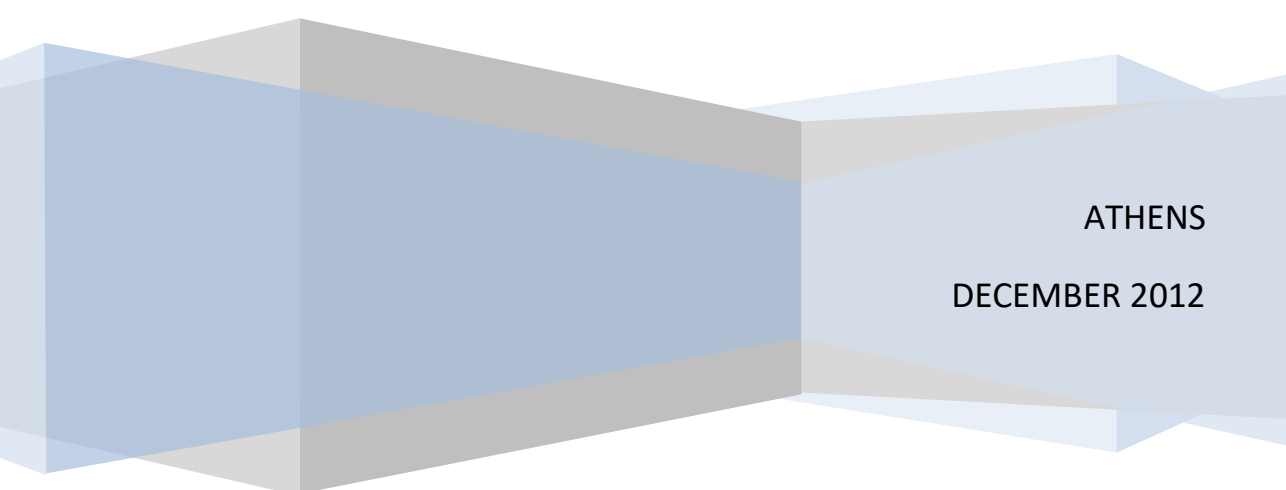


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INTRODUCTION

Science is the knowledge of the existing, which systematically totally covers a sector of issues. Science is one and its purpose is the understanding of all phenomena. Due to human's incapability of mental controlling the whole of universal rules, science is divided to partial "sciences" and each one covers its objective field.



The science of tourism can be divided in two parts. The sciences of understanding the tourism phenomenon and the sciences of the enterprises of hospitality and their management.

Dealing with sciences leads to complete studies whose purpose is the understanding of the reality. These studies are set to be published in refereed scientific journals. Their publication is judged for being original, complete and correct, by members of the academic community. Then, these publications are considered as valid and can be used by other researchers for the spread of knowledge.

Aim of the magazine is the spread of knowledge related to the scientific fields of tourism. In Tourism Issues there are being published original articles and obligatorily new researches. The writing language can be Greek, English, French or German. The scripts will be evaluated by three - membered scientific committee whose members have deep knowledge of the specific fields.

Laloumis Dimitris

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In "Tourism Issues" can be published original articles and research studies dealing with tourism topics. The articles and the studies should have never been published before.

Every scientific paper should not exceed a maximum of 8000 words and should be sent in electronic form at info@dratte.gr.

The paper can be written in Greek, English, French or German.

Papers should be typewritten in black, double-spaced on A4 or US letter sized white paper and printed on one side of the paper only, with 1 ½ inch margins on all four sides, using 10 pts Arial characters. Pages should be numbered consecutively.

The first page of the paper should include in the following order: paper title, author's name and surname, affiliation, postal address, telephone and fax numbers, email address, acknowledgements. In the case of co-authors, their full details should also appear (all correspondence will be sent to the first named author). Also include an abstract of 200-250 words, and up to five keywords.

The second page should contain the title of the paper, an abstract of 200-250 words, and up to five keywords. Do *not* include the author(s) details in this page.

Subsequent pages: main body of text; list of references; appendices; endnotes (endnotes should be kept to a minimum).

Every paper should be accompanied by a 180-word abstract. The text of the abstract is not allowed to be part of the paper. Also, the author should propose 4 key words associated with the main fields dealt with in the paper. The aforementioned (name, title, abstract and key words) should be given in English and Greek, as well as in the language of composition in case this is French or German.

Tables, figures and illustrations should be referred to and included in the text, in gray tint. Each table, figure and illustration should be numbered consecutively (in Arabic numbers) and titled. Tables, figures and illustrations should not exceed one page and should be kept to a minimum.

The text should be organized under appropriate section headings. Section headings should be marked as follows: primary headings should be typed in upper case and bold (e.g.

introduction); subsection headings should be in upper and lower case and bold (e.g. Tourism Planning).

Quotations should be taken accurately from the original source. Alterations to quotations should be noted. Quotation marks (“ ”) should be used to denote direct quotes. Inverted commas (‘ ’) are to be used to denote a quote within a quotation.

Papers should be supported by references. These should be set out according to the standard Harvard style as follows. In the text references should be cited by the author’s name and year of publication in brackets – for example (Miller, 2000; Tribe, 2000, 2001), or ‘... as noted by Miller (2000)’. Where there are two or more references to one author for the same year, the following form should be used (Smith, 1999a) or (Smith, 1999b). Where references include two authors the form (Clarke & Little, 1996) should be used. Where references include three or more authors the form (Riley *et al.*, 1996) should be used. The reference list, placed towards the end of the manuscript, must be typed in alphabetical order of authors. The specific format is:

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Every paper will be examined by a three-member scientific committee. The committee’s members cover cognitive fields relevant to the papers’ topics and receive the papers with the author’s/s’ name undisclosed. The judging process will be completed with author’s anonymity throughout. The judges will propose to the editorial committee the acceptance or the rejection of a paper to be published or the possibility of publishing an article after corrections suggested by the judging committee.

After the papers’ judgement, the authors will be notified, either the judgement has been positive or not. The approved papers will be published according to priority of chronological order.

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A METAPHORICAL EXPLORATION OF WORK, LIFE AND COMMUNITY ON-BOARD CRUISE SHIPS: A HOSPITALITY PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

This research provides a sociological understanding of front line hospitality staff, focusing particularly on waiters and pursers employed on cruise ships. Its purpose is to evaluate the complexities and richness of their work and social experiences as they negotiate, create and justify their identities and community formations in the unique and under-researched environment of a cruise ship. Conceptually, the research investigates the inevitable and inextricable links between identity, work and community to explore their perceptions of themselves, others and their world. Being part of a wider research project, this paper metaphorically explores twenty semi-structured interviews to creatively gather an “insider’s” view of the participants’ work, community and cruise ship environment. Ultimately, a metaphor can be used as a porthole into self image, guided by the framework of

the cruise ship to help construct meaning. Therefore, the metaphors used by participants were not a method to explain the organisation, but rather how the members come to understand themselves within the organisation. What is clear from this study is that all participants created a ship-based identity, which was different from how they perceived themselves on land. Being an environment that is unique, workers have to adapt, adopt and sacrifice - their previous identity has to be reshaped to meet the criteria of the place and system of the ship. Waiters were significantly more likely to define themselves and their world based upon their occupational perceptions and relationship with management, while pursers reflected upon their social and personal opportunities as a tool for self-definition. The outcomes of the research present an exploratory, in-depth account of the working lives of hospitality workers on cruise ships. The findings will be of value and relevance to cruise ship operators when tackling social issues relating to the employment of cruise ship workers.

Keywords: Cruise ships, Metaphors, Community, Hospitality

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this research is to explore and evaluate the transient and temporary working lives of front line hospitality workers on-board cruise ships. This is a field of research which is relatively unknown, particularly from a sociological and behavioural perspective (e.g., Gibson, 2008; Papathanassis and Beckmann, 2011). In particular, an important and under-researched issue is that of cruise ship employees and how they make sense of their work and life on-board. It is this area which constitutes the focus of this study. When most people go to work, they are in the knowledge that they can go home at the end of the day or the end of their shift, insomuch that they have a life outside of work, including friends and family. The cruise ship industry is in contrast to this. The organisation not only invades one's working life, but also one's social life. Ultimately, to be employed on cruise ships, is in a sense to dedicate one's life, albeit temporarily, to an occupation or line of work and the people attached to that work.

From an operational standpoint, hierarchy, efficiency and bureaucracy are prominent, a diluted form of its naval cousin. To work on a cruise ship is to be arguably more tied to an occupation than one would be on land. The occupational position which an individual is employed on-board has an overarching determinant on the type of life one can expect. One's occupation will not only determine aspects such as the level of pay, status and number of hours worked, but also where one lives on the ship, where one can eat and socialise, and it also influences the people one socialises with. Essentially, an occupation can be the forefront of how an individual comes to define oneself and others while on the cruise ship, thus creating a ship-based identity. This noted, to capitalise upon a fuller understanding of the sociological and behavioural nature of cruise ship work, efforts should be made to explore the totality of work and life, encapsulating not only the work one does, but also the surrounding community and social activities which are inextricably linked.

This exploratory paper, which is part of a wider study that explores the work and life of hospitality employees on-board cruise ships, presents a discussion and findings of a metaphorical analysis of twenty semi-structured interviews held with individuals in the occupations of waiter and purser. A waiter has similar occupational demands to those on land, while a purser is similar to that of a front desk / guest services personnel in a hotel.

