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FACTORS AFFECTING MUSEUM VISITORS' SATISFACTION: THE CASE OF GREEK MUSEUMS

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Greek museums, in the new era of economic recession, face the agony of surviving and at the same time chase the challenges for sustainable development. The scope of this survey is to define the groups of tourists who visited Greek public museums and their evaluations of the museums' services. The cluster analysis, forms different groups of tourists, and the principal component analysis reveals the factors that represent museum's quality characteristics. The analysis of variance follows, to correlate the already defined clusters per factors and to answer the research questions. The quantitative research reveals that, there are three different groups of tourists, and confirms that visitors behave according to the group they belong. Therefore, in formulating a strategy to attract and satisfy the cultural tourists, the improvement in the provision of educational services and the better training of the personnel are needed, since most problems are noticed on these aspects.

Keywords: *Cultural Tourism, Museums, Marketing, Tourists' Satisfaction*

JEL Classification: *L83, M1, O1*

INTRODUCTION

In the age of economic crisis, companies and organizations should rethink the strategies that they follow, in order to remain competitive in this new, economic environment. Cultural tourism is a form of tourism that can be developed according to the principles of sustainable development and contributes to the sustainable development of the region (Constantin and Mitrut, 2007). According to Gilmore, Carson, & Ascencao, (2007), the concept of sustainability was developed in the late

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1980s, early 1990s. The sustainable development of a tourist destination could be safeguarded by providing quality services to tourists, who seek for sui generis and unique experiences, like the ones that cultural tourism provides.

The tourism industry contributes significant to the national gross domestic product and is among the most dynamically growing industries in the world. The fast growing tourism sector increases the number of visitors to cultural sites. This has notably implications to the managers of the monuments and sites and arises the need for sustainable tourism marketing, in order to preserve the monuments for future generations (Gilmore et al., 2007).

Greek museums, in the new era of economic recession, face the agony of surviving and at the same time, chase the challenges for sustainable development. Cultural tourists could empower decisively the museums, the archaeological sites and the Greek tourist destinations, reinforcing their sustainable development. The cultural monuments are often lacking in marketing strategy and fail to realize the necessity of sustainable tourism marketing. The strategic marketing can enhance viability, increasing revenue from the influx of tourists and ensure the future development of the destination (Gilmore et al., 2007). In addition, an effective marketing strategy increases the public interest and revenue, helps museums to fulfil their mission and enhance sustainable development in the region (Chhabra, 2009).

LITERATURE REVIEW

The role of heritage and culture in motivating tourists is decisive. In a sample of 30.000 interviews, the holiday motivation for up to 26% of the sample was to visit historic places and sites (Middleton & Hawkins, 1998). According to Middleton and Hawkins (1998), the sustainable development of tourism has two dimensions; to protect the natural, social and cultural environment from the adverse effects of tourism and to develop appropriate business activities, which will enhance the sustainable development of the regions, through tourism and travel. Sustainability could be supported with attractive destination images, quality tourist products, value for money services, efficient segmentation of market niches, and repeated visits that enhance the existing quality of the destinations (Middleton & Hawkins, 1998).

Sustainable development of Greek tourism destinations could be related to the satisfaction of tourists and visitors of museums and archaeological sites, since they constitute dominant features of Greek

destinations and at the same time, the level of visitor's satisfaction is crucial for their sustainability. Sustainable development implies that the needs of this generation are covered, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. When an activity is characterized as sustainable, could theoretically continue forever, without causing problems in the future.

In the literature, there is not a holistic marketing strategy which strengthens the sustainable development of cultural tourism (Chhabra, 2009). The concept of using marketing for sustainable tourism development has been studied more in forms of tourism, for example the ecological rather than cultural (Chhabra, 2009). Chhabra (2009) presents a model of sustainable cultural tourism marketing, Sustainable Heritage Tourism Marketing Model (SHTM) that consists of a mission statement, along with a communication plan. Since tourist destinations constitute key factors of the tourism demand, is absolutely necessary to design a local marketing program or different tourist destinations in the country. The role of the museums and the historical monuments to the enforcement of the image and the development of the city, is decisive in the context of designing a strategic marketing plan (Deffner et al., 2009).

