

Political Consumerism for Sustainable Tourism: A Review

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Abstract

Over the last decades a substantial and growing societal and academic interest has emerged for the development of sustainable tourism. Scholars have highlighted the contribution of tourism to global environmental change and to local, detrimental social and environmental effects as well as to ways in which tourism contributes to nature conservation. Nevertheless the role of tourist consumers in driving sustainable tourism has remained unconvincing and inconsistent. This chapter reviews the constraints and opportunities of political consumerism for sustainable tourism. The discussion covers stronger pockets and a key weak pocket of political consumerism for sustainable tourism and also highlights inconsistencies in sustainable tourism consumption by drawing on a range of social theory arguments and possible solutions. The chapter concludes with an agenda for future research on this topic.

Keywords

Tourism, sustainability, political consumerism, carbon, inconsistency, home and away gap, social practices

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Introduction

Over the last decades, substantial and growing societal and academic interest has emerged for the development of environmentally sustainable tourism. The United Nations designated 2017 as the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development during which tourism's role was to be promoted in areas such as inclusive and sustainable economic growth, resource efficiency, environmental protection, and climate change. Tourism generates around 10 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) globally; it also accounts for more than one in ten jobs, more than 5 percent of all exports, and 30 percent of service exports, which makes tourism one of the largest industries in the world (Amelung et al., 2016). However, despite the high economic and political gains, the negative social and environmental effects of tourism have been clearly exposed by academics (Gössling, 2002; Ruhanen et al., 2015). For example, Gössling and Peeters (2015) provide a gloomy assessment of the global utilisation of natural resources by tourism, including tourism-related consumption of fossil fuel (and associated CO₂ emissions), fresh water, land, and food. Moreover, it was concluded that resource use associated with tourism may double for water and triple for land use in the period 2010 to 2050. It comes as no surprise that concerns of the problematic relation between tourism and sustainable development are widely shared. According to Hall (2013, p. 1091), "sustainable development, and the response to climate change in particular, has emerged as a central problem for tourism." Key causes for this problem are the global growth in tourist numbers, the increasing distances travelled, and the increasing use of energy-intensive forms of transport, such as aviation and automobility (Gössling & Peeters, 2015; Hall, 2013). However, as argued in this chapter, the slow progress made in the production and consumption of sustainable tourism have not kept pace with other sectors of the economy and are related to a number of wicked social and psychological barriers on the consumption side of sustainable tourism.

Tourism is a complex social phenomenon, or better: a range of social phenomena, in which different (groups of) actors have a stake in and influence the practices of tourism. Such actors can be tourism businesses, industry organisations, governmental agencies, nongovernmental organisations (NGOs), and consumers. Some progress is reported in the literature on the production side of sustainable tourism, for example regarding corporate social responsibility, industry partnerships (Haase et al., 2009; Van Bets et al., 2017), or institutional arrangements for conservation tourism (Buckley, 2010; Lamers et al., 2014). Consumers in particular have a crucial role to play in change processes towards a more sustainable development of tourism. However, progress on the consumption side remains problematic. As in other fields of production and consumption, the tourism market has seen the development of a plethora of ecolabelling initiatives, for example related to accommodations (e.g., Green Key), beaches (e.g., Blue Flag), destinations (e.g., Quality Coast), holiday packages (e.g., Book Different), and aviation (e.g., Flybe's ecolabelling scheme) (Buckley, 2002; Gössling & Buckley, 2016; Klintman, 2012), but the effects of such systems for generating sustainable outcomes remain limited.

