



TOURISMOS is an international, multi-disciplinary, refereed (peer-reviewed) journal aiming to promote and enhance research in all fields of tourism, including travel, hospitality and leisure. The journal is published twice per year by the Interdepartmental Program of Postgraduate Studies in Tourism Planning, Policy & Management of the University of the Aegean, 54 Michail Livanou Street, GR-82100, Chios, Greece. Phone: +30-22710-35322, Fax: +30-22710-35399, E-mail: mstath@aegean.gr, website: <http://www.chios.aegean.gr/tourism>

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Volume 12, Number 1, 2017

Print ISSN: 1790-8418, Online ISSN: 1792-6521



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Museums are essential institutions for the development of the society, and they have been shaping culture for years. Their functions have remained stable throughout their evolution, but today's world is more demanding making them serve as touristic attractions too. University museums have an even greater commitment, not only to society, but also to academic community. This is why such institutions must find a way to be more efficient in their activities and more innovative in their exhibitions, and using strategic planning they can

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COMMUNICATION SKILLS IN THE TOURISM SECTOR – THE ROLE OF TOUR GUIDES IN PRESENTING ATTRACTIONS

*Jasna Potočnik Topler, Violeta Zubanov, Mitja Gorenak
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AN URBAN POLITICAL ECOLOGY APPROACH TO LOCAL DEVELOPMENT IN FAST-GROWING, TOURISM-SPECIALIZED COASTAL CITIES

*Elena Ridolfi, David Sauri Pujol, Achille Ippolito, Efthimia Saradakou &
Luca Salvati*

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Cities everywhere, and especially those located in coastal areas, grow and change rapidly, reconfiguring in many cases through successful urban development strategies. Tourism specialization is considered a driver of urban transformation and environmental change. A key challenge facing cities for years to come will be understanding the critical role that tourism plays in urban policies and planning process. Our study focuses on Urban Political Ecology (UPE) as an emerging framework for analysis of socio-environmental change in metropolitan areas. Specifically, it allows to examine political, social, and ecological processes together with interests, power and relations shaping patterns and processes of urban change. After providing a brief review of UPE and how it expands toward tourism issues, the article examines Benidorm (Spain), Venice (Italy) and Mykonos (Greece) as representative examples of fast-growing, tourism-specialized Mediterranean urban areas. The case studies illustrate how tourism specialization has been for a long time a driver of change closely linked to urban processes. We conclude that UPE

allows a comprehensive analysis of tourism's role, problems and potentials in the context of complex socioeconomic dynamics, contributing to identify effective policies governing future urbanization processes in coastal cities.

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*Vicky Katsoni, Aspa Goula, Olympia Karagianni, Aikaterini Prezani,
Panagiotis Papandoniou & Maria Hatzidimitriou*

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The growing international demand for top medical services in combination with consumers' constant research for competitive prices in such services, has led to the growth of medical and health tourism in Greece, mainly because of the country's Mediterranean climate and its qualified health experts. In accordance with the above, the use of the Internet enables the Greek medical community to expand its marketing and advertising outside its borders. In this paper, the authors try to form a data base of the medical tourism providers in Greece and then they proceed in a website evaluation of the medical tourism providers in order to investigate and appraise their internet appearance. The results of the website evaluation can in turn lead to useful practical results with the aim of providing a successful e-marketing strategy implementation of the medical tourism providers.

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EDITORIAL

The issue comprises eight (8) papers on various aspects of tourism. In the first paper, **Zoran Klarić** aims to review the existing methodologies that are used in different parts of the world and in Croatia to identify and classify tourist attractions and to explain the approach used in the Master Plan and Strategy of Tourism Development of the Republic of Croatia. The Master Plan resulted in a list of approximately 280 spatially-determined attractions of international and national importance in Croatia by using a bottom-up approach as a tool for the classification of tourist attractions based on their type and importance. The paper also suggests that the bottom-up approach of classifying is applicable in other countries especially those with a plethora of diverse attractions in a relatively small territory. In the second paper, **Nancy Rocío Rueda Esteban** highlights the dual commitment of the University museums to society and academia. In order to enhance museums' efficiency and innovation, a guide for integral management based on different management and museological theories is suggested. The guide consists of 7 steps including planning, cultural tourism and marketing elements. Then **Jasna Potočnik Topler, Violeta Zubanov, Mitja Gorenak** and **Mladen Knežević** claim that the involvement of Tour Guides while tourists experience an object/attraction increases the perceived beauty of the certain object/attraction. For the research purposes an experiment took place in which in the first part participants were asked to observe an object from various sides. In the second part participants were exposed to the Guide's description using words, and in the third part they were exposed to the Guide's description using words but they were also being asked to produce movements.

In the fourth paper, **Sairoong Dinkoksung** and **Mehran Nejati** aim to explore the potential of developing health tourism in Ban Kaset Puttana which is a village located in the suburban area of Ubon Ratchathani in Thailand. Through the proactive involvement of local residents a sustainable community-based health tourism solution was developed and the local inhabitants' perception survey that was conducted shows that residents consider the health tourism development impact as positive. In what follows, **Dr. Arup Kumar Baksi** studies Crafttourism where the tourism-product offer is based on acculturation and focuses on the development and validation of a robust scale to measure visitor motivation to enact as craftsmen. Research resulted in a five-factor

(experiential learning, creative thrill, sensory gratification, socialization and self esteem) measurement instrument with acceptable levels of reliability and validity. Then, **Tomás López-Guzmán, Salvador Moral Cuadra, Pablo Cañero Morales** and **Francisco Orgaz-Agüera** focus on olive tourism in rural areas such as Spain. Tourism demand in the field of olive tourism was analysed by presenting the results of a fieldwork in Spain. A tourist survey was conducted in mills, olive oil interpretation centres and thematic museums related to olive oil for the purpose of this paper.

Subsequently, **Marios Sotiriadi** and **Cina Van Zyl** deal with sharing economy in the hospitality industry and conceive it as an alternative offered by the technological development that disrupts tourism industry and has direct effects on hospitality. The paper aims to examine the main issues of this economic and social phenomenon with regard to hospitality industry. Finally, in the eighth paper, **Elena Ridolfi, David Sauri Pujol, Achille Ippolito, Efthimia Saradakou** and **Luca Salvati** explore the political, social, and ecological processes that together with interests, power and relations shape patterns and processes of urban change. Urban Political Ecology (UPE) is used as an emerging framework for analysis of socio-environmental change in metropolitan areas while Benidorm (Spain), Venice (Italy) and Mykonos (Greece) are considered and analyzed as representative case studies of fast-growing, tourism-specialized Mediterranean urban areas.

BOTTOM-UP APPROACH TO CLASSIFICATION OF TOURIST ATTRACTIONS: A CASE STUDY OF CROATIA

Zoran Klarić

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This article discusses methodologies of identification and classification of tourist attractions based on the evaluation of attractions implemented in Croatia for the purpose of the Master Plan and Strategy of Tourism Development of the Republic of Croatia. After reviewing the existing methodologies in identification and classification of tourist attractions in the world and in Croatia, the article explains the approach used in the Master Plan, which has resulted in the list of approximately 280 spatially-determined attractions of international and national importance in Croatia. The list of attractions is used as a tool for the bottom-up approach of classification of tourist attractions in Croatia based on their type and importance. A proposal is made for the general classification of tourist attractions on the basis of the classification of attractions in Croatia as an example of a country with numerous and diverse attractions in a relatively small territory.

Keywords: *attraction, classification, natural heritage, cultural heritage, Croatia.*

INTRODUCTION

Tourist attractions are the main reason for visiting tourist destinations and have crucial role in tourism planning and positioning of a country on the tourist market. The additional importance of tourist attractions lies in the fact that the number of visitors or accessibility can be improved by the efforts of the local community and entrepreneurs, while the natural and cultural



attractions are in most cases the result of the country's position, geology, climate or history. Therefore, all attractions can be better interpreted or adapted to tourist needs, but the majority of attractions are those that were not made artificially. For Croatia as a Mediterranean tourist destination surrounded by countries offering similar tourist product this is especially important, because the final decision about where to go for a holiday is often dependent on the quality of the main attractions.

This work will use the term tourist attraction instead of visitor attraction, because the main sources for the original research come from the various studies dealing with the tourist attractions in Croatia, and because in the Croatian language the original English term "visitor attraction" is translated as "turistička atrakcija", i.e. "tourist attraction". The most important source was the Master Plan and Strategy of Tourism Development of the Republic of Croatia (Master Plan, 2011), produced by a group of authors from the Institute for Tourism Zagreb. It covered all aspects of tourism development of Croatia in thirteen reports, and resulted in concise document "Tourism Development Strategy for the Republic of Croatia until 2020", accepted by the Croatian Parliament on 26 April 2013. One of the tasks of this plan was identification of the main tourist attractions that are the reason why tourists are coming to Croatia, because it is estimated that investing in their accessibility and interpretation could improve the overall quality of Croatian tourism. Another reason was that all relevant research indicated that attractive natural and cultural heritage is the best-valued element of Croatian tourism and the main reason why tourists are visiting Croatia (Tomas Ijeto, 2011).

In order to identify the most important tourist attractions it was necessary to further the research, because existing lists of main attractions in Croatia were not useful for the purpose of the Master Plan. Those lists were either too extensive, embracing hundreds of various attractions in particular regions, or too subjective, dependent on the source of their creation – tourist associations, travel agencies, nature lovers, art historians, etc. Besides identification and evaluation, the issue was also in classifying those attractions caused by the diversity of Croatian tourism resources including various natural and cultural attractions and diverse markets regarding country of origin, age, social background, etc. International experiences in identification and classification of tourist attractions

proved as only partially applicable to Croatia, because each country has some specificities in their approach considering their heritage, overall development, tourism market orientation etc. That was especially the case when comparing Croatia with the most developed countries in tourism terms and those producing the most important theoretical works dealing with the phenomenology of tourism attractions, such as the United Kingdom or the United States.

The most important characteristics distinguishing Croatia from those countries that are related to attractions include:

a) Extremely high orientation on seasonal “sun and sea” tourism, with a consequence that 95% of total 65.862.680 tourist overnight stays refer to seven coastal counties and 86% were made from June 1 to September 30 (First release, 2016),

b) High dependence on foreign market (92%), which is at the same time very diverse - Germany 24%, Slovenia 10%, Austria 9%, Czech Republic 7%, Italy 7%, Poland 7%, all other countries 36% (First release, 2016);

c) Absence of big cities and large artificial attractions such as theme parks and amusement parks;

d) Natural heritage plays a more important role in attracting tourists than man-made attractions.

Such circumstances cause low utilization of existing attractions in comparison with countries more oriented towards cultural or city tourism due to high costs of maintenance and interpretation of attractions caused by seasonality of tourism, multilingual tourist demand and small domestic market. Additional problem is imbalance in the utilization level of tourist attractions between the coastal parts of Croatia, characterized with generally well-equipped and frequently-visited attractions, and the continental part with many potential attractions not prepared for tourist usage at all.

Since the majority of tourists are foreigners on summer holiday near the sea, for Croatia it is difficult to measure the “international importance” of attractions, usually represented in the share of visitors from abroad. Considering imbalances in the presence of tourists in coastal versus continental parts of Croatia, the number of visitors also cannot function as indicator of a real value of certain attraction. High fragmentation of the Croatian tourism market regarding nationality, education, purchasing power and family status

makes the evaluation of attractions even more difficult, because more educated tourists and those coming from more distant countries like the United States or Japan value Croatian heritage generally higher than less-educated tourists and those coming from neighbouring countries such as Austria or Italy.

The situation is additionally complicated because additional preferences of the tourists regarding types of attractions they'll like to visit are also different. For example, the Northern Adriatic coast is popular in rural and cycling tourism, the Central Adriatic coast in ecotourism and nautical tourism, while the Southern Adriatic coast is popular in cultural tourism. Diversity is highlighted by the fact that in a radius of less than 100 kilometres it is possible to see preserved renaissance Mediterranean towns, typically Central-European baroque churches, secluded beaches, virgin forests or rocky mountains. Therefore the territory of Croatia represent a good model for the evaluation of the methodologies for the classification of tourist attractions. In the Master for Croatia the classification of attractions was performed by using a methodology of bottom-up approach, what resulted in interesting findings about the phenomena of tourist attractions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Although there are many articles and books dealing with the phenomena of tourist/visitor attractions, the majority of them deal with already recognized and the most important attractions (Weidenfeld, 2010). Few authors focused on evaluation and classification of partly developed attractions, and the methodologies used are different, depending on the country of origin. In more developed countries like Great Britain (Leask 2010) or Australia (Benckendorff & Pearce, 2003) the interest was focused more on the developed attractions, and in less developed countries like Turkey (Alaeddinoglu & Selcuk Can, 2010) or Croatia (Kušen, 2002) also on potential attractions. Many authors noted the deficiency of theoretical works, stressing that many articles dealing with the phenomenology of attractions suffer from a lack of theoretical depth and empirical foundation (Richards, 2002). Therefore the term attraction is interpreted in various ways by different authors.

According to Richards (2002, pp. 1048) attractions are “central to the tourism process, providing activities and experiences and a means of collecting consumption statistics”, and according to Hu & Wall (2005) a permanent resource, which is developed and managed for the primary purpose of attracting visitors. Similarly, Middleton and Clarke (2001) define attractions as permanent resources managed for the visitor’s enjoyment, entertainment and education and Boniface and Cooper (2001) as “raison d’être”, or main purpose of tourism, which give rise to excursion circuits and create an industry of their own. There are some more complex definitions like the one that defines attractions as physical or cultural features of a particular place that individual travellers perceive as capable of meeting one or more of their specific leisure-related needs (Harris and Howard, 1996).

Tourist attractions are sometimes defined by institutions. For example, the British Tourist Authority defines an attraction “as a place where it is feasible to charge admission for the whole purpose of sight-seeing, with remark that such attraction must be open to public without prior booking for published periods each year and must be a single business under a single management” (Visitor Attraction Trends in England 2013, pp. 2). Such precise definition insinuates that Great Britain is a country abundant with well-developed tourist attractions, where it is necessary to limit the term attraction only for the fully-equipped locations. Therefore, many authors do not treat as attractions those that are not subject to fees or have an insufficient number of international visitors (Benckendorff P. & Pearce P., 2003) or temporary attractions such as festivals and sport manifestations (Swarbrooke J., 2001).

For countries having many undeveloped attractions or very few charging fees, such an approach will result in the exclusion of many important attractions. In a case of Croatia it would result in the exclusion of top attractions such as the old towns of Dubrovnik and Split, both protected as UNESCO World Heritage sites. Although there are no official numbers, according to estimations based on the number of tourist visitors (First release, 2016), the number of cruise passengers (Dubrovnik and Split port authorities, 2015) and approximation by the author of the number of excursionists and transit passengers, the total number of visitors is about two million per year in Split and more than three million in Dubrovnik. An

additional reason for a more broad view when using the term “attraction” in Croatia lies in the fact that sun/beach holiday makers are much less oriented on visiting attractions than tourists on cultural holidays or city breaks (Richards, 2002).

A different approach can be seen also in the definition of attractions by Croatian State Bureau of Statistics, defining them as “an attractive element in a certain tourist destination, such as a cultural-historical heritage, natural entity or phenomenon, performance or event, which either attracts future tourists or is a mainstay of the development of tourism on that destination” (First release 4.3.2/11). In the most important work on the methodology of evaluation and classification of tourist attractions in Croatia by Kušen (2010), the system of tourist attractions included also elements like climate, sea, wildlife or the culture of life and work. Kušen (2015) stressed the problem of the fact that the same type of feature like cave, waterfall, fortress or church can function as important tourist attraction subject to fee, or just as a potential resource, dependent on accessibility, marketing position, available funds for visitor facilities etc. Therefore in some remote areas far from tourist flows some resources will need to be identified first in order to be utilized as tourist attractions (Alaeddinoglu, & Selcuk, 2010).

THE PROBLEMS IN EVALUATION AND CLASSIFICATION OF ATTRACTIONS

Besides the difficulties in identifying attractions, there is also a problem in evaluating their importance, usually those of international, national, regional or local. Generally, the term international is used for attractions that are drawing international visitors from longer distances and are fully equipped with service and interpretative facilities, while the term national is used mainly for attractions that involve visits lasting half a day or less which are equipped with basic facilities (Fyall A., Garrod B., Leask A., 2008). Attractions of regional and local importance are even less important and equipped, with remark that the same attractions can be differently evaluated depending on the source

There is a problem also in classification of attractions by type. Although basic classification into natural and man-made is accepted worldwide, when it comes to more detailed classifications there are

many differences. For example, in Great Britain the main features considered under the term “natural attractions” are gardens, national parks and forests (Leask A., 2010), and there are no special categories for geological phenomena that are the most important natural attractions in Croatia. Therefore, E. Kušen lists geology, water, climate, flora and wildlife as the five main categories of natural attractions, with forests and parks being just subcategories of flora (Kušen 2010). Similarly, artificial attractions such as theme parks are highlighted as one of the most important types of attractions in Great Britain (Leask, 2010), but in Croatia they play marginal roles and are therefore treated just as a part of supporting tourist facilities as well as casinos (Kušen 2010).

In the Master Plan of Croatian tourism the focus was on attractions which can be spatially defined, because even spatially undefined attractions such as climate or a way of life also consist of attractions that are represented in a physical form - warm sea through beautiful beaches, vibrant lifestyle through well-known festivals, etc. Large attractive areas are similarly represented with landmarks or key attractions - in Plitvice Lakes NP it is a small zone near waterfalls, in Dubrovnik the small area surrounded by city walls, similarly like the Old Faithful geyser in Yellowstone NP or Western Wall in the old town of Jerusalem (Shoval N., Raveh A., 2004).

Although Kušen's (2015) system of tourist attractions based on 16 main categories and 270 subcategories was used for the identification of main attractions in Croatia, it proved not useful for their classification due to the huge imbalances of particular categories. For example, in four of a total 16 categories (climate, the culture of life and work, attractions for attractions, para-attractions) it was not possible to identify a single attraction in Croatia of international or national importance, and in eight categories there were only one or two attractions (Kušen 2010). Two categories (geological features and cultural/religious institutions) cover almost all important attractions in Croatia and overlap with the remaining two categories (protected natural heritage and protected cultural heritage). Therefore a bottom-up approach as a tool for the classification of tourist attractions proved as more useful for the purposes Master plan, especially for the designation of tourist

attractions that should be equipped with necessary service and interpretative facilities.

IDENTIFICATION OF MAIN TOURIST ATTRACTIONS IN CROATIA

Besides the necessity for finding a new model of classification of attractions, there was a need for an objective approach to the process of establishing criteria for their evaluation. In the case of Croatia the main problem was that the majority of potential objective indicators, like the number of visitors, share of foreign tourists or equipment for visitors, proved as not useful.

- The precise number of visitors is not available for the majority of attractions, and even if it is it can give the wrong impression due to its high dependence on the location. For example, the old towns of Rovinj and Poreč in Istria are well visited due to the high number of tourists residing in the surrounding areas (round 500.000 during the year each), although they are as attractions not superior to relatively remote island towns of Hvar with 150.000 and Korčula with only 70.000 tourists (First release, 2016).
- The same types of attractions are more visited in the areas with developed coastal tourism. For example, among 15 underground caves in Croatia equipped for tourist visits, two most visited are Biserujka on the island of Krk and Baredine in Istria, both having slightly more than 30.000 visitors (First release, 2012), and located near the big tourism resorts. At the same time the most attractive but remote Cerovac Caves in mountain region of Lika have only about 10.000 visitors. The same rule applies to important churches, palaces, museums, etc.
- The profits generated by attractions can be used as an indicator only in few cases where visitation fees are applicable, and for the majority of cultural attractions like historic towns, churches and monuments this is not the case. Another problem is that ticket prices are not an indicator of the real value of attraction, because higher fees are usually a consequence of additional services, location and especially the season - the ticket prices in summer are sometimes two times more expensive than in winter period.

- The share of foreigners as an indicator of international importance of particular attraction is irrelevant due to the fact that in coastal part of Croatia foreigners represent more than 90% of all tourists. Since the share of foreign tourists is lower than 45% in the majority of continental counties (First release 4.3.2, 2013), it can produce wrong impression that attractions in Continental Croatia are less important in general.
- The equipment of attractions with parking, information and interpretation facilities is often not useful as an indicator of their tourist importance, because it is more dependent on the funds available in local community, then on the attractiveness of the site. Therefore in coastal areas almost all interesting sites are well equipped and in Continental Croatia even some attractions of great value have no basic facilities.
- Various subjects involved in the evaluation of main attractions in Croatia shown different views regarding which attractions are the most important, especially domestic versus foreign sources. For example, In Croatia's capital Zagreb the most popular museum is the Technical Museum with 160.000 visitors per year, but in the edition of Lonely Planet Croatia from 2013 it was not mentioned as an important site at all. At the same time the innovative Museum of Broken Relationships is listed by Lonely Planet as the top museum attraction in Zagreb, although it was visited by less than 80.000 visitors.

Official international recognition of attractions, such as UNESCO World Heritage status, proved also as irrelevant, because some sites like Monument of land division Stari Grad Plain on the island of Hvar are not subject to fee and attract only small number of visitors, and some attractions not on the UNESCO list like Roman amphitheatre in Pula has almost 300.000 visitors per year.

Table 1. Croatian attractions subject to fee with more than 50.000 visitors in 2011/2014

| PROTECTED AREAS | visitors in 2011 | MUSEUMS | visitors in 2014 | OTHER ATTRACTIONS | visitors in 2011 |
|-------------------------------|------------------|--|------------------|----------------------------|------------------|
| Plitvice Lakes National Park | 1.083.451 | Museums in Dubrovnik | 377.630 | Dubrovnik city walls | 723.125 |
| Krka National Park | 683.739 *) | Diocletian palace cellars in Split | 218.528 | Pula Amphitheatre | 285.982 |
| Lokrum Island Special Reserve | 203.868 | Museums of Croatian Zagorje | 168.532 | Zagreb ZOO | 253.394 |
| Brijuni National Park | 156.549 | Technical Museum "Nikola Tesla" Zagreb | 163.312 | Osijek ZOO | 89.500 |
| Paklenica National Park | 118.288 *) | Museum of Arts and Crafts Zagreb | 126.243 | Trakošćan Castle | 70.975 |
| Telašćica Nature Park | 103.181 *) | Šibenik City Museum | 112.382 | Dubrovnik Aquarium | 57.013 |
| Mljet National Park | 95.498 | Museum of Contemporary Art Zagreb | 104.169 | Saint Donatus Church Zadar | 53.869 |
| Kornati National Park | 91.780 *) | Modern Gallery Zagreb | 99.633 | | |
| Vransko Lake Nature Park | 62.040 *) | Archaeological museum Zadar | 96.645 | | |
| | | Zagreb City Museum | 74.032 | | |
| | | Croatian Museum of Tourism Opatija | 59.415 | | |

*) Parts of the national/nature park area can be visited without paying a fee

Sources: First release number 4.4.8/4 (2012) and Museum Documentation Center Web Site (2015); for protected areas and other attractions newer data was not available, since the Croatian Bureau of Statistics stopped collecting such data after 2012

Bearing in mind all mentioned problems, it was obvious that it is almost impossible to designate objective and measurable criteria that can be used for the identification of the main attractions. Usage of expert opinion methodology based on scoring, like in case of Van Lake in Turkey (Alaeddinoglu A, & Selcuk Can A., 2010), was

considered as a good solution, but difficult to apply for the whole of Croatia and for so many different types of attractions. Therefore it was decided that the work on identification and evaluation of attractions should include a combination of all available resources and materials, filtered by the experts of the Institute of Tourism. The choice of main attractions was then bolstered by the suggestions made by representatives of 21 Croatian county tourist offices and other tourism experts.

THE MATERIALS USED FOR THE EVALUATION OF ATTRACTIONS

Having in mind the problems in identification of main attractions in Croatia, various sources were used in order to highlight those of international and national importance. The materials consisted of four main groups:

1. Materials produced by relevant institutions dealing with the heritage protection, primarily lists of natural and cultural heritage by the Croatian Ministry of Environment and Nature Protection and Ministry of Culture;
2. Materials produced by relevant institutions responsible for organizing tourist activities, primarily by the national and regional tourist boards and unions of tourist guides;
3. All other domestic and foreign materials dealing with tourist attractions in Croatia like tourist brochures, tourist guides, web sites; and
4. Materials of the Institute for tourism dealing with tourist attractions.

Especially important sources were studies dealing with the identification of tourist attractions that should be sign-posted with “brown” signs. The preparation of those studies between 1999 and 2005 was supported by the Croatian National Tourist Organization in order to improve tourist signage that was at that time very rare in Croatia. The work included ten of a total of 21 Croatian counties – Varaždin, Krapina-Zagorje, Karlovac, Međimurje, Zagreb, Primorje-Gorski kotar, Šibenik-Knin, Zadarska, Dubrovnik-Neretva and Osijek-Baranya. Having in mind limited funds, in those studies it was decided that only attractions with international or national

importance should be included in the sign-posting plans and have priority in equipment with the minimum of infrastructural and interpretative facilities.

The decision which attractions meet those criteria was made by experts from the Institute of Tourism and county tourist associations after visiting the attractions in particular county. Since the counties were different in size and regarding their resource basis, the number of attractions chosen for marking with “brown” signs was ranging from seven attractions in the smallest continental Medimurje County to 45 attractions in the largest and most complex coastal Primorje-Gorski Kotar County. Although some important attractions were not included in the sign-posting system on main roads, like attractions on the small islands and in the central areas of larger towns, the methodology used in those studies proved useful for the identification of main attractions. Its application on the remaining 11 counties resulted with approximately 90 international and 190 national attractions in Croatia and they were almost all visited by the author of this work between the years 1999 and 2015.

CLASSIFICATION OF TOURIST ATTRACTIONS

Considering big number of attractions, in the Master plan (2011) it was necessary to organize them into few easily understandable categories. Three basic types included nature based attractions, culture based attractions and manifestations, and further division 13 thematic subgroups, as seen in Table 2. Especially important types of attractions for Croatia like Water in Karst that includes the two most popular Croatian national parks Plitvice Lakes were separated as independent thematic subgroup, and themes without representative attraction of a higher degree in Croatia like amusement parks or winter resorts were omitted.

Having in mind the bottom-up approach of classifying Croatian attractions, it can be interesting to see how this classification can be applicable as a model for other countries. The main issue was the addition of attractions that are inexistent in Croatia due to its climate conditions such as glaciers, fjords and coral reefs, or due to its different cultural heritage such as Buddhist temples or Indian shrines. It was also necessary to add attractions like skyscrapers or theme parks that are inexistent or poorly represented in Croatia. In spite of those additions, there were few attractions that need to be

put in a group not represented in Croatia, because fjords and coral reefs are type of coastal forms, as well as shrines and temples are religious objects like churches and mosques. As presented in Table 3, the only types of attractions that are not present in Croatia are glaciers and city skylines, while some other types are present, but without a singular attraction of international or national importance.

Table 2. Main spatially-defined attractions in Croatia classified by theme

| | theme | attractions |
|--|---------------|--|
| | sea and coast | island national and nature parks (Brijuni, Kornati, Mljet) |
| | | attractive beaches (Zlatni Rat, Makarska Riviera) |
| | | the whole Croatian Adriatic Sea as nautical destination |
| | water in | national parks Plitvice and Krka with their waterfalls |

| | | |
|-------------------------------------|---|--|
| nature based attractions | karst | attractive rivers in karst (Mrežnica, Zrmanja, Cetina) Imotski lakes, Gacka springs and other lakes and springs |
| | attractive ter-rain features with forests | karst mountain parks (Velebit, Paklenica, Biokovo) Papuk, Medvednica and other continental mountains attractive caves (Blue Cave Biševo, Cerovac, Grabovača) |
| | lowland rivers and swamps | Kopački Rit and Lonjsko Polje nature parks big rivers of Pannonian plain (Danube, Sava and Drava) |
| | other natural attractions | city parks and arboretums (Trsteno, Zagreb, Split) landscapes and wine routes (Istra, Pelješac, Međimurje) thermal springs (Tuhelj, Sveti Martin, Naftalan Ivanić) |
| culture based attractions | ancient and prehistoric heritage | Diocletian's Palace in Split, Pula amphitheater and other archeologic sites (Stari Grad, Issa, Salona, Narona) Hušnjakovo, Vučedol and other prehistoric sites |
| | medieval heri-tage of the Adriatic area | old towns Dubrovnik, Trogir, Zadar and others Šibenik and Poreč basilica, and other attractive churches rural heritage (Motovun, Lubenice, Primošten, Ston) |
| | baroque heri-tage of conti-nental Croatia | Upper and Lower Town in Zagreb, "Tvrd̄a" in Osijek and other (Varaždin, Samobor, Karlovac, Požega, Ilok) castles of continental Croatia (Trakošćan, Veliki Tabor) |
| | other cultural attractions | fortresses (Senj, Šibenik, Knin, Klis, Slavonski Brod) Opatija coastal promenade memorials (Vukovar, Jasenovac) |
| | museums and galleries | special museums (Krapina Neanderthals, Nikola Tesla museum in Smiljan, "Old village" Kumrovec) art and history museums (Zagreb, Dubrovnik, Split) |
| other attractions (manife-stations) | culture and art manifestations | theatre festivals (Dubrovnik, Split, Zagreb) classic musical events (Varaždin, Osor, Zadar) film festivals (Motovun, Pula, Zagreb, Vukovar) |
| | religious and ethnographic events | religious events (Marija Bistrica, Trsat, Sinj, Aljmaš) folklore events (Đakovo, Vinkovci, Varaždin, Sinj) Rijeka carnival and other (Dubrovnik, Samobor) |
| | other events and manifestations | ATP Umag, International championships in various sports Zrće in Novalja and other summer beach festivals (Split, Tisno, Pula) |

Source: Master Plan and Strategy of Tourism Development of the Republic of Croatia – Book 3 (2011). Croatian tourism and its competitive environment, Institute for Tourism Zagreb

Almost every larger country can fit in proposed structure with representatives in all important types of attractions – geological forms, scenic rivers, historic towns, religious objects, museums, art festivals. For example, on the similar list of Bulgaria with 525 main attractions (Bulgaria in Photos, 2012) all attractions fit in this scheme, only museums, churches and monuments have stronger presence than in a case of Croatia, probably due to the intention of the publisher to motivate tourists visiting attractions subject to fees. The only exceptions that cannot fit in the structure are smaller countries and those with only a few equipped attractions. Therefore the lack of representatives in certain categories can be a signal that it is necessary to improve this category of tourism, as it was a case of Croatia with theme parks.

Table 3. Proposed general classification of attractions

| basic groups of attractions | subgroups of attractions | types of attractions | attractions in Croatia |
|--|---|--|------------------------|
| Natural Heritage | Mainland Features | mountains and hills | 8 |
| | | unique geological forms | 9 |
| | | caves and holes | 7 |
| | Coastal Features | attractive coasts and islands | 13 |
| | | beaches | 15 |
| | Inland Water | scenic rivers | 11 |
| | | canyons and gorges | 10 |
| | | waterfalls and springheads | 8 |
| | | scenic lakes | 4 |
| | | glaciers | - |
| | | mineral waters and geysers | 0 |
| | Natural Environment | swamps and marshes | 4 |
| | | forests | 6 |
| | | grasslands and deserts | 0 |
| Cultural Heritage (Man-Made Attractions) | Urban and Rural Complexes | historic towns | 23 |
| | | authentic rural areas | 14 |
| | | archaeological and prehistoric sites | 11 |
| | | big cities / skylines | - |
| | Individual Monuments | religious objects | 26 |
| | | fortified structures | 10 |
| | | castles and palaces | 8 |
| | | infrastructural and productive objects | 3 |
| | | offices and residential buildings | 0 |
| | Cultural Institutions and Memorials | museums and galleries | 12 |
| | | memorials and monuments | 7 |
| | | theatres, operas and concert halls | 2 |
| Other Attractions (Tourist Infrastructure and Events) | Events and Manifestations | art festivals | 4 |
| | | folklore and gastronomic events | 5 |
| | | religious events | 3 |
| | | historic events and carnivals | 3 |
| | | entertainment events and festivals | 6 |
| | | business events | 0 |
| | | sports events | 1 |
| | Health, Sports and Amusement Facilities | hotels and other accommodation | 8 |
| | | health resorts and spas | 3 |
| | | winter resorts | 0 |
| | | stadiums and sport halls | 2 |
| | | amusement parks, casinos | 0 |
| | Tourist paths | hiking and educational trails | 3 |
| | | cycling and equestrian trails | 2 |
| | | panoramic roads and railroads | 1 |

CONCLUSIONS

Tourist attractions are understood differently in various countries and cultures and the approach to these phenomena is different depending on the overall approach. Many differences are the result of various levels of tourist utilization of attractions, which is a consequence of the overall development of the area, accessibility, closeness to the tourist market etc. In the widest view tourist attractions are seen as phenomena covering all aspects of attractiveness, such as climate conditions or safety, and in the narrowest view attractions refer only to places designed for tourists that charge admission. Besides the nonexistence of a clear definition of what a tourist attraction really is, there is no unique approach regarding the identification, evaluation and classification of attractions. This is caused by the impossibility of precise measuring the importance of attractions, since for only a few attractions there is available data about the number of visitors. At the same time objective qualitative evaluation is difficult because various subjects have different opinions about the importance of particular attractions dependent of their profession, age, nationality, etc.

In spite of various approaches towards the phenomena of tourist attractions it is in most cases possible to reduce the term attraction to relatively small features visible in space. That can be done because large spatial or linear attractions such as national parks, scenic rivers or historic towns consist of landmarks and sites like unique rocks, canyons, churches, castles. Even non-spatial forms of attractions such as climate or the way of life are based on concrete attractions like equipped beaches or inspiring events. How many attractions in particular country or region will deserve status of international or national importance is a difficult task, but the only way to minimize subjectivity is consultation of all the possible sources and visitation of all attractions that should be evaluated.

The classification of attractions demands a different approach concerning specific circumstances in each country or region, and very often it is not possible to use previously-formulated models designed elsewhere. Therefore, the bottom-up approach based on adaptation of the methodology of classification on the existing attractions in particular country is more useful, although it will result in different models of classifications in each area. The biggest differences can be expected between countries predominantly oriented toward beach tourism and those mainly oriented toward

city tourism. Since almost all basic types of attractions are present everywhere, a structure of main types of tourist attractions presented in this work can be applied with some modifications also outside Croatia. Such classification can be useful for comparing between countries, especially for the purpose of highlighting strong and weak spots of tourism. Since tourist attractions are the basis of tourism development, comparable methods of their identification, evaluation and classification can be a good tool for tourism planning in general.

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A MANAGEMENT GUIDE FOR UNIVERSITY MUSEUMS FOCUSED IN THE CULTURAL TOURISM

THE CASE OF THE “MUSEO DE ARTE DE LA UNIVERSIDAD NACIONAL”

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Museums are essential institutions for the development of the society, and they have been shaping culture for years. Their functions have remained stable throughout their evolution, but today's world is more demanding making them serve as touristic attractions too. University museums have an even greater commitment, not only to society, but also to academic community. This is why such institutions must find a way to be more efficient in their activities and more innovative in their exhibitions, and using strategic planning they can become self-sufficient over time. In order to offer an option, a guide for integral management is proposed as a tool with 7 steps, including planning, cultural tourism and marketing elements.

Keywords: *University museums, cultural businesses, cultural tourism, integral management, cultural tourism.*



INTRODUCTION

As well as being a space for teaching, research and conservation, museums have held great importance for the development of culture for many years. However, today's world demands higher quality, as well as more communication and innovation in their exhibitions and activities, in order for them to affect development and become tourist attractions; these is why the museum management of today must blend the roles of protecting and attracting (Gilmore, Rentschler, 2002). University museums have the same functions as regular museums, but have certain characteristics that lend a particularity to their activities: they have a greater responsibility to the academic community, while at the same time belonging to a fountain of knowledge: universities (Stanbury, 2010).

Strategic management is a combination of actions and decisions that may lead the organization to competitive advantage in a determined market (Powell 2001; Wheelen and Hunger 2004 in Kong, 2008). While, the study and application of strategic planning has been broad in general entrepreneurial world, the research in non-profit organizations has been limited (Kong, 2008). Strategic planning could be a tool to organise non-profit organization because it may help managers and leaders to face the complex reality and challenges that comes with the everyday activity (Backman et al. 2000; Salamon et al. 1999; Stone et al. 1999 in Kong, 2008). It might help them to achieve their goals and strategies, to carry out their functions efficiently, thus creating a benefit for local and academic communities, while forming part of a touristic destination recognised both nationally and internationally. When entering the organisational and economic world (Rentschle, Geursen, 1999), museums have shown several situations and problems not related to their main activities (Janes & Sandell, 2007).

Because of these recurrent circumstances as cultural and touristic organisations, a possible solution is posed for university

museums: a guide for the integral management of the university museums in Bogota, focused on cultural tourism. This guide is based on different management and museological theories, the development of museums in Colombia and the study of strategic planning to reach a mid-point where the museum becomes a self-sustainable cultural institution, capable of promoting a community's local and regional development through the valuing of what they represent. The case of study is the Museo de Arte at the Universidad Nacional, (MAUN in this article), founded in 1970 as part of a reform in favour of culture and interdisciplinary approaches (Museo de Arte de la Universidad Nacional, n.d.).

METHODOLOGY

The article was made based on a conceptual and theoretical framework that helped the comparison and crossed analysis of concepts in management, tourism and museological studies that allowed the breakdown and formulation of a guide that may help the museums to organize their daily activity; this guide was applied to a specific case study.

