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**Tourism Research Institute**



**3rd International Conference  
on Tourism and Hospitality Management**

**Conference Proceedings**

**June, 27th – 29th, 2013**

**Athens, Greece**



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**ON TOURISM & HOSPITALITY MANAGEMENT** **2013**



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# “3rd International Conference on Tourism and Hospitality Management”

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# *Accessible tourism in the Italian destination*

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## **ABSTRACT**

The aim of the study is to investigate the advantages and the obstacles relating to accessible tourism. Disability is a phenomenon that receives a growing academic and government attention for a number of demographic and social factors. The number of people with disabilities is expected to increase. Accessible tourism represents a challenge and an opportunity to organizations and destinations to combine tourism quality and growth with social justice.

This study reviews the literature on the main constraints to tourism for persons with disabilities and on patterns of accessible tourism. With regard to this aspect, a specific focus on the “state-of-the-art” of the Italian destination is made. The study documents disability tourism policy and provides a picture of the perception of the tourist industry in serving tourists with disabilities. The survey is enriched by the analysis of a successful Italian case, aiming at evaluating best practices worthy of being replicated and emulated everywhere. The history of the social cooperative “Independent L” well embodies the new cultural lens through which to view tourism from a disability perspective.

Results of research suggest that tourism accessibility is not only a goal to be achieved through measures of an architectural nature, but first and foremost is a civil, social and cultural goal. Providing opportunities for tourism in full accessibility is not



only a correct action from the point of view of universal principles enshrined in the UN Convention, but it is above all an intelligent and forward-looking strategy, full of advantages, including economic benefits.

The research underlines the urgent need for education and training on tourism accessibility, since knowledge is the most efficacious means of changing attitudes towards people with disabilities, so that equal dignity and opportunity among citizens are guaranteed.

**Key Words:** Accessible tourism, Best practice, Italy, Persons with disabilities

## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to provide a contribution to the development of inclusive practices in the tourism field, by explaining why and how a much more detailed understanding and catering to the needs expressed by people with disability (PwD) are indispensable.

Despite the rising number of PwD, Destination Management Organisations fail to adequately address the needs of stakeholders with more limited abilities.

Many people with disabilities would like to visit places or destinations with specific objectives: many do but then are disappointed by the difficulties encountered, the low accessibility and usability experience, while others, informed and documented, give up and change the destination of their travel to other destinations.

To meet the demands of PwD involves financial effort, but the costs of compliance associated with accessible tourism criteria are small in comparison to the potential and remarkable benefits gained.

Accessible tourism offers an opportunity for organizations and destinations to gain a competitive advantage, in full respect of sustainable tourism. "Sustainable tourism" has been defined as tourism based on the principles of sustainable development; it is a form of tourism "that takes account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities" (United Nations Environment Programme & United Nations World Tourism Organization, 2005, p. 12). Sustainable tourism encompasses the economic, social and environmental dimensions of tourism development. Accessible tourism is as yet a neglected and underestimated area of sustainable tourism (Darcy et al., 2010).

In order to identify and explore the requirements of accessible tourism and their subsequent effectiveness, a qualitative, conceptual and empirical approach is employed. First of all a brief conceptual and terminological framework about disability and accessibility is provided, without omitting some worrying figures. To highlight crucial issues and challenges for the tourist industry, the literature is analyzed, selecting those researches more attentive to identifying the main issues of accessibility. The Italian situation with regard to accessible tourism is then described. For a mature destination like Italy, the real challenge will be to transform the culture of accessibility in a point of strength, in an asset, and in an item of excellence to be competitive and really welcoming. Finally the paper presents an interesting case of

Italian best practice with regard to inclusive tourism. The business case intends to show that it is possible to create economic value (doing business), with the option to also create social value (doing good).

In summary, the study has the potential to contribute to enhancing awareness of importance and benefits of accessible tourism.

## CONCEPTUAL AND TERMINOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

First of all, it behoves to remember the right meaning of disability, as conceptualized by the World Health Organization (WHO) according to the *International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health* (ICF). The WHO (2001) defines disability as “the outcome or result of a complex relationship between an individual’s health condition and personal factors, and of the external factors that represent the circumstances in which the individual lives”. In accordance with the WHO definition, article 1 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN, 2006) specifies that “persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others”. Both international organizations (the WHO and the UN) interpret the disability as a special “relationship” between a “health condition” (disorder or disease) and “the environment” (in the broad sense). Corollary to this “relative” notion of disability is the affirmation of a much more operational model, since the room for manoeuvre for qualitatively and quantitatively reducing the cases of disability increases greatly. In fact, by interfering on “environment”, that is, on one of the two terms of the relationship from which disability arises, it is possible to remove or alleviate many causes of the disability itself (Angeloni, 2011).

A person’s environment has a huge impact on the experience and extent of disability. A deaf individual without a sign language interpreter, or a wheelchair user in a building without an accessible bathroom or elevator, or a blind person using a computer without screen-reading software are all examples of the possible negative impact of the environment. Inaccessible environments create disability by creating barriers to participation and inclusion.

Therefore, as argued by Barnes (1996, p. 43), the exclusion and the segregation of people with impairments from participation in mainstream activities are not a result of the person’s impairment but a function of the disabling social environments and prevailing “hostile social attitudes”.

So, it would be more correct to speak about “disabling environments” rather than about persons with disabilities.

The way that disability is conceptualized and the consequent attitudes have a profound effect on society and people with disabilities, because these factors influence the level of accessibility.

“Accessibility” is a term that has a common meaning as well as specific meanings in different contexts. According to the everyday meaning (see *Oxford Popular Dictionary and Thesaurus*, 1998) the adjective “accessible” is synonymous to

“approachable, at hand, attainable, available, close, convenient, handy, and within reach”. In its specific meaning useful for the theme here treated, “accessibility is a relative concept, implying that accessibility problems should be expressed as a person-environment relationship” (Iwarsson & Stahl, 2003, p. 61). A word often used in parallel to accessibility is “usability”, a concept implying “that a person should be able to use, i.e., to move around, be in and use, the environment on equal terms with other citizens. ... Usability is mainly subjective in nature, taking into account user evaluations and subjective expressions of the degree of usability. Usability is a measure of effectiveness, efficiency and satisfaction” (Iwarsson & Stahl, 2003, p. 62). Another common term is “universal design”, synonymous to “design for all”. Generally, “while accessibility and usability are usually used to determine the observed performance, with usability being more centered on individual interpretation, universal design is highlighted as a more process-oriented approach instead of a focus on results. At its core, universal design addresses the inclusion of the entire population, incorporates aspects of accessibility and usability from the beginning and represents a less stigmatizing concept” (Eichhorn & Buhalis, 2011, pp. 47-48).

Disabling conditions arise from a variety of impairments, among which the most evident types are physical, sensory, cognitive, and communication impairments. However, disabling conditions also arise from less evident impairments (or hidden health problems), like heart disease or low blood pressure. For tourists with disabilities the factors that are the most significant for accessibility vary according to the kind of disabilities (Israeli, 2002).

Documenting the actual number of people with disabilities is problematic. However, according to the first *World Report On Disability*, produced by WHO (2011) in partnership with the World Bank, over a billion people, or about 15% of the world's population, were estimated to be living with disability. This percentage is higher than WHO estimates from the 1970s, which suggested a global prevalence of around 10%. The most recent figures show therefore a phenomenon which is certainly not marginal, and growing.

The number of people with disabilities is expected to increase. This trend on the one hand is the result of increasing life-span due to the progresses of medicine and medical technology that reduce the mortality rate, but also increase the number of people able to live with chronic diseases. On the other hand the population with disabilities “is increasing given the greater vulnerability of modern daily life to various dangers such as industrial and natural disasters, diseases, traffic accidents, addiction to drugs and/or alcohol, violence, and pollution” (Lee et al., 2012, p. 569).

Therefore, it would be a mistake to consider accessible tourism as a niche market. Older people, who increasingly want (and are able) to travel, “will soon make up 25% of the European population. Added to this are around 50 million people with disabilities in Europe who wish to enjoy holidays with their family and friends. Thus, it is estimated that as many as 130 million people in Europe alone will benefit from improved access to travel and tourism services. Making tourism accessible for all is a rational response to a foreseeable demographic trend, and a massive economic opportunity for the tourism sector” (Ambrose, 2012, p. 20). As a consequence, the real market of accessible tourism is far from modest.

In addition, it should not be forgotten that PwD often travel with others, that is they are accompanied by someone or even by their all family (Huh & Singh, 2007; Jo et al., 2004).

Therefore, the tourism market must be better understood including a broader and more general world of needs, taking into account not only the people who have evident disabilities (such as a motor, sensory, cognitive, or health problems), but, for example, also people who have eating difficulties such as in celiac disease or intolerance to certain foods, or who must follow a low-salt or other diet. Then there are the people who are “tired”, due to illness or age or stress or allergies or depression and, besides the elderly, there are the children, the mothers pushing strollers, the pregnant women and much more.

The final satisfaction of these important customers depends highly on the ability of organisations to offer services that are personalized and disability tailor-made.

If tourism requires hospitality, intended as a privileged way of interpersonal meeting marked by the welcoming attitude towards the other (dos Santos & de Carvalho, 2012), then inaccessible tourism is almost an oxymoron.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Given the significant and growing size of PwD, for the last three decades tourism researchers are increasingly turning their attention to the themes of accessibility and mobility for all.

Reasons of economic, ethical and legal order explain the interest of the scientific community in accessible tourism. From the economic point of view, it is evident that it is advantageous to serve tourists with disability, transforming a potential demand in an effective demand. From the ethical point of view, a greater awareness of human needs has allowed the consideration of the tourist experience as an issue of equity and social justice. As consequence of the last point, more and more laws and codes of practice for different sectors are being drawn up in order to ensure the respect of the right to a tourism experience, in the form of accessible tourism.

“Accessible tourism is a form of tourism that involves collaborative processes between stakeholders that enables people with access requirements, including mobility, vision, hearing and cognitive dimension of access, to function independently and with equity and dignity through the delivery of universally designed tourism products, services and environments. This definition adopts a whole of life approach where people through their lifespan benefit from accessible tourism provision. These include people with permanent and temporary disabilities, seniors, obese, families with young children and those working in safer and more socially sustainable designed environments” (Darcy & Buhalis, 2011, pp. 10-11).

Accessibility meets the needs of people with disabilities, but also of the elderly population that often has restrictions in movement, hearing capacity, eyesight, balance, memory and ability.

Only a wider consideration of constraints may lead to a better understanding of tourist motivation, decision-making and destination image (Darcy, 2010; Jenkins, 1999; Woodside & Lysonski, 1989; Yau et al., 2004).

Typically tourism participation of PwD runs up against a “plethora of barriers”, among which: a lack of information on accessibility and accessible facilities; a difficulty in finding accommodation which is really and totally accessible (because “accessible” is not always accessible, especially when it comes to hotels); a difficulty in booking accessible accommodation even when it did exist; a lack of carers or additional costs for care givers; site inaccessibility and scant information about accessible sites; economic constraints. The last point stresses that, for some people with disabilities, holidays are not possible because of financial restrictions. Financial restrictions “are clearly associated with disabilities in that these restrict access to the world of work” (Shaw & Coles, 2004, p. 402).

In addition, for individuals with disabilities, negative attitudes are the hardest barrier to overcome (Schleien et al., 1997). Several studies revealed that for PwD non-physical elements of the tourism environment, such as staff attitudes towards disability as well as limited opportunity for interaction with other people, were major constraints in achieving a full tourism experience. This thought is shared by some authors, who point out that “all sectors in the tourism system need to work towards dismantling negative attitudes that are a major barrier to tourism participation for individuals with a disability” (Eichhorn & Buhalis, 2011, p. 50).

Accessible tourism means to remove these concerns and break down barriers to the full tourism experience.

Many researchers have investigated and well-documented problems that PwD encounter with the tourism experience, providing some classification or categorization of types of constraints.

Smith (1987) provided the first examination and categorisation of barriers to leisure-travel for people with disabilities. He identified three dimensions of constraints:

- *intrinsic* barriers, resulting primarily from the tourist’s own levels of cognitive, physical, and psychological function;
- *environmental* barriers, consisting of externally imposed limitations and including attitudinal constraints, architectural constraints, ecological constraints, transportation constraints, rules and regulations constraints;
- *interactive* barriers, resulting from the reciprocal interaction between the tourist and the immediate milieu, with focus on interaction of the host and the guest and possible communication concerns.

Crawford et al. (1991) examined a “hierarchical” order of three constraints that influence leisure participation or non participation: *intrapersonal* constraints, followed by *interpersonal* constraints, and finally the *structural* constraints. *Intrapersonal* constraints refer to psychological conditions that are internal to the individual such as personality factors, attitudes, or more temporary psychological conditions such as depression or mood. *Interpersonal* constraints regard those constraints that arise out of interaction with others such as family members, friends, co-workers and

neighbours. *Structural* constraints include such factors as the lack of opportunities or the cost of activities that result from external conditions in the environment. According to the model of Crawford et al., *intrapersonal* constraints that affect leisure preferences occur first. Right after intrapersonal constraints, *interpersonal* constraints take place, which influence interpersonal compatibility. Finally, participation or non-participation is dependent on *structural* constraints. The model elaborated by Crawford et al. was later tested, revised and modified by other researchers.

Turco et al. (1998) identified constraints for PwD within four major tourism sectors and distinguished barriers concerning *attractions* (e.g., site inaccessibility), *information* (e.g., unreliable and inaccurate information sources about a destination and its accessibility), *transport* (e.g., difficulty in transferring between flights, inaccessibility of airplane restrooms), and *accommodation* (e.g., inaccessible rooms and bathrooms, restrictive appliances such as lamps and TVs, and front-desk counters that were too high).

McKercher et al. (2003) identified a number of exogenous obstacles that may inhibit travel, limit options or reduce satisfaction. Such obstacles include:

- *architectural* barriers, such as steps, inaccessible washrooms, inaccessible hotel accommodations, etc.;
- *ecological* barriers, such as uneven footpaths, tree roots and other exterior obstacles;
- *transportation* barriers, especially of the local transport variety including cars, buses and taxicabs;
- *legal* barriers, when rules or regulations prohibit people with disabilities from bringing needed equipment with them;
- *communication* difficulties, both in the individual's home and at destination;
- *attitude* barriers, due to negative attitudes from service providers;
- *information* barriers, due to inaccuracy of data about site accessibility.

McKercher et al. (2003) analyzed the constraints encountered by people with disabilities when they use travel agents. In particular, travel agents result inadequate to satisfy the needs of PwD for *attitudinal* reason (unawareness of the needs of PwD) and for *structural* reasons (inability to provide products that suit clients' needs and a preference to sell the standardized tourism package). The paradox is that travel agencies, instead of representing a facilitator, end up being another barrier for PwD. Also Takeda & Card (2002) recognized an indispensable role and significant benefits to travel agencies and tour operators that specialize in organizing package tours for clients with disabilities.

Other authors focused their analysis on travel-related constraints (Cavinato & Cuckovich, 1992; Chang & Chen, 2011, 2012; Poria et al., 2010). Other researchers studied in depth the experience linked to the visit of museums (Diamond, 1999; Poria et al., 2009). Others analyzed the accessibility of accommodation facilities (Darcy, 2010; Darcy & Pegg, 2011; Ozturk et al., 2008; Papamichail, 2012; Peniston, 1996).

According to Buhalis & Michopoulou (2011) the disabled/ageing population market has three basic requirements, namely:

- accessibility of physical/built environment;
- information regarding accessibility;
- accessible information online.

PwD must resolve a number of architectural obstacles that may inhibit travel, limit options or reduce satisfaction. Accessibility involves a range of physical barriers, both in public and private spaces.

PwD “need to identify information on accessibility to scenic spots, toilets, hotel accommodation, and transportation, as well as availability of assistance and presence of travel partners” (Yau et al., 2004, p. 954).

Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) have increased the frequency of tourist travel from the major generating regions. But ICTs are an even more crucial tool for PwD, who often use technology to compensate for the areas of functioning that they are lacking. It follows that tourists with disabilities provide the important function of stimulus, pushing organizations to be at the forefront in terms of ICTs and assistive technologies (Pühretmair & Buhalis, 2008).

However technology, depending on its configuration, can be not only a facilitator, but a barrier instead, with the consequence that technological constraints become another, and more modern, barrier for PwD. Unfortunately, web surfing is often still a barrier for people with disabilities (Michopoulou et al., 2007). “Examples of the physical barriers include: low vision users will need large text or spatial adjustment, blind people will require screen readers, color-blind users will need adequate contrast of text and background colors, and deaf people should have visual displays rather than pure audio presentations” (Buhalis & Law, 2008, p. 616). Nevertheless, technology, if well designed, can be a useful facilitator. The compliance with the standards defined by World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) and the assistive technologies allow PwD to access web information. Therefore, tourism web planners should take account of the needs of every group of users, so as to design the websites to address inclusion.

The quality of information provided can also be improved by Virtual Reality (VR), that can be defined as “the use of a computer-generated 3D environment – called a ‘virtual environment’ (VE) – that one can navigate and possibly interact with, resulting in real-time simulation of one or more of the user’s five senses” (Guttentag, 2010, p. 638). VR’s capacity to facilitate access to sites can benefit everyone, but this capacity is particularly beneficial for individuals with disabilities. For example, when physical access barriers cannot be easily eliminated due to large costs or conservation requirements (such as in historical heritage sites), visitors with disabilities can enjoy alternative forms of access provided by VR.

Obviously, the final purpose must be to provide an overall experience which is satisfying to the visitor with disabilities. As argued by Ambrose et al. (2012), all aspects of the accessible tourism value chain must be considered to well cater for PwD’s needs because only a *comprehensive accessible experience* increases loyalty

of visitors and profitability of service providers. “Accessible hotels, restaurants, museums and other visitors attractions must not be isolated ‘oases of accessibility’ within otherwise inaccessible landscapes; they must be physically joined up by accessible routes and transport systems. Moreover, destination management organizations must advertise the existence of accessible facilities and attractions through regular marketing channels in order to attract customers” (Ambrose et al., 2012, p. 6).

The true genesis of inaccessible and hostile tourism is probably to be found in a cultural issue: “the service providers in the tourism industry are given very little education and training concerning legislation, access provision, and service related to people with disabilities” (Daruwalla & Darcy, 2005, p. 550).

## **ITALIAN POLICY ON ACCESSIBLE TOURISM**

Generally, in Italy accessible tourism is being facilitated by a good legislation. Accessible tourism is a topic which has received increasing attention, above all since the late 1990s. Focusing the analysis on the most recent period, some important steps are to be noted.

In 2009 Italy ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and its Optional Protocol, adopted by the UN General Assembly on December 13th 2006.

To guarantee the implementation of the UN CRPD, a national law (article 3 of Law of 2009, no. 18) established the National Observatory on the Condition of Persons with Disabilities. The Observatory is a consulting body that provides technical and scientific support for the elaboration of National policies in the field of disability.

In October 2009 the Minister for Tourism created the “Accessible Tourism” ministerial Committee. This Committee drafted the “Manifesto for the Promotion of Accessible Tourism”. The Manifesto contains ten fundamental principles, as illustrated by Figure 1. In March 2011 European Network for Accessible Tourism (ENAT) undersigned the Manifesto, committing to promote its contents in all 27 EU Nations.

Moreover, on September 27th 2012, Italy signed the adoption of the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism (Angeloni, 2012).

Also in 2012 a Ministerial Decree established a Committee for the Promotion and Development of Accessible Tourism. In 2013 the Prime Minister’s Office & Mission Office for Enhancing Italy’s Image (PMO et al.) elaborated and published the first “White Paper on Tourism for All in Italy”, entitled “Make it accessible”.

The White Paper is a novelty to Italy and contains 360 best practices and projects related to accessible tourism, which show that Italy has been promoted among the destinations available worldwide. Below a summary of this White Paper is provided.

To quantify Italian people with disabilities, the White Paper uses the main source of data, represented by the study “Social inclusion of people suffering from limitations to personal independence”, published by the Italian National Institute of Statistics in December 2012. According to this study, in 2011 the number of persons aged 11-87



years with functional limitations is 3,947: more precisely, 1,867 are persons with “slight” functional limitations while the number of persons with “serious” functional limitations is 2,080. According to the same survey, over one and a half million Italian people (45% of the total of those aged between 15 and 87 with functional limitations) find it difficult to go on holiday due to health-related problems.

The White Paper (PMO et al., 2013, p. 40) reports that over 80% of Italians considered accessibility very important to modernising the services offered by the tourism sector. Moreover 12.8% of the Italian population declared that they have been in a situation, at least once, where they had special needs; they also declared that the special needs were catered for in 80% of such cases.

In this regard positive judgements also come from the data processed in 2010 by the TTG (Travel Trade Group) Italia’s Buyer Observatory, based on interviews with 600 foreign tour operators. These operators, who are “selling” Italy all over the world, believe that the country could improve, but 77% of the sample considers that Italy is an “accessible” destination. The most urgent improvements should be made, according to 54% of tour operators, to railway stations, which remain highly inaccessible, often due to structural constraints, but also due to the lack – as almost 80% of respondents stated – of adequate support and information services to aid communication with visitors. The opinion about accessibility is only slightly better on the subject of hotels, held to be inadequate by 46% of those interviewed, and restaurants, which in 38% of cases are deemed not capable of adequately receiving persons with disabilities.

Another important aspect highlighted by the survey is the sensitivity and training of staff. Clients with special needs do not feel understood in Italy, especially if the difficulty is a food-related problem. According to feedback received by tour organisers, these problems are underestimated by hotel and restaurant staff, unable to offer specific menus and food to persons suffering from coeliac disease, or who are lactose intolerant, or who have special dietary needs.

The same foreign tour operators also report that Italy falls short in providing training for establishing relations with clients suffering from mental illnesses, or with blind or deaf clients. Operators believe that personnel in Italy are not adequately trained to provide information to travellers suffering from renal insufficiency (who need to know where haemodialysis centres are located locally), diabetes or oncological diseases (who might benefit from the positive effects, including psychological effects, of the holiday in order to carry on with their treatment).

Another important survey referred by the White Paper (PMO et al., 2013, p. 44) regards studies conducted in 2009. According to these studies, almost 52% of accommodation structures, as a national average, paid particular attention to the needs of guests having disabilities and special needs. Table 1 provides a detail of these accommodation structures with awareness of PwD needs, distinguishing them by product area. It is easy to note that the mountain area had the greatest difficulty in approaching the question of accessibility, due to inherent structural difficulties and the nature of its accommodation structures.

Table 1 Accommodation structures with awareness of PwD needs, by product area (2009 data)

	Percentage
Cities of historical and artistic interest	51.2
Mountain	48.3
Spa	58.8
Lakeside	56.3
Seaside	52.7
Country	56.5
Other localities	52.0
<i>National average</i>	<i>51.9</i>

Source: PMO et al. (2013), White Paper on Tourism for All in Italy

It is interesting to investigate the breakdown of the same accommodation structures by type of accommodation. Table 2 below shows the percentage values.

Table 2 Accommodation structures with awareness of PwD needs, by accommodation type (2009 data)

	Percentage
Hotel	57.0
Holiday village	77.2
Holiday farm	58.3
Campsite	83.0
B&B	25.5
Holiday home	57.2
Youth hostel	80.1
Alpine refuge	24.5
Other guest accommodation	43.6
<i>National average</i>	<i>51.9</i>

Source: PMO et al. (2013), White Paper on Tourism for All in Italy

Table 2 shows that 57% (national average) of hotels were “heedful” to accessibility. Special care was also taken by hostels (80%), the highest expression of “popular” tourist accommodation. However, most care (83%) was expressed by campsites, a type of enterprise in which, due mainly to the presence of camper vans and caravans, tourists with special needs enjoy particular flexibility.

The White Paper discusses another and more detailed survey on accommodation structures, conducted in 2012, in order to examine the various aspects of attention paid to the issues of accessible tourism. The results are very interesting, because they give a measure of the relationship between “hard” factors and “soft” attitudes (PMO et al., 2013, p. 47).

In particular, this survey questioned Italian enterprises about 12 possible modes of structural products and services for accessible tourism. Table 3 lists in decreasing order the most common services provided by enterprises to meet PwD needs.

Table 3 Structural services for accessible tourism (2012 data)

	Percentage
Bathrooms/bedrooms of adequate size/accessories	43.8
Easy access to structure/accessible entrance	43.3
Easy access to bedrooms	34.4
Flexible food/menu based on guests' needs	24.0
Adequately sized lift	17.5
Staff trained to meet specific needs	16.0
Offered services reported in promotional materials	14.3
Lift with acoustic signals	11.2
Lift with Braille buttons	8.1
Specific entertainment (activities inside/outside the structure)	7.1
Services provided by associations collaborating with the structure	6.3
Presence of stair lifts	5.9

Source: PMO et al. (2013), White Paper on Tourism for All in Italy

At a national level, the most common service provided is that of bathrooms of adequate size and accessories (almost 44%), followed by easy access to the structure (about 43%). Still on structural aspects, facilitated access to bedrooms is found in 34.4% of structures. In fourth place with 24% there is a “soft” element, namely a flexible choice of food based on guests’ needs. Adequacy of lift size is next in the list (17.5%, but lifts with acoustic signals are present only in 11.2% of cases; lifts with Braille buttons are present only in 8.1% of cases, and the availability of stair lifts or other equipment are present only in 5.9% of cases). Specific staff training ranks in 6<sup>th</sup> place (16%). The accessible tourism services offered are adequately reported in promotional materials only in 14.3% of cases. Finally, specific entertainments are provided in 7.1% of cases, sometimes with services provided by associations collaborating with the guest accommodation structure (6.3%).

As already explained, the White Paper also collects and analyzes 360 accessible tourism projects (starting from the late 1980s to today).

The selected projects are very different for date of beginning, for size of the territory of implementation (national, regional and provincial scale projects), for type of intervention (publication of guides, training activities, communication tools, removal of architectural barriers, other specialist services), for subjects involved (from institutions to businesses to tourists), for type of disability referred to.

Given its vanguard, the case of *Independent L* organization has been chosen as an example of best practice, worthy of specific analysis, as shown below.



**Ministerio del Turismo**

**Manifiesto for the Promotion of Accessible Tourism**

Putting into effect art. 30 of UN Convention concerning the rights of persons with disabilities ratified by Law no. 18 of 2009

1. People in the most complete meaning of the term, with their specific needs resulting from personal and health conditions (for example: motor, sensory, intellectual disabilities, food intolerances, etc.), are citizens and customers who have the right to autonomously make good use of all the tourist services on offer, being supplied with suitable services with a just quality/price ratio.
2. Accessibility involves the whole tourist service chain, both at national and local level, starting with:
  - a. transport network;
  - b. accommodation capacity;
  - c. restaurants and cafés;
  - d. culture, leisure and sports.
3. Location accessibility shall not be the decisive factor when planning holidays: it should be possible to choose a destination or a tourist facility because it is where we want to go and not because it is the only accessible one.
4. It is necessary to think of accessibility as access to life experiences, that is overcoming the concept of "standard", enhancing the value of the person/customer, who has specific needs.
5. Information about accessibility cannot be reduced to a mere symbol, but has to be objective, detailed and guaranteed, to allow each person to certainly evaluate by himself which tourist facilities and services are able to meet his specific needs.
6. It is necessary to promote positive communication, avoiding the use of discriminating words. It has to be distributed in formats that everybody can use, and through all tourist information and promotion channels.
7. As accessibility does not concern only structural and infrastructural aspects, but also the services offered to tourists, it is necessary to promote quality reception for everybody, that is to encourage a cultural change, that can result in changes in organization and management models, even before structural ones.
8. It is necessary to encourage skill and professional training, based on Universal Design principles and involving the whole tourist and technical professional profile chain: managers, employees, companies, public and private enterprises. It is also necessary to update curricula in all Schools for Tourism, Technical Schools, Universities, Masters and Academic Centres of all grades.
9. Local Authorities, according to their competences and functions, shall implement the accessibility of towns, public buildings and local transports, and shall also plan periodical control and promotion operations for tourist offers for everyone.
10. In order to implement and promote accessible tourism in a system logic, proactive collaboration among tourist Operators, Local Authorities, Public Bodies, Associations of persons with disabilities and social tourism Organizations is encouraged.

**Figure 1: Manifiesto for the Promotion of Accessible Tourism**

## A CASE OF BEST PRACTICE

The project, described here, is as an example of best practice. It was realized by the social cooperative *Independent L* (“L” stands for “Living”), an organization which over the years has created a monitored and evaluated accessibility of touristic facilities in one of the most beautiful Italian regions: South Tyrol.

*Independent L* was founded in November 1997, by nine people with physical disabilities, all in wheelchairs, aiming at working together, towards the abolition of all discriminatory rules and barriers, the protecting of rights of people with disabilities in order to have equal opportunities and, above all, to have an independent life, characterized by a real autonomy in large and small decisions concerning everyday life.

Currently *Independent L* employs 23 people, 40% with disabilities, and has 22 members (90% with disability). The key projects of *Independent L* are mainly financed by the European Social Fund; the Autonomous Province of Bolzano and various banking institutions also finance some initiatives of the social cooperative, depending on the nature of the projects. *Independent L* also has an in-house Webcenter, a business unit that offers web-based internet solutions regarding accessibility. The services meet also the needs in terms of accessibility by people with sensory, motor and cognitive skills.

The Webcenter realized some important works; the most outstanding websites are:

- 1) South Tyrol for all ([www.southtyrolforall.com](http://www.southtyrolforall.com));
- 2) Municipalities for all ([www.comunipertutti.it](http://www.comunipertutti.it)).

“South Tyrol for all” is a specialised tourism portal that gives everybody the possibility of barrier-free holidays in South Tyrol. This website is a user friendly, extremely lightweight and intuitive search instrument for all those that cannot travel freely, in order to make South Tyrol accessible for people with disabilities, elderly people, families with small children and people with food allergies or intolerances. “Holidays without barriers” is the slogan that characterizes the South Tyrolean site dedicated to people with disabilities.

In its starting phase, the portal, born in 2004, aimed at showing the accessibility of facilities. About 1,600 hotel facilities were evaluated, but at that time only around 300 structures matched the demanded criteria. To increase awareness among operators of tourism industry, *Independent L* distributed 5,000 CDs and 50,000 brochures to national and especially international travel agencies.

In a second step, the analysis of accessibility has also been extended to structures other than accommodations. Therefore, the most interesting aspect of the current portal is the vastness of the reviewed structures (not just hotels). On the portal every structure published, whether hotel, restaurant or tourist attraction, is evaluated in an objective manner, letting the viewer to determine what is really accessible, according to his personal needs and requirements.

The careful attention to detail makes the portal an indispensable means for all those who live in South Tyrol or who intend to spend their holidays here.

“South Tyrol for all” is not just a rich and useful travel portal, but it is also the official information platform for accessible tourism in South Tyrol-Dolomites. This shows that South Tyrol is ever-busy in order to enhance its touristic offer by proposing high quality touristic services. The team of *Independent L* provides accessible tourist information, assistance and advice, in order to help guests to plan their holiday in South Tyrol as comfortable as possible. The touristic offer includes barrier-free accommodations, restaurants, tourist attractions, sports and leisure, transport accessible to all.

Throughout the years (9 up to now) and thanks to the remarkable work of *Independent L* people with disability, who visited and examined the facilities shown on the portal, the information on the website truthfully shows a detailed overview of facilities complete with clear and handy evaluation criteria, that indicate their different degree of accessibility.

The very portal provides detailed information regarding:

- around 350 accommodations;
- 110 restaurants, bars and cafes, bakeries;
- 46 excursions (also described in terms of difficulty);
- 7 natural parks;
- 13 panoramic cableways (more were examined and they will be online in a couple of months);
- 28 train stations;
- 84 cultural spots and entertainment;
- 22 facilities including swimming pools and sports centres.

Each structure shows a detailed and complete description. The single technical files start from the outer area of the single facility and lead to the inside one.

More precisely, the portal indicates in an orderly manner the following aspects:

- the presence of car parks and the presence of reserved car parks specifying the type of paving and the difference in height;
- the distance between the parking and the entrance;
- the entrance and details about the door (if automatic or sliding), the maneuvering space, the type of paving;
- the restaurant area and the bar area specifying the types of doors, the height of the tables and the minimum distance between the various tables, the height of the tables for the buffet and the height of the bar counter, the presence of carpets, the paving type;
- the toilets (port, height and type of WC, height and other characteristics of washbasin), the presence and type of lift (size, type of door, height of buttons, possible presence of the audible warning of arrival at the floor) and other rooms;


- if there are terraces or gardens, their features and how to access them;
- in the case of hotels, the height of the reception desk, the size of the corridors, the characteristics of the rooms (dimensions of the furnishings, the presence of automatic regulators for heating and air conditioning, height of switches and handles), the characteristics in terms of accessibility to other areas (sauna and Turkish bath, solarium, beauty center, wellness, fitness).


The workers steadily and currently engaged in the care of the portal are two.


“South Tyrol for all” offers a comprehensive data base with information. More precisely the portal is very rich in: technical files; photos; detailed descriptions; evaluations, distinguished in “general” and “specific” evaluations.


The “general” evaluation, expressed on each structure by means of a variable number of “smiles”, refers only to the degree of usability by guests with disabilities.


Possible evaluations, in descending order, are as follows:

 (five active smiles) – *excellent accessibility* – accommodation can be used very well in all areas and the furnishings are adapted to the needs of people with disabilities;

 (four active smiles) – *good accessibility* – accommodation can be used well in all areas but some furnishings could be better adapted to the needs of people with disabilities or the wellness area is hard to reach;

 (three active smiles) – *satisfactory accessibility* – accommodation is accessible but the independent utilization is uncomfortable in some important areas;

 (two active smiles) – *limited accessibility* – accommodation has restricted accessibility and the independent utilization of some important areas is very difficult;

 (one active smile) – *only accessible with assistance* – accommodation is accessible only with reservation because the utilization of the services needs the assistance of an accompanying person.

Besides a general evaluation of the accessibility, the portal also provides a “specific” evaluation of the accessibility for individual hotel areas (always using a variable number of “smiles”).

The “South Tyrol for all” portal tries to be objective when evaluating a single facility; however a marginal subjective component remains when the accessibility of a hotel is evaluated, because the needs of PwD can be classified in many different ways. For this reason the portal advises users to look at the many pictures and read the technical files as well, in order to find the facility that fulfils their very needs.

This online service, unique in Europe in terms of content, allows all people with disability (or not) to know the list of accessible places and book the accommodations and other tourist facilities from their home. The uniqueness of this site is given by the

large amount of true and complete information collected and displayed. The website is accessible also to people with visual disability.

In addition, today all this rich information is also available in a mobile way, so that tourists and citizens can get real time information at any time and at any place where they are situated. Indeed, from May 2013, "South Tyrol for all" is also available for smartphone and tablet thanks to a mobile application (APP). This new APP, a free download from the Apple Store, was created to facilitate mobility and allows the immediate search of places and facilities on the basis of geo-referenced location, degree of accessibility and the type of facility or service desired.

But *Independent L* is already thinking to the future. Currently the site is only published in Italian and German, but *Independent L* is presently working on the English version and some new graphic features to improve accessibility services.

## CONCLUSIONS

Ability and disability are areas of increasing interest in the tourism services. The tourist industry is frequently portrayed as an industry for the young and super-fit persons and this projection is used to create the image of vibrancy, energy and fun. However, the tourism sector can be more correctly described as one that offers opportunity to all members of a society respecting the whole range of its ability and disability (Baum, 2006).

The differences characterize the human population. Every tourist is different, carrying a unique spectre of experiences, motivations, needs and desires and, when the tourist is a person with disabilities, *a fortiori* this diversity should be respected and taken into account.

An organization (or a destination) that proves to be capable of meeting the needs of tourists with disabilities is an organization (or a destination) able to meet the needs of all tourists, being committed to meeting the needs of more sophisticated tourists. The literature has well documented the main constraints (or barriers) that preclude or reduce the travel frequency rate or the full enjoyment of the tourism experience. Tourism may and must contribute to the improvement of an individual's physical, psychological and mental health.

Thinking of the environment for the elderly, the person with permanent or temporal disability, the child, the pregnant lady, means to face restrictions, limitations, difficulties that any individual can have or have someday.

In the Italian destination, despite a good general policy framework, accessible tourism is still a strategy achieved by only a few operators and in some parts of the Italian destination. But the presence of some virtuous and successful cases is not sufficient, because only a "seamless" travel experience will attract visitors (Ambrose et al., 2012). The findings indicate that there are still many barriers which restrict the travel frequency of PwD who are willing to undertake a journey in Italy. This implies a significant loss of customers and also of profit, if it is true that in the collective imagination Italy is still considered the most valuable collection of luxury and cultural



heritage in the world (FutureBrand, 2012). Tourism websites also show little attention to the market and information needs of travellers with disabilities.

The case of *Independent L* teaches us that it is possible to move on from tourism development to sustainable tourism development without enormous financial and human costs, but only by a good cultural awareness of disability. The auspice is that a successful case such as that of *Independent L* is emulated and repeated, involving and empowering PwD (Darcy, 2006), as *Independent L* did.

In other words, it is hoped that the society at large will be more aware of PwD needs and that the tourism industry will be better able to provide inclusive and barrier-free services tailored to the needs of PwD.

We agree with Daruwalla & Darcy (2005, p. 563), according to who “in industry contexts, it is essential that both business enterprises and educational institutes offering tourism and hospitality programs put disability awareness firmly on the agenda”.

The research findings leave no doubt: educational challenge is the turning point to having a society less inattentive and egoist, and a kind of tourism which is more inclusive and sustainable. Future reflections and actions in the field of accessible tourism can economically and humanly enrich the industry, since inclusive tourism by definition means to pursue the well-being of all.

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# *Dimensions of Community-Based Tourism: A case of surf community in Bali, Indonesia*

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## **ABSTRACT**

This paper examines the dimensions of community-based tourism, a case of surf community in Bali. Most members are resident of Bali, the rest came from various regions in Indonesia. Through factor analysis, there are four dimensions: inspirational; entrepreneurial; cultural; and social.

**Key Words:** Community-based tourism; stakeholder theory

## **BACKGROUND**

Bali is one of the famous tourist destination. It is located in Indonesia which consists of several islands that also have various attractive tourist destination. Various research studies related to the Bali tourism (Minca 2000; Rosenbaum and Wong, 2007; and Iverson 2010). Various tourism available in Bali, such as art and nature tourism. Besides, Bali has special place and very different from other surfing locations. In Bali you can surf every day because there are waves every day not like in other places. If Nusa Dua doesn't have waves, Uluwatu will have some. In August, there was a pro surfing contest at Uluwatu and Padang-Padang. The waves were so good at Padang Padang that invite the photographers and videographers from all over the world to get the best shots of the pro surfers ([www.magicwave.org](http://www.magicwave.org)). Surfing is the most popular water sport in Bali. Surfing championships are held every year.

These championships have a positive impact for tourism industries, because it makes Bali becomes the international destination for surfing ([www.baliheaven.com](http://www.baliheaven.com)).

## **THE PHENOMENA**

In Bali there are many several surf communities. They are learning from other community to get inspiration about surfing techniques. Besides, the Balinese culture concerns for the natural environment. Balinese people belief that natural environment is spiritually preserved. Those phenomena lead to Coca-Cola to manage its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) relates to surfing and environment. Coca-Cola Amatil Indonesia (CCAI) conducts Indonesian Surfing Championship (ISC) Tour. Member of surfing communities, regional government, and surfing industry partners are present. In order to implement its CSR, CCAI programs work on four key areas: environment; marketplace; workplace, and community. ISC tour can help surfers to develop and proof themselves to national and international spectators. Together with surf community, CCAI conduct program to make beaches in Bali better ([www.baliheaven.com](http://www.baliheaven.com)).

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

Community-Based Tourism (CBT) enables tourists to discover local habitats and wildlife, celebrates and respects traditional cultures, rituals, and wisdom. The community will be aware of the commercial and social value placed on their natural and cultural heritage through tourism, and this will foster community based conservation of these resources ([www.communitybasedtourism.info](http://www.communitybasedtourism.info)). There are many study related on CBT. Okazaki (2008) developed the model of CBT integrating the concepts the ladder of participation, power redistribution, collaboration processes, and social capital. The study demonstrated that the model can be used to assess the actual participation level in a study site. Futhermore, Byrd (2007) argued that there is not a definable single generic interest for the host community. The interests will be individual to each community and each subgroup of the community. Changes to the community can either assist in keeping an individual in a community or increase their chance to leave the community. Current tourism and tourism development in the community will also influence their support for future endeavors and their interactions with visitors. The support and interactions will in turn influence the overall success of the tourism development. Moreover, Baglieri and Consoli (2009) elaborated the meaning of community in tourism. They argued that customers may interact with companies and other customers and may achieve more information that allows them to reduce their information asymmetry and become more empowered than they were in a pre-IT era. Numerous recent researches report that online reviews and comments do influence individuals' purchase decisions, affecting the evolution of demand within communities. In this respect, virtual communities play a pivotal role in boosting tourist product innovation by leveraging learning from customer relationships. Customers may become a source of innovation since they gain an economic benefit from innovation which boosts their creativity, and show high expertise which may be transferred to firms and among communities. Virtual communities allow people who interact to satisfy their own needs and to share

purpose such as an interest, need, information exchange, or service that provides a reason for the community. Firms may leverage these communities by providing a suitable context where customers may share social conventions, language, and protocols. Furthermore, Vanagas and Jagminas (2011) examined the potential of CBT in Vilnius district municipality, as well as to propose measures to make this activity feasible. The study demonstrates that communities considered their participation in tourism development reported a number of difficulties they have confronted with. The problems were mentioned most often: disagreement with the local government; lack of communal land; lack of finance; apathy and lack of initiative amongst local residents; lack of sociality and solidarity. Moreover, Lapeyre (2010) assesses the potential contribution of Community-Based Tourism Enterprises (CBTEs) to poverty alleviation and empowerment. It shows that tourism income captured locally improves rural households' livelihoods and generates linkages in the local economy. On the job learning, training sessions and extensive support by non-governmental organisations and donors are further shown to empower rural actors and unlock socioeconomic opportunities for the future. In this context, CBTEs can be characterised as pro-poor initiatives. However, this study provides counter evidence that the sustainability of such community tourism ventures is to be questioned. First, mainstreaming these projects within the competitive tourism commodity chain proves highly challenging and costly; second, communities' institutional and managerial capacity is weak and thus CBTEs' viability is limited; finally, inadequate support by donors and non-governmental organisations fails to tackle challenges faced by community tourism ventures. Furthermore, Manyara and Jones (2007) evaluate the potential of Community-Based Enterprise (CBE) as avenues of poverty alleviation in Kenya and the challenges facing them. The key factors that could influence local community attitudes towards CBE fall into two categories: motivational factors and community factors. A sense of ownership was seen as critical so that local communities were adequately empowered and involved. CBE initiatives had to be seen to be adding value to existing livelihoods. Issues of elitism and poor leadership also have to be addressed. Furthermore, Fiorello and Bo (2012) studied Community-based ecotourism. It aims at environmental conservation but it is also a way to empower communities, by allowing them a degree of control over tourism projects and their impacts. Fiorello and Bo explored the varying degrees of empowerment of host communities provided by community-based ecotourism through a metastudy analysis of six case studies of tourism projects. Not all contemporary tourism projects take local populations into consideration thus the six case studies are nonrandom selections for the purpose of representing the concept embodied in the thesis and showing its appropriateness with the new tourists' expectations. Furthermore, Salazar (2012), studied community-based tourism using long-term anthropological fieldwork in Tanzania. The study critically analyzes how well generally accepted community-based tourism discourses resonate with the reality on the ground. It focuses on how local guides handle their role as ambassadors of communal cultural heritage and how community members react to their narratives and practices. It pays special attention to the time-limited, project-based development method, the need for an effective exit strategy, for quality control, tour guide training and long-term tour guide retention. Findings reveal multiple complex issues of power and resistance that illustrate many community-based tourism conflicts. The encounter with the "Other" is shown to be central and that the role of professional intermediaries in facilitating this

experience of cultural contact is crucial. Tour guides are often the only “locals” with whom tourists spend considerable time: they have considerable agency in the image-building process of the peoples and places visited, (re)shaping tourist destination images and indirectly influencing the self-image of those visited too.

**OBJECTIVE**

As elaborated in the beginning of this paper, there are phenomena of surf community in Bali. Surf community are learning from other community to get inspiration about surfing techniques and they also conduct partnerships with companies to protect the environment and educate people to support making beaches in Bali better. By synthesizing the phenomena and the theoretical framework, the gap still remain. For that reason, the objective of this study is to measure dimensionality of CBT.

**METHOD**

Prior to this study, author conducted observation of surfer community activities. Based on those observations and theoretical framework, author developed a questionnaire consisting of four variables, each of which developed minimum into three items with a five-point Likert scale. The number of respondents in this study were as many as 100. In accordance with the eligibility criteria between the number of variables and respondents, the study meets the requirements (Hair, William, Barry, Rolph, and Ronald 2006). Then author conducts items purification through a number of experts and community members. After some revisions, questionnaire distributed throughout the community members.

**Findings**

Analyzing data through factor analysis by using criteria of eigenvalues greater than 1.0, principal component analysis, and varimax rotation. The results are shown in table 1.

**Table 1**  
Factor analysis’s result of  
the dimensionality of Community-Based Tourism

Factor	% Variance explained	Cronbach’s Alpha	Item	Factor loading
Inspirational	36.040%	.792	Ins 2	.856
			Ins 1	.833



			Ins 3	.724
Entrepreneurial	17.846%	.939	Ent 3	.950
			Ent 2	.919
Cultural	11.258%	.705	Cul 1	.833
			Cul 2	.778
			Cul 3	.697
Social	10.336%	.729	Soc 2	.853
			Soc 1	.850

The value of the KMO (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin) statistic is .660 indicates that is appropriate for factor analysis (Malhotra, 2010), total variance explained for the four dimensions is equal to 75.480% that indicates the level of variance is satisfactory (Malhotra 2010). Cronbach's alpha ranged from .705-.939 that indicates the internal reliability is supported (Nunnally 1979), and factor loading in each dimension ranged from .697-.950 indicates that construct validity for sample of 100 is supported (Hair, William, Barry, Rolph, and Ronald 2006; Huck and William 1996).

## DISCUSSIONS

Community-based tourism relates to stakeholder management (Byrd 2007). In this study, surf community relates with other surf community, tourists (both customers who wants to learn surfing and public), and company. Based on findings in table 1 and the phenomena as explained in the beginning of this paper, author constructs matrix as depicted in figure 1. The matrix consists of two dimensions: first, the context of community-based tourism. It consists of internal and external stakeholder. Internal stakeholder includes both within community and between communities, besides, external stakeholder includes tourists and company. Second, the content of community-based tourism. It consists of integration and relation. Integration means to what extent community becomes more exist. It explains doing the business and implementing the belief. Furthermore, relation means to what extent community relates to other community and tourists. It explains learning from others community and interacting with tourists.

Figure 1  
Matrix of  
Dimensions of Community-Based Tourism

		Context	
		internal	external
Content	integration	entrepreneurial	cultural
	relation	inspirational	social

### LIMITATIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This study has limitations that only focuses on surf community, specifically in Bali. There can be differences in the findings when tourists and company also are considered.

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[www.baliheaven.com](http://www.baliheaven.com)

[www.communitybasedtourism.info](http://www.communitybasedtourism.info)

[www.magicwave.org](http://www.magicwave.org)

# *Professional Training of Tourism Personnel in Bulgaria destination*

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## **ABSTRACT**

Tourism, as a dynamic field of human activity, is a leading industry in the modern economy and globalizing world. The successful functioning of tourist activities depends on numerous factors, such as: natural environment, cultural prerequisites and last but not least – training and qualification of tourist personnel. The constantly increasing requirements towards the level of training of future specialists in this field require by the Bulgarian managers to impose updating of the content, methods and technologies of professional training in tourism.

The present scientific report is aiming at presenting and analyzing the significance of tourism as a crucial factor for the development of labour market as well as the necessity of implementing of modern training and qualification requirements towards the personnel. A special emphasis is laid on the vocational training and its rules and regulations. Attention is focused on the role of the Bulgarian National Agency of Vocational Education and Training in ensuring quality of professional training in tourism. A series of indicators set out in the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training are highlighted. In this context, the need of an active support by the institutions providing training and implementing of the European expertise and strategies is underlined. Current outstanding issues and challenges faced by the vocational education and training system in tourism in Bulgaria destination are discussed.

**Keywords:** Tourism, Professional Training, Personnel in Tourism, Quality of Vocational Training.

## TOURISM: A KEY FACTOR FOR LABOUR MARKET DEVELOPMENT

The priorities of 'Europe 2020' strategy for smart and inclusive growth are the fundamentals of the perspectives for the progress of Bulgaria as a Member State of the European Union. Their accomplishment at national level is highly conditioned by the development policies of Bulgarian education. The **high quality of professional training** is a prerequisite for refining the obtained skills and acquiring new ones. This is the basis for achieving compliance with the requirements of the labor market, improving employment and increasing the economic growth.

Tourism, as the fastest growing industry in the world, is in **dire need of qualified managers** to meet the global demand. The successful operation of tourism activities relies on numerous factors: natural conditions, cultural prerequisites, and last but not least - training and qualification of tourism personnel (Hayes & Ninemeier, 2008).

One of the priorities of the National Strategy for Sustainable Tourism Development in Bulgaria for 2008-2013 is stimulating the role of **tourism as a crucial factor** for the labor market progress and implementation of modern requirements towards training and qualification through:

- development of various tourist services based on up-to-date knowledge technologies;
- wider use of modern communication technologies and devices in tourism;
- improvement of quality of training and professional qualification of tourism personnel at all levels - service, marketing, management, etc.;
- monitoring of the human resources training and qualification system and designing mechanisms for sustainable partnerships between training institutions and business;
- emphasis on alternative methods of training, such as distance, multimedia and interactive form (National Strategy for Sustainable Development of Tourism in Bulgaria 2008–2013).

In comparison with other industries of the economy, the **human factor in tourism** is determinant in terms of the main characteristics of tourism product. Observations and results out of some studies suggest, on one hand, a shortage of qualified personnel, and on the other - a shortage of professional and personable qualities of the specialists and managers. Due to that the lagging behind in training of future specialists and managers shall affect negatively not only the quality of the tourism product, but also its competitive power (Tadarakov, 2013).

The **competitiveness of tourism activities** is highly dependent on the different professionals, their knowledge and skills, working habits and behaviour. Entrepreneurs and managers strive to improve the technologies of the tourism product and to increase their profits mainly through qualification and professionalism of their personnel. The human factor in particular is that, which combines physical, financial and information resources in the tourism product. They not only

manufacture the product but also plan, organize and control the processes running simultaneously (World Tourism Organization, 2010).

Issues of human factor have been studied and analyzed in recent years. The World Tourism Organization (WTO), regional and national tourism organizations and units ground, recommend and implement requirements and rules aiming at improving and refining the training of tourism personnel. The **focus of the institutions** listed above is mostly professional. There are some deviations from the problems of comprehensive educational preparation of students, their general knowledge and personal responsibilities. Namely these educational issues are the foundation on which those working in the tourism system upgrade their professional skills and experience, develop and strengthen their individual and group qualities.

It is a common fact that at the core of tourism management lies the **human resource management**. It is characterized by distribution of roles, leadership behaviour and management by the manager both in the cultural-entertaining activities and in the tourism activities themselves. This requires a constantly refreshing paradigm orientated towards formation of leadership and executive skills in those working in tourism industry, their renewal and optimization.

The **peculiarities of training** a specialist in the field of tourism determine specific demands to the organization of the teaching process. Any future professional with high potential of managerial and executive actions shall implement their competence in the management system in different fields of the hospitality industry as a manager, consultant, analyst, researcher, executor, designer, and functionary (Cannon et al., 2013). He/she shall need to be able to orientate in socio-economic, organizational and technical situations, possess entrepreneurship, analytical skills, initiative and social activeness as well as knowledge of human psychology. In this regard, there is a need for development of **methodological and content tailored training programs** to support resolving of professional and creative tasks. Such targeted programs increase **effectiveness of professional training** of managers in tourism in the course of which the tutors use adequately:

- ✓ dialogue in debatable situations that run on the basis of specific acquired knowledge for individual and group solutions to problems arising in unusual conditions;
- ✓ training sessions that help students to transform learning into skills to solve real life situations;
- ✓ didactic games and exercises to reassert the material and strengthen the motivation for learning;
- ✓ design of projects related to new strategies for vocational training of managers in tourism, which takes into account the characteristics of their social and intellectual development.

According to Palchuk (2007) the main **qualification characteristics** of the professional manager in tourism are:

- systemic acquisition and upgrading of modern economic knowledge;

➤ level of professionalism (ability to plan upcoming activities, to report on the fulfillment of the tasks assigned, to control the quality of performance, to possess managerial and organizational skills, to analyze the processes of the economic activities and the results thereof);

➤ development of economically important personal qualities (enterprise, organizational skills, businesslike manners, creative attitude to work, responsibility);

➤ level of socio-psychological readiness (presence of inner conviction, value orientations, striving for continuous professional growth).

**The nature and functions of professional training** in tourism are objectively determined by socially important values and the existing needs of the society. Therefore, specialization in tourism is considered as a publicly necessary and socially regulated system.

Based on the fundamental necessities and development of the labour market and professions, and according to the paradigm developed in the research of Novikova (1999), vocational education includes the following **qualitative indicators**, which characterize the modern vocational training:

- ability to transform the acquired theoretical knowledge and apply it in practice;
- ability to communicate in various tourist activities;
- ability to adapt to the professional activities, subject to the ability of problem solving and performing creative tasks, active participation in discussions;
- ability to self-assess the targets set with a view to their future professional career;
- ability to work effectively in a team;
- ability to influence (a manifestation of leadership).

## **PARTICIPANTS IN THE PROFESSIONAL TRAINING IN BULGARIA**

**Key players** in providing high quality vocational training in Bulgaria are the main institutions and units that legally or as a social duty have clear responsibilities, rights and obligations in respect of professional training. Their **functions** are implemented through individual actions and/or interactions with other institutions involved in this process.

The institutions in relation to professional training in Bulgaria could be studied in two directions:

- ***Institutions at systemic level:***

**Ministry of Education, Youth and Science.** Its main functions related to ensuring the quality of training are:

- ✓ performing the overall management of the system that provides high-quality vocational training and is responsible for its condition;
- ✓ executing conceptual, legal and planning activities to improve the quality of vocational training;
- ✓ analyzing resources and usage of financial funds for vocational training. It develops and proposes for approval suggestions for their improvement;
- ✓ providing the necessary administrative structure and procedures for effective operation of the system for achieving high-quality professional education and training;
- ✓ preparing analyses and proposing measures for improvement of the overall performance aiming at providing high-quality vocational training;
- ✓ discussing with the social partners opportunities for development of the material and technical facilities for vocational training and possibilities for its modernization, especially for practical training;
- ✓ confirming state standards for acquiring professional qualification, monitoring their application and initiating their actualization and developing new ones;
- ✓ studying international experience in order to adopt good practices, ensuring compliance with the requirements and recommendations of the EU on improving quality of vocational training;
- ✓ interacting with the social and institutional partners to solve important organizational and resource issues - conducting examinations, providing the required quality and quantity equipment for practical training, developing standards, curricula, etc.

**National Agency for Vocational Education and Training (NAVET)** is the state body responsible for the licensing of the activities in the professional education and training system, as well as for the coordination between the institutions related to vocational guidance, training and education. NAVET designs projects of the state educational institutions for acquiring professional qualification for the system of vocational education and training, creates and updates the List of Professions for Vocational Education and Training, regulates the vocational training carried out in licensed centers for vocational training and in various kinds of professional schools.

Through coordinating the activities of the development of strategies for advance and improvement of the vocational education and training, the Agency:

- ✓ contributes to the improvement of the quality of vocational training;
- ✓ participates in the development of conceptual, statutory, regulatory and planning documents in the field of quality assurance of vocational training;



- ✓ ensures the development of high-quality public educational requirements for acquiring vocational qualification by professions and majors;
- ✓ provides monitoring and control over the vocational training centers and makes recommendations for improving the quality of their work;
- ✓ supports an information system for adult vocational training, which traces changes in their quality;
- ✓ makes recommendations to the centers for vocational training for improvement of the quality of education, fulfillment of the state standards, improvement of curricula and syllabuses, and monitors their implementation.

In this regard, it is particularly important the role of NAVET for quality assurance of the vocational training, and for the active support for the institutions offering training as well as for the implementation of European experience and strategies. Considering this purpose, the Agency monitors a series of indicators underlying in the European Quality Assurance Reference framework concerning the quality of the professional training, such as:

- ✓ training for trainers;
- ✓ successful completion of training programs;
- ✓ level of unemployment among graduates of training courses;
- ✓ adaptation of the training to the changing challenges of the labor market;
- ✓ access to the available vocational training.

The institutions, which offer vocational training in Bulgaria, are subject to licensing and continuous internal and external control. This aims at constant improvement of training and elimination of identified deficiencies. The systematic documentation and analysis of qualifying measures play a basic role. By December 2012, NAVET has issued 977 licenses and 650 of them are for vocational training in tourism.

**National Employment Agency:** its main commitments related to vocational training are to:

- ✓ organize and control conducting of vocational training for adults - both unemployed and employed in accordance with the Law on vocational education and training;
- ✓ organize the implementation and ensure provision of the required quality of vocational training for adults under the programmes financed by the EU Structural Funds;
- ✓ perform check-ups on the overall quality of vocational training for adults;

- ✓ assist methodologically the operation of the quality assurance system for vocational training of employed and unemployed;
- ✓ provide systematized information on the quality of completed vocational training for adults;
- ✓ give assessments, prepare analyses and make suggestions to the higher authorities in the process, including on the quality of the available vocational training;
- ✓ make suggestions for improvement of the organization of vocational training, curricula, syllabuses and content;
- ✓ carry out vocational guidance and career counseling.

Other institutions at systemic level, which support the higher quality of vocational training, are:

- ✓ Independent body for assessment of the quality of vocational training to the Council of Ministers
- ✓ Regional Education Inspectorates
- ✓ Regional Employment Service
- ✓ Labour Office Directorates
- ✓ Industrial Ministries

➤ **Nationally represented organizations of the social partners:** these include employers' organizations, on one hand, and the employees' organizations on the other. The former invest in the improvement of existing equipment and ensure financial support for the development of vocational training and the latter distribute the necessary information about the application of quality standards for training and assist in providing real job positions.

➤ **Institutions providing vocational training:** personnel training and up-skilling and their retraining are mainly provided by several bodies: vocational schools, vocational training centers, colleges, universities, which:

- ✓ implement the state policy on the quality of vocational training;
- ✓ create and provide conditions for the functioning of the internal quality control system of the offered vocational training;
- ✓ prepare self-assessment of the completed vocational training, analysis and a plan to improve its quality;
- ✓ include all stakeholders in the activities related to establishment and improvement of the quality of vocational training;
- ✓ create real conditions and take measures for settling and maintaining a high culture of quality assurance of vocational training.

➤ **Teaching staff:** Although teachers are a part of the institutions providing vocational training, given their particular importance and in relation to highlighting the shared responsibility in the process of quality assurance of vocational

training, they are separated as another group of key players. They participate in the learning process with all their psychological, professional and moral potential. Their qualification is a crucial element of the quality of vocational education and training.

➤ **Trainees:** they have a specific place in the provision of high quality vocational training. As direct and primary consumers of the activities of vocational training they have a significant impact on its quality and act as a corrective.

## PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES TO PROFESSIONAL TRAINING IN BULGARIA

The dynamic development of Bulgarian tourism in the last few years, the rapid growth of accommodation facilities, and of the employment in this sector highlighted the problem concerning preparation of highly qualified specialists. In recent years we have seen a rapid expansion and modernization of tourist infrastructure as well as an increase in its capacity. Under these conditions, mobility of Bulgarian tourism is determined by the professionalism of the employees in the sector. The rapidly developing Bulgarian tourism experiences acute deficit of contemporary vocational training staff. The solution of this pivotal problem in these market conditions suggests achieving an optimal match between supply and demand. This match should be implemented in two ways: first – as demand and supply of education and training services and second – as labor demand and supply. The peak efficiency could be reached, when the chain is closed and the needs of education and training are implemented in an adequate labour demand with relevant quality professional characteristics.

In recent years in Bulgaria a steady trend has appeared of increasing interest in vocational training of tourism specialties and in the professions of tourism. Increasing numbers of young or unemployed people are turning to vocational training and career in the field of tourism, mainly encouraged by the new jobs and new opportunities for starting a business. But unfortunately it is not yet established in this country and there is no such a **system for career guidance**, which to inform, consult and advise students, unemployed and other people in their choice of profession and career development according to their personal characteristics and needs of the labour market. This is evidenced by the fact that so far in Bulgaria there is no licensed information and guidance center due to the **lack of entrepreneurial initiative**.

The **professional nosedive** is one of the main reasons for **loss of huge staff potential** in tourism as regards to young recruits with foreign language proficiency, good communication and motivation. At the same time the supply of vocational training in the tourism sector is expanding. There are numerous vocational schools, which are turning to current and prospective jobs in tourism. The largest is the offering of qualification courses in tourism vocations and majors by licensed training centers. In the prevalent part, however, these are companies that do not have their own equipment, training experience and potential. Some of these centers are licensed for vocational training in a very wide range of diverse vocations and majors, which raises reasonable doubts about the level of professionalism in the learning process.

A key problem of vocational education and training in the field of tourism is its **poor relation to the needs and requirements of actual tourist business and expectations and claims of employers**. In most cases educational plans and programs just end in themselves and are detached from the practical needs. Graduates of vocational education and training acquire primarily theoretical, but very insufficient practical skills to successfully deal with their professional duties and responsibilities at the workplace. The main reason for this is the lack of conditions for efficient implementation of students' practical training in a real production environment, which should occupy more than a half of the length of the process. Vocational schools and centers do not have their own facilities for practical training, and in the place where they exist, they are primitive. Tourism management refrains from providing a work placement and work experience in its enterprises because it prevents the normal production rate and extremely commit qualified staff to deal with the trainees.

The **insufficient quality of vocational training** also is due to multiple other reasons, such as:

- ✓ most of the teachers are good professionals, but they lack the required pedagogical skills and experience in adult education, they are not familiar with the innovations in tourism, modern methods and forms of tourist services;
- ✓ the lecture form is still widespread, which is less effective. Extremely insufficiently are applied interactive forms of learning – presentations using visualization tools, tests, discussions, case studies, business games, training, individual work in small groups, solving practical problems and others;
- ✓ there are no suitable textbooks and didactic materials for practically applicable training in tourism professions and majors. Especially needed are written technologies, procedures and standards for specific activities and operations related to the performance of the basic and additional services;
- ✓ up till now only state educational requirements have been developed and approved for acquiring a qualification in certain tourist professions. For the other professions in tourism in fact there are no regulations on the level of compulsory vocational training, knowledge, skills and professional competencies that must be acquired in the training process. In the development and evaluation of these documents trained personnel is not involved, and their expectations and real needs are not considered;
- ✓ the management in tourism business neither invests in company training nor supports partnerships and contacts with vocational schools or training centers. Instead of participating in the necessary professionals preparation, often employers prefer to attract executives from other travel companies unfairly;

- ✓ the motivation of specialists for professional development in the Bulgarian tourist business is unsatisfactory. A significant part of the specialists trained in our country seeks opportunities abroad. This situation is very unfavorable. It is caused primarily by the pay systems and staff assessment, the seasonal nature of employment and by the absence of prospects for career development in the Bulgarian tourism companies (Infotourism, 2012).

All these circumstances are profound reflection questions, which create **initiatives for change**. The decision of a big part of these problems could be sought by establishment of National Centre for Vocational Education, Training and Implementation of Tourism Staff. According to the social status, its founders might be interested industrial organizations. This center can help for:

- ✓ more active involvement of tourism management in the process of training and education;
- ✓ better vocational education quality by improving teacher training, preparation of training materials, monitoring of teaching in vocational training centers, conducting strategic forums and public discussions, accelerating the development and improving the quality of public educational requirements for acquiring professional qualification in tourism professions, certifying educational plans and programs, etc.;
- ✓ establishment and development of partnerships of competent public authorities, tourism management, trade unions, NGOs and tourism training institutions to raise the level of vocational education and training in tourism in line with European standards;
- ✓ promotion and support intercompany action to enhance the staff skills in tourism businesses;
- ✓ actualization of the list of professions and vocational education and training majors in tourism, according to the needs of the tourism industry;
- ✓ creation of an information data system, containing graduates from vocational education and training, to assist employers in their recruitment;
- ✓ provision of professional assurance and advices of successfully completed vocational education and training for acquired knowledge, skills and competencies that will give them an advantage in the candidates selection process for employment in tourism enterprises;
- ✓ conduction of pilot training courses for new and prospective professions and specialties and dissemination of such educational and training products.

Mentioned facts do not exhaust the problems of vocational education and training in tourism. The strategic importance of these sustainable development problems of Bulgarian tourism makes even more urgent the **broad public debate** on the demand for better solutions.

## GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE TO PROFESSIONAL TRAINING IN 2020

European development, which is **based on the knowledge**, and opening of European labour market is the biggest challenge to the vocational education and training in Europe and to all stakeholders. The same is true about the **need of these systems to adapt continuously to new developments and changing needs of the society**. Enhanced cooperation in vocational education and training will help to ensure a successful enlargement of the EU, and to achieve the objectives set by the European Council in Lisbon. The European Development Centre for Vocational Training and the European Training Foundation are important institutions in supporting this collaboration. The opportunities, which EU gives to its citizens for life, education and work in other countries, contribute to **cross-cultural amity, personal development and full realization** of the Union economic potential (Parusheva, 2013).

Bulgarian public management takes into account European strategies, policies and practices in the field of vocational training. For our country leading in this respect are the Lisbon strategy, the Strategy for Lifelong Learning, the European Employment Strategy and others (Pencheva, 2011). **Education reform** in general and in particular – in vocational education and training in Bulgaria is facing an important task – to ensure such terms for training that allow continuous maintenance of the workforce quality and its employment suitability under the requirements of the labour market and knowledge economy.

By 2020 European vocational training systems should become more attractive, applicable, directed closely to careers, innovative, affordable and flexible than they currently are, and should contribute to excellence and equity in learning lifelong learning, by providing:

- ✓ attractive and inclusive vocational training with highly qualified teachers, innovative learning methods, high quality infrastructure and facilities, a high relevancy on labor market and opportunities for further education and training;
- ✓ high initial vocational training, which shall be an attractive choice, having the same value as general education for students, parents and society as a whole. It should provide students to acquire both key competences and specific skills;
- ✓ easily accessible and career-oriented continuing vocational training for workers, employers, independent contractors and unemployed, which facilitates both competence development and career changes;
- ✓ flexible vocational training systems, approach focused on achieved learning outcomes, which shall support both flexible learning programs and allow passage between the different subsystems of education and training (school education, vocational training, higher education, adult education) and also provide validation of formal and informal learning, including competences acquired through the work experience;

- ✓ European education and training area using the transparent qualifications systems, allow the transfer and accumulation of learning outcomes and qualifications and competences recognition and increase transnational mobility;
- ✓ significantly improved opportunities for professionals transnational mobility in vocational training;
- ✓ easily accessible and high-quality information, guidance and lifelong counseling forming a coherent network that allows citizens to take solid decisions and to manage their learning and professional development beyond the traditional gender lines.

The **strategic objectives** for tourism development to the period 2008-2013 are aiming at establishing a human resources development system and creating tourism integrated information system. Priority is given to the workforce training and retraining for the real needs of the economy to be met, and in this way the available training to comply with the demand.

## **FINDINGS**

- Tourism, as the fastest growing world industry, needs qualified managers to meet the global demand.
- At the core of tourism management lies the human resource management.
- There is an objective necessity of active institutional support providing vocational education and training and the implementation of European experience and strategies.
- The problems and challenges of vocational education and training require broad public debate on demand for better solutions.
- European development, which is based on the knowledge, and opening of the European labor market is the biggest challenge to the vocational education and training.
- 

## **CONCLUSION**

The challenge that society meets at the beginning of the new century is to achieve full employment and to maintain worldwide economic growth. In terms of developing globalization and continuous improvement of the knowledge society, the education and training are important priorities. The requirement for continuous improvement of the level of knowledge, skill and competence is a precondition for all citizens' personal development and also guarantees their participation in all ongoing important social processes and their active involvement in the labor market. Efforts are targeted to ensure the employment quality and quantity based on the new educational and training strategies.

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## *An Ubiquitous approach to tourism and tourists information needs in the Douro Valley Heritage Site*

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### **ABSTRACT**

With the distinction of the Alto Douro Wine Region to World Heritage Site in the category of Cultural Landscape, in December 2001, the pristine nature was echoed internationally, reaching new visibility. This is not only an amazing space where are produce excellent wines, notably the Port Wine, but also a natural Heritage, architectural, socio-cultural, gastronomic and wine space that urges boost. The heritage, its potential as a tourist resource, needs to be explained and / or interpreted, bailing up the model of ubiquitous computing - mobile phone, smart phone or tablet. These devices are embedded in the people daily routines, and represent today's most common and widely used technology. This growing technological phenomenon, aims to break with the traditional model, centered on the personal computer, giving users the ability to interact with the digital world through the elements that surround the user environment, and using multiple devices. Because all the information is reproduced in multiple atoms, becomes fundamental rethink the classical forms to support information needs that tourists have on the trip - guided tours and self-guided, "living history" performances / plays, forums / discussions, pamphlets, interpretive panels, signage, among others, as well as how actors tourist must interact with these.

This paper analyzes the main problems and needs that tourism entities have in disseminating information, and proposes a new approach of interaction between the tourist and the information and services within tourism. The proposed approach presents a Technologic Framework, based on the principle of ubiquity and implementing the concept of smart spaces supported by contextualization mechanisms.

**Key Words:** Contextualization, Interpretation, Ubiquity, World Heritage Site

## INTRODUCTION

Tilden (1957) was one of the first to address the issue of heritage interpretation, ensnaring the concept to the visitor experience. Despite the ambiguity of the term in 1977 (Tilden, 1957) a new approach to the maintained concept subordinate to interpret as a vehicle for decoding order, aided by a set of tools and techniques. Thus, "an educational activity Which AIMS to reveal meanings and relationships through the use of original objects, by firsthand experience, and by illustrative media rather than simply to communicate communication factual information."

According to the National Association for Interpretation (Graham, 2005), the "Interpretation is a communication process that forges emotional and intellectual connections between the interests of the audience and the Inherent meanings in the resource."

Despite the progress that the term has in recent decades, it is urgent to make the information more quickly and the next visitor, meeting the requirements established as the National Strategic Plan for Tourism (2007), which mandates the creation of itineraries to showcase heritage historical, cultural and religious regions. It is therefore necessary to provide a wide range of information about places, enabling the visitor knowledge and discipline as well as regular visits flows. But, this information will be tailored to the needs of your visitors?

In the current context, the interpretation techniques most commonly used are: the interpretation custom, which establishes a close relationship between the one who provides interpretation and visitant, e.g. guided tours, "living history" re-enactments / plays, forums / discussions. This technique has the advantage of adapting to the needs of each group, but represents costs for institutions, especially in human resources, technical and impersonal, which encompasses various practices, such as the internet and new technologies, the audiovisual media, the pamphlets and interpretive panels, signage, the self-guided tours, among others. This technique meets the new premises of public policy, presenting several advantages, including a very low cost per visitor.

Public policies have been focusing increasingly on reducing the human and material resources, paving the way for other forms, less expensive, and disclosure of assets. In addition, tourist information offices and / or educational services / interpretative provided by specialized personnel often depend, local, obeying, so a

rigid schedule of operation being closed after 5:30 pm or 6:00 pm and / or closed during the weekend.

Given the obstacles mentioned here, we are facing a new challenge and an opportunity.

## **THE ROLE OF UBIQUITY AND CONTEXTUALIZATION**

If a few years ago, a tourist to choose a touristic destination consulted prospectus in a travel agency, nowadays the same is not true. A tourist of today wants more. Want to be able to search all over the target region before choose to visit it. Tourist wants to have real time support when he is visiting the place, and also want easily to share his experiences with other users with the assurance that the information available after the visit will be useful to those who plan to go to the same place. These data justify the introduction of new information systems to support the tourists and tourism (Brown & Chalmers, 2003). With the advent of the Internet some of these services were extended to customers, but according to Watson et al. (2004) there are three fundamental problems with existing systems: first, tourists before the trip has a lot of information, which will have to filter, and will have to spend too much time to find useful information. Secondly there are few systems that support mobility of tourists, and finally after the journey of the outcome of experiments are not easily shared.

Although the concept of ubiquitous computing is not new, that does not need a computer to access the information (Weiser, 1991) and even the devices evolution might give the impression that they are "invisible" and are anywhere (Watson, et al., 2002) we verified that the development in the application of tourist support for mobile devices is imperative, even with the new functionalities of the phone, that slowly are becoming present in all models released. The existence of integrated camera and Java applications support are two examples of features considered common in a current phone. Today technologies such as Global Positioning System (GPS), Wireless Local Area Network (WLAN), or Bluetooth are already easily found on a mobile device while the technology Near Field Communication (NFC) is beginning to appear.