Cultural tourism constitutes a strategy of sustainable development and achieving local quality of life (Sdrali and Chazapi, 2007), and is growing worldwide, thus must follow the challenges posed, in order to remain a competitive form of tourism, since the challenges arising are many (Phaswana-Mafuya & Haydam, 2005). According to Phaswana-Mafuya and Haydam (2005), tourism organizations must broaden their offerings to meet the growing needs of increasingly discerning tourists, without lowering the quality of the services and the culture of the region. The profile of tourists, the needs, the expectations, and their desires and perceptions, should be clearly defined in order to ensure their satisfaction and repeated visits in the future.

Consumer satisfaction has been studied extensively in the literature (Rojas & Camarero, 2008). Whatever the nature of the service is, customer satisfaction is the most important goal that should be set (Eraqi, 2006). The study of museum visitors' satisfaction is mainly focused on the relationship between quality and satisfaction (Caldwell, 2002; De Ruyter, Bloemer, & Peeters, 1997; Harrison & Shaw, 2004), while there is limited research on the experience of museum visitors (Rowley, 1999) and its relationship with satisfaction.

From the literature comes out a link between satisfaction and the willing of dissemination of the service (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1988; File, Cermak, & Prince, 1994; Shemwell, 1998; Soderlund, 1998;

Hennig- Thurau, Gwinner, & Gremler, 2002; Ennew, Banerjee, & Li, 2000). Although the relationship between customer satisfaction and service quality has been studied, the relationship between satisfaction, by providing quality services and positive word of mouth at the same time, has not been investigated yet (Chaniotakis & Lymperopoulos, 2009). This underlines the importance of the personnel, not only in providing adequate services but also in promoting the organization through the influence they exert on shaping the opinion of visitors and consequently the word of mouth.

Satisfied visitors are those that affect the long-term survival of an organization, through repeated purchase and through the word of mouth communication, (Huo & Miller, 2007). The directors of museums recognize as an essential element of the museum visit, the visitors' satisfaction and are interested in factors affecting visitors to revisit the site and recommend to others (Harrison & Shaw, 2004; Kawashima, 1998; Mclean, 1994).

According to Rojas and Camarero (2008), satisfaction is achieved when the expectations of visitors are met or exceeded. The expectations of visitors, from various sources for example advertisements, opinions, friends and previous experience, affect the evaluation of their perceived service (Rojas & Camarero, 2008; Zeithaml, Berry, & Parasuraman, 1993). Thereupon the expectations of visitors influence the perceived service quality; therefore the perceived quality influences satisfaction ratings (DeRuyter et al., 1998; Oliver, 1999; Rojas & Camarero, 2008).

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Visitors choose a service to gain some utility. They evaluate the satisfaction they receive from the services by comparing their expectations, with the perceived quality of the service (Tse & Wilton, 1988; Rojas, & Camarero, 2008). When the perceived quality is superior to visitor's expectations, a visitor can be satisfied. From the literature comes out that the service satisfaction is a key factor for future behaviour and the intention to repeat the visit (Fornell, 1992; Oliver, 1999; Zeithaml, Berry, & Parasuraman, 1996). The higher the satisfaction is, the stronger the intention of the visitor-consumer is (Rojas et al., 2008), to visit again the site in the future and recommend to friends and relatives.

The adoption of marketing philosophy in the museum operation will result in higher satisfaction ratings, and satisfied visitors will become the best ambassadors of the organization, spreading its fame through the word of mouth (Tobelem, 1998). It is important to underline that creating a

strong brand, is essential in developing a positive word of mouth (WOM), (Kotler, Kotler & Kotler, 2008; Rentschler, 2007).