A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE CRUISE SHIP INDUSTRY

The cruise industry finds itself straddling a unique segment of the hospitality and tourism sector, entangled within a production and service environment, and underlined by maritime and international law. In its entirety a cruise ship is a floating hospitality, leisure, and tourism hub, demonstrating a multitude of industries intertwined within one entity. The ship itself is a social container, encroaching physical and symbolic boundaries, a controller of social action and interaction. In this sense, cruise ships have often been regarded as floating 'cities' or 'hotels', and could arguably be further categorised as their own floating society. Research on cruise ships has gathered pace over the past 30 years, with increased intensity in the last decade or so. The lack of social and cultural knowledge and rising media attention surrounding the industry are calls which

have challenged researchers alike to focus on this successful fragment of the tourism and hospitality sector.

The modern cruise ship industry is a strategic key player in the hospitality and leisure industries, and has changed markedly in recent years. It is 'expanding rapidly' (Millar, 2010: p.17), predominantly influenced by technological advances in vessel and operational design and changes in social perceptions, making cruising more accessible to individuals from wider socio-economic backgrounds. Such changes have evidently impacted on demand and according to the Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA), the industry has experienced a continuing upward trend with average annual growth figures of 7.4% since 1980 (CLIA, 2010). Cruise Market Watch (2013) reported that there were 20.3 million passengers in 2012, which is forecast to grow to 20.9 million passengers in 2013. Although cruise tourism, in terms of figures, registers less passengers than in other tourism sectors, the growth rate of cruise tourism far outreaches tourism rates overall, and the industry holds a significant economic portion of the world tourism business (Swain, 2006).

The nature of a cruise ship, being physically isolated and encapsulated, is what sets it apart from many other industries, organisations and places of work for an employee. The cruise ship is a place of work, a temporary home, and offers a base for leisure pursuits, which are 'locked into patterns of interaction with whoever is on-board' (Sampson, 2003: p.266), forming a contained floating society. Working seven days a week, up to 16 hours a day, for months at a time can severely strain employees, especially in occupations with direct customer contact such as those in hospitality positions. This on-board life offers little opportunity for socialising and activities outside of the occupation (Lukas, 2009; Sehkaran and Sevcikova, 2011), thus developing a sense of community revolving around a specific line of work.

Due to the self-sufficient nature of operations and a focus on customer satisfaction, there is often one employee per two/three customers, highlighting the centrality of labour operations on-board (Raub and Streit, 2006). The labour structure of a cruise ship can be divided into hotel and marine operations represented by a three class social structure of officers, staff and crew (e.g. Lee-Ross, 2004). Occupations categorised as 'crew' are at the bottom of the hierarchy

and are typically positions in the dining room, custodial operatives and cabin stewards. 'Staff' occupy positions such as shop assistants, gym instructors, and entertainment. Most front line service staff are recognised as crew, although the position of purser for example, is categorised as officer. Authority on-board can be compared to 'paramilitary' (Nolan, 1973: p.88) or 'quasi-military' (Wood, 2000: p.365) in which social relations are much more hierarchical than in most workplaces and power structures are closely linked to the specific division of labour (McKay, 2007; Nolan, 1973). The social structure is in principle restricted to one's position held on-board the ship. In this sense, a worker could be straggled to their occupation as an important dimension that expresses their identity.

A METAPHORICAL EXPLORATION

In its simplest of forms, a metaphor creates a distinctive understanding of an object/experience through the connection of something that is relatable and familiar. For example, "Michael has the heart of a lion", does not literally mean that "Michael" has a lion's heart, but may have a shared understanding of being brave, strong, and courageous. Therefore, through the vehicle of discourse an individual can communicate effectively, maintaining a shared meaning which may or may not be difficult to express otherwise. Metaphorical language means not taking language literally but rather deciphers the underlying meaning. In this sense, a metaphor can reveal an insight into how individuals make sense of events, which can be attributed in a collective and individual way (Cazal and Inns, 1998), reflecting an intersection of context specific social meanings and experience. In short, a metaphor can be considered a form of discourse that transfers an experience or process (e.g., emotion, ideas, relationship) that is tied contextually and often tacitly, and expressed so that it becomes clearer and relatable. Due to the presentational value that metaphors offer individuals, it can be a useful tool to express ideas or thoughts which are sensitive, complex or intangible, or furthermore in areas which are poorly understood, such as cruise ship work.

Much contemporary research on the subject of metaphor draws upon the work of Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) *'Metaphors We Live By'*. They asserted that metaphors structure conceptual understanding and regard metaphors as

'pervasive', not only in the thinking of language use, but also ingrained into thought and action. In this sense, a metaphor can be a representative link between language and thought, and furthermore can be fundamental to the signification of reality to understand and interpret the world (Lehtonen, 2000). As Lakoff and Johnson (1980, p.3) state, 'the way we think, what we experience, and what we do every day is very much a matter of metaphor'.

Metaphors, as a niche form of discourse analysis, have been applied to a wide range of research areas, specifically, and more relatable to this study, to the area of work, identity and community. In particular, metaphors have been used to explore the identity of teachers (e.g., Cameron, 2003; Hunt, 2006; Leavy *et al.* 2007), the relationship between work and life (Cowan and Bochantin, 2011), the emotional work of being a nurse (Froggatt, 1998), hospitality organisations (Palmer and Lundberg, 1995), and also the 'performative' metaphors in the interactive service work of cruise ship workers (Weaver, 2005). Understanding how metaphors are used can assist in the understanding of how people think, make sense of the world, and how individuals communicate (Cameron, 2003). Furthermore, the analysis of metaphors is concerned with how metaphors are structured, used and understood (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996). In other words, to what meaning is the metaphor being expressed, what information is being transferred, and what kind of relationship does this have with the experience/process. Thus bridging perceptive thought processes with shared understanding. In this sense, metaphors can provide insights into hidden emotions or experiences, particularly with regards to belonging to a group, transferring to such concepts as identity, or how individuals construct meaning of themselves.

METHODOLOGY

This study gathered data via semi-structured telephone interviews from past and present cruise ship employees in the positions of waiter and purser. Due to the notorious difficulties of collecting data on cruise ship employees (e.g. Larsen *et al* 2012), the sample of participants was achieved through three strategies: (1) an advertisement on cruise ship based online social networks, (2) a poster / advertisement in two internet cafes and one seafarer hub around the port of

Southampton, UK., and (3) the opportunity of snowball sampling. The sampling criteria were based on individuals employed in the position of waiter or purser, had completed at least one full contract on a cruise ship, and lastly that individuals were employed on a cruise ship, or employed recently. In total, twenty interviews were undertaken. The length of the interviews was between seventeen minutes and just over two hours, with an average of over forty minutes. The interview questions were generally derived from the literature and also a preliminary study, but questioning was open and remained general to seek the motivations and expectations of working on-board cruise ships, insights of their work and life, and their perceptions of work and themselves.

The sample included nine males and eleven females originating from 15 different countries. There was one participant who had worked in both positions and so was included in the data of waiting staff and pursers. This included eight waiting staff and thirteen pursers. The waiting staff participants were typical of cruise ship employees in that it is a male dominated position (six males and two females), and they also primarily originated from Eastern Europe or Asia (five). Participants in the position of purser were also typical in that it is a female dominated position (three males and ten females), and also mainly from Western Europe/North America/Australia (nine). All participants had worked at least one full contract on-board a cruise ship, with the longest being ten years, and with an average of just over three years. Because of the difficulties of contacting cruise employees directly, there was a total of just five individuals who were still working in the cruise ship industry. Of the 15 participants not currently working on cruise ships, seven months was the longest time out of cruise ship employment. The shortest was two months, and the average was just over four months.

METAPHOR ANALYSIS

Generally, metaphor analysis, as a research tool, begins with the collection of linguistic metaphors from participants, which are sorted into groups or clusters by lexical connections, and subsequently given labels from which meaning is transferred (Cameron, 2003: p.240). This can be typically applied in two ways: through the use of pre-determined metaphors which have been recognised in previous research, or through the development of metaphors based upon what is

discovered in the data. Each approach has its appropriateness and usefulness. The extraction of metaphors in this study was unprompted (Weaver, 2005). This meant that the interview schedule did not directly seek to ask participants to think metaphorically, allowing participants to naturally and organically use, and more importantly be given the choice of metaphorical use. In other words, individuals chose to use metaphors as a way of reflecting their understanding as a semi-conscious discourse.

The current analytical procedure of metaphors was primarily influenced by the work of Steger (2007), but also takes note of Cameron (2003), and was undertaken in three steps. Basically, these steps involve (1) the identification of metaphors in the discourse, (2) evaluating the general meaning of the metaphor, and (3) investigating the connotations relevant to the context (i.e. cruise ship). The analysis of metaphor is not to seek an all-encompassing metaphor that are used by cruise ship employees, but to locate multiple metaphors, which may contrast, to fully explore their understandings or realities of working and living on-board a cruise ship. This analytical process involved the reading and re-reading of the interview transcripts, highlighting the metaphors used. Metaphors were chosen that were 'strong' and 'comparative'. In other words, the metaphors that were more obvious and arguably less creative, yet were the dominant images of the organisation, work and life, that participants chose to express as one way of understanding their world. Once the metaphors were highlighted, these were listed and grouped by each participant.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

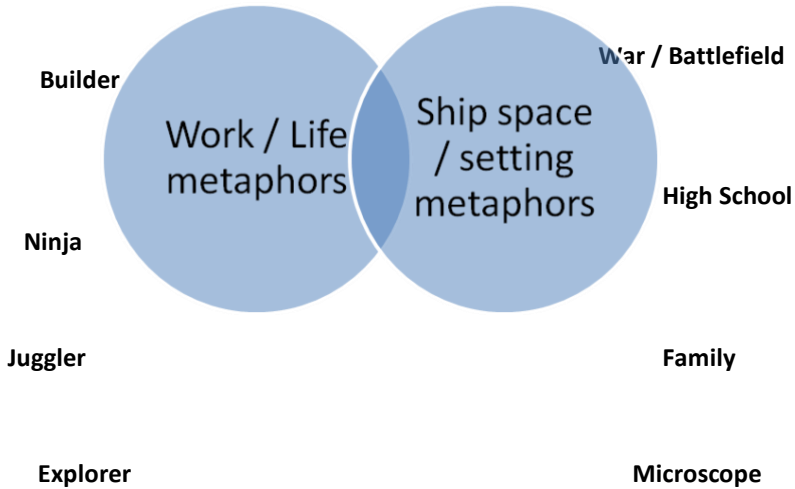
In total there were two clusters of metaphorical illustration that related to the environment of the ship. One cluster explored how participants understood the ship's space or work setting, and the second cluster identified the strategies used as participants negotiated their way through their working and social lives. The metaphor clusters are shown in Figure 1.

