

THE YOUNG TOURIST GUIDE TO PARADISE: UNDERSTANDING BEHAVIOURAL PATTERNS OF YOUNG BEACH-ORIENTED TOURISTS

Paolo Mura

Taylor's University

Catheryn Khoo-Lattimore

Taylor's University

This paper seeks to advance knowledge of young beach-oriented tourists by employing a qualitative research method. The research was conducted in Ios, on the south of Athens, Greece. The location represented an extremely popular destination for young people from all over the world. After three months of observation and interviews with twenty five young tourists, the findings interestingly show that the young tourists' patterns of behaviour on holiday were often discussed by them in contrast to the patterns of behaviour in the home environment. This finding has important implications because it further expands our understanding of the relationship between the tourism experience and the leisure experience in the home environment.

Keywords: *Young tourists, Qualitative research, Tourist activities, Tourist behaviour*

JEL Classification: *L83, M1, O1*

BACKGROUND

Deemed as a valid segment for research by Bywater (1993) and Ravon (1991), much has been published on youth tourism and young tourists. In particular, it has been noted that young tourists have specific interests and desires which distinguish them from the adult population (Furtwangler, 1991). In the same vein, Chadee and Cutler (1996) point out that the young tourist needs to be regarded as a separate market with its own characteristics while Stivala (1991) has warned scholars not to equate youth tourism to other forms of tourism. The consideration of youth

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tourism as a phenomenon with its specific characteristics leads to assert that it is necessary to explore in more detail this particular segment of the market.

THE YOUNG TOURIST ECONOMY

The importance of exploring the youth tourism market is further emphasised by its positive economic impact (Aramberri, 1991). Bywater (1993) reports that the five major companies that catered specifically to the young student tourism in 1992 (STA Travel, CIIE, Kilroy travels, USIT International and CTS Viaggi) earned around US\$800 million. Within the European context, Wheatcroft and Seekings (1995) indicate that in 1993 the youth tourism market represented 20% of the total expenditures by all tourists in Europe. The World Tourism Organization (2002) estimates that young people accounted for 17% of all international trips in 2000. Richards (2007) also claims that the total international youth spending was about 20% of total tourism spending in 2005, namely €109 billion (US\$136 billion). According to the data provided by Richards (2007:4), young tourists' '[a]verage spending on a main trip abroad increased by almost 40% between 2002 and 2007 to €1915, a higher rate of expenditure growth than the international travel market as a whole. As a proportion of their total income, young people spend more than any other group on international travel'. Prior to Richards (2007), Chadee and Cutler (1996) have already found that young tourists might not necessarily look for cheap accommodation - the findings of their study show that 'the student market is no different from other markets in demanding higher quality standards than in the past' (Chadee & Cutler, 1996: 77). In support of Chadee and Cutler (1996), Loker-Murphy and Pearce (1995:836) argue that young backpackers may spend less than other types of tourists, yet 'their relatively low daily expenditures are more than compensated for by their extended length of stay and the fact that they distribute their spending further throughout the country they are visiting'. The literature reviewed seems to contrast the assumption that young tourists are 'price conscious' and prefer budget travel (Kreul, 1991). Rather, past studies stress the positive economic impact of the young tourist as well as the long-term potential of the youth market.

RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

Besides its economic impact, youth tourism has also been regarded as a positive phenomenon from a socio-cultural point of view. According to

Richards and Wilson (2003:9), young people's tourism has the potential to 'build bridges between people and cultures'. Hence, it has been recognized that young tourists can contribute to promote ideals of peace and understanding among people from different cultures (Winter, 2004). Kelly (2006:7), for example, refers to the International Youth Hostels Federation (IYHF) as 'a body whose concerns now go well beyond the provision of inexpensive backpacker accommodation and incorporate the aim of fostering peace and understanding throughout the world'. European exchange student programs, such as 'Socrates/Erasmus' and 'Leonardo', represent another example through which youth tourism may promote understanding among people from different cultures. Indeed, it has been argued that one of the aims of these exchange student programs is 'to reach international understanding and to create a European consciousness' (Papatsiba, 2005:174).