Assert that the information and services are ubiquitous, means that they are available anywhere and anytime. The development of mobile devices to access the wireless network, along with lower costs of network access traffic data, as well as the proliferation of free wireless hotspots, makes the use of these devices access tools increasingly common and attractive content that proliferate on the Internet. The model of ubiquitous computing aims to break with the traditional model centered on the PC, and to give users the ability to interact with the digital world through the elements of the environment surrounding the user at any time and using multiple devices (Han, 2004; Saha, 2005; Hernandez, 2009).

Mobile devices such as mobile phones, smart phones or tablets, are incorporated into the daily routines of people and represent the most common and widely used technology today. Studies have shown that, in Portugal, the ratio of mobile phone / person far exceeds 100% (ICP ANACOM, 2012). As a general rule, "all people have at least one mobile device." This wide availability of mobile devices is the ideal tool

for interaction between the user and the information and services on-demand. This idea is reinforced by the current trends in the evolution of mobile devices, which suggests a huge potential for development as they incorporate new technological capabilities in mobile devices (e.g. GPS, NFC, and WIFI).

Allied to mobile devices are today, new technologies that allow the contextualization and the bridge between the physical and digital. GPS combined with mechanisms such as barcodes, multi-dimensional codes such as QR Code and radio frequency tags such as NFC allows associating real-world objects to a given element to represent and contextualize.

### **Technologic Framework**

An approach based on contextual and ubiquitous, it is demonstrated particularly interesting in promoting tourism and in particular in the context of the visit, where tourists more need to be helped in order to understand and have an answer to their expectations. For the tourist can get information and access to services during the visit is key to answer the need for mobility that the tourist has the means to access the information it provides, and the time / availability that it is willing to consume, to get the information they want.

The technical characteristics of current mobile devices, constitutes them today in devices that, among other capabilities includes: a processing capacity reasonably permanent connectivity, camera and the ability to run external applications to its core - operating system installed root - (e.g. Java ME, Google Android or Apple iOS). These capabilities allow now look at him as a very important technological device in ubiquitous architectures. Their decoding capabilities contextualization elements such as NFC tags, QR Code tags (with the camera) or GPS, make mobile devices that proliferate the overwhelming part of the population, a tool that allows you to support an architecture that aimed at providing, ubiquitous information and services in context, as illustrated in figure 1.

Applications for helping tourists "during the trip", when exists, are mainly focused in a single indexing-technology. Although sometimes one unique contextualization-mechanism can meet the necessary requirements to help tourists, when we only have one technology available, we are limiting the users to problematic situations such: lack of compatible devices with the technology used, or, situations where this technology does not respond in the best way at the requested.

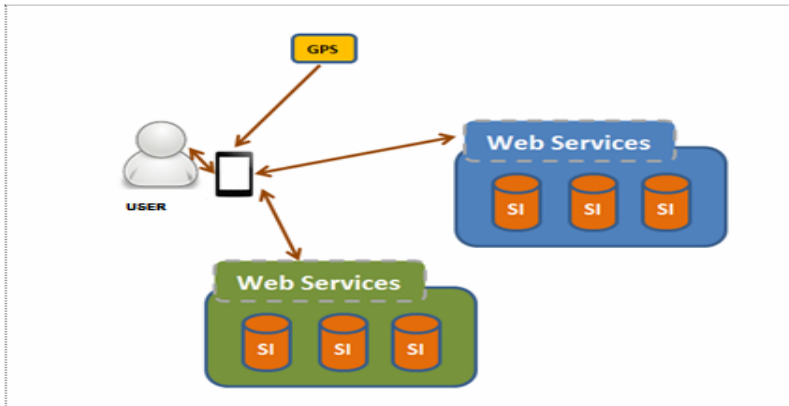


Figure 1: Access to information and services through mobile devices

In the case of tourism there are specific situations where we have to use different technologies to satisfy the tourists' needs. As an example: we can have GPS technology that is very good at tracking and helpful for the establishment of paths and trails for tourists but has an error in the approximation at distances of less than one meter. Also, if the tourist is in a place with many points of interest distancing between them less than one meter of each other and if the technology used to interact with tourists is the GPS, it's impossible identify which object is to be seen at any given time.

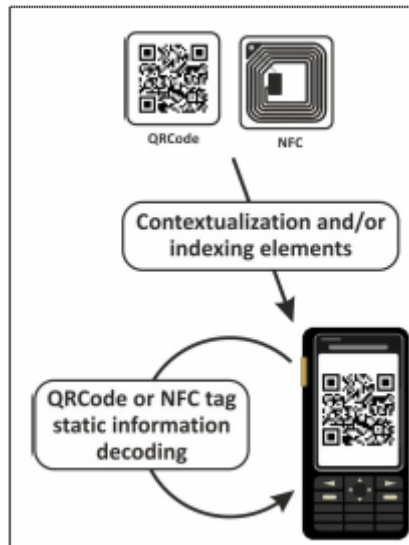


Figure 2: Using context elements (real world object-indexed) through mobile devices

To bridge this gap and the fact that there is no GPS signal indoors (e.g. museums), there are other technologies such as QR Code or NFC tags, that allow a closer interaction with the tourist, which not only have a smaller scope, but also allow only-spreads information to those who request it, being an interaction-aware logic-of-use, as illustrated in figure 2.

## **Conclusions**

This century saw an unprecedented increase in the number of users, applications and mobile networks available. The proliferation of mobile devices with increasingly technological features are enabling applications that can render pervasive computing, allowing that information can be accessible anytime and anywhere and, probably, based on user's location and context (Bahl, et al., 2002).

Mobile devices and mechanisms for contextualization tear the usual formats, engaging information already inventoried by the central and local - in printed brochures, pamphlets and leaflets, allowing arrives in a ubiquitous manner, contrary to the excessive weight of the costs of the physical devices promotional disproportionate to the current economic situation. It also aims at reducing obstacles, embarrassment, undue delay, responding to pressure from increasing demands and expectations of citizens towards the tourist information services. Contributes decisively to increase the information available to the public, a better organization of the visit, implementing best practices in the sector of tourism information, streamlines endogenous resources, and promotes quality and excellence, a perspective of instrumental nature in the service of a higher goal, which is to inform the public.

The proposed framework aims to be an enabler of innovative ways to provide information and services to tourists and establish itself as a gateway to a business network. This work is currently on development stage where we are creating a prototype in order to validate the proposed framework.

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*A Metaphorical Exploration of Work, Life and  
Community On-Board Cruise Ships: a Hospitality  
Perspective*

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## **ABSTRACT**

This research provides a sociological understanding of front line hospitality staff, focusing particularly on waiters and pursers employed on cruise ships. Its purpose is to evaluate the complexities and richness of their work and social experiences as they negotiate, create and justify their identities and community formations in the unique and under-researched environment of a cruise ship. Conceptually, the research investigates the inevitable and inextricable links between identity, work and community to explore their perceptions of themselves, others and their world. Being part of a wider research project, this paper metaphorically explores twenty semi-structured interviews to creatively gather an “insider’s” view of the participants’ work, community and cruise ship environment. Ultimately, a metaphor can be used as a porthole into self image, guided by the framework of the cruise ship to help construct meaning. Therefore, the metaphors used by participants were not a method to explain the organisation, but rather how the members come to understand themselves within the organisation. What is clear from this study is that all participants created a ship-based identity, which was different from how they perceived themselves on land. Being an environment that is unique, workers have to adapt, adopt and sacrifice - their previous identity has to be reshaped to meet the criteria of the place and system of the ship. Waiters were significantly more likely to define themselves and their world based upon their occupational perceptions and relationship with management, while pursers reflected upon their social and personal opportunities as a tool for self-definition. The outcomes of the research present an exploratory, in-depth account of the working lives of hospitality workers on cruise ships. The findings will be of value and relevance to cruise ship operators when tackling social issues relating to the employment of cruise ship workers.

**Keywords:** Cruise ships, Metaphors, Community, Hospitality

## **Introduction**

The purpose of this research is to explore and evaluate the transient and temporary working lives of front line hospitality workers on-board cruise ships. This is a field of research which is relatively unknown, particularly from a sociological and behavioural perspective (e.g., Gibson, 2008; Papathanassis and Beckmann, 2011). In particular, an important and under-researched issue is that of cruise ship employees and how they make sense of their work and life on-board. It is this area which constitutes the focus of this study. When most people go to work, they are in the knowledge that they can go home at the end of the day or the end of their shift, insomuch that they have a life outside of work, including friends and family. The cruise ship industry is in contrast to this. The organisation not only invades one’s working life, but also one’s social life. Ultimately, to be employed on cruise ships, is in a sense to dedicate one’s

life, albeit temporarily, to an occupation or line of work and the people attached to that work.

From an operational standpoint, hierarchy, efficiency and bureaucracy are prominent, a diluted form of its naval cousin. To work on a cruise ship is to be arguably more tied to an occupation than one would be on land. The occupational position which an individual is employed on-board has an overarching determinant on the type of life one can expect. One's occupation will not only determine aspects such as the level of pay, status and number of hours worked, but also where one lives on the ship, where one can eat and socialise, and it also influences the people one socialises with. Essentially, an occupation can be the forefront of how an individual comes to define oneself and others while on the cruise ship, thus creating a ship-based identity. This noted, to capitalise upon a fuller understanding of the sociological and behavioural nature of cruise ship work, efforts should be made to explore the totality of work and life, encapsulating not only the work one does, but also the surrounding community and social activities which are inextricably linked.

This exploratory paper, which is part of a wider study that explores the work and life of hospitality employees on-board cruise ships, presents a discussion and findings of a metaphorical analysis of twenty semi-structured interviews held with individuals in the occupations of waiter and purser. A waiter has similar occupational demands to those on land, while a purser is similar to that of a front desk / guest services personnel in a hotel.

### **A brief overview of the cruise ship industry**

The cruise industry finds itself straddling a unique segment of the hospitality and tourism sector, entangled within a production and service environment, and underlined by maritime and international law. In its entirety a cruise ship is a floating hospitality, leisure, and tourism hub, demonstrating a multitude of industries intertwined within one entity. The ship itself is a social container, encroaching physical and symbolic boundaries, a controller of social action and interaction. In this sense, cruise ships have often been regarded as floating 'cities' or 'hotels', and could arguably be further categorised as their own floating society. Research on cruise ships has gathered pace over the past 30 years, with increased intensity in the last decade or so. The lack of social and cultural knowledge and rising media attention surrounding the industry are calls which have challenged researchers alike to focus on this successful fragment of the tourism and hospitality sector.

The modern cruise ship industry is a strategic key player in the hospitality and leisure industries, and has changed markedly in recent years. It is 'expanding rapidly' (Millar, 2010: p.17), predominantly influenced by technological advances in vessel and operational design and changes in social perceptions, making cruising more accessible to individuals from wider socio-economic backgrounds. Such changes have evidently impacted on demand and according to the Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA), the industry has experienced a continuing upward trend with average annual growth figures of 7.4% since 1980 (CLIA, 2010). Cruise Market

Watch (2013) reported that there were 20.3 million passengers in 2012, which is forecast to grow to 20.9 million passengers in 2013. Although cruise tourism, in terms of figures, registers less passengers than in other tourism sectors, the growth rate of cruise tourism far outreaches tourism rates overall, and the industry holds a significant economic portion of the world tourism business (Swain, 2006).

The nature of a cruise ship, being physically isolated and encapsulated, is what sets it apart from many other industries, organisations and places of work for an employee. The cruise ship is a place of work, a temporary home, and offers a base for leisure pursuits, which are 'locked into patterns of interaction with whoever is on-board' (Sampson, 2003: p.266), forming a contained floating society. Working seven days a week, up to 16 hours a day, for months at a time can severely strain employees, especially in occupations with direct customer contact such as those in hospitality positions. This on-board life offers little opportunity for socialising and activities outside of the occupation (Lukas, 2009; Sehkaran and Sevcikova, 2011), thus developing a sense of community revolving around a specific line of work.

Due to the self-sufficient nature of operations and a focus on customer satisfaction, there is often one employee per two/three customers, highlighting the centrality of labour operations on-board (Raub and Streit, 2006). The labour structure of a cruise ship can be divided into hotel and marine operations represented by a three class social structure of officers, staff and crew (e.g. Lee-Ross, 2004). Occupations categorised as 'crew' are at the bottom of the hierarchy and are typically positions in the dining room, custodial operatives and cabin stewards. 'Staff' occupy positions such as shop assistants, gym instructors, and entertainment. Most front line service staff are recognised as crew, although the position of purser for example, is categorised as officer. Authority on-board can be compared to 'paramilitary' (Nolan, 1973: p.88) or 'quasi-military' (Wood, 2000: p.365) in which social relations are much more hierarchical than in most workplaces and power structures are closely linked to the specific division of labour (McKay, 2007; Nolan, 1973). The social structure is in principle restricted to one's position held on-board the ship. In this sense, a worker could be straggled to their occupation as an important dimension that expresses their identity.

## **A metaphorical exploration**

In its simplest of forms, a metaphor creates a distinctive understanding of an object/experience through the connection of something that is relatable and familiar. For example, "Michael has the heart of a lion", does not literally mean that "Michael" has a lion's heart, but may have a shared understanding of being brave, strong, and courageous. Therefore, through the vehicle of discourse an individual can communicate effectively, maintaining a shared meaning which may or may not be difficult to express otherwise. Metaphorical language means not taking language literally but rather deciphers the underlying meaning. In this sense, a metaphor can reveal an insight into how individuals make sense of events, which can be attributed in a collective and individual way (Cazal and Inns, 1998), reflecting an intersection of

context specific social meanings and experience. In short, a metaphor can be considered a form of discourse that transfers an experience or process (e.g., emotion, ideas, relationship) that is tied contextually and often tacitly, and expressed so that it becomes clearer and relatable. Due to the presentational value that metaphors offer individuals, it can be a useful tool to express ideas or thoughts which are sensitive, complex or intangible, or furthermore in areas which are poorly understood, such as cruise ship work.

Much contemporary research on the subject of metaphor draws upon the work of Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) *'Metaphors We Live By'*. They asserted that metaphors structure conceptual understanding and regard metaphors as 'pervasive', not only in the thinking of language use, but also ingrained into thought and action. In this sense, a metaphor can be a representative link between language and thought, and furthermore can be fundamental to the signification of reality to understand and interpret the world (Lehtonen, 2000). As Lakoff and Johnson (1980, p.3) state, 'the way we think, what we experience, and what we do every day is very much a matter of metaphor'.

Metaphors, as a niche form of discourse analysis, have been applied to a wide range of research areas, specifically, and more relatable to this study, to the area of work, identity and community. In particular, metaphors have been used to explore the identity of teachers (e.g., Cameron, 2003; Hunt, 2006; Leavy *et al.* 2007), the relationship between work and life (Cowan and Bochantin, 2011), the emotional work of being a nurse (Froggatt, 1998), hospitality organisations (Palmer and Lundberg, 1995), and also the 'performative' metaphors in the interactive service work of cruise ship workers (Weaver, 2005). Understanding how metaphors are used can assist in the understanding of how people think, make sense of the world, and how individuals communicate (Cameron, 2003). Furthermore, the analysis of metaphors is concerned with how metaphors are structured, used and understood (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996). In other words, to what meaning is the metaphor being expressed, what information is being transferred, and what kind of relationship does this have with the experience/process. Thus bridging perceptive thought processes with shared understanding. In this sense, metaphors can provide insights into hidden emotions or experiences, particularly with regards to belonging to a group, transferring to such concepts as identity, or how individuals construct meaning of themselves.

## **Methodology**

This study gathered data via semi-structured telephone interviews from past and present cruise ship employees in the positions of waiter and purser. Due to the notorious difficulties of collecting data on cruise ship employees (e.g. Larsen *et al* 2012), the sample of participants was achieved through three strategies: (1) an advertisement on cruise ship based online social networks, (2) a poster / advertisement in two internet cafes and one seafarer hub around the port of Southampton, UK., and (3) the opportunity of snowball sampling. The sampling criteria were based on individuals employed in the position of waiter or purser, had completed at least one full contract on a cruise ship, and lastly that individuals were employed on a cruise ship, or employed recently. In total, twenty interviews were

undertaken. The length of the interviews was between seventeen minutes and just over two hours, with an average of over forty minutes. The interview questions were generally derived from the literature and also a preliminary study, but questioning was open and remained general to seek the motivations and expectations of working on-board cruise ships, insights of their work and life, and their perceptions of work and themselves.

The sample included nine males and eleven females originating from 15 different countries. There was one participant who had worked in both positions and so was included in the data of waiting staff and pursers. This included eight waiting staff and thirteen pursers. The waiting staff participants were typical of cruise ship employees in that it is a male dominated position (six males and two females), and they also primarily originated from Eastern Europe or Asia (five). Participants in the position of purser were also typical in that it is a female dominated position (three males and ten females), and also mainly from Western Europe/North America/Australia (nine). All participants had worked at least one full contract on-board a cruise ship, with the longest being ten years, and with an average of just over three years. Because of the difficulties of contacting cruise employees directly, there was a total of just five individuals who were still working in the cruise ship industry. Of the 15 participants not currently working on cruise ships, seven months was the longest time out of cruise ship employment. The shortest was two months, and the average was just over four months.

## **Metaphor analysis**

Generally, metaphor analysis, as a research tool, begins with the collection of linguistic metaphors from participants, which are sorted into groups or clusters by lexical connections, and subsequently given labels from which meaning is transferred (Cameron, 2003: p.240). This can be typically applied in two ways: through the use of pre-determined metaphors which have been recognised in previous research, or through the development of metaphors based upon what is discovered in the data. Each approach has its appropriateness and usefulness. The extraction of metaphors in this study was unprompted (Weaver, 2005). This meant that the interview schedule did not directly seek to ask participants to think metaphorically, allowing participants to naturally and organically use, and more importantly be given the choice of metaphorical use. In other words, individuals chose to use metaphors as a way of reflecting their understanding as a semi-conscious discourse.

The current analytical procedure of metaphors was primarily influenced by the work of Steger (2007), but also takes note of Cameron (2003), and was undertaken in three steps. Basically, these steps involve (1) the identification of metaphors in the discourse, (2) evaluating the general meaning of the metaphor, and (3) investigating the connotations relevant to the context (i.e. cruise ship). The analysis of metaphor is not to seek an all-encompassing metaphor that are used by cruise ship employees, but to locate multiple metaphors, which may contrast, to fully explore their understandings or realities of working and living on-board a cruise ship. This analytical process involved the reading and re-reading of the interview transcripts, highlighting the metaphors used. Metaphors were chosen that were 'strong' and

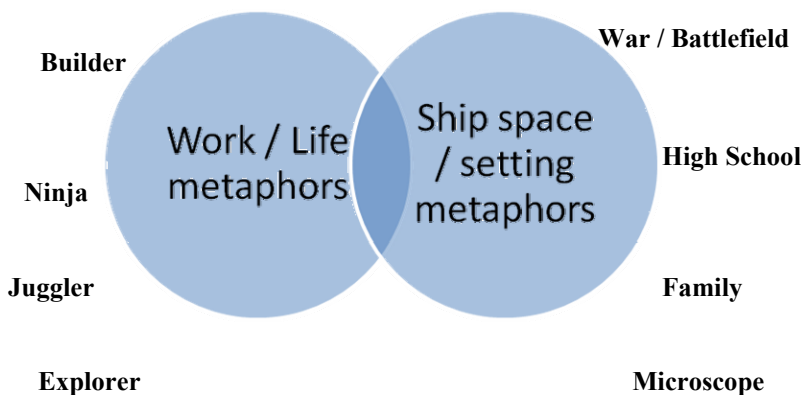
'comparative'. In other words, the metaphors that were more obvious and arguably less creative, yet were the dominant images of the organisation, work and life, that participants chose to express as one way of understanding their world. Once the metaphors were highlighted, these were listed and grouped by each participant.

## Findings and discussion

In total there were two clusters of metaphorical illustration that related to the environment of the ship. One cluster explored how participants understood the ship's space or work setting, and the second cluster identified the strategies used as participants negotiated their way through their working and social lives. The metaphor clusters are shown in Figure 1.

This metaphorical content reflected upon the participants' views about their working and social environment. In other words, how the cruise ship environment had implications upon one's work and also social activities. The metaphorical content here was predominantly associated with conflict, intensity and struggle, and how individuals were able to fit in the ship's environment. Moreover, the metaphors were of a community focus, in that the focus was not solely upon the individual. Being able to understand the cruise ship environment could not be fully made without reference to others. To make sense of oneself (self definition) within a given context can only be realised from the comparison, relationships, and judgement of others (e.g. Tajfel, 1978). Therefore to understand oneself in the cruise ship environment, the perception of others and their perceived perceptions need to be taken into consideration.

**Figure 1 Metaphorical findings**



### *Metaphors of the environment: ship space / work setting*

On cruise ships there is a strong emphasis on family. When talking of family about other cruise ship members it clearly had meaning to the participants, particularly since they were isolated from their "real" family. This disconnection from their

biological family provides a need for belonging and it became “a family away from your own family” (Joanne, purser). It was clear that cruise ship companies would foster and place value upon a family environment; it not only supports a strong and harmonious community atmosphere, but it also implements control, trust, and an element of obligation. The obligation refers to the feeling of having to do a good job or a reluctance to leave one’s role, because to do so would be letting their family down (Furunes and Mykletun, 2007). In some ways, a family and the organisation are similar. As a social system, both have a recognised leadership/hierarchy, which can be collectively and individually supportive and controlling, and furthermore have the capacity to entrench belonging and a base of conflict (Brotheridge and Lee, 2006). It was clear that organisational members “really became family” (Sam, purser), and although there was some references to the role of a parent/manager role, the most identified role was that of their “brothers and sisters”, or their work group members. In this study, waiters formed a family which was centred around their occupation, while pursers, having more freedom in their role, encapsulated different occupations, albeit typically on the same hierarchical level.

The war/battlefield metaphor was more often referred to by waiters. This would suggest that waiters felt more threatened and were in a position of conflict. This is not suggested as a physical war/battle, but one that is verbal and symbolic in construction (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980), whereby one’s identity (personal and social) is attacked or criticised and strategies are devised to defend it. Waiters related to this metaphor on a more symbolic level which was integrated throughout multiple discourses in the interviews. For pursers, this metaphor was used as a mechanism to primarily describe their relationship with guests, which can be at a confrontational capacity, and also as an explanation as to how their personal space was “invaded” by the organisation (Kim, purser). For waiters, a war/battlefield metaphor was more akin to their identity and multiple aspects of their work and life. It primarily defined their role as one with connotations of conflict and struggle. The war for waiters was ultimately to gain a positive identity, yet they were confronted with being labelled as ‘crew’ by the organisation, having an autocratic relationship with management, and generally having an occupation that carries a ‘stigma’ (Wildes, 2007). This is underlined by the conflict with management, and also the artificial battle with guests to gain gratuities. It is clear that the relationship with management has a direct effect upon the way workers are able to make sense of their world. Pursers appear to have a clear and congruent working relationship, while the restaurant seems to be more of a battleground whereby the soldiers (waiters) are instructed/ordered by the general/guard (management). This type of bureaucratic style relationship in place for waiters/management can be a source of conflict and furthermore a practice that can stifle creativity (e.g. De Bono, 1985).

The next metaphor was a feeling of being under the microscope. This metaphor relates to how some participants felt they had no “escape” and that everything was “visible”. This was more often used by pursers. Because pursers had that extra freedom with their role, being more socially available, it was a variable that was more salient. The final metaphor in this cluster was the high school metaphor. In particular, this was concerned with social standing (popularity) and community formation (segmentation) depending on one’s occupation, thus highlighting inter-group rivalries. It was noticeable that an individual’s social standing was generally attached to their

occupation. Based upon school-type language, waiters were thought to be more like “geeks”, while pursers more like “cheerleaders”. In other words, it was a case whereby individuals “knew their place” in the society of the ship based upon their occupation. From this comparison, there was little support for waiters and pursers regularly socialising, either on a voluntary basis of choosing to socialise together, or not having that opportunity to do so because of the lack of support structure from the organisation. This is not to suggest that waiters and pursers never socialised, but because of the differing occupational demands and access to space and time; the system and structure in place created practical and social considerations.

### ***Metaphors of the environment: work / life***

This metaphorical content identified the individual strategies used by the participants to work and live on a cruise ship. Moreover, the strategies reflected how participants were able to cope with the conditions and hardships of working and living on the ship. Though not exclusive, these metaphors were a strategy linked to one’s social activities. In this understanding, pursers were significantly more likely to use these metaphors than waiters, since a purser’s role allowed more social freedom outside of their work demands. In essence, these were used by participants to gain some element of control through the management and implementation of their social activities, which was determined by and linked to their occupation. The metaphor that illustrated the biggest sense of control, which bordered on deviance, was the ninja metaphor. This was a strategy that was linked to being stealthy, trying to escape from the pressures of work, which could be at the cost of organisational compliance. Norris (waiter) talked about sneaking past security after drinking too much alcohol so as not to get into trouble. Being a ninja was to a certain extent to gain some control, which was more often an ambition for a waiter, as their work and life are more controlled than that of a purser. Being a ninja is not always easy, and it wasn’t attainable for all, as Kim (purser) explains, “If you are on a regular job on the ship, you can just kind of slip away and no one really notices you”. Kim had two positions, in one of them she was an officer. In the officer position she found it increasingly difficult to get away from work and the role that she had stepped into and so a ninja was not appropriate in her position.

The explorer metaphor was a particular and temporary mindset that some participants described to achieve one’s personal goals that offset the difficulties of ship life. To an extent, to work on a cruise ship is a journey, and to therefore be an explorer. The explorer outlook, although seeks guidance, moreover grasps independence, and other than the exploration of new countries, some participants talked about the exploration of the self. The prospect of being away from home, and in some instances escaping from home, gave the opportunity for participants to reflect upon themselves and their life. This metaphor was popularly used by pursers. The position of a purser gave the opportunity for individuals to explore, whilst the occupational demands and restrictions on being a waiter appeared to have dampened their appetite for being an explorer. An explorer was chiefly a strategy to capitalise upon one’s personal ambitions; travel, experience new cultures and new lifestyles, and so on. This noted, an explorer’s mindset was thought to be only temporary, either waning over time or fading after one’s ambitions had been met.



This would result in individuals developing new ambitions, which may lie outside of the industry, or altering their mindset which may be on a professional level.

The remaining two metaphors were the juggler and builder. The juggler metaphor was an attempt to negotiate the major factors of cruise ship life: work, play and sleep. Moreover, it was a strategy for personal and work congruence, being able to meet personal goals but also the goals of the organisation. The builder metaphor was used to explain how individuals used the tools of the organisation to build relationships, a sense of self, and potentially a career. Working on cruise ships, for most individuals, is the beginning of something new; a new contract, meeting new people, and a new place of employment with different ways of working. So principally, working on a ship necessitates to some degree an element of building or planning, even if workers have worked on ships for several years. It was a means of using the tools provided by the organisation to develop social and professional bonds. Being organisationally dependent this could also be a cause of frustration. A worker may have career or professional aspirations, although the ability to reach these may not be facilitated by the organisation. This is arguably a case for waiters on-board. It is recognised that cruise ship organisations want the professional skill-sets and attributes for the role, but additionally forget or are inadequately prepared to meet these career aspirations or professional development. In short, frustration may occur if the tools do not match the requirements of the builder, or the builder does not understand the plans provided. Builders can only work if they have the right tools or plans in place.

## **Conclusion and limitations**

The identification of metaphors is a technique that offers a different way of seeing data and moreover a route that can help explore cruise workers' understanding of the semi-closed world of the cruise ship industry and their position within it. To do this, it was not a case of identifying every metaphor used by participants, but rather, through metaphorical association, to identify the metaphors that were central to their discourse in describing and evaluating their meaningful understandings. This study represents an exploratory and innovative contribution to the field of hospitality cruise ship work. The research also has value by being a medium that allows cruise ship workers to tell their story. This is something of a rarity in cruise ship research, to get a perceptive account of their world and what this line of work means for them. Furthermore, the research has been able to re-address and also re-affirm some of the negative depictions of cruise ship work. The stories collected from the workers in this study have been able to produce a very different but realistic perspective of the working lives of waiters and pursers. This paper also highlights the potential of metaphorical analysis in revealing a different view of reality. A metaphorical approach may be particularly useful in this instance where there is little research, but also as it may be particularly difficult for an "outsider" to grasp the realities of working on cruise ships. This noted, the analysis presented does not postulate that the views demonstrated here are definitive, but rather it has generated an interesting and creative way of discussing the way waiters and pursers view their working and social lives on-board cruise ships.

Despite the usefulness of metaphors to this particular paper, it is important to acknowledge the limitations. Firstly, the metaphors found here will be situation specific to the cruise ship environment. Although similar metaphors may be used in other research areas, the meanings could differ somewhat. Furthermore, the analysis of metaphors is concerned with a higher level of subjectivity. For instance, what one researcher deems as the underlying meaning could be totally different to what another researcher concludes, and moreover both could be different to how the participant makes sense of it. Second, as noted earlier, an analysis of metaphors, although it doesn't claim to be, cannot give an all encompassing view of a social phenomenon, only a partial view can be obtained. Third, metaphors can appear in conversation for several reasons, such as the 'nature of interactional talk' or fashioned by a 'sub-conscious accommodation' (Cameron 2003: p.269). In this study some interviews had more metaphorical content than others, while one (Mandy, purser) was found to have no metaphorical content that was of particular interest. Finally, the implication of nationality should be acknowledged. Although from a nationality perspective the sample was seemingly representative of a twenty-first century cruise ship, a major consideration therefore (being that the interviews were conducted in English) was that for 50% of participants (ten), English was not their first language. While participants are required to have a good grasp of the English language to be employed on cruise ships it is important to recognise this limitation. It could be suggested that if participants were interviewed in their first language, different metaphors may have been used to describe their experiences and subsequently affected the findings related to the analysis of metaphors. This further highlights the issue of national differences, whereby metaphors used by participants may be understood differently than their intended purpose.

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## *The Contribution of Municipal Police to a tourism destination: The case of Greece*

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### **ABSTRACT:**

The Municipal Police in Greece is an institution that has been undervalued, especially on the important role it holds in tourism, and the affect it has on the image of Greece as tourist destination. Following the enlargement of the responsibilities that have been transferred to the municipalities, the municipal police is called to have an even more active role in shaping a tourist destination.

**KEY WORDS:** municipal police, tourism destination, tourism, Greece.

### **Introduction**

When one visits a tourist destination, especially a major city, one is most likely to seek guidance and information on accommodation, transportation and places to visit. In Greece, this kind of service is provided by the GNTO (Greek National Tourism Organization 2013) a number of private tourist agencies and of course the public servants. In this case, this is what we call the Police and the Municipality Police officers. That is actually a very crucial part of the municipality policeman and policewoman job that is not broadly known or valued. There is a respectable number of citizens and tourists that apply to their help every day, some because they are lost in a big city, others because they've lost their luggage or had them stolen or even some who just need information on sightseeing. They all feel safer when speaking with an actual officer of the municipality police. They know they will not be cheated or taken advantage by him or her and it is easier for them to ask for help.

It is undisputed that the Municipal Police is an institution founded to serve citizens and solve the problems faced by local communities. The program Kallikratis (2010) with the new expanded domains granted to municipalities, actually added some more responsibilities to the municipal police.

### **The institution of the Municipal Police in Greece**

Although the Municipal Police is a newly established institution actually it can also be found in the ancient years carrying similar responsibilities to those of today. On the 5th century BC in ancient Athens, when the basis for the cultural peak was set, police units were founded with responsibilities such as the supervision of the streets, sanitation, cleanliness, supervision of constructions and the prevention of public accidents (Stamati 1971).

In 1833 with the establishment of the New Greek state by the King Otto with the Law of 27/12/1833 concerning the newly founded municipalities, duties of local policing were delegated to the Municipal Police. In those years, the Municipal Police did not bring weapons and had as a head officer the Mayor (Stamati 1971).

Far later, in 1980 the enactment of the then Municipal Code (Law 1065/1980 Article 24, paragraph 2) was the basis for the founding of the Municipality's "Special Units" as was the initial name of the Municipal Police (ibid). Its current form and extended responsibilities have been decided by the Law (3731/2008) and completed with the project Kallikratis Law 3852/2010 on associations of municipalities. Thus, Greece's Municipal Police responsibilities became similar to those of other major European countries.

### **Responsibilities of municipalities - Program Kallikratis**

On a tourist destination country at local and regional level there should be certain policies that will help in the development of tourism and more specifically, land planning and environmental management (Kokkosis and Tsartas 1999). With this Kallikratis program (Law 3852/2010) there is an expansion of geographical and population limits of municipalities and further responsibilities were added. Those newly added responsibilities previously belonged to the prefectural government (Makridimitris and Pravita 2010). This resulted in the expansion of the domain of responsibilities of the municipalities specifically in the fields of education and school infrastructure, health and welfare, environment, employment, issuing building permits locally and overseeing the proper functioning of the city (ibid). More specifically, the expanded powers of the municipalities are included in the following areas of public policy and associated with local management issues: a) Development b) Environment c) Quality of life and proper functioning of cities and settlements d) Employment e) Social Welfare and Solidarity f) Education, Culture and Sports, and finally g) of the Civil Protection (Makridimitris and Pravita 2010).

Although tourism has mainly a direct relationship with the private sector, the public sector still has crucial role to play in order to provide the policy guidelines,

infrastructure and the management when necessary in the economic and non-economic sector (Elliot 1997). Policies and responsibilities exercised by Municipalities are generally sustainable development policies that determine the success of a tourist destination.

Below is an indication of those powers which relate more specifically on tourism and tourism development:

**a) In the field of Development:** 1. The preservation, utilization and exploitation of local natural resources and areas of hot springs and mild or renewable energy, creation, maintenance and management of the projects and installations. 2. The preparation, implementation and participation in a plan for tourism development areas, promoting alternative forms of tourism, and the creation of multicultural centers and other leisure and holiday facilities (Makridimitris and Pravita 2010)

**b) In the field of Education, Culture and Sports:** 1. The implementation of policies for the promotion and preservation of local culture, the promotion of cultural goods and contemporary cultural works produced locally, the establishment of cultural and spiritual centers, museums, galleries, cinemas and theaters, etc., and the design and implementation of cultural programs. 2. The preservation of museums, monuments, caves and archaeological and historical sites in the area and the facility 3. The promotion of cultural exchanges at national, European and international level, and the development and promotion of cultural tourism in the region (Makridimitris and Pravita 2010).

**c) In the field of Civil Protection:** This category also includes municipal policing services. The reorganization of the Municipal Police in accordance with Article 1 of Law 3731/2008 includes testing various provisions relating to the functioning of the city. The Municipal Police on matters directly related to the tourism sector monitors the implementation of the tourism legislation, compliance measures for the protection of museums, monuments, caves, archaeological and historical sites in the area of the municipality. Also, the Municipal Police takes part in the implementation of projects civil protection under the supervision and assistance of the Greek Police (Makridimitris and Pravita 2010).

## **The tourist destination**

As defined by the tourism industry, destination is a specific place chosen by tourists for their stay. The visitors select the destination based on their preferences and reason for travel as leisure, business, adventure etc (Gee et al. 1997). Leiper (2003) refers to the tourism destination that has been written more than any other element in tourism systems, so the study of tourism is actually the study of tourism destinations and all the other are secondary. A destination offers visitors a tourism product which is the combination of several elements such as infrastructure, tourism facilities, natural beauties etc. The better the combination of those elements, the greater the success and acceptance towards tourists of a certain tourism destination. These important elements can be divided into six categories: 1) Attractions 2) Accessibility 3) Amenities 4) Available Packages 5) Activities 6) Ancillary Services (Buhalis 2000).

Therefore, it is important for the state, to provide the best infrastructure, environment and legal frameworks so as to create suitable conditions for the development of the tourism sector. This will encourage private initiative, so that more incentives will be given to business. Unfortunately some times because of the complexity of relations between local factors is difficult to manage and to promote a tourist destination (Sautter and Leisen, 1999).

### **The Municipal Police relation to a tourist destination**

It is commonly known that tourism development is achieved under circumstances of safety and the political unrest is always a suspense factor for the international tourism flow (Wahab and Cooper, 2001). For example, The Travel Advice Unit of the Foreign & Commonwealth Office in Great Britain (<https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/greece/safety-and-security-in-31/05/13>) advises the British citizens that should maintain at least the same level of personal security awareness in Greece as in the UK. Tourists in general prefer to visit destinations which maintain the same level of personal security as in their homeland. If a country has not managed to maintain its stability internally then it is difficult to convince the prospective visitor (Fraidaki 2009). The presence of the Municipal Police in an area, encourage domestic tourism and even further the foreign visitors by creating a sense of security and functioning rule of the law. During the 2004 Olympic Games in Athens, the Municipal Police of the city had a strong presence along with the Greek Police in tourist places (Acropolis, Theseion, Plaka, Syntagma, etc.) thereby enhancing the city's image as a safe and secure place to visit.

The tourist sensing the continuous presence of the Municipal Police feels more comfortable in spending money in order to enjoy as much as possible his trip to the tourist destination visited. The presence of the Municipal Police patrolling (pedestrian patrols, bicycle patrols, motorcycle patrols and vehicle patrols), especially in tourist spots provides a higher level of service to the tourists with the possibilities of receiving useful and valid information on transportation, accommodation, entertainment and sightseeing (visiting museums, shopping and cultural corners of the city).

In many cases, the Municipal Police guides tourists in the closest police departments and embassies when they fall victims of theft or lose their travel documents. The Municipal Police monitors the implementation of tourism legislation (Article 1 of Law 3731/2008) in the provinces and islands where there no established GNT0 (Greek National Tourism Organization 2013) services. The specific responsibility is very important as upholding the law guaranties the proper and lawful function of old businesses of tourist interest. For example, the phenomenon of excessive billing services is an unpleasant experience for the visitor and definitely a deterrent to revisit the destination occurs when tourists to illegal itinerant vendors who sell them counterfeit products. Also in this case Municipal Police monitor compliance with the provisions relating to the outdoor trade (ibid). However, the presence of the Municipal Police is not limited to daily patrolling city streets. Due to its expanding responsibilities (Makridimitris and Pravita 2010) the Municipal Police its present in



cultural and sporting events which in many cases hold international interest (e.g. Athens Classic Marathon).

## **Conclusion**

As mentioned above, a destination is defined by the combination of different elements. One of those elements is the service provided by the municipality police. The range of the services provided vary, from aiding tourists to implementing the law and keeping the city a safe and secure environment for everyone to visit.

Nevertheless, the Municipal Police is primarily known to the citizens for audits conducted or for fines imposed. Yet, there is a whole new chapter regarding the MP's services and actions that needs to be discovered and perhaps acknowledged.

That can be obtained with the proper approach to the public. What is more important though, is that everyone involved in the tourist business, meaning all the public and private factors that share interest in the tourist industry, should try to cooperate to expand and better serve their tourist destination city.

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*Comparative ratio Analysis of four and five star hotel units for the period 2002 - 2008*

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**ABSTRACT**

Financial analysis is an information and data evaluation system of business units. It is a control tool and helps the management to determine the efficiency of the various activities of the business unit and to plan its future actions. In this survey, the course of the economic situation of four and five star hotels in Attica during the period 2003 to 2008 was studied. The use of ratios and the method of the simple arithmetic average, despite their disadvantages, lead to conclusions about how not only the individual hotel but the industry in general operates.

**Keywords:** Financial analysis of hotel units<sup>1</sup>, Importance and use of ratios<sup>2</sup>, Ratios distinction<sup>3</sup>, Limitations and difficulties in the use of ratios<sup>4</sup>, Comparison of results<sup>5</sup>.

## **INTRODUCTION**

The objective of the present research is to analyze the financial situation of four-star and five-star hotel units in Attica during the years 2002-2008. The evaluation of each business unit is achieved through the use of a group of ratios. It should be noted here, that the calculation and presentation of various ratios is a method of analysis which often provides only indications. For this reason, an individual ratio can not give us a complete picture of the financial status of an enterprise, if not compared with other representative or standard ratios or not associated with the respective ratios of a previous years series. In the related literature there are many alternative ratios. In the present study the main ratio groups (liquidity, activity, profitability, capital structure and viability) were selected. The most representative ratios of each group (twelve in total) have been selected.

The determination of the sample followed two main restrictions. Firstly, the hotel units that are publicly traded and are obliged to publish consolidated financial statements (under IFRS) have not been taken into consideration in the present analysis. Similarly, the hotels for which no financial data for the 2002-2008 period were available, were excluded from this research. Therefore, the intended/analyzed sample consists of sixteen four-star and ten five-star hotels. The method used to draw conclusions for all economic units is the simple arithmetic average. Despite the existing drawbacks, this method was considered as the most appropriate.

## **METHOD**

Ratio is the simple relationship between an account of the balance sheet or profit and loss statement and another one and is expressed in a simple mathematical form (Niarchos 2004, p. 47). The reason that led to the introduction of the use of ratios is derived from the need the true value and importance of absolute magnitudes to be immediately perceived. The main and most used in financial analysis of accounting statements ratios can be grouped into the following categories:

1. Liquidity Ratios
2. Activity Ratios
3. Efficiency Ratios
4. Capital structure and viability Ratios

## **LIQUIDITY RATIOS**

The use of liquidity ratios enables the company management to ascertain how the working capital is employed and whether- and how much - the right use of it is being made. Discussion will focus on the two most important ones, namely the current liquidity ratio (overall liquidity ratio) and the quick liquidity ratio (special liquidity ratio).

## **CURRENT LIQUIDITY RATIO**

(Total Current Assets / Current Liabilities)

The current liquidity ratio shows the standard of the company's liquidity and the safety margin that its management keeps in order to be able to face any unwanted development in the flow of working capital. The higher the specific ratio, the better, in terms of liquidity, the financial condition of the entity is. Certainly, one entity may be unable to meet its liabilities, despite the fact that it has a high ratio. This can be associated with the over reserve, the granting of large credits to customers as well as with the sales to risky customers.

## **QUICK LIQUIDITY RATIO**

(Total Current Assets - Inventories / Current Liabilities)

The quick liquidity ratio indicates the extent to which the fast liquefiable assets of the company cover its short-term liabilities. Therefore, it portrays more accurately the company's ability to meet its current liabilities. In the event that the immediately liquefiable assets are equal to or greater than current liabilities, the company presents a good current economic status.

## **ACTIVITY RATIOS**

The activity ratios are used in addition to liquidity ratios. The use of activity ratios helps to determine the degree of conversion of certain assets (inventories, receivables) into cash (Niarchos 2004, p. 69).

## **ASSET VELOCITY RATIO**

(Turnover / Total Assets)

The asset velocity ratio is the extent of its use in relation to sales. It indicates whether there is over-investment of capital in the company in relation to the amount of sales made. The upward trend over time indicates a more intensive exploitation of assets (fixed and current) leading the company to increase sales.

## **EQUITY VELOCITY RATIO**

(Turnover / Total Equity)

It shows the extent of use of the company's capital in relation to sales. The higher the ratio is, the better the position of the company as it makes big sales with a relatively small amount of equity. What is more, a high ratio may indicate the use of large foreign capital from the company, which also affects its image. On the contrary, a low equity velocity ratio suggests that the company makes sales to a relatively large amount of equity. It also provides an indication of a possible over-investment by the company in fixed assets compared to its sales.

## **EFFICIENCY RATIOS**

The main purpose of a business is to generate profit. This determines primarily the viability of a financial entity in the future. Efficiency ratios indicate how effectively the firm ran over a fiscal year or more.

### **GROSS MARGIN OR GROSS PROFIT RATIO**

(Gross operating profit (before tax) / Turnover)

Gross margin or gross profit ratio represents the functional effectiveness of the business and its price policy. A company is considered successful when it has a fairly high percentage of gross profit which allows it to cover the organic and inorganic costs while leaving a satisfactory percentage of net profit. Therefore, a high ratio indicates the ability of the administration to obtain cheap purchases, as well as to sell at high prices. On the contrary, a low gross profit ratio points to a non effective policy in the area of purchases and sales.

### **NET MARGIN OR NET PROFIT RATIO**

(Net operating profit (before tax) / Turnover)

Net margin or net profit ratio indicates the profit achieved by a company from its operating activities. The higher the ratios is, the more profitable the company.

### **RETURN ON CAPITAL EMPLOYED RATIO**

(Net operating profit (before tax) + financial expenses / Turnover)

It shows the efficiency of the business regardless of its funds source of origin. This is, perhaps, the most important efficiency ratio, in terms of helping managers, in decision making. A low ratio may indicates changes in the organization and functioning of those sectors that seem problematic, or even the possible suspension of their activity. Moreover, this can be used as a guideline when a company is planning to make an acquisition of another company or to expand into new markets or products. A low return on capital employed ratio means that there may be an over-investment of capital in the company compared to its sales or that the cost of sales (administrative expenses, marketing costs, etc.) is high. In contrast, a high ratio suggests that the company's management follows a more rational financial policy.

### **RETURN ON EQUITY RATIO**

(Net operating income (before taxes) / Total Equity)

Return on equity ratio reflects the profitability capacity of a business and provides an indication of whether a satisfactory result was achieved. While a low

return on equity ratio means that the company suffers in a certain sector, a high ratio shows that the business operates efficiently.

## **EQUITY AND VIABILITY RATIOS**

In order to determine the long-term financial status of an entity, it is also appropriate to examine the capital's structure.

### **EQUITY TO TOTAL CAPITAL RATIO**

(Total Equity / Total Capital)

The higher the equity to total capital ratio, the greater the protection afforded to company's creditors is, as there is a little chance of financial difficulty to cover its liabilities. Nevertheless, a high ratio does not necessarily imply that the company follows the most beneficial way of financing, since it may eventually face a liquidity problem.

### **EQUITY TO LOAN FUNDS RATIO**

(Total Equity / Loan Funds)

Equity to loan funds ratio is used to determine whether or not there is an over-lending in a company.

### **EQUITY TO ASSETS RATIO**

(Total Equity / Total Fixed Assets)

By calculating this ratio, the financing method of company's fixed investments is discussed.

### **TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS TO LIABILITIES RATIO**

(Total Current Assets / Total Liabilities)

This ratio shows the liquidity of the company's long-term liabilities. It is especially important when taking into account the relatively low degree of liquidity that some current assets have.

## **SIMPLE ARITHMETIC AVERAGE**

The comparison of financial figures between certain companies in an industry can be achieved in different ways. In the present study, the use of the simple arithmetic average was preferred, not only because of the ease of calculation, but also because of the quality of the results provided. The main aim was to determine the tendency that four and five stars hotels exhibit during the reporting period. A

more accurate measurement of their financial figures is beyond the scopes of the survey. Consequently, the use of the weighted average, which presents certain difficulties in terms of calculation, was avoided. In addition, the calculation of the median was considered unsuitable as strongly influenced by extreme values. In order to calculate the simple arithmetic average the sum of the figures of hotel units in each category was divided by the number of units. It is obvious that the ratio (as well as the median) is affected by extreme sizes. However, due to the volume of the companies, the influence of these extreme values is relatively smaller.

From the above implies that the use of ratios is crucial for any business. The company's management in order to have a more complete picture of the firm should use apart from quantitative criteria, quality information. These information is provided by the CRM systems.

## **CRM SYSTEMS**

Customer relationship management (CRM) is a widely implemented model for managing a company's interactions with customers, clients, and sales prospects.

### **TYPES OF CRM SYSTEMS**

- CRM systems for call centers
- CRM systems for service representatives in the field
- CRM systems for sales managers in the field (sales managers who are in direct contact with the client)
- CRM systems for marketing
- analytic CRM systems for the creation of reports based on a database of client contacts

### **BENEFITS OF CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT**

There are significant business benefits from using Customer Relationship Management systems. These are:

- reduced costs through an effective and efficient operation
- increased customer satisfaction, as there is fulfillment of their expectations
- increased numbers of customers
- increased quality and quantity information of the market
- reveal poor operational processes
- long term profitability and sustainability

The benefits to the company's management vary:



- knowing what customers want enables to focus the production and service efforts to their needs
- knowing which products or customers have most growth potential leads to focus on developing highest potential
- knowing which products or customers are most or least profitable maximises the profit
- knowing which customers will be advocates and supporters helps to provide references and safely test new products and services

## **RESULTS**

### **COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF FOUR STAR HOTEL UNITS**

Looking at the four star hotel units from 2003 to 2008 we see that they maintain sufficient liquidity. The quick (special) liquidity ratio is almost identical to the current liquidity ratio. This implies that companies tend to invest those funds in current assets which are easily and quickly converted into cash (debtors and cash).

Over the time asset velocity ratio moves upwards. Associating this figure with current and quick liquidity ratios, one may observe that the current assets, in which companies have invested their capital, are sufficiently utilized, thus resulting in increased sales.

The equity velocity ratio from 2002 to 2005 is increasing as the hotels make big sales with relatively small amount of equity. Looking more closely, however, it is understood that the increase in the ratio is due to the large use of loan funds, which affects the businesses' image. From 2006 onwards, the ratio shows a downward trend, indicating that there is a decrease in loan funds and a parallel increase in the participation of equity.

The four-star hotel units have a relatively high rate of gross profit from 2003 to 2006, which allows them to cover the organic and inorganic expenses while leaving them a satisfactory rate of net profit. The index stands at 35% and shows a relatively good administration policy in the areas of purchase and sales. Nevertheless, from 2007 onwards, the ratio shows a downward trend of about 7% as a result of the higher cost of goods sold.

Deeper into the inner functions of businesses, there is instability in the net profit ratio during the period 2003- 2005 followed by relative stability. Presumably, the increased sales during the Olympics, allowed hotels to operate while having a higher profit margin. In the following period, however, the need for a more efficient organization and management was created. Although this has initially raised organic and inorganic costs for the companies, their percentage over net profits was gradually stabilized.

Concerning the return on capital employed ratio, a relatively good use of both loan funds and equity of the hotel units is indicated. This, in turn, suggests that management teams operate, by and large, rationally, by avoiding high costs.

Regarding the return on equity ratio, although there are some variations, we can claim that a satisfactory result has been achieved. The companies' equity (shareholders' equity and reserves), are invested properly, contributing to the profitability capacity of the business units. An exception can be noticed in the year 2005. The low ratio (-2.61%) seems to confirm the assumption made by studying the net profit ratio. The fall in turnover and the increase of organic and inorganic expenses reduced the net income for the hotel units and led to a fall in their efficiency.

Equity to total capital ratio is around 65% throughout the period considered. Given the fact that hotel units do not seem to be experiencing liquidity problems, there is a preference in financing their needs with their own capital. It should be noted that external loan is generally preferred to finance the assets of the business units.

Regarding the mode of financing the fixed investments of business units, two important observations can be made. Firstly, the companies' creditors finance their assets more than their shareholders. Secondly, the investment in fixed current assets (renovations needed to keep them in the market) means big annual depreciation, resulting in lower corporate profits.

## **COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF FIVE STAR HOTEL UNITS**

During the period 2002 - 2008 the current liquidity ratio of the five-star hotels is gradually improving. This can be more convincingly contributed to the reduced short-term liabilities of hotel units rather than on the rational distribution of current assets. The quick liquidity ratio reinforces such an interpretation.

The historical decline in the asset velocity ratio indicates over-investment of capital in companies' current compared to their sales. The working capital is not used sufficiently and the companies face increased costs. As a result, many of them are unable to cover their liabilities.

Equity velocity ratio shows that during the periods 2003- 2004 and 2005-2007 hotels had a large turnover with a relatively small amount of equity. Business units prefer to be supported by loan funds. During the periods 2002-2003, 2004-2005 and 2007-2008, the ratio shows decline partly due to over-investment in fixed assets by the enterprises compared to sales.

The operational efficiency of enterprises and their pricing is satisfactory throughout the period. The gross margin or gross profit ratio stands at 25%.

The net profit ratio shows large fluctuations during the period studied. Comparing the results with the gross profit, it becomes apparent that the operating

and non-operating expenses of the enterprises grow disproportionately to the sales made.

The return on capital employed ratio seems to follow a highly comparable course. The instability of the ratio and its low levels during the years 2003, 2005 and 2008 indicate over-investment of funds by the enterprises in comparison to their sales as well as high operating costs.

The downward trend in the return on equity ratio up to the year 2005 indicates that the funds invested by shareholders of hotel companies do not produce the desired result. From 2006 onwards the ratio level has been improved as a result of the managers' preference to raise capital from foreign sources. The participation of equity in net profit is reduced and the ratio has an increasing trend. The equity to total capital ratio is around 35% throughout the period considered.

Equity to fixed assets ratio is low and declining throughout the period 2002 to 2008, indicating that the hotel units' creditors increasingly finance their fixed assets. If the results of the aforementioned ratio are combined with the low current assets to total liabilities ratio, it becomes clear that in the long term five star hotel units will face liquidity problems.

## **DISCUSSION**

In this survey, the course of the economic situation of four and five star hotels in Attica during the period 2003 to 2008 was studied.

## **IMPLICATION FOR THE MANAGEMENT**

The available evidence of the four star hotel units from 2003 to 2008 suggests that they maintain adequate both short and long term, liquidity. Regarding five star units, the levels remain relatively low, even for those with improved liquidity. The current assets, in which four star hotels have invested their capital, are sufficiently utilized, thereby increasing both their sales and profits. Evidently, a downward trend during the late period can be observed. On the other hand, the funds invested by shareholders of the five-star hotel companies do not seem to have been well invested (there is over-investment) and the companies face higher costs. The consequence is that many of them are unable to fulfill their long-term liabilities. In the case of four star hotels equity to total capital ratio is around 65% throughout the period considered, while in the case of five star hotels the participation of equity in net profit decreases. The creditors of the hotel units increasingly finance the needs of hotel companies.

## **DIRECTION FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

In trying to improve the abovementioned results, it would be interesting for future research to extend the analysis of the financial condition in a larger sample of hotels and stock market listed companies, thus adding to the validity of our observations. Similarly, the use of different ratios mix could lead to export further

conclusions about the financial status of the companies. Also the use of crm data from the hotels may provide more informations for the hotels. Finally, concerning the sample under study, more comparisons could have been made in terms of different numbers relevant to the hotel occupancy (number of overnight stays and the visitors' country of origin, their satisfaction level, etc.). Therefore, the interpretation of the results described above remains, in certain respects, open to debate.

## **LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

The most important limiting factors of this research are related to the nature of the financial statements and to the accounting principles and assumptions with which they are compiled. The financial statements, particularly the balance sheet and income statement, provide information that can help those interested in the business units to take the right decisions. However, there are also some drawbacks, the most important of which could be summarized as follows:

1. The data included are very brief and uneven classified, given that their setting up is not of a single obligatory for all companies type.
2. There is usually a considerable time gap between the end of the fiscal year and the date that the data are published and are made known to the general public.
3. In many cases the data presented do not reflect the actual condition of the business unit.

Among other limiting factors influencing the evidence provided, one main includes the existence of certain extreme values. This can be attributed to the prevalence of the abnormal values of the parameters that affect the ratios, so that they may not be fully representative of the business.

Finally, because of the position of the analyzer (external analysis), the research is based solely on the information published in the annual statements of business units. Further clarification is needed on the accounting principles and assumptions applied in order to be able to draw more reliable conclusions.

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## INTERNET SOURCES

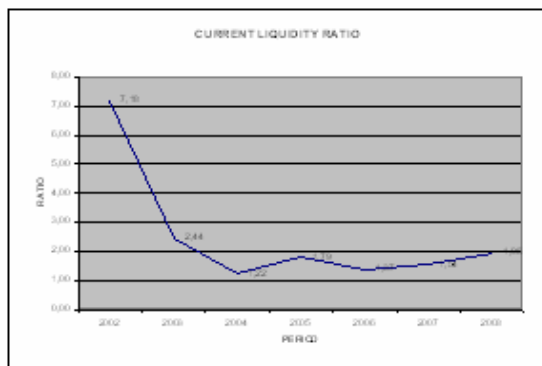
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## APPENDIX FOUR-STAR HOTEL UNITS DIAGRAMS

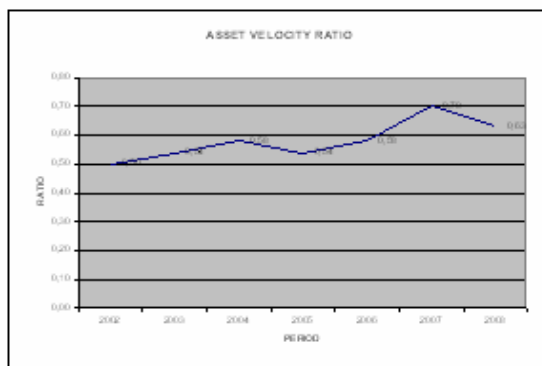
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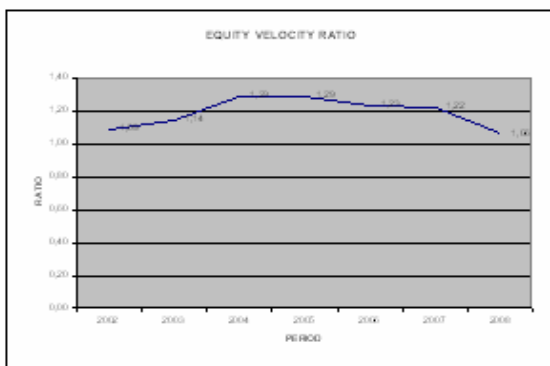
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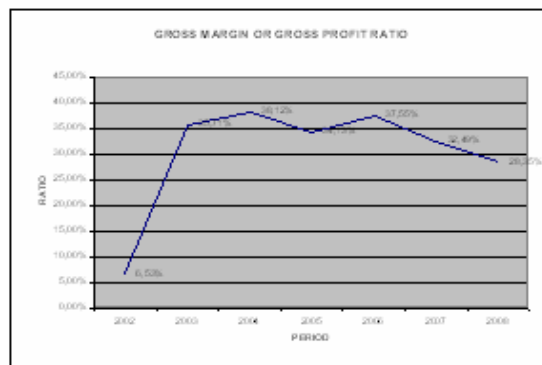
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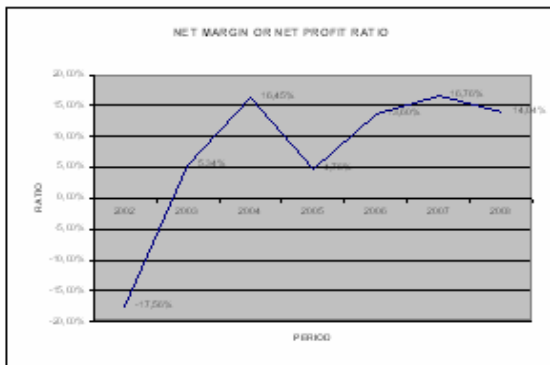
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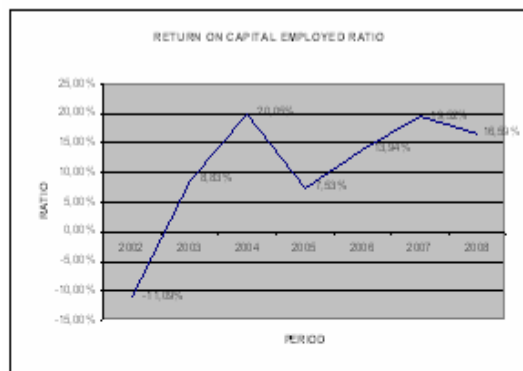
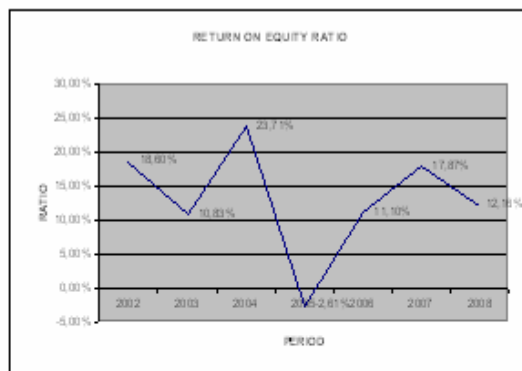
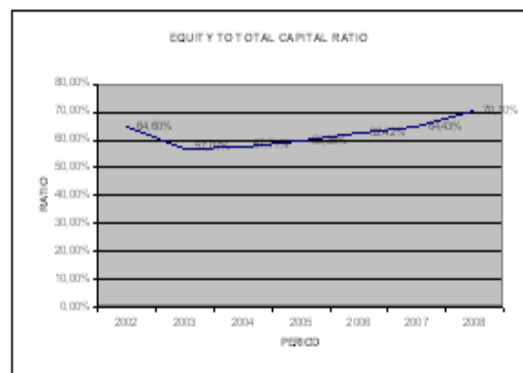
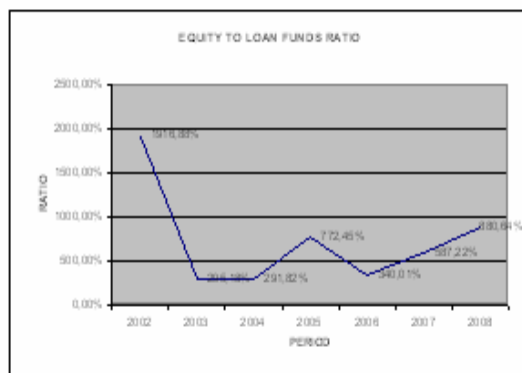
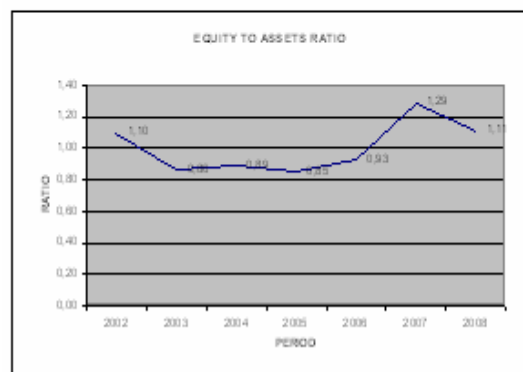
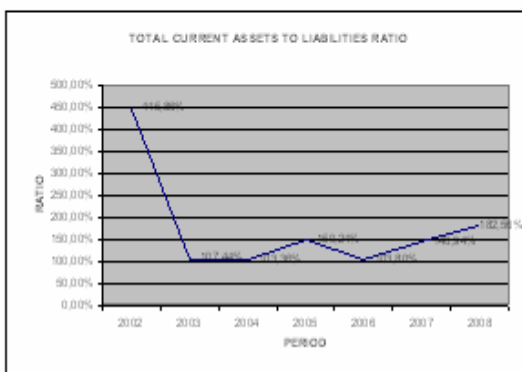


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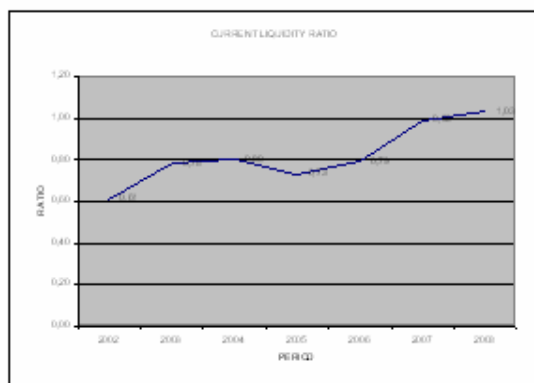
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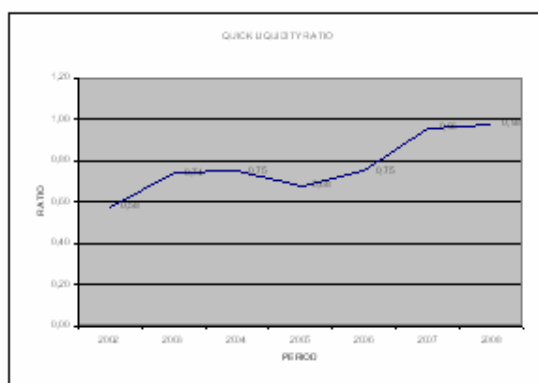
**Diagram 7****Diagram 8****Diagram 9****Diagram 10****Diagram 11****Diagram 12**

## FIVE-STAR HOTEL UNITS DIAGRAMS

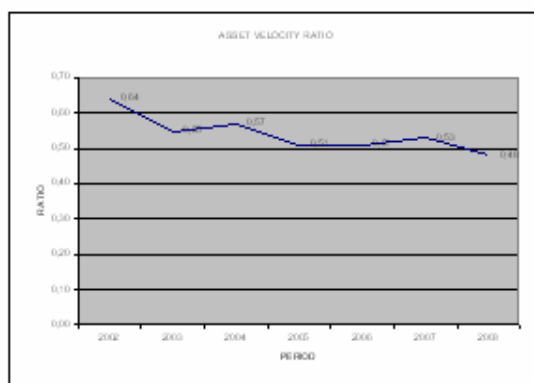
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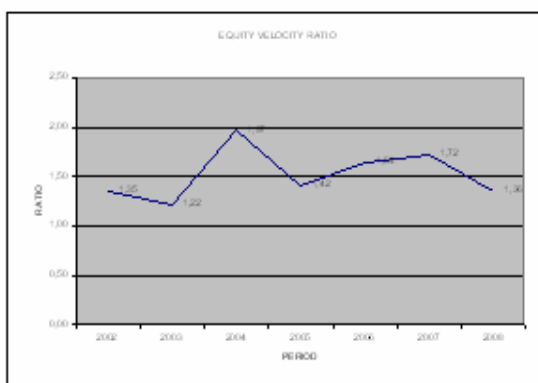
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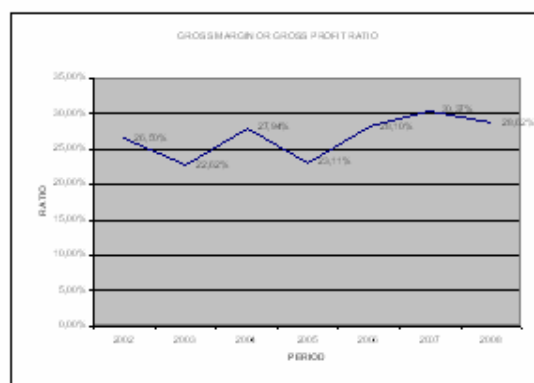
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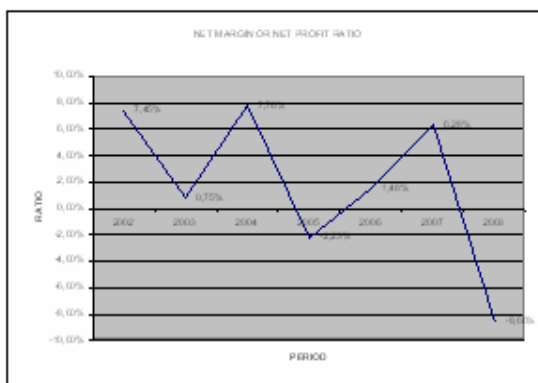
**Diagram 4**



**Diagram 5**



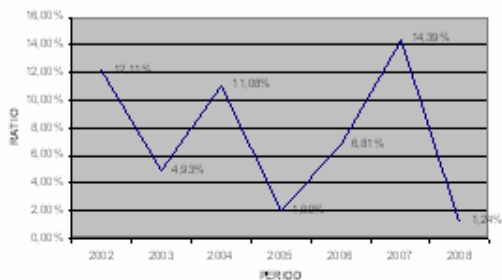
**Diagram 6**





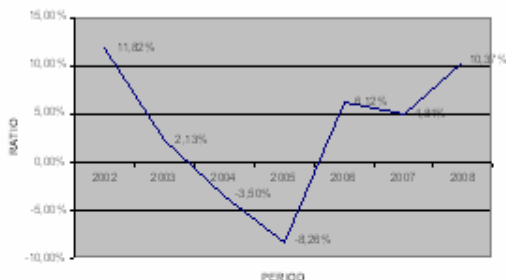
**Diagram 7**

RETURN ON CAPITAL EMPLOYED RATIO



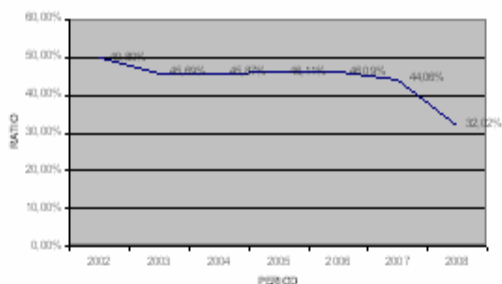
**Diagram 8**

RETURN ON EQUITY RATIO



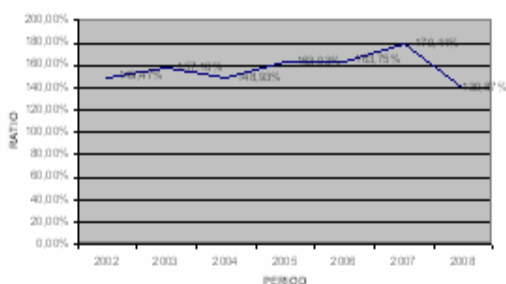
**Diagram 9**

EQUITY TO TOTAL CAPITAL RATIO



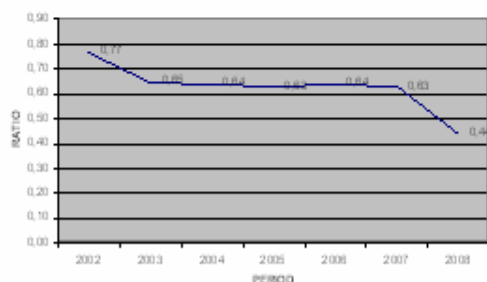
**Diagram 10**

EQUITY TO LOAN FUNDS RATIO



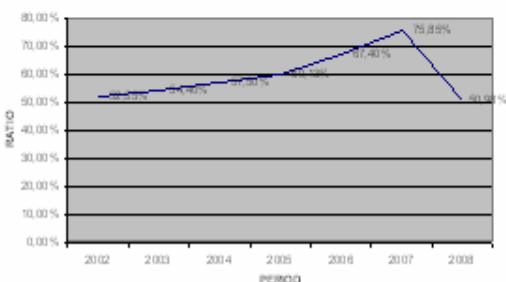
**Diagram 11**

EQUITY TO ASSETS RATIO



**Diagram 12**

TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS TO LIABILITIES RATIO



*Regional Sustainable Tourism Development  
Strategies.  
The case of Marathon municipality*

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**Abstract**

The paper aims to analyze the current situation of rural tourism in the municipality of Marathon and to identify ways of improvement. The research methodology followed is primary, quantitative analysis with a sample of 44 companies which offer tourism services in the region. The companies that participated in this research are categorized as followed 82% are in the food service sector such as restaurants and bars, 14% are hotels, 2% are rooms to let and 2% are travel agencies. The questionnaire used is trying to depict the attitudes and the perception of tourism professional about the rural tourism development. The findings lead to the conclusion that even though the area has a wide range of rich resources in order to develop a sustainable tourism model, the reality is far from the potential of the region. This gap can be covered through a number of initiations that the local community and the tourism companies must undertake. The research takes into consideration only the attitudes and believes of tourism companies and not the citizens and the local community and public administration. The changes proposed by this study are going

to improve the local economy and the social life in a sustainable way. This is the result of the unique characteristic of the study as it analyses the available resources and the professionals' opinion that are running their own business in the tourism sector in the specific area of Marathon.

## 1. Introduction

*“ Marathon, as the emblematic symbol of European cultural heritage belongs to all of us. It is the trophy of the supremacy of human values, spirit and democracy”*

*Vivi Vassilopoulou, General Director of Antiquities and Cultural Heritage of the Hellenic Ministry of Culture*

The human tendency to seek nature when manifested in the form of tourism is called “cluster of Anteo’s” by various psychologists which means that man owes his existence in nature, he takes strength from it and is reborn every time he is in contact with it (Sfakianakis, 2000).

There are several effects of organized mass tourism vacations in the environment, the society and culture as they reinforce the tendency for development of alternative tourism standards. Since 1980s there have been recorded many significant changes in tourism demand, which were initially related to the motives of tourists while tour operators began to seek an environment friendly package tour.

Given the decisive role of the above in the production of tourism packages, started the change of direction and growth of various alternative tourism models (Spilanis and Vayanni, 2003) based on three major lines:

- Creation of new impulses.
- Mitigation of tourist traffic and parallel to the economic development of areas of the region.
- Effective use of natural, cultural and human resources of the region.

## 2. The new era of mass tourism

The last two decades under the influence of sociology of tourism, there were made efforts to create new tourism standards where modern demands require pure natural environment, respect to local social specificities, decentralization and participation of residents in tourism development processes. These trends have created two fields of research (Ambrož, Ovsenik, 2011). To the first one, the emphasis is in the modern motives of tourists and trends in development issues and the second level refers to the changes in consumer and social patterns of tourists, leading to convert passive viewers of tourism activities into energetic tourists that influence the tourism development.

Many countries have tried to develop their economies through tourism. This was mainly in Third World countries but also in other areas with tourist resources and attraction areas for holidays (such as mountainous or coastal areas), which was the first choice of tour operators. The result of this development had positive and

negative positive impacts in other sectors of the economy (such as technology, crafts, construction, agriculture, etc.). The final yield however was less than expected (Britton, 1982). The items that were detected and focused on review were:

- Even though the primary target was the right combination of "quality - price" then it was replaced by the "quantity-price." The result was a decrease in revenues, stagnation in investment and social tensions for the inefficiency of the tourism sector.
- Creation of economic arguments against mass tourism and the benefits of tourism development.
- Tourist's reception areas display social and environmental problems and the profits are reduced, due to the competition among areas that have the same tourism product.
- The identical way of tourism development, with the same characteristics of the infrastructure and services brought to saturation having as a result tourists' dissatisfaction and seeking of new tourism services.

