Analysing Accessible Tourism in Religious Destinations: The Case of Lourdes, France

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Accessible tourism and religious tourism are normally treated separately. Even so, curative shrines can be defined as places where these two types of tourism are especially co-habitual. Behaviour of both religious tourists (Battour, Battor, & Bhatti, 2013; Nolan & Nolan, 1992; Rinschede, 1992) and of people with special access needs (Burnett & Baker, 2001; Figueiredo, Eusébio, & Kastenholz, 2012) has been analysed before. However, the behaviour of visitors with special access needs in religious sites has not been analysed yet. This study aims at exploring whether there are differences in motivations and perceived value of tourists with special access needs and those without at these destinations. Findings suggest: (1) there is significant difference in the perception of religious sites and hospitality services between the two groups of the sample; (2) the dimensions of the perceived value are structured differently; (3) there are significant differences in motivations, mostly related to the self, between the two groups; (4) the dimensions of the motivations have different structures between the two groups. Both managerial and theoretical implications are discussed.

Key Words: tourism for all, disability, motivation, perceived value, accessibility

Introduction

Religious tourism and accessible tourism have been treated as two different areas of study. However, there are religious destinations such as curative shrines that specifically attract people with special access needs. This is the case of Lourdes, France, where some people go for healing reasons. In this sense, accessibility and religious tourism are especially co-habitual there and a there is need to address them in this study.

On one hand, accessibility is a basic need in any tourism destination. Adapting products and services for people with special access needs helps in inclusion and in dignifying tourism experiences. This type of tourism is not only focused on people with disabilities but also on other groups of people with special access needs, such as seniors, families with young children, etc. On the other hand, the religious tourism market segment is equally diverse (Raj & Morpeth, 2007). For example, in terms of motivations, people visiting religious destinations range from devoted pilgrims to tourists with secular motivations. Thus, we may think that differences in motivations are also prevalent when comparing people with and without special access needs. Furthermore, we may think that people with special access needs have different perceptions of the destination than people without special access needs

and, consequently, the needs of the two groups must be addressed differently.

Previous literature (Freeman & Selmi, 2009; Ray & Ryder, 2003; Yau, McKercher, & Packer, 2004) highlights the importance of the market with special access needs and its growing potential because of population ageing. However, there is no previous research on exploring this market segment behaviour in religious destinations. The purpose of this study is to know whether they behave so differently that their special access needs must be separately met as it happens in other types of tourism destinations. In particular, the aim of this study is to explore whether there are differences in motivations and perceived value of tourists with special access needs and those without. Comparative quantitative analyses are conducted in order to explore whether differences regarding these two components are discriminant.

The study findings have a series of managerial and theoretical implications. For example, understanding and classifying the motivations of pilgrims and religious tourists can inform tourism management in developing ways to meet the needs of pilgrims and religious tourists on journeys to religious destinations and during their stay at those destinations (Blackwell, 2007). In parallel, exploring the motivations of people

with and without special access needs will also help tourism stakeholders in creating or adapting tourism products and itineraries for them and in meeting their needs. Additionally, knowing more about the perception of accessibility and the destination in general can help in improving destination facilities and services by minimising and eliminating barriers. In summary, after investigating tourists' behaviour in such destinations, tourism stakeholders can optimise their efforts accordingly.

Theoretical Framework

Previous studies have focused on religious tourist behaviour (Battour, Battor, & Bhatti, 2013; Nolan & Nolan, 1992; Rinschede, 1992). However, accessible tourism in religious destinations has not been analysed yet. Accessibility can be an important factor in a religious destination which a large number of people with special access needs visit for many reasons.

Nowadays, visitors to religious sites are very diverse. They range from pilgrims who travel alone, to families, seniors, and people with disabilities. Therefore, even though they have different needs, motivations and behaviours; they consume the same destination at the same time. This fact can be complex when managing tourism. With the purpose of helping tourism destination managers, this article analyses the behaviour of tourists' with special access needs and those without in a religious site. In particular, motivations and perceived value factors are analysed here. First, motivation is defined as the most important force of tourist behaviour (Iso-Ahola, 1982). Second, perceived value is one of the most important measures for marketing professionals as it is linked to marketing strategies such as market segmentation, product differentiation and positioning policies (Gallarza & Saura, 2006). For a destination, exploring perceived value can be useful to gain competitive advantage.

