

Tourism and Intercultural Communication and Innovations

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Edited by

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PART I

CHAPTER ONE

REFLECTIONS ON THE CHALLENGES FOR THE TOURISM INDUSTRY IN A DYNAMICALLY CHANGING GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT

MARIYA STANKOVA

Abstract

Within the current work are suggested some arguments on those processes, flowing with high dynamics in the global economic environment, which are reflecting on the industry of tourism. Undoubtedly, they have to be known, predicted, and ruled as a part of the conceptual frame of strategic development. Accepting the tourism industry as a complicated phenomenon with a growing importance, the examination and analysis of the relevant processes in this case are framed on the basis of a holistic approach. This approach includes a macroeconomic analysis, directed at determining organisational boundaries, the movement of tourist streams, and their economic dimensions; a geographic analysis, ranging over the processes of dynamic territorial systems and demographic changes together with their complex effects on the environment; and a sociological and psychological study, exploring the level of mutuality between the tourism and global economic, social, and cultural transformations. In conclusion, it is noted that the influence of changes in the global environment through tourism multiplies and leads to the destruction of traditional values and standards, changes in the way of life of big communities, and in general leads to the permanent alteration of a population's behaviour in those countries opened for tourism, as well as that of the users themselves.

Keywords: tourism, transformations, challenges, global issues

Introduction

Since 2001, scientific and global attention has been concentrated on the global issues affecting both the interests of particular countries and the human race as a whole. Assigned to these issues are: determination of a lasting peace on Earth and eliminating the sources of international tension, preservation of the environment, prevention of natural disasters and ailments that are hazardous to health, rational usage of the natural resources and provision of the needs of food and energy, and developing the physical and spiritual power of the human. All these issues have a huge importance not only for the socioeconomic and cultural development of the individual countries, but for the progress of the human civilization in general. It is obvious that, in perspective, the global changes will become even more meaningful, exerting influence on all aspects of people's lives. Thus, in its aggregation there are inevitable projections onto the tourism industry, where none of the tourist destinations can be fully protected from the different challenges and threats. Likewise, through tourism, they provoke change in the way of life, as well as lead to permanent changes in the population behaviour of those countries opened for tourists, and of the users themselves.

Review of the Literature Based on the Topic

A review of the specialised studies in tourism shows that, in an attempt to analyse the topic of tourism's global issues and effects, leading authors give many alternatives without putting an end to the matter. Admitting the problem, during the period 1978–2005 and in the current moment, many tourism researchers offer different points of view. Ritchie (2004), for an example, offers a post-disciplinary approach, to which the current theme is holding on, accepting that understanding tourism management and tourist destinations in conditions of global transformation is possible only by knowing the available works, good practices, and the activities of effects in their previous cases. In regard to this, the current research is based on a macroeconomic analysis directed at the establishment of the organisational frames and movement of the tourist flow and their economic dimensions; a geographic analysis, including dynamic processes of the territorial systems and demographic changes, together with their complex effect on the environment; and a sociological and psychological study, examining the level of mutuality between tourism and global economic, social, and cultural transformation. The research of Bulgarian and foreign authors is examined, among which are works by Ribov (2017), Marinov (2011),

Neshkov (2012), Mileva (2016), Dimitrov et al. (2018), and Goeldner et al. (2000), as well as Porter, Barlett, Kotler, Brown, Dirlav, Zorin, Kabushkin, Kvertalny, Krivoruchko, and Krivoruchko (Devadze, Prokopenko, and Zhuravka 2018). The research, however, has a definite restriction – despite the orientation of the newest studies in the field of tourism to manage the changes, challenges, and threats through a proactive and strategic approach, it turns out that there is not enough specialised research which supposes a complex approach to knowing, restricting, and managing in the field of tourism and tourist destinations.

Methodology

The present study uses methods such as the analysis of literature sources on the subject, a logical method of research in order to draw judgements from objective realities, and synthesis, situational analysis, and observation. As the study focuses on the changing global environment and the tourist industry, it takes the view that, in the conditions of dynamic changes, a new management concept is needed as a strategic framework which is well planned, financially secure, and understood as a constant focus of development, as well as a permanent process in the economic and social life of local communities, for the direct and indirect consequences to be overcome.