The tourism literature widely agrees that consumers' positive attitudes towards sustainable tourism are not reflected in their behaviour or willingness to pay for sustainable tourism services (e.g., Hall et al., 2013; Pulido-Fernandez & Lopez-Sanchez, 2016; Zschiegner & Yan, 2006). Tourism scholars have long identified and discussed the lack of political consumerism for sustainable tourism (e.g., Budeanu, 2007; Hjalager, 2000). For example, Hjalager (1999) related this to the lack of reliable information on sustainable tourism products, the intermittent character or lack of routine in tourism purchases, and the ambiguous consumption styles or lack of clear imitable standards, which means that it is not difficult for a tourist "to slip away with a quite contradictory behaviour" (Hjalager, 1999, p. 5). Political consumerism is defined as "consumer choice of producers and products with the aim to changing objectional institutional and market practices" (Micheletti et al., 2004, p. xiv). The concept foregrounds an enlightened, ethical, and active type of consumer, or consumer group,

that makes purchasing decisions based on political or ethical considerations and uses its purchasing power to change those markets and businesses. Political consumerism in tourism has been sparsely discussed in the tourism literature (Verbeek & Mommaas, 2008), and in a way the same applies to sustainable tourist behaviour (Budeanu, 2007) or the role of tourist consumers in ethical or sustainable tourism.

This chapter reviews the constraints and opportunities for the development of political consumerism in sustainable tourism, including the noncommittal character of tourism activities and the complex and transnational organisation of tourism products. This chapter asks if and why political consumerism fails to take off for sustainable tourism by reviewing the burgeoning literature on the role of tourist consumers in sustainable development. Why is it so difficult to steer, nudge, or influence tourist consumption towards sustainable tourism products? The following sections define relevant concepts, explore the history and constraints, and discuss some stronger pockets as well as a key weak pocket of political consumerism in tourism. The discussion then focuses on several theoretical perspectives on the so-called home and away gap and reach a conclusion.

Political Consumerism and Tourism

The concept of political consumerism highlights how consumers try to exercise political influence regarding the product and the production process through their consumption behaviour (Micheletti, 2003). Political power in this case is exercised by means of the private sector rather than the public sector (Holzer & Sørensen, 2003). First, consumers can express their political preferences by means of boycotts and “buycotts,” that is, consumers holding back on spending money on particular purchases or, conversely, “buying goods with higher environmental, ethical and social standards than conventional goods in order to effect societal changes” (Holzer & Sørensen, 2003, p. 86). Second, through discursive political consumerism, consumers and other groups can also “use communicative actions to take advantage of the market vulnerabilities that have risen in late capitalist market niches to create consumer awareness and change global corporate enterprises” (Micheletti & Stolle, 2008, p. 751). This chapter will focus mostly on the first type.

Political consumerism in tourism of the first kind refers to tourists that actively choose or refuse particular tourism services in order to generate social, environmental, or ethical change. Budeanu (2007) illustrates that there are numerous moments in the tourist experience lifecycle (i.e., pre-trip, trip, and post-trip) when decisions are made with environmental and social implications, such as in choosing a tourism product or destination, modes of accommodation and transport, modes of entertainment and services, and tourist roles. The tourism literature provides numerous examples of cases in which tourists deliberately choose or refuse tourism services or campaigns that influence such decisions. Boycotts in tourism are common and often related to religious differences, political conflicts, civil wars, or authoritarian regimes (Brin, 2006; Moufakkir & Kelly, 2010), for example the decade-long campaign to boycott tourism to Myanmar in the early 2000s (Henderson, 2003; Responsible Tourism, 2015). But also in the sustainable tourism realm tourists choose holiday packages with a lower contribution to greenhouse gas emissions (e.g., Gössling, et al., 2002; Hunter & Shaw, 2007; Patterson et al., 2007; Peeters & Schouten, 2006), environmentally friendly modes of transport at tourism destinations (e.g., bicycle, bus, and train) (Verbeek et al., 2011), destinations or accommodations that could be labelled as conservation tourism (Buckley, 2010; Lamers et al., 2014), volunteer tourism (i.e., voluntourism) projects (Sin, 2009), or use of ethical travel guides (Pattullo & Minelli, 2009).