The economic and socio-cultural significance of the youth tourism market highlights the importance of conducting research on the young tourist. More specifically, it has been noted that more research is needed on the young beach-oriented tourist, considering that 'up to 50% of all holidays taken by young people are located in beach-oriented resorts' (Carr, 1999: 223). Previous studies on young tourists in beach-oriented resorts reveal that the young tourists tend to behave in a more hedonistic manner on holiday than at home. Bellis, Hale, Bennett, Chaudry and Kilfoyle (2000), for example, found that young British visiting Ibiza have a higher propensity to use drugs and consume alcohol on holiday than at home. Similarly, Sonmez et al.'s (2006) findings show that North American students drink more alcohol and use more drugs in the tourism context. In her description of young tourists' behaviour on a Greek island, Wickens, (2002) refers to the 'Raver Type' as those who decide to travel to islands exclusively for its beaches and nightlife. Moreover, she labels most female tourists as 'Shirley Valentines', namely women who actively seek a romantic affair and sexual experiences with local Greek men or other tourists.

A number of studies have also focused on the causes of the 'disinhibiting' effect (Sonmez et al., 2006: 896) of beach-oriented vacations. Maticka-Tyndale, Herold and Mewhinney (1998) explored the sexual behaviour of Canadian university students on spring break. Their findings show that young tourists' increased sexual activity and substance use on holiday is influenced by a number of different components, such as previous expectations, peer group influences and personal attitudes. Similarly, Ford and Eiser (1995) found that social pressure from the peer group leads the young tourists to conform to more hedonistic patterns of behaviour on holiday. In addition, Carr (2002) highlights that young British tourists tend to behave in a more hedonist manner on international vacations than on domestic holidays.

Although numerous studies have been conducted on the young beach-oriented tourist, much research has mainly focus on the holiday experiences of British (Ford & Eiser, 1995; Bellis et al., 2000; Carr, 2002) and North American (Maticka-Tyndale et al., 1998; Sonmez et al., 2006) tourists. Furthermore, much research on North American young tourists has primarily focused on the holiday experiences of students on spring break. It needs to be emphasised that ‘the student population cannot be automatically equated with the young persons’ population’ (Carr, 1998:314). This is because not all the young population has access to the education system (Vandycke, 2001). In addition, most of the studies on the beach-oriented tourists (Maticka-Tyndale et al. 1998; Carr, 2002; Sonmez et al., 2006) employ quantitative methods of data collection and analysis. Although they have provided a valuable insight into young tourists’ behaviour on holiday, they also have limitations in terms of providing an in-depth exploration and understanding of young tourists’ experiences on holiday.

In this respect, the use of quantitative methods, such as self-report questionnaires, does not allow the researcher to explore individual circumstances and the participants’ free flow of ideas (Walle, 1997). Moreover, the relatively lack of depth of quantitative techniques can lead to a loss of understanding of people’s experiences, motivations and interactions (Walle, 1997). Given that quantitative methods are not flexible, they are not suited for studying naturally occurring real-life situations (Punch, 2005). In contrast, the use of qualitative methods provides more detailed information regarding the context. As Mason (2002:3) points put, qualitative methods are ‘both flexible and sensitive to the social context in which data are produced’. Patton (1990:24) confirms the value of qualitative data collection methods for ‘revealing respondents’ depth of emotion, the ways they have organized the world, their thoughts about what is happening, their experiences, and their basic perceptions’.

This study is in support of Patton’s (1990) views hence the aim of this paper is to explore young beach-oriented tourists’ behaviour on holiday by employing a qualitative method. More specifically, this paper focuses on the holiday experiences of young tourists in a specific beach-oriented resort, namely the island of Ios, Greece.

THE ISLAND OF IOS, GREECE

The island of Ios, Greece, is a part of the Cyclades, which are a group of 39 islands located in the Aegean Sea south of Athens and north of Crete (Ministry of the Interior, 2007). The island is about 18 km long and 10 km wide, it occupies an area of about 109 km² with a population of 1,838 in 2001 (Ministry

of the Interior, 2007). There are two main villages on Ios: Hora or Chora, namely the principal town of the island; Gialos, which is where the ferry port is; and Mylopotas, a beach situated a 15-minute walk from the main village and regarded as one of the most famous in the whole Greece (The Greek Travel, 1998).