Discussion on the Topic

From the review of specialised literature sources based on the subject, it is determined that today's peculiarities in economic and political development (including the tourism) are due to technical innovation and the formation of a new global community, realised during the previous two centuries. It is a fact that for a significant period of time in the Western European and North American countries market economic relations have developed, while in the Eastern World the principles of new economy are applied. With the stigmatization of the socialistic doctrine at the end of the 1980s, the principles of the market economy were imposed as a world paradigm. Of course, the merits of those kind of economy are well known and proven in history (Димитров 2009; ХЪНТИНГЪН 1999; Lewin 1993), although there are serious disadvantages such as a limited solvent market, labiality of the economic growth, and the unpredictability of changes in the economic conjuncture. Together, they provoke such things as overproduction crises, bankruptcies, delays of economic growth, lowering of population life levels, social explosions, and the destruction of

commodity stock – nothing but negative consequences, designated as market risks, related to the lability and insufficient prognostication of the funds, financial credit, and commodity stocks. Not without importance are the effects of the so-called politics of “strategy for a state support” or “strategy for poverty reduction” carried out by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, developed for poorer countries, comprising four steps: privatization, independent salvation of the country’s economics by capital market liberalisation so that the investment funds can come and go from the country freely (Паласт 2001), market price formation (or increasing foodstuffs’ price, water and energy carriers), and free trade (Стиглиц 2011). In most of the established examples, the forced policy provokes political and economic crises for the corresponding countries, which are connected with social tension and ecological loads, with and irreversible consequences. As Stiglitz stated in 2011, the troubled countries from the Eurozone will not be able to keep their debts under control without the recovery of economic growth. Threats remain, and 2015 was marked by the Greek crisis and the New Course in Russian policy. Thereby, the heavy economic situation and political changes in Greece are shown as direct threats to tourism growth, such as the Greek government’s decision to raise hotel accommodation VAT from 6.5% to 13%, which was likely to worsen the country’s competitive power as a destination, following which tourists would be more likely to go to Turkey and Croatia.

In this regard, changes in the political situation undoubtedly cause effects on the industry of tourism, and it can even be accepted that they “determine” its growth, in the first place because legislation is defined to a great extent by the existing political position. The economic powers are another important component with a multilateral influence on the decisions taken in tourist destinations and those taken by the tourists. Changes in the general condition of economies follow the general model of business cycles, which have an influence on and suffer from supply and demand, purchasing power, the desire for purchasing, and consumer expenditure’s intensity level of competition. That is the reason why the tourist destination needs information and to understand an economic power’s acts. On the other hand, the quality of the environment – both the natural and that created by humans – is essential for tourism. The determination of the ecological and natural resource restrictions has a huge importance for the tourist industry. Their act has a direct relation to settling the possibilities for a steady control of tourism in general, and the tourist destinations in particular (Станкова 2010). It can be argued that, in

the contemporary conditions, industry's dependence on ecological restrictions parallels the growing importance of steady practices.

Identifying the basic environmental restrictions of tourist destinations allows for the creation of five major groups (see Table 1.1 below).

Table 1.1. Major restrictions for tourist destinations

Typology of the environmental restriction	Characteristic Features
Environmental - restrictions resulting from physical effects - restrictions resulting from <i>force majeure</i> effects	Conditioned by the changes in the natural environment Endangering the natural and anthropogenic tourist resource Endangering tourists' health and safety
Technological - restrictions resulting from the usual effects - restrictions resulting from catastrophic effects	Conditioned by technology and development, and their effect on the natural environment Pollution and other changes in the environment as a result of usual (flawless) business Pollution and other changes in the environment as a result of technologically provoked disasters, failures, and incidents
Social Normative Political	Conditioned by the nation's and society's defensive reaction to overburdening the environmental problems by forming and developing an ecological and social environment Conditioned by accepting a green legislation Conditioned by ecological public shares (by ecological organisations, political parties, the population) in regards to preserving the natural environment

Source: Adapted from <http://www.esd.ornl.gov>

Tourism ranks among the ecologically sensitive economic fields by increasing the practice of informational and communicational technologies. As a result of which the importance of regulating tourism's operation in the new conditions in principle increases, along with the economic activity of tourism in relation to preserving the environmental and ecological safety in particular. Especially sensitive is the connection with non-governmental organisations and the tools for mass communication in connection with the rise and publicity of potential ecological problems. An

example of this can be given from Bulgaria in 2017 with the case of the second cabin lift in the winter resort of Bansko, situated in the immediate proximity of the Pirin National Park – the second largest in the country and listed as part of the world’s natural and cultural heritage – with the possible penetration of the territory of the park during construction activities and clearing of the forests. Protesting eco organisations and citizens insisted on the dismissal of the ministerial decision dated December 28, 2017 for a variation of the national park’s management plan from 2004, which stops the political actions in that direction for an indefinite period of time (Ташкова 2017). Another example is given by the insurance sector in relation to decreasing the snow cover and problems of winter tourism related to it (Тодоров 2008). Because of global warming, at the beginning of the winter season there is no snow cover on the tracks, and the ski season’s opening is being postponed or secured by machines creating artificial snow. In Bulgaria, the season in the winter resorts¹ of Bansko, Borovets, and Vitosha begins after the first week in December thanks to the artificial snow. In this connection, insurers elaborate on a new product for the tourists – the snowless policy. In similar situations, in the acknowledged ski destinations they have for many years been offering insurance, like the well-known “no snow guarantee” (Станкова 2003), with which insurers cover the risk of no snow in resorts above one thousand metres and pay back £20–50 per day to tourists as compensation. In Austria, for protection against such risk they offer the tourists a policy called “cancellation insurance” (for the price of around €100), which guarantees the cancellation of the reservation for the winter holiday and refund of the full amount.

