purchase sustainable tourism products remains rather limited (Karlsson & Dolnicar, 2016), and, considering the growth of the tourism industry, it is unlikely to be sufficient to have the transformative change that is needed to change the behaviours of tourism suppliers. Consumers that purchase more sustainable products often use this as an opportunity for moral licensing, that is, they will treat themselves to doing something

unsustainable because they have "compensated" for it by doing something sustainable (Cascio & Plant, 2015; Hertwich, 2005). The two actions do not need to be equal in importance or impact, actually they will choose to act based on the "costs" - understood as time, money, convenience or comfort (Diekmann & Preisendörfer, 2003; Stern, 1992). Hence, businesses ought to communicate with customers using explicitly sustainable messages only for the most important actions that they want the customer to undertake, while for other actions, it may be advisable to avoid references to sustainability and frame all suggestions as part of a better holiday experience. Knowing that a product is sustainable is likely to actually increase consumption – for example using more water or energy in ecolodges, or consuming more food and drink with lower calories or alcohol content (Cascio & Plant, 2015; Hertwich, 2005), feeding their sense of sustainable hedonism (Malone, McCabe, & Smith, 2014) and causing a rebound effect. The lack of conclusive evidence confirming the existence of sustainable segments has meant that businesses have dismissed the need to change their products (Dolnicar et al., 2008). Sustainability marketing must offer more, if we are to even aspire to meet any of the Sustainable Development Goals.

The product development approach

The second strand of sustainability marketing, arguably less developed, considers how marketers have a responsibility to design products that are more sustainable, but that are sold to consumers based on other decision-making attributes. One example is the difference between selling travel by train instead of flying, based not on its smaller carbon footprint but on convenience. The purpose here is for businesses to take responsibility to normalise the consumption of products with more sustainable features, through a better understanding of market needs and the marketing skills required to survive in a market-based economy (Grant, 2007). This approach is driven by customer-relevant sustainable product design and places the responsibility for sustainable tourism marketing with the producer and not the market. Many consumers feel it is the responsibility of tour operators and destinations to become more active in ensuring sustainability. As such this approach focuses on finding methods to make sustainable products more appealing to the marketplace, or to introduce sustainability features to the products currently bought by the market, without negatively affecting demand. This requires a greater commitment from suppliers, as the business case cannot often be made internally on the basis of accessing new target markets, and instead the focus is on business resilience and reputational risk management.

This approach moves away from a segmentation approach, and focuses on establishing opportunities for *all* consumers to behave in a more sustainable way, irrespective of their attitudes. Mainstreaming sustainability is achieved by normalising the purchase of more sustainable products. The effort here is placed on product design and it differs from the sustainability consumerism, or market-led approach because it plays down sustainability benefits and emphasises personal benefits to the consumer instead. This approach has the advantage that the product can be continuously improved towards greater sustainability, without having to sacrifice commercialisation of the product until it meets certain standards, reducing fears of claims of greenwashing, and where effort is directed to continuously fine tune the sustainability features of the product in the background, ensuring that sales are maintained (Grant, 2007; Ottman, Stafford, & Hartman, 2006).

Two studies in this special issue help us make the case for a product design approach. Mossaz and Coghlan (2017) developed a framework to study how travel agents choose to speak about sustainability as part of their sales process, that looks at message framing, salience, cognitive effort, the role of affect, projection bias and false consensus. The nuanced account they provide gives a candid understanding of the importance of conservation to tourism professionals' social identity as professional safari travel agents, how selecting suppliers with conservation efforts has been normalised, and yet how these choices are not verbalised as part of the sales process for fear that they will jeopardise a focus on the hedonistic benefits of a unique experience, that just happens to be sustainable. This moral muteness and customer-centred experiential understanding (Kreps & Monin, 2011;

Malone et al., 2014) was elaborated in the study by Font, Elgammal and Lamond (2017) as greenhushing, that is, the deliberate underplaying of sustainability attributes in the marketing process, for fear that consumers will see the company as less competent or the product or service of lower quality. What they have in common is that they report on businesses that are not prepared to wait for the marketplace to demand sustainable products, and have found methods to take the initiative in supplying them as part of a better consumer experience (Font et al. 2017; Mossaz & Coghlan, 2017).