The investigation involved observation of the case study and the comparison of its activity with other major contemporary art museums with a benchmark in order to study museums from over the world and determine which the characteristics for successful museums and university museums are. Two different analysis were made: (1) a direct study was made with four university museums: The "Museo Universitario de la Universidad de Antioquia", "Museo Universitario de Arte Contemporáneo de la Universidad Autónoma de México", "Yale University Art Gallery" in New Haven and "Art Museum Institute of Chinese Studies"; (2) an indirect benchmarking with two successful museums in modern art: The "Guggenheim Museum" and the "MOMA" from New York. The selected elements for the benchmark evaluation answered to the needs of museums in order to give a service to the community and to the tourists, capable

of developing activities for the cultural development of a society and accessible to everyone. The variables where: the management, the services offered to the public, the price of these services and the marketing; being these variables the centre of the proposed guide.

With these two sources of information - the conceptual research and the benchmarking - the guide was developed in order to fulfil the need of the museums, needs that were identified in management, marketing and museological fields. This guide is based in strategic planning concepts from different authors such as Lord and Markert (2007), Isabel Bravo (1995), Barry & Dexter Lord (1998), Kotler (2001), Newman (cited in Flores, Gómez, 2008), Lambert (2000, cited in Flores & Gómez, 2008), Kauffman (2003 cited in Flores & Gómez, 2008).

The investigation of the case study begun by an extensive data recollection from the museum archives in order to study thoroughly the history of the museum, and the different activities carried out in each management period. Interviews to the museum staff were also conducted in order to identify the main problems and need of the organization, but also the strengths and opportunities. The observation of the activities of the museum were made permanently during one year in order to understand the complexity of the reality in the environment where it develops its functions.

After all these process, the guide was applied to the *Museo de Arte* at the *Universidad Nacional*, (MAUN), and a series of strategies were proposed to enhance and strengthen the management, marketing and cultural and touristic activities. The findings are described below.

MUSEUMS AS A CULTURAL BUSINESS IN TOURISM

Nowadays, museums must be sustainable in the long term, they should learn to become strategically organised, based on planning and management; they should make proper use of marketing and acquire deep knowledge on their target to become well-known,

besides this they have to justify the funding they require and they must change their role in the modern society (Waltl, 2006). They should also learn to use the tools from the modern world, improving the quality of their exhibitions and services offered to visitors.

Museums used to be institutions responsible for protecting and conserving objects of historic or artistic value, they were “custodial institutions” (Gilmore, Rentschler, 2002); they were organised by curators and for curators, because they saw the exhibitions as a window of their own knowledge (Miles, 2001). But, today museums should be created by curators and educators for visitors (the community or tourists), because museums have been included as an option to enjoy in the free time of people (Asagua & Raussel, 2006). Furthermore, to motivate people about the museum, these institutions must differentiate from the competition in order to attract non-expert visitors (Pusa & Uusitalo, 2014): local community and tourists.

Through museums’ evolution and history, museum theories begun to emerge and diversify (Asagua, 2006), from the Anglo-Saxon, French and United States models, which paved the way for development in the following years. For some, they were a temple for education and artistic contemplation (French museology), for others a research and scientific centre (Anglo Saxon museology); and for the North American museology the management and marketing take their place to preserve tradition and memory for the community (Asagua, 2006). In the other hand, the Latin-American museology takes another course: museums become institutions for education and the acknowledgment of local richness to rebuild the past (López, Murriello, 2005).

In 1989, Peter Vergo published his book “The New Museology”, with this new theory, museums transformed and became community institutions that work for that same community, supporting its development (cited in Stam, 2005). With the modern museological trends, a new explosion of thinkers came, that made a drastic change in museum management that includes, among other

things (marketing, promotion, strategic planning, etc.) (Davis, 2006), the link to social responsibility and the search for profitability in museums - something that seemed impossible until now.

It is within these new ideologies that a relationship between economic profitability and museums started to develop, Peacock y Godfrey begun the study of the “economy of museums” in 1974 (Asagua, s.f.); Stephen Weil identified in 1983 three parallel crises that museums have to confront: “money, power and identity” (Harrison, 2005). The problem is not only the cultural representation of societies, but also their self-sustainability, today there are two different economical sources: state funding or private patronage (Poisson-de Haro, Normandin, & Coblenz, 2013), but the museums should try to diversifying the sources of investment withy “New audiences, products, venues and multi-art experiences” (Radbourne, 1997 cited in Gilmore, Rentschler, 2002).

Theories more concerned with current issues such as eco-museums (Davis, 2006) also begun to emerge, reaching critical museology that aims to renew the role of museums in the modern world (Flórez, 2006). It is, then, necessary for 21st century museums to be open minded and learn to adapt to the new needs of the society they serve. Museums are no longer sacred places; they are places to exchange opinions and visions, where visitors are active participants in the institutions’ activities (Hernandez, 2007). Thus, new museology becomes secondary, as critical museology “emerges from the constant crisis of the concept of the museum as a space for interaction between the public and a collection” (Florez, 2006: 231). The museum becomes a space for dialogue rather than contemplation; a place for a divided and dichotomous society to exchange ideals and beliefs. As argued by Bunch & Clifford: the museum is a “convergence and contact zone” (cited by Florez, 2006: 232).

Therefore, the museums functions are changing and evolving: being centres for learning and research, and meeting points. In fact, following Fernandez (2005) museums are now recognised as leisure

destinations and cultural touristic attractions, as the centre of regional pride and architectural icons, either isolated, or as part of a network. Due to these modern-day demands, museums must learn to organise their activities and recognise their priorities and ultimate goals. For this to happen, museums need to be seen as cultural organizations entering the world of strategic planning. They must learn about marketing, promotion, market segmentation and audience targeting. However, as Colbert stated in 1993, the marketing in cultural institution can't be the same as in any other institutions because they create the product and then look for the audience interested in it, unlike commercial organizations (Mejón, Fransi & Johansson, 2004).

In museum management, there are four approaches: business, strategic planning, marketing, and strategic management (Reussner, 2003). As Lord and Markert explained, the process of strategic planning is the best instrument to determine the course of action for the next three to five years and could be effective stirring the staff and the museum toward common goals improving the performance in its activities (2007). The museum must have foundation statements such as mission, vision and mandate and they must know the functions and objectives they want to fulfil (2007). All of these statements have to be directed towards the needs of the community they serve, looking for competitiveness and sustainability in long term (Cinnamon, 2008). Willie Newman presents a more simple model, but non the less allows to present possible solutions to a problem studied in advances, in this model there are 4 steps: problem diagnose, the choosing of possible solutions, the forecast of each solution and the final choosing (Álvarez, 2002, cited in Flores & Gómez, 2008).

For Isabel Bravo there are 4 stages in the museum management: planning, organization, motivation and control (1995). However, according to Barry & Dexter Lord having mission, vision, mandate, goals, objectives and functions is mandatory, and evaluations must be made at the end of a period of time (1998). Tom Lambert decided

to create a model of strategic planning that takes the organizations from where it is, to an ideal future, it has eight steps: vision, actual position, mission, objectives, alternatives, strategies, tactics and it ends in the tactic plan (Lambert, 2000, cited in Flores & Gómez, 2008).

Kauffman (2003) proposes a model that starts with the diagnosis to continue with the vision, the mission, the values and the cultural philosophy; the formulation of the objectives, the goals, the plans and programs, to end with the management, control and evaluation of the strategies (cited in Flores & Gómez, 2008). Is also possible to study the strategic planning from a marketing approach, Kotler & Kotler proposed a process including internal and external analysis, of the strengths and weaknesses of the organization, formulation of the mission, vision and goals, to continue with the strategies and the design of the marketing system such as information, planning and control (2001).

In spite of the development of the strategic planning in the entrepreneurial world, this tool haven't been fully applied and studied in organizations such museums (Reussner, 2002), much less in university museums, where the visitors are the students and the main goal is research and teaching. Specifically, the university museums must spread knowledge among the general public and promote science among young people (Bragança, 2002). Universities museums have a highly representative trajectory in history, still reserved for academic circles and scientists, despite being as old as the University institution: created in the XVIII century in England and spreaded to North American universities by the XIX century (Gali, 2006). University museum collections are varied and diverse; they don't have only collections of natural science, art, or the very history of the university (Gali, 2006).

Although, few studies have been carried out regarding the history and development of these museums – hence the lack of interest and innovation around them – they do play a highly important role in society, as they are the best spaces for the creation of discussion, analysis and conflict in the mind of young people

(Escobedo, 2011). For Stanbury, university museums are the same as other museums, but with the advantage of being close to the source of knowledge: the university (2001); they have the same objectives as other museums, with a plus: a responsibility to the academic community to awaken young minds and show other worlds on their walls. In spite of their strengths, university museums are not well administrated, nor understood (Gali, 2006). In recent years, university museums have faced another paradigm: opening their doors to public outside of the academic world.

Additionally, the museums are part of the cultural tourism (Vacas, 2000; Lizana, 2007) because they offer the possibility to know and understand other cultures, exchange traditions and customs (Harrison, 1997); museums are one of the main institutions that are responsible for creating awareness of other cultures and for conserving ancient objects that represent their beliefs and customs. Museums are of great importance for cultural and historical tourism, they have been and will be attractions that are visited in cities and other destinations, for being spaces to learn about the culture of a society (Vacas, 2000), and therefore understand its customs, traditions and beliefs. As stated by Lizana, tourism is one the greatest reasons for the museums expansion (2007). This makes museums one of the main elements of cultural tourism, not only because of the change in their structure, but also because of the change in tourists awareness (Lebrún, 2007); they want to find out more and more about the “other”, and look for tourism that allows them to discover an unknown past.

RESULTS

1. Benchmarking

The Benchmarking executed evidences the development and key variables in the activity of contemporary art university museums around the globe, comparing them with contemporary art museums that do not depend of universities, but, that at the same time, have a

great importance. With this study is evident that the wished balance between management, culture and tourism is possible; a museum can be a touristic attraction and at the same time serve the community it belongs to.

Besides, it showed that museums should have a defined management and strong basis in order to develop significant activities for the community. In the first place, four contemporary art university museums were chosen to make the direct benchmarking: the “Museo Universitario de la Universidad de Antioquia” as a national landmark from Medellin, Colombia; the “Museo Universitario de Arte Contemporáneo de la Universidad Autónoma de México” as a latin-américan landmark from México D.F., México; the “Yale University Art Gallery” in New Haven, USA; and the “Art Museum Institute of Chinese Studies” from The Chinese University of Hong Kong in China. In the second place, an indirect benchmarking was made with 2 of the more renowned museums of contemporary art: the “Guggenheim Museum” with its the 4 museums around the world, New York, Bilbao, Venice y Abu Dhabi; and the “MOMA in New York, USA.

The variables studied in each museum were the ones chosen based in the analysis made in the conceptual research, taking into account that the museum must serve the community, but at the same time be a touristic attraction in a destination: (1) management: the basic planning elements; (2) product: the services offered to the public; (3) the price offered; (4) the touristic offer in the destination; (5) and the location. Each variable had a certain percentage depending on the importance for the present study. The information from each museum was taken from the public information given in the web pages and in the internet for the touristic variable. The benchmarking evaluates the existence or not of each of the studies variables.

Table 1: Benchmarking

| | | | |
|--|--|---------------------|-----------------------|
| | | Direct Benchmarking | Indirect Benchmarking |
|--|--|---------------------|-----------------------|

| Variable | % | MAU N | Yale Univer sity Art Gallery | Museo Universitari o de la Universidad de Antioquia | Museo Universitari o de Arte Contempor áneo Universidad Autónoma de México | Art Museum Institute of Chinese Studies | Gugge nheim Museu m | MO MA |
|---|-----------|----------|---------------------------------------|--|---|---|------------------------------|----------|
| Managemen t | 30% | 14% | 15% | 18% | 27% | 21% | 18% | 24% |
| Mission | 6% | 6% | 6% | 6% | 6% | 6% | 6% | 6% |
| Vision | 3% | 0% | 0% | 3% | 3% | 0% | 0% | 0% |
| Objectives | 3% | 0% | 0% | 3% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% |
| Organigram | 3% | 3% | 0% | 0% | 3% | 0% | 3% | 3% |
| Research | 6% | 0% | 0% | 6% | 6% | 6% | 0% | 6% |
| Donations | 5% | 5% | 5% | 0% | 5% | 5% | 5% | 5% |
| Loyalty programs | 4% | 0% | 4% | 0% | 4% | 4% | 4% | 4% |
| Price | 15% | 13% | 13% | 13% | 10% | 14% | 12% | 9% |
| Price- entrance (5%:free. 8%:charge) | 8% | 8% | 8% | 8% | 5% | 8% | 5% | 5% |
| Price of guided visit | 5% | 5% | 5% | 5% | 5% | 5% | 5% | 3% |
| Price of audio guides | 1% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 1% | 1% | 0% |
| Internet tickets | 1% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 1% | 1% |
| Product | 30% | 19% | 21% | 21% | 21% | 20% | 26% | 26% |
| Permanent collection (5%: exhibited 3%: not exhibited) | 5%/ 3% | 3% | 5% | 5% | 5% | 5% | 5% | 5% |
| Exhibitions | 5 % | 5% | 5% | 5% | 5% | 5% | 5% | 5% |
| Programs/ activities | 5% | 5% | 5% | 5% | 5% | 5% | 5% | 5% |
| Guided visits | 5% | 5% | 5% | 5% | 5% | 5% | 5% | 5% |
| Audioguides in different languages | 2% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 2% | 2% |

| | | | | | | | | |
|--|-------|--------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|--------|
| Guided visits in different languages | 4% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% |
| Store | 1% | 0% | 1% | 1% | 0% | 0% | 1% | 1% |
| Restaurant | 1% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 1% | 0% | 1% | 1% |
| App | 2% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 2% | 2% |
| Place | 5% | 5,00 % | 5,00% | 5,00% | 5,00% | 5,00% | 5,00% | 5,00 % |
| Schedule | 2,5% | 2,5% | 2,5% | 2,5% | 2,5% | 2,5% | 2,5% | 2,5% |
| Location/ access | 2,5% | 2,5% | 2,5% | 2,5% | 2,5% | 2,5% | 2,5% | 2,5% |
| Promotion | 20% | 0 | 20% | 20% | 20% | 20% | 20% | 20% |
| Is in the destination touristic offer. | 20% | 0% | 20% | 20% | 20% | 20% | 20% | 20% |
| TOTAL | 100 % | 50% | 74% | 77% | 83% | 80% | 81% | 84% |

Source: Author's own creation

This study showed that the MOMA from New York is a great example in the way it manages the activities, the collections, the services, the exhibitions and the visitors. In the other side, the best example in the university museums is the “Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de la Universidad Autónoma de México” even if it's young, it's a tool for teaching, useful for professors, students and is an important element for the local community, and it managed to be a touristic attraction for the city. The MAUN has the lowest score with a 50%, none the less it has a great potential that might be used with good management and marketing strategies.

With this benchmarking is possible to see that a museum with a strong management basis can be useful for the community, having a positive impact and at the same time, it can have an international and touristic image.

2. Guide for the integral management of university museums

The guide was developed with the research and the benchmarking in the previous steps. It aims to offer museums a

basis from which they can develop their activity and become more efficient in providing their services to the community and proving the tourism function of the museum.

For Gail and Barry Lord the museum planning is “the study and practice of facilitating the preservation and interpretation of material culture by ordering all those components that comprise a museum into a constructed or renovated whole that achieve its functions in a sustainable way with optimal efficiency” (2012: 9); this guide adds the touristic variable to the planning, seeing the museums not only as social institutions for social inclusion (Sandell, 2012) but also as touristic attractions. The aim is to improve competitiveness, without abandoning the essence with which the museum was created.

Besides, the museum needs to understand the needs of the actual and the potential visitors (Lord & Lord, 2012) – national and international – because “museums without visitors would be like lifeless, empty halls with no purpose” (Walzl, 2006). The guide was build based on the authors named in the previous chapter, mixing the theories of strategic planning, in order to make a guide capable of answering to the needs of contemporary museums in a contemporary world; is made up of seven steps for museums to follow.

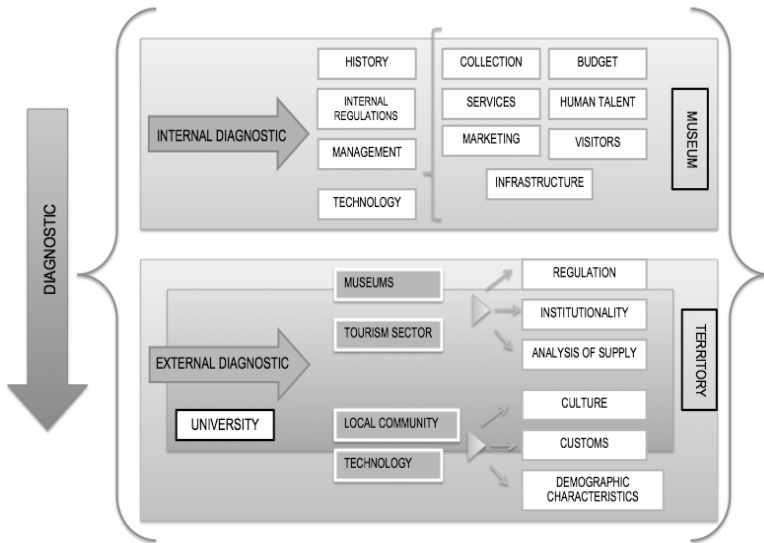
Step 1: the study and analysis of the internal and external context of the museum

In order to strategically plan a museum, the study and analysis of its internal and external context should come first, because every organization is impacted from different factors (Kotler, 2001; Lord & Lord, 2012). The internal analysis should start with: the study of its history and the foundations on which it was created, the philosophy and objectives with which the museum began its activity, the internal regulations on which the museum stands, the museum’s management, the model on which its activity is based, the marketing model it uses, its annual budget, the services offered should also be studied, as well as its collection, the type of

technology used by the museum and the way it is used in the exhibitions; and the infrastructure of the museum. It is important to include in this analysis, the study of demand: the number of visitors, their motivations and satisfaction.

Then the external analysis: the museological setting and the tourism background of the destination, the regulations, legislation and institutional rules by which it is regulated. Similarly, the offer of cultural and touristic activities of the destination should also be taken into account using a benchmarking and to analyse the current state of the competition (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Diagnostic, author's own creatio



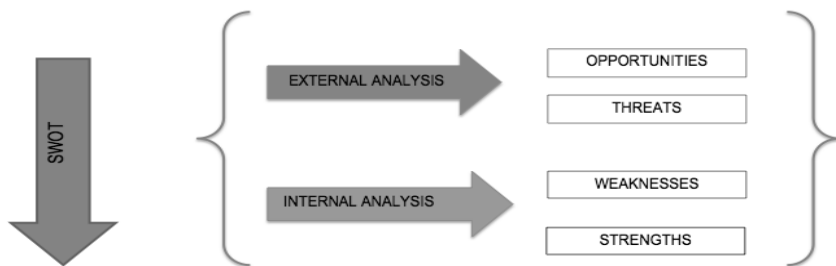
Step 2: SWOT analysis

The second step is to carry out a SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats), is an “institutional situation analysis” (Lord & Lord, 2012) based on the information from the internal and external diagnostic in step 1. The diagnosis is a very

important step included in strategic planning, because is the one that gives the photograph from the present of the organization (Lord & Lord, 2012; Newman; Bravo, 1995; Kauffman, 2003, cited in Flores & Gómez, 2008). This analysis should take into account the nature of the museum and its pillars of operation (Figure 2). The SWOT analysis is simple to apply and the investment needed is no high (Kong, 2008), which makes it perfect for museums as non-profit institutions, and also with limited human resources.

Figure 2: SWOT, author's own creation

Step 3: formulation of principles, values, mission, vision,

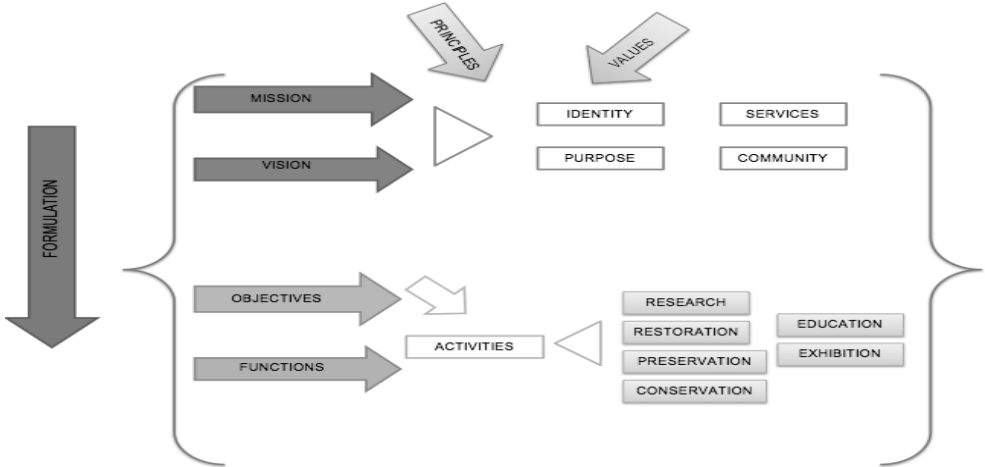


objectives and functions of the museum

The third step is the formulation of the principles and values on which the museum will be founded. For Barry & Dexter Lord these are main elements from the organization (1998). Even if the museum have already this elements, they need to evaluate them taking into account the internal/external analysis and the SWOT analysis, because times changes, society evolves and the museum need to move forward (Kotler & Kotler (2001). The museum's mission and vision should be established, bearing in mind what the museum is, and what it hopes to become. Objectives should also be formulated, based on what the museum hopes to achieve, similarly, functions should be determined. At this point, it is important to

define the gap between the current state of the museum (SWOT) and future hopes (vision, objectives) (Figure 3). This step is very important because as Martin (2012) argued is vital for the institution to know itself.

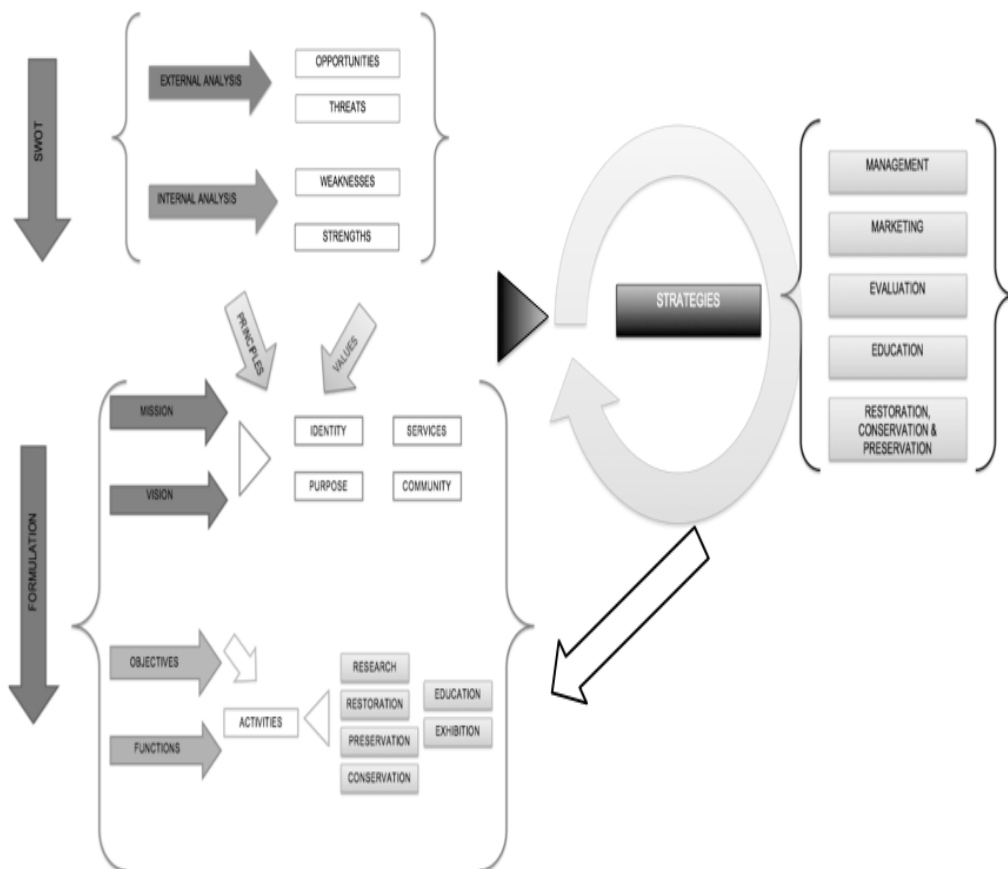
Figure 3: Formulation, author's own creation



Step 4: implementing strategies

Once the museum knows where they want to go and where they are at the moment, the strategies create must be created and will help the museum to reach its goals (Kotler & Kotler, 2001). In order to do this, activities are created, as well as the budget that would be required to carry out the desired activities. The strategies must be the fruit of the SWOT and the formulation of the mission, vision, objectives and functions; though they must also lead to the effective implementation of the different activities (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Strategies, author's own creation



Step 5: organisation of museum resources

The next step is the organisation of the museum's resources and human talent. The exhibitions should be planned for the year and the activities to be carried out in a specific period of time (Figure 5).

The organization of the staff is critical: everybody needs to work for the same goals in the organization. The effective work of the staff as a team is vital for the fulfilment of the goals (Lord & Martin, 2012).

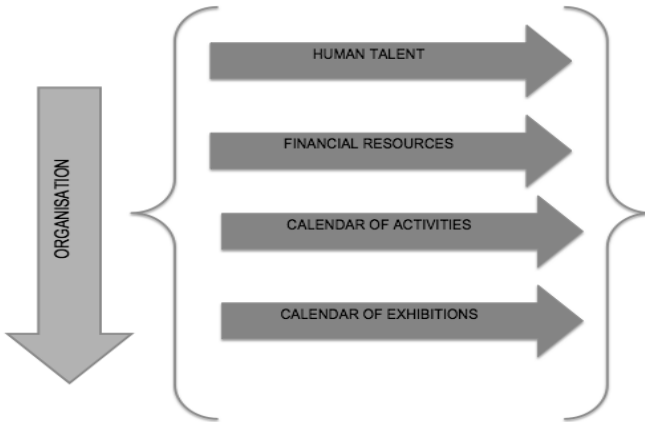


Figure 5: Organization, author's own creation

Step 6: motivation and socialisation of the plan

Next, a period of motivation and socialisation of the plan should take place. It is important to integrate the museum staff during the whole process of strategic planning, make them work as a team (Lord & Martin, 2012); besides, innovation and creativity should be promoted, in order to ensure continuous improvement (Figure 6). In fact, to produce a new exhibition, profound, educational and better, a team is needed, conformed by curators, designers and educationalists (Miles, 2001), also the commercial and managing team have their roles too.

Figure 6: Motivation, author's own creation



Step 7: control and evaluation

Once the plan is organised and working, there must be control and evaluation in order to ensure constant improvement of the process. The objective of this evaluation is to improve the planning and the performance of the museum (Martin, 2012). In addition, the museum must adjust its operation to the flexible world in which the museum works, and is changing constantly; this makes it necessary to carry out studies and reformulations of the plan, to be able to compete in the market and understand the new generations of tourists and other members of the community; also be able to provide services in accordance with their interests.

In order to evaluate the process implemented, at the end of each year of activities, the museum can apply an evaluation system based on indicators that evaluate the management, marketing, exhibitions, visitors and the importance of cultural tourism for the museum (Table 2).

Table 2: System of indicators to evaluate the management of the museum. Taken from: Gomez, Monroy & Rueda, 2012, unpublished.

| Museums | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---------------------------|---|--|--|--|---|-------------------------------------|---|--|------------------------------------|---|--|-----------------------------------|--|
| Innovation | | | | | | | | | | Cultural Tourism | | | |
| Management | | | | | Marketing | Theme | | | | Visitors | | Importance | Operations |
| Planning | Organization | Costs | Motivation | Control | Promotion | Exhibition | Communication | Areas | Technology | Tourists | Local population | It is a touristic attraction | Cultural interpretation |
| The museum has a mission | The museum has an inventory of patrimonial material | The museum has a financial plan | Percentage of staff who know the museum's mission | It has a scheme for follow-up/evaluation | Promotion campaigns in the month for the permanent exhibition | The museum offers guided tours | Educational activities/people who participate in them | Area in m ² devoted to repair workshops / m ² exhibition per day | Visits to website | Number of visitors/day x m ² of exhibition | | Objectives towards tourism | Number of languages in which exhibitions are offered |
| The museum has a vision | Number of people who work at the museum | Total operation costs / / m ² exhibitions/day | Percentage of staff who know the museum objectives | Museum general aims are achieved | Promotion campaigns for temporary exhibitions | Temporary exhibitions | | Area in m ² temporary exhibitions / m ² day | The museum has virtual exhibitions | Degree of satisfaction from museum visit | | Considered a touristic attraction | Has appropriate signage |
| The museum has objectives | | | | | | Number of visitors / m ² | | | | Total no. tourists to museum | % public school students | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | Museum attitude towards development of tourism | Total no. people from local population who attend museum | | |

3. Application of the guide to the maun

The application of the proposed guide to the “*Museo de Arte de la Universidad Nacional*” (MAUN) can be carried out only partially. Only the first four steps were analysed and studied and they were presented to the museum. The actions proposed are common and simple strategies, which can help the museum to be efficient and sustainable in a long term.

Step 1: the study and analysis of the internal and external context of the museum

The MAUN was founded in 1970, and conceived as a museum for the analysis and critique of art (Chacón, 2008). Today, the museum is not well-known by the local community, nor by the tourists that come to the city of Bogotá. It does not have a very marked development, although it makes high quality exhibitions. The Museum has a permanent collection that includes diverse and unique objects like paintings, sculptures, ceramics, photographs (MAUN, Colección), though it is not exhibited. The history of the MAUN has been marked by the context of the University. Some years it had the development of a great number of activities and exhibitions, while during others, activities were limited, due to different circumstances (MAUN, unpublished documents). Its exhibitions showed a great cultural richness and the acquisition of the Pizano Collection was a considerable achievement for the Museum (Arcos Palma, 2009). It has the ideal architecture for modern art exhibitions, and the rooms are maintained at the perfect temperature for the conservation of the pieces on exhibition (O. Foronda, personal communication).

Museums in Colombia are regulated by the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Tourism. In Colombia, there are more than 450 museums throughout the national territory (Ministerio de Cultura, 2002 – 2010). Bogota has 50 museums (Bogotátravelguide, 2013 & Bogotá Cultural, 2013), showing art, history and customs, and among these, the museums that form part of the city’s tourist attractions are the *Museo de Oro*, the *Museo*

Nacional, the *Museo Santa Clara* and the *Casa Museo Quinta de Bolívar*. There are only two museums in Bogota that could be considered direct competition for the MAUN: the *Museo de Arte Contemporáneo el Minuto de Dios* and the *Museo de Arte Moderno de Bogotá*. The majority of these museums are exhibition houses (Política Nacional de Museos, 2008), they fulfil the objectives of conservation and exhibition, but not of education or research, nor do they have a real commitment to society, or hold open communication, and neither have they continued to research the history of their objects.

The MAUN is located in the city of Bogota, the local population are potential visitors to the museum's exhibitions. In terms of tourism developed in Bogota, the most active sector of tourism in the city is business tourism (32%) and events (3%); 38% come to Bogota to visit friends or relatives and 17% for recreation and holidays (Instituto Distrital del Turismo, Observatorio de Turismo de Bogotá, 2010). The most important tourist attraction in the city is the Museo de Oro, followed by La Candelaria and Monserrate (El Tiempo, 5th June 2010)

Step 2: SWOT analysis

Table 3: SWOT from the MAUN

| EXTERNAL ANALYSIS | |
|---|---|
| OPPORTUNITIES | THREATS |
| The cultural policy of Colombian Museums supports these cultural institutions and provides a regulatory framework for their activity. | Cultural activities have little recognition among Bogota's population. |
| Nowadays, people look for more cultural activities to fill their free time. | The competition with which museums are faced within the market of free time activities is highly varied and very strong. |
| Although there are many institutions in the cultural tourism sector, and a lot of competition, very few have a national/international image. | The MAUN is located within the <i>Universidad Nacional</i> , limiting people's entry. |
| An art museum has the potential to become one of the most important attractions in the city, due to its permanent exhibitions and varied temporary exhibitions. | The disturbances that take place in <i>Universidad Nacional</i> limit entrance to the museum and give a negative image of both the University and the Museum. |

| | |
|---|--|
| New technologies applied to cultural institutions can create a new atmosphere of communication between the museum and its visitors. | The students want the museum for the development of their own activities, and do not consider it a place to create open dialogue about modern art. |
| The foreign tourist who visits Bogota is an educated person with a university background; a target in the market that is appropriate for the development of cultural tourism. | The little importance that museums hold for the general population. |
| New museum theories, directed towards the population and to the visitor, are an opportunity to change the way of exhibiting and museum activities. | In Bogota there are 50 museums, which, although there are only 3 that exhibit modern art, are considered direct competition. |
| Tourism can help museums to become known internationally, which can attract better exhibitions and artists. | The little regulation regarding museums in Colombia, despite there being a Policy, is not enough to regulate their activities, nor to give them a space in the cultural tourism. |
| INTERNAL ANALYSIS | |
| WEAKNESSES | STRENGTHS |
| The museum's organigram is highly complex, and decision-making depends on many people. | The museum does not charge for entry to the exhibitions, nor to its activities. |
| The museum staff is too limited to efficiently develop a wide range of activities. | |
| The temporary exhibitions are too separated one from the other, and their assembly takes a long time. | <i>Divulgación Cultural</i> (Cultural Dissemination) is responsible for attaining private financing for exhibitions, and they manage to collect the money necessary for their efficient development. |
| The local population and the tourists are unaware of the museum and its activities. | Guided tours are booked one week in advance, and are prepared according to the characteristics of each group. |
| The publicity carried out is very limited and reaches very few members of the community. | The museum depends directly on the National Office for Cultural Dissemination of the Universidad Nacional, which provides an ally in cultural development. |
| The museum is not managed based on a strategic plan, nor does it have a marketing plan. | The museum's permanent collection, the Pizano Collection and many more works, could be exhibited permanently in the museum. |
| Studies of the museum visitors have not been carried out; no one has asked what they want, nor what they think of the museum. | The exhibitions are of a high level of artistic quality and represent both national and international art. |
| The museum archives are full of documents, but they are not open to the public, nor do they have | The museum offers students at the University the <i>Laboratorio Cano</i> : an annual |

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| any established organisation. | exhibition where students are the curators and artists. |
| The opening times of the museum are limited to those of the university. | The museum's physical space has unique characteristics and conditions appropriate to hold both the works of art and visitors. |
| There are no age-specific activities. | It is located within the Universidad Nacional and enjoys its support. |
| The museum's permanent collection is not exhibited; it is kept in storage. | |
| Guided tours must be reserved, which means that tourists who turn up cannot receive one. | |

Source: Author's own creation

Step 3: formulation of principles, values, mission, vision, objectives and functions of the museum

The elements such as principles, values, mission, vision, objectives and functions were not invented, they are the result of the analysis of the information from the museum and the current mission, the elements were modified and classified

Principles and values: Responsibility towards the heritage, valuing the heritage, social responsibility, respect, self-sustainability, commitment to quality, participation, equality, cooperation, organisation, supporting the community, professionalism, equity, leadership, strategic planning.

Mission: The MAUN already has an established mission. No substantial modifications were made; some parts were omitted, as they were considered to be part of the vision or the objectives. "The MAUN collects, conserves, studies, restores, recovers and exhibits works of Colombian modern art; it carries out teaching and cultural functions, as well as promoting new artists and carrying out research in art history and theory. The MAUN constitutes one of the most important exhibiting spaces for artistic proposals in the country, since, as part of the *Universidad Nacional de Colombia*, it collects the most diverse aesthetic and visual trends, studies them and presents them to the public, bearing in mind their value and cultural importance, leaving aside any political, social or economic motivations. The MAUN is an institution dedicated to the study and

promotion of museology and artistic education, of the diverse expressions of modern art and the presentation of the most important collections in the field, as well as national and international exhibitions that allow the university community and the general public to enjoy.” (Museo de Arte, Misión).

Vision: In the year 2020, the MAUN will be recognised at the national and international levels, as the “core of the modern art dynamic in Colombia” (Museo de Arte de la Universidad Nacional, Misión), fulfilling teaching, cultural and research functions.

Objectives

- Complement teaching in the Universidad Nacional and of the academic community in general
- Present innovative artistic proposals and provide a space for young artists
- Promote the construction of knowledge through research in matters of art, art history, museology and related subjects and share them with the community through the exchange of experiences.
- Conserve, restore, protect and exhibit the museum’s permanent collection
- Organise temporary exhibitions of national and international modern art.
- Offer a space for discussion and analysis of Colombian modern art, through conferences, workshops, courses and other activities.
- Be a tourist attraction in the city of Bogota, recognised on the national and international levels, thanks to the quality of its exhibitions and the open communication with its visitors.

Functions

- Collect and conserve the museum’s permanent collection.
- Research into art, art history and museology.
- Hold high-quality exhibitions of national and international modern art that constitute attractions for both the local population and tourists.

- Educate students and the general population about new trends in art and create open dialogue among visitor, museum and exhibitions.
- Open a space where students can compare ideas about modern art.

Step 4: implementing strategies

The proposed strategies are common actions to various institutions and organizations, they are simple but useful for the museum. The strategies for the MAUN should be aimed at management, marketing, technologies used by the museum, education and the inclusion of tourism within the daily development of its activities.

