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THE ENRICHMENT OF TOUR OPERATORS' PRODUCT BY INCORPORATING SUSTAINABLE ELEMENTS. A TOURISM AND TRAVEL MARKETING APPROACH

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The tour operators offering their services in established and traditional tourism destinations for a long time face the issue of the lack of sustainable elements in their holiday packages and their focus is mostly on the classic 3S model. However, either their target markets or the needs of destinations for sustainable approaches push for the enrichment of the offered packages. Therefore, this paper studies the potential for enrichment of classical tour packages by incorporating components of the destinations natural and cultural resources. To recognize these elements research has been conducted on the impressiveness of natural and cultural resources. The results indicate not only the potential for product enrichment with unused, till now, elements but also suggest the creation of new packages for targeted markets. Facts that are positive for both the tour operators and the prosperity of the destination.

Keywords: *tour operators, holiday package, tourism destination, natural and physical resources, sustainability*

JEL Classification: *L83, M1, O1*

INTRODUCTION

For several countries and regions tourism stands as the only or as the most significant, means to achieve economic development (Bramwell and Lane, 1993). However, the importance of this activity and its sensitivity to a variety of external and internal influences demands a more considerate and sustainable approach to its development.

Several studies have supported the significance of tourism to employment and economic development (Rebollo & Baidal, 2003; Tapper & Font, 2005; Wijk and Persoon, 2006). However, even more scholars

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have indicated that tourism development is also associated with negative effects, especially environmental and social ones. Issues like depletion of resources, pollution, waste generation and alterations or destruction of local cultures (Wijk and Persoon, 2006; Sigala, 2008; Chheang, 2009; Gronau and Kaufmann, 2009) have been addressed.

According to a number of studies, it is the mass tourism activities that are considered responsible for generating the most severe negative impacts of tourism. However, mass tourism is a reality of our time that will continue to expand, meaning that the challenge of sustainable tourism is to find ways to ascribe sustainable attributes to mass tourism activities (Swarbrooke, 1999). For destinations that have followed the model of mass tourism development it is technically impossible to revert to a thoroughly sustainable model. For these destinations sustainability is associated with the protection of the environment, the use of green energy solutions and the general upgrading of its tourism supply, giving emphasis to the historical and cultural resources of the destination. As Clarke (1997) indicates no tourism activity is inherently sustainable, but all tourism activities should strive for sustainability.

As Sigala (2008) suggests, sustainable practices should be incorporated in all tourism enterprises since the image the tourist forms for a tour and a destination is holistic and the tour operator packages rely on the high level of service of all the involved providers.

As Trivun et al., point out (2008, p.175) the tour operators "create final product to be offered to market, transforming attractions and services into products with tailored personality. Specialization in this field of travel has changed the structure of travel industry and hospitality". The creation of the product includes actions related to the tour operator's choice of the destination and selection of holiday package components. It is important for tour operators to choose destinations that have product components which are attractive to their clientele.

As Cooper et al indicate (1993) the attractions generate the visit to a destination, while the other support services and facilities are also essential for tourism, but would not exist without the attractions. This is because demand for tourism products and services derives from those tourists drawn to the area by the attractions and the resources. It is the attractions and the resources of a destination, whether these are manmade features, natural features or cultural resources, or even events, that provide the initial motivation to visit. Traditionally, resources have been a neglected sector for the tourist industry due to their variety and fragmented ownership pattern.

However, the tourism package for mature and established destinations is limited to classic representations of the 3S model, with basic sightseeing options.

It must be noted that even though all inclusive package tours are at a rise (ABTA, 2014) and price appears to be the most significant choice criterion for a destination, probably due to the economic crisis, an attempt to distinguish a destination from its competition and give it an aura of uniqueness remains imperative.

A growing demand for more environmentally and culturally sensitive holiday experiences arises. Many tourists, nowadays, expect sustainability practices to be integrated into their holiday which means that tour operators must comply accordingly to remain competitive (Font and Cochrane, 2005).

Especially, the natural and cultural resources or attractions of a destination are the basis for an effort to offer products with sustainable elements. The incorporation of such elements into package tours is in compliance with the expressed wants and desires of the tourists and will support the destination's effort to promote features others than the 3S and achieve more sustainable forms of tourism.

