

## CONFERENCE REPORT

### **Annual ATLAS Conference** *Limassol, Cyprus, 3-5 November 2010*

The ATLAS Annual Conference and Doctoral Colloquium 2010 Limassol, Cyprus, November 3 - 5, 2010 had as a theme “Mass tourism Vs Niche Tourism”. The aim of the conference was to explain and to come with useful conclusions on the emerging concept of niche tourism and to exploit the ways that has been developed in different sectors and destinations. Even though the term mass tourism is widely used in real life and in the tourism vocabulary, many academics have argued that there is lack sufficient explanation. Poon (1993) attempted to define mass tourism, as a large-scale phenomenon, packaging and selling standardised leisure services at fixed prices to a mass clientele. Niche tourism is a new concept that is used as the antidote of the negative impacts caused by tourism development and at the same time claims to satisfy the needs of the contemporary tourist or the new tourist (Poon 1993). The conference was arranged into different topics of examination in order to identify the cutting edge between the two concepts. In particular, it was framed through the historical milestones of the concepts, an exploitation of the existing theoretical and empirical insights over time and space, the development of new forms of production and consumption and the challenges in the rhetoric arguments of the various methodological approaches.

The four day conference started with the PhD Colloquium presentations with topics from students who are sensitive in providing fruitful data on the wider spectrum of the existing literature on the abovementioned concepts. The opening day of the conference started with welcome speeches with the most notable to be by the Cypriot Minister of Commerce, Industry and Tourism, Mr Antonis Paschalides. The Minister had given emphasis on the need of a structured tourism development in Cyprus that is circumscribed with the current trends of the tourism consumption by taking into consideration the fierce competition from neighbouring countries.



The conference commenced with the wider context of community issues under the frame of rural tourism, mass tourism and sustainability. The papers considered areas from Cyprus (Omodos), USA, Mauritius, Albania (Gjirokastra) and Nepal (Annapurna). New trends of tourism had been interrelated with several policy initiatives on the environment, the budget available which affects the tourism development, tourism impacts and further development. The second half of the first day, tourism development in China had a prominent position for discussion in evaluating the coastal development and young educational tourism market. The next panel investigated wine tourism in Greece and China and the formation of strategic alliances withing the wine industry. Then, religious tourism was discussed, as a new form of consumption in Israel. In particular, Ultra Orthodox Jewish and the Russian Orthodox market visiting Israel-Jerusalem as the core place of development with notable religious and holy attractions where presented. Niche tourism products had been illustrated in terms of family vacations and motorsports tourism in Greece.

The next day the conference provided an insight on the response of tourism entrepreneurship on niche markets. In addition, it was given emphasis on the backpackers market in the way that has been developed as a new style of living. An important source of information is the contemporary tourism consumption in the spatial and sporadically dimensions of tourism developments within the frame of sustainable tourism and the exploration on new outbound tourism markets for established tourism destinations (i.e. Cyprus and USA). In the second half of the day, city tourism was discussed in terms of brochure development and the new era of the digitised community. In a different section, village development was addressed as a strategic response to niche and peripheral tourism planning and development by taking into consideration Malta and China. Risk and safety were discussed with particular emphasis on the issues of human trafficking, abnormal behaviour and terrorism. The last day of the conference youth and cultural tourism had been presented as new forms of consumption and development in the wider context of niche tourism. Then, mass tourism as it exists in the Mediterranean region as opposed to sustainability in the Alps was illustrated. An important section was the issues of creativity and innovation as the remedy for new research and development in tourism that will enable the inauguration of new products.

In conclusion, the conference provided a diversified network of discussion by taking into consideration real examples from different regions. The outcome is that indeed tourism planners, policy makers and

entrepreneurs have been realised the negative impacts emanated from the up to date tourism development under the definition of mass tourism in established destinations. Thus, the future will be more rational in the way that popular destination should be re- developed and at the same time emerging destination should learn from their mistakes and to promote more niche development that will address the needs of the contemporary tourists. Mass tourism is unavoidable in the sense that many destinations are considered as a must to the majority of the tourism market. However, a well planned strategy can spread the tourism development within these areas with new products and activities which will provide constructive tourism experiences.

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