Management strategies

- Carry out an annual strategic plan with the museum staff.
- Create a permanent exhibition with part of the permanent collection, using pieces from the Pizano Collection in one of the museum's spaces; an exhibition that can change each year to rotate the pieces exhibited with those kept in storage.
- Create a monthly schedule of activities and upload it to the webpage.
- Join the two webpages that the Museum currently has (Dirección de Divulgación Cultural and Sistema de Patrimonio y Museos), centralising information.
- Annual studies of visitors should be carried out, to understand their needs and expectations of the museum, to be able to plan activities based on the creation of knowledge, focused on these people.
- Create an application with all of the information on each exhibition, so that visitors can see this information as they visit the museum. They can also discuss the exhibitions in real time.
- Sign agreements with the faculties of the Universidad Nacional to carry out research projects related to modern art and museology. Agreements could also be signed with any other

universities that are interested in research projects around these subjects.

- Publish books with the most relevant research papers, taking advantage of the support offered by the Universidad Nacional publishing department.
- Create a Museo de Arte loyalty program, with benefits for its members, thus ensuring that some visitors will indeed return in the future.
- Create a database with the visitors of the museum, to carry out satisfaction surveys and to send e-mails with information about museum activities.

Marketing strategies

- Carry out an annual marketing plan.
- Create a QRC (Quick response code) with the most important information about the museum or a code for each exhibition with the most important and relevant information.
- Keep the webpage up-to-date, with current news, videos and photos.
- Create a Facebook page and update constantly, create dialogue and discussions about art and related subjects, thus reaching the young community. Upload photos and videos.
- Create a Twitter account to keep in constant contact with people interested in the museum.
- Send invitations to schools and universities in Bogota for the exhibitions and different activities offered.
- Invite companies to carry out recreational activities for their staff at the museum.
- Sign agreements with universities from Bogota, so that the museum's exhibitions form part of their cultural agenda.

Education strategies

- Design creativity workshops for children, to promote art from an early age in the local community.

- Create an application (app) with games for children, didactic activities for young people and information for adults about modern art.
- Hold conferences about art, art history and museology, as well as other topics of interest for the community, even when there is no temporary exhibition at the museum.
- Carry out activities for groups of public and private school children, in parallel with the visit to the exhibitions, to stimulate creativity.
- Invite colombian artists, not only to exhibit their work at the museum, but also to give conferences about modern art and their experience.
- The museum could create activities aimed at the whole community, about environmental sustainability and the responsibility we have as human beings, using art.
- Organise forums with artists and art critics, to provide a space for open dialogue between participants and experts in the field.
- Organise field trips for art students to the different universities in Colombia, especially to the different branches of the Universidad Nacional.

Strategies to include the museum in the tourist activities of

Bogota

- Offer guided tours in Spanish and English for the tourists that wish to visit the museum.
- For the museum to become a tourist attraction at the national and international levels, the first step should be to become well-known and have a more positive image at the local level. If the population of Bogota recognises the MAUN as one of the best museums in the city, then it will be easier for it to become well-known elsewhere.
- Include the museum in the offer of cultural and touristic activities of Bogota.
- Have the webpage in English, as a second language.
- Include the MAUN on Bogota tourism webpages, and offer it as a tourism attraction.

- Invite travel agencies and tour operators to visit the museum, so that they can sell it within Bogota tourism packages.
- The MAUN is not currently included in the inventory of tourist attractions from Bogotá.
- It would be interesting to sign agreements with the Museo de Arte Moderno de Bogotá – MAMBO, to hold modern art events together, or travelling exhibitions.
- The city of Bogota is home to several festivals during the year: music festivals (jazz, rock, hip-hop, salsa), gastronomy, cinema and opera, (IDT, 2014); it would be interesting to hold a Modern Art Festival in conjunction with the IDT and other modern art museums in the city (the MAMBO and the Museo de Arte Contemporáneo del Minuto de Dios).
- The Universidad Nacional, and more specifically, the MAUN, could be included in one of the touristic routes from the city.

Bogota celebrates the day and month of Colombian Cultural Heritage in the month of September. The MAUN could participate in the scheduled activities, with the Pizano Collection or with special exhibitions during that month.

CONCLUSIONS: IMPLICATIONS FOR MANAGEMENT IN UNIVERSITY MUSEUMS

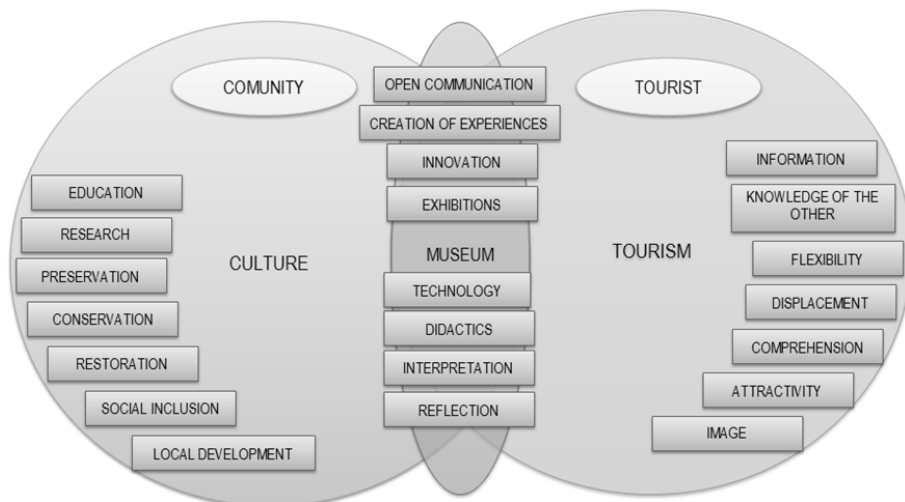
There has not been a marked development in Colombia's museums over the years, and today, they continue to apply the principles of old museology. The time has come for them to look to the future and consider themselves part of the community and the region. They are no longer isolated from the local reality; they should be active members of the community, offering a service to society beyond exhibiting collections. Moreover, they should form part of tourism, bearing in mind that tourism creates beneficial movement in the museum, and that being a tourist attraction in a city creates a national and international image that can create boundary-breaking dialogue.

Nowadays, the university museums face a challenge: to attract visitors from outside the academic community, such as the local community or the tourists. As is the case for any museum, university museums must work on their management, in order to become self-sufficient. They must use strategic planning as a tool to offer their services more efficiently, and to a higher degree of quality, for visitors, tourists, students and teachers. It is important to take into account that university museums cannot be managed in the same way as an independent museum, since, as well as having a commitment to the academic community, they must also support activities such as research and teaching.

The museum should establish its objectives and functions, and focus all of its activities on their achievement. It should develop a strategic plan and a marketing plan, which are necessary for the development of an institution's yearly activities. It should carry out a study of the market and understand the type of visitors that attend their exhibitions, as well as a study of the visitors that allows them to know what expectations they have of the museum; for this, all visitors should be counted, and an annual study should be carried out, with surveys to help focus the following year's activities.

Museums in general, and university museums specifically, must find a balance between the culture that they teach, the management theories that they apply, and the tourism that they attract; in this way, they can create an image in the local community, which can be promoted both nationally and internationally, in order to become a tourist attraction. They become uniting institutions, between culture, teaching and tourism. They should be valued and enter the sphere of the city's tourism; they should find their place within a specific region, become involved in the city's activities and proposals and create new ones to help society (Figure 7).

Figure 7: The culture-museums-tourism relation, author's own creation



The MAUN was conceived to create open and constant dialogue among artists, the exhibitions and visitors; this museum has a lot of potential and could be developed as a tourist attraction at both the national and international levels. However, it needs to become known in Bogota – it must improve its marketing and try to surpass the academic community, taking advantage of the high quality of its exhibitions and the name of the *Universidad Nacional*.

This article opens a window on the reality of university museums and their role in society. It proposes new tools that can be used for the continued improvement of these institutions, which have extraordinary potential and face an academic and scientific challenge, they must become aware of the changes they need to make to survive in the modern world.

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COMMUNICATION SKILLS IN THE TOURISM SECTOR – THE ROLE OF TOUR GUIDES IN PRESENTING ATTRACTIONS

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This article examines the experiencing of tourist attractions presented by Tour Guides through word descriptions accompanied by the active participation of the observers, and without Tour Guides. The research is focused on experiencing beauty. Participants were exposed to an experiment comprised of three parts. In the first part, the participants were asked to observe an object from various sides, in the second part they were exposed to the Guide's description using words, and in the third part of the experiment, the participants were exposed to the Guide's description using words and, simultaneously, being asked to produce movements.

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The experiment showed the participants evaluated the object as more beautiful when it was presented by a Tour Guide.

Keywords: *tourist attractions; Tour Guide; aesthetics; beauty; experiment*

INTRODUCTION

In the profession of Tour Guides, who are significant actors in presenting an attraction or a destination, the communicative aspect is significant. The knowledge of foreign languages, mastering of “the currently popular global discourse” (Salazar, 2006: 240), the knowledge of their mother tongue and “communication competencies” (Leclerc & Martin, 2004: 181), are all essential in enriching the experience of modern tourists, who are, in many respects, co-creators of their tourism experience (Richards and Wilson, 2006). Culture, in overall economic activity, has become a significant element of creating a value chain (Porter, 1985) and, in particular, this role is also indicated in tourism activity, by visiting museums, galleries and cultural heritage sites.

The perception of artistic works and the perception of objects in general has intrigued people, philosophers and scientists for centuries. Especially in the Tourism industry, aesthetics` modes – the beautiful, the sublime, and the picturesque – have been significant (Knudsen et al., 2015: 179) and typical within the theoretical corpus of aesthetic judgement since the 18th century (Knudsen et al., 2015: 182). According to Urry (1995: 151), tourism consumption is increasingly aestheticized. What is essential in tourism is the subjective positive impression that stays after the tourist’s visit. This subjective positive impression could also be called beauty (Knudsen et al., 2015: 180). Obviously, the aesthetic perception has to be incorporated into tourism planning to enable good memories for tourists (Wang et al., 2008: 207). Tour Guides

are a specific group of professionals who deal with aesthetic perception. Their role in presenting the aesthetic dimension, the beautiful, to tourists is, in fact, significant. But, what is beautiful? There is a well-known proverb saying that "Beauty is in the eye of the beholder". Shelley points out David Hume's words that "beauty is no quality in things themselves," but merely a sentiment in "the mind that contemplates them" (Shelley 2002: 48). Many experiments and treatises have shown that the appreciation of beauty is dependent upon "a wide array of social variables" (Porteous, 1996: 24).

All these dimensions are also the reason that Tour Guides have presented an important part of the experiment described in the article. The purpose of the experiment has been to induce the perception of the observed object. Prior to the experiment, it was assumed that Tour Guides enhance the perception of the object presented to the participants. The participants evaluated a post-modern sculpture by Martina Vrbljanin from the University of Zagreb in Croatia. The sculpture served as a symbol of any observed object or tourism attraction since, according to Carlson (2002: 551), "the new paradigm for aesthetic appreciation of environments is comparable to the new paradigm for appreciation of art". Carlson (2002: 552) also points out that "environmental aesthetics embody the view that every environment, natural, rural or urban, large or small, ordinary or extraordinary, offers much to see, to hear, to feel, much to appreciate aesthetically", and that the different world environments "can be aesthetically rich and rewarding, as are the very best of our works of art" (ibid.).

Based on the issues described above, the following research questions have been created:

1. Does the involvement of a Tour Guide in the presentation of an object (which stands for an attraction) increase the perception of beauty of a certain object when observed by tourists?
2. Does the moving activity during the observation of the object (which stands for an attraction) increase the perception of beauty?

ON AESTHETICS AND BEAUTY IN TOURISM

Aesthetics is vital to the “human sense of well-being”, and industries involved in “catering to aesthetic satisfactions /.../ are thriving economic enterprises” (Porteous, 1996: 5). It seems that beauty and beautiful represent the essence of tourism and tourism communication, which has also always involved aesthetics, which is, according to Prall (1929: 45), basic to human nature. According to Di et al. (2010), aesthetic values are at the centre of destinations’ perception, and at the centre of the experience economy (Pine & Gilmore, 1998). Aesthetic value is also one of the significant criteria in the evaluation of application for natural areas to be designated as World Natural Heritage Sites by UNESCO (Di et al., 2010: 59). In the first half of the 1980s, Zube et al. (1982) dealt with landscape perception and, in recent decades, especially since the 1980s, the growth of the tourist industry has led leaders and politicians to reconsider landscapes as revenue generators (Porteous, 1996: 10). Aesthetics explores the nature of beauty and comprises one of the five classical fields of philosophical inquiry – together with Epistemology, Ethics, Logic and Metaphysics (Sporre, 2006: 7), and is often discussed in tourism literature (Austin, 2007; Knudsen and Greer, 2001; Scarles, 2007, etc.). To create a pleasant experience for travellers and to present attractions and destinations as beautiful, is one of the goals of Tourism marketing (Kirillova et al., 2014) and, consequently, the aesthetic dimension of an attraction or a destination is significant, despite the fact that the term aesthetics is highly disputable in Philosophy (Todd, 2012: 65).

Lee, Jeon & Kim (2011) argue that the aesthetic characteristics of an attraction or a destination influence the experiences and satisfaction of tourists, and that they also contribute to their wish to return to the destination. According to Alegre and Garau (2010), a destination’s aesthetic characteristics have been an essential element of many perception and satisfaction image scales used in Tourism research. Herwitz (2008: 25), asks whether beauty is a property of the thing judged (the sculpture, attraction) or the person judging. In

the current research, the central questions are responses to the object, artwork – sculpture, which stands for an attraction, and perception of the artwork. Thus, the question of experience, which is also “a critical concept in Tourism marketing and management literature” (Kirillova, 2012: 282). In the experiment, the research team tried to imitate the tourism experience (an attraction, various tourists, a Tour Guide). One of the essential questions was how the sculpture stimulated the senses of the observers. It should be noted, however, that Tourism aesthetics could possess its own characteristics, in that “the tourism experience involves the full immersion of an individual into an environment that may be distinct from his/her everyday living surroundings” (Volo, 2009; Kirillova, 2016: 283). Whether tourists perceive an attraction as beautiful could be related to their home environments (Maitland and Smith, 2009). On the other hand, facility aesthetics are also significant (Wakefield and Blodgett, 1996; Ha and Jang, 2012), and a factor that should not be neglected in the tourist experience is a Tour Guide.

It should be observed, however, that “sometimes we are simply struck by the aesthetic qualities of an art work or natural scene” (Goldman, 2002: 265-266). What is more, in appreciation of the observed landscape, “what is aesthetically relevant is knowledge of why it is, what it is, and what it is like, whether or not that knowledge is, strictly speaking, scientific” (Carlson, 2002: 549). Thus, according to Carlson (ibid.), who speaks of the “aesthetic relevance of information”, information about an observed object’s histories, functions, their roles in our lives, is crucial, and Tour Guides are those who provide that significant information. Consequently, a lot is dependent upon how the presentations of objects/attractions are presented by the Tour Guides. In fact, the Tour Guides’ information plays a central role in the perception of an object/attraction. “The aesthetic relevance of such information seems especially evident for environments that constitute important places in the histories and cultures of particular peoples” (Carlson, 2002: 550). What is important is “an emotionally and cognitively

rich engagement with a cultural artefact, created intentionally by a designing intellect, informed by both art-historical traditions and art-critical practices, and deeply embedded in a complex, many-faceted art world”, and/or “emotionally and cognitively rich engagement with an environment created by natural and cultural forces, informed by both scientific knowledge and cultural traditions” (Carlson, 2002: 551).

Since the aesthetic component as judged by consumers was neglected in the past (Kirillova, 2014: 283), the experiment focused on this component specifically. According to Ittelson (1978), Tourism aesthetics involves multi-sensory experiences, which may incorporate many relations besides that between a tourist and the environment. Also, a tourist’s background is a factor (Kirillova, 2014: 283). In the past, several models of nature appreciation were developed (Natural environmental model - Carlson 1979, Arousal model - Carroll 1995, Sceptical view - Budd 2002, Mystery model - Godlovitch 2004, Engagement model - Berleant 2005). However, it should be noted that aesthetic judgements are relative, as is nature itself (Kirillova, 2016: 284). According to Todd (2009), tourism experience is often dominated by oversimplification, falsification, romanticizing and lack of authenticity.

When discussing the role of Tour Guides, communication of the landscape and its attractions is of great importance. According to Brochu and Merriman (2008, 1), the world “relies on interpersonal communication”, and modern society teaches about cultural topics in many ways, also with Tour Guides, who help audiences connect with history, culture, and the attractions on Earth (Brochu and Merriman, 2008: 3).

On tours, tourists are confronted by images and objects, many of which are unfamiliar to them and must be interpreted (Eco, 1976). As the experiment has shown, languages play a significant role in understanding and in the perception of the world. Cohen (1985: 16) points out Tour Guide’s interpretation skills and the representation of attractions “through the use of appropriate language”. Arbib (2012: 39-40), mentions co-speech gestures and

sign language, which can be used to complement the speech. Also, Topolinski et al. (2013: 174), discuss sign language, claiming that “motor components play a key role in fluency effects”. It can be concluded that signs and movements (gestures) are additional factors in tourism communication, more precisely in the communication of Tour Guides. Topolinski (2011: 260) argues that bodily processes are significant for “several essential mental faculties, such as processing emotions /.../, representing abstract meaning /.../, or building memory /.../.” The brain also has an important role in understanding and interpreting art (Livingstone, 2002), and what is more, aesthetics is an important form of additional knowledge that helps in shaping interpretations (Knudsen et al., 2015: 188), and also creating stories.

Interestingly enough, the word “interpret” comes up often when it comes to tour guiding. Tilden (1957) described interpretation as an educational activity aimed at revealing meanings and relationships to people. Weiler and Ham (2001) transferred this knowledge of interpretation into the relation between Tour Guides and tourists or, as they call them, visitors. The profession of a Tour Guide may seem relatively new, but it is not, as Pond (1993) explains that the first forms of tour guiding were already seen as far back as Ancient Greece and Ancient Roman times, where there was a professional that they named an “interpreter”. Those were people that interpreted the history of certain towns or areas to people who came through these towns or areas for payment, as it seems it was also on the other side of the world in Asia, where, as indicated by Hu (2007: 14), exist written testimonies of people who had the job of interpreting the history of certain areas to rulers who travelled around the country. In both cases, we can see the role of a Tour Guide being focused on a narrow group of people, or even an individual; this is quite some distance apart from the profession of a Tour Guide as we know it today. Cohen (1985:10), found that the mediatory sphere of the tourist guide’s role, noted later, “is much wider and more complex than the simple direction of tourists’ attention to such objects” and, in a way, an extension of the earlier

role, so the tourist guide has to be “a teacher, a confidant and a guru,” (McKean, 1976:13) and Schmidt (1979: 458), compares him to a shaman. The Cohen’s model (1985) of two basic roles (“outer-directed” and “inner-directed” tourist’s guides roles) has been expanded (Wiler & Davis, 1993) with a third, which is “resource management”, but the communicative role of the tourist guides has not yet been investigated clearly (Rendall & Rollins, 2008).

The theme of guidance (spiritual and geographical) is also present in literature. Cohen (1985: 8), mentions Virgil and Beatrice in Dante’s *Divine Comedy*, the Interpreter in Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Process*, and Mephisto in Goethe’s *Faust*, but there are many more works of literature, also contemporary ones, dealing with guiding and guides, among them J. R. R. Tolkien’s *Lord of the Rings* (Gandalf is a mentor/guide to Frodo) and J. K. Rowling’s *Harry Potter* (Albus Dumbledore is a Professor). It was not until the late 18th century when the first organised trip that could be considered as a tourist product was made in Great Britain, where Thomas Cook made an organised trip by train from Leicester to Loughborough that attracted some 570 people, and this is the time where we can say that the profession of a Tour Guide emerged. Cohen (1985: 6 -13), argues that “guiding is a complex concept” (6), involving many roles and activities, among them organising, leading the way, taking responsibility for the safety of a group, animating the group, etc. In addition, the Tour Guide’s is “a boundary role” (Cohen, 1985: 22) – the Tour Guide is the connection between the employer, the tourists and the natives of the site visited. Also “the demands and expectations of twenty-first century visitors have grown and evolved” (Weiler and Walker, 2014: 91), and the significance of public speaking skills, i.e. the quality of voice, diction, etc. is, therefore, crucial. The communicative aspect of guiding, and especially the knowledge of languages, is very important in the profession of Guides, who are significant actors in “the process of folklorizing, ethnicizing, and exoticizing a destination” (Salazar, 2006: 834). Tour Guides need to be able to choose the appropriate from a given code - in order to satisfy the needs of a certain selected

situation (Turner, 1973: 7). However, for tourist guides, not only the knowledge of their mother tongues and foreign languages is significant, but also the mastering of “the currently popular global discourse” (Salazar, 2006: 240).

Huang and others (2010), have confirmed that Tour Guide performance has a direct effect on tourists’ satisfaction with the guiding service, and an indirect effect on tourism experience, and that the tourist guide has to able to “to provide tourists with a transformative tourism experience, leading to positive change in attitudes and values by offering tourists a different way of seeing the world” (Io, 2013: 904). Also, during the onsite activities, their role is to create happiness, to let them experience positive emotions (joy, interest and contentment) (Filep and Deery, 2010), which is connected with positive psychology and satisfaction (Pearce, 2009) and to get an emotional, rather than educational experience (Poria et al., 2009).

The purpose of the research was to understand the more precise role of a tourist guide when presenting art facilities at tourist destinations. Thus, in theory, it is possible to find out which form of tourist guide activity is deeper into the experience of beauty with people who are listening to it, whether it is academic accuracy and precision of data, or an attempt to experience a beautiful experience by inviting tourists to some form of activity associated with the object being watched. The practical purpose of this research is to deepen and expand the education of tourist guides in order to make a deeper impression of tourist trips on tourists.

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted according to the experimental design involving two groups and the so-called pretest-posttest technique. The experiment was of laboratory type. Instead of the real attractions of a tourist offer, an art sculpture was used as a laboratory tool. As the experimental facility, a sculpture, titled

"Together" by the young ladysculptor Martina Vrbljanin from Zagreb, Croatia was chosen. Prior to the selection of Vrbljanin's sculpture, the research team reviewed a series of sculptures, and, later in the process of selection from the five shortlisted sculptures, used Vrbljanin's .

The observed object, which represented a cultural attraction in the experiment, was comprised of two separate three-dimensional full-round sculptures, made of terracotta, and connected by threads of wool. On the one hand, observing an object representing a cultural attraction could be seen as a limitation of the research, but on the other hand, employing it in the laboratory experiment was a significant part of the research, due to the fact that it was essential in providing useful and efficient information for further steps of the research, along with the obvious advantages of lower cost, shorter time, and the possibility to move the object around. Further on, experimental research in the field with real attractions of cultural heritage will be carried out, according to the experiences obtained with the laboratory experiment.

The study involved professional Tour Guides who volunteered for the study and undertook the task of the experimenters. At first, the target and the method of the experiment were explained to them. Then they were asked to self-reflect on how to perform their tasks in front of the participants of the experiment. The idea proposed by the Tour Guides was coordinated carefully with the research design. Then all the details were trained and coordinated with the members of the research team.

Two groups of participants were formed randomly (as are often formed groups of tourists) out of the participants who agreed to take part. When the participants entered the room where the experiment was being carried out, they were directed to the sculpture that stood on a table in the middle of the room. The participants were asked to take a good look at the sculpture from all sides.

Simultaneously, a short video was projected presenting the sculpture from all perspectives. Students were asked to rate the beauty of the sculpture using the scale provided. The experiment

was performed in a large room, so that every student could find their own »private« space from which they could observe the sculpture from their own perspective and rate its beauty. The participants could observe the details of the sculpture from the video that was projected continuously, and they had the opportunity to be closer to the sculpture if they had the need of a more direct contact with the object. Once they had made the assessment of the sculpture, they were asked to put their papers into an envelope. After that, the students participated in the performance of the second part of the experiment.

To Group 1, a Tour Guide described the sculpture in the usual form used by the majority of Tour Guides, meaning that the Tour Guide stood in front of the whole group, sometimes pointing a hand at the object that was presented, and told the story of this object.

In group 2, a Tour Guide, in addition to the description of the sculpture, asked the participants to take part in the presentation of the sculpture by moving, so as to get a ball of ropes, and everyone was asked to tell a member of the group a few phrases associated with the object of the research and deliver the ball to a partner – another participant; the partner should wrap the rope around themselves twice and then deliver the ball with a few sentences associated with the sculpture. Thus, a closed circle of interconnectedness was created between group members. At the end of the story, the Tour Guide cut the rope around the participants with scissors.

INSTRUMENT

The instrument was used to examine the extent to which respondents evaluated the displayed object as a beautiful one. The respondents evaluated 45 words that are synonyms in all three languages (Croatian, Serbian and Slovenian) and refer to some of the dimensions of beauty. The scale was five-degree, with rating 1 in the sense that the respondent does not in any case experience the sculpture as beautiful, and rating 5, that the respondent perceived the

sculpture as perfectly beautiful. The terms were divided into five factors: 1. Authenticity, 2. Colouring 3. Fascination, 4. Perfection and 5. Characteristics of the person. Internal scale consistency is very high, Crombach's alpha is .97.

PARTICIPANTS

The participants in the experiment were students of the University of Maribor (Slovenia), Libertas University in Zagreb (Croatia) and in Tims University Novi Sad (Serbia). The first group involved 27 students from Croatia, 59 students from Slovenia and 30 students from Serbia. In the second group, 23 students participated from Croatia, 40 from Slovenia and 35 from Serbia. The first group included a total of 116 students, and 98 students participated in the second group. A total of 214 students participated in this project. Of these, a total of 125 were young women and 61 men. A total of 28 had not marked their gender in the protocols. The proportion of young men and young women corresponds to the proportions of sexes at the Faculties of Tourism in this region. Proportionally, a far greater number of women than men choose to study Tourism in this region. The average age of students is 21,86, with a Standard Deviation of 3,34. The Value Mode was 20, which means that the largest number of students were 20 years old.

As in most other experimental researches of similar nature, this was a student convenience sample (Tucisny, 2017:416). Groups were formed randomly from the sample, but the nature of experimental research in Social Sciences generally and Tourism, use of the results are not direct and immediate. Groups were composed of students who were in the facilities of the university on the day of the experiment. They were invited to participate voluntarily in the experiment. Before starting the experiment, the experimenter explained to them that the aim of the project was to explore the best model of work of the tourist guides. After the experiment, the techniques of experimental design of this project were explained to the students in detail.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In order to check whether the test results in groups affected only the independent variable and not some other factor, the difference between the arithmetic mean of both groups was calculated at the pretest. This means that it was compared whether the sculpture which was chosen as the independent variable had the same effect on the participants in the two different groups. In the pretest phase, the participants of both groups had the opportunity to see the sculpture and then evaluate its beauty on a scale of 1 to 5. Rating the beauty of the sculpture was equal in both groups of participants in the experiment before the Tour Guides presented the sculpture, meaning that the sculpture was liked equally by all research participants. This is a key result for the further course of the study. In the next step of the experiment, the participants will be affected by independent variables differing in their content. In the pretest phase of study in the two separate groups of participants, their assessment of the beauty of the sculpture was influenced only by their personal experience of the sculpture, and no other effect. If this situation is projected as an event in the Tourism industry, then it would represent tourists who find themselves in front of an object of local culture and assess the beauty of that object without any kind of influence from the Tour Guide.

The average score for each of the factors was calculated that made an overall assessment of the concept of beautiful. As the number of items in the different components is different, the arithmetic mean was calculated in order to compare the components.

It is very interesting that the greatest value was achieved on the item of fascination, and the lowest on the item authenticity. We would say that the students acted on the model of an average tourist, who is very interested in the feeling of beautiful, and less for the authenticity of art objects – thus, tourists are searching for a sense of the beautiful.

The basic idea of performing this experiment was to examine whether the experience of beauty depends on the level of participation of tourists during a visit to a cultural object. Therefore, one group of participants in the experiment had a "classic" treatment. In that treatment, a professional Tour Guide introduced the object by the most commonly used method. She stood in front of the participants of the experiment and spoke of the sculpture in the same way as she would work explaining to tourists some of the cultural monuments of southern Italy, to which she travels most often with tourists. The central part of this presentation was the story told by the creator of the sculpture on how the sculpture was created.

In the experimental group, the Tour Guide asked for the active participation of the students during the tour of the object. The Guide who participated with the experimental group told the participants of the experiment the same story about the origins of the sculpture as his colleague. In addition to that, he invited them to participate in the way that was already described.

The Multiple analysis of variance (MANOVA) test was applied to identify possible statistical differences in the respondents' perceptions of beauty based on their participation in the experimental groups. The main hypothesis was that students who participated actively in the group had a more intense experience of the beauty than the students who were just watching and listening to the Guide.

All multivariate tests are significant, which means that the hypothesis that there was no statistically significant difference between groups of respondents should be rejected. This confirms a statistically significant difference between groups using a different model in the experiment.

In the first place, it should be emphasised that the experience of beauty associated with observing the sculpture has changed in both groups. Statistically, in both groups, the sense of the beauty connected with a view of the sculpture increased significantly. Thus, it may be established that the importance of Tour Guides in modern

tourism is not emphasised sufficiently in the tourism literature. A demand for reduction of operating costs, which appears to be the general trend of neoliberal capitalism in particular, struck exactly the position of guides in tourism. The costs were, in fact, mostly decreased by engaging Tour Guides, who have become more technical companions of tourists than their guides.

With the help of Scheffell's method, we identified differences in values between the pre- and post-tests in these two different experimental situations. Better results were obtained in the experimental group in which participants were invited to the activity. Thus, participation in activities linked to some cultural objects is a factor that would implant perception of that object as beautiful deeper and stronger in the memory of tourists. In Tourism, the participation of tourists in an activity is nothing new, but is, perhaps, too often neglected. In very different ways, Tour Guides have long been trying to activate and animate tourists. This issue, however, is not just the question of tourists' interest to participate actively, but it is related closely to a more sensitive topic in the Tourism industry, i. e. to the role, education, skills, and position of Tour Guides.

CONCLUSION

The current experiment unveils a new understanding of the significance of Tour Guides in perceiving attractions as beautiful by exploring the dimensions of the observer's (tourist's) aesthetic judgement. The results have answered the first research question, and confirmed that the object (which stood for an attraction in the experiment) was perceived as more beautiful when it was presented by Tour Guides. Thus, this experiment makes an essential contribution to the existing knowledge of the significance of aesthetics in the tourist experience. The experiment also showed that the participants evaluated the object as more beautiful when it was presented by a Tour Guide organising an activity in which the participants were involved actively in the presentation of the object.

The results showed that those participating actively had a deeper and stronger implant of the object as beautiful in their memories. The research obviously gave a positive answer to the second research question. Thus, it was confirmed that the Engagement model, which emphasised “the subject’s active, multisensory engagement in the environment, and the holistic, perceptual unity of the subject immersed in and continuous with their surroundings” (Todd, 2009: 161) is relevant in aesthetic judgement in Tourism. It was also confirmed in the experiment, not only that the perception of beauty varies, but also that the perception of beauty can be influenced. The latter is a central finding for the Tourism industry. When Tour Guides were involved in the presentation of an object, the object was perceived as more beautiful. Consequently, it can be assumed that objects and attractions/destinations are perceived as more beautiful when they are presented by professional Tour Guides. Thus, it can be concluded that the profession of a Tour Guide is still among the essential ones in the Tourism sector. Tour Guides, providing that they do their job professionally, are ambassadors of destinations, and, what is more, ambassadors of cultures.

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REVITALIZING BAN KASET PUTTANA VILLAGE THROUGH COMMUNITY-BASED TOURISM

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There has been a boom in health tourism. A growing number of tourists travel to other countries for preventive and rehabilitative care and seek detoxifying, de-stressing and healthy activities. Based on a community-based tourism project, this study aimed to explore the possibilities of developing health tourism in Ban Kaset Puttana, a village located in the suburban area of Ubon Ratchathani in Thailand. The one-year project based on participatory action research covered the entire process of forming thematic alternative health tourist products by employing the concept of natural-based health care. The project was then followed by 10 semi-structured interviews with local villagers to investigate their perceptions about community-based tourism development. This research project resulted in the development of community-created sustainable rural tourism. After the research project, villagers indicated that while health tourism development has both positive and negative impacts on their village, the positive impacts far outweighs the negative ones.

Keywords: *Health tourism, community-based tourism development, responsible tourism, participatory action research, Thailand*



INTRODUCTION

Rural areas in many countries including Thailand have often relied on agriculture as the main source of economic welfare. However, over-reliance on one source of income could have detrimental effects on the viability of these local communities. One of the useful diversification tools for rural economies is rural tourism. It refers to tourism activities and development in non-urban settings involving close interaction between local residents and visitors ([Lane, 1994](#)). Rural tourism is a prevalent development approach for both developed and developing countries to create sustainable and resilient communities and economies. It is a trend toward local empowerment and an engine of economic growth in rural areas ([Sharpley, 2002](#)). It can create the opportunity for growth to isolated rural areas, diversify their economies, and enhance the quality of life for the locals. Rural tourism has been shown to benefit local residents as well as outsiders ([Ryan, Chaozhi, & Zeng, 2011](#)).

Despite the many advantages of tourism development, the plethora of tourism research has also addressed some adverse impacts of tourism such as noise pollution, environmental pollution, and biodiversity loss ([Chaowu & Xianmin, 2001](#); [Zhang & Gao, 2016](#)). As such, in developing rural tourism plans, emphasis should be put on low-carbon and sustainable tourism alternatives. Sustainable tourism is a normative approach and is defined as “Tourism that meets the needs of the present tourists and host regions while protecting and enhancing opportunities for the future. It is envisaged as leading to management of all resources in such a way that economic, social and aesthetic needs can be fulfilled while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity, and life support systems” ([World Tourism Organization, 1998](#)). For tourism to be truly sustainable, it should meet four criteria outlined by [Beioley \(1995\)](#) as the following: 1) respecting the economic well-being and social and cultural concerns of host communities through involving local consultation,

participation, and control, 2) preserving the local environment and operating within its capability to regenerate itself, 3) reducing adverse impact on the wider global environment resulting from depletion of natural resources and pollution, and 4) providing a meaningful and satisfying experience for visitors and tourists.

Rural tourism must be a part of the rural fabric, echo the unique patterns of the rural environment, economy, history and location, and employ local resources ([Tchetchik, Fleischer, & Finkelshtain, 2006](#)). Due to lack of prior local experience with tourism planning, outsiders might take advantage of local communities in tourism development ([De Kadt, 1992](#)). Therefore, community involvement in rural tourism development is pivotal for ensuring sustainability ([Bramwell, 2011](#); [Sakata & Prideaux, 2013](#); [Salazar, 2012](#)). Community-based tourism planning and development which stems from the locals can encourage more local participation in rural tourism development, and ensure its sustainability. Such local-level democracy is widely associated with sustainable tourism ([Bramwell, 2010](#)) and can contribute to sustainable ecosystem management ([Wallander, 2007](#)). Nonetheless, active participation of local community has received little attention in the tourism development literature ([Sofield, 2003](#)).

In the lack of prior research on responsible tourism in Ubon Ratchathani in Thailand, this study attempted to examine the potential of developing community-based health tourism in this region through a one-year participatory action research, and follow-up interviews with villagers. This study reports the development of a community-based health tourism in Ban Kaset Puttana Village, Thailand. The following section first provides an overview of the village. Then, the method applied in this one-year participatory action research is explained. The paper then offers key results of the project, summarizes the interview findings, and presents some directions for future research.

CASE STUDY SITE: BAN KASET PUTTANA VILLAGE, THAILAND

Ban Kaset Puttana is a village in the urban area of Ubon Ratchathani Province, the northeastern part of Thailand. The term “Ban” in Thai is equivalent to “village” in English. Ban Kaset Puttana is advanced in its cultural and agricultural resources. The village is easily accessible by car and is only a 30-minute drive away from Ubon Ratchathani Airport. The trip would cost approximately 200 baht by taxi. Due to strong influence by Buddhism, the village is rich in its cultural resources. The village hosts two interesting “Wats” (Temple) in itself. The main one is Wat Pha Kaset Photisajjatam, the 46th branch of Wat Nong Pah Pong; the Buddhist forest monastery located in the province of Ubon Ratchathani, which was established by [Venerable Ajahn Chah Subhaddo](#); the master of the impeccable approach to meditation or Dharma practice and the simple direct style of teaching. The approach emphasizes on practical application and a balanced attitude, which began to attract numerous followers among foreign monks and laypeople. As such, the teaching has a special appeal to westerners, and many have come to study and practice with him since 1966. The number of foreigners who come to Ajahn Chah has been steadily increasing. This temple is, therefore, a habitat for monks, nuns, and laypeople who want to study and practice the Teachings of the Buddha under Ajahn Chah’s guidance.

Physically, the temple is very sylvan and peaceful with a large number of trees which makes visitors calm when they step into the temple’s compound. Besides, there is a big pavilion containing Buddha and the Venerable Ajahn Chah Subhaddo statues. This pavilion is designed for Buddhists or laymen to pay respect, pray, or do meditation. Inside the pavilion, there are some interpretation boards telling visitors about the history of the temple. There is also a small concrete road through a tranquil atmosphere for visitors to walk or bike along. The second Wat or temple is around a kilometer away from the main one. The landmark of this temple is Luang Por

Tho Ko Ta Maa; a big Buddha statue with a Buddhism story behind it. The statue is placed right at front of the temple, which is a common photo shooting place for visitors prior to getting inside to the ordination hall to see some nice pictures of Buddhism story.