This study taking into consideration the above will try to demonstrate that a mass tourism destination, focused on the classical sea, sand and sun model of tourism, can be proved much more impressive and interesting to the visitor, concerning both its natural and cultural resources than it was expected. The holiday package "consumption" can be proved valuable for the destination and give information for the enrichment of the tour operators product based on the elements that visitors found most impressive.

TOUR OPERATORS – TOURISM SYSTEM AND THE NECESSITY FOR SUSTAINABLE APPROACHES

Tour operators, in the past, have not been associated with environmental and social sensitivities. However, they claim that they are not the ones who cause conspicuous large-scale damage to the environment (Miller, 2001). Their position being that they are simply intermediaries between customers and service providers and that the environmental and social impacts to the destinations are the responsibility of the local authorities and the various local enterprises and providers. These self-perceptions as well as profit maximization motives and

managerial opinions, are most likely the reason they have been fairly slow to respond to the need for sustainable approaches.

Due to their key position in the tourism system, and their control or effect on the distribution channels and the creation of specific package tours, tour operators are the main link between the various service providers and target markets. They affect business operations, operational management and strategies such as pricing, product policies and promotional activities. Globalization and the various trends for vertical, horizontal and diagonal integration have led to massive global enterprises that have a great potential to influence purchase decisions and travel trends (Aguilo et al., 2001; Baloglu and Mangaloglu, 2001; Cavlek, 2002; Medina-Munoz et al., 2003; Seales and Stein, 2012).

Due to the above, together with the aggressive competition, they are often considered responsible for many of the undesirable effects of tourism development and lack of sustainable approaches to the planning of their packages (Bianchi, 2004; Bastakis et al., 2004; Budeanu, 2005; Dodds and Kuehne, 2010).

Even though, as Mason (2003) states, tour operators have a reputation for being associated with negative impacts and creating problems, they are however, especially the large-scale ones with great economic power, in an ideal position to facilitate the dissemination of sustainable policies and attitudes through the entire tourism industry (Tepelus, 2005; Wijk and Persoon, 2006; Font et al., 2008). In fact, many studies indicate that tour operators are in many ways the key to achieving more sustainable forms of tourism (Swarbrooke, 1999; Wijk and Persoon, 2006; Frey and George, 2010) and managing the expressed travel trends.

It is evident that in order to deal with the negative effects of tourism, the sector requires new tools and methods that minimize harm while allowing the development and management of tourism activities in ways that contribute to sustainable development (Tepelus, 2005).

However, as the literature suggests, most authors and researchers have concentrated on more sustainable practices in regards to the environment, energy consumption, waste management and infrastructure development. Few studies have focused in an attempt to provide information regarding the actual product offered by the destination, through the tour operators and how it could be enriched and expanded to contain elements that will be in accordance with the new demands of tourists for sustainable approaches. The incorporation of elements such as the historical areas, the picturesque villages, historical towns, the variety of physical environment, the mountains and hills, the countryside, etc will offer the opportunity to the visitors to know another aspect of the

product and satisfy their search for environmental and cultural components. At the same time this approach will offer the opportunity to the tour operators to differentiate their product and comply with the expressed needs and wants of their clientele.

This study aims to showcase the areas in which tour operators could guide their efforts in expanding and enriching their product for an already established destination, which has reached the mature phase in its product life cycle, using the proposals of the clientele. Specifically, it will attempt to assess the resources of a destination in terms of the impression they impact to the visitor. Considering that the creation and promotion of new tour packages present certain risks, it is the job of the tour operators' marketing department to try and find ways to minimize them. One possible way is to use the assessment of the visitors themselves regarding the destination's resources, in terms of impressiveness and bet on the best possible options.

The destination examined, which is the island of Corfu, is a typical, insular Mediterranean destination, known mostly for mass tourism packages, with the demand for its product managed mainly by foreign tour operators. Hence it is typical of most Mediterranean destinations where tourism packages promote the beaches and entertainment facilities ignoring other elements that could enrich the product offered. It is a place that apart from its beaches and entertainment facilities has a rich history and impressive cultural past as well as a variety of natural beauty, green environment, picturesque villages and physical resources. However, it is a fact that these are seldom if ever mentioned or promoted in the various package tours to the destination. The majority of the tourism packages offered to its target market are limited to the classic representations of the 3S model, with basic sightseeing options.

The study tries to establish whether a destinations' history, cultural past, natural beauty, green environment, picturesque villages and physical resources can be used in expanding and enriching its product.

