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Aims & Scope

Tourism Today serves as an international, scholarly, refereed journal aiming to promote and enhance research in the fields of tourism and hospitality. The journal is published by the College of Tourism and Hotel Management, Cyprus and is intended for readers in the scholarly community who deal with the tourism and hospitality industries, as well as professionals in the industry. *Tourism Today* provides a platform for debate and dissemination of research findings, new research areas and techniques, conceptual developments, and articles with practical application to any tourism or hospitality industry segment. Besides research papers, the journal welcomes book reviews, conference reports, case studies, research notes and commentaries.

Aims & Scope

The scope of the journal is international and all papers submitted are subject to strict double blind peer review by its Editorial Board and by international reviewers. The journal features conceptual and empirical papers, and editorial policy is to invite the submission of manuscripts from academics, researchers and industry practitioners. The Editorial Board will be looking particularly for articles about new trends and developments within the field of tourism and hospitality, and the application of new ideas and developments that are likely to affect tourism and hospitality in the future. The journal also welcomes submission of manuscripts in areas that may not be directly tourism-based but cover a topic that is of interest to researchers, educators and practitioners in the fields of tourism and hospitality.

Decisions regarding publication of submitted manuscripts are based on the recommendations of members of the Editorial Board and other qualified reviewers in an anonymous review process. Submitted articles are evaluated on their appropriateness, significance, clarity of presentation and conceptual adequacy. Negative reviews are made available to authors. The views expressed in the articles are those of the authors, and do not necessarily represent those of the Editorial Board of *Tourism Today* or of the College of Tourism and Hotel Management.

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NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome to the seventh edition of *Tourism Today*, the journal of the College of Tourism and Hotel Management. As in the past, our journal is available to everyone free of charge from the College of Tourism and Hotel Management website.

In this edition, we present high-quality scholarship that should be of interest to many academics and those in the tourism industry. Many of the papers in this edition are derived from presentations from the "International Conference of Trends, Impacts and Policies on Tourism Development" which took place in Heraklion, Greece in June 2006. We are grateful to the Hellenic Open University for organizing the conference and giving us the opportunity to see such interesting and stimulating presentations. Special thanks should be given to Konstantinos Andriotis, whose enthusiasm made the conference such a success, ensuring that participation made it a truly international event with cutting-edge research papers presented.

Apart from the vastly different methodological approaches and topics in this edition, we are proud to note that this edition of *Tourism Today* continues to be a truly international journal, publishing the works of authors from many different countries and analyzing data from around the world. For example, Onome Daniel Awaritafe, an academic living in Nigeria, writes about tourism in Nigeria, while Juame Garau-Taberner, affiliated with the University of the Balearic Islands, writes about the Canaries, mainland Spain, France, the Balearics, and Italy. These are merely examples of the truly international nature of the journal, authors of many different nationalities and living in many different countries, doing thought-provoking research involving data gathering from many different places.

Tourism Today continues to improve with time and we encourage the readers to be part of the continuous process of improvement by submitting quality submissions to us. As always, constructive comments that could help us improve the journal would be appreciated.

We wish you a good reading.

Craig Webster
College of Tourism and Hotel Management

A tale of two caravan parks: friendship, community and the freedom thing

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents the findings of a research project that explored notions of friendship and community in the context of caravan park holidays for repeat visitors to two caravan parks. The study was conducted by way of in-depth interview with 22 visitors to a caravan park on the south coast of New South Wales (Australia) in 2006 and 20 visitors to a caravan park in far north Queensland (Australia) in 2007. For both parks the findings indicate that the major attractions of caravan park holidays for long term repeat visitors are the friendships that build up over years of repeat visitation, and the relaxing lifestyle that the holiday affords.

For the older and smaller of the parks the respondents also reported that a strong sense of community existed among the visitors and that this was a very satisfying feature of their holiday experience. There was less mention of a sense of community from respondents at the larger and more recently established park. Theoretical implications: there is an emerging literature documenting the possibilities of 'serious leisure' and 'focal leisure activities' as significant investment channels in the accumulation of social capital. This paper supports the theory that focal leisure activities can foster the development of a sense of community, however, our findings indicate that factors influencing this growth may include the "age" of the group and also the size of the group. Management and marketing implications: caravan park (and other tourist service) organisations may benefit from including notions of friendship and community in their marketing campaigns rather than the usual narrow focus upon facilities

From a management perspective it may be useful to consider programming activities and providing amenities that facilitate social engagement and communal activity.

Key words: caravans and camping, community, friendship, social capital, holidays.

INTRODUCTION

This article explores the notions of 'friendship' and 'community' in the context of regular annual holidays in caravan parks. While not previously associated with the tourism and leisure literature, theories concerned with social capital (Putnam, 2000; Arai & Pedlar, 2003; Rojek, 2005), social engagement (Larsen, Urry & Axhausen, forthcoming; Urry, 2002) and community attachment (Kyle & Chick, 2004) are beginning to be discussed as significant aspects of

leisure and tourism involvement. In this paper we explore some of these emerging ideas through the use of stories and reminiscences from two groups of visitors, the first to a caravan park in far north Queensland, Australia, and the second to a caravan park on the south coast of New South Wales, Australia.

Caravan parks in Australia are generally small businesses run by private operators and, at times, by local authorities. Typically they have a mix of caravan and camping sites and self-contained accommodation such as cabins available for hire. Many parks feature attractive facilities such as swimming pools, 'jumping pillows', mini golf courses and tennis courts (for images refer to Big4.com.au and TopTouristParks.com.au). While caravan parks have traditionally offered an accessible holiday alternative for lower income families, the rising costs for camping and accommodation over the past decade has impacted upon this 'traditional' group and the market appears to have shifted toward middle income families.

Caravan parks have long been a popular holiday choice for domestic travellers in Australia (Prideaux & McClymont, 2005, p.371). Many Australians, including the authors of this paper, have enduring memories of family holidays in caravan parks. Indeed, family groups continue to be the major users of caravan parks (Ipalawatte, Carter, Heaney & Lubulwa, 2005). Recent growth in the sector, however, has been attributed to the increasing popularity of caravanning and camping among the over 55s. New caravan registrations increased by 40 per cent in the period 2000 to 2003 (Prideaux & McClymont, 2005, p. 371) and according to Ipalawatte, Carter, Heaney and Lubulwa (2005) caravan park holidays are currently one of the fastest growing niche markets in the Australian tourism sector.

Domestic travellers who stay mainly in caravan parks tend to travel in groups as an adult couple 55 years and over, or in a younger family group (Ipalawatte, Carter, Heaney & Lubulwa, 2005). In 2003/2004 these two groups accounted for 24 per cent and 37 per cent respectively of total visitor nights spent in caravan and camping accommodation (Ipalawatte, Carter, Heaney & Lubulwa, 2005, p.13). Family caravan park holidays tend to be concentrated around the Christmas and Easter periods that coincide with school holidays. The older group travel consistently throughout the year, peaking during August (Ipalawatte, Carter, Heaney & Lubulwa, 2005, p.18). The industry forecast further increases in demand from the seniors market (age 55 years and over) for caravan park holiday accommodation with the ageing of the Australian population over future decades (Ipalawatte, Carter, Heaney & Lubulwa, 2005).

Despite the long term popularity of caravan park tourism in Australia, the literature in the area is quite limited. A number of industry reports and academic papers have identified growth trends and management issues in the caravan and camping sector (see Hayllar, Crilley & Bell, 2006; Prideaux & McClymont, 2005; Ipalawatte, Carter, Heaney & Lubulwa, 2005) but limited literature exists on any *socio-cultural* aspects of these holidays.

A notable exception to the above is Marles' (2002, 2003) research which explores the

relationship between place attachment and the frequency of visitation to caravan parks. Marle's (2002) study documents a quantitative relationship between place attachment and years of visitation for visitors to caravan parks. The study also found that as the number of visits increased over time a *sense of community* within the caravan park becomes an attraction.

It is often the place that attracts people back to the same destination, but as the number of visits increase over time the community within the place also becomes an attraction.

Thus with very regular repeat visitation, the visitor feels at ease, facilitating a positive emotional response to the place, the community and the holiday (Marles, 2002, p.51).

While Marles' (2002, 2003) analyses are focused around the concept of place attachment, "the exploration of the emotional attachments that people have to geographic locales" (Marles 2003, p.1), she recommends further research into the sense of community attachment reported by the repeat visitors in her study.

Marle's (2002) call for more focus on the sociable aspects of the caravan park holiday experience is particularly noteworthy in light of recent theoretical developments in the tourism literature. Larsen, Urry and Axhausen (forthcoming) argue that the field of tourist studies has been marooned on a narrow theoretical reef resulting in a fixation upon place and a neglect of issues surrounding ideas of sociality. As they argue:

the problem with tourist studies fixation upon place is that it neglects issues of sociality, especially with *significant* others. Insofar questions of social relations are discussed, these are located within fixed dichotomies of hosts and guests, ("us" and "them") (Smith 1978), and tourist and guides, where social relationships are instrumental, commodified and ridden with power (Larsen, Urry & Axhausen, forthcoming, p.7)

From this perspective the tourist is a consumer, visually consuming places through gazing, photographing and collecting signs (Larsen, Urry & Axhausen, forthcoming). While more recent literature has embraced the related concepts of embodiment and performance (Larsen, Urry & Axhausen, forthcoming; Urry, 2002, Coleman and Crang 2002, Barenholdt, Haldrup, Larsen and Urry 2004), the continuing focus on place has resulted in researchers overlooking the extent to which much of tourist behaviour is concerned with (re)producing social networks.

Evidence of convivial sociality, such as the sense of community enjoyed by long term repeat visitors to caravan parks that was found in Marles (2002) study, has been largely neglected. Larsen, Urry and Axhausen (forthcoming) argue that tourist travel, even to typical tourist places is as much, or more, about catching up with people than about visiting a place.

The importance of interpersonal relationships and community attachment in relation to tourism and leisure experiences is beginning to emerge in the contemporary literature (Byrne, 2004; Kyle & Chick, 2004; Marles, 2002; Larsen, Urry & Axhausen, forthcoming). Kyle and Chick (2004) provide an ethnographic insight into the importance of interpersonal relationships to repeat visitation from the perspective of campers who regularly attend an agricultural fair in

the United States. They found that the fair was primarily seen by the campers as an opportunity to build and maintain relationships with family and friends (Kyle & Chick, 2004). The ten days of the fair were regarded as a sort of “utopia” where the campers were able to relax and unwind and spend meaningful time with friends and family. It was also regarded as a social space in which it was easy to make new friends, due to a perceived sense of safety that the campers felt in the environment of the fair, and to a belief that other campers attending the fair shared similar beliefs and values (Kyle & Chick, 2004).

Leisure theorists including Arai and Pedlar (2003) and Rojek (2005) have begun to explore the notion of social capital in the context of those leisure practices that contribute to a sense of community. Social capital is defined as the communal networks and the sense of trust that help to bind people together, transforming individuals from self seeking and egocentric calculators, with little social conscience or sense of mutual obligation, into members of a community with shared interests and a sense of common good (Arai & Pedlar, 2003, p.192). Further, they argue that focal leisure activities or communities of celebration help to build social capital – networks of trust and reciprocity - bringing benefits for both communities and individuals. These benefits range from a renewed sense of social and personal identity to those associated with a well networked, trusting and caring communal group – friendship and protection. Social capital is a conceptual cousin to the concept of community (Putnam, 2000, p.21).

Working and playing together is the basis for developing bonds of mutuality and sharing (Hemingway 1999). Reciprocity, mutuality and companionship generally score highly in quality of life valuations (Rapley 2003). Through these means the individual’s concept of self esteem is enhanced and community solidarity strengthened. Serious leisure is a significant investment channel in the accumulation of social capital. Reciprocity, mutuality and companionship are frequently the by-product of making music together, playing sports and eating and drinking together (Rojek, 2005, p.182).

Theoretically then, focal leisure activities that draw people together have the potential to contribute to an emergent sense of community (Rojek, 2005; Arai & Pedlar, 2003).

However, working in opposition to the community building opportunities of leisure, are self interest and possessive individualism, so characteristic of western societies post World War II, which have eroded the sense of trust and intimacy required for social capital to ‘accumulate’ and flourish (Arai & Pedlar, 2003). Group leisure practice has diminished as consumption and individualism have come to dominate – computer games of combat and chance, or listening to music on personalised mini devices (Rojek, 2005; Arai & Pedlar, 2003). The challenge is to identify, develop and support those forms of communal leisure experiences that contribute to reciprocity, mutuality and companionship, and therefore to a sense of community. Arai and Pedlar (2003, p.185) argue that people coming together in sports, festivals, hobbies, volunteering and the arts can create space for the production of shared meaning and communities of celebration.

The concept of 'community' is not unproblematic. As Raymond Williams (1983) noted in *Keywords*: 'Community can be the warmly persuasive word to describe an existing set of relationships, or the warmly persuasive word to describe an alternative set of relationships. What is most important, perhaps, is that unlike all other terms of social organization (state, nation, society, etc.) it never seems to be used unfavourably, and never to be given any positive opposing or distinguishing term' (1983, p76). However, this does not alter the general argument that focal leisure activities offer opportunities to become involved in a community of interest.

Literature on the psychological concept of a sense of community is quite well developed (McMillan & Chavis, 1986; McMillan, 1996). McMillan's (1996) theory and definition which developed from his earlier work with Chavis, proposes that sense of community is composed of four defining elements: spirit; trust; trade; and art. For McMillan, these elements are linked in a self-reinforcing circle.

Part of the significance of the attraction to a sense of community within the caravan park is that for many urban dwellers, a sense of community is something that has been lost from our everyday lives (Parker, 2004). We live close to each other in crowded cities but somehow remain socially isolated from our neighbours. Recent media reports in Sydney, Australia highlighted five instances within a ten day period in which people had died alone in their homes in high density urban areas and were not discovered by their neighbours for many months (El-Chami, 2006; Australian Broadcasting Corporation, 2006; Kent, 2006). The undiscovered deaths were attributed to a lack of a sense of community and the reluctance of neighbours to look out for each other (Kent, 2006).

While theoretical debate continues on how to remedy the situation, urban sociologists have long recognised that cities have not been planned with a sense of community in mind (Grant, 2006; Parker, 2004). Urbanism as a way of life "with its impersonality, anonymity and world of strangers" has been developed with the interests of business and industry in mind, not the sociable interests of its citizens (Wearing, 1998, p.128). Critical theorists argue that this situation is a result of an imbalance in power relations between big business and the rest of the community (Bessant & Watts, 2002; Parker, 2004).

The above view is manifested in the design and use of the typical urban streetscape. The current generation of children growing up in urban Australia generally do not play with their child neighbours in the street as their parents and grandparents may have done during their own childhood years. Nor do our children ride their bicycles around their local suburb unless they are accompanied by a responsible adult. It is not considered safe for them to do so. The combination of the dangers of traffic and "stranger danger" keep children isolated inside their own homes. Our homes provide refuge as well as revealing our deep need for security, image and identity (Grant, 2006). The design of our communities and the availability of public space do not encourage casual socialising with our friends and neighbours (Putnam, 2000,

p.408) and under these conditions there is reduced scope for the development of a sense of community (Parker, 2004; Grant, 2006).

APPROACHING THE DATA

In this paper we explore the notion of community in the context of McMillan's (1996) conceptualisation. This exploration arose in a grounded way from the narrative of the two groups of participants in the study. One group reported that a sense of community was a special and attractive feature of caravan park holidays; a feature they believed to be missing in other types of holidays. The second group appeared to have a less developed sense of community, despite the reports of the importance of the friendships among the group members.

We attempt to describe, in the first instance, ways in which a sense of community was manifested for the participants in the first group, and to determine the factors that contribute to the experience of community. Secondly, we aim to develop an understanding of the reasons that the second group had a less developed sense of community. Through this analysis we hope to provide some insight into the ways in which this form of tourist experience can contribute to the production of social capital.

METHODOLOGY

The Study Sites

The study took place at two caravan parks; one on the south coast of New South Wales, Australia, and the other in far north Queensland.

The New South Wales park is situated at the mouth of a river that provides caravan park patrons with direct access to the water. Boat launching ramps, swimming areas on the lagoon and the nearby beaches provide substantial opportunities for water-based recreation including swimming, enclosed water and deep-sea fishing, SCUBA diving and surfing. The park's locality also provides relatively easy access to national parks, state forests and smaller towns and villages in the coastal hinterland. In addition to these natural attributes, the caravan park is adjacent to a commercial area containing a range of tourist related services and infrastructure including local fast food outlets, restaurants and cafes, a small cinema, a bowling and returned servicemen's club, and a branch of a national supermarket chain. At peak periods, typically during the school holidays, up to seven hundred and fifty people will reside in the park.

While the management has changed many times, the site itself has been used for camping holidays for more than 60 years. (Indeed, some of the participants in the study have been visiting the park for that length of time.) The park has evolved from a local government controlled camping ground to a modern 'resort style' establishment with a mixture of camping and caravan sites, cabins and 'villas', a recreation hall, swimming pool, a 'jumping pillow' and programmed children's activities. It is clean, clearly laid out and appears to be well maintained. Peak season for this park is the southern hemisphere summer, particularly the December-January school holiday period.

The Queensland park is somewhat larger, holding over one thousand visitors during peak holiday periods. It has been in operation under the same manager for about 20 years. It is also a well maintained, modern 'resort style' establishment with manicured grounds, three swimming pools, two jumping pillows, and a variety of other recreational facilities including a tennis court, mini golf course, adventure playground for toddlers to teens, pool tables, bicycle paths, basketball court and outdoor movie facilities. A series of 'free' social events are facilitated/provided by the park management each week including pancake breakfasts, outdoor movies, dance performances, aquarobics classes and bocce games. This park is located on the fringes of an international tourist destination city . It is surrounded by a high fence and patrolled by security each night. Entry to the park is restricted to residents and registered visitors. The park's locality provides easy access to a plethora of tourist activities including reef and rainforest tours, markets, beaches and day trips to tropical islands. Peak season for this park is the southern hemisphere winter, referred to in this tropical climate as the 'dry' season, where maximum daily temperatures remain fairly constant at a comfortable 25 degrees celsius.

Consistent with similar caravan park developments along both the north and south coast of eastern Australia, the cost of hiring a caravan or camping site has increased significantly in both parks over the past decade. However, despite price rises, demand remains strong, particularly in seasonal peak periods. The park managers allow hirers of cabins and sites the first option on booking their cabin or site for the same period the following year. All of the participants in this study had taken advantage of that option. The managers of both parks enjoy high levels of peak period business from a stable and loyal base of repeat visitors.

Research Objective

The research project was guided by one overall objective, viz:

- To identify the ways in which caravan park holidays can contribute to the production of sense of community.

Data for this objective were generated in the specific context of the interview and data interpretation process.

Participants

Forty two caravan park holiday residents participated in the on-site studies during January 2006 and July 2007. Those interviewed ranged in age from the 30-39 years to 70-79 years and were fairly evenly divided in terms of gender (22 male, 20 female). All of the participants were repeat visitors. For the purposes of this study, repeat visitation was defined as returning to the same site on an annual basis for at least three years in succession. All but one of the participants was of anglo-celtic background.

Method

In order to explore the experience of the caravan park holiday with long term participants, we sought to elicit rich information in the form of stories, descriptions and personal analysis from the informants. The primary technique for data collection employed in this study was the in-depth interview.

The purpose of the interviews was to identify the ‘attraction’ of a caravan park holiday that kept people coming back to the same holiday park year after year. To this extent, the interview process was open-ended. However, given the objective of the study, the overall framework sought responses to the following general themes:

- personal histories of caravanning and camping and memories of these earlier experiences;
- benefits derived from the contemporary experience, the reasons they return to the same location on a sustained basis; and
- the impact of the holiday on relationships with family and fellow caravan park users, changes in gender roles, parent-child relationships.

At least one of the researchers stayed on-site for the duration of the interviewing periods. The managers of the caravan parks assisted with access, introducing the researchers and the purpose of the study to the participants. The interviews took place in the caravans, tents and cabins of the participants and were recorded with their permission. Following the interviews, each of the tapes was then transcribed. The data were analysed with the assistance of NVIVO qualitative analysis software.

Analysis

The first level of analysis undertaken was thematic utilising McMillan’s (1996) four contributing elements – spirit, trust, trade and art - as the principal textual groupings. As with any qualitative study, thematic analysis helps to give a degree of order and control to the task. This first ‘work’ of the data also established some broad groupings of experience beyond those emerging within the McMillan’s (1996) framework. Precise definitions of each theme were then established and the data once again examined. At this stage, codes were applied to the data and further reviewed. In order to enhance reliability, each of the coded themes (with data attached) was then reviewed independently and then jointly by the research team. Recoding and multiple coding was undertaken to ensure that the nuances of the language and the context of the data were not lost. Where points of difference arose, the original text was reviewed and ‘worked’ until there was agreement on its thematic placement. Throughout the process, categories (sub-themes or elements) were also developed to reflect the nuances of language inherent within the more ‘global’ themes.

The development of themes inevitably involves data reduction – the thematic construct is filtered, disconnected and then reconstructed from the text. The processes of data reduction notwithstanding, the themes as developed are interpretive mechanisms, not mutually exclusive

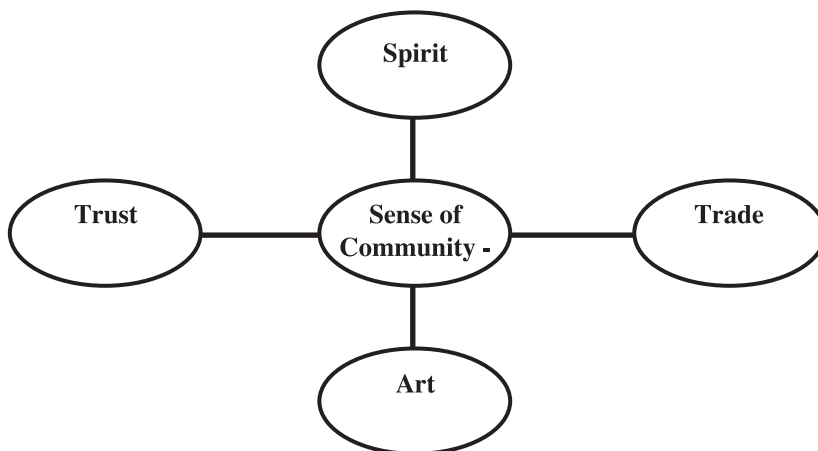
pieces of data. Reflecting on themes and ‘working’ the text is a dialectical process between the text, the researcher and the act of writing.

In the following text pseudonyms have been used to protect the privacy of participants.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

According to McMillan (1996) a sense of community is created from a coming together of four critical elements noted in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Building a Sense of Community – Contributing Elements (source: McMillan, 1996)



SPIRIT OF COMMUNITY

McMillan (1996) contends that the first element, spirit of community, is built around a number of important and interrelated characteristics – friendship, emotional safety, boundaries and a sense of belonging. The first of these, friendship, evolves in situations where we have a “setting and an audience to express unique aspects of our personality” (p.315).

Friendship was particularly important to the south coast participants. Hunter commented that he’d been coming here for 12 years and have probably got some of the best mates here. *Yep, I talk to locals as well as people that camp in the park [and] apart from family [they are] some of the closest people to me.* Barry echoed these sentiments and those of his wife for whom their holiday was about friendship. *100 per cent friendship. I believe once you’ve made a friend you’ve always got a friend and this is what its all about, coming, the friendships.*

The people from the far north coast park spoke about friendship too, but with less intensity of feeling than the south coast folk. Edward reported that *friendship is a key factor. We meet 8-12 couples from all parts of Australia. I imagine we'll lose some of the ones we've got and gain new ones. We've come here for 9 of the 11 years I've been retired, but some of this group have been coming here for 16 years straight.* Diana also enjoyed the friendliness of the lifestyle - *We've been going about 10 years. We don't come with anyone but we're very busy from the time we get here. We have lovely people behind us and beside us. We love the lifestyle. We come here for four months but if we took a unit we wouldn't see anyone. As much as we love each other's company we love being able to talk to the world, and you too.* Paul contrasted the friendly lifestyle he enjoyed at the park with his home life. *You get to meet your neighbours if you want to. Sometimes you exchange pleasantries and that's all, sometimes you click with a couple and you end up having morning tea together, or lunch, or dinner, and you end up exchanging Christmas cards. Particularly for me it's friendly because I live on my own in a high-rise apartment, a vertical community, but not one where you get to know people too well. I've been there 18 years but have never been to other residents' apartments for morning tea and they've never been to mine. So yes, I enjoy my five months away. It's the friendliness that matters.*

Within this context a number of the participants from both parks expressed a belief that a caravan park style of holiday is more conducive to the spirit of friendship than other types of holidays because it attracts friendly people. They expressed a sense of faith that other holiday makers at the caravan park would be interested in their friendship. Edward from the far north coast park commented that *caravan parks are far more friendly than motels or high rises. A five minute trip to the toilet can take an hour because you stop and talk to so many people along the way.*

Emotional safety is concerned with the ability of group members to be themselves, to speak 'the truth'. If "community members are willing to look inside themselves and honestly represent their feelings to others, then they are speaking *The Truth* (emphasis in text) as they know it" (McMillan, 1996, p. 316). This 'truth speaking' environment evolves through mutual feelings of empathy, understanding and caring. The truth is also about being yourself, without feeling bound to convention.

There is also a sense that within the interactions, people are free to be themselves – this is an environment with limited 'pressure'. Arai and Pedlar (2003, p.194) argue that 'communities of choice', like caravan parks, allow individuals to develop their "social and political identity beyond the confines of traditional structures of gender, race, class and age" (p.195).

By way of example to the above, Peggy, from the south coast park, is in her sixties and comes from a hard-working farming background and is staying in the caravan with her husband. She had a television with the tennis on in the background as the interview was being conducted. In the following extract, Peggy comments upon her social freedom to watch videos and tennis

while holidaying at the caravan park – activities that might be considered ‘time-wasting’ in other contexts.

This is still the best way to have a holiday. This is what we call our holiday. The others are trips, you're going places to see things. We've seen things we wanted to see, well not everything, there's always something new to see if you want to but we're not seeking to find new things when we come here. We can relax, and I love watching the tennis. I watch a lot of tennis and I watch a lot of videos 'cause I never watch videos at home. I don't think I've ever been to the video shop at home, so it's just a different lifestyle you have here. When you're home you feel you've got to be doing things, you haven't got time to be sitting around watching videos. All right, that's me anyway. Down here I don't feel I owe anybody anything, I'm not responsible for anything.

In another example, Alan from the north coast park is renowned at home for being a quiet man who tends to keep to himself, however, at the caravan park his persona alters somewhat and he becomes more outgoing. His wife, Diana, told a story of the surprise their daughter and son-in-law received when visiting them at the caravan park to find Alan behaving differently. *They'd never seen him like this – he talks to the world..*

Boundaries make emotional safety possible. Caravan parks are ‘bounded’ communities – temporally, spatially and historically. The boundaries are both defined and labile. Colleen from the south coast parks comments that:

The people who intend to camp and who are prepared to live close to each other are friendly. You're outside cooking and eating and you don't have a phobia of being close to a whole lot of people. I guess it's not as private as it would be in an apartment. [Caravan parks] attract those sort of people; friendly people who like other people.

Karen from the north coast park commented upon the emotional safety aspect with reference to her children. *In real life we tend to be very cautious of people. People are here because they care about kids, and everyone looks after everyone else's kids. There seems to be a confidence amongst the kids that this is their place. They connect so well with one another and I enjoy that.*

The feeling of a sense of belonging or sharing some sense of personal relatedness within a community is the third element. In the context of the caravan park, a sense of belonging to a community is integral to the holiday. For Richard, a long term visitor to the south coast park, *it's almost for us now after this many years like a sense of homecoming when you pull in the gate. And that's the part I was saying about its being easy. You don't have to learn the ropes all the time. It's knowing how things go. And it's that sense of homecoming.* Dallas from the north coast park expressed a similar sentiment in the following succinct statement - *when we come around the corner and see the park we go 'You beaut'.*

McMillan (1996) claims that when we believe that we will be welcome, that we fit or belong in a community, we have a stronger attraction to that community. This resonates with Marles' (2002) finding that repeat visitation elicits a positive emotional response to the community within the caravan park. The participants in this study chose to revisit the caravan park each year for a holiday and one of the main reasons that brought them back year after year was the community of friendship they found there.

You meet people here that you've met all the years. When you come here it's like old home week. You arrive here and walk around and catch up with all the people that you see from year to year and they're all on holidays (Nancy, south coast park)

The sense of belonging also extended outside the boundaries of the caravan park into the local community. Nancy also noted that

People recognise you, the locals you know. The guy at the butchers, soon as you arrive, "Hi, how are you going?" It's like you just saw him yesterday. Sometimes you get a better reception here than at home where you do your shopping every week.

The evidence indicates that the spirit of friendship, emotional safety and sense of belonging are strong among both of the communities of caravan park visitors interviewed for this study. The social space allows them to relax, to let go of some of the demands of their usual lives, to be themselves, and to forge important friendships. They also perceive that other people staying in the park are likely to be interested in making friends and consequently the participants are comfortable about approaching their "neighbours" with friendly overtures – a type of mutual reciprocity.

The evidence from the interviews suggests that friendships are more established for the south coast participants than for those on the north coast. This is possibly due to differences in the length of time that these friendships have been developing. Participants had been regularly visiting the south coast park for up to sixty years. Their stories about friendships span life stages. In one example Keith, in his early forties at the time of the interview spoke of his memories of holidays at the south coast park - *as a kid, like twelve, thirteen year old boy meeting the same kids, same boys and going fishing or surfing whatever we were doing at the time, so you'd come back to the place and meet the same people who camped, and you made friends that you'd had for a long time. More so as I've grown a bit older.* Judy, also from the south coast park, spoke of long term friendships - *we've watched their kids grow up and we've being to their 21sts and 18ths and to their weddings. That aspect of it is very gratifying. You make really good friends.*

In contrast, the far north coast park has been in operation for about twenty years. While friendships are clearly blossoming at the north coast park they have had less time to develop. This finding adds a potentially new theoretical dimension to the concept of sense of community

in respect of the temporal dimension. From a management perspective, an understanding of the timing of community development may help in planning for this aspect.

TRUST

According to McMillan (1996) the spirit of friendship is the foundation on which the sense of community is built. Trust on the other hand is an important building block. According to him, trust is about the informal and formal rules that guide and bind a community. This idea also resonates with those of Putnam (2000) who contends that a sense of community is closely related to that of social capital and, according to Arai and Pedlar (2003, p.193), social capital predisposes people to trust each other, and to treat each other as friends, “rather than as strangers, competitors or potential enemies”. The following extract from a south coast interview suggests that caravan parks engender a sense of trust in ways that other types of holidays fail to do.

If you're in a unit you don't know whether [your neighbour] is a banker or plumber or labourer or not ... There's a lack of trust there ... You think oh no he might just want to be left alone. You've got to shut your door whereas the caravans and the cabins are always open (Rod).

Trust is also concerned with the ‘formal’ authority that exists within the community. In the context of the caravan park experience, it is both the trust that exists between close and near neighbours and also the relationship with management who act as the formal authority. The holidaymakers of both parks trust that management will enforce the ‘rules’. The interviewees felt that the rules were fair, appropriately enforced, and they were well served by management staff.

It seems to me all the staff are really friendly. They drive past and they know our names and all that, and that's really nice. That sort of relational stuff is really nice and it's all part of the service and everything. They look after us really well and all our friends so we're really thankful for that because that's part of helping us to have this community within a community and that's allowed to happen, and they really do look after long-termers (Alice, south coast park).

The girls at the front desk are wonderful, the guys are good blokes, it's very safe and clean. This has more of a family feel about it, they take a personal interest in you (Mark, north coast park).

The staff are excellent, nothing's too much trouble for them. Everything's spotless all the time. You feel very safe. They're very friendly. Last year I fractured an arm just before we came up – and there were flowers for me when we got here. To be able to still remember people and their birthdays when there's over 1000 people staying here a night makes you feel special (Diana, north coast park).

The participants of the south coast park also expressed a sense of mutual care and responsibility for each other. Kirk and Angela commented that:

I feel safe with the kids here. It may be a false sense of security but I think while I'm here I've never had any trouble. You feel safe; we've been coming here a long time. People in the park all know the kids and where they should belong and if something happened someone will come and say "I saw your kids over there, they should be there" (Kirk).

It's great for the kids. It's all safety and just really there's so much to do. They've got the trampoline. They've got the rec room now. They have the movies; they can ride their bikes up and down. You've got the lake here. They go fishing in there or they just go play in the water in there and you know it's safe, there's not any tides coming in or out. They can go for walks up and down. They just have a whole big range of freedom and they can just do a lot of things (Angela).

While the respondents from both parks has a strong sense of trust in their relationships with park management, the north coast respondents were a little more reserved about the extent to which they trusted the other residents. At one end of the spectrum Jane commented that *you still put your things away at night, I never let my kids go out without me*. However most respondents had begun to develop this sense of trust. Raymond commented that *most people leave things out and hope no one takes anything. I've found it pretty safe. People are always watching. Our kids are getting a bit older so we tend to make them stick together. They've been pretty good and won't go and do something unless they ask us first*.

Leisure theorists (Arai and Pedlar 2003, Rojek 2005) have begun to explore the notion of social capital in the context of leisure practices that contribute to a sense of community. Social capital is defined as the communal networks and the sense of trust that help to bind people together, transforming individuals from self seeking and egocentric calculators, with little social conscience or sense of mutual obligation into members of a community with shared interests and a sense of common good (Arai and Pedlar 2003:192). There was evidence of a contrast between the two parks in terms of a sense of the common good. Marie from the north coast park claimed that *some of us are pensioners, some have a lot of money but we all get on together. People mix well here in a park like this*. However, the following comments from north coast respondents suggest a distrust of people from lower socioeconomic strata that is more in line with a community that is low on social capital (Arai and Pedlar 2003).

Because it's an expensive park you generally get nicer people and it's very safe, secure, relaxed. There are parks in the outback where people are on welfare, running away from jail, where you have to keep everything locked up (Paul, north coast park).

We've found in the more expensive parks, the more civilised the people are likely to be. In the cheaper ones you can get a lot of yobbos and drinking if you get some lax management (Beatrice, north coast park).

In contrast, a number of respondents from the south coast park lamented that the increasing cost of hiring a site in their caravan park was excluding single income families, blue collar workers and pensioners.

They should encourage a lot more families to do more in off-peak times, offering better value for money. We have friends with 4 kids on one income and they can't afford a holiday even in a tent (Wayne, south coast park).

The permanents, mainly pensioners and old people, are the ones getting kicked out for the cabins ... I think we're going to go through another phase where the blue-collar bloke is going to find it hard to go on holidays to the coast (Tim, south coast park).

The tendency to trust the broader 'potential' caravan park community indicates the existence of social capital in the south coast park. The respondents show strong signs of a community contributing to social cohesion and the common good in the broader Australian society.

TRADE

Trade in the context used by McMillan (1996) refers to the development of a social economy where positive feelings are shared between members of the community. Feelings and behaviour are 'traded' in the circumstances of building a sense of community.

While many of the south coast participants talked about community, the following examples typify the developing social economy of the caravan park:

It's friendly, relaxed, co-operative – everyone helps each other. It's a community with lots of community meals and all that sort of thing, its really good (Colin).

And they look out for you and its nice to know if something goes wrong with the car or whatever, everyone pitches in to help out or if someone gets flooded out everyone goes to help with drying out their bedding. So that kind of sense of community. If we catch heaps of fish we give it a way. That's the kind of community thing that builds up (Sally).

It's just the community atmosphere, and the kids, when they were little, they always had someone to play with. A community game of cricket, or fishing, or golfing, and we'd often go to the beach and we'd take kids from 4 or 5 different families, that was really good too. (Colin).

A final example is that discussed by Michael. His experience captures the essence of the trading relationship that exists within the park. Michael was away from the site when his son, Tim, broke his arm. His wife Denise has:

gone to the next door neighbour who took Tim and Denise to the ambulance – the ambulance took them to Moruya. By the time I come back they've gone to Moruya, worked out they can't fix his arm there so they've gone to Bega. On the way past I've come back and told everyone what's happened, and I kept on following the ambulance. After we come back the whole thing was all packed up 'cause I knew I was going the next day, so everyone's come, packed up all our clothes, pulled everything apart, dropped the tent and packed it all into the trailer. They didn't have to do that – I just said 'yep we'll be going tomorrow, I'll have to come back tonight and start packing up'. Twenty people did it. They just come, pulled it all apart and packed it up. It happens here. There's a good community of people here. You do look after each other.

North coast participants made comments about the positive feelings shared by the community.

Keith commented that once you get to know people you can solve the problems of the world. People walk around the park too for exercise and to check out everyone else's vans or units. And just to say hello. You could go to anyone and they'd be willing to help you.

Diana made note of the need to be accepting of others living in close proximity.

You must be prepared to go to a caravan park, people might have a few drinks at night, a baby might be crying, kids will get up early and run around.

Karen and Paul provided examples of the social economy in action at the north coast park.

When you get here your own life stops for a small period of time and you get to enjoy a combined family life. Not just your family but other families that you would connect with. There's a real camaraderie. Some complete stranger walked up yesterday afternoon and said 'I've forgotten my air bed pump'. You just don't do that in the real world, only here where everyone's comfortable and here for the same purpose (Karen, north coast park).

The day that I arrived here they rang me on the road and said 'You are coming for lunchtime aren't you?' and I said 'I'll be there in half an hour.' I pulled in here, Keith gave me a hand to put the van on the site, we had lunch, and then I got established (Paul, north coast park).

Trade is an aspect that was evident in the communities of both parks. As with friendship, it appeared to be better established at the time of interviewing in the older of the two parks. The south coast respondents offered more stories along these lines. Whether it was about sharing a good catch of fish with another family, fixing up someone's annex or tent which had blown down while they were away from the site, or pulling in someone's washing when it was about to rain, the south coast respondents were very aware of their strength in this aspect of community and the benefits it brings.