Religious tourist vs. secular tourist motivation

The needs, motivations and expectations of tourists are different from the ones of pilgrims (Nolan & Nolan, 1992). For example, motivations to go to religious destinations range from spiritual sense of belonging among pilgrims to hedonistic reasons among tourists. These motivations are also different depending on the degree of religiousness of visitors, so they can be attracted by pilgrimage, by religious attributes or secular motivations. Furthermore, the proportion of religious pilgrims versus people primarily interested in art, architecture, or history varies from one place to another (Nolan & Nolan, 1992). Consequently, the ratio of religious and secular motivations can vary from one destination to another.

However, there is not a clear dichotomy. Smith (1992) suggests that, in fact, there is a pilgrim-tourism continuum and, depending on personal needs and motivations, many guests fall into the range of intermediate categories. Furthermore, Smith (1992) describes two paths of this continuum. First, people can follow the path to faith and belief, so from the tourist point to the pilgrim point, or they can follow the secular knowledge-based route of Western science.

This is a continuum that is applied to visitors to religious sites in general. However, we may assume it can also be useful to explore the behaviour of visitors with special access needs in these sites, as both faithful and secular individuals with these needs consume the same place at the same time. Consequently, both religious and secular motivations are included in the study for further analyses.

Poria, Butler, & Airey (2003) explore the behaviour of visitors to heritage sites and their relationship with the perception of such sites. In particular, they explore the following motivating factors: desire for emotional involvement, education, enjoyment, and relaxation. Poria *et al.* (2006) deeply explores motivations at heritage sites and suggests that visitors of heritage sites are mainly motivated by purely education or recreational factors. However, the same study defines other types of motivating factors, suggesting that motivations are related to: connection with one's heritage, learning, leisure pursuit, bequeathing to children, and emotional involvement. All these types of motivations regarding heritage sites are taken into consideration in this study.

Particularly, Triantafillidou *et al.* (2010) explore motivations and reasons to travel to the Holy Land and find out that most of the participants of the study are driven by their faith or by strong religious reasons. For example, deep religious beliefs are revealed as motivations for their trip. Olsen (2013) also explores motivations of the religious tourism market with the aim of comparing them according to the type of site people visit (i.e., points, lines, or areas).

Motivations of tourists with special access needs

People with disabilities have the same needs and desires for tourism as others (Yau, McKercher, & Packer, 2004). However, the behaviour of tourists with special access needs is hardly explored in tourism literature (Burnett & Baker, 2001; Figueiredo Eusébio, & Kastenholz, 2012). In particular, studies on motivations or reasons to travel of this market segment are discussed in this section.

Crompton (1979) identified a series of push and pull factors related to socio-psychological motives and cultural motives. The socio-psychological factors are

linked to the tourist themself while cultural factors are influenced by the destination. First, socio-psychological motives (e.g. exploration of self or relaxation) should be analysed in disabled tourists' studies because intrapersonal and interpersonal constraints are specially challenging for them. Therefore, we may think that the motivations linked to themselves and to communication with others can be different between people with disabilities and those without. Second, cultural factors are also included in this study due to the singularity of a religious destination.

Shi, Cole, & Chancellor (2012) use Crompton's (1979) framework to understand motivations to travel of people with mobility impairments. They find that people with mobility impairments and those without share some motivations. However, they identified some unique motives of this group, such as independence, the desire of being in a natural environment, adventure / risk, do it today, and accessibility.

Figueiredo, Eusébio, & Kastenholz (2012) measured the motivations of people with disabilities for participating in leisure activities using the Leisure Motivation Scale (Pelletier *et al.*, 1989). They find that the most relevant motivations among them are linked to the pleasure and satisfaction obtained from the leisure experience.

Tourists with special access needs vs. tourists without special access needs - perceived value

Perceived value can be based on different features, such as price, utility, quality, benefits, worth, etc. It can be defined as the 'consumer's overall assessment of the utility of a product based on perceptions of what is received and what is given' (Zeithaml, 1988). From a managerial point of view, exploring perceived value is important to answer many questions (Woodruff, 1997):

- what exactly do customers' value?

- Of all the things customers value, on which ones should we focus to achieve advantage?

- How well do customers think we deliver that value?