It is worth remembering that unsustainable behaviour is often a by-product of societal changes, and therefore the issues relating to sustainable outcomes need to be understood as part of product redesign. In this special issue, Gössling (2016) analyses the impact that internet-based platforms can have on sustainable tourism. He argues that information technology has further glamorised travel and has fuelled the desire for comparison of travel behaviours as well as being a mechanism for social connectedness, which feeds into identity and social status. This social trend, Gössling argues, feeds into a desire for conspicuous experience consumption, representative of a consumer culture that supports aspirational and acquisitive consumption. This consumer culture leads to increases in carbon footprint and wasteful behaviour in the quest for travel experiences that are readily acquired and showcased online through social media sites. Gössling also reflects on how information technology has brought about opportunities to serve ever more sophisticated segmented markets with diverse sustainable travel choices, yet with limited evidence on the impact these have on the global marketplace to date. Furthermore, digital technology has facilitated a sharing economy of travel, which is a mixed blessing for sustainability: it can increase the utilisation of resources, but also have unintended negative consequences. It is worth noting that sharing economy sites, such as Airbnb, Uber and BlaBlacar have grown faster than sites specifically promoting the sustainability options for travel. Information technology has led to increased market concentration and dominance, and the reputation of travel services is closely aligned with their online ratings and the temptation to overstate, or even fabricate, positive reputation. Technology platforms allow benchmarking that leads to competitive behaviours, which in turn has increased customer expectations on quality and service.

In a similar way, there is potential for different avenues to achieve more sustainable behaviour as a result of changing the way that products are designed and marketed, without presenting the products as sustainable per se. The emphasis here is an effort in making mainstream products slightly more sustainable. This is not marketing sustainable products, but marketing for sustainability benefits. The carbon footprint for travel to a destination is arguably the responsibility of the destination: it is their marketing efforts that will in part influence which markets visit the destination, and therefore the distances travelled, the mix of activities they will engage in, length of stay and so on. Therefore, a tourist destination can, for example, use their marketing efforts to reduce the carbon footprint of tourism, targeting markets for which there are direct flights rather than relying on hubs that increase the carbon footprint, or targeting segments that can access the destination through more environmentally friendly transport methods. This could be applicable to the private sector also, according to Knežević Cvelbar et al. (2017), who suggest that an understanding of the likely environmental footprint of different types of guests may become part of how hosts in networks such as Airbnb select guests, which would however constitute a further case of discrimination (Edelman & Luca, 2014), even if this is arguably for pro-environmental reasons. A tourist board would, therefore, have a new performance indicator for its marketing actions: carbon footprint of transport per visitor per night. Needless to say, we have not found any destination doing this, although Whittlesea and Owen (2012) produced and tested a bespoke tourism footprinting and scenario tool to make this possible for the UK's South West Tourism (a regional marketing agency).

Marketing can help us attract markets that have a more "normal" behaviour, that is, visitors that behave more like residents. Visitors that behave more like residents have a lower demonstration effect, reducing host–guest conflict, and also are more likely to spread their economic impact by buying more local products, and visiting a broader range of locations in the tourist destination rather than the key honeypots that suffer from overcrowding. One method that a tourist destination can use for this is to specifically target repeat visitors. Tourist boards might be reluctant to do this

because part of their remit, and the justification for their existence, is through opening new markets, and also because repeat markets spend less per day. The statistics of tourist destinations on individual markets, however, tell us about expenditure, but not leakages and multiplier effects (and we all know that turnover is vanity whereas profit margins are sanity). A better understanding of how different markets spend and how such spending impacts on the destination may give us a different picture, and this could inform marketing efforts. A new performance indicator for tourist boards could well be the percentage of repeat visitors to the destination. While destinations may well have such data, the repeat market is not seen as a priority: it is often just taken for granted.