The basic literature on tourism development and visitor satisfaction argues that tourists choose their destination based on their experience. Their positive or negative experiences form their satisfaction or their tourist trip. According to the research of Lee, Lee, & Wicks, (2004), the motivation of the visit and the type of visitor, affect their overall satisfaction. The demographic characteristics of tourists, according to Huo and Miller (2007), often affect their satisfaction, especially for museums' visits. Huo and Miller (2007), based on previous surveys, they define a theoretical model exploring the relationship between visitor satisfaction, the characteristics of the service and their future intentions on behaviour.

Huo and Miller (2007) define three assumptions of the relationship between visitor satisfaction and tourism development that lead to increased museum visits:

- The greater the satisfaction of the visitor experience is, more likely is to revisit the museum.
- Visitor's satisfaction depends on the characteristics of the visit, the staff and the overall perceived experience.
- Satisfaction varies, depending on the demographic characteristics of each group of visitors.

The research results of Huo and Miller (2007), confirm the three cases. More likely to visit again the site in the future is, when the satisfaction is higher. The museum's personnel is crucial in evaluating the services offered by the visitor, as well as the level of satisfaction varies according to the country of origin, especially among Americans and Asians.

The quality of services can be assessed by using rating scale (service quality measurement), (Albacete-Saez, Fuentes-Fuentes, & Montes-Llorens, 2007). The service quality is the result of comparing the expected quality and the perceived quality of the service. One of the most widely used rating scales in services is the SERVQUAL of Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1988, 1991), which assesses customers' expectations and the perceived quality of service. This method influences many researchers but receives also many critical reviews (Buttle, 1996; Ekinci & Riley, 2001).

The theoretical model SERVQUAL, developed by Parasuraman et al. (1988), is a useful tool for studying the quality of service and customer satisfaction (Eraqi, 2006). Nowacki (2005) uses this model in the evaluation of the museum as a tourism product and Eraqi (2006), for the tourist services. The assessment of the service quality, because of its

intangible nature, is much more difficult than evaluating the quality of products. To achieve this Nowacki (2005) conducted a survey among museum visitors to identify what are the expectations of visitors and what is the level of perceived quality, using the model SERVQUAL, in assessing the quality of the museum.

Apart from the technical support and the design of museums by specialists, the study of the expectations of visitors and the ultimately perceived service, is needed (Nowacki, 2005). This method is used in recreational areas (Taylor, Sharland, Cronin, & Bullard, 1993), historical sites, historic houses (Frochot & Huges, 2000), tourist agencies (Luk, de Leon, Leong, & Li, 1993), tourism offices (Ryan & Cliff, 1997), theme parks (O'Neill & Palmer, 2003) and other forms of entertainment and tourism.

Based on the theoretical model of SERVQUAL by Parasuraman et al. (1988), two (2) research questions are formed and investigated in the present paper:

- Research Question 1: Are the preferences and interests of the tourists-visitors, differentiated according to the characteristics of the group they belong (Lee et al., 2004)?
- Research Question 2: Which are the main factors that constitute the dimensions of the service quality in the Greek public museums (Nowacki, 2005; Lam & Hsu, 2006)?

METHODOLOGY

The present survey, researches the impact of cultural tourism to the development of tourist destinations, using three statistical methods; the cluster analysis, the principal component analysis and the ANOVA. The survey took place from January 2009 to July 2009 with 535 questionnaires, filled by tourists, visitors of five different museums, in five tourist destinations in Greece. The quantitative research was carried out in five Greek, archaeological museums, which were: the Delphi Museum, the Mycenae Museum, the Ancient Olympia Museum, the Ancient Corinth Museum and the Epidaurus Museum. Those public museums represent about the 15% of the total museum visits, including their archaeological sites (http://www.statistics.gr/portal/page/portal/ESYE/PAGE-themes?p_param=A1802).

The scope of the survey was to define the groups of tourists who visited the Greek museums and their evaluations of the museums' services offered to them. In order to achieve this scope, the questionnaires

are designed according to the literature and investigate the factors that represent the data quality and the visitors' satisfaction elements of the services offered. The cluster analysis, forms different groups of tourists with different interests and evaluations and the principal component analysis, forms the factors that represent museum's quality characteristics. Thereupon, the analysis of variance follows the two previous methods, to correlate the already defined clusters per factors, by ANOVA (Lymperopoulos & Eeckels, 2003).

ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

The cluster analysis is based on the evaluation of certain features of the services offered and reveals the presence of three (3) distinct groups of tourists, with different interests and preferences. The first group of tourists has special cultural interest and its name is the Cultural Oriented group. They value higher the cultural attractions and assess lower the natural attractions, the infrastructure, the accommodation, the food, the entertainment and the quality of the service offered in relation to its cost (Diagram 1).

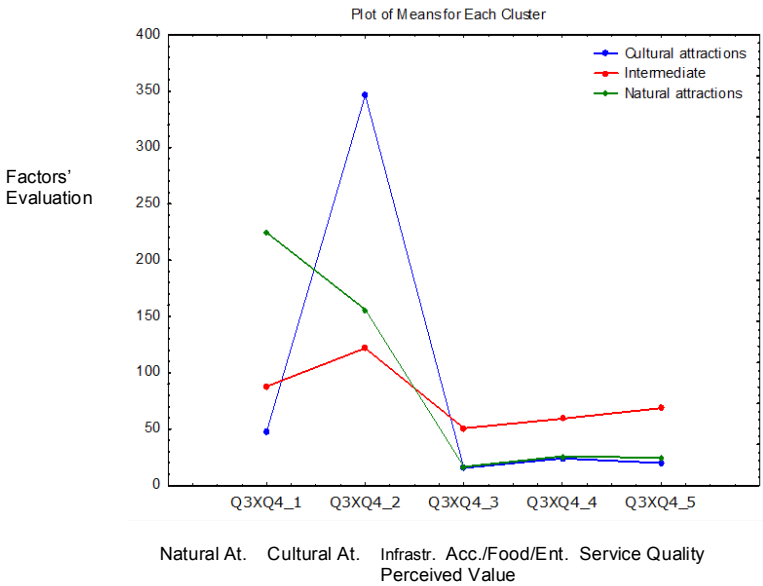
The second group shows a modest interest for both cultural and natural attractions and its name is the Intermediate. They rate lower the natural attractions, the infrastructure, the accommodation, the food, the entertainment and the quality of the service offered, while they assess slightly more emphasis on cultural attractions (Diagram 1).

The third group shows more interest in natural beauty and natural attractions and thus its name is the Natural Oriented group. They evaluate high the natural attractions, lower the cultural attractions and even lower the infrastructure, the accommodation, the food, the entertainment and the service quality (Diagram 1).

The six (6) characteristics of visitors that derive from the questionnaire (nationality, age, sex, education, income, family status), are compared with the group, the cluster the tourists belong and are presented at the Table 1. The survey shows that, those interested more in cultural attractions, the Cultural Oriented, are about one third of the visitors (32%). Canadians have the highest percentage in this group. They are mostly at the age of 46-55, men with higher education, with income less than 1000 euros, married with independent children. They evaluate positive the value for money of the services offered, the image of the museum they visited, the facilities and exhibits and the stores and cafes. Negative they evaluate the educational aspects and the personnel, while neutral the price (Table 1).

The second group, the Intermediate constitute 50% of the sample. Asians have the highest percentage in the sample. They are mostly older than 65 years, men with basic education and income 1501-2000 €, widow and widower. They evaluate the value of the service offered in relation to its costs negative but they have a positive image for the museum. They evaluate negative the facilities and exhibits and the price of the museum. At the same time, they evaluate positive the educational aspects and the staff, while neutral the stores and cafes (Table 1).

Diagram 1 Three (3) Clusters.



Finally, the third group, the Natural Oriented, consists the 18% of the sample. The Americans have the highest percentage in the sample. They mostly are at the age of 56-65 years, women with secondary education, with income 1001-1500 euros and single. They evaluate as not good the value for money of the services offered, they have negative image for the museum and they evaluate neutral the facilities and the exhibits. Positive they evaluate the educational aspects, the price and the personnel but negative the stores and cafes of the museum (Table1).

