

## Review

of the member of the dissertation council for the dissertation of Mahmoud Ibraheam Kotb Saleh on the topic: “Managing tourism resorts through destination social responsibility and information adequacy lenses: Attribution theory perspective”, submitted for the degree of *candidate* of economic sciences (*candidate* of sciences in economics) in scientific speciality 5.2.6. Management

### 1. Relevance of the research topic

The relevance of the research topic is determined, first of all, by the important role of the tourism industry in the world economy. In spite of the fact that tourism was one of the most striking examples of the negative COVID-19 pandemic impact on population and economy, there comes now an understanding that tourism may become one of the engines of economy recovery rather than a burden. Additionally, the major shift to domestic tourism in Russia, partly due to the turbulent economic environment that is forcing to search for internal sources of development, makes it crucial to improve resort management in many potential local destinations. This requires systematic actions of the state primarily focused on stimulating domestic tourism, restoring and developing business ecosystems keeping in balance various interests of the tourism industry stakeholders, from tourists per se and local businesses to regional and federal authorities. In contemporary environment, the issues of resources coordination among the private tourism sector supply chain and government tourism administrative procedures, as well as understanding tourists' needs and behavioral outcomes, should be addressed in close connection to destination social responsibility and supported by information adequacy. These aspects are crucial for improving the destination management and tourist attribution toward tourism destination events.

In this regard, it can be argued that in the dissertation Mahmoud Ibraheam Kotb Saleh set and solved the important aim of justifying the attribution shifting mechanisms in tourism management, namely corporate social responsibility and information adequacy about destination events to help managers bring favorable tourist behavioral responses toward their resorts. The research submitted for defense is relevant and timely.

## **2. Reliability and validity of scientific provisions, conclusions and recommendations formulated in the dissertation**

The validity and reliability of the scientific provisions and conclusions formulated by Mahmoud Ibraheam Kotb Saleh are confirmed by the correct formulation of the research aim and objectives, the use of general scientific methods and relevant theories, including attribution theory, corporate social responsibility theory, transaction cost theory, to develop hypotheses, form arguments and achieve research aim and objectives.

The study shows consistency in the data collection to achieve study reliability and validity. The collected data was properly analyzed using SPSS software to investigate the correlation among variables and constructs by regression analysis and structural equation modeling (SEM) as a multivariate statistical analysis technique. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) performed, and the model validation tested by assessing its discriminant and convergent validity.

The content of the thesis arguments and related ideas presented at a number of the leading international and Russian conferences and published in high-quality international journals allows us to conclude that the research results are sufficiently substantiated.

## **3. Scientific novelty of gained research results**

The scientific novelty of the study is determined by the original approach to the analysis and justifying the attribution shifting mechanisms in tourism management to help managers bring favorable tourist behavioral responses toward their resorts.

The study contributes to tourism management theory in several ways.

- The author introduces the new concept (“locus of personal traits”, LOPT), reflecting the physical and mental abilities that lead tourists to steer (vs. not) events outcomes, as an alternative to the locus of control besides the locus of causality. It helps to reduce confusion while measuring tourists' locus, to avoid the mistake of applying both locus valences (causality and control) simultaneously with the same construct that may vague the expected outcomes when utilizing attribution theory.
- The study adds attribution shifting mechanisms (e.g., tourists' perception of destination corporate social responsibility and destination information adequacy) to manage tourism resorts. The most important is that it is the first time to embed corporate social responsibility theory besides the attribution theory in the tourism

management context. In turn, information adequacy as an attribution shifting mechanism is of high importance to eliminate the information transaction costs of destination management, leading to favorite tendencies to attract, predict, and enhance tourists' experiences.

- The study helps to understand that the attribution shifting mechanisms could be perceived differently depending on the different experience effort valence. This is especially vital to managers as they want to know on whom to focus their marketing and management efforts.
- The study also shows that even if attribution shifting mechanisms exist, tourists underestimate these mechanisms without event stability and controllability. Therefore, it provides an additional attribution theory dimension (stability and controllability) to strengthen the attribution shifting mechanism as managerial tools to maintain the positive outcome of tourists' attribution toward events.

#### **4. Theoretical contribution and practical implications**

The theoretical contribution of the study is that it offers a novel approach to managing international tourism resorts based on the attribution theory supported by other relevant managerial theories, among them the transaction cost theory and the concept of corporate social responsibility as an attribution-shifting mechanism. This study is the first to utilize the attribution theory perspective to personalize managerial and marketing campaigns for different tourists based on their tourism types and demographics from a marketing standpoint. The study therefore provides valuable insights to resort destination managers, allowing them to develop more effective strategies, to achieve positive outcomes and maintain win-win situation for all tourism resort stakeholders (managers, tourism service providers, and tourists).

#### **5. Comments and points for improvement**

Along with the merits of the study, one should mention some points for improvement:

- On the page 5, there is reference to the UNWTO (2019) forecast stating that international arrivals will reach 1.8 billion tourists by 2030. But in 2020 all sectors of the tourism market have been almost completely paralyzed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Many of negative factors that caused the negative development will retain

their impact in the long term. Therefore, the pre-pandemic forecasts were revised, and it would be better to use post-pandemic ones to confirm the topic relevance.

- In the statement that "marketing results from positive consumers' WOM tendencies are nine times more functional than the past marketing and promotional models" (p.24), the accuracy of the figure is questionable. Moreover, the author refers to his own paper (Saleh, 2022) - this means that the result is not confirmed/proved by other independent studies, which does not add validity to the statement.
- In the section 5.2. Practical implications, the fourth one is that "managers who provide services to adventure and leisure tourists should be aware of the significance of the information adequacy factor" (p.80). From our point of view, all managers who provide services to tourists should be aware of the significance of the information adequacy factor. Why the author focuses only on adventure and leisure tourism?
- The quality of the text in the Russian version of the dissertation thesis is not high, the text contains difficult-to-understand phrases, types, and some misused words that may distort or doubt the meaning of quite clear statements posed in the English version. This is especially obvious in the subsection 1.2.2 when it comes to the discussion on the issues of the information adequacy from the transaction cost theory perspective (pp.154-157).

The abovementioned points do not reduce the overall positive assessment of the dissertation which makes a significant contribution to the development of conceptual foundations and practical approaches in tourism management.

## **6. Conclusion on the dissertation compliance with the criteria of the Procedure for Awarding Academic Degrees**

Considering the above, I believe that Mahmoud Ibraheam Kotb Saleh`s dissertation on the topic: "Managing tourism resorts through destination social responsibility and information adequacy lenses: Attribution theory perspective" meets the requirements of speciality 5.2.6. Management.

The dissertation is a scientific qualification work that resolves a scientific problem important for the development of the relevant field of science or provides new science-based technical, technological or other solutions and developments vital for the national development.

No violations of paragraphs 9 and 11 of the Order No.11181/1 as of November 19, 2021 "On the Procedure for Awarding Academic Degrees at St. Petersburg State University" have been detected.

The dissertation meets the criteria of dissertations for the academic degree of candidate of sciences, established by the specified Order. The dissertation is recommended for the defense at St. Petersburg State University.

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