Political consumerism in tourism of the second kind refers to tourists or tourism organisations that use different types of media to express their concerns with unsustainable or unethical forms or to promote more desirable forms of tourism. An early example of discursive political consumerism is

the longstanding work of the British NGO Tourism Concern. Tourism Concern was established to provide a voice for disempowered groups in the Global South, overwhelmed by the capitalist forces of tourism, through awareness-raising campaigns and education (Barnett, 2008). Nowadays, the emergence of internet, social media, and travel review systems in particular have provided ample possibilities for tourists and tourism organisations to express their opinion or raise concerns regarding tourism products or services (Dippelreiter et al., 2008; Gretzel & Yoo, 2008; Liburd, 2012; Munar, 2012). However, the application of online review systems for sustainable tourism is still limited (with exception of Gonzalez, 2015).

Political consumerism in tourism can be driven based on both public and private virtues (Micheletti, 2003; Ormond, 2014; Verbeek & Mommaas, 2008). Public virtues would apply to tourists who want to consciously consume tourism services that would care for the needs and interests of “distant others” as global citizens without necessarily benefitting ... themselves directly” (Ormond, 2014, p. 2). Meeting ethical and ecological standards are prime examples of such lofty needs and interests, such as biodiversity conservation, a clean environment, fair incomes for staff, and quality education and healthcare for the host communities. Private virtues refer to tourists consuming sustainable and ethically sound tourism services for individual reasons and for one’s family or immediate community because they represent high quality and comfort or a more authentic experience of nature, culture, and everyday life. By purchasing particular services for ethical or political reasons, and not others, or publishing alternative information regarding tourism products and services, tourist consumers or tourism organisations hold power over providers of tourism services, whereby tourism businesses take into account the preferences and interests of green, ethical, and political tourists when formulating their business strategies and developing their services. Tourism service providers do this not only because these tourists are part of their market but also because protests and boycotts impact negatively on their corporate image. Shaping sustainable tourism services can thereby be seen as a process of co-creation in which (groups of) consumers, intermediaries (e.g., tour operators and agents), and providers (e.g., transport companies, accommodations, attractions) take part collectively.

Strong and Weak Pockets of Political Consumerism in Sustainable Tourism

A lot of the work on pro-environmental tourist behaviour consists either of review papers (e.g., Antimova et al., 2012; Budeanu, 2007; Dolnicar et al., 2008; Hall, 2013; Hall et al., 2016), empirical work that focuses on niche tourism products (e.g., conservation tourism, voluntourism), or particular services within the tourism value chain (e.g., air travel, hospitality). This section discusses a selection of these examples with regard to the extent to which public virtues are served. Strong pockets of political consumerism are cases in which consumer choices uphold public virtues, such as environmental conservation or social solidarity, whilst in weak pockets collective interests would be eroded due to private virtues of tourist consumers. The following presentation of some strong pockets of political consumerism in sustainable tourism and a key weak pocket represents a selective reading of the literature.

Some Strong Pockets

As addressed earlier, political consumerism in sustainable tourism can take different empirical forms and shapes. This section briefly discusses four such forms: slow travel, conservation tourism, volunteer tourism, and whale watching.

Firstly, tourism transportation to and from the destination is the main contributor of tourism to climate change (Gössling & Peeters, 2015; UNWTO-UNEP-WMO, 2008). Slow travel is a reaction to fast, high-carbon travel, where travel is more than a means to get from A to B—a profound spatial experience—and a way of expressing the values of slow tourism (Germann Molz, 2009). A useful

study in this regard attempted to identify and conceptualise groups of slow travellers within the tourism market (Dickinson, Lumsdon, & Robbins, 2011). This qualitative study distinguished a group of "hard" slow travellers. These people are intentional low-carbon tourists. They act on their public virtues and, for instance, refuse to use a car or an airplane due to environmental concerns. Thus, in terms of political consumerism, these consumers boycott certain modes of transport to make a statement that corresponds with their beliefs and values in life. Using a quantitative approach, Juvan et al., (2016) distinguished a segment of travellers that they named "struggling seekers," or those having difficulties finding environmentally friendly vacation offers. This segment of tourists would not book their dream vacation if it was environmentally unfriendly. However, it appeared that whilst this segment acknowledged an awareness of the impacts of their travels, they did not experience much control over possibilities to reduce the negative environmental impacts of their travels. According to the study, this segment of low-carbon tourists would benefit most by accessing relevant information so as to increase their sense of control. Travel agents play an important role here as two-thirds of the struggling seekers use travel agents as an information source. Furthermore, this segment does not use social media much but relies more on traditional media. Thus, a key factor in stimulating this segment of intentional low-carbon tourists to travel accordingly is to provide information.