ART

The final element of McMillan's conceptualisation is that of *Art*. Art in this sense is the combined stories and history that shape a community. However, it is not necessarily a history that one must have participated in but one whose ideas they embrace. The historicity of their experience in the south coast caravan park comes from the annual recasting of community engagement.

Its primarily the people that we've met and have remained friends with [that keeps us coming back to this caravan park]. The kids my boys used to play with when they were small are still here, they're still coming. Even if I can only get down here for a week or a weekend they've still got to come here in January. We know people from all over Australia, from Newcastle, from Wollongong, Melbourne, Goulburn – its one of the key things – we know people from all those areas from this. It's very important to the kids. They get invited to each other's 21sts, weddings and all that sort of stuff (Colin).

Indeed, the sense of long lasting and valued relationships was the theme of many stories. There was more than one mention of couples who met at the caravan park as children and went on to marry.

She was saying she used to come down here when they were children and then she met her husband here and so you hear the stories about one's who have come on holidays, grown, and then their children have come and they've met the ones who live next door, because you see all the young ones get together, and then they come back every year and they become friends, then they become girlfriends and boyfriends (Nancy).

A poignant story was told of one elderly man's final visit to the caravan park. The theme of this story seemed to be a celebration of a life full of rich holidays at this particular caravan park.

When we first arrived there was an old couple in the caravan up the back. He came from The Entrance up near Newcastle to here every year for about 45 years. The last time he come he said "I don't think you'll see me again because the son's coming to drive me back", but he said "I've enjoyed every minute I've ever come here" (Rod).

While the historicity was less developed in the stories of the north coast park, their stories celebrated the friendly and relaxed atmosphere and the freedom from time constraints which left space for building and maintaining relationships. This celebration was a feature of both parks.

My boys do swimming, I see the same parents when I drop them off but I'd only have a 2-3 minute conversation, maximum, with any of them. I've made better friends in 2 days at a caravan park which is kind of sad. I heard someone say we're not human 'beings'

any more, we're human 'doings'. And I agree. This place helps you connect (Karen, north coast park).

The people I meet in caravan parks are either of my age group or young families, a mixture of people. They've all got time on their hands and are fairly relaxed. It's friendly, you meet people by walking up the road (Paul, north coast park).

We're on the foreshore right at the water and the kids can just swim there. You can watch them, just sit in front of our tent, we don't have to move, don't have to go anywhere, just sit still. For our family in particular that's really good because we're really busy (Anne, south coast park).

Just relaxing, sitting out watching the kids play, having a few drinks with your partner, wife, girlfriend. Everyone's happy, no stress – when you come to places like this you don't have any expectations of doing anything. We had breakfast at 11am, lunch at 4pm and dinner at 9pm. Take it as it comes (Warren, south coast park).

The theme of relaxation of time constraints was central to the stories and reminisces of the majority of respondents at both parks.

CONCLUSION

I actually used to scoff at people who came back to the same place all the time ... I couldn't understand what the attraction was. But now I do ... It's a community of friendship. (Richard, south coast park)

This study has explored the experiences of 22 repeat visitors to a caravan park on the south coast of New South Wales and 20 repeat visitors to a caravan park on the far north coast of Queensland from the perspective of the literature on sense of community and the associated concept of social capital. We have sought to understand and compare the elements of the experiences of the participants that contribute to a sense of community within the caravan park. The sense of community that exists among regular repeat visitors to the south coast caravan park appears to be a major source of the park's attraction and arguably keeps people coming back to the same site, at the same time each year, for their annual holiday experience.

While the foundations have been laid for the development of a sense of community at the north coast park, the findings indicate that it is less well developed. One of the factors contributing to the difference between the two parks is the amount of time they have been in operation. The south coast park has been operating for about sixty years, three times as long as the north coast park. This indicates that holiday communities may need several decades to fully develop in the areas of trust, trade and art.

A community of friendship is something that is valued by all the participants in this study. The findings of this study support those of two similar studies located in the tourism literature.

Marles' (2002) quantitative study of Australian caravanners found that the sense of community increases as an attraction as the number of visits increases over time. Kyle and Chick (2004) concluded that relationships with family and friends were the most important and meaningful elements of the experience for annual repeat visitors to an agricultural fair and encampment in the United States.

A sense of community and social capital can be thought about as public goods. They offer members a full social existence of intimate, close connections to others – social nurture (Arai & Pedlar, 2003). Social capital enables members to act together more effectively to pursue shared objectives (Putnam, 2000). A sense of community mitigates against feelings of alienation. A sense of community and social capital are, arguably, elements of social life that have been eroded over recent decades in urban communities. Arguably a domicile-based community in an urban environment is something more substantial to people's lives in general than a community with the kind of time horizon of a holiday community. However, a holiday community seems to fit under the banner of communities based around "focal leisure activities" referred to by Arai and Pedlar (2003). It is clear the people interviewed for this study gain a great deal of pleasure, sense of identity and ongoing benefit from their membership of the holiday community

Arai and Pedlar (2003) are interested in the exploration of the role of focal leisure activities in providing spaces for the social self and civic engagement to occur – spaces where community structures and their potential contribution to social cohesion, trust, mutuality, co-operation and openness can emerge and thrive. They argue that tourism and leisure studies can reaffirm their practical and theoretical roots by focusing on the community building aspects of focal leisure activities. Leisure studies has neglected the concept of community and the common good in recent decades where the focus of both research and practice has been on leisure as consumption and individualism (Arai & Pedlar, 2003, p. 185).

For many decades caravan park holidays have been providing a sense of community and important avenues of friendship for many of the people interviewed for this study. McMillan's (1996) conceptualisation of the four critical elements - spirit, trust, trade and art – for creating a sense of community have proved useful for understanding these experiences, and may offer insights for tourism and leisure theorists and practitioners. It is the purpose of theory to help us think clearly and to make connections across particular cases. This purpose accomplished, clearer pathways of personal and professional action should emerge. Theory that is adequate in explaining something also suggests effective pathways of action.

Missing from both McMillan's (1996) theory of sense of community, and Arai and Pedlar's (2003) understanding of building social capital through focal leisure activities, is the aspect of a relaxed social space, where people have the time and conducive social environment to 'connect' with others. As one respondent noted, in the usual social spaces of every day life we seem to be constantly busy - we have become human 'doings' instead of human 'beings'.

The success the respondents in this study had with the building of friendships and a sense of community was very much linked to taking time out from 'doing' to just 'being' which gave them the space to reconnect with family and friends.

In the management and marketing context, there are also implications from this study. Caravan park (and other leisure service) marketing may benefit from including notions of friendship and community in their marketing campaigns rather than the usual narrow focus upon facilities and services. It may be useful, for example, to use quotes from past customers that refer to these notions in the promotional material. From a management perspective it may be worthwhile to consider programming and providing amenities that facilitate social engagement and communal activity. An example of this might be barbecue areas and picnic tables that cater to larger groups where multiple family groups can share a meal or an afternoon and evening.

There are many questions that still need to be answered. For example, to what extent is it possible for tourist operators and other leisure service providers to 'manipulate' conditions that support the creation of a sense of community? Are the benefits accrued through being part of a community in a holiday setting only temporary or are they substantial enough to permeate aspects of people's lives once the holiday is over? Are the integral elements for creating a sense of community in holiday communities transferable to other tourist settings?

Further research into the needs and motivations of repeat visitors to caravan parks may provide marketing and service delivery insights to practitioners in the field and, hence, improve the economic and social sustainability of their enterprises. Further research into holiday communities may contribute to theoretical understandings about sociality and social capital in the context of focal leisure activities. Such research could contribute to a fledgling body of literature in the area of tourism, leisure and social capital that offers potential for reframing the social relevance of tourist experiences.

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Language travel or language tourism: have educational trips changed so much?

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This article points out the changes in organization, students and language learning that language trips, as contrasted with educational trips (of which language trips are a subgroup) have gone through in the last years. The article emphasizes the need to differentiate between language trips and language tourism based on issues of additional activities, emphasis on language and expected outcomes in order to show that although both types of language experiences have significant differences in language gains, both can be interesting for the travel agents and course organizers alike. The article begins by positioning the importance of language tourism in the world and the addresses its importance in the British economy to support the need to pay special attention to its study. Afterwards, the article will study the difference between language travel and language tourism and a tentative approach of both approaches' effect in language learning. Finally, the paper concludes that despite their similarities language trips and language tourism are aimed to different types of students and that although the language benefits of language tourism can be expected to be lower, these trips can be very for younger students. This paper can also bring some light towards the kind of customers that each type can attract, thus it can be useful for travel companies and agencies alike that need to suggest trips to their potential customers.

Keywords: Language learning; Education; language travel; effects of travel

INTRODUCTION

In a recent teacher training course in Valencia, tourism students were asked if they really knew what students enrolled in foreign language courses abroad do. Surprisingly, many said that they did not and that they never read the content of the language travel brochures that were received in the college. In fact, although some students had taken courses 6-7 years before, most of them did not consider travelling to learn a foreign language as "tourism".

The language travel market has changed significantly since the 1970s (Wissot, 1970) but the publications reflecting these changes are scarce both in foreign language education and tourism education. Of course, there is a significant research on educational travel and the effects of study trips on the students views' and experiences' towards the world. Most of these studies address issues of adult education previously included in Knowles' andragogical model (1984) such as: self-directed learning; the learner's background and its effect in succeeding in the

trip; the evolution of intrinsic motivation to learn; the interest in tasks that imply learning; and experiential learning (Roberson, 2002). Additionally, one major reason for educational travel abroad is the opportunity to learn and interact with other cultures (Byrnes, 2001).

This paper reflects the results of several studies undertaken by a language travel study group at EPS Gandía College in Valencia from 2002 to 2006. The central assumption is that there is a significant difference in summer courses abroad today between those that can be considered to follow tourism practices (language tourism) whose main goal is entertainment, and language trips aimed at learning the language. Each type has its benefits and drawbacks and, indeed, its customers with differentiating features from each other. According to Engle and Engle (2000) there is an increasing shift between longer educational stays abroad to shorter courses or sessions (2000; 2006) maybe as a "result of institutional pressure to increase study abroad numbers" (Engle and Engle, 2006: 220) or as continuous effort to make experiences abroad accessible to more students. However, there are drastic differences between long educational stays and shorter trips. As they mention:

"It is undeniable that there are fundamental differences in the academic and cultural experience offered by study abroad programs today. We consider that the creation of a level-based classification system for program types would address this situation honestly and responsibly. Compare, if you will:

- a one-month summer term, requiring little or no host language proficiency, with subject-matter classes in English, collective housing and American roommates; with
- a full-year program for students of advanced linguistic proficiency housed individually in a host family and directly enrolled in local university courses or engaged in a professional internship or service learning project." (Engle and Engle, 2000: 3).

According to this changing trend, this paper revises the following issues: 1) study abroad as a type of tourism, 2) Its impact in the international economy (and specifically in the British one), 3) Importance and differences between language travel and language tourism, 4) current issues associated to language tourism, and 5) effects in language learning. The paper concludes that the language learning of language tourism trips could be lower due to the social activity component making the trip profitable only in specific circumstances and with younger and inexperienced students.

STUDYING ABROAD

The 2 to 4 week language trip has been recommended for a long time partly because of the need of acquiring a second language (Freed, So & Lazar, 2003). and partly as a life experience or what has recently called "serious leisure"¹ In the 1960s many researchers recommended

¹"*Serious leisure* is the systematic pursuit of an amateur, hobbyist, or volunteer core activity that is highly substantial, interesting, and fulfilling and where, in the typical case, participants find a career in acquiring and expressing a combination of its special skills, knowledge, and experience (Stebbins, 1992, p.3)". [Retrieved from <http://www.soci.ualgary.ca/seriousleisure/MainPages/BasicConcepts.htm>].

the trip when students achieved an intermediate proficiency level in English (Lado, 1964). When learning a foreign language abroad students needed to adjust to their situation, the new culture, the influence of their reference cultural group and their own personality. In fact, Dragonas (1983) assured that summer programs serve to enhance motivation for language learning, cultural awareness, positive attitudes toward the host country, and parental and public consciousness of other cultures. Clashes in some or all of these factors may lead to the cultural crisis known as the cultural shock that is usually experienced by immigrants but can also be experienced by international students in short programs as well as tourists (Furnham, 1984). However, the adaptation that follows the difficult moment when the student's own culture clashes with the new culture allows the acculturation process or adaptation to the new culture (Lundstedt, 1963). Thus students move from the euphoria upon their arrival to culture shock to adaptation (Hofstede, 1997). However difficult, this experience is highly rewarding for most students who see in their travel abroad a necessary part of their own education (Engle and Engle, 2006).

In the early 1970s many international travel companies observed the potential of organizing summer courses. First, it was in France but, very soon, the influence of the English speaking countries in the world (United Kingdom and United States) redirected this trend towards the U.K. and the U.S. This trend has remained stable until today (Chen and Barnett, 2000; Roberson, 2002). The last years before the 1973 petrol crisis also meant an increase in the number of trips abroad in the US. At the same time, in Europe the trip abroad was limited by the cost of transportation, housing and tuition fees. However, due to the fact that the number of countries started to increase in the European Union Market (which was later replaced by the global idea of the European Union in the last decade) in which many social law and policies are common to all the member countries, the student mobility has increased considerably. Likewise, students have more flexibility to study abroad. However, although this could mean that less students would be attracted to taking regular summer courses, in fact, language requirements in the professional market in many countries have been very demanding in reference to the minimum English proficiency level, and therefore students willing to improve their English tend to take more and more courses (Engle and Engle, 2006).

IMPACT OF LANGUAGE TRAVEL IN THE ECONOMY: FROM THE WORLD TO THE UNITED KINGDOM

Summer courses as a justification for travel abroad has become clear in the last 15 years. To cope with the need of further programming, organization and figures have justified journals like the *Language Travel Magazine*. Currently, this periodical does a general status survey on language travel internationally every two or three years. According to this journal, the length of stay varies a great deal between countries. In fact, while the average student in Australia in 2003 (*Language Travel Magazine*, 2005) could spend as many as 15.6 weeks in his educational stay, some other countries usually received their foreign students for much shorter stays. For instance, in the same year Malta welcome its visitors an average of 2.8 weeks, France 3.2 weeks, Italy 4.2 weeks and Ireland or Spain for 5 weeks. Course prices

also varied accordingly, while a month in South Africa can be as low as 632 US\$, the same stay in France averaged 1132 US\$ and a month in the UK could mean 1512 US\$. By 2005, the travellers flux had slightly increased. However, prices were very different among countries with greater charges in South Africa where the average of a one month course was 847US\$ (a 34% increase) and the USA 1044US\$ (a 20.84% increase). The number of students seems to have increased also but total figures of travellers are difficult to obtain.

According to the *Language Travel Magazine*, language travel (shorter or longer) has a great impact in the British economy especially in the South and Midlands. The decreasing prices in air travel due to the competence between low budget and national airlines have facilitated the increment in the number of language travel in the last years. According to a survey done by the *Language Travel Magazine* with data obtained from 16 companies in 2003, each company had an average of about 850 students (total 12,619) and their average of stay was 10 weeks. Most students are Asian (32.5%) followed by Swiss and Spanish. Most students are between 19 and 24 years old. The average expense for housing is about 140£ per week and tuition about 220£ a week. Students also spend important amounts of money in food, entertainment, excursions, personal trips, books and more. In total, most students staying for about two months would probably spend between 2,000 and 3,000£. These numbers are only indicative because it is well know that most companies keep this information secretly but it is commonly believed that the total number of students could be in excess of 150,000 a year. Thus the impact is very significant. Additionally, a recent report by JWT Education for the Association of Language Travel Organizations (ALTO) suggested that language travel, especially 3-4 weeks courses and the total number of students, will have a sustained increment in the next years while longer courses will be reduced (p.11-12). This global trend places Japan as the first emitting country followed by Germany, the USA, Spain, Brazil, France, Italy and South Korea. Host countries, according to ALTO's Associates are: UK, Spain, France, US, Canada, Australia, Ireland, Malta and Italy. Although, as it is mentioned in the report " It should be noted that these findings are most likely to be dependent on where agents are located and in this study most participants were from Western Europe" (p. 9).

IMPORTANCE AND DIFFERENCES BETWEEN LANGUAGE TOURISM AND LANGUAGE TRAVEL²

There is little question on whether this large quantity of foreign students require special services different from other students or general travellers. In order to approach this issue, it is necessary to see what kinds of services are related to the organization of summer courses. In general, we should address this issue from a number of different perspectives (see diagram 1)

²In general, this article refer to Language travel as that whose main goal is academic while Language tourism is a combination of academic and entertainment aspects.

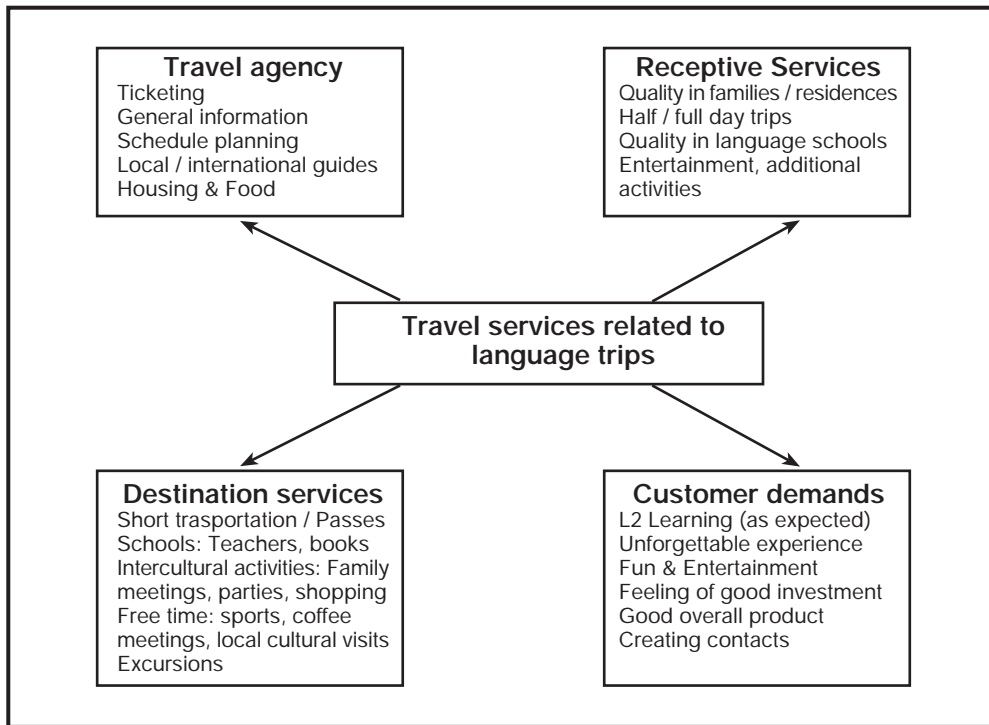


Diagram 1: Travel services in Language trips

The diagram above clarifies only a very small part of the total process carried by the organization of language travel. However, it shows very clearly that while the main reason for the trip, which is the language course, has decreased its importance; many other services are now considered fundamental when only 20 years ago the companies' interest in them was very limited. In spite of all these changes any reader interested in the topic of language travel will still find two main types of language travel organizations: language tourism organizations (i.e. EF) and summer School organizations (although some of them are operative all year round) (i.e. Hilderston College, Kent). At this point it would be desirable to mention what makes the difference between one and the others. Language tourism organizations pose their interest in the enjoyment. In general, classes tend to be an average of 16-18 hours a week (there is usually a break in both types of thirty minutes), have sport and social activities during the week and, most often, a half day excursion (on a weekday) and a full day excursion (Saturday), evening activities run from games for under 18-years-old students to pub meetings or even dance activities for the older students. As opposed, summer Schools usually have an average of 24 class hours a week and their social activities are limited to cultural visits and cinema activities although many also include social events or pub reunions (mainly moved

by the competition with other programs). Summer Schools also organise day trips but are usually full day and give more freedom to the students. Diagram 2 exemplifies these differences. Overall, although both types tend to include students of all ages, Language tourism is usually aimed at younger kids who go in groups while Summer Schools are mostly devoted to adults who go as individuals.

Time or period	Language tourism (usually young kids)	Language Travel in Language schools (usually adults)
8:30 – 13:00 (30 minutes recess)	Classes	Classes
	Lunch	
14:30-16:30	Sports, games, half day trips (all included in the price)	Classes (If students have a different optional activity, they usually need to pay extra)
	Dinner	
19:00 – 21:00	Evening games, disco	Cine Forums, Pub evening

Diagram 2: A typical day in a language program according to the type of trip (according to She Spanish Heritage for language trips to the UK and Ireland).

The key question is how some language trips have become language tourism. The explanation is probably not as easy as expected. The first reason is that the participants in language tourism companies usually go with groups that have been put together through hiring the trip in a language company and who may feel that want to experience more the local culture or want to enjoy as much as they want to learn the language (sometimes even more). On the other hand, participants in the summer School programs tend to value the language learning as their first goal but, in the end, would like to get the same feeling of relevance (the feeling that their investment is worth) and also enjoyment in their trip.

CURRENT ISSUES ASSOCIATED TO LANGUAGE TOURISM

In a recent study, Capellino Ciscar (2004) analysed the typical causes of complaints in many language tourism companies. Furthermore, Capellino discovered that most complaints after return were centred in the families. After analyzing a questionnaire that was distributed to 15 companies all over Spain, she found that most problems could be limited to 3 groups: families, local organizations or schools and organizations in the country of origin. According to her findings these problems could be summarized in the following 11 (although some of them could have many different variations).

LANGUAGE TRAVEL OR LANGUAGE TOURISM: HAVE EDUCATIONAL TRIPS CHANGED SO MUCH?

Category	Problem	Perception	Solved on site, how
Families	Home is not very clean	Students have the feeling that a few houses may not match their origin homes cleanliness	Generally. Visiting the family. Change of families is considered the last resource. Most times a conversation with the student is enough.
	Food	Students' perception of meals varies from one country to another but getting used to new foods can be difficult	Most times. Most times a conversation with the student is enough.
	Too many students of the same nationality in the same home	They speak their L1 in the house	Generally. Either students agree compensations or one or more students will have to be moved out.
	Sense of insecurity with personal belongings	Many students report to miss valuable items but most times is just their perception	Generally. A conversation with the student is usually necessary. If real, student will be moved to a different house.
	Students are distant from their friends (mostly US, Canada, Australia)	Students miss to meet their school / group friends in the evening. A variation of this problem is early curfew with younger students who may have more freedom in their own countries.	Generally. Once the students understand the importance of communication with the host family.

Diagram 3: Common problems in language tourism (own source).

These have been considered the most important issues for a long time. However, experienced tour escorts (or "group leaders" as they are often called) and family organisers are aware that although in just a few cases these complaints are real, most often they are unjustified and they are just a student's response to pre-concepts, prejudices, lack of experience in travel abroad, fears and even first impressions. In one word, culture shock (as seen before). A language travel company reported that one of their most experienced group leaders filed a loss for a large sum of money. After a few weeks, he found he had miscalculated the currency exchange

rates! Some tour leaders (or tour escorts) have suggested that school residences instead of families can be a better option since the traveller is sure that whatever happens in the room is due to one's actions. Capellino reported that this can be true for adults whose independence is highly regarded but she also found that most of the problems related to the families are also perceived in residences and dorms (and then blamed on the cleaning services or those who may have to enter the room).

Category	Problem	Perception	Solved on site, how
Schools	Teaching quality is not very good	Students feel that the procedures, time administration, drilling, dynamics, tasks do not lead to optimal learning. Additionally, some schools are not certified by the British Council.	Not very often. Students understand learning in their own specific ways and are very demanding with their money
	Activities	They are not worth the price	Most times. Most times a conversation with the student is enough. Sometimes reimbursements or compensations are necessary
Schools / Organization	Excursions / field trips are no good or boring		The students' expectations could not match with what is offered. Trying to be positive can help very much
Organization	Overbooking or delays	Lack of organization	Generally. A word with the student
	Lack of information about destination	Little interest	Provide the student with some basic information
	Transfers, buses delayed	Lack of organization	Generally. A word with the student

Diagram 4: Common problems in language tourism(own source) .

These problems are usually due to the students' wrong expectations. Capellino found that urban students are less likely to value activities in the wilderness (like a cycling day, a trip to the countryside, adventure day trips and so) and seem eager to spend most of their field trips or free time going shopping. She actually mentions a case in which in the initial information of a language course in Galway (Ireland) a group of students had been programmed a trip to Dublin (a 8 hour drive). Later, in Ireland, students were informed that if taken the visit would last for up to two hours. The leader reported that it took a full week to convince the group that it was far better to make an excursion to the Isle of Mann than spending a full day on the bus and visiting the city in two hours.

In relation to the quality of the school, Badenes Puig (2005) found a few number of schools that were not certified in the city of Chaltenham. In her study with 37 students from Spain, she expresses her belief that if this omission can be observed in small and medium controllable cities, in the larger ones the problem can be even overwhelming. Although she tackled some of the issues presented in this section, Badenes Puig intended to study in more depth what the students' and family attitudes towards each other's group are. Her idea was that one of the key questions why students may not achieve while attending summer schools in England was the relationship between the students and their host families. It is important to remember that host families were originally chosen (in the 60's) because in the acculturation process the host family is supposed to provide the support that the international student needs due to the distance with his original family and friends in a totally different environment (Bochner, 1986; Ward & Kennedy, 1994; Kenny & Rice, 1995) and only partially replaced by the telephone or e-mail (Trice, 2002; Kline & Liu, 2005). Although Badenes Puig's study is inconclusive in this sense, it proved that family problems are usually not very frequent but that problems could be ranked in importance towards the student's final impression of the course. Moreover, she found that although students in junior programs do not spend much time with the host families, given the fact that students are far from their family in Spain, at least in their thought, a good relationship can substitute the feelings of belonging and grouping and thus facilitate learning. On the other hand, if the host family is not accepted, the student will be so stressed that will hardly benefit from the language travel experience. In not few occasions this cultural clash drives the student into a cultural shock unless the student can integrate the foreign cultural and cultural patterns in its life (Pearce, 1995). However, this paper will not discuss this situation that has been addressed many times from different perspectives already.

The school and teaching quality is also another controversial issue that has only vaguely addressed. It is a common criticism that there is a broad difference between the EFL teaching qualifications required to prospective teachers and that run between a few hours (20) to master's in foreign language education (2 years). This situation contrast with the requirements for non native speakers in their own countries. Thus, when the summer peak season comes many schools need extra teachers that are sometimes hired with limited teaching experience and minor teaching skills. As a consequence, some summer programs are poorly taught and the schools do not meet the minimal quality standards (Hinga, 1990). Although many

professionals consider these practices illegal and damaging to the country's educational reputation many students especially in junior programs attend this kind of course. The main problem is that just because the students are not considered valid referees companies tend to ignore whether the main purpose of the trip (language learning) is achieved. In a course in the city of Athlone some years ago one leader with expertise in teacher training and school supervision claimed that the students were neither receiving the correct services by the local coordination nor an acceptable teaching quality. After denouncing the situation to the Spanish company, the Irish organization was informed. The Irish company's reaction was to threaten the leader and although the teaching improved a little, none of the teachers in the program was replaced and the teaching was very criticized in the students' final evaluation of the program. Surprisingly, the Spanish company continued working with the same Irish company for a couple of years until the complaints made it impossible to continue the partnership.

WHAT OTHER ASPECTS ARE DISTINCTIVE IN LANGUAGE TOURISM?

As opposed to the traditional language trip, language tourism companies tend not to use language schools due to the high cost of these educational centres. Indeed, most use regular schools that are hired for smaller groups. These schools are very convenient because of their facilities but very seldom the companies use teachers of the very same institution and in many occasions although the school name is used as a reference, in reality, what the local organization does is hire a couple of rooms and, not always, a few hours of the gym and computer room. It is not necessary to mention that this means that if problems arise the local company finds little help in the school and teachers and students are affected.

Weekly afternoon activities have a special importance because they help the foreign student to adapt to the new environment (Toyokawa & Toyokawa, 2002) and motivate them in their studies (Bergin, 1992). However, local companies try to cut costs and then inexpensive actions are usually preferred. For instance, a language program played videos without subtitles once a week but no language activities were planned around it. However, if the students do not have a lower intermediate proficiency level (B1 in the European Framework) and are not very familiar with the film the input is much higher above their competence both in quality and quantity and as a consequence this activity does not lead to learning and becomes a complete waste of time and generally leads to boredom. Likewise, many leaders have noticed that those teachers and guides that are supposed to accompany junior groups tend to avoid their responsibilities. As one tour leader says "...we had a wonderful history teacher but as soon as we arrived to York she just disappeared. When we went back to the bus we found she had been visiting a friend instead of coming with us".

DOES LANGUAGE TOURISM LEAD TO LANGUAGE LEARNING?

Despite the many disadvantages expressed above, it is important to evaluate the effect of language tourism in the students' learning. The following chart (diagram 5) presents the positive and negative aspects of language tourism.

LANGUAGE TRAVEL OR LANGUAGE TOURISM: HAVE EDUCATIONAL TRIPS CHANGED SO MUCH?

Aspects of language learning	Positive aspects	Negative aspects
Input and exposure to English	Students can hear native accents of a variety of backgrounds and origin. They can also read and operate in a variety of registers.	If students travel in groups most conversation is in L1. When the class is mostly formed by students from the same group interaction with other non native speakers with the same proficiency level is almost inexistent.
Classroom dynamics	Teachers make a change in what students usually do in their own country (after all, the purpose of Summer courses is more oriented towards non academic goals). There is an intercultural exchange of classroom behaviours. Tasks, drills and activities are also different to what students are used to. Usually they are more realistic and amusing.	If students were looking for a real international interaction they may feel frustrated. Pupils may feel disappointed if they do not understand the teaching style or the rationale that differentiates the teaching between their country of origin and the country they visit.
Use of English	It is contextualized. Projects in the street / family can help to make English real. Communicative language is emphasized.	When students have a limited experience of English in context (for instance, they spend most of the time with their L1 group) their learning may decrease due to a lack of interest, input or opportunities to interact.
Social skills and motivation	The experience can trigger the interest in future trips or interest in meeting new people. When students can communicate, even in daily situations, with the local people it fosters the student's interest in getting immersed in the new culture.	Spending too much time with the L1 group limits interaction with local people. Also staying with the group make weaker L2 speakers rely upon the most advantaged and limits their interaction and opportunities for communication with local people.
Accuracy	When language use teachers are familiar with the L2 speakers' language problems, their grammar and language use formal teaching can be very beneficial.	Not all the teachers in the English speaking country know about L2 learning or even language skills.
Vocabulary	Increases both consciously and subconsciously.	
Productive and receptive skills	It is always positive but even better in L1 mixed groups. When most students have the same origin teachers need to limit the students' L1 use to the minimum and stress activities that can promote the students' interaction.	

Diagram 5: Effects of language tourism in EFL learning (own source).

Overall, language tourism can mean a great deal of exposure to the foreign language and, above all, exposure to real people's speech. Thus, travel organizations should care about providing genuine interactions for their student travellers. Language organizations should also be especially careful with the teachers they use since in language tourism language acquisition is second in importance after acculturation and opportunities for conversation. In this sense, it is necessary to point that countries like England or Ireland have such a great demand of teachers that usually some of the teachers may not have the necessary qualification or teaching skills, and, consequently, reducing the educational value of the stay considerably. Obviously, this experience should be attractive for most students and push the foreign students to use the language in daily and social interactions that cannot be achieved in their own country. Other linguistic considerations are mentioned in diagram 5.

CONCLUSIONS

Overall, language tourism is mostly beneficial for all the students but it is important to be aware of who it should be recommended to. First, it can be a valuable experience for younger kids who do not need to rush in their L2 learning and can use more time in entertaining activities. Shy students may also benefit from the fact of not having to travel on their own. If the trip is a reward, the idea of getting relaxed and have fun in a L2 environment is very gratifying. Second, it is important to decide how to choose the right company. In this sense, students and parents should get together and consider aspects like the price, company's reputation, information about the destination (some people still believe that London is the best place for immersion programs!), the contract (some parents get false impressions about what their children will get in the trip) and make sure that the student understands that the trip should be worth.

Language tourism is different from language trips in very many different ways, and it can be a unique experience for many students opening new worlds to them. Students (or parents) should be very aware of their own goals and put them forward. Although English learning may not be as important in language tourism many students improve their language proficiency level if the program is well chosen and their interpersonal skills developed throughout the trip. Dawson (1990) has assured that it also helps to make students more mature and independent, and, on top of these advantages, it can also be great fun.

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Leisure tourists' considerations regarding destinations recently experiencing safety and/or security problems

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ABSTRACT

Nowadays, safety and security considerations represent one of the major issues that affect tourists' perceptions of risk when selecting a travel destination. Natural disasters, terrorist attacks and political instability that are prevalent in certain parts of the world raise the travelers' awareness of the importance of safety and security factors when choosing a destination. The purpose of this paper is to assess leisure tourists' considerations and attitudes regarding those destinations that have experienced safety and/or security issues in the recent past and the changes in people's travel and recreation behaviors when it comes to destination and activity choices.

This study is based on the analysis of questionnaires addressed to tourists of different nationalities, religion, age and income. The terms "safety" and "security" will be addressed separately: safety will refer to natural calamities or disasters that cannot be anticipated or prevented; security will refer to anything perceived to be free from danger, such as crime, accidents, terrorist attacks, political instability or economic insecurity.

The conclusion of this paper will highlight the main factors, by order of importance, that have to be considered when promoting a destination as safe and secure while building up an image and overcoming biases and stereotypes. The results may help in better understanding travelers' risk perceptions and their impact on travel behavior.

Keywords: decision-making process; disaster; leisure tourist; risk perception; safety; security; terrorism; travel and tourism;

INTRODUCTION

Travel and tourism is the world's largest service industry, being of overwhelming importance for many a country's economy level (Goeldner, Ritchie and McIntosh, 2000). In accordance

with the World Tourism Organization (WTO), tourism is the main source of income for almost 40% of the world's countries (Quinn, 2003).

Tourism is associated with enjoyment, and according to various typological models, most tourists rank security and comfort as essentials for a vacation site.

Nevertheless, the emerging global economy and communication networks, of which the internationalization of tourism is an integral part, make tourism increasingly subject to the effects of political instability and violence.

In this global environment, safety and security considerations constitute one of the major issues that affect travelers when selecting a travel destination. Perceptions of political stability and safety are a prerequisite for tourist visitations (Brackenbury, 1995). Natural disasters, terrorist attacks and political instability that are prevalent in certain parts of the world raise the tourists' awareness of the importance of safety and security factors when choosing a destination and can all alter tourists' travel behaviour. The effects of these acts aimed against tourists have proved devastating to tourism destinations, damaging not only the tourist infrastructure and arrivals, but the longer-term image of the destination as well. Tourism stakeholders seem to embrace these concerns and strive to take related measures to satisfy travelers' needs.

This study explores how safety and security factors affect leisure tourism and the choice of a destination. Are tourists willing to visit a destination that has been recently hit by a natural disaster, such as the tsunami in Indonesia, or by a terrorist attack, such as the bombing in London? How quickly will a tourist forget the safety or security incident when making their choice of destination? What are the elements that need to be introduced and emphasized in order to make a tourist perceive a destination as safe and secure?

A differentiation was made between the terms "safety" and "security". According to different sources (Glaesser, 2003; Monahan, 2006; wikipedia)¹, **safety** refers to the effects of accidents or hazardous forces of nature (things that cannot be anticipated or prevented), such as hurricanes, maladies, and earthquakes, while **security** involves anthropogenic factors, such as political instability, economic insecurity, terrorist attacks etc. **Disasters** are episodic events that disrupt the tourism industry on a regular basis (Sonmez et al., 1999; Faulkner, 2000), termed as a disaster being any sudden, random or great misfortune. Disasters can take many forms and can include natural events, such as floods, typhoons and earthquakes, or human induced events, such as war and terrorism. **Terrorism** is defined as any act of violence that countries may exchange; its beginnings may be traced back to as early as the mid-1930s (*ibid*).

Security is a concept that, at present, is associated not only with tourism, but with a larger scope as well. As a result of the events of September 11th 2001 and the American-led invasion

in Iraq, security concerns affect not only the individual tourism decision-making process, but also the larger environment in which the leisure industry operates and the way in which individual destinations are perceived.

BACKGROUND LITERATURE

Travel surveys consistently show that safety and security are important concerns among tourists (Poon and Adams, 2000). In the recent past the influence of natural disasters on tourism demand has received increased attention as well (Faulkner, 2001; Mazzocchi and Montini, 2001). It has been identified that the risks associated with one's safety, i.e. potential terrorist attacks and political instability, were particularly influential in changing travelers' intentions and perceptions on different destinations, even among experienced travelers (Sonmez and Graefe, 1998a). Sonmez (1998) maintains that, when faced with the threat of terrorism, tourists tend to engage in a number of behaviours, including that of substituting risky destinations with safer alternatives and generalizing potential risks to other countries in the affected region as well. Tourists tend to exhibit cultural variations in their reactions, with US tourists most likely to perceive higher levels of risk in foreign destinations (*idem*).

Sonmez, Apostolopoulos and Tarlow (1999) observe that travel statistics from all over the globe clearly suggest that tourism demand decreases as the perception of risks associated with a destination increases. Richter (1983) explains that when tourists are victimized worldwide, media broadcasts heighten the perceptions of risk associated with a particular destination. Sonmez and Graefe (1998b) found that perceptions of risk or safety concerns are of paramount importance in the decision-making process of tourists, since they can alter rational decision-making, as it pertains to travel modes and the choice of a destination. Due to media coverage, perceived risks associated with a particular destination could even surpass the actual conditions in the travel decision-making process, causing entire regions to be perceived as risky (Sonmez, 1998).