This village is also an organic agricultural-based site that has been a source of organic food for Ubon Ratchathani. There is a big organic farming of Mae (mother) Ket Keaw; the 64-year-old lady, who has been following the King philosophy of the sufficiency economy for years. The 50 rais of her farm (1 rai is equivalent to 1,600 square meters) contains various kind of vegetables and fruits that are organically grown. These organic plants are therefore a great source of healthy food. In addition, the farm is a learning center open for those who are interested in organic agricultural-based in the King Philosophy initiative. Tourists can try fresh fruits such as banana, coconut, Thai blueberry, nut, star fruit, monkey apple, star gooseberry and others while walking along the farm. Mother Ket Keaw plays the role of a tour guide, telling visitors about the concept of doing organic farming. In addition, there is a nearby village located about a kilometer from Ban Kaset Pattana where farmers grow colorful Mum flowers throughout the year. The village is, therefore, one of the destinations for the biking tour. At this point, tourists can take photos of beautiful flowers and buy some at a very reasonable price directly from the farm owner.

The advantage of its location an urban area helps the village in term of accessibility. As mentioned earlier, it takes tourists around 30 minutes by taxi from the airport or 20 minutes from Ubon Ratchathani downtown through the main road number 24, followed by only 5 minutes from the main road to easily reach the village. Besides, there is a health promotion center nearby which is around 10 minutes by car from the village. Currently, there is a high potential to connect the village with the center for the use of medical technology as well as human resources.

The information above tells us the high possibility of health tourism development in this village. To ensure sustainability of

community-based tourism, researchers have taken local participation into account. With high confidence that the impacts of such health tourism would not only generate income for the villagers but also help the mother province in term of increasing the length of stay for tourists.

METHOD

This research was initiated by finding a topic of interest from a key informant in the village. The informant was selected on the basis of occupation and relation to health tourism. Developing thematic villages stimulates proactive involvement among local residents which can lead to community-created sustainable rural tourism development ([Idziak, Majewski, & Zmyślony, 2015](#)).

The theme selected for the village was health tourism. Then, 245 questionnaires were used to survey the demand for the health tourism in Ubon, followed by participatory action research (PAR). A group of 15 citizen villagers voluntarily worked with the author for a year in the field. Participatory action research is a very common method for studies on community-based tourism planning ([Idziak et al., 2015](#); [Ormsby & Mannle, 2006](#)). It involved a key role played by the main researcher, who is local to the region, as both an observer and participant in the research ([Cole, 2005](#)). Through observation techniques, informal interviews and participation in the villagers' everyday lives, the researcher could get closer to villagers' life experiences and learn from them. Learning in action and participatory techniques put great emphasis on stories shared among the people ([Elliott, 1999](#)), enabling the rural community to create a new image of itself ([Barrett, Thomas, & Hocevar, 1995](#)).

PAR began with the site survey for gathering data. Then, SWOT analysis was performed as part of the diagnostic phase to examine the potential of the site. This was followed by initiating the tourism map and setting up health tourism activities employing the concept of natural-based health care. The concept consists of eight natural bases of being healthy, namely 1) following the four bases of

success by Dharma; aspiration, exertion, thoughtfulness, and investigation, 2) being in a good mood, 3) having healthy food, 4) doing exercise, 5) living in and breathing fresh air, 6) relaxation, 7) detoxification, and 8) having an honest job. These eight bases are available in the natural and rural community of the village under study. The researcher helped local villagers with the development of health tourism products such as healthy food and drink catering from the organic farm of Mother Ket Keaw, Thai massage, the easy hydrotherapy for relief pain, chanting out loud for the mind detoxification, morning meditation, yoga, and biking tour along the route. To ensure a sustainable community-created tourism, a group of villagers was trained for the hospitality work on how to welcome and greet tourists, cater food and drink. Besides, as well as a young local tour guide training for three days before inviting a group of pilot tourists. In addition, two different groups, each including representatives from the press and ten pilot tourists, were invited to try the route and activities developed for the site and provide feedback. Photographs of health tourism development in Ban Kaset Puttana Village can be seen in the supplementary data section available on the web-based version of this paper. Finally, this research employed 10 follow-up interviews with local residents to obtain their feedback and feeling regarding the community-based health tourism in their village. These semi-structured interviews with the local villagers were conducted six months after the project by one of the researchers. Semi-structured interviews provide a more open-ended feedback from respondents ([DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006](#); [Sekaran & Bougie, 2011](#)) and offer flexibility to both interviewer and interviewee to engage in sharing of views, opinions, and experiences in a less restrictive manner ([Turner III, 2010](#)). Interview sessions were recorded and transcribed for further analysis. The interview entailed the following main questions:

- How did you feel about the plans for health tourism development in your village after hearing them for the first time?

- How do you feel about the plans for health tourism development in your village now?
- What do you think would be the impact of health tourism development on your village?
- What do you think would be the impact of health tourism development on villagers?
- Why do you think tourists should come and visit your village?

What do you see as challenges of running health tourism in your village?

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This research reports the sustainable community-based health tourism solution developed for Ban Kaset Puttana Village along with the local residents. Consistent with Beioley's ([1995](#)) four criteria for sustainable tourism, the community-based tourism in the case study is sustainable as it meets all these criteria outlined below. The following section explains how this community-based tourism project addressed each of these criteria and a summary of key project achievements and observations are outlined.

RESPECTING THE ECONOMIC WELL-BEING AND SOCIAL AND CULTURAL CONCERNS OF HOST COMMUNITIES THROUGH INVOLVING LOCAL CONSULTATION, PARTICIPATION, AND CONTROL

The designed tourist activities were based on economic well-being as well as the social and cultural concerns of the host community shared by a local consultant, as the following. At some point, community-based tourism was expected to create extra jobs for local villagers to earn an extra income. Meanwhile, tourism activities should not cause any social and cultural distortion in the

village, rather respect and maintain those values. In addition, environment resources should not be degraded.

In order to ensure the economic well-being of the host community, income leakage is taken into account. Local villagers' participation is the main concern of this research. Resulting from this community-based tourism, local labor is employed in the food and beverage catering activities. Local transportation such as bicycles and cars are also utilized. For those villagers who participated in tourism-related activities, they could earn their share after the end of the program. Moreover, tourism activities are based upon the available resources in the village, which were found in the data collection stage. Tourist spots were also selected from the existing attractions in the village including temples, organic vegetable and fruits farm, Mum flower farm, and massage shop, and were promoted by local villagers as tour guides.

Meanwhile, local traditions such as offering food to monks early in the morning are also respected. Tourists will have a first-hand experience doing this as part of the overnight stay program. Local socio-cultural life of the host community is still going in the traditional way; villagers still live their life as usual. By visiting local tourist sites such the farms, tourists will be asked not to disturb the farmers but observe their way of doing farming and purchase farm products if interested. Besides, tourists will be requested to dress and behave properly for the temples visiting. This tourism initiative, therefore, respects the local economic well-being, as well as the social and cultural norms of host communities through involving local consultation, participation, and control.

PRESERVING THE LOCAL ENVIRONMENT AND OPERATING WITHIN ITS CAPABILITY TO REGENERATE ITSELF

To ensure the local environment is presented, all activities were designed within the capacity and resources available in the

village. To this end, the day trip program starts by greeting and welcoming tourists with a corsage or a small bouquet of flowers made by villagers, followed by a welcome drink made from herbs such as butterfly pea flowers and passion fruit juice, which are very tasty and healthy. Then, tourists will be offered the easy hydrotherapy session for pain relief instructed by a local villager who was a nurse. This session takes about two hours to finish and is followed by a very enjoyable lunch with a set of healthy food from organic sources obtained from Mother Ket Keaw's farm. The lunch is arranged by villagers who are trained for cooking. The portion of lunch is provided in proper scale and tourists will be discouraged from over consuming, which could result in obesity. After lunch, tourists will have two free hours, which can be spent by reading one's favorite books, laying down, or taking a walk before moving on to the massage session. The massage could be arranged either at the house that is used for welcoming tourist or at a nearby massage shop owned by a villager. The massage session will take two hours or more if requested by tourists. After the massage therapy, tourists will have the chance to buy local souvenirs and products of local villagers such as banana products, organic vegetable, and fruits juice before heading back home. This day trip costs 1,500 baht per person.

Besides, an overnight stay trip program (2 days 1 night), which costs 4,500 baht per person, is also designed to be provided by local villagers. This is because the village has some nice houses that can accommodate tourists and enables local house owners to earn some extra income from accommodation service. The program starts at a nearby health promotion center used for checking the body composition analysis. The checkup can inform tourists about their physical condition such as their obesity level, the strengths, and weaknesses of their heart and body. This activity is instructed by nurses who work at the center. After the checkup, tourists will obtain advice on well-being and nutrition, and will then be transferred to the village by car to continue with the designed health activities, which are quite similar to the single day trip outlined

above. In the evening time, tourists will be assigned to their room for staying with a local host. Then, they will come back to a house which is used for some activities such as chanting out loud led by a villager before going to bed. On the second day, tourists will be alarmed at 5:30 am for taking a fresh air followed by offering food to monks, feeding birds and having breakfast, bike tours, visiting the organic farm of Mother Ket Keaw, having lunch, enjoying free time, and having massage therapy before being sent off.

All of the tourist activities designed for the community-based tourism in the Ban Kaset Puttana Village, except for the check-up at the health promotion center, are based on the available resources in the village. The sustainability of this tourism initiative is ensured through obtaining full support from the villagers who have agreed on the price of services and their share in arranging the activities.

REDUCING ADVERSE IMPACT ON THE WIDER GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT RESULTING FROM DEPLETION OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND POLLUTION

To ensure minimizing adverse impact on the environment, the community-based tourism in Ban Kaset Puttana emphasized on using environmentally-friendly devices such as bikes and organic sources, as much as possible. Using bicycles for local transportation benefits environment and the health of tourists. Tourists will have the opportunity to do outdoor activities and exercise pleasantly along the bike route. This also allows tourism to observe the simple way of living of the local villagers along the route while enabling tourists to relax their mind and strengthen their mental health. In addition, this practice will minimize the environmental footprint resulting from the tourism activities in Ban Kaset Puttana. Meanwhile, in line with utilizing organic sources of fresh fruits and vegetable, local people have been encouraged to avoid using chemicals insecticides which cause environmental degradation and long-term health problems. The use of food containers such as foam

boxes and plastic bags in food and beverage catering is also prohibited instead, the use of banana leaves is encouraged. In addition, buckets are provided for tourists for waste separation. Waste such as discarded crumb or food scraps are used as a source of organic fertilizer. All these initiatives and plans enable the community-based tourism in Ban Kaset Puttana Village to have a minimal adverse environmental impact both regionally and on the wider global environment.

PROVIDING A MEANINGFUL AND SATISFYING EXPERIENCE FOR VISITORS AND TOURISTS

To create a meaningful experience for visitors, they are encouraged to obtain firsthand experience through activities designed as part of the natural bases of being a healthy concept. For instance, tourists can participate in picking fresh fruits and vegetables from the organic farm of Mother Ket Keaw when preferred. As for the activity of mixing healthy drinks, tourists are encouraged to make fresh drinks by themselves with the help of recipe provided. Moreover, tourists are pleasantly trained in some activities such as exercising, yoga and qigong, detoxification, chanting, meditation, and the hydrotherapy, which can also be practiced by tourists at home upon their return. In addition, the religious activities such as offering food to monks in early mornings can also enhance the experience of those none Buddhist tourists as they can observe and try them if preferred.

Since of this community-based health tourism research is at the stage of finding a potential for Ubon Ratchathani to become one of the popular health tourism destinations, researchers measured tourists' satisfaction and obtained their feedbacks. This was collected from the two different groups that were invited to try the route and its activities. The first group of the pilot tourists consisted of ten people with diverse careers such as nurses, university lecturers, and business women. As for the number of pilot tourists, ten was deemed to be the appropriate number due to the current

capacity of the host community to handle and serve tourists in one simultaneous visit. The pilot visit aimed to evaluate the program and seek feedback while giving the chance to local guide and local tourism staff to practice their role for the first time onsite. As for the result of the try, the first group of pilot tourists was happy with the health-related activities initiated. However, there were some empirical comments provided, as the following. Checkup activity at the health promotion center was not so smooth and it took a long time for tourists to find the checking room, indicating that a small sign board or flag should be provided for tourists to easily direct them to the tour guide. Besides, local tourism staff should be well-trained. Meanwhile, meals should be catered in smaller portions and the taste of the food should not be too strong to fit a wider taste preference. Another concern raised by pilot visitors was that the healthy talk session in the evening was very long. It was also suggested that some activities such as the offering of food to monks in the early morning, morning meditation, and biking tour should be optional choices for those none Buddhist tourists and tourist who are unable to bike or wake up early. In order to prevent the unexpected bike-related incidents such as accident and getting lost, a first-aid kit should be provided together with tour guides closely looking after tourists all along the biking route. In addition, cleanliness in both food production and homestay should be more focused on. These comments and feedbacks were taken into consideration by the local community in improving the quality of their community-based health tourism.

As a follow-up, one month later, the second group of ten pilot tourists was invited. This group consisted of tourists, tourism lecturers, and members of media. The result showed that the group was satisfied by all activities available. The only empirical comment from this group was how to promote such tourism initiative. The press media basically helped the community to promote through cable television channel, while others shared their experiences through social media such as Facebook. Overall, reactions and

feedbacks of the two groups of pilot tourists showed that this community-based health tourism provided a meaningful and satisfying experience for visitors and tourists.

RESIDENTS' PERCEPTION OF COMMUNITY-BASED HEALTH TOURISM IN THE VILLAGE

This section provides a summary of the local villagers' views and perceptions about the health tourism developed in their village in response to several major questions asked by researchers as the following:

- *How did you feel about the plans for health tourism development in your village after hearing them for the first time?*

Almost all interviewed villagers reflected that they felt excited at first when they heard about such health tourism development plan. Some of them revealed that the idea for community-based tourism was initially brought up into the meeting of villagers ten years ago when there was a government agent from the agriculture department of Ubon Ratchathani Province came to the village with the policy of organic farming. At that time, Mother Ket Keaw's farm was selected as the demonstration site. There was later a group of villagers including Mother Ket Keaw who continue the organic farming activities. Years after that there were some talks about agriculture tourism in the region, however, it never materialized and nothing happened. They were hesitant because they felt unconfident and did not know how to develop tourism products and services. Besides, they were not sure if their village was interesting enough to attract tourists.

- *How do you feel about the plans for health tourism development in your village now?*

After the research project, villagers almost unanimously felt more confident about conducting tourism plans in their village. They

had a clear picture of what to be presented. Being part of the research team encouraged them to explore more about their own village. At this point, they have become more aware of the significant history of their village they had never known before as well as the many nice places their village had to offer to tourists. Most of them revealed that they felt proud of themselves in this community-based tourism project. Even if it was just a pilot project, in their opinion, at least it helped them a lot in terms of learning and gaining more confidence in the process.

- *What do you think would be the impact of health tourism development on your village?*

Villagers believed health tourism development has both positive and negative impacts on their village. On the positive side, the village would attract tourists which will make it become well-known and gain good image. However, pollution arising from tourism activities could be a negative side if not managed properly. Nonetheless, villagers were not worried about such negative impacts as they had not observed any of them yet.

- *What do you think would be the impact of health tourism development on villagers?*

Most of the villagers revealed that villagers could get positive impacts from health tourism development in terms of additional job creation for villagers and generation of extra income. Moreover, they felt that they would be proud of themselves to conduct such tourism initiative. At present, villagers especially those who got involved in tourism have seen it as an opportunity for both local economic growth and a means for building unity among villagers. A villager revealed that there is a neighbor running a pool as a family business in a nearby village and has shown interest to join hands in this project since she has seen an opportunity to gain more clients. In contrast, one negative drawback for the village could be the over

crowdedness resulting from tourism activities. As such, according to villagers, it should be well-managed and the number of tourists number be maintained within an acceptable limited.

- *Why do you think tourists should come and visit your village?*

Villagers revealed that the research project they had been working with for a year expanded their understanding of how nice the available tourist attractions in their village are and they were excited to share the beauty of those sites with visitors. Especially after observing the interest, satisfaction and excitement in pilot tourists, villagers felt more confident that their village has nice and valuable tourist attractions. Villagers proudly stated that the organic farm of Mother Ket Keaw is not only a source of healthy food but also a learning center for those who would like to employ sufficiency economy. As stated by some villagers, several people visited the farm because they wanted to gain farming knowledge for a better life, especially the knowledge of growing bananas since there are various species of bananas organically grown on the farm. Moreover, the organic fertilizer made of chicken dung is also one thing that attracts some people interested in learning about agriculture. This fertilizer helps a lot to reduce cost of doing farm. In addition, villagers felt that Ban Suan Tip - the house that has been used as a tourist welcoming center and one of the homestay accommodations service - is very attractive in its natural beauties. Lastly, the elder care initiative that the owner of the house has practiced daily impressed the two groups of pilot tourists. As highlighted by villagers, some pilot tourists stated that such care could be developed also in the future for the elder-friendly tourism development.

- *What do you see as challenges of running health tourism in your village?*

Almost all villagers stated that time managing, business sustainability, and marketing are the top challenges of running tourism in the village. Regarding time management, tourism group

members especially the head of the group are quite busy with their regular jobs. As such, they sometimes found it difficult to manage their time. This, in turn, could affect the continuity and sustainability of the business if they are unable to manage it. Meanwhile, marketing is also one of the key challenges in the beginning stage. However, pilot tourists invited were happy to share their experience which is helpful in term of marketing the tourism destination through word of mouth.

CONCLUSION

This study investigated the possibilities of developing community-based health tourism in Ban Kaset Puttana Village for revitalizing the region and generating new revenue streams for local residents. The project entailed a one-year participatory action research project which aimed to create a health tourism destination in the village and create thematic health tourist products with the help of villagers. The community-developed health tourism was then piloted by two groups of visitors and demonstrated the huge potential of the region in offering health tourism services. To further investigate the impact of this responsible tourism on local residents, ten follow-up interviews were conducted with villagers and results were reported in this research.

For ensuring a successful and sustainable change process toward community-based tourism in Ban Kaset Puttana Village, the project followed the recommendations by [Heath and Heath \(2010\)](#). First, villagers were pointed to the ultimate destination of having their village as a tourist destination soon. After consulting with locals and identifying the strengths of the village and what it has to offer in terms of health tourism, critical moves were scripted. Local villagers were provided with specific training related to hospitality and tourism. The project also strived to shrink the change process by simplifying the tasks and breaking them into manageable activities. The research project also emphasized on cultivating an identity of

serenity and tranquillity in locals to encourage them toward developing local health tourism solutions and services. Finally, by inviting two groups of visitors and allowing locals to see visitors' positive feedback and delight, we tried to rally the herd and encourage more participation and support from the locals.

Several directions for future research emerge from the current understanding of the potential of the Ban Kaset Puttana Village and Ubon Ratchathani for health tourism. First, it would be worthwhile for future studies to explore the barriers and challenges to the continuity of a sustainable health tourism. Second, future research can deepen the understanding of the success factors of community-based tourism by investigating the role of place image and visitors' positive word of mouth in attracting new visitors. Since one in every three visitors choose community-based tourism in order to support such initiatives ([Sánchez-Cañizares & Castillo-Canalejo, 2014](#)), it is crucial to better promote such destinations using various media.

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CRAFTTOURISM: DEVELOPMENT & VALIDATION OF A SCALE TO assess visitors' behavioural pattern based on identified travel motives

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Although perennial and transgenerational practice of local and traditional crafts have been recognized as factor a priori to segmental differentiation of destinations, inadequate research effort has been observed to understand and analyze the cognitive involvement of visitors to enact as craftsmen and to develop a scale to measure the motivation which brings out this role reversal. Destination marketing organizations are quick to enlist this role-reversal of visitors, nomenclated as Crafttourism by the researcher, as tourism-product offer based on acculturation. This study focuses on development and validation of a robust scale to measure visitor motivation to enact in this role-reversal. The scale development procedure yielded a five factor measurement instrument with acceptable levels of reliability and validity. The five dimensional spread of motivation related to Crafttourism were identified as experiential learning, creative thrill, sensory gratification, socialization and self esteem. The scale was tested for predictive capability of behavioural intentions of visitors with respect to two specific intentions namely repeat visit and positive referrals and was found to be significantly effective. The implications of the scale developed were discussed in both theoretical and managerial perspectives.

Keywords: *craft, tourism, scale development, visitor, measurement, role-reversal*



INTRODUCTION

Motivation to travel has been recognized as a cognitive urge, often conceptualized as a socio-psychological phenomenon, which stimulates visitors to undertake journeys to specific destinations (Cohen, 1974, Crompton & McKay, 1997; Fodness, 1994). Empirical evidences justifying tourist motivation pointed out that destination preference franchised by visitors are predominantly determined by the magnitude of perceived satisfactory experience (McIntosh et al., 1995; Crompton & McKay, 1997; Fodness, 1994). Researchers, namely Pearce (1993), McIntosh et al. (1995), Nicolau and Mas (2006) and many others emphasised that assessing visitor motivation is critical in gaining an understanding of visitor behaviour and they went on to assert that the exploration of theoretical perspectives of visitor motivation should yield positive research outcomes in the context of travel behaviour, travel pattern and travel preference. Vassiliadis and Fotiadis (2008) identified a four factor construct for visitors' motivation to travel museums. Tourist motivation, therefore, has received considerable attention of researchers in tourism literature, however, the understanding of motivation has not been expanded to the process of destination-specific acculturation-in-practice namely role-reversal of visitors with reference to traditional crafts.

Changing paradigms of tourism is witnessing the emergence of experiential travelling where visitors are getting integrated with the patronization and practice of destinations' cultural and heritage-based outputs, may be more suitably represented as an expanded and dynamic acculturation stigma. learning and participating have emerged as a critical element of travel with crafts as a central focus (Shushma, 2012). As an element of cultural celebrations, handicrafts can be used to enhance the attractiveness of the destination for non-local visitors, develop community image, raise funds for special, civic or charitable projects, provide opportunities for the community to deal with fine arts, help to preserve and revitalize local cultures and traditions, provide important leisure activity outlets, build social

cohesion and provide opportunities for family members to strengthen their bounds, foster civic pride and cohesion (Weaver & Robinson, 1989; Janiskee, 1980; Getz 1991; Liang, Illum & Cole, 2008; Getz, 2008). As Long et al., (1990) argue, rural communities strive to enhance the local tourism industry to attract nonresidents to the community with the expectation to boost the economy.

Past research works observed that visitors are involved in pro-destination activity namely positive referrals once they are satisfied with the destination they visited (Kotler et al., 2010). Therefore it becomes imperative for the destination marketer to ensure visitor satisfaction by improving the experience of the visitors associated with the destination visited (Pike, 2008). Researchers have also pointed out that destination bonding can be a useful input in understanding the criticality in satisfaction-loyalty relationship (Yuksel, Yuksel and Bilim (2010). Research inputs are available in the context of emotional bonding with destination and destination loyalty. Adequate insights of visitor integration with local craft production and its probable direct and moderating impacts on visitors' cognitive aspects and consequent behavioural manifestations have not been explored at all.

The districts of Birbhum, Bankura and Murshidabad in the state of West Bengal, India were chosen as the sites to carry out this research work. Birbhum is recognised as the hub of traditional crafts namely 'batik work' (wax-cracks on textile and leather) and 'kantha work' (a special type of stitching on textile materials). Other craft practices that namely potteries, textile dying, bamboo works, macramé etc also prevails among thousands of artisans. Murshidabad, situated in the northern part of West Bengal, India is the home of ivory works and bell-metal crafts. Bankura, primarily an arid zone in the south-western part of West Bengal, India is famous for its 'dokra works' (sculptures in brass and other alloys) and terracotta sculptures, It is also famous for textile weaving and specifically for a particular type of saree (traditional women-wear) namely 'baluchari'. Every year millions of visitors flock in these

states of handicraft production and participate in the learning and practice of these crafts.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The economic implications of tourism-craft linkage depends on the effectiveness of the sub-sectors of tourism such as retailing, leisure services etc., to effectively harness the locally produced crafts and artefacts into the tourism market (Saji & Narayanaswamy, 2011). Today, the craftsmen involved in the manufacture process have braced themselves by opening new vistas into the current trend, with drastic changes in their thinking and attitude by producing products according to present market demands (Shariff, 2005). John (2014) conducted an extensive study to identify the revival issues of Channapatna toys, a speciality handicraft product, of Karnataka, India and found that awareness and integration of visitor with the production process can play a pivotal role in the revival process. Craft tourists have been considered to be both source of revenue generation and promotional vehicle for the rural destinations as they are often parts of craft clusters (Pustylnick, 2011) and the combination of earthly rural essence and indigenous craft practice can be an adequate strategic fit for Crafttourism. Crompton and McKay (1997) and McIntosh et al. (1995) were of the opinion that heritage and cultural experience imbibes accumulation of knowledge and integrating with the cultural spread. Heritage and cultural motivation can stimulate destination choice and broad-spectrum travel behaviours (Kerstetter et al., 2001) which include participation in local practice, activities and events (Lee & Lee, 2001, Funk & Bruun, 2007. Kim and Eves (2012) considered consumption of local cuisine as one of the significant and potential travel motivations. Urge to explore and seek the novelty was perceived to be triggered by the experience of environment (Loewenstein, 1994). Crompton and McKay (1997) concluded that travel can be considered as a physical involvement towards

satisfying a cognitive desire to expand intellectual enrichment by becoming an integral part of the destination.

Travel motivations, other than centering heritage and cultural insights of destinations have also received considerable attention by the researchers. Seeking excitement and indulging in uncertainty has been observed as optimal arousal attitudes in travel context (Mayo and Jarvis, 1981) which has been more specifically presented by Iso-Ahola and Weissinger (1990) as an escapism from daily routine & monotony and participating in something creative and novel. A desire to experience travel through sensory appeals has also found empirical support (Dann and Jacobsen, 2002, Urry, 2002). Push and pull motivations have been categorized by the researchers to play decisive role in travel decisions (Yoon and Uysal, 2005; Dann, 1977). Yoon and Uysal (2005) observed that 'push' motivations are emotional and internal aspects of the individual which lead to travel decisions. Pull motivations are exogenous factors that influence visitors to travel to a destination (Yoon and Uysal, 2005). McGee et al. (1996) emphasized that pull motivations are governed by a destination's attractiveness such as heritage and culture, natural ambience, recreation facilities etc. Nostalgia, novelty and social interaction were identified as critical travel motives by Kassean and Gassita (2013). Travel motivations, a combination of push and pull, culminates in registering emotional bonding of the visitors with the destination. Several studies have indicated that the need for prestige distinctions in the form of 'sense of self-worth', 'sense of accomplishment', 'sense of creative-self' can play as travel motivators (Crompton and McKay, 1997; Dann, 1977; Urry, 2002). According to Dann (1977), travel behaviour can derive cognitive-drives from the desire for ego-esteem and the need to be recognised.

Emotional bonding with destination, as one of the outcomes of travel motivation, has received considerable attention of researchers in contemporary literatures in tourism perspective. A number of antecedents have been identified to play decisive role in framing emotional bonding of the visitors with the destination visited namely recreation and relaxation (Nawijn et al., 2013), restaurants and

dining facilities (Han and Jeong 2013), cultural and ethnic festivals (Grappi and Montanari 2011; Lee et al. 2008), shopping opportunities (Yuksel 2007), theme parks (Ma et al., 2013), and adventure tourism (Faullant et al., 2011). Studies have also emphasized the impact of emotional bonding of the visitors with the destination on motivation to travel (Goossens 2000) and destination preference (Chuang 2007).

Researchers have also verified the relationship between the travel motivation and destination loyalty (Baksi and Parida, 2014; Baksi, 2013; Baksi and Parida, 2013; Chi and Qu, 2008; Yoon and Uysal, 2005) not only in terms of repeat visit but also through positive referrals (Bigne et al, 2009; Murray and Howat, 2002; Yoon and Uysal, 2005).

Although contemporary literature revealed adequate empirical support in favour of heritage and culture playing a pivotal role in enhancing visitor motivation, involvement of visitors towards participating in production of crafts and thus manifesting behaviour of role-reversal, has not been studied at all. Visitors' travel motivation has been conceptualized as a multidimensional construct comprised of a number of tested dimensions namely escape from routine, ego satisfaction, sensory appeals, knowledge accumulation etc. The term 'Craftourism' has been coined by the researcher to emphasis on a specific novel pattern of tourism which may significantly affect the visitors' motivation to travel and hence need to be quantified and scaled. Craftourism as a travel motivator may bring changes in behavioural consequences of visitors too.

Thus, the specific objective of the study is to develop and validate a scale quantifying Craftoursim as visitors' travel motivator in role reversal and to sample test its impact on behavioural pattern of visitors.

METHODOLOGY

In order to ensure reliability and validity of the scale the study followed steps that are successfully used in prior studies (Kim and Eves, 2012; Hung and Petrick, 2010; Netemeyer et al., 2003) namely a) review of literature to understand the constructs, b) preparing list of items explaining the constructs, c) refining the measurement, and d) developing the final measurement scale.

A primary list of 32 items was identified on the basis of the past studies focusing on handicraft-based tourism and associated travel motivations (Saji & Narayanaswamy, 2011; Shariff, 2005; John, 2014; Grappi and Montanari 2011; Lee et al. 2008; Yuksel 2007; Crompton and McKay, 1997; Dann, 1977; Urry, 2002). The initial pool of 32 items was used for a pilot study using the focus group interview technique (FGI) to assess the content for ambiguity and lack of clarity. The FGI panel consisted of researchers, academicians and practitioners in the field of tourism. The researcher decided not to assign any pre-existing construct for these items to avoid biasness of response and allowed free analysis. This initial pilot test identified 29 items for the measurement purpose.

An exploratory factor analysis with varimax rotation was deployed to assess the reliability (DeVellis, 2003) and construct validity (Netemeyer et al., 2003) with a convenience sample size of 123. The sample were chosen from visitors who took active part in practicing and producing crafts in the three destinations selected for the study over the last one year. To assess whether a particular data set is amenable to factor analysis, examination of the strength of the relationship among the items is required (Hair et al., 2006; Bohmstedt & Borgatta, 1981). The items having factor loadings lower than .6 or cross-loaded on more than one factor were discarded. The internal consistency and reliability were proved to be significant as Cronbach's alpha was found to be $>.7$ (Hair et al., 2006). A total of 22 items were significantly loaded across five components (Table-1). EFA explained 73.667% of overall variance and identified five constructs: (Table-1). Bartlett's test of Sphericity (a statistical test for the presence of correlations among the variables) and the KMO (Kaisere Meyere Olkin) measure of

sampling adequacy were measured to assess the factorability of the data. The KMO value at .902 exceeds the acceptable minimum value which is .6 (Hair et al., 2006). The Barlett's test of Sphericity was found to be significant (Chi-square-654.213, $df=187$, .000 $p < .00$). The Cronbach's alpha score of reliability ranged from .828 to .919. To achieve a more meaningful and interpretable solution, some items which loaded on more than one factor were deleted. During the factor extraction process, 27 out of 29 items were retained.

Table-1: EFA results

| Dimensions assigned | Scale items | Factor load | Mean | SD | α |
|------------------------|--|-------------|------|------|----------|
| Ethno-cultural aspects | I feel proud to learn the techniques of the crafts | .795 | 5.15 | 1.28 | 0.919 |
| | I feel proud to learn the history behind the crafts | .766 | 5.81 | 1.44 | |
| | I feel proud to produce crafts hands-on | .860 | 5.38 | 1.99 | |
| | I feel proud to be a part in crafts production | .703 | 4.95 | 1.49 | |
| | I feel proud to see my products on display for sale | .776 | 4.81 | 1.77 | |
| | I feel proud to learn the techniques of craft making | .882 | 5.13 | 0.57 | |
| | I feel proud about the experience of being a craftsman | .741 | 5.51 | 1.17 | |
| Thrill | I had the scope to impart my own design in the craft | .620 | 4.50 | 1.47 | 0.917 |
| | I had the scope to modify the traditional designs | .699 | 4.89 | 1.98 | |
| | I had opportunity to manifest my creative self | .840 | 4.10 | 1.66 | |
| | I had the opportunity to create new designs | .910 | 5.10 | 1.87 | |
| | I had the opportunity to use the tools to create my own craft item | .832 | 4.36 | 1.39 | |
| | Participating in the craft practice takes me away from routine | .740 | 4.26 | 1.68 | |
| Cognitive appeal | I derived immense satisfaction from participating in craft making | .707 | 5.57 | 1.00 | 0.877 |
| | I felt relaxed in the environment of learning craft production | .729 | 4.89 | 1.12 | |

| | | | | | |
|-------------------------------|--|------|------|------|-------|
| | The rural environment of craft making is soothing to the eye | .751 | 5.47 | 1.62 | |
| | The earthly smell of the environment of craft making is refreshing | .763 | 5.82 | 1.76 | |
| | I derived immense satisfaction when I touched the tools and raw materials of the craftsmen to produce crafts of my own | .949 | 5.27 | 1.90 | |
| Mutual community relationship | I got a chance, as a craftsman, to interact with buyers | .867 | 5.14 | 1.41 | 0.842 |
| | I was thrilled to observe buyers recognizing me as a craftsman | .820 | 5.05 | 1.29 | |
| | The local craftsmen provide satisfactory hospitality | .654 | 5.37 | 1.19 | |
| | The local craftsmen provide satisfactory hospitality | .912 | 5.67 | 1.78 | |
| | Participating in role-reversal increases friendly bonding | .818 | 5.11 | 1.08 | |
| | The local craftsmen are happy to share their selling platform to sell products that we made | .779 | 5.73 | 1.11 | |
| Esteem | Experiencing local food enriches me intellectually | .748 | 5.42 | 1.29 | 0.828 |
| | I want to talk about my experience to enact as a craftsman | .659 | 4.98 | 1.03 | |
| | I shall advice people to enact in the role of a craftsman | .682 | 5.01 | 1.53 | |

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

Rotation converged in 5 iterations.

KMO: .902, Bartlett test of Sphericity: Chi-square-654.213, df=187, Sig.: .000

To assess the validity (construct & convergent), reliability and dimensionality of the scale confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988) with the maximum likelihood method was deployed using the LISREL software. For this purpose convenience sampling method was adopted and data from three different locales Birbhum (n = 443), Bankura (n = 276), and Murshidabad (n = 310) were collected. The data were collected using the items churned out by EFA in a 7 point Likert scale ranging from 'strongly disagree' to strongly agree'. Those visitors who visited these three destinations between December, 2014 to March, 2015 were interviewed.

The response generated across three locations were compared on the basis of five demographic variables namely gender, age, education, income and occupation to assess the probability of response bias using χ^2 analysis (Hung and Petrick, 2010). The results revealed significant difference in age groups ($\chi^2= 31.69$, $p = .000$) and occupation ($\chi^2= 42.33$, $p = .000$). It has been assumed that the probability of response bias is minimal.

CFA was deployed to identify the distribution of latent variables which are supposed to account for the covariance amongst the set of observed variables (Kim and Aves, 2012; Anderson and Gerbing, 1988). The magnitude of standardised factor loadings on the latent construct should preferably be greater than .5 in order to ensure a meaningful and interpretable solution of a measurement (Hung and Petrick, 2010; Netemeyer et al., 2003). Empirical evidence suggested other goodness of fit indices should be considered apart from χ^2 measure as χ^2 may be influenced by sample size (Hair et al., 2006; Kim and Li, 2009; Kim and Aves, 2012).

The results of the three CFAs using three datasets yielded five dimensions and nomenclated as: 1) experiential learning, 2) creative thrill, 3) sensory gratification, 4) socialization, and 5) self esteem (Table-2). Three items namely 'I feel proud about the experience of being a craftsman', 'I had the scope to modify the traditional designs' and 'The local craftsmen are happy to share their selling platform to sell products that we made' were discarded as factor loading for these items were below acceptable level (Netemeyer et al., 2003).

Convergence was established as the factor loadings ($>.6$) were found to be adequate (Kim and Aves, 2012; Anderson and Gerbing, 1988). Construct validity of the scale was evaluated by analysing the standardised factor loadings, the critical ratio and the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) (Kim and Aves, 2012; Anderson and Gerbing, 1988). Discriminant validity (Hair et al., 2006) was assessed by obtaining the composite means of the constructs and the correlation was applied to examine the discriminant validity of the measurement. The correlation values obtained (Table-4) were

significantly lower than .85 which established the discriminant validity Hung and Petrick (2010). Convergent validity, showing internal consistency of the measuring instrument, was established as the average variance extracted (AVE) exceeded the cut-off range of .5. (Kim and Eves, 2012; Fornell and Larcker 1981).

The results of CFA with the fit statistics were displayed in Table-3 which was found to exhibit reasonably moderate to good fit with the model for all the three datasets used.