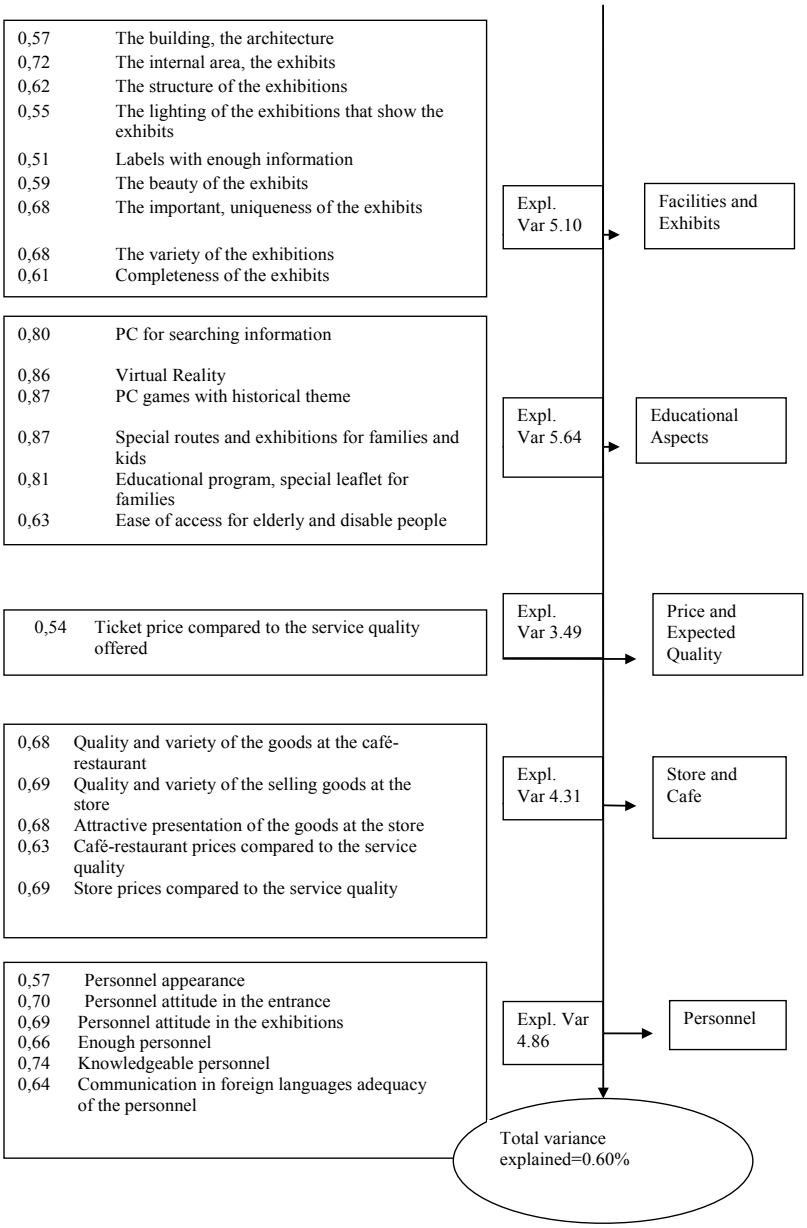
Table 1 Clusters and their characteristics.

Clusters Characteristics	Cultural Oriented	Intermediate	Natural Oriented
Size	32%	50%	18%
Nationality	Canadians	Asians	Americans
Age	46-55	Older than 65	56-65
Gender	Men	Men	Women
Education	Higher	Optional	Secondary
Income	Less than 1000	1501-2000	1001-1500
Family Status	Married with independent children	Widow, widower	Single
Value for Money	Very good	Bad	Not good
Image	Positive	Positive	Negative
Facilities and Exhibits	Positive	Negative	Neutral
Educational Aspects	Negative	Positive	Positive
Price	Neutral	Negative	Positive
Store, Cafe	Positive	Neutral	Negative
Personnel	Negative	Positive	Positive

The Principal Components Analysis, extracts five (5) factors out of the 27 characteristics of the museum services. The principal component analysis of five (5) museums explains 60% of the total variance. This method leads to grouping the questions of the questionnaire into five (5) factors and describes the services' characteristics, as assessed by the respondents. The five (5) factors that came out are; Facilities and Exhibits, Educational Aspects, Price and Expected Quality, Store and Café, Personnel (Table 2).