- How will what customers' value change in the future?

In addition, perceived value is a subjective construct (Sánchez *et al.*, 2006). As it is something perceived by customers or visitors of a destination, it varies according to each individual, each culture, and at different times (Sánchez *et al.*, 2006; Woodruff, 1997). In particular, every item of the destination is perceived and evaluated differently by every tourist. In this study, and taking into consideration this subjectivity, we may think that people with special access needs and those without evaluate the attributes of a destination in a

different way. According to this, there is a need to contrast these perceptions and their influences on tourist behaviour.

Specially for people with special access needs, it is important to consider items evaluating accessibility of the destination's attractions and facilities. In this study, items related to the accessibility and availability of several tourism and religion related activities and services within the destination ('accommodation', 'transport', 'hospitality services', 'religious sites', and 'religious activities') are included.

Methodology

Case Study: Lourdes

Lourdes is a religious town in the Midi-Pyrénées region, France. In 1858, Bernadette Soubirous, the first daughter of a miller from Lourdes, saw Marian apparitions in a grotto near Lourdes. She started to dig into the grotto and a natural spring appeared. Nowadays, Lourdes' sacred water is believed to have healing and therapeutic qualities.

Lourdes is a very well-known religious destination with around 8 million pilgrims every year. Lourdes' sanctuary covers a surface area of 52 hectares with 22 places of worship. This offer ranges from basilicas (Basilique Notre Dame, Basilique de l'Immaculée Conception, etc.), to the grotto (Grotte des Aparitions), churches (Église Sainte Bernadette, etc.), a crypt, and the baths.

In 1992, Rinschede analysed the profile of visitors to Lourdes. First, he identified that, in religious tourism, the person travelling alone represents the minority. In the case of Lourdes, the number of large and small groups of organized pilgrims at that moment represented 29%. Regarding the transport used by the visitors, train travel represented about 30%, including special trains for the ill, and automobile transport represented 62%. Other transports used were bus, plane, etc. In terms of gender, Rinschede (1992) found a strong representation of women and, regarding age, those under 25 years of age totalled only 34% and pilgrims over 60 represented 39%. Taking into consideration all these characteristics of Lourdes' demand, it becomes particularly important to analyse the behaviour of people with special access needs at these destinations, as they represent a high proportion of visitors at the site.

Rinschede (1992) also highlighted the seasonality of Lourdes, with high points of Christian pilgrimage related to apparitions and other saints' days. Furthermore, the climatic location of Lourdes is a factor that influences visitor flows. Lourdes has cold winters, so this period of the year is low season. Apart

Table 1: Demographics and sample description.

Variable	Category	Distribution
Gender	Male	201 (38.73%)
	Female	318 (61.27%)
Age	Mean	36.53
	Median	44
Disability	Yes	131 (25.24%)
	No	388 (74.76%)

from climatic factors, other elements of the destination, such as the type of terrain, can be challenging in order to ensure accessibility standards. Thus, exploring accessibility at this destination can also be helpful to face these difficulties.

In spite of all these adversities, Lourdes has evolved from a small site to an international pilgrimage destination. It can be considered a complete tourism destination, with a wide range of facilities and services for the visitors.

Description of the sample

A total of 523 individuals participated in this study. A survey was conducted in Lourdes between 28th of June

Table 2: Sample of people with disabilities.

Variable	Category	Distribution
Degree of disability	Mild	26 (20.47%)
	Moderate	67 (52.76%)
	Severe	34 (26.77%)
Type of disability	Physical	65 (51.18%)
	Sensory	30 (23.62%)
	Cognitive	8 (6.3%)
	Combined	24 (18.9%)
Need assistance	Yes	52 (41.27%)
	No	74 (58.73%)

and 2nd of July 2014. A random sample was used among the people visiting Lourdes. More females than males participated in the study (61.3% vs. 38.7%), corroborating Rinschede's findings (1992). The mean age of the participants was 36.5 years old.