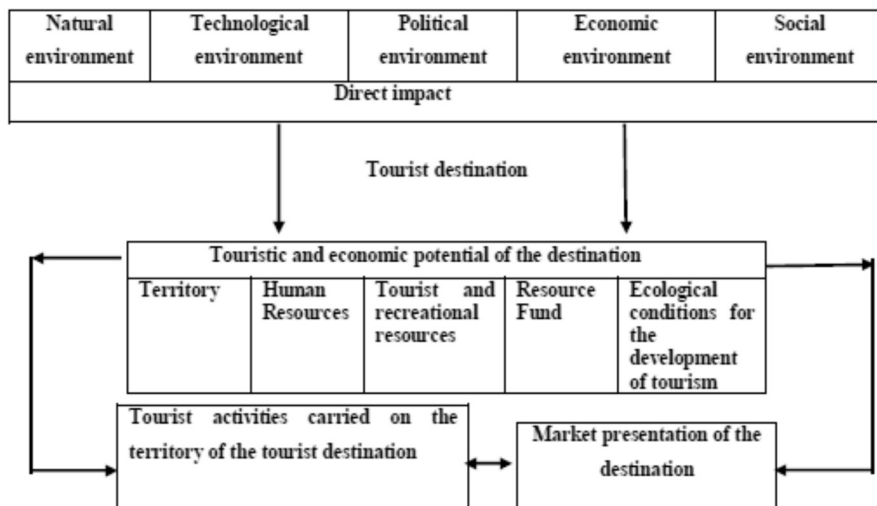
Technology’s negative influence on the ecological conditions of the realised activities in tourist destinations is revealed as being tangible mostly in those parts of its territory which have increased their ecological sensitivity, and where the ecological conditions become a significant part of its professional business potential. Resolving the ecological problems is therefore of huge importance for the competitive power of the tourist destination, which has to take into consideration each one of the tourist’s and other’s actions realised on its territory through observing the exact ecological parameters. Thus considered, the process of establishing ecological restrictions is directly connected with planning and undertaking concrete actions to overcome and prevent them.

² The term “resort” is being used in its popular meaning, rather than the methodology of the NSI.

A totality of management practices and decisions regarding changes in the global environment has been imposed as a new part of the general management theory, and despite the presence of a number of unresolved and barely surmountable problems, the first steps in this regard are strongly appreciated by the consumers of the tourist product, and are of worldwide importance. In this direction, Bulgaria is a country that is developing tourism and ought to observe European directives to harmonize successfully its practice with the other members of the European Union. Moreover, important anti-crisis strategic documents affecting the industry of tourism are developed within the union.

Within the most general frame, the spontaneous influence of global changes on the tourist destination can be presented by the scheme, shown in Fig. 1.1 below.

Fig. 1.1. The impact of restrictions on the tourist destination



Source: Adapted by Станкова (2010) (Stankova 2010, 33)

Undoubtedly, the interrelations between tourism and the environment are complex. On one hand, the environment restricts tourism's development, and on the other tourist actions, realised at the destination, can have a negative effect on the environment. Most of these influences are connected with the ecological and social characteristics of the global environment, more specifically with the building of infrastructure like roads, airports, tourist equipment, including resorts, hotels, restaurants,

shops, golf courts and yacht ports. The negative influences of tourism can gradually destroy natural resources, and the development of tourism depends on them as well as leading to changes in social models, parts, and services to create tension and conflicts in the communities that are welcoming the tourists. At the same time, tourism has the potential for creating useful influences on the environment by contributing to its protection and preservation. That is to say, tourism contributes to increasing people's knowledge of environmental values, and at the same time can be used as a tool to finance projects for the protection of natural areas or increasing their economic importance.

In that connection, the studied negatives in the current work have common and complex manifestations. On one hand, they can be provoked in connection with the economic, political, ecological, and social changes and functioning of the tourism industry, and on the other they can restrict its development. All of them have the nature of threats with specific acts and aspects, provoked by the drained natural resources, soil, water, and air pollution, physical effects, natural disasters, and economic, political, and religious changes.

The tourism industry has however proven its flexibility and timely adaptivity to the threatening changes. As a result, development is progressive and irreversible, embracing new and different spheres and areas, with the realisation of a steady tourist's models, consistent with restrictions and threats in the global environment.