A second form of political consumerism is tourism projects that aim to have an effect on the conservation of nature and the development of local communities. Buckley (2010 p. 2) labelled these new solutions "conservation tourism," which is intended to make "an ecologically significant net positive contribution to the effective conservation of biological diversity." These ecotourism arrangements have led to a variety of projects in both marine and terrestrial settings in which actors take on different roles in generating and sharing the value of nature conservation. For example, in eastern and southern Africa, problems of rural development and biodiversity loss are now tackled by generating value for nature through tourism, in the form of community-based tourism enterprises, private game, conservancies, and conservation enterprises (Lamers et al., 2014; Van Wijk et al., 2015). In these arrangements, wildlife conservation is promoted and managed as an alternative form of land or ocean use, replacing or complementing resource use practices (e.g., agriculture, fishing, mining), without changing customary rights or ownership (Atmodjo et al., 2017; Lamers et al., 2014; Webb & Pertierra, this volume). Through tourism activities and by increasing the involvement of the private sector, economic value is generated and distributed to sustain local livelihoods, to finance conservation actions, and to generate entrepreneurship. Conservation tourism products and arrangements are developed to serve a conscious and affluent tourist consumer who deliberately chooses to visit sites where such public virtues are upheld. Typically, tourist services would be combined with philanthropy, whereby longer-term support from tourists would be generated in the form of networks or funding. Paradoxically, in conservation tourism, as in ecotourism, many consumers will need to trade off local environmental benefits against the impacts caused by their long-haul flight (see next section).

Thirdly, voluntourism is another, and related, growing form of tourism in which travellers do voluntary work to assist development or environmental organisations to aid communities or environmental causes in the places they are visiting (Bargeman et al., 2016). McGehee and Santos (2005) analysed how voluntourism contributes to possible changes in networks, increasing self-efficacy and raising levels of consciousness among participants. Participation in volunteer tourism positively contributes to post-trip social movement activities and support for activism (McGehee & Santos, 2005). Tourist consumers deliberately choose to take part in social movements and act as change agents through their participation in a particular holiday practice (Verbeek & Mommaas, 2008). A current example of such a movement would be the clean-up dives, such as the Dive

Against Debris® programme, organised through diving schools and operators to remove plastics and other forms of marine debris from coral reefs¹.

Fourthly, worldwide whale watching has grown into a popular form of ecotourism (or conservation tourism) with millions of tourists enjoying the experience of viewing and photographing whales in their natural habitat. Whale watching developed during the 1980s during a time when countries were debating the imposition of the whaling moratorium, the International Whaling Commission, after the overexploitation that led to the collapse of many of the world's whale stocks. Now as whale stocks have recovered, the proponents of whale watching are concerned with future possible relaxation of the whaling moratorium or the continuation of commercial whaling by some countries. It is claimed that concerns about whaling are not just aimed at the risk of declining whale stocks but also at the risk of losing market share in the rapidly developing whale-watching industry (Herrera & Hoagland, 2006), particularly in small countries like in Iceland where most whale watchers are international tourists (Parsons & Rawles, 2003). The same mechanism can be identified with other animal rights or welfare cases in which practices of hunting or harvesting wildlife (e.g., seals, wolves) are opposed by conservation organisations or nature-based tourists (Fennell, 2012).