The destination under consideration shows fluctuations in arrivals, an element that can be associated to a variety of reasons, among them and most likely the saturation of the product and the interchangeability with other similar destinations. An issue that is common knowledge for mass tourism destinations.

Therefore, an effort to enrich the product with cultural and natural elements could be worthwhile. Such an effort can be achieved through research that will attempt to measure the impression that these resources

have on the visitors, trying to select the most impressive ones to be used in a future product planning.

This study will try to support that a mass tourism destination applying the 3S model can enrich its offer by relying in its natural and cultural resources, since these have yet to be exploited by marketing to the extent of their capabilities. However, considering the limited financial means of destinations and the reticence of tour operators planning departments to invest in new products, the careful selection of such resources is necessary. Research in the opinions of the existing clientele that looks for their proposals to enrich the product is the best method to assure the most effective allocation of the available budgets.

For a tour operator to consider the enrichment of its product and the expansion of its offer some basic practical business requirements must be fulfilled. Requirements that can operate as a stimulus and propel them to design new products. The most important requirement is the possibility to expand their customer base and achieve profits.

In order to meet this requirement a multitude of information and data must be obtained and analyzed. These information and data include the following:

- The destination's existing offer and resources
- The offer and resources should be evaluated as impressive and worthwhile by the prospective visitors in order to be taken into consideration for a future purchase decision
- The tour operator should have already identified the evolving needs and wants of the target markets and be willing to enrich its product to meet them.
- The tour operator should apply proper market research methods to ensure communication with its clientele and the recognition of their needs.

For the design of this research the above considerations where taken into account for the construction of a research instrument, a structured questionnaire, destined to the actual visitor. This questionnaire through its content and structure converted into variables all the above points allowing the testing of specific hypotheses.

The most effective way to answer the issues mentioned is the creation of a research instrument that will transform specific questions into research variables. These questions will ask initially the opinion of the destination's visitors regarding their expectations for the physical and cultural resources and subsequently their evaluations of the same resources after the "consumption" of the chosen package tour. The recording of the difference between the evaluation and the expectation

will reveal not only the assessment of the resources but most importantly the measurement of their impressiveness. This element could be considered the guideline for the exploitation and incorporation of these features to enrich the tourism packages of tour operators.

Firstly, we will examine if there are demographic groups, at both phases of expectation and evaluation, which operate as differentiating factors, so as to examine the existence of possible target groups' characteristics and focus on them. Consequently, the differences between evaluation and expectation for every element of the natural and cultural resources and demographic group will be examined.

FORMATION OF THE HYPOTHESES

Therefore, the following sets of hypotheses will be developed and tested.

A. 1st set of hypotheses

The general statement of the hypotheses is:

H0: There are no significant differences among the several demographic categories concerning the expectation about the natural and cultural resources' impressiveness

VS

H1: There are significant differences among the several demographic categories concerning the expectation about the natural and cultural resources' impressiveness

The expectations about the natural and cultural resources' impressiveness consist of 9 variables and concern the several demographic categories, so the above general statement of hypotheses is divided into an equal number of partial hypotheses (see table 1)

H0: There are no significant differences among the several demographic categories concerning the evaluation of the natural and cultural resources' impressiveness

VS

H1: There are significant differences among the several demographic categories concerning the evaluation of the natural and cultural resources' impressiveness

The evaluation of the natural and cultural resources' impressiveness consists of 9 variables and concerns the several demographic categories,

so the above general statement of hypotheses is divided into an equal number of partial hypotheses (see table 2).

B. 2nd set of hypotheses

The general statement of the hypotheses is:

H0: There are no significant differences between evaluation and expectation within the demographic categories regarding the impressiveness of the natural and cultural resources

VS

H1: There are significant differences between evaluation and expectation within the demographic categories regarding the impressiveness of the natural and cultural resources

For every one of the 9 variables we calculate the difference D=evaluation – expectation and for every difference we test the hypotheses

H0: D=0

versus the alternative

H1: D≠0 at the level of significance, α=0, 05, p≤ 0, 05 (see table 3)

For the testing of the hypotheses, ANOVA analysis and descriptive statistics (paired samples t-test differences) were implemented.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The case study was a mature insular Mediterranean destination and the sample was international first-time visitors. Most of them had booked the package tour from a tour operator. They were chosen by random sampling (from the entire island's visiting population) that gave a reliable sample of 375 respondents (e=5%). All the demographic categories were almost equally represented. The research tool was a dual questionnaire where the first section was completed upon check-in and the last before check-out. The first section allowed us to identify the visitors' expectations for the destination's natural and cultural resources impressiveness while the second one displayed their evaluation for them after the "consumption" of the holiday package.