Conclusion

Summarizing what has been written, the conclusion is that the success in tourism's development and of tourist destinations is to a great extent connected with the environmental condition around which tourist activities are realised. But here it must be emphasized that the connection between tourism and the environment in which it develops is bilateral. Disregarding the existing complex dependence during the 1970s and 80s brought about the excessive loading on a number of tourist destinations (especially maritime ones in Europe). In such situations, tourism has shown that, despite the high short-term speed of development, in the long-term plan the management problems in regards to conditions, convenience, and visitors go deeper. The last are even more conscious today as regards the importance of global issues. An inference can be made that in conditions of the dynamically changing global environment, the consumer-tourist is faced with new challenges restricting their choice. In this awareness, they change their consumer model as initiator of actions, with the purpose of

fighting the problems created as a result of tourists' actions and affecting both the social and private sectors. This, in turn, reflects on the local communities in destinations that are welcoming tourists. They are influenced, and as a result of which turn out to be vulnerable towards different social and cultural conflicts, for which they have no capacity to handle. They proceed from here with the necessity of developing and applying tourist politics which are steady and responsible for the environment and the countries concerned with it.

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CHAPTER TWO

TOURISM BEYOND HUMANS: ROBOTS, PETS, AND TEDDY BEARS

STANISLAV IVANOV

Abstract

Tourism is universally considered as an activity specifically reserved for humans. Although not explicitly stated, all definitions of tourism assume that the tourists are human beings. However, the advances in animal ethics, artificial intelligence, and experience economy in the last decades indicate that this fundamental assumption might need revision. Travel agencies already offer trips for teddy bears, hotels have special pet policies, companies sell stones as pets, while social robots will force companies to adapt to the new technological realities. This paper focuses on these non-human travellers in tourism (home robots, pets and toys) and the specific strategic, operational, and marketing issues they raise for tourist companies.

Keywords: robots, pets, toys, experience economy, non-human travellers

Introduction

After the 1990s, Tourism has been universally considered as an activity specifically reserved for humans. Although not explicitly stated, all definitions of tourism assume that the tourists are human beings (see, for example, United Nations and UN World Tourism Organisation 2010). But should it be so? Recent advances in animal ethics and wellbeing (Armstrong and Botzler 2016; Fennell 2012; 2013; Markwell 2015; Sandøe, Corr, and Palmer 2016), artificial intelligence and robotics (Bhaumik, 2018; Miller and Miller, 2017; Neapolitan and Jiang 2013; Russell and Norvig 2016), and the experience economy (Andersson 2007;

Kirillova, Lehto, and Cai 2017; Pine and Gilmore 2011) indicate that this fundamental assumption might need revision. Travel agencies already offer trips for teddy bears (e.g. <http://www.teddy-tour-berlin.de>), hotels have special policies for the pets of their guests, and companies sell stones as pets (e.g. <http://www.petrock.com>), while social robots will force companies to adapt to the new technological realities (Agah et al. 2016; Ivanov 2017; Nørskov 2016). The presence and the future influx of these non-human travellers in tourism (home robots, pets and toys) requires that we broaden our perspective on who the traveller is, how they are involved in tourism activities, and how travel, tourism, and hospitality companies should address the specific strategic, operational, and marketing issues these non-human travellers raise. This paper contributes to the body of knowledge by focusing on the non-human travellers in tourism, their specific characteristics, the challenges faced by travel, tourism, and hospitality companies in regard to these non-human travellers, and the ways to cope with the challenges.

Table 2.1. Non-human entities in the tourism and hospitality industry

		Type of non-human entities in tourism	
		<i>Animate</i>	<i>Inanimate</i>
Role in tourism/ hospitality industry	<i>Service providers</i>	✓ Animals in zoos ✓ Animals for safaris, photo safaris, riding, etc. ✓ Fish for pedicures	✓ Chat bots ✓ Self-service kiosks ✓ Robots
	<i>Service consumers</i>	✓ Pets	✓ Robots ✓ Toys ✓ Pet rocks

Source: Author's compilation

Non-humans are actively engaged in tourism and hospitality services. Table 2.1 above provides some examples of the animate and inanimate entities involved in the provision or consumption of tourist services. The animate non-human entities have a long history and important role in tourism (e.g. animals in zoos, animals used for safaris, photo safaris or riding, or pets travelling with their owners) (Carr and Broom 2018), while due to technical reasons the inanimate entities (like chat bots and robots) have only recently been adopted for the provision of travel, tourism, and hospitality services (Ivanov, Webster and Berezina 2017). However, the delivery of tourist services for non-animate human entities is nearly non-existent and mostly anecdotal. Non-animate entities are actually perceived

