

Tourists are a flock of sheep!

Herd Behaviour in purchasing tourism services

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ABSTRACT. Previous literature highlights the importance of informational cascades in affecting many decision-making processes. When products are experience goods and quality is affected by customers' imperfect information, some signals are perceived as indicators of quality and herd behaviour may occur. This study examines a tourist context, where several services and commodities, composing the tourist product, are offered by a plethora of firms, whose information on quality is not publicly shared. In this context, cues, such as the number of persons seated in alternative restaurants or, specularly, the fraction of free seats, frequently influence consumer decision processes. In several similar situations, the actions of other tourists influence the choices of individuals more effectively than guides or experts' advice. This study also suggests possible recommendations for private providers and the public sector in order to improve the diffusion of quality information and enhance the efficiency of tourist selection process. As a result, tourist firms could strategically use cues or the power of crowds to drive tourist purchasing selection process.

KEYWORDS: herd behaviour; tourist selection process

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