Therefore, this analysis reveals that there are different factors that lead to the satisfaction of visiting a museum and visitors' satisfaction depends on the characteristics of the quality of the services.

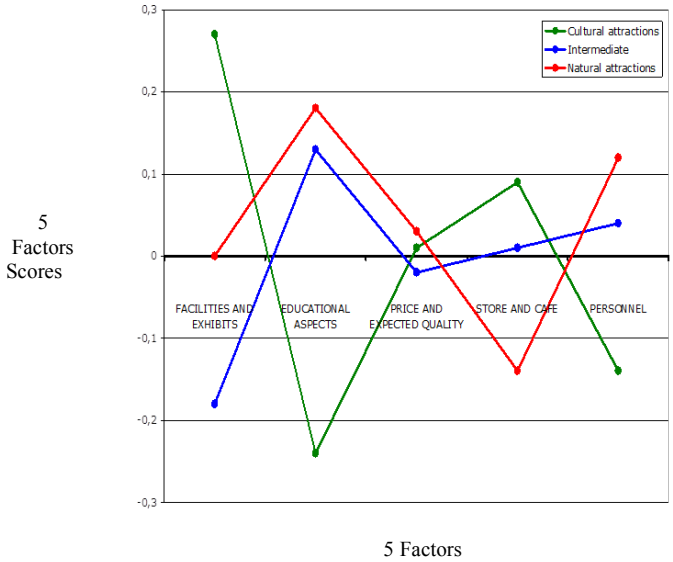
Table 2 Loadings of 27 characteristics and variances of 5 factors.


0,57 The building, the architecture
0,72 The internal area, the exhibits
0,62 The structure of the exhibitions
0,55 The lighting of the exhibitions that show the exhibits
0,51 Labels with enough information
0,59 The beauty of the exhibits
0,68 The important, uniqueness of the exhibits
0,68 The variety of the exhibitions
0,61 Completeness of the exhibits
Expl. Var 5.10
Facilities and Exhibits
0,80 PC for searching information
0,86 Virtual Reality
0,87 PC games with historical theme
0,87 Special routes and exhibitions for families and kids
0,81 Educational program, special leaflet for families
0,63 Ease of access for elderly and disable people
Expl. Var 5.64
Educational Aspects
0,54 Ticket price compared to the service quality offered
Expl. Var 3.49
Price and Expected Quality
0,68 Quality and variety of the goods at the café-restaurant
0,69 Quality and variety of the selling goods at the store
0,68 Attractive presentation of the goods at the store
0,63 Café-restaurant prices compared to the service quality
0,69 Store prices compared to the service quality
Expl. Var 4.31
Store and Cafe
0,57 Personnel appearance
0,70 Personnel attitude in the entrance
0,69 Personnel attitude in the exhibitions
0,66 Enough personnel
0,74 Knowledgeable personnel
0,64 Communication in foreign languages adequacy of the personnel
Expl. Var 4.86
Personnel
Total variance explained=0.60%

These are in accordance to the literature (Nowacki, 2005; Lam & Hsu, 2006), that visitors are affected by specific factors which constitute the dimensions of the service quality. Taking into account the variables and the factors extracted from the Principal Components Analysis, the following model is created (Table 2), depicting the loadings of twenty-seven (27) characteristics and the variance of each of the five (5) factors (Table 2).

The Diagram 2, illustrates how the three (3) groups of tourists, the clusters, they assess the five (5) factors. The vertical axis shows the Factor Scores and the horizontal the 5 Factors. When every factor gets the average, the value is zero and gets either negative or positive values. The statistics of this diagram are shown on Table 3.