A case in point would be the outbreak of the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS epidemic) (2002-2003), which had the effect of reducing Hong Kong's hotel occupancy rate to 15% from a seasonal norm of 82%, having implications with global ramifications as well. Similarly, Singapore had a drop of 67% year on year (The Economist, 2003). With regard to SARS, Peter Harbison, founder of the Centre for Asia-Pacific Aviation, notes that "SARS itself is arguably largely a media and travel syndrome. It was unpredicted, unprecedented and, once it gained momentum, unstoppable (Thomas, 2003a).

Building on the media's power to manipulate individuals' perception of reality, as well as to help at the formation of an attitude which manifests this reality, Jean-Paul Sartre suggested that individuals make their own reality. Attitudes (interpretations of 'reality') are a psychological tendency which forms the basis of antecedent cognitive, affective and behavioural processes (Eagly and Chaiken, 1993).

Travel decisions potentially involve all the forms of risk, as identified by Dowling and Staelin (1994), namely *functional risk* (actual performance), *social risk* (embarrassment), *physical risk* (risk to self), *psychological risk* (bruised ego) and *time risk* (wasted).

Early work within travel literature by Cohen (1972) identified four types of tourists based on their relative preferences for either familiarity or novelty of a travel destination. Most broadly, one group preferred destinations and circumstances to which they felt familiar ('organised mass tourist'). Another group preferred novelty, where the circumstances were unfamiliar. The group seeking novelty would have a lower perception of risk and in turn appreciate and find desirable "an acceptable level of risk".

Roehl and Fesenmaier (1992) suggest another perspective, which classified tourists into three groups based on their perception of risk. These were *risk neutral*, those who did not consider tourism or destination choice to involve risk; '*functional risk*', those who considered the possibility of operational or organizational failure as the primary source of potential risk; those who were *risk aware* if not *anticipatory*. According to Sonmez et al., (1999), essential for the recovery of a destination in the eyes of consumers is some demonstrable success in terms of the actual level of safety and security at the destination. As Francesco Frangiali, the secretary general of the WTO, declared, 'we have learned from experience that the tourism industry recovers very quickly from adversity' (Quinn, 2003). Evidence has been brought to show that, at times of global or regional heightened awareness of risk, where the actual country or region does not experience any such risks, the recovery is quite swift.

Various studies have found that, in addition to the differences in recovery times in terms of location relative to the specifically afflicted destinations, the impact of terrorism can be delayed from between three and nine months after the event took place (Enders and Sandler, 1991; Sonmez et al., 1994). The delay in impact has been variously attributed to the consumer perception that there is a low probability of an immediate repeat of the incident or that post-incident media coverage heightens consumer awareness of the locale (Enders et al., 1992).

Furthermore, it stands under discussion the proposition that factual information for centrally processed attitude formulators should be targeted to males rather than females as males are less risk averse (Hall, 1996; Gibson and Jordan, 1998; Carr, 2001). A study by Elsrud (2001) found an actual positive perception of risk by males. However, another study by Sonmez and Graefe (1998) found that gender was not an influence on risk perception. In addition to gender, there is some evidence that the post-terrorist marketing should be more targeted to younger rather than old consumers. A study by Gibson and Yiannakis (2002) of the tourist role preference over the life course found that preference for risk-related tourism tended to decrease with age.

In his paper entitled "Tourism Security, Different Places/Different Faces", Dr. Tarlow (2006), mentions some of the principle locations at high risk from terrorism such as transportation hubs, hotels and conventions, cruises, restaurants, shopping centers, amusement parks, festivals

and sporting events. These locations are directly or indirectly related to our multi-faceted tourism industry, therefore increasing their risk for becoming terrorist targets.

STUDY PURPOSE

The concept of the research study was created at Trinity International School of Tourism Management, Crete, Greece, and it stands as an attempt to assess the impacts of security and/or safety concerns generated by certain destinations on leisure tourists at this destination and potential tourists for the destinations that offer the subject of discussion.

The survey instrument, written in English, was developed by a faculty member in collaboration with students who played a major role in the input and data collection in the areas of recreation of a local resort as well as via web.

The purpose of this paper was to analyze leisure tourists' considerations and attitudes regarding those destinations that have experienced safety and/or security issues in the recent past and the changes in people's travel and recreation behaviors when it comes to destination and activity choices.

METHODOLOGY

The apparent lack of such a framework has triggered the present study. As the purpose here was to produce insight and offer a new aspect on the issue, rather than test theory and make comparisons with existing findings, the study was deductive in nature and used a quantitative approach as it will be explained next.

A myriad of alternative research methods exist, from which tourism and leisure researchers may choose. Notwithstanding this opportunity of choice, it is of key importance to select a research method on the basis of its suitability to address the research question, rather than on some prior preference (Veal, 2006).

The quantitative research is a rigorous scientific method that is usually structured and collects numerical data and tests theories (Finn et al, 2000). It involves 'the gathering of relatively small amounts of data on relatively large numbers of cases' (Veal, 2006, p. 99).

In order to explore our aim, it was necessary to study a relatively large number of subjects so as to obtain a representative sample, using a limited number of questions that can be precisely defined. Therefore, a quantitative approach was best suited in this case through the use of questionnaires administered to recipients analysed below.

This study combined the distribution of 350 questionnaires on-site and through email to gather data from tourists traveling for leisure purposes. The basis for analysis and investigation of

this subject was the reception of 158 completed questionnaires, out of which 80 were completed manually and 78 electronically, registering an overall response rate of 45,14%. The survey instrument consisted of eleven closed-ended questions, out of which two general questions on travel habits, five demographic questions, targeting the outline of the respondents' profile and four questions on the pattern of safety and security issues and on how perceptions of risk affect decisions to travel to certain destinations. The closed-ended questions were formulated so as to help the respondents in making quick decisions by choosing from several alternatives (Sekaran, 2001). The safety and security items were measured on a five-point Likert scale, labeled definitely disagree and definitely agree at the poles and neutral at the mid point, using a set of six items asking about their considerations regarding certain destinations recently affected by a crisis issue. The method according to which an answer was being considered valid was the ticking/checking of the one answer most appropriate to one's perception. The written survey method was selected for this study to be more appropriate for the respondents to fill in the questionnaires at their own convenience.

The sample surveyed represented respondents as it follows: 89% European, 7% American, 2% Asian and 1% African. The differentiation by gender had it that 53% of the respondents were females, the majority of whom (49%) were between 26-44 years of age. A high percentage (43%) has an annual income level of less than €12.000 and 55% have a university or college degree. The majority (53%) of male respondents were between 26-44 years old, most of them (28%) having an annual income level of less than €12.000 and 54% had a university or college degree. Fifty-eight percent of the respondents traveled 1-3 times for leisure purposes in 2005 (table No. 1) and 49% traveled both within their country of origin and abroad (table No. 2).

The information and data derived were analyzed and are discussed in this paper in order to provide more findings in an area which lacks research. The approach enabled some limited findings to be compared with secondary information, allowing thus the paper to illustrate the theory with realities.

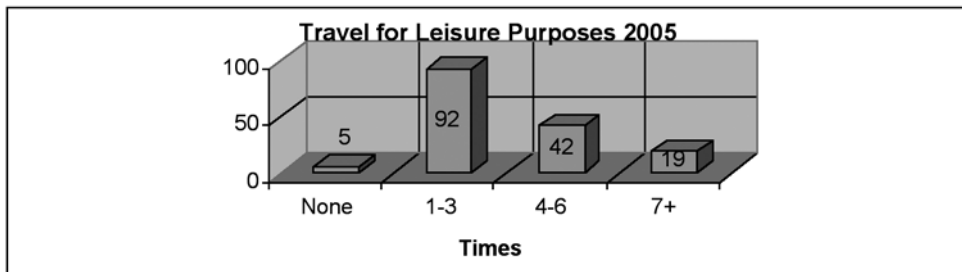


Table No 1: Travel for Leisure Purposes in 2005

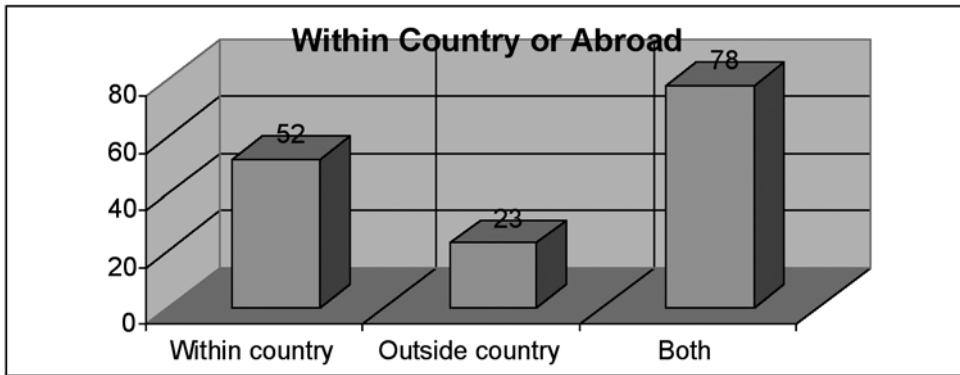


Table No 2: Leisure travel within country of origin or abroad in 2005

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The next part of the questionnaire examines whether or not leisure tourists are willing to visit destinations that have experienced safety or security issues in the recent past. The question is divided into two parts. The first part (3a) concerns destinations that have been affected by a **safety** issue, namely China (bird flu), Indonesia (tsunami, December 2004), India (tsunami and earthquake – 2004), Japan (frequent earthquakes), Canada – Toronto (SARS) and USA (tornados and hurricanes – Katrina, August 2005).

THE SAFETY FACTOR

The analysis of the answers showed that **USA** registered a high percentage of “definitely yes” (42%) and “yes” (54%) answers (Table No. 3), when the respondents were asked if they would choose to visit one of the above mentioned destinations that have experienced a safety issue in the recent past. A possible explanation for these results can be the fact that the hurricanes and tornados which periodically hit parts of USA are phenomena with a high degree of predictability. This fact gives leisure tourists the opportunity to cancel their holidays in case of a hazardous event. In 2004, Florida handled 4 hurricanes, and emergency officials took no chances with Hurricane Rita, ordering the evacuation of hundreds of thousands of people from the Florida Keys, Louisiana and Texas.

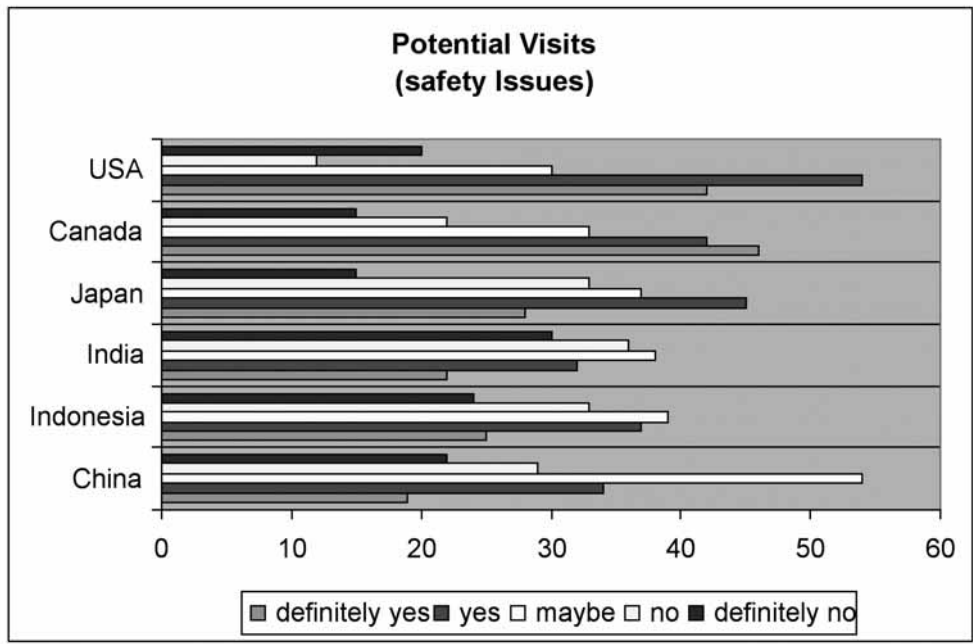


Table No 3: Potential visits to destinations having experienced a safety issue

Moreover, people traveling for leisure purposes do not perceive these phenomena as a major factor that influences their choice of destination; a tendency underwritten by the results of this questionnaire: people are less influenced in their choice of a destination by the factor called “absence of threat of natural disasters”, which ranks in the last position, out of a number of 7 factors. Nevertheless, the general mobilization and quick response of American citizens, authorities and media after the Hurricane Katrina – which was the costliest and one of the deadliest hurricanes in the history of the United States² - seems to have influenced in a positive manner the perception of leisure tourists who have declared themselves “loyal” to this destination, despite the serious safety issues identified.

Closely following the case of the USA, tourists possibly visiting **Canada** also do not seem to be strongly influenced by safety issues. Twenty five per cent of respondents answered with “definitely yes” and 18% with “yes”, when asked if they would choose to visit Canada as a leisure destination, despite the fact that this country was seriously affected in 2003 by the SARS³ syndrome. According to different sources⁴, in 2003 the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation reported that the hotel occupancy rate in Toronto was only half the normal rate, and that tour operators were reporting large declines in business, while most conferences and conventions scheduled for Toronto were cancelled. And yet presently, according to our survey, people seem not to be influenced by this safety issue that affected Canada back in 2003. Their

choice and their perception of Canada as a safe destination might be influenced by the factor that we called "time elapsed from the safety incident", which ranks in the second position in respondents' priority of the factors that influence them when choosing a destination. Also, we have to take into account the fact that, with the exception of SARS, Canada has not frequently experienced any other major safety issue and the overall image of the country has generally been a positive one mainly due to its political and economic stability.

As far as **India, Indonesia** and **China** are concerned, most of the respondents were undecided whether or not they will choose to visit one of these destinations in the near future, with the "maybe" box being by far the most ticked. One of the factors that has influenced respondents' decision might be the fact that these countries have experienced a safety issue quite recently, and the impact of this aspect is still in their collective memory. The images of the tsunami disaster (which affected Indonesia and some parts of India at the end of 2004) that have been broadcasted all over the globe, or the damages caused in India in October 2005 by an earthquake with the epicenter in the disputed region of Kashmir, together with the great loss of human life due to the avian flu in China (2005), seem to be the main reasons for which respondents are reluctant to visit the above mentioned countries. Another possible explanation for their reluctance is the fact that most of the participants are of European origin, while the countries mentioned above are long-haul destinations for the European market. Since the budget of most of the participants is less than €12.000, they might also take into account the fact that their budgets would not allow them to visit one of these destinations. Also, these destinations are emerging markets in the leisure tourism industry. Therefore, most tourists might fear that they do not offer standards equal to those of the traditional destinations.

Still, we assess that Indonesia and China have the potential for developing into productive markets, due to their novelty value in particular for the European market. A relatively high percentage of "yes" answers with a view to the above-mentioned countries shows that tourists do not totally dismiss the opportunity of visiting such "exotic" destinations.

When it comes to India, things are somehow different, since the percentage of "yes" answers was surpassed by the high percentage of "no" answers. This might be due to the fact that the respondents took into account not only the safety factor, but might also have been influenced by their own biases and by the overall image of the country (political and economic factors playing a major role).

As for **Japan**, although it is a long-haul destination and it presents constant seismic activity, the majority of opinions were favorable (18% of "yes" answers), mainly because Japan is considered, as a paradox, to be a world leader in earthquake preparedness, mainly after the Kobe quake which killed more than 5,000 people. At the same time, we may claim that Japan is a "mature" market in the leisure and business industry, as compared to China, or Indonesia.

THE SECURITY FACTOR

The second part of this question (3b) assesses the importance of security factors that might influence leisure tourists when choosing a destination (table No 4). The destinations chosen for this research were Denmark (cartoon riots, February 2006), Egypt (bombing in popular tourist area 2005, and 2006), France (the recent demonstrations in Paris), Spain (Madrid, subway bombing, March 2004), UK (London, subway and bus bombings 2005) and USA (New York, September 2001).

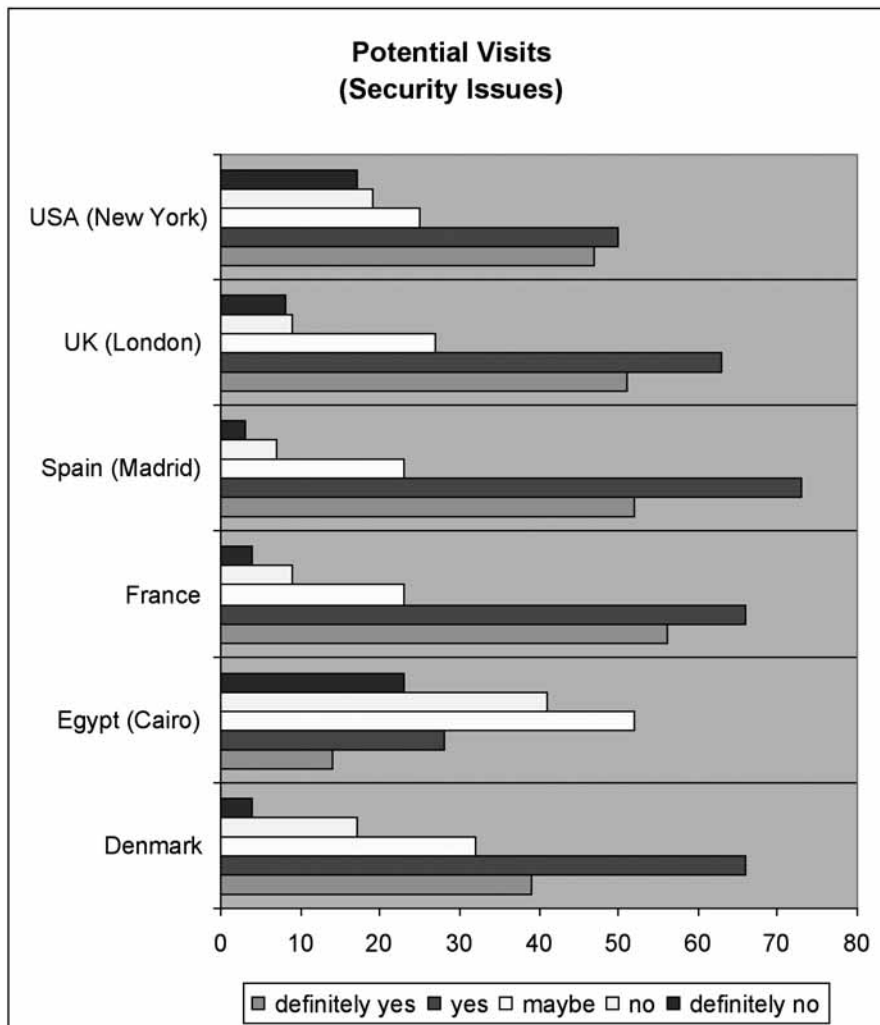


Table No 4: Potential visits to destinations having experienced a security issue

UK, Spain, France and Denmark registered almost similar results. Even though the above mentioned destinations have experienced terrorist attacks or political crises, they have achieved a majority of “Yes” and “Definitely Yes” answers. Due to the fact that these destinations are located in Europe, are important leisure and business markets, and also because most respondents are of European origin, it can be concluded that their image has not been so much affected by the negative influence of the security issue.

An important aspect that might have influenced their choice is the factor called “time elapsed from the incident” – which plays a central role in the decision making process. We can see this very clearly when we compare the results for Spain and UK with those obtained for Denmark. In the case of Denmark, the “maybe” answers (32%) are following very closely the “definitely yes” answers (39%). The high percentage of “Yes” answers (66%) is due to the general positive overall image of the country before the cartoon riots. Also, this crisis management, based on diplomacy and without major losses (especially human losses) and the calm that governs this country once again, might have led participants to give their vote of confidence.

As far as the case of the USA is concerned, it can be deduced that the highly-positive ratings which the destination achieved (even though 9/11 is still present in many of the respondents' minds) are due again to the factor called “time elapsed from the incident”. As it can be observed later in this study, this factor scores an important percentage when it comes to choosing a destination. Apparently, leisure tourists do not feel menaced anymore when choosing USA as a leisure destination. Also, another important factor is the fact that after September 11th, USA did not experience any other major security incidents.

A somewhat predictable high percentage of uncertainty (“maybe” – 33%), followed by an also high percentage of negative answers (“no” – 26%; “definitely no” – 15%) was registered for **Egypt**. This is mainly due to the high-frequency of terrorist attacks that are taking place in the country – and especially in popular tourist areas. It is worth mentioning that most of the questionnaires received after the attacks on 25th of April 2006 (in which at least 23 people - including three foreigners - have been killed and 62 wounded in three blasts in the Egyptian resort town of Dahab⁵) rated Egypt with “no” and “definitely no” answers, while the questionnaires received before these incidents scored: “no”, “maybe”, “yes”, and even “definitely yes” answers, as well. Notwithstanding this recent evidence, Wahab (1995) noted that the Egyptian police had adopted preventive and proactive measures, which included placing civil police officers on all transport vehicles used by tourists.

SAFETY AND SECURITY FACTORS INFLUENCING DECISION MAKING PROCESS

The questionnaire then proceeds to exploring the safety and security factors that influence the decision making process of leisure tourists through three questions.

The first question required participants to choose from a list of safety and security factors those that influence in general their choice of destination (table no. 5). A significant number of answers pointed good sanitation and medical conditions (19%) as being a prerequisite for visiting a destination, influencing both men and women of most income levels with a university or post-graduate degree were. This was closely followed by security factors concerning the absence of fanatic or terrorist groups (17%), the absence of terrorist attacks (16%), political stability (15%) and the requirement of safe means of transportation (15%). Both men and women above the age of 26 with a university or post-graduate degree and irrespective of their income were affected by the security factors in their choice of destination. Reliable security measures have been chosen by 11% of the participants while only 7% were influenced by the absence of the threat of natural disasters - mainly women with a low income level. Only 2 out of 158 respondents were not influenced by any of the security or safety factors mentioned.

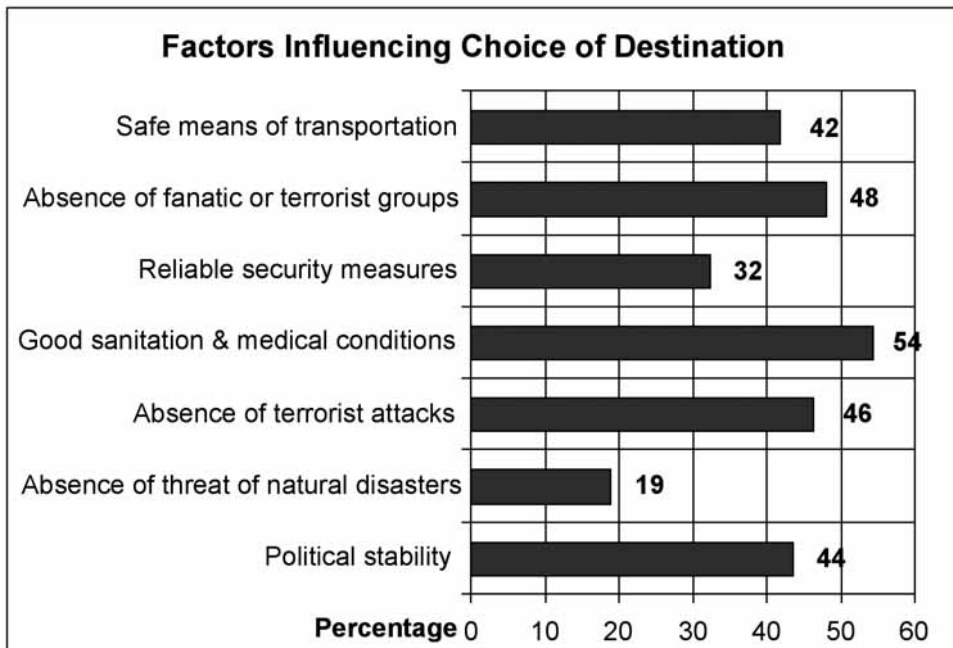


Table No 5: Safety & security factors influencing the choice of leisure destinations

The second question examined the features that make hotel guests feel safe and secure (table No 6). Participants were asked to check up to three features.

The results show that the “facility’s compliance with fire codes” was the participants’ main concern (59%). This proves the importance of the correct positioning of exit signs on visible places as well as the placement of fire extinguishers, fire detectors, etc.

Next in order of importance is the feature of “staff trained in crisis management”. This result suggests that it might be a good advantage to stress this feature when promoting a hotel and building up a brand image. It is worth mentioning the Marriott example and its reaction after the 9/11 terrorist attacks. The Marriott organization clearly understood how the lodging industry – considered a “soft target” – has had to change since 9/11. Prior to this, health and safety policies had mostly focused on routine injuries to guests and employees, and the basic protection of customers. Although these elements are still in place, the focus, behavior and operations have all changed to give more protection to the company and its guests and employees in today’s uncertainty of natural and man-made disasters (Kyriakidis & Viles, 2006). In order to prove the abilities of the staff and assure the customers, some hotel operators have created new security procedures, such as conducting more detailed background checks on their employees (Enz & Taylor, 2002).

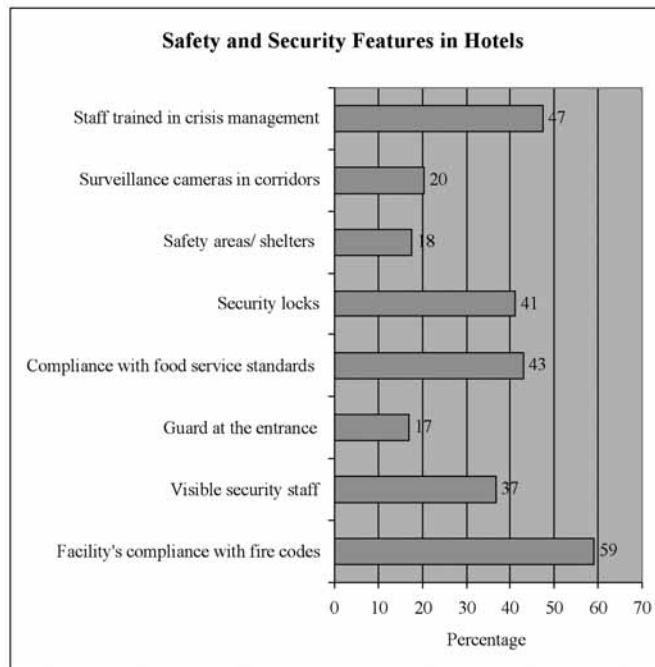


Table No 6: Hotel features that make guests feel safe and secure

Another aspect that also has to be taken into account is the fact that 18% of the participants showed interest in the existence of safety areas and shelters which can be provided in case of an emergency. Of course, a worldwide risk assessment constantly monitors developments, so the company can increase or decrease its security levels according to the risks in each location. Clearly, some countries require a much higher level of protection than others (Kyriakidis & Viles, 2006). This can only show a new and innovative approach when building up a brand name or just promoting the features of a hotel.

Another important issue is the “compliance with food service standards” (43%). Whether the guests are native or not and familiar or not with local cuisine, they want to see that the places where they eat are clean and comply with all the international food service standards as well as to be reassured that their meals are prepared with care.

Security locks is a feature that plays an equally important role. In these times of insecurity, guests have expressed their need for more secure locks (41%), though this feature seems to be more essential for women - 41 over 24 of the male participants. This proves that women in general have higher needs and expectations when it comes to security.

The complicated issue of how visible the security staff should be has been taken into consideration in the questionnaire. Until now we thought that entering the hotel should be carefully balanced between the freedom of guests’ movement and the access control and that the physical presence of security personnel has to be made more obvious (Kyriakidis & Viles, 2006). Surprisingly, only 13 % of the respondents have required a more visible security staff and only 6 % required a guard at the entrance.

Our survey showed that surveillance cameras are not considered that important. Nowadays people feel much more exposed and they want to have more privacy. A mere 20% of the participants said that surveillance cameras will make them feel more secure. Moreover, the mere presence of such equipment as electronic locks and security cameras does not guarantee guests’ security in the absence of personnel who are well-trained to implement a fully developed emergency plan (Enz & Taylor, 2002).

Two of the participants did not select any of the possible responses not considering any of them important.

The third question explored the reasons that would convince potential tourists to visit a destination for leisure purposes that has recently experienced a safety or security incident. According to recent history, what most tourism stakeholders do is to offer better prices and increase their marketing and advertising campaigns. However, these two reasons scored rather low in this research (table No 7). Advertising and promotion was chosen by 9% of the respondents whereas only 32% claimed to be convinced by price discounts, mainly those of an annual income of less than €20.000.

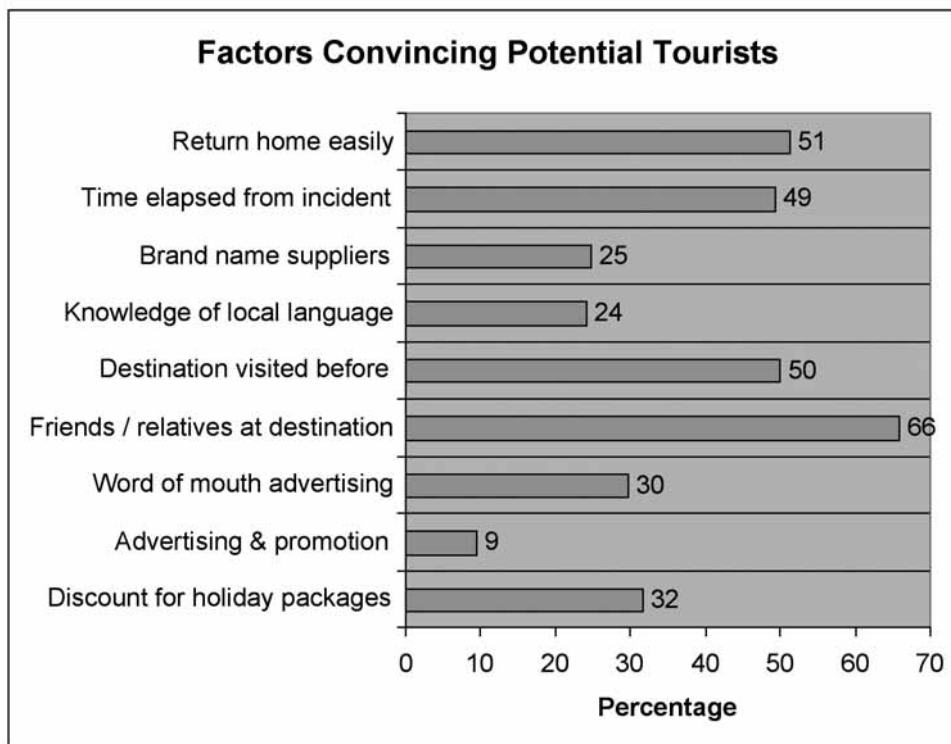


Table No 7: Reasons that convince leisure tourists to visit destinations after a safety or security incident

The reason that by far would convince most respondents to visit such a destination (66%) is to have friends or relatives staying at that destination. This proves the importance of the VFR market which is a rather under researched field. Some would argue that the VFR market is less lucrative because it attracts people of a low income level since they prefer to be accommodated at their friends' or relatives' home to save on related expenses. However, 79% of people with an annual income level of more than €45,000 would be convinced to visit such destinations provided that they have a friend or relative staying there. This demonstrates that it is not merely a question of money but of feeling safer and more secure with someone who knows the destination well. This might be combined with a significant 50% of respondents who say that they would be convinced to visit such a destination if they are already familiar with it, that is by having visited it in the past.

A reason chosen by 51% of participants and especially women (64%) is the ability to return home easily in case a safety or security incident occurs. The reason "time elapsed from the safety and/or security incident" is an equally essential aspect that would convince 49% of

both male and female respondents to visit that destination. People have a tendency to forget, after a certain time, upsetting incidents, or have a memory of such an incident, which is not so strong as to deter them from visiting the place. A good example supporting this view are the results that we registered for USA (Table No 4) when asking respondents to state if they would chose to visit this destination in the near future.

Word of mouth advertising (30%), brand name suppliers (25%) and the knowledge of local language (24%) – a reason chosen mainly by those with a university degree or higher – were relatively less convincing for the participants. Concerning brand name suppliers, in today's "networked" world, where many consumers browse and book vacations online, what makes a company stand out from the crowd is the value of its brand and what that brand says to existing and potential customers. Consumers tend to book at the same hotel or with the same chain time and time again because they value the brand and the level of service, reliability and quality that comes with it (Kyriakidis & Viles, 2006).

Only five of the 158 respondents were not convinced by any of the 9 reasons proposed. These are mostly Greek males, 26-44 years old with an annual income greater than €12.000.

SUMMARY/CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The need for safety and a secure environment is definitely the *conditio sine qua non* for the existence and the development of tourism at a destination.

Recent history has made people realize that no part of the world is immune to terrorist attacks. It can be concluded that nowadays, apart from the need to travel to a destination with good sanitation and medical conditions, security factors play a major role when choosing a destination. "As world tension mounts, the demand for risk management increases".⁶

The inference to be drawn from the above study findings is that, when choosing a destination, security factors are prevalent in travelers' minds as compared to safety factors. The absence of natural disasters ranks on the last position out of 7 factors influencing the choice of destination. According to the research findings, the factors which most influence the choice of a destination are the absence of fanatic or terrorist groups, absence of terrorist attacks and political stability. Furthermore, the key factor in the process of choosing a destination is "the time elapsed" since the incident has occurred. Nevertheless, the uncertainty in the minds of tourists, as well as the actual damage to a destination, may delay the recovery stage.

A solution to be implemented would be for the tourism industry to advance the recovery stage for any afflicted destination, by dispersing factual information locally and internationally, thus bringing visitors back to the affected area, when it comes to rebuilding the image of the destination after a safety and/or security incident has occurred.

In addition, it was revealed that leisure tourists are influenced when choosing a hotel by the compliance with fire codes and the importance of training hotel employees in crisis management. It is thus recommended that all hotels promote these features regardless of their category.

One of the most interesting findings of the paper is the importance which leisure tourists place on visiting friends and relatives staying at the destination. This result highlights the importance of the VFR market which, until now, has been rather underestimated.

Finally, even if brand name suppliers did not score very high among the factors which can persuade potential tourists to visit a destination, they still play an important role for those leisure tourists with a high annual income level (over €60.000) and the possessors of an academic degree (university/post graduate).

Given the already complex decision-making process involved in the destination selection, a perception of elevated risk for a purely pleasurable event is problematic. It is clear that the perception of risk is subjective and most often does not reflect reality.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Safety>
- ² http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hurricane_Katrina
- ³ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Severe_acute_respiratory_syndrome
- ⁴ Ibid
- ⁵ http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/4940506.stm

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Measuring destination competitiveness: an exploratory study of the canaries, mainland spain, france, the balearics and italy¹

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ABSTRACT

The main purpose of this paper is to present an instrument aimed at identifying and measuring factors that determine competitiveness in Mediterranean sun and sand destinations. The study is divided into three parts. The first analyses the concept of competitiveness when applied to the tourist sector, reviewing different attempts to measure it (proposals that have been shown to be unsatisfactory). In the second part, an index is presented that is intended to improve on former proposals. Finally, the paper concludes with a preview of the results of a pilot study aimed at measuring competitiveness, where factors that play a decisive role in competitiveness are identified through a case study of five Mediterranean destinations (the Canaries, mainland Spain, France, the Balearics and Italy).

Keywords: *Destination competitiveness; mass tourism; Mediterranean destinations*

1. INTRODUCTION

Maintaining or raising the price of exports of tourism services is no easy task because: i) destinations which offer a similar type of product are easily interchangeable (Mangion et al., 2005); ii) today's tourism supply has achieved an unprecedented level of excellence, quantitatively and qualitatively and in terms of the variety of available services (WTO, 2003; Aguiló et al., 2005; Go and Grovers, 2005); and iii) although the demand for tourism is increasing, the growth rate has fallen considerably, particularly in comparison with the growth rates of the last fifty years (WTO, 2003; Papatheodorou and Song, 2005).

Given this scenario, the only way to raise the price of exports is to make a destination's tourist industry more competitive. That is, destinations must be capable of attracting and satisfying current and potential new customers, and doing it better than their rivals. In short, destination competitiveness is becoming increasingly important, particularly when economies or countries are heavily dependent on tourism (Gooroochurn and Sugiyarto, 2005).

In recent years, studies of destination competitiveness have come to acquire an increasing relevance in academic literature. In continuation, an analysis will be made of the concept of

competitiveness applied to the tourist sector, followed by a review of different attempts to measure competitiveness. An index will then be presented that is intended to improve on proposals made to date. Finally, a preview will be given of the results of a pilot study aimed at measuring demand competitiveness. From a case study of five Mediterranean destinations (the Canaries, mainland Spain, France, the Balearics and Italy), those factors that are most influential in determining competitiveness are identified.

2. ATTEMPTS AT MEASURING DESTINATION COMPETITIVENESS

The new scenario, indicated above, has prompted academic literature to devote increasing attention to studies of destination competitiveness. A summary will now be made of some of the main contributions to date aimed at identifying and measuring factors that determine competitiveness in different destinations.

2.1 Different attempts at measuring tourism competitiveness: a critical review

2.1.1 The Calgary Model (Crouch and Ritchie, 1999)

The Calgary model of competitiveness, developed by Professors Crouch and Ritchie (1999), is one of the first conceptual and applied contributions to the field of destination competitiveness. The authors state that for a destination to be competitive in the long term, two types of competitiveness are fundamental: i) a comparative advantage, represented by the resources available at the destination (human resources, physical resources, know how, the availability of capital, tourism infrastructure, and historical and cultural assets) and ii) a competitive edge, represented by the use the destination makes of these resources (audits and inventories, maintenance, growth and development, efficiency, effectiveness).