as objects, items, or things that lack consciousness, needs, wants, or desires, and hence are excluded by default from the list of potential consumers of travel, tourism, and hospitality services. Nevertheless, the owners of these entities consume travel, tourism, and hospitality services and travel together with their non-animate entities, and thus tourist companies need to provide certain services for these entities (e.g. robot-friendly hospitality facilities, repair services, storage, etc.) in order to be able to serve their human customers. Moreover, some owners of inanimate non-human entities send them on trips (or “pseudo trips”), probably due to the need for ego enhancement (Ivanov 2008; MacCannell 2002) through stories in social media of their toy/robot undertaking a “tourist” trip, a sense of belonging to a specific social group, special emotional attachment to the entity, or as a substitute or an extension of the owner when they cannot personally undertake such a trip to the destination. While the research literature has abundant studies on travelling pets (Gretzel and Hardy 2015; Hung, Chen, and Peng 2016; Kirillova, Lee, and Lehto 2015; Taillon, MacLaurin, and Yun 2015) and has already started to pay attention to robots and chatbots as service providers in tourism (Ivanov and Webster 2018; Ivanov, Webster, and Berezina 2017; Ivanov, Webster, and Garenko 2018; Kuo, Chen, and Tseng 2017; Murphy, Hofacker, and Gretzel 2017; Tussyadiah and Park 2018), our review of the related literature has not yet revealed a study that deals with inanimate non-human travellers, besides two notable exceptions. Ivanov and Webster (2017a) focuses on the design of robot-friendly hospitality facilities and emphasises that the ability to serve guests’ own mobile robots would be a key competitive advantage for accommodation establishments in the future. In another paper, the same authors (2017b) elaborate on the role of robots as consumers of services and set a research agenda for further studies in the field. This paper tries to partially fill in this gap and delve deeper into the field of non-human travellers, i.e. the non-human “consumers” of travel, tourism, and hospitality services.

The Non-human Traveller

Scope

The non-human travellers in tourism include all those animate and inanimate entities that may or may not accompany (or be accompanied by) a human traveller, but for whom their owner and/or the accompanied (accompanying) human traveller requests the provision of (a) specific travel, tourism, and hospitality service(s). These non-human entities may

include pets (dogs, cats, rabbits, guinea pigs, horses, and other animals, or even plants), robots, toys (mechanical, stuffed, or other), and pet rocks. The participation of a non-human entity in a trip might be: (a) the result of a deliberate decision of its owners to send their non-human entity on a tourist trip (e.g. an owner of a teddy bear sends it on a trip); (b) a result of a decision of the owner to take the entity on their own tourist trip (e.g. a family taking their dog on vacation with the RV); or (c) a consequence of the inability of the owner to leave the non-human entity at home during their trip, i.e. a forced decision to take it on a trip (e.g. a guide dog for a blind person, or a couple taking their cat on a weekend trip because they could not find someone to take care of it during their absence). The owner on the non-human entity is emotionally attached to it (Elder 2018), although fifty shades of grey may exist in the level of this emotional attachment.

Common Characteristics

The non-human travellers share some common characteristics:

✓ First, the non-human entities do not take their own decision about whether to participate in a trip or not – it is their owner/caretaker who does this.

✓ Second, the non-human entities do not take their own decision about which services to consume – the decision is again taken by their owner/caretaker and/or the service provider. Although, provided the choice, a pet can decide to eat one type of food instead of another, non-human entities do not initiate the service process and do not order the service – the service initiation and the determination of the service scope is within the authority of their owner/caretaker and/or the service provider.

✓ Third, for obvious reasons, non-human travellers do not pay for their own trip. While we cannot expect this to change for pets, pet rocks, or toys, the advances in robotics might lead to a future situation when a robot is recognised as a legal entity (although not necessarily a human entity), which can receive and authorise payments. This would make robots consumers *per se* (Ivanov and Webster 2017b).

✓ Fourth, the level of satisfaction with the consumption of a travel/tourism/hospitality service by a non-human traveller cannot be determined and is associated with the level of satisfaction of its owner/caretaker. It is evident that toys and pet rocks cannot be “satisfied” with a service. Some advanced robots, for example, can identify human emotions and react accordingly (Perez-Gaspar, Caballero-Morales, and

Trujillo-Romero 2016; Zhang et al. 2015), but they do not experience emotions. Hence, the robots cannot indicate their level of satisfaction with a service they have “consumed.” The increased cognitive skills of robots in the future may change this situation, but for the time being they cannot determine the level of their own satisfaction with a service. The case with animals is less clear cut. While research firmly indicates that animals do have emotions (Anderson and Adolphs 2014; Panksepp 1998), and can identify and react to human emotions (Müller et al. 2015), especially dogs, cats, and non-human primates, interspecies communication cannot always clearly identify the degree of satisfaction of the animal with the service, especially when the travelling pets include less sentient species like frogs, fish, and hamsters. Therefore, tourism service companies need to focus on the level of satisfaction of the owners/caretakers of the non-human travellers as it can be explicitly expressed, and thus managed.

Specific Characteristics

Of course, non-human travellers are not a homogenous group and they all have some specific characteristics. *Pets* are by far the most popular non-human travellers, and many hotel companies are offering pet-friendly facilities (see Figs. 1 and 2 below), which, considering the large number of people owning pets, is a source of competitive advantage for many of them. Like any biological entity, pets require their physiological needs to be taken care of, which sometimes goes to extremes like offering afternoon tea for dogs (see Fig. 3 below). Pets have their own daily regimes, dietary requirements, and preferences (probably most often determined by their owners rather than the pets themselves), and are also subject to different vaccinations, microchipping, and special regimes for travel across borders.