Until the 1960's the local economy of the island was mainly based on agriculture, fishing, and animal farming (Dana, 1999). With the arrival of the first travellers in the 1960's, tourism began to develop and most of the inhabitants of the island turned away from the traditional occupations. Tourism on Ios started in the 1960's when the island was discovered by hippies from all over the world (Ministry of the Interior, 2007). However, it was only after 1965 that the island undertook a massive tourism development. A study conducted by Tsartas (1992) shows that in a relatively short period of time (1965-1975) Ios evolved from being an agricultural and fishing island to a mass tourism destination. Indeed, at the beginning of the 1980's Loukissas (1982) included Ios in the category of small islands with high tourist density. Similarly, in their study concerning the environmental impact of tourism on the Aegean Islands, Spilanis and Vayanni (2003) included Ios in the group of islands with a marked tourism pressure indicator (defined as beds/surface area and beds/inhabitants).

Today, Ios is particularly renowned among the young tourists for being the 'party island of Greece' (IosPartyIsland, 2007). In this respect, Styliadis, Terzidou and Terzidis (2008:181) claim that 'in recent years Ios has become an extremely popular destination for young people from all over the world, who come to Ios to enjoy the beautiful beaches and the frenzied nightlife'. The image of Ios as being a party island for the young tourists is also highly emphasised by the media. The Greek Travel, for example, reports that 'they [tourists] come to Ios because they are young and the island is the best party scene in Greece if not the world for people from every country' (The Greek Travel, nd).

Although Ios is highly promoted as a destination for the young tourists (Styliadis et al., 2008; Fritz & Spaneli, 2001), there is a lack of data concerning the number of young tourists visiting the island hence a scarcity of information about tourist flows and expenditures in Greece (Buhalis, 2001). There also exists a scarcity of information with regard to the type of tourists staying on Ios. Since statistical data does not offer information on tourist arrivals by age, it is difficult to estimate the approximate number of young tourists that visit the island during the summer. According to the data published by the National Statistical Service of Greece (NSSG) (2007), Ios was visited by around 8,000 people during the summer 2007. However, it is likely that the number of arrivals was higher than that provided by the NSSG due to the fact that the

statistics only refer to the nights spent in the hotels of the island and do not include data concerning campsites and other types of accommodation (NSSG, 2007). USA Today (2007), for example, estimates that Ios attracts 20,000 visitors daily during the summer.

In addition, very little is known about the young visitors' patterns of behaviour on the island. There are only a handful of studies published on foreign tourists' patterns of behaviour in Ios. One of such studies concerns the socio-cultural impact of tourism on Ios and Serifos (Tsartas,1992), who highlights locals' scepticism towards foreign tourists' patterns of behaviour. Another, Dana (1999:63) describes Ios as an environment in which 'visiting tourists let their hair down – getting drunk, flirting, and sunbathing in the nude'. These studies however, mainly focus on the cultural changes that occurred on the island as a consequence of the development of tourism and do not provide an in-depth exploration of tourists' patterns of behaviour. This paper extends current knowledge on tourists in Ios with an aim to uncover new patterns of behaviour not yet identified in past research by employing a qualitative technique.

DATA AND METHODS

Study setting

The data for this study was collected during a three month period (May-August 2007) on the island of Ios, Greece. Age was the main criterion employed to identify a young tourist. More specifically, all the tourists aged between 16 and 35 were regarded as potential participants of the study. The choice of this age range, although somewhat arbitrary, has been already employed in previous studies on young tourists (Carr, 1999).

This study combines participant observation and in-depth interviews as its data collection methods. Participant observation was chosen as a data collection method because it requires direct involvement in the social world object of study. The possibility of firsthand contact with the population chosen for the study was of value to 'hear, see, and begin to experience reality as participants do' (Marshall & Rossman, 1989: 79). Indeed, it allowed the researchers to develop rapport and build a relationship of trust with the young tourists on Ios, which was crucial to collect valuable information concerning tourists' background, their emotions, expectations, perceptions and patterns of behaviour. Observational notes consisted of descriptions of the context in which interviews were carried out. The researchers also recorded notes on the participants'

patterns of behaviour on Ios as well as description of events and circumstances that were regarded as relevant for the study.