The questions used a 5-point rating scale that allowed the measurement of impressiveness concerning the natural and cultural resources, 1 being "very unimpressive", 2 "quite unimpressive", 3 "neither impressive, nor unimpressive", 4 "quite impressive" and 5 "very impressive".

FINDINGS

Comments on the expectation

According to the results of ANOVA analysis and regarding the expectations about the impressiveness of the natural and cultural resources it is observed that all the demographic characteristics are differentiating factors. Among them the least differentiating one is the education level, while income and age level are the most differentiating ones. Differences are not observed for the sea and fields.

From a careful observation of the below tables results that the expectations have high ratings for all the resources. All the demographic groups demonstrate high expectations about the impressiveness of the resources sea and mountain and hills. The lower income levels demonstrate higher expectations for the resources under consideration. It appears that they have more expectations from their destination choice since they are the ones seeking the more value for their money. The higher level of education has greater expectations about the impressiveness of the physical environment.

Table 1. Expectations about the Natural and Cultural resources' impressiveness *

		Age			Education level			Income level		
	Total	**under 34**	**35-54**	**55+**	**Secondary**	**Professional**	**University**	**under 20000**	**20000-40000**	**40000+**
Island's capital	3,78	3,77	3,69	3,93	3,82	3,71	3,82	3,87	3,70	3,78
Villages	3,73	**3,63**	**3,69**	**3,87**	3,80	3,63	3,75	**3,83**	**3,63**	**3,76**
Historical areas	3,69	**3,51**	**3,75**	**3,78**	3,76	3,62	3,69	3,79	3,68	3,55
Beaches	3,78	3,79	3,81	3,73	3,81	3,78	3,74	**3,96**	**3,64**	**3,73**
Physical environment	3,84	3,93	3,81	3,81	**3,86**	**3,71**	**3,97**	3,93	3,78	3,81
The sea	4,25	4,25	4,25	4,25	4,23	4,21	4,32	4,31	4,19	4,28
Mountains and Hills	4,23	4,27	4,23	4,19	4,25	4,13	4,32	**4,35**	**4,18**	**4,13**
Countryside	3,91	3,85	3,91	3,97	3,96	3,82	3,95	3,98	3,85	3,92
Fields	3,27	3,37	3,23	3,23	3,26	3,22	3,33	3,31	3,21	3,29

**The significant differences among the ages, level of education and income are highlighted in bold lettering and are the differences which support the respective alternative hypotheses H1 (1st SET of hypotheses) regarding the expectations (ANOVA analysis).*

Comments on the evaluation

According to the results of ANOVA analysis and regarding the evaluations for the impressiveness, the level of education is not a differentiating factor. The level of income, in this case appears to be the more differentiating factor, similarly as with expectations. In accordance with the expectations, the lower incomes have the higher evaluation for the impressiveness of the natural resources.

The lower levels of education consider "quite" and "very" impressive the island capital city, the physical environment, the sea, the mountains and hills and the countryside.

Table 2. Evaluations of the Natural and Cultural resources' impressiveness *

		Age			Education level			Income level		
	Total	**under 34**	**35-54**	**55+**	**Secondary**	**Professional**	**University**	**under 20000**	**20000-40000**	**40000+**
Island's capital	4,03	**4,02**	**3,93**	**4,19**	4,04	3,99	4,05	**4,19**	**3,92**	**3,96**
Villages	3,81	3,75	3,78	3,90	3,81	3,79	3,82	3,93	3,73	3,73
Historical areas	3,79	**3,64**	**3,77**	**3,96**	3,80	3,82	3,75	3,88	3,78	3,67
Beaches	3,73	3,74	3,75	3,68	3,71	3,83	3,62	**3,94**	**3,55**	**3,70**
Physical environment	3,87	4,03	3,83	3,80	3,79	3,83	4,03	4,00	3,81	3,78
The sea	4,35	4,29	4,39	4,33	4,27	4,37	4,42	4,41	4,32	4,29
Mountains and Hills	4,35	4,37	4,31	4,41	4,34	4,30	4,43	4,43	4,28	4,37
Countryside	3,98	3,94	3,96	4,05	4,03	3,92	3,99	4,07	3,90	3,98
Fields	3,24	3,19	3,26	3,25	3,29	3,24	3,18	**3,33**	**3,11**	**3,34**