A Key Weak Pocket

The travel to and from the destinations mentioned above by energy-intensive aircrafts or automobiles is often not considered in these papers. Tourists in general, and also if engaged in conservation or volunteer tourism projects, typically display carbon-intensive behaviour whilst holding generally positive attitudes towards behaving in an environmentally friendly manner. This is problematic as travel to and from the destination is the main component of tourism's contribution to climate change (see Gössling & Peeters, 2015; UNWTO-UNEP-WMO, 2008). We, and with us many others (e.g., Barr et al., 2011; Cohen et al., 2013), argue that air travel forms a key blind spot and weak pocket of political consumerism for sustainable tourism. Consumers in general and tourists in particular make individual decisions that are not beneficial for our collective environmental interests. Price and time availability are widely identified as key factors in holiday decision-making (Budeanu, 2007; Sirakaya & Woodside, 2005), whilst the environment is ranked lowest in terms of choices to make when booking a holiday trip (Eijgelaar et al., 2016). Tourist consumers often intend to make pro-environmental decisions with regards to their holiday behaviour, but they mostly fail to do so eventually (Juvan & Dolnicar, 2014). In a study comparing the consideration of climate change by air travellers home and away, Cohen et al. (2013) found that there was very little evidence for consistency between these two contexts. "More common was the tendency to subject tourism settings to less stringent, or even to consider them as exempt from, climate concern" (Cohen et al., 2013, p. 994). This gap between intention and behaviour is widely acknowledged within the tourism literature (e.g., Antimova et al., 2012; Gössling et al., 2012) and beyond (e.g., Kollmuss & Agyeman, 2002). An early review of literature on the topic was conducted by Dolnicar, Crouch, & Long (2008) who reviewed twenty-nine papers in total. These authors acknowledged the fact that there was little consensus at the time of who exactly these low-carbon tourists ("environment-friendly tourists" in their words) were. Their analysis uncovered that most work up to that point in time focused on ecotourism and thus direct effects of tourism on nature at the destination only, including factors such as protection of nature, learning about nature, and understanding nature. Along similar lines, a more recent study on sustainable behaviours of backpackers revealed that sustainability is of low concern to backpackers (Iaquinto, 2015). However, backpackers do practice environmental sustainability via reduced consumption and waste, albeit mostly unintentionally.

Explaining Inconsistencies in Sustainable Tourist Behaviour

The examples presented above reflect the inconsistencies with regard to sustainable tourist behaviour. For two decades tourism scholars have wondered about the barriers that cause the gaps and inconsistencies in tourism consumption and ways to overcome these barriers. This section discusses these inconsistencies by presenting arguments and solutions from different social theory perspectives used in the literature.

Complexity and Fragmentation

First, as a global industry, tourism is notoriously fragmented and diverse, consisting of a variety of primary (e.g., accommodations, transportation, attractions) and intermediary (e.g., tour operators, online booking platforms) segments (Amelung et al., 2016). Members of the tourism industry originate from the public, private, and not-for-profit realms, with substantial variations within each. Private enterprises, for example, can range from multinational corporations to family-owned and -operated companies. The continuing emergence of the sharing economy (think of Airbnb and Uber) has multiplied the number of stakeholders active on the supply side. As an activity, tourism patterns and impacts emerge from the visits of billions of international and domestic tourists to countless destinations. Hjalager (1999) reviewed the potential role of a range of organisational forms in tourism that could promote political consumerism, such as consumer associations, conservation, environment, or social justice-focused NGOs, and self-regulatory business organisations, but laments the actual steps undertaken to provide reliable information, incentives, or standards. In addition, Klintman (2012) has analysed the challenges of developing global standards and criteria for sustainable tourism certification schemes. He argues that the specific context and bias of many local and regional tourism certification schemes and the reliance on countless small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) makes it challenging to build trust among tourism actors in both the Global North and South (Klintman, 2012).

Intention and Behaviour

Secondly, as seen in other sectors, there is a notorious gap recognised in tourism literature between intention and actual behaviours of tourists and of tour operators (Antimova et al. 2012; Budeanu, 2007; Cohen et al., 2013; Hjalager, 1999). For example, in relation to the weak pocket presented above, a dissonance is reported between the growing awareness among tourist consumers of their contribution to climate change and actual changes, particularly in the consumption of long-haul flights, that would mitigate the emission of greenhouse gases (Cohen et al., 2011; Gossling et al., 2010; Miller et al., 2010). In other words, when it comes to political consumerism for environmentally sustainable products, the tourism sector is considered to be faced with considerable social and psychological barriers and therefore lags compared with other domains of consumption.