## **2. Model of sustainable tourism development**

Sustainable tourism development is defined as development that aims to equitable satisfaction of needs, that is, development that meets the needs of the current generations and does not preclude future generations from meeting at least the same level of needs (Fotiadis, 2009)

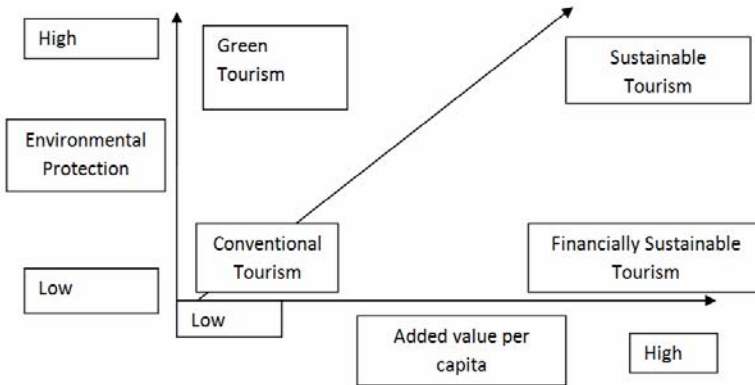
Sustainable development refers to creating the necessary conditions for the sustainability and maintenance of a specific activity and there are limits to growth and exploitation of natural resources in such a way that is profitable, socially justifiable and ecologically tolerated.

The tourism industry has two sides. On the one hand, contributes to the economic prosperity of a region in various ways, and on the other hand it must be environmental friendly and socially responsible.

According to a number of WTO surveys ([www2.unwto.org](http://www2.unwto.org)) the majority of tourists today, wish to visit areas of high environmental quality and strong elements of local culture. Sustainable development pays particular attention to alternative forms of tourism which were rapidly developed the last two decades, as they were considered a effective tool to improve the quality and quantity of services, which is important to overcome competition.

Diagram 1

A model of sustainable tourism development

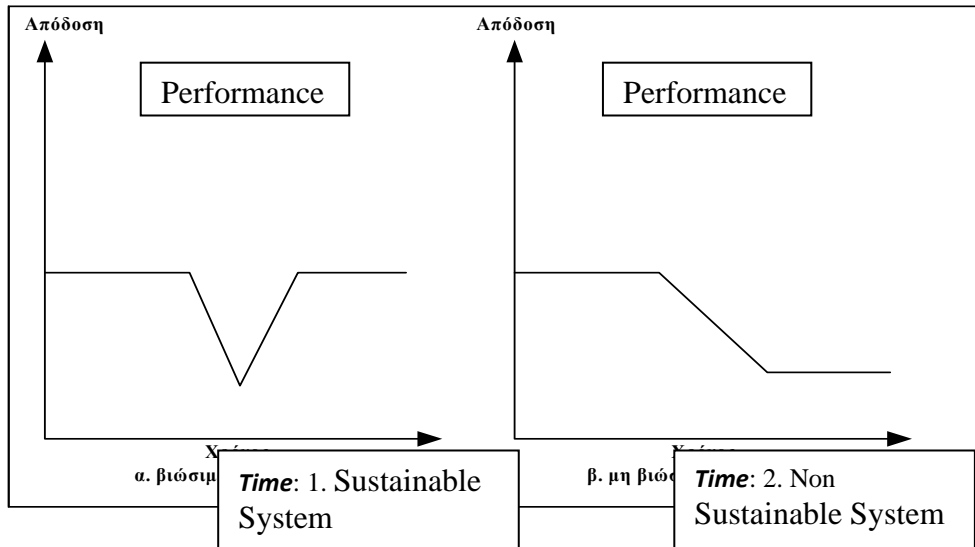


Source Fotiades, 2004

The locality has been closely linked with policies and actions for the development of modern tourism, where the cooperation of the State, the private sector and local government are necessary. The private sector contributes more and more through institutional and professional representative bodies at the local level, such as businessmen, hoteliers, tourism workers and others. This change was required by initiations (Elliot, Radcliff, 2006) such as: a) the need to protect the environment by reducing the unsustainable use of non-renewable energy sources, control water consumption, reduce waste, the congestion, access control tourists to ecologically vulnerable areas, etc. b) changing motivation for tourists and turn in quality tourism using tourism innovations, new technologies friendly to the environment and promotion of alternative forms of tourism compatible with the principles of sustainable development.

The move of mass tourism into alternative tourism financially and expertise supported by community programs, emerged a dynamic field of sustainable tourism development, by connecting different productive activities, in addition to environmental protection, the protection and promotion of traditional agricultural activities, highlighting monuments and activities of local culture, as well as programs changing the land use from problematic rural areas to implement alternative forms of tourism. Also local innovative initiatives systematically strengthened, particularly those created positions and many of these movements were based on activities related to the above forms of tourism. However, the final conclusion is that the promotion of alternative tourism does not concern tourists and locals in the same way and both contribute to the consolidation of it by their behavior.

Diagram 2. Sustainability of an ecosystem in the Conway theory



Source: Conway, G. R. 1983. Agroecosystem Analysis. London: Imperial College of Science and Technology.

Tourism and sustainable development are interrelated constituent elements since they always refer to quality features and timeless presence. Sustainable development not only takes account of economic factors, but also environmental and sociocultural. That means that we approach the development with a sense of "economic sustainability tourism" and the concept of sustainable tourism development. (Fennell, 1999).

In Greece the sustainability of tourism is administrated by the law JMD 107017.28/8/2006 which is the result of the European Union Directive 2001/42/EC.

The **Chamber of Environment and Sustainability** objected because the proposed framework has these characteristics:

The basic principles and targets for sustainable tourism development are:

- Tourism development should be from time to time, environmentally friendly and socially equitable for the locals.
- Tourism should be always interested in the cultural heritage and traditions of the local community.
- Compliance with the natural environment
- To protect and improve the natural environment and the cultural environment should be working together all operators of the local community.
- The main goals of tourism development should be to preserve the local destination and the service of tourists in the context of sustainability.
- To contribute significantly to the opportunities of the local economy.

- To contribute effectively to improving the quality of life of residents and the social-cultural enrichment of the tourist destination.
- The environmental sensitive areas should be given special care.
- There should be an emphasis on using alternative energies.
- The adoption of alternative and special forms of tourism should be in harmony with the local culture environment.
- Raising awareness to all, about the implementation of these principles objectives.

#### Sustainable development indicators:

Hughes (2002) analyzes sustainability into three categories:

1. Ecological sustainability to protect the ecological system and varieties of fauna and flora. The limits of the ecosystem should not be exceeded due to the development.
2. Social and cultural sustainability for the maintenance of identity and characteristics. This is achieved through the direct and active involvement of residents.
3. Economic sustainability to ensure resources for the maintenance of society and future generations.

For the above categories should be created laws that will support sustainability and sustainable development..

#### Major types of rural tourism

Areas of natural environment except the urban and marine areas are the rural areas and the countryside. In the countryside are developed different tourist activities that make up the various options, and special forms of tourism. The most important are:

- Rural tourism being developed in rural areas
- The agricultural tourism being developed in rural areas
- Tourism of observation of flora and fauna
- The ambulatory tourism developed in rural walking paths
- Tourism of Outdoor sports
- The Trekking tourism, excursion tourism, health tourism. if the forms are developed in the countryside
- Adventure Tourism
- Eco-tourism and environmental tourism which does not mean focusing only on the protection of nature but also on the protection and promotion of cultural heritage.

If the concept of rural consists also of mountains then mountain tourism is also a form of rural tourism. Decentralization and removal of tourism activity from the coastal areas and channeling them within the country, is a common characteristic resulting in the development of new areas and maintenance of remote areas.

### 3. Marathon as a rural tourism destination

At the following map 1, we see that the majority of lowland of Marathon takes up rural areas. They are also basic economic factor for the residents of the area, since one third of the economically active population mentioned that is occupied with farming. The most important agricultural core is surrounded by housing associations of Judicial officers. The Grava, the Schinias and Saint Panteleimon. A second core is located around the village of Agios Georgios, Kato Souli and Aura. Smaller rural areas are north of association and between the village of Marathon and Kalentzi.



Source: National Technical University SCHOOL: ARCHITECTURE-ENGINEERING

#### Marathon Natural resources

##### 1. The artificial lake of Marathon

Marathon lake is a very important part of natural wealth of the region. Beyond the exploitable water resources, the lake has a rich natural ecosystem and offers a picturesque natural beauty. In a relatively short distance from Athens.

##### 2. Mountain ranges in the north and northeast of the municipality.



These tumors are not as important natural wealth for the region as that of Penteli mountain, especially after the recent fires and illegal reconstruction. However, they are an important forest reserve.

### 3. The Blessed Source

The source gushes today beside the road Bei-Kato Souliou, at the northeastern end of the valley. Once, Athens was supplied by the rich waters of it, and this is evident from the pumping station located there. During German possession was protected by guard. Still survives untouched the small fort of the German army. Today waters enrich the arena of the Olympic Rowing Centre

### 4. The Pentelic mountain

It is the western municipality and a unique source of greenery and oxygen for residents of the entire basin. From this point several streams start and lead to the sea where they have been preserved, creating a pleasant microclimate for surrounding areas.

### 5. National Park of Schinias-Marathon

This is an area of increased ecological importance, both for Schinias, and for the entire Attica Basin. Includes the biotope the coastal zone of the pine forest, of 3 km length and 450 m width about and certain crops north of the wetland. West of the park lies the plain of Marathon. The area Schinias is of particular interest from an ecological point of view, both because of the variety and rarity of habitats and wetlands and also because it has been strongly degraded and is likely to be completely destroyed by the continuing and increasing human interventions.

The National Park Schinias Marathon is the important coastal ecosystem of Attica, while it is extremely interesting as a location and is based on a sensitive water balance. Its area is 13.84 sq km and comprises the forest of Koukounaria. The Great Swamp, the Hersonissos of Kynosoura, the coast and the sea zone includes protected species of flora and fauna, such as water ducks and one rare endemic type of fish around the world. In 2000 the land and sea areas of the Schinias, were marked as National Park and established zones and activities permitted per zone. The law stipulates the integrated planning and development of the area while locating the Olympic Rowing Center. The area was described as supra-environmental resource for the preservation, promotion and enhancement of ecological features and natural ecosystems.

Recently, and as the rowing remains closed to the public after the Games, the organization of Olympic Properties, issued a press release whereby the Rowing reopens its doors to the world: 'The aim is the utilization of Olympic facilities and the chance to learn the future athletes / sportsmen of our country for the sport. As well as contact and acquaintance of the public with rowing but also with the environment of the National Park Schinias Marathon.

### Points of attraction of the study area (City Marathon)

The areas bordering the National Park of Schinias are broader segments of the National Park of Marathon. Are in order of the habitat, the rowing and pine forest with the beach of Schinias. The rowing and the beach work as a sports city, while pine forest and habitat areas are of particular interest because of its natural beauty and rare species of flora and fauna they host. The region Tymvos is a dipole point of interest, the trophy of the battle of Marathon and the church of Panagia Mesosporitissa. The trophy is a copy of the original, parts of which are in the Archaeological Museum of Marathon. From the information appears that there were buried in groups dead Persians because they found bone remains irregularly arranged, which seems to belong to hundreds of victims. North of rowing is another archaeological site which is located north of the village of Kato Souli. In this region is located the Blessed Source, the waters of which provided input to Athens, while these waters today are used to enrich the track of rowing. At this point is the church of Agios Athanasios, and the estate Benaki with neoclassical villa. The property has an area of 2500 acres and belongs to the institution of the Benaki Museum since 1962. Older residents recognize the contribution of the estate Benaki to the survival of area in difficult times. Finally, the area with the number 7 includes the archaeological site of Rhamnus. Although formally not wholly owned by the municipality of Marathon, it is located very close to the settlement of the Aura and is accessible through the main street that runs through the study area. The archaeological site of Rhamnus is the most extensive archaeological site in the area and has a huge archaeological significance as it includes walled shrines of holy Themis and Nemesis, burial buildings, ancient theater and settlement of the 4th century BC.

### Other points of attraction

- Olympic Rowing Center of Schinias

Created for hosting the rowing race and canoe kayak during the Olympic Games and is part of the National Park of Schinias, which has joined the program NATURA 2000. The facility enables you to host activities and programs of environmental education and research, and related functions with the principles of sustainable development and conservation of the area of Schinias. The main lake has a length of 2.2 km and is associated with a second auxiliary lake, which during the period of the Olympic Games was used for training and warming up athletes. The total water surface area of the facility is approximately 470 acres, while the Olympic Rowing Center grandstands of Schinias has 1000 seats.

- The “trophy” of the battle of Marathon

The copy of the trophy of the battle of Marathon, is located next to the church of Panagia Mesosporitissa. From the information appears that there were buried in groups dead Persians because bone remains found irregularly arranged, that seem

to belong to hundreds of victims. The remains of the real trophy are in the Museum of Marathon

- Archaeological site of Rhamnus

In the borders of the municipality of Marathon and Grammatiko extends the archaeological site of Rhamnus the best preserved ancient township of Attica. Two shrines have revealed - the temple of the strict goddess Nemesis , connected with the biggest names in classical art of Phidias and Agorakritos - and the temple of god Amphiaraos. Seaside fortress is preserved, which has been used as a fort for Athens for long periods, burial monuments and houses.

- Panagia Mesoporitissa

The Church of Panagia Mesoporitissa is located at the SW edge of Megalo Eleos. Celebrated on November 21, of the Presentation of Mary. In terms of style, striking impression makes the roof of the temple which consists of thin wooden logs. Beside the church they found the remains of the trophy of the battle of Marathon, built in a tower from the time of the Middle Ages.

- Benaki estate

On the avenue of Kato Souli, about 4 km from Marathon, are the estate and the magnificent villa Benaki. The property once reached up the Limiko (Rhamnus). Today it has an area of 2500 acres and belongs to the Foundation of the Benaki Museum (since 1962). Older recognize the contribution of the estate Benaki to the survival of area in difficult times

#### **4. Field Research**

The aim of this is to gather information that would determine if there are opportunities to support the possibility of developing alternative tourism focusing on activities of mild rural tourism (Brown, 2003).

In the new Kallikrateio Municipality of Marathon and mainly in the area of Nea Makri and Marathon Beach have been developed in standards of mass tourism and not organized, various tourism businesses. Also in the municipality there are too many holiday houses. The previous Municipalities and communities had no organized plan with tour operators, since the destiny of the tourism product transferred by secretariats to secretariats and from ministry to ministry. The possibilities that existed were many as the tourism standards have changed since the 80s, and the tourist attractions of alternative tourism are many and motivations of tourists are also too much.

The objective of this research which was carried out on questionnaires forms which will be recorded and analyzed is to find appropriate ways of developing alternative tourism with an emphasis on outdoor activities. The effort will be, so that all operators with the initiatives of the municipality, and with new jurisdictions that provide the NLF or involved in tourism, initiate projects and programs targeting to the internal and external tourism. The specific research questions of the research are:

1. If there is an alternative tourism in the Municipality of Marathon
2. Investigation of alternative forms of tourism that may help in the tourist development of the Municipality of Marathon
3. If there are tourist activities in the countryside Municipality of Marathon.
4. Evaluation of all parties involved, associations and local government and the degree of participation.
5. If they know the tourism attractions of alternative tourism activities and particularly in the countryside of the municipality Marathon and if they have goals for a sustainable development of alternative tourism with an emphasis on outdoor activities.

#### Presentation and analysis of research results

The statistical analysis of the data was performed by using the statistical package SPSS 17.0 version for Windows. The descriptive measures considered are a) Frequencies of variables and b) The averages of variables scale likert, of 4, 5, 7 and 10 degrees used in the questionnaire. The results are presented graphically in pie Charts or bar graphs

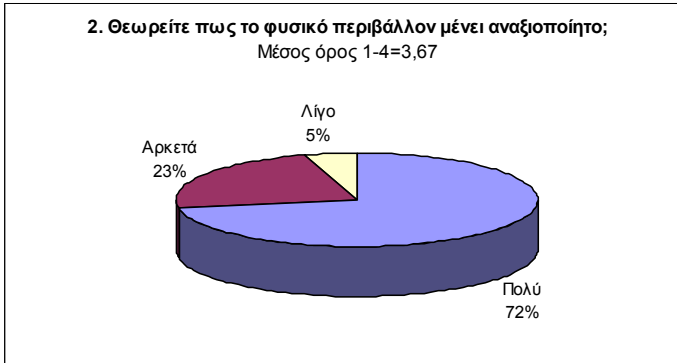
#### The Sample

From the 44 companies of the sample, the vast majority are catering companies and general health interest (82%), 14% are hotels while only 2% are the rented rooms and 2% travel agencies. The 81% of companies operates all year round, which is probably due to the permanent operation of the catering business in the region.

#### Results

The answers to the research questions are depicted in the following charts.

1. Do you believe that psychical environment is not part of the local tourism product?



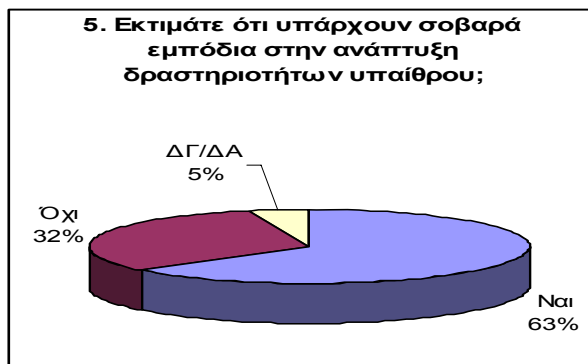
The majority 72% believes that environment is completely unexploited

2. Do you believe that rural tourism is well developed in Marathon?



The majority 81% believes the current situation is unsatisfactory.

3. Do you consider there are problems in rural development in Marathon?



The majority 63% believes that there serious obstacles in Marathon's rural development such as:

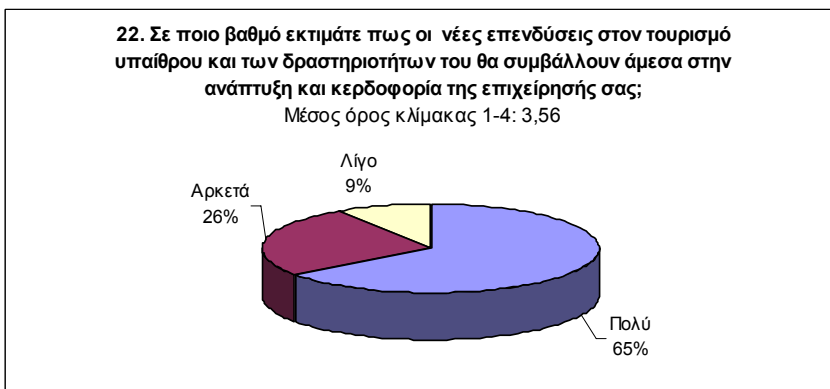
- Lack of infrastructure
- Lack of know how in rural tourism development
- Limited marketing efforts to promote the destination
- Lack of competition in the field
- Lack of capital and other resources

4. Do you consider that the Municipality of Marathon promotes rural tourism?



The majority 88% believes that it is not interested at all.

5. Do you believe that rural tourism will increase tourism companies profitability?



The vast majority (65+26) 91% believes that it will be for the benefit of the tourism companies.

## **5. Conclusions and Recommendations**

The research results prove that Marathon is a very attractive destination for rural tourism development although up to now there are very limited initiations to this direction.

According to Wray et al. (2010) who have conducted a research in Australia focused on the best practices in sustainable regional tourism destinations there twenty two best practices which, keeping in mind the research results, could also be implemented in area of Marathon:

1. Establish long-term strategic planning processes to guide the sustainable management, development and marketing of tourism.
2. Establish an effective destination management structure to lead and facilitate stakeholder cooperation for the sustainable development, management and marketing of tourism.
3. Have a strong level of support from their state or territory tourism organisations.
4. Business involvement supported by effective regional tourism organisations and/or local tourism organisations that lead and coordinate tourism and business involvement.
5. Have a good level of support from their local governments.
6. Have a good level of support from parks agencies and other relevant government authorities.
7. Undertake research to support decision-making for tourism.
8. Establish methods to improve funding for tourism.
9. Educate and communicate the significance and local values of tourism to visitors, the community, governments and business (Venetzanopoulou, 2006).
10. Foster service excellence.
11. Develop crisis management plans for tourism.
12. Improve access for visitors by planning and developing effective transport infrastructure and systems (WTO, 1994).
13. Plan and develop appropriate infrastructure and support facilities for tourism.
14. Plan and develop a range of appropriate visitor products and experiences.
15. Plan for the preservation of natural, built, socio-cultural environments.
16. Foster a cooperative approach to marketing.
17. Develop strategic marketing plans.

18. Establish an effective and consistent destination brand and image that is used to position and promote the destination to attract appropriate visitor markets and guide the development of appropriate tourism product.
19. Identify and target appropriate visitor markets.
20. Develop innovative advertising, sales and promotion strategies to support the destination brand and image.
21. Provide quality visitor information and interpretation services.
22. Develop festivals and events that support the destination image.



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*Eco certification and tourism operators: marketing  
and operational issues*

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**ABSTRACT**

The objectives of this paper are twofold: (1) to examine the alignment between visitor and operator perceptions on the importance of different attributes of certification, and (2) to look for evidence of the belief that certification improves operators' performance. Over 600 visitors and 48 tourism operators in and around the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area, Australia, provided data on the popular

ECO Certification Program ®. Using just the mean scores of importance, the study found that visitors and operators had similar views: both perceived *Nature* and *Marketing* as the most important attributes and *Conservation* and *Culture* as the least important attributes. However, statistically, operators ‘valued’ *Nature*, *Community*, *Customer* and *Marketing* significantly higher than visitors. To examine that certification improves performance, we collected data about operators’ subjective views of their own performance (self-assessed) and visitors’ subjective views of operator performance. These perceptions of performance were then validated with independent, actual objective measures. To facilitate comparisons, data were segmented according to certification status. Across the majority of attributes, *ECO* certified operators self-scored their performance higher, but not significantly so, than did their non-*ECO* certified counterparts. According to visitors, *ECO* certified operators out-performed their non-*ECO* certified counterparts on many attributes and these were statistically significant. Objective measures of performance confirmed these perceptions: *ECO* certified operators are ‘better’ on most attributes – however, these results need to be interpreted with caution, given the small sample size.

**Key Words:** *ECO* certification, importance-performance analysis, Wet Tropics World Heritage Area, visitor-operator alignment.

## INTRODUCTION

Tourism is renowned for its significant economic contributions to economies worldwide but its environmental and social impacts cannot be ignored. While the growth of the industry is pivotal, such growth must nevertheless occur in a manner that does not adversely affect the physical and human environments that sustain it. This is especially important when tourism occurs in protected areas, as the beauty and significance of protected areas attracts considerable public interest (Puhakka & Siikamaki, 2011; Rogerson & Sims, 2012). The tourism industry must therefore become a proactive leader by implementing initiatives that will lead to more sustainable outcomes. One such initiative is certification.

Certification is defined as “... a process of providing documented assurance, in the form of a logo or seal, that a product, service or organisation complies with a given standard” (Honey & Rome, 2001). It is broadly promoted as being able to improve the triple bottom line performance of firms whilst promoting more sustainable consumption (Font, 2007). But not everyone is convinced given limited conclusive evidence that certification is able to satisfy these claims.

Many argue that certification has failed to attract customers. This failure is compatible with the overall perception that the majority of certification programs are ephemeral, unknown, regrettably vague and misleading. For example, Vail (2011) found that a large majority of Australian and German residents were unaware of their countries’ tourism certification programs. Although some studies have found an

increase in demand<sup>1</sup> or a willingness to pay (WTP) for certified products, such findings need to be interpreted with caution since customers seldom have just one motivator to purchase a product (Font & Epler Wood, 2007) and oftentimes very little of expressed 'willingness' is actually translated into practice (Manaktola & Jauhari, 2007; Vermeer et al., 2010; Oom do Valle et al., 2012).

Ideally, certification should help consumers differentiate between the genuine and the 'opportunist' (i.e. the green washers), serving as a guarantee against false claims of sustainability. But, credible 'green' reputations are rare and difficult to create because such reputations are met with strong suspicion (Rivera, 2002, pp. 342). For example, Rivera et al., (2006) found evidence of opportunistic behaviour on the part of ski areas with certification and Rogerson & Sims (2012) argue that many businesses see certification as a way to improve their 'green' reputation without actually implementing beyond compliance practices. Consumers are also sceptical of these claimed ambitions as was found by Robinot & Giannelloni (2010). Clearly, an inability to 'prove' the tangible environmental benefits of certification hinders the progress of building operator and customer confidence in either partaking in such schemes or in buying certified products.

That said, the success of certification depends on consumer and operator support and some studies have tried to find evidence of such support (e.g. Rivera, 2002; Fairweather et al., 2005; Puhakka & Siikamaki, 2011; Esparon et al., 2013). Most of these studies have looked at certification 'holistically', focussing on consumer perceptions of or WTP for certification. Esparon et al., (forthcoming) extended these discussions by specifically looking at visitors' perceptions of the importance of eight core attributes of the *ECO* certification scheme and their perceptions of operator performance on those same attributes.

Since consumers have "*influences far beyond any other stakeholders*" (Chan, 2008, pp. 193), an understanding of their views is critical, but relatively little research has been done on operators' perspectives of certification. To date, all we know is that: (a) tourism operators are aware of certification schemes; (b) this awareness and involvement is increasing; but (c) operators remain neutral or undecided on the potential impacts of certification on their businesses (Chafe, 2005; Darling, 2010). Indeed, there is no information about the importance that tourism operators attach to specific attributes.

Just as important, but also absent in the certification literature, is information about businesses' evaluation of their own performance. The value of businesses' self-assessment lies in its ability to make operators take responsibility for their own performance and development. Doing so enables businesses to internalise the need for change and performance improvement (Luo & Bhattacharya, 2006; Goetsch & Stanley, 2009).

Clearly having information about either visitor or operator perceptions is important; but having information about both and then checking to see how much they align is something that to the best of our knowledge has not been done. This is

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<sup>1</sup> For example, GG21, 2004, (cited in Font & Epler Wood, 2007) found that 8% of Green Globe participants noted an increase in customers as a direct result of being Green Globe certified.

a potentially important research gap, given that research has shown that the views of tourists and operators are often very different (Morgan & Vorhies, 2001).

The objectives of this paper therefore, are to help fill those gaps. In doing so, we build on Esparon et al.'s (forthcoming) study on visitor perceptions by extending the analysis<sup>2</sup> to include operator perspectives. We also use some indicators that attempt to objectively validate perceptions of performance. Specifically, this paper considers the:

1. Alignment of values, i.e. operator and visitor attitudes with respect to importance; and the
2. Performance of operators using:
  - a. Operators' subjective view of performance;
  - b. Visitors' subjective view of performance; and
  - c. Objective indicators of performance

In the next section, we provide an overview of the *ECO* certification scheme and we describe our methods. Results are presented next followed by a discussion of the findings and its implications.

## Overview of methods

### ***Selecting a study area and certification scheme***

Geographically, the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area (WTWHA) extends from near Cooktown on the far north Queensland coast of Australia, to Townsville (approximately 650kms further south) and it borders the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area (GBRWHA) along a considerable part of the coastline. Ecologically, the area is significant enough to have merited special protection: world heritage status was granted in 1988 (UNESCO, 2010). It contains a distinctive and diverse assemblage of flora and fauna: the highest concentration of primitive flowering plant families in the world and various threatened plant and animal species find a home within these boundaries (Wet Tropics Management Authority, 2009).<sup>3</sup> Covering almost 900,000 ha, the WTWHA includes six national parks and Australia's most extensive remaining area of wet tropical rainforests is protected here. The WTWHA

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<sup>2</sup> Unlike that study, here we do not segment our sample into accommodations, attractions, and tours, instead, we analyse collectively.

<sup>3</sup> The WTWHA contains: 40% of Australia's bird species, 35% of Australia's mammal species, 60% of Australia's butterfly species, 20% of Australia's reptile species, 21% of Australia's cycad species, 29% of Australia's frog species, 65% of Australia's fern species and 30% of Australia's orchid species. As regards the flowering plants specifically, 16 out of the world's 28 lineages of primitive flowering plants grow in the WTWHA and within these families, there are at least 50 flowering plant species found only in the Wet Tropics (Wet Tropics Management Authority, 2012).



contains over 200 visitor sites and 150 managed walks and attracts approximately five million visitors annually (Wet Tropics Management Authority, 2009). Such coexistence between a thriving tourism industry and this complex ecosystem makes it of special interest to the wider-world. Accordingly, it was selected as our case study area.

We had three key criteria for choosing a certification scheme: (1) it had to be relevant to the study area; (2) it had to encompass multiple domains of sustainability; and (3) it had to be applicable to all types of tourism products represented in the study area. The *ECO* certification scheme – described as one of the most long-standing schemes in the world (Wood & Halpenny, 2001; Buckley, 2002) – satisfied all three. The *ECO* certification scheme has been used as a blueprint for the development of other certification schemes and in Australia, it has been attributed with improving standards and professionalism in the ecotourism sector (Thwaites, 2007). It certifies any tourism experience that is nature-based or has a nature focus and businesses have a choice of three levels: Nature tourism, Ecotourism or Advanced Ecotourism. Each level requires businesses to satisfy all core criteria, with higher standards imposed for advanced certification (Ecotourism Australia, 2011).



Unlike other certification programs, *ECO* certification is product specific: operators need to address the criteria as it applies specifically to each product, rather than the entire business or the operator. Hence, it is strictly products, not operators or businesses that are certified. However, in this paper, we use the phrase ‘certified operator’ to refer to an operator with a certified product and a ‘non-certified operator’ as one with no product which is certified.

### ***Questionnaire design and sample size***

We focused on eight core attributes of *ECO* certification: Natural area focus (*Nature*); Interpretation (*Interpretation*); Environmental sustainability (*Environment*); Contribution to conservation (*Conservation*); Working with local communities (*Community*); Cultural component (*Culture*); Customer satisfaction (*Customer*); and Responsible marketing (*Marketing*). Central to the questionnaire design was ensuring the close alignment of importance and performance. Hence the same attribute that was used to gauge importance was also used to gauge performance (Figure 1a and b). Moreover, since we wanted to examine the alignment between visitor and operator perceptions on different attributes, the same attributes (and examples) that were used in the visitor surveys were also used in the operator surveys (Figure 1a and b).

ATTRIBUTES OF ECO CERTIFICATION	11. How important to you, are each of the following attributes of ECO Certification?						12. How well do you think the tour you went on today performed based on these attributes?					
						Not Sure						Not Sure/Unable to judge
	Not Important at all		Very Important				Not well at all		Very well			
	1	2	3	4	5		1	2	3	4	5	
INTERPRETATION <i>e.g. Pre-tour materials such as brochures that explain the environment are provided</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
WORKING WITH LOCAL COMMUNITIES <i>e.g. The tour operator purchases many goods and services locally, thus contributing to the local economy</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Excerpt of Visitor Survey

ATTRIBUTES OF ECO CERTIFICATION	11. How important to this business, are each of the following attributes of ECO Certification?						12. How well do you think THIS BUSINESS performs on these attributes?					
						Not Sure						Not Sure/Unable to judge
	Not Important at all		Very Important				Not well at all		Very well			
	1	2	3	4	5		1	2	3	4	5	
INTERPRETATION <i>e.g. Pre-tour materials such as brochures that explains the environment are provided</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
WORKING WITH LOCAL COMMUNITIES <i>e.g. The tour operator purchases many goods and services locally, thus contributing to the local economy</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

(b) Excerpt of Operator Survey

Figure 1: Importance and performance

Since ECO certification is product specific, for each target group (i.e. visitor and operator) we developed three types of questionnaires targeting accommodations, attractions and tours. We contacted operators of both ECO certified and non-ECO certified products to help distribute the visitor surveys and/or fill out the operator survey. We also supplemented our visitor sample by collecting data at the Cairns airport. In total, we collected data from 600 visitors and 48 tourism operators.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> In early 2011, the region was battered by cyclone Yasi. Several tourism businesses were impacted, and some had to close down to allow the rebuilding process to begin. As such, tourism numbers were less, which adversely impacted our sample of participating tour operators and attractions.

## ***Analysis***

We used importance-performance analysis (IPA). This method incorporates both importance and performance data thus enabling one to look for disparities between performance (Martilla & James, 1977; Ainin & Hisham, 2008). Results of the IPA can thus highlight aspects of performance that require attention. This technique is most prominent in the analysis of customer/tourist data; to the best of our knowledge, it has not yet been used to assess business/operator. We performed non-parametric statistical tests on the differences between importance and performance and we present our results graphically, instead of the usual quadrants typical of IPA.

## **RESULTS**

### ***The alignment of perceived importance***

The procedure for assessing attributes followed that of Esparon et al., (forthcoming). Whilst it is not strictly correct to convert Likert scale data into numbers and then to calculate means, doing so facilitates an easy visual comparison of responses. Each 'category' was therefore assigned a number (as set out in Table 1) and the mean scores of each attribute were computed and then ordered (from 'most' to 'least' important).

**Table 1 Values assigned to categorical responses measuring importance**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Value assigned</b>
'Not important at all'	-2
'Not important'	-1
'Neither important nor unimportant'	0
'Important'	1
'Very important'	2

Table 2 summarises the top three and bottom three attributes. Visitors and operators clearly have the same 'values' with similar attributes being perceived as the most important. Although there is some divergence in the bottom three attributes, overall, it can be concluded that visitor and operator perceptions of importance are well-aligned.



Table 2 Comparisons of visitor & operator perceptions – The ‘top 3’ & ‘bottom3’ importance scores

	Visitor	Operator
Top 3	Nature Marketing Community	Marketing Nature Community
Bottom 3	Culture Conservation Customer	Interpretation Conservation Culture

To statistically examine the alignment of values, we used the two or more independent-samples test. This test considered the distribution of importance scores of each of the attributes across visitors and operators. The results suggest that visitors and operators have similar values in four of eight attributes. However, operators valued *Nature*, *Community*, *Customer* and *Marketing* significantly more than did the visitors (Figure 2).



Figure 2: Differences & similarities on the importance of attributes between visitor & operator Asterisks show significant differences between operators’ and visitors’ perceptions at  $p < .001$

### Subjective view of performance

As per the assessment of importance, we first examined visitors' and operators' (self-assessed) perceptions of performance individually, and segmented our analysis according to certification status. Here too, we converted likert-scale responses to numeric and show mean values for easy visual communication of results (using more appropriate statistical tests to check for differences in the distribution of responses). We found that visitors generally rated the performance of *ECO* certified operators higher than the performance of non-*ECO* certified operators, with performance in *Nature*, *Interpretation*, *Culture* and *Marketing* being significantly 'better'.

Self-rating of performance revealed highest scores for *Marketing*, followed by *Nature* and *Community* across both *ECO* and non-*ECO* certified operators. *ECO* certified operators rated their own performance higher than did the non-*ECO* certified operators. However, there were no statistically significant differences in self-rating of performance between the two groups of operators.

When we compared visitor and operator views of performance, we found statistically significant differences in five attributes. Visitors' evaluation of performance was significantly higher than those of the operator on *Conservation* and *Culture*, while operators rated their performance higher on *Nature*, *Community* and *Marketing* (Figure 3).

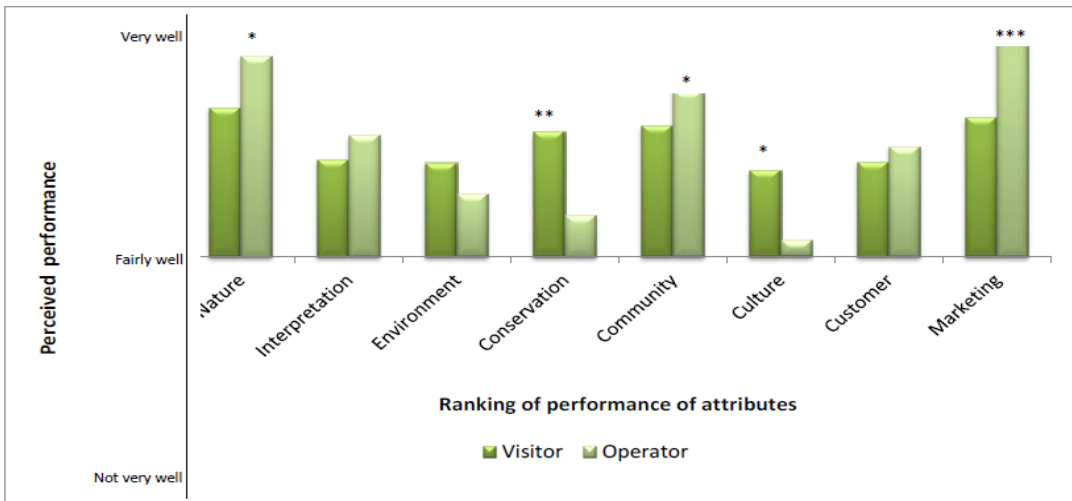


Figure 3: Differences & similarities on the performance of attributes between visitor & operator – all data

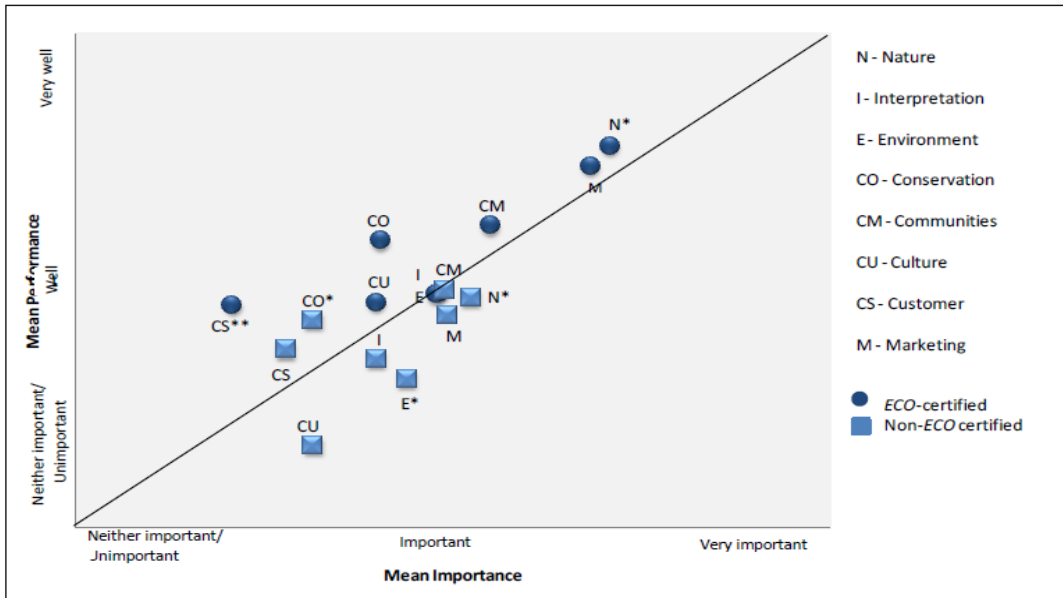
Asterisks show significant differences between operators' & visitors' perceptions at  $p < 0.05$ ,  $p < 0.01$  &  $p < 0.001$

#### 3.2.1 Aspects of operation needing improvement

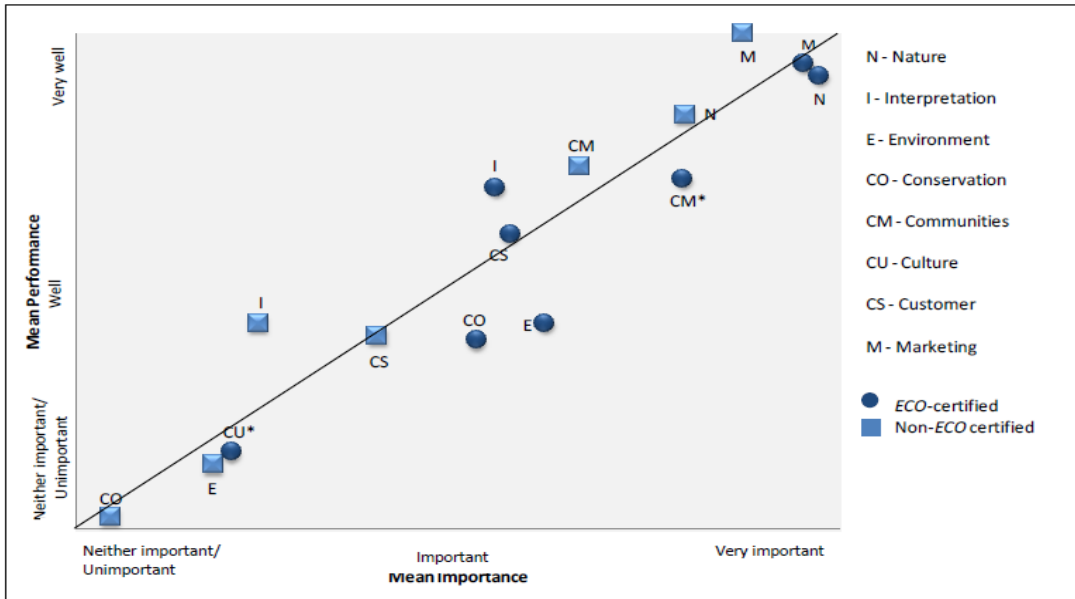
To examine areas for improvement, we used the IPA and the Wilcoxon signed-rank test to identify differences in perception of importance and performance. In most

cases, differences between importance and performance were statistically insignificant (based on visitors' perceptions) (Figure 4a). However, where significant differences were observed, *ECO* certified operators' performance exceeded importance (*Nature* and *Customer*), whereas for the non-*ECO* certified operators, importance exceeded performance (*Nature* and *Environment*) but performance scores on *Conservation* were higher than those on importance (Figure 4a).

When operator perceptions are considered, the performance of *ECO* certified operators is considered to be less than importance on *Community* and *Customer* (Figure 4b) – and these differences are statistically significant.



(a) Visitors' perception



(b) Operators' perception

Figure 4: Comparisons of importance and performance

Mean scores are graphed. Single & double asterisks (\*) denote significance of the difference between the distributions relating to importance and performance at  $p < .05$  and  $p < 0.1$  respectively. Points below the line indicates that mean importance exceeds mean performance. This implies that there are opportunities for improvement.

### Objective indicators of performance

While learning more about operator and visitor perceptions of performance is clearly important, perceptions do not always align with reality. It can be argued that operators' self-assessment is biased and as was found in Esparon et al., (forthcoming), visitors often lack the necessary information to properly assess performance. We therefore set out to select suitable indicators and examples to measure performance using more 'objective' data. We examined the assessment criteria used for *ECO* certification coupled with those used in the broader literature (Ceron & Dubois, 2003; Bell & Morse, 2008; Castley et al., 2008). We narrowed our focus to consider only indicators that closely aligned with the management objectives of the region of interest, while ensuring that the chosen indicators (particularly those pertinent to environmental performance) were measurable, understandable and feasible. The final list of indicators and examples encompassed three aspects of operator performance: (1) maintenance of customer satisfaction/experience, (2) contribution to the local and wider communities (social performance) and (3) contribution to the local and wider environments (environmental performance) (Table 2).

Table 2 A summary of comparison of performance on various objective indicators

<b>Attributes</b>	<b>Indicators</b>	<b>Category</b>
Customer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Obtaining feedback (informal and formal measures)<sup>5</sup></li> </ul>	CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE
Interpretation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provision of interpretation (personal and non-personal)<sup>6</sup></li> </ul>	
Marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Responsible marketing (measures employed to ensure that marketing is accurate and leads to realistic expectations)</li> </ul>	
Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Employment: Full-time equivalent</li> <li>Employment: Indigenous employees</li> <li>Donations to charities (financial)</li> <li>Donations to community initiatives (financial)</li> <li>Non-monetary contribution</li> </ul>	SOCIAL PERFORMANCE
Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Energy use</li> <li>Green house emission</li> <li>Waste</li> <li>Carbon offset</li> </ul>	ENVIRONMENTAL PERFORMANCE
Conservation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Contribution to conservation (financial and in-kind)</li> </ul>	
Nature	NOT MEASURED	
Culture	NOT MEASURED	

<sup>5</sup> Examples of informal feedback include: discussion with customers; feedback forms and regular meetings/debriefs on operations between management and staff. Examples of formal feedback include: structured interviews with customers; review by tourism professionals and questionnaires.

<sup>6</sup> Examples of personal interpretation are: informative interaction with a guide (e.g. spotlighting); lectures by specialists; games or quizzes. Examples of non-personal interpretation are: pretour materials (e.g. briefing sheets, brochures); displays/interpretive signage; audio visuals, and reference materials.

## A synthesis of performance measures

Although we aimed to compare similar products (e.g. a non-certified bed and breakfast with its certified counterpart, or a non-certified river tour with its certified counterpart), the low number of surveys received and non-response on some key indicators did not permit comparisons to be made at such fine level of detail.<sup>7</sup> Thus, we limited comparisons between certified and non-certified operators to generic comments. Table 3 summarises cases where statistically significant differences in perceptions on each attribute were found between *ECO* certified and non-*ECO* certified operators and in each case, states which of the two groups of operators appear to be performing 'better'.

Table 4 Summary of statistically significant differences in perceptions of the performance of *ECO* certified compared to non-*ECO* certified operators across each attribute

Where there are significant differences, a description of how operators were perceived to be performing is given.

Attributes	Visitor perceptions of ...		Operator perceptions of ...		Objective measures of performance – (no statistical tests done due to small sample size)
	performance	aspects of operation that need improvement <sup>8</sup>	performance (self-assessed)	aspects of operation that need improvement	
Nature	<i>ECO</i> certified 'better' than non- <i>ECO</i> certified	<i>ECO</i> -certified performing 'well' Non- <i>ECO</i> certified performing 'poorly'			
Interpretation	<i>ECO</i> certified 'better' than non- <i>ECO</i> certified				<i>ECO</i> certified 'better' than non- <i>ECO</i> certified
Environment		Non- <i>ECO</i> certified performing 'poorly'			Non- <i>ECO</i> certified 'better' than <i>ECO</i> certified
Conservation		Non- <i>ECO</i> certified			<i>ECO</i> certified 'better' than non-

<sup>7</sup> We received 48 operator surveys. Of these, 19 were from accommodations (10 *ECO* certified and 9 non-*ECO* certified), 5 from attractions (3 *ECO* certified and 2 non-*ECO* certified) and 24 from tours (10 *ECO* certified and 14 non-*ECO* certified). However, there were not enough similar businesses in each category to facilitate a 'fair' comparison (i.e. based on similar attributes, e.g. same size, same activities, etc.).

<sup>8</sup> The term 'well' indicates that performance exceeds importance; 'poorly' indicates that importance exceeds performance.

		performing 'poorly'			ECO certified
Community				ECO-certified performing 'poorly'	ECO certified 'better' than non- ECO certified
Culture	ECO certified 'better' than non-ECO certified				
Customer		ECO-certified performing 'well'		ECO-certified performing 'poorly'	ECO certified 'better' than non- ECO certified
Marketing	ECO certified 'better' than non-ECO certified				ECO certified 'better' than non- ECO certified

Based on visitors' subjective perceptions, the clear observation is that *ECO* certified operators are out-performing their non-*ECO* certified counterparts. There were no statistically significant differences in performance when operator views are considered. If considering whether visitors are satisfied (i.e. performance in relation to importance), here too, the generalised perception of performance is in favour of the *ECO* certified operators. *ECO*-certified operators however, were not necessarily satisfied with their performance on *Community* and *Customer*.

Objective measures of performance confirmed the overarching perception that *ECO* certified operators are 'better' on most attributes – however, these results need to be interpreted with caution, given the small sample size.

## DISCUSSION

This study found that generally, there is good alignment between the perceptions of visitors and operators. This information may prove useful in marketing campaigns geared to encourage tourism operators in joining certification programs. However, there may be reasons to be concerned given the fact that *Conservation* was ranked 7<sup>th</sup> in importance by both operators and visitors (out of eight attributes). Clearly, this is in contrast to the goals and objectives of the WTWHA as set out by the Wet Tropics Management Authority (WTMA). WTMA strongly advocates the building and maintenance of ecosystem health and resilience as defensive responses to potential impacts of climate change in the region (WTMA, 2009). Thus, contributions towards *Conservation*, financially or otherwise, are paramount to this cause.

That *ECO* certified operators self-scored higher in performance across the majority of attributes, is of no surprise. Recall that these attributes are core criteria against which businesses are assessed against in order to obtain *ECO* certification. Accordingly,

*ECO* certified businesses may have had time to work on those attributes and may have felt more confident in scoring their performance. Moreover, they may have obtained feedback that validated their scores – thus, they present a more realistic performance score. That said, an alternative hypothesis is that there is strategic bias: *ECO* certified operators have a stronger incentive to score well, or risk losing certification. Another possible reason for the higher scores is that those with *ECO* certification would have displayed superior levels of performance without the logo: it is argued that the vast majority of businesses joining certification schemes are the sustainability pioneers (although there are some businesses who have become more informed through certification). Therefore, how much of the improvement in performance is attributable to certification *per se*, as opposed to prior interest of sustainability remains unclear (UNEP, 2006; Font, 2007). In spite of suggestions that operators' judgement of their own performance may be biased, the results nevertheless reflect visitors' perception of the performance of operators in the region.

Those points aside, several additional comments can be made from that part of the analysis which compares visitor and operator perceptions. On three attributes (*Nature, Community and Marketing*), operators perceived their performance to be better than visitors perceived them to be. The mis-alignment of perceptions may be viewed as a product quality 'problem' which may adversely impact on the outcome of operators' quality improvement strategies. This means that when businesses consider their performance to be better than the consumer perceives it, there is a tendency to be less likely to devote resources towards improving either the customers' perceptions of quality or the products' quality (Morgan & Vorhies, 2001). However, since some attributes are invisible to the consumer (Esparon et al., forthcoming), it is likely that customers will be unable to make appropriate or accurate assessments of operator performance.

When objective indicators are considered, in most areas, *ECO* certified firms showed better execution, while in others their performance was relatively poor. Whilst there is limited evidence to definitely confirm or refute the claim that certification improves performance,<sup>9</sup> the subjective indicators of performance generally indicated that *ECO* certified operators were outperforming their non-*ECO* certified counterparts. Although, there are few evidenced-based studies on this topic, those that have attempted to explore these claims, were unable to provide decisive evidence either way. For example, in a study conducted over a five year period, Rivera et al., (2006) found no evidence to conclude that ski areas adopting the *Sustainable Slopes Program* (SSP) displayed superior performance than non-participants in several areas of environmental protection.

Specific to our region of interest, research by Colmar Brunton (2010), revealed that tourism operators in the Wet Tropics region and surrounds were both positive and apprehensive about environmental issues. Particularly, operators were significantly more likely to agree that: (1) it was important for their business to reduce its carbon footprint; (2) their customers expect them to be environmentally responsible; and (3) climate change is an issue that requires drastic action. But, despite these positive affirmations, the study also found that tourism operators were significantly less likely to agree that they personally need to be more environmentally responsible in their

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<sup>9</sup> This is mostly due to relatively small sample of operators.



businesses. Zeppel and Beaumont (2011)'s study concurs: they found 28% of environmentally certified businesses already carbon offsetting and 37% planning to begin offsetting, while 34% did not consider offsetting necessary.<sup>10</sup>

Our findings corroborate those of earlier studies: in general, tourism operators were not implementing measures to mitigate their business' carbon footprint. For instance, only three operators surveyed stated that they measured and/or engaged in practices for offsetting their carbon emissions. Only two operators indicated usage of 100% solar energy as their source. Despite five operators stating that they offer the opportunity to clients to offset the impacts of their travel, none of the respondents was able to identify specific measures that were being implemented, i.e. on the ground actions that actively engage customers.<sup>11</sup> Overall, these findings reveal that despite operator concerns and stated intentions over emission issues of their business, actual implementation remains lacking.

## CONCLUSION & WIDER Implications

We set out to examine the alignment between visitor and operator perceptions on the importance of different attributes of certification. We found the same attributes were perceived to be important by both visitors and operators. These attributes were: *Nature*, *Marketing* and *Community*. Although there were some divergences in the bottom three attributes, overall, it can be concluded that visitors and operators value the same things. We also searched for evidence that certification improves performance. Evidence was sought in three ways: by looking at operators' subjective views of their own performance (i.e. self-assessed); by considering visitors' subjective views of operator performance; and by validating those perceptions of performance with actual objective measures (indicators). We found that *ECO*-certified operators self-scored higher in performance than their non-*ECO* certified counterparts, and visitor perceptions of operator performance corroborated. According to visitors, the performance of *ECO*-certified operators was significantly better on *Nature*, *Interpretation*, *Culture* and *Marketing*. Objectively, we are unable to conclude that certification improves performance; however, *ECO*-certified operators appear to be performing 'better' than their non-*ECO* certified counterparts on most attributes measured – *Environment* being the exception.

The lack of data on indicators provided by operators is an important limitation of the study, but it is a limitation of all previous research on certification in the tourism industry. If we are ever to assess the 'true' impact of certification on sustainability, then a baseline dataset needs to be established and backed by science: at present, tourism certification schemes lag others in this domain (the FSC and MSC certification programs for example, which certifies sustainable timber and fishery respectively, are well-known for their rigorous science). Importantly, certification providers need to publicize the contribution of certification. This could be done by

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<sup>10</sup> Zeppel and Beaumont's study however did not compare those with and without certification.

<sup>11</sup> For example, guests participating in tree planting as part of the business' own carbon offset/bio-sequestration project). A search on Ecotourism Australia's website revealed ~15 operators (inclusive of both marine and terrestrial) in the Wet Tropics region having Climate Action Certification Program. This is clearly a low number in respect to the hundreds of operators known to operate in the area.

perhaps making public an anonymous database of data collected from certified operators.<sup>12</sup> That such information is not available to the general public means that the true impact of certification is essentially 'hidden'.

This information asymmetry must be addressed. As rightfully noted by Font (2007), certification programs must show how their actions contribute to their aims. The ability to demonstrate the measurable benefits of certification may not only contribute to greater confidence and consumer interest and operator participation in such programs (Liu, 2003; Dalton et al., 2008; Valor, 2008) but may also provide certification programs with the benefit of securing financial and promotional support, a requirement which has received much success in other industries (e.g. the Marine Stewardship Council) (Rome et al., 2006).

Undoubtedly, there is a clear need to obtain data with respect to environmental and social impacts and this is especially important in areas like the one focused on in this study: the WTWHA. As documented in the literature, the WTWHA contains ecologically sensitive ecosystems, and some sites have already experienced degradation from heavy usage (Talbot et al., 2003; Turton, 2005). Thus, managing the high volumes of visitation is clearly challenging. If *ECO* certification can be found to mitigate such impacts, then it could prove to be a useful management tool (e.g. via legislation) for tourist access to ecologically sensitive areas within the WTWHA. Alternatively, WTMA could devise its own certification scheme (similar to the PAN Parks certification)<sup>13</sup> tailored to suit its own requirements and geographical needs. Information from this study could be used as key inputs on what aspects needs special attention. But, until, or unless, better information is available, one cannot make a case for such radical public interventions.

Finally, the study found a lack of concern over some attributes, which are generally believed to be vitally important to the sustainability agenda. This suggests that there may be a need to consider using public awareness campaigns (or similar) to highlight their importance and thus raising private demand for certified products, promoting sustainability. Although this study was conducted in the WTWHA, the implications of its finding are likely to extend to other protected areas (marine and terrestrial) and to other products in different industries promoting sustainability. The fundamental issue here is the fact that consumers and businesses may not perceive some attributes to be important (e.g. *Conservation*). Public awareness campaigns coupled with more and better information may thus help revitalise the business-to-consumer (B2C) marketing campaigns, which to date, have been deemed as unsuccessful and may also enhance that of business-to-business (B2B) campaigns for further support of certification and increase market uptake.

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<sup>12</sup> Font (2007) recommends that data is collected by agents independent from the actual certification program so as to ensure credibility. But, that may increase costs. In the short-run, it may be 'quicker' to provide existing data, however in the long-run, the goal could be to get external agency to verify those data.

<sup>13</sup> The PAN Parks certification is one such example. This program aims to protect Europe's natural habitats and fragile ecosystems while balancing high quality tourism with environmental protection and sustainable local development. For more information see <http://www.panparks.org/what-wedo/mission> and Puhakka & Siikamaki (2011).

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# *Sustainability as a Key to the Future for St. Thomas, United States Virgin Islands*

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## **ABSTRACT**

St. Thomas, United States Virgin Islands is a 31 square mile island in the Caribbean Sea, situated at the northern end of the Greater Antilles (VI Now, 2013). Home to roughly 51,000 residents, St. Thomas hosts millions of air and water guests each year (Central Intelligence Agency, 2004). Tourism is the main source of income for the island and is the largest employing industry (Central Intelligence Agency, 2004). Yet since its boom as America's tropical paradise in the late 1960's, very little tourist related infrastructural renovations have been made to the island, taxing the island's already limited resources. Furthermore, the intersections of socioeconomic status, ethnicity, and colonial history of the local population stand in sharp contrast to the tourists', exacerbating a bittersweet relationship between residents and tourists. These factors maybe a hindrance to the full development of tourism in St. Thomas. Improving tourism infrastructures and collecting input from both community residents and tourists on tourism initiatives may hold the key for improvements of St. Thomas's tourism future. This paper proposes conducting a quantitative study surveying tourists and local residents on their perspectives of tourism in St. Thomas. The results of such a study may be used for local government, the Department of Tourism, non-profit agencies, and others involved in the tourism industry to implement infrastructural improvements and sustainable tourism initiatives.

**Key Words:** St. Thomas, USVI, sustainability, tourism

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

St. Thomas, United States Virgin Islands (USVI), a small 31 square mile rock island in the northern Caribbean Sea, is known as America's tropical paradise boasting pristine beaches, romantic wedding packages, and accommodating family resorts (United States Virgin Islands Hotel and Tourism Association, n.d.). Home to approximately 51,000 residents, not including the influx of seasonal workers and undocumented residents, this island is somewhat mainland U.S.A. in its demographic mix and mainland amenities, while very Caribbean with its limited resources and dated public infrastructures (VI Now, 2013; Central Intelligence Agency 2004). St. Thomas is also considered the most culturally diverse island in the Caribbean, particularly when millions of annual tourists breach its shores (United States Virgin Islands Demographics, n.d.). The addition of hundreds of tourists daily creates a heavy demand on limited island resources like water, electricity, gasoline, and even space. The beaches and waterways surrounding the island also pay a heavy price in human traffic since these are prime tourist destinations.

As an island heavily dependent upon tourism, the addition of so many tourists daily adds a strain to the tourist/resident/environment relationships as evidenced by the consistently low rankings in customer service and island cleanliness assessments on guest surveys (Bureau of Economic Research, 2005). It may be that the underdevelopment of tourism related infrastructures plays a part in how local residents interact with tourists and how both tourists and residents interact with the environment. When developing sustainable tourism initiatives, these may be factors necessary to consider.

Aligning with the Virgin Islands Department of Tourism's goal of including community input on tourism plans, this paper seeks to assess the relationships local residents have with tourists and the environment to provide valuable information for sustainable tourism initiatives (Lewin, 2012). The methodology chosen for this research is quantitative whereby the researcher will utilize questionnaires for both tourists and local residents as the data collection tools. Findings of this study may be instrumental in mapping sustainable development options for not only tourism, but also other aspects of island life like environmental conservation, public works, and economic and social development plans.

## **2 LITERATURE REVIEW**

Researchers Dunn and Dunn (2002) conducted a similar study in Jamaica for the purpose of enriching Jamaica's hospitality industry. Recognizing the growing economic importance of tourism for the island, Jamaica's department of tourism realized it needed to establish a niche within the Caribbean tourism sector. Seeing its people as the distinguishing factor of the island over the physical nature of the island, Jamaica realized their customer service must be their point of demarcation. "For people to be happy with visitors, they have to be happy within themselves and their social environments", Dunn and Dunn reported (2002, p. 26). These authors reiterated residents' sentiments regarding the need for improvements in the

hospitality workers' arena, specifically a need to improve workers' housing and transportation options. Also recognized was a need to improve the relationships between locals and tourists via reducing the resentment between the wealthy tourists and the poor residents. Like Jamaica in Dunn and Dunn's 2002 study, St. Thomas's tourism industry is currently at a pivotal point facing very similar dynamics. With the closure of the largest private company in the territory, tourism is now this island's main income source. Therefore, feedback from both resident and tourist populations are essential components for future tourism initiatives in St. Thomas.

Walmsley and Jenkins's (1993) research examined tourists' and local residents' perspectives in Australia. Using social construct theory, these researchers found that tourists' perspectives of each tourist destination were relatively the same among themselves regardless of sex and age, but differed when compared with local residents perspectives. These researchers wanted to determine what constructs tourists used to differentiate between tourist areas. Understanding the importance of human perception as it relates to their environment "has led to a resurgence of interest in 'cultural geography' and [challenged us] to focus on how environmental meaning is contested and negotiated" (Walmsley & Jenkins, 1993, p. 2). Likewise, the St. Thomas proposed study would assess tourists' perspective of St. Thomas to see how they relate with local residents perspectives of St. Thomas. The Walmsley and Jenkins' (1993) study provided valuable information particularly for the tourism marketing industry. These businesses were able to work with how tourists viewed each particular location to create marketing strategies that reinforced the tourists' perspectives. Both the Department of Tourism and Hotel and Tourism Association in St. Thomas recognize the need for St. Thomas to develop its own niche in the Caribbean tourism sector. Assessing tourist and local resident perspectives on St. Thomas tourism would be useful in determining an appropriate niche, which could then be utilized for marketing initiatives.

When dealing with the human factor of tourism, there are many overlapping aspects to consider. In St. Thomas, the colonial history of the island, the high cost of living, low average household income, and its patriarchal culture all factor into how local residents and tourists interact (USVI Moving Center, 2012; Bureau of Economic Research, 2012; U.S. Census Bureau, 2002; de Albuquerque, 1999). Recognizing that tourism perpetuates gender and ethnic inequalities, it is not surprising that most front line service positions like hotel front desk staff, servers, and cashiers/clerks are positions occupied by females and are among the lowest paying jobs (Virgin Islands Department of Labor, 2011; Bailey & Ricketts, 2003; Massiah, 1982). One can deduce that this intersection is where most of the negative interactions between guests and tourists occur.

The two largest resorts on St. Thomas confirm that guest satisfaction rankings can be improved by improving guest/staff interactions, which may mean improving the value or worth of the front line employees. One example is the Marriott Frenchman's Reef and Morning Star Resort, continually the company's biggest earner worldwide, yet with the lowest guest satisfaction rate within the entire Marriott Corporation (personal communication, 2013). Based on their Guest Satisfaction Survey and Trip Advisor responses many guests' overall experiences were less than satisfactory citing poor customer service and uncleanness of the island as two most reported complaints (personal communication; Bureau of Economic Resource, 2005;



Trip Advisor, 2013). Another example is the Ritz-Carlton of St. Thomas, also continually low ranking in guest satisfaction relative to other Ritz hotels in the region (personal communication, 2013). Assessing worker's attitudes and their perspectives of tourism may be the key to improving tourist and worker interactions, which would not only help these particular hoteliers, but also the island's economy.

### **3 THEORY**

The frustration/aggression theory may be an appropriate lens through which to frame the resident/tourist dynamics. According to this theory, workers may be frustrated because of their low wages and/or low worth to their place of employment. Feelings of frustration can turn to acts of aggression, passive or active, when they are not acknowledged, validated, or managed in socially acceptable ways. As this theory states "the more directly the target of our aggression is associated with the frustration, the more effectively is the tension released" (Schellenberg, 1996, p. 51). This reality has the potential to cause turbulence in not only the workplace, but in the greater community, which according to Tilly (2003) is a prime ingredient for civil discontent. Societies where certain populations' basic needs are not met or are denied risk violent outbursts from those populations (Burton, 2006). Greece's April 18<sup>th</sup>, 2013 strawberry shooting case exemplifies this very point (Labropoulou, 2013).

There is a sizable West Indian population in St. Thomas, many who migrated to the U.S. Virgin Islands for work and a better quality of life. Differentiating West Indians from St. Thomians, de Albuquerque and McElroy (1982) elaborate, "Although their impact on the delicate insular social and demographic fabric has been substantial, the West Indians' assimilation has only been partial as evidenced by insecure legal status, persistent job and wage discrimination, grudging social acceptance and political disenfranchisement" (p. 96). This social dissonance still exists in St. Thomas today as many West Indians work in the tourism industry, possibly explaining some of the negative tourist/local interactions (personal experience, 2006).

This dissonance may also explain St. Thomas's violence. Rated one of the deadliest places in the world for murders per capita, St. Thomas has its social challenges (Mattei, 2013a; Shea, 2012; Mortenson, 2010). Island violence certainly does not facilitate a successful tourism campaign particularly when violence spills over into the tourism sector, like when a 16 year old cruise ship day guest was gunned down by gang cross fire in 2010 (Sloan, 2010). Social ills such as this exemplify the need for St. Thomas's tourism industry to become directly involved in the health and well being of the local community.

### **4 ENVIRONMENT**

Violence against the environment is also a major concern for St. Thomas's tourism industry. As an often-reported disappointment mentioned by tourists, cleanliness of the island is an area identified for improvement (Bureau of Economic Research, 2005). Litter lined roads is reflection of ecocide, a society's conflict against the environment. This term, ecocide, is defined as "The extensive destruction,

damage to or loss of ecosystem(s) of a given territory, whether by human agency or by other causes, to such an extent that peaceful enjoyment by the inhabitants of that territory has been severely diminished” (McClellin, 2012). This term can be viewed as fitting for St. Thomas for several reasons highlighted below.

St. Thomas’s garbage collection system is such that it requires residents to dispose of their waste at various dumpsters located around the island along the major roadways. Most of the garbage makes it into these dumpsters, but not all. Around any one of these dumpster areas one can find old refrigerators, tires, televisions, batteries, and various other toxic materials. Often times the garbage bins and dumpsters are overflowing with the grounds around them absorbing hazardous material residue jeopardizing the long-term health of the environment.

Another major area of concern jeopardizing the long-term health of the island is the end location for all the island’s garbage. There is only one landfill for the garbage of three of the four islands of the territory and all their tourist guests. The unlined, shoreline landfill in St. Thomas accommodates millions of people’s garbage each year (Parten, 2013; Baur, 2010). It is consistently in violation of polluting the environment, costing the territory millions of dollars in fines (Environmental Protection Agency, 2008). The dearth of recycling facilities is a contributing factor to the landfill problem, resulting in batteries, refrigerators, motor oil, etc. to be tossed into the landfill, bush, or ocean (Mattei, 2012; Environmental Protection Agency 2008).

Furthermore, the practice of live-aboard boats dumping raw sewage in the marinas and the open ocean is another major offense against the environment directly affecting coastal coral life (Department of Planning and Natural Resources, 2005). Despite the large marina industry in St. Thomas, there are no holding facilities in place for boats to deposit their raw sewage; therefore, boats empty their waste directly into the ocean (Parten, 2013; Department of Planning and Natural Resources, 2005). Raw sewage dumped into the ocean creates eutrophic conditions known to cause algae blooms, which suffocate coral life. Over the years, much of the coral around St. Thomas has died. The Resident Questionnaire will assess knowledge and awareness of environmental issues pertaining to the above raised topics. Understanding the importance of environmental cleanliness to tourists and whether or not it is important to residents will be an outcome of this study. Answers to the survey questions can help key tourism industry entities tailor their tourism initiatives towards addressing the environmental concerns raised by previous tourists.

## **5 TOURISM INFRASTRUCTURES**

Understanding that there is a connection between private and public tourism related sectors, it is known that private sector entities will be hesitant to invest in or support tourism infrastructures if public infrastructures are not adequate. Defining tourism related infrastructure as those services and facilities that service tourists needs and encourages private sector investments in competitive tourism products, it is paramount that public sector infrastructures in St. Thomas operate affordably, efficiently, and effectively if private sector support is desired (Tourism Western Australia, n.d.; Oliconography on Social Infrastructures, n.d.). Examples of public

sector tourism infrastructures include roadways, airports, ports, solid waste and sewage treatment facilities, emergency services, water and power services, and labor regulations (Island Resource Foundation, 1996). In St. Thomas, a few of the public sector infrastructures are only just being addressed while many are still in need of improvement before they can support private tourism infrastructures adequately. For example, the emergency phone number 9-1-1 does not always connect or connects to the wrong island (personal communication, Mattei, 2013b). Local regulatory agencies like the Health Department, Water and Power Authority (WAPA), and Virgin Islands Department of Public Works, have all been in serious violations of safe operating practices (Environmental Protection Agency, 1998, 2008, 2012). Electrical power service is not only inconsistent, but costs the highest of all U.S. states and territories resulting in many private sector businesses being forced to close and move off of St. Thomas. (Water and Power Authority, 2012).

Finally, labor policies like the Federal minimum wage of \$7.25 is insufficient for living in St. Thomas by \$2.75 for a single person or by over \$15 for a family of three. Employees who are under 20 years of age, work for tips, or are full time high school or college students can legally get paid can legally be paid \$4.25, \$2.13, or \$6.16 per hour respectfully in St. Thomas (Kotval, Kotval-K., Machemer & Mullin, 2012; MinimumWage.org, 2012). This stipulation includes most hotels and tourism based employees. Paying minimum wage or less means that a large number of tourism's employees are completely disenfranchised from the very industry in which they work.

Improving public sector services like those aforementioned would not only encourage more private sector businesses to invest in St. Thomas's tourism industry, but would also enhance the quality of life for local residents. As Dunn and Dunn (2002) observed, for tourism to be successful and not an exploitative industry, involvement of local residents in tourism must be organized and planned. Such efforts will inevitably improve tourist/local relationships. Updating emergency service protocol, equipment, and staff training is one step to ensuring the safety and well being of everyone on St. Thomas. Improving the quality and effectiveness of regulatory agencies would help ensure long-term safe practices of St. Thomas services. Making electricity more affordable and reliable would help many private sector businesses by reducing their overhead costs; savings that could be converted into increased workers' wages, possibly improving tourist/resident interactions. Lastly, establishing fair labor practices and implementing a minimum wage that is compatible with the cost of living in St. Thomas would significantly help curb the poverty rate and improve the quality of living for over 30 percent of the island's poor population and over 40 percent of the island's children currently living in poverty (Kotval et al., 2012; Bailey & Ricketts, 2003, VINow, 2013).

In sum, public sector improvements in St. Thomas are needed for the economic survival of St. Thomas. The ripple effect of such improvements would not only impact tourism via the private sector, but island residents as well, potentially improving tourist/resident interactions. The questionnaires included in this proposal will assess local resident knowledge of how these infrastructures relate to them and to tourism.

## **6 METHODOLOGY**

The methodology for this research initiative is based on the implementation of two questionnaires listed in Appendices A and B. These survey tools utilize nominal, ordinal, and interval ratio questions. The questionnaires, which will be in both English and Spanish languages, will be disseminated by research assistants to adults of any gender at various locations around the island. A set number of copies of each survey will be printed and offered to both tourists and local residents until all questionnaire forms have been complete. The points of dissemination will be at high traffic areas for tourist and locals alike. The number of completed surveys will provide a rich perspective of both tourists and local residents on tourism and the environment in St. Thomas. Using survey analysis software such as Survey Monkey or SPSS, the results will be coded and analyzed. The primary researcher will then offer a written report of the findings once the analysis is concluded.

The primary limitation of this study is language. Tourists and residents who cannot read English or Spanish will be excluded from this study. Though Spanish and English are the two most prominent languages spoken and read, there are numerous other languages used by residents and tourists who may be very interested in completing the questionnaire in their own language, but who cannot because of a language barrier. Each research assistant will encourage the tourist or resident to answer each question honestly and to the best of the respondent's ability and will not guide or influence participants' responses.

## **7 CONCLUSION**

The implications of this study will be far reaching. Assessing tourist and local residents' level of interest in tourism and environmental awareness will benefit many sectors of not just St. Thomas, but potentially the whole U.S. Virgin Islands territory. As a result of this study, tourism industry investors can specifically allocate resources to address their areas of weakness as well as to bolster their areas of strength. The U.S.V.I. Hotel and Tourism Association, the Virgin Islands Department of Tourism, the St. Thomas/St. John Chambers of Commerce, the Department of Education, the University of the Virgin Islands, and the St. Thomas Taxi Association are just a few organizations that will directly benefit from the implementation of streamlined tourism related initiatives designed from the results of this study. It is this author's belief that if sustainable tourism changes are to take place, the residents of St. Thomas need to support them through actions by establishing accountability measures. Furthermore, this author is confident that this seminal work will establish a foundation for future research on the social, cultural, and economic perspectives of the U.S. Virgin Islands.

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## DISCLAIMER AND STATEMENT OF WILLING VOLUNATRY PARTICIPATION

Dear Participant,

As part of this tourism research project, we are asking that you take a few minutes to complete the survey below.

Our research study's objective is to examine the attitudes and opinions of local residents on tourism. The goal of this research is to include local residents' input on sustainable tourism initiatives for St. Thomas, Virgin Islands. To gauge the community's perspectives and input, we want to ask participants to complete the survey herein as honestly and completely as possible. By participating in this exciting groundbreaking research, you are not only assisting our community in assessing an accurate read on public opinions on tourism, but you are also helping to better plan a future for St. Thomas.