Tourist boards and businesses alike can also make tourism more sustainable by reducing geographical and seasonal pressures. Visitors often focus on very specific times and sites, which creates congestion, negative social and environmental impacts that are much higher than would be necessary if distributed more evenly. Congestion also means that the local economy cannot serve the needs of visitors efficiently, an opportunity cost, while the lack of visitors in low season is a second reason of sub-optimal performance. Destinations must change the way they promote themselves and stop relying on iconic attractions that are already saturated, and design packages so that iconic attractions can only be accessed as part of a longer stay. Explicit efforts at destination de-marketing will be more acceptable to consumers if they are found to fit well with the brand's environmental reputation (Armstrong Soule & Reich, 2015) and politically it is rather complex for destinations to do this, while private companies are unlikely to see a benefit in not showing the Eiffel tower in their marketing of Paris, for example, although they can suggest innovative ways of experiencing iconic sites that provide a better experience with a more acceptable impact.

Nudging consumers away from the most unsustainable choices may work better, and both Araña and León (2016) and Hall (2014) provide some promising examples such as the utilisation of attract and dispersal strategies, offering an increasing range of things to do, and marketing the personality of complimentary destinations that can serve different markets. The dispersion of tourism should also be diverting consumers away from peak demand periods in order to distribute demand to create a regular flow of visitors, which can be optimally accommodated. It is still surprising how many destinations seem to market their summer season in their brochures and websites, which is likely to be full anyway, and instead do not pay attention to their shoulder or low seasons. Ski resorts learned a long time ago to promote summer trekking, attractions as different as aquariums and museums are opening at night to provide more intimate experiences, and yet it seems odd that summer destinations have not always learned how to diversify their offer. The "Visit Amsterdam, See Holland" campaign to disperse tourism across the city and to neighbouring towns is a good example running since 2009 (Amsterdam Marketing, 2017), while numerous adventure tour operators are redesigning their tours for animal welfare reasons, and getting creative about providing activities that are both more humane and experiential (see, for example, G Adventures, 2017; TOFTigers, 2017).

Destination management organisations and distribution channels must introduce sustainability requirements in their supply chains, in order to make sustainability a de facto requirement to trade. In the same way that fair trade tea, coffee, cocoa, bananas and other commodities are becoming normalised, the tourism industry must use the lessons learned across other sectors to do the same. From humble beginnings (Schwartz, Tapper, & Font, 2008), companies as different as the largest leisure, travel and tourism company in the world, TUI, and the 1500 employee G Adventures are surveying their suppliers to identify and reward those that meet sustainability standards – both display their achievements in their brochures, but expect customers to buy their products for quality, not sustainability reasons. In mature destinations, with well-developed supply chains, sustainability certification must be the norm, not the exception. A destination cannot market their sustainability efforts with credibility when the majority of its product is not sustainable. Rather than expecting tourists to demand sustainable products, the public sector itself must acknowledge that they are often the largest buyer of catering, conference, event, hotel and transport services, and it is within their power to introduce sustainability criteria, that will then create a snowball effect. The city of Copenhagen is an example of good practice: over 70% of all its hotels are certified as sustainable, 18% of all food sold is

certified as organic, and nearly 80% of all food purchased by the public sector as certified organic (VisitCopenhagen, 2017).