Psychological work tends to address issues related to discrepancies between intention and behaviour (e.g., Juvan & Dolnicar, 2014). Such studies often attempt to explain why tourists who hold pro-environmental or sustainable attitudes and who are aware of environmental effects do not act in accordance with these values. Psychological explanations for this gap between intention and behaviour are the theories of cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957) and construal-level theory of psychological distance (Trope & Liberman, 2010). Construal-level theory hypothesises that experiences are represented at different levels of mental abstraction. More distant choices are referred to as high-level construal, whereas more proximate choices are referred to as low-level construal. Psychological distance can be delineated into four different types: social, spatial, temporal, and hypothetical. This suggests that pro-environmental tourists could still be making unsustainable choices as they would consider climate change to be a psychologically distant phenomenon. Tourists, as consumers in general, could well be wondering whether effects of climate

change may occur anytime soon (temporal and hypothetical distance), that effects may not occur where they live or go on holiday (spatial distance), and may thus not be affecting them but others whom they do not know personally (social distance). Making such an unsustainable choice whilst having holiday pro-environmental attitudes, however, may result in cognitive dissonance. This dissonance then triggers feelings of guilt among tourists (e.g., Cohen et al., 2011) and in order to resolve this dissonance, tourists would adjust their behaviours accordingly, or so the theory goes. In practice, most tourists do not change their behaviour, possibly because the feelings of guilt are not strong enough (see Van Dam & De Jonge, 2015).

Providing clear and reliable information for tourist consumers is widely seen as a key way to raise awareness, change attitudes, and stimulate tourist consumers towards sustainable options (e.g., Budeanu, 2007; Hjalager, 1999). Various types of informational mechanisms are suggested, predominantly ecolabels, but also corporate social responsibility reporting (Budeanu, 2007). The effectiveness of ecolabels in tourism are increasingly considered to be limited to specific niche markets (Karlsson & Dolnicar, 2016), where particularly conscious consumer groups can be targeted. For example, recent work on carbon labelling to stimulate tourist consumers to choose climate-friendly transportation options suggests that the communication strategies used in existing labels are not optimal. Namely, information on the contribution of trips to climate change is not made visible during the spatiotemporal setting of booking (Eijgelaar et al., 2016), unsustainable choices are not labelled negatively (Van Dam & De Jonge, 2015), and communication in general does not appeal to private virtues (Hardeman et al., 2017). These insights could be used to make carbon labelling in tourism more effective, but they currently seem to present a step too far for tour operators because of their prioritising of sales and their strategic position in the value chain.

Home and Away

Thirdly, as mentioned before, the tourism and travel sector is known for lagging behind with regards to pro-environmental behaviour and ethical choices of tourists. This position of the tourism and travel sector has been coined and discussed by several authors as the home and away gap (Aday & Phelan, 2013; Barr et al., 2011; Cohen et al., 2013). The home and away gap identifies the inconsistencies between environmentally conscious practices of consumers in their everyday lives and whilst travelling. Early sociological explanations for the inconsistencies between home and away regard tourism as an escape from ordinary modern life. Tourism was seen as a functionalistic process in which people engage in extraordinary experiences (Cohen et al., 2013) to restore and “recreate” themselves so they are then able to return and take on their roles in society. Tourism is “essentially a temporary reversal of everyday activities—it is a no-work, no-care ... situation” (Cohen, 1979, p. 181). Inspired by Turner’s (1982) notion of liminality, tourism is seen as a temporary separation from everyday activities, social norms, and regulations, while taking advantage of the relative anonymity and freedom from one’s community. This early sociological theory of tourism aligns well with the observed differences between home and away regarding sustainable tourism consumption behaviour (Barr et al., 2011), as it allows for a temporary “carnavalesque” deviation while away, in order to return to more sustainable behaviour at home.