This metaphorical content reflected upon the participants' views about their working and social environment. In other words, how the cruise ship environment had implications upon one's work and also social activities. The metaphorical

content here was predominantly associated with conflict, intensity and struggle, and how individuals were able to fit in the ship's environment. Moreover, the metaphors were of a community focus, in that the focus was not solely upon the individual. Being able to understand the cruise ship environment could not be fully made without reference to others. To make sense of oneself (self definition) within a given context can only be realised from the comparison, relationships, and judgement of others (e.g. Tajfel, 1978). Therefore to understand oneself in the cruise ship environment, the perception of others and their perceived perceptions need to be taken into consideration.

On cruise ships there is a strong emphasis on family. When talking of family about other cruise ship members it clearly had meaning to the participants, particularly since they were isolated from their "real" family. This disconnection from their biological family provides a need for belonging and it became "a family away from your own family" (Joanne, purser). It was clear that cruise ship companies would foster and place value upon a family environment; it not only supports a strong and harmonious community atmosphere, but it also implements control, trust, and an element of obligation. The obligation refers to the feeling of having to do a good job or a reluctance to leave one's role, because to do so would be letting their family down (Furunes and Mykletun, 2007). In some ways, a family and the organisation are similar. As a social system, both have a recognised leadership/hierarchy, which can be collectively and individually supportive and controlling, and furthermore have the capacity to entrench belonging and a base of conflict (Brotheridge and Lee, 2006). It was clear that organisational members "really became family" (Sam, purser), and although there was some references to the role of a parent/manager role, the most identified role was that of their "brothers and sisters", or their work group members. In this study, waiters formed a family which was centred around their occupation, while pursers, having more freedom in their role, encapsulated different occupations, albeit typically on the same hierarchical level.

Figure 1 Metaphorical findings



Metaphors of the environment: ship space / work setting

The war/battlefield metaphor was more often referred to by waiters. This would suggest that waiters felt more threatened and were in a position of conflict. This is not suggested as a physical war/battle, but one that is verbal and symbolic in construction (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980), whereby one's identity (personal and social) is attacked or criticised and strategies are devised to defend it. Waiters related to this metaphor on a more symbolic level which was integrated throughout multiple discourses in the interviews. For pursers, this metaphor was used as a mechanism to primarily describe their relationship with guests, which can be at a confrontational capacity, and also as an explanation as to how their personal space was "invaded" by the organisation (Kim, purser). For waiters, a war/battlefield metaphor was more akin to their identity and multiple aspects of their work and life. It primarily defined their role as one with connotations of conflict and struggle. The war for waiters was ultimately to gain a positive identity, yet they were confronted with being labelled as 'crew' by the organisation, having an autocratic relationship with management, and generally having an occupation that carries a 'stigma' (Wildes, 2007). This is underlined by the conflict with

management, and also the artificial battle with guests to gain gratuities. It is clear that the relationship with management has a direct effect upon the way workers are able to make sense of their world. Pursers appear to have a clear and congruent working relationship, while the restaurant seems to be more of a battleground whereby the soldiers (waiters) are instructed/ordered by the general/guard (management). This type of bureaucratic style relationship in place for waiters/management can be a source of conflict and furthermore a practice that can stifle creativity (e.g. De Bono, 1985).

The next metaphor was a feeling of being under the microscope. This metaphor relates to how some participants felt they had no “escape” and that everything was “visible”. This was more often used by pursers. Because pursers had that extra freedom with their role, being more socially available, it was a variable that was more salient. The final metaphor in this cluster was the high school metaphor. In particular, this was concerned with social standing (popularity) and community formation (segmentation) depending on one’s occupation, thus highlighting inter-group rivalries. It was noticeable that an individual’s social standing was generally attached to their occupation. Based upon school-type language, waiters were thought to be more like “geeks”, while pursers more like “cheerleaders”. In other words, it was a case whereby individuals “knew their place” in the society of the ship based upon their occupation. From this comparison, there was little support for waiters and pursers regularly socialising, either on a voluntary basis of choosing to socialise together, or not having that opportunity to do so because of the lack of support structure from the organisation. This is not to suggest that waiters and pursers never socialised, but because of the differing occupational demands and access to space and time; the system and structure in place created practical and social considerations.

Metaphors of the environment: work / life

This metaphorical content identified the individual strategies used by the participants to work and live on a cruise ship. Moreover, the strategies reflected how participants were able to cope with the conditions and hardships of working and living on the ship. Though not exclusive, these metaphors were a strategy linked to one’s social activities. In this understanding, pursers were significantly

more likely to use these metaphors than waiters, since a purser's role allowed more social freedom outside of their work demands. In essence, these were used by participants to gain some element of control through the management and implementation of their social activities, which was determined by and linked to their occupation. The metaphor that illustrated the biggest sense of control, which bordered on deviance, was the ninja metaphor. This was a strategy that was linked to being stealthy, trying to escape from the pressures of work, which could be at the cost of organisational compliance. Norris (waiter) talked about sneaking past security after drinking too much alcohol so as not to get into trouble. Being a ninja was to a certain extent to gain some control, which was more often an ambition for a waiter, as their work and life are more controlled than that of a purser. Being a ninja is not always easy, and it wasn't attainable for all, as Kim (purser) explains, "If you are on a regular job on the ship, you can just kind of slip away and no one really notices you". Kim had two positions, in one of them she was an officer. In the officer position she found it increasingly difficult to get away from work and the role that she had stepped into and so a ninja was not appropriate in her position.

The explorer metaphor was a particular and temporary mindset that some participants described to achieve one's personal goals that offset the difficulties of ship life. To an extent, to work on a cruise ship is a journey, and to therefore be an explorer. The explorer outlook, although seeks guidance, moreover grasps independence, and other than the exploration of new countries, some participants talked about the exploration of the self. The prospect of being away from home, and in some instances escaping from home, gave the opportunity for participants to reflect upon themselves and their life. This metaphor was popularly used by pursers. The position of a purser gave the opportunity for individuals to explore, whilst the occupational demands and restrictions on being a waiter appeared to have dampened their appetite for being an explorer. An explorer was chiefly a strategy to capitalise upon one's personal ambitions; travel, experience new cultures and new lifestyles, and so on. This noted, an explorer's mindset was thought to be only temporary, either waning over time or fading after one's ambitions had been met. This would result in individuals developing new ambitions, which may lie outside of the industry, or altering their mindset which may be on a professional level.

The remaining two metaphors were the juggler and builder. The juggler metaphor was an attempt to negotiate the major factors of cruise ship life: work, play and sleep. Moreover, it was a strategy for personal and work congruence, being able to meet personal goals but also the goals of the organisation. The builder metaphor was used to explain how individuals used the tools of the organisation to build relationships, a sense of self, and potentially a career. Working on cruise ships, for most individuals, is the beginning of something new; a new contract, meeting new people, and a new place of employment with different ways of working. So principally, working on a ship necessitates to some degree an element of building or planning, even if workers have worked on ships for several years. It was a means of using the tools provided by the organisation to develop social and professional bonds. Being organisationally dependent this could also be a cause of frustration. A worker may have career or professional aspirations, although the ability to reach these may not be facilitated by the organisation. This is arguably a case for waiters on-board. It is recognised that cruise ship organisations want the professional skill-sets and attributes for the role, but additionally forget or are inadequately prepared to meet these career aspirations or professional development. In short, frustration may occur if the tools do not match the requirements of the builder, or the builder does not understand the plans provided. Builders can only work if they have the right tools or plans in place.

CONCLUSION AND LIMITATIONS

The identification of metaphors is a technique that offers a different way of seeing data and moreover a route that can help explore cruise workers' understanding of the semi-closed world of the cruise ship industry and their position within it. To do this, it was not a case of identifying every metaphor used by participants, but rather, through metaphorical association, to identify the metaphors that were central to their discourse in describing and evaluating their meaningful understandings. This study represents an exploratory and innovative contribution to the field of hospitality cruise ship work. The research also has value by being a medium that allows cruise ship workers to tell their story. This is something of a rarity in cruise ship research, to get a perceptive account of their world and what this line of work means for them. Furthermore, the research has been able to re-

address and also re-affirm some of the negative depictions of cruise ship work. The stories collected from the workers in this study have been able to produce a very different but realistic perspective of the working lives of waiters and pursers. This paper also highlights the potential of metaphorical analysis in revealing a different view of reality. A metaphorical approach may be particularly useful in this instance where there is little research, but also as it may be particularly difficult for an “outsider” to grasp the realities of working on cruise ships. This noted, the analysis presented does not postulate that the views demonstrated here are definitive, but rather it has generated an interesting and creative way of discussing the way waiters and pursers view their working and social lives on-board cruise ships.