Table-2: CFA results

| Scale items | Dataset-1 (Birbhum, n=443) | | Dataset-2 (Bankura, n=276) | | Dataset-3 (Murshidabad , n=310) | |
|--|----------------------------------|-----|----------------------------------|-----|---------------------------------------|-----|
| | SL | AVE | SL | AVE | SL | AVE |
| <i>Experiential learning</i> | | .81 | | .80 | | .80 |
| I feel proud to learn the techniques of the crafts | .823 | | .811 | | .804 | |
| I feel proud to learn the history behind the crafts | .798 | | .783 | | .801 | |
| I feel proud to produce crafts hands-on | .845 | | .857 | | .843 | |
| I feel proud to be a part in crafts production | .821 | | .819 | | .824 | |
| I feel proud to see my products on display for sale | .799 | | .782 | | .789 | |
| I feel proud to learn the techniques of craft making | .785 | | .777 | | .769 | |
| <i>Creative passion & thrill</i> | | .82 | | .81 | | .81 |
| I had the scope to impart my own design in the craft | .854 | | .848 | | .844 | |
| I had opportunity to manifest my creative self | .833 | | .829 | | .820 | |
| I had the opportunity to create new designs | .818 | | .802 | | .813 | |
| I had the opportunity to use the tools to create new designs | .799 | | .804 | | .791 | |
| Participating in the craft practice takes me away from routine | .808 | | .801 | | .795 | |
| <i>Sensory gratification</i> | | .78 | | .77 | | .78 |

| | | | | | | |
|--|------|-----|------|-----|------|-----|
| I derived immense satisfaction from participating in craft making | .768 | | .777 | | .763 | |
| I felt relaxed in the environment of learning craft production | .798 | | .782 | | .791 | |
| The rural environment of craft making is soothing to the eye | .792 | | .787 | | .802 | |
| The earthly smell of the environment of craft making is refreshing | .768 | | .759 | | .772 | |
| Use of tools of craftsmen gives me satisfaction | .791 | | .779 | | .784 | |
| Socialization | | .81 | | .82 | | .81 |
| I got a chance, as a craftsman, to interact with buyers | .811 | | .827 | | .814 | |
| I was thrilled to observe buyers recognizing me as a craftsman | .848 | | .854 | | .839 | |
| The local craftsmen provide satisfactory hospitality | .824 | | .836 | | .829 | |
| The local craftsmen provide satisfactory hospitality | .816 | | .822 | | .812 | |
| Participating in role-reversal increases friendly bonding | .793 | | .784 | | .803 | |
| Self esteem | | | | | | |
| Experiencing local food enriches me intellectually | .765 | .76 | .759 | .76 | .754 | .75 |
| I want to talk about my experience to enact as a craftsman | .782 | | .789 | | .775 | |
| I shall advice people to enact in the role of a craftsman | .749 | | .737 | | .754 | |

SL – Standard loading, AVE – Average variance extracted

Table-3: Goodness-of-fit indices for the model

| Index | Accepted value | Dataset-1 (Birbhum, n=349) | Dataset-2 (Bankura, n=254) | Dataset-3 (Murshidabad, n=225) |
|---------------|----------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| χ^2 , df | ----- | 776.241, 329 | 474.640, 243 | 418.277, 235 |
| χ^2 /df | <2.0 | 1.74 | 1.93 | 1.77 |

| | | | | |
|---------|--------------------------------|------|------|------|
| p value | <.05 | .000 | .000 | .000 |
| RMSEA | <.05 (Kline, | .04 | .06 | .06 |
| SRMR | <.10 (Hu and Bentler, 1998) | .09 | .10 | .09 |
| GFI | >.9 (Hu and Bentler, 1998) | .93 | .91 | .92 |
| AGFI | >.9 (Hu and Bentler., 1998) | .91 | .90 | .89 |
| NFI | >.9 (Bentler and Bonett, 1980) | .93 | .92 | .92 |
| CFI | >.9 (Kline et al., | .91 | .91 | .90 |

Table 4: Multiple squared factor correlations

| | EL | CT | SG | SOC | SE |
|-----|------|------|------|------|----|
| EL | -- | | | | |
| CT | 0.23 | -- | | | |
| SG | 0.31 | 0.41 | -- | | |
| SOC | 0.19 | 0.28 | 0.37 | -- | |
| SE | 0.20 | 0.25 | 0.22 | 0.18 | -- |

*EL- Experiential learning, CT- Creative thrill, SG- Sensory gratification, SOC- Socialization, SE- Self esteem

The external validity of the scale was assessed by examining its predictive capability (Hair et al., 2006) of the measurement about behavioural intentions of visitors namely repeat visit (3 items, Baksi & Parida, 2013) and positive referrals (4 items, Baksi and Parida, 2013). The researcher used the same sample to generate response with regard to their behavioural intention on the basis of the opportunity of role-reversal that they received with respect to the destinations they visited. The response was generated with a 7 point Likert scale ranging from 'strongly disagree' (1) to 'strongly agree' (7).

Table-5: EFA for behavioural intention

| Dimensions | | Factor loading | Mean | SD | α |
|--------------------|--|----------------|------|------|----------|
| Positive referrals | I shall be recommending my friends and relatives to invest money in visiting this destination | 0.81 | 5.05 | 1.28 | .92 |
| | I shall say positive things about this destination and scope for role reversal to other people | 0.82 | 5.11 | 1.36 | |
| | I shall recommend this destination to visitors | 0.84 | 5.09 | 1.34 | |
| | I shall encourage my friends and relatives to visit this destination | 0.79 | 4.97 | 1.29 | |

| | | | | | |
|--------------|---|------|------|------|-----|
| Repeat visit | I would have visited this destination within one year time had I not come to join this year | 0.77 | 4.99 | 1.37 | .89 |
| | I would visit this destination even without scope of role reversal associated with it | 0.76 | 5.89 | 1.47 | |
| | I shall visit this destination again in next year | 0.81 | 5.59 | 1.28 | |

Regression analysis was deployed to test the predictive capability of the scale about two specific behavioural intentions of the visitors namely 'repeat visit' and 'positive referrals'. The results of the regression analysis (Table-6 and Table-7) revealed that 'Craftourism' as a tool of travel motivator on the basis of role-reversal can significantly and effectively predict repeat visitation for all three destinations under study namely Birbhum($R^2 = .362$, $F = 68.893$, $\beta = .304$, $t = 8.300$, $p < .001$), Bankura ($R^2 = .181$, $F = 6$, 19.447 , $\beta = .126$, $t = 3.383$, $p < .005$) and Murshidabad ($R^2 = .266$, $F = 33.890$, $\beta = .246$, $t = 5.821$, $p < .001$). Positive referral was shown to be significantly predicted for two destinations: Birbhum ($R^2 = .352$, $F = 43.072$, $\beta = .363$, $t = 7.118$, $p < .001$) and Murshidabad ($R^2 = .201$, $F = 25.491$, $\beta = .293$, $t = 6.093$, $p < .001$). Craftoursim, however, did not exhibit a significant predictive factor for positive referral for the visitors travelling to Bankura.

Table-6: Regression analysis showing predictive capability of Craftoursim about repeat visit

| Datasets | R | R Square | Adjusted R Square | R Square Change | F Change | Sig. F Change | Std. Coeff | t | Sig. |
|---------------------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|-----------------|----------|---------------|------------|-------|------|
| | | | | | | | Beta | | |
| Dataset-1 (Birbhum, | .604 ^a | .362 | .361 | .362 | 68.893 | .000 | .304 | 8.300 | .000 |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------|------|------|------|--------|------|------|-------|------|
| n=349) | | | | | | | | | |
| Dataset-2 (Bankura, n=254) | .426 ^a | .181 | .179 | .181 | 19.447 | .001 | .126 | 3.383 | .001 |
| Dataset-3 (Murshidaba d, n=225) | .512 ^a | .266 | .264 | .266 | 33.890 | .000 | .246 | 5.821 | .000 |

a. Predictors: (Constant), Craftourism

b. Dependent Variable: Repeat visit

Table-7: Regression analysis showing predictive capability of Craftoursim about positive referrals

| Datasets | R | R Square | Adjusted R Square | R Square Change | F Change | Sig. F Change | Std. Coeff. | t | Sig. |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|-----------------|----------|---------------|-------------|-------|------|
| | | | | | | | Beta | | |
| Dataset-1 (Birbhum, n=349) | .594 ^a | .352 | .350 | .352 | 43.072 | .000 | .363 | 7.118 | .000 |
| Dataset-2 (Bankura, n=254) | .226 ^a | .051 | .049 | .051 | 7.447 | .007 | .906 | 1.383 | .006 |
| Dataset-3 (Murshidabad, n=225) | .449 ^a | .201 | .199 | .201 | 25.491 | .000 | .293 | 6.093 | .000 |

a. Predictors: (Constant), Craftourism

b. Dependent Variable: Positive referrals

CONCLUSION REMARKS

The growth of Craftourism is a mark towards moving towards the notion of sustainable tourism. Mere landscape and opportunity to entertain oneself are no longer the only travel motives, but a cognitive urge to experience the local (destination) ethno-cultural offers by being a part of it has emerged as a potent travel motive (Mogindol and Bagul, 2014). The craft production process has become a cog in the wheel of cultural shift as visitors are transforming from passive consumption mode to active participation mode (Richards, 2015). Craftourism can even play a significant role in revival of crafts on the verge of extinction by creating awareness

and integrating visitors with the production process as was found by John (2014) in the case of Channapatna toys of Karnataka, India. The study posited the theoretical framework on the basis of empirical evidence and has been a pioneering effort towards identifying the underlying dimensional structure of a newly termed tourism paradigm – ‘Craftourism’. The study provides opportunities to researchers for further extrapolations in the area of travel motivation and to identify new dimensions of ‘inclusive tourism’.

The scale development, measurement and validation process embarked upon has its base on the previous successful studies of similar initiatives (Kim and Aves, 2012, Netemeyer et al., 2003). The final scale measuring ‘Craftourism’ as a travel motivator has been converged on five dimensions and were named as ‘experiential learning’, ‘creative thrill’, ‘sensory gratification’, ‘socialization’ and ‘self esteem’. The first dimension namely ‘experiential learning’ was loaded on six items. Earlier studies (Kim et al, 2009; Kerstetter et al, 2001; Lee and Lee, 2001) identified cultural experience and accumulation of destination-based knowledge as two distinct factors, which have been merged into a single dimension in the context of the present study. The second dimension ‘creative thrill’ was found to be defined by five items. Previous studies emphasized on ‘excitement’ factor as a possible motivator to travel decisions. Mayo and Jarvis (1981) pointed out participation of visitors in unusual activities or taking unknown risks for excitement. In this study the thrill factor was found associated with unprecedented manifestation of creative skills of the visitors when they found opportunity to enact the role of craftsmen, a case of role-reversal. The third dimension ‘sensory gratification’ and five items were found useful in defining it. Sensory appeal has received considerable attention from the researchers (Kim and Aves, 2012; Urry, 2001; Dan and Jacobsen, 2002) towards explaining travel experience. The fifth dimension namely ‘socialization’ actually explains the visitors’ motivation s a case of role-reversal whereby the visitor gets to enact as the host craftsmen. The dimension of socialization was discussed earlier as ‘interpersonal relationship’ (Kim and Aves, 2012) or

togetherness (Crompton and McKay, 1997; Steptoe et al, 1995). For the first time the social interaction factor has been identified from the point of view of role-reversal. The sixth and final dimension was identified as 'self esteem' which loaded on three items and reflected the earlier studies (Kim et al., 2009).

Thus, this study brings forth the issue of role-reversal as visitors play the role of host and the reverse interface between the visitors and the host is triggered by 'Craftourism', a phenomenon which has been empirically tested to have significant role in enhancing travel motivation. Craftoursim, as a travel motivator, not only ensures the thrill of creative expressions and sensory satisfaction but also plays a role in ego-augmentation and self esteem through socialization.

The study tested a scale comprising of 24 items (after validity test of initial 27 items) and found it reliable and consistent to measure 'Craftourism' as a travel motivator for the visitors who visited destinations of craft-heritage namely Birbhum, Bankura and Murshidabad in West Bengal, India. The study contributes and expands the existing body of knowledge in the domain of travel motivation by identifying and measuring representative constructs for 'Craftourism' and the case of role-reversal associated with it.

As far as managerial implications of the study are concerned it provides ample indications to the Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) to strategise their service offers, specifically for those destinations with proliferative traditional craft practices. DMOs can organise creative workshops for the visitors in a more structured way whereby the visitors can experience the thrill of creative exploration and get an opportunity to socially interact and derive satisfaction. DMOs can also organise exhibition and training programmes for those visitors who are professionally engaged as craftsmen in their own localities, thereby, a possible economic and business linkage may be established with the local craftsmen and the visitors.

The study has certain limitations with regard to destinations and surveyed groups of visitors. It has been limited to three specific destinations of a state (West Bengal) in India and the visitors group

represented a cultural homogeneity. To ensure generalisability, sample may be drawn from culturally diversified population of visitors visiting a wide range of destinations with rich tradition in handicraft practice. 'Craftourism' may be studied from wider perspectives and may include such variables namely accessibility to destinations, craft-marketing and reach, hospitality, environmental issues etc. The scale is based on self-perception (SP) response. The same measurement can be tried out with importance-rating (IR) scale as there can be discrepancies in response generated between the two (Huang, 2010). Future studies may include, exclude or modify existing item-set measuring 'Craftourism' to make the scale more robust. The study explored into the cognitive architecture of the visitors and tried to understand their travel motivation on the basis of the opportunity of role-reversal. In future further extrapolations may be taken up to understand whether role-reversal is a critical cognitive differentiator that stimulates behavioural pattern of visitors in the long run.

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OLIVE TOURISM IN RURAL AREAS. A CASE STUDY IN SPAIN

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The significant role played in recent years in different gastronomy and beverages tourism destinations has also meant a potential commitment to the development of other similar types of tourism, such as olive tourism, being creating this typology especially in Mediterranean countries where are the major producing areas of the world. The aim of this paper is to contribute to progress in the analysis of tourism demand in the field of olive tourism by presenting the results of a fieldwork in Spain. The methodology used in this research involved conducting surveys to

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passengers at the time of his visit to mills, olive oil interpretation centres and thematic museums related to olive oil. The results of this research indicate that tourists especially value their rural activity, the satisfaction with their visit to this destination and the relationship, in addition to agriculture activities, culture due to the important heritage elements.

Keywords: *Olive tourism, Demand, Rural Areas, Spain, tourism, food and beverage tourism.*

INTRODUCTION

Food and beverage tourism is one of the fields that is most discussed in the academic literature in recent years (Björk & Kauppinen-Räsänen, 2016; Okumus, Koseoglu & Ma, 2018). In this sense, the number of investigations dealing with the study of wine tourism in different parts of the world has increased substantially; these investigations examine the relationship between tourism and wine from different aspects (Marzo-Navarro & Pedraja-Iglesias, 2012). Furthermore, food tourism is also addressed by different research and from different angles (Lee & Scott, 2015). Food and beverage has been completed with research in other subject areas among which are beer tourism (Kraftchick, Byrd, Canziani & Gladwell, 2014) and olive tourism (López-Guzmán, Cañero Morales, Moral Cuadra & Orgaz-Agüera, 2016).

Focusing on olive tourism in recent years this type of tourism is undergoing a strong development both in different Mediterranean countries, traditional place of production of olive oil, and in other countries around the world. Olive oil is an important agricultural commodities in the economy of countries from different geographical areas, especially those located in the Mediterranean area, Europe, Africa and the Middle East. In fact, according to Namdar, Amrani, Getzou & Milewski (2015), there is evidence of the use of olive oil in Israel in the fifth and sixth millennia BC as they have found traces of olive oil in vessels found in archaeological excavations. Olive oil is one of the main ingredients in the

Mediterranean diet, declared Intangible Cultural Heritage by UNESCO in 2010, since it is a key element in cooking the culinary resources of this area. Moreover, olive oil, together with its contributions to cuisine, also is a socio-cultural and anthropological component of certain regions, nationalities and countries (Alonso & Krajsic, 2013) and it can be identified as a gastronomy culture and it can good from the importance acquired by food in relation to hospitality and tourism (Lee & Scott, 2015; Yeoman & McMahon-Beatte, 2016). Similarly, olive oil is not only a culinary product but also reflects the culture, knowledge and idiosyncrasy of certain towns and is crucial for economic, ecological and even tourist development. (Ruiz Guerra, 2010).

The main objective of this paper is to present the results of a research conducted to determine the motivations and perceptions of tourists, taking into account their socio-demographic profile both domestic tourists and foreign tourists. The fieldwork has been carried out through a survey of visitors to olive oil mills, olive oil museums and olive oil interpretation centres in the region of Andalusia (Spain), and more specifically in the provinces of Córdoba and Jaén, provinces that are the main olive oil producers worldwide.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The concept that defines the relationship between rural areas, olive oil and tourism takes different terms in academic literature such as olive tourism, oleotourism, olive oil tourism, agritourism, or, even, olive-based agritourism (López-Guzmán et al., 2016). Some authors (Ruiz Guerra, 2010) even consider that olive tourism is also an important manifestation of cultural tourism. Olive tourism development is based on the significant role played by food and beverage tourism, especially wine tourism (Alebaki & Iakovidou, 2011; Byrd, Canziani, Hsieh, Debbage & Sonmez, 2016), and whose analysis contributions and research are serving as the basis to articulate the development of olive tourism.

The scientific literature in this field deals with the first studies on olive tourism in Australia (Alonso & Northcote, 2010; Alonso, 2010; Northcote & Alonso, 2011). And after that, it is developed to Europe, specifically to Italy, Portugal, Spain (Ruiz Guerra, 2010; Murgado, 2013; De Salvo, Hernández-Mogollón, Di-Clemente & Calzati, 2013; Campón-Cerro, Di-Clemente, Hernández-Mogollón, De Salvo & Calzati, 2014; López-Guzmán et al., 2016; Millán Vázquez de la Torre, Arjona-Fuentes & Amador-Hidalgo, 2017; Campón-Cerro, Folgado-Fernández & Hernández-Mogollón, 2017; Millán, Del Pópulo & Sánchez-Rivas, 2018) and Turkey (Uylaser & Türkben, 2017). Alonso & Northcote (2010) present the results of research based on field work carried out with 23 companies dedicated to the industry of the olive oil in Australia. These results show the relationship within rural tourism, food tourism and olive tourism, where the tourist destination, and the companies, is characterized by a combination of activities in rural areas, local agricultural products and landscape. Ruiz Guerra (2010) presents one of the first researches in Europe based on the fieldwork of the visitors for olive tourism in different places and focused the profile, the motivations and the perspectives of university students in relation to this kind of food and beverage tourism.

The development of olive tourism is enabling to open a new business and marketing opportunity for the agricultural products themselves related to olive oil (Alonso & Krajsic, 2013) in line with what happened, and widely discussed in the academic literature, (Alebaki & Iakovidou, 2011; Marzo-Navarro & Pedraja-Iglesias, 2012) in the wine and food tourism. However, currently the absence of researches in this typology of tourism within academic literature is manifest, due mainly to the little tradition of this typology of tourism in the business and to the shortage of empirical studies by academic literature (Alonso & Northcote, 2010). For these reasons, it is essential to increase olive oil-related research, specially in the Mediterranean countries. This also implies the relation of investigations that analyses the relations between the olive mills and activities for tourists. It is also important the relationship between

this type of tourism and the economical and cultural activities related with olive oil. Among others, we can highlight those related to the sale of olive products, or the study of how to structure and potential of the hospitality in these rural areas of visitors who are interested in olive oil tourism or, in general, as pointed by Ruiz Guerra (2010), in tourists activities related to these geographical areas and with the olive oil culture, integrated the concept of cultural tourism in the rural areas (Prat Forga & Cànoves Valiente, 2014). To do this, we believe that it could be used as a basis thematic and substantiation that has already been made both with wine (Alebaki, Iakovidou & Menexes, 2014; Byrd et al., 2016) and with cuisine tourism (Timothy & Ron, 2013).

In this sense, the development of this type of tourism represents the potential of the image of olive oil to the clients, specially to the foreign visitors, and at the same time, an increase of the added value for rural areas (Alonso & Northcote, 2010), and, similarly, both through an increased direct sales and recognition of this product and knowledge of the olive oil culture (Alonso, 2010) and its subsequent consumption in the places where travellers reside. Furthermore, it could make a positive contribution to the dissemination of the olive oil heritage as it is a beneficial activity from an economic, social and cultural point of view (Ruiz Guerra, 2010). Namely, and according to Alonso & Northcote (2010) the development this typology of tourism focused on olive oil could mean a potential benefit for different actors. Among other actors we could highlight the following: firstly, olive oil producers, who could find other ways of marketing their product and, at the same time, the development of complementary economic activities; secondly, visitors, because this type of tourism offers a different experience to the visitors and, even, the possibility of knowing a social and cultural heritage with strong Mediterranean roots; and thirdly, tourist services' enterprises, through the creation of complementary activities, such as restaurants, catering services, tourist accommodation or tourist routes.

The main issues on which we could develop olive oil tourism would be the following (Campón-Cerro et al., 2014): olive footpath, olive forests, gestures of olive, olive oil favours, and olive oil and beauty. Similarly, the main components in a tourist experience related with olive oil would be (Murgado, 2013): olive oil mill visits, olive oil tasting, purchase of olive oil, olive oil museum, culture, cuisine, popular festivals, landscapes and olive farms and, of course, heritage. Therefore, there are several complementary activities that olive tourism could develop, for example, the direct sale of oil olive, learning about the olive oil culture, visits to museum, mills and interpretation centres by tourists, tasting of olive oil, or gazing at landscapes of the rural geographical areas where it is located (Alonso & Krajsic, 2013). After that, for the development of this typology of tourism, the location of this geographical area is fundamental, for example, if you are near places with significant tourist flows (Northcote & Alonso, 2011).

Thus, currently, and according with Northcote and Alonso (2011), the principal tourists to these rural areas related with olive tourism come from coach tours, student groups and local community groups. It is also necessary to reinforce the characteristics of these geographical areas in order to receive people who organize their trip individually. Nevertheless, olive tourist routes are currently poorly developed due both to the existence of a limited number of tourist activities related with the olive culture and to the low development in terms of management and marketing of this type of tourism (Murgado, 2013). It would be a key factor for the development of this type of tourism considering the socioeconomic conditions of these places, the coordination level of partnership between public organizations and private enterprises and the strength of tourism services that exist in this place (Northcote & Alonso, 2011). In conclusion, the main problems for the development of this tourist activity are the following (Murgado, 2013): inexperience of personnel in relation to offer tourism service, specially in the rural areas (Vassiliades, Fotiadis & Piper, 2013), poor business infrastructure in the area, problems of cooperation between the

different enterprises and the public administration, lack of complete olive oil tourist products in the market to spark demand for this typology of tourism, and lack of interactive marketing and development to this product and, in general, to the geographical area where it develops.

As for the segmentation of tourists according to their nationality, distinguishing between domestic and international visitors, there are different studies related to the food and beverage tourism that analyse visitor segmentation in order to perform different exploratory studies. Thus, Alonso, Fraser & Cohen (2007) present the results of a research to determine the sociodemographic profiles of wine tourists in New Zealand segmented by nationality. Likewise, in the field of food tourism, Nam & Lee (2011) present a study on the satisfaction of international visitors in traditional Korean restaurants and Horng, Liu, Chiu & Tsai (2012) focus on the analysis of the perception of brand equity in international tourists.

DESCRIPTION OF THE GEOGRAPHICAL AREA

The geographical area studied in this paper is the region of Andalusia in the South of Spain. Currently, Spain produces in relation to olive oil around 60% of world production. In Spain, the region of Andalusia currently provides just over 80% of the national total production. And over 60% of this national production comes from two provinces in this region, Córdoba and Jaén. According López-Guzmán et al. (2016), these two provinces annually provide a figure close to 35% of olive oil in the world production. These figures indicate the economic relevance of this primary economic sector in these two provinces and, in general, in the region of Andalusia. Similarly, this geographical area is very important in heritage tourism because the cities Córdoba, Úbeda and Baeza are World Heritage Site by UNESCO. For this reason, there is a significant increase in the relationship between the tourism, the

culture and the olive tourism is taking place (López-Guzmán et al., 2016).

Currently, there are in Spain related to olive oil 31 Protected Designations of Origin (PDO). This system of PDO allows us to recognize the own quality of this agricultural product, based on its own features and quality which each geographical area is different in Spain. For instance, in the province of Jaén are the PDOs of Sierra Magina, Sierra de Cazorla, and Sierra de Segura. And in the province of Córdoba are the PDOs of Priego de Córdoba Baena, Lucena, and Montoro-Adamuz.

In relation to the boosting of this typology of tourism in this region, again the provinces of Jaén and Córdoba are the ones which have most advanced in this type of tourism. In the province of Jaén, it has created a general route called oleotourism which addresses the existence of olive tourism from different scopes such as economics, development strategies, innovation, culture, olive oil and others agricultural products, marketing, and environment (Aybar León, 2004). And in the province of Córdoba planning of this type of tourism is carried out through the design, implementation and development of eight different olive routes covering in this province the different PDOs. Similarly, both proposals show the potential for the development of this typology of tourism both in the region of Andalusia and in Spain (Murgado, 2014).

METHODOLOGY

The methodology used in this research was based on a fieldwork investigation to know about different aspects of visitors interested in learning on the culture of olive oil, distinguishing between national and foreign tourists. To conduct this fieldwork, a face-to-face five-point survey was conducted to visitors in the provinces of Córdoba and Jaén. A convenience sampling was used. According to Finn, Elliott & Malton (2000), this type of analysis is

usually used in the tourism research where visitors are available to be interviewed in a specific time and place.

The survey used in this research is based on several previous studies about the olive oil and the food and beverage tourism (Alonso & Northcote, 2010; Alebaki & Iakovidou, 2011; Molina Moreno, Quesada Rubio & Ruiz Guerra, 2011; Horng et al., 2012; De Salvo *et al.*, 2013) and responds to three blocks of variables analysed during the visitor visit: firstly, socio-demographic profile of tourists; secondly, the motivations to visit these two provinces; thirdly, the satisfaction by tourists of different variables related with the destination and their perceptions about the olive product.

The fieldwork, based on surveys, took place between the months from April to November, 2014. Five survey points (museums, mills, and interpretation centres) were chosen in the major olive-growing areas of these two provinces. Tourists surveyed completed the survey completely independently and anonymously, although the interviewers were present in case they had some kind of help to complete it. The survey was distributed in four languages (Spanish, English, German and French). Previously, a pre-test of 30 surveys was conducted to detect possible errors and deviations. The total number of questionnaires returned was 423 surveys, of which 397 were valid. Of these, 43.5% were national tourists, while 56.5% are foreigners. Among the foreign tourists, French (49.58%), British (21.24%) and Germans (10.44%) stand out.

The items used in the survey are intended to respond to the objectives of this research. The number of items of this survey was 19. Thus, three different types of questions were used: first, questions based on a Likert scale of 5 points to assess the perceptions, the opinion and the evaluations of tourists; second, yes/no answers for the evaluations of certain aspects related with this destination where this places was located; and third, some questions, both closed and open, where visitors could make opinions their perceptions and their experience with this typology of tourism.

Due to the existence of few studies on olive tourism in the region of Andalusia, there is no reliable data available on the

number of tourists in this segment so we cannot determine an objective population.

The data collected was organized, tabulated and analysed using the SPSS 19.0 programme. Similarly, data processing was performed through the use of univariate and bivariate statistical tools.

RESULTS OF THE INVESTIGATION AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 shows the demographic characteristics of respondent tourists, distinguishing between national tourists and foreign tourists.

According to Table 1, there are a greater number of women than men surveyed. Furthermore, in terms of age, two groups stand out, those under 30 and those over 60 years of age. We believe that this result is closely related to the fact that most respondent tourists have visited. The places where the fieldwork was carried out were through organized groups, so the amount of people visiting these places individually is very low. This result is similar to that obtained by Alonso (2010). As for professions, retired and professional persons stand out. In the first case, it is closely related to the respondent tourist's age. Regarding the level of education, both cases clearly show a university level, common in the results of other studies on food and beverage tourism (Alonso, 2010).

Table 1. Socio-demographic profile of the tourist

| Variable | Variable | Domestic | International | Contingency coefficient (p-value) |
|----------|--------------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------------------------|
| Gender | Male Female | 46.2% 53.8% | 40.4% 59.6% | 0.058 (0.251) |
| Age | Under 30 years old | 8.8% | 21.5% | |

| | | | | |
|------------------------------|--|--|---|--------------------|
| | 30-39 years old 40-49 years old 50-59 years old 60 years old or more | 11.7% 21.2% 18.1% 40.2% | 2.8% 1.8% 13.6% 60.3% | 0.382 (0.000) * |
| Category Professiona l | Retired Self- employed Employee Civil Servant Housewif e Student | 31.1% 19.8% 17.4% 15.0% 12.0% 4.8% | 45.0% 13.6% 12.3% 7.7% 2.3% 19.1% | 0,313 (0.000) * |
| Level of education | Primary Secondary University | 21.1% 25.7% 53.2% | 4.1% 43.1% 52.8% | 0.278 (0.000) * |
| Income | More than \$ 2,500 From \$ 1,501- 2,500 From \$ 1,001- 1,500 From \$ 700-1,000 Less than \$ 700 | 17.2% 30.7% 32.5% 11.0% 8.6% | 43.4% 35.3% 17.3% 2.6% 1.4% | 0.343 (0.000) * |

| | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|--|
| | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|--|

Source: Own elaboration

* Correlation is significant at level 0.01

According to table 1, regarding the level of income, foreign tourists stand out as visitors who claim to have an income above € 2,500. Meanwhile, most national tourists have an income between € 1,000 and € 2,500. 82.3% of foreign tourists had never visited this geographical area, while 46.2% of Spanish tourists had not visited it before. As for the time spent in this geographical destination, most range between 3 and 7 days (Spanish tourists, 41.1%; foreign tourists, 51.3%). Spanish tourists mostly travel accompanied by a partner (43.5%) while foreigners with co-workers or friends (51.1%).

It is quite significant that 71.8% of Spanish tourists and 77.0% of foreign tourists consider a visit to the mill, to the interpretation centre or museum where the survey was conducted as part of their cultural experience. This result reinforces the conclusion drawn by Ruiz Guerra (2010) in the sense that this type of tourism is closely related to culture.

It is also interesting to note the fact that 81.8% of Spanish tourist respondents recognize that they consume olive oil daily, while this percentage decreases to 32.3% for foreign tourists. This is why we consider that olive tourism can be an interesting way for foreign tourists to learn of the beneficial effects of olive oil and then to consume this regularly in their country of origin.

As for the main motivations for the visit to this geographical area, where survey centres are located, these are set out in Table 2. These items were measured on a Likert 5-point scale, with 1- being very little and 5-very much. The reliability index according to Cronbach's Alpha of 0.725. In conclusion, the high rate of reliability obtained in this research reinforces the validity of the results (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Again there is a difference between national and international tourists.

Table 2. Main motivations for visiting the geographical area

| Variables | Tourist | | F (signification) | Levene Statistic (signification) |
|--|----------|---------------|----------------------|--|
| | Domestic | International | | |
| Knowing the geographical area | 4.14 | 3.77 | 6.573 (0.011) | 3.254 (0.072) |
| Learning about the world of olive oil | 4.03 | 3.51 | 12.306 (0.001) | 18.949 (0.000) |
| Eating and drinking traditional products | 3.61 | 3.49 | 0.627 (0.429) | 2.561 (0.111) |
| Relaxation | 3.51 | 2.84 | 16.213 (0.000) | 0.002 (0.966) |
| Spending a day out | 3.47 | 2.73 | 16.012 (0.000) | 1.097 (0.296) |
| Tasting different kinds of oil | 2.58 | 3.09 | 8.603 (0,004) | 0.618 (0.432) |
| Buying oil | 2.52 | 2.72 | 1.302 (0.255) | 0.223 (0.637) |

Source: Own elaboration

According to table 2, the main reason for visiting this destination is getting to know the geographical area. Similarly, learning about the world of olive oil and eating and drinking the typical products of the area stand out. It is interesting to note the fact that buying olive oil is not a significant motivation to visit this destination. Perhaps an explanation for the low valuation of this motivation is the difficulty for tourists to transport olive oil by aircraft. In fact, this result has already been detected in other papers related with wine tourism (López-Guzmán, Vieira-Rodríguez & Rodríguez-García, 2014). Likewise, neither is tasting olive oil an important motivation; perhaps, unlike what happens with wine, given the little tradition that exists on this subject with olive oil.

As for the average equality stress tests regarding motivations, they are set out in Table 3.

Table 3. Equality stress test of average motivations for the visit

| | Brown-Forsythe | gl1 | gl2 | Sig. |
|--|----------------|-----|---------|-------|
| Knowing the geographical area | 6,726 | 1 | 312,354 | 0,010 |
| Learning about the world of olive oil | 12,933 | 1 | 326,765 | 0,000 |
| Eating and drinking traditional products | 0,641 | 1 | 270,874 | 0,424 |
| Relaxation | 16,222 | 1 | 239,935 | 0,000 |
| Spending a day out | 15,969 | 1 | 237,446 | 0,000 |
| Tasting different kinds of oil | 8,715 | 1 | 281,932 | 0,003 |
| Buying oil | 1,309 | 1 | 270,298 | 0,254 |

Source: Own Elaboration

As for the ratings of different variables related with the tourist destination where the survey points are located, the main results are set out in Table 4. Once again it is used a Likert 5-point scale, with 1- being very little and 5-very much. For these items, the reliability index according to Cronbach's Alpha was 0.871.

According to table 4, Spanish tourists value the following elements in particular: hospitality, environmental conservation and public safety. Meanwhile, foreign tourists positively valued hospitality, cultural activities and restoration. This implies that this olive tourism also has a significant cultural component, consistent with the conclusion of Ruiz Guerra (2010). Similarly, the places under study, en in the provinces of Jaén and Córdoba, is located near three World Heritage Cities. Therefore, we consider it important to strengthen the cultural aspects of this type of tourism and relate it to gastronomic experiences and culture (Lee & Scott, 2015).

Table 4. Rating of different variables related to the tourist destination

| Variable | Tourist | | F (signification) | Levene Statistic (signification) |
|------------------------------------|----------|---------------|----------------------|--|
| | Domestic | International | | |
| Hospitality | 4.53 | 3.96 | 30.925 (0.000) | 16.838 (0.000) |
| Conservation of the environment | 4.24 | 3.54 | 38.231 (0.000) | 13.538 (0.000) |
| Citizen Safety | 4.09 | 3.43 | 27.602 (0.000) | 7.692 (0.006) |
| Cleaning | 4.09 | 3.59 | 18.781 (0.000) | 5.921 (0.016) |
| Restaurants | 4.02 | 3.70 | 8.636 (0.004) | 5.061 (0.025) |
| Olive oil mills | 3.96 | 3.42 | 17.717 (0.000) | 2.392 (0.123) |
| Price of the trip | 3.93 | 3.19 | 36.527 | 6,698 |

| | | | | |
|---------------------|------|------|-------------------|------------------|
| | | | (0,000) | (0,010) |
| Information | 3.86 | 3.27 | 21.923 (0.000) | 3.008 (0.084) |
| Cultural activities | 3.83 | 3.82 | 0.006 (0.937) | 0.276 (0.600) |
| Communications | 3.76 | 3.02 | 26.846 (0.000) | 2.856 (0.092) |
| Accommodation | 3.74 | 3.67 | 0.267 (0.606) | 2.817 (0.094) |
| Shopping area | 3.11 | 2.97 | 0.724 (0.396) | 0.048 (0.826) |

Source: Own elaboration

Regarding the degree of satisfaction, the main results are shown in Table 5 measured in a Likert 5-point scale, with 1-being very little and 5-very much.

Table 5. Satisfaction level

| Variable | Tourists | | F (signification) | Levene Statistic (signification) |
|--------------|----------|---------------|----------------------|--|
| | Domestic | International | | |
| Satisfaction | 4,38 | 4,06 | 13.464 (0,000) | 1,114 (0,292) |

Source: Own elaboration

According to the data of Table 5 we can see the satisfaction importance of both domestic and international tourists. Table 6 shows the average equality stress test with respect to satisfaction.

Table 6. Robust tests for equality of means variable of satisfaction

| | Brown-Forsythe | g11 | g12 | Sig. |
|--------------|----------------|-----|---------|-------|
| Satisfaction | 13,906 | 1 | 372,590 | 0.000 |

Source: Own Elaboration

As to whether they would repeat the trip, 95.2% of national tourists say yes, while 77.6% of foreign tourists say yes (contingency coefficient = 0.240; $p = 0.000$).

CONCLUSIONS

The importance of food and beverage tourism, both in businesses and their supply and demand for it, has enabled to use this experience to improve other related rural products in different geographical areas. Olive tourism stands out among these, consisting in knowing the world of olive oil, as basic ingredient of the Mediterranean Diet as Intangible Cultural Heritage. In fact, the different Mediterranean countries, both in Africa and in Europe, are precisely the most important olive oil area in the world.

This paper presents the perceptions and opinions of visitors to the olive-growing areas of Andalusia. In this respect, it differentiates itself in the research between national and international visitor groups with the analysis of different attributes and showing significant differences between groups. This research aims to provide one of the first analysis in Europe of the academic literature regarding the motivation, the level of satisfaction and the socio-demographic profile of tourism demand in this geographical area with two different groups, domestic and foreign. Thus, the socio-demographic profile of visitors in places related with olive oil (such as mills, museums, and interpretation centres) is that of a person in adulthood, with a significantly high education and upper middle class. Similarly, it is very important the motivation of domestic and foreign tourists both to learn of this culture and to learn about the rural geographical area is reinforced. It has also been found that the olive tourism is associated to both the rural tourism and the cultural tourism, namely to the foreign travellers. Tourists consider visiting these places related to rural areas and in particular with olive oil as part of their own cultural trip and a good experience.

The main limitation of this research is that most of the visitors surveyed came to the different survey points, especially in mills, through tour groups or student groups, due to the underdevelopment of the individual tourists in the rural areas and where it is quite difficult to locate tourists who organize their own trip in order to visit museums, interpretation centres or mills. In fact, most of tourists that visit this area through groups who are managed by student groups or tour companies. Similarly, another of the main limitations of this research is that a convenience sampling has been used.