**The significant differences among the ages, level of education and income are highlighted in bold lettering and are the differences which support the respective alternative hypotheses H1 (1st SET of hypotheses) regarding the evaluation. (ANOVA analysis).*

Comments on the difference between evaluation and expectation

Significant differences are observed for the 5 from the 9 resources examined and there are all positive regarding the total size of the sample. There are alterations for every variable and are all positive apart from this of the beaches. For the purposes of statistical accuracy we will focus mostly on the variables that present statistically significant differences.

Table 3. Significant differences between expectations and evaluations of the Natural and Cultural resources' impressiveness *

		Age			Education level			Income level		
	Total	**under 34**	**35-54**	**55+**	**Secondary**	**Professional**	**University**	**under 20000**	**20000-40000**	**40000+**
Island's capital	**0,24**	**0,26**	**0,22**	**0,28**	**0,23**	**0,26**	**0,24**	**0,31**	**0,22**	0,18
Villages	0,08	0,11	0,08	0,06	0,01	**0,18**	0,06	0,10	0,10	0,01
Historical areas	**0,10**	0,13	0,02	**0,20**	0,05	**0,20**	0,05	0,10	0,10	0,12
Beaches	-0,05	-0,05	-0,06	-0,05	-0,10	0,06	-0,12	-0,02	-0,09	-0,04
Physical environment	0,03	0,10	0,02	-0,01	-0,06	0,12	0,05	0,07	0,03	-0,02
The sea	**0,10**	0,04	**0,14**	0,07	0,04	**0,15**	0,10	0,10	**0,13**	0,01
Mountains and Hills	**0,12**	0,10	0,07	**0,22**	0,09	**0,17**	0,11	0,08	0,10	**0,24**
Countryside	0,07	0,09	0,05	0,07	0,06	0,10	0,04	0,09	0,05	0,06
Fields	-0,02	**-0,18**	0,03	0,04	0,02	0,03	-0,15	0,01	-0,10	0,06

**The significant differences are highlighted in bold and are the differences which support the respective alternative hypotheses H1 (2st SET of hypotheses) regarding the differences between evaluation and expectations for every variable and demographic category.*

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

A general finding is that both expectations and evaluations of the natural and cultural resources of the island received quite high ratings.

- With a significant difference from the others the sea and mountains and hills are set apart.
- At the end of the vacations, evaluations are more positive for five characteristics (island's capital, villages, historical areas, sea, mountains and hills).
- The age groups, the level of education and income are factors which seem to differentiate significantly the answers for varying resources.
- However, these demographic characteristics do not influence the change (increase or decrease) of the ratings between expectation and evaluation.
- The demographic characteristics operate as differentiating factors mostly at the expectations phase.
- The higher ages give more positive evaluations for the island's capital, historical areas and mountains and hills.
- More modifications are observed for the older ages while the most of them are observed into the education level professional,

regarding the phase of the comparison between expectation and evaluation.

- While education is the least differentiating factor at both phases separately, at their comparison the category of professional education is influenced positively for 5 out of the 9 elements of the resources, meaning more than the other educational levels or demographic criteria.
- Medium income respondents and professional level of education ones give lower ratings at both phases in relation to the other levels of the specific demographic characteristics. Statistically significant differences are observed more often to the medium incomes.
- Despite the fact that the observed differences between expectations and evaluations are not statistically significant, it must be noted that the resources of beaches present negative modification for the majority of respondents.

In general (a) the resources are considered impressive at both phases, expectation and evaluation, (b) the more positive evaluations concern the island capital, the sea and the mountains and hills, which impress all the respondents without exception and (c) the evaluations for the impressiveness of the cultural resources, meaning the island capital, villages, historical areas etc. have high ratings.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR TOUR OPERATORS' MARKETING

From the above analysis several significant conclusions are derived. First of all the main selling point of the island, specifically the beaches, receives lower evaluation ratings for its impressiveness. A finding that demonstrates the need to preserve the destination's main selling element but also to enrich the product.