Despite the usefulness of metaphors to this particular paper, it is important to acknowledge the limitations. Firstly, the metaphors found here will be situation specific to the cruise ship environment. Although similar metaphors may be used in other research areas, the meanings could differ somewhat. Furthermore, the analysis of metaphors is concerned with a higher level of subjectivity. For instance, what one researcher deems as the underlying meaning could be totally different to what another researcher concludes, and moreover both could be different to how the participant makes sense of it. Second, as noted earlier, an analysis of metaphors, although it doesn't claim to be, cannot give an all encompassing view of a social phenomenon, only a partial view can be obtained. Third, metaphors can appear in conversation for several reasons, such as the 'nature of interactional talk' or fashioned by a 'sub-conscious accommodation' (Cameron 2003: p.269). In this study some interviews had more metaphorical content than others, while one (Mandy, purser) was found to have no metaphorical content that was of particular interest. Finally, the implication of nationality should be acknowledged. Although from a nationality perspective the sample was seemingly representative of a twenty-first century cruise ship, a major consideration therefore (being that the interviews were conducted in English) was that for 50% of participants (ten), English was not their first language. While participants are required to have a good grasp of the English language to be employed on cruise ships it is important to recognise this limitation. It could be suggested that if participants were interviewed in their first language, different metaphors may have been used to describe their experiences and subsequently

affected the findings related to the analysis of metaphors. This further highlights the issue of national differences, whereby metaphors used by participants may be understood differently than their intended purpose.

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AN UBIQUITOUS APPROACH TO TOURISM AND TOURISTS INFORMATION NEEDS IN THE DOURO VALLEY HERITAGE SITE

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ABSTRACT

With the distinction of the Alto Douro Wine Region to World Heritage Site in the category of Cultural Landscape, in December 2001, the pristine nature was echoed internationally, reaching new visibility. This is not only an amazing space where are produce excellent wines, notably the Port Wine, but also a natural Heritage, architectural, socio-cultural, gastronomic and wine space that urges boost. The heritage, its potential as a tourist resource, needs to be explained and / or interpreted, bailing up the model of ubiquitous computing - mobile phone, smart phone or tablet. These devices are embedded in the people daily routines, and represent today's most common and widely used technology. This growing technological phenomenon, aims to break with the traditional model, centered on the personal computer, giving users the ability to interact with the digital world through the elements that surround the user environment, and using multiple devices. Because all the information is reproduced in multiple atoms, becomes

fundamental rethink the classical forms to support information needs that tourists have on the trip - guided tours and self-guided, "living history" performances / plays, forums / discussions, pamphlets, interpretive panels, signage, among others, as well as how actors tourist must interact with these.

This paper analyzes the main problems and needs that tourism entities have in disseminating information, and proposes a new approach of interaction between the tourist and the information and services within tourism. The proposed approach presents a Technologic Framework, based on the principle of ubiquity and implementing the concept of smart spaces supported by contextualization mechanisms.

Key Words: Contextualization, Interpretation, Ubiquity, World Heritage Site

INTRODUCTION

Tilden (1957) was one of the first to address the issue of heritage interpretation, ensnaring the concept to the visitor experience. Despite the ambiguity of the term in 1977 (Tilden, 1957) a new approach to the maintained concept subordinate to interpret as a vehicle for decoding order, aided by a set of tools and techniques. Thus, "an educational activity Which AIMS to reveal meanings and relationships through the use of original objects, by firsthand experience, and by illustrative media rather than simply to communicate communication factual information."

According to the National Association for Interpretation (Graham, 2005), the "Interpretation is a communication process that forges emotional and intellectual connections between the interests of the audience and the Inherent meanings in the resource."

Despite the progress that the term has in recent decades, it is urgent to make the information more quickly and the next visitor, meeting the requirements established as the National Strategic Plan for Tourism (2007), which mandates the creation of itineraries to showcase heritage historical, cultural and religious regions. It is therefore necessary to provide a wide range of information about

places, enabling the visitor knowledge and discipline as well as regular visits flows. But, this information will be tailored to the needs of your visitors?

In the current context, the interpretation techniques most commonly used are: the interpretation custom, which establishes a close relationship between the one who provides interpretation and visitant, e.g. guided tours, "living history" re-enactments / plays, forums / discussions. This technique has the advantage of adapting to the needs of each group, but represents costs for institutions, especially in human resources, technical and impersonal, which encompasses various practices, such as the internet and new technologies, the audiovisual media, the pamphlets and interpretive panels, signage, the self-guided tours, among others. This technique meets the new premises of public policy, presenting several advantages, including a very low cost per visitor.

Public policies have been focusing increasingly on reducing the human and material resources, paving the way for other forms, less expensive, and disclosure of assets. In addition, tourist information offices and / or educational services / interpretative provided by specialized personnel often depend, local, obeying, so a rigid schedule of operation being closed after 5:30 pm or 6:00 pm and / or closed during the weekend.

Given the obstacles mentioned here, we are facing a new challenge and an opportunity.

THE ROLE OF UBIQUITY AND CONTEXTUALIZATION

If a few years ago, a tourist to choose a touristic destination consulted prospectus in a travel agency, nowadays the same is not true. A tourist of today wants more. Want to be able to search all over the target region before choose to visit it. Tourist wants to have real time support when he is visiting the place, and also want easily to share is experiences with other users with the assurance that the information available after the visit will be useful to those who plan to go to the same place. These data justify the introduction of new information systems to support the tourists and tourism (Brown & Chalmers, 2003). With the advent of the Internet some of these services were extended to customers, but according to

Watson et al. (2004) there are three fundamental problems with existing systems: first, tourists before the trip has a lot of information, which will have to filter, and will have to spend too much time to find useful information. Secondly there are few systems that support mobility of tourists, and finally after the journey of the outcome of experiments are not easily shared.

Although the concept of ubiquitous computing is not new, that does not need a computer to access the information (Weiser, 1991) and even the devices evolution might give the impression that they are "invisible" and are anywhere (Watson, et al., 2002) we verified that the development in the application of tourist support for mobile devices is imperative, even with the new functionalities of the phone, that slowly are becoming present in all models released. The existence of integrated camera and Java applications support are two examples of features considered common in a current phone. Today technologies such as Global Positioning System (GPS), Wireless Local Area Network (WLAN), or Bluetooth are already easily found on a mobile device while the technology Near Field Communication (NFC) is beginning to appear.

Assert that the information and services are ubiquitous, means that they are available anywhere and anytime. The development of mobile devices to access the wireless network, along with lower costs of network access traffic data, as well as the proliferation of free wireless hotspots, makes the use of these devices access tools increasingly common and attractive content that proliferate on the Internet. The model of ubiquitous computing aims to break with the traditional model centered on the PC, and to give users the ability to interact with the digital world through the elements of the environment surrounding the user at any time and using multiple devices (Han, 2004; Saha, 2005; Hernandez, 2009).

Mobile devices such as mobile phones, smart phones or tablets, are incorporated into the daily routines of people and represent the most common and widely used technology today. Studies have shown that, in Portugal, the ratio of mobile phone / person far exceeds 100% (ICP ANACOM, 2012). As a general rule, "all people have at least one mobile device." This wide availability of mobile devices is the ideal tool for interaction between the user and the information and services on-demand. This idea is reinforced by the current trends in the evolution of mobile

devices, which suggests a huge potential for development as they incorporate new technological capabilities in mobile devices (e.g. GPS, NFC, and WIFI).

Allied to mobile devices are today, new technologies that allow the contextualization and the bridge between the physical and digital. GPS combined with mechanisms such as barcodes, multi-dimensional codes such as QR Code and radio frequency tags such as NFC allows associating real-world objects to a given element to represent and contextualize.

TECHNOLOGIC FRAMEWORK

An approach based on contextual and ubiquitous, it is demonstrated particularly interesting in promoting tourism and in particular in the context of the visit, where tourists more need to be helped in order to understand and have an answer to their expectations. For the tourist can get information and access to services during the visit is key to answer the need for mobility that the tourist has the means to access the information it provides, and the time / availability that it is willing to consume, to get the information they want.

The technical characteristics of current mobile devices, constitutes them today in devices that, among other capabilities includes: a processing capacity reasonably permanent connectivity, camera and the ability to run external applications to its core - operating system installed root - (e.g. Java ME, Google Android or Apple iOS). These capabilities allow now look at him as a very important technological device in ubiquitous architectures. Their decoding capabilities contextualization elements such as NFC tags, QR Code tags (with the camera) or GPS, make mobile devices that proliferate the overwhelming part of the population, a tool that allows you to support an architecture that aimed at providing, ubiquitous information and services in context, as illustrated in figure 1.

Applications for helping tourists “during the trip”, when exists, are mainly focused in a single indexing-technology. Although sometimes one unique contextualization-mechanism can meet the necessary requirements to help tourists, when we only have one technology available, we are limiting the users to problematic situations such: lack of compatible devices with the technology used,

or, situations where this technology does not respond in the best way at the requested.

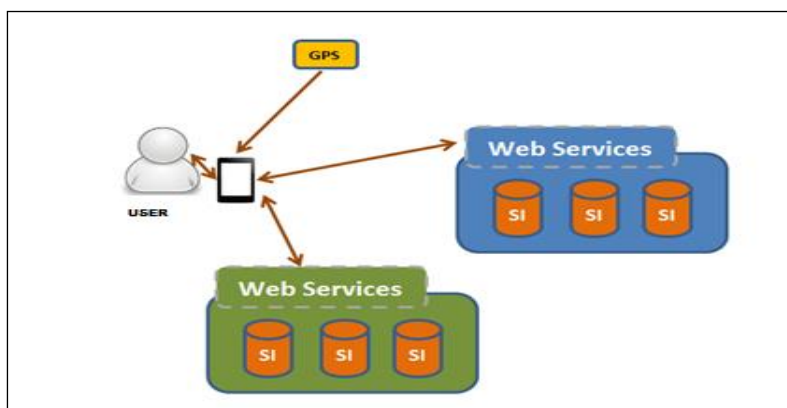


Figure 1: Access to information and services through mobile devices

In the case of tourism there are specific situations where we have to use different technologies to satisfy the tourists' needs. As an example: we can have GPS technology that is very good at tracking and helpful for the establishment of paths and trails for tourists but has an error in the approximation at distances of less than one meter. Also, if the tourist is in a place with many points of interest distancing between them less than one meter of each other and if the technology used to interact with tourists is the GPS, it's impossible identify which object is to be seen at any given time.