The young tourists were approached by the researchers in different locations, although the interviews and the observations were mainly conducted in three parts of the island, namely Chora (the main village), Mylopotas Beach (the main beach of the island) and Gialos (the port of the island). The reason of this choice were based on the fact that the young tourists tended to concentrate in these three locations and only occasionally moved to more remote parts of the island. More specifically, interviews and observations were conducted on Mylopotas Beach and Gialos during the day and in Chora at nighttime. This was due to the fact that, like in other beach oriented tourist destinations (Ford & Eiser, 1995; Carr, 1999), the young tourists on Ios tended to spend their time on the beach during daytime and in the bars and pubs of the main village at night.

Participants and data collection procedures

The exact number of people to be approached was not previously determined and interviews were carried out until the researchers believed that the amount of data collected was sufficient to address the research aims and to identify emergent themes (Patton, 1990; Mason, 2002). In the end, twenty-five in-depth interviews were conducted among the young tourists on the island. Each interview lasted 30-45 minutes on average, with each interview varying in length from 20 to 70 minutes. All the interviews were digitally audio-recorded and then transcribed verbatim. Pseudonyms were assigned to the various interviewees in order to guarantee anonymity and confidentiality. Similarly, the observational notes taken during the fieldwork were first read and examined in order to identify names and particulars that would have potentially compromised the anonymity of the participants. Following transcription, the transcripts and observational notes were read several times in order to identify themes and significant facts (Patton, 1990).

Data analysis

As Mason (2002:148) suggests, data was read 'literally, interpretively and reflexively'. Data was first read literally in order to assess whether there were particular words and expressions that the respondents tended to use during the interviews and observations. This also allowed the researchers to become familiar with the information collected, although it needs to be remembered that a provisional identification of emergent themes had

already occurred during the fieldwork. As Lofland and Lofland (1984:131) point out, ‘analysis and data collection run concurrently’. Data was then read ‘interpretatively’ in order to provide possible explanations ‘*through or beyond the data*’ (Mason, 2002:149 emphasis in the original). The interpretation of data was based on both the existing literature on young tourists and the researchers’ fieldwork experience. In particular, the researchers tried to understand and explore their roles in the data collection process. Therefore, the interpretative and reflexive reading of the data occurred concurrently.

Table 1 Phases of Thematic Analysis

Phase	Description of the process
1. Familiarizing yourself with your data	Transcribing data (if necessary), reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas
2. Generating initial codes	Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code
3. Searching for themes	Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme
4. Reviewing themes	Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (Level 1) and the entire data set (Level 2), generating a thematic ‘map’ of the analysis
5. Defining and naming themes	Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme
6. Producing the report	The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis.

Source: Braun and Clarke, (2006: 87).

A thematic analysis was used in order to identify emergent themes (Patton, 1990), which were explored and discussed in relation to the existing literature on fear as well as the aims of the study. Thematic

analysis was chosen due to the fact that 'it offers an accessible and theoretically flexible approach to analysing qualitative data' (Braun & Clarke, 2006: 77). In particular, the themes were identified based on six phases of analysis, which are summarised in Table 1. The themes were partly identified in an inductive manner. As Patton (1990) points out, an inductive analysis is a data-driven process, namely a process that identifies themes without referring to pre-existing theoretical assumptions. Despite this, it needs to be emphasised that 'researchers cannot free themselves of their theoretical and epistemological commitments, and data are not coded in an epistemological vacuum' (Braun & Clarke, 2006: 84). Therefore, the themes identified by the researchers were a result of both inductive (data-driven) and deductive (theory-driven) reasoning. More specifically, the analysis was conducted to explore young tourists' patterns of behaviour, yet emergent themes related to tourist behaviour which initially had not been considered were also explored.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Tourists in Ios

The interviews and observations conducted during the fieldwork for this study provide information on the type of tourists visiting Ios. In particular, they reveal that most people staying on the island were young tourists aged between 18 and 35. As on other Cycladic Islands, foreign tourists represented a significant source market for holiday travel to Ios (Spilanis & Vayanni, 2003; Tsartas, 1992), with Italians, Norwegians, Swedish, North Americans, British and Australians representing the majority of the tourist presence on the island. In addition, the island is also visited by a considerable number of Greek people travelling from mainland. The observations concerning the nationality of the respondents reflect the data provided by the NSSG (2007) with regard to the number of arrivals by country of residence.