Participation in this survey is completely voluntary and anonymous. It may take you up to 30 minutes to complete this survey. You must be 18 years of age or older, must reside in St. Thomas, must understand written English and/or Spanish, and be of sound mind. You may terminate your own participation in this study at any time by discontinuing to fill out the survey. You, as the survey participant, can opt to answer all, some, or none of the survey questions below. You will not gain any direct benefit from participating in this survey, nor will you incur any risks. The information obtained from this survey will be used for informational use only with the goal of assessing local resident perspectives of tourism for the purpose of establishing sustainable tourism initiatives for St. Thomas, Virgin Islands.

Thank you for your participation in this ground-breaking research. We value your time and opinions.

Elizabeth Estes, ABD  
Primary Investigator



# Appendix A

## Resident Survey

### SECTION 1: DEMOGRAPHICS

1. What is your home town, state, and/or country?

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2. What is your ethnicity? \_\_\_\_\_

3. What is your gender?

Male \_\_\_\_\_ Female \_\_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

4. What is your age range?

18-24 \_\_\_\_\_ 25-34 \_\_\_\_\_ 35-44 \_\_\_\_\_ 45-54 \_\_\_\_\_ 55-64 \_\_\_\_\_ 65 + \_\_\_\_\_

5. How many years have you lived in St. Thomas?

0-5 \_\_\_\_\_ 6-10 \_\_\_\_\_ 11-15 \_\_\_\_\_ 16-20 \_\_\_\_\_ 21-25 years \_\_\_\_\_ 26 + \_\_\_\_\_

6. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

Some high school \_\_\_\_\_ High School Graduate \_\_\_\_\_ Some College/Associates Degree \_\_\_\_\_  
Bachelor's Degree \_\_\_\_\_ Graduate or professional degree \_\_\_\_\_

7. What category best describes your household income?

Less than \$20k \_\_\_\_\_ 21k-50k \_\_\_\_\_ 51k-70k \_\_\_\_\_  
71k-99k \_\_\_\_\_ 100k-150k \_\_\_\_\_ 151k \_\_\_\_\_

### SECTION 2: RESIDENT PERSPECTIVE

8. How do you define a St. Thomian?

- A person born in St. Thomas \_\_\_\_\_
- Someone who's parents were born in St. Thomas \_\_\_\_\_
- Anyone who lives in St. Thomas \_\_\_\_\_
- A West Indian living in St. Thomas \_\_\_\_\_

9. Is a "local" always a St. Thomian?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

10. Is a St. Thomian also a West Indian?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

11. Is a local also a West Indian?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

### SECTION 3: INDIVIDUAL INFORMATION

12. From where are your grandparents? \_\_\_\_\_

13. In what estate do you live? \_\_\_\_\_

14. Do you work?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

15. What best describes your line of work?

Entertainment/Tourism \_\_\_\_\_ Education \_\_\_\_\_ Health Care \_\_\_\_\_

Construction \_\_\_\_\_ Government \_\_\_\_\_ Real Estate \_\_\_\_\_

16. How do you get to work or around the island?

Personal car \_\_\_\_\_ Safari/Taxi \_\_\_\_\_ Carpool \_\_\_\_\_ Walk \_\_\_\_\_

17. Do you own or rent your place of residency? Rent \_\_\_\_\_ Own \_\_\_\_\_

18. How many people live with you?

0-1 \_\_\_\_\_ 2-4 \_\_\_\_\_ 5-7 \_\_\_\_\_ 8 or more \_\_\_\_\_

19. Does your place of residence have drinkable tap water?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

20. About how much is your average monthly electricity bill?

Less than \$150 \_\_\_\_\_ \$151-\$250 \_\_\_\_\_ \$251-\$350 \_\_\_\_\_ Over \$351 \_\_\_\_\_

SECTION 4: TOURISM PERSPECTIVE

21. How important do you think tourism is to St. Thomas?

Not Important\_\_\_ Somewhat Important\_\_\_ Important\_\_\_ Very Important\_\_\_

22. How well do you think St. Thomas treats its tourists?

Very well \_\_\_ Adequately\_\_\_ Not well\_\_\_

23. How do you feel about the number of tourists who visit St. Thomas each year?

Not enough tourists visit\_\_\_ Just enough tourists visit\_\_\_ Too many tourists visit\_\_\_

24. What do you think is the primary reason tourists come to St. Thomas?

Duty free shopping\_\_\_ Cultural experience\_\_\_ Beaches\_\_\_ U.S. territory\_\_\_ Other\_\_\_

25. What percentage of tourists do you think return to St. Thomas within 5 years?

0-20%\_\_\_ 21-40%\_\_\_ 41-60% 61-70% 71+ % \_\_\_

SECTION 5: ENVIRONMENT

26. Rank in order of importance the following list as they relate to you personally with "1" meaning the most important and "10" meaning the least important:

\_\_\_ Cost of living (price of housing, utilities, food, gasoline, etc.)

\_\_\_ Crime

\_\_\_ Food security (a reliable supply of food)

\_\_\_ Health of the environment

\_\_\_ Homeland security (protection against the threat of terrorism)

\_\_\_ Overdevelopment

\_\_\_ Emigration (residents leaving St. Thomas to live somewhere else)

\_\_\_ Education

\_\_\_ Tourism

\_\_\_ Energy matters (reduction of green house gases, development of alternative energy options)

\_\_\_ Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

27. Again, rank in order of importance the following list as they relate to you personally with "1" meaning the most important and "10" meaning the least important:

- \_\_\_ Air quality
- \_\_\_ Availability of safe drinking water
- \_\_\_ Cleanliness of beaches
- \_\_\_ Climate change
- \_\_\_ Coastal water quality
- \_\_\_ Habitat protection
- \_\_\_ Invasive species
- \_\_\_ Preservation of coral reefs and fisheries
- \_\_\_ Preservation of land-based and marine plants and animals
- \_\_\_ Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

28. From what energy source do you think St. Thomas generates most of its electricity?

- Oil \_\_\_ Coal \_\_\_ Natural Gas \_\_\_ Solar \_\_\_ Wind \_\_\_

29. Which of the following have you disposed of in the garbage or a dumpster?

- Plastic water bottles \_\_\_\_\_ Batteries \_\_\_\_\_ Florescent light bulbs \_\_\_\_\_ Motor oil \_\_\_\_\_  
Electronics (T.V., Computer, VCR/DVD) \_\_\_\_\_  
Household appliances (Refrigerator, Washer, Stove) \_\_\_\_\_ None of the Above \_\_\_\_\_

30. Where do you think live-aboard boats deposit their raw sewage?

- Ocean \_\_\_\_\_ Holding Facility \_\_\_\_\_ Public Water Treatment Plant \_\_\_\_\_

#### SECTION 6: TOURISM INFRASTRUCTURES

31. Do you think emergency services like fire, police, and ambulances work effectively and efficiently?

- Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_ Not sure \_\_\_\_\_

32. Do you have confidence that agencies like Environmental Protection Agency and Water and Power Authority adequately monitor the safety and security of operating procedures for businesses and private residences alike?

- Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_ Not sure \_\_\_\_\_

33. Do you think the Federal minimum wage of \$7.25 is adequate, too low, or too high for St. Thomas?

- Adequate \_\_\_\_\_ Too Low \_\_\_\_\_ Too High \_\_\_\_\_

34. Do you think hiring practices in St. Thomas are gender biased?

Yes\_\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_\_ Not sure\_\_\_\_\_

35. Is there anything else you would like to add for this survey? \_\_\_\_\_

## DISCLAIMER AND STATEMENT OF WILLING VOLUNATRY PARTICIPATION

Dear Participant,

As part of this tourism research project, we are asking that you take a few minutes to complete the survey below.

Our research study's objective is to examine the attitudes and opinions of tourists on St. Thomas tourism. The goal of this research is to include St. Thomas tourists' input on sustainable tourism initiatives for St. Thomas, Virgin Islands. To gauge our guests' perspectives and input, we want to ask participants to complete the survey herein as honestly and completely as possible. By participating in this exciting groundbreaking research, you are not only assisting our community in assessing an accurate read on tourists' opinions on tourism, but you are also helping to better plan a future for St. Thomas.

Participation in this survey is completely voluntary and anonymous. It may take you up to 30 minutes to complete this survey. You must be 18 years of age or older, must be a visiting guest of St. Thomas, must understand written English and/or Spanish, and be of sound mind. You may terminate your own participation in this study at any time by discontinuing to fill out the survey. You, as the survey participant, can opt to answer all, some, or none of the survey questions below. You will not gain any direct benefit from participating in this survey, nor will you incur any risks. The information obtained from this survey will be used for informational use only with the goal of assessing tourists' perspectives of tourism for the purpose of establishing sustainable tourism initiatives for St. Thomas, Virgin Islands.

Thank you for your participation in this ground-breaking research. We value your time and opinions.

Elizabeth Estes, ABD

Primary Investigator

Appendix B

Tourist Survey

SECTION 1: DEMOGRAPHICS

1. What is your home town, state, and/or country?

---

2. What is your gender?

M\_\_\_\_ F\_\_\_\_ Other\_\_\_\_

3. What is your ethnicity? \_\_\_\_\_

4. What is your age range?

18-24\_\_\_\_ 25-34\_\_\_\_ 35-44\_\_\_\_ 45-54\_\_\_\_ 55-64\_\_\_\_ 65 +  
\_\_\_\_\_

5. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

Some high school\_\_\_\_ High School Graduate\_\_\_\_ Some College/Associates Degree\_\_\_\_  
Bachelor's Degree\_\_\_\_ Graduate or professional degree\_\_\_\_

6. What category best describes your household income?

Less than \$20k\_\_\_\_ \$21k-50k\_\_\_\_ \$51k-70k\_\_\_\_ \$71k-99k\_\_\_\_  
\$100k-150k\_\_\_\_ \$151k and over\_\_\_\_

SECTION 2: TOURIST INFORMATION

7. How long was your visit on St. Thomas?

1-3 days\_\_\_\_ 4-6 days\_\_\_\_ 7-10 days\_\_\_\_ 11+ days\_\_\_\_

8. What were two of your other destination options you considered besides St. Thomas?

1)\_\_\_\_\_ 2)\_\_\_\_\_ Did not consider another option\_\_\_\_\_

9. Where did you stay?

Hotel/Resort\_\_\_\_ Boat/Ship\_\_\_\_ Guest House\_\_\_\_ Private Residence\_\_\_\_

10. How did you travel around the island?

Rental car \_\_\_\_\_ Taxi \_\_\_\_\_ Friend \_\_\_\_\_ Didn't travel \_\_\_\_\_

11. How many times did you dine at a restaurant off property from where you were staying?

1-3 \_\_\_\_\_ 4-6 \_\_\_\_\_ 7-9 \_\_\_\_\_ More \_\_\_\_\_ None \_\_\_\_\_

### SECTION 3. TOURISM PERSPECTIVE

12. Did your vacation meet your expectations?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

13. What was your impression of St. Thomas?

Better than expected \_\_\_\_\_ As expected \_\_\_\_\_ Less than expected \_\_\_\_\_ No expectation \_\_\_\_\_

14. Were the prices as you expected?

Higher \_\_\_\_\_ Just right \_\_\_\_\_ Lower \_\_\_\_\_

15. Did you visit any other islands while in St. Thomas?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

16. What did you think of the customer service?

Very friendly \_\_\_\_\_ Friendly \_\_\_\_\_ Neutral \_\_\_\_\_ Not friendly \_\_\_\_\_ Rude \_\_\_\_\_

17. How important do you think tourism is to St. Thomas?

Very Important \_\_\_\_\_ Somewhat Important \_\_\_\_\_ Important \_\_\_\_\_ Neutral \_\_\_\_\_

17. Was this your first time to St. Thomas, USVI?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

18. Would you recommend St. Thomas as a vacation destination to others?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ Probably \_\_\_\_\_ Not Sure \_\_\_\_\_ Not likely \_\_\_\_\_ Definitely Not \_\_\_\_\_

19. Would you come again to vacation in St. Thomas?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ Probably \_\_\_\_\_ Not Sure \_\_\_\_\_ Not likely \_\_\_\_\_ Definitely Not \_\_\_\_\_

### SECTION 4: ENVIRONMENT

20. What did you think of the cleanliness of the island?

Very clean \_\_\_\_ Somewhat clean \_\_\_\_ Not very clean \_\_\_\_

21. What was your impression of environmental conservation in St. Thomas?

Better than expected \_\_\_\_ As expected \_\_\_\_ Less than expected \_\_\_\_ No expectation \_\_\_\_

22. Where you aware that St. Thomas has no natural water source?

Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_

23. How do you think St. Thomas generates its power?

Coal \_\_\_\_ Oil \_\_\_\_ Gas \_\_\_\_ Solar \_\_\_\_ Wind \_\_\_\_

24. How much of St. Thomas's power do you think comes from renewable resources (wind, solar, biofuel)?

1-5% \_\_\_\_ 10-30% \_\_\_\_ Over 50% \_\_\_\_

25. What do you think of renewable energy (wind, solar, biofuel)?

Positive \_\_\_\_ Neutral \_\_\_\_ Negative \_\_\_\_

## SECTION 5: TOURISM INFRASTRUCTURES

26. What is the average cost of your monthly electric bill at home?

Less than \$50 \_\_\_\_ \$51-\$150 \_\_\_\_ \$151-\$250 \_\_\_\_ \$251-\$350 \_\_\_\_ Over \$351 \_\_\_\_

I don't receive a bill \_\_\_\_

27. Did you find the roadways and walkways easy to navigate?

Yes \_\_\_\_ Somewhat \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_ Not Applicable \_\_\_\_

28. Did you know St. Thomas residents pay the most for electricity out of all U.S. states and territories at 51 cents a kilowatt?

Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_

29. During your stay in St. Thomas, did you feel safe and secure, trusting in the local police/emergency response teams should you have needed to rely on their services?

Yes \_\_\_\_ Somewhat \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_ Not sure \_\_\_\_



30. Do you think the Federal minimum wage of \$7.25 is appropriate for St. Thomas?

Adequate \_\_\_\_\_ Too Low \_\_\_\_\_ Too High \_\_\_\_\_

31. How would you rate your departure experience at the airport or dock?

Excellent \_\_\_\_\_ Good \_\_\_\_\_ Fair \_\_\_\_\_ Poor \_\_\_\_\_

32. Is there anything else you would like to add? \_\_\_\_\_

# *Exploring the touristic image of Greece*

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## **ABSTRACT**

Greece has been a popular tourist destination for many decades. Tourism is one of the biggest contributors to the country's GDP, able to compete on a worldwide scale and achieving remarkable progress through the years. According to the Bank of Greece official statistics, the number of tourists in 2012 was 14.8 million and initial predictions for 2013 show a further rise to 17 million with direct revenues exceeding 11 billion euros (that is 647 euros per capita income from every tourist on average). The general purpose of this study is to explore how foreign tourists perceive Greece as a tourist destination. Specifically this study aims to identify the various selection criteria for visiting Greece, to evaluate tourists' satisfaction during their stay in Greece and to identify the most popular Greek tourist destinations. To carry out the survey we used a convenience sample from 40 different countries around the world but primarily European. The final sample was comprised of 201 foreign tourists, who shared their opinions and experiences with us after visiting Greece and before

returning home. The research was based on primary data collected through individual interviews (supported by a structured questionnaire) at the departure hall of Athens International Airport “El. Venizelos”, from 15/05/2012 until 15/08/2012. The general tourist image of Greece is as “a holiday destination”. Empirical findings report that the most popular destinations in Greece are those developed in recent years, followed by traditional mass tourism areas, alternative destinations with special interest and finally the urban centers (mostly Athens). Findings also revealed that tourists select Greece for many different reasons (selection criteria). The most significant criteria appear to be the climate, the natural beauty, the culture and the warm hospitality of Greeks. Tourists experienced high satisfaction levels when visiting museums and archaeological sites and when tasting Greek food and beverages. The quality of accommodation also scored high. Finally, tourists were not satisfied by the environmental pollution, the high price of goods and services, the road signs and the quality of the roads.

**Keywords:** Greek tourism, tourist satisfaction, touristic destination, selection criteria.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Over the decades, tourism has experienced continued development to become one of the fastest growing economic sectors in the world. It is closely linked to economic growth and encompasses a growing number of new destinations. These dynamics have turned tourism into a key driver for socio-economic progress to those countries who invested on their touristic infrastructure. For Greece, tourism has been the most dynamically growing sector since its contribution to national economy is measured at 34.4 billion euros, representing 15.1% of the total Gross Domestic Product. In terms of employment, estimations state that 741,000 job placements are supported by tourism (IOBE, 2011). The incorporable match of different destinations and contrasts attracts every year millions of tourists from all around the globe, who visit Greece in order to experience the authentic Greek touristic offer. It is the place they can discover the Greek history and culture, the environment, the climate, the food and the aesthetic integrity of Greek islands.

The general purpose of this study is to explore how foreign tourists perceive Greece as a tourist destination. Specifically this study aims to identify the various selection criteria for visiting Greece, to evaluate tourists' satisfaction during their stay at Greece and to identify the most popular Greek touristic destinations. To achieve the purpose (and the aims) of this study we carried out a survey and collected various types of data concerning: respondents' demographic characteristics, activities and places they opt for, average per day expenditures, trip organizing factors, satisfaction level, pre-made image of the country, intention of coming back at the near future, efficiency of Greek advertising campaign abroad, alternative competitor countries to Greece etc.

## 2. INDICATIVE LITERATURE REVIEW

Regarding tourist market data, the Greek authorities periodically carry out sample surveys of foreign visitors in order to identify the type of tourists that travel to Greece

and to determine the factors which influence their preferences and their purchasing behaviors (Buckley and Papadopoulos, 1986). It must be recognized, however, that the tourist product is a composite product and that there is more than one type of client. At this direction, market segmentation is required since the subdividing of a market into distinct subsets of customers, where any subset may conceivably be selected as a market target can be reached with a distinct marketing mix' (Kotler, 1976).

As Kaynak and Yavas (1981) suggested in their study, once purpose-orientated segments are identified they can be mapped according to demographic and psychographic characteristics thus helping policy makers to target their strategies more precisely. In this respect, the Greek tourist authorities in more recent surveys endeavored, with the help of international market research and advertising agencies (e.g. McCann-Erickson, A.C. Nielsen Hellas and Aspect) to establish a visitor profile for each major country supplying tourists to Greece.

The European market for Greek tourism is by far the most important. According to data given by Greek National Tourism Organization (GNTO) and National Statistical Service for the period 1950-1995, most visitors (93.2%) originate from Europe and 70.2% from the EU, especially United Kingdom, Germany, Sweden, Finland, Deutschland and Austria (Buhalis, 2001: Greek National Tourism Organization and National Statistical Service). Although these nationalities are the dominant markets, the British and the Germans contribute almost half of all arrivals. Examining the results of an even more recent sample survey, carried out at 2008 under the auspices of the Greek National Tourist Organization of Greece among foreign travelers visiting the country by plane, it can be observed that the demand of British and Germans was at high levels (53.8% and 15.9% respectively), while Russians (13.1%) and French (5.1%) completed the top-four markets visiting the country. As Buckley and Papadopoulos (1986) state: "Rising transport costs play an important role in determining choice for a tourist destination. Hence Europeans are more likely to travel to a nearby tourist destination instead of far off places such as the USA and Australia".

Buhalis (2001) mentions that the inconvenience of indirect transportation schedules, large differentials in charges for groups and individual customers by accommodation establishment, lack of information about the Greek tourism product, as well as insufficient marketing by SMTEs (Small and Medium Touristic Enterprises) have enabled tour operators to act as intermediates between consumers and principals and to play a dominant role in the tourism industry. However, the development of the Internet enables prospective visitors to pre-book their packages independently and to use cheaper non-frills airlines and leisure fares of schedule airlines for their transportation (Buhalis, 2001).

GNTO (2008) survey results confirm that a vast majority of foreign tourists are travelers-repeaters, since they have come once (18.4%), twice (12%), three times (11.5%), more than four times in Greece (17.8%) or they even visit the country every year (7.2%). The areas visited by these kinds of visitors are described by Gilbert (1984, 1990) as "status areas" and is a result of the unique product perceptions by the tourism market. These unique attributes may be genuine or imagined and thus, a destination is regarded as irreplaceable, increasing consumers' loyalty.

Nevertheless, despite its popularity and growth over the last 40 years, the Greek tourism industry has reached a stage where both its potential and competitiveness have become questionable (Buhalis, 2001). "Rapid increases in price mean the country is no longer perceived by mass market clients as cheap in relation to comparable destinations in the Mediterranean, but much of the country's tourism infrastructure, hastily built in response to demand for cheap accommodation, does not meet the needs of a market less sensitive to price and more concerned with quality and value for money" (Economist Intelligence Unit/EIU, 1990) As a result, Greece fails to attract the desired "high-quality, high-expenditure" tourists and is increasingly unable to satisfy their requirements (Conway, 1996). The deterioration of the tourism product and image leads to a lower willingness-to-pay by consumers, which consequently leads to a further drop in quality, as the industry attempts to attract customers with lower prices. Consequently, tourists' expenditure per capita in Greece gradually deteriorates, while their volume increases (Association of Greek Tourism Enterprises/SETE, 1993). According to SETE (2012), United Nations World Tourism Organization/UNWTO and the World Economic Forum 2012 ranks Greece at the third place regarding tourism receipts, competitiveness and arrivals. Spain and Cyprus have achieved the greatest performance while Egypt and Croatia are graded at the fourth and fifth place respectively.

### 3. METHODOLOGY AND SAMPLE

To carry out the survey we used a convenience sample from 40 different countries around the world but primarily European. The final sample was comprised of 201 foreign tourists, who shared their opinions and experiences with us after visiting Greece and before returning home. The research was based on primary data collected through individual interviews (supported by a structured questionnaire) at the departure hall of Athens International Airport "El. Venizelos", from 15/05/2012 until 15/08/2012. Descriptive statistics were calculated for all variables. Table 1 provides some basic sample data.

Table 1: Sample characteristics of Tourists

<b>Nationality</b>	<b>Europeans</b>	67.6%
	British	10.9%
	French	7.5%
	Italians	7.5%
	Spanish	6%
	Belgian	5%
	Germans	4%
	Other	26.7%
	<b>Non Europeans</b>	32.4%
	Australians	14.4%

	Americans	7%
	South Africans	3%
	Other	8%
<b>Professional status</b>	Employed	56.2%
	Students	32.3%
	Retired	7%
	Housewives	2.5%
	Unemployed	2%
<b>Previous visit</b>	Yes	55.7%
	No	44.3%

The sample originates from 40 different countries worldwide. Non-European citizens consist 32.4% of the sample including tourists from Australia (14.4%), USA (7%), South Africa (3%) and countries as Korea, Canada, Argentina, Brazil, China, Dominican Republic, Philippine, Mexico, New Zealand, Palestine and Yemen (the rest 8%). The majority of our sample originates from Europe (67.6%). More specific; United Kingdom (10.9%), France (7.5%), Italy (7.5%), Spain (6%), Belgium (5%), Germany (4%), Netherlands (3.5%) as well as Austria, Denmark, Iceland, Ireland, Norway (2% each), Switzerland, Russia, Rumania, Sweden, Bulgaria, Finland, Hungary, Malta, Poland (1% each), Portugal, Croatia, Estonia, Serbia and Ukraine (the rest 4.2%). The average tourist's age of our sample is approximately 35 years old; 51.2% are women and 48.8% men. The majority of our sample are employed (56.2%) and 55.7% of the total sample have previously visited Greece.

#### 4. EMPIRICAL RESULTS

Table 2 presents the touristic preferences (in terms of areas chosen and classification of destinations) and data about organizing their trip to Greece.

Table 2: Touristic Preferences and Trip Organizing

<b>Classification of destinations</b>	Recently-developed areas that combine summer holidays with different types of touristic development (Amorgos, Folegandros, Milos, Andros, Kefalonia, Ios etc.)	38.5%
	Mass tourism areas	26.5%

	GNT0 Offices	1%
<b>Nature of activities</b>	Passive (sightseeing, swimming, cruises)	65.2%
	Active (participation in social and environmental friendly initiatives)	34.8%
	City centers (Athens, Thessaloniki etc)	17.9%
	Other	14.6%
<b>Purpose of the trip</b>	Holidays and recreation	75.1%
	Professional Reasons	16.4%
	Other	8.5%
<b>Way of organizing their trip</b>	Independently	79.6%
	Via tour operator	20.4%
<b>Accommodation</b>	Hotel/ 2-3 stars	28.3%
	Hosted by friends or family	19.4%
	Hotel /4-5 stars	18.9%
	Furnished apartments	12.4%
	Rooms to let	7.5%
	Free camping	5%
	Organized camping	4.5%
Hotel/1 star	4%	
<b>Expenses per day (Excluding accommodation costs)</b>	Mean	79.9€
	Median	60€
	SD	59.3
<b>Information sources to organize a trip to Greece (Multiple response)</b>	Internet	83.1%
	Friends and family	43.8%
	Previous experience	22.4%
	Travel agents	20.4%
	Newspapers/magazines	6%
	Radio/TV	3%

The majority of tourists opt for seaside (75.6%) and urban (28.4%) areas and only a few prefer rural, mountain or lake locations (5%, 11.4%, 2% respectively). Destinations as Aigina, Amorgos, Andros, Chalkida,, Chalkidiki, Folegandros, Ios, Ithaki, Karditsa, Karpathos, Kavala, Kefalonia, Kithira, Kos, Leukada, Lesvos, Naxos, Patra and Samos which follow the summer holiday model even though their growth has been accomplished lately, attract the highest percentage of travelers (38.5%). Meanwhile, 26.5% of the sample prefer the traditional, classic places that have been starring for decades, like Santorini, Crete, Corfu, Rhodes, Mikonos and Paros. 12.5% of respondents travel to destinations whose development has been associated with specific religious ( Meteora), cultural (Olimpia, Idra, Chios, Koroni), ecological (Alonissos, Sporades), complex environmental sources (Kalavrita) or thermal ones (Methana). Visitors who prefer to visit city centers are 17.9%.

67.51% of the total sample visited Greece for holiday and recreation and only 16.4% of respondents came for professional reasons. The survey imprints a strong trend towards independently organized trips (82.1%), whereas tour operators seem to lose their dominant role (17.9%). Therefore, the main information source to organize a trip to Greece is the net (83.1%) and second best the friends and family (word of mouth) with 43.8%. Approximately 20% of the total sample trusts tour agencies, 23.4% had already a previous personal experience about the country and only 9% are advised by traditional means (tv, radio, newspapers, magazines). Minor is the contribution of GNTTO offices at countries of origin (only1%).

Regarding accommodation, high and medium category hotels are preferred (47.2%), as well as auxiliary and additional touristic infrastructure/facilities (rooms to rent, apartments, camping- 29.4%). Moreover our empirical findings confirm an international trend which indicates that tourists select to stay at their friends or relatives (19.4%). This phenomenon is either attributed to economical parameters (free accommodation) and/or to strong and close relationships kept with the locals. Interestingly, 35% of incoming tourists inclined towards active tourism, visiting local cultural events, cooking and tasting local food recipes, language learning, observing biodiversity while the rest 65% favored for holidays involving only sightseeing, swimming and cruises. The mean of the personal daily expenses (excluding accommodation costs) is at 79.9€ per person (Standard Deviation=59.3, Median=60€, Min=10€, Max=300€).

Table 3: Hierarchy of selection criteria visiting Greece

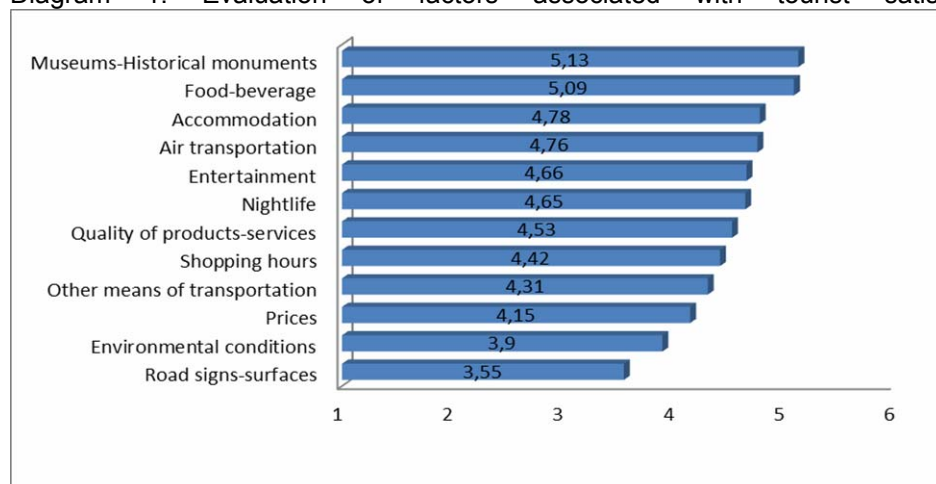
<u>Criteria</u>	<u>Percentage of respondents</u>
<b>Climate</b>	66.7%
<b>Natural beauty</b>	61.2%
<b>Culture</b>	50.2%
<b>Friendly people</b>	36.8%
<b>Good</b>	32.3%



<b>food/wine</b>	
<b>Hospitality</b>	30.3%
<b>Historical monuments</b>	27.9%
<b>Cost of living</b>	13.4%
<b>Thermal bathes</b>	3%

Table 3 presents hierarchically the selection criteria for visiting Greece. The top two selection criteria are: (a) the climate (66.7%) and (b) the natural beauty of the country (61.2%). Then follows: culture (50.2%), friendliness of the locals (36.8%), tasty food and wine (32.3%), Greek hospitality (30.3%), historical monuments (27.9%), cost of living (13.4%) and thermal bathes (3%).

Diagram 1: Evaluation of factors associated with tourist satisfaction



(scale: 1= worst evaluation, 6= best evaluation)

Diagram 1 presents the evaluation of factors which are mostly associated with tourist satisfaction during their stay at Greece. It is interesting to note that all factors were evaluated higher than the average (3.5 points). The highest satisfaction score was for museums and places with historical and cultural interest (mean: 5.13). Then we have food and beverage (mean: 5.09), accommodation (mean: 4.78), air transportation (mean: 4.76), entertainment (mean: 4.66), nightlife (mean: 4.65), quality of products and services (mean: 4.53), shopping hours (mean: 4.42), other means of transportation (mean: 4.31), prices (mean 4.15), environmental conditions (mean: 3.9) and road signs-surfaces (mean: 3.55). Another indication measuring tourists' satisfaction is their intention of coming back in the near future: 72.1% of the total sample is willing to visit Greece again, 22.9% is indecisive, while only 5% answered negatively.

Tourists, prior to their arrival, had a "Good" image for Greece (mean 4.10 at a 1-5 scale, 1: very bad, 5: very good). After their trip to Greece we asked them if their expectations were fulfilled: the mean was 4.32 (1-5 scale, 1: expectations not fulfilled at all, 5: totally fulfilled expectations).

Table 4 presents the top ten spontaneous statements of tourists before leaving Greece.

Table 4: Tourists' top ten spontaneous, authentic statements

	<u>Nationality</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Statement</u>
1	Hungarian	22	<i>Local people were very friendly. They were extremely happy if they managed to say a few words in my language. I really love autumn's temperature, beautiful beaches and the nature!</i>
2	Irish	22	<i>The sun, the beaches and the people were the best I have ever met. I think I won't find anywhere else in the world sandy beaches like these ones. I just loved it!</i>
3	Polish	31	<i>Amazing, warm hospitality from the part of the locals, peaceful and relaxing atmosphere, wide variety of things that Greece has to offer. Cultural sites, areas with a special, historical interest!</i>
4	American	23	<i>People were very kind, spoke English and made my experience worthwhile. The culture and history were amazing to experience first-hand!</i>
5	New Zealander	20	<i>I loved the attitude of locals. They always laugh and smile for a good reason!</i>
6	Spanish	69	<i>Lovely country, nice people, scenic islands, excellent civilization. Nothing compares to Greece!</i>
7	British	34	<i>Fantastic food at "tavernas"! People at the villages welcomed us in the best way! Excellent, unspoiled mountains and hills!</i>
8	Belgian	43	<i>The beautiful, pure, blue color of the sea. Ideal for swimming!</i>
9	South African	33	<i>Greece was far better than people in my country thought it would be. And even though all these things have happened in the economy, everybody seemed still happy. Strong characters!</i>
10	Dutch	49	<i>I feel like I am Greek too. "Kalimera" (Good morning)!</i>

Table 5: Greek Image

<u>'I characterize Greece as...'</u>	<u>Mean</u>
a Mediterranean holiday destination	4.36
a country-coast	4.28
a country where somebody must travel	4.12
a country of civilization	3.95
a country of qualitative natural environment	3.84
a country for independent tourism	3.81
a country for specialized and alternative tourism	3.32

*(scale: 1= strongly disagree 5= strongly agree)*

As Table 5 demonstrates, Greece is principally a Mediterranean holiday destination (mean 4.36) characterized as a "Country-Coast" (mean 4.28), a country where somebody must travel (4.12), a country of civilization (3.95) with qualitative natural environment (3.84). Official Greek advertising touristic campaign abroad was evaluated as average (mean value: 3, 1-5 scale: 1= very bad, 5= very good).

Table 6: the position of Greece against the top competitor countries in Tourism

<u>Position</u>	<u>Competitor countries</u>	<u>Percentage of respondents</u>
1	Italy	23.4%
2	Turkey	14.4%
3	Spain	13.9%
4	Croatia	13.4%
5	Greece	11.9%
6	Portugal	2.5%
7	France	2.0%
8	Cyprus	1.5%
9	Other	17%

With regard to the countries that tourists would alternatively select if they were looking for a similar type of holidays (Table 6), 65.1% of respondents answered that it would be a Mediterranean destination; neighboring Italy is listed at the first place

(23.4%), new-comer Turkey at the second (14,4%) , "traditional" Spain at the third (13.9%) and alternative Croatia at the fourth one (13.4%). Greece is at the 5th position. Then come Portugal (2.5%), France (2%), Cyprus (1.5%), Egypt, Brazil and others with insignificant, however, percentages.

## 5. DISCUSSION AND POLICY PROPOSALS

It is common knowledge that tourism is one of the crucial fields in the country's national strategy and economic growth. Its ability to respond, however, to current challenges is going to determine its critical role at the areas we previously analyzed. Having completed its life-cycle, mass tourism is no longer an "up-market" product. Demand diversification should aim to swift the mass tourism product of low cost, low value-added, low-skilled employees with unprofessional services, to the offering of a differentiated product of high quality, high value-added, employing appropriately trained staff which provides high quality services (Maroudas et al, 2013); this new touristic offer should promote Greek culture and civilization and comply with high environmental standards. Indicatively, we mention three different types of specialized tourism which can be exploited:

*i) Cultural tourism.* Even though national cultural heritage represents one of the major criteria for guests, there is a need to form a multi-dimensional image of Greek culture and tradition other than just antiquities and historical monuments. These efforts are to focus on the protection and preservation of cultural heritage, revealing elements of local tradition (e.g. traditional cuisine, traditional dances etc.) even exploiting the plethora of orthodox churches (religious tourism).

*ii) Agro-tourism.* The development of agro-tourism would be able to stimulate rural areas, which were selected only by a low percentage of the total survey sample, through the construction of proper accommodation facilities or even tourists' encouragement to observe/participate at the production process of Greek popular and traditional products (such as wine, ouzo and olive oil).

*iii) Medical tourism.* Although Greece possesses a great number of advantages with regard to medical tourism, such as international airports and seaports, many private medical clinics, a great number of qualified doctors in every specialty and plethora of historical and touristic attractions, it has an insignificant market share (Theofanides and Papanikolaou, 2012). The above statement is verified by the survey results of this study, which indicated that thermal bathes are a negligible criterion for tourists visiting Greece. As medical tourism has gained a significant market share during the last decade, opportunities may emerge by offering complete and diversified packages to patients in order to convince them to select Greece for medical care.

Furthermore, new specialized forms of tourism could be promoted in order to increase Greek touristic market share such as: (a) Philosophical Tourism, (b) Mythological Tourism, (c) Homeric Tourism and d) Tourism for the origins of European Civilization deriving from ancient Greek locations (Minoan civilization in Crete, Mycenaean civilization in Peloponnese, Aegean civilization etc.).

The negative assessment regarding environmental conditions illustrates the importance of diminishing the carbon footprint for businesses involved in the touristic

sector. All types of accommodation facilities should meet the criteria of "green" management and certification. For example logical use of natural resources, environmental friendly treatment of waste, water and energy saving etc.

Our research revealed that tourists experienced high satisfaction levels when visiting museums and archaeological sites and when tasting Greek food and beverages. The quality of accommodation also scored high. On the other hand tourists were not satisfied by the high prices of goods and services, the road signs and the quality of the roads. High prices of goods and services in Greece combined with the low cost emerging touristic destinations of Turkey and Croatia impose a major strategic threat for Greek tourism. It is of extreme necessity for Greece to justify high prices by offering high value to tourists (value for money). Furthermore, it is advisable to enhance transportation infrastructure (roads, ports, public means of transportation and road signs) so that tourists can easily transport within Greece (improving transport infrastructure will not benefit only the touristic sector but the whole national economy).

Moreover, extended use of internet from tourists in order to organize independently (without using a travel agent) their vacations requires the training of touristic businesses to e-tourism applications. Professionals of the touristic sector must view the adoption of new technologies as a significant tool for promoting their businesses.

Widely classified as a "country-coast" and "a typical Mediterranean country", Greece has deteriorated its position as a winter destination. Regarding this aspect, a supportive plan should aim at a twelve-month promotion of Greek touristic services, using creative advertising and targeting on groups with special interests. Furthermore, accommodation infrastructure must be adjusted and developed in that way, to host guests who prefer winter destinations. Finally, the alarming outcome of our research concerning "average" effectiveness of the advertisement campaign of Greece abroad and minimum exerted influence of GNTTO offices in the countries of origin, require immediate action: creation and usage of one attractive and stable advertising message (slogan) that reflects the general image of Greece to foreigners and hiring high quality professionals at GNTTO offices abroad with the intention to be effective sellers-promoters of Greek touristic product.

## **6. CONCLUSIONS**

Tourism is one of the most important sectors of the Greek economy. In recent years it is growing dynamically achieving a worldwide position. In the last year (2013) the number of tourists approaches 17 million and Greece position is on of the top in Mediterranean. Our research is mainly centered on how foreign tourists perceive Greece. We used a convenience sample from 40 different countries of the world, primarily from Europe based on a structured questionnaire addressed to 201 foreign tourists who shared their opinions and experiences with us after visiting Greece and before returning to their home. The data were collected at the departure hall of Athens International Airport "El. Venizelos", during the typical tourist period from: 15/05/2012 until 15/08/2012.

Results show that the majority of tourists opt for seaside (75.6%) and urban (28.4%) areas and only a few prefer rural, mountain or lake locations. The most significant criteria for choosing Greece are: the climate, the natural beauty, the cultural heritage

and the warm hospitality of the Greeks. Tourists experience high satisfaction when visiting museums and archaeological sites and when tasting Greek food. The quality of accommodation scored high, but tourists were not satisfied by the environmental pollution, the high price of goods and services and the transportation conditions. The study presents concrete policy proposals in the fields of Cultural Tourism, Agrotourism, Medical Tourism and suggests other forms of specialized tourism such as Philosophical Tourism, Mythological Tourism, Homeric Tourism etc., in order to improve the status and the image of Greece as a popular tourist destination all over the world.

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*Understanding the impacts of cruise tourism and their  
remediation costs for small island communities in the  
Aegean*

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**ABSTRACT**

The cruise industry continues to enjoy strong growth, and represents a significant portion of the tourism industry as a whole. Nevertheless, amid considerable success, questions remain as to the environmental impact it can have on delicate natural systems, and the disruptions caused within small host communities. There is a need to understand the full costs of cruise tourism; to put a value on the things that are disrupted or damaged when visitors arrive in large numbers, and to ensure that adequate funds are recovered by the communities themselves – and used for remediation.

Seeking to arrive at sustainability through a 'Triple Bottom Line' approach, the aim of this research was to investigate the environmental and social impacts upon a Greek



island destination, and to compare these with the economic benefits resulting from cruise tourism. Empirical research was conducted in early 2013 in the small island community of Chios. The research involved in-depth interviews with stakeholders such as residents and local business owners. The broad, open-ended format of the questioning encouraged interviewees to share their opinions and experiences, identifying a wide range of ways in which cruise tourism had affected the social and natural environment of the destination, and posing questions for the future development of cruise tourism on the island.

**Key Words:** Sustainable cruise tourism, socio-economic factors, carrying capacity, Mediterranean region

## INTRODUCTION

Tourism remains one of the most important industries for Greece and her islands [Tselentis et al, 2012]; the World Travel and Tourism Council reported that tourism in Greece contributed €12bn, or 6.5% of total GDP for the nation [WTTC, 2013]. Furthermore, tourism directly supports 330,500 jobs, representing 8.8% of total employment. With an anticipated 5 million cruise tourists visiting Greece this year [Politis, 2013], significant numbers of day visitors arriving via cruise ships have the potential to contribute substantially to local economies [ECC, 2013]. Quantifying the economic contribution of cruise tourism remains problematic, however, since it comprises business transacted with locally-owned leisure facilities, restaurants, retail shops, visitor attractions and the like, plus charges levied by port authorities (handling charges and taxes), and charges imposed by cruise operators that cruise tourists pay to partake in port excursions. These last are usually paid in advance of the visit, and typically include transport, entry to attractions, and refreshments. Such payments will eventually trickle through as a reduced sum for local businesses, for services rendered, but what can be construed as a high price to the cruise tourist will in fact be greatly reduced when it reaches the host economy.

For Chios, tourism in general is an important contributor to the local economy, and cruise tourism is surprisingly significant, with day visitor numbers approaching those for leisure tourists arriving by air. Ashcroft and Associates [2011] describe Chios as having an increasing appeal, particularly for cruise tourists. Chios can be considered atypical, when compared to other Greek Island destinations such as Corfu, Rhodes, Kos, Crete or Santorini; it is at an early stage of tourism and especially cruise tourism development, and decisions must be made as to the extent to which the host community will seek to develop the industry. Critical in such decisions is an understanding of the level of benefit to the island's economy, and the impacts in terms of sustainability.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A useful starting point when considering issues of sustainability is Elkington's [1994] vision of Triple Bottom Line (TBL) accounting, often summarised as "people, planet and profit". Here, an activity is only said to be sustainable (which is to say, viable in the long term) if it is socially just, environmentally benign and commercially sound. This definition has been widely adopted, and the Venn diagram that shows sustainability existing only at the confluence of all three issues is well known – but on its own it does not provide a means for practitioners to pursue sustainability. According to MacGillivray [2004] for sustainability to occur "economic, environmental and social balance sheets must all be in the black", yet the toolsets to measure environmental and social harm lag far behind the level of accuracy and wide understanding found in the assessment of economic performance.

Mitchell et al [2007] found that TBL reporting promoted sustainability thinking within organisations, but trade-offs between the different TBL dimensions remained difficult. (In a sustainable tourism context, for example, this might mean choosing between job creation and natural habitat destruction, when considering the construction of facilities.) Adams [2006] states that trade-offs between TBL elements are a flawed concept because governments and businesses will always tend to prioritise the economic. It can be argued that it is human nature for a system to tend toward further environmental or cultural degradation over time – at the risk of "killing the goose that lays the golden eggs." Middleton and Hawkins [2012] concur, warning that tourists can destroy the natural environment that attracted them to the destination in the first instance, if their tourism activities are not managed sustainably.

In this study, trade-offs have not been attempted; final decisions rest with the host community, after all. Instead, each component of the system has been examined to identify the scale, value and growth potential of the industry (profit), the environmental strain it imposes upon an island community (planet) and the social impacts upon the hosts (people).

Graci and Dodds [2010] acknowledge that it is important to establish just who the principal stakeholders are in the area of sustainable tourism, and more importantly for this study, in relation to island destinations. In this context we use Freeman's [1984] definition of a stakeholder, as a person or group who may hold an interest in the ability of an organisation to exercise actions involving the destination and possibly influence change. Several authors argue that qualitative research in tourism is an evolutionary practice and well recommended [Veal, 2011; Phillimore and Goodson, 2004]. When taking this approach Veal argues that it is possible to obtain a more comprehensive account of the situation in tourism related scenarios, involving individual feelings and thoughts, as opposed to the limited amount of information obtained from a larger study that quantitative research can reveal. Veal also argues that individuals absorbed in tourism experience situations are best positioned to interpret their account of the situation in a qualitative type of information gathering. In view of such recommendations, qualitative research was carried out among local businesses. Graci and Dodds recognise local businesses as being the 'grass roots' of the tourism industry, especially in an island destination [2010] since local businesses, as stakeholders, work to ensure that a high proportion of the income

generated from tourism reaches the local economy, and that it is distributed across the island community.

Empirical research was carried out through in-depth personal interviews with a variety of local business owners, citizens and officials, in a non-directive manner. An interview guide was formulated, featuring semi-structured, broad, open-ended questions aimed at obtaining comments illustrating the experiences and opinions of the interviewees. In total, eighteen interviews were conducted, obtaining contributions from local residents, café and shop workers, taxi drivers, law enforcement and local officials.

The stakeholder interviews allowed the researchers to catalogue the concerns of the interviewees, in terms of the ways that cruise tourism affects the business, social and natural environment of an Aegean island community. These distinct issues are discussed in Sections 3, 4 and 5, respectively.

## **ASSESSING THE SOCIAL IMPACTS OF CRUISE TOURISM**

The social aspects of sustainability vary from one business proposition to another, but might include issues such as health and safety, consumer rights, participation in local democracy, fair dealing with consumers and suppliers, equal opportunities, infrastructure and access to services, culture and heritage; a list of potential impacts that remain difficult to measure or assign a value to.

The interviewees reported a number of social issues. By far most commonly identified, from 16 of the 18 interviewees, was that cruise tourism is affecting the opening hours of businesses in the port area. This represents a recent change; before the economic crisis tourists were left with little to do when shops closed mid-afternoon, but now their business is considered more valuable. The extended opening hours are something of a grey area, legally, but closure is not enforced. Taxi drivers were also reported to be working a lot on days when there was a cruise ship in port, and some interviewees reported that road traffic congestion was an issue on those days.

Interestingly, all interviewees rejected the idea that cruise visitors have a negative affect upon their everyday life; in fact residents rarely interacted with cruise tourists, who tended to take coach tours around the island. An emerging cultural influence on Chios comes from the growing number of Turkish visitors who also arrive by sea, as day visitors or on a two-day cruise from Izmir. Interviewees generally failed to distinguish between Turkish day visitors and more conventional cruise tourists. The emergence of this market segment has led to new signage appearing on the streets and within shops, where staff have started learning Turkish, and organising related cultural events.

Overall, respondents had relatively little to say that showed cruise tourism in a negative light. Local businesses appreciate the extra revenue, and reported that they cope with the influx of tourists by arranging to have extra staff on duty on 'cruise days'. It was also reported that the short period for which cruise day visitors stay meant that bars and cafés could still serve residents as usual.

## **ASSESSING ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS FROM CRUISE TOURISM**

When questioned about environmental impacts, the great majority of interviewees saw no environmental problems at all. Just two reported that cruise ships “pollute the sea” and none mentioned problems of air quality, or climate change. It may be significant that the region is often subject to strong winds, and thus any smoke that the engines of a ship generate will rapidly be dispersed. In any event, ‘green’ issues seem not to be considered, beyond the two respondents who took exception to the discharging of waste that they assumed to take place. The relevant marine environmental convention, MARPOL, specifies conditions under which the discharge of food wastes, certain cleaning agents, sewage and grey water are permissible [IMO, 2013] – although one respondent’s statement that “they empty their tanks just outside our port” is unlikely to describe the discharging of sewage, as a minimum distance of 4.8km from shore is specified for such material.

### ***Metrics for the Environmental Impact of Cruise Holidays***

To some extent, environmental impact can be quantified, although this remains highly complex. A common option is to consider the ‘carbon footprint’, based upon the emissions of greenhouse gases that are associated with the provision of a good or service, and the corresponding risk of climate change. Ward [2010] suggests a figure of 960kg CO<sub>2</sub> per passenger, for a one-week cruise (not including travel to and from the ship). For comparison, annual CO<sub>2</sub> emissions for a person living in Greece are around 8,400kg [World Bank, 2013].

The cruise vessels that call at Chios appear to produce substantially higher CO<sub>2</sub> emissions per passenger. *Le Levant*, a cruise ship that regularly visited Chios in 2011, is reported to consume 14 tonnes of heavy fuel oil (HFO) per day [ship-technology.com, 2012]; using the standard conversion factors published by DEFRA [2012] this quantity of HFO equates to 53,717kg of CO<sub>2</sub> and equivalent greenhouse gases emitted, or 597kg per passenger, per day – and more if full occupancy is not achieved. *Le Levant* carries just 90 passengers in luxury and at speed; calculations based upon a typical large cruise ship – of the kind not currently seen at Chios – broadly confirms the Ward [2010] figure for CO<sub>2</sub> per passenger, although it should be noted that these basic calculations are for energy use only and do not include food, services, excursions, and the like.

Sustainability calculations based purely upon climate change potential are limited in that they do not address other environmental issues such as toxicity, habitat destruction or the consumption of scarce material resources – nor the other component parts of the TBL, such as social issues. Another key problem when calculating the environmental harm of tourism is that measurements tend to be attributed to the country where emissions occur, rather than being associated with the nationality of the citizens who visit [Kitzes et al, 2007]. This does not affect calculations of environmental degradation at the global level, but can serve to conceal the source of climate change. An additional source of complexity is that

some environmental problems are global in nature, such as CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, while others are more local, e.g. affecting water or air quality.

Addressing one example of the latter, EU Legislation (Directive 2005/33/EC) imposed a limit of 1.5% sulphur in HFO used by passenger ships serving the EU with effect from 2010, and further limiting the sulphur content of fuel used when berthed to 0.1%. Sulphur occurs naturally in crude oil, and can be present in HFO at up to 4.5% by weight, but the sulphur dioxide (SO<sub>2</sub>) resulting from combustion is known to cause many health problems, plus acid rain. Further sulphur reductions are planned for 2015 and 2020, compelling ship operators to use more expensive, low-sulphur fuels.

Despite the lack of concern about gaseous emissions from those interviewed, the potential for environmental harm is huge, as the data on shipping in Greek waters in Tzannatos [2010] show. Passenger ferries and cruise ships are considered together because the vessels tend to be similar in terms of their performance; taken together they accounted for 18% of ship movements in Greek waters, and 390,633 tonnes of HFO consumed in 2008. Even with low sulphur fuels substantially reducing the local air quality problems, the global issue of climate change remains: based on the DEFRA [2012] conversion factors this fuel usage implies the emission of greenhouse gases equivalent to 1.47 megatonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> – and there are other emissions of concern as well. Vogtländer et al [2002] identified seven different classes of emission (acidification, eutrophication, heavy metals, carcinogens, summer smog, winter smog and climate change), and proposed a common denominator in the form of “prevention costs at the norm”. It may be that an adapted form of this mechanism could be used to assign a cost to the various forms of damage that occur as a result of cruise ship operations, perhaps with the ultimate aim of levying taxes and using money obtained for remediation or offsetting – but we have yet to consider the environmental harm that occurs when passengers come ashore, causing soil erosion in sensitive sites that endure high footfall, or engaging in hazardous or resource-intensive activities during excursions. Fortunately, the low numbers of cruise passengers seen on Chios at present are unlikely to be doing damage that cannot be repaired by natural processes.

### ***Emerging Improvements to Cruise Ship Environmental Performance***

On the technical side, some efforts have been made to improve the ‘green’ performance of cruise ships: some cosmetic, and some more practical. Fitting low energy lighting and heat-reflecting glass help to reduce the fuel consumed for on-board electricity generation, while “cold ironing” (using a shore-based electricity supply while docked) can further reduce emissions. Tzannatos [2010] and Kalli et al [2009] also reported favourably on the use of a seawater-based scrubber to reduce SO<sub>2</sub> emissions, it being permitted to continue to use fuels with higher sulphur content with this technology in place to treat emissions.

Less conventional attempts to make cruise holidays more ‘green’ have included the addition of solar panels, sails, and even the introduction of biodegradable golf balls, made from surplus lobster shells [Daley, 2011]; MARPOL [IMO, 2013] classifies conventional golf balls as waste plastic, and prohibits their ‘discharge’. Lobster shell golf balls provide an example of how a leisure activity can once again become

sustainable, through re-engineering, but there is a danger that the small changes make good press, while failing to address the real problems.

## **ASSESSING THE BUSINESS IMPACTS OF CRUISE TOURISM**

The responses from interviewees regarding the business impacts of cruise tourism on Chios were overwhelmingly positive. Stakeholders were pleased at the additional business generated by cruise ships, although one negative comment concerned a cruise ship that arrived complete with bicycles, allowing the visitors to tour the island without having completed a business transaction with local companies. As cruise ships become increasingly sophisticated, this kind of competition with local leisure amenity providers may become a significant problem.

The business issue that was most commonly discussed concerned the inadequacy of the present-day port. When a cruise ship is berthed within the port, it can prevent access for other vessels, and the larger cruise ships cannot gain access to the port at all, but must transfer passengers to and from shore by tender. The strong winds in the region can make this activity difficult or impossible on some days. As a result, there is considerable interest in the development of a more suitable port, most likely at Mesta on the west of the island. Naturally, the proposal is unpopular with the businesses in the port area of Chios that would suffer if cruise visitors were to land elsewhere.

## **THE LIFE CYCLE OF CRUISE TOURISM**

An aspect that needs approaching with caution when considering sustainability (literally, the ability to continue an activity) is that a business activity may flourish only for a brief time. Those who invest in developing a tourist destination may be disappointed to find that numbers cease to expand, and ultimately decline – with consequences in terms of the monetary investment and materials that have been expended on development, which will ultimately have social and environmental consequences.

It is useful, therefore, to determine the stage of development at a destination, when assessing the impacts of tourism (and specifically in this case, cruise tourism). Many authors [Cooper et al, 2008; Page and Connell, 2009] recognise Bulter's [1980] Tourist Area Life Cycle (TALC) as being a valid model to explain how a destination develops over time, moving through the stages of involvement, development and consolidation with a corresponding growth in tourist numbers. Graci and Dodds [2010] caution that the TALC cannot provide a typical evolution of an island destination, especially in a planning context. Choy [1992] and Agarwal [1997] support this, arguing that the exact angle of ascent in the TALC graph cannot be determined as "one size fits all". Indeed, there is evidence to support a very different tourist area life cycle occurring on Chios in comparison to Rhodes, despite the islands being of a similar size and in close proximity.

Rhodes evolved with the first charter flights in the early 1960s, attracting large numbers of tourists originating from UK and European consumer markets searching

for an inexpensive packaged holiday [Visit Rhodes, 2013]. For summer 2013 Rhodes is expecting to attract in excess of 1.3 million tourists arriving by air, with a further 600,000 arriving as cruise tourists on 33 large capacity cruise ships, participating in day visit activities. These vast numbers of tourists in their various forms exceed the carrying capacity of the island at the height of the season [Pappas and Tsartas, 2009], degrading the tourism product and over-stretching the infrastructure and natural resources. Obviously, day cruise visitors also cause a noticeable 'spike' in the load that tourists impose upon the destination.

Chios is largely unknown to the mass tourist markets of Europe, and instead attracts affluent Greek families, often with holiday homes, and Turks visiting on short excursions from the nearby Turkish mainland, only 10 km away. The island is expected to see fewer than twenty cruise ship visits during the 2013 holiday season, from five different ships with a maximum capacity of only 450 passengers [Seabourn 2013; Silversea, 2013] – although it is worth noting that Seabourn, in particular, describe this as an 'ultra luxury' cruise product, which may increase the value of each passenger to the local economy. Of course, a cruise tourist arriving at the island only stays for a few hours, but contributions from this source can be significant, if a fair share is allowed to permeate through to the host community.

When utilising Butler's [1980] TALC to determine the maturity of the destinations, Rhodes can be seen to be in the 'consolidation' stage, and arguably bordering on stagnation as the destination regularly reaches over-capacity, degrading the tourism product [Pappas and Tsartas, 2009]. In comparison, Chios has developed so as to attract a very different kind of higher spend consumer, albeit in limited numbers. In addition to the low level of visitors, comments from stakeholder interviewees confirm Chios to be at the 'involvement' stage of Butler's [1980] TALC. The tourism industry on Chios has developed at a much slower pace, and the island lacks the infrastructure that would be needed to serve the mass market, although in consequence much of the coastline remains in a highly desirable, undeveloped state that has largely escaped tourism [Lonely Planet, 2009].

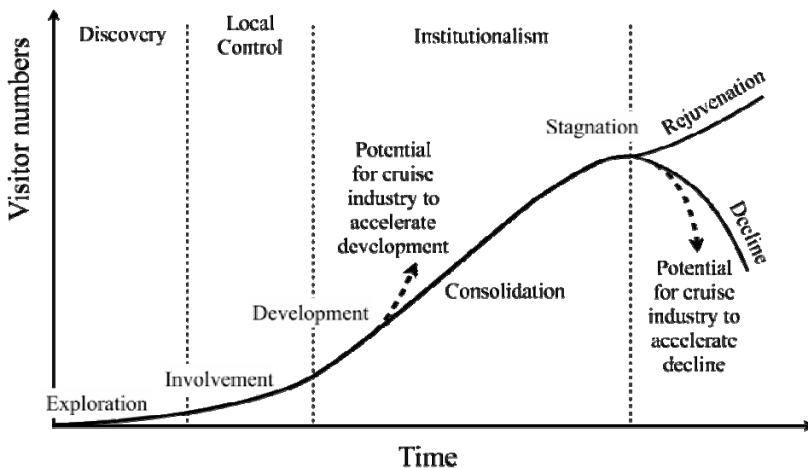


Figure 1: Tourist Area Life Cycle showing the cruise industry's potential to accelerate development, and decline (adapted from Butler [1980])

Cruise tourism should be pursued with caution, as its appeal as a sustainable income generator is questionable. It has the potential to skew the TALC because the mobile nature of the cruise product can overcome the normally slow process of development and consolidation. If a destination becomes popular, cruise visitor numbers can increase rapidly by the simple expedient of changing cruise itineraries from one season to the next, as Figure 1 demonstrates:

Destination-specific investment would remain relatively small, allowing cruise operators to sample a destination, and move elsewhere if it proves insufficiently profitable. In this sense, cruise ships are superior to land-based development, but introduce considerable variability that may leave local businesses struggling to meet capacity requirements without taking on considerable financial risk.

In addition to the TALC theory, there are further established concepts that can be utilised to develop an overall image of the development of tourism on Chios. Cooper et al [2008] highlight that when searching for the allegations of socio-cultural impacts in tourist destinations, one of the major impacts on the host community occurs when they come into any kind of contact involving communication with tourists, either arriving to stay overnight or, it can be argued, via a cruise ship. This activity is reported as being a direct impact that can lead, over time, to irritation (as characterised by Doxey's [1975] Irritation Index.)

Brida et al [2012] have completed focused research involving destinations receiving cruise tourism, utilising successfully the fundamental theories devised by Butler [1980] and Doxey [1975] to determine the social-cultural impacts of tourism in Messina, Sicily. In Chios both the TALC and Doxey's Irritation Index can be utilised to demonstrate that not only is the island destination at the 'involvement' stage, the responses from the local host community taking part in the primary interviews, acknowledge 'euphoria' per the Doxey Irritation Index. Largely as a result of the continuing economic crisis in the Eurozone which has impacted many businesses in Chios, the host population is increasingly reliant on tourism and in particular, on the cruise tourist to supplement their income and the local economy.

It appears that cruise tourism on Chios is developing towards the next stage of both the TALC and Doxey's Irritation Index models, although other authors [Brida et al, 2012; Brida and Zapata-Aguirre, 2010] have argued that these models are only reliable when utilised retrospectively. In the case of Chios it seems reasonable to suggest that an accurate prediction can be made, in that the economy is moving towards reliance on tourism and consolidation, involving the cruise tourism industry in particular. The cruise industry may ultimately become a major cause of *annoyance* amongst the host population, particularly if larger cruise ships are able to land greater numbers of cruise tourists on the island in the future. Cruise tourism could develop to attract numbers that would test the carrying capacity of the island, as has been seen on Rhodes.



## Conclusions

Chios is at a pivotal stage in its development, and the importance of cruise tourism has been magnified by wider economic issues. The islanders must resolve some difficult business decisions if they are to invest in a major port development, and even if successful in this they run the risk of substantially altering the character of the island.

It appears that stakeholders are largely unaware of the negative impacts that a large increase in cruise tourism could inflict on their island, and their lives. The host population were found to have only a limited regard for maritime environmental issues, and the current social impacts were largely considered to be of minor importance and easily addressed. Meanwhile, the people of Chios remain well-disposed to tourism, and few perceive any significant risk. As a result, developments that will permit increased cruise tourism appear likely.

Whilst an attractive solution in the short term, and especially in the current economic climate, the fostering of cruise tourism on Chios ought to be undertaken with care – taking into account the luxury positioning of the current product, and aiming to maintain or increase local revenue per passenger even as numbers increase. Offering a rare example of a largely unspoiled destination, it should be entirely possible to derive further income from both cruise operators and passengers.

Even when considered on a purely business level, investing in new port infrastructure is risky because there are no guarantees that with such facilities in place the island will attract larger cruise ships in sufficient numbers to repay the initial investment. Furthermore, there will be social changes for some in the host community, in the form of longer working hours and highly seasonal work, plus issues of congested roads and crowded amenities, while the environmental impacts of increasing cruise tourism in general will be borne by the much wider (or even global) community.

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*ICTs Integration into Destination Marketing  
Organizations (DMOs) Tourism Strategy*

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**ABSTRACT**

Given that the development of ICTs infrastructure and use has positive effects on economic growth and that tourism often acts as a driver of economic and social development, especially in developing areas, the exploitation of technology is critical for the tourism industry to achieve competitive advantage and to provide economic benefits for their locality, by reducing the asymmetric distribution of economic, political, and cultural capital globally. This study argues that the gap between the “ICTs – included” and “the ICTs-excluded” widens, further jeopardizing the social, cultural, and economic development at the global level; the consequently created digital divide may lead to digital and social exclusion—when individuals,

communities, and organizations are unable to fully participate in the network society and determine their own destiny. For tourists and destinations, this means being unable to participate in the emerging electronic market and benefit from arising opportunities.

The authors assert that in this newly evolving production environment the most efficient relationships are based on the creation of alliances, partnerships and networks among firms and that learning, collaboration, and the active sharing of online experience become extremely important in the process of knowledge creation. Only DMOs and other tourist stakeholders with an ability to learn quickly and to translate that learning into action rapidly will be able to gain competitive advantages in these high velocity marketplaces. Destination communities and regions rely on network formation (between businesses, between the private and public sectors) for the development of competitive tourist products. These can be attained through a number of mechanisms including mutual dependency and adaptation, discussion and negotiation, honesty, long-term commitment, quality control and shared knowledge. Networks may also be created and enhanced by the emergence of new information and communication technologies (ICTs). Virtual networks, which can be defined as permeable structures without physical borders of separation from the environment, comprising a multiplicity of autonomous, interdependent, and self-organizing actors that rely on the internet infrastructure to integrate and exchange value, are an example of these new concepts.

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Over the last decade, investments in ICT in the tourism and hospitality industry have substantially increased. The challenge for the tourism operator is the provision of accurate, localised data, increasingly via ICT, whilst maintaining a trust relationship with the tourist. Developing destinations face increasing disadvantages in establishing links with their clientele, promoting their resources, distributing their products, and collaborating with industry partners, especially in high- and upper-digital access markets. This has considerable effects, as not only do they fail to fulfil their full potential and then to gain sufficient economic and socio cultural benefits but also they are unable to build their resources and expertise in order to improve their competitiveness and ensure their future prosperity.

ICTs have the potential to upgrade the quality of life by providing new tools for better access to information, knowledge management as well as sharing. A shift of power to the buyer is also evident in that the modern day tourist has ready access to the World Wide Web and a store of information. The tourist consumer has more choice when buying travel products also because of the options provided by on-line travel agents and direct marketing by airlines. Sterne, (1997) adds getting management support, assigning responsibilities, establishing procedures, and setting standards against which the efforts are measured to this list.

In tourism, the ability of destination organizations and businesses to select, to aggregate, and to distribute information to the right consumer at the right time and in the right place is critical. ICT-skilled tourism enterprises and destination marketing organizations (DMOs) have huge opportunities to apply ICTs for communicating their

offering, enhancing their visibility on the market and strengthening their competitiveness (Gretzel, Yuan, and Fesenmaier 2000; Buhalis 1998). Design, content, and production access can be achieved through appropriate training, which stimulates the development of specific skills and also trigger staff behavioural intention to use ICTs. In addition, institutional and governmental incentives can support businesses' decision to invest in innovative tools and applications.

The integration of IT into the organizational fabric of the destination marketing organization (DMO) is an important key to success. It is difficult for most DMOs, however, to keep pace with the evolution of new technologies, the emergence of innovative advertising strategies, the changes in the consumer market, and the growing competition due to increasing globalization. They often have to struggle with limited financial and human resources, a lack of technological expertise, and time constraints. The question of how to move from the current way of doing business to one that is responsive to these changes becomes a vital concern.

## **2. DIGITAL DIVIDE IN THE TOURISM INDUSTRY**

Many countries are having a two-tiered structure (Werthner, 1999) in which Tier 1 is made of a small number of large, often global, players, and Tier 2 is made up of a much larger collection of small and medium tourism enterprises (SMTEs). Larger players are well versed in current management practices, including information technology applications. Large enterprises are keen on facilitating the uptake of online technologies because they have a critical mass of infrastructure, personnel, and related experience to undertake this transition. These enterprises are generally high up the distribution chain and undertake a large percentage of their communication with other businesses in the chain; hence, they are primarily concerned with business-to-business applications for online technologies. They involve information exchange, inventory management, and alliance facilitation, like for example, association with Travelport, Sabre and Amadeus GDSs.

In contrast, Tier 2 enterprises have mostly limited technological infrastructure and financial power, the level of marketing know-how is generally low, and direct access to the market is limited and they tend to be located in regional and rural areas. Tourism businesses (especially small to medium enterprises (SMEs)) and DMOs with low use of ICTs are often cut off from electronic distribution channels and eCommerce (Buhalis and Kaldis, 2008; Collins, Buhalis, and Peters, 2003). Tourism destinations and SMEs in peripheral, low digital- access regions are even more disadvantaged than their colleagues located in developed countries (Buhalis, 1998, 2003; UNCTAD 2004). Not only are they excluded from the considerable set of their prospective customers but they also struggle for access to expertise, capital, and technologies that could enable them to promote their products and develop suitable tools for attracting new markets (Minghetti and Buhalis, 2010). Their online presence often reflects the level of ICTs deployment in their own location rather than the expected level of use by their clientele, which often operates in high-ICT regions. These destinations and businesses have a high dependence on external traditional intermediaries (i.e., tour operators and incoming agents) to promote and sell their products (Bastakis, Buhalis, and Butler, 2004; Buhalis, 2000).

According to Warschauser (2004), "What is most important about ICTs is not so much the availability of a computing device or the Internet line, but rather people's ability to make use of that device and line to engage in meaningful social practices." Awareness of the functionality of the Internet, as well as resources and expertise necessary to take advantage of this functionality may be lacking, especially with respect to SMTEs. The nature of the Web provides new opportunities but also poses serious threats, especially to small tourism organizations. Naisbitt, (1994) refers to this phenomenon as the "global paradox." This ambiguous situation calls for risk taking and at the same time requires careful management. It is not clear that individual SMTEs are able to use this intelligence, or recognise its value. Information potentially available therefore is lost. Also infrastructure issues, such as access to broadband, may impede its use. Disparities in possessing, controlling, processing, communicating, and distributing information have a greater impact on tourism production and consumption than in other economic sectors. These disparities are determined by both the technological tools available to provide and distribute accurate information widely, and the ability to use these tools effectively (Minghetti and Buhalis, 2010).

Paradoxically, as technology progresses, the gap between the "ICTs – included" and "the ICTs-excluded" widens, further jeopardizing the social, cultural, and economic development at the global level. Highly developed tourism markets and destinations that systematically use and benefit from advanced computer-based and Internet applications will continue to strengthen their position and affect the evolution of the sector. Conversely, others who are able to use basic or simple electronic applications, or those that do not use them at all, will stay behind and be excluded from the first tear of the global tourism community. They will inevitably be more dependent on offline and online tour operators and travel agencies for putting their offerings forward to the marketplace.

Digital divide may lead to digital and social exclusion—when individuals, communities, and organizations are unable to fully participate in the network society and determine their own destiny (Selwyn, 2004). For tourists and destinations, this means being unable to participate in the emerging electronic market and benefit from arising opportunities. Recent studies carried out in Thailand (Vatanasakdakul, Tibben and Cooper, 2004) and in the tourism sector (Cosh and Assenov, 2007) have shown that although the government has funded projects to improve ICTs infrastructure and widen Internet and e-Commerce functionalities, their use in firms is still very limited. The reason is that immediate social and cultural expectations of e-Commerce users in the country are not met by current technologies.

In addition, the high dependency of the local industry on external trade operators and, in the case of tourism, from intermediaries located in highly developed markets, does not give incentives to Thai travel agents to modify their business model. Local agencies generally show a lack of knowledge of e-Commerce and poor Web design capabilities (content management, security issues, etc.). Many of them also feel "that the online channel is already overpopulated, while they are already busy in satisfying physical customers" (Cosh and Assenov, 2007:499). Consequently, digital divide initiatives should be combined with development policies for tourism in order to support the welfare of destinations.



Although the diffusion of ICTs has a great potential for ensuring sustainable global and tourism development, especially in less developed areas (UNCTAD, 2004), disparities still exist in access, skills, use of ICTs, and services. Many infrastructural and above all knowledge barriers have to be overcome therefore to support a wide use. This also applies to the developed regions of the world, which face the challenge of ensuring that everybody has the opportunity to benefit from Internet services. (Minghetti and Buhalis, 2010).

### **3. USE OF INNOVATION SYSTEMS AND ICTS IN TOURIST DEVELOPMENT**

The innovation process thus demands a selective collection, use, and dissemination of information, as well as an intensive interaction among multiple actors. And so, innovation would seem to call for a systematic reorganization of how society and economies function, aiming to enhance the creation and development of social and economic networks, supported by trust and structured around the sharing of common interests, languages, and knowledge. Being able to integrate global knowledge and networks into local innovative processes is of crucial importance, and the existence of an absorptive capacity and learning atmosphere is therefore needed in a contemporary innovation system (Asheim and Isaksen, 2002).

ICTs are driving the innovation process by reducing distance and time constraints in inter-personal and inter-institutional contacts and by reducing the complexity of exchanging and acquiring information (Santinha, Castro, and Sobral, 2006). However, while it is important to acknowledge their important role, these technologies only play a part in enabling the many processes and relationships that characterize the patterns of socioeconomic development. An efficient use of ICT-based services demands the existence of dense immaterial networks, related to social interactions that occur within and between places and socioeconomic activities, allowing in turn the constant production of innovation.

Innovative solutions are the key to the promotion of tourist regional development. Rapid developments in mobile telephony, cable, fibre-optics, and wireless applications as well as in the field of computer hardware and software products appear to offer excellent opportunities to tourism development. (Santinha and Castro, 2010; Battle et al., 2009; Bell, 2008; Van der Meer and Van Winden, 2003). Numerous empirical studies of innovation systems and industrial districts indicate advantages in terms of adaptability and viability. As a consequence, single enterprises, when interlinked to collaborative relations, tend to be more shielded from the exposure to immediate competition (Markusen, 1996). However, the individual and collaborative actors in innovation systems need to address external pressures continuously, such as, for example, shifts in technological paradigms or changed regulatory environments (Hjalager, 2010). If innovations systems slide into a 'comfort' zone and lose their ability for rapid catch-up, their vulnerability may increase (OECD, 2006). This perspective is perhaps most important in environments with many small enterprises, as is the case in tourism. (Hjalager, 2010).

In the newly evolving production environment the most efficient relationships are based on the creation of alliances, partnerships and networks among firms (Castells, 2004). Destination communities and regions rely on network formation (between

businesses, between the private and public sectors) for the development of competitive tourist products. These can be attained through a number of mechanisms including mutual dependency and adaptation, discussion and negotiation, honesty, long-term commitment, quality control and shared knowledge. Networks may also be created and enhanced by the emergence of new information and communication technologies (ICTs). Virtual networks, which can be defined as permeable structures without physical borders of separation from the environment, comprising a multiplicity of autonomous, interdependent, and self-organizing actors that rely on the internet infrastructure to integrate and exchange value, are an example of these new concepts (Romano, Eliva and Passiante, 2001; Pollock, 1998).

Tourist places have often been treated as more or less territorially bounded destinations with the focus laid on organizational and marketing strategies. The destination is seen as a 'container' of attractions and various facilities such as transport, accommodations and food and hence the tourism experience (Tinsley and Lynch, 2001). As a result, the complexities of tourism practices disappear behind dualistic categorizations; on the one hand are tourists, on the other tourist organizers working within destinations. However, the territorial model of industrial districts, where tourism networks are made of relations between fixed nodes in one-dimensional time-space and resting on the physical proximity of homogeneous actors, does not seem to be successfully implemented in tourism. (Bærenholdt et al., 2004). Studies based on this understanding of networks have shown that tourism industries are rather weak in networking, at least in the same way as traditional production industries (Hjalager, 2000; Tinsley and Lynch, 2001). Instead, the concept of networks is in line with much of economic geography and innovation theory, which has focused on the significance of inter-firm relations and learning economies.