To bridge this gap and the fact that there is no GPS signal indoors (e.g. museums), there are other technologies such as QR Code or NFC tags, that allow a closer interaction with the tourist, which not only have a smaller scope, but also allow only-spreads information to those who request it, being an interaction-aware logic-of-use, as illustrated in figure 2.

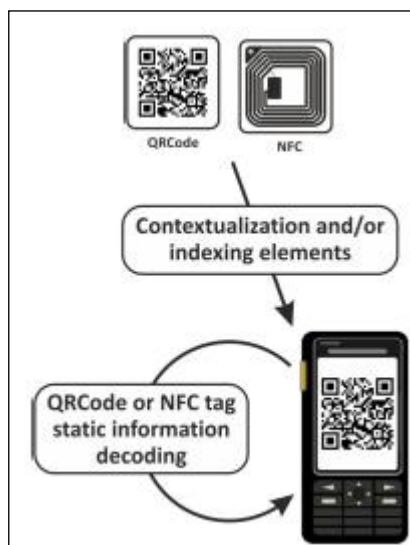


Figure 2: Using context elements (real world object-indexed) through mobile devices

CONCLUSIONS

This century saw an unprecedented increase in the number of users, applications and mobile networks available. The proliferation of mobile devices with increasingly technological features are enabling applications that can render pervasive computing, allowing that information can be accessible anytime and anywhere and, probably, based on user's location and context (Bahl, et al., 2002).

Mobile devices and mechanisms for contextualization tear the usual formats, engaging information already inventoried by the central and local - in printed brochures, pamphlets and leaflets, allowing arrives in a ubiquitous manner, contrary to the excessive weight of the costs of the physical devices promotional disproportionate to the current economic situation. It also aims at reducing obstacles, embarrassment, undue delay, responding to pressure from increasing demands and expectations of citizens towards the tourist information services. Contributes decisively to increase the information available to the public, a better organization of the visit, implementing best practices in the sector of tourism information, streamlines endogenous resources, and promotes quality and

excellence, a perspective of instrumental nature in the service of a higher goal, which is to inform the public.

The proposed framework aims to be an enabler of innovative ways to provide information and services to tourists and establish itself as a gateway to a business network. This work is currently on development stage where we are creating a prototype in order to validate the proposed framework.

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DIMENSIONS OF COMMUNITY-BASED TOURISM: A CASE OF SURF COMMUNITY IN BALI, INDONESIA

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the dimensions of community-based tourism, a case of surf community in Bali. Most members are resident of Bali, the rest came from various regions in Indonesia. Through factor analysis, there are four dimensions: inspirational; entrepreneurial; cultural; and social.

Key Words: Community-based tourism; stakeholder theory

BACKGROUND

Bali is one of the famous tourist destination. It is located in Indonesia which consists of several islands that also have various attractive tourist destination. Various research studies related to the Bali tourism (Minca 2000; Rosenbaum and Wong, 2007; and Iverson 2010). Various tourism available in Bali, such as art and nature tourism. Besides, Bali has special place and very different from other surfing locations. In Bali you can surf every day because there are waves every day not like in other places. If Nusa Dua doesn't have waves, Uluwatu will have some. In August, there was a pro surfing contest at Uluwatu and Padang-Padang. The waves were so good at Padang Padang that invite the photographers and

videographers from all over the world to get the best shots of the pro surfers (www.magicwave.org). Surfing is the most popular water sport in Bali. Surfing championships are held every year. These championships have a positive impact for tourism industries, because it makes Bali becomes the international destination for surfing (www.baliheaven.com).

THE PHENOMENA

In Bali there are many several surf communities. They are learning from other community to get inspiration about surfing techniques. Besides, the Balinese culture concerns for the natural environment. Balinese people belief that natural environment is spiritually preserved. Those phenomena lead to Coca-Cola to manage its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) relates to surfing and environment. Coca-Cola Amatil Indonesia (CCAI) conducts Indonesian Surfing Championship (ISC) Tour. Member of surfing communities, regional government, and surfing industry partners are present. In order to implement its CSR, CCAI programs work on four key areas: environment; marketplace; workplace, and community. ISC tour can help surfers to develop and proof themselves to national and international spectators. Together with surf community, CCAI conduct program to make beaches in Bali better (www.baliheaven.com).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Community-Based Tourism (CBT) enables tourists to discover local habitats and wildlife, celebrates and respects traditional cultures, rituals, and wisdom. The community will be aware of the commercial and social value placed on their natural and cultural heritage through tourism, and this will foster community based conservation of these resources (www.communitybasedtourism.info). There are many study related on CBT. Okazaki (2008) developed the model of CBT integrating the concepts the ladder of participation, power redistribution, collaboration processes, and social capital. The study demonstrated that the model can be used to assess the actual participation level in a study site. Futhermore, Byrd (2007) argued that there is not a definable single generic interest for the host community. The interests will be individual to each

community and each subgroup of the community. Changes to the community can either assist in keeping an individual in a community or increase their chance to leave the community. Current tourism and tourism development in the community will also influence their support for future endeavors and their interactions with visitors. The support and interactions will in turn influence the overall success of the tourism development. Moreover, Baglieri and Consoli (2009) elaborated the meaning of community in tourism. They argued that customers may interact with companies and other customers and may achieve more information that allows them to reduce their information asymmetry and become more empowered than they were in a pre-IT era. Numerous recent researches report that online reviews and comments do influence individuals' purchase decisions, affecting the evolution of demand within communities. In this respect, virtual communities play a pivotal role in boosting tourist product innovation by leveraging learning from customer relationships. Customers may become a source of innovation since they gain an economic benefit from innovation which boosts their creativity, and show high expertise which may be transferred to firms and among communities. Virtual communities allow people who interact to satisfy their own needs and to share purpose such as an interest, need, information exchange, or service that provides a reason for the community. Firms may leverage these communities by providing a suitable context where customers may share social conventions, language, and protocols. Furthermore, Vanagas and Jagminas (2011) examined the potential of CBT in Vilnius district municipality, as well as to propose measures to make this activity feasible. The study demonstrates that communities considered their participation in tourism development reported a number of difficulties they have confronted with. The problems were mentioned most often: disagreement with the local government; lack of communal land; lack of finance; apathy and lack of initiative amongst local residents; lack of sociality and solidarity. Moreover, Lapeyre (2010) assesses the potential contribution of Community-Based Tourism Enterprises (CBTEs) to poverty alleviation and empowerment. It shows that tourism income captured locally improves rural households' livelihoods and generates linkages in the local economy. On the job learning, training sessions and extensive support by non-governmental organisations and donors are further shown to empower rural actors and unlock socioeconomic opportunities for the future. In this context,

CBTEs can be characterised as pro-poor initiatives. However, this study provides counter evidence that the sustainability of such community tourism ventures is to be questioned. First, mainstreaming these projects within the competitive tourism commodity chain proves highly challenging and costly; second, communities' institutional and managerial capacity is weak and thus CBTEs' viability is limited; finally, inadequate support by donors and non-governmental organisations fails to tackle challenges faced by community tourism ventures. Furthermore, Manyara and Jones (2007) evaluate the potential of Community-Based Enterprise (CBE) as avenues of poverty alleviation in Kenya and the challenges facing them. The key factors that could influence local community attitudes towards CBE fall into two categories: motivational factors and community factors. A sense of ownership was seen as critical so that local communities were adequately empowered and involved. CBE initiatives had to be seen to be adding value to existing livelihoods. Issues of elitism and poor leadership also have to be addressed. Furthermore, Fiorello and Bo (2012) studied Community-based ecotourism. It aims at environmental conservation but it is also a way to empower communities, by allowing them a degree of control over tourism projects and their impacts. Fiorello and Bo explored the varying degrees of empowerment of host communities provided by community-based ecotourism through a metastudy analysis of six case studies of tourism projects. Not all contemporary tourism projects take local populations into consideration thus the six case studies are nonrandom selections for the purpose of representing the concept embodied in the thesis and showing its appropriateness with the new tourists' expectations. Furthermore, Salazar (2012), studied community-based tourism using long-term anthropological fieldwork in Tanzania. The study critically analyzes how well generally accepted community-based tourism discourses resonate with the reality on the ground. It focuses on how local guides handle their role as ambassadors of communal cultural heritage and how community members react to their narratives and practices. It pays special attention to the time-limited, project-based development method, the need for an effective exit strategy, for quality control, tour guide training and long-term tour guide retention. Findings reveal multiple complex issues of power and resistance that illustrate many community-based tourism conflicts. The encounter with the "Other" is shown to be central and that the role of professional intermediaries in facilitating this

experience of cultural contact is crucial. Tour guides are often the only “locals” with whom tourists spend considerable time: they have considerable agency in the image-building process of the peoples and places visited, (re)shaping tourist destination images and indirectly influencing the self-image of those visited too.

OBJECTIVE

As elaborated in the beginning of this paper, there are phenomena of surf community in Bali. Surf community are learning from other community to get inspiration about surfing techniques and they also conduct partnerships with companies to protect the environment and educate people to support making beaches in Bali better. By synthesizing the phenomena and the theoretical framework, the gap still remain. For that reason, the objective of this study is to measure dimensionality of CBT.