To summarize, the main contribution of the Calgary Model is the fact that it outlines a series of factors that play a determining role in the competitiveness of a tourist destination and, additionally, it establishes certain categories, based on these factors' importance as primary or secondary ones, etc.

However, the same authors also point out some of the model's shortcomings: i) many destinations do not have databases or indicators to assess many of the said factors; ii) in this purely conceptual model, what is missing is for each of the elements to be ranked in order of importance and given a relative weight, and iii) variables and indicators must be added to assess and measure aspects relating to the environment and the destination's natural attributes.

2.1.2 The World Travel and Tourism Council's Tourism Competitiveness Monitor (Gooroochurn and Sugiyarto, 2005)

The Tourism Competitiveness Monitor (henceforth the TCM), created by Gooroochurn and Sugiyarto (2005), is one of the most courageous attempts to measure the competitiveness of

the tourist industry in different countries around the world. Based on a database drawn up annually by the World Travel and Tourism Council (henceforth the WTTC), the TCM attempts to overcome one of the main shortcomings of the Calgary Model.

The index is calculated for over two hundred countries and, with this information, the countries are ranked according to their level of tourism competitiveness. The results show that the most competitive countries, in terms of tourism, are the United States, Sweden, Norway, Finland and Australia in that order. At the other end of the scale are Burkina Faso, Chad, Benin, Ethiopia and Cambodia.

With Gooroochurn and Sugiyarto's proposed monitor (2005), many countries can be compared, given the type of variables that it uses. The main problem, however, is the results that it gives. Except for the USA, none of the other top countries in the tourism competitiveness ranks are among the most commonly visited countries in the world. Indeed, these supposed other leaders do not receive very high visitor numbers (2.5% of the world total)². At the same time, it also has other shortcomings: i) It lumps together totally different types of destinations, even though intuitively it can be assumed that the factors that make the Bahamas (a sun and sand destination) competitive as a tourist destination will not be the same as those of Switzerland (a mountain destination), since they offer very different tourism products; ii) The monitor lends too much importance to variables like technology (the amount of high-technology that is exported, number of mobile telephones etc.) and gives the environment a very secondary role, when in literature natural resources are cited as one of the main attractions of a destination (Crouch and Ritchie, 1999; Mihalič, 2000; Butler, 1980, Jennings, 2004, among many others).

2.1.3 Dwyer and Kim's Destination Competitiveness Indicators (2003)

Taking a similar approach to that initiated by Crouch and Ritchie (1999), Dwyer and Kim's Destination Competitiveness Indicators (DCI) (2003) explore a series of factors that are considered to determine destination competitiveness. The authors propose a number of indicators for measuring competitiveness. Among the different factors that determine competitiveness, they cite the available resources (natural resources, cultural assets and heritage items), created resources (tourism infrastructure, the activities on offer etc.), supporting factors (infrastructure in general, the quality of service, access to the destination etc.) and destination management factors.

The main drawback to this proposal is the difficulty involved in applying it. It would no doubt be very useful to identify the situation of each of the said determinants using indicators or surveys, but it would be costly and, in some cases, impossible, given the lack of available and/or comparative data for destinations. At the same time, the authors also point out that a better insight into tourist motivations and their typologies is needed if the factors that determine competitiveness are to be properly identified and weighted. Under no circumstances should the aforementioned factors be considered to have the same influence on a destination's competitive capacity.

2.1.4 Other Empirical Studies of Destination Competitiveness

We will now summarize the main characteristics and contributions of different case studies of destination competitiveness. In some cases, the studies apply the conceptual models described above.

The study of Turkey's competitive capacity by Kozak and Rimmington (1999) makes two important contributions: firstly, the main travel motivations for tourists to Turkey are identified, together with the biggest causes for complaint. In this way, the destination's strong and weak points are identified. Secondly, and even more important, a comparison is made using tourist assessments of Turkey's different attributes and its position in relation to its rivals. In this way, Turkey's situation is identified vis-à-vis a group of "other rival destinations". Nonetheless, the study does not compare the competitive capacities of different countries, since Turkey is only compared with "other destinations". Neither does it prioritize the factors that are most important in determining competitiveness. Instead it merely identifies in which aspects the country satisfies tourists more than in others.

The contribution made by Enright and Newton (2004) is an innovative study in several aspects, taking a supply-based approach to competitiveness. Using surveys, members of the tourist industry are asked to identify and categorize the main factors that contribute toward the competitiveness of the city of Hong-Kong as a destination.

Although it represents an importance advance, the study by Enright and Newton also has some shortcomings. Only one destination is compared with "the rest" of its rivals. What is more, although it identifies and prioritizes key factors in the competitiveness of urban destinations in the Asia region, it does not make a global assessment of the destination's capacity to compete, thus it is impossible to rank how competitive the destinations are, unlike the study by Gooroochurn and Sugiyarto (2005). Lastly, although a supply-oriented analysis provides crucial information for measuring competitiveness, at no time are consumers' motivations in travelling to the destination or their assessment of the services they consume taken into account.

2.2. Conclusions on Attempts to Measure Destination Competitiveness

From an analysis of the main contributions that have been made in the field of destination competitiveness, there is no fully satisfactory conceptual model or applied study for measuring and identifying the determinants of destination competitiveness (Dwyer and Kim, 2003). If the main shortcomings of the aforementioned proposals are synthesized, it can be concluded that:

- i) The conceptual models that have been analysed (Crouch and Ritchie, 1999; Dwyer and Kim, 2003) take into account a large number of factors that play a determining role in competitiveness, but these factors are not ranked in order of importance.

- ii) Many of the factors proposed in the conceptual models cannot be applied, given the lack of available indicators at different destinations.
- iii) The results of the Tourism Competitiveness Monitor (Gooroochurn and Sugiyarto, 2005), the most courageous proposal to date, are not consistent with the real dynamics of the market.
- iv) As for the empirical studies, (Enright and Newton, 2004; Kozak and Rimmington, 1999), they do not allow for a comparison of different destinations, because they only compare one destination against “the rest”.
- v) Destination competitiveness cannot be fully measured if it is only done from the perspective of the supply (Enright and Newton, 2004; Gooroochurn and Sugiyarto, 2005) or from that of the demand (Kozak and Rimmington, 1999)

In short, the results of different attempts to measure destination competitiveness are insufficient and unsatisfactory. The main aim of this paper, therefore, is to contribute by providing a more fully comprehensive indicator of destination competitiveness, as detailed in the following section.

3. A PROPOSED INDEX

To identify the demand-related factors or determinants of a tourist destination’s capacity to compete, a Demand Competitiveness Index was constructed (henceforth the DCI). The index is calculated using tourist opinions, since tourists are considered to be in a good position to assess the components that make a destination attractive and the services that they consume (Enright and Newton, 2004). Consequently, to construct this index, a survey that interviews tourists to the destination is required.

In the DSI, consumers are asked, from their experience in recent years, to assess what factors play a determining role when they take a summer holiday at a Mediterranean destination. A brief look at other studies of Mediterranean destinations (Kozak and Rimmington, 1999, for Turkey, 1999; The Year 2001 Tourism Expenditure Survey in the Balearic Islands; Yoon and Uysal, 2005, for Cyprus) gives us an idea of some of the pull motivations (motivations generated by the destination’s own attributes like the climate, quality of the beaches, scenery, nightlife, leisure).

Tourists are asked what external factors they consider to be most important when choosing a summer holiday destination (the beaches, nightlife etc.). The interviewees are also asked to rank these factors in order of importance. With the data from these surveys, the aggregate importance of each factor can be identified and, consequently, each one can be weighted within the index. The same weighting will be used for all tourist destinations.

The next step consists of asking the interviewees to rate each of these factors for each of the destinations they have visited over the last few years. In this way, we can obtain an assessment of each factor at each destination.

To obtain a DSI for each destination, the weight of each factor will be multiplied by its corresponding rating.

$$DSI = \sum_{i=1}^N w_i * f_i$$

$$(if \sum_{i=1}^N w_i = 1)$$

Where:

W_i = the weight of appeal factor i

f_i = the value of factor i (value between and 5)

N = the number of items or factors

To sum up, it can be concluded that, in consumer terms, the most competitive destinations are those with the necessary attributes to satisfy tourists' external motivations and just a minimum number of externalities that might be perceived as negative by consumers.

4. RESULTS OF THE PILOT STUDY

4.1 Hypothesis and methodology

In order to test the usefulness and validity of the proposed index, a pilot study was conducted to calculate the Demand Competitiveness Index. The data for the study was taken from a survey made at Palma Airport (Balearic Islands) on March 17th, 18th and 19th 2006.

The target population of the study comprised European tourists returning home after spending a holiday in the Balearic Islands. During the last few years (2004 and 2005), these subjects had also spent a summer holiday (June to September) in other leading Mediterranean tourist destinations and/or the Canaries. By using this target population, we aimed to identify factors that play a decisive role in these destinations' capacity to compete. More specifically, an analysis was made aimed at identifying these factors in the Canary Islands, mainland Spain, France, the Balearic Islands and Italy.

To conduct the survey, a team of five interviewers spent three days (Friday, Saturday and Sunday) in the departure area of Palma Airport. In total, 106 surveys were considered to be

valid. Although the size of the sample group is small, it is not far different from other surveys used in other reference studies, like those cited in Kozak and Rimmington (1999) ($n = 294$) and Yoon and Uysal (2005) ($n = 148$). It should be highlighted that this was only a pilot study carried out during the low season. Furthermore, since it was a pilot study, the questionnaires were available in English and Spanish.

The questionnaire was divided into two different sections, and headed by a series of preliminary questions. In this introductory part, the interviewees were asked whether they were a citizen of the European Union, whether they had spent this current stay on holiday in the Balearics, and whether they had been to mainland Spain, the Canaries, France or Italy on holiday during the last two summers (2004 and 2005). Only if the interviewees answered yes to all three questions did the interviewer proceed to conduct the main body of the survey.

The first part of the interview contained profile-type questions, enquiring about the interviewees' country of residence, sex and age, the type of holiday they had booked, length of stay at the destination etc.

In the second part, the tourists were asked to rate possible motivations that might have prompted them to choose their holiday destinations during the last two summers. Using a scale that ranged from 1 ("not at all important") to 5 ("very important"), the tourists were asked to indicate how important certain motivations were in persuading them to visit the said destinations.

A list of motivations or destination "attractors" was carefully drawn up, using various conceptual studies of destination attractors (Crouch and Ritchie, 1999; Dwyer and Kim, 2003) and different empirical studies in other destinations (Kozak and Rimmington, 1999; Enright and Newton, 2004; Yoon and Uysal, 2005; Kim et al., 2000). Likewise, the annual Tourist Expenditure Surveys that are conducted by the regional governments of the Balearic Islands (Govern de les Illes Balears, 2001) and Canary Islands (Gobierno de Canarias, 2005) were also used. These contain a list of key travel motivations for visits to both archipelagos. Finally, a workshop was held with three lecturers who specialize in tourism studies at the University of the Balearic Islands. As a result of all the above, 24 travel motivations or attractors were selected.

Lastly, the interviewees were asked to rate their level of satisfaction with each of the above factors at each of the destinations they had visited over the last few years. Using a scale from one to five, ranging from 5 ("very satisfied") to 1 ("not at all satisfied"), the tourists were asked to choose a value for each attractor at each destination. They were also given the opportunity to leave a blank space if they did not have enough information at their disposal to assess a particular factor (particularly in the case of motivations associated with certain market segments, such as the "existence of facilities for the elderly and/or children" or "nightlife").

4.2 Results of the study

Details of the sample group are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Details of the sample group ($n = 106$)

Variable	%	Variable	%
Sex		Type of holiday booked	
Man	55.7	All inclusive	21.7
Woman	44.3	Full board	2.8
Place of residence		Half board	27.4
Germany	17.9	Bed and breakfast	6.6
UK	34.9	Accommodation only	5.7
Spain	36.8	Flight only	35.8
France	1.9	Type of accommodation	
Other country	8.5	Hotel	58.5
Age		Rented apartment / villa	10.4
18 – 29	28.3	Owned apartment / villa	10.4
30 – 44	23.6	Home of friends and/or family	15.1
45 – 59	29.2	Rented rural house / Rural hotel / Rural accommodation centre	1.9
60 or over	18.9	Others	3.8

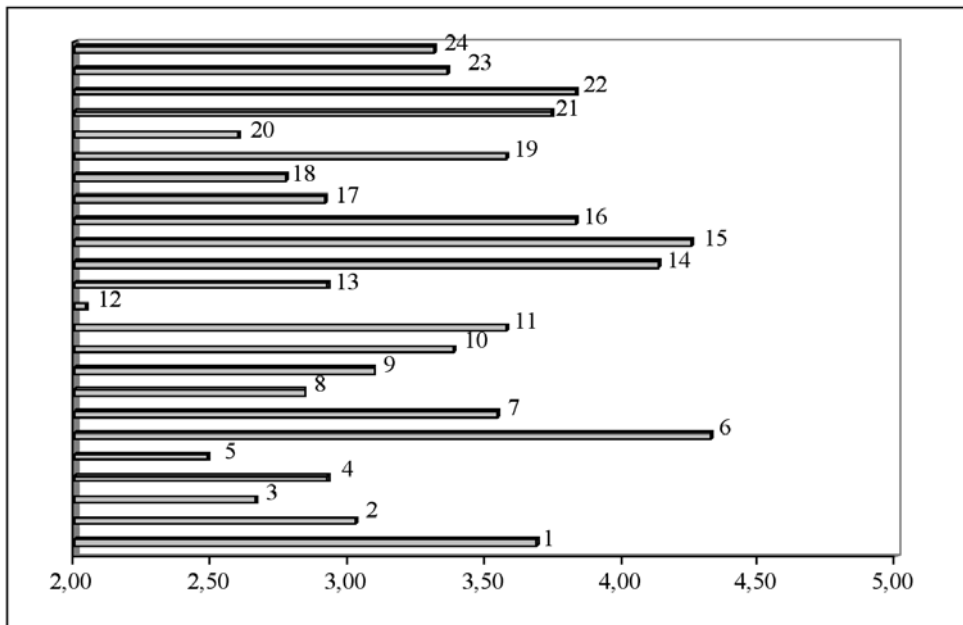
Source: Own, based on data from the survey

As a study of destination competitiveness, it is important to stress that this pilot study has an initial bias: the interviewees were asked to assess each of the attractors during the summer months at each destination they had visited. In the case of the Balearics, the stay had taken place during the low season. This may have influenced their assessments of certain attractors there. In other words, certain factors, like the “climate”, “beaches”, “presence of friends and relatives” or “nightlife”, may have been affected because they were assessed during a winter holiday period, whereas at the other destinations they were rated during a summer holiday period. However, as we have already said, the main aim of this test is not to obtain specific results but to confirm whether the proposed instrument and methodology for measuring and identifying the determinants of competitiveness in Mediterranean sun and sand destinations are suitable.

The travel motivations that prompt tourists to visit the Mediterranean as a whole and the Caribbean are shown in Figure 1. Among those that were considered most important, and therefore most influential in determining a destination’s capacity to compete in the summer holiday segment, are: i) the climate; ii) the scenery; iii) cleanliness and hygiene and iv) the beaches. Those that were considered least important (and least influential in determining

destination competitiveness) are: i) the existence of facilities for the elderly and/or children, ii) specific tourist attractions; iii) the opportunity to get to know other holidaymakers and; iv) the nightlife. These results coincide with other studies that reflect the main travel motivations for visits to the Mediterranean, as seen in section 3.

Figure 1. Main travel motivations for visits to Mediterranean destinations

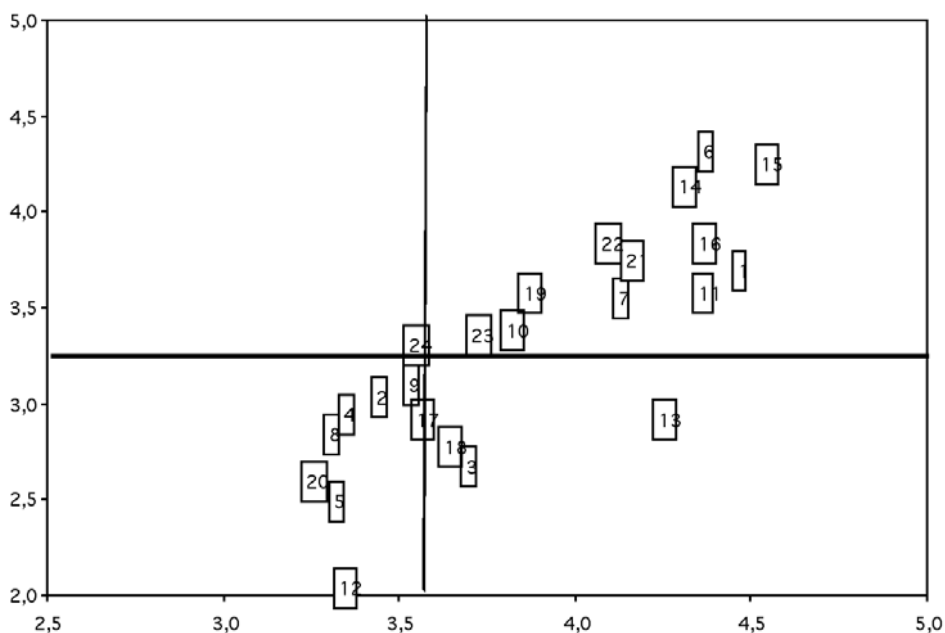


Source: Own, based on data from the survey

Key: **1** Accommodation; **2** Cultural activities, festivals, exhibitions etc.; **3** Nightlife; **4** Exotic atmosphere; **5** Specific tourism attractions, leisure parks etc. **6** Climate; **7** Local cuisine; **8** A less expensive destination; **9** Getting back to nature (hiking etc.); **10** The local lifestyle; **11** Easy access from your country to the destination; **12** Facilities for children and/or older people; **13** Easy access to information about the destination, its presence in travel brochures etc.; **14** Cleanliness and hygiene; **15** The scenery; **16** The beaches; **17** Sports and sporting activities; **18** The presence of friends and/or relatives; **19** Interesting towns and villages/cities; **20** Getting to know other holiday companions; **21** Safety and security **22** Tranquillity; **23** A holiday that suited your budget; **24** Visits to historic sites/attractions

In continuation, a dual input matrix was used to analyse competitiveness and its determinants. By using an IPA grid to present the results, as also used by Enright and Newton (2004) and Fuchs and Weiermair (2004) in literature on tourism, we could analyse the importance and relative weight of the tourism attractors at each target destination (Figures 2 to 6). The vertical axis shows the importance of each factor in summer visits to Mediterranean destinations and the Caribbean. The horizontal axis shows each factor's relative competitiveness at each destination.

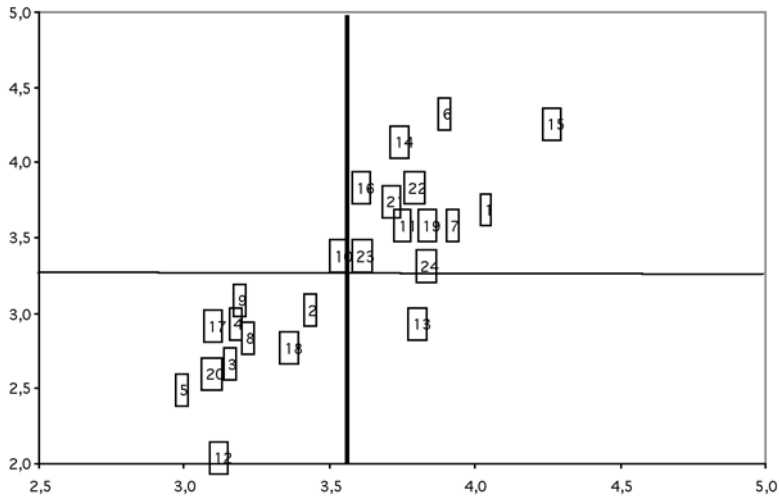
Figure 2. The importance and relative weight of tourism attractors in the Balearics.



Source: Own, based on data from the survey

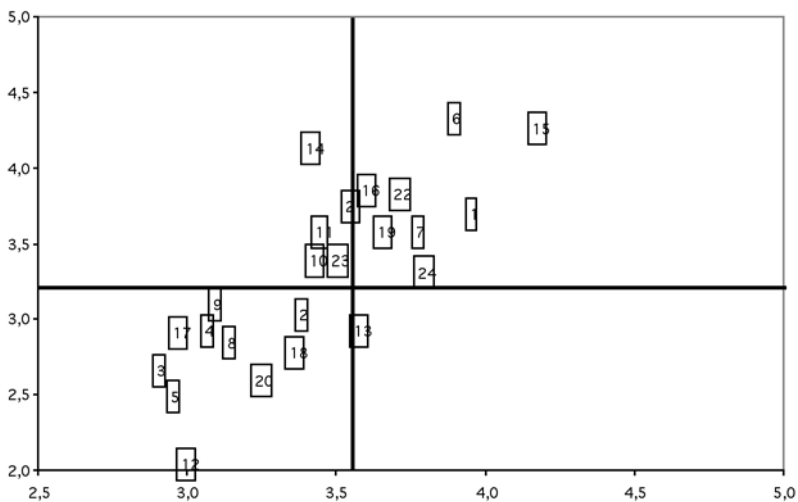
Note: See key for Figure 1

Figure 3. The importance and relative weight of tourism attractors in mainland Spain.



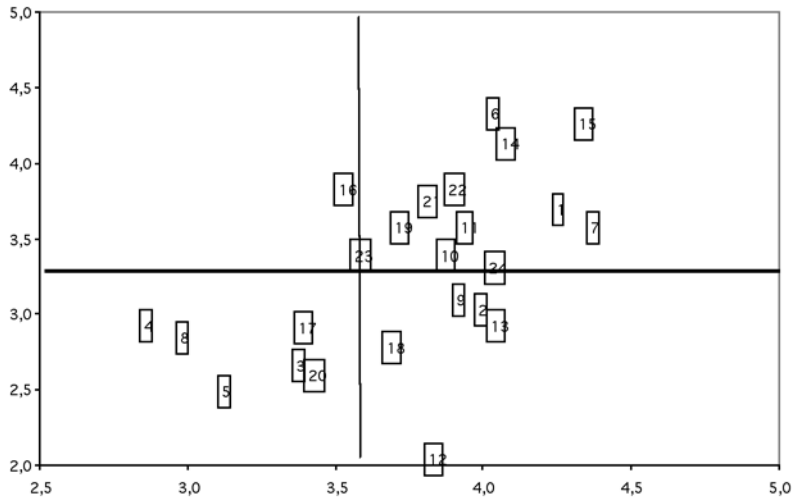
Source: Own, based on data from the survey
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Figure 4. The importance and relative weight of tourism attractors in France.



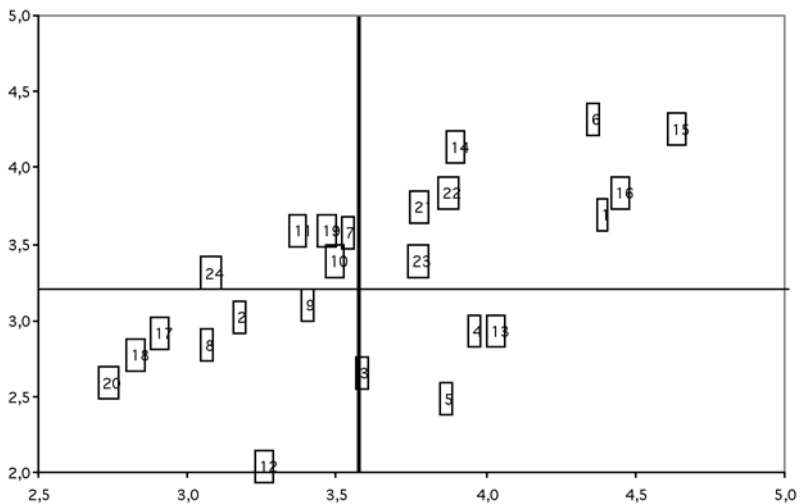
Source: Own, based on data from the survey
 Note: See key for Figure 1

Figure 5. The importance and relative weight of tourism attractors in Italy.



Source: Own, based on data from the survey
 Note: See key for Figure 1

Figure 6. The importance and relative weight of tourism attractors in the Canary Islands.



Source: Own, based on data from the survey
 Note: See key for Figure 1

The factors in quadrant I represent the strengths of each destination, since they play a key role in competitiveness and also achieved a high rating for that destination. The factors in quadrant II are ones in which the destination is well positioned, compared with its rivals, although they do not play an important role in competitiveness. In fact, they are considered “wasted efforts”. The factors in quadrant III do not play a decisive role in competitiveness and did not achieve a high rating for the destination in question. Finally, quadrant IV shows the main weaknesses of each destination. These are factors that play a major role in competitiveness, but the destination is not well positioned in such matters.

A global look at all the target destinations shows that they share the scenery, climate, accommodation and cleanliness and hygiene as strong points. Wasted efforts include easy access to information about the destination and the presence of friends and/or relatives. The existence of facilities for children and/or the elderly and specific tourism attractions are factors that achieve a low rating at all destinations but, at the same time, they do not play a decisive role in competitiveness. Lastly, four factors must be improved on if these destinations are to become more competitive: the local life style, holidays that suit one’s budget, easy access from the tourists’ country of origin to the destination, and historical sites or attractions. Table 2 shows an overview of the individual analyses.

Table 2. The importance and relative weight of tourist attractors for the destinations as a whole

Aspects to improve on Local life style	Strengths Scenery
Holidays that suit one’s budget	Climate
Easy access from the country of origin to the destination	Accommodation
Historical sites or attractions	Cleanliness & hygiene
Non-crucial factors that achieved low ratings	Wasted efforts
Existence of facilities for children and/or the elderly	Easy access to information about the destination and from travel agents, tour operators etc.
Specific tourist attractions	Presence of friends and/or relatives

Source: Own, based on data from the survey

Lastly, a Demand Competitiveness Index (DCI) was created, calculating the weight of each factor within the index (Table 3). Subsequently, the DCI was estimated for each of the five destinations, by calculating the difference between the rating achieved by each destination

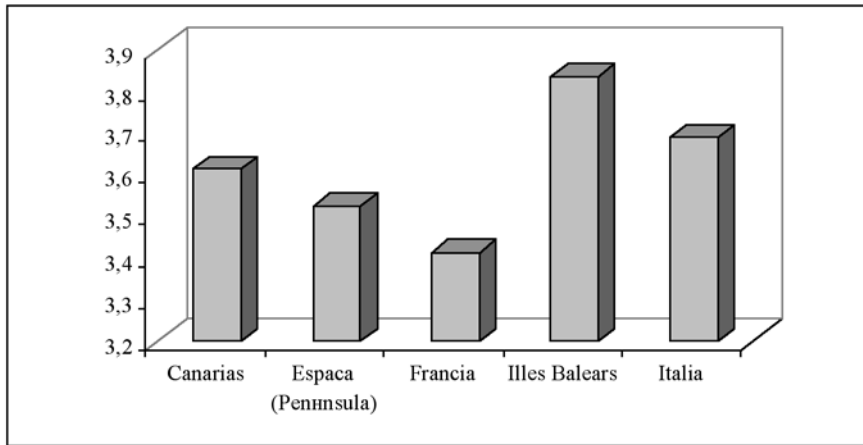
for each of the factors and its corresponding weighting. The results, shown in Figure 7, show that the Balearics achieves the best result, followed by Italy, the Canaries and mainland Spain, with France in last place.

Table 3 The weight of each factor within the DCI

Atractor	Weight
01 Accommodation	0,047
02 Cultural activities, festivals, exhibitions etc.	0,038
03 Nightlife	0,034
04 Exotic atmosphere	0,037
05 Specific tourism attractions, leisure parks etc.	0,032
06 Climate	0,055
07 Local cuisine	0,045
08 A less expensive destination	0,036
09 Getting back to nature (hiking etc.)	0,039
10 The local lifestyle	0,043
11 Easy access from your country to the destination.	0,045
12 Facilities for children and/or older people	0,026
13 Easy access to information about the destination, etc.	0,037
14 Cleanliness and hygiene	0,052
15 The scenery	0,054
16 The beaches	0,049
17 Sports and sporting activities	0,037
18 The presence of friends and/or relatives	0,035
19 Interesting towns and villages/cities	0,045
20 Getting to know other holiday companions	0,033
21 Safety and security	0,048
22 Tranquillity	0,049
23 A holiday that suited your budget	0,043
24 Visits to historic sites/attractions	0,042

Source: Own, based on data from the survey

Figure 7. Results of the estimated Demand Competitiveness Index



Source: Own, based on data from the survey

5. CONCLUSIONS

The new background to the tourist industry has led to a scenario in which destination competitiveness is increasingly important for those economies that are heavily dependent on this type of activity.

Despite this, the subject has been given little attention in academic literature. A review of different attempts in this field and an analysis of those models that have been developed show them to be unsatisfactory. In some cases, they are conceptual proposals that cannot be applied due to a lack of available indicators or comparable data for different destinations. Additionally, the factors they cite are not prioritized in order of importance. In the empirical applications made to date, it is only possible to compare one destination with a set of “other” rival ones, rather than comparing how competitive each one is. Also, since these contributions are either demand or supply oriented, only a partial measurement of competitiveness and its factors is made.

In order to overcome these weaknesses, this study presented a new instrument: the Demand Competitiveness Index (DCI). A pilot study was then carried out to apply the said index, using tourist surveys and five key Mediterranean destinations. These destinations account for a substantial market share of the world total and they rival one another in the summer holiday segment.

The results show that key travel motivations for tourists when choosing a holiday include: i) the climate; ii) the scenery; iii) cleanliness and hygiene and iv) the beaches. In contrast, the least important motivations (factors that are least influential in competitiveness) are: i) the existence of facilities for the elderly and/or children, ii) specific tourist attractions; iii) the opportunity to get to know other holidaymakers and iv) the nightlife. These results tie in with other studies that have been conducted in other Mediterranean destinations.

By using a dual input matrix, the importance and relative weight of each factor and each destination could be visualized. The local life style, holidays that suit one's budget, easy access from the tourists' country of origin to the destination, and historical sites and attractions are areas where all the target destinations must improve if they wish to improve their capacity to compete. Finally, by estimating the DCI, we were able to see that the Balearics holds first place in terms of tourist satisfaction.

The key conclusion of this study is the usefulness of the instrument we have presented, aimed at identifying and measuring factors that determine the competitiveness of Mediterranean sun and sand destinations. However, subsequent empirical applications must be conducted and improved on. These improvements include i) the need to use a larger sample group in order to guarantee more reliable results and a comparison among a higher number of destinations, and, finally; ii) a sample group selected during the summer months so that assessments of all the target destinations are made during the summer.

In short, future research studies must be conducted so that the instrument presented here can be applied to different rival destinations. This is currently in the pipeline, as part of a doctoral thesis.

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Tourist characteristics and demand for tourism destination products in nigeria, tropical africa

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ABSTRACT

The study seeks to establish whether the commonly held belief in many Western tourism studies that demand for tourism products is differentiated by demographic, social and cultural/nationality characteristic of tourists is applicable to Third World Africa. Using Nigeria as a case study, a questionnaire survey of 795 tourists was undertaken in seven-tourism destinations, employing simple random process. Data measurements obtained on various tourists' characteristics and the demand levels for tourism products, using various scales in a questionnaire, was subject to multiple regression analysis, ANOVA and t-test, at the 0.05 significance levels. Study result revealed that variation in tourism product demand accounted for by demographic, social and cultural variables were generally low. Significant differences in product demand between some tourist's groups were however shown by variation in destination environment peculiarity, and for some tourism products by socio-economic status, education, sex and cultural variables. The study concludes with implications for destination planning, management and marketing and suggests strategies to attract desired tourist markets.

Key words: Tourist characteristics, tourism destinations, tourists' product demand, and environmental peculiarity/quality.

INTRODUCTION

Substantial tourism destination development is proposed for the first decade of this millennium by the Federal and some State governments in Nigeria (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2000). In the context of these proposals, a clear understanding of factors that determine tourism destination demand has become a crucial concern in Nigeria. The concern is particularly pathetic as the country is presently experiencing low tourist's patronage and economic gains, despite the abundance of its tourism resources (Ukpanan, 1993, Awaritefe, 2003).

The position that the product demand and value of tourists is determined by the individuals' demographics, social group, culture and the environmental components of tourism destinations appear acceptable, especially in the developed Western World (Hudson, 1986; Moscardo,

2001; Gartner, 1993). In fact, such position has been widely adopted and applied in the planning, design and development of leisure facilities and tourism destinations in Western environments (Knudson, 1998).

However, there is a gross inadequacy of studies on demographic, social group, or cultural factors as determinants of tourist's destination product demand or value in the Third World (Cooper, et al, 1993; Lea, 1999; Singh, 2001). Besides, demographic, socio-economic, social group or cultural variables were revealed in some previous Western studies (Parolin, 2001; Moscardo, 2001; Dann, 1996) as not to have adequately explained tourists' destination product demand and activity patterns. Little is also known concerning the influence of social groups as peers and workmates in influencing travel tourism demand, despite the growing influence of such social groups as peers and workmates in influencing consumer behaviour (Holloway and Plant, 1998; Pearce, 1989). Thus, as some scholars suggest, there is the need for research to help make reliable statements on demographic, social group and cultural factors as determinants of tourists behaviour, attitudes and demand pattern (Knudson, 1998; Ashworth and Turnbridge, 1990). It is thus with the purpose of providing a clearer understanding for the demographic, social and cultural factors that determine tourists destination product demand in Nigeria, a Third World tropical African country, that this study is undertaken.

As a kind of pioneering study, this research effort aims to evaluate the nature of factors that are important in the individuals' demographic, social group and culture setting that significantly determines tourism product demand in Nigeria. The study was carried out between 2004 and 2005. It was based on a questionnaire survey of the personal demographic, social group, and cultural characteristics of a sample of 795 tourists, and the nature of their product demand in seven tourism destinations in Nigeria.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A review of relevant literature revealed three approaches as most dominant in explaining tourist/visitor behaviour, demand, and preference patterns in social and behavioral research. Although these three approaches explain different aspects of tourism product consumer behaviour, they are, nevertheless, complementary. The first of these approaches explain tourism product demand and participation as determined largely by demographic and socio-economic characteristics of tourists. This approach had been used in several national and regional tourism planning, and in making visitor projections, mostly in the United States of America and Britain (Knudson, 1998; Holloway and Plant, 1988). The earlier works of Adams, et al (1973), Lathan (1985), and Goodall (1998), exemplify such studies. These studies employed multivariate statistical techniques, especially regression models, to evaluate relationships between tourism product demand and socio-demographic and economic variables of tourists such as income, education, residence type, age, race, sex, marital status, family size and work period. Results obtained in majority of these studies suggest some relationship between tourists' product demand and some demographic and social- economic characteristics

of tourists. However, more recent studies, specifically, Parolin (2001) and Moscardo (2001) revealed rather low association between travel patterns and some socio-economic characteristics of tourists. Though Parolin identified some common types of travel demand patterns in the structure of day trips in New South Wales, but these were specific to some socio-economic segments only. Similarly, Moscardo (2001), revealed no significant differences for overall trip enjoyment between tourists from within the local region or overseas, or between tourists of various ages and travel groups on the Great Barrier Reef, Australia.

The second approach posits that tourist's product choice or demand depends on social, cultural or national group of tourists. The individual tourist's is believed to be influenced by the social, cultural or nationality groups they belong. Thus, the collective value, taste, lifestyle and characteristics of social, national or cultural groups are interpreted as instrumental in moulding individual tourist's behaviour and taste in some structured manner (Holloway & Plant, 1998). Earlier studies that investigated product demand and preference patterns of tourists in the context of social, cultural and national groups include Burch (1986), Check (1981), and O' Leary (1981). These studies showed that the social group is the most common unit of participation amongst tourists, when individuals are compared to groups; with the family emerging the most frequent visitor group identified by Goffman (1971). Other similar and more recent studies such as, Field and O' Leary (2001), showed tourist's groups as the peer group, the family group and a combination of family and friends participating in like activities in areas they visited. Butler (1991), and Holloway and Plant (1998), suggest that there is a strong tendency for individuals to conform to the norms and values of social groups (peers, students, workmates, friends, neighbours) and relations, cultural, national or regional groups in their aggregate patterns of demand for tourism products. The assumption that culture, nationality or social group influences tourist's behaviour undoubtedly informs a major motive why the British tourism authority regularly monitors different tourists' markets from various countries and regions in their tourism product demand (English Tourism Board, 1983; Medlik, 1985).

The third approach explains tourists' destination product demand and participation patterns as a function of available resources; that is destination product supply tends to influence tourists' demand. Both supply and demand factors in tourism destinations are thus viewed as integrated and constituting a coherent system. There are practical reasons that suggest that the nature and quality of environmental resources in tourism destinations influence tourists' entering the market, as most facilities provided have been used by tourists. However, such assumptions have been validated in only a few empirical studies such as those of Crompton (1979), Gartner (1986), and Afolabi (1993). The variables used as surrogates for assessing destination environment quality in previous studies include climate, distance, aesthetic pleasing natural and cultural environmental features, facilities, amenities and service quality, etc (WTO, 1999; Mills and Morrison, 1985). Destination environment quality or pull factors was scored much less than socio-psychological or push factor as determinant of travel demand in previous studies by Pearce (1982), and Dann (1989). The physical components of destination environment

were also found in earlier studies by Afolabi (1993), and Fekeye and Crompton (1977) to have considerably influenced destination patronage by tourists. In contrast, more recent research (Moscardo, 2000; Lubbe, 1999; and Zapalska, et al 2004) tended more to favour cultural or man-made components as destination determinants of tourists' choices and demand patterns.