Tales of sex, drugs and alcohol

There are two main findings from this study. The first finding is consistent with past studies on young tourists' patterns of behaviour (Maticka-Tyndale, Herold and Mewhinney, 1998; Carr, 2002; Wickens, 2002; Sonmez et al., 2006). In this respect, the excerpts from the interviews and observations showed that the holiday experience on Ios was perceived by many as an

occasion to 'let oneself go'. Typical patterns of behaviour on Ios included sleeping, relaxing, sex and substance abuse. Unregulated alcohol consumption was not uncommon as illustrated below:-

I wake up around 2pm...this is the earliest... I could sleep 'till 5pm. Then I go to Mylopotas Beach to relax. I need to relax because it is likely that I have to deal with a hangover. I may have a couple of beers anyway on the beach or even a couple of cocktails. Then I go back to my hotel at around 9pm, I have dinner and I go back to sleep till 12am. At 12am I wake up again and at 1am I go out. And I spend the whole night partying and drinking from bar to bar till 7am (Matt 21, Ireland)

I drink, I eat, sometimes I sleep, I drink again, I eat again and I never sleep! This is my holiday on Ios pretty much. I go out and I let myself go, without any constraint, no control, nobody who tells you what to do... (Jenny 25, Scotland)

The findings also revealed other forms of substance abuse such as ecstasy. The following participants confessed:-

I tried something new this time, it made me feel good, light, happy... At home I avoid drugs but here everybody seems to do it...I thought 'well, who cares? I am on holiday!' (Mark 27, Argentina)

It [ecstasy] helps me to have fun. Not that I need it, usually I don't do these things, actually I am against drugs...but I went to dance to this place and the atmosphere was cool and I tried ecstasy. I thought that trying it is normal when you are on holiday (Lisa 23, Sweden)

Although past studies have found that young tourists have sex while on holiday (Maticka-Tyndale, Herold and Mewhinney, 1998; Wickens, 2002), we were somewhat surprised when most participants admitted to having unprotected sex during their stay on the island. For example, Giulia (23, Italy) confessed that she "had sex on Ios... after all I'm on holiday! We didn't use any protection, we were too drunk to think about it...but I'm not too worry... he looked like a regular guy" while Alex (24, Argentina) said, "Well...in that moment we didn't think about it [protections]. We were too busy."

Undoubtedly, young tourists in Ios have indulged in alcohol and substance abuse as well as sex, often times unprotected. This might be explained by the way the mass media promote Greece and the Greek islands. Movies like Shirley Valentine, for example, create expectations and, subsequently, encourage certain patterns of behaviour, such as sexual intercourse with strangers while on holiday. Similarly, the Italian movie 'Ginger and Cinnamon' (*Dillo con Parole Mie*) may have played a role in promoting the party environment of Ios among young Italian tourists. In fact, many Italians interviewed in this study mentioned this movie in relation to their patterns of behaviour on Ios. A film distribution company

describes the movie as, “*A comedy-of-errors filled with small talk, sun, sea and music, broken diets, antihistamines, camping stoves, tents, sleeping bags and nervous girls, multiple orgasms, condoms, beers, teenage love making, ex-girlfriends, homework, octopuses, secret ingredients*” (Film Movement, nd; p. 7). This image of Ios is further created and promoted by several websites and blogs that describe a typical holiday on Ios as “*the ultimate party island, this is the paradise for youngsters from all over, eager to party all night and sleep half the day*” (www.in2greece.com); where “*times of lucidity were few and far between*” (About.com, nd).