Out of the sample, 131 people (25.2%) had disabilities or a chronic illness, indicating that they have special access needs. As shown in Table 2, more than a half of this group are physically disabled (51.2%), while 30 (23.6%) have sensory disability, 8 (6.3%) have

Table 3: Perceived Value - descriptive statistics and ANOVA tests of people with and without disabilities

Disability		N	Mean	Standard Deviation	p-value
Availability of accommodation	No	378	5.74	1.181	
	Yes	125	5.51	1.389	.080
	Overall	503	5.68	1.238	
Accessibility of accommodation	No	369	5.44	1.288	
	Yes	124	5.21	1.489	.100
	Overall	493	5.38	1.344	
Availability of transport	No	374	5.36	1.568	
	Yes	121	5.36	1.309	.958
	Overall	495	5.36	1.507	
Accessibility of transport	No	374	5.38	1.565	
	Yes	119	5.39	1.403	.966
	Overall	493	5.38	1.522	
Availability of hospitality services (cafes, restaurants, etc.)	No	379	5.79	1.307	
	Yes	122	5.33	1.440	.001*
	Overall	501	5.68	1.354	
Accessibility of hospitality services (cafes, restaurants, etc.)	No	375	5.63	1.359	
	Yes	120	5.18	1.516	.002*
	Overall	495	5.51	1.419	
Availability of religious sites	No	370	6.14	0.989	
	Yes	127	5.87	1.129	.011*
	Overall	497	6.07	1.033	
Accessibility of religious sites	No	371	6.10	1.073	
	Yes	124	5.90	1.088	.064
	Overall	495	6.05	1.078	
Availability of religious activities	No	376	6.21	0.998	
	Yes	127	6.08	1.013	.211
	Overall	503	6.17	1.003	
Accessibility of religious activities	No	379	6.09	1.070	
	Yes	126	5.96	1.031	.217
	Overall	505	6.06	1.063	
					(*p<.05)

Table 4: Dimensions of perceived value among tourists without disabilities.			
	1. Religion	**2. Transport**	**3. Accommodation and Hospitality Services**
Availability of accommodation			.758
Accessibility of accommodation			.725
Availability of transport		.918	
Accessibility of transport		.934	
Availability of hospitality services			.816
Accessibility of hospitality services			.797
Availability of religious sites	.786		
Accessibility of religious sites	.811		
Availability of religious activities	.797		
Accessibility of religious activities	806		

cognitive disabilities, and 24 individuals (18.9%) have more than one type of disability. Regarding the degree of disability, about half of the sample (52.8%) have a moderate degree of disability, followed by severe disabilities (26.8%) and mild disabilities (20.5%).

Survey design and data analysis

First, 10 items on perceived value of the destination are rated using 7 point Likert-type scale where 1 means 'very poor' and 7, 'very good'. Second, participants are asked to what extent a list of 8 motivations contributed to the choice to go to Lourdes. These items are rated using the same scale, 1 meaning 'not contribute very much' and 7 means 'contribute a lot'.

Differences in perceived value and motivations between people with special access needs and those without were explored using analyses of variances (ANOVA tests). SPSS software was used to conduct these analyses. A significance level p-value <.05 was adopted. Second,

exploratory factor analyses (principal components with Varimax rotation) were used to identify the dimensions of perceived value and motivations of the two groups of the sample with the aim of contrasting the structure of these two components of tourist behaviour.

Results

Perceived value

Ten items on perceived value representing the main sectors or activities of the destination were evaluated. Both availability and accessibility of these services and facilities were explored (Table 3). With averages greater than 6 out of 7, availability of religious sites (6.07), accessibility of religious sites (6.05), availability of religious activities (6.17), and availability of religious activities (6.06) are better rated than the other factors.

Table 5: Dimensions of perceived value among tourists with disabilities.				
	1. Religion	**2. Transport**	**3. Accommodation**	**4. Hospitality Services**
Availability of accommodation			.868	
Accessibility of accommodation			.763	
Availability of transport		.772		
Accessibility of transport		.819		
Availability of hospitality services				.918
Accessibility of hospitality services				.893
Availability of religious sites	.685			
Accessibility of religious sites	.794			
Availability of religious activities	.804			
Accessibility of religious activities	.727			

Table 6: Motivations, descriptive statistics and ANOVA tests of people with and without disabilities