METHOD

Prior to this study, author conducted observation of surfer community activities. Based on those observations and theoretical framework, author developed a questionnaire consisting of four variables, each of which developed minimum into three items with a five-point Likert scale. The number of respondents in this study were as many as 100. In accordance with the eligibility criteria between the number of variables and respondents, the study meets the requirements (Hair, William, Barry, Rolph, and Ronald 2006). Then author conducts items purification through a number of experts and community members. After some revisions, questionnaire distributed throughout the community members.

FINDINGS

Analyzing data through factor analysis by using criteria of eigenvalues greater than 1.0, principal component analysis, and varimax rotation. The results are shown in table 1.

Table 1
Factor analysis's result of
the dimensionality of Community-Based Tourism

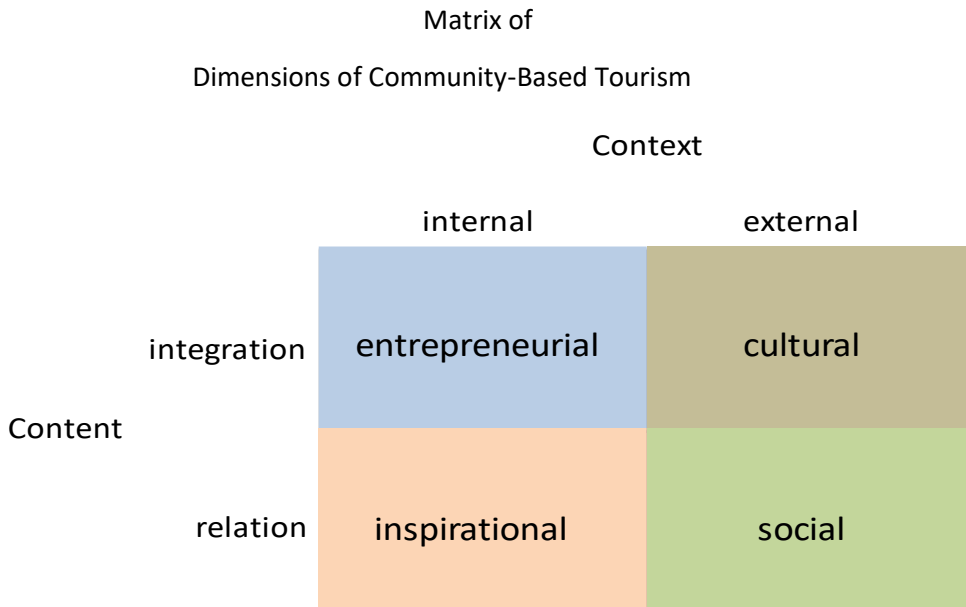
Factor	% Variance explained	Cronbach's Alpha	Item	Factor loading
Inspirational	36.040%	.792	Ins 2	.856
			Ins 1	.833
			Ins 3	.724
Entrepreneurial	17.846%	.939	Ent 3	.950
			Ent 2	.919
Cultural	11.258%	.705	Cul 1	.833
			Cul 2	.778
			Cul 3	.697
Social	10.336%	.729	Soc 2	.853
			Soc 1	.850

The value of the KMO (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin) statistic is .660 indicates that is appropriate for factor analysis (Malhotra, 2010), total variance explained for the four dimensions is equal to 75.480% that indicates the level of variance is satisfactory (Malhotra 2010). Cronbach's alpha ranged from .705-.939 that indicates the internal reliability is supported (Nunnaly 1979), and factor loading in

each dimension ranged from .697-.950 indicates that construct validity for sample of 100 is supported (Hair, William, Barry, Rolph, and Ronald 2006; Huck and William 1996).

DISCUSSIONS

Community-based tourism relates to stakeholder management (Byrd 2007). In this study, surf community relates with other surf community, tourists (both customers who wants to learn surfing and public), and company. Based on findings in table 1 and the phenomena as explained in the beginning of this paper, author constructs matrix as depicted in figure 1. Figure 1



The matrix consists of two dimensions: first, the context of community-based tourism. It consists of internal and external stakeholder. Internal stakeholder includes both within community and between communities, besides, external stakeholder includes tourists and company. Second, the content of community-based tourism. It consists of integration and relation. Integration means to what extent community becomes more exist. It explains doing the business and

implementing the belief. Furthermore, relation means to what extent community relates to other community and tourists. It explains learning from others community and interacting with tourists.

LIMITATIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This study has limitations that only focuses on surf community, specifically in Bali. There can be differences in the findings when tourists and company also are considered.

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ECO CERTIFICATION AND TOURISM OPERATORS: MARKETING AND OPERATIONAL ISSUES

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ABSTRACT

The objectives of this paper are twofold: (1) to examine the alignment between visitor and operator perceptions on the importance of different attributes of certification, and (2) to look for evidence of the belief that certification improves operators' performance. Over 600 visitors and 48 tourism operators in and around the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area, Australia, provided data on the popular ECO Certification Program[®]. Using just the mean scores of importance, the study found that visitors and operators had similar views: both perceived Nature and Marketing as the most important attributes and Conservation and Culture as the least important attributes. However, statistically, operators 'valued' Nature,

Community, Customer and Marketing significantly higher than visitors. To examine that certification improves performance, we collected data about operators' subjective views of their own performance (self-assessed) and visitors' subjective views of operator performance. These perceptions of performance were then validated with independent, actual objective measures. To facilitate comparisons, data were segmented according to certification status. Across the majority of attributes, ECO certified operators self-scored their performance higher, but not significantly so, than did their non-ECO certified counterparts. According to visitors, ECO certified operators out-performed their non-ECO certified counterparts on many attributes and these were statistically significant. Objective measures of performance confirmed these perceptions: ECO certified operators are 'better' on most attributes – however, these results need to be interpreted with caution, given the small sample size.

Key Words: *ECO certification, importance-performance analysis, Wet Tropics World Heritage Area, visitor-operator alignment.*

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is renowned for its significant economic contributions to economies worldwide but its environmental and social impacts cannot be ignored. While the growth of the industry is pivotal, such growth must nevertheless occur in a manner that does not adversely affect the physical and human environments that sustain it. This is especially important when tourism occurs in protected areas, as the beauty and significance of protected areas attracts considerable public interest (Puhakka & Siikamaki, 2011; Rogerson & Sims, 2012). The tourism industry must therefore become a proactive leader by implementing initiatives that will lead to more sustainable outcomes. One such initiative is certification.

Certification is defined as “... a process of providing documented assurance, in the form of a logo or seal, that a product, service or organisation complies with a given standard” (Honey & Rome, 2001). It is broadly promoted as being able to improve the triple bottom line performance of firms whilst promoting more

sustainable consumption (Font, 2007). But not everyone is convinced given limited conclusive evidence that certification is able to satisfy these claims.

Many argue that certification has failed to attract customers. This failure is compatible with the overall perception that the majority of certification programs are ephemeral, unknown, regrettably vague and misleading. For example, Vail (2011) found that a large majority of Australian and German residents were unaware of their countries' tourism certification programs. Although some studies have found an increase in demand¹ or a willingness to pay (WTP) for certified products, such findings need to be interpreted with caution since customers seldom have just one motivator to purchase a product (Font & Epler Wood, 2007) and oftentimes very little of expressed 'willingness' is actually translated into practice (Manaktola & Jauhari, 2007; Vermeer et al., 2010; Oom do Valle et al., 2012).

Ideally, certification should help consumers differentiate between the genuine and the 'opportunist' (i.e. the green washers), serving as a guarantee against false claims of sustainability. But, credible 'green' reputations are rare and difficult to create because such reputations are met with strong suspicion (Rivera, 2002, pp. 342). For example, Rivera et al., (2006) found evidence of opportunistic behaviour on the part of ski areas with certification and Rogerson & Sims (2012) argue that many businesses see certification as a way to improve their 'green' reputation without actually implementing beyond compliance practices. Consumers are also sceptical of these claimed ambitions as was found by Robinot & Giannelloni (2010). Clearly, an inability to 'prove' the tangible environmental benefits of certification hinders the progress of building operator and customer confidence in either partaking in such schemes or in buying certified products

That said, the success of certification depends on consumer and operator support and some studies have tried to find evidence of such support (e.g. Rivera, 2002; Fairweather et al., 2005; Puhakka & Siikamaki, 2011; Esparon et al., 2013). Most of

¹ For example, GG21, 2004, (cited in Font & Epler Wood, 2007) found that 8% of Green Globe participants noted an increase in customers as a direct result of being Green Globe certified.

these studies have looked at certification ‘holistically’, focussing on consumer perceptions of or WTP for certification. Esparon et al., (forthcoming) extended these discussions by specifically looking at visitors’ perceptions of the importance of eight core attributes of the *ECO* certification scheme and their perceptions of operator performance on those same attributes.

Since consumers have “*influences far beyond any other stakeholders*” (Chan, 2008, pp. 193), an understanding of their views is critical, but relatively little research has been done on operators’ perspectives of certification. To date, all we know is that: (a) tourism operators are aware of certification schemes; (b) this awareness and involvement is increasing; but (c) operators remain neutral or undecided on the potential impacts of certification on their businesses (Chafe, 2005; Darling, 2010). Indeed, there is no information about the importance that tourism operators attach to specific attributes.

Just as important, but also absent in the certification literature, is information about businesses’ evaluation of their own performance. The value of businesses’ self-assessment lies in its ability to make operators take responsibility for their own performance and development. Doing so enables businesses to internalise the need for change and performance improvement (Luo & Bhattacharya, 2006; Goetsch & Stanley, 2009).

Clearly having information about either visitor or operator perceptions is important; but having information about both and then checking to see how much they align is something that to the best of our knowledge has not been done. This is a potentially important research gap, given that research has shown that the views of tourists and operators are often very different (Morgan & Vorhies, 2001).