Pet rocks are marketed as the only pets which “you will never need to feed, walk, bath, groom or neuter” (see Fig. 4 below). Although they have no physiological needs, do not get old and die (a pet rock in ten years would be the same as now, although the first might be more emotionally charged), and not subject to travel regulations, the instruction manual from the company which first started offering them in 1975 emphasised that the pet rock is a sensitive, devoted friend and companion with an individual character (Dahl 1975). From a tourism perspective, the pet rock is even sold with a special travel case for protection.

Toys are inanimate non-human travellers for whom travel companies already organise trips (see Fig. 5). Unlike pet rocks, toys (especially stuffed toys) are subject to significant wear and tear, and thus guides need

to take special care to protect them from damage. Furthermore, a recent report (*Daily Mail* 2018) shows how Mexican fans attended the 2018 FIFA World Cup in Russia with a cardboard cut-out of their friend whose wife did not allow him to travel and attend the matches. Hence, from a tourism perspective, this cardboard cut-out needs to be treated as a travelling toy as well.

A *robot* is an “actuated mechanism programmable in two or more axes with a degree of autonomy, moving within its environment, to perform intended tasks” (International Organization for Standardization 2012). Robots can be classified into industrial or service robots, depending on their intended task. Ivanov and Webster (2017a) indicate that tourists would be travelling with mobile personal and domestic service robots (see Fig. 6 below) rather than with stationary and industrial ones, and companies need to design robot-friendly hospitality facilities for them. Although robots do not eat or drink, they require electricity, maintenance, and repair, digital maps for navigation around the premises of the hotel, and can interact with humans and other robots.

Fig. 1. Search for pet-friendly hotels on Petswelcome website



Source: screenshot from <https://hotels.petswelcome.com>

Fig. 2. Search for pet-friendly hotels on IHG website



Source: screenshots from <https://www.ihg.com/destinations/us/en/pet-friendly-hotels>

Fig. 3. Afternoon tea for dogs: Coed-Y-Mwstwr Hotel, Bridgend, Wales, UK



Source: screenshot from <https://www.townandcountrycollective.co.uk/coed-y-mwstwr/dine/dog-afternoon-tea>

Fig. 4. Rocks as pets

Pet Rock™

ROCK THE HOUSE THIS HOLIDAY SEASON!

ONLY **\$19.95**
+ FREE SHIPPING

PET ROCK™ is the only pet you'll own that you'll never need to feed, walk, bath, groom or neuter! Pre-trained to "sit" and "stay" and best of all your Pet Rock is the only pet that will never run away!

Here's what you get when our Pet Rock™ arrives on your doorstep -

- A Pet Rock™ to call your very own!
- Numbered Certificate of Authenticity!
- Personal Pet Rock™ Travel Crate!

Named "One of the TOP TEN Toy Crazes" by TIME magazine

100% **ROCK SOLID GUARANTEE!**

PET ROCK
OFFICIALLY REAL

Buy NOW

Source: screenshot from <http://petrock.com>

Fig. 5. Tours for teddy bears by Teddy Tours Berlin

The screenshot shows the website for TEDDY TOUR BERLIN. At the top is a navigation menu with links: Home, News, About us, Tour offers & registration, Gallery, Customer's feedback, Press, FAQs, and Contact. Below the navigation is a banner with the text "TEDDY TOUR BERLIN" and a teddy bear icon. A row of images shows various teddy bears in different settings. Below the banner is a sidebar with three sections: "Our tour through Berlin" (with a map), "Our Specials" (with a list of activities), and "Special wishes? Further Cities?" (with a paragraph about visiting other cities). The main content area is titled "The following city tours and offers are at your teddy's disposal:" and contains a table with columns for different tour types and a list of activities with their corresponding prices.