The apparent association of growth in regions and of industries with conspicuous networking activity has encouraged suggestions that successful tourism regional economies in the world economic system must be 'intelligent' or learning regions (Feldman, 1994). Networks are thus part of the dynamics of organizational creativity, directed towards building and maintaining competitive links to the global economy, and based on strengthening existing competitive activities (Hansen, 1992; Castells, 2004). At the same time, the sustainability of the industry may well be tied to creating effective alliances between the private and public sectors. Thus, networks become fundamentally based not on spatial proximity, or shared interests, but on notions of trust and reciprocity. The future competitiveness of destinations, and the development performance of tourism, will not simply depend on a destination's natural and cultural resource base, its ability to harness new technologies, or its depth of human capital.

In this challenge, four specific criteria must be taken into account: to guarantee an integrated vision of the tourism regional development strategy, to include initiatives that spread the advantages of using virtual platforms so that ideas can be replicated and new initiatives stimulated, to assure the collection and spread of tourism information concerning the productive system and firms' needs, and to facilitate the access to information and supporting services by tourism stakeholders (Santinha and Castro, 2010). Regional tourism initiatives are driven by the need to maximize marketing penetrations for the region and its product, facilitate the entry of local enterprises into e-commerce and demonstrate comprehensiveness of coverage of

product in the region, whether or not individual products have independent online presence.

Recently, in many countries, has emerged the need to establish a resource centre to develop education, training, and projects' facilitation, to support the move to online tourism business practices. The responsibilities of the National Online Tourism Resource Centre could include:

- maintaining a resource directory, including a directory of high-standard examples, to be accessed by industry for identifying opportunities and impediments to the uptake of online technologies;
- assisting industry associations to promote online technology among their members, including organizing and conducting workshops;
- developing national competency standards in online technologies
- developing a set of guidelines for minimum infrastructure needs for online business practices;
- monitoring and providing information about tax and legal issues relating to online tourism initiatives; and
- undertaking applied research and data gathering about the most effective online strategies for SMTEs.

While the resource centre will be online, it will have to be supported by considerable offline activities in its initial phases.

Web 2.0 brings a second generation of opportunities for collaboration and information sharing based on web-based communities and hosted services. For tourism the benefits include enhanced information sharing between consumers and between business and consumers. The Web gives tourist firms and organisations the ability to reach highly motivated customers with information-rich messages at a negligible cost. Nevertheless, competitive advantage on the Internet will not be realized by applying existing marketing models but, rather, by developing innovative concepts. Integrated approaches that build on the advantages and capabilities of technology need to be translated into concrete innovative marketing actions. The Internet, Dogac, et al (2004) argues, enhances the level of collaboration between tourist operators and brings about greater levels of interoperability with internal and external applications, previously available to technologically advanced tourism stakeholders via proprietary systems.

#### **4. CONCLUSIONS**

The emergence of innovative Web-based technologies has led to a reconfiguration of the environment in which tourism business is conducted. These fundamental technological shifts have a profound impact on the perception, consumption and construction of tourism spaces, and their local development outcomes. 'Traditional' regional communities have new tools through which to disseminate their concerns, and may, via global networks, gain new 'community members' that can represent their interests around the world (Gurstein, 2000; Rheingold, 2000). As Zeldin

(1994:467) notes, the Earth is being 'criss-crossed afresh by invisible threads uniting individuals who differ by all conventional criteria, but who are finding that they have aspirations in common'. Understanding these changes is crucial for creating a vision in the tourism organization that things are going to evolve.

Tourism leaders need to convince stakeholders to come along on this move toward innovative strategies, knowing that it will cost money, require a lot of training, and take time. The problem with many current online tourism strategies is that organizations try to fit everything into existing structures and models. The co-evolution of innovative Web based technologies and communication strategies will lead to a quantum change in the way business is conducted, from business to consumer, from business to business, and internally. Understanding the medium, the customer, the business, and partners seem to be the key variables for the successful integration of ICTs in regional tourist development. Understanding usually comes from knowledge. Since no expertise is readily available, learning, collaboration, and the active sharing of online experience become extremely important in the process of knowledge creation. Only DMOs and other tourist stakeholders with an ability to learn quickly and to translate that learning into action rapidly will be able to gain competitive advantages in these high velocity marketplaces.

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# *Intercultural Communication, a key factor for successful International academic conferences*

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## **Summary**

Entertainment activities in an international academic conference, remains an important factor for its success. The question is if there is an optimal communication strategy for the organization of the conferences entertainment program in order to attract a large number of potential researchers. Can social event(s) ameliorate the participants' of an international academic conference experience? This is the research question of this paper.

The entertainment part of an academic conference can have an important impact on the overall event. An adequate communication strategy that takes into account its *interculturality* and so the difficulties of facing a *cultural confusion* is more than important for the overall success of the conference.

**Key Words:** Intercultural Communication, Academic conference, cultural confusion, cultural shock

## I. Introduction

Attending conferences is one important element in the work of the academic community. Researchers, professors, PhD and master students need presentations in international conferences to acquire feedback on a paper, get informed about the work of others, communicate with colleagues from the same or from other disciplines and exchange ideas (Borghans L. et al., 2010). The participation in conferences can also help academics ameliorate their Curriculum Vitae, obtain the opportunity of new collaborations, and finally even have some nice time off, which can be combined, for example, with holiday vacations, immediately after the conference. Actually, the need of participants to combine their scientific activity with relaxation has been identified by researchers on the field. In this paper we focus on the need of academics for relaxation and communication.

We consider the entertainment activities that exist in an international academic conference an important factor for its success. The question is if there is an optimal communication strategy for the organization of the conferences entertainment program in order to attract a large number of potential researchers and which is the role of intercultural communication. Our research question is the following: Can social event(s) ameliorate the participants' of an international academic conference experience?

Our research is based on literature review, the observation of academic international conferences and the unofficial discussion with its participants. We focus on international, multicultural (more than 10 different nationalities per conference), academic conferences. The participants of these conferences had the opportunity to interact 4 days (duration of the conference<sup>14</sup>). It is also important to notice that we are referring to non-rotated conferences that take place in Athens, Greece, with a minimum of 50 to a maximum of 150 participants.

This paper is separated in 5 different parts, including the introduction. In the second part, we analyze some of the elements to take into account for a successful conference. We then examine the communication strategy steps needed for the organization of a successful event, as far as multicultural events are concerned, taking into account the effect of *cultural shock* or *cultural confusion*. We finally take a look at the infrastructure elements and more particularly the entertainment services that can ameliorate the participants' perception of academic conferences.

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<sup>14</sup> The international conferences we are referring to include 2 days of presentations and 2 days of possible participation in entertainment activities.



## II. Elements to take into account ...

The interest and value of academic conferences is growing. According to the statistics of the International Congress & Convention Association (ICCA), Greece has the 21<sup>st</sup> position in meetings per country and the numbers of meetings is growing each year (see figure 2).

International academic conferences location is an important factor of attractiveness for the organization of scientific conferences (Terzi M. et al., 2013). The evaluation criteria regarding this factor include a) infrastructure, that must be able to meet the needs of both conference organizers and participants (accommodation, food quality, entertainment services, ability of a destination to offer sightseeing), b) historical and cultural heritage, c) appropriate weather conditions, d) adequate availability of travel services, e) variety of transportation modes, f) safe destination (free of high terrorism, theft and injuries), g) calm environment, as far as local community is concerned, h) adequate health conditions, j) the use of English as an international language that can help the participants communicate.

123 academics and students participated in a quantitative research, conducted by Terzi M. C. et al. (2013) that was completed to evaluate the role of the location for a conference success. This research concluded that evaluation criteria are able to influence the decision making process of potential delegates, regarding their participation since the more the factor of "Conference Location" is satisfied, the higher the levels of participation. The evaluation criterion of Infrastructure was considered as very important, according to 74% of respondents. A percentage of 87.8% considered their transportation options (ease of access to and from the destination in which the conference is held) as one of the major criteria for the choice of a conference destination. The criterion of security with a rate of 77.2% was also approved as one of the elements that had also a great impact on participants' reaction. Concerning the evaluation criterion of hygiene (destinations free from bad hygiene, infectious diseases and poor cleanliness), 87% of the sample consider it very important for a successful conference. Finally, English was approved as the official language for academic conferences for 83.7% of the sample as academic conferences usually attract scientists from different countries. The use of a united code of communication among participants is therefore needed. Terzi M. C. et al. (2013) also noticed that the communication strategy based on the pillars of the factor "conference location" is able to increase the levels of participants' satisfaction and by extension the levels of their participation. Judging from the above, the organization of conferences should develop a communication strategy by highlighting the evaluation criteria of the factor conference location in order to attract more participants. As far as infrastructure and entertainment elements are concerned, before organizing our communication strategy we should take into account the *interculturality* of the event and so the effect of cultural shock.

### III. The effect of “Cultural Shock” - “Cultural Confusion” ...

Hottola (2004) proposes the theory framework of “dynamic model of culture confusion”, to explain the theoretical understanding of short-term transitions. This is the term we also consider adequate for the intercultural adaptation needed for the participation in an international conference. Conference participants can be regarded as short term tourists, as the event takes place from 2 to 4 days and the stay can be extended (to meet new places, monuments and people, establish collaborations, etc).

The term ‘*cultural confusion*’ (also known as ‘*culture shock*’), describes a variety of difficulties experienced while meeting other countries and people. Oberg (1960:177) has defined culture shock as a ‘transitory concept precipitated by the anxiety that results from losing all one’s familiar signs and symbols of social interaction’. For Guanipa (1998), the expression ‘culture shock’, introduced in 1958, describes the anxiety (lack of direction, feeling of not knowing what to do or how to react), produced when someone moves to a new environment. The feeling of culture shock generally sets in after the first few days of coming to a new place and can be described as the physical and emotional discomfort one suffers when coming to live in another country or a place different from the place of origin (different language, social rules, etc.) (Oberg, 1960). Some of the symptoms might be loneliness, melancholy, pains and allergies, health troubles (insomnia, desire to sleep too much, depression, feeling tired, anger, irritability, resentment, unwillingness to interact with others), identifying with the old culture or idealizing the old country, loss of identity, feelings of being lost, overlooked, feeling exploited or abused. These symptoms of cultural shock can appear at different times. Nevertheless, we should also add that culture shock can also become an opportunity for redefining one’s life objectives and acquiring new perspectives.

Culture shock can have different stages (Guanipa, 1998), that can be ongoing or might only appear at certain times. These different stages remind us the U-Curve of Culture Shock (Oberg, 1960) (see figure 1). At the first stage, the new arrival may feel euphoric and be pleased by all of the new things encountered. This time is called the “**honeymoon**” stage, as everything encountered is new and exciting. At this point we have to observe that conference participants usually stay on this first stage, due to their short time of stay.

In the second stage, the person may encounter some **difficult times and crises** in daily life. For example, communication difficulties may occur such as not being understood. In this stage, there may be feelings of discontent, impatience, anger, sadness, and feeling incompetence. This happens when a person is trying to adapt to a new culture that is very different from the culture of origin. Transition between the old methods and those of the new country is a difficult process and takes time to complete. During the transition, there can be strong feelings of dissatisfaction. The third stage is characterized by gaining some understanding of the new culture. A new feeling of pleasure and sense of humor may be experienced. One may start to feel a **certain psychological balance**. The new arrival may not feel as lost and

starts to have a feeling of direction. The individual is **more familiar** with the environment and wants to belong. This initiates an evaluation of the old ways versus those of the new. In the fourth stage, the person realizes that the new culture has good and bad things to offer. This stage can be one of double integration or triple integration depending on the number of cultures that the person has to process. This integration is accompanied by a more solid **feeling of belonging**. The person starts to define him/herself and establish goals for living. The fifth stage, called the "**re-entry shock**", occurs when a return to the country of origin is made. One may find that things are no longer the same. For example, some of the newly acquired customs are not in use in the old culture.

These stages are presented at different times for each person. Additionally, each person has its own way of reacting in the stages of culture shock (cultural confusion). As a consequence, some stages will be longer and more difficult than others. Many factors contribute to the duration and effects of culture shock. For example, the individual's state of mental health, the type of personality, previous experiences, socio-economic conditions, familiarity with the language, family and/or social support systems, and level of education can differentiate its duration and effects.

In our globalised society we experience the difference in mentalities and cultures every day, especially when people travel, this is why we can't speak of a culture shock, even if we might like to call their confusion a shock because that sounds more exciting (Hottola, 2004). 'Culture confusion', as we have already noticed, seems more accurate in the context of intercultural adaptation. Culture confusion focuses both on the problematic part of the adaptation process and on the presence of enjoyment, success, and learning. It acknowledges the reality of mixed emotions instead of clearly definable stages of emotional dominances (Hottola, 2004). In other words, culture confusion recognizes the complexity and diversity of people behavior and feelings while communication with a new, different culture.

Cultural confused people need special communication treatment. In our view, the organization of successful social events can very much help the ameliorations of possible *cultural confusions*. An adequate intercultural communication strategy could also help overcoming situations of cultural confusion.

#### **IV. What Intercultural Communication Strategy?**

Cultural communication influence the way people communicate across different cultures. Effective intercultural communication is very difficult and sometimes even impossible to achieve. In this research we focus on intercultural contact and adaptation in a multicultural environment of an international conference that takes place in Athens, Greece. Our field study involves the time people meet during the conference. In this case we can speak of a first cultural confusion. The steps for an adequate communication strategy are the following:

First of all we need a communication plan: what do we hope to achieve? What are our objectives and goals? A SWOT-analysis should follow, to see our project's

communications strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. Then, we need to know our target group and the message we should share with this group. Messages used necessitate being appropriate and interesting for our audience. In addition, each audience is reached by different tactics and different communication tools. The selection of communication tools, the responsibilities of each member of the team, the timeline to follow, the budget and the way that the plan will be evaluated, have also an important role for our communication strategy concerning the organization of a successful conference event. Our objective is to accomplish an event that will help academics coming from different parts of the world. The interculturality, which can easily provoke cultural confusion, should be also taken into account.

Varying characteristics of a conference can influence both its overall attractiveness, but also the type of researchers interested to participate. Selecting these characteristics is therefore a strategic instrument for the communication strategy scientific associations to reach their goals (Borghans L. et al., 2010). These basic characteristics are the following: First of all, the expenses for the scientific conferences participation (conferences fees and travel costs) are generally fully covered by the researchers' universities, when presenting a paper at the conference participation. This is why the price of the registration fee will not so much affect conference participation. Elements such as conference destination, the brand name of the university/association that organizes the conference (conference reputation), specialists participating in the academic committee, and possibilities for networking are important for the attraction of participants' attention. More particularly, Borghans L. et al. (2010) consider conference characteristics like the quality of keynote speakers and the attractiveness of conference location as the most important characteristics as far as the European Association of Labour Economists (EALE) conferences are concerned. On the other side, the type of social events, the conference venue and the time of the year, are considered as less important for the successful organization of a conference.

Borghans L. et al., (2010) carried out a research among 1310 former participants in at least one of the EALE-meetings in between 2001 and 2008, who could still be contacted by their email-address. In total, 437 participants filled in the questions on conference participation. On a 5-point Likert scale, 89% of survey participants answered that getting international feedback on their research and networking is an important reason for conference participation. **33% are attending conferences for fun.** 61% prefer attractive conference locations and 80% easy-to-reach places. Then, 57% agree with the statement that travel costs should be low. At the same time, 78% explained that travel expenses are mostly fully covered by the institution a researcher works for if the participant is accepted for presenting a paper.

Researchers can value conference characteristics differently (Borghans L., et al., 2010). Their cultural background and country, their character, their emotional condition at the moment of the event, their age and discipline have certainly a role to play. This is also a fact for the entertainment part of a conference.

For Borghans L., et al. (2010), researchers prefer an informal garden barbecue instead of more formal events like formal dinners or a reception in the city hall. During our informal contact with participants of academic conferences, academics expressed their preference for 5 star hotels as conference locations. These kinds of

hotels have organized conference sales and meeting places, not to forget restaurant, accommodation and entertainment facilities. In this way conference participants can refresh themselves or even take a small nap during the posses of the conference. Restaurant fully booked for conference participants with good, clean Greek food and Greek entertainment events is also something that is preferred by conference participants. This kind of event can help them communicate and get to know each other better in a more informal environment. Collaborations can also be privileged in such an environment. It is important to notice that certain rules should always be taken seriously into account by the entertainment activity organizers. First of all, the start and finish time of the event should be announced and followed. We can't say that the event will start on 20.00 and the participants wait until 21.00, for example. Then, when food is included, we should always check and be sure of its good quality and sufficient quantity. It is also important to notice that the amount of alcohol consumed should also be controlled. More than one or two glasses of wine could cause troubles during the event. Finally, participants require good service and encouragement to participate. The animation part has an important role to play here.

Additionally, Newcomb (1961) model of artistic communication emphasizes the dynamic nature of the relationship between each audience member and the performance/ performer (In Hill L. et al., 2003). In case of artistic performance, it is the dialogue between the performers and the audience that will each time give a different performance (figure 3).

Generally speaking, mutual respect, good communication and understanding will help everybody have a good time, meet new people, taste local cuisine and participate in local entertainment activities.

## **V. Conclusion**

At what time academics who participate in a conference can combine their presence with a nice experience, the conference can attract new participants the years to come. In order to achieve such a mission, an adequate communication strategy, is a necessity! The intercultural academic character of the conference should be certainly taken into account, as far as the organization of intercultural events with multicultural participants is also concerned.

The entertainment part of an academic conference can have an important impact on the overall event of an academic conference. An adequate communication strategy that takes into account the *interculturality* of the event and so the difficulties of facing a *cultural shock* or a *cultural confusion* is more than important for the overall success of the conference. Certainly, as far as the event itself is concerned, the interaction between the participants and the animators/ artists is finally that makes the difference.

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VII. Annexes

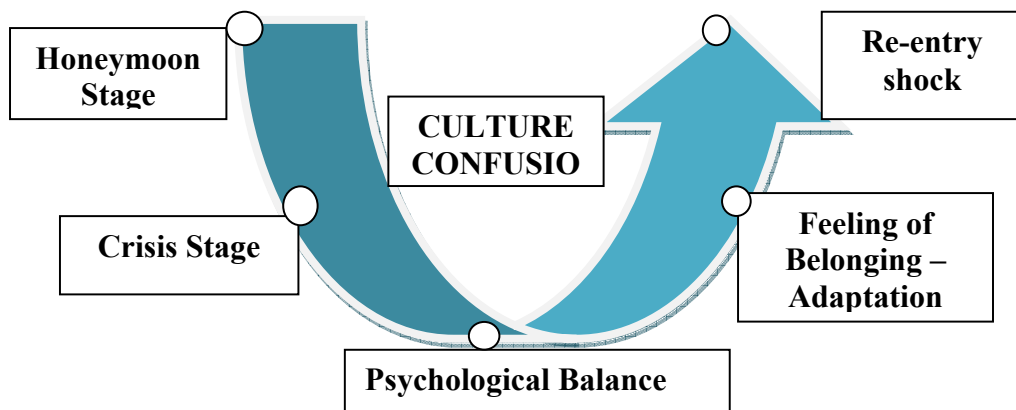
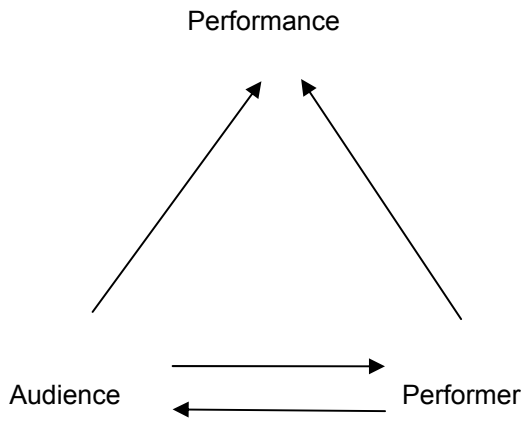


Figure 1: Stages of Culture Confusion

Rank	Country	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
1	U.S.A.	538	468	571	587	620	648	645	651	637	<b>595</b>
2	Germany	325	299	314	339	409	415	449	525	450	<b>458</b>
3	Spain	212	221	304	302	387	352	316	365	385	<b>360</b>
4	Italy	243	278	293	317	329	324	323	350	350	<b>350</b>
5	United Kingdom	321	231	310	323	315	389	390	368	381	<b>345</b>
6	France	297	273	283	283	372	360	370	340	397	<b>341</b>
7	Brazil	124	105	107	128	161	186	231	223	255	<b>293</b>
8	Japan	176	213	211	197	205	232	243	265	281	<b>257</b>
9	China-P.R.	83	79	130	81	229	226	255	264	262	<b>245</b>
10	Austria	101	103	111	156	165	188	240	243	212	<b>236</b>
	Netherlands	191	186	170	190	230	234	229	235	253	<b>236</b>
12	Switzerland	106	117	154	170	169	193	189	205	204	<b>214</b>
13	Canada	168	156	190	168	204	199	209	247	270	<b>213</b>
14	Sweden	142	141	140	143	164	157	171	161	177	<b>184</b>
15	Republic of Korea	53	106	113	93	149	139	167	147	184	<b>176</b>
16	Australia	207	165	168	166	189	186	207	212	197	<b>169</b>
17	Portugal	82	88	116	133	148	153	155	199	186	<b>168</b>
18	Denmark	88	111	136	102	109	110	126	118	128	<b>151</b>
19	Argentina	67	73	53	55	84	93	90	120	136	<b>145</b>
20	Belgium	98	92	115	97	122	145	150	157	152	<b>130</b>
21	Greece	58	85	116	97	116	123	157	156	147	<b>128</b>
22											

**Figure 2:** Number of meetings per country. In the association of meeting markets 2000-2009. Available at: <http://www.iccaworld.com/dcps/doc.cfm?docid=1130> [Accessed on 21 Mai 2013].





**Figure 3:** Newcomb model of artistic communication (In Hill L. et al., 2003).

*The impact of marketing upon the kitchen organization, operation and management. Could that improve the customers' satisfaction?*

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**Abstract**

Marketing is a science that probes our life more and more. It was a matter of time till the field of restaurants, were conquered. Although the restaurant marketing is well known today, the direct impact and influence from the marketing to the food production is quite limited. The marketing procedures are used in a few kitchen tasks such as menu planning and menu engineering. The great issue is whether marketing can affect the organization, operation and management of a kitchen directly. And let us suppose that this is feasible, can it lead to increased levels of the guests' satisfaction? It is essential that we know who we are, who is the guest, develop the equivalent profiles, study the reasoning for consumption and finally manipulate the production process in a way that will provide the potential buyer with a product that is irresistible.

**Keywords:**

Marketing, Kitchen, Customer satisfaction, Personalization of the product

## **Introduction**

The marketing process provides an enterprise with the ability to customize their products and services to the clients' needs and wants (Kotler, 1991). The beginning of that process defines the profile of the clientele. At first the marketer needs to take under consideration the common characteristics of several groups of people, regroup those characteristics and finally create segments of the general social group (Laloumis, 1998). Those segments are parts of the society that demonstrate a number of characteristics which are combined among them on a different logical basis. This determines a group of people which for example belong to an age spread from the early twenties to the early fifties. In actual life this age spread displays a number of differences, which lead to a completely opposite consuming behavior. Within the marketing process though, those ages can be bound by other common characteristics such as a tendency to search for brand new experiences that lead them to be willing to consume a certain product or service (Yankelovich, 2006).

## **Culinary Market Segmentation**

The nature of the culinary product is obviously met as a component in any kind of tourist product. The basic need for food will be fulfilled. Additionally, there are tourists who will seek a different experience out of their basic need. There are also tourists that travel basing their destination choice on the food and drink that they will find there. The appropriate segmentation under today's circumstances, are presented by Ignatov (2003) which breaks them down to three specific target groups. Those target groups are people who are interested in food, those who are interested in wine and those who are interested in both (Kivela et al, 2005).

It is proven that culinary tourists, are quite older than generic tourists, more highly educated and they tend to spend an average of the double amount than the generic tourist. (Wade et al, 2005, Hall et al, 2003). There are two main directions in which culinary tourists spread. These directions are the food and the wine. Culinary tourists demonstrate significant differences among visitors interested in food-based tourism, wine-based tourism, and food and wine-based tourism. Those segments differ in demographic characteristics, travel activities and spending during travel. Culinary tourists who aim to both food and wine tend to have the highest socio-economic profiles, engaged in more activities than the other two sectors (Ignatov, 2003).

Middleton (et al, 2001) indicates that there are seven main ways to segment markets in the tourism market:

- The purpose of travel
- The buyer needs, motivations, demands and anticipations
- The consuming behavior
- The demographic, economic, and geographic profile
- The psychographic profile

- The geodemographic profile
- And the price

On the other hand Buckley (1993) defines that those characteristics can be divided into three categories.

- Demographic
- Psychographic and
- Behavioristic

Those characteristics suffer the regrouping process providing a certain model of a large group of people which demonstrate common facts that lead them to specific consuming behaviors. That allows the enterprise to specify the product accordingly.

The segmentation process analyzes and reorganizes the characteristics of the enterprenual profile (Auty, 1992). The enterprenual profile is basically consisted of a list of characteristics which translate the firm's identity into the customer's consuming language. Those characteristics are the following (Scanlon, 1985, Minor et al, 1984):

- The type of the enterprise
- The category of the enterprise
- The cuisine
- The fame
- And the product

Those characteristics can provide the buyer with an accurate image of what to expect from the restaurant. On the other hand the enterprise will profit out of this comparison a more detailed aspect of the potential buyer's profile which will enable the marketer to design and develop a product or service that will satisfy the target group (Seaberg, 1983). According to Buckley (1993) the enterprise must go through a tunnel that will get the firm much closer to the target group. This tunnel is crossed in four steps:

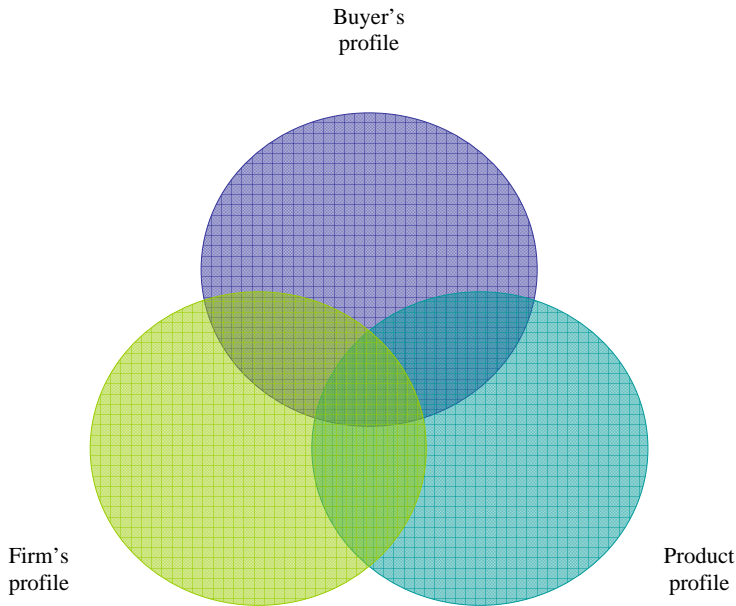
1. Perceiving,
2. Understanding,
3. Stimulating,
4. And satisfying the customer's needs

The enterprise is provided with the appropriate data that describe best the customer's needs. Apart from the needs, wants and expectations must be taken under consideration (Laloumis, 2002). It is an expected reaction that consumers easily jump from satisfaction to expectation and from expectation to demand.

It is a major step reading the guest's body language to perceive and understand his needs. The buyer may be in a hurry, may be n a diet, may be on a

budget, may not understand the menu or may face some quality problems. In all cases the personnel must provide the customer a reason for consumption (Smith, 1990).

At this point the restaurant possesses all the information needed in order to develop the product profile. The product is the chain part that bonds the buyers with the enterprise, by studying and comparing the equivalent profiles.



### **Consumer Behavior**

Consumer behavior is the procedure via a buyer comes to a decision of what to purchase, the criticism of the choice and the potential of repeating this purchase.

According to Assael (1992) consumer behavior is the humans' reaction to a process of exchange.

Wilkie (1990), declares that consumer behavior is the one that potential buyers demonstrate while they research, buy, use, evaluate and accept or reject a product or service depending no their needs' satisfaction.

As Peter (et al, 1990) indicates consumer behavior is the procedure of decision making and reactions during a purchase of goods or services.

Mowen (1990) defines consumer behavior as all the activities that are relevant to the purchase of a product. This includes the thoughts and stimulus before, during and after the purchase of a product along with each factor affecting that procedure.

The first step for the buyer is to define the needs and wants which have to be satisfied. Right after the buyer collects information referring to the available products and services that can satisfy those needs, evaluates the source of the information and comes to a decision. The buyer purchases the product, uses the item, compares the expectations with the actual experience, develops a critic opinion about his purchase and finally rates the overall experience as worth repeating or not (Siomkos, 1994, Gabbott et al., 1994).

### **The consumer**

The consumer is the one who decides whether a product is worth buying or not. There are four basic types of consumers (Laurent et al, 1985).

- The economic type. This type is totally rational, basing all decisions on the best balance between spent and profit, knowing all the needed details and being untouched by external stimulus.
- The pathetic type. This type represents the guided person who decides according to what the external stimulus suggest.
- The knowledgeable type. The information collector, being more down to earth compared to the economic type.
- The emotional type. The one who decides depending on the emotion.

Consumers might demonstrate a mixture of characteristics depending on the external social, family and financial environment (Siomkos, 1994). The external environment cannot be measured thus an approach to define sound types of consumers is notrational.

### **Decision making**

The decision making process begins with the stimulus which declares an unsatisfied need (Moorman, 1990). The consumer will gather the appropriate information, come up with a shortlist of potential goods or services, analyzes the positive and negative facts and comes to a decision (Keller et al, 1987). The quality and quantity of the information play a key role in the decision making. Higher quality of information, lead to better decisions. Quantity wise it is not always the same. In some cases the volume of the information, tend to confuse the consumer (Hauser et al, 1993).

In the F&B sector the decision making process is randomly implemented since the buyer's knowledge regarding the product is very limited. In this case the main factor that leads to a decision is the restaurant's fame. An important factor is

that the product is evaluated mostly after the consumption. It is preferred by the enterprises that the product is bought in advance to the consumption.

### **Consumer perception**

The consumer's perception in comparison with the actual reality, play a significant role in the buying process.

The perception is the procedure when a buyer makes sense out of a certain stimulus (Siomkos, 1994). The same applies to situations when the experience makes sense for a consumer.

### **Restaurant Marketing**

The marketing process aims to draw a landscape in the market, in which the most efficient position will be selected as a target for the restaurant to accomplish. This will enable the enterprise to obtain an advantage when communicating the product to the target group and being visited by the target group. The main target is to achieve a minimum level of sales which can guarantee a sustainable operation. There is a number of tools which under proper usage, can contribute a considerable increase in the sales and the income. The product promotion is an important part of selling (Breitfuss, 2008). There are a few techniques that can increase the sales in a restaurant (Breitfuss, 2008, Κοσσένας, 2007). Those techniques are the following:

#### **The extra product**

This simple technique is broadly adopted by fast food restaurants. The employee communicates possible combinations as a new potential or a reminder. In case of repeated purchases the guest will go for some of those combinations.

#### **Demonstrate knowledge of the product**

Trying to sell a drink might not be as accurate as it should. Trying to sell a specific drink that matches the guest's order proves that the waiter possesses knowledge of the product. This will develop a relationship of trust among the guest and the enterprise.

#### **Offering**

Offer, suggest. Wear a pretty smile and introduce the product to the guest. The potential buyer is more likely to expand the order if he is not dealing with the unknown.

#### **Show enthusiasm**

Enthusiasm is essential. It develops the image of an honest person. On top of that the message that the waiter believes in the product assures the guest that his needs

will be met by all means. There is also a strengthening of the trust between the waiter and the guest.

### Listen

Listening is a difficult task. Letting the sound get through the ears is not enough. In many situations people hear the words but they do not listen at all. Listening is the major step that can lead to understanding the buyer's needs and getting sound knowledge of your buyer.

### Know Your Guest

Knowing the guest equals to knowing the needs, wants and demands. That information can customize the product to the guest's needs and guarantee the sales delivering the message "We can offer exactly what you want".

### Assume the Sale

This state of selling offers the buyer the choice of not choosing. For example a waiter can ask the guest if there is a need for water. Since the guest replies positively the waiter asks if there is a preference between still and sparkling water. There is no reference on tap water. The waiter gives the guest the choice to buy, hiding the existing alternative of not buying. Statistically, it is rare that the guest will head for tap water.

### Incentives

This method aims to provide the consumer with the needed motivation in order to achieve a better sale agreement.

### Ask

This technique enables the employee to develop a more efficient image of details that customers seek. Those details create a database that will lead to personalizing the product to each and every buyer.

### Downselling

This is a quite similar technique to up-selling. In this case the waiter suggests the most expensive alternative. If the guest turns this alternative down, the waiter goes for the second most expensive. The achievement in this technique is that the guest will most probably settle in the middle between his original intention and the waiter's suggestion. Thereafter there is not a direct sale, but a direct increase in the average spent.



## Crossselling

In this case there is needed a state of trust between the guest and the waiter. The concept is that the waiter tries to lead the guest to a completely different choice against the buyer's determination for a certain product. For both down-selling and cross-selling the negotiation relies on the superior quality of the product.

An important alternative is that the selling techniques contribute a considerable value to the consuming experience. This derives from the perspective that the additional sales tend to meet the needs and wants that the consumer was not aware of until this time. Thus the consuming experience becomes rich and pleasant beyond the point that it was expected in the first place.

## The other side of the pass

The marketing process can be implemented effectively enough in the dining room of a restaurant. The question is what is happening on the other side of the pass? It is well known that the marketing claimed a large field on the menu planning process (Seaberg, 1983). The menu is a tool via which the marketing reaches the kitchen. Is it though possible that the marketing can affect the kitchen in a direct manner?

## Menu planning and engineering

The menu is not a simple list of dishes that are offered in a restaurant. It is mostly a selling tool (Minor et al, 1984). This tool is based on marketing procedures which reflect the needs of the clientele. Thus the menu plays an important communicative role, which can broaden to mild advertising by using pictures or impressive description of the available dishes.

Historically the first menu was the *escriteau*. The *escriteau* was a simple communicative list between the aristocrats and the chefs during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This list was the guideline of the dishes that should be prepared, while it provided the appropriate information for the ingredients to be supplied as well. The local restaurant, attempted to flutter their clientele by using an *escriteau* in a poster size hanging outside the entrance (Green et al, 1978). During the 1880's and the 1890's the *escriteau*, moved on to the table, receiving today's size and transformed to what is known today as menu. The first book that contained commercial menus in their former image was written by Hanna Glasse in 1747 (Scanlon, 1985). The menu as it is today was developed in the post war years.

The menu is developed in two phases. The menu planning and the menu engineering phase (Scanlon, 1985).

The menu is the prime kitchen item that is mostly affected and manipulated by marketing. There is a number of factors that affect the menu planning process. Those factors are (Scanlon, 1985, Seaberg, 1983, Fuller et al, 1991):

- The type of the enterprise

- The category of the enterprise
- The target group
- The cuisine
- Variety of ingredients
- Variety of colors
- Diet balanced
- Tempting the senses
- The employees' capabilities
- The equipment capabilities
- The marketability
- Profitability

It is obvious that marketing plays a very important role in the menu planning process. The key factors that determine the elimination process, through which the menu is created, are the clientele profile, the enterprenual profile and the product profile.

The target group is analysed above. The product itself, regardless the assistance from any advertising campaigns, will definitely summon potential customers who do not belong to the adopted target group (Laloumis, 1998). This will result in two possible outcomes. Either the target group will be enriched absorbing the additional guests redefining the overall clientele profile, or the target group will reject the additional potential groups in a long mild process. There are several examples of target groups that cannot be easily put together.

The menu engineering process on the other hand, runs procedures that monitor the efficiency and the effectiveness of the menu whilst on production aiming to correct any mistakes that lead to an uneven operation (Dittmer et al, 1989).

The menu engineering process uses two main pieces of data in order to complete the checking process. Those are the profitability of a menu item and its popularity (Kotchevar, 1987).A basic information system that allows the enterprise to draw accurate conclusions is the sales statistics. The sales statistics provide the appropriate data for the estimation of a menu item's popularity. Additionally the menu items that display high popularity can be analyzed on the basis of their characteristics. Herein the goal is to analyze the menu item and specify the highest number of possible characteristics. The category of the item is not as important as other factors such as the rich or poor flavor and aroma, the pricing, the complexity or simplicity of the flavors and the presentation of the menu item. The determination of the demanded product character is based on the demographic and psychographic characteristics of the clientele (Buckley, 1993). The more educated, well – living and highly ranked in the social status is the target group, the more complex product will be required.

### Kitchen organization

The kitchen organization expands on two levels. The first one is the layout organization (Laloumis, 1998) and the second one is the personnel organization (Laloumis, 2002).

The main factor that determines the layout of the kitchen is the menu (Fosket et al, 2003). Rationality and reasonability in the kitchen layout oblige that the equipment that should be used must be selected in a manner that will meet the operational needs further on. The equipment layout should be adapted to the available space providing increased levels of utility for both the equipment itself and the available room (Eshbach, 1979). It is essential that the layout will not create obstacles to the production process. The kitchen departments should be clearly defined in all levels. The basic productive equipment should be combined by the equivalent supportive equipment so as to create a post that will enable a person or a team to operate without facing the interference of other employees. For example, the grill post should be organized around the griller along with the appropriate passes, fridges, microwave ovens and any other needed equipment. This layout must output an even productive operation diminishing the need for another employee to invade into that post. Thus the operation can run smoothly without unnecessary frustrating incidents (Knight et al, 1979). A manner in which the marketing process could affect directly the equipment organization of the kitchen is the demand for a more detailed plan of satisfying the guests' needs. Thus the equipment layout could possibly follow a path of aiming to customize the product the buyers' needs such as offering slower or faster service. This can be achieved by manipulating certain elements such as the flow of work, time management and the use of portable equipment accordingly. The marketing can directly come to decisions relevantly the production process and setting the equipment in the appropriate order.

The same rationality is employed in personnel organization. The number and the specialization of the employees are determined by the operational needs, the forecasting process and the menu to a minor extent (Laloumis, 2002). There are three major issues over which marketing plays a significant role indirectly to the personnel organization procedure. Those issues are the following:

- The personnel responsibilities
- The team work
- The communication with the serving staff

The marketing possesses a limited list of methods that can affect the kitchen organization directly. The total contribution marketing can demonstrate upon the personalization of the product to each guest's needs is high, perceiving that this contribution makes the difference to customer satisfaction and increased sales.

### Kitchen operation

As kitchen operation is referred the actual production process that outputs the consumable product. The operation is the sector which suffers the most influence from the marketing process (Fosket, 2003). The operation process is the physical continuation of the organization process. The kitchen organization quality reflects the smoothness of the operation carried out.

Marketing increases the feasibility of interference with the kitchen itself on the operational basis. The marketing process can exploit a large volume of data which derive from the service operation (Minor, 1984). That data contain opinions, demands, preferences and a detailed list of the guests' needs. The restaurant manager cooperates with the kitchen manager, analyze that data and translate it into guidelines, orders and information that will allow the employees to take steps towards the production of a dish that reflects the buyer's needs, wants and demands at most.

The production process can be adjusted to the customers' needs evenly at every level that is required. The information from the manager to the employee, will determine the speed of the production according to the desired speed of service, how well it is done, the levels of salt and pepper, the heavily or lightly spiced dish, details regarding the presentation and any other detail that could bring the dish as closer as possible to the guest's image (Knight, 1979, Laloumis, 2002).

### Kitchen Management

The kitchen management process can be broken down to 6 basic tasks (Laloumis, 2002). Those tasks are:

- Monitor the effectiveness of the organization
- Monitor the efficiency of the operation
- Track down any problems
- Analyze the problems
- Take action to solve the problem
- Evaluate the improvement

At this point it is necessary to make clear that the aim is not to provide a kitchen manager's job description. For that reason any tasks which have to do with organizing or operating the kitchen along with menu planning and engineering processes are set aside since they were analyzed above.

### Research method

Semi structured interviews were used to collect the primary data. A number of three interviews on four star hotels and an equal number on five star hotels were carried out in the region of Athens. The nature of the objective leads the researcher

to the adoption of that method since the required information was not to be discussed on a narrow manner.

There are some limitations to that process. Primarily the marketing in the regional market of hotels has barely found its way to the kitchen. An additional limitation was the heavy schedule of the head chefs and the F&B managers which led to mostly telephone interviews.

The interviews were consisted of three sections. The first section aims to define the organization, operation and management of the kitchen. At this stage it is important to be clearly defined the exact enterprenual environment. The role of the culinary product in the overall plan for the customer satisfaction issue is a key element.

The second section aims to define the marketing impact both in a direct and an indirect manner to the food production process. The researcher's scope is to obtain an accurate picture of the practical application of the marketing within the kitchen along with the potential reconsideration of the operational factors.

The third section aims to define the impact of the marketing process and the kitchen overall function upon customer satisfaction and vice versa. Here lays an attempt to measure the differences in guests' criticism and their response to the customization of the product.

### Data analysis

The data was analyzed mainly by using four tools. Those tools are keywords, key-phrases, key-ideas and key meanings. The process focuses on the data details and elements that provide sufficient information to build a part of the answer. Further on the usable elements were reorganized and regrouped in order to provide a fully comprehensible image of the final objective.

### Discussion of the findings

As seen through the secondary research the marketing process analyzes the customers' profile, the enterprenual profile and the product profile. This tactic reorganizes the picture of how things should be. The same process needs a considerable time period for the market research, the planning, the implementation and the evaluation of the outcomes to be completed. Furthermore marketing adopts a specific logic which displays a long term character. On the other hand food production process is a group of tasks with a short term character. It is a difference the fact that the kitchen operation is based on the day to day running. The researching procedures that are adopted by the kitchen logic are different to the marketing logic heading for completely different data between each other. Additionally the organization displays everyday results, assists the everyday operation and the only long term procedure is the managerial one.

The marketing process aims to draw all the necessary information that will lead the restaurant to produce the best possible product, while keeping an eye on

possible changes that have to be made. On the other hand the kitchen product bases on standardization. Either in favor to the idea, that the guest will not have any surprises, or in favor to the “automated productive operation”, the kitchen cannot follow the marketing reasoning.

There are very few details on the everyday kitchen operation that the marketing may manipulate. The marketing mostly affect the menu planning and engineering processes and some parts of the product planning and development such as pricing and a general framework that will define the product profile.

There is a high number of factors affecting the food production, which cannot be manipulated. The inflow of the guests, the possibility of having malfunctioned pieces of equipment and the constant chance of the employees making a mistake are a few of those. Thus the operation is flexible and in addition to the organization and management process there are plan Bs and Cs in case of an unexpected problem. On the contrary the marketing process employs a poorly maneuverable approach. The adjustment to any changes in the micro or macro environment is executed in a low rate.

The employees in the food production sector have limited access to the clientele. This leads to drawing information indirectly through the service or the marketing personnel. This leads easily to misunderstandings. Direct communication between the guest and the kitchen personnel can provide a much more effective tackle of a complaint and improve the consuming experiences. Moreover the indirect communication reduces the detailed comprehension of the guests’ needs, wants and demands. Hence the kitchen staff may not be able to come to secure conclusions regarding the product details that need reconsidering concerning the exact characteristics of a dish.

The marketing process is not treated always as a must. It is still today a common practice, that a chef will develop the menu and the edible part of the culinary product according to his ideas. The main selling tool in the restaurant is designed by a person who does not rely on information relevantly the guests’ demands and needs. Thus the opportunity of meeting the guests’ needs is eliminated resulting to minor customer satisfaction.

### Conclusions

The final results are important for several reasons. It is a success story for a restaurant to keep all the guests happy and satisfied. The marketing process aims at creating the appropriate circumstances under which this success story will be a reality. Marketing tends to affect the procedures where there is a direct communication between the guest and an employee. The marketing process has very few things to do with departments such as the kitchen, the supplies and the housekeeping. Though information regarding consumers’ needs, wants and demands is considered to be crucial, in the food production sector the tactic is to rely on a chef’s ideas without any guarantee that those ideas much the consumers’ ones. A major issue is that the scholar training of chefs in Greece offers no marketing courses. This results in a heavy lack of knowledge on the marketing field from the

food production employees. The working experience that is gained in the future covers a part of this lack though in an unorganized manner leading to poor usage of that knowledge. The final conclusion is that the meaning of customer satisfaction and the outcome of that is treated as a good idea and not as an important goal to be achieved. The marketing process can play a minor direct role in the kitchen organization, operation and management, though it can make the difference from success to failure based on the increased customers' satisfaction and repeated sales.

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# *The Effect of Virtual Communities and Social Network Sites on Tourism Destination Choice*

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## **ABSTRACT**

Competition and globalization are factors that challenge tourism enterprises and destinations to develop and introduce new products, services and concepts at an increased speed. At the same time, Internet has an enormous diffusion and radically changed most of our economic and social life and impacted the way we communicate, work and conduct business. The emergence of Web 2.0 or Travel 2.0 brings together the concept of social networking/virtual communities and applies it to the tourism industry. The importance of Travel 2.0 features and tools, and specifically of social media environments, is growing fast and many tourism businesses are changing their approach to the manners of presenting themselves online (Au, 2010; Jones & Yu, 2010; Schegg et al., 2008). However, tourism operators have not yet fully understood the new technological world by and still many concerns, such as credibility of the information online, possibility to forge for particular interests by

unscrupulous competitors, privacy, overload of useless information, in addition to the usual (in the technology arena) lack of resources or skill shortage are the most reported issues are brought forward.

This study analyzes factors that influence tourists' involvement in virtual communities and asserts that virtual communities and social network sites (SNSs) support tourism organizations to develop and improve their marketing functions, as they can understand better their customers' satisfaction and behavior, to reach worldwide customers in a cost effective way, to engage in a direct dialogue with the customers and undertake corrective actions to improve their offering, and ultimately influence tourists' destination choice.

**Key words:** Web 2.0, virtual communities, tourism marketing, social network sites

## 1 INTRODUCTION

The tourism industry can be seen as one of the first business sectors where business functions are almost exclusively using information and communications technologies (ICTs) (Garzotto et al., 2004). The benefits from ICTs, particularly the Internet, for tourism are substantial, since they enable knowledge about the consumer or tourist to be gathered, as well as vice versa. In the modern economy, knowledge is commonly recognized as the most important factor in increasing the competition among firms and regions. If one considers knowledge as the organization of information designed to provide an answer to a question or solve a certain problem, information can be seen as the fuel of knowledge which produces innovation. Innovation is a continuous learning process because the strategic value of information, changes in time; therefore a regular knowledge update is important. It is also a highly coordinated process, because it demands the interaction of several actors, the selective acquisition of information, and the creation of networks in an attempt to produce value through the use and exchange of information throughout several activities inherent to the innovation process (Santinha and Castro, 2010).

ICTs also help tourists to overcome risks regarding tourism destination choice, such as (Jacobsen et al, 2012:40): monetary risks (eg. feeling of wasting money); functional risks (eg.the standards of the place did not meet tourists' requirements); physical risks ( eg. avoiding get injured or ill); social risks (eg. visiting a fashionable place and getting a high status); psychological risks (eg. not damaging the self-esteem, by feeling guilty that there was not enough time spent looking for more information about the place).

Recently, new applications that facilitate interactive information sharing, collaboration and formation of virtual communities, known as Web 2.0., is a natural development of the original Berners-Lee's idea of "a collaborative medium, a place where we all meet and read and write" ( Richardson, 2006: 1). With the introduction and the diffusion of the interactive Web 2.0 features and applications, tourists everywhere see the potential for new technologies to improve their ability to make travel plans (Sheldon, 1998; Smith & Jenner, 1998) and Web marketing is gradually becoming mainstream

(Buhalis, 2003; Fesenmaier, Gretzel, Hwang, & Wang, 2003). Perhaps marketing and distribution are the most affected business functions from the technological revolution (O'Connor, 2008). New online technologies within the tourism industry have significantly impacted on communications, transactions and relationships between the various industry operators and with the customer, as well as between regulators and operators (Galloway, Mochrie and Deakins, 2004; Sharma, Carson and De Lacy, 2000; Sheldon, 1998; Werthner and Klein, 1999a). This happens in particular with Social Networks (SNs) which seem to have rapidly attracted a considerable attention by Internet users of all ages and are discussed below.

## **2. VIRTUAL COMMUNITIES AND SOCIAL NETWORK SITES IN WEB 2.0 ERA.**

The emergence of Web 2.0 or Travel 2.0 brings together the concept of social networking/virtual communities and applies it to the tourism industry. The most cited definition of a virtual community was firstly given by Rheingold (1993, p. 58) as “a virtual community is a group of people who may or may not meet one another face-to-face, and who exchange words and ideas through the mediation of computer bulletin boards and networks”.

In the Web 2.0 era, the boundaries between information producers and users is blurred, and the usual concepts of authority and control are radically changed. Among the other consequences, marketing approaches aiming at improving online reputation are being greatly affected. Brand awareness, one of the objectives of classical marketing practices transforms into brand engagement, purpose of Marketing 2.0., which passes through experience and is created by the perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors of those with whom the different companies and organizations are communicating (Weinberger, 2007). As stated ten years ago by the Cluetrain Manifesto (Locke et al., 2000: xxiii): “people in networked markets have figured out that they get far better information and support from one another than from vendors.” Thus, virtual communities are gradually becoming incredibly influential in tourism as consumers increasingly trust better their peers, rather than marketing messages. Virtual communities influence all three phases which were identified as being influential in travel experience formation process (Milano, 2010):

- pre-experience, built on other people’s travel stories, before travelling;
- experience during travel or stay, today increasingly shared real-time through mobile applications;
- post-experience, which disseminates comments, evaluations, emotions.

Virtual communities vary in the scope of their content from fairly simple lists of resources to complex cyber environments offering net-citizens information and the opportunity to socialize with likeminded individuals. Some of these have arisen spontaneously, while others have been sponsored or managed by companies (Flavian and Guinaliu, 2005). Free Software (FS) communities are virtual communities that help companies to have better relations between them and their consumers and vice versa. Members of FS communities are linked by common admiration to the same product or brand etc. being a part of such communities is important for participants because they can be active in discussions, forums, they can recommend and help in picking one of products of their favorite brands or products. For them existence of this community is like a real one and can influence

their behavior. Secondly, the virtual community can help to know better the needs or desires of you or a group of people (Casaóla et al, 2010:364). Examples would be communities based on shared interests (such as wine-enthusiasts' Virtual Vineyards), or communities held together by product or brand loyalties (e.g., Apple.com/usergroups). In any case, these virtual environments represent fertile territory for the dissemination of eWOM and the creation of "buzz". If a virtual community wants to be successful, its members have to show strong involvement. They should also know how to promote a community to non-members. According to literature review, the most important interactions in a virtual community are:

- Identification. This concept is divided in affective and cognitive component: the cognitive one is said to be a result of perception of similarities with other members and dissimilarities with people who are not in a group; the affective component is believed to be this type of identification experienced when a person is emotionally involved with a group (Casaóla et al, 2010:358-359). Identification with a group impacts consumer motivation to communicate and interact with the rest of a group members. It leads to further participation in a group and recommending community. *'Broadly speaking, if the consumer is identified with a group, participation in joint activities in the collective will be viewed as congruent to personal values, so that s/he will be motivated to participate actively in the community and help other members (Casaóla et al, 2010:361)'*. Online social networks can guarantee a social support. You can always ask for an information, advice, meeting. As the membership grows, you have more alternatives or possibilities to get such help. These all can attract you in a way that you will feel more identified with a group. But on the other hand, the network size can destroy net quality, which can be something opposite to increase identification with the SNS (Chiu et al, 2013:4-5).
- Satisfaction. We may define satisfaction *'as an affective condition that results from a global evaluation of all the aspects that make up the relationship'*. We can say that if a product is better than a customer assumed, he or she is satisfied. If it is not, the customer is dissatisfied (Casaóla et al, 2010:359). If our requirements will be met, we would like to participate longer in virtual community because we feel good. If the basic needs (satisfaction) will not be ensured, long term presence in the virtual community is not possible. But if we are satisfied from our previous interactions and in the community it can *'[...]help to develop profitable behaviors such as positive word-of-mouth (Casaóla et al, 2010:360)'*. Then it is possible that a consumer is able to promote and recommend the virtual community to non-members. There are also some complementarities so that you can feel more satisfied. That means for example additional applications, services etc. It is especially important, as while using complementarities, we can feel whether achieved our goal or not. According to the article *'[...] when an individual achieves the goal of having fun and relaxing by playing an online game, a complementary application in SNS, he/she will experience a pleasurable emotional state of satisfaction with the SNS (Chiu et al, 2013:6)'*. We can note that having additional, complementary functions or services will increase user's satisfaction of SNS.
- Continuance Participation. It is very crucial as on it mainly depends the future and success of the community. When we participate in the 'life' of the virtual community we can guarantee its endurance and help achieve groups' goals (Casaóla

et al, 2010:359). Vogt and Fesenmaier (1998) stated that participation and attitude are the primary dimensions of consumer behaviour in the virtual communities.

- **Community Promotion.** When a consumer wants a product, brand or just virtual community to be known or recommended to non-members, he or she uses promotion. Community Promotion is also very important in a 'life' of FS community. It makes it more attractive to the potential future members by for example *'[...] talking about the benefits of being a part of the community, inviting non-members to join the virtual community or emphasizing the positive aspects of the community when somebody criticized it (Casaóla et al, 2010:360)'*.
- **Loyalty.** Loyalty is the crucial factor in the success of virtual community (Casaóla et al, 2010:360). The longer tourists are in a virtual group, the more loyal and engaged to this organization they become, because they feel that *'[...] the quantity of value received from participating in the community is greater than the value of non-participating (Casaóla et al, 361)'*. They want to be in a group as long as it is possible so you also do everything to make it 'live'. It is obvious that they try to recommend and promote your organization to non-members. We can say that the more participation to the group you feel, the more promotions and recommendations you want to do. If we are active in a group, we try to be good participants, and this leads to our greater loyalty to a virtual group. We feel more emotionally tied and identified to a group (Casaóla et al, 2010:361).

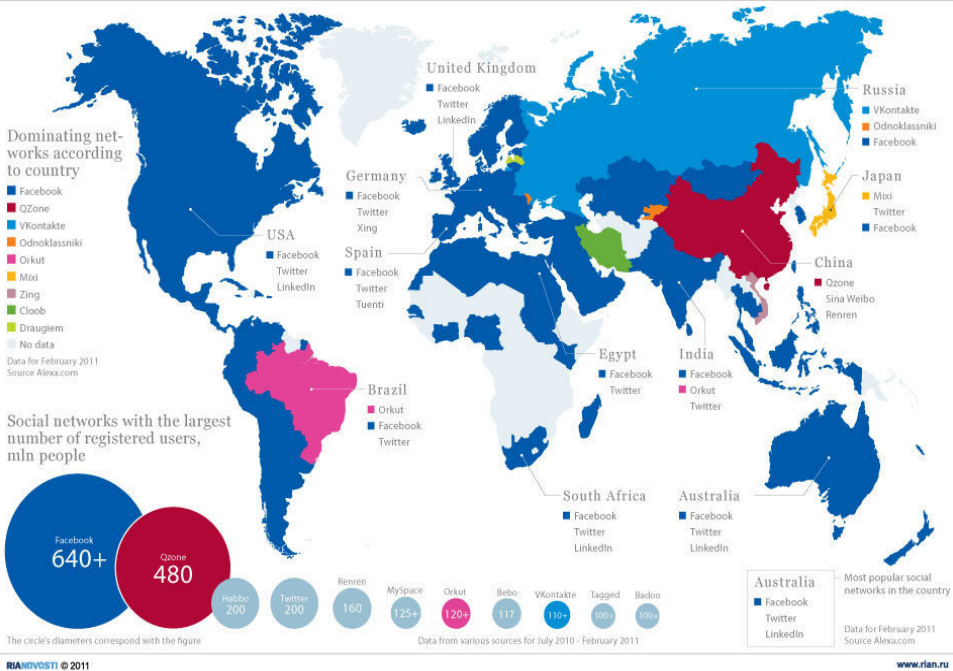
Since many travelers like to share their travel experiences and recommendations with others, VTCs have become one of their favourite areas to post their travel diary. Additionally, online travelers are enthusiastic to meet other travelers who have similar attitudes, interests, and way of life (Wang, Yu, & Fesenmaier, 2002). Contents generated by users (UGCs) have an acknowledged importance in all fields, and in tourism in particular (Akehurst, 2009). Their positive effects have recognized repercussions on quantifiable phenomena such as e-commerce, but also on intangible matters such as those related to the image or the informational side of specific products or services (termed sometimes info-commerce). The continuing growth of UGCs' influence, due to their wideness and deepness, makes them perceived as even more reliable than official sources for a tourist. According to PhoCusWright (2009) nine out of ten cybertravelers read (and trust) online reviews on tourism products and services (hotels, restaurants and destinations). A Virtual Travel Community (VTC) makes it easier for people to obtain information, maintain connections, develop relationships, and eventually make travel-related decisions.

The impact of modern ICTs and Web 2.0 poses a big challenge to any business or organisation (private or public) working in today's tourism arena. These changes and developments in the travel market, force all tourism players to rethink their business models and to take drastic actions in re-developing their value chains. Tourism organizations aim to disintermediate all intermediaries that add cost to their production and distribution. For example, tour operators aim to sell their packages direct, bypassing travel agencies. They also disbundle their packages and sell individual components. On the other hand, travel agencies dynamically package tour products and support the development of customized packages, disintermediating tour operators. The web therefore introduced utter transparency in the marketplace

VTCs have a large potential impact on the tourism industry, and by analysing VTCs' content, travel organizations can understand their customers' satisfactions and behaviour, and undertake corrective actions to improve their offering. They can also increase brand awareness and strengthen brand association through the assistance of VTCs. The tourist (traveler, visitor etc.) makes extensive use of these technologies and shows to appreciate quite much the possibilities offered by the Internet today. The adoption issues commonly referred to social media application, include aspects such as a certain level of suspicion, distrust and reluctance to share information, comments or suggestions with others. This amazing new phenomenon of SN can be interpreted as starting a new trend, especially in some countries, where generic SNs (Facebook first and Twitter), which are being progressively more used in travel and tourism, as it can be seen from fig.1(Cosenza, 2010).

Fig. 1. The World Map of SNs (Cosenza, 2010).

### The world map of social networks



Apart from a few areas (part of Latin America, Russia, China and some others), Facebook shows to be the most widespread SN. Facebook has become in few years by way the largest (in number of users) and the most widespread (in geographical terms) online social network in the World (Fig. 1 after Cosenza, 2010). Facebook is very popular and without any doubts it influences our lives. Some people say that they feel happier when they update their status, they explain that it helps them to

keep in touch with people when they are not around. Facebook is one of the SNSs that uses many complementarities. It tempts with many games, photos sharing, applications. However, research conducted in Germany showed, that the more time you spend on Facebook, the poorer your life seems to be for you (Elmore, 2013). Web 2.0 or Travel 2.0 providers such as Tripadvisor.com, IGOUGO.com and Wayn.com also enable consumers to interact and to offer peer to peer advice. TripAdvisor (www.tripadvisor.com) for example, is amongst the most successful social networking/virtual community in tourism that facilitates the reviewing of all hotels around the world and brings together individuals in discussion forums. The system provides users with independent travel reviews and comments written from TripAdvisor members and expert advisors and provides a powerful platform for interaction between peer, as user satisfaction is a major factor for evaluating a travel organisation.

Nevertheless, better understanding VTC users' behaviour and motivation can assist tourism practitioners and policy makers to establish, operate, and maintain VTCs in a more efficient way. This, in turn, facilitates consumer centric marketing or relationship marketing. VTCs, however, may be at risk of losing members if their members are not satisfied with the content, design, security policies, and repercussions for non-compliance with community rules. Credibility of the information online, possibility to forge for particular interests by unscrupulous competitors, privacy, overload of useless information, in addition to the usual (in the technology arena) lack of resources or skill shortage are the most reported issues concerning SN application.

### **3. CONCLUSIONS**

This paper argues that the Internet forces tourism organizations around the world to change their strategies dramatically (Buhalis & Zoge, 2007). Constant innovations of both product and process supported by proactive and reactive strategies are some of the few sources of competitive advantage in the Internet era (Buhalis, 2003). VTCs have a large potential impact on the tourism industry, and by analysing VTCs' content, travel organizations can understand their customers' satisfactions and behavior, and undertake corrective actions to improve their offering. They can also increase brand awareness and strengthen brand association through the assistance of VTCs. The effects of these tools on the image and the popularity of destinations or other tourism operators, mainly in the hospitality sector, in which the direct contact, real or virtual, with the customer and their crucial role for the good health of the companies are tremendous (Burgess et al., 2009; Inversini et al., 2009; Matloka & Buhalis, 2010; Sigala, 2010).

Identification of tourism destinations competing for the same market can be assisted by a Group Decision Support System (GDSS). In this way, decision-makers can include their subjective and objective views for analysis like the traditional forms of competitive analysis. Similarly, there was a shift in the bargaining power of suppliers, as the Internet provided alternative procurement opportunities. The bargaining power of suppliers was also be enhanced by allowing direct contact with consumers and decreasing distribution costs while creating the opportunity for partnerships with countless affiliates and other distributors. Consequently, tourism enterprises for the



first time ever did not have to rely exclusively on powerful intermediaries, such as Tour Operators or Global Distribution Systems.

Tourism marketers can no longer ignore the role of social media in distributing travel-related information without risking to become irrelevant (Xiang and Gretzel, 2010: 186). The virtual communities phenomenon has become a social convergence trend, where specialized travel websites increase their sociality by adopting applications which enable real-time sharing of contents among the visitors, while giants such as Facebook try to occupy vertical markets through dedicated services or acquisitions of specialized companies as the social DTravel recommendation site Nextstop (see: <http://www.insidefacebook.com/2010/07/08/facebook-acquires-social-travel-startup-nextstop/>).

However, tourism operators have not yet fully understood the new technological world by and still many concerns are brought forward. These positions however, create a tension between demand (tourists, travellers, visitors) and supply (tourism businesses and organizations). As well reported by Xiang and Gretzel (2010: 186): "social media Websites are "ubiquitous" in online travel information search in that they occur everywhere [...] no matter what search keywords a traveler uses. Certain social media Websites [...], which can be considered more comprehensive and travel-specific sites, are becoming increasingly popular and are likely to evolve into primary online travel information sources. [...].

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*Enhancing Students' Learning in Sustainable Practices  
by incorporating a Triple Bottom Line approach in a  
Restaurant Operations Course*

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**Abstract**

Sustainability is an increasingly important concept for all hospitality students to understand before entering the workforce. New curriculum employing more sustainable content was introduced at the University of Guelph's School of Hospitality and Tourism Management. Using the school's restaurant, PJ's, which is used as laboratory for course delivery, students were asked to take a triple bottom line approach in its operation. Curriculum additions required students to calculate nutritional analysis and complete life cycle assessments of menu items. Other sustainable improvement such as composting, the increased purchasing of local food and beverages and waste reduction were also introduced during the course of the academic year. This paper provides a framework for other hospitality institutions to incorporate a triple bottom line approach to operating student run restaurants. The increase of scores for the 'sustainability' related learning objectives show us that the project was successful in introducing students to sustainability topics. With the embedding of new sustainably focused curriculum in a third year restaurant

operations course students became more aware of the effect that restaurants have on their environment and in their communities.

**Keywords:** *Hospitality Education, Sustainability, Restaurant, triple bottom line*

## **Introduction**

PJ's is a full service, student run restaurant in the School of Hospitality and Tourism Management (HTM) at the University of Guelph. The restaurant is used as a laboratory to teach students about the fundamentals of food production and restaurant operations management. New curriculum aimed at introducing sustainability was incorporated into the restaurant operations course taught at PJ's during the 2011/12 academic year. Funded through the University's Learning Enhancement Fund (LEF), this change was implemented to fill a need for more sustainably focused curriculum at HTM. A project team was formed to work on the development of sustainably focused learning modules to be introduced to HTM3090, the restaurant operations course that all HTM students were required to take. The team included two faculty members, the Chef/Instructor of PJ's, a recent graduate of the program and an Undergraduate Research Assistant (URA).

Goals set out for the project were determined through discussions between members of the project team and input from HTM students who had already completed the restaurant operations course. The goals were defined as:

- (1) To complete a review of PJ's current operation in regards to all aspects of environmental, social and economic sustainability.
- (2) To develop new curriculum for HTM3090 that would embed aspects of sustainability and create associated learning outcomes for future students.
- (3) To implement new 'sustainable' practices to transform PJ's into a 'model of sustainability'.

PJ's is open to the public for weekday lunch service eight months a year as well as offering a fine dining experience once a week for three months during the winter semester. The restaurant has had a number of upgrades since it opened in 1974, including a major renovation in 2001. PJ's has historically operated similarly to most restaurants in Canada and few sustainable restaurant practises had been incorporated prior to the proposal of this project. Indeed, PJ's operated in a conventional manner that focused on "...management functions and the production of food in quantity with an emphasis on principles of food production and service in a commercial setting". (University of Guelph, Undergraduate Calendar, 2011) Its focus has been on teaching students the daily, and mostly economic operating aspects of restaurants including such areas as ordering, food cost, pricing and quality control.

This article presents the results of a curriculum development exercise aimed at incorporating the principles of sustainable development in a restaurant operations course within a hospitality and tourism program. The project team used a 'Triple Bottom Line' approach introducing new learning modules that related to

environmental and social aspects of sustainability. This introduced the broad concepts of environmental and social sustainability along with examples of specific initiatives in each area. It was determined that students were already getting a solid 'economic' understanding of how restaurants were operated so no changes were made in this respect.

The literature review reflects the current demand for and issues surrounding increasing sustainable practices within the restaurant industry and higher education curriculum. Replication of this project can be undertaken by following the detailed steps in the methodology and results sections. The achievements and challenges faced throughout the project, as well as future implications are discussed to allow others to consider broader ideas of incorporating sustainability into the curriculum and the restaurant/foodservice industry.

## **Literature Review**

### **Sustainability**

Sustainability has been at the forefront of many corporations' strategic direction for the past thirty years as environmental effects stemming from population growth; increased consumption and industrialization have been realized. In 1987 the World Commission on Environment and Development completed a report for the United Nations entitled "Our Common Future." More commonly referred to as the Brundtland Report, this 'global agenda for change' paved the way for organizations to become more aware of their impact on the environment. Thus began the greening efforts by many organizations working toward a more energy conscious behavior and their implementation of internal procedures to reduce pollution.

The definition that commonly appears in sustainability literature is the joint statement from the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), and the Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF) whereby, sustainable practises "...improve[e] the quality of human life while living within the carrying capacity of supporting ecosystems" (IUCN/UNEP/WWF, 1991, p.10); further, the Brundtland Commission instructs that sustainability "...meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (United Nations, 2007, p. 2).

Another term developed as a result of the work done by the United Nations is 'triple bottom line'. The initial use of this term is attributed to author John Elkington and was first seen in his book *Cannibals with Forks: the Triple Bottom Line of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Business*. The term offers an approach that enlists organizations to look beyond the financial bottom line of their business. Companies are asked to consider not only the economic outcomes of their activities but the social and environmental results as well. The term "People, Planet and Profit" is often used interchangeably with the concept of the Triple Bottom Line.

## **Sustainability and Restaurants**

The restaurant industry in Canada has been slow to adopt principals put forth in a triple bottom line approach. Approximately 64% of the Canadian Accommodation and Food Services sector is a small or medium (SME) size business that employs 5 to 75 people (Statistics Canada, 2008). SME's are less likely to implement sustainable practises than their corporate counterparts (Schaper & Carlsen 2004; Revell & Blackburn, 2007; Tilley, 1999). A number of factors contribute to this, including the attitude of owners and employees, the cost of implementing sustainable initiatives, a lack of financial incentives, and a lack of government or regulatory standards (Chou, Chen & Wang, 2012). While SMEs may not have the marketing budget of larger corporations a communication strategy identifying their environmentally friendly practices can increase patronage (Hu et al., 2010). The sustainability of the hospitality and tourism industry is dependent upon managers who are willing to adopt and promote a triple bottom line approach as part of their management strategy. Education and training is needed in order to improve sustainable business practices in this sector.

While the hotel and tourism sectors have made some progress adopting sustainable practises— this cannot be said in the restaurant sector (Tseng, 2010). Myung, McLaren & Li (2012) reviewed the environmental research literature in the hospitality industry published between 2000 and 2010. Of the 58 articles, only 6 articles focused on the restaurant sector. It would seem that restaurant managers have fewer examples to follow should they want to develop practices needed to create a more sustainable future.

Menu content analysis and the labelling of menu items has become an issue of social sustainability for Canadian restaurants to consider. With increasing levels of obesity, type-two diabetes and hypertension in Canada (Health Canada 2012), restaurants are being asked to consider their role and responsibility in regards to this issue. In March 2010, the United States Congress passed a national law requiring chain restaurants with 20 or more outlets to list calories on menus and menu boards. Some studies have shown that consumers underestimate the calories in restaurant items. Menu labelling can help consumers understand what is in the foods they eat and can motivate restaurant owners to change recipes to lower fat and sodium in their offerings. (Roberto et al., 2010) Evidence suggests that menu labelling can decrease the amount of calories purchased per restaurant transaction. (Finkelstien et al., 2011) Students introduced to this concept will be prepared to deal with a change in consumer demand and increasing regulation in this regard.

## **Sustainable Curriculum**

It is believed education is the greatest hope to creating a sustainable future. Universities and colleges are an integral part of the global economy and prepare professionals who will develop, manage and teach in our public, private and non-governmental institutions. In 2012, over 1.5 million full and part-time students were registered at a Canadian university, and therefore, have a significant impact on the economy (AUCC, 2012) It is essential that undergraduate business programs provide students with opportunities for success in the job market and develop skills to think



critically and make decisions that will contribute toward building sustainable commerce. Rethinking and revising curriculum to incorporate sustainable development into educational programs is based on a set of United Nations (1987) objectives and encouraged from industry (Cortese, 2003). As more companies create sustainable products, they are looking to staff their organizations with graduates who understand sustainability principles (Calhoun, 2005). Leaders in a variety of industries are vying for graduates who “understand green” (Calhoun, 2005).

Deale, et al. (2011) found incorporating sustainability into the hospitality curriculum remains an afterthought or an add-on to the curriculum in many courses. When sustainability is included, it is often presented in lecture/discussion (20%), followed by case studies (12%). Continuing to develop pedagogy that takes the educational experience from a theoretical to a practical level will impact the way students are able to implement sustainable hospitality business practices; “Hospitality educators are uniquely positioned to play an important role in forwarding sustainability practices in the hospitality industry” (Deale, et al., 2011, p.40). The context of learning needs to change to make human and environmental interdependencies, values perspectives, and ethics, a central holistic part of teaching in all disciplines, rather than isolating them as a special course (Cortese, 2003; Reid & Petocz, 2006).

## **Methodology**

It was determined that assessing the current state of PJ's environmental, social and economic practices would help provide context for the project team to set goals. Taking a triple bottom line approach, coupled with a review of a number of on-line sustainability tools, the team developed a comprehensive and unique audit form. This form was used as a guideline to evaluate the current state of sustainability at PJ's restaurant. Completion of this form proved beneficial in both educating the project team and highlighting potential areas of focus. The results of the audit helped produce the prioritized ideas for curriculum change including the nutritional and life cycle analysis of menu items.

In addition to designing new curriculum, the project team met informally, but regularly to look at various initiatives to incorporate other sustainable practices to the daily operations of PJ's. Using the audit results as a guideline the project team identified three areas of potential improvement; food and beverage sourcing, energy consumption, and waste management. Small projects in each area were tested and either adopted or abandoned during the course of the school year.

## **Curriculum Redesign**

Two new learning modules were created for the restaurant operations course: a nutritional analysis of menu items; and a life cycle assessment (LCA) of food. Existing course content was scaled back in order to add the aforementioned modules. Each new module was designed to take the student approximately four hours to complete.

## **Nutritional analysis.**

A redesign of PJ's' menu to include a nutritional analysis of all menu items using ESHA Research's The Food Processor Nutrition and Fitness software (ESHA Research, 2006) was introduced. ESHA Research generates the caloric breakdown of each menu item, itemizing calories from fat, saturated and unsaturated fats amounts, carbohydrate content, protein amounts, and sodium values. The decision to provide the breakdown of nutritional information for PJ's patrons was based on recent research where customers wanted information on fat and calories (Mills and Thomas, 2008) as well as the growing concern of too much sodium in food products (Health Canada, 2012).

By including the nutritional analysis of food items on the PJ's menu, students were forced to consider consumer reaction to such information. This required students to look at menu engineering in a socially conscious way.

## **Life cycle assessment of food.**

In this module, students researched the impact on the environment of food they were using in the creation of their menu. Students choose two ingredients from the menu items they had created—one fruit or vegetable and one meat or dairy item. Students researched and commented on the environmental impact produced by each of their chosen menu items, focusing on production, processing, distribution, storage, cooking, and consumption. In addition to these questions students were also asked to assess their learning:

- What did you learn by completing the Life Cycle Assessment of your products?
- Did you find this activity made you more aware of food and where it comes from?
- What surprised you most by completing this exercise?