The cost of achieving a low carbon tourism sector by 2030 is estimated at US$11 per person per trip if costs are shared amongst international and domestic arrivals, or US$38 if only international arrivals pay (Scott, Gössling, Hall, and Peeters (2016). This relatively low cost of offsetting carbon emissions, together with the limited uptake of such programmes, begs the question of why the tourism industry relies on voluntary market mechanisms. Clearly raising awareness is likely to achieve some change, as well as showing the credibility of carbon offsetting, as found in tests conducted by Babakhani et al. (2017). But there is also an argument that such voluntary mechanisms are a way of avoiding regulation while also demonstrating the lack of appetite for further intervention by consumers. This is an example of the limits of product design mechanisms for sustainability marketing, in that issues without a clear win–win solution are unlikely to be addressed by businesses or destinations, and carbon suffers from not being a particularly attractive topic to sell to tourists, while absorbing the cost will only happen for the more committed businesses. The UK adventure tour operator Explore (www.explore.co.uk/about-us) is a good example of making a stand in this respect and including it in their price, hence reducing profit margins, because of their belief in taking responsibility.

These are just some further research avenues available to the tourism researcher that require a deeper understanding of the commercial realities of our industry, which in turn has potential to deliver scalable, impactful solutions.

Methods and impact in sustainability marketing

This special issue makes a contribution not only by identifying methods to make sustainable products more attractive and social marketing techniques more persuasive, but also by broadening the range of methods to study the effectiveness of such approaches (Doran & Larsen, 2014). Because of the evidence that environmental intentions are a poor predictor of behaviour (Juvan & Dolnicar, 2014), we must develop different methods to examine sustainability intentions (Dolnicar & Ring, 2014). Process evaluation helps understand what works for whom in what circumstances, rather than simply reporting on decontextualised outcomes. It is by looking into the "black box" of consumer behaviour that allows us to understand specific contextual factors that influence why certain mechanisms achieve desired outcomes in some cases but not in others. What the experimental and mixed methods approaches used in this special issue have in common is in their providing a greater depth of understanding, grounded in psychological theories that also have practical applications.

In this issue, Babakhani et al. (2017) develop communication methods that counteract previous limitations of engagement in carbon offsetting, writing messages to improve the effectiveness, transparency, choice and calculation of carbon offsetting. They test both the attention and activation of the respondents against these messages using psycho-physiological and attitudinal measures. Ponnapureddy et al. (2017) conduct a survey using the hypothetical scenario planning method to test purchase intentions, based on a fictitious 16-page online brochure. Borden et al. (2017) study how social marketing initiatives from small accommodation firms that encourage water efficient behaviour among guests impacts on the experience of those guests. This sequential mixed methods study has a minor qualitative element, studying the behaviours and attitudes of accommodation managers towards water saving initiatives, in order to complement a dominant quantitative part studying the response of guests towards such initiatives. Warren, Becken, & Coghlan (2017) conduct an action research experiment, developing a series of social marketing initiatives and testing their impact on consumer behaviour.

Most of these studies report a certain level of success in identifying methods to change consumer behaviour, and point towards theoretically valid constructs that may be operationalised in a broad range of contexts. Measuring the impact of social interventions is rare: Truong and Hall (2017)found that, besides the small operational savings, the majority of the campaigns studied did not seem to

have a direct business benefit, such as increased purchases, other than vague reputational added value. Despite some rather vague claims about the effects of these programmes on positive behaviour change, actual evidence of effectiveness is rarely available. Truong and Hall (2017) found that results are not attributable, are vaguely generalised or simply not made available. It is also evident that studies tend to be highly context specific, and rarely consider the ways that contextual variables may have influenced results.

Borden et al. (2017) found some willingness to change behaviour in order to save water, but overall the results show that social marketing efforts (eight initiatives and five messages) would be more welcomed when they were supported by incentives and were found to not get in the way of positive guest experience. These incentives were, however, costly and therefore the least preferred initiatives by the accommodation owners. What is not clear at this point is the likely return on investment of different social marketing initiatives, which points the way to potential new lines for research. Warren et al. (2017) test a range of social marketing initiatives and are able to quantify the impact these have on resource consumption, while reporting limited negative impact on the guest experience. And yet despite reporting positive results, they also acknowledge that this type of intervention requires a level of dedication rarely seen in small accommodation owners, and that the positive response from consumers may be, in part, the result of the personal rapport developed between host and guest during the process.