It is in light of such empirical contradictions that Knudson (1998) argued that majority of existing studies on determinants of destination product demand appear inconclusive due to certain reasons as flaws in manner of variable selection, data collection and measurements. Nevertheless, as Knudson further observes, many scholars still believe that some relationships exist between tourist's product demands and demographic, social, cultural and environmental factors, though some empirical evidence points to the contrary. In line with Knudson, Lea (1999) suggest that further research are therefore required to make reliable statements on these suspect determinants of tourism destination product demand. It is in the context of these contradictions and flaws in the literature, and need for further verification of the belief that demographic, social, culture/nationality of tourist and destination quality determine tourist product demand that this study is designed, using a Third world tropical country, Nigeria, as environment of study.

CONTEXT OF STUDY AREA

The study area, Nigeria, is located in West Africa, between latitudes 5°N and 14°N, and longitudes 3°E and 15°E.. With a population of about 120 million people, Nigeria occupies an area of approximately 913,768 Sq. Kms (Awaritefe, 2000). Attractions to tourists in Nigeria are both natural and cultural features. The primary natural attractions for tourism include outstanding scenic landform areas such as beaches, rivers and inselberges, and the rainforest and savannah vegetation, which provides natural habitat for a wide variety of wildlife/game. Nigeria is also endowed with good climate, all year sunshine, and good location along the coast of the Atlantic Ocean, all of which encouraged the development of numerous good beaches, especially around Lagos. The unique cultural attractions in Nigeria include a chain of national museums, ancient slave sites, and ancient palaces and shrines. It is from these vast and diverse tourism resources that seven tourism destinations were selected for detailed study of tourists and their product demand in Nigeria (See Figure 1). The seven centers selected for study include Yankari Park, Kainji Lake Park, and Obudu Ranch; these represent the nature/ecotourism destinations in Nigeria. Three destinations - Jos, Benin City and Badagry Beach were also selected to represent the urban/cultural and historic tourism destinations in the country. It is from the public museums, cultural centres and parks in Benin City, Jos and Badagry beach areas that tourists were sampled. Additionally, Abraka River Resort was selected to represent hotel resorts. The seven destinations were also selected such that one was picked from each of the six geo-political zones in Nigeria; though two destinations were selected from the South-West Zone because of the larger concentration of tourism destinations in that zone.

Official concern for tourism development in Nigeria started after the colonial period in 1975, following the establishment of Nigeria's Tourism Board (NTB). But because of political instability and lack of commitment by successive governments tourism has been neglected in the country (Ojo, 1985; Chokor, 1993). It was only recently in 1990 that a national tourism policy was formulated and adopted to guide tourism developments in Nigeria. However, several programmes for tourism development have within the past four decades (1960 - 1999), been pursued by various states and the Federal Governments of Nigeria. These were mostly in the areas of wildlife conservation, museum and archaeological site preservation, and hotel and physical site development in areas of outstanding natural beauty or unique quality.

Several constraints, however, have hindered these and other efforts to develop tourism in Nigeria. Prominent amongst which are limited supply and poor quality of tourism infrastructures, facilities and amenities. The nature of attractions that are highly dispersed over large areas particularly constitute serious transportation problem to tourists patronage. Additionally, poor transport linkage within tourists sites, low income earning of residents and poor 'image' of the country as unsafe, and disturbed by political, ethnic, and religious crises and frequent military coups are all important constraints to tourism (Awaritefe, 2000). Consequently, though blessed with abundant and highly unique tourism resources, earnings from tourism have been low, about 3 percent of foreign travel in Africa (between 1998 and 2003) and insignificant (less than \$.137 billion) when compared to \$10 billion for other Third World African countries, majority of which are with less tourism resource endowment (WTO, 2001). There has been very few tourists' arrival to Nigeria since 1972, the majority of whom are travellers on business, official missions or visit friends/relations, mostly from Western Europe, America, South-East Asia, and neighbouring West African countries. Domestic tourism participation has also been low in Nigeria. An increasing number of educated and high income Nigerians and students provides an important source of the domestic tourists that visit the tourism destinations, especially the national parks, historic sites and cultural centers (Awaritefe, 1993, 2003). However, with the inception of a new democratic government in 1999, the Federal and several state governments have indicated keen interest to develop the tourism industry in the first decades of this millennium (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2002). The country is thus presented with challenges associated with growing public and private sector desires to develop the tourism industry. It is in the context of this scenario, the dilemma of a country with abundant tourism resources, yet experiencing low gains that this study aims to provide greater understanding of the nature of factors that determine tourism product demand. This step is important so that desired tourist markets and products can be articulated and realised in subsequent tourism destination development or rejuvenation programmes in Nigeria.

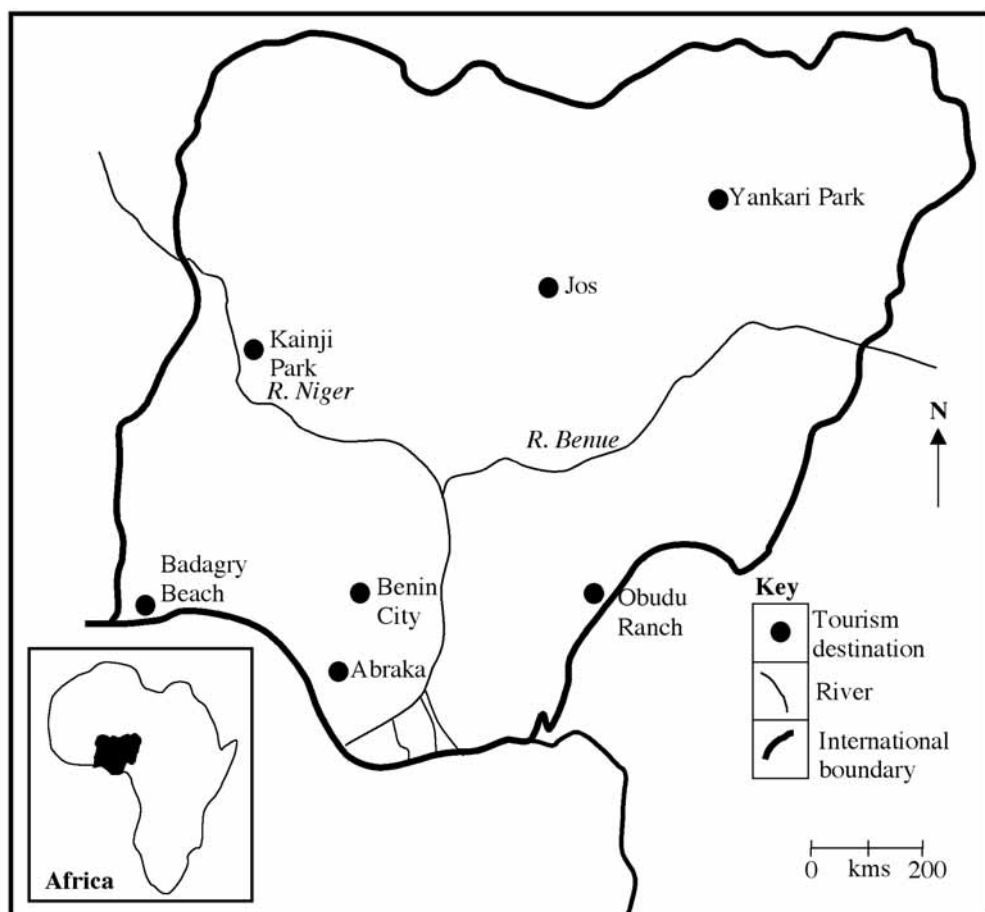


Fig 1: Study Area in Nigeria

* Further information on tourism destinations from which respondents were selected.

1. Yankari Park is located in the North East tourism zone of Nigeria. It is primarily an “Ecotourism” area. Additionally the Wikki warm spring and several archaeology sites located within the park are also of interest to visitors.
2. The Abraka River Resort is located in the South-south tourism zone. It is popular for its beaches and water resort tourism.
3. Badagry is located in the south-west tourism zone. It is significant because of its beaches for water tourism, and for historic/cultural tourism as a result of its slave sites, museums and relics of early European contact with Africa.
4. Kainji National Park is located in the north-west tourism zone. It is significant for wildlife and unique plant habitats, and is also endowed with ecotourism/naturism/nature tourism resources.
5. Benin-City is located also in south-south tourism zone. It is popular for urban, cultural and historic tourism.
6. Obudu Cattle Ranch, located in the south-east geo-tourism zone, is notable for its wildlife and unique plant habitats, and is also a good example of ecotourism/nature tourism.
7. Jos is located in the Middle Belt tourism area of Nigeria. It is significant for both culture, and adventure/landform tourism.

Annual visitors rate for both domestic and foreign tourists are 121,033 for Yankari, 45,926 for Abraka Resort, 27,036 for Badagry, 30,539 for Obudu Ranch, 64,616 for Kainji Park, 16,972 for Benin-City and 18,451 for Jos. The major difficulties of visiting these destinations include poor accessibility, inadequate vehicle vans, and cultural restrictions at certain periods of the year. Minimal entrance fees are charged for use of these destinations, especially for entry into the beaches, game viewing areas and cultural centers.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Data Collection

The study involved a questionnaire survey of 1,075 tourists randomly sampled in seven tourism destinations mentioned previously and presented in Figure I. The destinations were selected from previous tourism studies (Awaritefe, 1993, 2000) and official publications by Nigeria's Tourism Development Corporation NTDC (2000) to represent the variety and distribution of tourists' destinations in the country.

In each of the seven destinations selected for study, sites for survey of tourists were chosen after consultation with managers of the destinations. It is mostly sites considered "unique" or "most popular" that were recommended and selected for survey of tourists. The survey was by systematic random sampling as tourists arrived at the selected sites at intervals of every first (1st), third (3rd), or fifth (5th) persons. The systematic random process thus depended on the frequency and number of visitors that arrived a site at a time. Amongst the 1,075 tourists surveyed, 156 were in Badagry Beach; 152 in Kainji Park; 130 in Jos; 145 in Benin City, 160 in Abraka River Resort, 177 in Yankari Park and 155 in Obudu Ranch. Only 795 questionnaires were received as properly filled, giving a useable response rate of 74.0 percent. The major reasons for failure to fill the questionnaires were language difficulty and lack of time. Tourists in selected sites were surveyed everyday of the week, though the majority was surveyed on weekends, on Saturdays and Sundays. The majority of tourists were surveyed between November and May, during the dry season, when the largest numbers of visitors are attracted to tourism destinations in Nigeria. Few tourists were surveyed between June and October, during the wet season. Three research assistants who are graduates in foreign languages (Italian, Spanish and French) were trained in relevant questionnaire administration techniques; these assisted with questionnaire administration.

The questionnaire, which had two sections, was in the English language. In the first section, respondents were asked to provide information on their demographic, socio-economic, cultural and nationality characteristics. And in the second section, the questionnaire evaluated the tourism products that tourists demanded or valued most. Completed questionnaire were collected back in each site or at the gate of each destination before visitor departure.

Variable Measurement

The main assumption postulated and verified in the study is that tourists' product demand (y) is determined by demographic, social group and cultural characteristics (x). This assumption is expressed in a regression model formulated as:

$$TPD(y) = f(INC, EDU, AGE, SEX, OCCP, CULNT, FAMSZ, SOGR)$$

Where;

TPD(y) = Tourist's Product Demand, INC = Income of Tourists, EDU= Education of Tourists, AGE = Age of Tourists, SEX = Sex of Tourists, OCC = Occupation or Socio-economic Status of Tourists, CULNT = Culture/Nationality of Tourists, SOGR = Social Group Company of Tourists' and FAMSZ = Family Size of Tourists.

Variables considered important in the regression model were selected from previous works of Adams, et al (1973), Moscardo (2001), Moscardo and Greenwood (2001) and Afolabi (1993). Variables in the regression model were categorized into an independent component category made up of demographic, social group and cultural variables and a dependent variable component category that consist of tourism destinations and their products that tourists demand or value most. In all, 8 independent variables were employed in the study to represent the three main determinants of demographic, social group and cultural factors expressed in the regression model. The 8 independent component variables were measured for each tourist as mentioned previously in a questionnaire that consisted of two sections. The first section of the questionnaire used various scales similar to those of Leopold (1969), and Odemerho and Chokor (1993). Specifically, in the first section of the questionnaire, the independent variable of sex was categorised on a dichotomous basis into two groups: males and females. Other demographic and social group characteristics of tourists such as education, age, income (measured in equivalent of Nigeria's currency, the Naira, ₦) and culture/nationality, were similarly scaled to differentiate respondents into 3 - 5 tourist's groups or segments.

Socio-economic status was defined in terms of tourists' occupation. The system of socio-economic grouping most commonly applied amongst marketers adopts six groups (Holloway and Plant, 1988; Paroline, 2001). These groups are:

- | | |
|---|---|
| A: Higher managerial, administrative or professional | C ₂ : Skilled manual workers |
| B: Middle managerial, administrative or professional | D: Semi and unskilled manual workers |
| C ₁ : Supervisory or clerical, junior managerial | E: Unemployed, pensioner, casual or lowest grade workers. |

In the study, ABC₁, were combined and redefined as middle class workers, C₂ and D categories were combined and designated as working class. Tourists in the E category were further divided into two segments: lower class tourists and students. This is because of the large number of tourists in the unemployed category that are students. Details of socio-economic segmentation of tourists, as well as their segmentation according to nationality/culture, social group and sex characteristics are presented in Table I.

The second section of the questionnaire evaluated the dependent variables of tourism product demand using 3 grouping of variables: (1) Type of destinations highly patronised or valued by tourists. (2) Features or image attributes of products within destinations considered highly attractive to tourists. (3) Destination features or their components considered obnoxious/disliked by tourists. Each of these 3 variable groupings that were selected as surrogates for the tourism products demanded was evaluated in the questionnaire by asking tourists to rate each on various 5 point Likert type bi-polar scales. Thus, to evaluate the types of tourism destinations tourists patronise or value most, respondents were requested to rate a set of 105 tourists destinations in Nigeria on a 5 point Likert type scale that was anchored by the bi-polar adjectives of least important to very important for me to visit as a tourists. Next, to evaluate the specific destination image or components that are highly valued by tourists, respondents were requested to rate on a 5 point bi-polar scale 28 items on destination features that attracted or motivated them to selected destinations for visitation. The scale ranged from least important for me to very important to me in the destination features that determine my decision to visit. Finally, the distractions/problems encountered in the destinations by tourists were evaluated. 18 items that reflected various dimensions of distractions/problems within the destinations that distracted from the quality of each destination were presented to tourists for rating on a 5 point Likert type bi-polar scale that ranged from least important to very important to me as a problem during visit. The detailed format and information on the three sets of items presented to tourists for evaluation of destination product demanded or valued is omitted here for brevity of space. The three sets of items presented to tourists for rating were, however, selected from previous developed and published tourism studies by Greenwood and Moscardo (2001); Fakeye and Crompton, (1997); Awaritefe (1993, 2004) and Afolabi, (1993).

Data Analysis

Mean scores obtained for each of the 3 sets of variable rating schemes were aggregated for each tourist's segment, and also for the seven destinations separately. The mean scores obtained for the 3 groups of items provided measures for the tourism product demand (y) used in the multiple regression models of study. Mean scores for each of all items measured were obtained by the ranking procedure developed by Nunally (1967). As a result of the abundant data obtained, a factoring technique that involved identifying items with thematic commonalities developed by Miles and Huberman, (1994), was used to scan the data obtained into various categories or grouping of items of similar dimensions, with each sharing a common description factor. Next, these dimensions of items were segmented according to tourist's demographic characteristics, culture/nationality and social groupings. And finally, the means obtained were presented under each segment. These were used as summary measures for the various independent tourism product demand variables in the regression models and in the various one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) and t-tests to establish significant differences between various tourists groups in product demand, which is the central hypothesis of the study. Scheffe's multiple range tests was also applied to ANOVA results to identify tourists' groups that differed significantly in product demand.

RESULT PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION

Demographic Characteristics of Tourists

Analysis of data in Table I was on tourists' demographic, social and cultural characteristics obtained from the first section of the questionnaire. This indicated that majority of the tourists were males, single, between the ages of 21 and 45 years, highly educated and earn more than N75, 000 monthly. Majority of the tourists were also Nigerians with others being Europeans from Western Europe, and Americans and Asians. Other Africans were few and from neighbouring West African countries. The largest proportion of tourists was also the working class, and travelled in company of their spouses or family/relations.

Tourism Product Demand and Characteristics of Tourists

Result of the measurements obtained on the 8 independent variables and the dependent variable of tourism product demand is summarized in a multiple regression model as follows:

$$TPD = 9.3 + 2.2 (OCCP) - 2.31 (ED) + 0.24 (INC) + 3.95 (SEX) - 0.097 (AGE) - 0.05 (CULNT) + 0.002 (FAMSZ) + 0.043 (SOGR).$$

Where: TPD = Tourism Product Demand; OCCP = Occupation of tourists; Ed = Education; INC = Income; CULNT = Culture/nationality; FAMSZ = Family size; and SOGR = Social Group/Company during travel.

The above regression equation indicates that among the 8 variables of demographic, social group and cultural characteristics of tourists, the ones that contributed highest to determining variation in tourism product demand within the tourism destinations are education, sex, and occupation/socio-economic status. Other variables such as family size, social group, income, and age contributed less in their influence on tourism product demand, though tourism product demand was not positively influenced by age and education of tourist. Thus, while tourists with high education and older tourists did not necessarily patronise tourism products most, it was those with high income, medium family size and of certain social group, sex and culture/nationality that patronised.

However, the eight independent variables on both demographic, social group, and cultural characteristics of tourists accounted for only 19% of the total variation in tourists' product demand. Moreover, based on the computed F values obtained for the regression analysis: (F calculated = 1.763 and F-table value = 2.367 at $P > 0.05$), the hypothesis that demographic, social group and cultural characteristics having significantly influenced tourism product demand was rejected. It was concluded, therefore, that demographic, social group, and cultural characteristics of tourists did not adequately explain tourists' product demand. However, significant variation in tourism product demand was revealed in some destination products by differences resulting from socio-economic status, education, and culture/nationality and

sex segmentation of the tourists. In contrast, social group, family size, and age and income segmentation of tourists did not reveal significant differences for tourism product demand.

Detailed discussion of tourism products where significant differences in demand was observed between tourist's groups is discussed next. First, in Table 2 is presented socio-economic segmentation of tourists according to various destination products where tourist's groups differ significantly in their demand, at the 0.05 levels.

One-way ANOVA test at 0.05 levels on data in Table 2 showed that socio-economic status had significant influence on demand for tourists' products in some destinations. And Scheffe's multiple range tests was applied to data in Table 2 to identify the tourism products that social – economic status significantly differentiated tourists. The result showed that there are two pairs of groups of socio-economic tourists that differ significantly from each other in product demand. Middle class tourists differed significantly from student tourists and lower class tourists in tourism product demand. Middle class tourists displayed significantly higher demand for nature/ecotourism destinations, water/beach areas, and culture/historic tourism areas when compared with others. Lower class tourists indicated a similar overwhelmingly higher demand for nature/ecotourism areas, and water resorts/beaches, and also differed from other socio-economic groups in having significant higher demand for urban tourism areas. Student tourists, on the other hand, depicted equally high demand for both nature/ecotourism, and water/beach tourism areas, but differed in having significant higher demand for adventure tourism areas. Middle class tourists, being older, more educated and having more income, revealed significantly higher demand for a broader range of tourism areas, especially those that offer a wide spectrum of experiences and opportunity mixture when compared to other tourists segments. In contrast, student's tourists, being more youthful and effervescent, were also more desirous of action/adventure oriented tourism destinations than other tourists segments. The lower class tourists, unlike other groups, indicated higher preference for urban tourism. These group of tourists appeared less exposed to other parts of the country and thus were more desirous of modern urban and industrial environmental settings.

Furthermore, ANOVA and Scheffe's multiple range tests were applied to establish where significant differences existed between the culture/national groups in their demand for various types of tourism destinations. Data in Table 2 revealed two groups of tourists whose means differ significantly and collectively: first, African tourists and secondly, European and American tourists combined. African tourists were shown to patronise mostly water/beach destinations followed by wildlife/ecotourism and nature/adventure destinations that are well provided with facilities and that are easily accessible. In contrast, European and American tourists patronised mostly culture/historic destinations, followed by wildlife/ecotourism destinations, with adventure tourism destinations also emerging high in demand as peripheral valued destinations.

ANOVA and Scheffe's multiple range tests conducted on data in Table 3 (right hand section) also indicated that the structure of distractions/problems encountered within the tourism centres

differed significantly between tourists of some socio-economic groups. For instance, two pairs of socio-economic groups, the middle class and working class, have means that differ significantly from each other in seven distraction/problems encountered in the tourism destinations. In Table 3, the problems of high cost, poor quality/variety of facilities and poor variety of attractions and dirty/obsolete environmental features in the destinations were considered as of overwhelmingly high concern to middle class tourists. The problems of insecurity/hostility, transportation, lack of information, poor service and poor food quality were highly indicated by working class tourists. They also indicated foremost concern with problems as poor variety/poor quality of facilities and inadequate animal variety. The student tourists expressed encounter with a broader range of problems that appeared of parallel seriousness to them. Foremost amongst these are high costs of tourism items, dilapidated environments and structures and transportation problem. Table 3 also shows that education significantly influenced the tourists in their assessment of six distractions/problems they encountered in various destinations. Multiple range test applied to data in Table 3, using Scheffe's technique, showed that there is only one pair of group of tourists whose means differ significantly from each other: Degree holders and diploma/certificate holders. Tourists with Diploma/Certificate expressed over-whelming high concern for distractions/problems associated with poor quality/variety of facilities and inadequate animal variety. Transportation was at the core of these problems. On the other hand, tourists who are degree holders indicated encountering a wider range of distractions/problems, especially associated with poor maintenance culture of tourism environments/facilities, poor quality/variety of attractions, poor management/poor services and bad food.

Various t-tests applied to the data in Table 4 also shows that tourist differed significantly in their choice of tourism destination features on the basis of their sex gender. Table 4 shows that female tourists expressed significant higher choice for destinations that are distantly located/safe from their residential/work environments. This is apparently to escape from daily routine, and enjoy new and different environments. The females also showed significant higher demand for natural, beautiful, quiet areas of unique flora and fauna, especially beaches/river/water areas and parks/games reserve with entertainment/leisure resources. In contrast, male tourists expressed significant higher demand for unique geophysical mountainous /hilly landform features and game reserves/parks, natural places of plenty flora and fauna and sporting facilities/events. Water/beach areas, cultural/educational and other landform areas offering opportunity for unique experiences constituted the major spur in choice of destination product by male tourists. Additionally, sports/recreational facilities available and their nearness to residence were also significant considerations amongst male tourists in product choice and demand.

The result of the analysis presented and discussed above pertained to all the seven tourism centers of Jos, Obudu Ranch, Benin City, Yankari Games Reserve, Kainji tourism center, Badagry Beach and Abraka River tourism destinations jointly. Next, we shall establish whether significant differences exists in tourism product demand between the tourists groups within each of the 7 destinations selected for study.

Environmental Peculiarities/ Quality and Tourism Product Demand

This section attempted to establish whether differences in the quality or type of environmental components or features in each destination determine variation in tourism product demand also. The aim of the presentation in this section is, thus, to verify whether besides the influence of individual demographic, social group and culture/nationality factors, tourism product demand is also determined by the environment peculiarity or quality of each destination. Data for this analysis is presented in Table 5 and is undertaken with various regression models.

In Table 5, results obtained for each of the seven tourism centres separately, showed that within the Obudu Ranch area, three variables: occupation/economic status, sex and income contributed most to the determination of variation in tourism product demand. These three variables accounted for 35.4% of the 39.12% variation explained by all the 8 variables. It is also shown in Table 5 that in Yankari Park tourist's product demand is accounted for mainly by two variables: occupational/economic status and sex. Economic status alone explained 12.53 percent of the variance in tourists' product demand, while 11.76 percent was explained by sex. For Kainji Lake, the regression model in Table 5 shows that age alone accounted for as much as 17.4 percent. Education, sex, and social-group influence jointly accounted for 14.2 percent of the other 33.4 percent of the variation in tourist's product demand. The regression equation for Badagry Beach in Table 5 indicates that tourism product demand is explained mainly by culture/nationality, education and income. The group variable of culture/nationality of tourists accounted for the highest proportion of variance (16.76 percent). Moreover, together, education, income, age and sex, these four variables measuring demographic characteristics of tourists, explained 25.81 percent of total variance in product demand. The Jos multiple regression models in Table 5 showed that tourism product demand is explained mainly by two variables: culture/nationality and income of tourist. These two variables together accounted for 41.17 percent of 50.33 percent variation in the 8 independent variables. In Table 5, the regression model for Benin City shows that culture/nationality and income significantly influenced tourists' product demand. The results also indicate that in Abraka income was the only variable that had significant positive influence on product demand. The other variables had low and negative influence on product demand. Overall, variations explained by the regression models for tourism product demand by tourists' demographic and social group characteristics in Benin City and Abraka were low: 14.2% for Benin-city, and 12.3% for Abraka respectively.

Generally, the various regression models in Table 5 revealed two patterns of variation in tourism product demand as resulting from differences in tourists demographic, social group and cultural characteristics in the seven different destinations. The first pattern is that evident in four destinations (Obudu, Yankari, Kainji and Abraka) that are nature/ecotourism destinations. In these destinations, it is evident that demographic variables only, especially socio-economic status, income, sex, and education are the most important determinants of tourism product demand. In contrast, the pattern most conspicuous in the regression models of the three urban cultural/historic destinations (Jos, Benin-city and Badagry) is that both cultural and demographic

characteristics such as nationality, income, age and education are important variables that influenced tourism demand. In order words, tourists in dominantly nature/ecotourism destinations appeared differentiated in demand for tourism products based on their demographic characteristics only; especially socio-economic status, sex and education. In contrasts, tourists in dominantly culture/historic tourism destinations appeared differentiated in tourism product demand primarily on the basis of their culture/nationality, and to a lesser degree, based on some demographic characteristics. Also, it is concluded that tourism product demand is also determined by the environmental peculiarity or quality in the various tourism destinations.

Conclusion and Implication of Study

The primary goal of this study was to discover those variables that are important in the demographic, social and cultural characteristics of tourists that significantly influenced demand for tourism products. This was with the aim of providing information that may be helpful in establishing the types of tourism destination products that are important and demanded by the various tourist groups visiting tourism destinations in Nigeria. The study revealed that demographic, social group and cultural characteristics of tourists did not adequately explain variation in tourism product demand. Both demographic, social group and cultural characteristics of tourists in all tourism destinations selected for study in Nigeria showed fairly low levels of explanation for tourism product demand. The hypothesis that destination product demand is significantly influenced by demographic, social or cultural group characteristics of tourists was therefore rejected. In all destinations, variation in tourism product demand accounted for by the factors of demographic, social groups and cultural/nationality variables was generally rather low. However, significant variation in some tourism product demand was revealed for some culture/nationality and demographic tourist groups. In addition, quality of destinations, when incorporated in subsequent regression analysis for each of the seven destinations suggests that the environment quality of each destination was also important in accounting for variation in tourism product demand between various tourists segments. Thus, no single factor or variable of demographic, social group or culture but rather various sets of these variables including environment quality of destinations interrelated in various manner and significance to determine variation in destination product demand. The findings are consistent with previous Western studies by Adams, et al (1973), Dann (1996), Moscardo (2001), Parolin (2001), Moscardo and Greenwood (2001) where variations in destination product demand was shown to be related only to some demographic, social and cultural group factors, and the environmental quality of destinations.

The findings of the study also have some practical planning, marketing and management implications. Previous efforts to improve or rejuvenate tourism destinations in Nigeria, especially in the allocation of resources to the tourism sector by the Federal and some state governments, have often lacked consideration for variations in the tastes of various tourist segments. This neglect is also true for spatial variations in resource endowment and constraints in tourism destinations (Awaritefe, 2004). The variations revealed in the study by different tourists' segments in their demand for destination products and constraints encountered in the

destinations thus constitute a framework for the planned articulation of policies and strategies to enhance visitor satisfaction with tourism destination products in Nigeria. The study also reveals products that may be congruent with the demands and expectations of various tourists segments or groups. For instance, middle class tourists differed significantly from lower class and student tourists in tourism product demand and problem perception in the tourism destinations. While lower class tourists indicated overwhelmingly higher demand for urban tourism, student tourists differed in their higher demand for a broader range of tourism destination types, thus displaying more elasticity in product demand when compared with others. Also tourists who are degree holders differed from those with diploma/certificates and middle class tourist differed from working class and student tourists groups in several constraints/problems perception within the tourism destinations. Furthermore, tourists of African culture/nationality differed significantly from European and American groups in demand for various types of tourism destinations. African tourists appeared more particular, they patronised mostly nature destinations as water/beach, and wildlife/ecotourism areas. In contrasts, foreign tourists groups, Europeans, Americans and Asians, were more general in product demand; they patronised both culture/historic and nature areas as wildlife/ecotourism destinations. Also, female tourists expressed significantly higher choice for distantly located, safe/quiet, natural and beautiful destinations, and destinations offering good accommodation/entertainment were most preferred. In contrasts, male tourists indicated significantly higher demand for natural landform destinations and areas with abundant amenities/facilities. Destinations that present enriching opportunities for sports facilities/events were also significantly highly preferred by male tourists. Such knowledge as these will be much helpful in determining the basis for a destination-marketing plan that is designed to attract tourists of various socio-economic, educational, sex and culture/nationality groups in Nigeria. It will also aid destination managers/proprietors learn to cater for the particular needs for various tourist groups or markets.

The most important of the constraints/problems perceived by tourist include high cost of tourism products/services, poor variety/quality of facilities, and insecurity/hostility. Others include inadequate animal variety and plant species, dirty/obsolete environments and features, high transport cost, poor service/food quality, and poor information. While many of these problems may best be addressed by individual proprietors/managers of tourism destinations, some others as insecurity, high transport cost and information are beyond the control of the individual destination management. Here, government direct intervention, control and support is inevitable and thus canvassed, especially as the tourism industry in Nigeria is still relatively young and underdeveloped.

Results of this study also provides meaningful guide to tourism destination proprietors/managers on products, amenities/facilities, to accord priority in destination planning, design and management to attract and sustain desired tourists' markets. The results also provide valuable information on those tourists segments to target in destination product marketing. Besides, the study provides a framework for articulating policies and strategies to curtail obnoxious constraints to tourists' patronage of tourism destinations in Nigeria.

The findings of this study, however, may not be regarded as conclusive for other Third World countries in Africa because of differences in destination environment milieu and types of tourists attracted to such destinations. Further research is required to explore those factors or variables that are demographic, social, cultural, as well as other factors that may also significantly influence tourism product demand in other Third World African tourism environment. It is only then that statements that are more reliable can be made on whether these facets of tourists' characteristics are important determinants of tourism destination product demand, or not, as some studies suggest.

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Table 1: Demographic, social and cultural characteristics and grouping of tourists

Sex		Age (in years)		Family size (children)	
Males	441(55.47)	16-20	93(11.7)	Single	252(31.82)
Females	354(44.35)	21-32	336(42.26)	Couple without children	211(26.54)
		33-44	345(42.4)	Couple with 1-2 children	236(29.69)
		45+	21(2.64)	Couple with 3-4 children	52(6.54)
Marital Status		Education			
Single	588(73.96)	Primary/Secondary	159(20.0)		
Married	207(26.04)	Diploma certificates	297(37.36)		
		B.Sc.	219(36.6)		
		M.Sc/Ph.D	48(6.04)		
Income (Per month)		Occupation/socio-economic groups			
₦ 40,000	141(17.74)	Students	192(24.15)		
₦ 40,000- ₦ 69,000	60(7.55)	Lower class	105(13.21)		
₦ 70,000- ₦ 99,000	141(17.74)	Working class	288(36.23)		
₦ 100,000+	453(56.98)	Middle class	210(26.42)		
Culture/Nationality		Social Group Companion			
Nigerians	418(52.58)	Spouse/Partner	309(38.87)		
Europeans (British/Germans etc)	196(24.65)	Friends	117(14.72)		
Asians	87(10.94)	Family/Relations	216(27.17)		
Americans, Canadians	63(7.92)	Fellow students/ Workmates	110(13.84)		
Other Africans	31(3.9)	Alone	43(5.41)		

Table 2: Types of Destinations Considered important or very important by various tourists' socio-economic groups

Culture/Nationality Grouping of Tourists					Socio-economic Grouping of Tourists						
F-value	Nigerians/ other				Groupings of preferred tourism places	Students	Lower class	Working class	Middle class	F-Value	
	African	Asians	Euro- peans	Ameri- cans							
0.78	2.12	2.85	2.81	2.76	1	Nature/Ecotourism	2.84	2.52	2.76	3.87	*2.37
2.51*	3.14	1.71	1.41	1.82	2	Water/Resorts/Beach tourism	2.27	2.83	2.47	3.61	*1.98
0.82	1.98	0.64	.72	.73	3	Urban tourism	0.82	2.94	0.91	1.07	*2.13
2.74*	1.16	2.82	3.1	3.04	4	Cultural/historic tourism	1.23	1.68	1.42	1.78	0.64
1.87*	2.67	1.86	1.87	1.32	5	Adventure/landform tourism	3.76	1.79	0.97	1.01	*2.17

*Statistical significant different at the 0.05 level based on ANOVA test.

Table 3: Distractions/Problems Considered serious or very serious in Tourism centers by tourists of various educational and socio-economic groups

F-value	Educational tourists groups					Distraction/problem grouping	Socio-economic Grouping of Tourists				F-Value
	Primary/Seco-ndary	Diploma/NCE	Certificate	First degree/other high profes-sion	Higher degree/other higher profes-sion		Students	Lower class	Working class	Middle class	
0.78	4.87	2.23	1.82	1.57	1	High cost/finance	2.02	1.08	1.84	3.92	*2.13
0.73	1.54	1.76	1.84	2.63	2	Insecurity of leaving home, theft, hostage local hostility	1.41	1.32	2.88	1.47	*1.97
2.04*	1.97	2.95	1.79	2.21	3	Transportation/communication problems	1.2	0.91	2.89	0.87	*1.88
3.12*	1.48	2.89	1.51	1.72	4	Poor quality/variety of facilities	0.43	1.63	1.83	2.89	*2.42
2.93	1.02	2.87	1.21	0.84	5	Poor animal variety and number	0.68	0.86	0.73	0.75	0.92
0.84	0.27	0.43	0.32	0.31	6	Disturbance from locals, crowdedness, prostitution	0.31	0.54	0.38	0.47	0.74
2.11*	0.65	0.32	2.48	0.37	7	Poor service/management, hospitality, bad food/drinks	0.71	0.32	0.41	1.24	0.66
1.93*	0.29	0.51	2.42	0.38	8	Poor quality/variety of attractions	0.64	1.84	0.79	2.88	*2.31
0.74	1.02	0.81	0.92	0.84	9	Poor tourists information/briefs/tour guides	0.97	0.81	1.69	0.78	*2.23
2.12*	1.64	1.77	2.93	1.2	10	Dirty obsolete damaged environment/structure	1.48	1.82	1.79	2.93	*2.11

*Statistical significant different at the 0.05 level based on ANOVA test.

Table 4: Destination environment components Considered important or very important in Tourism centre by sex groups

S/N	Destination environment attractions	Sex groups		t-value
		Males	Females	
1	Natural landform areas (mountains/hills)	2.43	1.97	*2.75
2	Flora/fauna	2.74	2.80	0.62
3	Beaches/river and resorts/water areas	2.12	2.06	0.71
4	Cultural/historical areas	.81	.65	0.49
5	Sports facilities/events	2.74	1.66	*2.73
6	Facilities/amenities	1.13	.09	*2.19
7	Accommodation/entrainment	2.18	3.18	*2.78
8	External transport/communication	.16	.20	0.16
9	Distance/safety	1.44	2.22	*2.64
10	Natural beauty/quietness	1.01	2.62	*3.11

*Statistical significant different at the 0.05 level based on t-test.

Table 5: Regression Equation of Tourism Product Demand (TPD) and Characteristics of Tourists in Seven Centres in Nigeria

S/N	Tourism Centres	Dependent Variable y	Constant y intercept	Regression Equation-Constants and Variables (Coefficients of X-Variables)							
				Socio-economic	Sex	Edu.	Income	SOGR	Age	CULGNT	FAMSZ
1	Obudu	Tourism Product Demand (TPD)	-18.72	4.05	5.08	-0.37	0.04	-0.04	0.06	-0.84	-0.12
2	Yankari	"	19.94	3.64	15.82	0.05	-0.01	-0.02	-0.04	0.07	0.19
3	Kainji	"	19.38	4.10	3.18	0.06	-0.03	-0.24	-3.50	0.06	0.59
4	Badagry	"	13.76	-1.17	-0.17	-0.31	0.12	0.06	-0.19	1.94	-0.08
5	Jos	"	21.42	0.14	0.14	0.04	-0.27	0.05	0.11	2.21	0.15
6	Benin City	"	44.28	3.03	0.00	-0.16	4.10	0.30	0.22	2.43	-0.09
7	Abraka	"	32.63	-1.73	-1.73	0.00	4.01	-1.57	-0.02	0.36	0.15

Dynamic overbooking limits for guaranteed and nonguaranteed hotel reservations

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ABSTRACT:

The research note addresses the problem of dynamic overbooking limits in the context of guaranteed and nonguaranteed bookings. The note shows how the optimal number of overbookings will change when the hotel receives a request for a specific date given the current guaranteed/nonguaranteed reservations ratio for the same date.

Key words: hotel management, overbookings, yield and revenue management

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INTRODUCTION

Overbooking is a well-known and widely used practice in the hotel industry. Its goal is to maximise room revenue by confirming more rooms than the available capacity of the property. From a theoretical perspective it has been usually analysed in the context of yield and revenue management (e.g. Jain and Bowman, 2005; Lee-Ross and Johns, 1997; Netessine and Shumsky, 2002; Sanchez and Satir, 2005; Ivanov, 2006). Most of the research has focused so far on calculating a static optimal overbooking level (for econometric modelling of static overbooking limits for accommodation establishments see Netessine and Shumsky, 2002; Ivanov, 2006). It has been argued that a hotel can afford to overbook until the marginal revenues from the overbookings exceed the marginal costs associated with them (Netessine and Shumsky, 2002).