## **Learning outcomes survey.**

A pre-implementation survey was conducted prior to any changes occurring in the Restaurant Operations course (HTM\*3150). A link to the survey, hosted by surveymonkey.com, was sent to all students who had just finished the course in winter 2011. The pre-test survey consisted of twenty one questions, fifteen of which were based on the learning outcomes already established in the course. Students taking the survey were asked to evaluate their learning in a number of areas, such as 'monitoring of quality control' and 'the effective supervision of staff in a restaurant'. Six additional questions were designed to measure the impact of the new sustainable aspects of the curriculum and one question covered the nutritional analysis component that was introduced during the course of the project. Each question had a five-point Likert style scale, ranging from "Strongly disagree" (1) to "Strongly agree"

(5). The post-test survey was administered to a different group of students who completed in the restaurant operation course during the winter 2012 cohort

## **Results**

### **Curriculum Re-Design**

#### **Nutritional analysis.**

The learning outcome “*I learned about the importance of understanding the nutritional value of food when designing a menu*” was shown to be statistically significant ( $p=0.00$ ) between students using the older curriculum and those who took part in the revised curriculum. With an increase in public awareness regarding health issues caused by food as well as pending governmental regulation on menu labelling adding this module to the course was deemed valuable for students to become aware of the impact this has on menu selection.

#### **Life cycle assessment of food.**

Overall, the module on the life cycle assessment of food items showed positive outcomes. Many students went beyond the basic task requirements and included photos, video links, and maps of travel distance. Food products ranged from butternut squash grown in Elmira, Ontario, to lettuce from California, and bananas grown and shipped from Costa Rica. Some students found food production and distribution companies un-cooperative in aiding their research and many refused to provide information regarding their products and practices. It was not uncommon to encounter food companies that were unaware about the concept of life cycle assessment. Further, the students did not find any company that had conducted a LCA on any of their publically available products.

At the end of the LCA learning module, students were asked to comment on the learning value of their experience. The following summary highlights some student responses: What did you learn about the Life Cycle Assessment of your product?

- You can get an abundance of ingredients within a short distance from Guelph, which reduces transportation.
- Many suppliers/producers were not willing to give up information regarding the sourcing of their products. Many were alarmed that someone was questioning the sustainability of their products.
- Many suppliers/producers had never heard of a Life Cycle Assessment.

Did you find this activity made you more aware of food and where it comes from?

- All students responded yes.
- The students learned about the environmental exchanges food products have to pass through before they reach a plate. This

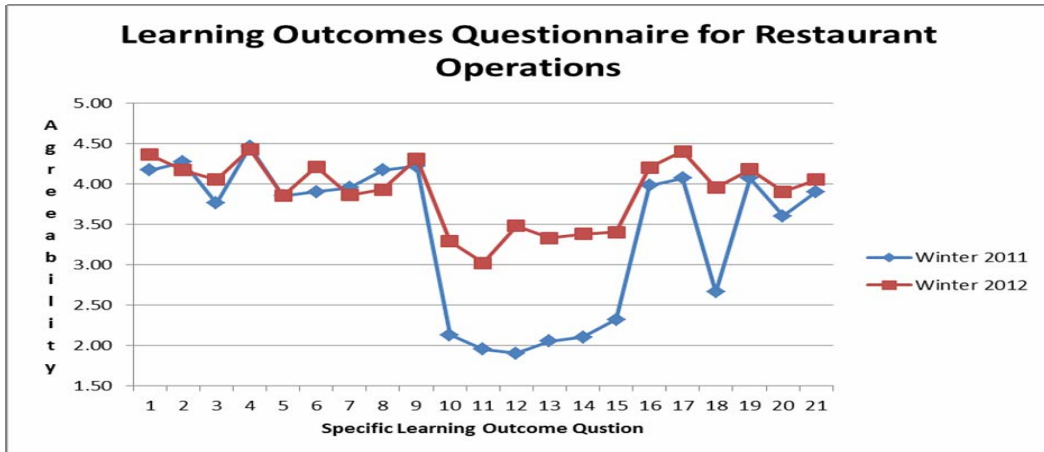
prompted the students to consider how complicated a life cycle must be for certain products.

- The students were surprised by how unsustainable certain products are as compared to what they previously speculated.

What surprised you most by completing this exercise?

- Students were surprised by the relatively small area where specific products' life cycle took place. Unlike onions, which travel all the way from Texas, the mushrooms used in PJ's kitchen were grown and harvested in Woodbridge, Ontario (a few kilometres away).
- After having completed the research, students were surprised by how much conversation the life cycle assessment assignment promoted. Students found themselves willingly discussing topics such as waste, energy consumption, and sustainability at every critical aspect of food processing.

**Figure 1.0 Learning Outcomes Questionnaire for Restaurant Operations.**



### Learning outcomes survey.

The survey of learning outcomes was analyzed in SPSS using the Mann-Whitney U test. Class size was 83 students in 2011 and 88 students in 2012. The survey response rates were 51% and 48% respectively. The mean widest distribution between learning outcomes were learning outcomes #10 through 15 and #18. Upon further analysis, learning outcomes with a p value lower than .05 are considered significant (Table 1.0). Six learning outcomes were significant, including sustainability concepts (#10-15 and 18) (p= 0.000) that indicates students learned more about

sustainability with the revised curriculum than they had students in the previous year. Learning outcome #8 ('I learned about the operation of kitchen equipment') had a  $p=0.07$ , and although not statistically significant, there was a noticeable difference between the two populations.

### **Sustainable Improvements to PJ's**

Beyond curriculum advancement, the project team piloted several sustainable improvements at PJ's during the 2011/12 academic year, many of which were adopted. Beverage offerings were changed eliminating all foreign beer and wine. This introduced students to the idea of supporting 'local', a huge movement in Canada which provides economic, social and environmental benefits. Conventional dairy items were also replaced with product offerings from a local organic producer which was shipped in reusable bottles. This change helped familiarize students with the concept of organic, many of which did not have a solid understanding of what it meant. Students were also encouraged by the chef to source more locally raised products when creating menu items. This resulted in students questioning why local food is often more expensive than imported food.

Several energy initiatives were introduced including a water audit conducted by the City of Guelph's Water department. The subsequent report provided valuable data on water usage and area for improvement and was noted and shared with students. An in-house washer and dryer were purchased for PJ's allowing them to eliminate the need for an out-sourced laundry service.

Steps were taken to see PJ's have a more sustainable approach to waste management. A compost program was created to help divert organic material from landfill and steps were taken to have cooking oil picked up where it was to be recycled into a form of bio-diesel. Both of these initiatives involved changing student's behavior to be more conscious of where PJ's waste would end up. The restaurant also eliminated the use of drinking straws in the restaurant in order to reduce its use of petroleum based plastics.

During the course of the academic year, two members of the project introduced a separate research project on plate waste at PJ's. Data collection involved the researchers standing in the dishwashing area collecting and weighing food that was not eaten by the paying customers. One of the most interesting outcomes of this project was how much conversation this action created between students working at PJ's and the researchers. Many students showed excitement and continued interest in the project results as it progressed through the year and also initiated independent study projects to explore sustainability topics in more detail.

### **Discussion**

The higher scores for the 'sustainability' related learning outcomes suggest that the project was successful in introducing students to topics such as nutritional and life cycle assessment, food waste, and resource conservation. With the

embedding of a new 'sustainably' focused curriculum in a third year restaurant operations course, it is expected students will become more aware of and have an understanding of the effect that restaurants have on the environment and in their communities. The goal of the Life Cycle Assessment was for students to demonstrate all the steps involved in getting the ingredient to the restaurant and the impact this process has on the environment. Students learned how some ingredients in a dish can have a very different impact on the environmental sustainability of our planet. A common frustration experienced by the students when completing the LCA's was their lack of ability in getting the information they needed to complete the module. With more attention being paid to the nutritional analysis of menus by both interest groups and governments, hospitality students that have been introduced to this process should stand to benefit and be able to manage change in industry more effectively.

Students' qualitative comments taken during the changes to the curriculum and assignments were informative and reinforced our contention that sustainability practices can be taught to our future leaders in the foodservice and hospitality industry. It is anticipated that students will have better long term retention of the knowledge, skills, and values taught because they were active participants in the learning process. As Cortese (2003) notes, individuals retain 80% of what is learned by doing and only 10-20% of what is hear or read. Through the hands-on component of running a restaurant and the applicability of assignments conducted, the researchers are confident students will take the sustainability lessons and concepts learned in this course and continue to apply them elsewhere.

Not only did this project increase our students' knowledge of sustainability, but the steps taken throughout the year were recognized by a third-party certification program, LEAF (Leaders in Environmentally Accountable Foodservice). In June 2012, PJ's was one of 24 Canadian restaurants to make "Canada's Greenest Restaurants" list (LEAF, 2012).

## **Lessons Learned/Path Forward**

Like most attempts to improve sustainability in an organization, this project met with both success and failure. While curriculum advances were achieved and resulted in the expansion of student learning, a few barriers prevented the project from meeting all of its goals. Physical complications and financial restraints prevented the research team from being able to collect the necessary data to measure potential resource conservation, while time limitations prohibited students from calculating actual green house gasses (GHG) involved in the production of their menu items. The project team had to adapt to these constraints. Instead of calculating GHGs, students were asked to do LCAs

An unforeseen outcome of the project was the creation of the University of Guelph Sustainable Restaurant Project. Since its inception, the UGSRP has evolved. Moving forward, UGSRP will take the environmentally sustainable origins of the project and expand on them, to include social and economic aspects of sustainability in restaurants as part of a field of study. As well, UGSRP is now seen as an academic resource for the Canadian food-service industry regarding issues of

restaurant sustainability. The legacy of focused learning and sharing was unanticipated but a significant benefit both within the School and more broadly in the industry.

This project provided a vehicle ensuring ongoing sustainability innovation is occurring in the curriculum. The learning objectives are now embedded in the curriculum and provide an impetus for ongoing development and enhancement. As sustainability becomes an integral part of the hospitality program it allows students to gain the skills and knowledge necessary to expand sustainability practices into their professional, personal and community life. The ideas and template presented in this project can be replicated or adapted to any establishment in the foodservice industry.

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### Appendix 1: Restaurant Operations Learning Outcomes

Learning Outcome:		Winter 2011	Winter 2012	Mean Difference	z-score	Significance
1	I learned about the effective supervision of staff in a restaurant.	4.17	4.36	0.19	-1.274	0.203
2	I learned about recipe development and quantity food production.	4.27	4.17	-0.10	-0.817	0.414
3	I learned about menu engineering.	3.76	4.05	0.29	-1.376	0.169
4	I learned about the safe handling of food in a restaurant environment.	4.46	4.43	-0.03	-0.635	0.525
5	I learned how to order the appropriate amount of product needed to run my restaurant.	3.85	3.85	0.00	-0.650	0.516
6	I was involved in the monitoring of quality control.	3.90	4.21	0.31	-1.569	0.117
7	I learned how to effectively control costs for my restaurant.	3.95	3.86	-0.09	-0.730	0.465
8	I learned about the operation of kitchen equipment.	4.17	3.93	-0.24	-1.815	0.07
9	I learned about the basic job requirements needed to work each position in a restaurant.	4.22	4.31	0.09	-0.569	0.57
10	I learned about how restaurants can become more energy efficient by	2.13	3.29	1.16	-4.370	0.000

	practicing sound conservation methods.					
11	I learned how restaurants can reduce water usage by implementing conservation methods.	1.95	3.02	1.07	-4.446	0.000
12	I learned about environmentally sustainable practices that can be implemented in a restaurant setting.	1.90	3.48	1.58	-5.896	0.000
13	I learned about how restaurants can set recycling and waste to landfill targets.	2.05	3.33	1.28	-4.796	0.000
14	I learned about methods and practices used in food composting.	2.10	3.38	1.28	-5.016	0.000
15	I learned about how a restaurant's carbon footprint can be reduced through using local food.	2.32	3.40	1.08	-3.945	0.000
16	I learned how to receive and properly store items ordered for my restaurant.	3.98	4.20	0.22	-0.522	0.602
17	After completing HTM 3090 I feel I have improved my ability to be effective in a work team.	4.07	4.40	0.33	-0.753	0.451
18	I learned about the importance of understanding the nutritional value of food when designing a menu.	2.66	3.95	1.29	-4.506	0.000
19	After completing HTM 3090 I feel I have improved my leadership	4.07	4.18	0.11	-0.201	0.841

	skills.					
20	I learned how to market our event to the general population of the University.	3.60	3.90	0.30	-1.031	0.303
21	I learned how to create and keep a consistent theme throughout the event.	3.90	4.05	0.15	-0.421	0.674

## *Strategy in Traditional Restaurants. Analysis and Evaluation of menus at food service outlets*

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### **ABSTRACT**

**Background:** By the registration and analysis of the Greek menus, by the finding of the menus' important features, and by the analysis of the menu-items that more frequently appear in Greek catering businesses, we can have the profile of the typical menu in a Greek restaurant, for historical, traditional and nutritional researching purposes.

**Methods:** On the whole, 502 menus out of 502 catering businesses were chosen throughout Greece. The research was divided into six parts, which concern the registration and the analysis of the names of the businesses, the different types of the businesses that took part in the study, the menu-categories and the menu-items,

the nutritional and gastronomical comments on some of the most frequently appearing menu-items and finally, the creation of the profile of a typical menu.

**Results:** Some of the most important results are that 600 single words derive from the names of the businesses, 489 different words that compose the menu-categories. From the results of the menu-items' analysis, 2033 single words were appeared. The 10 most common of them, which describe dishes are: feta cheese (934 occurrences), shrimps (703), mushrooms (702), fried cheese (saganaki) (595), burger (570), souvlaki (535), octopus (409), sausage (395), Greek salad (choriatiki) (391) and wine (382). 22 menu-items, 3 alcohol drinks and 3 desserts, were chosen in order to be commented.

**Conclusion:** The current study could improve the procedures of writing a menu, as an important process of the Ho.Re.Ca. Sector. The catering businesses show variety in the businesses names, but they seem to keep a specific strategy on writing a menu, such as specific word profile and menu-categories number. Furthermore, it is interesting that some elements and menu-items, from foreign cuisines, seem to have been deeply embedded in the Greek gastronomy. Additionally, it seems that dishes with meat maintain a great percentage on a menu. Eventually, a model profile of the Greek menu was created upon the afore mentioned data analysis. However, more research in this topic is recommended, by taking into consideration some other aspects of this one.

**Key Words:** menu, menu-item, dish, restaurant, gastronomy

## INTRODUCTION

### Tavern; The traditional Greek restaurant

There are many different definitions that explain the word "Tavern". It is the restaurant that usually offers cheap food, meat or fish and wine (Iordanidou, 2007). Otherwise, tavern is a small Greek restaurant or café (Simpson & Weiner, 2012).

The origin of the tavern appears 2500 years ago. It was first appeared in the Ancient Athina with the name of "kapilio" or as an inn. The definition of "tavern" first used on the 13<sup>th</sup> centuries in Istanbul with the beginning of the Frankish (Pittas, 2009). Taverns and inns had an important role in the History of Culture, because they were used as way of the society's relief (Lundberg, 1997). In general, the Greek tavern changed throughout the decades, in parallel with the historical changes in Greece and particularly in Athens (Pittas, 2009).

Tavern is divided into several categories. Fish-taverns offer fish dishes usually accompanied with alcohol drinks. Grill houses offer meat or chicken dishes accompanied or not with drinks. Souvlaki-taverns roast small pieces of meat in order to prepare the typical Greek souvlaki (Laloumis & Stefanakidis, 2005).

A usual tavern menu consists of:

Bread (usually sliced), salads (most frequently Greek salad or seasonal greens), meze or appetizers (such as: tzatziki, dolma, spinach pie, saganaki-fried cheese), pulses, spaghetti, fish and seafood, cooked dishes, grilled dishes, wine, beers, other

alcohol drinks, such as ouzo and tsipouro, seasonal fruits and desserts (such as yogurt with honey, preserves sweet, halva).

There are some trademarks and certifications, for the quality assurance of the quality of Greek

Cuisine in catering businesses and of general rendering of services; “Greek Cuisine” trademark of the GNTO<sup>15</sup>, “Cretan Cuisine Quality” trademark, “Gourmet” award, “Golden Chef’s Hat” award (Boskou & Palisidis, 2012).



**Picture 1: "Greek Cuisine" trademark, "Cretan Cuisine Quality" trademark, "Gourmet" award, "Golden Chef's Hat" award**

As it is mentioned above, tavern is the traditional restaurant of Greece. Respectively, “konoba” is the Croatian traditional restaurant, “osteria” and “trattoria” are the Italian traditional ones, “tapas bars” and “el restaurantes” are the Spanish traditional ones and “brasserie” and “roisserie” are the French traditional ones.

### **The role of taverns in Greek tourism**

Tourism is a very widespread way of entertainment, as well as a part of a big industry and an important financial source for traditionally tourist countries, such as France, Spain, America, Italy, Cuba and Greece (Boskou & Palisidis, 2012). Food is an important tourist attraction in an assortment of forms and enhances or is central to the visitor experience. It has assumed a prominent role in tourist decision-making and satisfaction, tourism products and place promotion strategies. As such, it can be a useful instrument of destination and general development. Tourists and the tourism industry around the world thus share an interest in food, although certain concerns must be addressed to ensure visitor expectations are met and perhaps exceeded (Henderson, 2009). Food and tourism have a very close relationship and food is a critical tourism resource (Quan & Wang, 2004; Henderson, 2009). It is vital for physical sustenance and all tourists have to eat when travelling. But food can be a major draw and primary motivator for some, which satisfies a multiplicity of physiological and other needs and wants (Tikkanen, 2007; Henderson, 2009). With regard to benefits, food offers pleasure and entertainment and serves a social purpose. Dining habits can also afford insights into ways of life (Bell & Valentine, 1997; Henderson, 2009) helping tourists understand differences between their own culture and those with which they come into contact (Hegarty & O'Mahoney, 2001; Henderson, 2009).

In Greece, tourism contributes to the local economy, providing 15% of the GDP<sup>16</sup>. There are more than 9700 hotel establishments and 115000 catering businesses,

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<sup>15</sup>GNTO: Greek National Tourism Organization

thus the tourist Sector is one of the major financial sources for Greece (SETE, 2011). Tourists come in contact with Greek cuisine throughout hotels, and afterwards throughout Greek restaurants and taverns.

Taverns prepare meals from mediterranean ingredients. The Mediterranean Diet based on simple food preparation, offers delicious dishes because of the wide range of mediterranean products (Willet *et al*, 1995). Hence, Greek tavern is an integral part of a tourist visit in Greece.

## **Studies Review**

In recent years, many research has been conducted, concerning outdoor food consumption. In fact, food consumption in restaurants and other catering businesses seems to have been increased later (Kant & Graubard, 2004; Horizons FS Limited, 2012). The increased outdoor food and fast-food consumption is associated with an increase in obesity percentage, because of the high-calorie meals that the food catering businesses usually offers (Lachat *et al*, 2011; Bezerra *et al*, 2012). As far as the menus' content are concerning, it seems that when businessmen design their menu-pricelist, they give priority to the profit margins than to health and nutritional issues (Granz *et al*, 2007). In another research, they studied the energy and nutritional content of some menus of a food chain restaurant. The results indicated that appetizers had more energy, fat and sodium than all other item types. The majority of main entrees fell below one-third of the US Department of Agriculture's estimated daily energy needs, but as few as 3% were also within limits for sodium, fat and saturated fat (Wu & Sturm, 2012).

## **Necessity and Purpose of the research**

As a result from the above bibliography and studies review, there is a need to analyze the menus of the traditional Greek restaurants for two main reasons. A menu represents an important part of a business' profile and operation, thus it is important to study the features and key-points that businessmen give priority to when designing a menu. From these results we can have an idea about what customers need from a food menu, because of the Supply-Demand Law. Hence, we can come to a conclusion about the potential outdoor food choices of the Greek, that this concerns the Science of Nutrition, as well the potential food choices of tourists, that this concerns the Tourism Industry and the Ho.Re.Ca. Sector.

The aim of the research is the registration and the analysis of the Greek menus. Particularly, we registered and analyzed the menus into menu-categories, as well as we analyzed the menus into menu-items. By the registration of the menus, by the finding of the menus' important features and the results of the analysis of menu-categories and menu-items that most frequently appeared, we can have the profile of the typical menu in a Greek restaurant, for historical, traditional and nutritional researching purposes.

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<sup>16</sup> Gross Domestic Product

## Methods

### Selection Criteria

For the current research, we collected data with some criteria. We choose catering businesses that:

- VIII. Are Greek firms
- IX. Have typical Greek Cuisine and Greek dishes. Ethnic restaurants, pizzeria, fast-food restaurants and fast-food chain restaurants, souvlaki restaurants, grill houses and creperies are not included.
- X. Coffeeshops and bars that do not offer any kind of meals are not included. On the contrary, café-restaurants, snak-bars and wine-bars are included in the sample.
- XI. The full menu-pricelist is available to us. We do not include menus that are not completed.
- XII. Their menu is available at least in Greek language. Menus of Greek restaurants that are not available in Greek are not included.
- XIII. Have fixed a la carte menu. Table d'hote menus, buffet menus and restaurants without a fixed menu are not included.
- XIV. Coffeeshops and bars that do not offer any kind of meals are not included.

As far as

We selected our data from the Internet, from business sites, web pages related to catering businesses and web pages with special offers for restaurants and catering businesses in general. Also, we select data directly from businessmen, either by asking the menu by email or by taking photos and copies of the menus.

We collected data throughout Greece. The number of the selection data in each prefecture is mentioned below:

Evrou	3	Larissa	26
Rodopi	1	Magnisia	6
Ksanthi	8	Euritania	0
Kavala	29	Aitoloakarnania	1
Drama	6	Fthiotida	7
Serres	8	Fokida	10
Thessaloniki	18	Viotia	3
Halkidiki	20	Evia	0
Kilki	1	Attica	70
Pellas	2	Korinthos	3



Imathia	5	Argolida	47
Florina	6	Achaia	20
Kastoria	21	Ilia	15
Kozani	4	Arkadia	3
Pieria	15	Lakonia	5
Grevenon	5	Messinia	6
Ioanninon	6	Cyclades	42
Thesprotia	1	Lesvos	3
Corfu	2	Chios	3
Leukada	2	Samos	5
Keffalinia	1	Dodekanisou	7
Zante	0	Lasithi	6
Preveza	3	Heraklion	3
Trikalon	11	Rethimno	7
Arta	3	Chania	2
Karditsa	1		

**Table 1: Number of the selection data in each prefecture in Greece.**

The final sample consists of 502 menus out of 502 catering businesses throughout Greece.

### **Analysis of the data**

The programs, which are used for the analysis of the data, are: Excel (MS Office), Calc (Open Office) and Online Text Analyzer, a java application from the <http://www.online-utility.org/text/analyzer.jsp> website. The last one can analyze a text into the frequency that each work of the text appears in it. It also analyzes a text into 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 word phrases that appear most frequently. The results of the Online Text Analyzer are presented into tables, for each number of word phrases, separately.

Firstly, businesses names are analyzed by the Online Text Analyzer, in order to find which words are usually used for a Greek catering business name. To continue with, we analyze the businesses categories that took part in the research, in order to have participation's percentage for each business category. The analysis is conducted with filters of Excel Sheet of MS Office. Then, we analyze the menus into menu-

categories. We first put the data into an Excel Sheet: we register the business' name, the city or town the prefecture that each establishment is located, the number of menu-categories that each menu obtains and the menu-categories of each one, particularly, in order to be analyzed. We made arithmetic analysis of the number of menu-categories that the menus obtain, by using Excel Sheet of the MS Office. The next analysis has to do with the characterization of the profile of the words that are used for the menu-categories. 17 different word characterizations were used. Thereafter, the menu-categories are analyzed according to special categories, such as "regimen" category. The language of the words of menu-categories is also registered. Then, a two-word combination is made between the words that appear most frequently in menu-categories titles, in order to find the probability to appear together on a menu.

In the next part, the menu-items of menus are analyzed by Online Text Analyzer. Some spelling and syntax correction, as well as replacements of words with the same meaning, were necessary in order to be finally analyzed. The initial word number is 10481 words, but because of the dish-codification, the final one is 9996 words. The final sample of the menu-items is a Word Sheet of 558 pages.

From the last analysis, the most frequently appeared dishes come off. Some of them are commented nutritionally and gastronomically. Finally, the most frequently appeared menu-categories and menu-items are used to design the typical Greek menu.

## Results

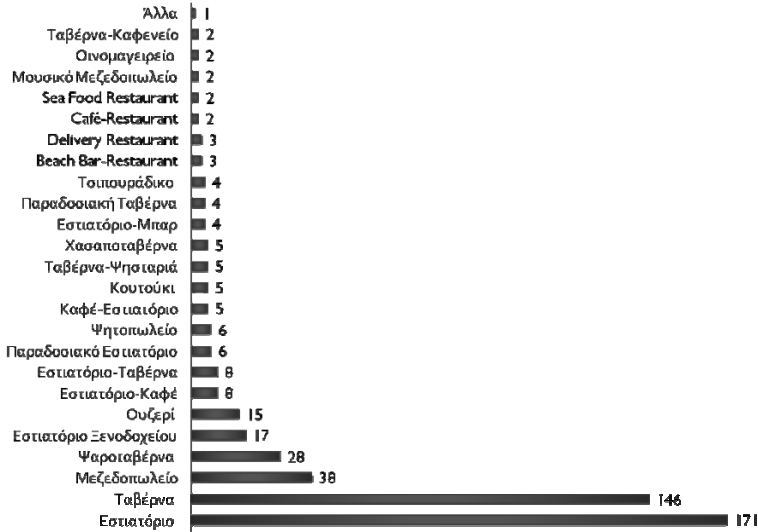
Most common name for a catering business is "steki" that means «hang out», with 8 appearances. Other common names are "geuseis" that means «flavors», "maistrali" that means «mild wind», "petrino" that means «stony» and "acrogiali" that means «seashore», with 4 appearances. Also, the word "hotel" appears 7 times, which means that businessmen give special name indication concerning hotle restaurants. Finally, 600 name words come out of 502 businesses in total, which explains that there is variety throughout businesses names. Businesses names, which appear more than 3 times, are mentioned below:

<u>Order</u>	<u>Words</u>	<u>Appear.</u>
1.	το	55
2.	ο	36
3.	restaurant	25
4.	η	16
5.	τα	15
6.	του	10

7.	στέκι	8
8.	της	8
9.	ταβέρνα	8
10.	εστιατόριο	8
11.	και	7
12.	hotel	7
13.	ουζερί	5
14.	μας	5
15.	taverna	4
16.	la	4
17.	στο	4
18.	γεύσεις	4
19.	μαϊστράλι	4
20.	πέτρινο	4
21.	ακρογιάλι	4
22.	η'	3
23.	φάρος	3
24.	thalassa	3
25.	κουζίνα	3
26.	κληματαριά	3
27.	bar	3
28.	and	3
29.	golden	3

**Table 2: Businesses names results**

35 different businesses categories derive from the research. It is important to mention that the typification of the business category was made by each businessman themselves. 171 out of 502 businesses are characterized as “restaurants” and 148 out of 502 are characterized as “taverns”.



**Figure 1: Businesses categories results**

It is important to keep in mind that, businesses categories results, possibly, influence menu-items results.

The results of the most appeared menu-categories are below. This table consists of the results that have more than 20 appearances into the sample.

<u>Or.</u>	<u>Words</u>	<u>App.</u>			
1.	appetizers	469	27.	white	55
2.	salads	455	28.	cold	48
3.	wines	232	29.	warm	44
4.	refreshments	189	30.	meats	42
5.	dishes	166	31.	rouge	38
6.	beers	149	32.	pasta	36
7.	desserts	142	33.	cooked in oil	35
8.	of (her)	140	34.	tsipouro	34
9.	seafood	140	35.	risotto	33
10.	cheese	123	36.	cuisine	31
11.	cooked to order	118	37.	of the day	30

12.	drinks (pota)	118	38.	wine	29
13.	fish	111	39.	specialties	29
14.	spaghetti	106	40.	pizzas	28
15.	entrees	101	41.	retsines	27
16.	sweets	95	42.	varieties	27
17.	grilled	88	43.	for	26
18.	ouzo	78	44.	us	25
19.	and	75	45.	pies	24
20.	cooked	70	46.	fresh	24
21.	soups	67	47.	omelets	22
22.	meat food	65	48.	spit	22
23.	coffees	64	49.	carbons	20
24.	meze	59	50.	fried	20
25.	roasted	56	51.	drinks (rofimata)	20
26.	red	55	52.	special	20

**Table 3: Frequency of menu-categories**

In total, 489 different words results from the menu-categories analysis. 243 out of 489 words appear more than 2 times in the sample.

<u>Number of Categories</u>	<u>Number of menus with the particular number of categories</u>
6	60
5	58
4	57
7	52
8	46
3	41
9	33
10	31

11	29
13	23
14	14
12	11
16	10
15	8
21	5
19	5
17	5
2	5
23	3
20	3
24	2
18	1

**Table 4: Results of the arithmetic analysis**

As far as the arithmetic results are concerned, the minimum number is 2 categories and the maximum one is 24 categories. 80%, of the menus, consists of 3 to 11 categories. On the other hand, 20%, of the menus, consists of: 2, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 23, 24.

The characterization of the profile's words, that consist the menu-categories, is completed in 17 different ways. Finally, the main percentage of the word-profile was characterized as «categories» (38.2%) and the second biggest one as «subcategories» (26.6%).

Order	Categorization	Appearances	Percentage
1.	category	232	38.1579
2.	subcategory	162	26.6447
3.	characterization	75	12.3355
4.	dish	57	9.3750
5.	drink	17	2.7961

6.	clause	14	2.3026
7.	adverb	10	1.6447
8.	verb	9	1.4803
9.	quantity	7	1.1513
10.	drink	5	0.8224
11.	location	4	0.6579
12.	number	3	0.4934
13.	conjunction	3	0.4934
14.	preposition	3	0.4934
15.	pronoun	3	0.4934
16.	letter	3	0.4934
17.	ingredient	1	0.1645

**Table 5: Results of word profile analysis**

Special categories results indicate that Greek businesses seem to rarely offer these kinds of food- categories. To be more specific, only 1.6% out of 502 menus has a special category as well as 8 words out of 489 consist a special one.

<b><u>Special Categories</u></b>	<b><u>Appear. Number</u></b>
Regimen	2
Diabetic	1
Fasting	2
Vegetarian	3

**Table 6: Special Category Results**

The majority of the words that are used in menu-categories have Greek origin (87.1%). However, there is an important percentage of other language on the origin of some words (12.9%). It seems that is quite usual to use foreign words in Greek menus.

<b>Order</b>	<b>Word Language</b>	<b>Appearances</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
1.	Greek	426	87.1166

2.	other	63	12.8834
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**Table 7: Language of menu-categories**

From the law of averages, the combination of «salads-appetizers» and «appetizers-salads» have the biggest probability to appear together in a menu-category-title (0.68% percentage).

As far as the menu-items are concerned, the most common ones are appeared below:

feta cheese	934	sauce (with..)	264	vinegar	150	broccolli	113
shrimps	703	olives	257	tomato sauce	149	with honey	113
mushrooms	702	pork chop	249	oregano	148	dolma	112
fried cheese	595	spaghetti	248	salmon	148	with cheese	108
beef steak	570	cola	244	shrimps fried cheese	148	with ice cream	106
souvlaki	535	squid	233	patatosalata	143	grilled	105
octopus	409	meat balls	230	risotto	143	salad (with..)	103
sausage	395	from tomato	228	fava	143	virgin olive oil	102
choriatiki	391	anchovy	227	with sauce	140	(cooked) in the oven	99
wine	382	coca cola	225	kebab	138	chef's salad	92
tzatziki	352	Greek salad	200	sardine	138	staffed with	87
French fries	345	florina	167	baked feta cheese	138	fried zucchini	87
Chicken fillet	341	chicken with	166	sepia	130	with tomato	85
tenderloin	332	pork souvlaki	163	moussaka	122	chef's	84
with sauce	324	beef steak	162	hooch	121	with mushrooms	81
ouzo	310	tsipouro	160	ntakos	119	with sauce from	81
zucchini	300	tirokafteri	160	butter bean	116	salad of	79
mussels	297	aggouratomata	157	sour cream	116	salt pepper	70



greens	294	cod	157	swordfish	115	chop pork chop	63
ribs	291	tomato and	154	taramosalata	115	beef steak staffed	52
veal (chop)	279	chicken souvlaki	153	zucchini balls	114	pork chop veal	52
lamb	267	barbecued	152	orange juice	114	a la crem	51
ice creams	265	braised	151	soda	114	yogurt with honey	51
						pork chop veal chop	50

**Table 8: Most common menu-items**

The above results are mentioned to the one word results that appear more than 110 times and to the 2, 3, 4 word phrase results that appear more than 50 times (according to Greek words results).

According to the above mentioned results, 22 dishes, 3 Greek alcohol drink and 3 desserts are chosen and commented nutritionally and gastronomically.

### **Creation of the typical Greek menu**

According to results of the research, the indicated menu-category number is 6 categories, because the greater percentage of the menus obtains this number. We choose the 10 first results of menu-categories and we combined them into pairs. Finally, we create 6 menu-categories for the typical menu. However, it is necessary to add the “drink” category in the “refreshments-beers” one. To continue with, we decided to include single word dishes and 2, 3, 4 word phrase dishes that appear more than 50 times and desserts with over than 30 appearances. We do not include the “fish” category because it is not a priority according to results, but it is a necessary category when we refer to fish-tavern. The Typical Menu is presented to a lesser order:

### **Conclusion**

The registration and analysis of the Greek menus interests the Greek Tourism Sector. In this research, we study the Indirect Demand. Lots of similar researches could be conducted in order to study the Law of Supply-Demand and to improve the writing processes of menu, which is an important marketing part of a catering business. Nowadays, menu is more important than before, especially for businesses that have websites. In this case, customers firstly come into contact with the menu and afterwards with the space of restaurants and the staff. Also, throughout this study, we end up to some probable outdoor nutritional choices for Greeks. This part of the study has a great scientific interest for the Science of Nutrition.

**Appetizers-Salads:**

Feta cheese  
 Mushrooms  
 Saganaki  
 Octopus  
 Sausage  
 Tzatziki  
 French fries  
 Mussels  
 Olives  
 Meatballs  
 Anchovy  
 Cuttlefish  
 Skordalia  
 Graviera  
 Tigania  
 Kefalotiri  
 Florina  
 Tirokafteri  
 Shrimps fried cheese  
 Risotto  
 Fava  
 Sardines  
 Sepia  
 Ntakos  
 Butter beans  
 Zucchini balls  
 Dolma  
 Cheese pie  
 Kasen  
 Livers  
 Cheese croquettes  
 Mashed potatoes  
 Mushrooms

Bougiourdi  
 Fried zucchini  
 Beans  
 Scampi  
 Omelet  
 Bekri (meze)  
 Tuna  
 Bourekakia  
 Mullet  
 Green beans  
 Smelt  
 Soup  
 Flogeres  
 Fish-soup  
 Toursi  
 Choriatiki  
 Greens  
 Eggplant salad  
 Beet salad  
 Lettuce salad  
 Aggouro-tomata  
 Potato salad  
 Tarama salad  
 Broccoli  
 Tuna salad  
 Chef's salad  
 Caesar's  
 Cheese salad  
 Cauliflower salad  
 Caleslow  
 Russian

**Cooked to order:**

Beef steak  
 Ribs  
 Pork chop  
 Cuttlefish  
 Pancetta  
 Souvlaki pork  
 Veal chop  
 Souvlaki chicken  
 Haddock  
 Kebab  
 Hooch  
 Swordfish  
 Gyro  
 Kontosouvli  
 Barbel  
 Bass fish  
 Mackerel  
 Kokoretsi  
 Sole  
 Tope  
 Sea bream

**Main dishes:**

Chicken fillet  
 Tenderloin  
 Lamb  
 Pasta  
 Meatballs  
 Schnitzel  
 Soutzoukakia  
 Red meat  
 Salmon  
 Moussaka  
 Carbonara  
 Stifado  
 Napolitana  
 Giouvetsi  
 Lobster  
 Pasticcio  
 Pesto  
 Pizza  
 Cockerel  
 Bolognaise  
 goat  
 Shrimp spaghetti  
 Rabbit  
 Mpriam  
 Gumbo  
 Soufle

**Refreshments-Beers-Drinks:**

Cola  
 coca cola  
 Orange juice  
 Soda  
 Sprite  
 Lemon juice  
 fanta.

Heineken  
 Amstel  
 Kaiser  
 Mythos  
 fix

Ouzo  
 Tsipouro

**Wines:**

wine (white-red-rouge)  
 retsin a

**Desserts:**

Ice-creams  
 Halva  
 Yogurt with honey  
 Pecan pie  
 Kadaifi  
 Baklavas  
 Panacotta  
 Ravani  
 Crepa  
 Fruit salad  
 Mousse  
 Custard filled pastry  
 Sweet preserves  
 Millefeuille

To be concluded, businessmen use a variety of words for their businesses names, which is also a marketing part of a business. Also, 80% of the menus have 3 to 11 menu-categories, a limited number, maybe in order to facilitate customers' choices. Furthermore, the main language of a catering business' menu is Greek. There is a small but remarkable tendency for foreign languages to embed into Greek gastronomy. As far as special categories are concerned, regimen, diabetics, vegetarian and fasting categories are the great minority of them. That may be cause there is a limited demand for that kind of categories, or else businessmen do not want to invest money in order for this categories to be included in the menus.

Results, from menu-items, reveal some interesting key-points for a catering business. In the first 80 words, we can find 16 red meat dishes, 7 fish and 6 seafood ones. This could play an important role on how much Greek people prefer red meat than other kind of animal protein. Moreover, in the first 80 dishes, we find 10 salads and specifically Choriatiki (Greek salad), greens, egg plant sauce, beet salad, lettuce salad, cucumber-tomato salad, potato salad, broccoli salad, tuna salad, ceasar's. In the first 80 words, the alcohol drink that appears most frequently is wine, followed by ouzo, tsipouro, beer and retsina. The most frequently appeared dessert is ice-cream, followed by halva and yogurt with honey, as well as the most frequently appeared coffee is espresso, followed by cappuccino and frappe. Greek coffee appears significantly fewer times than espresso. Finally, we have to underline that in the first 120 dishes, we find 11 ethnic foods (Turkish, Italian, American, and Russian). It seems that there are many foreign elements that have been penetrated into Greek gastronomy.

### **Limitations**

Data Analysis Program: "Online Text Analyzer" could be replaced from another tool that will not create confusion of certain single words. Because of that, we may have interpreted wrongfully some dishes. However, we corrected the confusion to a great extent by using the 2, 3, 4, 5 word phrase tables of the Program. Furthermore, the different business categories do not equally take part in the research. This might have influence some results, especially for the most frequency appeared menu-items. Finally, we missed some data, because of the exclusion of Greek catering businesses that were available only in foreign languages. We recommend further research in this topic, taking into consideration all the limitations that have mentioned.

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# *Global Choice of Cultural Destinations via New Technologies*

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## **ABSTRACT**

The scientific report aims to reveal the opportunities for global choice of cultural destinations via new technologies. The role of the global information society is emphasized by providing contacts and interaction between different cultures. Globalization process is reviewed as a stimulus for implementing changes in tourism. The importance of global electronic and communication technologies and media for tourism development is underlined. The opportunities for creating global transparency in choosing tourism destinations are indicated. Levels and factors affecting globalization of tourism are identified. The global network is viewed as a mean for dissemination of global culture. Attention is focused on the role of new technologies for traveling throughout the world. Special accent is given to the expansion of short-term trips to exotic and cultural destinations worldwide. Issues concerning establishment of growing interest in cultural destinations are discussed and attractive cultural destinations for the year 2012 are analyzed in details. The interrelation 'choice - image' of a tourist destination is explained. Special attention is drawn to cultural values as a key to successful destination development. The author considers that the new technologies are a helpful instrument for attracting tourists to unknown locations having great cultural potential.

**Keywords:** Globalization, Tourism, New Technologies, Cultural destinations

International tourism is the most visible expression of globalization. Its economic dimension represents the global movement of the largest flow of people, goods and capital. The development of global tourism is associated with the availability of common information space. The entities in tourism industry are elements of the global network. Tourist travels everywhere in the world connects more and more tourist destinations in the global economy. Global tourism is a process of a constant contact and interaction between representatives of different cultures. It is a field where the tolerance of a huge number of people is being verified.

## **GLOBALIZATION AS A STIMULUS FOR CHANGES IN TOURISM**

Globalization stimulates the growth of tourism through global electronic and communication **technologies and networks**, and the **global media**. Electronic technologies help to implement fast-functioning and economical systems for transport and hotel reservation services all over the world. Contemporary media, especially **Internet**, creates a global transparency thus multiplying the potential in choosing tourist destination.

The impact of globalization on tourism takes place on **two levels**:

- 1) Creating prerequisites and conditions for performing tourist activity;
- 2) Changing the postmodern tourist's lifestyle relating to formation of motivation for tourism.

There are a number of **factors** that play a significant role in the process of tourism globalization (Mpful, 2009). These include:

- Expansion of global business and trade;
- Technological development in transport and communication;
- Increasing cultural and political interdependence
- Development of multinational and transnational corporations.

Globalization of the world economy plays a key role in implementing changes in **business tourism**. Trade and foreign direct investment (FDI) are associated with travel abroad. No doubt they contribute to further globalization and growth of the hospitality industry. The removal of trade barriers stimulates business tourism (Tadarakov, 2012). The development of global tourism and movement of tourist flows are facilitated by the transition to free markets.

Modern man may obtain information through the **global network** about hundreds of destinations and attractions all over the world. That is one of the ways in which globalization affects the choice of cultural destinations. Effective marketing helps attracting more tourists to a particular tourism destination. Thus, visitors can experience **culture and customs** of the tourist place and become familiar with the specificities of the region, and the indigenous people.

The geographic enlargement of connections between tourist places has become a major factor in global tourism development. It is leading to internationalization of tourism, **global culture**, effective use of leisure time, **global tourist flows** worldwide

and increased competition. The phenomenon of globalization is contributing significantly to the **global tourist journey** to the most remote places of the Earth.

## THE ROLE OF NEW TECHNOLOGIES FOR WORLDWIDE TRAVELS

Implementation of new technologies is one of the frequently discussed drivers of globalization. Technological improvements in transportation and communication have contributed to the movement of foreign tourists. New opportunities for business, trade and internet banking are found out. Globalization process has advanced significantly via technological development of **transport, communication, internet, computer reservation systems** (CRS), and **e-commerce**.

Due to the growth of **air transport**, global travels to distant destinations become shorter in terms of time and distances. **Internet** is an important achievement in favor of globalization. It makes national borders become 'invisible'. Internet expands capabilities of the potential tourists in searching for **new information** and opportunities for **global travel** to various destinations in the **global world** (Parusheva, 2012b). Many international and regional agencies, airlines, hotels, travel associations and public sector organizations maintain their own **web sites** targeted to promote tourism in the **global environment**. The purchase of online-based entertainments has facilitated the **global spread** of new forms of leisure services. This has strengthened the role of the **global media** in the social construction of the desired lifestyle.

The emergence of **low cost airlines and cruise lines** is a growing trend in tourism industry. The new transportation vehicles are distinguished not only by their speed and convenient in overcoming great distances. They affect fashion in travel and tourism, tourists' motivation and imagination (Pencheva, 2011). The most important factors in determining travel routes during a given epoch are the means of transportation, their features and price. In XVIII century Spain and Portugal are considered as **exotic destinations** by the British and the Central Europeans. Nowadays, the transport innovations change the place of exotics to the Caribbean, Africa or less known places in Asia. Sociological studies indicate that Asia is the most preferred place for cultural tourism by the modern Europeans.

The modern air transport plays an important role in tourism development. Studies show that low-cost airlines are causing expansion of the short-term trips targeted to **cultural tourism**, aiming at visiting cities with huge cultural heritage.

Information technologies are a great achievement in organization and management of tourism. The introduction of computerized reservation systems (CRS) and global distribution systems (GDS) support **global supply** of tourist services (Parusheva, 2010). Studies show that above half a million terminals of the global distribution system have connected the major portion of world airlines with potential tourists. They have allowed passengers to choose airline, check flight time, and get acquainted with the rules of travel and book tickets online.

Nowadays, along with the rapid progress of information technologies and transport, the **global phenomena** change societies in the world. The contemporary globalization radically transforms the global economy and the **global society**.



## **GROWING INTEREST IN CULTURAL DESTINATIONS**

Tourism develops rapidly and turns into a modern global economic sector. It becomes a fundamental **tool for world development**. Globalization is establishing new configuration of social time, which reflects in **global mobility** and **fragmentation of vacation time**.

Today, despite the tension of the everyday life and stress, people go on holidays and vacations which sometimes are for longer periods, but in most cases they last shorter time. Geographical mobility has changed its static character. More and more “holiday hunters” could be met at any spot of the globe. This process is favorable for the development of tourism and increases the demand for **cultural tourism**.

According to World Tourism Organization in 2020 more than 720 million foreign tourists (non-Europeans) will spend their holidays in Europe. The 'International Business Times' has presented a study of the top 20 destinations of the year 2012. Following the trend of increasing interest in cultural tourism, special attention is paid to cultural destinations. The most attractive cultural destinations in 2012 follow hereunder (Parusheva, 2012a):

### **Muscat, Oman**

Unlike its neighboring Arab countries, which are using their oil wealth to build skyscrapers, mega shopping malls and convention centers, Oman pays attention to construction of opera and theater halls. Muscat has become an attractive destination for cultural tourists from all over the world.

### **Bentonville, Arkansas - USA**

Have you ever heard about Bentonville, Arkansas? This is the hometown of the retailer Wal-Mart. This small town, situated in the center of the United States, has become a cultural destination of world-class. The most impressive of all is the Crystal Bridges Museum of American art.

### **Trinidad, Cuba**

Only a three and a half hours distance southeastwards from the Cuba's capital of Havana spreads a city with a 500-year history, named Trinidad. According to tourists the whole city is like a museum. UNESCO has officially recognized and entered in their lists its cobblestone streets, Spanish colonial architecture and the colorful houses specific for this country.

### **Hampi, India**

Hampi is one of the fastest-growing tourist cities in India. It combines both desert and oasis. The ruins, still visible today prove that its population numbering 500,000 has lived in splendor, could be compared with those of Angkor Wat.

### **Portovenere, Italy**

Portovenere shares its UNESCO status together with Cinque Terre and it is just as picturesque as the latter with its boats, towering catholic churches and meandering trains. The town streets are filled with history and breathtaking sea views.

### **Guimaraes, Portugal**

In 2012 Guimaraes become the European Capital of Culture. This city is a symbol of Portuguese nationality from the XII century and it skillfully manages to combine both authenticity and modern look. Guimaraes is developing due to its young population and rising arena of culture

### **Kazan, Russia**

Kazan, the third capital of Russia combines in harmony Christian and Muslim culture. The city is famous for its museums, theaters, restaurants and river views. They all create reminiscent of Central Asia. Sport is one of the major interests of the people of Kazan.

The cultural tourism has **magical potential**. It brings additional incomes due to the inexhaustible resources of the tourist place. In recent years, it has gained a great importance in the **global community** as a foundation for economic development.

## **THE INTERRELATION 'CHOICE - IMAGE' OF A TOURIST DESTINATION**

Tourism is highly dependent on the development ability of the **cultural attractions**. An important feature of the cultural heritage is that to a large scale it determines the **image of the tourist destination**. The heritage is not only a source of historical knowledge that affects the attractions themselves, but it also affects the destination as a whole.

Every tourist has the opportunity to choose among a **set of destinations** offering multiple products and services. A strong influence on the choice of destination may play the so-called **"push" and "pull" factors** that determine the tourist's motivation to choose one destination over another. "Pushes" are the primary factors associated with instinctive desires of individual tourists (such as: desire for escape, rest, relaxation, adventure, prestige, etc.). "Pull" factors are mainly related to the **attraction of destination** and the external physical characteristics (such as: beaches, ways of accommodation, relaxation facilities, cultural and historical

resources, etc.). The success of “pull” factors depend on the personal preferences of the individual tourist.

A huge proportion of cultural tourists come mainly from the neighboring countries. They are usually aware of the specificity of **cultural values**. However, the more distant destinations are, the more attractive they are. Cultural tourists have a high level of knowledge of cultural life. They are attracted both by the experience and memories of past visits, and by their personal knowledge about the cultural heritage.

Forecasts indicate that tourism will continue to dominate on the international travel scene. Therefore it is considered to be the **key to a successful destination development**. At any part of Earth tourism is treated as a **source of profit** and an instrument contributing to better **environmental protection**.

## **FINDINGS**

- Globalization of tourism provides high potential in choosing cultural destinations via new technologies.
- Cultural tourism has a major market share in the world tourism.
- Modern communication technologies “bring” attractive tourist destinations to prospective tourists.

## **CONCLUSION**

The major economic asset of the global tourism is the cultural wealth of the tourist destinations. The cultural heritage and attractions more and more sensitively are becoming centres of attraction for the majority of tourists and improving the image of the particular tourist destination. New technologies could be a helpful vehicle for attracting visitors to less-known places that possess great cultural potential.

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*Positioning Strategy of a boutique hotel in an emerging destination; Mineral de Pozos, México*

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**Discussion**

One of the topics this paper wishes to discuss is related to the process of implementation of tourism plans in the case of Mineral de Pozos. It is important to note that research on policy “implementation” seeks to understand how the machinery of the state and political actors intersect to produce public actions (John, 1999: 1). Before the 1970s, researchers in political science tended to focus their analyses on the phase of “policy formulation” leaving “implementation” to the

attention of administration scholars. However, more recently a new wave of studies emerged aiming to gain a better understanding of the policy process as a whole considering “implementation” as a crucial part of the analysis (Hogwood and Gunn, 1984). These types of studies focused on providing insightful explanations for the failure or success of policies derived from “implementation” practices.

“Implementation” is not viewed here as a linear process neither as an exercise doomed by the will of its implementers but as complex social interactive process that involves multiple scenarios of adaptation, reformulation and, above all, negotiation. Considering the former, “implementation” is conceived in this paper as “an interactive and negotiative process...between those seeking to put policy into effect and those upon whom action depends” (Barrett and Fudge, 1981: 25, quoted by Krutwaysho and Bramwell, 2010: 671). Thus, it is recognised the crucial role that actors’ visions play in these negotiations setting the power arrangements through which policies are legitimated and implemented.

It is important to note that the literature concerning policy implementation in tourism remains modest because it is “still diverse and fragmented and there have been few structured attempts to extract lessons from implementation” (Krutwaysho and Bramwell, 2010: 675). Despite this, some studies have paid attention to exploring implementation experiences from the perspective of the actors involved. Some examples of these types of studies can be found in the works of Airey and Chong (2010), Krutwaysho and Bramwell (2010), Stevenson (2007) and Stevenson et al (2008). These studies investigate the narratives of the actors participating in this process in order to gain a better understanding of how different visions are bridged, contested, transformed and/or negotiated.

For the particular case of Mineral de Pozos, it can be said that the implementation process has proceeded in an incremental manner. The community conversion from mining to tourism activities formally started in the late 1970s once the federal government recognised the importance of tourism as a development tool, especially in economically depressed areas like this case. Given the difficult conditions this community experienced during most of the 20th Century, tourism appeared as a viable economic alternative to pursuit. Thus, the main objective was to integrate this region into the national dynamics of tourism in order to take advantage of its economic benefits. Despite the great efforts made by local and regional authorities during the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s, little could be materialised to transform this community into a relevant tourism destination. Nevertheless, this preparation process was helpful for the identification of multiple heritage and natural resources for tourism purposes. This previous work helped this community to be integrated within the proposal of a regional tourism circuit denominated “Ruta de la Plata” (silver route) and, ultimately, for the elaboration of a local Development Plan in 2011 in order to address urban and tourism issues.

As previously mentioned in this paper, Mineral de Pozos received the distinction from the federal government as Pueblo Mágico in February 2012. This certification seemed to revive the management process in which this community has been working during the last three decades. Above all, it seemed to give a new impulse to the entrepreneurial initiatives from the public and private sector. However, this certification has not helped to solve the main problems that prevent tourism

development so far. There is still a great lack of coordination among the different actors within the community to consolidate a consolidated tourism product. This situation has prevented the social cohesion that is needed among the local stakeholders (government, private sector, community) to develop a strong tourism destination. Additionally, there has been a lack of public investment that prevents not only the development of tourism activities but also the social and economic development of the community. This is clearly reflected in infrastructural, environmental, and social problems that the local government has been unable or unwilling to solve.

We believe the award of this certification has indeed contributed to put Mineral de Pozos in the spot of the national the tourism market, at least in promotional terms. However, we also consider that this certification can only report a very modest contribution to the achievement of local development goals in the short and medium term. The design and implementation of a more complete strategy in terms of planning is needed in order to ensure the progressive growth of tourism activities and tourists' flows to the region. This is not to say that this certification or previous planning work is completely useless; perhaps it remains incomplete. It is acknowledged here that this certification might be unable to lead this community to develop in a sustainable way as is expected by the local government. That is why initiatives from the private sector such as the Boutique Hotel that is presented in this paper acquire more relevance, especially in communities where the tourism planning process is unfinished such as the case of Mineral de Pozos. This initiative has proven to be useful to strengthen the local offer in the community as well as to preserve and promotion the local heritage to the visitors. It is important to say that this hotel has been able to subsist despite an almost absence of economic and organisational support from local authorities. In this sense, our main contention is that these sorts of initiatives should be supported and replicated throughout this territory in order to consolidate a strong tourism destination. The former must be accompanied with the implementation of more effective tourism programs and investment plans to ensure a more congruent growth aligned with tourism sustainable principles. More studies (such as the one conducted by this research team) are needed to shed some light on the evolution of the local tourism dynamics derived from the implementation of these initiatives and development plans. This follow-up is crucial to evaluate and monitor the progress of the destination and the achievement (or not) of the goals envisaged within the development plans. Otherwise, the implementation of corrective measures and action plans in fragile areas would be impossible making these initiatives ineffective for the purposes they were created in the first place. It is believed that Mineral de Pozos possess the potential to become a relevant tourism destination, at least at the regional level. Yet, the coordination of actions remains as a pending agenda at the local level in the years to come.

## **Introduction**

Mineral de Pozos is a community located in Central Mexico, in Guanajuato State, which has been coined to take a graceful shape and be capable to generate attractive tourism flows, leveraging its cultural riches in a beautiful natural setting.

Although this has not been always the community's vocation according to Guanajuato State's Government (2010). While its society and economy were dynamic, it focused on mining which began in the XVI century, but despite of their bonanza, the place started to suffer and repeated several periods of abandonment, so by the middle of the XX century Mineral de Pozos had already won the reputation of "ghost town", which together with the mysticism of the place and the nature generated that some visionary people fight for the recovery of some constructions to revalue the place (see picture 1 and 2).

**Picture 1. One of Pozos's Corner**



**Picture 2. Side of the Main Square**



It is recognized as exceptionally valuable testimony to the social, economic and aesthetic of Mexico (Sánchez Martínez, 2007).

Government actions and strategies undertaken in this community to preserve the cultural tourism that characterizes the main tourism products and destinations in the central west of the country, gave way to classifications and special appointments whose end it is the appreciation and preservation of tangible and intangible cultural heritage of destinations with special and distinctive characteristics, full of mysticism and magic, as Mineral de Pozos.

Magic Town's appointment was given to this community on February 16, 2012, assuming to detonate its potential tourism, generating jobs and improve the habitants' life quality. The appointment gave way to various commitments by the government on its different levels, and the mention of mexican peso amounts



invested in projects of tourism development, which actions will be reflected in favor of the town and its habitants.

So, tourism is now the main economic activity, therefore, it is a cradle of investments for domestic and foreign, like in the case of the investment, 100% mexican, made last year in this community, consolidating as a Boutique Hotel that certifies accomplish the expectations of the customers and visitors. The current work will talk about of this project, that will analyze closely its performance and will verify that, indeed, the destination has been benefited with each action of this particular.

### Location

Mineral de Pozos is a community located at the municipality of San Luis de la Paz, in the northeast of Guanajuato State, at the region of the Sierra Gorda. The community of Mineral de Pozos is housed between hills above 2,300 meters of the sea level and only 25 miles from San Miguel de Allende, a World Heritage Site, also located in Guanajuato State.

The roads and infrastructure that allow you to arrive to the community are the 110-2 highway or 46 SCT. Another access is a dirt road from approximately 7 miles, an option that is not well-known and does not have road signs neither touristic signs, but communicates with the 57 highway, made of asphalt in good conditions and with the appropriate transport and tourism services. It also provides emergency services and is one of the country's busiest highways (Federal Government, 2011).

#### Map 1. Location in the country



Source. Googlemaps (2013)

#### Map 2. Location in Guanajuato State



Source. Googlemaps (2013)

### Population and weather

According to the INEGI's Census of Population and Housing of 2010, the state has a population of 5'486,000,372 habitants, placing 115,000,656 habitants in the municipality of San Luis de la Paz. For this year, it is estimated that Pozos would be around 2,000,500 habitants. Mineral de Pozos is located in a semi-arid zone with a semi-dry weather. The temperature's annual average is between 12 °C and 18 °C. Source: Guanajuato's Municipal Monographs.

### History

The region where the community is located was dominated by Chichimecas, Huachichiles, Copuces, Guaxabanos and Pames during the pre-hispanic period. In

Guanajuato's Monographs of its municipalities (2010) is notified that the first foundation was done by the jesuits, on 1576, in the northeast of the state. This is how the community of Palmar de la Vega borns, and later changes its name to Mineral de Pozos. The VIII Gonzalo de Tapia entered the territory on 1859, and because of its fairness and how quickly he learned the language, and the customs of otomies and chichimecas, he persuaded the natives to get together as a village. He also negotiated the terms of peace to ensure the conquest and foundations conducted by his predecessors, among this were Pozos's mines called Del Palmar.

Below are the community's aspects that gave place to generate important changes on her. They are organized from the most notorious until its current situation (chart 1).

**Chart 1. Growth and evolution of Mineral de Pozos**

Impact on the Community of Pozos	Event Date	Number of habitants	Historic event	Causes	Consequences
Village's conformation	Since 1576	Native, there is no data. The 1903's census indicated 15,443.	XVI Century "The Conquest Century". Discovery of deposits of various minerals.	Human settlements. The Chichimeca's Nation in San Luis de la Paz.	Start of mining development.
First period of decline.	First decades of the XIX Century.	Eight thousand	Independence Movement	A lack of some essential elements for working, and the withdrawal of capital.	Decrease of bid labor. Stopped of most jobs in the year 1844
Resumption of activities	Second half of the XIX century	Eighty thousand	The productivity increases. A rise in commercial activities. There were some lodging services, food and beverage, entertainment	A positive economic outlook. Immigrants from France, Spain, Italy, England and the United States and other states: Guanajuato, Zacatecas,	Splendor and opulence of the place. In 1897, the village increases to the rank of city named Ciudad Porfirio Diaz. Growth in its population economy and infrastructure.

			services, such as the theater.	Mexico State, Hidalgo, etc.	Architectural Treasures.
Second period of decline	End of Porfirio Diaz's Government.	Less than 200 on the 50's.	Mexican Revolution on 1910. On 1926, the cristero movement. International Depression. Metal prices drop.	Strong capital is removed. Lack of money and a lot of technical problems.	Mass exodus in search of work. The entire infrastructure was dismantled and sold. Complete abandonment of the people.
Reactivation of activities	President Lopez Portillo's Government.	About 1,500 at the end of the XX century.	Recognized as Ghost Town which became a place of crafts and tourist attractions.	The Community was declared a National Historic Monument by the Mexican Government on 1982.	Declared Magic Town in 2012. Located in the II region of the State, attending the adventure and cultural tourism.

Decay period of growth



Development period



**Source:** Authors' creation based on (Guanajuato State's Government, 2010) and (Sánchez Martínez, 2007).

The community is now a peaceful place that has inspired artists (painters, photographers, etc.) and has served as a location for movies, thus foreigners and residents of the area have been taken the task to rescue this historic and singular site. Despite that the filmography does not make any reference to this place but to others, one case in particular is Juan Rulfo's film, "Pedro Paramo", where they talk about a town called Comala, although the movie was filmed in Mineral de Pozos, and neither Pozos and Comala (Aguascalientes State's Magic Town) used these tools as strategic touristic positioning.

### Tourism at Mineral de Pozos

This community is now a town full of mysticism and magic, the main attraction of this place are the underground mines, there are about 20 and with the assistance of a guide, you can explore inside of some of them. The mining approach allows observing some ancient walls of buildings, some in ruins and others rebuilt, several abandoned that housed miners, monks, families and others.

Another of its major attractions are its architectural remains among the most prominent examples of the architectural richness of this village are the mining ex-haciendas of San Baldomero, Five Lords, Dolores, The Triangle, and majestic remnants of the "Model School".

There are also samples of Pre-Hispanic Music and workshops that allow tourists to appreciate and learn about the making of local musical instruments. Many of its current habitants are dedicated to the manufacture of pre-hispanic instruments.

To make it easier the visit to this beautiful place, we have created a list of the most important sites to visit (see Chart 2)

**Chart 2. Landmarks**

Points of Interest	Churches and Chapels	Shops, galleries and restaurants
1. Delegation 2. Library "Palmar de Nogal" 3. Old Mode School 4. Alameda 5. Door of the Constitution 6. Mine Santa Brigida 7. Mines Area 8. Main Square Juarez 9. Square Zaragoza 10. Old Supply 11. House of Culture	1. Parroquia San Pedro 2. Casa Santa Chapel 3. Señor de los Trabajos Chapel 4. San Antonio de Padua Chapel 5. Señor de la Misericordia Chapel 6. Refugio Chapel	1. Restaurant "Los Famosos de Pozos" 2. Instruments and Pre-hispanic Music "Camino de Piedra" 3. Collective Cinema 4. Gallery "Gallery 6" 5. Restaurant-bar "Posada de las Minas" 6. Gallery "Rueffert Gallery" 7. Handcrafts "Manos Creativas" 8. Workplace of "Janice Freeman y Geoff Wunningham" 9. Shop "Mineral de Pozos, A. C." 10. Gallery "Casa de Cielo" 11. Instruments Construction Company "Casa del Venado Azul" 12. Handcrafts "El Rebozo" 13. Store "Arte y Diseño de Pozos" 14. Restaurant, Cafe bar and gallery "La Pila Seca"

**Source: Authors' creation based on the Tourism Observatory of Guanajuato State (2013)**

The place allows practicing ecotourism activities such as hiking, rappelling and botanical tours. In addition, through the area's semi-desert landscape you can appreciate the remains of ancient ex-haciendas, chapels and ruins, some with walls still raised but no windows, doors or ceilings.

**Picture 3. Chapel among ruins**



**Picture 4. Remains of an ex hacienda**



The town can be explored on foot, bike, horse or using any motor transportation, where the reference point is the main garden, from where tourists can start the journey with caution as there are holes and slopes with no signal that were excavated and abandoned, perhaps were the latest attempts made to find precious material (Sánchez Martínez, 2007).

**Picture 5. Casco de Hacienda**



**Picture 6. Community Street**



Through these tours, the villagers tell old stories, traditions and legends of the "ghost town", further enriching the tourist experience.

Additionally, during the year there are held events of young creation, which in a continuous way and looking for its consolidation, they are listed as the community's festivities (see Chart 1). They are also promoted as a regional way and they look to promote the growth the place's tourism.

**Chart 3. Mineral de Pozos's festivities**

Month	Event
January	Mines and Music Festival
February	Art Walk
March	Home and Garden Tour

April	Easter and Passion Play
May	Mariachi Festival
	City's Anniversary Porfirio Diaz
	Mineral de Pozos's Sound
	Lord of the Works Festival
July	Toltequity Festival
	Blues Festival
	Art Walk
August	Mines and Music Festival
	Home and Garden Tour
November	Day of the Dead
December	Christmas Fair
	Pastourelle

**Source:** Authors' creation based on SEDETUR (2013)

In addition, given the centric location that has Mineral de Pozos, you can make trips to other communities or towns located in the same state of Guanajuato or other states, as in the case of Queretaro, San Miguel de Allende, Guanajuato, San Luis Potosi, Dolores Hidalgo, among others.

### **Governmental actions**

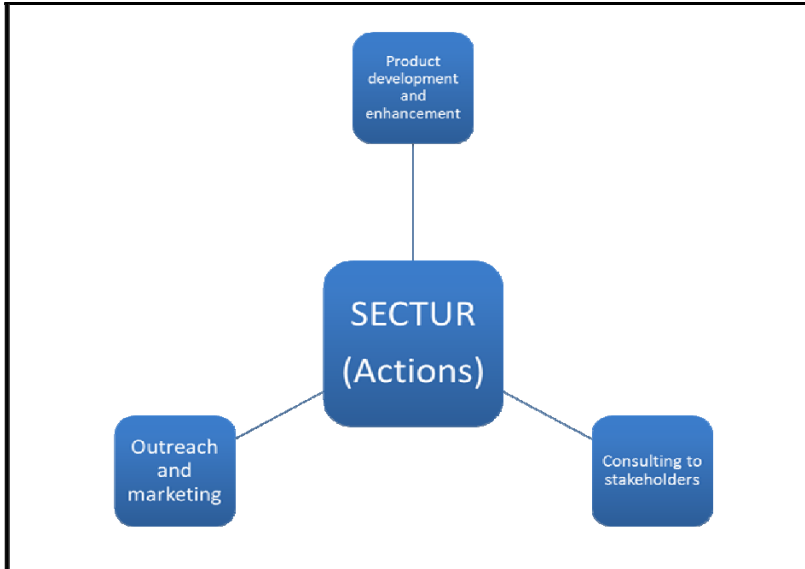
San Luis de la Paz gave to Guanajuato State its regionalization through the assistance of the Silver's Historic Route. Currently, the Ministry of Tourism established 6 tourism regions, where Pozos is part of the II region mainly specialized in tourism adventure; however, the community, in addition to have natural attractions, has turned towards to cultural tourism, especially for wealth architecture of the place.

According to the Ministry of Tourism (SECTUR-CESTUR; 2002), cultural tourism is defined as "Any touristic journey motivated to know, understand and enjoy the set of features and distinctive, spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional elements that characterize a society or social group of a specific destination ". Through a proper management, this type of tourism gives way to the supply of touristic experiences which are difficult to match and appreciated by the tourist, the heritage conservation of touristic use, and it also achieves the economic and social development of the communities by generating new jobs for the coming generations.

The target of the SECTUR's Cultural Tourism Development Program is to "coordinate efforts focused to ensure the segment's development, strengthening mechanisms and instruments to achieve the long-term use of natural and cultural resources,

guaranteeing economic and social profitability of their projects "(SECTUR-CESTUR, 2002).

**Figure 1. Actions SECTUR**



**Source.** Authors' creation base on SECTUR (2013)

The variation and development of new tourism products through strategic alliances is one of the strongest goals with actions that have been implemented to support the identification and provision of infrastructure and equipment for cultural tourism, mainly in those points or sites that have a high tourism impact from the point of view of tourist arrivals, economic benefit and job creation. Mexico's Tourism Ministry (SECTUR) organizes its actions in three areas (see Figure 1)

With the firm goal of preserving the Mexican cultural attractions, there are several steps, including the Magic Towns Program, developed by the Ministry of Tourism overall with government agencies and state and local governments.

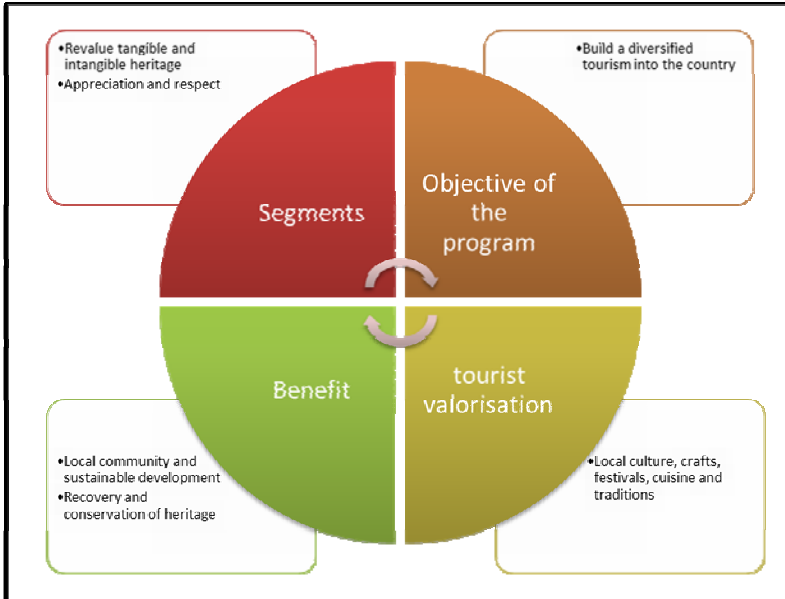
According to SECTUR (2013), a Magic Town is a town that has symbolic attributes, legends, history, important facts, every day, in brief it has to have MAGIC that comes from each of its socio-cultural manifestations and that mean today a great opportunity for tourism and they get enroll in the need to join efforts to become founder for local and regional economy..

Now, Mexico has 83 Magic Towns and still counting.

Mineral de Pozos obtained the appointment of the Magic Town on February 16, 2012 (No. 49), conceding the participation of governmental agencies of great interest, both government agencies as service providers and local community, full of speeches that encouraged the development of the community. SECTUR 2013.

To achieve this designation, Mineral de Pozos as all locations who achieved it, it has to observe several requirements, procedures and documentation that allowed it to get the title of Magic Town.

**Figure 2. Principal points referring to the Magic Towns Program**



**Source.** Compiled from SECTUR (2012)

In addition to these basic criteria, there are defined criteria that can be included in the Magic Towns Program among which are:

**Application for incorporation;** Initial assessment visit done by the General Management of Regional Programs and/or the General Management of Tourism Product Development.

**Incorporation of the record,** once the application is approved, shall contain:

1. Involvement of the Company and Local Authorities.
2. Planning and Regulatory Instruments. Projects for Municipal and State Development. Tourism Urban Development Plan. Municipal Tourism Development Program. Regulation of urban image and a management plan based on the Magic Towns Program. Rearrangement Trade Program.
3. Promote the Municipal Development through programs. Continuation and consolidation of programs and/or actions for tourism development.
4. Bid of attractions and services. To have a symbolic attraction (unique). To have different touristic attractions. Travel services that guarantee its potential merchandising (flow in radius). Assistance services, health and public safety.



5. Singular Value "The Magic Town". Declaration of "Zone of Historic Monuments." Conservation actions of tangible and intangible heritage. Rescue and preservation.
6. Terms and Territorial Areas. Accessibility land. Feasibility for touristic trade. Touristic product. Rated by the General Management of Tourism Product Development.
7. Impact of Tourism in the town and the influence area. Touristic State Information System.
8. Assessment of the touristic impact on a regional and/or municipal level. Relevant displays of tourism behavior. Distribution of printed and digital materials.
9. Development of local capability. Induction Workshop of Magic Towns Program (teach the town). Workshop for planning and management of cultural tourism.

### **Database evaluation by the Inter-Agency of Evaluation and Selection (CIES)**

The record validated by the local and state authorities, is sent to the General Management of Regional Programs for a review, the pre-feasibility will be assess by the CIES, and its incorporation to the program will be defined.

If it accomplishes the Criteria for Incorporation of the Program, the town will have the pre-feasibility to be recognized as a Magic Town, and you will get the designation in no more than 3 years, during which it must establish itself as a touristic destination, through public investments in infrastructure, tourism facilities, urban image development, application of competitive programs, among others.

Also, CIES will determine the moment when the town will be designated as a Magic Town. During this time, the town will see the Indicators Manual for the Magic Towns Program to obtain feedback on their performance as a touristic destination. However, once the designation is given, it must apply these indicators during the first 3 months, in order to have a base year and to make the recertification at the time established by SECTUR.

### **Certificate of nomination**

The localities incorporated to the program, to keep their designation as Magic Town must obtain its renewal each year, this will include the review of agreement with the Performance Evaluation Indicators and Program Certification Criteria, so they must accomplish with the requirements detailed below:

The Performance Evaluation Indicators are grouped according to the following chart:

#### Chart 4. Performance Indicators

Institutional and Government	Heritage and sustainability	Economical and social	Tourism
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Envelopment with society</li> <li>• Security at the destination</li> <li>• Development of new business</li> <li>• Cultural and historical development</li> <li>• Tourism development planning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integrity and authenticity of heritage</li> <li>• Sustainability</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Efficiency of institutional coordination</li> <li>• Public investment generated from the program</li> <li>• Economic impact of tourism development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bid attractions</li> <li>• Tourism promotion</li> </ul>

**Source.** Prepared based on SECTUR (2013).

#### The Program Certification Criteria

They are divided into 3 areas: Planning, Competitiveness and Strengthening.