The objectives of this paper therefore, are to help fill those gaps. In doing so, we build on Esparon et al.’s (forthcoming) study on visitor perceptions by extending the analysis² to include operator perspectives. We also use some indicators that

² Unlike that study, here we do not segment our sample into accommodations, attractions, and tours, instead, we analyse collectively.

attempt to objectively validate perceptions of performance. Specifically, this paper considers the:

1. Alignment of values, i.e. operator and visitor attitudes with respect to importance; and the
2. Performance of operators using:
 - a. Operators' subjective view of performance;
 - b. Visitors' subjective view of performance; and
 - c. Objective indicators of performance

In the next section, we provide an overview of the *ECO* certification scheme and we describe our methods. Results are presented next followed by a discussion of the findings and its implications.

Selecting a study area and certification scheme



Geographically, the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area (WTWHA) extends from near Cooktown on the far north Queensland coast of Australia, to Townsville (approximately 650kms further south) and it borders the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area (GBRWHA) along a considerable part of the coastline. Ecologically, the area is significant enough to have merited special protection: world heritage status was granted in 1988 (UNESCO, 2010). It contains a distinctive and diverse assemblage of flora and fauna: the highest concentration of primitive flowering plant families in the world and various threatened plant and animal species find a home within these boundaries (Wet Tropics Management Authority, 2009).³

³ The WTWHA contains: 40% of Australia's bird species, 35% of Australia's mammal species, 60% of Australia's butterfly species, 20% of Australia's reptile species, 21% of Australia's cycad species, 29% of Australia's frog species, 65% of Australia's fern species and 30% of Australia's orchid species. As regards the flowering plants specifically, 16 out of the world's 28 lineages of primitive flowering plants grow in the WTWHA and within these families, there are at least 50 flowering plant species found only in the Wet Tropics (Wet Tropics Management Authority, 2012).



Covering almost 900,000 ha, the WTWHA includes six national parks and Australia's most extensive remaining area of wet tropical rainforests is protected here. The WTWHA contains over 200 visitor sites and 150 managed walks and attracts approximately five million visitors annually (Wet Tropics Management Authority, 2009). Such coexistence between a thriving tourism industry and this complex ecosystem makes it of special interest to the wider-world. Accordingly, it was selected as our case study area.

We had three key criteria for choosing a certification scheme: (1) it had to be relevant to the study area; (2) it had to encompass multiple domains of sustainability; and (3) it had to be applicable to all types of tourism products represented in the study area. The *ECO* certification scheme – described as one of the most long-standing schemes in the world (Wood & Halpenny, 2001; Buckley, 2002) – satisfied all three. The *ECO* certification scheme has been used as a blueprint for the development of other certification schemes and in Australia, it has been attributed with improving standards and professionalism in the ecotourism sector (Thwaites, 2007). It certifies any tourism experience that is nature-based or has a nature focus and businesses have a choice of three levels: Nature tourism, Ecotourism or Advanced Ecotourism. Each level requires businesses to satisfy all core criteria, with higher standards imposed for advanced certification (Ecotourism Australia, 2011).

Unlike other certification programs, *ECO* certification is product specific: operators need to address the criteria as it applies specifically to each product, rather than the entire business or the operator. Hence, it is strictly products, not operators or businesses that are certified. However, in this paper, we use the phrase 'certified operator' to refer to an operator with a certified product and a 'non-certified operator' as one with no product which is certified.

ATTRIBUTES OF ECO CERTIFICATION	11. How important to you, are each of the following attributes of ECO Certification?						12. How well do you think the tour you went on today performed based on these attributes?					
						Not Sure						Not Sure/Unable to judge
	Not Important at all		Very Important				Not well at all		Very well			
	1	2	3	4	5		1	2	3	4	5	
INTERPRETATION <i>e.g. Pre-tour materials such as brochures that explain the environment are provided</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
WORKING WITH LOCAL COMMUNITIES <i>e.g. The tour operator purchases many goods and services locally, thus contributing to the local economy</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

(a) Excerpt of Visitor Survey

ATTRIBUTES OF ECO CERTIFICATION	11. How important to this business, are each of the following attributes of ECO Certification?						12. How well do you think THIS BUSINESS performs on these attributes?					
						Not Sure						Not Sure/Unable to judge
	Not Important at all		Very Important				Not well at all		Very well			
	1	2	3	4	5		1	2	3	4	5	
INTERPRETATION <i>e.g. Pre-tour materials such as brochures that explains the environment are provided</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
WORKING WITH LOCAL COMMUNITIES <i>e.g. The tour operator purchases many goods and services locally, thus contributing to the local economy</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

(b) Excerpt of Operator Survey

Figure 1: Importance and performance

QUESTIONNAIRE DESIGN AND SAMPLE SIZE

We focused on eight core attributes of *ECO* certification: Natural area focus (*Nature*); Interpretation (*Interpretation*); Environmental sustainability (*Environment*); Contribution to conservation (*Conservation*); Working with local

communities (*Community*); Cultural component (*Culture*); Customer satisfaction (*Customer*); and Responsible marketing (*Marketing*). Central to the questionnaire design was ensuring the close alignment of importance and performance. Hence the same attribute that was used to gauge importance was also used to gauge performance (Figure 1a and b). Moreover, since we wanted to examine the alignment between visitor and operator perceptions on different attributes, the same attributes (and examples) that were used in the visitor surveys were also used in the operator surveys (Figure 1a and b).

Since *ECO* certification is product specific, for each target group (i.e. visitor and operator) we developed three types of questionnaires targeting accommodations, attractions and tours. We contacted operators of both *ECO* certified and non-*ECO* certified products to help distribute the visitor surveys and/or fill out the operator survey. We also supplemented our visitor sample by collecting data at the Cairns airport. In total, we collected data from 600 visitors and 48 tourism operators.⁴

ANALYSIS

We used importance-performance analysis (IPA). This method incorporates both importance and performance data thus enabling one to look for disparities between performance (Martilla & James, 1977; Ainin & Hisham, 2008). Results of the IPA can thus highlight aspects of performance that require attention. This technique is most prominent in the analysis of customer/tourist data; to the best of our knowledge, it has not yet been used to assess business/operator. We performed non-parametric statistical tests on the differences between importance and performance and we present our results graphically, instead of the usual quadrants typical of IPA.

⁴ In early 2011, the region was battered by cyclone Yasi. Several tourism businesses were impacted, and some had to close down to allow the rebuilding process to begin. As such, tourism numbers were less, which adversely impacted our sample of participating tour operators and attractions.

Table 1 Values assigned to categorical responses measuring importance

Category	Value assigned
'Not important at all'	-2
'Not important'	-1
'Neither important nor unimportant'	0
'Important'	1
'Very important'	2

THE ALIGNMENT OF PERCEIVED IMPORTANCE

The procedure for assessing attributes followed that of Esparon et al., (forthcoming). Whilst it is not strictly correct to convert Likert scale data into numbers and then to calculate means, doing so facilitates an easy visual comparison of responses. Each 'category' was therefore assigned a number (as set out in Table 1) and the mean scores of each attribute were computed and then ordered (from 'most' to 'least' important).

Table 2 summarises the top three and bottom three attributes. Visitors and operators clearly have the same 'values' with similar attributes being perceived as the most important. Although there is some divergence in the bottom three attributes, overall, it can be concluded that visitor and operator perceptions of importance are well-aligned.

Table 2 Comparisons of visitor & operator perceptions – The 'top 3' & 'bottom3' importance scores

	Visitor	Operator
Top 3	Nature Marketing Community	Marketing Nature Community
Bottom 3	Culture Conservation Customer	Interpretation Conservation Culture

To statistically examine the alignment of values, we used the two or more independent-samples test. This test considered the distribution of importance scores of each of the attributes across visitors and operators.

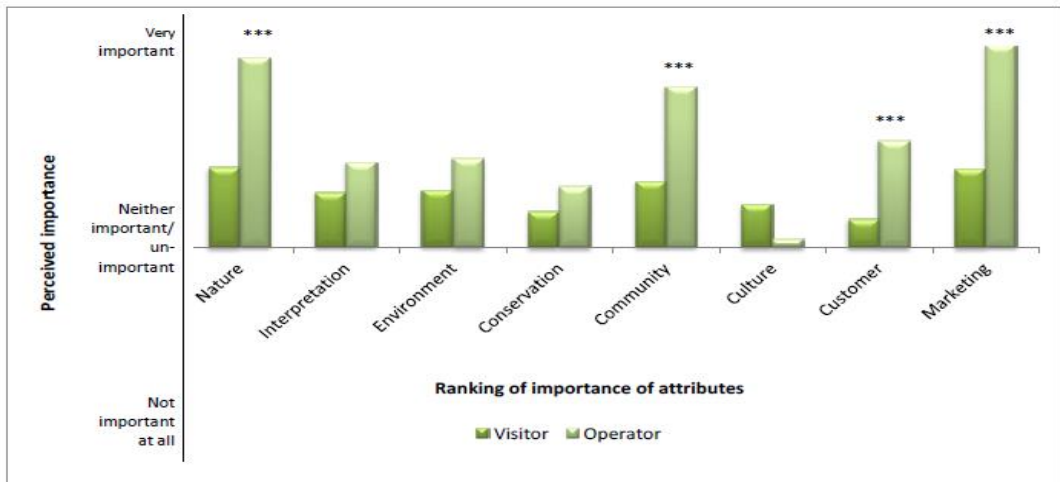


Figure 2: Differences & similarities on the importance of attributes between visitor & operator Asterisks show significant differences between operators' and visitors' perceptions at p<.001

The results suggest that visitors and operators have similar values in four of eight attributes. However, operators valued *Nature*, *Community*, *Customer* and *Marketing* significantly more than did the visitors (Figure 2).