More recent sociological thinking tends to see tourist behaviour as performed in distinct contexts and as integrated in everyday practices and mobilities (e.g., Edensor, 2001; Franklin & Crang, 2001; Urry, 2007). Carbon-intensive tourism is seen not as a temporary deviation, represented by the single annual summer holiday, but as part of everyday life in which dwelling, commuting, business travel, tourism, and leisure activities are mixed on a more regular basis. These behaviours are viewed as performed and contextually dependent, and it is questioned whether behaviours would have to be consistent across different contexts (Bell, 2008; Cohen et al., 2013). The use of a performativity perspective is a longstanding and relevant tradition in sociological tourism studies

(e.g., Edensor, 2001; MacCannell, 1976), based on the work of Erving Goffman. By looking at the contexts in which tourism is performed and directed, one recognises that individuals perform various roles and that identities are fragmented dependent on these contexts. Instead of seeing one's identity as a consistent whole, individuals may have several identities. From a performativity perspective, dissonance between intention and behaviour, or home and away, are "easily reconcilable because consistency is not presumed from the start" (Cohen et al., 2013, p. 985).

Barr et al. (2011, p. 1243) state that the spatiotemporal contexts of tourism do not appear to be "appropriate sites in which to be environmentally conscious." In other words, pro-environmental behaviour in one setting, for example dwelling and consuming at home, does only sparsely "spill over" into similar levels of commitment in other sites of consumption" (Barr et al., 2011, p. 1242), such as while touring and travelling (e.g., De Young, 2000). Further research would be needed to explore the validity of this claim. For example, would it not make sense to assume that practices that are performed regularly, both home and away, such as eating out or showering, share many resemblances? Moreover, it could be argued that the different contexts of home and away could also be used as opportunities to expose consumers to innovative and sustainable technologies that they may adopt in their everyday lives or households, for example water- and energy-saving appliances in hotel rooms or low-emission vehicles in car hire. The tourism setting could provide opportunities for tourists to try out, experiment, or learn about behaviours or technologies that could be used in political consumerist activities in the domestic setting. However, the effectiveness of these spillover strategies have not been studied or applied much in tourism.

Contexts and Practices

Building on the performativity tradition, practice theories are increasingly recognised as a relevant sociological perspective in studies of sustainable tourism production and consumption (Aday & Phelan, 2013; Barr et al., 2011; Oosterveer et al., this volume; Hall, 2013; Lamers et al., 2017; Verbeek & Mommaas, 2008). Social practices can be defined as: "a routinised type of behaviour which consist of several elements, interconnected to one other: forms of bodily activities, forms of mental activities, 'things' and their use, a background knowledge in the form of understanding, know-how, states of emotion and motivational knowledge" (Reckwitz, 2002, p. 249). Proponents of practice theories argue that social practices provide a more fitting unit of analysis to capture the interplay between agency (e.g., lifestyles) and structure (e.g., infrastructures and systems of provision) with its own distinct characteristics. Shove, Pantzar, and Watson (2012) provide a simple conceptual framework for identifying and characterising social practices, as constituted by combining three main elements: "materials" (e.g., bodies, things, technologies, and tangible physical entities), "competences" (e.g., skills, know-how, techniques), and "meanings" (e.g., symbolic meanings, ideas, and aspirations). Similar to the performativity perspective, practice theories allow for inconsistency due to the contextualised setting of behaviours in tourism, but it also draws attention to the socio-material constitution of this setting and the identities expressed or the meanings derived. For example, from a social practices perspective, installing solar panels (see Kloppenburg & van Vliet, this volume) and undertaking a long-haul flight to be a volunteer can both contribute to a particular, consistent lifestyle. In contrast to the psychological theories mentioned earlier, tourist behaviours are not always seen as individual and intentional but more as collective (i.e., involving other humans as well as nonhuman entities) and routinized. Moreover, due to the focus on bodily behaviours (e.g., doing) in addition to the cognitivist arguments (e.g., awareness, attitude), informational sources, such as ecolabels, are seen as one of many elements playing a role in tourism consumption contexts and practices.