#### Chart 5. Certification Criteria

Axis: Planning	Axis: Competitiveness	Axis: Strengthening
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. State and Municipal Development Plans.</li> <li>2. Municipal Tourism Development Program.</li> <li>3. Regulation of urban image and management plan based on the Magic Towns Program.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Software to support municipal development.</li> <li>2. Tourism services that can guarantee its trading.</li> <li>3. Assistance and security services.</li> <li>4. Actions to preserve tangible and intangible heritage.</li> <li>5. Tourism trade and development of local tourism products.</li> <li>6. Distribution and promotion of the destination.</li> <li>7. To have a municipal tourism information</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Accomplish the program according to the Coordination Agreements of the Committee on Relocation Resources.</li> <li>2. Continuation and consolidation of programs and /or actions for tourism development.</li> <li>3. Monitoring tourism and economic impact of the town's designation to the regional and /or municipal level.</li> </ol>

	system.	
Axis value: 10%	Axis value: 40%	Axis value: 50%

**Source.** Prepared based on Tourism Secretary (2013)

On 2011, a Partial Program of Urban- Tourism Development of Mineral de Pozos, of Guanajuato State, was published in the Official Journal of the Federation. It exposures the community's growth and how its business activity works. Since its nomination as a Magic Town, it displays the possibility to boost tourism activity through an activate plan of tourism attractions and products that can interest visitors and thus generate significant economic spills.

### **Regional Tourism Strategy**

This strategy contains a variety of products to be generated in the medium and long term, to allow the development of the community, the following are mentioned:

1. Integral Tourism Project (PTI) St. Bridget. Ex hacienda hotel, clubhouse, cluster of country houses, sites and monuments, parks and recreation areas.
2. Theme Park Five gentlemen. Ex hacienda with semi-closed and open spaces to house exhibitions, set plays, concerts, movies, music, sculpture, among others.
3. Cultural Center of Arts and Crafts. Rehabilitation of the Model School, promote arts and crafts.
4. Music Cultural Center. Recover the Old Supply. Musical concerts.
5. Tourism Information Center. Orientation and sale of tour services.
6. Information Center by satellite reception. Reactivation of the Old Radio.
7. Triangle Visitor Center. Link tourism service providers.
8. Cactus Botanical Garden. Improvement cactus family and the area vegetation.
9. Gourmet Market. Revaluation of culinary work and the use of local ingredients.
10. Cultural System. Shaped by museums and scenarios of visual arts, performing, literary, culinary, galleries, workshops of arts and crafts, networks, boutique hotels, etc.
11. State country routes. Involving various touristic services. Enabling transport, and be part of thw growth of the road's.

### **Complementary activities generated in parallel**

- ✓ Promotion and advertising, extensive marketing
- ✓ Improving Urban image
- ✓ Purification of the environment

The appointment promises to enable and generate proposals that incorporate Mineral de Pozos to tourism dynamics. It is in this sense that the project unfolds a boutique hotel, which in one way can complement future needs that the destination

will demand in terms of accommodation and food services and, on the other hand, become a destination attraction axis. It requires a viability study to determine the feasibility of establishing a hotel under a particular category that meets these goals or above a denomination called boutique.

Now there are 6 small boutique hotels, with a unique charm and comfort. However, it is an insufficient supply to meet the current demand of Mineral de Pozos, therefore derived from the need to offer accommodation in a destination whose potential tourism is notorious, it rises the idea to open and offer an establishment, in addition to attend the housing requirements, it ideally will become a point where ecotourism activities, shows, art, traditions and cuisine will meet.

## **HOTEL BOUTIQUE**

Set in a magical town, the Hotel is created as an ideal tourism complement looking to established as the main lodging bid and the first integral offer of products for different segments.

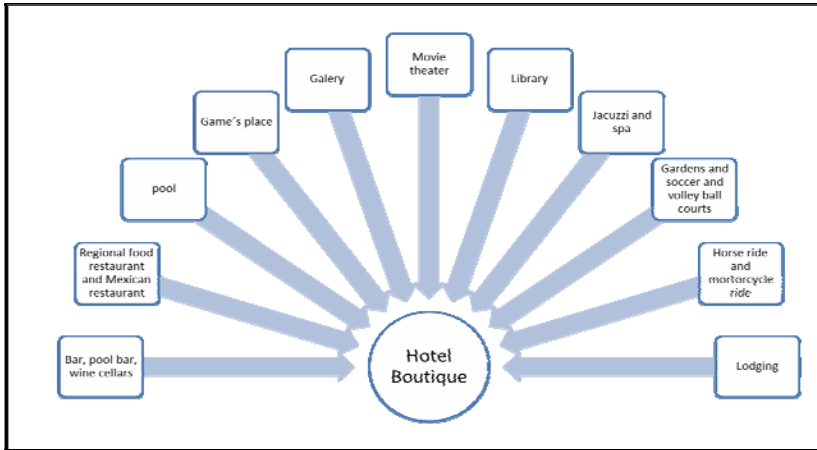
**Picture 7. Aerial view of Hotel Boutique**



With a choice of 7 bedrooms (two master suites, four junior suites and one suite) specially equipped and maintained in decor so in that way they can welcome and enrich the customer's experience, providing specialized services lacked in the town and nearby.

The supply of services not only focuses on accommodation and food, but seeks to ensure an stay that meets the expectations of visitors and that can contribute with the destination in the bid of various services (see Figure 3).

**Figure 3. Boutique Hotel Services**



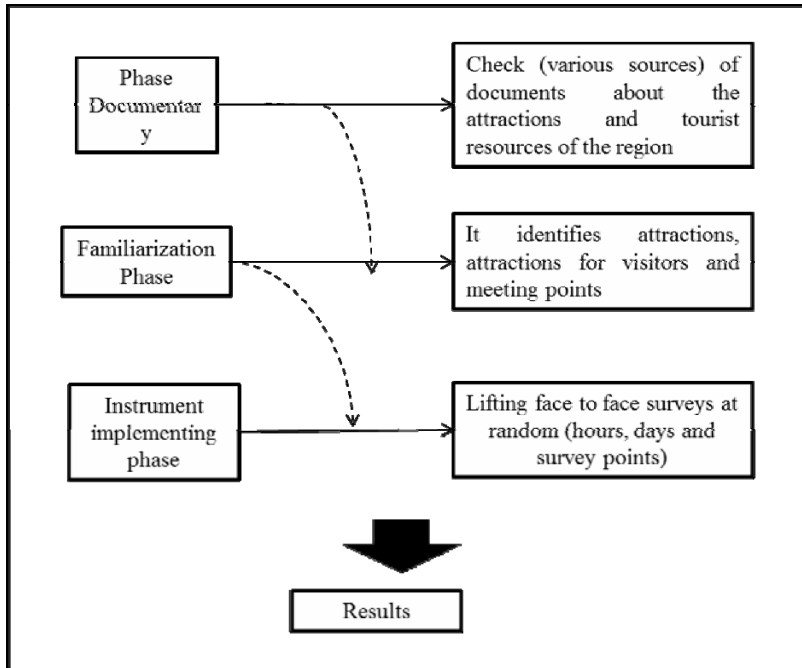
**Source.** Authors' creation.

Against this background, it is identified that the boutique hotel becomes a strong attraction for the city, considering that despite the existence of places, activities and food. The boutique hotel's supply of services makes the destination to be complemented and motivate; in some cases, the movements, only if it represents a great responsibility to establish if you are looking for a job that lends you to work in partnership with Mineral de Pozos.

From this conception, it takes place a relevant study to define the community's social reality of Mineral de Pozos based on tourism (see diagram 1).

The documentary phase gets organized from the collection and the construction of the database referring to the media used by visitors to learn and plan their trip, allowing to build a location map; the following step, let establish the familiarization phase whose goal was to corroborate the gathered information and identify each tourism attractive to set the lifting plan. The third phase was formed by the surveys applied to the tourists (face to face) based on random sampling and defined by schedules, days and strategic points. The results were obtained by using SPSS for making graphing and determine the interpretation of the results, from an instrument applied to 350 people (visitors, tourists and hikers) during 3 months, emphasizing that currently the visits made to the destination are low and they get concentrate on weekends; so that is why the sample applied on time was difficult to accomplish. For this reason, the surveys were distributed in days and hours, as well as lifting points, to obtain the results of different visitors as previously identified (by direct observation non-participatory) that there is a greater affluence of national tourism on weekends and, during the week, there are foreigners (all conditioned by the stay of less than 4 hours on average).

**Diagram 1. Lifting stages**



**Source. Authors' creation.**

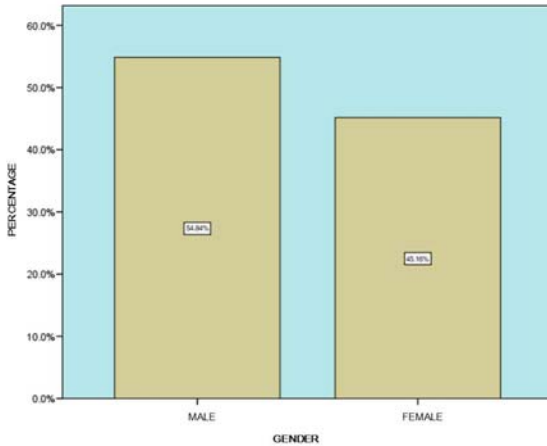
Therefore, the results let us that we could establish schedules as shown in Chart 6.

**Chart 6. Schedule for surveys**

Time	Place	Comments
10:00 to 11:00 hrs.	Main Square	Point of arrival, main access of people and vehicles.
11:00 to 13:00 hrs.	Main Church	With an easy access and location.
13:00 to 15:00 Hrs.	Old Supply and School Model	
15:00toa 17:00 Hrs.	Mine "Cinco Señores" and Hotel Posada de las Minas (outside)	Sites with major flow.

**Source. Authors' creation.**

**Graph 1. Gender visitors**



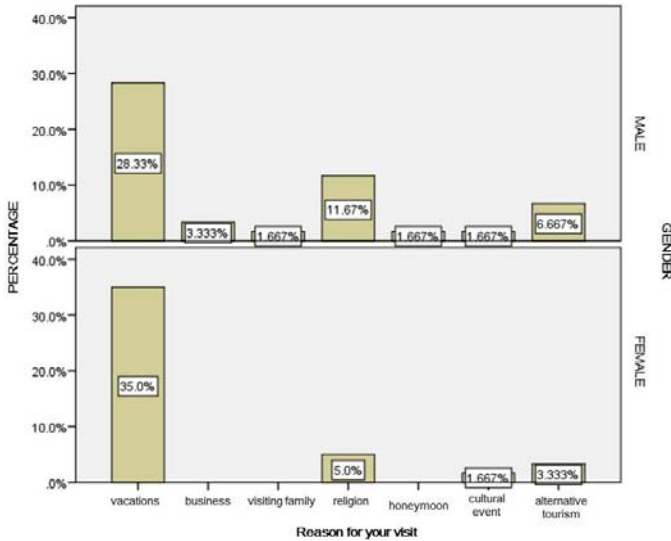
**Source.** Authors' creation.

To achieve the goal, the interviewers worked in groups on different days of the week during the months indicated, thus reaching the following results:

The age of visitors is determined in a range from 22 to 70 years, being the visitors of 50 years old, the ones that visit the most this place; from those, 54.84% are male and the rest females (see Graph 1).

Mineral de Pozos has as its principal motivation the vacations, followed by religion, alternative tourism and culture. Emphasizing that the community holds religious festivities such as the Toltequity Festival and the Celebration of the Patron Saint, among others. Additionally, alternative tourism is done by an activity that visitors do, although this product is not offer in the community, but in other close destinations such as San Miguel de Allende and Dolores Hidalgo (see Graph 2).

**Graph 2. Gender Business Motivation**



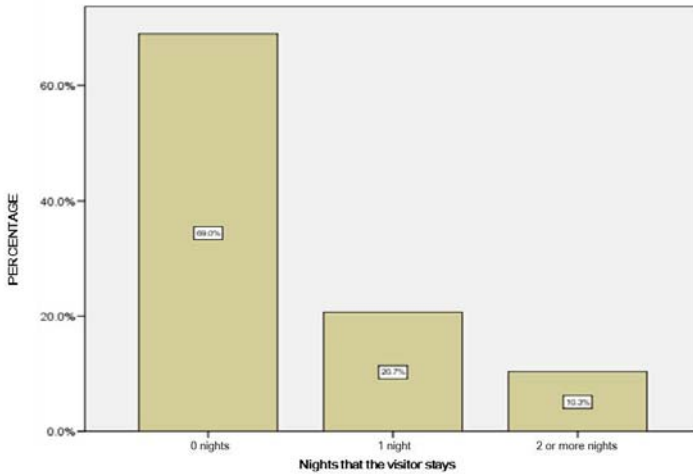
**Source.** Authors' creation.

However, Mineral de Pozos has a lack of attractive monuments that does not allow the overnight, so it is estimated that the destination visitors stay an average from 3 to 5 hours in one day; that is why Pozos is seen as a destination only to take a walk and not for staying. (Graph 3)

With no activities at the destination, there is not enough lodging supply. In case of the visitors that stay one night (31%), they have only 3 options where they can pass the night; one of them is under the classification of Treasures of Mexico and there rest of the visitors prefer to stay with their family, so they does not spend money on accommodation (see Graph 4).

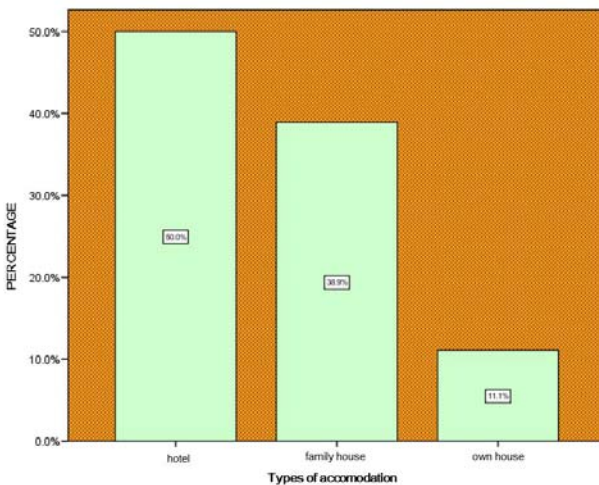


**Graph 3. Overnight**



**Source.** Authors' creation.

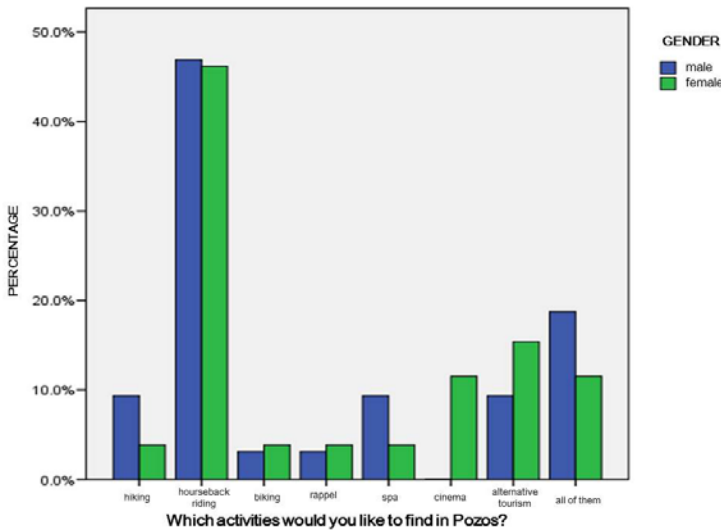
**Graph 4. Types of accommodation**



**Source.** Authors' creation.

Finally, we define the interaction between the visitor and the destination considering the few options that he has to pass the time, for which the majority of respondents consider the walk (in terms of visiting the location without using a vehicle) as the main option to know the place. Other alternatives are to visit museums or restaurants. There is a high degree of discontent with the lack of activities for visitors, which some suggest several activities such as biking, horseback riding, spa, alternative tourism activities, classic cinema, etc. (see Graph 5)

**Graph 5. Which activities would you like to find in Pozos?**



**Source.** Authors' creation.

From the above, we can highlight that the frail figure of Mineral de Pozos as a destination is capable to attract visitors. It detonates the need of touristic products that can complete and incite the tourist to visit the place.

Mineral de Pozos currently has a moderate frequency of visitors that stay from 3 to 5 hours due to the lack of products, services and attractions, as well the poverty of urban designs, touristic and road signs for accessibility; derived from this, the boutique hotel looks forward to complete the destination's deficits though its services and incite the travelers to spend more time at the destination; by offering spa services, regional cuisine based on the rescue of some local ingredients such as chilcuague, pita and the xoconoxtle; it promotes the culture through its small cinema where classic films for national and international guests are projected. It spreads the culture from its art gallery, selling artworks made by local artists, preparing exhibitions, concerts and music recitals, as well as providing spaces for meetings, for resting and spend vacations, among other actions that does not work only as company's commercial products, they also serve as reference for the destination in the supply of attractions and services. It offers within its services, to be in contact with the environment, by doing cultural tours, handcrafts at its workshops, hiking, horseback riding, mountain bike trails, ATV tours, mining exploration, parks and farms, flora and fauna.

This means that the boutique hotel establishes a close relationship with the States Government's goals that are propose to the town in terms of strengthening the destination, attracting investments and financing, and to rationalize the use of natural and cultural resources. Therefore, the hotel developed its strategies in compliance

with the fundamental premises established as General Tourism Development Strategies.

**Chart 7. General Tourism Development Strategies coupled with the employer's activity**

Fundamental Premise	Business Strategy applied
Cultures and traditions	<p>The company is incorporated to the environment, using for its structure some materials from the region, as well as the involvement of the habitants.</p> <p>They serve and jointly promote local festivals as a social commitment</p> <p>It promotes Mexican regional cuisine using local ingredients.</p>
Sustainable Tourism	<p>Solar cells are installed.</p> <p>It works in collaboration with the Biosphere Reserve in plans and programs to support local communities.</p> <p>Program for the use of sustainable resources.</p>
Preservation of the zone's integrity	<p>Its structure is designed in compliance with the community's physiognomy, each one of its rooms have an specific theme were its items reinforce chichimeca's local identity.</p>
Create a visitor with high-value	<p>Considering that its services are of quality and details, it attracts a larger segment with a current purchasing power, guaranteeing service and good treatment activities, and of course a greater economy.</p>

**Source:** Authors' creation based on (Federal Government, 2011)

**Final considerations**

Tourism activities cause the displacement of large numbers of people to various destinations, producing amazing results in communities hosting cultural richness, natural urban and high impact. Currently, the cultural tourism product is has being increasingly supported by other dependencies and Government Institutions (municipal and state), that have allocated economic resources for its development and consolidation in the tourism market.

Destinations that are characterized by identity and authenticity as in the case of Mineral de Pozos are more likely to capture a defined flow of tourists coupled to a positive environment that increase the stay and tourism expenditure. It is required if you want to preserve the cultural richness of mechanisms that are seen holistically

and are able to guarantee the enjoyment of cultural and natural resources and their use by current and future residents of the area.

Business participation is essential to ensure the sustainability of resources, which in synergy with citizen participation lead to better decisions and best practices for the town, on the premise of sustainability must implement each of the activities generated by tourism service providers and complementary, each project thus revalue regional wealth, both cultural and natural, same that can be distinguished by future visitors to highlight its originality. It is the obligation of experts and decision makers to ensure the creation of identity and authenticity destinations and offer competitive tourism products, differentiated and value-added.

It is estimated that the appointment of Pueblo Magico favor the hotel sector, positively affecting the stay, hotel occupancy increased from 20% to 55%, density per room (2 persons), 60% foreign ownership and increasing overall visitor flow. However, because of the recent appointment, the real impacts are not known yet, will have to wait, and observe actual site conditions that will be generated to the Community.



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# *Quality systems and practices in agro-ecotourism enterprises: A case study in Thessaly.*

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## **Abstract**

Tourism comprises a self- contained phenomenon synonymous to consumption and spare time and its growth, due to the development of technology and the improvement of the standards of living, has taken global dimensions. As a result tourism has developed to a pure industry, leading the economy and society in local, regional, national and global level to important changes. Based to the quality and the value of the natural and cultural heritage, as well as to the growth of the level of the given services, tourism is directed to the boom of alternative types of tourism and especially agro-ecotourism, which went through an enormous rise and demand. The change of the consumer's behavior and the tourist's consideration of the environment has led organizations taking actions in the sector, to the adoption of high level of standards in all aspects of the generative procedure. The main reason for this continual improvement of the service level and the quality of the given services, as well as the clamp-down for the protection of the environment, was the reason that sustainable tourist growth became a stratigical aim. The quality and the practices that ensure sustainability are a continuous procedure which is accomplished with the implementation of quality systems, aiming to achieve the Total Quality. Companies with comply with the specific standards receive quality marks, which conform to this kind of favour that will remain to the consumer's consciousness.

In that perspective, the aim of the research was to examine whether agro-ecotourist enterprises are certified for the given services, for the protection for the consumers/ tourists, as well as for the protection of the environment. The research was carried out in the first two months of 2013 in the region of Thessaly, and more specifically in the prefecture of Karditsa.

Through the use of questionnaires and personal interviews, data was gathered and analyzed with the use of SPSS. Through statistical analysis, we detect that the majority of the organizations do not apply any certification system for the services that offer. However, most of the entrepreneurs were disposed to learn them and apply them to their companies.

**Key words:** Tourism enterprises, quality systems, consumer's protection, Karditsa, Greece.

## 1. Introduction

The current challenges make the constant search and adoption of sustainable touristic development necessary. This kind of development has both the human and the environment in the centre of interest. The touristic development should aim to both increase the level of the offered services' quality and to incorporate activities that would upgrade the environment. The first main point of environmental certification took place in 1985, when the first blue flags were awarded as a way to encourage the abeyance of the European Council's legislation for swimming water quality.<sup>17</sup>

In 1996, the organization of international standards launched ISO 14001, which is awarded to organizations, industries and touristic enterprises. In 1998, the environmental program of the United Nations published its first report concerning ecological signs for tourism. EMAS was invented by the local authorities and it is the only version for the services.

The incorporation of an environmental direction to the touristic enterprises may well contribute to their sustainable development. On the one hand the preservation of the quality of the environment is necessary to maintain a good quality level in the touristic industry. On the other hand, being environmentally conscious and developing such activities, may be used as tools by the touristic enterprises in order to attract visitors.<sup>18</sup>

The main strategic target of touristic development is the constant improvement of the services and products provided.

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<sup>17</sup> Avlonitis S. (2003) Control Data & Quality Ensurance, Ellin publications, Athens

<sup>18</sup> Spanos I., Lagoudi A. (2002) Complete environmental management for hotel units. The prerequisites of development, [www.hotel-restaurant.gr](http://www.hotel-restaurant.gr)



## **2. Quality and certification in the Greek touristic industry**

According to the evaluations and predictions so far, the visitability of the Greek touristic destinations has been severely damaged by the crisis while other destinations' visitability has remained intact or even increased. The current adverse situation brings forward the eternal problems of Greek tourism and it makes it necessary for the touristic enterprises to change their developmental strategies.

Since the beginning of the 90s, the characteristics of the activity of the Greek touristic industry have utterly changed. However, Greek tourism has not managed to live up to the modern challenges and expectations. Little attention was paid to the development of the general touristic product and to the upgrade of the services offered.

The current decade is characterized by deep recession that has brought into surface all the structural weaknesses and the problems of the Greek touristic industry. The establishment of special institutions and scientists brought about the necessity to adopt new entrepreneurial policies that would focus on the upgrade of the services and the pursuit of quality in order to ensure sustainability and competitiveness.

The Greek touristic industry is in the middle of a critical crossroad. The consumerist attitude has changed, new destinations and markets have appeared, new forms of tourism have developed, new technologies have emerged and the touristic products now follow different paths.

Under the shadow of the current adverse situation, quality is considered to be one of the main targets that will eventually lead the touristic industry out of the crisis.

Despite the excessive touristic mobility and the large profits made out of it, it is a fact that we have not yet reached the desired level of services and infrastructure.<sup>19</sup> Many hotel units, small or large, have adopted policies and strategies so as to improve the quality of the services they offer.

The installation of standardization qualifications prepares the ground for satisfied customers, high productivity, satisfied employees and increased competitiveness.

## **3. Certification systems in Greek agrotourism**

So far in Greece there is no commonly accepted certification system. The term "certification" is widely used but every time it refers to different things.

All the touristic institutions agree that the qualification systems for sustainable tourism should incorporate elements of both the procedure and the execution. However, the emphasis should be on execution. The certification signs are awarded by non-governmental organizations, private companies and governmental organizations. They are awarded to all those businesses that meet certain criteria.

The lack of specific methods to impose sustainable development in the touristic industry has provoked the emergence of a number of voluntary initiatives in the form of ethic codes, guidebooks, awards and ecological signs. There are many ecological

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<sup>19</sup> Tsiotras G. (2002), Quality Improvement Mpenou publications, Athens

signs that are characterized by different meanings, criteria, geographical field, complex messages, covering thus the requirements of an evaluation process. Due to the large number of the existed qualification systems, there is a confusion concerning the advantages of each one.

The certification systems that exist today are:

♥ **Agrocert certification system:** it provides certification to protected destination of origin and protected geographical indication products as well as to special poultry products.

♥ **Agrotourism Certification System:** it was established in Greece by AGROTOURISTIKI S.A and it is awarded to touristic businesses of the countryside.

♥ **Local Quality Agreements:** Globalization and open markets have resulted in the increase of competitiveness for the agricultural regions. In order to face the new situation, to promote themselves in the market, to support their local services and products, many regions in Greece and Europe have established the “Local Quality Agreements”. The Local Quality Agreements in tourism focus on the improvement of the quality of the services offered in the countryside. They differentiate the touristic products by incorporating elements of traditional legacy (architecture, gastronomy), that is the identity of each region. The target is to exploit the local production of agricultural products.

There are the following certification systems in the field of the research:

♦ **Local Agreement PINDOS:** The main target of this certification is to form the appropriate circumstances for sustainable development in the mountains. The implementation of an alternative developmental model aims to withhold the current population and to attract new. The entrepreneurs that will be awarded by PINDOS, will obtain several privileges, such as the preservation of the agricultural identity, the designation of cultural legacy and the proposition and implementation of initiatives.

♦ **The Local Quality Agreement “Xenios Zeus”:** The local quality agreement for tourism in the prefecture of Kozani, titled as “Xenios Zeus”, is a modern cooperation of private character that is charged with the responsibility to benefit the society and its citizens. This company, which was created mainly for the local quality agreement, is of social, educative, scientific, environmental and nonprofit nature.

## **4. The empirical research**

### ***4.1 The methodology of the research***

In order to examine the degree of adaptation and implementation of certification systems in agrotourism, a field research was realized in March 2012. The field of the research was certain agrotouristic enterprises in the prefectures of Kozani and Florina. These two prefectures are engaged with an agrotouristic identity and development that has been upgraded during the past decade.

The 25 enterprises that participated in the research invested on their businesses and were funded by the Community Initiative operational Program LEADER+ and by the programs of agricultural regional growth (OPAAH) in order to upgrade or establish restaurants and coffee shops.

The research was realized through structured questionnaires that were completed by the means of personal interviews. The questionnaire includes four units. The first unit is about the demographic characteristics and it consists of two subunits which have six and five questions respectively. The second unit includes eighteen questions and examines the evaluation of Leader+ in the prefectures of Kozani and Florina. This unit defines and assesses the impact of the program, positive or negative, on the local economy. The third unit consists of nineteen questions that refer to the evaluation of the certification systems ISO and HACCP, the respective local systems and their contribution to the increase of competitiveness. Finally, the participants make their propositions and talk about their plans to acquire a kind of certification system and they also talk about the future of agrotourism in general and their business in particular.

#### ***4.2 The findings of the research***

After statistically processing the answers, the following conclusions can be reached:

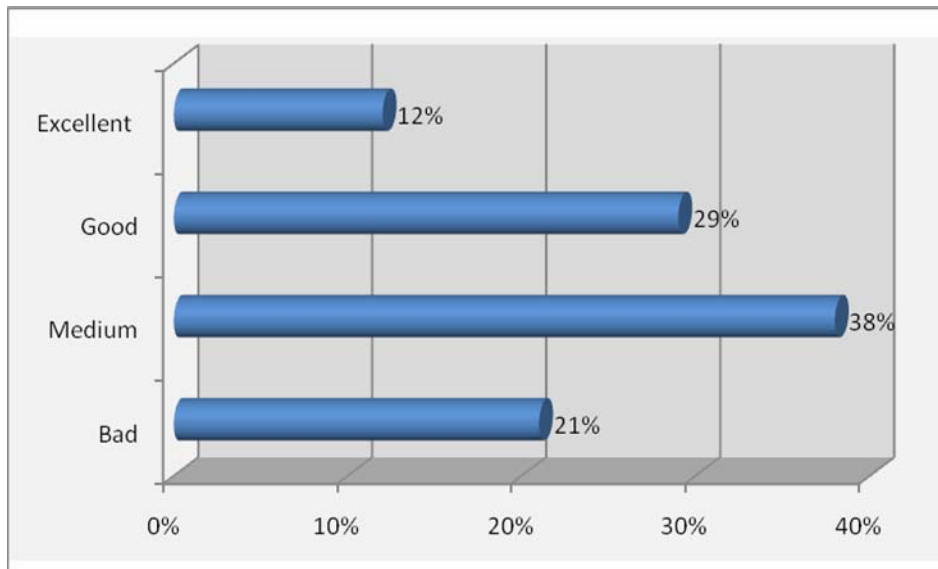
The majority of the participants in the research are men between 31 and 40 years old while women of the same age represent on 8% of the respondents. 21% and 13% of the participants are men of 41-50 and 51-60 respectively while the respective percentage for women is much lower: 4%.

What is quite interesting is the level of education of the participants. 71% of them are secondary education graduates. 21% of them are upper education graduates and only 8% are primary education graduates.

Most of the respondents (54%) have been working in the touristic industry from 6 to 10 years. Those who have been active in tourism business from 1 to 5 and from 11 to 15 years share the same percentage: 21%. Only 4% have been in the business from 16 to 20 years. Therefore, the research is mainly about “young” enterprises.

The participants' evaluation about the level of quality of agrotourism in the prefectures of Kozani and Florina was recorded as follows: medium (38%), good (29%), bad (21%) and excellent (12%). Here is the relative graph:

1<sup>st</sup> Graph: Level of quality in Agrotourism



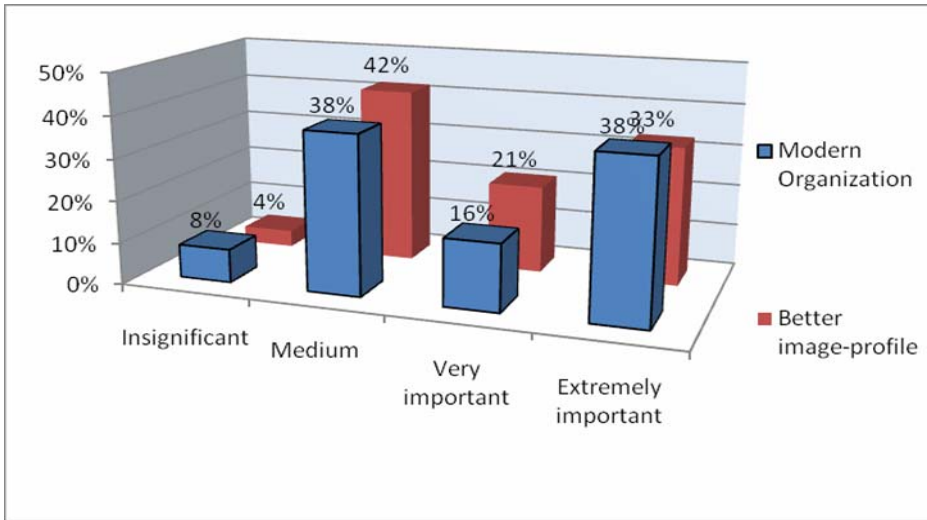
The vast majority of the agrotouristic enterprises (92%) are not ISO certified. That leaves only a percentage of 8% of enterprises that are certified.

The agrotouristic enterprises argue that an ISO certification gives an enterprise a comparative advantage. This comparative advantage concerns the modern organization, the better image, the better quality of services offered and eventually the satisfied customer.

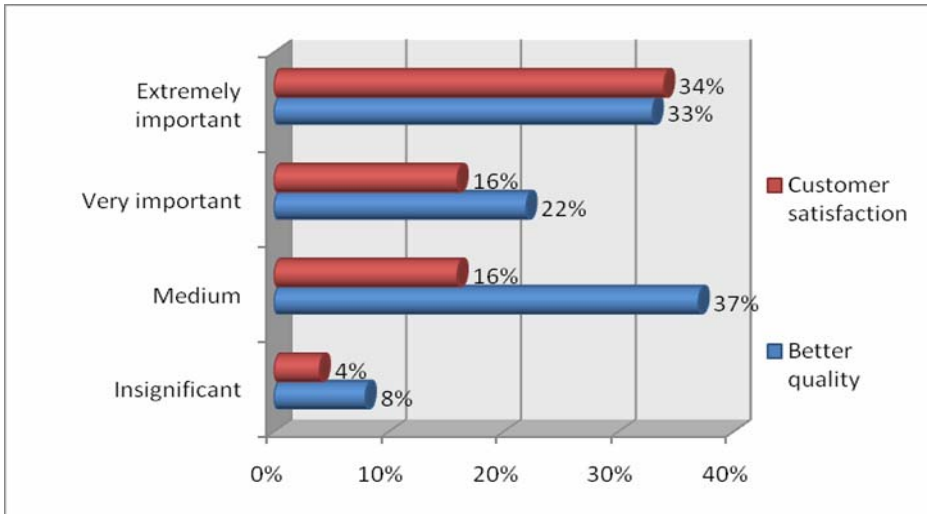
More particularly, the advantages are evaluated to be of medium importance to of extreme importance. Only a low percentage of the participants (4-8%) consider that the advantages from an ISO certification are indifferent.

These evaluations are presented in the following diagram:

2<sup>nd</sup> Diagram: Evaluation of the advantages from ISO certification



3<sup>rd</sup> Diagram: Evaluation of the advantages from ISO certification



Only 8% of the enterprises are ISO certified.

The biggest part of the participants consider that the benefit from HACCP certification is extremely important. The evaluations are presented in the following table:

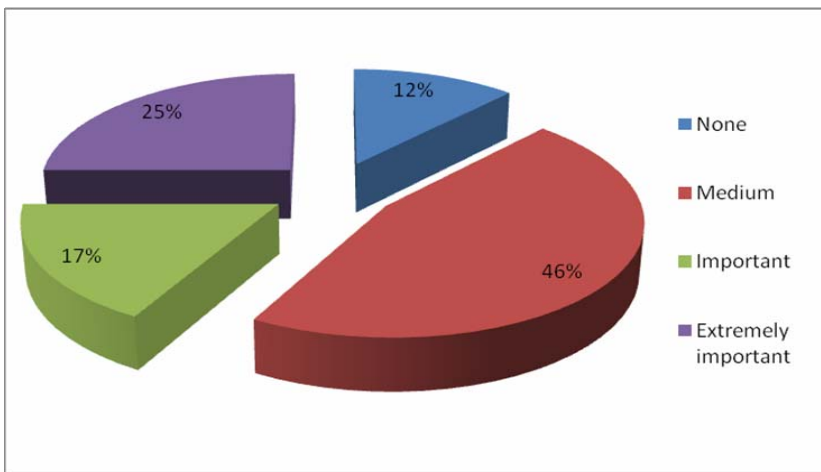
**3<sup>rd</sup> Table: Evaluation of the advantages from HACCP certification**

	Medium	Much	Very Much
Customer's satisfaction	21%	33%	46%
Food quality	21%	29%	50%
Product Security	25%	33%	42%
Employees' Security	25%	29%	46%
Sanitary Production Conditions	21%	33%	46%

The only local certification that some of the enterprises have been awarded to, is the local quality agreement "Xenios Zeus". 17% of the participant enterprises are certified by "Xenios Zeus".

Most of the respondents consider that the contribution of local certification systems to the increase of competitiveness in agrotouristic enterprises is of medium importance. The evaluations are presented in the following graph:

**4<sup>th</sup> Graph: Contribution of local certification systems to the increase of competitiveness in agrotouristic enterprises**



When it comes to the contribution of the program Leader+, the evaluations seem to consider it of medium importance for the reduction of local inequalities (34%), the new investments (35%), the upgrade of traditional settlements (42%) and the utilization of local products (34%).

The respondents think that the impact of Leader+ on the enhancement of entrepreneurship (46%), on the creation of new jobs and attraction of new investments (37%), is important.

The majority of the participant enterprises think that the local economy has been importantly benefited from the new investments by creating new jobs and additional incomes.

The participants seem to consider medium or minimum the impact on the rise of prices (37%), on the income outflow (37%). They also believe that the negative impact on the local economy is of minimum importance (46%).

Many respondents appear to be rather pessimistic about the future course of agrotourism due to the economic crisis, the problematic infrastructure and the limited accessibility and transportation.

Another restraining factor is that a big part of the funding was given to entrepreneurs that did not have the technical knowledge to offer quality services to the costumers.

The majority of the respondents predict that the future of their enterprises will be from stable to worse and they mainly justify this prediction to their pending bank loans.

## 5. Conclusions

The current challenges make the constant search and adoption of sustainable touristic development necessary. This kind of development has both the human and the environment in the centre of interest. The touristic development should aim to both increase the level of the offered services' quality and to incorporate activities that would upgrade the environment.

The Greek touristic industry is in the middle of a critical crossroad. The consumerist attitude has changed, new destinations and markets have appeared, new forms of tourism have developed, new technologies have emerged and the touristic products now follow different paths.

Under the shadow of the current adverse situation, quality is considered to be one of the main targets that will eventually lead the touristic industry out of the crisis.

Despite the excessive touristic mobility and the large profits made out of it, it is a fact that we have not yet reached the desired level of services and infrastructure.<sup>20</sup> Many hotel units, small or large, have adopted policies and strategies so as to improve the quality of the services their offer.

The lack of specific methods to impose sustainable development in the touristic industry has provoked the emergence of a number of voluntary initiatives in the form of ethic codes, guidebooks, awards and ecological signs. There are many ecological signs that are characterized by different meanings, criteria, geographical field, complex messages, covering thus the requirements of an evaluation process.

The realization of the empirical research leads us to the following conclusions:

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<sup>20</sup> Tsiotras G. (2002), Quality Improvement Mpenou publications, Athens

The majority of the Greek agrotouristic enterprises consider that the certification systems in tourism, local or not, contribute from moderately to significantly to the competitiveness of their enterprises.

While most of the agrotouristic enterprises seem to be interested in ISO and HACCP certifications, only very few of them are certified or wish to get certified in the future.

The agrotouristic enterprises are aware of the advantages of a certified business: modern organization, better profile, better product quality, more satisfied costumers, and sanitary conditions of production, food quality and security for both their employees and their products.

Most of the enterprises are not familiar with the Local Quality Agreements, even though the entrepreneurs are young. Most of the participants do not intend to acquire a sort of certification due to lack of information and reservation during the economic crisis.

Many respondents appear to be rather pessimistic about the future course of agrotourism due to the economic crisis, the problematic infrastructure and the limited accessibility and transportation.

Another restraining factor is that a big part of the funding was given to entrepreneurs that did not have the technical knowledge to offer quality services to the costumers.

The majority of the respondents predict that the future of their enterprises will be from stable to worse and they mainly justify this prediction to their pending bank loans.



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# *Willingness to invest in medical tourism in Greece*

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## **ABSTRACT**

**Introduction :** Greece is experiencing a deep economic crisis while seeking for new sources of revenues. Nowadays, medical tourism seems to be an effective mean of economic growth which could facilitate the way out of the crisis.

**Purpose :** To investigate tourism companies' willingness to invest in medical tourism in Greece.

**Material & Methods :** A nationwide survey was carried out in 2012. The target population consisted of all the 337 5-star hotels across the country and 28 companies-members of the Hellenic Association of Professional Congress Organizers (HAPCO).

Data was gathered by emailing a structured questionnaire to the executives of the abovementioned companies. The questionnaire investigated the executives' opinion and experience regarding the characteristics of the tourism facilities of their company, their evaluation of the existing medical tourist infrastructure in Greece and perspectives for future investment in the field.

Descriptive and econometric analyses have been performed. The willingness to invest in medical tourism (1: yes, 0: no) has been used as the dependent variable. The companies' characteristics (the degree to which the actions taken regarding tourist awareness on medical tourism are effective in attracting tourists, the personnel training on medical tourism etc.) as well as the ability of the local market to support medical tourism were used as the independent variables.

Independent variables were rated in a four category Likert Scale (1: very low - 4: very high).

For the econometric analysis of the willingness to invest in medical tourism and given that the response variable was dichotomous, logistic regression was applied.

**Results:** According to our findings, 177 hotels and 15 members of HAPCO responded and completed the questionnaire, corresponding to a 53% and 54% response rate respectively.

According to the analysis, the willingness to invest in medical tourism depends on the personnel's training on medical tourism as well as on the ability of local community to support medical tourism.

Half of executives (50%) evaluated the personnel's training on medical tourism as low and 43% responded that the ability of the local community to support medical tourism is high.

The econometric analysis indicates that the likelihood of willingness to invest in medical tourism is positively associated with personnel's training on medical tourism (OR=4.56). Additionally, the higher the ability of local community to support medical tourism, the higher the likelihood to express willingness to invest in medical tourism (OR=3.11).

**Conclusions:** High class hotels seem to be willing to invest in medical tourism, since they have the ability and the relevant infrastructure to develop it.

Obviously, medical tourism in Greece should constitute an important source of national income and consequently, an alternative for the country to exit the economic crisis.

**Keywords:** Medical tourism, investments, infrastructure, medical care, Greece.

## INTRODUCTION

Medical tourism, nowadays, represents a wide range of activities, including wellness and spa treatments, all kinds of cosmetic services as well as some of the most complicated medical operations. In the past, medical tourism referred to wealthy patients of developing countries who often journeyed from less developed countries to medical centres in more developed countries, where they received health care services that were not available in their countries of origin. As technology and medical know-how dissolved to emerging market countries, a new model of medical tourism – from rich to poor countries – evolved over the last two decades. Rich country tourists started to exploit the possibility of combining tourist aspects with medical ones. (Horowitz et al. 2010)

The growth of the medical tourism industry usually follows the trends of general tourism as well as those of the national and/or international economy. Also, it has been shown that medical tourism has a significant impact on countries' national economy as well as on the hospital budgets generating up to 10% of total revenue from international patients (Hungarian, 2010). Recent U.S data show an average annual rate growth on medical tourist arrivals by 4% from 1996 to 2008, a decrease by -4.2% in 2009 due to recession as well as to severe epidemiological issues and an increase by 6.9% in 2010 mostly related to the U.S economic recovery (CBO, 2010; Caballero et al, 2006; Deardorff, 2005). In economic terms, worldwide business in medical tourism grossed about \$60 bn in 2006 and it is expected to rise to \$100 bn in 2012 (Deloitte, 2008a). According to international data, emerging markets in Asia, such as India, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, in Europe and Latin America are some of the most attractive and low cost medical tourist destinations. At the same time, USA and European hospitals – especially in the UK as well as in Germany – are able to attract foreign patients for high quality and specialized care. (Hungarian, 2010 c)

In Greece, data on medical tourist flows are poor and consequently, its impact on the health sector and the overall economy is difficult to estimate. Furthermore, the lack of standardised and integrated information systems in the public administration across the country prohibits collection and elaboration of relevant data. Greece is among the countries with the highest demand on Mediterranean destinations and it also offers natural advantages, tourist infrastructures and expertise at a high level. However, medical tourism has been very recently prioritised in the political agenda mainly due to the economic recession and the tuff austerity measures taken in the country.

In this context, the aim of this study was to investigate tourist executives' opinions, aspects and beliefs in medical tourism and to examine factors affecting their potential investments in the country.

### **Tourism health related terminology and historical background**

“Medical tourism” or alternatively called “health tourism” and “wellness tourism” is a term that has risen from the rapid growth of an industry where people from all around the world are travelling to other countries to obtain medical, dental

and surgical care while at the same time touring, vacationing and fully experiencing the attractions of the countries that they are visiting. The combination of medicine, i.e. providing complex medical services and tourism is a relatively new type of tourism showing a high rate of growth. It combines travelling with the provision of various, often serious medical services, such as operations, transplantations, plastic surgery, dental procedures, as well as other more simple medical interventions. This kind of health tourism most often involves cross border travelling, where the provision of medical services is the only or the primary motive for travelling (Connell 2006). There is a difference between the use of terms “health and medical tourism” based mainly on the type of intervention on the body (Cook, 2008). Health tourism aims to improve tourists’ health status by relaxing in spa or providing alternative treatments, whereas medical tourism implies diagnosis, hospitalization and surgical operations to improve or restore health in the long term(Connell 2006).

Since the end of the 19th century, richer citizens and the elite from underdeveloped countries travelled towards medical centres in more developed countries i.e Europe, for diagnosis and treatments which were not possible to obtain in their own countries. Also, rich patients from northern countries of Europe travelled towards tourist destinations such as the Swiss Alps and on the Mediterranean coast in order to be treated in sanatoriums for tuberculosis. In the last few decades, this emigrational flow has taken a new direction. More specifically, an increasing number of patients from developed countries have been travelling to medical centres of less developed countries in order to obtain certain medical services (Horowitz et al. 2010). It should be noted that numerous factors of medical tourist demand and supply have influenced this change of direction, such as the inability to obtain health service in their own countries due to the high health care costs, the absence of public or private insurance schemes coverage, long waiting lists, the non existence of specific health technologies, contracting with well known western clinics and hospital universities and other ethical and religious issues (Connell, 2006; Horowitz et al. 2010).

## **MATERIAL & METHODS**

This is a nationwide survey conducted through the use of a questionnaire given to 337 five-star hotels in Greece as well as to 28 member companies of the Hellenic Association of Professional Congress Organizers (HAPCO).

The questionnaire, consisting of three parts, was the survey’s key tool which investigated executives’ opinion and experience regarding the characteristics of their companies’ tourist facilities, their evaluation of the existing medical tourist infrastructure in Greece and the perspectives for future investment in the field. The first part includes respondent demographic data, the second part contains questions regarding spa tourism and the economy, while the third includes questions concerning the funding of spa tourism.

At first, a pilot survey was conducted so that the initial questionnaire would be corrected and rendered perfectly understandable. The pilot survey took place at 3 hotels and 2 member companies of the Hellenic Association of Professional Congress Organizers (HAPCO).

Our focus will be on non-cosmetic surgery and medical treatment. In this case, tourists sought sophisticated, often technologically advanced services that were typically not available in their home countries.

The questionnaire was emailed to respondents and it was sent back the same way.

Descriptive and econometric analyses have been performed. The willingness to invest in medical tourism (1: yes, 0: no) has been used as the dependent variable. The companies' characteristics (the degree to which the actions taken regarding tourist awareness on medical tourism are effective in attracting tourists, the personnel training on medical tourism etc.) as well as the ability of the local market to support medical tourism were used as the independent variables. Independent variables were rated in a four category Likert Scale (1: very low - 4: very high). For the econometric analysis of the willingness to invest in medical tourism and given that the response variable was dichotomous, logistic regression was applied.

## RESULTS

According to our findings, 177 hotel and 15 members of HAPCO executives responded and completed the questionnaire, corresponding to a 53% and 54% response rate respectively. Based on the descriptive analysis, the sample characteristics are presented in Table 1.

Table 1 Demographic characteristics

	Frequency	Percent
<b>Gender</b>		
Female	40	20,8%
Male	152	79,2%
<b>Age</b>		
20-35	38	19,8%
36-45	72	37,5%
46-55	76	39,6%
56+	6	3,1%
<b>Education</b>		
High school -college	12	6,3%
University	105	54,7%

Master	75	39,1%
<b>Family status</b>		
Single	41	21,4%
Married	140	72,9%
Widow	2	1,0%
Divorced	9	4,7%
<b>Position</b>		
Owner	67	35,3%
tour-operator	4	2,1%
Employee	113	59,5%
Other	6	3,2%

According to table 1 the ratio of female and male respondents is 20.8% and 79.2% respectively. 39.6% has an age between 46 and 55 years old, 37.5% is between the age of 36 and 45 years old, 19.8% is between the age of 20 -35 years old and the rest 3.1% is above the age of 56 years old. Regarding the issue of education 54.7% of the respondents have a University degree, 39.1% have a master degree and the rest 6.3% is a graduate of either a high-school or a college. On the issue of family status 72.9% of the respondents is married, 21.4% is single, 4.7% is divorced and the rest 1% is widow. Finally, 59.5% of the respondents are employees, 35.3% of the respondents own the hotel, 2.1% are tour operators and the rest 3.2% gave a different answer.

In table 2 below the level of information given to tourists regarding the medical tourism is been presented.

Table 2 Level of tourist information on issues of medical tourism

	Frequency	Percent
Little	81	45.0
Moderate	18	10.0
A Lot	49	27.2
Very much	11	6.1
I don't know/refuse to answer	21	11.7

Total	180	100.0
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Table 2 shows that almost half of the responders (43.3%=10%+27.2%+6.1%) considered at least moderate the information given to tourists on issues of medical tourism while 45% considered that the amount of information is not enough. Also 11.7% of the respondents refused to answer or they did not have an opinion on the specific issue. It is obvious that the executives are divided on this issue which could be interpreted as a sign that the level of tourist information on issues of medical tourism should and can be improved not only by increasing the quantity of the information given but improving also the quality of the information.

Table 3 Personnel training on issues of medical tourism

	Frequency	Percent
Little	86	46.0
Moderate	20	10.7
A Lot	52	27.8
Very much	13	7.0
I don't know/refuse to answer	16	8.6
Total	187	100.0

In table 3 the level of personnel training on issues of medical tourism is presented. Almost half of the responders (46%) evaluated at low level the personnel training on issues of medical tourism while 45.4% evaluated the training as at least sufficient. Also 8.6% of the respondents refused to answer or they did not have an opinion on the specific issue. It is obvious that the executives are divided on this issue which could be interpreted as a sign that the level of personnel training on issues of medical tourism should and can be improved by increasing not only the time of training but also improving the quality of the training.



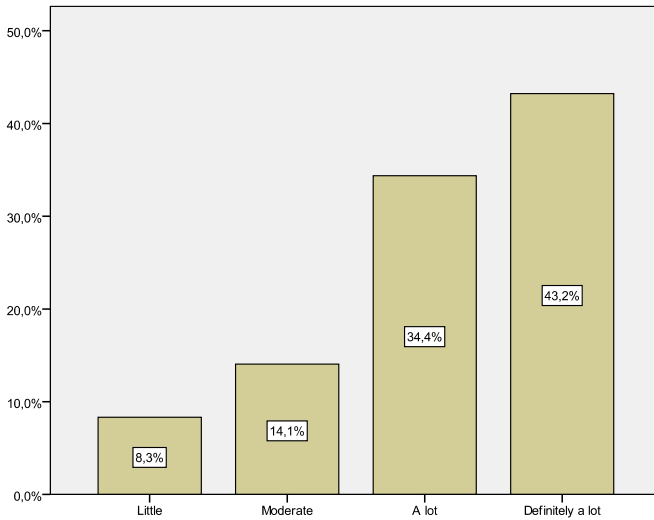


Figure 1: Ability of local community to support medical tourism

According to figure 1 that presents the ability of local community to support medical tourism it seems that the majority of the executives (91.7%) evaluated highly this ability and only 8.3% evaluated at a low level. They also stated that the local community is ready to support medical tourism if it has the chance to do so.

Table 4 Willingness to invest in medical tourism

	Frequency	Percent
No	14	7.4
Yes	153	81
I don't know/refuse to answer	22	11.6
Total	189	100.0

In table 4 below the willingness to invest in medical tourism is presented. It seems that the majority of the executives (81%) evaluated it positively while a 7.4% of the executives expressed negatively towards the willingness to invest. Also 11.6% of the respondents refused to answer or they did not have an opinion on the specific issue. It can be noticed from above that there is a strong and realistic will based on the executives' opinion for investments in the medical tourism sector.

In table 5 below the results of the econometric analysis regarding the dependent variable of 'willingness to invest in medical tourism' are been presented.

Table 5 Multiple logistic Regression (Willingness to invest in medical tourism)

	OR	Std. Err.	z	P>z	95% Confidence Interval	
<b>Ability of local community to support medical tourism</b>	3.108363	1.404452	2.51	0.012	1.282134	7.535813
<b>Personnel training on medical tourism</b>	4.56318	2.831116	2.45	0.014	1.352571	15.39484

According to table 5 results, it can be observed that the ability of local community to support medical tourism affects in a statistical significant level the willingness to invest in medical tourism ( $p=0.012$ ). The same applies for the personnel training on medical tourism ( $p=0.014$ ). Moreover the direction of influence of both independent variables to the dependent is positive.

Regarding the index McFadden  $R^2 = 0.2092$  (satisfactory values above 0.20), and the  $p_{\text{Likelihood Ratio Test}} < 0.001$ , the model can be considered at least sufficient. Moreover on the basis of Link Test, the model does not have any specifications error since  $p_{\text{hat}} < 0.05$ ,  $p_{\text{hat}}^2 > 0.05$ . Moreover since  $p_{\text{Hosmer \& Lemeshow -Goodness of fit}} = 0.3022 > 0.05$  the model fit very well to the data.

## DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to investigate tourism companies' willingness to invest in medical tourism in Greece. A nationwide survey was carried out. The target population consisted of all the 5-star hotels across the country and the companies-members of the Hellenic Association of Professional Congress Organizers (HAPCO).

The majority of the executives evaluated highly the ability of local community to support medical tourism and the willingness to invest in medical tourism positively. Furthermore, the personnel training on issues of medical tourism along with the tourist information given on issues of medical tourism was evaluated below average. This result indicates that the environment for investing in medical tourism is fruitful if the right choices will be done. The support of the local community which is the most important factor has a strong presence, suitable therefore environment for investments. Meanwhile the level of tourist information on issues of medical tourism has some problems that must and can be improved in the future not only by increasing the quantity of the information given but also improving the quality of the information.

The econometric analysis indicated that the likelihood of willingness to invest in medical tourism is positively associated with personnel's training on medical

tourism. Additionally the higher the ability of local community to support medical tourism, the higher the likelihood to express willingness to invest in medical tourism.

These results are very important for our country, since they show that Greece, even being under great depression has the ability to overcome the obstacles and enter the international tourism competition if it makes the right choices by implementing rational national policies. One of these policies should be the development of the medical tourism. The growth of this sector will bring prosperity to the country. Local communities and the whole Greek population are in favor of medical tourism and will support any kind of investment in this sector.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The outcome from the whole analysis was that high class hotels seem to be willing to invest in medical tourism, since they have the ability and the relevant infrastructure to develop it. Obviously, medical tourism in Greece should constitute an important source of national income and consequently, an alternative for the country to exit the economic crisis.

Since, medical tourism has been very recently prioritised in the political agenda and given the positive willingness to invest in this field, further research is needed on their potential impact on the national economy.

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# *How DMO Reflects Community Identity in Festivals for Destination Marketing*

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## **ABSTRACT**

Recently, the importance of local community identity in destination branding has been argued, but there is lack of studies about relationship between community identity and destination branding using festivals. This study aims to investigate to what extent festival identity is reflected as a way of destination branding adopting the case study approach. Content analysis using brochures, guidebooks and website, and expert interviews with practitioners from DMO was employed to confirm the findings from content analysis. The findings indicate that community identity is generally reflected as a tool of destination branding, but mere reflection of community identity in festival does not yield optimal returns. This research identifies the importance of reflecting community identity in festivals as well as how to reflect community identity in festivals plays significant role in achieving the purpose of the festival.

**Key Words:** Destination Marketing, Festival, Community Identity

## **INTRODUCTION**

Local community plays the most significant role in destination branding, for it is the local community that adds uniqueness to the festival (Dredge & Jenkinson, 2007). According to Bowdin, Allen, O'Toole, Harris, & McDonnell (2006), festivals must reflect the genuineness and uniqueness of the local community if they are to attract tourists. From this point of views, the development of festival's brand identity should originate from the identity of the local community, because a brand is created by and emerges from the people themselves (Gilmore, 2002).

Since it is the local community that communicates with visitors and adds a unique atmosphere to the festival (Dredge & Jenkinson, 2007), it is important for DMOs (Destination Marketing Organization) to know what the community identity is and how it can be reflected in destination branding and in the festivals themselves to boost the destination's image as a tourist destination (Getz, 2005). By considering these elements, DMOs could gain the support of the local community, which is essential to the sustainability of festivals (Getz, 2005), but also the support of cultural tourists who seek authenticity in their destinations (Real, 2000). By reflecting their true identity in their brand identity, communities can also strengthen their pride, which will positively influence the communities' attitudes toward visitors (Dredge & Jenkinson, 2007; Getz, 2005).

Given the scarcity of research on community identity in festivals held for the purpose of destination branding, the current study uses a case study of the Hi! Seoul Festival in Seoul, South Korea, to provide insight into the importance of community identity in festivals held for destination branding. In addition, by assessing Seoul's strengths and weaknesses in portraying its image in festivals, the study provides information to other DMOs that are planning or holding festivals as a way of destination branding.

## **Lituratione Review**

### ***Destination Branding***

There has been general agreement that concept of brand can be applied not only to products but also services and places. Increasing competition in world tourism market and growing substitutability of destinations influence today's tourists to have more destination choice. As tourists are becoming more sophisticated, and they want holiday experiences different from others as a way of displaying their identity, they want more other than simply traditional 'sand, sun and sea' type of vacation. Thus, the need of differentiation for destinations from other competitors has increased (Peirce & Ritchie, 2007).

Consequently, a brand that can help consumer to simplify the process of decisions, creating emotional appeal and exclusive value and delivering expectations, became considered as invaluable. Today's destinations need to provide the reason to choose the destination among other alternatives, answering to the question why visitors should visit the very destination (Anholt, 2007; Kolb, 2006; Morgan & Pritchard, 1998). The uniqueness of destination branding compared to product branding is that destination branding needs to consider social aspects such as impact on the

community, and it goes to the heart of questions of identity and social evolution. Destination branding embodies its histories and locations. In addition, destination branding includes the capital usually generated from taxes of its residents and invested futures that promise or highlight certain specific possibilities which the destination branding needs to accomplish (Donald & Gammack, 2007).

Brand is considered to consist of two components which are brand identity and brand image. While brand image represents the actual image perceived by consumers and help them to choose a destination reflecting their identity (Anholt, 2007), brand identity in destination branding is more internal focused component, representing self-image and value, and desired market image of producer such as DMOs and stakeholders of a destination, and this affects brand image through brand positioning (Cai, 2002; Pike, 2008) (see Fig. 1).

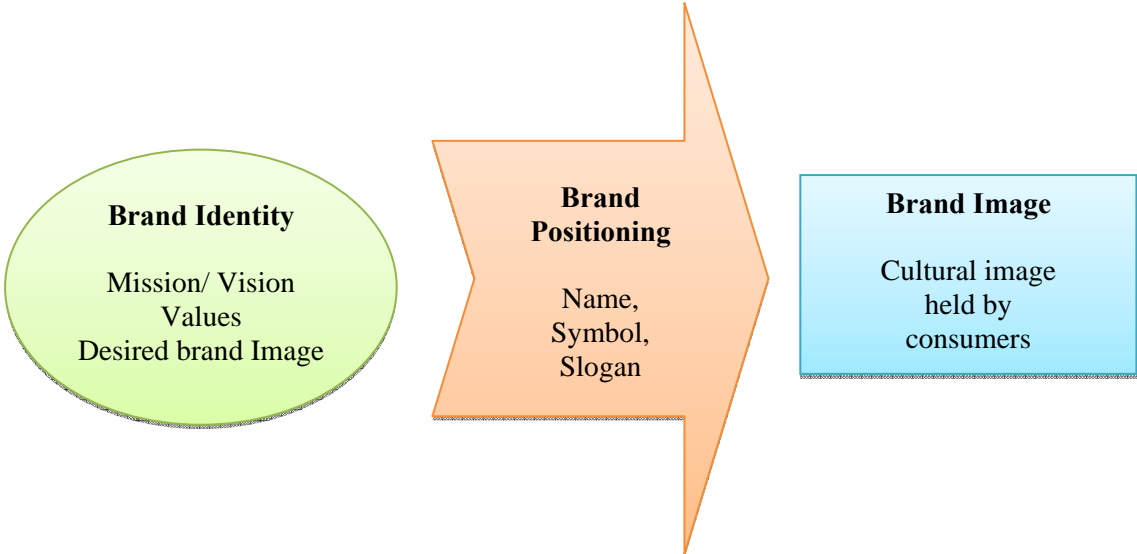


Figure 2: Branding identity, branding positioning, and brand image

Source: Pike, 2008:179

Inter-connectedness of destination image and destination brand identity in the minds of tourists and mechanics of marketing has been stressed in recent studies (Henderson, 2006). Though studies of brand image which focus on customers' point of view have been conducted increasingly, there is sparse published research regarding destination brand identity (Ekinici & Hosany, 2006; Pike, 2008). Besides, it is recently argued that the key point in destination branding is that brand identity has to be rooted in community and their value of the destination, for in many places a brand is created by or emerges from the people in the destination (Donald & Gammack 2007; Gilmore, 2002; Pike, 2008). This would imply that more attention to be placed on the concepts of identity and community.



## ***Festival and Local Community in Destination Branding***

Successful festivals make a contribution to travelers' favorable perception of a destination and recognition of a place as a potential tourist destination on the tourism map and help a place to gain a lively and cheery image (Felsenstein & Fleischer, 2003). With their implications of joyfulness, sociability, and cheerfulness, festivals provide a ready-made set of positive images (Quinn, 2005). Therefore, festivals are often used to give people a sense the cultural atmosphere of a local destination and to deliver the impression of variety, activity, and sophistication (Getz, 1991). Destination managers use festivals because of the image associated with festivals, which could be transferred to the image of the host community and destination (Getz, 2005). Therefore, major festivals and events have become a standard destination-branding strategy (Getz, 2005; Richards and Wilson, 2006). However, perhaps because festivals are considered 'quick fix' solutions (Quinn, 2005, p.927) for shaping destinations' images, they run the risk of duplicating other festivals (Richards & Wilson, 2004; Richards & Wilson, 2006) and lacking any real connection with the destination, especially with the local residents (Quinn, 2005).

Festivals enhance local continuity by creating opportunities to share histories of community, cultural customs, and ideas, and by building settings for social interactions (Quinn, 2005). Previous studies (Getz, 1997; Quinn, 2005) indicated that festival increases community pride and spirit as well as enables the residents to create new vision of the place they live, and strengthens the community's tradition and values. Local residents play an important role in terms of human resources in festivals, as community involvement and its management are key factors in festivals and their planning processes. Community involvement encourages variation and local flavor in the nature of the tourist destination and reflects the attitude and identity of local residents (Steynberg & Saayman, 2004). From this respect, Donald & Gammack (2007) emphasized that every local resident is an ambassador, and if they do not believe in what the destination tries to represent as a brand, that disbelief will be reflected in the destination's image. If festivals are to be effective for branding tourist destinations, they must reflect genuineness and express the uniqueness of local residents (Bowdin et al., 2006), including their sense of community, identity, and place (Derrett, 2003). It is often the case that the local people's attitude toward tourism, their intangible qualities (e.g., their culture), recreational attractions like local festivals, and the atmosphere of the destination are what attract tourists (Dredge & Jenkins, 2007; Donald & Gammack, 2007). Therefore, festivals provide the opportunity to help in creating, changing, or reinforcing the destination brand by reflecting those community identities (Bowdin et al., 2006).

## **METHODOLOGY**

### ***Background Information: Hi! Seoul Festival***

Seoul was chosen as a subject of the case study. Seoul is employing the Hi! Seoul Festival as a way of destination branding to create an image of Seoul as a tourist

destination (Hi Seoul Festival, 2012). The capital city of South Korea, Seoul is one of the fastest-growing tourist destinations in East Asia. While the Korea National Tourism Board is in charge of the national tourism industry and marketing, Seoul City Council is in charge of tourism in Seoul. According to the annual report of the Korea National Tourism Board (KNTO, 2013), the number of foreign tourists who visited South Korea in 2012 was 11.1 million, an increase of 13.7 per cent over 2011. Seoul City Council has been holding the Hi! Seoul Festival since 2003, with the purpose of boosting the image of Seoul as a festival city (Hi Seoul Festival, 2012).

### ***Research Design***

The study was conducted using a qualitative approach, as its purpose is to examine how community identity is reflected in the brand identity that DMO portrays through a festival as a way of destination branding. A qualitative approach was used to explore brand identity, which represents the value and essence of the destination community, and the image drawn by destination marketers. Brochures and tourist guidebooks published by Seoul City Council and the electronic brochure that is the official website of the Hi! Seoul Festival (Hi Seoul Festival, 2012) were used for content analysis (Pike, 2008). The findings of the content analysis were confirmed by three semi-structured interviews: one with a practitioner from the festival division and two with practitioners from the division of city marketing of Seoul City Council.

### **Results and discussion**

#### ***Cohesiveness as a Spirit of Citizens of Seoul***

The first image Seoul City Council tries to portray seems cohesiveness of the citizens of Seoul. In explaining the history of the festival, the organization states, "The huge red wave that engulfed the downtown Seoul area during the 2002 FIFA World Cup Games showed the possibility of a festival that would attract citizen's participation." By putting emphasis on the "red wave" as the origin of the festival to depict unified citizens and their spirit, the website portrays an image of the unifying power and cohesiveness of Seoul's citizens. Seoul City Council explains that, because of the memory of this "red wave," representing cohesiveness, Seoul decided to hold the first Hi! Seoul Festival in May 2003 in place of the Seoul Citizens' Day event. The Seoul Citizens' Day event had been hold in October, but to remember the spirits of the citizens shown during the 2002 FIFA World Cup, Seoul City Council transformed that event into a new festival (Hi Seoul Festival, 2012) and moved it to May. Pictures of the "red wave" taken during the World Cup are found in every guidebook published by Seoul City Council introducing the Hi! Seoul Festival, so this image, representing the unity of the citizens, is a significant image in the festival.

#### ***Culturally International and Diverse***

Another image that Seoul City tries to portray in reflecting the identity of citizens is "international." In the festivals held in 2010, 2011, and 2012, more than half of the performances in the festivals were by international artists (e.g., artists from France,

Mongolia, China, Indonesia, Spain, Canada, Australia, the United Kingdom, Slovenia, and the Czech Republic). As the festival defines itself as an 'international festival', the content of the festival includes diverse genres of music, from western music like jazz to Korean traditional classic music, rather than focusing on a specific genre, such as jazz (Montreal, New Orleans), rock (Woodstock), techno (Detroit, Istanbul), or classical (Wien) music. It also includes all forms of dance, from break dancing to ballet and traditional dance, fashion, theatre, street performances, exhibitions and paintings, with no focus on any one place of origin or genre.

This content of the festival reflects the image of Seoul in terms of culture. In the brochure and guidebooks for tourists, Seoul is described as a place where "you can have it all"—whatever you hope for, whatever you want. The variety of content in the festival also reflects the diverse cultures of the citizens of Seoul, which is too diverse to focus on or collect as one.

One interviewee from the festival division of Seoul City council explained that it is difficult to collect the tastes of Seoul's citizens as one.

*"The taste of the citizens is intricate, so Seoul City Council has changed the content and the themes of the festival every year in an effort to please the citizens of Seoul."*

Clearly, Seoul City Council tries to reflect the cultural characteristic of the citizens in the festival by considering the cultural flavors of the community in the festival's content. Derrett (2003) stated that characteristics of a community are among the elements in constructing community identity. Therefore, by reflecting the characteristics of citizens of Seoul in composing the festival's content, Seoul City Council tries to reflect community identity in the festival.

### ***Open-mindedness and friendliness***

The next image Seoul City tries to portray reflecting community identity in Hi! Seoul Festival is open-mindedness and friendliness. The symbolic building of the Hi! Seoul festival in 2008 and 2009, "May Palace" which was built on Seoul Square during the festival symbolizes open-mindedness and broad horizon of the festival in its design. According to Seoul City Council, traditional palaces are in the form of building, where contains space confined by walls and doors, but May palace does not have doors or walls, but a splendid roof and pillars created by light, meaning that it is wide open to all visitors and citizens providing them with space to be together and dance together ([www.hiseoulfest.org](http://www.hiseoulfest.org)). This symbolic building represents the attitude of citizens of Seoul towards visitors as well. In the guide book introducing Hi! Seoul Festival, Seoul City Council also clarifies that citizens' gracious welcoming attitude towards visitors shown in 2002 FIFA World Cup is reproduced in Hi! Seoul Festival. Also, most of the programs and events are held in open-air places, including major parks and squares of Seoul (e.g. Hangang (River) public park, Seoul square, Cheonggyecheon square).

Moreover, the brand name “Hi! Seoul” itself and the symbol of Seoul “Haechi” represent friendliness as the interviewee from the city marketing division of Seoul City Council remarked.

*“Hi! Seoul’ expresses friendliness. ‘Hi’ is an informal greeting used worldwide, so this brand is intended as a friendly approach to people, as well as to imply the will to expand the city to the world, since ‘hi’ is homophone of ‘high’.”*

*“It is not just enough to have infrastructure and tourist attractions; the hospitality of citizens is what gives visitors a good impression so they want to come again. Besides, ‘Haechi,’ the new symbolic icon of Seoul, is designed to express friendliness.”*

This image of hospitality and friendliness with open-mindedness is one of the themes that can be interpreted from the brand of City of Seoul reflected in Hi! Seoul Festival.

## **Conclusion**

The current study was undertaken in the context of rise of employing festivals as a way of destination branding and how well it reflects community identity for the genuineness and sustainability of festival, since many festivals merely created for destination branding has not been yielding optimal returns recently as expected (Quinn, 2005). Overall, how Seoul City Council tries to portray community identity in destination branding through festival is identified. It could be said that Seoul City Council reflects the community identity considerably well in brand identity, in the themes “cohesiveness” “culturally international and diverse” and “open-mindedness,” as recent study argues that the brand identity should reflect the community identity. Hi! Seoul Festival has shortcoming that it is not originated from the community but strategically created by Seoul City Council for the purpose of boosting image of Seoul as a tourist destination, but Seoul City Council seems to try to find justification of the festival by putting its origin in a significant event of citizen of Seoul and boosting image of “cohesiveness” at the same time.

When reflecting community identity in festivals as a destination branding, the most important thing seem to consider how to reflect the community identity in festivals. Even though it is hard to collect tastes of citizens as one, careful consideration needs to be given about including too many aspects in the festival, since it could give impression of festival as just a ‘collection of everything’ which does not really help to give uniqueness to the festival. This could prevent people from perceiving the contents in detail which is important to induce them to participate in, even though it was an attempt for the community. Regarding contents, it would be necessary for organization to distinguish between what the community generally likes and what the community wants to do “in festival.” Although some parts of festival are composed of voluntary staffs and performers of the community, it is general people of the place who spice the unique atmosphere of the festival which is significant factor in creating image of the destination. They are not guests of the festival, but host to visitors. Therefore, it would be necessary to have more programs that require active participation of general citizens, rather than make them spectators.

There is a limitation that should be considered. The limitation comes from the nature of case study. This study is mere basis for other case studies and research, and findings of this research is confined to the festival in Seoul, thus it needs more case studies of other festivals in other regions to lead deeper understanding of identities and destination branding using festivals.

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# *Franchising: Business Formula of 21<sup>st</sup> Century*

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## **ABSTRACT**

The main purpose of the present research report is to present and analyze franchising as an alternative growth strategy for tourism enterprises that combines a variety of products, services and corporate strategies. Special emphasis is laid on the essential characteristics of franchising as a specific business model for company growth and development. With a view to its specific features, franchising is considered to be one of the most successful business formats in 21st century. The focus is put on the role of the so-called 'responsible franchising', which is providing added value to franchisees by teaching them how to achieve a competitive advantage and maintain a wide range of customers willing to consume franchise products and services. The advantages of franchising are analyzed in details as a method of growth and expansion in the tourism industry. Disadvantages and limitations of this financial instrument are considered, too. The profile of the Bulgarian franchise model is studied as well as the present status and trends of franchise development in Bulgaria. Current problems of the franchise market in this country are discussed.

**Keywords:** Franchising, Growth Strategy, Tourism Enterprises, Responsible Franchising.

## FUNDAMENTAL CHARACTERISTICS OF FRANCHISING

In recent decades franchising has emerged as popular expanding business tool, which combines diversity of products, services and company strategies. This business model became an **effective opportunity** for small tourism enterprises, which cannot afford to finance their development (Dant & Kaufmann, 2003).

A lot of trade formulas and business strategies are defined with the term 'franchising', but often this denotation is given to them incorrectly (Bermúdez, 2002). Defining the franchising concept is a task related to many difficulties, because depending on the perspective of study (law, trade, institutional, etc.), more attention is paid to some aspects than to others. Franchising is a **commercial relationship** between two agents – franchisor and franchisee, who are legally and financially independent, but share a common goal (Insa-Ciriza, 2003). Franchising is based on a contract, by which the franchisor gives to the franchisee the right to use a **developed business concept**, including brand name, products, marketing services, methods and manners of managing the business, in a specific field against payment. Usually in the franchising system there are several franchisees, which have similar cooperation agreements with one and the same franchisor. This allows them to work together on the market by a cooperative system. In this context Díez et al (2005) define franchising as a **cooperative system** between different organizations, bounded by a contract, by which one of them, called the franchisor, gives against payment to the other party, called the franchisee, the right to use the brand name and/or the commercial formula, materialized by certain distinctive signs. The franchisor guarantees at the same time technical support and the necessary regular maintenance services during the term of the contract. From this definition the following **fundamental characteristics of franchising** can be found:

- Franchising is a cooperative system.
- Relations between the two parties are established by a contract.
- Participants in this system are the main company (franchisor) and the companies which sign the contract with the franchisor (franchisees).
- The franchisor provides to its franchisees brand name, commercial formula or know – how, technical or other support during the term of the contract.