Albeit their merits, overbookings are not without their shortfalls. Wirtz *et al* (2002:18) emphasize that overbookings and other inventory control revenue management practices could cause perceived unfairness or perceived lack of customer appreciation by clients. In order to avoid the large financial costs, missed revenues and negative word-of-mouth associated with overbookings, hotel companies should collect detailed information on no-shows, cancellations, and last minute amendments (Kimes and McGuire, 2001:11).

Although much research has focused on overbookings, the problem of *dynamic* overbooking limits has not received much attention. In our research note we address the problem by posing

the question: *How will the optimal number of overbooked rooms change when we receive a booking request for a specific date given the current guaranteed/nonguaranteed reservations ratio for the same date?* The optimal level of overbookings is inversely related to the amount of the cancellation charge – the closer the cancellation charge to the room rate, the lower the missed benefit from the unoccupied room, and the less the stimuli to overbook (Ivanov, 2006:29). If a hotel accepts both guaranteed and non-guaranteed bookings then the optimal number of overbookings must be set separately for each booking type.

METHODOLOGY

Basic model

Let N be the number of nonguaranteed bookings at the hotel for a specific date, $\bar{\eta}$ – the average percentage of unused nonguaranteed bookings, G – the number of guaranteed bookings, $\bar{\gamma}$ – the average percentage of unused guaranteed bookings, and C – the total available capacity of the hotel (for simplicity we shall assume that all rooms are identical and complete substitutes). The expected used capacity of the hotel C^{exp} is defined as:

$$(1) \quad C^{exp} = N \cdot (1 - \bar{\eta}) + G \cdot (1 - \bar{\gamma})$$

We differentiate (1) to N and G and arrive to:

$$(2) \quad \frac{\partial C^{exp}}{\partial N} = 1 - \bar{\eta} \quad , \text{ and}$$

$$(3) \quad \frac{\partial C^{exp}}{\partial G} = 1 - \bar{\gamma} \quad .$$

Formulas (2) and (3) show the increase in the expected used room inventory C^{exp} as a result of one additional nonguaranteed or guaranteed booking, respectively. They also imply that the expected used capacity will increase *less* than the number of additional rooms booked.

However, reservation managers are more interested in how the overbooking limits will change if they confirm particular request. To address this problem, we express N as a function of G :

$$(4) \quad N = \frac{C}{1 - \bar{\eta}} - G \cdot \frac{1 - \bar{\gamma}}{1 - \bar{\eta}} \quad .$$

Differentiating (4) leads to:

$$(5) \quad \frac{\partial N}{\partial G} = - \left(\frac{1 - \bar{\gamma}}{1 - \bar{\eta}} \right)$$

Expression (5) shows the marginal rate of substitution of nonguaranteed bookings by guaranteed ones. For example, if $\bar{\gamma}=5\%$ and $\bar{\eta}=25\%$, then:

$$(6) \quad \frac{\partial N}{\partial G} = -\left(\frac{1-\bar{\gamma}}{1-\bar{\eta}}\right) = -\left(\frac{1-0,05}{1-0,25}\right) = -1,27$$

The result shows that a guaranteed booking of 4 rooms will have the same impact on the expected used capacity as a nonguaranteed booking of 5 rooms ($4*1,27=5,08$).

Let us consider that a hotel receives only nonguaranteed bookings. If it has 100 similar rooms and $\bar{\eta}=25\%$, then the hotel must confirm:

$$(7) \quad N_{\max} = \frac{C}{1-\bar{\eta}} = \frac{100}{1-0,25} = 133 \text{ rooms.}$$

According to (7) the hotel will overbook $N_{\max} - C = 133 - 100 = 33$ rooms.

In the other case, if all bookings are guaranteed and $\bar{\gamma}=5\%$, the hotel should confirm:

$$(8) \quad G_{\max} = \frac{C}{1-\bar{\gamma}} = \frac{100}{1-0,05} = 105 \text{ rooms,}$$

which corresponds to only $G_{\max} - C = 105 - 100 = 5$ overbooked rooms.

The two analysed situations determine the upper and lower overbooking limits (see Figure 1.)

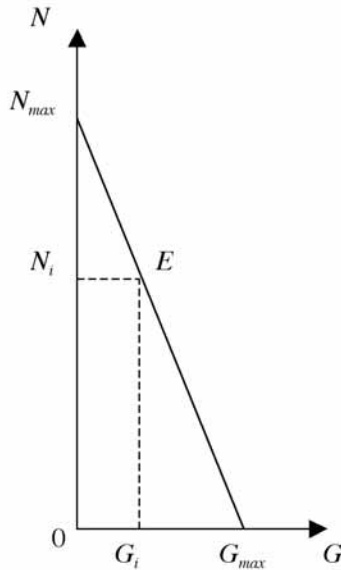


Figure 1. Relationship between guaranteed and nonguaranteed reservations

Figure 1 presents a population of points which are a linear combination of the number of guaranteed G and nonguaranteed N reservations and have an expected used room capacity of C . In algebraic form they are defined through equation (1). In differential form (1) is presented as:

$$(9) \quad dC^{\text{exp}} = dN \cdot (1 - \bar{\eta}) + dG \cdot (1 - \bar{\gamma})$$

Extended model

Now we will extend the basic model discussed above with the inclusion of monetary costs of overbookings. Let r be the room rate, m – the absolute amount of the cancellation charges and v – the variable costs per occupied room per one overnight. The expected total room revenues TR^{exp} will be the sum of the revenues from the occupied rooms TR_{occ}^{exp} and the cancellation charges from the unoccupied rooms with guaranteed bookings TR_{unocc}^{exp} :

$$(10) \quad TR^{\text{exp}} = TR_{occ}^{\text{exp}} + TR_{unocc}^{\text{exp}}$$

$$(11) \quad TR^{\text{exp}} = r.[N.(1 - \bar{\eta}) + G.(1 - \bar{\gamma})] + m.G.\bar{\gamma}$$

The total variable costs will be:

$$(12) \quad TVC^{\text{exp}} = v.[N.(1 - \bar{\eta}) + G.(1 - \bar{\gamma})]$$

The gross margin, then, is:

$$(13) \quad GM^{\text{exp}} = TR^{\text{exp}} - TVC^{\text{exp}}$$

$$(14) \quad GM^{\text{exp}} = (r - v).[N.(1 - \bar{\eta}) + G.(1 - \bar{\gamma})] + m.G.\bar{\gamma}$$

Differentiating (14) to N and G leads us to the contribution of one room with a nonguaranteed /equation (15)/ or guaranteed booking /equation (16)/ to the gross margin of the hotel:

$$(15) \quad \frac{\partial GM^{\text{exp}}}{\partial N} = (r - v).(1 - \bar{\eta})$$

$$(16) \quad \frac{\partial GM^{\text{exp}}}{\partial G} = (r - v).(1 - \bar{\gamma}) + m.\bar{\gamma}$$

Obviously $\frac{\partial GM^{\text{exp}}}{\partial G} > \frac{\partial GM^{\text{exp}}}{\partial N}$, i.e. it is more profitable for the hotel to have guaranteed bookings rather than non-guaranteed ones.

To determine the marginal rate of substitution between guaranteed and non-guaranteed bookings we express N as a function of G using (14):

$$(17) \quad \frac{\partial N}{\partial G} = - \left[\frac{(1 - \bar{\gamma})}{(1 - \bar{\eta})} + \frac{m.\bar{\gamma}}{(r - v).(1 - \bar{\eta})} \right]$$

The first expression in the brackets equals to (4). Therefore, when we include the monetary costs in the extended model, more rooms with nonguaranteed bookings will be needed in order to substitute one room with a guaranteed reservation.

APPLICATION

We can illustrate equations (9) and (17) from the basic and the extended models with the following numerical *Example 1*:

Let the hotel has 100 identical rooms, $\bar{\gamma} = 5\%$, $\bar{\eta} = 25\%$, $r = 50$ EUR, $v = 5$ EUR, $m = 50$ EUR, and there are currently guaranteed bookings for $G_i = 45$ rooms and nonguaranteed for $N_i = 60$ rooms. The expected used capacity is:

$$(18) \quad C^{\text{exp}} = N \cdot (1 - \bar{\eta}) + G \cdot (1 - \bar{\gamma}) = 60 \cdot (1 - 0,25) + 45 \cdot (1 - 0,05) = 88 \text{ rooms}$$

The expected used capacity is *less* than the number of booked rooms ($C^{\text{exp}}=88 < N+G=45+60=105$ rooms). Thus, the hotel can increase its revenues if it confirms more rooms. It has 12 rooms which are likely to be left unoccupied. Applying (7) we calculate that the hotel can confirm nonguaranteed bookings for 16 rooms:

$$(19) \quad N_{\text{max}} = \frac{C}{1 - \bar{\eta}} = \frac{12}{1 - 0,25} = 16 \text{ rooms}$$

Alternatively, the hotel can confirm guaranteed bookings for only 12 rooms:

$$(20) \quad G_{\text{max}} = \frac{C}{1 - \bar{\gamma}} = \frac{12}{1 - 0,05} = 12 \text{ rooms}$$

However, some of the bookings will be guaranteed, while others nonguaranteed. Let the hotel receive a guaranteed booking for 4 rooms. Then the new C^{exp} shall be:

$$(21) \quad C^{\text{exp}} = N \cdot (1 - \bar{\eta}) + G \cdot (1 - \bar{\gamma}) = 60 \cdot (1 - 0,25) + 49 \cdot (1 - 0,05) = 91 \text{ rooms}$$

The expected number of unused rooms is now 9. Reapplying (7) and (8) with the new data leads to:

$$(22) \quad N_{\text{max}} = \frac{C}{1 - \bar{\eta}} = \frac{9}{1 - 0,25} = 12 \text{ rooms, and}$$

$$(23) \quad G_{\text{max}} = \frac{C}{1 - \bar{\gamma}} = \frac{9}{1 - 0,05} = 9 \text{ rooms.}$$

If, for example, these 4 rooms are booked with a nonguaranteed reservation the situation is different:

$$(24) C^{\text{exp}} = N \cdot (1 - \bar{\eta}) + G \cdot (1 - \bar{\gamma}) = 64 \cdot (1 - 0,25) + 45 \cdot (1 - 0,05) = 90 \text{ rooms}$$

$$(25) N_{\text{max}} = \frac{C}{1 - \bar{\eta}} = \frac{10}{1 - 0,25} = 13 \text{ rooms, and}$$

$$(26) G_{\text{max}} = \frac{C}{1 - \bar{\gamma}} = \frac{10}{1 - 0,05} = 10 \text{ rooms.}$$

When the additional 4 rooms are guaranteed, the hotel is able to confirm between 9 (all guaranteed) and 12 (all nonguaranteed) rooms. In the case of a nonguaranteed booking, the hotel can confirm between 10 (all guaranteed) and 13 (all nonguaranteed) rooms. Of course, the greater the number of nonguaranteed bookings, the greater the risk for the hotelier, because he/she shall receive no charges in case of a no show or late cancellation/amendment, or, alternatively, shall bear large costs for walking guests if too many of them arrive.

Applying (15) and (16) from the extended model we can calculate that:

$$(27) \frac{\partial GM^{\text{exp}}}{\partial N} = (r - v) \cdot (1 - \bar{\eta}) = (50 - 5) \cdot (1 - 0,25) = 33,75 \text{ EUR}$$

$$(28) \frac{\partial GM^{\text{exp}}}{\partial G} = (r - v) \cdot (1 - \bar{\gamma}) + m \cdot \bar{\gamma} = (50 - 5) \cdot (1 - 0,05) + 50 \cdot 0,05 = 45,25 \text{ EUR}$$

Therefore, one room with a nonguaranteed booking contributes 33,75 EUR to the gross margin of the accommodation establishment, while the guaranteed booking creates a gross margin of 45,25 EUR. The rate of substitution is:

$$(29) \frac{\partial N}{\partial G} = - \left[\frac{(1 - \bar{\gamma})}{(1 - \bar{\eta})} + \frac{m \cdot \bar{\gamma}}{(r - v) \cdot (1 - \bar{\eta})} \right] = - \left[\frac{(1 - 0,05)}{(1 - 0,25)} + \frac{50 \cdot 0,05}{(50 - 5) \cdot (1 - 0,25)} \right] = -1,34$$

rooms, i.e. 4 rooms with nonguaranteed bookings will have the same impact on gross margin as 3 rooms with guaranteed bookings.

In the *Example 1* above we showed that if the hotelier confirms the 4 additional rooms as guaranteed bookings, later on he/she could confirm not more than 12 rooms with nonguaranteed bookings or 9 rooms with guaranteed reservations /see (22) and (23)/. Applying (27) and (28)

to (22) and (23) respectively, we find that the maximum expected gross margin that the hotelier can earn after confirming these 4 rooms is:

$$(30) \quad GM^{\text{exp}}(N_{\text{max}}) = \frac{\partial GM^{\text{exp}}}{\partial N} \cdot N_{\text{max}} = 33,75.12 = 405 \text{ EUR, if all other bookings}$$

after this booking are nonguaranteed, and

$$(31) \quad GM^{\text{exp}}(G_{\text{max}}) = \frac{\partial GM^{\text{exp}}}{\partial N} \cdot G_{\text{max}} = 45,25.9 = 407,25 \text{ EUR, if all other bookings}$$

are guaranteed.

The difference between (30) and (31) is negligible, but the situation is different if the hotelier has confirmed the 4 additional rooms as nonguaranteed bookings. Reapplying (27) and (28) to (25) and (26) leads to:

$$(32) \quad GM^{\text{exp}}(N_{\text{max}}) = \frac{\partial GM^{\text{exp}}}{\partial N} \cdot N_{\text{max}} = 33,75.13 = 438,75 \text{ EUR, if all other bookings}$$

are nonguaranteed, and

$$(33) \quad GM^{\text{exp}}(G_{\text{max}}) = \frac{\partial GM^{\text{exp}}}{\partial N} \cdot G_{\text{max}} = 45,25.10 = 452,50 \text{ EUR, if all other bookings}$$

are guaranteed.

The difference between the two expected gross margins in (32) and (33) is now significant. The hotelier does not have stimuli to confirm more nonguaranteed bookings. In fact, he/she will maximize his/her income if he/she confirms only guaranteed bookings. That's why usually hotel chains require a credit card guarantee for online bookings through their websites (e.g. Accor, Marriott, etc.). However, the competition among hotels forces them to accept both guaranteed and nonguaranteed bookings.

CONCLUSION

The major strength of the proposed model is that it can be readily and easily applied in hotel establishments. Hotel managers do not need expensive software in order to determine how their expected used room inventory will change in case of changes in the guaranteed/nonguaranteed bookings ratio. The average percentage of non-used rooms from guaranteed and nonguaranteed reservations is also easily determinable from past bookings

data. Of course, proper statistical analysis requires also the calculation of the standard deviation of $\bar{\eta}$ and $\bar{\gamma}$ - the lower the deviation, the more precise the estimates of $\bar{\eta}$ and $\bar{\gamma}$ and the recommendations of the overbooking model are. The determination of $\bar{\eta}$ and $\bar{\gamma}$ should take into consideration the seasonality, day of the week, and period of the month, which supposes different $\bar{\eta}$ and $\bar{\gamma}$ for different months/days/special event periods.

A weakness of the model is that it assumes that all rooms within a hotel are identical and complete substitutes. However, hotels usually offer low priced (standard/economy rooms) and high priced (deluxe rooms, suites, apartment) accommodations, as well as smoking and non-smoking rooms. The model can be applied to different room types within the establishment, finding a separate overbooking limit to each of them. In practice, a guest can be accommodated in a room with a higher or lower standard than in the reservation confirmation which requires *simultaneous* solution of the optimal overbooking level for different room types (for a *static* simultaneous solution see Ivanov, 2006). Therefore, further research is needed in order to incorporate the different room types into the dynamic overbooking model.

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The carrying capacity of mountainous tourist areas: the case of plastira's lake

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ABSTRACT

The basic characteristics of tourism in Greece are seasonality, massiveness and its spatial orientation having the biggest percentage of tourist flows concentrated in coastal areas. In the last years an important development of other alternative forms of tourism exists, with more importance in the mountainous tourism. One of the most interesting areas for mountainous tourism with particular environmental characteristics is Plastira's Lake. This area constitutes an important tourist pole with impressive increase in nights spent by tourists over the last 10 years. Characteristically, as it is reported, during the years 1995 – 1997 arrivals and nights spent by tourists have increased at 440% and 425% respectively. During the period 1997 – 1999 arrivals and nights spent by tourists continuously increased at approximately 52% and 43% respectively.

The augmentative changes in the number of tourist arrivals at the area and the determination of limits of tourism development require the estimation of tourism carrying capacity. In this article a methodology of estimation of tourism capacity of the above-mentioned area is developed, using as basic variables the characteristics of the area. Moreover, the intensity of the development of the area is determined, so as to utilize the structured and natural environment, without the environmental degradation.

Key words: *tourism development, tourism carrying capacity, regional development*

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is a global socioeconomic phenomenon based on the human need for recreation, being in contact with nature and getting acquainted with other places and cultures. It is an activity of important economical, social, cultural and environmental consequence (Fleming & Toepper, 1990; Coccosis *et al.* 2001; Page *et al.* 2001). In a number of studies and developmental programs, particularly the economic or social dimension of its sequences is stressed, while the environmental dimensions is underestimated or ignored. The maintenance of balance between tourism and the environment imposes the configuration of suitable policy

for the tourism development of an area and the imposition of essential limits. Thus, the tourism does not lead to the degradation of the environment and in long-terms to the tourist disdain of an area, but in its protection or its conservation. In other words, the environment influences the tourism and vice versa. The environment of a region is negatively influenced most times by the increase of tourism, whereas the development of tourism depends on the quality and the characteristics of the environment (Brown *et al.* 1997).

Tourism as an economic activity has contributed extremely to the development of many geographically isolated regions of Greece as well as of other countries helping in this way in spatial diffusion of the development and creating the conditions for regional development. In the last years the abrupt and lacking of organization tourism development of many regions of Greece in combination with the massiveness of tourism causes new problems in the organisation of regional space. As main reasons can be reported: (a) regional inequalities because of the excessive concentration of tourism in specific areas, (b) progressive abandonment of other productive activities and the appointment of tourism as the only or main activity in a number of regions and (c) the degradation of the allocated tourism resources and the reduction of tourist attractiveness of an area due to the overexploitation of the natural and structured environment.

The problem of the determination of the tourism capacity of a mountainous area such as the Plastira's Lake area, and the potential of tourism development are analyzed in the present paper.

The Plastira's Lake area can be characterized as geographically isolated and problematic as far as development is concerned, with serious demographic problems, with lacks in the technical infrastructure and economic activities of low productivity. The area allocates particularly natural characteristics, a fact that contributed decisive in the development of tourism in the last years. The natural environment is presented particularly considerable in development of the area through a frame of development compatible with the protection of nature.

Despite its natural beauty the lake area had not been considered as an important resource for the local communities until 1988; then a local development plan by the Prefecture authorities indicated agro-tourism as an alternative path to development. Afterwards, the communities took the initiative to build 7 hostels that first operated around the mid 90's. This was followed by increasing numbers of visitors in the area (Koutsouris, 2002).

The tourist demand in the area increased very rapidly in the 90s and continues to increase with a lower rate. Concretely, an increase of arrivals and overnight stays by 440% and 425% respectively, was noticed in the 1995-1997 period which consists in the majority of local and less by foreign visitors. In the 1997 – 1999 we have a continuing increase in the total of arrivals and overnight stays, at 51,76% and 43,15% respectively. The overnight stays were

noticed throughout the whole year with a percentage of about 18% in the month of August, whereas the average time of staying of the visitors was 2.0 days for locals and approximately 1.5 for foreign visitors (GTO, 2003).

THE TOURISM CARRYING CAPACITY OF AN AREA

The large increase of demand for recreation internationally as well as in Greece over the last decades has caused the administrators' concerns regarding the extents of recreation, due to proofs that the recreation activities downgrade the natural environment. Moreover, the increased demand of recreation has as a result the reduction of the visitors' satisfaction. Consequently, the information of taking the suitable measures is necessary to avoid these problems. This kind of information is related to the idea (concept) of carrying capacity which is the connection between supply and demand of recreation. The idea of capacity is very important in the management of natural resources, while its origin is biological and has been connected closely with the idea (concept) of sustainability.

In the recreation sector the significance of carrying capacity began to be taken into consideration mainly after the 1960s. In 1960, in the outdoor recreation plan of California it was placed as one of its basic hypothesis that each natural area of recreation has the maximum capacity (number of individuals in the unit of surface per day and season). When the area is used beyond its capacity, the character and the quality of natural resources changes, is downgraded or destroyed.

The main approaches of carrying capacity are: ecological, social or psychological or aesthetics, natural and economical (Trakolis, 2003). In the ecological approach it is defined as the ability of natural resources and ecosystems to support tourism development. In the social or psychological approach the visitors' pleasure/enjoyment is used as measure/limit for the tourism development in a region, while in the economic it is used as the limit of equation of marginal cost with the marginal profit that results from the tourism development for the area.

The significance of tourism carrying capacity of an area is associated with (a) the ability of a tourism destination to absorb the tourism development before the negative results become perceptible by the host community and (b) the level of tourism development beyond which the particular destination ceases to attract and to satisfy the tourists. Stankey (1981) and Baud-Bovy (1977) report as tourism carrying capacity the number of periods of use that an area can offer for recreation (each year) without causing permanent biological and natural destruction of the ability of the area to support recreation and without a significant weakening of the quality of the recreation experience.

World Tourism Organization refers as carrying capacity of a tourist resort, "the maximum number of people that may visit a tourist destination at the same time, without causing destruction of the physical, economic and socio – cultural environment and an unacceptable decrease in the quality of the visitor's satisfaction (WTO, 1981)".

According to Hovinen (1982) and to Mathieson and Wall (1982) tourism carrying capacity is the maximum number of people who can use a site without an unacceptable alteration in the physical environment and without an unacceptable decline in the quality of experience gained by visitors. Shelby (1987) proposed a more general definition for carrying capacity: the level of use of an area beyond which the consequences from this use exceed certain levels that have been determined by evaluative models.

The most well known interpretation is that by Pearce (1989): "Tourism carrying capacity is commonly considered as the threshold of tourist activity beyond which facilities are saturated (physical carrying capacity), the environment is degraded (environmental carrying capacity) or visitor enjoyment is diminished (perceptual or psychological carrying capacity" (Pearce, 1989, p. 169).

Two schools of thought have been developed explaining carrying capacity of a tourist area (O' Reilly, 1986). In one, carrying capacity is considered to be the capacity of the destination area to absorb tourism before negative impacts are felt by the host population. Capacity is dictated by how many tourists are wanted rather than by how many can be attracted.

The second school of thought contends that tourism carrying capacity is the level beyond which tourist flows will decline because certain capacities, as perceived by tourists themselves, have been exceeded and therefore the destination area ceases to satisfy and attract them. The basic elements of carrying capacity are: (a) the quality of experience that the visitors are exposed to before they look for alternative destinations and (b) the level of the host community's tolerance at the presence of tourists.

The endogenous factors of an area that influence carrying capacity are the following:

- Natural environmental characteristics and activities (topography, soil, vegetation, climatic conditions).
- Economic infrastructure and economic development (level of economic development spatial characteristics of growth, investment planning, import-export characteristics and diversity of economy).
- Social infrastructure and organisation (demographic profile of local population, local tradition, social organisation, perceptions, behaviours, values towards the tourists).
- Political organisations (national, regional and local tourist organisations' role, motives and limits that influence the tourist impacts).
- Level of tourism development (rate of growth, types and quality of lodgings, entertainment and restaurant facilities, travel agents).

Respectively the exogenous factors are: the visitor's characteristics (age, sex, income, motives, behaviours and expectations), level of use of facilities, density of visitors, duration visitors' staying in the area, activities of visitors in the area, level of tourist satisfaction.

The determination of limits of social capacity is perhaps the most difficult, because it is based exclusively on the estimates of values, while for its estimation questionnaires, public research and interviews used. The social capacity is defined as the most possible level of recreation regarding the number of visitors and activities above which the reduction of the visitors' recreation experience will come up. The visitors do not have all the same perception of the tourism capacity of an area. This differs depending on the social characteristics of the visitors, depending on the activity of recreation and is altered within time. The social factors that limit the capacity of recreation are those that depend on the visitors' social characteristics (age, income, educational level, place of residence, home) (Trakolis, 2003).

THE AREA OF PLASTIRA'S LAKE

The Palstira's Lake area is consisted of 14 municipal districts and 37 hamlets. In 2001 the population was 7.906 people. It was increased by 23,09% in relation to 1991 and by 3,59% over the twenty-year period of 1981 – 2001.

The Palstira's Lake area is consisted of 14 municipal districts and 37 hamlets. In 2001 the population was 7.906 people. It was increased by 23,09% in relation to 1991 and by 3,59% over the twenty-year period of 1981 – 2001.

The area's 565 -bed capacity is in all type of accommodations (hotels, lodgings) and rates. Most hotels are small family businesses (on average 25-bed capacity per unit). Tourism activity has increased over the last years both in terms of numbers of arrivals and numbers of overnight stays. These trends are solely attributed to the increase of domestic tourists. However, there is also an increasing demand from visitor tourists in arrivals and overnight stays.

The proximity of the area to the town of Karditsa plays an important role to the access of many holidaymakers. The study area - in a greater geographical, economical and socio-cultural context- belongs to the mountain range of Pindos. The whole of this range is an area rich in natural and cultural resources. Consequently, the promotion of the special features of all areas and the creation or the reinforcement of the tourism flow among adjacent areas is imperative.

The area of Plastira's Lake is a protected natural area of the NATURA 2000 network, with particular land and aquatic characteristics and elements, which make it one of the most interesting and beautiful areas in Greece. It is a mountainous area in Agrafa, which form part of Southern Pindos and it includes the artificial Plastira's lake and most of the land ecosystems of the lake. It is characterized by rich biodiversity, by variety of landscape and exceptionally rich – qualitatively and quantitatively – fauna, while the diversity of vegetation shows the presence of a rich and interesting flora (GTO, 2003). The most important elements of the natural environment which in their total create a landscape of particular aesthetic value are the following: (a) the existence of mountainous areas, (b) the existence of water in an altitude of approximately 800m, (c) the variety of vegetation and ecosystems that are formed by the

existence of forests, (d) the existence of torrents and streams and riverside ecosystems and (e) the existence of Alpine grasslands that form the habitat of flora and fauna species. The good condition of the regional natural environment derives from the maintenance of traditional land uses which remained extensional. This has a negative effect on the economic development of the area but allows the maintenance of a high quality natural environment and consequently of sustainable tourism development. From a "traditional" point of view, the area offers very limited possibilities of development. From a "modern" point of view its prospects are particularly good, once the sustainable development that will be supported by activities of a mild form is possible. This development would not be a burden to the natural environment which in combination with the anthropogenic environment would maintain the tourist attractiveness of the area and would create a combined product with an increased added value on a local level. Moreover, it would achieve the increase of employment in the area and the maintenance of the economically active population, which would possibly be occupied in the service sector but also additionally in the primary sector.

The human activities in the area are limited because of the decreased human potential, but also because of the low rate of development, so that the impact on the environment is little.

Regarding the tourist activities, particular attention should be paid to the sizes that can be developed without being a burden to the environment. This concerns the size of tourism facilities as well as the number of visitors to the important biotopes.

The natural and social characteristics of the study area do not encourage particularly the development of tourist activities in the models of mass tourism. On the contrary, the area is in a comparatively better position regarding the development of "alternative" forms of tourism, supported mainly by elements as the natural and cultural environment, the traditional way of life, the contact with nature, understanding the cultural and historical features of the tourism destinations. It allocates those elements that will support activities like the naturalist tourism, the sport tourism, the tourism of adventure, the cultural tourism and the ecotourism.

The most important differentiation of this tourism model compared to the previous perceptions are the respect for the local environment (natural, cultural, social) which becomes a vital advantage of the destination area and the visitor's experience who becomes more demanding as the quality of the provided services is concerned, especially when it comes to the point of information. From this point of view, planning of infrastructure and activities that are related to the tourism development in the study area should be made according to specific standards that will minimise the consequences for the natural and anthropogenic environment.

METHODOLOGY OF ESTIMATION OF CARRYING CAPACITY OF MOUNTAINOUS TOURIST AREAS

The term of carrying capacity should not be treated as an absolute size, but should be examined in regard to social, cultural and economic conditions. In the planning of tourism development

of an area, the carrying capacity can be useful as a "guide", assisting in the evaluation and the control of the maximum acceptable level of tourism development. However the application of a limit, in practice, faces difficulties. As a result the related implementations are very limited at the level of tourism planning. The first implementations have been developed for the management of recreation in national parks (Fisher and Krutilla, 1972). On the other hand efforts have been made to evaluate the usefulness of tourist resorts, cities (Borg, 1991) and islands (Coccosis, 2000).

In a protected marine area the evaluation of carrying capacity is a relatively easy process (MPA, 2004). The carrying capacity can differ from area to area and it depends on the habitat and can increase or decrease, depending on the level of experience and education of the visitors. According to the Environmental program directive of United Nations the basic equation for the estimation of carrying capacity is the following:

Carrying capacity = Area used by tourists / Medium individual extent

Medium individual extent (m^2 / individual) is the extent that is required for an acceptable level of recreation in the protected area, which can vary depending on the area, the activity and existing management (MPA, 2004).

Very often for the estimation of carrying capacity we use the case study methodology, which includes various techniques such as, observation and interview. The interviews are received by tourist experts, governmental cadres, as well as by other public and private institutions (Simon et al., 2004). We can estimate the carrying capacity of coasts by measuring their level of use and the pollution of the sea. The increase of tourism in a beach is a desirable phenomenon for the economies of most countries. However the large number of visitors in the beaches includes the danger of degradation and the pollution of the wider marine area (Kocasooy, 1989).

Most types of carrying capacity are based on the American experience and have relation with the intensive use of land and aquatic recreation areas and are presented in table 1 (Sidaway, 1974). Usually, they are expressed in number of individuals per surface unit of the resource of recreation, e.g. per hectare of forest, forest extent, park, coast, agricultural land, also in number of individuals in the unit of length, e.g. per kilometre of path or coast line and in number of units of facility (scenes, tables) per unit of surface (Trakolis, 2003). A lot of efforts have been made for the creation of «*transformation factors*» that represents the extent of natural resource of recreation that is required per visitor and day. The «*transformation factors*» help the administrators of extents of recreation to maintain the quality of recreation in a given level.

Table 1: Capacity's standards

Type of natural resource	Capacity (individuals/ha)
Camping areas	120
Grasslands	100-200
Forested area to the shore of the lake	100
Forested areas of parks	10-20
Agricultural areas	5
Productive forests	3-10

Concerning the tourism development of the Plastira's Lake and each mountainous area, carrying capacity can be fixed as that size of visitors of an area for which it is possible to ensure its maximum satisfaction, without the experience of recreation of visitors being downgraded and permanent environmental degradation being caused (Coccosis and Parpairis 1992). This definition focuses the objective of tourism development in the respect of environmental limits of an area that determines carrying capacity.

The proposed methodological frame for the estimation of carrying capacity includes the analysis of its socio-economic, environmental and physical dimensions. Each dimension includes factors, which should be shaped depending on the area's general characteristics. It is necessary to take into account the permanent as well as the flexible factors like the infrastructures and the socio-cultural resilience of the host community.

Specifically, for a mountainous area like Plastira's Lake, the dimensions or other factors can be:

Socioeconomic dimension

Factors

- *Number of permanent residents*
- *Number of tourists visiting the area, mean length of stay, number of overnight stays*
- *Number of the available beds in touristic and other lodgings*
- *Number of employees that directly or indirectly work in the tourism sector, period of employment and educational level*
- *Number of enterprises that are related to the tourism activity (development) and the degree that influence the local economic and productive system*
- *Touristic expenditure (total and per capita)*
- *Created added value and the percentage that stays in the study area*
- *Number of tourists in developmental resources of the area like, museums, natural springs, caves etc*

Physical and Environmental dimension

Factors

- *Extension of the reception area (per visitor)*
- *New structures (rate of construction)*
- *Water consumption (per visitor), Energy consumption (per visitor)*
- *Production of liquid wastes (per visitor)*
- *Production of solid wastes (per visitor)*
- *Extent of protected area (per visitor)*
- *Extent of archaeological area (per visitor)*
- *Extent of coastal area (per visitor)*
- *Extent of natural parks (per visitor)*
- *Length of hiking paths (per visitor)*
- *Ratio of fauna species that are endanger or in a regime of protection per number of visitors or percentage variation of those fauna species and respectively of visitors' number*

These factors are possible to be altered depending on the features of the area in question. There are significant limitations concerning the determination of the area capacity:

- a) there is inability to determine the number of one-day excursionists from the surrounding areas of the Lake Plastira and especially from the town of Karditsa,
- b) there are no sufficient data as to whether the empty houses are used during the high season as undeclared lodgings or as secondary residence or not used at all, and
- c) there is inability to determine quality parameters.

Based on the above the limitations of the capacity of the study area are as follows:

Lodgings capacity: 565 beds

Ratio of local population to tourists: 1 local to 1,4 tourists (as dictated in relevant literature) or 11068 tourists.

Therefore, *Ceteris paribus*, tourists that will visit the area can not exceed the number of 11,068 individuals per day of peak season.

If the need exceeds the above Carrying Capacity of lodgings we are against the construction of new, but we propose the use of the already existent residences as tourist lodgings, in the period where these are not using as second resident.

The existence of several empty houses (43% of the total) is an important factor that if exploited correctly could increase the limits of the area capacity regarding tourism development since these houses could be used as lodgings for the visitors.

EVALUATION AND PLANNING OF TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

The area of Plastira's Lake had not been developed before the 90s despite of the existence of an attractive natural environment, which combines mountainous areas, biodiversity, rich forests and the existence of the lake. The basic reasons for the lack of tourism development were the small rate of mountainous tourism in Greece and the lack of significant and planned activities. Since the 90's an increase of tourism development of the area, has been noticed as a result of undertaking relative actions by local institutions and the creation of proportional infrastructures. Up to now the spatial interventions can be characterized as "mild" and at the same time they accompanied by the efforts made to achieve ecological awareness.

The natural environment of the area, as it has been formed through the natural factors and the anthropogenic activities that acted in the past and still act in the area is maintained at a high qualitative level. The Plastira's Lake today has become a significant biotope and is an integral element of the landscape of the area. Nevertheless, there are quite a lot of issues related to the protection of concrete ecotypes and important species that are indigenous in the study area, which will improve considerably the situation of the natural environment if they get the necessary attention and treatment. These issues can be grouped in two units:

- More general issues of strategic planning that concern the frame of development of the study area and are related to choices such as the service sector development in parallel maintenance of traditional activities of the primary sector and developing the extremely interesting natural and anthropogenic environment of the area.
- More specific issues of management of the natural and anthropogenic environment, the spatial arrangement of activities and management of natural resources, which lie within the competence of institutions of public administration and local government (soil erosion, forest management, construction of new roads, litter and domestic waste management, spatial planning of cattle areas, spatial planning of settlement).

The development of the area will have to be based on the conservation and protection of the natural and anthropogenic environment of the area, supporting the service sector and the parallel maintenance of the primary activities. The proposed model of development must include the following basic rules (GTO, 2003):

1. Planning of work taking into consideration the particular needs (social, cultural, economic) of the host community, which considers being a basic and integral element of the natural and cultural environment.

2. Planning of work taking into consideration the carrying capacity (meaning the resistance) of the ecosystems and the biological diversity.
3. Development of tourism activities in combination with the application of uses and practices friendly to the environment.
4. Planning of tourism, in such a way that it is not a burden to only one part of the area but being spread spatially and temporally, causing the least possible consequences in the protected areas.
5. Planning of material and technical infrastructure taking into consideration the saving of energy, the guaranteed cleaning of waste and the taking of remedial measures for the protection of the local environment.
6. Participation of the institutions of exploitation of ecotourism activities in local, national and international action of environmental protection.

According to the rules above, we could say for the area of Plastira's Lake the following:

- Tourism development should consist of a lot of infrastructures on a small scale, which would push forward local characteristics of each area without being an excessive burden to the local environment. In the bibliography a proportion of six (6) tourist beds per 100 permanent residents is reported indicatively, which is considered not to aggravate the natural and cultural environment of the reception area. The proportion can, in a lot of cases be bigger without causing problems, but when a limit (e.g. of 50 per 100) is exceeded the problems of mass tourism are noticeable.
- Tourism activities in the areas of natural protection should be strictly controlled, spatially and temporally spread in such a way that local micro-environments are not disturbed by continuous visits at the same place. Important role in the achievement of this aim plays the establishment of a network of paths with specific labelling that will lead the visitor only to those places which have been evaluated as suitable for visits. Especially in the sensitive areas, visits should be made with the escort of guardian-ecotour-guide. In the periods of fauna-reproduction the visits in the sensitive places can be replaced by extensive and detailed information using maps, booklets, posters, models, slides and films in the Information Centre.
- The infrastructures that will be created (guest rooms, recreation infrastructures etc.) should be adapted to the local environment and should have environmentally, friendly planning. In the cases of monument promotion, particular attention should be paid to the spatial conservation because, as UNESCO underlines «*a monument loses important part of its attractiveness when it is separated from the elements that surrounds it (small buildings,*

tree clumps) which on their own are of minor importance, but have always been near the monument». A well-conserved total is much more attractive than isolated monuments and it offers an exceptional and interesting view.

