

COGNITIVE PSYCHOLOGY AND TOURISM

Noel Scott, Brent Moyle,
Ana Cláudia Campos,
Liubov Skavronskaya and Biqiang Liu
– With contributions from other authors

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Cognitive Psychology and Tourism

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COGNITIVE PSYCHOLOGY AND TOURISM

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

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SECTION 1
INTRODUCTION TO THE
COGNITIVE APPROACH

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

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The purpose of this volume is to provide a foundation for the application of cognitive science theories and concepts to fields such as tourism, hospitality, events, leisure and services. The contents have been compiled from a 10-year programme of doctoral research, as well as chapters contributed by experts in the field. The primary intended audience of the volume are tourism researchers, doctoral candidates and tourism professionals looking for a fresh approach to understanding their customers. However, the cognitive paradigm and its applications discussed are equally applicable to other applied fields that utilise psychological theories and concepts.

For tourism researchers and doctoral candidates, the volume aims to contribute to a paradigm shift in the way the field is studied and approached. The authors consider that tourism will benefit by the application of new ideas

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found in the mainstream psychology discipline. The importation of these new ideas will enable a better understanding of mental processes, but requires adoption of a new paradigm, termed here the 'Cognitive Wave'. Tourism professionals who apply theory will benefit by identifying how they apply concepts such as attention, emotion, sensations and memory in their work, and critically understand how to measure them. All such professionals do use and measure these concepts, often without being aware of the assumptions they make.

The tourism academy may wish to avoid the coming 'cognitive wave', but failing to innovate and anticipate the future leads to irrelevance. It is the responsibility of an academic to embrace new theories and methods, and at the same time discard ideas that have been disproven. Past giants, on whose shoulders present researchers stand, were insightful and intelligent. They examined those aspects of phenomena accessible to them in their time. However, while it is important to respect them for their ideas, it is vital to evaluate their work against more recent empirical findings in foundation disciplines. Doing otherwise risks myopia and a disconnect between academic tourism research and that found useful in practice.

A word of caution for the reader. The theories and methods used in cognitive psychology have their own associated debates and traditions. Adoption without understanding this background is fraught with problems. Further, the authors acknowledge that they are not classically trained experts in cognitive psychology, despite their decade of work in the area. Thus, they are open to criticism of the detail of their knowledge and in the light of recent theoretical advances and welcome constructive debate in this regard. However, there seemed to be no alternative to bridging the gap between current tourism theory and that of cognitive sciences. Criticism is expected, but wholesale and dogmatic rejection of any possible useful applications or insight is not.

Finally, this volume points to an emergent 'invisible college' of tourism researchers who are adopting the cognitive wave in their work. This volume is designed to stimulate further development of this college and lead to the development of organizational infrastructure, such as regular workshops, conferences and perhaps a journal.

The chapters of this book are arranged into five sections. After this introduction, Chapter 1 introduces the cognitive wave paradigm adopted in this book, discusses the arguments for and against use of a cognitive paradigm and translating concepts into it. Chapter 2 introduces the mental processes central to cognition. Chapters 4 and 5 provide examples of disambiguation, translating tourism concepts and theories into those of cognitive psychology.

In section two, each of the mental processes central to cognition are discussed in more detail. These are sensations and perception (Chapter 6), consciousness (Chapter 7), emotions (Chapter 8), motivation and goals (Chapter 9), novelty (Chapter 10), memory (Chapter 11), memory schema (Chapter 12), prospection and imagery processing (Chapter 13) and coping (Chapter 14). Each chapter discusses the cognitive psychology literature of a process as well as relevant tourism research.

Section three provide applications of these processes to topics of interest to tourism researchers involved in the study of experiences. Chapter 15 discusses experience design and Chapter 16 looks at the co-creation of experiences. The next three chapters examine topics related to experience design, firstly the emotion of awe (Chapter 17), mindfulness, or the experience of the present moment (Chapter 18) and storytelling (Chapter 19).

Section four discusses three methodological techniques used in cognitive psychology, eye-tracking (Chapter 20), electroencephalography (Chapter 21) and skin conductance (Chapter 22). The final section provides a cautionary chapter on the use of the cognitive wave paradigm (Chapter 23), and a final conclusions chapter (Chapter 24).

In resume, this volume aims to advance tourism research and that of cognate fields through the adoption of a new paradigm, with embedded theories, concepts and methods. Each of the chapters highlight relevant existing research and opportunities for further developments. Examples of the application of theory and methods to topics of interest in the tourism, hospitality, events, leisure and services fields are provided. There are many opportunities for developing these and other topics further and in developing the work of the invisible college which underpins the silent shift to the cognitive wave further.

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Chapter 2

COGNITIVE SCIENCE AND TOURISM

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Abstract: This chapter introduces the cognitive paradigm. The concept of translation and associated problems is discussed. Several arguments for the adoption of a cognitive-based social sciences are provided. A brief history of the term cognition is provided and the origin of theory in tourism discussed. Justifications for the use of cognitive psychology in the field of tourism are provided. These include the (mostly) hedonic and hence emotional nature of tourism experiences, the novelty of travel outside one's usual environment, the importance of imagining, day-dreams, emotions and desire for travel decisions and the importance of

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autobiographical memories because of travel. **Keywords:** Cognition; behaviour; cognitive science; disambiguation; emotions; translation

INTRODUCTION

There is a ‘cognitive wave’ approaching academic tourism, business and social sciences research (Scott, 2020). This is a wave of new knowledge about how the human brain functions and how its processes take sensations, create knowledge and initiate behaviour. This wave of knowledge originated in cognitive science and neuroscience laboratories in the 1960s and onwards and has begun to break upon the shores of other fields of study. This book provides an introduction to this cognitive literature and its application to tourism.

The need for study of tourism and cognition would on the face of it appear useful. Tourism research is a multidisciplinary endeavour (Tribe, 1997), and many social science concepts have a relationship to cognition. There has been an upsurge in interest in tourism experiences, creative and memorable experiences, emotion, embodiment, transformation, sensations and experience design. Tourism scholars have traditionally been interested in fields such as decision-making, destination image, resident attitudes, cultural differences, interpretation, liminality, savouring, risk, authenticity and so on. To the extent that these phenomena are related to brain functioning, then cognitive sciences would be useful in advancing knowledge. However, there is a ‘toothbrush problem’, other peoples’ theories are treated like toothbrushes – no self-respecting person wants to use anyone else’s. It is amusing, but it also points to a conflict that one may be nurturing within the profession to the detriment of science (Mischel, 2008).

Despite this apparent usefulness, there are numerous problems and barriers to the application of cognitive science findings and theories in the study of tourism. The first is the translation problem (Francken & Slors, 2018), which examines the difficulties of relating everyday ‘common sense’ concepts like memory into more fine-grained concepts such as semantic, episodic, autobiographical, long-term and working memory (Circle 1 in [Figure 2.1](#)). There are subsequent problems in identifying appropriate procedures and operationalising these in experiments (Circles 2 and 3). Further, many ‘common sense’ concepts have multiple meanings in the social sciences derived from different streams of research (Circle 4). For example, many concepts commonly used in tourism are derived from behavioural psychology and operationalised in terms of behaviour (Skavronskaya et al., 2017). This book will address these translation problems in Chapter 3 on disambiguation, and by discussing in each chapter on prominent brain processes, their mechanisms and areas of application to existing fields of study.