Another definition of this **intellectual and financial tool** is given by Bermúdez (2002). He perceives franchising as a **business system for cooperation** which aims to connect two economically and legally independent units in long-term plan with a contract by which one of them (franchisor) provides in good faith to the other (franchisee) the rights to use its business, production, distribution and marketing of tangible or intangible products with proven quality. This product may include basic



and extra services, which might be secured (patents, brands, and etc.) or unsecured (know – how), however all of them should be sufficiently tested, effective and licenced. In return of received rights each franchisee is required to make periodical or lump-sum payments to the franchisor. According to this definition **six interchangeable flows** take place between the parties under this contractual relationship:

- ✓ *Information flow.* Information has to pass between the franchisor and the franchisee,

as well as between the franchisees themselves. This helps for solving emerging problems, exchanging information about the market and various competencies, and for receiving of services and training required by the franchisee.

- ✓ *Material flow.* The right to operate the business of one or more brands with regard to

products, services and know – how, listed in the contract is a prerequisite condition for both parties in a franchise relationship.

- ✓ *Physical flow.* If between the franchisor and the franchisee exists a relationship that aims to exchange material goods, then the physical flow is carried out by the members of the distribution channel.

- ✓ *Financial flow.* The franchisee has to pay off for the goods, services and ideas that it has received by the franchisor.

- ✓ *Satisfaction information.* It is necessary to have information about the extent to which the expectations of the contractual parties – the franchisor and the franchisee, are satisfied with a view to making subsequent decisions.

- ✓ *Transparency.* Giving true and complete information is an important requirement for

maintaining a long-term relationship between the parties.

Franchising might be seen as an **alternative growth strategy**, because the owners of franchise companies are not directly responsible for the financial investments, necessary for the expansion of their businesses. This financial responsibility is taken by franchisees that pay to the franchisor the right to use its trademark and business package against payment of an initial fee and royalty. In the future that capital becomes a valuable and a profitable asset for future business expansion.

In terms of business, the franchise system is an **alternative way to create companies with less risk**, which is a consequence of the application of a proven management model. Therefore, franchising contributes to the expansion of business structures that have already been established. It is important to note that not every company or business could operate by using franchise model. For this purpose, franchising needs a key element for success that is already proven by the franchisor, which has to be distinguishable and able to pass to future franchisees by some adequate training. If this process is not realized in the best way, the company will fail in short or medium period of time.

As a **marketing instrument** and a **distribution tool** of products and services, franchising is suitable for certain tourism enterprises. Before any tourism enterprise considers franchising as a **method of rapid expansion**, it is necessary to take into consideration a number of legal and business practices. Many tourism companies prematurely choose franchising as a **growth alternative** or a **strategy for international rollouts**. Other organizations resort to it, driven by unqualified consultants, who are interested in the professional fees received, rather than in the long-term success of the proposed franchise program (Chen, 2010). This causes financial distress and business failures of both, the franchisor and the franchisee and often evolves into litigations. Therefore companies that are part of a franchise system should be responsible for the establishment and development of their franchise programs. Such attitude towards this financial tools is known as **'responsible' franchising**.

## FRANCHISING ELEMENTS THAT PROVIDE COMPANY GROWTH

**'Responsible franchising'** is the only way in which growing tourism enterprises and the franchisees could exist in a harmonious environment in 21st century. It requires a secure foundation on which the franchise program to be developed. The core of the responsible franchise model is based on the understanding of the strategic nature of the business structure. Franchise system consists of **three basic elements** – brand name, operating system and ongoing support from the franchisor to the franchisee (Barnes, 2001).

**The brand name** creates demand that initially helps the franchisee to attract customers. It includes trademarks and service marks of the franchisor, commercial interior, and all the intangible factors that create customer's fidelity and build market value of the service (Parusheva, 2013). The **operating system** provides the promise that allows franchisee to maintain good relations with its customers and build loyal relations with them. The **constant support** and training boost growth and provide to the franchisee tools and tips for expanding the customers base and for developing an independant market share.

**The responsibly established franchising system** is such a system that provides added value to its franchisees, by training them how to achieve competitive advantage and maintain a wide range of customers, who are willing to consume their products and services. Many of the disputes in franchising relations are based on the difference between the actual needs of the franchisees to retain their market niche and the current support from the franchisor. Major discussions are generated by the wish of the franchisee to acquire competitiveness and the failure of the franchisor to comply with the contractual promises, the initial support and the continuing training (Abrams, 2010).

Every organization which treats franchising as a **method of growth and expansion** should understand its **basic components** that could be synthesized in the following areas:

- ✓ **Proven business concept:** provides a basis for applying the franchise program.
- ✓ **A strong management team** consisting of internal experts and qualified consultants: they must be familiar with both the specific characteristics of tourism industry and the legal and business aspects of franchising as a method of expansion.
- ✓ **Sufficient financial capital:** it is required for starting and maintaining the franchise program; it should be available for the developing tourism company for providing initial support and subsequent assistance to the franchisees.
- ✓ **Availability of distinguishable and protected commercial identity:** it includes registered trademarks, uniformed appearance, and distribution policy that create the overall image of the franchise program.
- ✓ **Patented and proven methods of operation and management:** these shall be presented in a detailed operation manual that helps the franchisees to implement their operational work.
- ✓ **Ability to protect the intellectual products:** it is a key point, in case of duplication of the product range by competitors and it is manifested by clear and objective standards established for quality control.
- ✓ **Comprehensive training program provided to the franchisees:** this shall integrate all the latest education and training technologies.
- ✓ **Ability to use a support staff** by qualified teachers: they shall support the franchisees during the work process periodically, and shall monitor the quality control.
- ✓ **A set of complex legal documents:** they reflect the business strategy and the operating policy of the company. There should assure a delicate balance between the rights and obligations of the parent tourism enterprise and the franchisee, respectively.
- ✓ **Providing continuous market demand for products and services** by the growing tourism enterprise subject to distribution through franchising. The products and services offered in the franchise package must comply with certain minimum quality standards. They should not be a subject to rapid changes to the consumer's preferences. The study and analysis of the market is necessary to comply with the current trends in the economy and with the competitiveness of the tourism industry.
- ✓ **Carefully designed set of uniform criteria for selection** of the site and architectural standards.
- ✓ **Understanding of the competition,** assessment of direct and indirect competitors, and reliable marketing and sale policy, developed by the franchisor for the franchisee's needs.
- ✓ **Agreed relations with suppliers,** creditors, foreign companies, as well as with the key resources related to them.

- ✓ **Secured and tested control system targeted** to define the minimal financial possibilities as well as careful study of the latest trends in hospitality industry, needed for the company's success.
- ✓ **Preparing and analyzing the market profile** of the franchisees.
- ✓ **Effective system for reporting and supporting** the payment of the royalties on behalf of the franchisees.
- ✓ **Exploring possibilities of introducing new products and services** for the consumers through franchise network.
- ✓ **Developing a solid communication system** that facilitates dialogue with the franchisees, and reduces the chances for conflicts and disputes with the franchise network.
- ✓ **Providing stable national, regional and local advertising, marketing and public relations programs** for recruitment of potential franchisees as well as users of websites moderated by franchisees (Spencer, 2010).

## **ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF FRANCHISING FOR TOURISM INDUSTRY**

There are various **reasons** for which the developing enterprises within the tourism industry prefer to use franchising, as a **method of growth and expansion**. Having this tool they manage to:

- achieve efficiency in the working process and economies of scale;
- penetrate quickly on the market at low capital costs;
- effectively redirect costumers by advertisements and promotions;
- achieve sale of products and services using special distribution network;
- satisfy internal company needs and motivate the work force;
- provide training and management of the personnel, local advertising and other administrative activities in favour of the franchisees.

The major **advantages** that franchising provides to the entrepreneurs, and which could serve as a background for using its potential, are summarized in the **following areas**:

- ✓ an option for obtaining a substantial profit, without the need to invest in high-risk operations;
- ✓ opportunities for quick expansion by using foreign resources;
- ✓ use of the advantages of the franchisees' potential and contacts on the local market;
- ✓ saving costs and time in recruiting, hiring and motivating personnel of the separate sites;
- ✓ achievement of economies of scale.

Franchising is **the fastest growing business expansion strategy** that has ever been created. In few years, by applying franchising many companies enlarged, and from several enterprises, or even from a single one, they turned into large chains with many offices. No other approach for business expansion has come closer to the opportunities and scopes that franchising offers. The major part of this success is due to the mutual benefits for both parties (franchisor and franchisee) under the contract (Tadarakov, 2013).

Along with obvious advantages of this partnership concept, the eventual **disadvantages** cannot be neglected, which concern both parties under the franchise agreement. The major disadvantage for the franchisee is the loss of control over the management of their company. Along with the benefits such as the right to use the trade mark, consulting, training, recognition of the offered goods or services, the franchisee is bound to follow the rules, imposed by operation manuals, and as well as to consult about every change that they think might have beneficial effect over the dealings with the franchisor.

Another core problem is that usually an unfair behaviour of either party under the franchise contract, could easily lead to legal proceedings for forfeits. Such franchisee could lead to the loss of confidence in the brand, which is spread over vast territories and to gain again the lost image and good will much efforts and money shall be needed. The opposite assumption is not uncommon, too – when franchisors, due to their incompetence and failure to pay sufficient efforts to the promotion of the trade mark, at the end they lose their franchisees. This assumption should also be taken into consideration and the franchisee have to be very careful when choosing franchise and studies the contractual terms and conditions.

When launching a franchise, although the parameters are set by the franchisor, it should be taken into account that costs might be higher than those that are initially planned. One of the setbacks of the starting-up franchise is the clause for purchasing the equipment and materials (including raw materials) from the franchisor, which are sold as a rule at higher prices than those at free market. Significant expenditure is also the declared by many franchisors advertising charge, which could be a fixed cost and not an element of the turnover.

Another important drawback is that the strength of the chain is defined by its weakest link. Even if a franchisee puts the utmost efforts to follow strictly the franchise model, there is no guarantee that another franchisee should not discredit the confidence in the trade mark causing the first one to suffer direct losses. Here comes the role of the franchisors themselves to take control over the quality of service with a view to avoid occurrence of such problems in their chains that might have impact over the other outlets of the chain.

## **PROFILE OF BULGARIAN FRANCHISE MODEL**

Franchising is the most successful **business model** in the contemporary world. It allows anyone to start its own business immediately, using the brand and business

model of proven franchise chain. That **market growing strategy** possesses a real potential to turn a small business into a large one.

Although **the popularity of franchise** is growing in **Bulgaria**, a small part of the active business entrepreneurs are aware of its specific features and practical focus. **The major reasons** for the fast franchise grow are the offering of a strong and known brand, as well as the established business model, providing know-how and good practices. A few groups of Bulgarian investors are willing to buy franchise rights. They could be specified, as follows:

- **Experienced entrepreneurs in business management**, owning a certain amount of capital for investment and willing to launch a new business. This is the group of “reasonable” entrepreneurs and the percentage of successful deals with them is very high.

- **Entrepreneurs willing to start an additional business**. They prefer franchising because it saves time and financial resources needed for long-term development of a business model.

- **Applicants without any business experience**. This group is willing to make benefits

of the strength of the brand and from the offered know-how for its managing.

- **Applicants, who are choosing EU funding for launching their own business**. This is a niche, which low cost franchising chains could use and could turn into national chains which is typical for the rural tourism.

- **Operating businessmen**. They move into an entirely new field or seek to develop franchise business model as a supplement to their ongoing business and endeavours. The reason is that a large portion of company owners suffered seriously by the crisis and want to diversify their capital and business experience into other sectors, which are not so much affected.

The franchising model offers developed know-how, necessary for launching business. A number of entrepreneurs are facing the dilemma either to struggle with the economic conditions to complete depletion of their financial resources or to move ‘under the wing’ of a big chain. During the past year in Bulgaria more often is practiced the so called conversion franchise. By its help, an existing business is included in a franchise system agreeing to operate under its name and rules, in return of payment of a fee.

In Bulgaria the average term of return of a starting investment in franchise business is 15 (fifteen) months, however it depends mainly on the franchisee’s skills and efforts. The majority of recipients of franchise entitlements believe that after the crisis despite of the low sales, those working under this model will have a higher market share than that of the independent entrepreneurs.

- **Average parameters of franchising in Bulgaria**

- ✓ Average fee, collected by the franchisors for starting a franchise business: approximately about EUR 3,000.

- ✓ Monthly royalty deposits: average 4.9 % of the turnover.

- ✓ Some franchisors fix a minimal fee for the use of a franchise (e.g. 5% of the turnover, but not less than EUR 250 per month), others (usually these are forms of a distribution franchise) don't require such a fee, but the franchisees are obligated to buy the goods offered from their franchisors only.
- ✓ Average fee for the national advertisement fund: 4.2 %.
- ✓ Total investment for starting a franchise business: about EUR 1 500.
- ✓ Number of outlets: average 11 outlets per chain.
- ✓ An average lease term: 5 years.

One of the **problems** related to franchising in Bulgaria is the **unregulated financing of the franchise projects**. Every particular franchisor has the commitment to negotiate with individual banks for financing of their project. There are no specialized bank products to be offered to the clients entering into franchise deals. According to many experts, franchise market in Bulgaria by its features is close to that of Greece. The current trend is associated with the introduction of more specialized franchise models, especially in the sector of tourism services. In support of this is the fact that in the past two years, the number of companies offering franchises in Bulgaria has tripled. The reasons for this are that the start-up investment returns in very short terms (from 1 to 3 years) and especially, the opportunity to follow a proven **business methodology**.

Another problem the franchise in Bulgaria is connected with **organizational and legal issues**. There is no legal regulation of franchise, neither in a separate legal document, nor as a part of the regulation on other matters. It is necessary to be established real competitive conditions between the franchise systems and the traditional mechanisms for sales of goods; the adopted legislative rules and regulations concerning the participants in the franchise system should provide convenience to them, and establish transparency in the system and its elements for the controlling authorities.

**The lack of awareness of the franchising as a business concept** is the major problem for its insufficient development in Bulgaria. The small and medium-sized enterprises are the most numerous and they have a great potential for flexible adaptation to the economic conditions in this country and to the changing market conjuncture. The enterprises in this sector are the most likely buyers of franchise. For the period 1996 - 2012, in Bulgaria have been invested over 17 billion euros in tourism sector and hotel facilities have been built with over 1.2 million beds. So far, only 3.8 % of these hotels work with franchise agreements. New future of franchising is in the management of rural tourism, which is still undeveloped European and international practice.

Although the mentioned disadvantages, the franchise has established itself as a method of **business cooperation** with a significant lower level of risk, compared to a self-starting and developing of a separate business. In this dynamic economic period, the franchising has the potential and the ability to become the most profitable method for those entrepreneurs, who are willing to launch or grow their businesses.

## FINDINGS

- Franchising is reviewed as an alternative growth strategy.
- Owners of franchise companies are not directly responsible for the financial investments.
- Responsible franchise system is the one that provides added value to its franchisees.
- Franchising is a method for fast growing and marketing distribution of products and services.
- Franchising is the new civilization level in tourism industry.

## CONCLUSION

The current financial and economic crisis is affecting all market sectors. A lot of tourism enterprises have prematurely chosen franchise as an alternative strategy for their growth and global integration. Other companies apply it following consultants and advisors, who in most cases are interested in the professional fees, rather than the long-term success of the franchise program. In Bulgaria the franchise is a mean to attract foreign expertise and financial capital. As a business form, the franchise has a significant importance for improving quality of servicing in tourism industry, acquiring know-how, getting closer to world standards and last but not least, generating an economic growth for the Bulgarian economy.

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*Tourist consumer behaviour insights in relation to all inclusive hotel resorts:  
The case of Antalya, Turkey*

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**ABSTRACT**

This research investigates tourist customer satisfaction levels in all-inclusive resort hotels in Turkey. The paper investigates changes in patterns regarding all-inclusive hotel packages as well as changing consumer behaviour of tourists preferring such establishments. The research was conducted in the region of Antalya and data is analysed by using SPSS with descriptive statistical analysis, and correlation analysis. The results suggest, among other, that new tourists that purchase all inclusive package are now more diverse in profile while the products themselves are significantly better than what all-inclusives were associated with. Relevant criticism is being addressed and suggestions for further research are being made. Finally, the

study emphasized the effect of all inclusive system on customer satisfaction in 5 star hotels in Antalya.

**Key Words:** *Consumer Behaviour, All-inclusive Resorts, Tourism Planning, Tourism.*

## INTRODUCTION

The on-going financial crisis, initially after 2008 in the US and lately in the EU zone has created new playing fields and norms in the hospitality industry. Although it is relatively early to draw conclusions, it seems that hospitality firms exposed to debt were severely damaged and traditional tourism markets, such as destinations in the Mediterranean, found themselves in an interesting but also dramatic equilibrium between trying to be competitive and deliver quality products and services. Large firms tried to cut their losses while SMEs struggled simply to continue to exist in an environment where the cost of capital remained expensive and average hotel prices remained significantly lower than the 2008 mark (Hotel Price Index Data, 2012). However, the tourism and hospitality industry has shown great reflexes in the following years allowing global Travel & Tourism direct contribution to GDP to increase by a healthy 3.2% in 2012 (WTTC, 2013) but this does not reflect equally the majority markets. Political turmoil in Africa has enabled traditional markets like Greece and Spain or the nearby Dubai to maintain or even increase their competitive position mainly due to displaced demand (Ernst & Young, 2012). However, it seems that Turkey will outperform the Mediterranean resort market capitalizing on long term effects of the devaluation of the lira which has made the Turkish tourism product very attractive in comparison to Eurozone markets (Ernst and Young, 2012). According to the same source, it seems that this projected growth is mostly revolving around the *Sun and Sea* all-inclusive offerings that Turkey is well known for and which is a growing segment on a global scale, despite the fact that it is not a new product. It is however a new boost of all-inclusive facilities supply which provided the segment with a second youth. These interesting developments are receiving old criticism which still applies since authors have argued in the past about how all inclusive packages bode ill for many small business people - restaurant owners, craft vendors, taxi drivers - establishments owned by small business people (Henry, 1989). Critics of all-inclusive resorts accuse the firms for alienating the tourists from the local context by importing provisions and discouraging them in many ways tourists from ever leaving the properties (Issa and Jayawardena, 2003). This creates an adverse effect on the expected outcomes of tourism development. Furthermore it has been argued that early all-inclusive practices were not up to the desired standards with the adoption of unified pricing system leading to a decline in employee satisfaction as well as customer perception of overall service quality, and finally, in customer satisfaction (Kozac, 2006). Further evidence has shown that hotels around the globe are increasingly adopting all-inclusive policies and it has been documented that this trend has reduced the revenue per stay as well as the customer satisfaction levels (Aguilo and Rosselio, 2012).

However, evidence shows that times have changed and practices vary between properties. Increasing volume of tourists preferring all-inclusive packages might show a shift either in the quality of the delivered services or the tolerance of the tourists who might be willing to compromise the quality for a good price. Based on these prevailing conditions, the main objective of this research is to investigate consumer perceptions on services provided by all-inclusive resorts. Turkey as a premium and growing all-inclusive provider has been chosen for the research with a specific focus on the region of Antalya.

## Literature Support

Over recent years, several studies have focused on tourist satisfaction in particular tourism destinations and from there information was drawn on the elements that create attractive tourism products and services. This study concentrates on customer satisfaction with the service performance of all inclusive resort seeking to identify key variables which are related to customer satisfaction and holiday selection patterns.

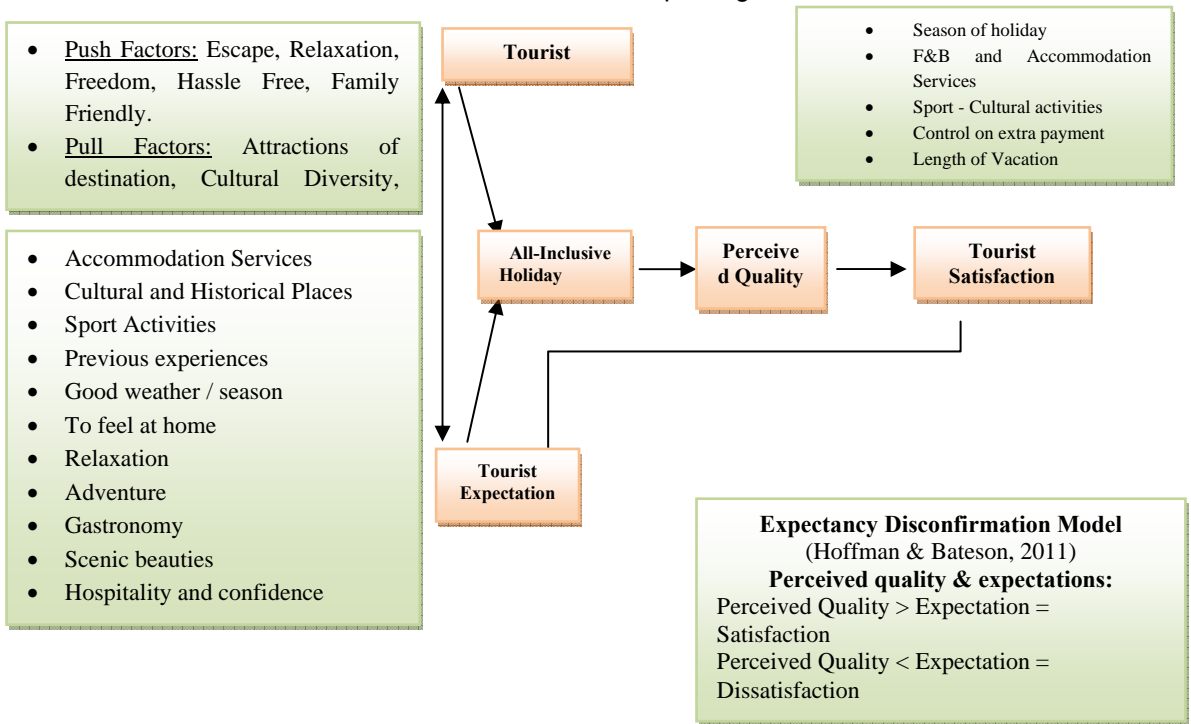
The basic definition of all-inclusive holidays is where all travel, accommodation, food and beverage, entertainment, trips or sports coaching costs are paid for when booking for one established price. Issa and Jayawardena (2003), established that the all-inclusive holiday concept was first introduced in holiday camps in Britain in the 1930's and was a different holiday concept where a guest had to carry no form of currency while on a holiday. It was a package designed to eliminate extra charges that can sour the sweetest of vacations.

Issa and Jayawardena (2003) further explain that all-inclusive clubs had a major impact on the concept of hospitality service. In the 1950's, 'Club Mediterranean', popularly known as 'club-med' introduced the concept on the Spanish island of Mallorca and later spread all over the globe. An explosion of the concept was later realised along coastal strips in the late 1990s. At this point, the all-inclusive concept was a fundamentally different type of holiday where a guest had to carry no form of currency, paper, coin or plastic to a hotel, resort or while on a cruise. Poon (1998) describes the all-inclusive concept as an important product innovation in the international tourism market place, as it packages various elements of the tourism product. The main idea of all-inclusive system is, minimize monetary transactions during the holiday, do not to make some decisions about money spending during the holiday and to eliminate the anxiety because of spending money, stress or problems for tourists (Poon 1998). The all-inclusive system has so far been dominated by European based providers such as Italy, Greece, Turkey and France. Additionally, the Caribbean, Central America, Dominican Republic and other tourist destinations such as Thailand have entered the market with accommodation facilities (Menekse, 2005). German and Italian tourism enterprises have played a key role in spreading all-inclusive system in Europe, Asia and Africa. For example, main tour operators, such as TUI, NUR, ITS, preferred to implement all inclusive system in tourist destinations, such as, Spain, Turkey, Greece, Italy, Austria, Switzerland, Kenya, Sri Lanka, the Canary Islands, Tunisia, Senegal, Thailand and Ibiza with

resorts operated by themselves like Robinson Club, Club Calimera and Club Aldiana (Poon 1998; Voss 2003).

This development has led to increased research interest mostly around motivational factors driving tourist consumer behaviour. Literature for some years now has recorded various factors which have impacts on consumers' purchasing decisions, such as cultural, social, personal and psychological (Mucuk, 1998). Other studies provide generally accepted classification of factors influencing consumer behaviour collected in four main groups such as personal factors (age and life cycle, occupation, economic status and lifestyle), cultural factors (culture, subculture, social class), social factors (reference groups, family, roles and status) and psychological factors (motivation, perception, learning, beliefs). These factors cannot be controlled by marketers generally, but necessarily be taken into account and to be emphasized on these factors (Kotler, Bowen, and Makens, 2006).

Figure One: Tourist Motivational Factors and consumer decision making processes in relation to all-inclusive travel packages



All these factors affect tourist decision making process. These decisions can appear in a simple structure or sometimes, be connected with multiple decisions in more complex structures (Decrop 2006). These processes usually consist of the following steps of; identification of variables of the problem addressed by a purchase, evaluation of alternatives as solutions to the problem, and the related returns, and finally selecting the best alternative using the appropriate decision criteria to get the

best result (Clemen and Reilly 2001). Consumer behaviour models emphasize that needs and motivation factors are closely associated with each other (Kozak 2002). Additionally motivation factors explain how tourists are pulled by various factors when deciding on their purchase and how tourists are pushed towards their holiday destination (Baloglu and Uysal 1996; Kozak 2002; Yoon and Uysal 2005).

Key motivational factors and consumer behaviour processes can be summarized as seen in **figure one**.

## **Research and Methodology**

For the purpose of this study satisfaction levels were measured exclusively in 5-star all-inclusive hotel establishments in the highly touristic province of Antalya which has one of the most widely all-inclusive systems in Turkey. The main research questions to be answered where 'Why do the tourists prefer All- inclusive system?' determine the satisfaction level towards to the hotel services and features and last to identify the comparison with all-inclusive 5 star hotels with standalone 5 star hotels.

This research applied mostly quantitative research methods in consequence of the means available as well as the nature of this study. A survey of 18 questions was employed and 10 of the survey questions were close ended. The questionnaire contained 4 main sections. The first section was designed to determine the demographic characteristics of tourists. The second section measured satisfaction levels on food and beverage services, staff performance, and the general features of the hotel during the tourists stay. The third section investigated the importance of holiday destination features in decision making. The fourth section was designed to determine the importance of selection elements related all-inclusive resort hotels. Generally 5-point Likert-type scales were used and data obtained from the study were analyzed with SPSS (Statistical Program for Social Sciences). Demographics have been considered and the significant data have been continually evaluated. Reliability was also tested with Cronbach's Alpha Reliability test.

### **3.1 Sampling and Hypotheses**

The study sample was chosen from 8 different 5 star hotels in the province of Antalya to represent the best of the population. According to data from the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, Turkey in 2011, 7.5 million tourists had visited in Antalya. Approximately 70% of tourists staying in Antalya prefer all- inclusive properties. To assume reliability a confidence level of 95% with a sample of 384 tourists would be ideal. However, we managed to gather 174 usable surveys which poses certain limitations but could be still considered an acceptable sample size for the needs of this research. The study sample was randomly selected.

According to the study aims certain hypothesis were created to identify the relationships between demographic characteristics of tourists and tourist's satisfaction with all inclusive resort hotel services. The hypotheses are:

H1.0: There is no relationship between education level and reason to choose All-inclusive holiday.

- H1.1: There is relationship between education level and reason to choose All-inclusive holiday.
- H2.0: There is no relationship between gender's food and beverage department satisfaction and overall satisfaction.
- H2.1: There is relationship between gender's food and beverage department satisfaction and overall satisfaction.
- H3.0: There is no relationship between the education levels of tourist with comparison the all-inclusive hotels quality to standalone 5 stars hotels quality.
- H3.1: There is relationship between the education levels of tourist with comparison the all-inclusive hotels quality to standalone 5 stars hotels quality.
- H4.0: There is no relationship between reasons to choose an all-inclusive resort hotels and involving any activity outside of hotel during the stay.
- H4.1: There is relationship between reasons to choose an all-inclusive resort hotels and involving any activity outside of hotel during the stay.

## Analysis

The sample demographics were appropriate with fair age and gender distribution. The largest age range is 36-45 age group with 43,1% 26-35 age group is second group with 24,1%. Furthermore, 46-55 age range has 23,0%, 18-25 age group has 5,7% 56 and above age group has 4,0%. The Gender distribution was almost a 50-50 split which is also representative in nature.

The geographical origin distribution of the sample poses slight limitations to this study since the distribution was not ideal. The vast majority of the respondent were Germans representing 44,3% . The next big segment were the Russians with 19,0% and the Ukrainians with 9,2%. From there on 5,2% were from Austria, 4,0% from Switzerland. On the positive side tourists from 18 different countries were surveyed in total.

The marital status was also even with 49,4% being married. Interesting enough 74.1% had no children and this was not expected in all-inclusive establishments but this could be justified from the age band of the interviewed tourists.

Another very interesting element refers to the education level which seems to be exceptionally high. 48,3% had BA university degree and amazingly 19,5% had doctoral degree. This is very interesting since it has been the impression in the past that well educated tourists prefer more independent travel products so this should be further investigated. 22,4% had high school degree and 9,8% had primary school degree.

The next set of questions aimed in identifying the level of satisfaction on Food and Beverage quality, staff performance, hotel facilities and crucial factors that affect purchase decisions. In total 24 different factors were investigated and the results were again somewhat surprising. It has been argued that in recent literature, that all-inclusive establishments suffer in terms of quality and (Aguilo and Rosselio, 2012)

therefore brand loyalty but clearly here this is not the case. 51,1% were strongly satisfied with freshness of food while 52,9% were strongly satisfied of the food which was served in food and beverage outlets during their stay in 5 star all inclusive resort hotels. Menu descriptions and diversity of beverages have more satisfied tourists than strongly satisfied tourists. In total none of the participants were dissatisfied or strongly dissatisfied with any of the aspects of the food and beverage services.

Similarly tourists were satisfied with the performance of staff with none of the respondents providing a negative answer. Having said that some of the answers were at the neutral zone which could be an indication of indecisiveness of what good performance of staff means or there was a struggle in compromising the quality level for a good deal. In the same fashion Hotel facilities were also very highly rated with total satisfaction levels that borderline the average of an 85% (strongly or just satisfied). Interesting enough the lowest scores went to children facilities rates.

Concluding this part of the research, important elements for holiday choice were investigated and the outcome was more or less the expected. *Price* of hotel is the most important feature for the survey participants with 88,5% specifying that it is very important element for choosing holiday product. Second most important factors are *Relaxation* and *Rest* with a percentage of 72, 4%. Amazingly 67, 2% did not consider the *Location* of hotel as an important element for deciding holiday which can be interpreted in various ways. It seems that the effect of choices provided by tour operators might render destination irrelevant but this is just an assumption and should be further investigated. What we can safely say though is that this proves that some of the on-going criticism presented earlier seems to apply. To further these arguments only 3, 4% seek for both amenities of destination and for Cultural and Historical places as important elements for deciding on holiday destination.

With regards to distribution channels used the analysis shows that 32,8% made their reservations through the travel agencies and 31,0% via tour operators. This means that 63,8% use the specific channels which illustrates a fairly high dependency on this means. Internet bookings were at 17,8% and this could also refer to the same as above channels of all-inclusive resorts. Finally, direct hotel bookings were at 18,4% which illustrates the early quoted dependency on certain channels and might also explain the high concentration of certain markets that seems to be key clients (Germany).

Finally a very important section of the research revolved around the identification of elements that lead tourist to all-inclusive resorts. The key motivational factor here is *Low Extra Expenses* that all-inclusive resort hotels offer to the tourist with a percentage of 84,5%. 81% of the respondents specified that no obligation for tracing the extra expenses is another very important reason to stay in all inclusive resort hotels. Hence we can conclude that tourists more focused on initial price and overall cost at the end of their vacation. The third most important motive is not to have to engage with holiday plans standing at 59,8%. Interesting enough 36,8% specified that it's of no significance to them if the establishment is family friendly but this can be possibly explained by the demographics and could vary in different destinations. Also to reject some of the criticism discussed, more than 90% were satisfied with the whole experience 46,0% of which were very satisfied and none was dissatisfied.

This first image of the analysis was somewhat expected but interesting findings were made and conclusions were drawn. However, the final part of the analysis refers to the investigation and testing of the stated hypotheses.

*H1.1: There is relationship between education level and reason to choose All-inclusive holiday.*

As mentioned previously, there were 7 elements of importance to choose all-inclusive resort hotels. These were, low extra expenses, all inclusive resort hotel services, being family friendly, sun, sea and sand features of the destination, no obligation for tracing the extra expenses, being holiday plan is ready and sport activity diversity. With cross tabulation we found that there is a relationship between education and perceived low extra costs which is probably connected also to the income level of the more educated respondents. On the Chi-square test, P-value was found 0.00. Since the P-value is between  $0.00 < 0.05$  which is true for all the elements so H1 hypothesis is accepted.

*H2.1: There is relationship between gender's food and beverage department satisfaction and overall satisfaction.*

To identify the relationship between genders satisfaction level from the food and beverage outlets with overall holiday satisfaction, Spearman's rank correlation coefficient test was applied. In the results of test, r value was calculated at 0.337 without consideration of gender. When the gender was considered, r value was calculated at 0.408. This confirms that there is relationship between gender's food and beverage department between satisfaction and overall satisfaction.

*H3.1: There is relationship between the education levels of tourist with comparison the all-inclusive hotels quality to standalone 5 stars hotels quality.*

Results show the cross tabulation and chi-square test results between education and comparison of all inclusive resort hotels with standalone 5 star hotels. We can say that there is relationship between the education levels of tourist with comparison the all-inclusive hotels to standalone 5 star hotels. As the education level increased, satisfaction level from all-inclusive hotels increased, which is very interesting. Also another not expected outcome was that once comparisons are done by tourist, it can be observed that 5 star all inclusive hotels are perceived to serve higher quality than standalone 5 star hotels. This however is an indication that needs further research in other geographic areas and different clientele geographic distribution in order to have more conclusive results. It is however, a clear indication of shifting perceptions on all-inclusive establishments.

*H4.1: There is relationship between reasons to choose an all-inclusive resort hotels and involving any activity outside of hotel during the stay.*



This hypothesis was created to understand whether tourist stay in the hotel during their holiday or they do involve any activities outside of the hotel. Spearman's Chi-square test results show that there is significant statistically negative relationship between no obligations on tracing extra expenses and involving any activity outside of the hotel. When we do correlation analysis between involving in any activity outside the hotel with the reason to choose all-inclusive system is the relationship, the  $r$  value was  $-0.615$ . This indicates that there is a strong negative relationship between these two variables. Therefore we can conclude that people who never go out of the hotel are mainly preferred all-inclusive system the reason is clear they do not have to consider spending or tracing extra money. Additionally 39,7% of the survey respondents *never went out of the hotel*, which is also consistent with previously described criticism. The reasons however need to be further investigated since we are not clear on whether this relates to convenience or whether the establishments implicitly or explicitly discourage the tourists to leave the premises.

## Conclusions

All-inclusive accommodation establishments and tour operators have become an indispensable element of a fast growing segment. All-inclusive package tours offer economical and hassle free holiday options, which is why it is often preferred by middle-income tourists and as this research illustrates now other profiles are joining the target market. Despite the heavy criticism on the negative impacts associated with all-inclusive resorts mostly with regards to the lack of recognition of local cultures and limited contribution to the development of local economies of the destinations, the segment seems to be set for further growth.

This study illustrates that, tourist consumer behaviour is generally changing due to convenience reason and this affects heavily the choice of holiday types as well as destinations. Tourists are now more price sensitive than ever and this is clearly the most important factor for holiday product type selection. In general, there has been a belief that all-inclusive system preferred by low-income tourists but the current analysis showed that income levels of tourists in all-inclusive resorts in Antalya higher than expected. This should be an interesting observation for hotel business pricing strategies as a means to influence on tourists' buying preferences. The quality of the hotel considered to be important factor when choosing an all-inclusive holiday by any type of tourist standards. Education level was not found to be important and interesting enough when the educational level of tourist increases the satisfaction degree obtained from an all-inclusive system is increasing, too. This could be due to excellent services or a broader perception of what constitutes a good deal. The destination's natural beauty, historical riches and cultural elements could be included in all-inclusive package tours but these research shows that the destination elements are less significant in the choice of holiday and this should be further investigated since it poses major issues to service providers and marketer who will find it rather difficult to identify differentiating features to compete with.

Concluding we feel that despite the criticism received, all-inclusive tourism products will only grow especially among Mediterranean countries mostly due to prevailing economic conditions and consequently shifting consumer patters. This will leave

destinations, providers and marketers in a conundrum with regards to tourism development options as well as marketing promotion approaches. The segment of all-inclusive products is changing by becoming more sophisticated with better provisions and by attracting new types of tourists.

## **LIMITATIONS**

The survey had been conducted solely on international tourist who stayed at 5 star all inclusive hotels in the province of Antalya. The province of Antalya has a big scale of resort area and definitely indicative but this research should be also open to other areas since this might change the synthesis of tourist and possibly the outcomes. Larger sample size would also be beneficial.

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*Modular Tourist Complexes (MTC) and areas of integrate tourism development (AITD) as recommended tools of organized tourism superstructure in Greece. Critical reviews.*

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**ABSTRACT**

In the post-war years, the prevailing model for tourism development in Greece has been given various definitions, such as, "spontaneous", "chaotic" "and unplanned". This model was in fact resulted from the development of international mass tourism and mainly related to sun activities concentrated in coastal zones. It is primarily a model representing the demand for tourism goods and services, the main feature of which was mass production and standardization for the final beneficiaries the tourists - consumers, as a result of socially organizing the demand, mainly of an international nature.

The law draft on enhancing tourism entrepreneurship and "Organized Tourism Superstructure» as suggested by the Ministry of Tourism, intends to encourage a number of investments in the Modular Tourist Complexes (M.T.C.) and in the Areas of Integrated Tourism Development (A.I.T.D.), in the country's popular tourist regions

and islands, inevitably exacerbating the current problem of oversupply of tourist accommodation. In this paper we will seek both to define and conceptualize the above notions and discuss the negative and positive effects that bear its implementation, however we will attempt to propose "alternative actions" and measures, which require the differentiation of the Greek tourism model.

The main objective of this paper is to examine whether the promotion of the M.T.C. and the A.I.T.D., as well as their integration into the current tourism policy in Greece have been sufficiently explored by the Ministry of Tourism, international experience taken into account. After outlining the kind of tourism development at the M.T.C. and the A.I.T.D. at international level, the present paper aims at criticizing the resulting effects at spatial level.

Conclusively, alternative actions and measures of tourism development related to a qualitative approach of the existing oversupply of tourist accommodation in the country will be presented, since it the Modular Tourist Complexes and the Areas of Integrated Tourism Development do not constitute an enlarged spatial planning of the coastal zone, weighing heavily upon the excessive demand for accommodation.

**Key Words:** Modular Tourist Complexes (M.T.C.), Areas of Integrated Tourism Development (A.I.T.D.), Tourist Enclaves.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Modular Tourist Accommodation Complexes (M.T.C.) and the Areas of Integrated Tourism Development (A.I.T.D.) enhance the existing tourist models without to differentiate them, in contrast with the modern alternative models of tourism development which are based on the development and enhancement of the cultural, natural and social resources. Regarding their adoption and implementation, is one of the principle objectives of the existing tourism policy. This paper attempts to quote some views on the philosophy of "Modular Tourist Complexes" and "Areas of Integrated Tourism Development" and its integration in the national tourism policy framework, in the Greek existing situation.

In this paper we attempt to present the aspects of the 'modular tourist complexes' and the 'Areas of Integrated tourism development' and on the other hand to propose alternative actions and measures, by examining the International experience regarding integrated tourism development. Practices from various countries can offer us many examples of alternative models of tourism development, such as sustainability, by taking advantage of the existing tourist resources, as well as by taking particular account of the architectural aesthetics, the landscape and the spatial, social and economic adaptation of the project to the local characteristics etc. The new tools recently introduced but not yet implemented is the creation of "Areas of Integrated Tourism Development".

As Integrated tourism development areas are recognized either, areas with significant tourism infrastructure where demand is quite important; or where tourism

infrastructure is important while natural environment is rather fragile and the demand is still high; or areas where there is important infrastructure and low demand. The creation of these areas aims on the one hand at the control of tourism development and on the other hand at the amelioration of tourism services, since in these areas it would be possible to provide adequate infrastructure and assure the provision of high quality services.

The relevant Law draft, which will be presented, “Special Framework of Spatial Planning for Tourism (Gov. Gazette 1138/V/2009) aims primarily at creating or improving the conditions of prosperity and quality of life in the county’s regions and communities. Therefore, it sets directions, rules and criteria for the spatial structure and the organization of tourism in Greece and determines the necessary infrastructure. At nowadays, its implementation consist a primitive goal of the existing tourism policy, and a predominant tool for tourism development.

Conceptually, issues and constraints such as the spatial planning and management and the lack of macro – economic project analysis and conjunction with the local socio economic communities prove that the Greek integrated tourism development areas do not meet the criteria needed of the international experience standards. However they correspond rather to the idea of a holiday club or tourism enclave, although in reality they do not involve the characteristics of an enclave, also. Enclave tourism is a form of self-contained resort development which is geographically isolated or insulated from the surrounding indigenous population, enclave resorts in Third World and less developed destinations, such as Greece, are associated with ‘4-S tourism’ (sun, sand, sea and sex) (Lanfant, 1995).

The Greek tourism product can be differentiated against other competitive products that have the same image, by highlighting elements related to cultural heritage, natural environment and humanity, which can be qualified as unique. Developing traditional buildings and residential complexes, which are characterized by their uniqueness and find themselves in a state of neglect and desolation, for the purposes of tourism, can contribute substantially to the diversification of the overall Greek tourism product.

## **2. The new Law Draft “Special Framework of Spatial Planning for Tourism ”** (Gov. Gazette 1138/V/2009)

The Special Framework of Spatial Planning for Tourism (Gov. Gazette 1138/V/2009) aims primarily at creating or improving the conditions of prosperity and quality of life in the county’s regions and communities. Therefore, it sets directions, rules and criteria for the spatial structure and the organization of tourism in Greece and determines the necessary infrastructure. In this way, a realistic action plan for the next 15 years is formulated (2009 - 2024). A draft Joint Ministerial Decision has been set (from 09/03/2012) for Public Consultation, approving the Special Framework for Spatial Planning and Sustainable Development for Tourism and Environmental Impact Assessment, evaluating the experience gained from the implementation of the relevant Ministerial Decision of 2009.

## **2.1. The new law draft of the Ministry of Tourism on strengthening entrepreneurship and the organized receptors for tourist activities.**

The provisions of the new law draft apparently refer to:

- The intention to suspend even the few diversifications included in the Plan of regions, set by category (developed regions, developing regions, mountainous regions, - islands, metropolitan regions, protected regions, etc.) and to allow unrestricted implementation throughout the country.
- The objective to give priority to investment in Modular Tourist Complexes (M.T.C.) as well as to Areas of Integrated Tourism Development (A.I.T.D) (Art. 11,12,13).

Therefore, it appears that investments in the M.T.C. and in the A.I.T.D. will be inevitably promoted in popular holiday regions and islands, aggravating the current situation of dense housing and tourist building as well as the problem of oversupply of beds. Not to mention the unconstitutionality of authorizing productive use of residential facilities which are not included in the urban planning, as they are developed without prior urbanization.

The first types of investment, the Areas of Integrated Tourism Development have not been tested in practice so as to know the effects it may produce in both the social and the economic environment of the tourist regions. As far as the second type of investment is concerned, in the Areas of Integrated Tourism Development (A.I.T.D.) there is only one example, that of the private A.I.T.D. of Messenia region (Costa Navarino Resort ), operated over the last three years. The main question about the specific types of investment is “what are the developmental benefits (at local and national level), since their complete development seems to entail the consummation of too precious natural resources due to their unorganized growth”.

Their adoption allows us to configure two important ascertainments:

- They refer to individual properties. Thus, they concern methods of urban development, not planning procedures that would ensure a well organized spatial planning of investments.
- Urban sprawl of tourism facilities is continued.

Under these terms, it seems that the EP -T promotes a single horizontal adjustment of the organized receptors for tourist activities, especially in areas A and D. Without taking account of the oversupply of tourism beds, characterizing the country, and the need to redefine the existing ones by seeking alternatives.

### **Areas of Integrated Tourism Development**

Efforts to adapt sectoral policies to environmental issues have also attempted to bridge the gap between socio-economic programming and physical planning.

Since the main activity that is developed along the coast is tourism special efforts have been addressed towards the development of the economic activity itself (GNTO, 2011).

One of the new tools recently introduced but not yet implemented is the creation of “Areas of Integrated Tourism Development”. As Integrated tourism development areas are recognized:



- areas with significant tourism infrastructure where demand is quite important
- areas where tourism infrastructure is important, while natural environment is rather fragile and the demand is still high
- areas with important infrastructure and low demand.

The creation of these areas aims on the one hand at the control of tourism development and on the other hand at the amelioration of tourism services, since in these areas it would be possible to provide adequate infrastructure and assure the provision of high quality services.

It should be noted though that this system defines tourist capacities and limits based not upon the study of the carrying capacity of the natural system, but only on socioeconomic criteria. That is through areas of integrated tourism development of different tourism development levels are defined without reference to possible local natural particularities. Another comment to be made in this respect is that the goal of amelioration of quality is strictly related to the construction of hotels of a certain type -A, A" class- and not to a broader perspective of social and environmental goals.

### **International Experience**

Historically, the first efforts towards integrated tourism development were made during the decade 1960-1970 in the Black Sea region (Bulgaria, Romania), in France (Languedoc Rousillon) and were followed by similar efforts elsewhere in the world, as in Santos Brazil, in Sousse of Tunisia, in Llorroto Nopolo of Mexico, etc (Mastny, 2001). However, all these projects were mainly dealing with "resort complexes" that included various types of tourist accommodation, with a capacity of 10,000 to 50,000 beds, flanked by shopping centers, sports centers and recreation facilities. Such prestigious constructions required the State's dynamic intervention in terms of design, direct financing of the infrastructure as well as undertaking of promotional activities (Hall,2001).

Conceptually, if the aforementioned cases refer to Areas of Integrated Tourism Development, the respective A.I.T.D. in Greece do not meet the specific criteria of the international ones, due to the following reasons:

- a. Differentiated philosophy compared to the international experience
- b. Limited spatial units
- c. Small sized facilities and Hotel Units
- d. Lack of macro – economic project analysis and conjunction with the local socio economic communities.

Consequently , it seems that the Greek A.I.T.D. correspond rather to the idea of a holiday club or tourism enclave, although in reality they do not involve the characteristics of an enclave. "Enclaves" and "Third World model" are some of the expressions used to describe the concept of A.I.T.D. in Greece.

## **Tourist Enclaves**

Enclave tourism is a form of self-contained resort development which is geographically isolated or insulated from the surrounding indigenous population. Such enclaves typically are coastal, offer amenities such as tennis, golf, scuba diving and horseback riding, and often contain landing strips for jets or smaller airplanes. Tourists who stay in such enclaves have no need to leave the complex as food, drink, and entertainment are provided by the resort. At all-inclusive resorts, such as Club Med, almost all daily needs and amenities are included in the overall price. Many enclave resorts in Third World and less developed destinations are associated with '4-S tourism' (sun, sand, sea and sex) (Lanfant, 1995).

Enclave tourism has been studied from several perspectives, notably its role in economic development and social impacts. Resort enclaves in developing countries have traditionally been developed and owned by multinational firms, and thus the local economic benefits have been low (Cazes, 1988). Whereas foreign corporations have the capital to develop tourism facilities as well as the ability to bring in tourists by tapping into established marketing linkages, profits are subsequently taken out of the host country and there is little 'trickle down' into the local economy. In economic terms, enclave tourism has been described in terms of both vertical integration practices and also dependency theory.

Enclave tourism allows virtually no host—guest interactions (see host and guest) and this has led to resentment by both the local population and the broader national community. Except for low-level resort staff and wealthier residents, the local population is generally banned from the resort complex premises (Cazes, 1989). Enclave guests are segregated from the local culture and are especially shielded from the local informal sector which includes vendors, hustlers, drug dealers and prostitutes. At the local level, such segregation not only creates a wall between host and guest but also precludes economic benefits from filtering into the community. At the national level, such segregation is often regarded by the native population as a form of neo-colonialism (Cazes, 1988). In a typological analysis of seaside resorts, an 'interactive' enclave resort category was recognized, in which tourists did experience a limited amount of interaction with the local population and levels of local resentment were lower than those surrounding totally self-contained complexes.

### **[1] Reviewing the existing situation of tourism in Greece**

Reviewing the Greek tourism model it is a fact that the destination characterized as a traditional holiday destination, where the predominant heliocentric model configures the existing situation and the perspectives of development. The main ascertainments will be presented below:

- The hosting capacity of the Greek tourism product exceeds two million beds;
- The existing model of tourism development is the mass tourism model (4S-Model/ Ford Model);

- A significant number of areas depend almost entirely (socially and economically) on tourism. As a result, the abandonment of productive activities can be witnessed in many places;
- The Greek tourism product is composed of infrastructure and services addressed mainly to mass tourism. The diversity and richness of natural cultural heritage offer however significant opportunities for alternative types of tourism which are gradually being developed;
- Lack of a comprehensive institutional framework for tourism development. The rapid growth of tourism in Greece – which derived from the government's efforts to increase foreign tourist inflow was not accompanied by the development of an effective institutional framework for the management and planning of tourism (Varvaressos, 2011);
- The absence of any long-term planning in tourism development led to deficiencies in infrastructure and services (low-quality accommodation, insufficient infrastructures, lack of centers of information and problematic access in tourist regions). It is also important to mention the weaknesses in the upgrade of accommodation and other infrastructure until quite recently;
- Tourism growth is spatially located in certain regions of the country and is highly seasonal (in character), concentrating in the summer months, which leads to high pressures in tourist destinations and deterioration of the built and natural environment;
- The limited and inadequate promotion of tourism product and the intensification of international competition led to decreasing competitiveness of Greek tourism product;

In spite of such deficiencies of Greek tourism, the wealth and diversity of the Greek natural and cultural heritage provide excellent opportunities for long term dynamic balanced growth.

### **6.1. The Structural problems of Greek Tourism**

Studies of the Greek tourist product show that the satisfaction derived from the consumption of tourist commodities and services decreases with time. The tourist product, to a great extent consisting of several banal/commonplace elements, fails to sustain a maximization of tourist/customer satisfaction, giving way to indifference and boredom. Therefore, the tourist product ought to be expanded, renewed and differentiated (Laws, 1995).

If Greek tourism manages to survive international competition and remain a considerable contributor to economy (income, employment), it should restructure its product within the boundaries of a new model of development (Buhalis 2001, Tsartas 2003). The structural factors that dictate this are the following:

- (i) The crisis was the consequence of a model for development which was pushed to its limits – a fact reflected in the excess offer of tourist accommodation. The increase in tourist accommodation in the coastal zone relied on the basic requirement that tourist demand would increase or maintain its levels. However, this prerequisite condition was not realised and this constituted the beginning of the decrease in quality, the latter being the result of a hotel type of crisis (additional/supplementary tourist accommodation, holiday homes, etc. which are difficult to record statistically) (Velas 2003, Morucci 2003). Thus, the increase in hotel accommodation cost led tourists to other types of accommodation of lower services and quality. The hotel crisis, through a process of excess offer in comparison to demand, may also be due to the 'leakage' of a number of customers, usually of high income, towards other destinations (Soteriades et al. 2005). The crisis of Greek tourism was defined from its beginning as a crisis of tourist accommodation spatially located in the coastal zone and restricted to the market limited by the 4S boundaries.
- (ii) The second problem of Greek tourism is associated with the offer of one and only product (4S) which had enabled the country to generate the tourist income necessary for its economic growth. Today, the 4S model seems to have reached a point of saturation (Arnaud & Kovacs hazzy 1998, Morucci 2003).
- (iii) The third major structural cause of the crisis in Greek tourism may be the constant alteration of hosting areas and resorts, an alteration due to environmental, aesthetic and noise pollution, excessive concentration of reception facilities, inadequate quality of offered services and hygiene facilities, inadequate infrastructure, etc (Tsartas,1998: 21-41, Varvaressos, 2000: 87-119). All the above underscore a 'suffering tourist development' and constitute a serious inhibiting factor in the development of quality tourism.
- (iv) The last cause worth considering which would be able to explain the structural crisis of Greek tourism is the absence of political sensitivity towards the tourist industry. Tourism in Greece is still centrally administered, both in spatial and functional terms, in the absence of decentralised and autonomous tourist organisation at regional and local level, as in the countries of Western Europe (Varvaressos, 2011).

## **7. Alternative Actions – Measures**

In conclusion we summarize some of the action points, which should be adopted and practiced in growing tourism assumption. The strategies to implement The Special Framework for Spatial tourism planning, the role of Tourism Policy and local participation, are issues which need further investigation in each case. Also some key ideas provided as alternative actions and measures of tourism policy framework in order to differentiate and enhance the Greek tourism product.

Action issues:

- establishment of strategic tourism policy framework and spatial planning

- work with the tourism industry to learn about the realities shaping available choices, while helping create an environment in which higher standards can be delivered
- integration of conservation of social and environmental resources into all strategies and plans
- enhancement prospects of economic development and employment while maintaining protection of the environment sustainability in tourism and related activities
- strengthening of the coordination of tourism policy, planning development and management at both national and local levels

Adopting such alternative actions and measures as an alternative tourism model diversifying the existing one, aims to:

- A) ensure greater involvement of local population
- B) respect local scale regarding the range of activities and the host facilities
- C) respect the local heritage, natural and cultural, for economic, social and aesthetic purposes.

The outcomes sought could be the result of redefining tourism policy and redrawing the touristic sector in terms of planning and diversification. The implementation of such a policy may require the following measures:

- legislative and regulatory
- functional, technical and financial

Attainment, however, creates a number of problems, such as:

- financial
- commercialization
- exploitation, management

Actually, the new draft law includes few of the aforementioned measures of spatial orientation, to render its application more effective.

Partial improvement of spatial planning could include the following:

- Creating a category of "rehabilitation hosting" in conformity to the relevant standards of EP- industry, so that developed tourism regions undergo real environmental and quality improvements (public investments in infrastructure and rehabilitation projects and, in general, public space arrangements).
- Establishing a new type of organized private urbanization, that is not based on the existing framework which has proved to be rigid. This specific kind of investment should be directly related to local development and social acceptance, not causing the reaction of the local population, as Fast-track investments do.
- Diversifying tourism development guidelines for the islands of the region (E11), as set by the new draft law of the Ministry of Tourism, where the various and different

levels of tourism development make it virtually impossible to establish integrated horizontal arrangements.

- Therefore, those islands that already have dense tourism building should qualify as “developed regions” and adapt to the specific conditions as set by the aforementioned measures (A-D).

Basically, the new draft law does not provide a holistic approach on the tourism development of the country in terms of accommodation, through the promotion of the Modular Tourist Complexes (M.T.C.) and the Areas of Integrated Tourism Development (A.I.T.D.), which encourages a quantitative rather than qualitative approach, as it has an upward effect to the existing oversupply of tourism beds in the country.

As opposed to the model of the Areas of Integrated Tourism Development, which enhances the existing tourist model without differentiating it, we suggested considering an "alternative" model and actions, that aims to take better advantage of appreciable yet abandoned traditional settlements of the country, and that, according to international experience, shows growing demand, based on cultural, natural and social environment.

The creation of specialized organizations such as AGEPOP in Senegal or other national organizations such as SEATM to develop mountain regions in France confirm the feasibility of a policy of diversification of the Greek tourist product. The implementation of such a policy, though it may seem difficult for Greece, it may be feasible if the tourism policy of the country acquires a new philosophy and new structures, in an attempt to redefine itself in the new international division of labor.

## **8. Conclusion**

The Greek tourism product can be differentiated against other competitive products that have the same image, by highlighting elements related to cultural heritage, natural environment and humanity, which can be qualified as unique. Developing traditional buildings and residential complexes, which are characterized by their uniqueness and find themselves in a state of neglect and desolation, for the purposes of tourism, can contribute substantially to the diversification of the overall Greek tourism product. International experience can offer us many examples of alternative models of tourism development, by taking advantage of the existing tourist resources, as well as by taking particular account of the architectural aesthetics, the landscape and the spatial, social and economic adaptation of the project to the local characteristics etc.

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*Strategic Aspects of Third Stream Activities in Global  
Higher Education: Case Study of 5 Universities in the  
North East of England*

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**Abstract:**

Third stream activities are vital for Global Higher Education, with reciprocal benefits for both International Higher Education and the global business community including

key impacts/benefits. Although evidence implies that Universities are actively embedding and integrating third stream alongside first and second stream curriculum activities, the paper would challenge such rhetoric and is far from the truth. The paper reports a study in the North East of England, involving all 5 universities. The results synthesized validate this stance and with the aid of tangible evidence further implies that there is in fact a clear miss-match of perceptions and a situation in which many Universities are clearly struggling to demonstrate tangible internal and external third stream key performance indicators. Empirical research conducted in 2012, discovered executive and procedural failings that clearly stifled academics in actively becoming involved participants in external activities. The paper concludes in presenting both an operational and strategic theoretical framework to embed 'Third Stream' activities within Higher Education and its effective integration within 'First and Second Stream' initiatives.

**Key Words:** Government; Third steam Activities; University Procedures; Community of Practice; Third Stream Solutions.

### **Introduction:**

Third stream activities, concerned with the generation use, application and exploitation of knowledge and other university capabilities outside academic environments (Thune, 2007), are vital to the success of the HE sector. Universities are required to add both direct and indirect value to social and economic development (Cable et al., 2011), with impact studies monitoring the sector's contribution as part of the overall excellence profile for the 2014 Research Excellence Framework (HEFCE, 2012).

The Russell Report (2002) and the Lambert Review (2003) emphasised that Third Stream activities should be seen as a core activity of Higher Educational Institutes. Many University Executives have responded to government initiatives and focus by establishing Third Stream policies and infrastructures within their institutes. Prima facie evidence would suggest that we are actively embedding and integrating third stream alongside first and second stream activities. However, a decade later, Wilson's Review (2012) provides troublesome reading, for whilst it identifies good practices and exemplary approaches, it highlights the continuing low take-up and patchy provision of Third Stream activity along with 30 recommendations for improvement. HE collaboration with SMEs has been identified as critical for future growth (EU documentation, TSB documentation, Strategy for growth 2011), with significant UK and EU funding initiatives aiming to stimulate cooperation.

So, if Third Stream activities are so essential, as recognized by the government, industry and the HEI executives, why then aren't we seeing considerable growth in Third Stream activity to ameliorate the loss of income from the first and second streams in the HE sector and to meet the economic imperative? This paper discusses a study that is part of a wider project aiming to identify an effective approach to growing Third Stream activity in Higher Education. The results presented here highlight academics' perceived priority of the various streams of academic

activity in their institutions and their limited involvement in, and awareness of, Third Stream activities.

## **Method & Participants**

163 academics from the Business Schools of the 5 North Eastern Universities, 2 Russell group (Durham, Newcastle) and 3 post-92s (Northumbria, Sunderland and Teesside) completed an online 20-question questionnaire in February 2012. Participants completed questions on the prioritization of the three streams of activity and on awareness and perceptions of Third Stream activity, policy and infrastructure at their institutions.

59% of the sample were Lecturers/Senior Lecturers, 17% were Professors/Readers and 24% were academic managers (e.g. Associate Deans, Head of Departments, Principal Lecturers, etc.).

## **Results & Interpretation**

### ***Prioritisation of Activity***

Academics were asked to rate the priority that each of the three streams of activity have at their institution (1 = lowest rating, 10 = highest rating). Paired samples t-tests were used to calculate whether there were significant differences in the mean scores assigned to research vs. teaching, research vs. Third Stream activity, teaching vs. research and teaching vs. Third Stream activity. This was significant for research and teaching as priorities ( $t(162) = -4.01$ , two-tailed  $p < .001$ ), indicating that teaching ( $M = 7.66$ ) was given a higher overall mean priority rating compared to research ( $M = 6.45$ ).

The t-test comparing mean differences between research priority and Third Stream priority was also significant ( $t(162) = 10.59$ , two-tailed  $p < .001$ ), research ( $M = 6.46$ ) prioritised significantly higher than Third Stream activity ( $M = 3.72$ ). Significant differences also emerged in the priority ratings assigned between teaching ( $M = 7.66$ ) and Third Stream activity ( $M = 3.74$ ) ( $t(162) = 16.98$ , two-tailed  $p < .001$ ). This confirms that teaching was prioritised more highly than Third Stream activities.

No significant differences were revealed between academic position and priority ratings for teaching, research or Third Stream activities with general agreement across all levels on prioritization.

Independent t-tests were carried out to calculate whether there were significant differences in priority ratings given to T/R/TS by Russell Group Universities compared to Post 92 Universities. Unsurprisingly, Russell Group Universities had a higher priority for Research ( $t(134) = 8.30$ ,  $p < .001$ ), with Russell Group Universities ( $M = 8.43$ ) rating Research as a significantly higher priority than Post-92 Universities ( $M = 5.50$ ). Teaching Priority Ratings ( $t(160) = -5.39$ ,  $p < .001$ ) were the opposite, with the means illustrating that Post-92 Universities ( $M = 8.28$ ) rated teaching as a significantly higher priority compared to Russell Group Universities ( $M = 6.31$ ). However, the Third Stream Priority Ratings ( $t(159) = -3.21$ ,  $p < .001$ ) means highlight that Post-92 universities ( $M = 4.13$ ) rated Third Stream activity as a significantly higher priority compared to Russell Group Universities ( $M = 2.88$ ).

### Participation in Third Stream Activities

Over 60% of academics had not participated in any Third Stream activities. A third of the sample had been doing some consultancy activities for 12 months or more. No significant association was found between length of participation in third stream activities and University type (Russell Gp vs. Post 92) ( $X^2(2) = 4.67, p = .10$ ). However, the percentages indicate that more Russell Group individuals (74.5%) had never participated in activities compared to Post-92 (57.1%).

### Rich Picture Analysis

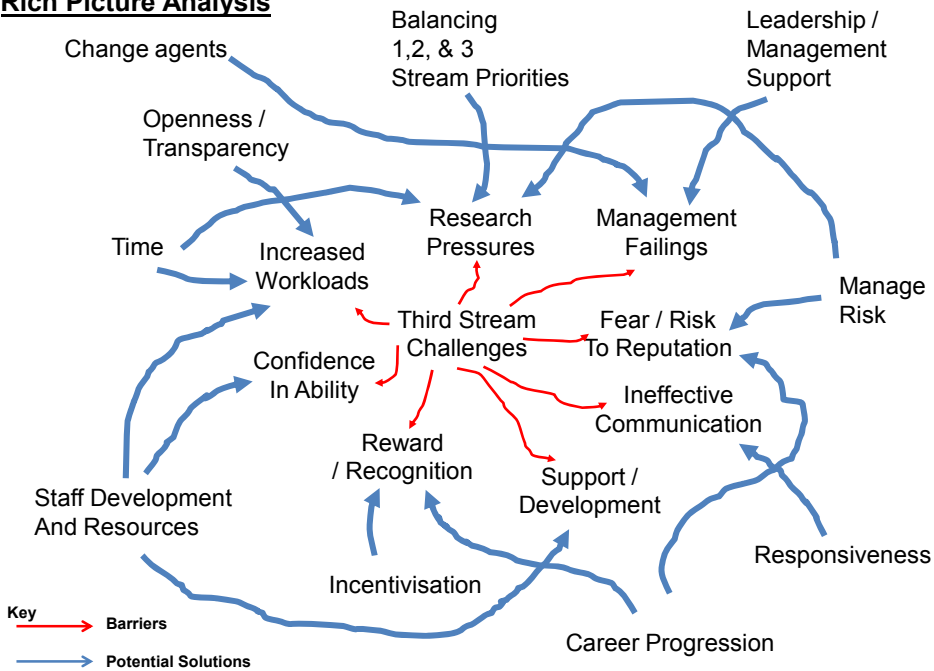


Figure 1: Rich Picture Analysis of Key Challenges and Change Solutions

### Awareness of Third Stream Targets

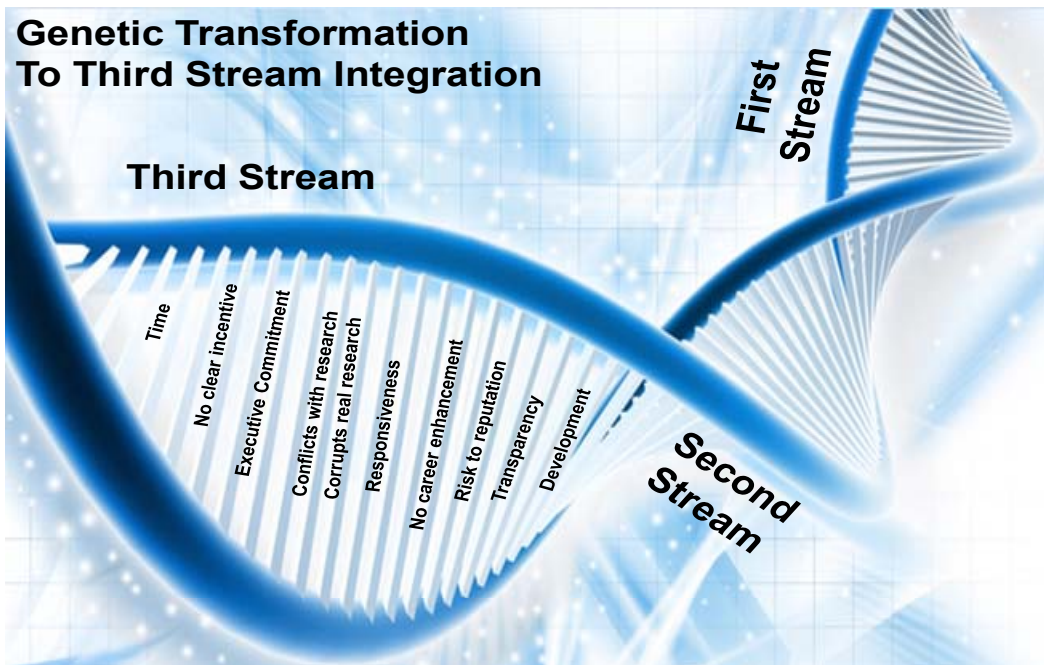
Although only 15% of academic staff actually knew the target for Third Stream activities, there were significant associations between university type and knowledge of the target for consultancy activities. Chi-square cross-tabulation between university type and knowledge of the target figure for consultancy was significant ( $X^2(1) = 6.36, p = .01$ ). Only 4.1% ( $n = 2$ ) of individuals from Russell Group universities indicated that they knew what the target figure for consultancy activities were compared to 19.4% ( $n = 21$ ) for Post-92 universities.

## Discussion

Third Stream activity is considered to be critical for the Higher Education sector and for the economy as a whole. However, whilst government, policy makers, funders and University senior management have the clear aim of integrating Higher Education through Third Stream activity, our results would indicate that the most essential element of the Third Stream mix, academic engagement, is missing.

Our results show a significant lack of academic engagement in Third Stream activity in Business Schools across 5 quite different Universities. Only 15% of our sample (which covered all levels from lecturer to Faculty management) knew the Third Stream targets for their institution, with under 40% of academics engaging in Third Stream activity.

Further analysis of the results helped construct a rich picture analysis, (See figure 1) and in doing so synthesized nine core drivers, (See figure 2), which it is felt, that if addressed, would significantly dissipate those barriers raised by respondents in the research exercise. Thus aiming to counteract the perceived perception that third stream is a 'bolt on exercise'.



**Figure 2: Genetic Transformation To Third Stream Integration as a Strategic Theoretical Framework.**

With innovation and knowledge seen as fundamental to economic growth and Universities increasingly expected to be the primary provider or at least a significant contributor, Third Stream activity is key, however, the challenges are significant. Our study clearly identifies that academics do not perceive Third Stream to be of the same priority as teaching or research. And this difference in prioritization is vast, with research and teaching both being high priority and Third Stream at best semi-priority for post-92s and of low priority for the Russell Group universities.

The response to engaging Higher Education with business has focused on senior management and high level policy, supported through the implementation of high quality infrastructure and support services. However, the product of the University is the academics themselves. Knowledge and innovation is expressed as artifacts and outputs, however, it is embedded in us. Unlike research and teaching, many Universities did not previously have third stream activity as a core function within their mission statements (Ramos-Vielba, 2009). Further, as most academics entered higher education because of first and/or second stream interests, even where the University has changed the mission and established infrastructure this may not have filtered through to faculty, with corresponding low levels of activity and growth in Third Stream activities in almost all institutions [Hoskins, 2011].

Progressing Third Stream activity from low to high priority is essential. Whilst academics continue to view Third Stream as being of significantly less priority than research and teaching, low take-up of Third Stream activities will continue. The challenge lies in changing the academic perception of Third Stream activity. This requires new approaches and models, both to embed Third Stream activity into the first and second streams, and to establish equivalence between Third Stream activity and the other streams in terms of academic career progression. Further, an academic-centric approach is needed, one where the needs and expectations of the academic, as well as the institution and the wider economy, are met. Our current work focuses on the development and implementation of a “grass-roots, buy-in” model, where we are looking at adapting attributes of Third Stream activity that inhibit and provide barriers (even if unintended) to academic engagement.

At the University of Sunderland the author has developed an operational theoretical framework named the ‘Business Clinic’ as noted in figure 3. The Business Clinic offers a viable ten step procedure whereby external enquiries can be channeled into three third stream initiatives such as first stream teaching, second stream research and third stream external engagement gateways. The Business Clinic has proven both successful and attracted further interest via the academic and business community in the formal invitation to attend research conferences, business networking forums and overseas Universities such as the Meiji University in Japan.

Higher Education has always evolved and reinforced its presence as a major pillar in society or what is now referred to as the ‘knowledge economy’. The wheels of change were historically driven or paced by universities themselves. However, as with all public sectors both the government of the day, business and public opinion have started to question their autonomous role.

# Business Clinic Operational Process

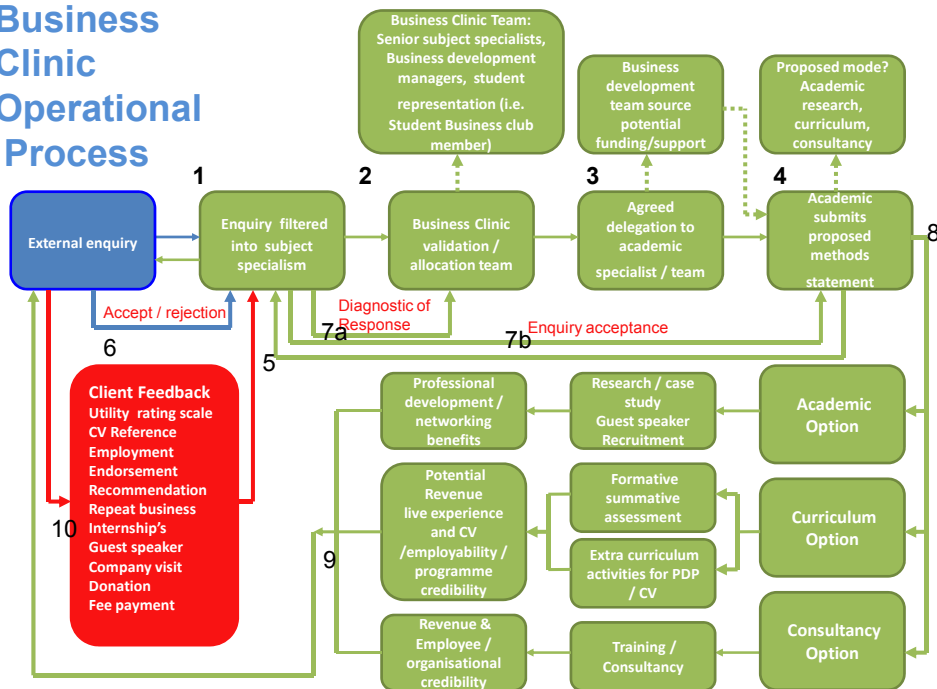


Figure 3 Operational Theoretical Framework 'Business Clinic Model'

We face a current and continued situation in which Higher Education is in the 'lime light' of scrutiny and fuelled by the economic recession. The academic community has in many cases struggled to adapt to what many feel is the commercialisation of their profession. However, with professionalism comes commitment and academics have shown that they are willing in the main to adapt. However, research reveals many academics feel that their institutes are failing to provide the necessary policies, infrastructure and management styles to foster a proactive third stream culture.

The paper concludes by clustering respondents' feedback into nine key challenges that need to be addressed and a route map / business clinic to enhance the adoption of third stream activities. It is anticipated that readers can relate to both the feedback and proposed solutions. Hopefully, the paper will act as a catalyst for academics to lobby decision makers to further validate and explore workable solutions within their own institutions.



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