- The active participation of the host community in the whole tourism development should be aimed at and provision should be made, so that the cultural values and the particularities of the local populations are strengthened in such a way that they do not become vulnerable to the inevitable cultural invasion that will result from the increasing number of visitors. The local traditions and customs, the folklore events and the types of local handicraft form the most sensitive elements of the local cultural environment. Their potential alteration stems at firstly from the economic development that goes with the tourism and not from the visitors themselves. These local cultural characters can be conserved when tourism in the area does not exceed a concrete and relatively low level above which they become usually an artificial spectacle for the visitors. In such cases folklore products are replaced by cheap imported substitutes. A long-range plan for the tourism development of the area must foresee motives for the encouragement of local handicraft as well as folklore and cultural events aiming at their conservation and the improvement of the tourist picture of the area.
- The institutions of exploitation of tourism infrastructures must offer part of their income to the protection and conservation of the local environment and encourage the local populations to turn to a development which is friendly to the environment (e.g. biological agriculture, extensional and sustainable livestock-farming etc).

An issue that must also be taken into consideration during planning is the demand of building a second residence in the area. The cover of needs of seasonal residences must be included in the rural planning.

Finally, it must be mentioned that for the protection of the biodiversity index of the study area and particularly the big mammals and the birds of pray, it is essential to take measures that will prevent the fragmentation of ecotypes and will deter from the access to the sensitive areas. This means that the planning and tracing of new roads in the forest or provincial network will have to by-pass the sensitive ecotypes, but in cases where the tracing of such roads is absolutely necessary (e.g. forest network roads or cattle paths) the access must be restricted, so that they are used only for the above purpose.

In conclusion: (a) More than 15 years of tourism activity have already passed and it occupies big part of the productive potential of the prefecture, either as directly or as indirectly involved. (b) Rich and significant natural resources, remarkable cultural heritage and rich diversity of natural environment are exist. (c) Although the agricultural sector plays a major role in the area, as a basic productive activity, this domain is not identified exclusively with the agricultural activities, but is a place of multiple productive activities (tourism, seasonal residence, recreation,

manufacture). (d) In the last decades, important socio-economic transformations and developments have taken place that basically result from demographic development, the tendency to residence and employment, the reformations and changes of the rural sector, the increasing needs for the protection of the environment, the new possibilities that the area offers for alternative forms of tourism and recreation, but also from the more general developmental process (GTO, 2003).

All the actions that were developed form a complete program of rural innovation that does not cover of course all the needs of the rural industry, but is a multi-sector intervention whose experience can support the local society and contribute substantially to new developmental prospects, that promote the area, improve the quality of life, create new knowledge and techniques, new products and services.

CONCLUSION

To conclude what has been discussed in the paper, it is clear that tourism is having an impact on the environment and changing the character and structures of the mountainous areas. Negative externalities on the environment also decrease the environmental quality. In other words, tourism planning is typically a short period policy but its aim must be a long period policy because tourism is a rapidly developing industry and is having negative impacts which threaten to destroy the historic and architectural heritage (Gunce, 2003).

The mountainous tourism is a basic developmental factor for the less favoured areas of Greece. We can not argue its contribution to the economic development, despite any criticism it has faced because of its negative impact. The version of the sustainable mountainous tourism development should be placed theoretically between the maximum and the minimum of the carrying capacity of each area.

In this article firstly we investigate the tourism carrying capacity of a mountainous area, which presented a big increase in the number of tourists in the last decade. The results showed that potential for development without any environmental problems still exist.

Under a general regard, we appreciate that the mountainous tourism in Greece still has not attained such sizes, in order to decide between a scenario of intensive tourism or in a moderate one of alternative tourism. A scenario of mountainous sustainable development can offer enough choices for the tourism development and the carrying capacity of the area.

We estimate that the scenario of a "mild tourism" is more suitable for the Plastira's Lake area. Despite the fact that the area has reached the limits of its capacity, efforts from central and local institutions to the sustainable development of area promoting soft forms of tourism development must be undertaken. This development must be harmonised with the principles of viable development. Moreover, must contain elements of "nature tourism" or "sustainable

ecotourism", must be based on the respect of natural environment and sensitise or additionally educate the visitor in the conservation of natural resources and natural rules.

The area possesses the necessary resources (natural and cultural) for a powerful, balanced and long-term tourism development. Undoubtedly, reinforcement of the sustainable development model and of the local aspect of tourism development is required along with modernization of the existing tourism product with additional services and products and modernization of the existing infrastructure and services.

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Predicting residents' perceptions of cultural tourism attractiveness

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to identify the city services factors that explain and predict success of cultural tourism in Indianapolis from residents' point of view. Following collection of the data, a number of statistical techniques were utilized, including descriptive statistical analysis to detect Indianapolis residents' demographic profiles and their perceptions about city services, and a factor and a regression analysis to determine what factors are more important as predictors of cultural tourism success. The factors that emerged were landscape/architectural services, hospitality services, transportation/ infrastructure services, and leisure services.

Key Words: Cultural Tourism, Leisure and City Services

INTRODUCTION

The world's tourism industry is highly developed and too large to solely rely on mass tourism. Alternative forms of tourism, such as city tourism, can and should be more emphasized in tourism planning and development. City tourism represents an opportunity to revitalize a city and its regional economy, and at the same time, to dignify and preserve its architectonic and cultural richness (Law, 1993). It also provides alternatives to mass tourism allowing a community to diversify its tourism offerings through market research and market segmentation efforts that categorize city tourists to identify and market to the best prospects.

City tourism is a sustainable form of tourism that relies on community partnerships to ensure economic development without destroying urban environmental, social, and cultural systems. Wilson (1997) stresses the importance of a community's ability to concentrate on addressing mutual needs in the pursuit of common interests, such as marketing and promotion plans of urban destinations, management of community visitor information centers, and city tourism related health and education issues.

Jansen-Verbeke (1988) and Buckley & Witt (1989) suggest that urban regeneration for tourism purposes is an appropriate approach not only for the great cities, but also for smaller urban centers that offer unique tourist attractions quite different from traditional mass tourism destinations.

According to the World Tourism Organization (1999), cities will continue to be in high demand by tourists of all sorts, and the problems associated with the handling of these tourists will have to be more systematically tackled by all parties concerned. Therefore, city officials and marketing professionals face two important challenges. First, they have to be able to respond to the expectations and needs of the growing number of tourists who are attracted to their rich and varied array of cultural, business, entertainment, shopping, sports and other attractions. Secondly, the city's leaders have to ensure that tourism is developed and managed in such a way that it benefits the resident population, does not contribute to the deterioration of the urban environment but rather to its enhancement, and does not become a financial burden to the local authority. Meeting these challenges requires a steady collaboration between all parties concerned including the urban governments, the private sector, and non-governmental groups.

Many cities increasingly see cultural tourism as a driver of future economic growth. In 2002, Indianapolis embarked on a cultural tourism initiative. The city-wide cultural tourism initiative sets sights on positioning Indianapolis as a cultural tourism destination.

Cultural tourism defined by the Indianapolis Cultural Development Commission is "experiencing the diverse mosaic of places, traditions, arts, celebrations and experiences that the Indianapolis area offers to residents and visitors. It is an important component of an overall tourism plan that emphasizes the total Indianapolis experience" (Indianapolis Cultural Development Commission, 2007, p. 1). Furthermore, the commission states, "In addition to all the growth and expansion Indy is experiencing and will continue to experience, there is even more to celebrate. A powerful sports schedule, exciting national conventions, landmark anniversaries, and new summer celebrations will together tell the Indianapolis story. It's a chance for the city to be recognized for the cultural destination that it is" (Indianapolis Cultural Development Commission, 2007, p. 1).

One of the first projects of the Commission was the creation of the Cultural Districts Program to facilitate the cultural development of six distinct neighborhoods or districts that offered a critical mass and unique mix of arts, cultural and hospitality activities. The development of these six neighborhoods was designed to share the unique, authentic and diverse character of Indianapolis and its people with residents and visitors alike. The idea of the cultural districts has been popular in many other urban areas (Bell & Jayne, 2004). Judd and Fainstein (1999) offered city leaders and other public officials a recipe for prioritizing the needs of suburban tourists over the needs of urban residents. Specifically, the authors recommended the construction of 'tourist bubbles,' which could be promoted to the point of displacing the actual city as the 'principle signifier of a locality,' an area shield from urban ills (p. 36).

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

It was found that forty percent of people who travel to Indianapolis are for visiting friends and families. It implies that Indianapolis residents are hosts to a significant percentage of visitors. Therefore, one of the objectives of the city's cultural tourism initiative is to increase residents' awareness of the city's cultural attractions and their cultural participation. The more awareness and involvement that residents have with cultural tourism, the more likely they will be active ambassadors for the city (Indianapolis Cultural Development Commission, 2007).

Thus, it is important to measure Indianapolis residents' perceptions of the city's cultural tourism development to monitor the progress of the cultural tourism initiative. The purpose of this study is to identify the city services that explain and predict attractiveness of cultural tourism in Indianapolis from residents' point of view. The objectives of this research are stated in the following two research questions:

- (1) To what extent can the variation of attractiveness of cultural tourism be explained by the set of city services attributes?
- (2) Which city service dimensions may play a significant role in determining Indianapolis' attractiveness as a cultural tourism destination based on the perceptions of Indianapolis residents?

LITERATURE REVIEW

CULTURAL TOURISM

As statistical research lacks in the financial impact of cultural tourism and its projected popularity, several researchers are focusing on understanding residents' attitudes toward cultural tourism development (Jurowski, Uysal, & Williams, 1997; Schroeder, 1996; Smith & Krannich, 1998; Chen, 2000, 2001; Chen & Hue, 2002; Dieke, 1989). Attitudes toward tourism may be directly related to how residents feel about their community and surrounding region (Jurowski & Brown, 2001). McCool and Martin's (1994) investigation on rural resident's attitude toward tourism development has served as a foundation for many studies in this area. The investigators developed a 27 impact-attribute model representing four categories (impacts, benefits, equity and extent), which explains the relationship between community loyalty and rural residents' attitudes toward tourism development. Notably, Lankford and Howard (1994) and Chen and Hsu (2002) followed with variations of the model, which may be viewed as more appropriate to urban research.

Projections for the future of cultural tourism are highly optimistic. The World Tourism Organization estimates that 37 % of all trips have a cultural component, and that this type of travel will grow by 15 % annually (Industry Canada, 1995). With education levels among

North Americans expected to remain a constant, an increasing number of double income families, an increasing number of women involved in travel decision making, an aging population, and the total dollar value of tourism expected to double by the year 2010, it is clear that all indicators point to a growing demand for cultural tourism products (Leitch, 1997).

CITY SERVICES RELATED TO TOURISM PROMOTION

An impressive variety of literature dating back to the early 1980s has been published by academic consultants and city planners covering every elements spanning from a city's demographic and psychographic composition and the impact of city services on the community.

However, available literature specific to city tourism is very limited and tends to be scattered all over city governmental reports that have not been fully synthesized. The study of city tourism has also been ignored by the academic world (Ashworth, 1989, Fainstein, Gordon, & Harloe, 1992). It was not until the middle 1980s that articles began to appear on city tourism (Jansen-Verbeke, 1986, 1988, 1989). Researchers began examining the potential of city tourism as an economic revitalization tool for smaller industrial areas as well as major cities (Buckley & Witt, 1989).

Jansen-Verbeke (1988) defines the city tourism product as historic buildings, urban landscapes, museums and art galleries, theatres, sport and events. The author classifies the elements of city tourism into primary, secondary, and additional elements. The primary elements are the reason that tourists visit a destination. They include cultural facilities, physical characteristics, sports and amusements facilities, and socio-cultural features. The secondary elements comprise hotels, catering facilities, and markets. They are the tourism suprastructures intended to accommodate and service the visitors. Lastly, the additional elements consist of support services that deal with issues such as accessibility, parking, information offices, signposts guides, maps, etc.

Every city, as a tourist destination, can create and promote a global image, which is integrated by climatic factors, tourism infrastructure, tourism superstructure, services, and cultural attributes that the traveler shapes from his/her perceptions and symbolic interpretations (Telisman-Kosuta, 1989). City leaders must be able to integrate a strategic tourist marketing plan that reflects the supply of tourism infrastructure, services and products the destination can offer to visitors and residents. This will inevitably contribute to the attraction of the destination's target market and help with the economic development of the area.

Some motivational research has attempted to decipher the features of destinations that visitors consider important enough to influence their vacation destination selection processes (Cha, McCleary, & Uysal, 1995; Pennington & Kerstetter, 1998; Baloglu, 1998). Weaver (1993) developed a model for city tourism space that is made up of five zones: specialized tourist zone, central business district, local neighborhoods, resort strip, and rural areas. Weaver's

model is a valuable tool for a systematic analysis of city tourism space development as it permits a focus on different types of attractions of a city. Oppermann, Din, and Amri (1996), Ashworth (1989), and Ritter (1986) propose their own versions of city models that will ensure sustainable city tourism.

Such endeavors require accurate assessments of visitor needs and perceptions for destinations to determine where they are meeting the needs of their target visitors, and identify areas that additional efforts are needed. The quality of services, facilities and attractions of destinations in the eyes of visitors will usually be important factors in creating an image which not only helps to attract new visitors, but also encourages past visitors to return to the destination (Joppe, Martin, & Waalen, 2001).

Ross (2007) surveyed residents of an Australian city to measure their perceptions of the impacts of tourism on city facilities and on individual and community life. The results show that tourism had positive effects on hospitality facilities, leisure and entertainment services, as well as business opportunities. Several negative impacts were found such as increased living costs and crime rate. In addition, the study revealed that tourism has greater impact on the community as a whole rather than on the individual level.

Achana and Avgoustis (2001) used the importance performance analysis (IP) to assess Indianapolis's position as a potential international tourism destination. IP is a research technique often used in strategic quality development of the salient features of services and products provided to customers (Martilla & James, 1977; Hawes & Rao, 1985; Dolinsky, 1991; Almanza, Jaffe, & Lin., 1994; Go & Zhang, 1997; Joppe et al., 2001). In tourism destination assessments, it involves a simultaneous examination of the assessments by visitors of both the importance of the salient features of the services and products provided by a destination, and the extent to which the destination is seen by the visitors to have performed to their expectations on those salient features. Achana and Avgoustis (2001) concluded that Indianapolis has certain destination features that could allow it to position itself competitively, such as: (a) exceptional hospitality to the visitor, (b) high standards of cleanliness and hygiene, (c) safety concerns would not be a major preoccupation of visitors, (d) new and unique experiences that differ from other American destinations, and (e) diverse offering of restaurants. In order to remain competitive, Indianapolis must create a distinctive market position out of its unique comparative advantages.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The following three objectives were established to address the purpose of the study: (a) design a survey to be administered to Indianapolis residents, (b) utilize a number of statistical techniques, including descriptive statistical analysis to detect Indianapolis residents' demographic profiles and their perceptions about city services, and (c) perform a factor analysis and a regression analysis to determine what factors are more important as predictors of Indianapolis' overall attractiveness as a cultural tourism destination.

INSTRUMENT DESIGN

After reviewing previous research that match the theme of this study, a total of 26 city service attributes were developed that represent different areas of city services and facilities including: parks, landscape, hospitality services, transportation, safety, and infrastructure. Those 26 attributes were measured on a five-point scale ranging from strongly agree (1) to “strongly disagree (5).” Several items were identified with a purpose to measure Indianapolis’ overall attractiveness as a cultural tourism destination. Questions regarding respondents’ demographic characteristics, such as age, gender, ethnicity, household income, and length of residency were included to paint a picture of the demographic profile of respondents.

INSTRUMENT ADMINISTRATION

The research team attracted subjects through a convenience sampling technique, i.e. Indianapolis residents were selected on the basis of their availability, and only those who agreed to volunteer were approached and asked to complete the surveys. Students were involved in the process of data collection supervised by the researchers through a period of four weeks from September to October. The administration of the survey was carried out during all days of the weeks and in three daily shifts, mornings (8 am to Noon), afternoons (Noon to 4 pm) and evenings (4 pm to 8 pm). As a result, all research participants were volunteers, 18 years of age or older, and residents of Indianapolis. The team collected 960 surveys which data was entered into SPSS for data analyses.

DATA ANALYSIS

With the input of data into SPSS, the mean ratings of all the city service items were computed and tabled. Factor analysis was used to group these items into a smaller set of factors. Multiple regression analysis was employed to determine the impact of the city service factors on the overall attractiveness of Indianapolis as a cultural tourism destination. The city service dimensions were used as independent variables, while a composite variable was created representing all the cultural tourism attraction related items.

RESULTS

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

As shown in Table 1, male and female respondents were almost equally distributed, with male respondents accounting for 52.6% of the total sample. In terms of age groups, the mode of age groups was the younger group (18-30 years old), representing 34% of the total. The middle age groups of 31-43 and 44-56 years old made up 26.2% and 25.7%, respectively. Fewer respondents were from the older age group of over 56 years old (11.7%). With respect to ethnicity, most respondents were Caucasian (65.1%). The next largest ethnic group was

African American (16.3%). Other ethnics included Hispanics (5.9%), Asian or Pacific Islander (2.7%) and Native Americans (1.8%).

Most of the respondents have lived in Indianapolis for at least 2 years (83.8%). Among them, about 50.7% have lived here for 10 years or more. From Table 1, it can be seen that respondents were about equally distributed in terms of family income. For instance, 27.0% of the respondents had less than \$30,001 household income, another 25.1% had household income of \$30,001-60,000, and the other more than one-third with household income over \$60,000.

Table 1: Respondents' Demographic Profile

		Frequency	Valid Percent (%)			Frequency	Valid Percent (%)	
Gender	Male	504	52.6	Ethnicity	Hispanic	58	5.9	
	Female	452	47.4		Black	159	16.3	
Age	18-30	330	34.0		White	635	65.1	
	31-43	255	26.2		Asian/pacific	26	2.7	
	44-56	250	25.7		Native American	18	1.8	
	Over 56	104	11.7		Other	52	5.3	
Residency	<1 year	94	9.7		Household Income	\$0-\$30,000	259	27.0
	<2 years	63	6.5			\$30,001-\$60,000	241	25.1
	<4 years	119	12.3	\$60,001-\$90,000		200	20.9	
	<10 years	163	16.9	\$90,001-\$120,000		108	11.3	
	≥ 10 years	490	50.7	\$120,000-\$150,000		45	4.7	

MEAN RATINGS OF CITY SERVICE ITEMS

The mean ratings of all the city service attributes were computed and tabled (see Table 2). Except for one item 'no crimes/theft' which perception is negative (3.32), all the other city service items were perceived positively by the respondents, ranging from 1.92 to 3.32. The top attributes with the lowest mean scores include "attractive sporting facilities" (1.92), "variety of restaurants"(1.97), "quality hotels" (2.03), "quality restaurants" (2.04), and "variety of hotels" (2.04), "great place to shop/nice shopping malls" (2.08), "attractive cultural venues" (2.09) and "attractive historic venues" (2.12), etc.

Table 2. Mean Ratings of the City Service Attributes

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Attractive sporting facilities	984	1.92	.966
Variety of restaurants	985	1.97	.883
Quality hotels	985	2.03	.869
Quality restaurants	986	2.04	.885
Variety of hotels	985	2.04	.884
Great place to shop/nice shopping malls	981	2.08	.961
Attractive cultural venues	983	2.09	.956
Attractive historic venues	985	2.12	.973
Good size/right population size	984	2.16	.932
Many attractions/activities/events/things to do	985	2.17	1.014
Nice green city/beautiful parks and gardens	986	2.22	1.088
Attractive buildings	984	2.22	.940
Friendly people	987	2.25	1.058
Well laid out and spacious	984	2.27	.980
Reliable police presence	986	2.47	1.058
Slow pace/no rush/relaxed	983	2.55	1.102
Quality of parking	987	2.60	1.094
Clean/no litter	986	2.68	9.573
Safety e.g. city reasonably trouble free	982	2.68	1.079
Not too much traffic/easy to get around	985	2.71	1.131
Affordable parking	986	2.76	1.211
Good public transport	986	2.81	1.262
No noise pollution/quiet	983	2.83	1.137
Good/well maintained roads	985	2.87	1.354
No air pollution	985	2.96	1.163
No crimes/theft	988	3.32	2.866

Scale: 1=strongly agree, 2=agree, 3=neither agree nor disagree, 4=disagree, 5=strongly disagree

FACTOR ANALYSIS OF CITY SERVICE ITEMS

The city service items' internal reliability was tested before running the factor analysis. Two items, "clean/no litter" and "no crimes/theft", were excluded from the factor analysis due to their low internal associations. The Cronbach's Alpha of all the other items was .937. As a result, 24 items were entered for the factor analysis. The result of the factor analysis is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. City Service Dimensions

Variables	Varimax Rotated Loading				Communality
	F1	F2	F3	F4	
Factor 1 – Overall Urban Landscape					
No air pollution	.773				.639
No noise pollution/quiet	.765				.626
Slow pace/no rush/relaxed	.718				.592
Not too much traffic/easy to get around	.659				.576
Safety e.g. city reasonably trouble free	.613				.564
Nice green city/beautiful parks and gardens	.608				.473
Good size/right population size	.588				.541
Good/well maintained roads	.543				.487
Friendly people	.513				.406
Well laid out and spacious	.502				.538
Factor 2 – Leisure Services					
Attractive cultural venues		.814			.751
Attractive historic venues		.792			.708
Attractive sporting facilities		.737			.628
Many attractions/activities/events/things to do		.636			.532
Great place to shop/nice shopping malls		.585			.568
Attractive buildings		.535			.562
Good public transport		.491			.408
Factor 3 – Hospitality Services					
Variety of restaurants			.787		.726
Quality hotels			.770		.765
Variety of hotels			.767		.763
Quality restaurants			.753		.730
Factor 4 – Transportation Related					
Quality of parking				.776	.784
Affordable parking				.767	.761
Reliable police presence				.414	.437
Eigenvalue	10.05	2.37	1.23	.91	
Variance (percent)	41.86	9.89	5.14	3.78	
Cumulative variance (percent)	41.86	51.75	56.88	60.66	
Cronbach's alpha	.886	.859	.887	.767	
Summated Mean	2.55	2.02	2.20	2.60	
Number of items (total=24)	10	7	4	3	

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

For the 24 items, the test statistic for sphericity is large (12775.330) which is statistically significant at 0.001. The KMO measure of sampling adequacy of these variables was 0.943. The communality ranges from .406 to .784. Four factors were extracted from the factor analysis, explaining a total variance of 60.66%. These four factors were labeled as “Overall Urban Landscape” (F1); “Leisure Services” (F2); “Hospitality Services” (F3); and “Transportation Related” (F4). In terms of these factors’ summated mean scales, “Leisure Services” (F2) obtains the lowest mean scale of 2.02. The second lowest rated factor is “Hospitality Services” (F3) at 2.11, followed by F1 “Overall Urban Landscape” (F1) at 2.55, and finally “Transportation Related” (F4) at 2.60. In other words, “Leisure Services” (F1) was perceived most favorably by the Indianapolis residents, and “Transportation Related” (F4) as least favorable.

PREDICTING OVERALL ATTRACTIVENESS WITH CITY SERVICE FACTORS

In conducting the regression analysis, a composite variable labeled as “Indianapolis’ attractiveness as a cultural tourism destination” was created representing a cluster of five items measuring Indianapolis’ overall attractiveness as a cultural tourism destination, i.e. “I understand the concept of ‘cultural tourism’,” “Indianapolis has the potential to succeed as a cultural tourism destination,” “Indianapolis is an attractive destination for all visitors,” “I enjoy the cultural attractions the city has to offer,” and “visitors will enjoy the cultural attractions the city has to offer.” This composite variable was treated as a dependent variable in the regression model. Reliability test was conducted to measure the Cronbach’s Alpha which is .836, indicating a high internal consistency among these items. Independent variables used for the regression analysis are the four factors extracted from the city service items.

As illustrated in Table 4, the regression equation model in predicting Indianapolis’ attractiveness as a cultural tourism destination indicates an adjusted R^2 of 0.317, which means that 31.8% of the total variance in the dependent variable can be explained by the independent variables in the model. The F-ratio of 110.27 is significant (Prob.< 0.01), indicating that there is a small possibility that the result of the equation model occurred by chance. The degree of variable collinearity is considered acceptable with the variance inflation (VIF) less than 10. All the t values for the partial correlations are statistically significant at the level of 0.001. As a result, all the four factors are found to be significant in predicting Indianapolis’s overall attractiveness as a cultural tourism destination.

Table 4. Predicting Indianapolis’s Potential to Succeed as a Cultural Tourism Destination

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	217.76	4	54.44	110.27	.001
Residual	463.59	939	.49		
Total	681.35	943			

$R^2 = .320$, Adjusted $R^2 = .317$

Variables in the Equation

Variable	B	Beta	t	Sig.	VIF
(Constant)	2.285		99.919	.000	
Factor 2	.32	.386	14.327	.000	1.000
Factor 3	.252	.295	10.975	.000	1.000
Factor 4	.179	.211	7.843	.000	1.000
Factor 1	.170	.200	7.413	.000	1.000

Dependent Variable: Indianapolis' attractiveness as a cultural tourism destination

The regression model further indicates that the most important factor in contributing to Indianapolis' overall attractiveness in terms of its city service items is "Leisure Services" (Beta=.386), then followed by "Hospitality Services" (Beta=.295), "Transportation Related" (Beta=.211), and "Overall Urban Landscape" (Beta=.200).

Before this survey, a similar survey was conducted two years ago with a goal of predicting the dependent variable which is "Indianapolis has the potential to succeed as a cultural tourism destination" with a similar survey instrument. Interestingly, "Leisure services" turned out to be the most important dimension in the equation model, followed by "Landscape/architectural Services", and "Hospitality Services." Both tests show that "Leisure services" plays the most important role in determining Indianapolis' potential or overall attractiveness as a successfully cultural tourism destination.

CONCLUSIONS

The economic benefits of cultural tourism are easily recognized. Its direct and indirect effects can be quite substantial, and cultural tourism can add significant diversity to a city's economy. Cultural tourists, as a demographic group, tend to have higher incomes and are more educated than other tourists, which translates into more money spent per visit and longer stays. However, these benefits are contingent on a city's ability to sustain the level of city services its residents and visitors are accustomed to.

Decision-makers in cities of all sizes are beginning to understand the impact of a growing cultural tourism business on their city services. A careful assessment of the situation is a way to foster urban revivals, as well as to improve the quality of the city environment and the lives of local people.

Indianapolis already has diversified its tourism product. Conventions and special events are becoming more popular. Sports tourism is already well established. The emphasis is now on developing cultural tourism. Such type of tourism can have negative attributes for conservation of the city's cultural identity and economic development. Indianapolis city and

cultural tourism planners may use the study's findings to create a strategy for minimizing the adverse impacts to city services due to the increased flow of cultural tourists and maximizing the economic gains to the entire community. This would have to include the management of cultural attractions and the quality of new developments, the uses and activities the city's infrastructure sustains, and the integration of both these factors with the economic and social needs of the city's residents.

In conclusion, from the perspective of its residents, Indianapolis has the potential to succeed as a cultural destination and maintain the current quality of life for its residents as long as public and private tourism service providers work with the city planners to design, implement and monitor an integrated quality management approach to cultural tourism that identifies standards and quality labels, integrates the tourists' and residents' concerns into its core and continues to improve the city's appeal through individual and collective initiatives.

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Sustainable tourism in the small and medium tourism businesses in Albania

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ABSTRACT

During the last two decades, the issue of sustainability and tourism has been a more widely studied topic. This paper presents the results of an investigation into the attitudes of tourist accommodation managers to the principles of sustainable development. This paper presents the sustainable tourism in viewpoint of accommodation business.

Its aim is to examine and assess the level of interest, understanding, and implementation of sustainable tourism management practices within tourist accommodation sector of Albania, especially in small and medium tourism enterprises.

The underlying assumption of intervention is that every form of small and medium tourism in order to be sustainable must consist in the conservation of cultural and natural values by demonstrating the potential to the local communities in order to generate sustainable economic activities.

Keywords: Sustainable tourism, Community Based Tourism, strategy, tourism initiatives.

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is one of the biggest industries in the world and one of the economical sectors which grows rapidly. It has many impacts, positives and negatives ones, in social life and on the environment. It leads to a resources administration in such a way to meet the economical, social and the aesthetics needs, keeping natural originality, ecological base processes, biological diversity and other vital systems.

Tourism is one sector of the economy that has endorsed the notion of sustainability, at least in policy statements and within some initiatives. This interest reflects a realization that the viability of the industry is dependent on the quality of the resource base, whether in the natural, built or cultural environment.

Tourism-related industries present additional problems for the interpretation of sustainability because the sector is diverse in terms of type and size of businesses and the range of possible

environmental impacts. “Sustainable development” is defined as “development that meets the need of present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs”. Furthermore it is now encouraged the formulation of locally-based and sector specific strategies for transferring sustainable development into practice. The tourism product is a composite of services where the level of environmental impacts is difficult to monitor and regulate, especially if business performance and profitability might be affected.

There are four features for tourism to be truly sustainable. First, tourism must respect the economic well-being and social and cultural concerns of host communities. Consequently, tourism development in an area must involve consultation and participation as well as a degree of local control. Second, tourism must respect the character of the local environment and operate within its capability to regenerate itself. Third, tourism should reduce its impact on the wider global environment in terms of depletion of natural resources and pollution. Fourth, tourism should provide a meaningful and satisfying experience for the visitor.

ANALYZE OF THE SITUATION FOR A SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN ALBANIA

The idea of application a new tourism in Albania, so I mean a new sustainable form of tourism, especially regarding or within the small and medium tourism and accommodating business, is really a **big challenge**. And this not only in low level, but and within the viewpoint of national policy of Albanian tourism, the word “sustainable” is very used recently, but still is far.

What we are doing is the support of small and medium tourism businesses, or especially tourism familiar, in order that they develop their proper business in a sustainable way, so, I recommend to **utilize the community is the base for a long and sustainable Tourism in Albania**, especially for the moment.

The sustainable development should be done within the objective of promoting sustainable development in the tourism destinations in Albania, especially analyzing the Butrint National Park (BNP), regions in south as in Vlora, etc, by engaging surrounding communities in the development of community-based tourism products and services.

I suggest that: The underlying assumption of intervention is that every form of small and medium tourism in order to be sustainable, must consist in the conservation of cultural and natural values by demonstrating the potential to the local communities in order to generate sustainable economic activities.

Overall, this type of development that Albanian community has to choose will not give to that control over tourism. Rather, it has been a means for greater community involvement in economic development, but we recommend that this is not less that we are waiting for. Because,

if we analyze small and medium forms of tourism as the CBT, tourism familiar, etc., as a sustainable way for communities in our country, we are sure that firstly this is not easy, but very complicated, but in the end of process the community will be included in such ways in economic development and what we analyze important, the Albanian communities will results with more revenue, more employment and more aware for their culture, history, etc.

The result of a all this process is: *“Most Albanian communities will be generally in favor of tourism if growth is slow and if residents are able to maintain a high degree of control over numbers of visitors, timing of visits, and the activities of visitors, and because of different regions within country are very different from each others we strongly recommend that a tourism strategy must be develop and implement”*.

What the government is doing in macro level?

In Albania, the public sector has taken a lead over the introduction of projects promoting “sustainable tourism”. It has since been promoted at a national level. Despite the growing international recognition of the importance of environmental sustainability across many economic sectors, the main issue remains the translation of the concept into effective workable and practical strategies. In tourism, the range of tourism businesses, the diversity of environmental impacts and the essentially commercial nature of the business have resulted in various interpretations of the term as well as many real and perceived barriers to its adoption. The main barriers identified in previous research appear to be a lack of understanding and awareness of environmental issues related to tourism, the fear of extra costs, and skepticism of what is perceived to be an impractical and overly theoretical concept.

Albanian Government in collaboration with World Bank is holding the management of coastal area project on purpose its protection and the promotion of a sustainable tourism. Through financing, World Bank will sustain the study for in the south of the country tourism development, with all elements of the project including legacy custody, environment protection.

Sustainable Tourism in Albania?

When a small destination or an area of one region has problems from public support, EC projects can effort these problems. So, in our case both the weakness of a strategic plan for small destinations tourism development (or for whole region of Vlora, together with the inadequate integration of regional programmers within the EC ones, have led to the loss of many opportunities.

I support the opinion that must be the community that will lead the development that must participate in the process of monitoring, or can analyze carefully the impact on the environment. Anyway, what our government must do is to analyze not only the recent EU tourism policies, but the trends in European tourism.

What is happening in Europe?

With its decreasing and ageing population, Europe can no longer depend on Intra-regional travel to sustain its travel and tourism industry. Nor can it afford to ignore the fact that Chinese and Indian tourists spend more on holiday than Their European counterparts. Without a doubt, the Asian tourist is pivotal to the future of Europe's travel and tourism industry and European countries now need to take stock and develop their infrastructure and services. If slow to Respond, Europe runs the risk that other competing regions, such as the Middle East, Latin America and Africa, as well as other countries within Asia Itself, will realize more of the potential offered by these high-spending tourists.

So, what Europe will do is to adapt its politics to real and biggest change in new tendencies. Also language issues are another important not only for Europe, but also for our country and continue to undermine Albania's tourism product offer. Visiting Friends and Relatives (VFR) and Bollywood tourism boom is another characteristic that should analyze in Europe tourism. The alpine countries such as Switzerland, Austria and France are also popular, as they are the location for many Bollywood films today, while the Kashmir region remains unstable.

SURVEY

Our survey of 100 managers from large and medium-sized hotel groups in our region indicated that the main reason for introducing environmental initiatives was on the basis of cost-savings rather than the benefits for the environment. Indeed, care of the environment was not as important as health and safety, quality, cost or customer care in the decision to introduce such changes. The introduction of environmental initiatives was often hindered by controls and procedures operated by head office. Other research has indicated that many large hotel groups believe some "sustainable" practices, such as water and energy conservation, to be in conflict with the principle of luxury accommodation and might adversely affect the enjoyment of a guest's stay.

The case study of the perception and implementation of sustainable tourism by tourism enterprises in the region of Vlore-Sarande, derived from focus group research, revealed a slightly different perspective on the issue. As with previous research, respondents could provide no clear definition of the concept of sustainable tourism, and were consequently very wary of those who sought to encourage adoption of theoretical concepts with no practical definition. Nevertheless, the groups were receptive to new ideas and were able to identify workable practices that they felt would contribute to local sustainability, namely the alleviation of traffic congestion through public transport initiatives; directing visitors to resilient destinations by effective marketing; encouraging local purchasing and environmental education; and by energy conservation. Whether all suggestions were thoroughly thought through is open to question, especially as one suggestion to alleviate traffic congestion was to undertake road improvements. The main obstacles to developing and implementing sustainable tourism were the perceived extra costs and the mistrust of local government.

CASE STUDY

Albanian tourism will grow “organically” as an authentic destination, true to its culture, history and natural environment. International best practices in nature and culture tourism, hospitality and logistics will be studied and adapted to Albania’s specific needs and cultural context. The coastal region Vlore-Sarande was chosen for the focus of this study for a number of reasons. First, the city has an established tourism industry with a range of tourist accommodations that is not dissimilar to many resorts, towns and cities in the Albania. Much of the stock dates back to the nineteenth century, when the location’s agreeable climate and coastal location made Albania a popular destination. The provision of tourist accommodation in the city developed to cater for visitors arriving by rail, by sea, or by car. In more recent times, the city has also had a considerable degree of success in attracting large-scale new investment in the accommodation base. In total, it is estimated that direct and indirect tourism spending supports 60% of tourism budget expenditures.

The second justification for focusing on the accommodation sector in South Part is that the public sector in the city has developed an important role in the development of tourism in the local economy. In May 1994, the Prefecture Marketing Bureau was established as collaboration between the City Council and the private sector to market and develop region’s potential as a tourist destination. These objectives, however, have evolved as the tourism industry in the city has expanded and progressed and the Bureau aims to play a vital role in the future development of the industry, including the protection of the city’s environmental resource base for tourism.

Third, the Prefecture Marketing Bureau and the City Council have been involved with the Tourist Board for the Green Tourism Initiative and in the production and implementation of an environmental audit manual. Businesses in the region were too slow in their motions in this group, probably because of the absence of direct representation their project officer was invited to make although it was noted that those businesses which did sustainable tourism have been promoted to accommodation providers in this region, although the concept also lies within the broader operational remit of public sector agencies.

In order to understand the concept, operators were presented with an open-ended question asking for their understanding of the term “sustainable development”. Significantly, no operator interpreted the term in its environmental context. Only 11 per cent of the respondents came close by recognizing the maintenance of the cosmetic appearance of the resource base as being important for the continued viability of the industry (eight businesses). Over one quarter (28 per cent) had no understanding of the term (21 businesses), and further nine per cent had never heard of the phrase before (seven businesses). The largest group of responses (36 per cent) equated the term with the maintenance of the customer base (27 businesses). The lack of awareness shown by accommodation operators over the meaning of the term “sustainable development” is disappointing, although perhaps not necessarily a serious concern. The level

of understanding of erudite terminology is less important than general attitudes held toward the environment and the implementation of “sustainable” practices.

Generally, the respondents to the survey demonstrated a strong awareness of the importance of the environmental resource base to the tourism industry. Only one business (1 per cent) thought that the natural environment was unimportant to tourism, whereas 68 per cent (50 businesses) considered it to be “important” or “very important”. Furthermore, 9 per cent (7 businesses) were of the opinion that the tourism had a beneficial impact on the environment, whilst 45 per cent (33 businesses) decided that, on balance, tourism had a damaging impact. These results indicate that there is some sympathy with, and recognition of, environmental issues that involve and affect tourism. Such awareness might be the basis for future action. However, many businesses felt that the responsibility for any potential damage to the environment lay outside the accommodation sector cannot therefore be assumed, despite some favorable and sympathetic attitudes.

ADOPTION OF SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES IN ALBANIA

Albanian’s central product will be the “discovery” of Albania. The product is a presentation of a broad cross section of Albania’s history, nature, archaeology, living culture, cuisine and hospitality. Visitors participating in this discovery will leave with a lasting impression of the diversity, complexity and beauty of the culture and the land. The overall goal of tourism development for Albania is to increase the quality of life of a significant and creasing number of residents.