As future lines of research, we propose an investigation, especially in foreign tourists, to find out if visiting these rural sites has changed the purchase behaviour of these visitors in their own country, with respect to the consumption of olive oil and, above all, to the purchase of olive oil, and in general food product of this area, that comes from the rural areas they have visited in their trip to know and to learn in this places.

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SHARING ECONOMY IN THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY: ANALYSIS, SUGGESTED STRATEGIES AND AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

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Nowadays, technology is enabling alternatives that aim to disrupt the tourism industry. If these alternatives become longstanding options for tourists, hospitality businesses and other tourism providers will have to adopt new strategies to maintain their market share. One of these disrupting forces is the sharing economy that revolutionizes three facets of tourism: accommodation, transportation, and in-destination activities. In no industry has the sharing economy caused greater controversy than in the hospitality industry. This paper aims at examining the main issues of this economic and social phenomenon with regard to hospitality industry. Specific objectives are: (i) to provide a useful summary of the business models of sharing economy; (ii) to analyze its impact on the hospitality industry; (iii) to examine the related issues and challenges; (iv) to briefly present some suitable strategies to surmount these challenges; and (v) to suggest an agenda and for future research.

Keywords: *Sharing economy, business models, hospitality industry, strategies, research agenda.*

INTRODUCTION

Sharing is a phenomenon as old as time itself, collaborative consumption and the sharing economy (SE) are phenomena born as

© University of the Aegean. Print ISSN: 1790-8418, Online ISSN: 1792-6521



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a result of the Internet age (Belk, 2007). Internet services based on user-generated content such as Social Networking Sites (SNSs) encourage individuals to share information in various ways. In what is called the SE, individuals participate in sharing activities by renting, lending, trading, bartering, or swapping goods, services, transportation solutions, space, or money mainly in urban areas (Möhlmann, 2015).

Other definitions proposed for the term are the following. The Oxford Dictionary defines SE as: “An economic system in which assets or services are shared between private individuals, either for free or for a fee, typically by means of the Internet” (cited in Heo, 2016). Möhlmann (2015) defines this phenomenon as “An economy created by tech companies, enabling people to make money out of their spare assets, by providing the interface between them and consumers”. SE is also known as “Collaborative consumption”, “Peer-to-peer”, and “Access economy” (HBSCNY, 2011). Eckhardt & Bardhi (2015) argue that the correct term for this activity is “access economy”, stressing that “When sharing is market-mediated - when a company is an intermediary between consumers who don’t know each other - it is no longer sharing at all. Rather, consumers are paying to access someone else’s goods or services.”

In 2011, “collaborative consumption” was named one of TIME Magazine's ten ideas that will change the world (Time, 2011). Nowadays, businesses based on the SE concept continue to grow at a phenomenal rate in the tourism marketplace because the idea is very attractive to consumers.

Literature suggests that the benefits of sharing goods, products and assets include the following (Cohen and Muñoz, 2015; Sundararajan, 2013): Providing people with access to goods who cannot afford buying them or have no interest in long-term usage; reducing negative environmental impact (e.g. consumption of resources); stronger communities; saving costs by borrowing and recycling items; increased independence, flexibility and self-reliance; and accelerating sustainable consumption and production patterns in cities around the globe. It is estimated that this transition

of SE will have a positive impact on economic growth and welfare (Sundararajan, 2013).

A common premise is that when information about goods and services is shared (typically via an online platforms), the value of those goods and services may increase for the business, for individuals, for the community and for society in general (Botsman and Ross, 2011). The SE model is used in online marketplaces such as eBay as well as emerging industries such as social lending, peer-to-peer (P2P) accommodation, P2P travel experiences, P2P task assignments or travel advising, car sharing or commute-bus sharing (HBR, 2011). There are over 7,300 website listings of organizations that claim to be part of the SE (Virgin, 2015). In Table 1 are presented some examples of P2P sharing platforms per industry.

Table 1. Sharing economy – examples of online platforms

| Industry | Industry |
|---|--|
| Accommodation and real estate | Transport |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Airbnb • Co-housing • Coliving • Collaborative workspace • Couchsurfing • Home exchange • Peer-to-peer property rental • HomeAway • OnefineStay • Roomoram • Ace hotels | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uber • Bike sharing system • Carpool • Carsharing • Real-time ridesharing • Share taxi • Share parking space • Transfer cars • Zipcar • Carpooling.com • Liftshare BlaBlacar |

| | |
|--|---|
| <p>Travel</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EatWith • Local hosts • Local tour guides • ToursByLocals | <p>Dining/Catering</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kitchen surfing • Cookening (Fr) • SuperKing (US) • Housebites (UK) • Gobble (US) • Surfing dinner (Ch) |
|--|---|

Source: Retrieved from the Sharing Economy Directory, 2016

Airbnb and Couchsurfing are the best-known examples of P2P accommodation sharing in the accommodation industry. Eatwith, EatWithalocal, Meal Sharing, and Cookening help individuals to organize dining experiences in which people pay to dine in private homes. The tourism industry has been shaken up by SE that is disruptive to its traditional economic model. These P2P companies are progressing from start-up status to demanding attention from other players in the field as real stakeholders who are changing the way people book accommodation, transportation, and other aspects of trip planning (Tussyadiah and Pesonen, 2016).

The SE is a result of long-term megatrends colliding together, driven mainly by advances in technology, resource scarcity and social change (Botsman and Ross, 2011). According to estimations, the global SE revenues could account for \$335 billion by 2025 and the five key industries of the SE are: P2P finance, online staffing, P2P accommodation, car sharing, and music/video streaming. All five are growing at a rapid rate, and the SE is showing no signs of slowing (Virgin, 2016). It is estimated that an outline of the tourism business environment is useful in getting better understanding of this phenomenon.

THE CONTEXT: TOURISM BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

Tourism businesses have to face different kinds of issues and to address related challenges. According to a survey by ReportLinker

Insight (2016), the top three challenges in the tourism industry are as follows. *Political situation and security*: Political instability and the fear of terrorism have severe impacts on the global tourism industry since they prevent people from traveling and thus decrease demand in all tourism-related industries. *Diversification*: Customer satisfaction is also challenging, as businesses need to provide unique experiences to satisfy customers. Tourists demand a wide variety of attractions and services, so developing and providing unique services are becoming strategic for the industry. *Competition*: New online companies are also a threat for the established tourism industry. Increasing competition, with new kinds of competitors and online companies, means that differentiation is key issue. To face this new kind of competition, developing technology and communication are tremendous challenges (Hristov, 2015; Vlachos, 2013).

Furthermore, all business reports agree that changes in tourist consumer behavior and travel technology are the global trends considerably effecting tourism business environment (see, for instance, Kavoura and Katsoni, 2013; Vlachos, 2013; WTM, 2015). Travel technology and digitization, with the latest development coined Travel 3.0 is about the advent of smart travel. This technology is about to transform the tourism experience to make it richer and more enjoyable on the basis of tourists' personal preferences. Additionally, the changes in the tourist consumer behavior are of crucial importance; mainly the advent of savvy experienced tourists having their aspirations and requirements for customized experiences (Hasegawa, 2014; WTM, 2015).

These two trends are very influential to the development of SE. The emergence of profit-based online platforms for the P2P sharing of consumer goods and services provides new ways for end-users to generate income from their assets (Carter, 2015; Kostakis and Bauwens, 2014). However, the P2P sharing is moving from a way to bolster personal incomes amid a stagnant wage market into a disruptive economic force (Guttentag, 2015). The rise of profit-based online platforms for tourism-related P2P sharing has changed

the way people travel and is of great significance to the traditional tourism industry (Swedish Entrepreneurship Forum, 2015). In 2014 Euromonitor International has presented a business report on SE. The key findings of this report are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Main features and trends in sharing economy

| SE's features and trends | Meaning |
|---|--|
| Transformed by technology | The SE has existed for many years, but has now been transformed by advancements in technology enabling secure online payment and geo-location applications. |
| Tourism industry well suited | The tourism industry has embraced the sharing trend, with opportunities in accommodation and experiences all growing. |
| Airbnb leading the way | Airbnb is the sharing economy's most successful company operating on a global scale. However, Airbnb faces problems in a number of cities with issues of legislation. |
| Young consumers eagerly embrace sharing | Generation Y are traditionally seen as the key participants in the SE, although this profile is changing with increasing numbers of older people joining in. |
| Diverse future opportunities but legislation is crucial | More tourism sharing opportunities are likely, but new entrants need to be aware of the limitations due to existing legislation. Some cities have changed laws to allow for accommodation and lift sharing but the process is lengthy. |
| Global expansion but facing cultural limitations | The SE is growing globally, with Brazil and China in particular seen as central to expansion. However, cultural limitations are expected in many developing countries where a key aim is to acquire material goods such as cars. |

Source: Euromonitor International, 2014: 2.

It is believed that a better knowledge about and insights on the main factors causing this phenomenon are very useful to all tourism providers (Toposophy, 2015). The following section aims at identifying the factors driving this urban phenomenon.

THE KEY DRIVERS FOR GROWTH OF THE SHARING ECONOMY

The formation of the business models of SE and the popularity the respective markets enjoy among many consumers have been driven by a series of distinct, yet interrelated factors. The driving forces behind the rise of sharing economy are as follows (Hamari et al., 2015; Kostakis and Bauwens, 2014; Puschmann et al., 2016).

Global economic crisis: it has provoked a greater awareness of the need for self-sufficiency among taxpayers, a growing disillusionment with consumer culture in general. In brief, this crisis has given rise to a consumers' desire to utilize existing resources more effectively and a greater interest among consumers towards developing new sources of income.

Changes in consumer behavior: three are the key changes, namely (i) a cultural shift from ownership to sharing; (ii) the eternal quest to save money; and (iii) internationalization and cultural transformation: consumers have steadily become more comfortable with the efficiency and safety of online purchasing goods and services; SNSs and electronic markets render the link and connection between consumers much easier.

Technological advancements (Web2.0 and SNSs): Advances in technology account for the strongest driver of the sharing and trading of private assets. A host of enabling technologies has reached the mainstream, making it easy for networks of people and organizations to transact directly. These technologies dramatically reduce the friction of share-based business and organizational models.

Increasing volatility in cost of natural resources: Rising prosperity across the developing world coupled with population growth is putting greater strain on natural resources and has caused a spike in costs and market volatility. This has been increasing

pressure on traditional manufactures to seek design, production and distribution alternatives that will stabilize costs.

Mobile technology (mobile devices and electronic services): these tools make the use of shared goods and services more convenient. In the context of the SE, mobile devices equipped with GPS and near-field technology have made it possible for visitors and residents alike to search for and access the nearest available guest room or home-cooked meal.

A younger demographic, millennials: this age group leads the way. Millennials are commonly identified as those born between 1980 and 1999, and who entered their teenage years as from the year 2000, putting them currently in the 18-35 age group. Younger generations have created strong demand for providers - whether they are shops, airlines, banks or other services - to conduct their business online. This age group is the fastest growing customer segment in the hospitality industry, expected to represent 50% of all tourists by 2025.

All abovementioned factors have contributed to the formation of the business models of SE. The next section deals with this issue by outlining the business models.

BUSINESS MODELS OF SHARING ECONOMY

As already indicated, technology and the Internet are the key in this market toward making the old idea of sharing new again in the digital era. The business models of SE are based upon two pillars, (i) trust and (ii) vast technological supply systems (Kostakis and Bauwens, 2014). *First*, the main rationale/concept, the heart of SE is crowdsourcing, and crowdsourcing's heart is trust. *Second*, the means, technology companies sit on the top of vast supply systems and interface with demand, the consumers. The interface is where the transaction value is. These SE companies don't assume any normal operating costs, such as running a hotel unit.

It is believed that trust constitutes an issue of critical importance (Ert et al, 2016; Green, 2012). The SE relies on the willingness of the users to share, but in order to make an exchange; users have to be trustworthy (Green, 2012). The adoption and use of SNSs has enabled individuals to grow and maintain a network of trusted contacts. Based on the two pillars – trust and technological supply systems - the SE has produced various business models. Table 3 depicts three examples of SE start-ups and their online approach.

Table 3. Business models: SE websites and apps

| Provider's name and website | Features / Focus |
|--|--|
| VaycayHero www.vaycayhero.com | This platform is basically like an application for vacation rentals, a kind of an Uber for rooms. VaycayHero claims consumers can <i>"book like a hotel, stay like you're at home."</i> Emphasis on customer service and taking the guess-work out of a rental is a brazen attempt at disrupting the hotel niche. |
| Couchsurfing www.couchsurfing.com | Its interface works a lot like a social network. Users have profiles and can connect via existing Facebook friendships. Its moto is <i>"stay with locals instead of at hotels."</i> It is a website that simply connects users around the world. Convenience is its big advantage. |
| HomeExchange www.homeexchange.com | Just like the brand name indicates, its contribution to the share economy is a reciprocal model. Members receive offers for various opportunities to swap their house with a stranger's house. The site has 55,000 members who pay \$9.95 a month to list their homes. This platform completes approximately 120,000 exchanges a year. |

Source: Retrieved from <http://socialhospitality.com/contact/>, 2016

The ideas and practices of the SE have already driven major hotel chains to introduce the provision of innovative services in their units; this strategy will be presented in a following section (See section 6). As it can be seen from Table 3, at the forefront of SE have been the platforms that allow users/consumers to stay in private accommodation. The last decade has seen an explosion in the types of accommodation available, in line with the growth and increasing diversity of users and providers. Let us see the case of Airbnb, a P2P accommodation platform.

Airbnb was founded in 2008 and developed online platforms enabling individuals to share spare space, such as rooms or flats, with one another. Airbnb has in the space of six years attracted more than 800,000 listings in 34,000 cities in 190 countries. In 2015 the platform processes on average 10 million guest nights per month PricewaterhouseCoopers (PWC). Airbnb has taken a range of steps to improve its corporate profile and alleviate some of the concerns raised by the scope of its activity. Airbnb and the other sharing accommodation platforms have yet to challenge the online travel agents (OTAs), such as booking.com, with their vast distribution systems. However, Expedia recently started listing HomeAway properties, and booking.com website has expanded into apartment and villa rental in Europe in an attempt to join the competition. It is likely that private rental brands will eventually enter the Global Distribution System (GDS) channel and also partner with an increased number of OTAs (Euromonitor International, 2014). It is worth pointing out that the segment of budget hotels is the most affected by Airbnb platform (Euromonitor International, 2014).

The growing expansion of the SE has also brought a number of reactions inside and outside the boundaries of the tourism industry. These reactions lead us to the need to consider the whole picture by presenting the challenges posed by the SE.

MAIN ISSUES AND CONCERNS POSED BY SHARING ECONOMY

The main issues and concerns arise in the business and social fields include (Toposophy, 2015): (i) unfair competition; the SE models should be subject to the same regulations governing traditional businesses (legal status); (ii) the SE platforms should comply with the licensing and certification requirements that apply for conventional businesses; (iii) the taxation regime (collection and payment of taxes); (iv) safety and quality control issues for consumers (v) lack of planning and zoning causing conflicts with established businesses; (vi) impact on infrastructures (road networks) and housing.

Another concern is that the SE promotes and prioritizes cheap fares and low costs rather than personal relationships, which is tied to similar issues in crowdsourcing (Echardt and Bardhi, 2015). Because of this, it may not be about sharing but rather about access. This business model has taught people to prioritize cheap and easy access over interpersonal communication and the value of interactions has diminished. Finally, the local economic benefit of the SE is offset by its current form, which is that huge tech companies take a great deal of the profit in many cases (e.g. Uber).

In order to acquire a comprehensive image of the phenomenon there is a need to examine the impacts of SE on hospitality industry, based on existing literature.

IMPACTS ON HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY AND HOW BUSINESSES TACKLE WITH THE ISSUE

At the forefront of the SE have been the P2P accommodation platforms. Some are claiming that sharing economy may change the face of the hospitality industry forever (Carter, 2015; Euromonitor, 2014). It is also worth considering that online consumer reviews used by these platforms are influencing the tourist consumer behavior (Filieri et al., 2015; Sotiriadis and Van Zyl, 2013; Hasegawa, 2014).

The study by Zervas et al. (2015a) is one of the very few studies on the impact of SE on the hospitality industry. Combining data from Airbnb and the Texas hotel industry, this study estimated the impact of Airbnb's entry into the Texas market on hotel room revenue, and examine the market response of hotels. Findings indicate that a ten per cent increase in Airbnb supply results in a 0.35% decrease in hotel room revenue, which translates into a thirteen per cent impact on revenue in Austin, Texas, which is home to the highest Airbnb supply. Key findings of the same study include: (i) Airbnb's impact is non-uniformly distributed, with lower-priced hotels and hotels that don't cater to business travel are the most affected by Airbnb; and (ii) hotels are reducing prices in an effort to stay competitive; affected hotels have responded by reducing prices, an impact that benefits all consumers, not just participants in the SE (Zervas et al., 2015a). This study, therefore, provides empirical evidence that the SE is making inroads by successfully competing with, and acquiring market share from, incumbent companies.

A study by Fang et al. (2016) explored the effect of SE penetration at a macro-economic level by collecting 657 Airbnb houses and industry data of 44 counties in Idaho State, USA. This study revealed both positive and negative impact of Airbnb on tourism employment.

At the same time the reactions of the hospitality industry is fighting back and attempts to turn this increasing trend into an advantage. Through e-commerce sites and apps, businesses are seeking to harness the power of the Internet to battle against sharing economy start-ups. The ideas and practices of the SE have already driven major hotel chains to introduce the provision of innovative services in their units. Let us give some examples. Marriott International is identifying underutilized assets and finding ways to leverage and optimize them. Currently 432 Marriott hotels have meeting spaces listed with LiquidSpace. Marriott gives the opportunity to both guests and locals to use lobbies and other vacant areas of its hotels as meeting and work spaces. Because many of the

people reserving space are not guests, the arrangement helps Marriott reach new consumer segment.

The Hilton brand of Homewood Suites provides additional amenities – enhanced food and beverage services and free Wi-Fi - to those guests who stay for many days in these units. Another example is Hilton's HHonors App: [Hilton](#) is now partnering with Uber in a move to incorporate the SE with their traditional hotel service. This app includes automated reminders to request Uber rides to and from the hotel. Users peruse restaurant and nightlife destinations based on their popularity with Uber customers. Along with booking, this app features Digital Key, which lets users bypass check-in to get straight to their room.

Other examples of hospitality websites and apps that innovate with their online approaches include (Socialhospitality, 2016): (i) [Brewster](#): is an example of a website where consumers can book every part of their vacation: accommodation, activities, and transportation—as long as they stay within the Brewster sphere, Canada. Brewster claims to be staffed by Canadian locals who can give tourists the local experience. The Brewster model is similar to 'building your own pizza and ordering online'. (ii) [Hipmunk](#): is a tourist site and app helping in planning a trip. It aims at allowing consumers to compare a vast variety of options from across the web, including travel and accommodations - all narrowing down to a hotel stay. Hipmunk is a 'concierge of worldwide travel'. Its Trip Planning feature allows consumers to save their search trail and share with fellow tourists. Other examples include hotels recommending apps and online platforms that guide guests to local neighborhoods; and hotels accrediting private houses with their own ranking system.

The challenges the SE poses for consumers, businesses and other stakeholders couldn't leave indifferent scholars.

ACADEMIC RESEARCH ON SHARING ECONOMY

The academic research on SE is still in its infancy; very few studies have been carried out (Heo, 2016). One research stream explores the consumer behavior from psychological perspective. [Guttentag \(2015\)](#) argued that tourists use Airbnb not only because of its economic benefits but also because of its experiential values. [Möhlmann's study \(2015\)](#) revealed that the perception and satisfaction of consumers is determined by their self-benefit, such as utility, trust, cost savings, and familiarity. Ert et al. (2016) examined the impact of hosts' photo on Airbnb on guests' decisions. This study found that (i) a more trustworthy photo leads to a higher price and increased chance to purchase; and (ii) review scores affect guests' decisions only when varied experimentally. Tussyadiah and Pesonen (2016) found that sustainability (i.e., social and environmental awareness and responsibility), community (i.e., social interactions), and economic benefits (i.e., lower cost) are three main factors that motivate users to stay in Airbnb accommodations. Other studies within this research stream are Bardhi and Eckhardt (2012) and Lamberton and Rose (2012).

The impact of SE on the traditional hospitality industry from economic perspective was the topic investigated by Zervas et al. (2015a), a study already mentioned. Later, Zervas et al. (2015b) analyzed over 600,000 listings on Airbnb worldwide and reported that nearly 95% of them boast an average user-generated rating of either 4.5 or 5 stars.

Lastly, Heo (2016) suggests that service-dominant logic could be a good framework to investigate the co-creation of experiences within the context SE. As it can be seen, SE is a phenomenon under-researched; there is an imperative for more academic research to investigate SE-related issues and aspects from various perspectives.

SUGGESTED STRATEGIES TO ADDRESS THE CHALLENGES OF SHARING ECONOMY

This section deals with the various strategies that could be adopted and implement by hospitality brands and independent

hoteliers. It is believed that it is very useful for hospitality businesses to analyze in strategic terms the SE with the aim to identifying the strengths and weaknesses of these platforms, as well as to designing the appropriate strategies.

According to estimations by business reports (Euromonitor, 2014; WTM, 2015), two are the main strengths of P2P platforms, namely: (i) Value for money: the SE offers consumers a chance to gain financially from sharing their goods or services, combined with users paying a competitive price for the service. (ii) Using under-utilized resources: consumers are able to offer up their under-utilized resources (a spare room or car), thereby offsetting an initial cost and using the item more productively. The weaknesses are concerns having legal implications: no compliance with the regulations; many of SE businesses are not meeting legal obligations in terms of tax payments as well as local regulations. There are also concerns about health, safety and control due to their unregulated nature.

The question is, therefore, what hospitality businesses should do; how the hospitality industry should face the challenges by taking into account these issues. The most appropriate response is, in our humble opinion, to adopt and implement suitable strategies.

This study argues that the key strategic aims of hospitality businesses should be: (i) to strengthen their competitiveness; and (ii) to mitigate the adverse impacts of their new competitors. Previously, as a prerequisite, there is a need for the hospitality businesses - corporate organizations and independent hoteliers - to conduct a strategic analysis of positioning and competition analysis. There are threats and opportunities that come along with SE, which the hospitality business should identify in terms of where its hotel brand or unit currently stands in the market. Some suitable suggested by this study are outlined below.

Old-fashioned hospitality: Classic hospitality businesses should go back to the roots of hotelier's mission; that is, provide good, old-fashioned hospitality. That means customer service, personalized in a way that creates that (i) feel-good sensation in hotel guests that

makes them want to return, and (ii) positive WOM, recommend to their friends about the wonderful experience they had at the hotel establishment (Hasegawa, 2014).

Creativity and innovation: hoteliers must become creative in the process of differentiating their service and accommodation offerings. Consumers looking to book rooms via P2P are not only seeking lower rates, they are also in search of unique, out of the ordinary experiences that chain hotels simply do not offer. If the hotel is independent, it may have the authority and ability to provide the needs and wants of its customer market base in real time. Another strategic option is to offer improved value proposition to guests: give better value for money to attract customers and meet their needs.

Adopt a hybrid model: this strategy shows an ability to adapt. More hotels will make like Hilton to include P2P businesses. Hospitality business launching their own websites and apps: the SE is valuable for the options it brings, and hotels need to keep adapting as the sharing possibilities keep multiplying. Hotel brands also launch their own sharing platforms and sharing brands enter the GDS and OTAs.

Coopetition (i.e. cooperation and competition at the same time): this is a smart strategy involving cooperation competing companies. Businesses that engage in both competition and cooperation are said to be in coopetition. Certain businesses gain an advantage by using a judicious mixture of cooperation with suppliers, customers and firms producing complementary or related products. This could be the case of established and new online P2P platforms. **Revenue management:** One possible pathway to follow is to put less emphasis on the marketing efforts and focus / concentrate on revenue management.

Last, but not least, another strategy could be proposed; the strategy of further segmentation and niche development, with mining big data for greater customization. Obviously, this list of suggested strategies is by no means exhaustive; however, it is a valuable contribution to the discussion about the possible ways that

hospitality industry could implement to tackle more effectively with its new competitors.

CONCLUDING REMARKS AND AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This article is no more than an analysis of the economic and social phenomenon of SE and a review of existing literature with the purpose to present and highlight the main issues and challenges of the growth of the SE, mainly with regard to the hospitality industry. The SE is on the rise and it is already disrupting the hospitality industry. The latter is not the only industry shackled up by SE. As the SE continues to pick up momentum and gains ground, the established tourism businesses should find their way to tackle with and to try to address the related challenges. If they do not do so in an efficient and effective way, tourism businesses stand to lose a significant market share and struggle to survive.

This article is completed by highlighting the main issues. It is believed that SE is here to stay because there is a demand for this segment. The SE is associated with both opportunities and challenges for hospitality industry and other tourism-related businesses that should (i) improve their knowledge on it; (ii) conduct a competition analysis; and (iii) find ways / to tackle with online P2P.

As for the government and local authorities, they should establish an institutional framework establishing rules (regulations, certification, and taxation regime) for fair competition, ensuring that conventional businesses compete on a level-playing-field with the platforms of SE. Furthermore, hospitality industry should understand that SE is a phenomenon that cannot be ignored; established businesses should embark in investigating and engaging in innovation in the provision of hospitality services. Every hospitality business (organization or independent unit) should opt for the suitable strategy or strategies.

Additionally, this study indicates that academic research is needed to explore and gain insights on the various issues of the topic of SE in the hospitality industry. Some suggestions for future research, classified into three perspectives or streams, are formulated below.

- Demand: / tourist consumers: the antecedents/motivations for and the influencing factors of consumer in using SE platforms; the encounter between hosts and guests and their interaction; the exchange value consumption in psychological, and anthropological terms; the co-creation value and experience within various contexts; the assessment of their experiences; the factors influencing the consumers' perceived value and satisfaction of online sharing services; and a comparative approach and investigation to more conventional forms of tourism.
- Supply and Business perspective: interesting avenues for future research include issues such as the perceptions and motives of owners offering their properties for sharing and their level of satisfaction; the impact and contribution of SE to entrepreneurship; from marketing management perspective the business models of SE platforms (critical success factors as well as their marketing strategies), the strategies adopted and implemented by hospitality businesses in addressing market challenges.
- Hosting community/area: Academic research should explore (i) the effects of SE on local communities and populations such as the perceptions of residents and the conflicts among different stakeholders; (ii) the impact on tourism demand (tourism consumption) and the economic effects on hosting cities (local economy); as well as the contribution of SE in job creation and employment and the negative impact on local tourism businesses.

Academic research should investigate SE-related issues and aspects from the perspective of different disciplines, i.e. psychology, anthropology, sociology, economy, marketing and management. The

above-mentioned suggestions and streams should have a contribution to improving our knowledge and understanding on the SE.

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AN URBAN POLITICAL ECOLOGY APPROACH TO LOCAL DEVELOPMENT IN FAST-GROWING, TOURISM-SPECIALIZED COASTAL CITIES

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Cities everywhere, and especially those located in coastal areas, grow and change rapidly, reconfiguring in many cases through successful urban development strategies. Tourism specialization is considered a driver of urban transformation and environmental change. A key challenge facing cities for years to come will be understanding the critical role that tourism plays in urban policies and planning process. Our study focuses on Urban Political Ecology (UPE) as an emerging framework for analysis of socio-environmental change in metropolitan areas. Specifically, it allows to examine political, social, and ecological processes together with interests, power and relations shaping patterns and processes of urban change. After providing a brief review of UPE and how it expands toward tourism issues, the article examines Benidorm (Spain), Venice (Italy) and Mykonos (Greece) as representative examples of fast-growing, tourism-specialized Mediterranean urban areas. The case studies illustrate how tourism specialization has been for a long time a driver of change closely linked to urban processes. We conclude that UPE allows a comprehensive analysis of tourism's role, problems and potentials in the context of complex socioeconomic dynamics, contributing to identify effective policies governing future urbanization processes in coastal cities.

Keywords: Local development, Urban growth, Southern Europe, Venice, Benidorm, Mykonos.

INTRODUCTION

Cities, irrespective of their size, are constantly changing (UN-Habitat, 2012). Inner cities and neighborhoods or peri-urban areas are built, transformed and used for several functions, and grow in complex ways as far as population, socioeconomic patterns and geopolitical settings are concerned (Hall, 1998; Batty and Marshall, 2012; Salvati et al., 2013; Gavalas et al., 2014). Considered as the most complex, dynamic and never-ending artifact created by humans (UN-Habitat, 2010; Portugali et al., 2012; Zamenopoulos and Alexiou, 2012; Salvati and Serra, 2016) cities reflect the interactions among biophysical, social, environmental and economic processes at local, regional and global scales (Swyngedouw and Heynen, 2003; Salvati, 2013; Di Felicianantonio and Salvati, 2015; Rontos et al., 2016; Cuadrado-Ciuraneta et al., 2017). Responding to

increasing processes of globalization, urbanization and socioeconomic change, the world has moved towards an urban era (Kötter, 2004; Cerccarelli et al., 2014; Salvati, 2015). In the last decades, tourism has emerged as an important sector influencing urban environments at different physical, social, cultural and political levels (Ashworth and Page, 2011).

Tourism is considered one of the fastest-growing industry in the world, with the largest increase concentrated in coastal cities, where processes of urban change are particularly rapid and unpredictable. Tourism represents a major economic activity in Europe, supporting continuously local development since decades (European Travel Commission, 2015). The Mediterranean region is the most important destination in Europe and the most visited site in the world (Zitti et al., 2015). Southern European tourism-specialized coastal cities act as engines of growth in regional economic systems, influencing urban morphology and functions (Mullins, 1994; Russo, 2002; Ivars Baidal et al., 2013; Salvati and Gargiulo Morelli, 2014; Carlucci et al., 2017).

Over the last decades, researchers, practitioners and policy makers have started assuming that tourism is an instrument of economic development that generates (usually negative) consequences on urban areas, landscapes and natural resources. However, these studies fall providing a critical understanding of how cities are evolving through internal and external processes at local and global scales in which tourism dynamics are embedded. This is partially due to the fact that analysis of the relationship between tourism and urban environment lacks appropriate concepts for conducting empirical research understanding socio-environmental problems and identifying possible policy solutions. As a consequence, although tourism contributes considerably to the local economy of several cities world-wide, scholars engaged in critical debates on urbanization and socio-environmental dynamics, ignored sometimes tourism-induced patterns and processes of metropolitan change (Ashworth and Page, 2011).

The present study explores and discusses such issues in the light of the Urban Political Ecology (UPE) framework. UPE is considered a suitable theoretical framework contributing to ‘disentangle the interconnected economic, political, social and ecological processes that shape urban landscapes’ (Cook and Swyngedouw, 2012) and providing positive and normative concepts for analysis of urban contexts. As such, the Mediterranean region is an interesting field of investigation and three important tourist destinations have been identified and analyzed in light of the aforementioned issue (European Environment Agency, 2002).

Specifically, Venice (Italy) has been and remains one of the world-class cities with a distinctive cultural heritage. Benidorm (Spain) has become one of the most well known mass tourism resorts in Spain and Europe. Finally, Mykonos (Greece) was experiencing an explosive tourism boom which is rather peculiar among Greek tourist destinations. All cities are characterized by increasing influx of tourists and rapid processes of urban change, influencing social, economic, political and environmental local contexts (Zambon et al., 2018).

This paper is composed of three sections. The first section reviews the UPE approach and describes the key concepts and methods through which processes of urban change may be analyzed, represented and understood. The second section provides a description of the main processes of urbanization observed in tourism-specialized Mediterranean cities. The third section analyzes the three cases mentioned above. The analysis allows exploring the extent to which tourism shapes cities and how tourism-specialized cities are producing new urban landscapes.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Understanding causes of urban growth and the related socio-environmental consequences have become one of the new domains of critical thinking based on the premises of political ecology (Cook

and Swyngedouw, 2012; Zambon et al., 2017; Duvernoy et al., 2018). Political ecology is an approach oriented towards the understanding of the complex interactions between society and environment in which issues of class, gender, race, power and hegemony acquire a special relevance (Robbins, 2004). As urbanization has gained remarkable prominence in recent years, the interconnection between human and natural processes has been appropriately extended to the foreground of 'urban' dimensions through the so-called Urban Political Ecology discipline (De Rosa and Salvati, 2016). UPE thinking promotes critical urban political–environmental research (Heynen et al., 2006b) grounded on the intimate transformation of nature-social relations connected with urbanization processes. More specifically, UPE provides a theoretical, methodological and empirical platform for untangling how socio-environmental processes shape urban landscapes.

Starting from the assumption that nature and society do not exist independently as distinct entities, UPE scholars argue that 'urban' dimensions are mediated by socio-ecological flows. In other words, nature has become urbanized through social interactions, and used in the process of urban development (Cook and Swyngedouw, 2012). Socio-ecological flows including water, CO₂, food, and materials, are linked to (i) the specific historical, geographical, social, cultural, political and economic conditions, practices and relations, (ii) the formal and informal governing institutions that accompany them, (iii) the action of groups of actors, stakeholders and social power relations, (iv) the interaction among local, regional and global scales, and (v) the relationship between urban capitalism and environmental injustices produced through exploitation, commodification and degradation of places (Salvati et al., 2012). All these factors finally result in a continuous "urban metabolism" (a fundamental concept in the UPE theory, e.g. Gandy, 2004) configuring new and complex urban landscapes (Swyngedouw, 2004). From this perspective, 'urbanization' is considered a process produced through particular forms of socio-physical metabolism,

and “cities are conceptualized as metabolic vehicles constituted in and through metabolic circulatory socio-ecological flows” (Swyngedouw, 2006). Therefore, according to urban political ecology scholars, socio-environmental changes result in the continuous production of new urban (social and physical) configurations (Salvati and Serra, 2016).

On the basis of these theoretical premises, UPE has elaborated some central concepts such as, for instance, the relationship between society and nature, social power and interests, capitalism and circulation of capital, urbanization, networks, groups of actors, local/global scale, environmental commodification and urban metabolism (Cook and Swyngedouw, 2012). UPE scholars argue that these concepts contribute in shaping the formation of urban environments (Cronon, 1991), evidencing how comparative studies may help understanding changes in contemporary urban landscapes (Davis, 2002; Gandy, 2003; Desfor and Kail, 2004; Heynen et al., 2006a).

Over the past few years tourism has become one of the more recent political ecology themes. Studies carried out by Stonich (1998) in Honduras, and by Gossling (2001) in Zanzibar have contributed “to understand how environmental and political forces interact to affect social and environmental changes through the actions of various social actors at different scales” (Stonich, 1998, p. 28). Following these evidence, other scholars have focused on tourism and related aspects linked to globalization and uneven distribution of natural resources - including water (Sharpley, 2000; Gossling, 2001; Cole, 2012) in both developed and the developing countries. The latent interplay among international, national, regional and local actors, agencies, institutions and policies at the interface of socio-environmental change was also extensively addressed (Swyngedouw, 2004). Moreover, research questions have emerged when discussing on issues such as ‘who initiates and controls tourism development, for whom, for what purpose, at what cost, to what end; who has the power to create and control the narratives related to development issues; and, depending on the

context, how are the resources affected by development processes' (Beahm, 2009). Through these and other case studies, political ecology has introduced a new thinking to the ways in which tourism is studied, by broadening its scope and scale (Swyngedouw and Kaika, 2000). If Political Ecology of tourism is gaining more and more attention, as Douglas (2014) explains in his work "What's political ecology got to do with tourism?", studies on tourism from a Urban Political Ecology are scarce, despite the increasing importance "of planetary urbanization" as the main driver of environmental change (Swyngedouw and Kaika, 2014). As Cook and Swyngedouw (2012) suggest, the UPE framework 'is an important step towards beginning to disentangle the interwoven knots of social process, material metabolism and spatial form that go into the formation of contemporary urban socio-natural landscapes'. Its relevance for tourism studies should be, however, demonstrated with specific examples. According to the UPE framework adopted in this paper, the next chapters examine the increasing importance of the nexus between tourism and urban change and by focusing more specifically on selected case studies.

CHANGES IN TOURISM-SPECIALIZED CITIES FROM GLOBAL TO LOCAL SCALES

Cities, especially those located in coastal areas, are considered among the major urban hotspots globally (Sekovski et al., 2012). In 2008, the world's urban population exceeded the world's rural population and approximately a quarter of this population concentrated along or near coasts (Tibbetts, 2002). Although human population has been growing mainly in coastal megacities (Sekovski et al., 2012), recent studies have shown that the concurrent movement of population to coastal areas worldwide, also occur in medium and smaller cities (UN-Habitat, 2012; Salvati and Zitti, 2005; Munafò et al., 2013). Coastline locations have offered advantages and opportunities for human settings. As strategic

meeting points between land and sea, coasts have experienced a long commodification of landscapes and natural resources such as water, land and other environmental amenities suited to human activities. This has led to rapid population growth and socioeconomic development, as the result of a combination of geographical location, rural-to-urban migration, infrastructure development and other political, social and economic forces, including globalization (see Colantoni et al., 2016 and references therein). These processes of change, associated with global capital, have proved to be major forces in the emerging landscapes of both developed and less developed cities. Additionally, as urban development has accelerated, the major economic, political, social, cultural and ecological processes of change have gained space very quickly (Biasi et al., 2015).