Disability		N	Mean	Standard deviation	p-value
To escape from routine	No	379	4.38	2.317	
	Yes	126	4.85	2.128	.040*
	Overall	507	4.51	2.279	
To explore and evaluate myself	No	380	4.78	2.077	
	Yes	121	5.03	1.949	.493
	Overall	503	4.84	2.044	
To relax	No	372	3.76	2.269	
	Yes	125	4.46	2.077	.006*
	Overall	499	3.93	2.241	
To enhance the relationships with family and friends	No	371	4.90	2.054	
	Yes	122	5.36	1.749	.050
	Overall	495	5.01	1.995	
To facilitate social interaction	No	377	4.97	1.971	
	Yes	121	5.27	1.713	.034*
	Overall	499	5.03	1.921	
To feel independent	No	371	3.85	2.361	
	Yes	124	4.45	2.108	.029*
	Overall	497	4.00	2.312	
To experience the spirituality of the place	No	383	5.84	1.507	
	Yes	128	5.95	1.222	.731
	Overall	513	5.87	1.440	
To experience the place	No	380	5.59	1.734	
	Yes	124	6.00	1.256	.029*
	Overall	506	5.70	1.637	

(*p<.05)

Significant differences (p-value<.05) between disabled and non-disabled travellers are found in three factors (i.e. availability of hospitality services, accessibility of hospitality services, and availability of religious sites). People without disabilities have a better perception of these three factors than people with disabilities. For the remaining items, there is not a significant difference between the two groups.

After the ANOVA tests, an Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) is conducted in order to identify the dimensions of perceived value among tourists with and without disabilities and compare them. This EFA results in 3 dimensions among tourists without disabilities, and in 4 dimensions among people with disabilities.

For people without disabilities, the 3 dimensions extracted explain 76.5% of the variance (KMO=.815). The first dimension (Table 4), named 'religion',

includes: availability and accessibility of religious activities and sites. Dimension 2, named 'transport' includes accessibility and availability of transport. Dimension 3, called 'accommodation and hospitality' gathers attributes on availability and accessibility of accommodation and hospitality services. Factor loadings lower than .4 are deleted from the tables in order to facilitate their interpretation.

For people with disabilities, 4 factors are extracted (Table 5). These 4 dimensions explain 85.56% of the variance (KMO=.755). The first dimension, 'religion', and the second dimension, 'transport', include the same items as the ones identified among non-disabled participants. However, accommodation and hospitality services emerge as two discrete factors, while they are one among non-disabled travellers.

Table 7: Dimensions of motivations among tourists without disabilities.

	Dimension	
	1. Socio-psychological / Self and communication	2. Cultural / destination
To escape from routine	.771	
To explore and evaluate myself	.702	
To relax	.786	
To enhance relationships with family and friends	.546	
To facilitate social interaction	.529	
To feel independent	.711	
To experience the spirituality of the place		.878
To experience the place		.760

Table 8: Dimensions of motivations among tourists with disabilities.			
	Dimension		
	1. Socio-psychological / Self	**2. Socio-psychological / communication**	**3. Cultural / desti-nation**
To escape from routine	.885		
To explore and evaluate myself	.604		
To relax	.581		
To enhance relationships with family and friends		.868	
To facilitate social interaction		.785	
To feel independent	.786		
To experience the spirituality of the place			.873
To experience the place			.819

Motivations

In this section, 8 motivations have been rated and compared between the two groups. As stated above, motivations related to the self, to interaction with others, and to the destination features are included in the study. Furthermore, both secular and religious motivations are explored. The most influential motivation to travel to Lourdes among our participants (Table 6) is 'to experience the spirituality of the place'. However, there is no significant difference between the two groups of the sample.

Table 6 shows that there is significant difference between people with and without disabilities in five motivations: 'to escape from routine', 'to relax', 'to facilitate social interaction', 'to feel independent' and 'to experience the place'. All these motivations contribute more to decision to travel to Lourdes among participants with disabilities.

Then, as is done with the structure of perceived value, an Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) is conducted to identify the dimensionality of dimensions within the two groups. Here, 2 dimensions of motivations are detected among tourists without disabilities, and 3 dimensions among people with disabilities.

For people without disabilities, the 2 dimensions extracted explain 59.33% of the variance (KMO=.801). The first dimension (Table 7) includes socio-psychological motives, such as: 'to escape from routine', 'to explore and evaluate myself', 'to relax', 'to enhance relationships with family and friend', 'to facilitate social interaction', and 'to feel independent'. These motivations are both related to the self and to communication with others. Dimension 2 includes cultural motives: 'to experience the spirituality of the place' and 'to experience the place'. Again, factor loadings lower than .4 are deleted from the tables in order to facilitate their interpretation.

