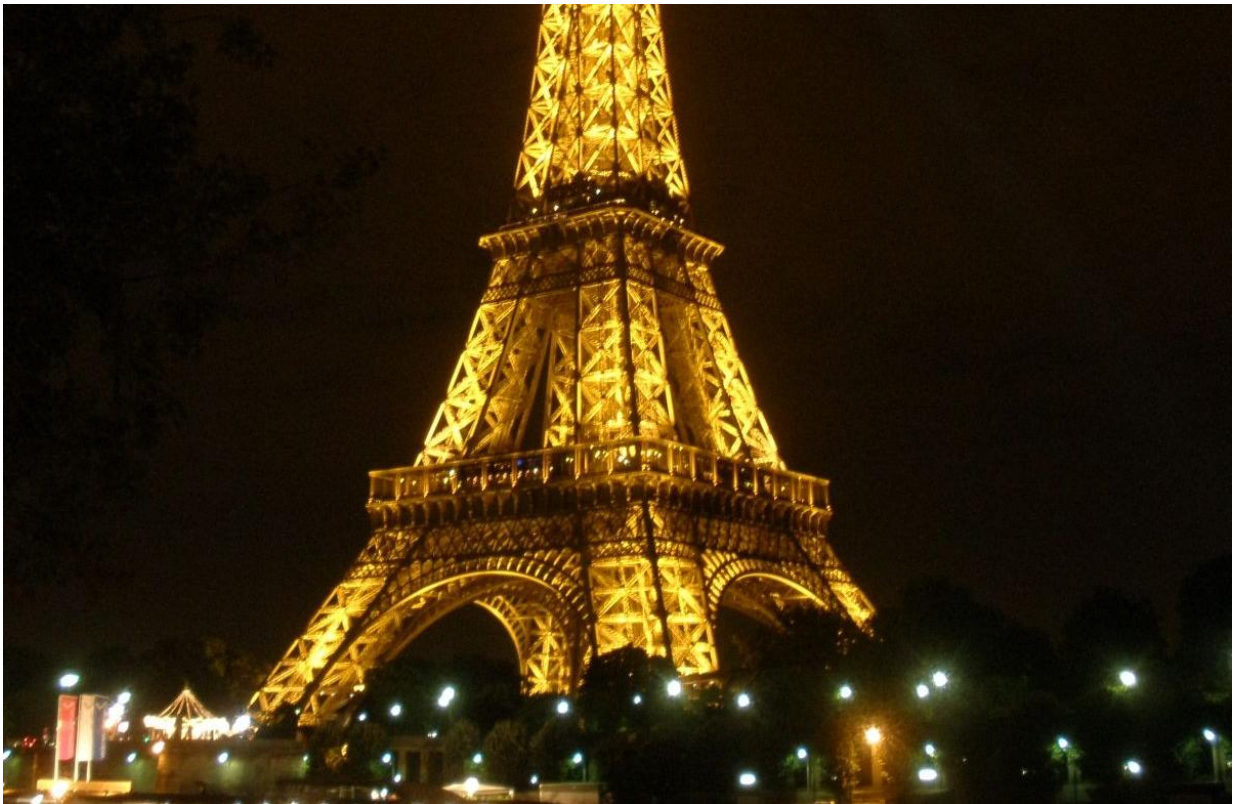


Personifying places can boost travel intentions

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Humanising destinations can encourage travel intentions. Credit: Queensland University of Technology

People who see animals as people and assign human traits to non-human objects are more likely to travel to destinations that are presented as being human-like, according to Queensland University of Technology

(QUT) research.

Dr Kate Letheren, Professor Brett Martin and Dr Hyun Seung Jin, from QUT Business School, found that writing about a destination as if it were human could boost its appeal as a travel destination.

The research, published in *Tourism Management*, looked at personality dimensions and the impact on destination choices.

Participants were shown a travel advertisement for either Paris or Rome. Half of the participants saw an ad where the destination was personified, referring to the city as "she", while the other half saw an ad that referred to the city as "it".

"One of the ads used typical copy for a travel destination advertisement, for example, facts about the city and its attractions. The other used language that humanised the destination, like 'Paris welcomes you'," Dr Letheren said.

"We found people higher in anthropomorphic traits were more likely to respond with feel-good emotions and have a positive view of the destination after reading the personified ad.

"This suggests people with this trait who see human characteristics in tourism destinations are more likely to want to visit those destinations."

The researchers said that levels of anthropomorphic traits varied by person, but some common examples of anthropomorphism at work include people assigning human emotions to a pet dog or referring to a car or ship as "she".

Professor Martin said it was a normal tactic for destination and major event marketers to try to make a connection with consumers.

"Humanising a [destination](#) or event can help place it in a positive light and give the audience a warm, fuzzy feeling. This is why cute cartoon animals are often chosen as mascots for the Olympics, for example.

"Large sums of money are spent on campaigns to try to attract tourists and destinations need to appear warm and welcoming.

"Tourism campaigns often focus on attracting specific demographics, for example Chinese tourists or luxury holiday-makers, and our research shows that if you have a tourist who naturally humanises, you can tailor the message to appeal to this aspect of their personality.

"If you can successfully identify what traits people have, you can send them customised messages. Ten to 20 years ago that wasn't possible, but now it is."

More information: Kate Letheren et al. Effects of personification and anthropomorphic tendency on destination attitude and travel intentions, *Tourism Management* (2017). [DOI: 10.1016/j.tourman.2017.03.020](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2017.03.020)

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