It has been argued that contextualised analyses of the socio-material setting, the lifestyles associated with and routinized character of tourist consumption practices, and the relation with

wider social practices are needed to potentially change tourism consumption (see also Lamers et al., 2017; Verbeek & Mommaas, 2008) or stimulate political consumerism for sustainable tourism. Practice theories are particularly useful for undertaking explorative research on tourism contexts as an opportunity for experimenting with sustainable technologies (mentioned in the previous section) or research into understanding the role of carbon labelling as one of many elements in tourism purchasing practices. According to Verbeek and Mommaas (2008), to have an effect on their travelling behaviour, boycotts of environmentally damaging transport options, or boycotts of sustainable tourism innovations, need to be embedded in travellers' lifestyles and routines. Bargeman and Van der Poel (2006) also emphasise the role of routines in people's holiday practices and concluded that people show routine behaviour in both their transport mode, length of stay, accommodation type, and travelling companion. The way people look for holiday possibilities and arrange their holidays also shows repetitive patterns of behaviour. For example, tourists who routinely choose to arrange their holiday through a tour operator are able to relate to carbon labels or climate compensation schemes offered to them by tour operators as part of holiday package deals. Finally, the debate on the consistencies in consumption behaviour while at home or away calls for systematic comparison between, and assessment of, tourism consumption practices and wider social practices.

Conclusion

Over the last decades a substantial and growing societal and academic interest has emerged for the development of sustainable tourism. Scholars have highlighted the contribution of tourism to global environmental change and local detrimental social and environmental effects, as well as to ways in which tourism contributes to nature conservation. Nevertheless the role of political consumers in driving sustainable tourism has remained unconvincing and inconsistent. This chapter aimed to review the status of political consumerism for sustainable tourism, particularly to understand if and why tourism is lagging behind with regard to sustainable consumption.

The discussion presented some stronger pockets and a key weak pocket of political consumerism for sustainable tourism to show that the strong pockets of political consumerism, such as slow travel, conservation tourism, and voluntourism, are dominated by forms of boycott, that is, deliberate choices for particular products or services that uphold public virtues, like environmental or social sustainability. Cases of boycotts for reasons of environmental sustainability are more difficult to find, with exception to animal rights or welfare cases in which practices of hunting or harvesting wildlife (e.g., whaling, sealing) are opposed by conservation organisations or nature-based tourists. Of course, generally speaking, calls for tourism boycotts are common, but they are often applied to other political reasons than sustainability such as religion, conflict, or authoritarian regimes.

The key weak pocket of energy-intensive forms of transportation, like air travel, indicates that generally the commitment of tourist consumers for sustainable tourism products and services does not yet include the mobility component. The chapter argues that this leads to a key inconsistency in political consumerism for sustainable tourism, such as the tendency of tourists to relate to public virtues (like environmental and social sustainability) at the destination but to ignore the global impact of their transportation. This inconsistency is discussed in the light of different theoretical perspectives used in the literature, including complexity and fragmentation, the attitude-behaviour gap, the home-away gap, and the contextualised approach of social practice theories. It is argued that the performativity perspective and practice theories provide a promising way to analyse tourist consumption by taking into account spatial-temporal contexts, the socio-material setting, lifestyles, and the routinized character of tourist consumption.

Further research would be needed to explore the extent to which tourism is lagging in the field of sustainable consumption and political consumerism. To what extent is tourism really lagging behind when compared to other domains of consumption? To what extent is there evidence for the presumed gap between home and away? In this regard the chapter calls for a systematic comparison between, and assessment of, tourism consumption practices and wider social practices. Also, what is the potential support for boycotts and buycotts among slow travel, conservation tourism, and voluntourism-related consumer organisations? Especially slow travellers would be expected to favour boycotts, as their type of travel does not idealise the destination but rather focuses on the process of travel itself. The chapter further calls for research on the potential to use tourism and hospitality settings as a spillover strategy or as an opportunity to expose consumers to innovative and sustainable technologies that they may adopt in their everyday lives or households. Finally, a practice-based perspective on the role of carbon, or other forms of ecolabelling, as one of many elements in tourism purchasing practices could provide much insight in the effectiveness of such informational governance instruments for sustainable tourism.

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1 For more information regarding such projects see:
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