Much further research is needed to provide realistic evaluations of the impact of campaigns on behaviour change, based on the bigger picture of how behaviour was formed or affected (Pawson & Tilley, 1997). Gregory-Smith, Wells, Manika, and McElroy (2017) establish that a thorough understanding of contextual factors can determine the ability of a social marketing project to achieve its outcomes (in this case, through internal communications via email, signage, toolkits, workshops, etc.) and how it can be used as an evaluative tool, and arguably also proactively as a diagnostic tool to reduce risks in project preparation. The study shows how outcomes are the result of multiple layers of decisions and how it is only by recognising the levels of complexity involved that we can fully appreciate the value of any intervention. Using data from interviews with the staff implementing the intervention as well as employees of the heritage tourism organisation involved, Gregory-Smith et al. (2017)) found that a number of contextual issues affected the ability of mechanisms to generate outcomes. For example, the lack of understanding of organisational culture in the implementation of pro-sustainability decisions meant that a blanket approach was taken; and the lack of pro-environmental infrastructure in the heritage properties did not allow certain objectives and initiatives to be translated into specific actions; agency issues of staff empowerment would prevent environmental awareness mechanisms from achieving their desired outcome, and so on.

Further research is needed to understand the conditions under which some of the studies included in this special issue achieved the outcomes reported. A pragmatic research approach should allow us to contextualise these social marketing initiatives, and help us assess their replicability and scalability.

Conclusions

Whilst this special issue represents merely the tip of the iceberg of the challenges facing tourism's sustainability and the role marketing can play in helping to achieve more sustainable outcomes, the articles brought together in this volume represent the cutting edge of research in this field. The research presented demonstrates the breadth of approaches that can be utilised to understand how consumers can be influenced to make more sustainable choices that do not compromise their main motivations, and also how we can mainstream sustainability into the wider tourism business through product design and more persuasive marketing messages. Globally, the industry is now at a pivotal point in its history. The research presented here shows that there are many innovative solutions to sustainability challenges and that there is a growing impetus for the development of more sustainable tourism products that can be marketed successfully. We hope that the range of issues covered,

and the methods developed and applied will provide encouragement across the tourism marketing and sustainability fields to work more closely together in search of common goals for a prosperous, and environmentally responsible industry and marketplace, one that respects the needs of all stakeholders to achieve positive, successful and long-term outcomes, including tourists, residents, the tourism industry and related destination services. This special issue helps enable a platform for such greater cooperation and future research.

Some other wider ranging points need to be made. There is the problem of subject sub-division amongst researchers. An assessment of how best to market the concept of sustainable tourism to tourists, to the commercial world, and to those involved in the governance of tourism, requires many different subject specialists to work together. That is rare in the world of tourism academics. For example, this journal has encouraged papers and special issues on behavioural change. Its two most recent special issues on this subject (Volume 24, Issue 3, 2016 and Volume 21 (7) 2013) had very little discussion about the role of markets and marketing: papers concentrated on other questions, because those issues were promoted and populated by academics who had little experience in marketing. Given the commercial world's belief in marketing to secure tourist behaviour in their favour, that is surprising, but it is reality. This paucity of research into marketing may also reflect the failure of many sustainable tourism academics to work with the tourism industry (Lane, 2009). Higuchi and Yamanaka (2017), however, present a fascinating example of recent success in industry–academic cooperation. And there is a very important form of para-marketing in tourism – the role of travel writers and journalists, who have enormous but un-researched roles in influencing the image of sustainable tourism. McWha, Frost, and Laing (2017) have begun work on aspects of research into that area. Finally, there is a major implementation problem. How can the marketing specialists working in tourism promotion and marketing learn about the critical role of sustainable tourism in the future of the industry and the regions in which it works, and how can we, as researchers, disseminate our findings to them, and their clients?

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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