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ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES TO PROFILE THE CONSUMERS’ ATTITUDE: A LATENT SEGMENTATION APPROACH

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Abstract

During the last three decades, the international debate on environmental issues as sustainability in tourism sector has increased due to the fast growth that this kind of tourism has experienced internationally. From a demand-side perspective recent literature highlighted that consumer fundamental beliefs (e.g., value orientations) are shifting toward a higher degree of post materialism which in turn positively affect consumers’ pro-environmental attitudes and behaviors. Despite this, it could be argued that there is still a need for deeper investigation of the consumer’s attitude towards sustainable tourism especially in regard to specific countries, such as Italy, where very poor research has been published internationally around the topic. Adopting a demand-side perspective, this study was therefore carried out to profile Italian consumers based on their attitude toward environmental and sustainable tourism also considering their socio-demographic characteristics (age, gender, civil status, level of education, occupation and income). To achieve this aim, exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses were used to identify the underpinning dimensions of what is meant by sustainable tourism, and these factors were used to profile the respondent using a latent segmentation approach. Findings reveal that four clusters can be identified (namely: “the absolutes”, “the motivated”, “the intentionals” and “the skepticals”) and that significant differences between these do exist based on socio-demographic characteristics of respondents. Findings provide insights from an under-investigated country (Italy), which is one of the most important sources of the tourism market for European and non-European tourism destinations, thus offering practical recommendations for tourism businesses, policy environmental makers, and destination marketers interested in targeting the Italian tourism demand and/or in promoting further growth of environmental and sustainable tourism.

Key words: attitudes, environment issues, factor analysis, Italian latent segmentation, sustainable tourism

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