The concept of sustainability is built into the strategic position by necessity. Without aggressive efforts to ensure the sustainability of the natural and cultural resources, Albania cannot reasonably expect to maintain a market position capable of attracting international tourists. Without involving the local communities and providing real opportunities to participate in and benefit from the development process, the attractions will continue to be degraded, or converted to other economic uses nearly all of which offer much less long term development potential than tourism.

Developing a successful sector requires substantial levels of investment in infrastructure, marketing, human resources, natural area management, historic preservation and living culture. Without a serious investment commitment, the country will not be successful.

The present level of adoption of sustainable practices within the sample population was relatively modest. The reduction of energy consumption was the most widely integrated activity (74 per cent; 55 businesses), although usually for cost-cutting reasons rather than those related to environmental protection. Other popular “sustainable” practices adopted by the businesses included in the sample were buying from local encouraging the use of public transport (51 per cent; 38 businesses) buying recycled products (45 per cent; 33 businesses)

and recycling glass (45 per cent; 33 businesses). Many of these activities would appear to be established priorities and practices that do not necessarily involve owners in active and innovative environmental work. Indeed, purchasing from local suppliers does not necessarily mean that the goods are derived from the local area]. The least popular activities were donating to environmental groups (3), buying organic produce (8), monitoring waste production (9) and eliminating the use of disposable packaging (10).

While these results represent the general picture, levels of implementation of sustainable practices were higher in the “managed” and larger establishments than in the smaller, family run businesses. Participation levels of larger hotels exceeded those of the privately run hotels in 11 of the 17 activities assessed presumably stimulated by initiatives from head office rather than encouragement from the public sector. The largest size group of hotels was more likely to install water saving devices, encourage the use of public transport and purchase organic products, whereas the smaller and medium sized businesses were more likely to monitor energy, water and waste consumption, recycle cans, glass and paper and use environmentally friendly cleaning products.

Effective action by the public sector to improve levels of sustainability in tourism businesses is obviously problematic. While operators recognize the environmental benefits of sustainability, they often do not have the time, resources or information to act on their conscience in a commercially viable way. The Environmental Monitoring Agency was attempted to overcome some of these barriers by at least providing accessible and user-friendly guidance and by demonstrating that cost-savings and market advantage could be achieved. Of the 74 businesses in the survey, only 39 per cent (29) were aware of the Environmental Monitoring Agency. Awareness levels were highest amongst the smaller establishments. A total 43 per cent of small establishments (19/24) and 33 per cent of medium sized establishments (4/12) were aware of the Green Audit, in comparison with only 25 per cent of the larger businesses (2/8). This pattern was not totally unexpected as the Kit had been designed for the smaller establishments and managers from the larger businesses may not have been in the city when the Kit was promoted.

PERCEIVED DIFFICULTIES OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

Operators were also asked to consider potential problems and barriers to the introduction of sustainable management practices in their business. The most common responses highlighted the importance of interest, time and cost as barriers to implementation. Two third of respondents expressed a lack of interest in environmental sustainability as a reason for their inaction (66 per cent). A further 64 per cent of respondents stated that they did not have the time or energy to spend on the introduction of such practices, with 59 per cent stressing their concerns over initial financial costs. Staff and customer opposition together with external restrictions were not significant issues. However, just over half of respondents (53 per cent) recognized a lack of information as a barrier to their consideration of this issue.

METODOLOGY

A questionnaire survey of accommodation establishments in the city was undertaken to assess the understanding and the level of implementation of sustainable tourism in South Part. The questionnaire obtained information relating to the understanding of sustainable tourism, the adoption of sustainable practices, the awareness and use of the Environmental Monitoring Agency and the characteristics of the respondents (size of accommodation, price range, and type of business, age and length of ownership). The sampling strategy was based on the "Region Guide", which detailed accommodation united registered with the Prefecture Marketing Bureau. The sample was stratified according to the size of business based on the number of rooms (i.e. small, 1-10 bedrooms; medium 11-50 bedrooms; large, more than 50 bedrooms). Initially, the hotels and guesthouses listed were contacted by telephone in order to ascertain their willingness to take part in the survey. On the 100 businesses listed in the guide, 74 per cent agreed to participate. The survey took place on a face-to-face basis over the period 10 March to 17 March 2005. This period proved to be advantageous because it was low season and hoteliers could afford the time to answer questions. The sample included over three-fifths of each size category.

RESULTS

The survey has indicated that, despite the support provided by Prefecture Marketing Bureau and the framework of the Environmental Monitoring Agency, the understanding of the concepts behind sustainable tourism remains at a low level amongst tourist accommodation operators in the city. In this respect, the survey supports the findings of previous research where operators' awareness and appreciation of the concept were limited. In the present survey, the term "sustainable tourism" was interpreted by most businesses as the short-term preservation of the tourist industry in terms adoption of sustainable practices within the sample population was also relatively modest, being dominated by activities that might be established priorities, such as energy conservation.

Another key factor in the adoption of sustainable practices is the potential of customer requirements to influence the operation of the industry. Operators suggested that very few guests show any regard for environmental practices carried out in the hotels, and usually only require a "clean, comfortable bed" and a "good breakfast". I suggest that guests may be willing to pay higher prices for environmentally less damaging products, although a survey carried out in the region indicated that, whilst 71 per cent of those interviewed said that they would prefer to stay in hotels that show concern for the environment, they were not willing to pay extra to fund these green policies. Therefore, it seems that from the point of view of running a business, there is very little incentive for those who are making an effort to continue to do so. The introduction of sustainable management in accommodation businesses remains largely unsupported by both public and private sector infrastructure and is of little concern to the paying guest. The translation of the concept of sustainable development from theory into practice in tourism remains a long-term commitment, as in other areas of the economy.

The survey showed that the benefits of adopting sustainable management practices appear to have been realized by the large, managed hotels perhaps related to encouragement and financial support of the parent company or headquarters. The potential of sustainable management to produce savings in expenditure or improve business prospects appears influential in these decisions to implement such practices, although personal interest in the environment was also an important motivator. Such interest might be targeted, at least in the first instance, in future strategies to establish working examples of sustainability and the associated costs and benefits. Positivism towards sustainability appeared to increase with unit size. In general, small businesses do not have the interest, resources or time required to introduce environmental management practices.

What should be done in the New Albanian Analyze?

It is no time when the main aim of tourism policies was easy tourism growth without taking care too much of the natural and cultural environment. It is no the time when for every 5 years our public sector impose a new strategy.

It is the time of adapting new policies, new analyses, that can support and welcome the “new” international tourist in a sustainable way. Of course, I know that on one side, requests new analyze need such investments that are seen as a tool for promoting higher incomes in tourism. On the other one, tourism policy encourages a “sustainable” growth of the underdeveloped areas in internal parts of the region. At this time, internal areas are not as spoilt as coastal zones.

Moreover, these new trends have emerged together with the following features:

- Improvement of infra-and superstructure;
- Promotion of alternative forms of niche tourism (especially in the mountain areas through Alternative livelihood opportunities, such as eco-tourism and “paesi-albergo”);
- Development of new destinations away from the traditional coastal resorts.

It is the time when:

- More must be done in the diversification of the tourism product;
- Incentives for tourism development must become more selective;
- To go towards the upgrading of new infrastructures and the construction of other specific tourism facilities (e.g. marinas, golf courses, new villages;

Finally, in the context of development in south region of my country I recommend in terms of politics:

- Partnerships between the State, the private sector and community, because no single actor, either public or private, can solve on its own all the many problems related to tourism. So, partnerships are particularly important in allowing for positive collaboration among all the actors;

- A consistent set of policies which “build-up” the many aspects of tourism in a holistic way;
- The public sector must select which sort of policies is best suited to deal with the challenges of tourism and to manage natural, financial and human resources. Since tourism is an economic activity embedded into a “specific” local territory, public strategies are not always really suitable to manage the complexities of this industry;
- Local policies seem to be in a better position when coping with tourism related issues: they are aware of the region’s strengths and weaknesses and might be able to solve more properly problems which might affect communities;
- Promoting decentralization and strengthening local governance can allow a greater participation of all stakeholders in the decision-making process, as well as a closer collaboration of citizens in the policy process;
- Local governments must be in a better position to formulate policies which allow the private sectors to operate effectively. This is why tourism, as many economic activities, depends on factors such as local initiatives and capabilities.

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Ski – resort and regional development: profile of visitors and appraisal of demand in Parnassos ski - resort

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ABSTRACT

Good quality information and in depth knowledge about the characteristics and preferences of ski-resorts visitors is of extreme importance to better organize the resort and increase the demand for participating in skiing activities. In turns, this can lead to an increase of the importance and development role of the skiing resort for the broader district. This paper targets at achieving some estimations of demand of winter-mountainous tourism in Parnassos ski-resort in Greece as well as at analyzing the special characteristics of the winter visitors. The methodology involved a social survey by means of questionnaires. On site personal interviews was the specific technique. Data analysis was accomplished by using descriptive statistics and linear regression. More specifically, they were studied the preferences and characteristics of ski-resort visitors as well as the factors affecting the frequency of visits to the ski-resort and the staying duration. The most important conclusions resulted from the research are: (a) the majority of both visitors and skiers have or are in the state of acquiring academic education, (b) the majority of visitors are students (School/College/Universities), (c) the majority of visitors consider the lack of time as the main deterrent factor for more frequent visits to the Parnassos ski - resort, and (d) the exercise in ski and the love for the nature were the main reasons for which the individuals visit the ski resort. Moreover, it was realized that the frequency of visits to the Parnassos ski – resort depended on the type of profession, the visit cost, the distance in kilometers between the Parnassos ski – resort and the place of residence and the time - distance for accessing the resort.

Keywords: *ski-resort, individual and social characteristics, visitors' preferences, regional development.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Tourism, as an economic activity, has played a significant role in regional economic development especially in mitigating to a substantial degree regional economic inequalities as well as improving local people's standards of living. Through the years it has turned out that tourism

is one of the most important lifting factors of regional growth and has helped to restraint population migration processes from the less developed areas by considerably influencing unemployment rates in a great number of disadvantageous regions (Pavlopoulos, 1999; Lindberg et al., 2001; Bowe and Marcouiller, 2007; Lasanta et al., 2007).

According to the available statistical data of the World Tourism Travel Council the contribution of tourism to both the global GDP and employment were 10.4% and 8.1% respectively in 2004. As regards the European Union, tourist GDP formed as much as 11.5% of the total European GDP produced in the state members for 2004. In addition, the sum of direct and indirect employment reached 22 millions individuals (12.9% of total employment). The mean annual increase in tourist GDP for the state members of the European Union was 2.8% during the period 1995-2004. For the same period, the increase in employment was 1.2%. Approximately, 20% of the GDP in Spain, 17% in Portugal, 16% Austria and 14.3% in Greece are generated within the tourist sector (Papanikos, 2005).

Regional economic growth that is associated with tourism is an issue of growing importance to the regional policymakers. During the last few decades, such growth has flourished due to increases in mass tourism flows towards rural and coastal regions and islands. A lot of empirical research concerning insular and rural regions in Greece as well as the rest of the Mediterranean countries has demonstrated that tourist development, in certain cases, has had a positive effect on the development of other economy sectors as well (Spilanis, 2000; Tsartas, 2000; Andriotis, 2001; Cocosis and Tsartas 2001; Galani-Moutafi, 2004; Soutsas et al., 2006). The sectors that have mostly benefited are those concerning firms of consumer goods used by the tourist industry such as food, furniture etc. However, there have also been regions where tourism has had a negative effect on industrial and agricultural activities. A great part of the working force of the aforementioned sectors was rapidly absorbed in these new economic tourism-orientated activities (Tsartas, 2000; Andriotis, 2001; Galani-Moutafi, 2004; Soutsas et al., 2006).

The spatiotemporal distribution of tourist flows is a crucial factor in determining important dimensions of development, like the effectiveness of economic resource exploitation, the allocation of developmental benefits to various geographical regions, as well as the protection of the resources themselves upon which tourism activities relies. Therefore, increasing tourist flows in rural and mountainous regions during the low season of winter months is one of the major goals of the applied tourism policy in order to achieve balanced development in all regions (Karameris, 2000; Mules, 2005; Lasanta et al., 2007).

The purpose of this paper is to evaluate present tourist demand in Parnassos ski-resort and to analyze the social characteristics and preferences of visitors.

2. WINTER TOURISM AND DEVELOPMENT OF MOUNTAINOUS AREAS

Since the decade of '50s, it began an important effort for the development of various tourist activities in the mountainous Mediterranean regions. In these areas the traditional activities of agriculture and livestock-farming were unable to contribute to the improvement of income of local people (Andre, 1998; Godde et al., 2000).

Generally speaking, the development of tourist infrastructure in Europe has been achieved through various ways the most important of which are (a) the differentiation of productive direction of agricultural exploitation (including tourist services such as accommodation and catering) (Walford, 2001), (b) the creation of companies devoted to outdoor activities such as climbing and other adventure sports (Hudson and Miller, 2005; Pomfret, 2006), (c) the exploitation of landscape and natural resources such the creation of national parks and (d) the development of ski resorts (Price, 1987; Mules, 2005).

During the last two decades, special or alternative forms of tourism and relevant recreational activities (ecotourism, winter tourism, agro-tourism) have started to develop in Greek mountainous regions (Iakovidou, 2000; Galani-Moutafi, 2004; Soutsas et al., 2006). Winter tourism can be defined as the tourist flow towards a country or a particular region, during winter months often found in ski-resorts and surrounding mountainous areas. Winter tourism in Greece is materialised through special activities that increase the «attractiveness» of a region during winter season such as skiing and other winter sports carried out in ski-resorts (Christopoulou, 1991, Karameris, 2000; Soutsas et al., 2006). Nowadays, there is an increasing demand for outdoor recreation. This scaling demand is the outcome of improved standards of living and the considerable increase in free time in many developed and developing countries. This situation has led both the state and the local development bodies to invest in the utilization and sustainable exploitation of natural resources in order to develop diverse recreational facilities. Recreation, and skiing in particular, has become a crucial factor in the development of mountainous areas (Christopoulou, 1991; Cordell, 1999).

After the World War II, the development of winter tourism in Greece began with the foundation of ski -resorts thus contributing to the economic development of mountainous regions. The construction of essential infrastructures (roads, ski facilities) created the basic conditions for their growth. In particular, winter tourism contributes to the increase of income of mountainous communities which are situated around the ski-resorts in various ways. It provides part-time jobs as well as the possibility of exploiting tourist lodgings and sailing local rural products to the tourists. In addition, it improves the conditions of life and the cultural level of region (Karameris, 2000).

A great number of researchers agree that the in-depth study of the social, economic and demographic characteristics of ski -resorts visitors constitute a useful tool for improving resort administration policy.

According to Goeldner and Standley (1980), the determining factors of the number of visits to ski resorts are income level, sex, education and occupation. The general attitude towards recreation is becoming increasingly positive, which in turn has led to increased tourism in ski resorts. This change in attitude has already led to recreation being regarded as a necessity, rather than a luxury. As leisure time increases there is a proportional increase in demand for skiing, a sport which will continue to be directly affected by this trend. In general, according to the researchers mentioned above, demographic trends in the U.S.A. plus general population trends are expected to lead to a continuous increase in demand for skiing.

Goeldner and Farwell (1981), compared the efficiency of ski areas of N. America by creating a benefit coefficient. It was found that benefit increases proportionately to the size of the area and it is also affected by the high fixed cost of running the facilities and the relatively short winter period. The total benefit for ski a resort increases linearly in relation to the length of its operation period. Latest trends regarding mountain tourism activities worldwide seem to be following certain fixed patterns. A massive increase can be observed regarding downhill skiing, while hiking, cross-country skiing and snowmobiling are also increasingly preferred, but to a lower degree (Fredman and Heberlein, 2003).

Walsh and Davitt (1983) attempted to determine the factors affecting the length of stay in the winter resort of Aspen in the U.S.A. The research examined such factors as: the total cost of the visit, traveling distance, annual family income, the ability to ski, size of group, the population of the skier's place of origin and the percentage of days visiting the specific resort (in relation to the total number of days visiting other resorts). The results of this research show that information about the factors affecting the length of stay may lead to better decision making and planning.

McClaskie et al. (1986), set up two linear models that specify the factors which affect participation in outdoor recreation activities (boating, hunting). The factors required are qualitative (for example the convenience of entry in the area, non participation of friends etc.) as well as quantitative (income). The above models had an adjusted determination coefficient, 0.103 and 0.125 respectively. The model was applied to recreation activity in downhill skiing in Michigan.

Uysal et al. (1988), in a national research in the U.S.A. use regression analysis in order to determine the factors that affect demand for accommodation in mountain ski resorts. The average individual cost, the traveling distance involved, the number of skiers (mountain skiers) over the previous year, the number of people in the group, the number of people gathering in the area daily (congestion), the existence of non-recreational activities (pits, mines, logging) in the area, were investigated by the research.

In Northern America, it had been observed an increase regarding cross-country skiing, backpacking and snowboard, from the early 80's to the middle 90's (Cordell, 1999). In Australia and Europe, a slowing down in the growth of downhill skiing market has been observed (Buckley et al., 2000; Hudson, 2000). Statistics from the national organization of USA ski-resorts demonstrate a considerable decline in downhill skiing during the 90's, while snow boarding activities almost tripled during that same period.

Profound changes were also detected in the mountain tourism patterns of Sweden, a country with a long tradition in mountain sports. In the early 80's, approximately 22% of the Swedish population would make at least one trip per year to the mountains for downhill skiing (including snowboarding). In the late 90's, the percentage had increased significantly to 36%, an increase corresponding to 970,000 individuals. Snowmobiling, skiing as well as downhill skiing demonstrated a large increase (from 9% in the 80's to 16% in the 90's). Increased number of visits to the northern mountains of the country near urban centers might be associated with short vacation breaks. The observed increase of 11% in the average available income between 1981 and 1997 coincides with the increase in the cost of skiing and snowmobiling. Downhill skiing has demonstrated an increase due to its attractiveness to various age groups that can participate in the activity at various stages of their lives (Fredman and Heberlein, 2003).

Local people's attitude towards tourism and views on tourism effects often vary considerably, since tourism development can be profitable to some and damaging to some others. The net effect of tourism activities in a region has been studied thoroughly in the international literature. A research conducted in Aren Sweden, suggested that certain local residents acquired significant profits from the expansion of a ski-resort while some others get damaged. Tourists themselves also acquired certain profits from the expansion of a ski resort; however, their benefits were not large enough in order to counterbalance the net losses experienced by the local residents. Therefore, the expansion of the ski-resort resulted in an overall negative change in prosperity level of the society (Lindberg et al., 2001).

Since the early 90's, the Canadian ski industry has been facing many problems due to low profit generation. While it is rather difficult to predict its future, it is quite obvious that the world ski industry will continue flourishing. Therefore, the Canadian ski industry will have to develop new products and create new alternatives in order to attract more people to the sport. The Canadian Ski Council, in particular, is currently making a considerable effort to attract people who have never tried skiing. The most important factors keeping potential skiers away from the mountains are related to the public image of skiing created by the media, training requirements in order to become able to carry out the activity, time requirements and costs. Many non-skiers have never trying skiing, either because they have not been told about the sport's benefits or due to their biased perceptions about the nature of the sport (Williams and Fidgeon, 2000).

According to annual reports from ski-resort organizations in Europe and N. America, growth

of visits to winter sport markets is low. In addition there are new requirements and challenges regarding the management of environmentally 'sensitive' mountainous regions and villages that the managers of the resorts are faced with. Survival and development of winter sports' destinations focuses to a large extent on strategies for creating competitive advantages (Flagestad and Hope, 2001).

Even though research on tourism is a major scientific occupation in the field of social science, winter tourism research remains a neglected field of study. This can be due to the lack of agreement between academics regarding an appropriate theoretical approach in order to understand tourism motivation. In addition there is a lack of agreement between psychologists for a theoretical approach to understand the visitors' motivation patterns. Further development of the ski industry could be achieved when the determinants of skiers' preferences are studied and understood (Holden, 1999).

Mountain's exploitation for skiing activities constitutes an important issue, especially in the last two decades and new innovative development plans are increasingly proposed. The auxiliary firms that are related and support skiing activities generate substantial benefits for the communities such as employment and social stability to the regions involved. Future development of ski-resorts should rely on a wider understanding of skiers' needs and attitudes (Holden, 1998).

The issue of recreational demand for skiing-related activities in Greece has been thoroughly investigated neither from the influential socioeconomic factors' point of view nor from the contribution of ski resorts themselves to regional economy. The demand for skiing activities and the associated facilities only sporadically has been studied as for instance in the case of Thessaloniki city. In this case there have been suggested certain factors that encourage or discourage the participation in such activities. They have also have been proposed certain measures for lifting demand such as the expansion of state social tourism programs to encompass winter tourism destinations in addition to summer tourism ones. Furthermore, the study examines the ski-resorts in the Northern Greece in terms of their spatial distribution and serving capacity as well as the factors determining the necessity for winter tourism (Karameris, 1988; Karameris, 1992).

In another study Christopoulou and Papadopoulos, (2001) studied the preferences and characteristics of Pertouli ski-resort visitors and together with the factors affecting the visiting frequency to the ski-resort, as well as the visiting duration. Moreover, attitudes, points of view and characteristics of Voras ski-resort visitors, in Northern Greece, have been examined using questionnaires (Arabatzis et al., 2003).

3. METHODOLOGY

The research took place in Parnassos ski-resort which lies in an altitude of 1750-1950 metres, in Fthiotida District, Central Greece, and belongs to the 'ski resorts of national importance'

with visitors mainly from Athens but also from around the country. Parnassos Resort is situated 191 km from Athens, the capital city of Greece. There are 16 pistes of various levels of difficulty and 13 ski lifts. There is also a ski school, stores selling and renting skiing equipment, cafe, restaurant, a small health center and a car-park. It operates 8.5 hours daily between 15 December and 30 April.

Data used in this research derive from questionnaire survey amongst the visitors of the resort. In sociological researches, the use of questionnaires is essential in order to collect personal and social data. This specific research was carried out by using a structured questionnaire and employing the methodology of personal interviews, which is one of the best methods as regards statistical data collection (Christou 1999, Daoutopoulos 2005).

Pre-sampling was performed on 50 visitors at the ski-resort in order to estimate the final sample size. In that first sample size the percentage of skiers was about 50%. Final sample size was calculated using random sampling principles with aid of the following formula (Christopoulou and Papadopoulos, 2004):

$$n = z^2 p(1-p)/a^2 \quad (3.1)$$

Where:

n	=	sample size
p	=	skiers' percentage (equals 50%)
a	=	error of mean (equals 0.05)
z	=	1.96 (for probability level 95 %)

Thus, based on the above formula the necessary sample size was estimated to be 384 questionnaires. However, for the refinement of the sample size, 400 questionnaires were filled in. They were distributed among visitors (skiers and non-skiers). The questionnaire consisted of 26 questions (64 variables) with «closed» answers, although some questions could be answered freely. The questions concerned:

(a) Visits to the ski resort (if they have visited it previously, number of times per year, reasons for not visiting more frequently, naming the days of visit, duration of their stay there etc), (b) skiing: if they practice the sport or not and for what reasons, (c) region: location of the visitors' home, the area where they spent the night, time of stay, travel costs per person, (d) other ski-resorts: which ski-resorts they prefer and visit frequently and for what reasons, (e) individual features: age, sex, profession, level of education, number of family members and annual income.

Data collected were analysed using the statistical program SPSS. Descriptive statistics and multiple linear regression analysis were employed for dealing with the data. In particular, by using descriptive statistics, averages and percentages of certain variables were estimated. Two

linear models have been constructed for the detection of the factors which affect the duration of the visitors' stay and the frequency of visits. «Stepwise regression» was selected as a method for the structure of the models. (Papastavrou et al., 1979). Linear models for the estimation of the socioeconomic factors that affect the recreation demand have been used by many scientists (Clawson and Knetsch, 1966, McClaskie et al., 1986).

4. RESULTS – DISCUSSION

4.1 Characteristics and preferences of all visitors

The great majority (81.8%) of respondents at Parnassos ski-resort were not visiting the resort for the first time. They had visited it before at an average of 14 times during the winter period (mainly at week-ends and on bank holidays). Their length of stay was around 6 hours.

Most visitors were Athens residents (77.6%) because Parnassos is the nearest large ski resort to the Greek capital. The ski-resort of Parnitha which is closer to Athens has low quality facilities. The most common transportation means to the resort was by car (67.55%). However, a substantial number of visitors used excursion coaches (29.8%) since many travel agencies organize daily or weekend fieldtrips to Parnassos. The purpose of the visit was mainly skiing (about 76%), as well as appreciating the nature (19.6%). Participation in snow-related entertainment games also constitutes one of the main reasons (12.1%) for visiting Parnassos ski-resort (Table 1).

Table 1: Reasons for visiting the Parnassos ski-resort

Reasons	%
Ski	75.6
Mountaineering	2.0
Playing	12.1
Nature Observation	19.6
Other reasons	6.3

*Note: The sum of the individual percentages gives a number larger than 100, because there was the possibility of multiple answers in the question.

The vast majority (97.2%) of the visitors state that they would like to visit the resort more often (only 2.8% of the respondents replied that they did not wish more frequent visits) but due to certain constraints their wish cannot be realized. Lack of time is the major factor that prevents visitors from visiting the resort more often (61% of the visitors). It is true that contemporary working time patterns are a restrictive factor of free time availability. In addition, family affairs keep the levels of winter tourism down (19.7%), since this kind of tourism

involves significant the costs, especially for the families with children. This seems to be the main reason for the majority of visitors (52%) that choose to return within the same day of visit to their residencies. The people using the accommodation facilities in the wider resort area for more than three days belong to the high income class and they are also skiers. The need for breaking their routine patterns is the principal factor that makes winter tourists to look for a destination to spend some time. Distance affects demand, as greater travel distances involve larger costs and time requirements. The ski-resort's equipment, facilities, infrastructure and provisions play a decisive role to the size and the form of demand, which directly correlates to the resort's capability to satisfy visitors divers needs (Table 2).

Table 2: Restrictive factors to the visiting frequency to Parnassos ski-resort

Factors	%
Non-satisfactory organization	11.5
Lack of private vehicle	4.9
Lack of time	61.0
Financial factors	19.7
Family reasons	4.6
Health reasons	0.0
Distance factors	12.3
Poor street quality	3.1
Insufficient quality of snow	8.2
Lack of desire for more frequent visits	2.8
Others	5.1

* Note: The sum of the individual percentages gives a number larger than 100, because there was the possibility of multiple answers in the question.

The Parnassos ski-resort is not the only resort visited for skiing and winter tourism by the respondents. 37% of them also had visited alternative ski-resorts, nevertheless keeping Parnassos at the top of their preferences. This preference is mainly due to three reasons: a) the resort is situated near the area of residence for approximately 69% of the visitors, b) the resort provisions in size and quality are amongst the best compared to the rest of the Greek ski-resorts, c) the research year snowfalls were satisfactory in to the rest of the ski-resorts. Bad organization is an important factor of discouraging winter tourists to make more frequent visits to the resort. Lack of accommodation at the ski-resort, traffic congestion to the nearby road network, insufficient lighting on the pistes, ineffective precautions from avalanches and landslides, lack of a radio-station supplying visitors with information, are all factors valued by the holiday makers.

The majority of visitors are males (64.8%). The average age of visitors is 27 years, whereas, the prevailing age is 15 years. Participation of 40-50 year old visitors is limited (8.8%) and very low for visitors of over 50 years old (2.6%). This could be due to the extreme environmental conditions in ski resorts such as high altitude and low temperature as well as the physical strength involved in doing skiing that discourage older people. The total absence of farmers and livestock breeders, as well as low participation of labourer, technicians and housewives could be related to their educational level. That is to say, only people of certain professional occupations, educational level and income level opt for or can afford winter tourism (Table 3).

Table 3: *Distribution of all visitors at Parnassos ski-resort according to their occupation*

Occupation	%
Farmer/Stock-breeder	0.0
Workman/Technician	2.0
Civil Cervant	18.2
Private Cervant	16.7
Dealer	8.4
Industrialist (Manufacturer)/Tradesman	1.3
Free-lancer	17.7
Pensioner	0.5
Students (School/College/University)	30.4
Housewife	3.0
Unemployed	1.8

Thus, from Table 4, it can be observed the complete absence of less educated people amongst the visitors, small participation of elementary school graduates, higher participation of high-school graduates and relatively high participation of lyceum, technical institutes and university graduates.

Table 4: *Distribution of all visitors at Parnassos ski-resort according to their education*

Education Level	%
Illiterate	0.0
Elementary Education	3.3
High-school Education	15.3
Lyceum Education	35.3
Technical Education Institute	10.3
University Education	35.8

4.2 Characteristics and preferences of skiers

Skiers' characteristics focus on the fact that about 8 out of 10 people visiting Parnassos ski-resort are involved with skiing just because they like it (73.5%). There are plenty visitors that choose skiing on physical exercise grounds (34.5%), since exercise opportunities in urban environment range are limited. In addition, many skiers see the sport as an opportunity to get in touch with nature (20.9%), as skiing takes place in open areas where someone can benefit from nature. Some respondents stated that they participated in skiing because they were influenced by friends (9.9%) and therefore the decision of getting involved were not a purely personal choice of desire. However, only very few visitors (1%) stated that the choice of participating in this specific sport was influenced by the fact that skiing is considered to be an activity of the higher social classes and thus they had chosen it as a means of social promotion and prestige.

Male participants appeared to be significantly greater (63.2%) regarding both skiers and visitors in total. Increased demands for skiing, presupposes physical strength and stamina, as well as accepting a risk of getting involved in accidents. These facts may make women reluctant in participating. Four out of ten skiers also visit other ski-resorts. All ski-resorts have unique features concerning scenery, landscape aesthetics and quality of facilities as well as the level of difficulty of the ski-runs. Getting to know new ski-resorts, experiencing new things and socialising strengthen the desire towards skiing. Skiers with high (university) educational levels constitute the majority (38.3%), whereas, the minority are primary school graduates (3.3%). This pattern could probably be explained by lack of information, prejudice or a general dislike for sports (Table 5).

Table 5: Distribution of skiers according to their education

Education Level	%
Elementary Education	3.3
High-school Education	15.5
Lyceum Education	33.0
Technical Education Institute	9.9
University Education	38.3

There was an increased representation of students (elementary/high-school, college, university) (33.1%) amongst skiers versus other occupations. Self-employed (19.5%) and private sector personnel (15.6%) are the second most popular group.

Table 6: Distribution of skiers according to their occupation

Occupation	%
Workman/Technician	1.3
Civil Cervant	14.9
Private Cervant	15.6
Dealer	10.9
Industrialist (Manufacturer)/Tradesman	1.0
Free-lancer	19.5
Pensioner	0.3
Students (School/College/University)	33.1
Housewife	1.3
Unemployed	2.0

33.8% of skiers belonged to the age-group of 21-30 years old and 31.4% to the group of 10-20 years old. Skiing is a hard sport demanding strength, stamina, agility as well as being in a good physical condition. These qualities tend to decrease as some becomes older. Along with horse riding, skiing is considered to be one of the harshest and strength-demanding sports. Skiers visit Parnassos ski-resort at an average of 16 times per winter season, corresponding to 1 per weekly visit, whereas, non-skiers visitors visit the resort 8 times per winter season, namely twice a month. The vast majority of skiers (87.4%) come from the distance zone of 101-200 km. This zone encompasses some of the larger Greek cities such Athens, Larissa, Chalcida, Volos, Karditsa etc.

4.3 Factors affecting visiting frequency and length of stay

The factors which affect: a) the frequency of visits and b) the length of stay at the resort were investigated by using the growth of demand in the ski-resorts. The following linear models were used:

$$y = 29,78 + 1,31 X_1 - 0,0000326 X_2 - 0,059 X_3 - 4,99 X_4 \quad (4.1)$$

(6.03) (0,47) (0,0000128) (0,027) (1,55)
 $R^2 = 0.34$ S.E. = 10.56 D.W. = 1.74

Where:

- y = expresses the frequency of visits at the Parnassos ski-resort.
- X₁ = expresses the visitors' profession.
- X₂ = expresses the cost of visit per person.
- X₃ = expresses the distance in km between the visitors' permanent residence and the ski-resort.
- X₄ = expresses the journey time to the ski-resort.

The signs of the model parameters are consistent with the economic theory. The adjusted coefficient of determination has an acceptable value if compared to the findings of similar research (Gum and Martin, 1975; Walsh and Davitt, 1983, McClaskie et al., 1986). The standard errors of the dependent variable are significantly smaller than the average of the observed values. As the figures in parentheses indicate the standard errors of the constant and the independent variables are low and the coefficients are statistically significant. The Durbin - Watson test shows that there is not autocorrelation between the residuals of the models.

According to the linear model, the frequency of visits to Parnassos ski-resort depends on the following factors whose values (beta values) are shown in the model (Uysal et al., 1988):

Visitors' profession: Some professions or occupations (for example students, teachers etc) provide people with more free time and/or income. Thus these people can visit more frequently ski resorts (Douglass, 1975).

Cost of visits: The beta value indicates that the connection is important (Martin and Witt, 1988). The higher the cost (distance costs, staying overnight costs etc) to the lower the visits to the resort.

Distance in kilometers between the ski-resort and the visitors' area of residence. When small distances are involved it is easier to travel more frequently. Long journeys call for increased expenses. For this reason, the opportunities and the possibilities for frequent visits to the ski-resort are limited. Distance is a significant factor that affects the demand of almost any type of recreation (Lucas, 1985 and Roggenbuck and Lucas, 1987).

Journey time: Both a variable that expresses journey time and a variable which expresses distance are included in the model. Amongst other, the variable of travel time depicted the traveling conditions (road turnings and condition, difficulty because of the snow etc). These are factors that produce a different travel time for equal distances (in km). For some researchers this is considered to be a very important factor that affects demand because it incorporates the ratio of cost time (Knetsch and Cesario, 1976). A negative correlation is likely as the possibilities of having long journeys are low.

The final linear model that expresses the demand in hours of stay at Parnassos ski-resort is the following:

$$y = 6,81 - 0,298 X_1 \quad (4.2)$$

(0.34) (0.112)

$$R^2 = 0.41 \quad S.E. = 1.3 \quad D.W. = 1.81$$

Where:

y = expresses duration of stay (in hours) at the ski-resort.

X₁ = expresses required travel time.

The sign of the coefficient of the independent variable agrees with economic theory and has a significant value for this specific kind of research. The standard error of the dependent variable demonstrated a much smaller value when compared to the average of values observed. The standard errors of intercept and the coefficient of the dependent variable are relatively small, as it can be seen by the values in parentheses. Both the intercept and the coefficient are statistically significant. The Durbin - Watson test suggests that there is no autocorrelation between the residuals of the model. The model shows that the duration of stay at Parnassos ski-resort depends only on travel time. Therefore, long journeys can be a reason for limiting length of stay to the resort.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Natural resources in mountainous areas are of great importance for tourism development. Combined with other resources such human capital and infrastructure create the total regional tourist attractiveness and affect the spatial distribution of tourist flows while determining the types of tourism to be developed. Winter tourism, is a type of tourism which takes place in mountainous regions and constitutes an important economic activity. This activity contributes to the regional development in great extent, especially in less advantageous regions. In particular, winter tourism development is directly connected to the ski-resort potential, the level of provided services, the level of utilisation and the status of natural resources, as well as the distances involved between the resort and visitors' places of origin. The further development of winter tourism through the enhancement and improvement of the existing infrastructures should be a strategic development aim for mountainous regions.

More specifically, the great majority of Parnassos visitors expressed the desire to have been able to visit the resort more frequently. They did not because of their limited free time as well as their limited financial resources. Therefore, the factors that have a negative effect on skiing are income issues, lack of available free time and the perception of skiing as a dangerous sport.

The relatively high costs resulting from staying overnight in the ski-area highlight the relationship between staying overnight and income. This is a major constraint for developing further winter vacations in the area. According to the respondents, the main factors that affect the attractiveness of a particular ski-resort are its proximity to the urban areas, the quality of its facilities as well as the snow abundance. The frequency of visits is affected by the distance which the visitor or tourist may travel, the journey -time, the cost of the visit, and the profession of the visitor. Although the skiing infrastructure of the resort operates at a loss, the benefits that generates for the region as a whole are considerable. Such benefits include job opportunities for local residents, demand for overnight accommodation and more recreational opportunities for people and facilities such as cafeterias, bars, restaurants, and taverns.

The increased numbers of visitors have a wider positive effect on the local economy not least by increasing the demand for traditional, local goods and artifacts. For instance, Arachova's

textiles and wine sales provide an additional income to the locals. Furthermore, the increased visits to nearby places of cultural interest such as the Oracle of Delphi are one of the most important positive influences of winter-mountain tourism in the Parnassos ski-area. Some proposals for increasing the demand for winter tourism at Parnassos ski-resort are as follows:

1. Reduction of travel time: This can be achieved by improving road conditions and establishing traffic control measures.
2. Ski-pistes lighting, the opening up of new pistes and the introduction of suitable measures to protect skiers from avalanches.
3. Operation of a radio station to provide information to potential visitors.
4. Development of conference-tourism in neighboring areas. This could increase demand for the ski-resort.
5. Development of internal tourism in the area and the advertising and promotion of the beauty of Greek mountain sites.
6. Holiday package offers to the area, where the price would include low cost accommodation for several days.
7. Incentives for the creation of family accommodation units, which maintain the traditional architectural character of the area – according to Austrian models – to ensure minimum environmental cost. These could take the form of low interest loans or grants. Such incentives could also be used to encourage the creation of small traditional handicraft businesses.
8. Organization of special events, festivals etc within the area.
9. Advertising brochures promoting the various places of interest in the wider area. These could be historical sights or sights of outstanding natural beauty.

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