Leisure versus tourism

Perhaps one of the more interesting findings is that majority of the young tourists observed and interviewed revealed that their patterns of behaviour were influenced by the fact that they were on holiday on a party island rather than at home. Getting drunk on Ios was conceived by many respondents as a different experience than getting drunk in a non-holiday context. As Matt (21, Ireland) pointed out, ‘*getting drunk on Ios is a different experience than at home, because back home you get drunk and you have to behave, here you can let yourself go*’. With regard to sexual activity, Leonardo (19, Italy) claimed that,

...it's not something new...I mean I can do this even at home if I want, I don't need to come to Ios to have this kind of experiences...I mean having sex...anyway I have to admit that on Ios it's different, it's more intense...yes I can feel a different intensity, a higher intensity...I'm looking for this kind of intensity.

Other respondents also reported increased sexual activity on Ios than at home:-

Well...here on Ios I am definitely more active, I mean, I am more active from a sexual point of view. Sure I have more sex here than at home...it's easier to find someone here, I guess everybody is looking for the same thing, I mean you meet someone and it's pretty much sure you end up doing it. I don't have a boyfriend and I think I am allowed to have occasional partners... Maybe at home I wouldn't have so many opportunities... (Johanna 27, South Africa)

Let's be honest, that's the main reason why people are here. And why not? I bought the ticket to Ios and I thought: 'I will have plenty of opportunities to have sex'. At home you can do it of course but when I'm on holiday in a place like this I think it's easier...everybody is more into that... (Carmen 23, Sweden)

Several young tourists perceived Ios as a context in which they felt free from the constraints of everyday life and without anybody's control:-

I think that on holiday you are in a different dimension...a dimension in which I have a different state of mind...for me it's different from all the things I do when I'm home...I feel like I have a different state of mind...on holiday you have more freedom to do what you like...at home I have to work and do always the same boring stuff (Mario 21, Italy)

Being on holiday is different...a different mindset anyway...you don't do the things you usually have to do in everyday life... Personally, I feel freer than at home and I let myself go...I do things I usually don't do at home (Mina 22, Greece)

Mario (21, Italy) and Mina (22, Greece) described 'holiday' as an experience different from 'home'. In this respect, young tourists' responses agreed with Graburn (2004:23) that 'tourism is best understood as a *kind of ritual*, one in which the special occasions of leisure and travel stand in opposition to everyday life at home and work' (emphasis in the original). More specifically, Mario and Mina both referred to 'holiday' as a context in which they felt like having a 'different state of mind' than the one at home, a mindset similar to Langer's (1993:44) 'mindfulness', namely 'a state of mind that results from drawing novel distinctions, examining information from new perspectives, and being sensitive to context'. Conversely, 'home' was often described as a boring and predictable context, one in which young tourists felt trapped in a 'mindless' mindset, namely a state of mind in which 'the individual gets locked into one predetermined version of information, even though alternative versions may better meet her or his needs in the future' (Langer, 1993:45). Furthermore, young tourists' high levels of perceived freedom on holiday could also be related to the notion of liminality (Turner 1986; Shields, 1990; Ryan & Kinder, 1996), a dimension in which 'people feel able to do things they really want to do freed from the constraints of responsibilities to employers and social roles they normally occupy' (Ryan & Kinder, 1996: 510).

Expectations of '*experiencing a liberating holiday*' (Demetra 20, Greece) were mainly influenced by the respondents' age and life stage. It needs to be emphasised that most of the interviewees were young tourists in their early 20's and had just completed their undergraduate studies. More interviewees confirms Demetra's sentiments. For example, Ali (22, Israel) perceived 'tourism' as a liberating experience due to the fact that they had recently terminated military service. He said, "*I just completed military service. It's compulsory in Israel; three years...three long years...It's common among young Israelis to go on holiday after three years of strict rules. It's kind of a liberating experience...I am free*

now...finally out of my parent's guard." Most of the young tourists interviewed echoed Ali's comments as they were on holiday in a foreign country for the first time without family members. Carl (23, New Zealand) for instance, observed that *"I think that sometime I'm anxious because I have been waiting for this moment all my life, finally I'm here, my first serious holiday experience, I mean without nobody's control. I can show I am not a child anymore. I can make it without mum and dad. I just want to enjoy it."* As Ali's (22, Israel) and Carl's (23, New Zealand) interviews show, the holiday experience was conceived by many as a 'rite of passage' (Van Gennep, 1960) between childhood and adulthood, namely the first experience out of their familiar environment.