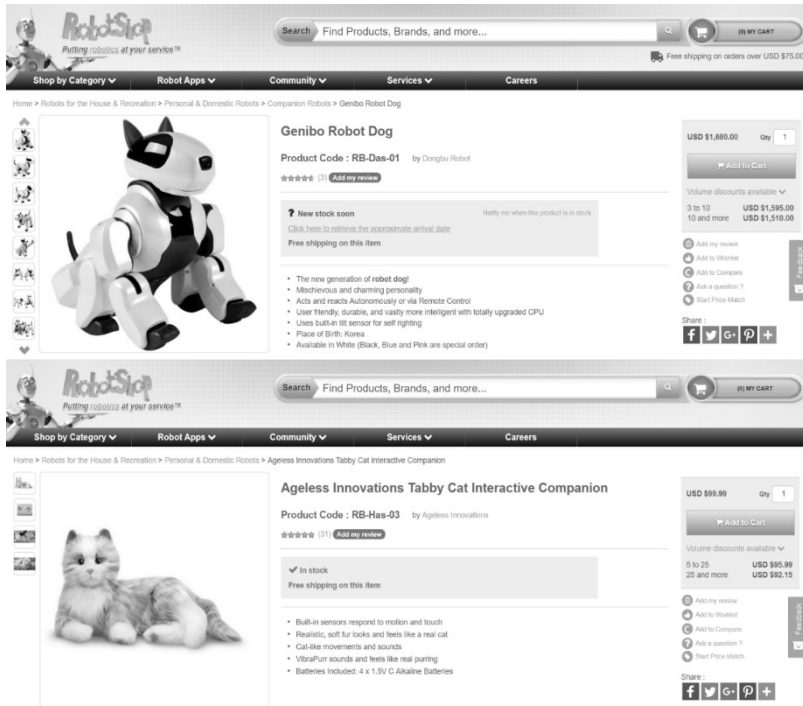
The following city tours and offers are at your teddy's disposal:

	paparazzi registration voucher	compact registration voucher	exclusive registration voucher	deluxe registration voucher
TV-Tower at the Alexanderplatz	X	X	X	X
Red Cityhall	X	X	X	X
Cathedral of Berlin	X	X	X	X
Brandenburg Gate	X	X	X	X
Chancellor's Place	X	X	X	X
Reichstag (Parliament)		X	X	X
Victory Column		X	X	X
Bellevue Castle			X	X
Potsdamer Platz			X	X
Checkpoint Charlie			X	X
The Wall			X	X
Gendarmenmarkt				X
Zoo station				X
Ku'damm				X
Church of Recollection				X
House of World Cultures				X
Stelenfeld				X
Famous construction site				X
Group-picture in front of the Brandenburg Gate	X	X	X	X
Picnic in Berlin's central park	X	X	X	X
Included donation to nestwärme e.V.	5,00 Euro	5,00 Euro	5,00 Euro	5,00 Euro
Pictures	X	X	X	X
Certificate	X	X	X	X
Postcard		X	X	X
Passport		X	X	X
Surprise		X	X	X
CD-ROM			X	X
Relaxing massage				X
Costs (in Euro) if coming from:				
Germany	39,00	59,00	79,00	109,00
European Union	49,00	69,00	89,00	119,00
Rest of the world	69,00	89,00	109,00	139,00
Additional special-tours:				
Ask us for the Teddy's Gay-Tour	Visit the heart of queer Berlin! Information: here! Additional costs for this special-tour: 30,00 Euro			

To top

Source: screenshot from <http://www.teddy-tour-berlin.de/25.html?andL=1>

Fig. 6. Personal and domestic robots



Source: screenshots from <https://www.robotshop.com/en/dasa-robot-genibo-robot-dog.html> and <https://www.robotshop.com/en/ageless-innovations-tabby-cat-interactive-companion.html>

Serving the Non-human Traveller: Strategic and Operational Issues

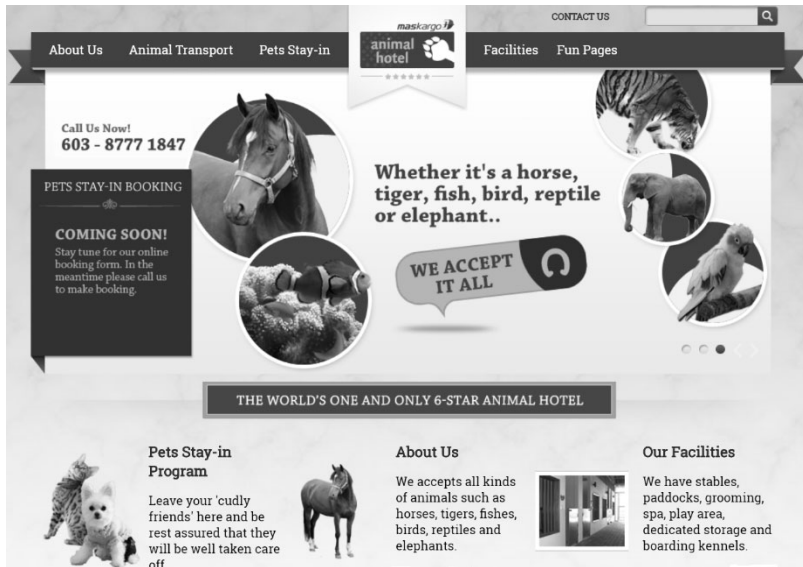
Serving human travellers is difficult, but serving non-humans is even more difficult considering the common and specific characteristics of the non-human travellers which were discussed in the previous paragraph. In this section, we shall outline some of challenges travel, tourism, and hospitality companies face in regard to serving non-human travellers and how to cope with them.