Cities have always been labeled as engines of economic growth (Salvati, 2015). Through a diversity of processes they have become complex places of accumulation and concentration of economic and political power, organizations, activity, infrastructure and resources, acting as magnets of development (Collet, 2010). Ultimately, cities have configured themselves as nodal points for business, competitiveness and creativity as well as consumption and leisure within global networks (Salvati et al., 2013). Through these particular conditions, some urban economies have shaped new geographies of consumption and production. This is particularly the case of the tourism sector which has been one of the most highly developed and dynamic industry of the world economy in recent years. Tourism has grown at such a pace and scale that, in 2012 the total international arrivals were expected to reach one billion people for the first time (UNWTO, 2012). According to the World Tourism Organization new destinations are emerging worldwide, new markets are expanding and international tourist arrivals in emerging economy destinations are expected to grow in double digits by 2030 (UNWTO, 2012: 9-15). Influencing the movements of a relevant number of people and the urban development, tourism represents today a fundamental strategy of economic development for many

coastal cities. This is attributable mainly to new socioeconomic processes producing transformations in traditional landscapes (Ashworth and Page, 2011). As Ashworth and Page have observed, new urban geographies arise from these processes and result in different patterns and complex forms with their own specific characteristics, practices and modes of consumption in time and space. They also noted that, while some urban forms influenced by tourism have developed over time, other forms do not pass through a series of phases of growth and development, and are emerging as new landscapes for tourism (Ashworth and Page, 2011: 3). Additionally, these new tourist destinations require infrastructures, facilities and amenities, adding further pressures on existing social and natural environments.

Indeed, coastal cities - especially those specialized in tourism activities - are already under heavy pressure from human activities, and result as critical areas of global environmental change (Small and Nicholls, 2003; Gössling and Hall, 2006; Collet, 2010). Occupying just 10 percent of the earth's land surface, coastal zones are heavily urbanized with 65 per cent of their inhabitants residing in urban areas (UN-Habitat, 2010). Despite the fact that the most urbanized coastal cities today tend to be situated in less developed countries, such as Asia and Africa, the process of rapid urbanization started first in today's more developed regions, gradually spreading from Southeast Europe across the whole European continent (Antrop, 2004: 9). In Europe 76 percent of the population lives in urban regions and 43 percent live in coastal regions (European Environment Agency, 2006a). Between 1990 and 2000 urbanization in Europe grew 30% faster in coastal areas than in inland areas, and this difference continues to grow (UNEP/MAP-Plan Bleu, 2009).

The Mediterranean coastal regions well illustrate long-term processes of urbanization and socio-environmental change. Considered by Cuadrado-Ciuraneta et al. (2007) one of the most celebrated and threatened in the world, the Mediterranean coasts have always been attractive areas for development. Mediterranean

cities are the result of the close interplay between natural characteristics and the equally diverse human activities, both past and present (Carlucci et al., 2017). This phenomenon refers to a great variety of conditions, depending on the more or less strategic locations, natural features (climate, water, landscape, ecosystems, terrestrial and marine biodiversity) and cultural (historic and cultural heritage) resources, on the nature of the activities, as well as on the urban dynamics capable to confront all these issues (Rontos et al., 2016). In the last decades, the interplay between processes of development and human-environment relations have intensified and dense urban tissues of several Mediterranean cities has been exposed to socioeconomic changes and substantial landscape transformations (Trumbic, 2005).

Out of a total 46,000 km of coastline, more than half are urbanized, and urbanization rate is expected to grow up to 72 percent in 2025. According to recent studies, the Western Mediterranean area shows the highest increase in artificial surfaces (UNEP/MAP, 2012). In Italy, France and Spain the coverage of built-up areas in the first kilometer of the coastal strip exceeds 45 per cent (European Environment Agency, 2006a). Coastal urbanization has been often attributed to the growth of the tourism sector. The Mediterranean is now considered the first destination in the world attracting 30 per cent of global international tourism arrivals. France, Spain and Italy, are among the ten strongest tourist destinations in the world (UNWTO, 2012). Responding to waves of population increase, rapid urbanization and emerging economic sectors like tourism, the Mediterranean coastal cities have grown outward from small dense cores and acquired new forms, dimensions, functions and centralities (Cuadrado-Ciuraneta et al., 2017). In this connection, it can be argued that by moving the analysis from the global scale to the regional scale, coastal cities are nowadays the places where processes of urban change appear more evident depending on several interconnected factors.

URBAN CHANGE AND TOURISM: MAIN ISSUES FOR THE MEDITERRANEAN CITIES

In southern European coastal regions, urban change processes and their socio-environmental impacts have been illustrated widely (e.g. Muñoz, 2001; Antrop, 2004; Serra et al., 2014). Mediterranean cities have been traditionally characterized by urban compactness and high population densities, complex morphologies, social diversity and economic polarization in industrial and service areas. However, in the last two decades new morphologies have emerged (Colantoni et al., 2015). Sprawl can be considered as one of the most salient features of the recent urbanization process in the region (European Environment Agency, 2006b). According to Muñoz (2003) sprawl generates a new type of city with important changes in the socioeconomic relationship between urban and rural areas, reflecting simplified morphologies and homogeneous design in cities with vastly different socioeconomic contexts (Salvati and Gargiulo Morelli, 2014). The loss in morphological and social diversity represents a significant change from the features that characterized the traditional Mediterranean compact city (Leontidou, 1990).

Taken as an emerging urban form in Mediterranean Europe, dispersed cities are considered urban landscapes designed and produced as a commodity, induced by mobility, including voluntary mobility such as that associated with leisure (Zambon et al., 2017). The process of commodification produces wider environmental impacts compared to what was generated by the compact cities, for instance, higher consumptions of land, energy and water as well as larger amounts of waste and pollution (Mullins, 1991; Hoffman et al., 2003; Rico-Amoros et al., 2009). Additionally, a proliferation of intermediate urban forms has emerged. Tourism is considered the main driver of these new urban forms. In many places of the Mediterranean region activities have taken place, involving the development of tourism capacity (campsites, hotels, holiday resorts,

second homes and villas) and support infrastructure (ports, marinas, and other new facilities, swimming pools, golf courses). These capacities can be identified in two main types of tourist patterns: landscapes and cities of mass tourism, associated with concentration of facilities, vertical growth of buildings and high population density, and the new type of resort tourism characterized by settlement dispersion, horizontal growth, land consumption and low population density, detached residential houses with private gardens and swimming pools, together with amenities such as golf courses, leisure parks and health centers (Hoffman et al., 2003).

As outlined by Gossling (2006) tourism is embedded in the process of urbanization mainly in two ways. First, as the main driver behind urbanization in places oriented to (and suitable for) tourism and leisure, or what Mullins (1991) calls 'tourism urbanization' and second, as an element of leisure production in urban place where a part of the city is oriented to satisfy tourist demands, even though the city's economy is not dominated by tourism and leisure production (Page and Hall, 2003). As it has been observed recently, different forms and types of tourism produce diverging socio-environmental impacts. In particular, some studies show that the consumption of water, the most important resource for urban settlements, population and tourism amenities in the Mediterranean, may differ substantially according to the predominant type of tourism and second-home settlement, and the water requirements of future expansions of tourism will probably depend on the specific land-use selected for development (Mullins, 1991, 1994; Hoffman et al., 2003).

Several factors contribute to explain the changing urban patterns found in the Mediterranean region. Besides biophysical and territorial conditions, the development of tourism along the Mediterranean coasts has reflected specific socioeconomic and political characteristics. For example, economic restructuring has been a driver for infrastructure development achieved through tourism and the burst construction phase mainly observed in Spain and Greece in the 2000s. Factors such as local community interests,

health and security conditions, real estate speculation, and traditional models of tourism exploitation have contributed to shape urban forms in tourism-specialized urban areas (Pili et al., 2017). Again, policies and programs initiated and implemented by the tourism industry have also contributed to new patterns, processes and directions of change in Mediterranean coastal cities (Mullins, 1991; Hoffman et al., 2003; UNEP/MAP, 2012). Competitiveness and creativity appear as new contemporary elements in the specific dynamics of Mediterranean economic urban strategies and actions driven by globalization (Salvati, 2015). Finally, the recent economic crisis influencing the Mediterranean countries constitutes an important driver of urban change strongly interlinked to factors just mentioned (De Rosa and Salvati, 2016).

As a result, all these factors are embedded in the configuration of the urban form and in its processes of change. Edwards et al. (2008: 1038) state that tourism is 'one among many social and economic forces in the urban environment'. Page and Hall (2003) argued that what characterizes these new urban configurations where tourism assume an important part, is the scale, complexity and diversify of consumption. In this connection, Wall and Mathieson (2005) have addressed the issue how much urban change can be attributed to tourism. By considering the complex processes that are taking place in contemporary cities, Ashworth and Page (2011) claim that the major urban changes should be sought in the phenomena of globalization of urban networks, complex interactions between local and global scales, rise of the city as the centre of cultural production and consumption, the commodification of cities as competitive marketable brands and other identifiable trends. According to these authors, they are the basis for the explanation of the current urban changes and transformations and to understand the direction of future urban configurations. Ashworth and Page also argue that what is happening to urban environments depend on the understanding of what is happening to cities, in which tourism is inextricably embedded.

URBAN GROWTH AND TOURISM: CASE STUDIES

BENIDORM

Benidorm and the Costa Blanca are the most important seaside resorts in the Mediterranean coast and Europe. In the mid-20th century Benidorm was a small fishing village of nearly 2,000 people. In the early 1950s the fishing industry went into decline, and the village was regenerated through tourism as a short-cut to economic prosperity. In 1956 an urban plan targeting tourist development was approved (the first of its kind in Spain), and Benidorm turned into a tourist destination experiencing significant urban growth. Since the late 1960s population has increased tenfold and now stands at 80,000 inhabitants, 40% of whom approximately are foreigners (Benidorm en cifras, 2012). Since the first tourist hostel was built in the Playa de Levante in 1925, Benidorm represents a concentrated form of tourism settlements characterized by 142 hotels with more than 3,000 swimming pools, 330 skyscrapers including the 52 floor Gran Hotel Bali, 6.266 apartments, 10 campsites with some 11.275 places, providing more than 68,000 beds, and 18,000 second homes, as well as resorts villas, and extensive recreational facilities (Benidorm en cifras, 2012).

Several factors may explain these changes. The coastal environment, characterized by white sand, palm trees, crystal-clear waters and a favorable microclimate all year round, has contributed to its attractiveness. As said, this sun and sand destination emerged along the Mediterranean coast in the 1960s as a high-density urban development and high-rise buildings, which conforms Benidorm's distinctive vertical skyline. By no means this was an uncontrolled process. Benidorm is instead the result of a long process of land-use transformations and local planning based on mixed public-private initiatives.

The Alicante airport, which opened in 1967, was perhaps the biggest contributing factor to Benidorm success as a holiday resort. In 2011 1.748.564 people visited Benidorm and hotels alone annually registered approximately 10 million overnight stays (Benidorm en cifras, 2012). Foreign tourists, primarily British, followed by French and Northern Europeans, account for half of these visits. Current projections suggest increasing numbers in hotel occupancy in Benidorm.

As it has been recently observed by Ivars i Baidal et al. (2013), the interaction of local factors and global forces substantially influenced the development model of Benidorm, and the relationship between urban configuration and tourism dynamics during four critical phases: (i) the international recession and supply-demand imbalances (1988-1993); (ii) the expansive phase (1994-2001); (iii) the stabilization stage (2002-2007) and (iv) the effects of the international economic crisis (2007-nowadays). Among economic factors, the crisis of the traditional sun and sand model was identified, as well as the national and local tourism crisis in adapting to changes in the tourism market (Phase 1), the local tourism recovery of Benidorm that contemporary caused the reduction of attractiveness of other tourist destinations such as Greece and Turkey (Phase 2); the fluctuation of currencies; the favourable economic national situation and consolidation of the tourism industry (Phase 3), the world economy recession and the repercussions on the local tourism demand, and the dependence on the British market (Phase 4). Planning and policy factors contributed to environmental quality improvement, with a strategic marketing plan (1991) for the town; the creation of a water park and a large green urban space (Phase 1) the renovation of beach seafront promenades (Phase 1 and 4) and the new terminal of the Alicante airport, associated with growth of low-cost airlines and the increase of Internet purchases (Phase 4). Regional tourism policies also supported the major Theme park (2000) located outside the town and associated with beaches and built-up spaces that contributed to

urban growth with new activities, such as golf courses, the construction of hotel and residential accommodation, a new leisure area and residential homes (Phase 2). While the real estate market boom produced many non-hotel beds due to the growth of residential tourism, a considerable renovation of existing establishments was carried out (Phase 3). Moreover, new strategic infrastructures of tourism linked to culture and business were promoted (Phase 4).

Competitiveness factors related to rival sun and sand destinations (Phase 1), or growing rival destinations (phase 4) offering alternative tourism models to the Spanish traditional model were also observed. This has led Benidorm to promote the creation of the Tourism Training, first in a network of regional centres (Phase 1), urban, recreational and leisure facilities, including the hotel growth with high-range categories, as a product brand from the Benidorm and the Tourism Marketing Plan (phase 3 and 4), and currently the promotion of a new model of tourism for more sophisticated and independent travellers, while maintaining the traditional focus on families, young people and elderly. This indicates that new urban forms and facilities will change according this new model of tourism, since settlement patterns influence and are in turn influenced by the profiles of tourists (Rico-Amoros et al., 2009).

Moreover, local and international interest groups or stakeholders played a critical role in the decision making for the town development and the renovation of urban public spaces (Phase 4). Exogenous factors such as international wars and other conflicts (Phase 1 and 3) also contributed significantly to the tourist movement reductions and local development. Moreover, social factors such as new consumption habits or property speculations were the responses to the ongoing situations. All these factors result intrinsically linked to the environmental and sustainability factors, as the processes of urban configuration of Benidorm have occurred through a long commodification of its coastal environment, hinterland and natural resources. A remarkable example is the water

issue in Benidorm, which in part describe such commodification process.

After the 1978 drought crisis, which coincided with the sharp increase of tourist arrivals and that severely affected the German market by the prospects of insufficient water, the water supply system of the city was renovated and enhanced in order to ensure water supply for the new urban facilities, tourists and local people. Since then, sustainable measures such as obtaining water from farmers in exchange of electricity and other goods also were activated (Rico and Olcina, 2004). Although its vertical urban form changed the traditional one, Benidorm such as Manhattan are both considered sustainable "intelligent terrains" and a future model for holiday hubs which is expected to expand globally by 2030 (Thomson Holidays, 2010; Webster, 2011).

This model appears to be more environmentally efficient, in regard to energy, water and land-use, and less dependent on private mobility (Iribas, 2000; Ivars i Baidal et al., 2013; Rico-Amoros et al., 2009), than other tourism models based on urban sprawl located in Mediterranean coastal areas (European Environment Agency, 2006). However different land management strategies have recently used Benidorm as an anchor for urban sprawl (Bellot et al., 2007). As a result, the proliferation of new urban forms, such as housing development with green gardens and private swimming pools, and recreational sites such as water parks and golf courses are generating new processes of landscape change.

VENICE

The historic city of Venice, located in a wide lagoon between mainland and the Adriatic Sea, is an internationally renowned tourism destination. Although Venice is unique compared to other realities, it is considered a perfect case of a large heritage city allowing for the study of long modifications of land-use, the effects of tourism, and other contemporary processes of change (Zanetto

and Calzavara, 1991; Zannini et al., 2008). Originally Venice developed over 118 small islands and was inhabited by few people subsisting on fishing and salt extraction. Over 15 centuries ago, refugees from the Italian mainland, fleeing from Northern invaders, populated the coastal strip, while noblemen, owners and people settled on these islands to find protection. Location helped propel Venice to its place of wealth and political dominance. It grew in size and autonomy and, in the fifteenth century, became the center of world trade and the largest port city in the Mediterranean and in the world with more than 200,000 inhabitants. Although tourism seems a relatively new phenomenon in the city, it holds a long tradition since it was a destination for pilgrims during the preindustrial period, the grand tour and the European society of the 1700s for tourism elites during the industrial revolution and, finally, the transformations of the holiday in the era of mass consumption with the development of Lido, the global tourism and the Disneyfication of the city (Costantini, 1997; Leonardi, 2003; Tissot, 1996; Zannini, 2002).

As Venice became a travel destination of many wealthy strangers, tourism influenced its conurbation. Certain parts of the city were chose to be built with a view to advertising its economic grandeur and to welcoming foreigners such as the waterfronts and St. Mark's central square (Zannini et al., 2008). After the deviation of the main rivers which flowed into the Lagoon between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries and that avoided the risk of its silting, the city kept evolving through a complex combination of natural processes and human interventions.

In the early twentieth century urban transformations centered in the areas around the historic city: the new bourgeoisie chosen the Lido littoral in the lagoon as a seaside resort among the most interesting of the period, some communities of the mainland regrouped in Mestre, beginning its slow transformation from town to suburb. The process of urban sprawl began after World War II as a consequence of the replacement of industrial activities with services. As industries needed to find new areas outside the city centre,

Marghera developed as the most important industrial settlement, while services were prevalently located in the centre generating higher revenues linked to real estate.

Higher real estate prices caused the population to migrate outside the city leading to the depopulation of the historical center. Since then, tourism has strongly influenced the evolution of Venice and its historical city centre in particular. According to Zannini et al. (2008), Venice has than gained strength with the advent of mass tourism driven by better socioeconomic conditions and new ways to travel. Two main transformations emerged over the last thirty years: the first refers to the upgrading of the area around St Mark's, triggered by the increase of second-home acquisition (Lando and Zanetto, 1978; Costa et al., 1980) while the second involves the increasing number of houses that have been refurbished and dedicated to extra-hotel services (Barbiani and Zanon, 2004). The process of growth refers in particular to the second largest building cycle (1993-2007) and the mechanisms that determined the formation of urban income, representing a decisive element in the transformation of the city.

These factors influenced the structure of the city which today encompasses historical districts and more peripheral areas transformed for both local interests and tourism purposes. Venice is characterized by both under-exploited and over-exploited cultural areas (Russo, 2002) and new areas (or the refurbishment of abandoned areas) are created to improve its image; the transformation of the commercial structure also adapted to satisfy the tourist demand. After the 2008 crisis, the positive trend of tourism arrivals in 2010 seems to be continuous in the subsequent years. In 1951, around 1.1 million tourists per year visited the city and in 2011 there were 22,080,717 of which 6.221.821 stayed overnight in the historical city centre. In 2012 80 percent were foreigners, especially from the United States, followed by the traditional European markets of France, United Kingdom and Germany, while emerging markets such as Russian, Brazil and

China also increased substantially (Annual Tourism Report, 2012). Art, culture, the lagoon environment and the current 14 business exhibitions per year and international events that the city is constantly improving, are the main events in the historic city which attracts more than 60 per cent of its visitors in peaks during spring and autumn.

The major transport infrastructure, the port and airport, are expanding both in term of size and tourist arrival. Today, the city concentrates around 418 hotels and 2.314 other accommodations which include bed and breakfast activities. Moreover, the visible increase in the number of restaurants and stores is a direct result of the need to address the demand of both tourists and work-commuters. Demand for housing in Venice is consequently very high in particular regarding second homes, and it has become the most expensive urban real estate market in Italy. For this reason, the population has decreased from 102,269 residents in 1976 to 59,080 in 2011 and continues to lose regularly about 60 people per month (according to the Venice municipality statistical data). This process of depopulation of the historic city is generating conflicts between tourists and resident population over the use of urban landscapes (Van der Borg and Russo, 2001: 167).

MYKONOS

The island of Mykonos (Greece) constitutes a well-known holiday destination in Europe. Traditionally it was a very poor fishing village characterized by local activities based on fishing, farming, and cattle breeding on harsh lands as well as ship construction which represented the major industry. Tourism has modified entirely the local economy over since it started in the 1950s. Despite the natural environment of the island, typical of the archipelago of Kyklades, characterized by low vegetation due to the dry climate, lack of fresh water and poor soil conditions, the “sun and sand” tourism model has been favored by its coasts, long

sunshine duration and little rainfall. As it is mostly visited during the summer months, tourism has a highly seasonal character.

Tourist numbers have increased substantially from around 5150 arrivals (at hotels) in 1965 to 60.000 in 1995 and currently are experiencing an explosive rise, unknown in the other Greek islands. In 2015 1 million visitors are expected and more than 4000, 1-day transfer visitors per day, use the island as an intermediate stops on ferry routes or as a day trip destinations. Tourists visiting Mykonos come from Germany and United Kingdom, and from other emerging markets such as China, Turkey and Russia. The island has thus become more cosmopolitan and expensive than other Greek islands sustaining the country which competes internationally with other tourist markets (SETE, 2012).

From the mini-resorts built back in the 1960s, new tourism developments have grown up on a quarter of the island between 1971 and 1991. Afterwards, the accommodation stock has risen considerably. The island's population has also increased in size, in contrast to other Greek islands that have lost population over the last decades. Population doubled between 1961 and 1991 from 3,700 to around 8,500, and now stands above 10,000 people. Population growth was followed by the expansion of the infrastructures and investments that have further boosted the island's capacity to accommodate tourists.

The case of Mykonos is a paradigmatic example of the process of urban sprawl occurring spatially far away from (and functionally outside the direct influence of) an urban region and mainly linked to tourism and second-home development sometimes under informal housing and real estate speculation (Salvati, 2013). Until the 1970s, the island of Mykonos was characterized by a dense spatial organization with adjacent settlements concentrated within the area of the main city and harbor. Such a settlement model was similar to that observed in several other Greek islands and reflected the traditional compactness observed in several Mediterranean coastal towns. In the following years, however, an impressive growth of

dispersed settlements (especially one-floor houses with small gardens and swimming pools or two-floor residential housing estates) was observed, due to the urban planning directives that permitted the construction of multi-floor buildings only in the main settlements of the island. Thus, rapid urbanization altered the socioeconomic structure and local culture (Coccossis and Parpairis, 1995). During the first phase rapid and uncontrolled tourism development has transformed in scale, volume of built-up areas, character and environmental quality (Özgen, 2003).

The island experienced impressive changes in land-use and in the urban landscape of the main center (Chora) due to urban expansion. Moreover, tourism and second-home development in suburban areas surrounding Chora have caused concentration of people and buildings especially along the coastal rim forming a fragmented, entropic and diffused peri-urban landscape with poor aesthetic quality and implications for environmental degradation. Water and soil pollution occur especially during the peak summer season. Although water resources in Mykonos are naturally limited, the reliance on tourism has prompted the development of new water flows. Thus, two dams have been built to collect surface water, while a central wastewater treatment plant, a desalination plant and the network projects made for water and sanitation are currently under construction, according to the information provided by the local municipality of Mykonos.

The conversion of agricultural and pasture land located in the suburbs of the main city observed since the 1980s was primarily driven by socioeconomic changes due to tourism development and real estate speculation (Leontidou and Marmaras, 2001). The limited effectiveness of urban planning as well as poor controls against land appropriation and illegal buildings were the main causes of landscape changes in the 1980s and 1990s, with a pattern similar to other Greek islands. As discussed by Andriotis (2004) ‘the planning process of tourism development is controlled by external actors, mainly the central government’. On the contrary, these dynamics are now diverging, at least partially, from those observed in Kyklades

due to the quite different settlement patterns, landscape composition and tourism pressure found in the neighboring islands (Salvati, 2013).

Other relevant factors have affected the processes of environmental change. The economic crisis has played a big role in the tourism sector of Mykonos, and other Greek islands which now have been re-launched in tourist exhibitions around the world in order to compete internationally as tourist destinations moving away from the old “sun and sand” tourism based-model. Although the municipality of Mykonos is currently developing a ‘quality tourism’ model, the attempt to break with the old stereotype has frequently been thwarted by corruption and social power interests. Moreover, new public investments focusing on the creation of new strategic infrastructures (the enlargement of the port and airport, the Cultural Center, the water infrastructures mentioned above, etc.) are currently under construction. These contribute to change the urban landscape to respond to new interests linked to tourism demand. However, the weak role of the State and the lack of autonomy in the decision-making of the island’s future impedes the accomplishment of an integrated policy approach (Salvati, 2013).

DISCUSSION

Cities and landscapes are on the international and local political agenda today. They receive increasing attention from researchers, geographers, planners and policy makers (UN-Habitat, 2010, 2012). The main reason is the general observation of the speed of the changes, urbanization effects, environment impacts and transformations, globalization and networks considered important driving forces of these changes and the emergence of new landscapes. Despite the number of approaches to understand such change, urban processes and their relations occur in complex and are difficult to understand. Even more when new elements like tourism add complexity and new challenges to the highly dynamic urban

picture. Using a urban political approach this article has tried to examine how tourism shapes cities and to what extent tourism interacts with socioeconomic and environmental change.

In order to provide a big picture of these new urban dynamics the Mediterranean context was used as field of investigation since it represents the European destination more influenced by tourism processes, particularly in many coastal cities as in the cases of Benidorm, Venice and Mykonos, illustrated in this article. Even though studies dealing with tourism in these cities exist, they mainly focus on the economic influence and environmental impacts of tourism, and do not consider the complexity of processes that are taking place in these contexts in which tourism is profoundly and intimately embedded to urban form, and how such processes will continue to produce and reconfigure these places.

The article argued that landscape changes resulting from the complex political, economic, social, cultural and ecological processes that form certain types of urban contexts in coastal tourism-specialized cities are permeating the intimate relationship between tourism and urban form. More than other approaches, Urban Political Ecology allowed to understand how these processes are interconnected and produce a particular socio-environmental metabolism that materializes through new urban forms. From this perspective, as it has been shown in this study, the construction of the skyscrapers (in the Benidorm case), or the water infrastructures (in the case of Mykonos), testify the particular social, power, cultural relations through which socio-natural metabolisms are organized. Tourism constitutes therefore an important component within the urban metabolism, but not the only one responsible of the changing urban form.

In more fundamental ways, the three examples provide different avenues to socio-environmental change through international tourism and its relations with the circuits of global capital accumulation. Benidorm keeps improving its role of a mass tourism resort adding new products and services to an already well established destination without many changes in its current socio-

environmental configuration. Venice, on its part, has succumbed to the dual threat of rampant real estate speculation for a global elite clientele and the overcrowding of the city by thousands of visitors each day with an additional environmental problem created by the navigation of mammoth cruise ships in the lagoon. Finally, Mykonos is vulnerable to real estate speculation under difficult environmental conditions (water, soil and energy access especially) that could undermine the interests for future investments and jeopardize the viability of the island as a tourist destination.

CONCLUSION REMARKS

The present study, grounded on a UPE framework, represents a tool for in-depth understanding of the intimate relationship among tourism development, contemporary processes of urbanization and landscape changes. Although we recognize that these cases would need a more extensive conceptualization in a broader framework of international tourism, the UPE vision proved to represent an operational approach for future investigation, toward a broader understanding of tourism intended together as a local and global phenomenon. These research efforts should definitely inform appropriate policies and planning for future cities specialized in tourism.

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CONTENT ANALYSIS OF GREEK MEDICAL TOURISM WEBSITES FOR A SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION OF AN E-MARKETING STRATEGY

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The growing international demand for top medical services in combination with consumers' constant research for competitive prices in such services, has led to the growth of medical and health tourism in Greece, mainly because of the country's Mediterranean climate and its qualified health experts. In accordance with the above, the use of the Internet enables the Greek medical community to expand its marketing and advertising outside its borders. In this paper, the authors try to form a data base of the medical tourism providers in Greece and then they proceed in a website evaluation of the medical tourism providers in order to investigate and appraise their internet appearance. The results of the website evaluation can in turn lead to useful practical results with the aim of providing a successful e-marketing strategy implementation of the medical tourism providers.



Key words: *Medical Tourism, ICTs in tourism, Web evaluation, Medical tourism marketing, Tourism distribution channels.*

JEL Classification: *M1, M30, Z33, Z38, I10*

INTRODUCTION

Medical tourism is an alternative form of tourism in which Greece can and has to invest given its climatic and geographical characteristics. However, medical tourism has been very recently prioritised in the political agenda; data on medical tourist flows are poor and the Greek medical tourist sector is unable to follow the rest of the well-established destinations in terms of ICTs integration (Sampaniotis, 2006). The aim of this research is first to develop of a database of Greek medical tourism providers for the first time in the country and then to propose a comprehensive evaluation framework for medical tourism websites.

The rest of the article is organized as follows: first we discuss medical tourism in Greece, and we introduce the role of ICTs in medical tourism as well as the role of the e-medical tourism facilitators and providers. Then we present our proposed evaluation framework by evaluating the web sites of 107 medical tourism providers using as methodological tool, 29 criteria drawn from the international literature along with our findings, and in the final section we discuss concluding remarks and present future directions for further research.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Medical Tourism in Greece

Greece is among the countries with the highest demand on Mediterranean destinations and it also offers natural advantages,

tourist infrastructures and expertise at a high level. It is a fact though, that Greece is a rather atypical tourist destination and has problems competing with emerging tourist destinations of the wider area of Eastern Europe (Sampaniotis, 2006). The total contribution of Travel & Tourism to GDP (including wider effects from investment, the supply chain and induced income impacts) was EUR32.5bn in 2015 (18.5% of GDP) and is expected to decrease by 1.8 % to EUR31.9bn (18.6% of GDP) in 2016. Tourism's total contribution to Greece's GDP will reach 46.7 billion euros, according to the World Travel & Tourism Council's (WTTC) Economic Impact Report in 2016.

Nowadays, the growth of the medical tourism industry usually follows the trends of general tourism as well as those of the national and/or international economy and medical tourism has a significant impact on countries' national economy as well as on the hospital budgets generating up to 10% of total revenue from international patients (Hungarian Central Statistical Office, 2010). According to international data, emerging markets in Asia, such as India, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, in Europe and Latin America are some of the most attractive and low cost medical tourist destinations. Rich country tourists started to exploit the possibility of combining tourist aspects with medical ones. (Horowitz et al., 2007). According to Medical Tourism Association (2011), "medical tourism refers to people who live in one country and travel to another country in order to receive medical, dental and surgical care, while at the same time receiving equal to or greater care than they would have in their own country, and are traveling for medical care because of affordability, better access to care or a higher level of quality of care".

However, empirical results clearly demonstrate that medical tourism is highly underdeveloped in Greece; a survey by McKinsey & Company in Athens (2011) confirms that, "while Greece has to play an important role in the rapidly growing market of medical tourism, it is lacking a comprehensive national development strategy for the industry. Indicatively, only one medical unit is accredited by the

Joint Commission International, an international certification body for health care organizations, compared with 43 in Turkey, 21 in Italy and 14 in Thailand. Greek hospitals haven't yet established official agreements with top international hospitals, which could enhance the international medical profile of the country" (McKinsey & Company, 2011:59).

ICTs and web-evaluation strategies for an online medical tourism marketing strategy

The medical tourism industry has realized the importance of the internet as an innovative distribution channel for disseminating information on products and services, for online purchases and for opportunity to communicate directly with e-consumers (Stratigea & Katsoni, 2015; Stratigea et al, 2015; Katsoni & Venetsanopoulou, 2012) and websites may be the first and only contact with the potential customers (Katsoni & Kavoura, 2013). The adoption of new technologies in a deliberate marketing strategy of medical tourism has as a result a globalization of health services' (Levett, 2005: 27). India for example, has upgraded and imported technology, absorbed western medical protocols and emphasized low cost and prompt attention, but also advertised as important the links to its highly successful IT industry (Connell, 2006:1095).

ICTs use in medical tourism affects the whole structure of the medical tourism industry, not only supply and demand side, but also medical tourism intermediaries (Lunt et al, 2012), since it helped in the emergence of a third party intermediary (rather than being directly referred or receiving informal recommendations from a domestic consultant) and this emergence of new companies, "that are not health specialists, but brokers between international patients and hospital networks" Connell, 2006: 1095), act as advisers and help the consumer/patient select, negotiate and access health care abroad (Crooks, et al. 2010; Cormany & Baloglu, 2010). Their services range from information about health care regulation, qualifications and special competences and other forms of

specialization of the individual and/or public host country's providers, to typical travel agents' tasks, such as booking of hotels and flights according to the client's special requirements. Sometimes, special tailor- made surgical packages are offered, according to the medical market of the country of destination. The need for the creation of these intermediaries mainly stems from the following reasons:

- Medical tourists' lack of the technical knowledge to assess the quality and appropriateness of care and may struggle with a foreign language or navigating a different health system (Legido-Quigley et al., 2008).
- medical tourism companies need for differentiation from their competitors by consistently managing to attract news coverage and by developing social media strategies that take advantage of free marketing opportunities provided by social media such as YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter (Turner, 2012).

These e-medical tourism intermediaries can be specialized travel agencies, electronic medical tourism guides (e.g. treatmentabroad.net) and specialized e-journals (e.g. International Medical Travel Journal- imtjonline.com). Network creation between hotels offering special services for medical tourists is also developed, as for example StarHospitals network) and these services can be included in the above mentioned services of e-medical tourism intermediaries. However, keen competition, varying degrees of business savvy and marketing sophistication, changes in the consumer market, limited financial and human resources intermediaries are maybe the most possible threats in medical tourism intermediaries existence and function.

As the medical providers' internet appearance is crucial, their website performance becomes a very important aspect of their marketing strategy. Evaluation is considered the process through which website owners achieve the harmonization of the site to customers' needs and requirements (De Marsico & Levialdi, 2004). Evaluation involves concepts such as quality, truthfulness, and

accuracy as well as the use of criteria and standards that enable one to appraise the extent to which particulars are accurate, effective, economical, or satisfying (Dragulanescu, 2002). The growth of e-Commerce renders a company's success depends on its website quality (Mich, Franch, & Gaio, 2003). The quality of the various website attributes (e.g. content, structure, navigation, human engineering, user interface, and usability, internet marketing strategies) influence users' opinion as well as the perception of the related organization's identity (Susser & Ariga, 2006; Sigala, 2003). The evaluation criteria used in the present study, are discussed in the methodology section below.

METHODOLOGY

The authors used a combination of content analysis methods to explore, compare and analyze the Greek medical tourism websites based in Greece. This study uses a Quantitative Research method which means that statistical tools have been used in order to extract results (Christou, 1999). It also means that the questionnaire that was set can only be answered with 'yes or no' replies from the researchers. The Comparative Content Analysis method is also used, due to the fact that the above mentioned websites are compared and analyzed by examining the information available to their visitors (Weber, 1990). The authors followed a two-step procedure:

In the first step the authors had to identify all providers that are based in Greece and market medical tourism products and services to both domestic and international medical tourists. The identification process started from October 2015 until January 2016, by conducting repeated Internet searches to identify medical tourism providers with head offices or affiliate offices in Greece. The authors made a clear distinction between medical tourism services

and health and wellness tourism services provided; the findings of the latter are discussed in another paper.

In total 107 Greek medical tourism providers were identified and data of the identified medical tourism providers and their location in Greece were gathered. This led to the development of a database of Greek medical tourism providers for the first time.

When conducting Internet searches the authors used the most popular medical tourism services in the major search engines as discussed by Lunt & Carrera (2010), that is Plastic Surgery, Dental Surgery, Cardiologic Surgery, Bariatric Surgery, Orthopedic Surgery, IVF Transplantation, Ophthalmic Surgery, General Check ups ; therefore, we used such phrases as “medical tourism Greece”, “medical Greece”, “plastic surgery Greece”, “dental surgery Greece”, “cardiac surgery Greece”, “bariatric surgery Greece”, “orthopedic surgery Greece”, “IVF Greece”, “organ transplantation Greece”, “eye surgery Greece”, “checkups Greece” “stem cell tourism Greece” “transplant tourism Greece”, and “global health care Greece”.

The authors also used these terms when searching for newspaper articles describing Greek medical travel companies. Searches for newspaper articles were conducted using Google News Greece and Use of Google Alerts. Newspaper reports of medical tourism companies assisted with tracking the development of Greek businesses marketing medical travel. Phone calls and emails were used to establish whether companies continue to function. Companies were deemed to have exited the marketplace if they had expired websites, non-functioning email accounts and disconnected phone service, or when phone calls and/or emails failed to elicit a response. Companies were deemed operational if respondents reported that the companies remain in business.

In the second step, content analysis was used to study the websites of the remaining medical tourism providers. Content analysis was performed by analyzing printed versions of company websites. Detailed information was recorded for each category of analysis. Information extracted through content analysis was fact-

checked and feedback was solicited from the research team. Our evaluation framework included the completion of questionnaires with the aim to examine and compare the above mentioned websites by using criteria that already exist in the scientific literature, modified to fit the needs of our research. The combination of four criteria mentioned below provide a holistic view of the current Greek medical tourism websites:

1. **General website information:** About us section, FAQs section, Photo gallery, Downloadable material, Maps, Weather information, External links, Last updated date of the website, Site map, Logo existence, Languages support.
2. **Information about services provided by each provider:** Air tickets, Visa, Ground transportation, Insurance, Hotel booking, Direct hotel booking, Sightseeing, Medical records transfer, Pre/Post care services, International mobile phones, Translation services.
3. **Website interactivity and contact information:** Email, Phone number, Postal address, Social media links, Newsletters, Information request forms, Patients' testimonials.
4. **Medical tourism exclusive information:** Hospital names, Hospital credentials, Available procedures, Estimated cost, Medical staff CVs.

The above criteria, as well as their origin in the relevant literature review are analyzed thoroughly below.

- About us section: The purpose of the website, general information about the services provided (Mason & Wright, 2011:171).
- FAQs section: Questions regarding common matters. This is a very useful tool as the patient can get quick answers to his questions without having to communicate with the provider (Sobo et al. 2011:125).