On the whole, the second finding in this study would seem to indicate that there is a perceptual dichotomy between being on holiday as a tourist versus leisure holiday within the home country. Indeed, most respondents emphasised that their patterns of behaviour on Ios were influenced by the fact they were in a tourism context. In particular, the young tourists perceived higher levels of freedom on holiday than at home.

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

The main aim of this study was to understand the patterns of behaviour of young tourists visiting Ios, Greece. This study has shown that young tourists in Ios do engage in unprotected sex and substance abuse including alcohol and ecstasy. This result has implications for those involved in the development of risk-reduction initiatives that try to protect young people on holiday. A number of initiatives can be implemented to protect the sexual health of young tourists, such as campaigns that encourage the use of precautions against HIV infection while on holiday. Moreover, prevention measures may be of help to heighten awareness of the health-related and legal consequences of drug consumption in foreign countries. These initiatives should be based on programs that involve tourists' country of origin as well as young tourists' holiday destinations. Not only should they target young holidaymakers but local residents too, given that the latter did often participate in tourists' risky activities on Ios.

A further significant insight offered by this study is that patterns of behaviour on holiday were often discussed by the young tourists in relation to patterns of behaviour in the home environment. This finding has important implications because it further advances our understanding of the relationship between the tourism experience and the home environment. There has been a lack of agreement concerning the relationship between tourism experiences in the holiday environment and leisure experiences in the home environment. A

number of authors (e.g., Fedler, 1987; Pearce, 1987; Crouch, 1999) claim that tourism and leisure experiences are related, suggesting that studies on leisure behaviour conducted in the home environment can be used by tourism scholars to understand tourist behaviour. However, the results of this research highlight the existence of a perceptual dichotomy between 'holiday' and 'home'. Indeed, most respondents emphasised that their patterns of behaviour on Ios were influenced by the fact they were in a tourism context. In particular, the young tourists perceived higher levels of freedom on holiday than at home. This result suggests that studies on young people's behaviour conducted within leisure activities should not be automatically applied to a tourism context. Rather, the relationship between tourism and leisure should be further explored by tourism scholars in order to understand whether and how tourist behaviour can be related to leisure behaviour.

One of the distinctive features of this study concerns the data collection methods chosen to explore young tourists' patterns of behaviour on holiday. In contrast to previous research on the young tourists (Carr, 2001; Richards, 2007), in-depth interviews and observations were employed to investigate young holidaymakers' behavioural patterns. The fieldwork experience allowed the researchers to develop rapport and build a relationship of trust with the young tourists on Ios. This was crucial to collect valuable information concerning tourists' background, their emotions, expectations, perceptions and the context. Future research should employ qualitative interviews and observations in the investigation of holidaymakers' experiences. Indeed, a qualitative approach to research will allow tourism scholars to have a better understanding of tourists' experiences and, subsequently, a more in-depth comprehension of tourist behaviour.

Although more research is needed to verify the results obtained, the findings of this study shed light on young tourists' patterns of behaviour on holiday. It has been found that the specific social context of Ios played a significant role in influencing young tourists' patterns of behaviour. Finally, future research could determine whether and how different tourism contexts influence tourist behaviour. There is also a need for research to explore whether other factors, such as gender and culture, influence young tourists' behaviour on holiday.

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REFEREED ANONYMOUSLY

Paolo Mura School of Hospitality, Tourism & Culinary Arts, Taylor's University Lakeside Campus, Subang Jaya, Selangor Darul Ehsan, Malaysia.

Catheryn Khoo-Lattimore School of Hospitality, Tourism & Culinary Arts, Taylor's University Lakeside Campus, Subang Jaya, Selangor Darul Ehsan, Malaysia.