Diagram 2 Clusters per factors.



According to ANOVA (cluster per factor), the Cultural Oriented tourists are satisfied with the facilities and the exhibits, the museum cafes and the stores (Table 3). The price does not affect them much and are dissatisfied with the educational aspects and the personnel of the museum (Diagram 2). The Natural Oriented tourists, assess very negative the store and cafes, neutral the facilities and exhibits, as well as neutral the price and the expected quality. The educational aspects and the staff are

evaluated positive (Table 3). The Intermediate tourists evaluate very negative the facilities and exhibits, but positive the educational aspects. Regarding the stores and cafes, are evaluated as neutral, while the personnel as positive (Table 3).

Table 3. Three (3) clusters and their factors's scores.

	Facilities and Exhibits	Educational Aspects	Price and Expected Quality	Store and Cafe	Personnel
Cultural Oriented	0,27	-0,24	0,01	0,09	-0,14
Intermediate	-0,18	0,13	-0,02	0,01	0,04
Natural Oriented	0,0	0,18	0,03	-0,14	0,12

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

As the International Council of Museums (ICOM) defines, the museums are non-profit organizations, open to the public interest. Visitors expect different services depending on their visit motivations and get satisfaction, when are treated according to their needs (McLean, 1994). McLean (1994) points out that museums, are still not adopting a clear marketing strategy, despite the effort that has been done in this field. For museums, the need for long-term strategies and public education has now emerged, combined with sustainable development strategies. The museums have to set an attempt for sustainable tourism development, providing innovative opportunities for cooperation with the local community.

An important opportunity for sustainable development in the region and the simultaneous strengthening of museums is to develop a strong relationship between the museum and the local community (Cole, 2008). The locals are likely to contribute to the activities of the museum and visit the place with their friends and relatives, constituting the future audience (Cole, 2008). Attracting cultural tourists is a major strategy. This can be achieved by developing cooperation with cultural and tourist agencies and by creating a network to attract tourists, both at national and international level. When museums cooperate with travel agencies that organize tours and visits, they attract more audience (Runyard & French, 1999).

The museum café and stores, can enhance the income of the organization, enrich the educational role and attract new visitors (Kotler et al., 2008; Rentschler, 2007; Cole, 2008, McPherson, 2006). In cooperation with the local community they can offer goods from native producers and artists and thus enhance the income of the local community. Social media, used by destination marketing organizations (DMOs), could influence a growing number of travelers and offer a number of challenges and opportunities to DMOs (Lange-Faria and Elliot, 2012), museums and cultural sites.

As defined by the International Council of Museums (ICOM), the museums are open for the public interest (non-profit organizations). Therefore, the success of marketing is measured by fulfilling their mission statement, providing quality services and offering unforgettable experiences. Customers expect different services depending on their motivations and become satisfied when are treated according to their needs (McLean, 1994). It is of high importance, the museum services offered to visitors, to be improved and the factors of dissatisfaction to be minimized, in order the very important group of cultural tourists, to become satisfied, thus to revisit and to recommend the museum to friends and relatives, via positive word of mouth.

The quantitative research of visitors-tourists of Greek museums reveals that, there are three different groups of tourists, three segments and confirms that visitors behave according to the group they belong. The survey confirms also the existence of five different factors that lead the groups of museum visitors to satisfaction. Therefore, in formulating a strategy to attract and satisfy the cultural tourists, the improvement in the provision of educational services and the better selection and training of the personnel are needed, since most problems are noticed on these aspects. The museum price and the expected quality do not affect visitors much on their satisfaction, although they need the retrieval of the services and goods at their stores and cafes.

Those responsible for the operation of museums may take under serious account these factors, in order to improve their organization and to design a clear strategy in accordance to visitors' demands, as well as satisfying each target groups' needs. The segmentation of the market and the targeting of specific groups with different offerings and packages, will meet the needs and the demands of each tourism segment. The increase of satisfied cultural tourists, could contribute to the possibility of revisit and positive word of mouth, and consist main factors for the sustainable tourism development of Greek destinations.

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