Marketing

The main marketing challenge is to create a hospitality service/experience that is attractive for the owner/caretaker of a non-human traveller. Here, differentiation is the key. A company offering services to non-human travellers is already differentiating its product and gaining a competitive advantage. Currently, there are tourist companies that serve pet animals nearly exclusively. Some hotels, for example, have special pet-friendly policies which allow a pet animal to be accommodated with its owners, thus freeing the owners of the worries of where and to whom to leave their pet during their trip. Other hotels go even further with the differentiation and experience design by offering special afternoon tea packages for pets and their owners (see Fig. 3 above). The ultimate pet-friendly experience is a dedicated animal hotel (see Fig. 7 below), where animate non-human travellers are the only guests. Considering that pet-related expenditures (supplies, food, veterinary, and other services) are income limited (Ehlert 1997) and the low level of competition in offering pet-friendly services, tourist companies that offer such services can charge high prices. Besides the usual marketing communication channels (e.g. website, social media), the tourist company can reach its target customers through various pet owners' clubs and associations, veterinary clinics, or pet exhibition organisers.

Marketing tours for toys are another story. While there is a real necessity to take care of travelling animals, there is no existential need to provide tourist services to toys, even less to cardboard cut-outs, even if they are human shaped. As mentioned in the Introduction, these tours actually satisfy the needs, wants, and desires of their owners (ego enhancement, aspiration to belong to or be associated with a specific social group, showing special emotional attachment to the toy, etc.), and therefore the tour companies need to develop promotional messages reflecting these needs, wants, and desires. Such tours are offered with different itineraries, languages, and price tags, depending on the country of origin of the owner – exactly as they would be offered to human travellers. The company that organises the Teddy Tour Berlin even offers a gay tour of the city (see Fig. 5 above). This human-level treatment of the toys, further evidenced by the photos the toy owners receive, contributes to toy owners' level of satisfaction with the service. Furthermore, the uniqueness and unusualness of the tourist service (tours for toys) create media attention and facilitate a company's marketing communication efforts. The same marketing issues and solutions are valid for pet rocks as well.

Fig. 7. Animal hotel



Source: screenshot from <http://www.maskargo.com/animalhotel>

In essence, offering tourist services for robots is the same as for toys. Considering the current low cognitive skills of home robots, they are not much different from regular toys. However, as already mentioned, the advances in robotics would force tourist companies to focus on delivering services for robots. The low penetration of home robots and the even smaller number of people travelling with them do not contribute to the attractiveness of this market segment for the moment. Nevertheless, the situation will change in the next five to ten years, fuelled by the plummeting prices of home robots. Similar to pet owners, robot owners can afford to pay for extra services for their robots. Some of them, including companies that use service robots, go to extremes and buy clothes for their robots, treating them as kids (NHK World – Japan 2018). Therefore, the robot owners would have low price sensitivity, could afford to pay higher prices, and would be profitable customers for tourist companies.

Human Resource Management

During the last few decades, most societies matured and started to accept people with different disabilities, sexual orientations, or unusual behaviours or appearances. Taboos are being replaced by the “new normal” and accessible tourism (Darcy and Dickson 2009), corporate social responsibility (Cragg, Schwartz, and Weitzner 2016), and business ethics (Crane and Matten 2016; Eagle and Dahl 2015) are actively contributing to the removal of barriers in people’s minds. Employees in the travel, tourism, and hospitality industries serve people of various nationalities and ethnic, religious, and cultural backgrounds, with various preferences, sexual orientations, and disabilities, and need to treat them with due respect. Employees should not be surprised if they have to serve a robot, an animal, a stuffed toy, or a pet rock, but should consider this as part of the whole experience they create for the customers. Of course, resistance is inevitable, and many employees may not feel comfortable serving non-human travellers, which is quite understandable. However, their negative attitude does not mean that they should be fired, but their efforts should be directed towards serving human travellers, while employees with a broader perspective of who the traveller is should serve the non-human tourists. Proper training and employing people with the suitable service mindedness are advised. For example, employees may need training in how to operate and communicate with robots or how to take care of pets.

Operations

Serving non-humans raises several operations management issues – facilities design, scheduling and executing operations, and managing capacity. Obviously, pet rocks and toys do not require specific facilities, but this is not the case with pets and robots. Pets need cages, hutches, aquaria, waste disposal/litter boxes, furniture scratches, crates, beds and blankets, bowls and feeders, play toys, accessories for grooming and bathing, leashes, collars, harnesses, apparel, odour control, travel equipment like carriers, and many other things. While these are usually bought by the pet owners, pet-friendly hotels may consider keeping a stock of a few items of this equipment and providing them to the guests when necessary. Accommodating pets in a hotel requires amendments in the operation procedures, e.g. it would take more time to clean a room if a dog/cat is accommodated together with the guests because of the hairs, waste, and odour left by the animals. Additionally, staff need to be trained