The findings are in accordance with the literature review that supports the need to enrich the product and to preserve the natural and cultural resources of a destination. Visitors describe the most significant, but underused, resources of the island as very impressive and specifically more impressive than they expected. Combining this element with the average responses regarding a basic element of the 3S model, the beaches, supports the statement that destination marketers and tour operators alike should attempt to enrich the product, promoting more unique elements associated with the specific destination.

The findings indicate that tour packages can be differentiated to fit the needs of several groups. For example, higher age respondents are more impressed with the resources and therefore they could be approached with packages containing more sightseeing and cultural options. The results indicate that there is a more sustainable future for mass market destinations that involves the enrichment of its stale 3S model and the preservation of their natural and cultural resources.

The existing clientele of the destination could serve as the basis for the future target markets, essentially we want to achieve repeat visits and loyal customers. A large percentage of the destination's future clientele could come from the existing markets, in terms of demographic characteristics, that would purchase tour packages that incorporate and promote the destination's unused features. Considering that maintaining the existing clientele requires less expenses than to approach new target markets, it is in the tour operators and destinations managers interest to enrich their product.

Also, the findings suggest that the opportunity arises for tour operators to approach new clienteles by designing new packages. Meaning that apart from maintaining the existing clientele through the enrichment of the product they can also expand their clientele by designing packages based mostly on environmental and cultural elements. The high expectation and evaluation rates achieved for "mountains and hills", especially for the groups of older ages, professional education and higher incomes could lead to the creation of eco friendly holiday packages offering bird watching, hiking and other country based activities, as well culture based programs. Additionally, the variable "villages" displayed statistically significant positive differences for the total sample of the respondents, supporting the above opinion. Such packages, introducing alternative forms of tourism, can reduce the seasonality problem of the traditional destinations.

Additionally, the above suggestions would help tour operators to maintain their classic target markets, while at the same time comply with the new trends in tourism and demonstrate their environmental and sustainable sensitivities, disproving the general assumptions to the opposite. While local stakeholders clearly share the responsibility, most tour operators realize that their position as intermediaries, working closely with both tourists and tourism service suppliers allows them to shape the tourism product of a destination and the policies applied regarding the environment and sustainability (Swarbrooke, 1999; Budeanu, 2005; Font and Cochrane, 2005).

However, the achievement of the above goals requires a series of prerequisites in matters of personnel training, product management and marketing, cooperation with local providers and suppliers and cooperation with local authorities and organizations. As Badeley and Font (2011) note, the application of more sustainable practices often stumbles on communication problems between the tour operators and their requirements from local suppliers and more often than not on the low cost approach tour operators have, that passes the cost of sustainability to local suppliers. On the case study, Ionian Eco Villagers, analyzed by Sigala (2013), networking and collaboration between individuals, teams, enterprises, associations and national or regional organizations emerged as essential for the successful application of sustainable and alternative tourism activities. An additional and welcome future development would be increased professionalism in the management of attractions and resources.

However, it is the responsibility of the tour operators' product development department as well as the local authorities to record the impression of the natural and cultural resources, through research, and make them worthy of a visit by incorporating them into tour packages and making the necessary promotional actions, respectively.

In any case the training of the personnel on sustainability issues is imperative. Their training should focus on the selection of destinations which have the potential to offer the components that can minimize the environmental, economic and cultural impacts and on the incorporation of ecological and cultural elements into the holiday package which will be in accordance with the target –markets' demand. Font and Cochrane (2005) explain that the management of sustainable holiday packages necessitates the assessment of the various components of a tour (accommodation, transport services, excursions, natural and cultural resources), in order to determine their potential environmental, social and economic effects, minimize the negative and maximize positive effects to the environment, the local communities and the destination's economy in general.

TOI (Tour Operators Initiative, 2003) suggests that tour operators can support suppliers in their efforts to be more sustainable by raising their awareness on sustainability issues and providing feedback on performance so that they can learn where and how to make improvements. Additionally, they can offer technical support for sustainability actions and create incentives for high performance using contractual procedures to enforce the requirements.

From the above it is clear that the enrichment of the tour operators' product and the application of sustainable elements in their packages is

not just an ethical issue but also a sound business decision. Future research is necessary in order to expand on the issue and test the application of the findings in various destinations and resources.

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