

Integrating Personality Traits and Travel Motivations for Enhanced Small and Medium-sized Tourism Enterprises (SMEs) Strategies: A Case Study of Cumbria, United Kingdom

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Abstract : The tourism sector is mainly comprised of small and medium-sized tourism enterprises (SMEs), representing approximately 80% of global businesses in this field. These entities require focused attention and support to address challenges, ensuring their competitiveness and relevance in a dynamic industry characterized by continuously changing customer preferences. To address these challenges, it becomes imperative to consider not only socio-demographic factors but also delve into the intricate interplay of psychological elements influencing consumer behavior. This study investigates the impact of personality traits and travel motivations on visitor activities in Cumbria, United Kingdom, an iconic region marked by UNESCO World Heritage Sites, including The Lake District National Park and Hadrian's Wall. With a £4.1 billion tourism industry primarily driven by SMEs, Cumbria serves as an ideal setting for examining the relationship between tourist psychology and activities. Employing the Big Five personality model and the Travel Career Pattern motivation theory, this study aims to explain the relationship between psychological factors and tourist activities. The study further explores SME perspectives on personality-based market segmentation, providing strategic insights into addressing evolving tourist preferences. This pioneering mixed-methods study integrates quantitative data from 330 visitor surveys, subsequently complemented by qualitative insights from tourism SME representatives. The findings unveil that socio-demographic factors do not exhibit statistically significant variations in the activities pursued by visitors in Cumbria. However, significant correlations emerge between personality traits and motivations with preferred visitor activities. Open-minded tourists gravitate towards events and cultural activities, while Conscientious individuals favor cultural pursuits. Extraverted tourists lean towards adventurous, recreational, and wellness activities, while Agreeable personalities opt for lake cruises. Interestingly, a contrasting trend emerges as Extraversion increases, leading to a decrease in interest in cultural activities. Similarly, heightened Agreeableness corresponds to a decrease in interest in adventurous activities. Furthermore, travel motivations, including nostalgia and building relationships, drive event participation, while self-improvement and novelty-seeking lead to adventurous activities. Additionally, qualitative insights from tourism SME representatives underscore the value of targeted messaging aligned with visitor personalities for enhancing loyalty and experiences. This study contributes significantly to scholarship through its novel framework, integrating tourist psychology with activities and industry perspectives. The proposed conceptual model holds substantial practical implications for SMEs to formulate personalized offerings, optimize marketing, and strategically allocate resources tailored to tourist personalities. While the focus is on Cumbria, the methodology's universal applicability offers valuable insights for destinations globally seeking a competitive advantage. Future research addressing scale reliability and geographic specificity limitations can further advance knowledge on this critical relationship between visitor psychology, individual preferences, and industry imperatives. Moreover, by extending the investigation to other districts, future studies could draw comparisons and contrasts in the results, providing a more nuanced understanding of the factors influencing visitor psychology and preferences.

Keywords : personality trait, SME, tourist behaviour, tourist motivation, visitor activity

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