

Climate Change from the Viewpoints of Airbnb Hosts: Wildfire Threats to Rural Tourism

Susan Slocum*

Department of Tourism and Events Management, George Mason University, Fairfax Campus, Fairfax, USA

Introduction

Natural and cultural resources are essential to the tourism business, especially in rural areas where traditional attractions are less prevalent. Visits to natural places, such as parks, nature preserves, or public lands, as well as agricultural pursuits, like farm tours or wineries, are frequent components of rural tourism. When developing economic growth strategies for underdeveloped regions with few industrial possibilities, tourism is crucial. As "certain locations may include just farm and natural features in defining rural tourism, while others may consider any economic activity that occur outside of urban areas," definitions of rural tourism can be perceived differently from country to country and region to region (p. 1044). Rural tourism is defined by the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) as fostering a rural environment. The frequency and severity of natural disasters are rising, which has a negative influence on rural communities' capacity to use tourism as a strategy for economic development. The economist reports that during the 1970's, there have been more than four times as many natural disasters in the world. According to Woosnam and Kim, storms in the southern United States not only affected tourism during the storm itself but also resulted in structural damage that necessitated prolonged national park closures. Revenue losses from park closures when a tornado struck Thunderbird State Park in Oklahoma approached USD 50,000. Wineries in California's Sonoma County lost "\$38 million in sales, and an extra \$50 to \$100 million in revenue as a result of facilities that needed to be fixed or replaced in 2017". Evidence suggests that regions with weaker economies or those that depend on a single economy (like tourism) are more severely affected by natural disasters. As a result, recovery times are longer, there are fewer resources available to enable full physical recovery, and there is a greater relative loss of income than in regions with stronger economies.

Description

This study examined how Airbnb hosts perceived the effect of wildfires on rural tourism. Outdoor recreation and tourism services have offered new channels of economic activity, particularly within the sharing economy in Southern Oregon, a nature

based tourism destination where resource extraction has traditionally been the motor of the economy. However, the severe drought conditions present new dangers to southern Oregon. Wildfires not only pose a threat to the health of the tourism sector but lingering smoke from fires beyond the region is also having an effect on tourism. Wildfires are now a common occurrence in Oregon as a result of the lengthening of the smokey season and the fall and winter's decreased precipitation. Additionally, wildfires support Woosnam and Kim.

Conclusion

Although the findings of this work cannot be generalized, they offer an intriguing backdrop for recommending more investigation. Due to the small sample size of this study, future research should take into account a broader inquiry into wildfire consequences on tourism by incorporating other regions and a more heterogeneous sample, including various tourism stakeholders. Visitors' perceptions of wildfire/smoke could offer insight into more profound climate change effects, such as seasonality shifts, tour operator decision-making, small business profitability, and education/interpretation to raise awareness of the challenges of climate change on rural communities. Wildfire impacts are increasing in a number of destinations. Additionally, the role of media coverage of significant environmental and climate dangers (spurring last-chance tourism) could inform research on how tourists will decide in the future. This study backs up the assertion made by Scott, Gossling, and Hall that climate change inexorably affects tourism. The hunting and fishing seasons are already being disrupted by summer's lengthening and increasing heat. As a result of regulations requiring fire-resistant building materials and ground-cover site hardening for any new construction or remodeling projects, operating expenses for Airbnb hosts are rising.

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*Address for Correspondence: Susan Slocum, Department of Tourism and Events Management, George Mason University, Fairfax Campus, Fairfax, USA, E-mail: susans@gmail.com

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