- Photo gallery: Photos taken by the provider regarding its facilities, services or even satisfied patients (Giannopoulos & Mavragani, 2011:722).
- Downloadable material: Material such as travel guides, useful articles, video files, informative leaflets (Giannopoulos & Mavragani, 2011:723).
- Maps: For tourists that visit Greece for the first time or patients who wish to know the exact location of the facilities so they can make the appropriate arrangements (Tanrisevdi & Duran, 2011:727).
- Weather information: Information regarding the weather conditions so the patients can visit the country prepared (Tanrisevdi & Duran, 2011:755).
- External links: Links that are relevant either with the provided services or with touristic information (Cormany & Baloglu, 2010: 711).
- Last updated date of the website: The exact date when the website was last updated. If the website hasn't been updated for a long time, it might not be considered as trustworthy (Cormany & Baloglu, 2010:711).
- Site map: A way for the website's visitor to take a glance at the website's content (Sobo et al. 2011:125).
- Logo existence: The provider's own logo which makes visitors remember the website (Sobo et al. 2011:125).
- Languages support: The languages each website supports (Panagopoulos et al. 2011:703).
- Air tickets: Information regarding issuing air tickets (Cormany & Baloglu, 2010:712).
- Visa: Visa related issues information (Gan & Frederick, 2011:171).
- Ground transportation: Information regarding tourists' transportation while in the country (Cormany & Baloglu, 2010:712).

- Insurance: Information regarding public and/or private insurance plans (Mason & Wright, 2011:171).
- Hotel booking: Information regarding available hotels near the provider's facilities (Cormany & Baloglu, 2010: 712).
 - Direct hotel booking: The website provides an application to book directly a hotel within its website. This way, the visitor doesn't have to visit another website to make his hotel booking (Panagopoulos et al., 2011:703).
 - Sightseeing: Information regarding sightseeing services (Cormany & Baloglu, 2010: 712).
 - Medical records transfer: Information regarding the ways of transferring each patient's medical records (Cormany & Baloglu, 2010: 712).
 - Pre/Post care services: Information regarding pre medical care and post medical care services (Gan & Frederick, 2011:171).
 - International mobile phones: Information regarding the use of international mobile phones (Cormany & Baloglu, 2010:712).
 - Translation services: Information regarding the translation services provided from the health provider (Cormany & Baloglu, 2010:712).
 - Email: Existence of a valid email address (Cormany & Baloglu, 2010:711).
 - Phone number: Contact number of the provider (Cormany & Baloglu, 2010:711).
 - Postal address: Postal Address of the provider (Cormany & Baloglu, 2010: 711).
 - Social media links: Links to the social media platforms of the provider (Cormany & Baloglu 2010: 711).
 - Newsletters: The ability to sign up for a newsletter (Giannopoulos & Mavragani, 2011: 723).

- Information request forms: The existence of a contact form so the visitors can request further information on the services provided (Cormany & Baloglu, 2010:711).
- Patients' testimonials: Comments from patients that have used the provider for an operation, check up or a medical service (Cormany & Baloglu, 2010:711).
- Hospital names: A list of all the hospital names the provider cooperates with (Gan & Frederick, 2011:171).
- Hospital credentials: The credentials of the hospitals that the provider cooperates with (Cormany & Baloglu, 2010: 711).
- Available procedures: A list of all the available procedures provided (Cormany & Baloglu, 2010:711).
- Estimated cost: An estimated cost for each service (Cormany & Baloglu, 2010:711).
- Medical staff CVs: Detailed CVs of the medical staff (Mason & Wright 2011:171).

The last stage of the analysis involved the statistical analysis using SPSS v.17 and R open source software. Descriptive statistics, in the first instance, provide an overview of the frequency of use for each one of the criteria under study. Frequency tables have been produced to discuss occurrence of the criteria for the different groups of criteria. ANOVA analysis has also been used to compare the use/occurrence of the criteria among different types of medical health providers (i.e. portal, medical facilitator, clinic and private doctor). Comparison has been based on a group-index that has been calculated as the sum of the criteria of the same group used by each provider. ANOVA is thus used to determine whether differences between the mean values of the index for different types of providers are statistically significant. Finally, Principal Component Analysis (PCA) has been employed to look at the data in lower dimension. Principal components are linear combinations of the original variables (in our case the 40 criteria), less in number

than the original variables, that explain as much of the variability of the data as possible without losing information.

RESULTS

Descriptive statistical analysis

The results yielded by the current survey (107 sites in total) and which were further analyzed and interpreted according to the international criteria of website evaluation, are presented below:

Table 1. Frequency (number and %) of health providers' sites with available information about First group of criteria: general information that is offered in the health providers' websites

| First group of criteria | Frequency | Percentage Frequency |
|--|-----------|-------------------------|
| 11. Languages | 107 | 100 |
| 10. Logo | 97 | 90.7 |
| 5. Maps | 79 | 73.8 |
| 1. About us | 75 | 70.1 |
| 3. Photo gallery | 71 | 66.4 |
| 7. External links | 70 | 65.4 |
| 2. FAQ – frequently asked questions | 41 | 38.3 |
| 4. Downloadable Material | 29 | 27.1 |
| 9. Site Map | 20 | 18.7 |
| 6. Weather information | 5 | 4.7 |
| 8. Last updated date | 1 | 0.9 |

Note: criteria have been sorted in descending order according to frequency

‘Languages’ is the only criterion among all groups of criteria that has been provided in the websites of all health providers. The second most frequent criterion of the first group is ‘Logo’ (90.7%). More than half of the health providers have also information about ‘Maps’, ‘About us’, ‘Photo gallery’ and ‘External links’ in their websites (73.8%, 70.1%, 66.4% and 65.4% respectively). One out of three websites provide information about ‘FAQ’ (38.3%) and ‘Downloadable material’ (27.2%), while ‘Site maps’ are used to a lesser extent (18.7%). Only 5 and 1 health providers have used ‘Weather information’ and ‘Last updated date’.

Table 2. Frequency (number and %) of health providers’ sites with available information about Second group of criteria: Services each health provider offers his customers

| Second group of criteria | Frequency | Percentage Frequency |
|---------------------------------|-----------|----------------------|
| 16. Hotel booking | 44 | 41.1 |
| 14. Group transportation | 29 | 27.1 |
| 18. Sightseeing | 29 | 27.1 |
| 20. Pre and post care services | 24 | 22.4 |
| 19. Transfer of medical records | 20 | 18.7 |
| 22. Translation services | 20 | 18.7 |
| 12. Air tickets | 14 | 13.1 |
| 15. Insurance | 12 | 11.2 |
| 13. Visa | 8 | 7.5 |
| 17. Direct booking | 5 | 4.7 |
| 21. International Mobile phones | 4 | 3.7 |

Note: criteria have been sorted in descending order according to frequency

All of the services of this group have been provided by less than half of the health providers. In particular, ‘Hotel booking’ is the most commonly used by 41.1% of health providers, followed by

‘Group transportation’ and ‘Sightseeing’ both of which are used by 27.1% of the health providers. Almost 20% of websites provide information about ‘Pre and post care services’ (22.4%), ‘Transfer of medical records’ (18.7%) and ‘Translation services’ (18.7%). ‘Insurance’ and ‘Visa’ are available in even less websites (13.1% and 11.2%), while ‘Visa’, ‘Direct booking’ and ‘International Mobile phones’ are the least frequently used (7.5%, 4.7% and 3.7% respectively).

Table 3. Frequency (number of sites and % in total number of sites) of health providers’ sites with available information about Third group of criteria: interactivity of the website and the means of communication with the visitors

| Third group of criteria | Frequency | Percentage Frequency |
|---------------------------|-----------|-------------------------|
| 25. Phone number | 99 | 92.5 |
| 26. Postal address | 97 | 90.7 |
| 29. Info Request Form | 93 | 86.9 |
| 24. Email | 90 | 84.1 |
| 27. Social media links | 75 | 70.1 |
| 30. Patients Testimonials | 40 | 37.4 |
| 28. Newsletter | 23 | 21.5 |

Note: criteria have been sorted in descending order according to frequency

The majority of the health providers have ‘Phone number’, ‘Postal address’, ‘Info Request Form’ and ‘Email’ in their websites (92.5%, 90.7%, 86.9% and 84.1%). ‘Social media links’ are available in 70.1% of the websites under study, while ‘Patients testimonials’ and ‘Newsletter’ are provided by 37.4% and 21.5% of health providers.

Table 4. Frequency (number and %) of health providers' sites with available information about Fourth group of criteria: Medical tourism exclusive information

| Second group of criteria | Frequency | Percentage Frequency |
|------------------------------|-----------|----------------------|
| 31. Hospital names | 85 | 79.4 |
| 35. Medical staff CVs | 78 | 72.9 |
| Surg6. IVF | 49 | 45.8 |
| 32. Hospital credentials | 39 | 36.4 |
| Surg5. Orthopedic surgery | 27 | 25.2 |
| Surg4. Bariatric surgery | 24 | 22.4 |
| Surg9. Check up | 24 | 22.4 |
| Surg8. Ophthalmic surgery | 22 | 20.6 |
| Surg3. Cardiological surgery | 21 | 19.6 |
| Surg7. Transplantation | 21 | 19.6 |
| 34. Estimated cost | 20 | 18.7 |

Note: criteria have been sorted in descending order according to frequency

Only two of the criteria of the category 'Medical tourism exclusive information' are provided by more than 70% of the websites: 'Hospital names' (79.4%) and 'Medical staff CVs' (72.9%). Information about IVF is available by 45.8% of health providers, while 'Hospital credentials' are provided in 36.4% of the websites. Information about 'Orthopedic surgery' is provided by 1 out of 4 health providers (25.2%). Smaller frequencies are observed for 'Bariatric surgery' (22.4%), 'Check up' (22.4%), 'Ophthalmic surgery' (20.6%), 'Cardiological surgery' (19.6%), 'Transplantation' (19.6%) and 'Estimated cost' (18.7%). Figure 1 gives a visual presentation of frequencies for the different criteria in ascending order by group. Evidently, the most commonly used criteria across all groups, i.e. those that are used in more than 97

websites under study (i.e. more than 90%), are 'Languages', 'Phone number', 'Logo', and 'Postal address'.

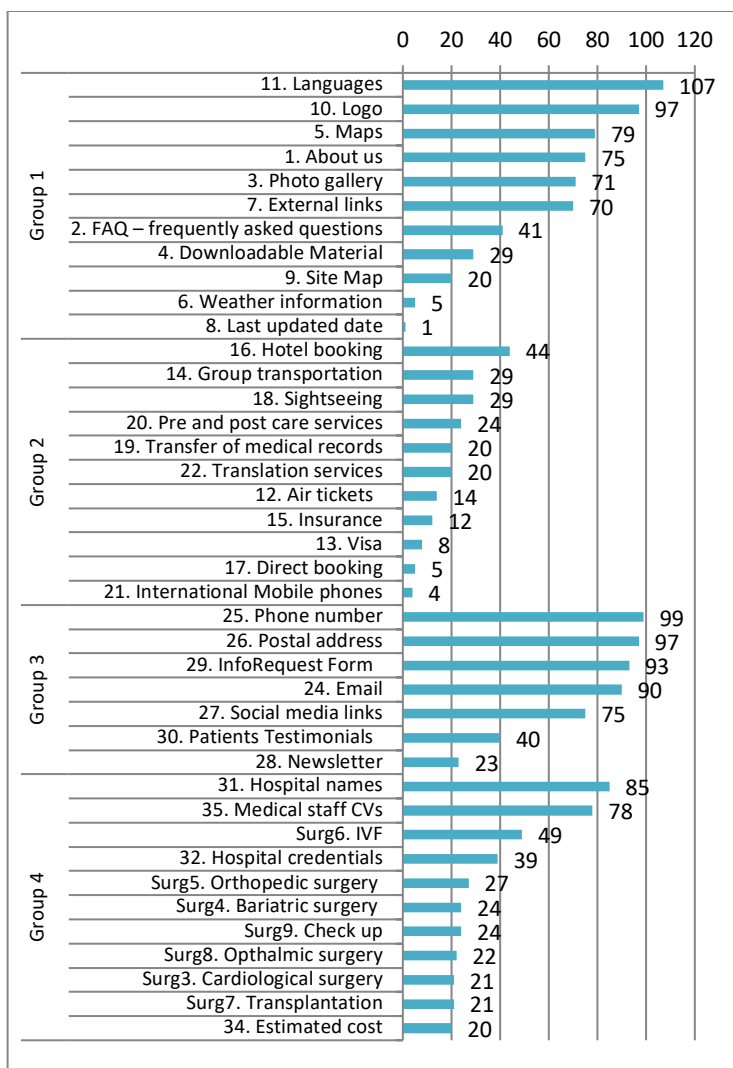
With frequencies between 70% and 90% we also observe the following criteria in ascending order (from the most to the least frequent): 'Info Request Form', 'Email', 'Hospital name', 'Maps', 'Medical staff CVs', 'About us' and 'Social media link'.

More than half of the websites, but with smaller frequencies, we also observe the 'Photo gallery' and 'External links' criteria (66.4% and 65.4% respectively).

The rest of criteria can be grouped in two categories according to their prevalence in the websites under study:

- 25%-50%: 'IVF', 'Hotel booking', 'FAQ', 'Patients testimonials', 'Hospital credentials', 'Downloadable material', 'Group transportation', 'Sightseeing' and 'Orthopedic surgery'.
- Less than 25%: 'Pre and post care services', 'Bariatric surgery', 'Check up', 'Newsletter', 'Ophthalmic surgery', 'Cardiological surgery', 'Transplantation', 'Site Map', 'Transfer of medical records', 'Translation services', 'Estimated cost', 'Air tickets', 'Insurance', 'Visa', 'Weather information', 'Direct booking', 'International Mobile phones', 'Last updated date'

Figure 1. Frequency (number) of health providers' sites with available information about all groups of criteria



Analysis of different types of providers

Health tourism providers under study have been categorized into four types: portal, medical facilitator, clinic and private doctor. Table 5 is a frequency table of health providers by type. Apparently the majority of health providers are clinics (56,1%), followed by private doctors (24,3%). Portals and Medical facilitators comprise a smaller group in our study population, with 10 (9,3%) and 11 (10,3%) health providers respectively.

Table 5. Number of health providers by type

| | Frequency | Percentage frequency |
|-----------------------------|-----------|-------------------------|
| Type 1. Portal | 10 | 9.3% |
| Type 2. Medical facilitator | 11 | 10.3% |
| Type 3. Clinic | 60 | 56.1% |
| Type 4. Private doctor | 26 | 24.3% |
| Total | 107 | |

In this section we test whether there is difference in the occurrence of the criteria among the four types. At that stage, and due to the large number of criteria, we have grouped the criteria as suggested earlier in the report into:

- Group1: general information that is offered in the health providers' websites
- Group 2: Services each health provider offers his customers
- Group 3: interactivity of the website and the means of communication with the visitors
- Group 4: Medical tourism exclusive information

Based on the suggested grouping, and for the needs of this analysis, we calculate an index as the sum of available criteria for each health provider by group. We thus calculate four different

indexes for each provider, one for each group of criteria. Table 6 presents three examples with calculated indexes for three health providers. The value of 6 for Group1 index (Group 1_index) for ‘Greek Medical Travels’ suggests that 6 out of the 11 criteria of Group 1 have been provided by ‘Greek Medical Travels’. The value of 2 for Group3 index (Group 3_index) for ‘Health tourism in Greece’ suggests that ‘Health tourism in Greece’ provide 2 out of the seven criteria of Group 3 and so forth.

Table 6. Indexes summarizing information of occurrence of criteria - Examples for three health tourism providers

| | Group 1_i | Group 2_i | Group 3_i | Group 4_i |
|--------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Greek Medical Travels | 6 | 2 | 3 | 9 |
| Health Tourism in Greece | 5 | 0 | 2 | 2 |
| Dental Holidays | 8 | 1 | 4 | 1 |

The four indexes will be treated as four different variables. Statistical test will be used to determine whether differences between the mean values of the different types (i.e. portal, medical facilitator, clinic and private doctor) are statistically significant. Table 7 presents summary information, i.e. mean value and standard deviation, for about each index in relation to the health providers’ type. It also presents the results of the ANOVA that has been used to compare variation in the scores of the each one of the indexes between the four health providers’ types. ANOVA results suggest that different types of health providers show different behavior in the selection of the criteria of Group 2 and Group 4. P-value of less than 0.05 reveals statistically significant difference in the mean values of Group 2_index and Group 4_index among the four different types.

More specifically, regarding Group 2_index, there is significantly statistical evidence that Clinics and Private doctors offer less services (Group 2 services, like hotel booking, group transportation, sightseeing, etc.) to their customers compared to

Portals and Medical facilitator. Clinics and Private doctors show similar behavior concerning the use of criteria of Group 2 (mean value 3,7 and 4,0 respectively), and the same happens with Clinics and Private doctors (mean value 1,53 and 1,39 respectively).

Regarding Group 4_Index that describes medical tourism exclusive information (hospital name, medical staff CVs, IVF, Hospital credentials, etc.), the results of the ANOVA suggest that Portals and Medical facilitators score significantly higher than Clinics and Private doctors. While Portals and Medical facilitators use on average 7,1 and 7,46 of the 11 medical tourism exclusive criteria of Group 4, Clinics use on average 3,58 and Private doctors use only 1,62.

Criteria of Group 1 (general information) are used equally and in a uniform way by all types of health providers, and the same happens with criteria of Group 3 (interactivity of the website).

Table 7. Summary information (mean and standard deviation) of the four indexes by group of health providers. ANOVA to compare each index in relation to type of health provider

| | Portal | Medical facilitator | Clinic | Private doctor | ANOVA |
|-----------|----------------|------------------------|-----------------|-------------------|---|
| Group 1_i | 5.6 (0.967) | 5.36 (1.567) | 5.77 (1.64) | 5.15 (1.317) | F- value=0.479, p- value=0.49 |
| Group 2_i | 3.7 (4.448) | 4.0 (3.193) | 1.53 (2.119) | 1.39 (2.192) | F- value=10.3, p- value=0.0018 |
| Group 3_i | 4.4 (1.776) | 4.82 (1.470) | 5.03 (1.119) | 4.54 (0.947) | F- value=0.012, p- value=0.913 |

| | | | | | |
|-----------|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|--|
| Group 4_i | 7.1 (3.871) | 7.46 (2.945) | 3.58 (1.889) | 1.62 (0.697) | F- value=75.32, p- value<<0.000 5 |
|-----------|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|--|

Principal component analysis

All websites under study have been scored for the different criteria according to a binary scale: 1 for available information, 2 for non-available information. Due to the large number of criteria under study (40 criteria in total), it is useful to simplify the analysis by seeking a small number of linear combinations of the original variables which can account for as much variability of the data as possible. A standard explanatory practice to look at the data in lower dimension is the analysis of principal components. Principal components are linear combinations of the original variables (in our case the criteria), less in number than the original variables, that explain as much of the variability of the data as possible without losing information.

Table 8 presents the importance of the first 10 components. The first four components together account for 45.6% of the total variance and these are considered to be the most important ones. The decision about the cut-off point (i.e. number of important components) is taken looking at the screeplot in Figure 2, which is used to assess in a visual way which components explain most of the variability of the data. The line in Figure 2 starts to straighten after component 4, which means that the first four components provide sufficient information to explain the variability of the data. The remaining components explain a very small proportion of it and are therefore not very important.

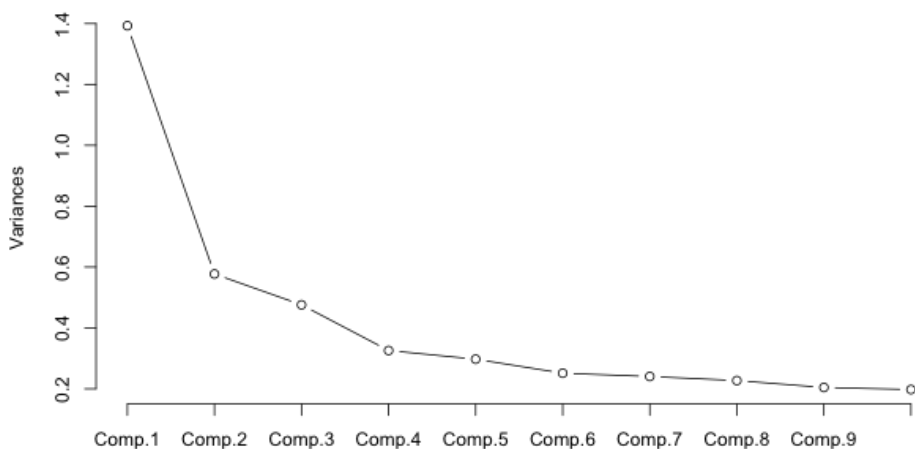


Table 8. Summary information on the importance of the 10 first components

| | Com p.1 | Com p.2 | Com p.3 | Com p.4 | Com p.5 | Com p.6 | Com p.7 | Com p.8 | Com p.9 | Com p.10 |
|------------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|-------------|
| Standard deviation | 1.180 | 0.760 | 0.690 | 0.571 | 0.545 | 0.501 | 0.490 | 0.477 | 0.452 | 0.445 |
| Proportion of Variance | 0.229 | 0.095 | 0.078 | 0.054 | 0.049 | 0.041 | 0.040 | 0.037 | 0.034 | 0.033 |
| Cumulative Proportion | 0.229 | 0.324 | 0.403 | 0.456 | 0.505 | 0.546 | 0.586 | 0.623 | 0.657 | 0.690 |

Figure 2. Screeplot – cumulative variance (eigenvalues) explained by each component

Each one of the principal components is a linear combination of correlated variables. Table 9 presents the

coefficients (loadings) of the original variables that are used as linear combinations to explain each component. In other words, the loadings of the first four principal components are the coefficients that show how much each of the original variables contributes to each principal component. The first principal component has the largest variance and therefore explains most of the variability of the data. Not all variables that comprise a component are important. For the needs of this analysis we analyze variables that contribute with loadings greater than 0.25 (in absolute terms) to the construction of a component (Table 9).

The first principal component is **described by** seven of the original criteria, most of which comprise criteria of the 'Medical tourism exclusive information' group:

- Surg9. Check up
- Surg3. Cardiological surgery
- Surg4. Bariatric surgery
- Surg5. Orthopaedic surgery
- Surg7. Transplantation
- 16. Hotel booking
- Surg8. Ophthalmic surgery

The ranking of the criteria is descending, from the most to the least important. Apparently the first component is very much related to most of the Group 4 criteria, and therefore has a 'Medical tourism exclusive information' character. Positive loadings for all criteria suggest that they vary together, i.e. that if a health tourist provider uses Surg9 .Check up, he will also use the other six criteria and vice versa if a health tourist provider does not use Surge9. Check up, he will not use any of the other six criteria.

The second principal component is described by five of the original criteria:

- 16. Hotel booking
- 2. FAQ
- Surg5. Orthopaedic surgery

- 14. Group transportation
- 27. Social media links

All criteria, except for the Surg5.Orthopedic surgery, are negative correlated to the second principal component. In that respect, those providing Surg5.Orthopaedic surgery, will not provide any of the other four criteria.

The third principal component is correlated with six of the original criteria:

- 32. Hospital credentials
- Surg6. IVF
- 30. Patients Testimonials
- 4. Downloadable Material
- 18. Sightseeing
- 14. Group transportation

Positively related to the third principal components, are 14. Group transportation and 18.Sightseeing. The rest of the criteria have an opposite effect, in that those providers selecting criteria 14 and 18 will not select any of the other four medical-specific criteria of the component.

Finally, the fourth principal component is correlated with nine of the original variables:

- 2. FAQ
- 1. About us
- 4. Downloadable Material
- 30. Patients Testimonials
- Surg6. IVF
- 5. Maps
- 27. Social Media links
- 9. Site maps

While 1.About us, 27. Social Media links, 30. Patient testimonials and Surg6. IVF have the same positive behaviour, the rest (2.FAQ, 4. Downloadable material, 5. Maps, 7. External links

and 9. Site maps) have negative effect. Apparently this component is very much related to criteria of general information (Group 1).

Table 9. Loadings of the first four principal components

| | Comp.1 | Comp.2 | Comp.3 | Comp.4 |
|---------------------------------|-------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| 1. About us | | -0.22 | -0.17 | 0.33 |
| 2. FAQ | | -0.28 | -0.24 | -0.38 |
| 3. Photo gallery | | -0.21 | -0.19 | |
| 4. Downloadable Material | | | -0.32 | -0.37 |
| 5. Maps | | -0.23 | | -0.25 |
| 6. Weather information | | | | |
| 7. External links | 0.14 | | -0.17 | -0.30 |
| 8. Last updated date | | | | |
| 9. Site Map | | -0.13 | | -0.23 |
| 10. Logo | | | | |
| 11. Languages | | | | |
| 12. Air tickets | 0.12 | | 0.11 | |
| 13. Visa | 0.12 | | | |
| 14. Group transportation | 0.23 | -0.26 | 0.23 | |
| 15. Insurance | 0.15 | | | |
| 16. Hotel booking | 0.26 | -0.29 | 0.18 | 0.11 |
| 17. Direct booking | | | | |
| 18. Sightseeing | 0.23 | -0.21 | 0.24 | |
| 19. Transfer of medical records | 0.16 | -0.13 | 0.10 | -0.12 |
| 20. Pre and post care services | 0.22 | -0.24 | 0.10 | -0.20 |
| 21. International Mobile phones | | | | |
| 22. Translation services | 0.23 | -0.15 | 0.11 | |

| | | | | |
|------------------------------|-------------|--------------|--------------|-------------|
| 24. Email | | | | |
| 25. Phone number | | -0.12 | | |
| 26. Postal address | | | | |
| 27. Social media links | | -0.25 | | 0.24 |
| 28. Newsletter | 0.11 | | | |
| 29. InfoRequest Form | | | -0.15 | -0.14 |
| 30. Patients Testimonials | | -0.23 | -0.33 | 0.34 |
| 31. Hospital names | 0.11 | | -0.15 | |
| 32. Hospital credentials | 0.16 | -0.12 | -0.42 | -0.13 |
| 34. Estimated cost | 0.12 | | -0.16 | |
| 35. Medical staff CVs | -0.19 | -0.14 | | -0.10 |
| Surg3. Cardiological surgery | 0.29 | 0.21 | | |
| Surg4. Bariatric surgery | 0.28 | 0.17 | | |
| Surg5. Orthopedic surgery | 0.28 | 0.27 | | |
| Surg6. IVF | 0.16 | | -0.42 | 0.26 |
| Surg7. Transplantation | 0.28 | 0.19 | | |
| Surg8. Ophthalmic surgery | 0.23 | 0.20 | | |
| Surg9. Check up | 0.31 | 0.20 | | |

DISCUSSION

As mentioned before, Greece is a suitable destination to develop medical tourism due to its climate, its location, its well-trained professionals etc, however its development is much smaller than this of other similar countries. The results of this study confirm this assertion. Apart from the fact that Greece does not have a specific marketing strategy towards medical tourism, there are not enough

businesses that promote and evolve medical tourism. There were only 107 medical tourism providers with internet appearance found in our sample of the whole country. Also, the businesses that want to attract medical tourists through the web are not fully developed towards this niche market hence there is a significant need for improvement, as it was found from the analysis of our results.

Moreover, there is evidence that different types of health tourism providers (portal, medical facilitator, clinic and private doctor) have a different behavior in what regards the use of internet marketing criteria. More specifically, there is significantly statistical evidence that Clinics and Private doctors' offer services (Group 2 services, like hotel booking, group transportation, sightseeing, etc.) to their customers to a lesser extent compared to Portals and Medical facilitator. Regarding the criteria of medical tourism exclusive information (Group 4 criteria like hospital name, medical staff CVs, IVF, Hospital credentials, etc.), the results of the ANOVA suggest that Portals and Medical facilitators use them more frequently than Clinics and Private doctors. Criteria of Group 1 (general information) are used in a uniform way by all types of health providers, and the same happens with criteria of Group 3 (interactivity of the website).

In the methodology section of this study the authors have categorized the criteria of the evaluation into four groups. The results of this study will be discussed according to those groups.

a. General website information

Most of the websites show a very positive image to their visitors by having an 'about us' section. This makes the medical tourist aware of the company as well as what it represents and its values. Also, the majority of the websites has a photo gallery and interactive maps which familiarizes the user with the facilities and the destination. A brand name is present to almost every website as most of them own their personal logo. Another attribute present in many websites is the existence of external links. These links are either advertisements

- from which each provider gets paid for, or useful information for medical tourists.

However, the FAQs section appears to be non-existent in many of the websites that have been evaluated. This might make a website less attractive to a visitor as he would have to call or email the provider for a simple question that could have been included in such a section. Downloadable material and weather conditions are also attributes that are not mentioned in most of the websites even though, they can make a website look updated and richer. Lastly, almost none of the websites has a last updated date or a site map. These attributes might seem 'too technical' to a user but they make the websites look more trustworthy.

b. Information about services provided by each provider

The available services Greek providers offer definitely need improvement.

Medical tourism can benefit both the health and tourism sectors of each country. However, none of those sectors comprehend its importance as shown in this study's statistics.

For example, not many of the medical tourism websites, that have been evaluated, have a hotel or a flight booking service. In fact, most of them include only general information about such services and do not offer direct bookings by implementing small applications (widgets) in their websites. Also, not many of the websites have visa information, insurance information, international mobiles' information, medical records transfer services, sightseeing services and pre/post care services. Those are all information and services which are very attractive to a future medical tourist. For example, other medical tourism websites abroad, even offer all-inclusive packages with all of the above services in very competitive prices.

Lastly, translation services are not as present as they should be. Most of the providers mention that their doctors and general staff can speak in English but they do not mention other languages or translation services. Therefore, for example, even though a website

might be translated in German, a German medical tourist might have to contact and communicate with the provider in English.

c. Website interactivity and contact information

As this is probably the most important attribute a medical tourism website can have, most of the evaluation percentages are high in this category. Most of the providers provide an email, a phone number, their physical address as well as an information request form. Also, many of the providers have social media pages from which they interact with their visitors. This percentage can be improved however, as this is an almost free and efficient way to advertise products and services.

However, as we can see, the patients' testimonials percentage is low. This is one of the most important attributes that should be in such web pages as it adds credibility to the provider.

Lastly, the newsletter percentage is also low which might indicate that the website doesn't update its content regularly with relevant medical news.

d. Medical tourism exclusive information

This category might sound mandatory for each provider, however statistics show that there is not enough emphasis on the relevant attributes. An excellent example would be the 18.5% of the estimated cost attribute. This means that the majority of the websites does not include one of the most important factors that a medical tourist thinks about - the price.

In addition, not many of the providers include in their websites hospitals' credentials which makes the services less reliable. However, most of the websites include their staff's CVs which means that they want to advertise their personnel's skills and abilities.

The rationale about grouping the 40 criteria into the four groups analyzed above has been thoroughly discussed in this paper. However, in order to use the information of the criteria to explain the data and try to find patterns in the use of the criteria by different

providers, it is necessary to use more sophisticated statistical techniques and look at the data in lower dimension. The Principal Component Analysis that has been selected for the needs of this analysis suggests that four principal components, that are linear combinations of the original criteria/variables, account together for 45.6% of the total variance and can thus be used to explain much of the variability of the data without losing much information. The composition of each of the principal components suggests a different way of grouping the criteria that helps to identify patterns in the behavior of health tourist providers in what regards the selection of internet marketing techniques. Evidently, the fact that the first and most important principal component comprises mostly criteria of the 'Medical tourism exclusive information' group plus the Hotel booking information suggests that this mix of criteria is important to observe differences in the behavior of health tourism providers regarding the use of internet marketing criteria.

CONCLUSIONS AND FURTHER WORK

In this article, we offered a systematic database for Greek medical tourism providers for the first time in the Greek scientific community. Then, we proposed a comprehensive evaluation framework for medical tourism providers' websites. The proposed framework is based on the medical tourism website evaluation by the authors and consists of four main categories. Each category consists of a variety of attributes which are examined individually. The proposed evaluation model is generic, open, and standardized as it can be applied for evaluating websites of various medical tourism providers' categories. This information can be used to help website designers and managers to improve the corresponding website attributes taking into account customers' needs and preferences, thus promoting an effective e-marketing strategy of the medical tourism providers.

There are several limitations in our recent study, as it is confined mainly to descriptional attributes. By expanding or modifying the evaluation questionnaire (for example by using Likert scaling) we can be able to rate performance indicators and to analyze each given provider's website sample specific features. Website evaluation of the most important features could also be linked with the profile of the tourist looking at the internet for such information. Moreover, comparisons between different groups of providers could also be looked into in more detailed, like for example providers grouped by region (Greek territory) or/and Greek providers compared with foreign providers.

NOTE

The above research was funded by the action **80239** of TEI of Athens for the reinforcement of young researchers.

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TOURISMOS

An International Multidisciplinary Journal of Tourism

AIMS & SCOPE

TOURISMOS is an international, multi-disciplinary, refereed (peerreviewed) journal aiming to promote and enhance research in all fields of tourism, including travel, hospitality and leisure. The journal is published by the University of the Aegean (in Greece), and is intended for readers in the scholarly community who deal with different tourism sectors, both at macro and at micro level, as well as professionals in the industry. TOURISMOS provides a platform for debate and dissemination of research findings, new research areas and techniques, conceptual developments, and articles with practical application to any tourism segment. Besides research papers, the journal welcomes book reviews, conference reports, case studies, research notes and commentaries.

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The Editorial addresses issues of contemporary interest and provides a detailed introduction and commentary to the articles in the current issue. The editorial may be written by the Editor, or by any other member(s) of the Editorial Board. When appropriate, a “Guest Editorial” may be presented. However, TOURISMOS does not accept unsolicited editorials.

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For the Research Papers section, TOURISMOS invites full-length manuscripts (not longer than 6000 words and not shorter than 4000 words) from a variety of disciplines; these papers may be either empirical or conceptual, and will be subject to strict blind peer review (by at least three anonymous referees). The decision for the final acceptance of the paper will be taken unanimously by the Editor and by the Associate Editors. The manuscripts submitted should provide original and/or innovative ideas or approaches or findings that eventually push the frontiers of knowledge. Purely descriptive accounts are not considered suitable for this section. Each paper should have the following structure: a) abstract, b) introduction (including an overall presentation of the issue to be examined and the aims and objectives of the paper), c) main body (including, where appropriate, the review of literature, the development of hypotheses and/or models, research methodology, presentation of findings, and analysis and discussion), d) conclusions (including also, where appropriate, recommendations, practical implications, limitations, and suggestions for further research), e) bibliography, f) acknowledgements, and g) appendices.

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Case Studies should be not longer than 3500 words and not shorter than 2500; these articles should be focusing on the detailed and critical presentation/review of real-life cases from the greater tourism sector, and must include - where appropriate - relevant references and bibliography. Case Studies should aim at disseminating information and/or good practices, combined with critical analysis of real examples. Purely descriptive accounts may be considered suitable for this section, provided that are well-justified and of interest to the readers of TOURISMOS. Each article should have the following structure: a) abstract, b) introduction (including an overall presentation of the case to be examined and the aims and objectives of the article), c) main body (including, where

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Book Reviews should be not longer than 1500 words and not shorter than 1000; these articles aim at presenting and critically reviewing

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Conference Reports should be not longer than 2000 words and not shorter than 1000; these articles aim at presenting and critically reviewing conferences from the greater field of tourism. Most reports should focus on recent conferences (i.e., conferences that took place not before than three months from the date of manuscript submission), but older conferences are also welcome for presentation if appropriate. Conference Reports are not subject to blind peer review; the decision for the final acceptance of the article will be taken unanimously by the Editor and by the Conference Reports Editor. Where appropriate, these articles may include references and bibliography. Conference reports may be assigned to potential authors by the Conference Reports Editor, though 239 TOURISMOS is also open to unsolicited suggestions for reports from interested parties.

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- Book reviews should be emailed directly to the Book Reviews Editor (Prof. Marianna Sigala), at marianna.sigala@unisa.edu.au.
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Feedback regarding the submission of a manuscript (including the reviewers' comments) will be provided to the author(s) within six

weeks of the receipt of the manuscript. Submission of a manuscript will be held to imply that it contains original unpublished work not being considered for publication elsewhere at the same time. Each author of a manuscript accepted for publication will receive three complimentary copies of the issue, and will also have to sign a “transfer of copyright” form. If appropriate, author(s) can correct first proofs. Manuscripts submitted to TOURISMOS, accepted for publication or not, cannot be returned to the author(s).

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Research Papers should be not longer than 6000 words and not shorter than 4000. Research Notes should be not longer than 2000 words and not shorter than 1000. Case Studies should be not longer than 3500 words and not shorter than 2500. Book Reviews should be not longer than 1500 words and not shorter than 1000. Conference Reports should be not longer than 2000 words and not shorter than 1000. Industry Viewpoints should be not longer than 1500 words and not shorter than 500. Forthcoming Events should be not longer than 500 words. Manuscripts that do not fully conform to the above word limits (according to the type of the article) will be automatically rejected and should not be entered into the reviewing process.

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- All submissions (research papers, research notes, case studies, book reviews, conference reports, industry viewpoints, and forthcoming events) must have a title of no more than 12 words.
- Manuscripts should be double-line spaced, and have at least 2,5 cm (one-inch) margin on all four sides. Pages should be numbered consecutively.
- The use of footnotes within the text is discouraged – use endnotes instead. Endnotes should be kept to a minimum, be

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- For Internet sources (if you do not know the author): Tourism supply and demand.
[Http://www.tourismabstracts.org/marketing/papersauthors/id3456](http://www.tourismabstracts.org/marketing/papersauthors/id3456). Accessed the 30th of January 2004, at 12:35. (note: always state clearly the full URL of your source).
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