For people with disabilities, 3 factors are extracted (Table 8). These 3 dimensions explain 69.18% of the variance (KMO=.687). The dimension on cultural motives, dimension 3, includes the same items as for the non-disabled group. However, socio-psychological motives are divided in two different factors, those related to the self and those related to communication, while they form a single dimension among non-disabled travellers.

Discussion

According to the aim of this study, significant differences in motivations and perceived value of tourists with special access needs and those without are found. Both the investigation on motivations and perceived value can help tourism scholars and practitioners in different ways.

First, in this study, all the items on perceived value are highly rated. Consequently, results suggest that efforts are made in order to meet high standards of accessibility in all the sectors of the destination. Lourdes can be considered a complete tourism destination, with all kinds of services and facilities. In this type of religious destination, where tourism and religious organisations must work together and align strategies and aims, reaching high standards can sometimes be quite challenging. Despite all these constraints and difficulties, according to the results of this study, secular and religious organisations are successful achieving this. Even these positive evaluations, results show that, in general, attributes related to religion are rated better than the secular items, indicating that emphasis is still put on the main assets of the destination. As explained before, one of the main contributions of studying perceived value related to accessibility, in particular, is to improve facilities and services of a destination and eliminate barriers according to the needs of the market of people with special access needs. Taking this into consideration, results suggest that more emphasis must be placed on ensuring accessibility standards in secular services and facilities, in order to reach the levels of accessibility of religious facilities.

Second, as a result of EFA of attributes on perceived value, at least two observations must be considered: the number of dimensions for tourists with and without disabilities is different; accommodation and hospitality services are perceived as one factor by people without disabilities and as two different factors by people with special access needs. Thus, while people without special access needs similarly rate accommodation and hospitality services, people with special access needs consider them differently. This may indicate that people with disability needs may be significantly different in these two sectors compared to those without disabilities. Consequently, when creating inclusive and fully accessible experiences, attention must be specially paid to these two sectors in order to meet these needs. Another implication of studying perceived value is that, when knowing exactly what customers value, tourism stakeholders can focus on that to achieve advantage. For a tourism destination where people with special access needs represent an important market segment such as curative shrines, this advantage can depend on knowing how to meet these needs and on creating or adapting products for them.

Third, as it happens with perceived value, the most influencing motivation to travel to Lourdes among the participants of the study is related to religion (i.e. 'to experience the spirituality of the place'). Once again, study results highlight the importance of these assets at the destination, which are the most important pulling factors that attract visitors to go there.

Fourth, there is a significant difference in the evaluation of motivations between the two groups of the sample. These motivations are: 'to escape from routine', 'to relax', 'to facilitate social interaction', 'to feel independent' and 'to experience the place'. Disabled travellers are more motivated than non-disabled travellers by all these reasons. Most of the motives with significant differences between the two groups are linked to the self and are also socio-psychological. Results of the EFA also suggest that the dimensionality of motivations is different. While people with disabilities consider motivations regarding the self and regarding communication and interaction as two different dimensions, people without disabilities see them as a single dimension. In this sense, while personal characteristics or communication skills are not challenging among non-disabled travellers, they are especially important to be considered separately among disabled visitors. As stated before, one of the main implications of studying motivations is to meet visitors' needs and create or adapt products accordingly.

Taking into consideration that people with special access needs are much more challenged when they travel, once they find a destination where they can feel independent and dignified, they are more attracted to these sites than the other groups of the population. Consequently, we may think that a higher level of motivation to go to these places can be translated into higher levels of satisfaction and loyalty once their needs are met. Previous studies prove that disabled tourists tend to be more loyal to a product or service once they are satisfied with it (Burnett and Baker, 2001). However, further research on satisfaction and loyalty is needed in order to confirm these relationships in a religious site.

Conclusion

In general, the results of this study suggest that tourism stakeholders must take into consideration the differences in behaviour of people with special access needs. In consequence, they may need to create strategies to meet their needs and adapt the destination for them. From a theoretical point of view and given the importance of accessibility in a destination, further studies based on people with special access needs must take into consideration these differences in behaviour. Therefore, they will be able to create tailored products and services for them, and manage destinations with this potential market in mind.

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