SUBJECTIVE VIEW OF PERFORMANCE

As per the assessment of importance, we first examined visitors’ and operators’ (self-assessed) perceptions of performance individually, and segmented our analysis according to certification status. Here too, we converted likert-scale responses to numeric and show mean values for easy visual communication of results (using more appropriate statistical tests to check for differences in the distribution of responses). We found that visitors generally rated the performance of *ECO* certified operators higher than the performance of non-*ECO* certified operators, with performance in *Nature*, *Interpretation*, *Culture* and *Marketing* being significantly ‘better’.



Figure 3: Differences & similarities on the performance of attributes between visitor & operator – all data

Self-rating of performance revealed highest scores for *Marketing*, followed by *Nature* and *Community* across both *ECO* and non-*ECO* certified operators. *ECO* certified operators rated their own performance higher than did the non-*ECO* certified operators. However, there were no statistically significant differences in self-rating of performance between the two groups of operators.

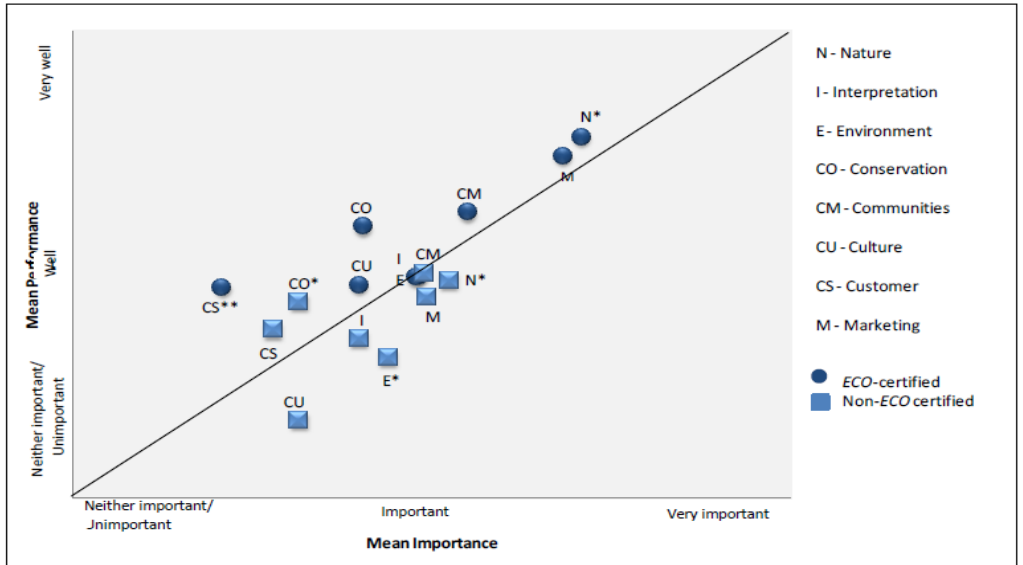
When we compared visitor and operator views of performance, we found statistically significant differences in five attributes. Visitors' evaluation of performance was significantly higher than those of the operator on *Conservation* and *Culture*, while operators rated their performance higher on *Nature*, *Community* and *Marketing* (Figure 3).

Asterisks show significant differences between operators' & visitors' perceptions at $p < 0.05$, $p < 0.01$ & $p < .001$

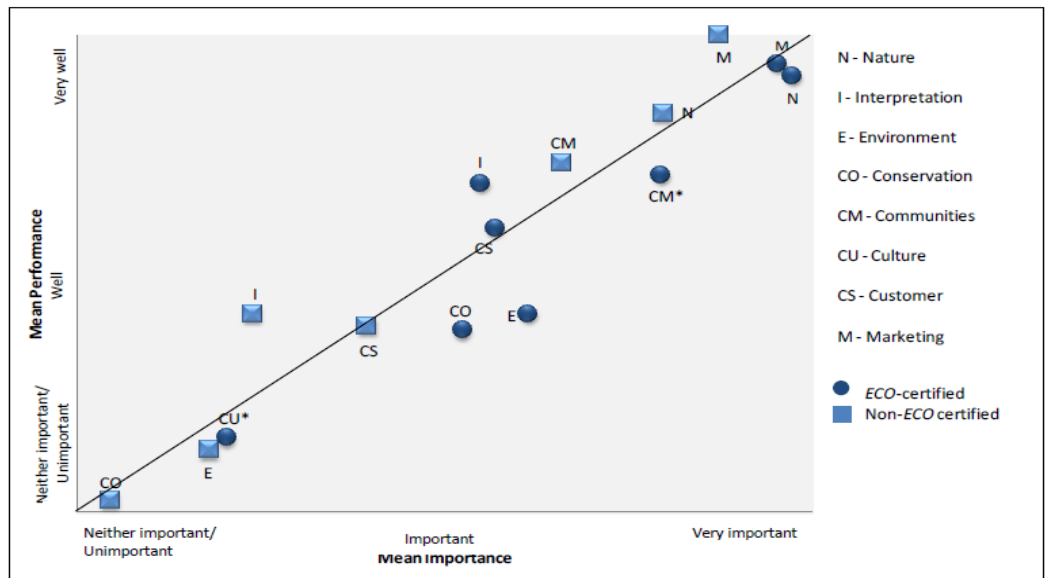
3.2.1 ASPECTS OF OPERATION NEEDING IMPROVEMENT

To examine areas for improvement, we used the IPA and the Wilcoxon signed-rank test to identify differences in perception of importance and performance. In most cases, differences between importance and performance were statistically insignificant (based on visitors' perceptions) (Figure 4a). However, where significant differences were observed, *ECO* certified operators' performance exceeded importance (*Nature* and *Customer*), whereas for the non-*ECO* certified operators, importance exceeded performance (*Nature* and *Environment*) but performance scores on *Conservation* were higher than those on importance (Figure 4a).

When operator perceptions are considered, the performance of *ECO* certified operators is considered to be less than importance on *Community* and *Customer* (Figure 4b) – and these differences are statistically significant.



(a) Visitors' perception



(b) Operators' perception

Figure 4: Comparisons of importance and performance

Mean scores are graphed. Single & double asterisks (*) denote significance of the difference between the distributions relating to importance and performance at $p < .05$ and $p < 0.1$ respectively. Points below the line indicates that mean importance exceeds mean performance. This implies that there are opportunities for improvement.

OBJECTIVE INDICATORS OF PERFORMANCE

While learning more about operator and visitor perceptions of performance is clearly important, perceptions do not always align with reality. It can be argued that operators' self-assessment is biased and as was found in Esparon et al., (forthcoming), visitors often lack the necessary information to properly assess performance.

We therefore set out to select suitable indicators and examples to measure performance using more 'objective' data. We examined the assessment criteria used for *ECO* certification coupled with those used in the broader literature (Ceron & Dubois, 2003; Bell & Morse, 2008; Castley et al., 2008). We narrowed our focus to consider only indicators that closely aligned with the management objectives of the region of interest, while ensuring that the chosen indicators (particularly those pertinent to environmental performance) were measurable, understandable and feasible. The final list of indicators and examples encompassed three aspects of operator performance: (1) maintenance of customer satisfaction/experience, (2) contribution to the local and wider communities (social performance) and (3) contribution to the local and wider environments (environmental performance) (Table 2).

Table 2 A summary of comparison of performance on various objective indicators

Attributes	Indicators	Category
Customer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obtaining feedback (informal and formal measures)⁵ 	CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE
Interpretation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of interpretation (personal and non-personal)⁶ 	
Marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsible marketing (measures employed to ensure that marketing is accurate and leads to realistic expectations) 	
Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment: Full-time equivalent • Employment: Indigenous employees • Donations to charities (financial) • Donations to community initiatives (financial) • Non-monetary contribution 	SOCIAL PERFORMANCE
Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Energy use • Green house emission • Waste • Carbon offset 	ENVIRONMENTAL PERFORMANCE

⁵ Examples of informal feedback include: discussion with customers; feedback forms and regular meetings/debriefs on operations between management and staff. Examples of formal feedback include: structured interviews with customers; review by tourism professionals and questionnaires.

⁶ Examples of personal interpretation are: informative interaction with a guide (e.g. spotlighting); lectures by specialists; games or quizzes. Examples of non-personal interpretation are: pretour materials (e.g. briefing sheets, brochures); displays/interpretive signage; audio visuals, and reference materials.

Conservation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contribution to conservation (financial and in-kind) 	
Nature	NOT MEASURED	
Culture	NOT MEASURED	

A SYNTHESIS OF PERFORMANCE MEASURES

Although we aimed to compare similar products (e.g. a non-certified bed and breakfast with its certified counterpart, or a non-certified river tour with its certified counterpart), the low number of surveys received and non-response on some key indicators did not permit comparisons to be made at such fine level of detail.⁷ Thus, we limited comparisons between certified and non-certified operators to generic comments. Table 3 summarises cases where statistically significant differences in perceptions on each attribute were found between *ECO* certified and non-*ECO* certified operators and in each case, states which of the two groups of operators appear to be performing ‘better’.

Table 4 Summary of statistically significant differences in perceptions of the performance of *ECO* certified compared to non-*ECO* certified operators across each attribute

Where there are significant differences, a description of how operators were perceived to be performing is given.

Based on visitors’ subjective perceptions, the clear observation is that *ECO* certified operators are out-performing their non-*ECO* certified counterparts. There were no statistically significant differences in performance when operator views

⁷ We received 48 operator surveys. Of these, 19 were from accommodations (10 *ECO* certified and 9 non-*ECO* certified), 5 from attractions (3 *ECO* certified and 2 non-*ECO* certified) and 24 from tours (10 *ECO* certified and 14 non-*ECO* certified). However, there were not enough similar businesses in each category to facilitate a ‘fair’ comparison (i.e. based on similar attributes, e.g. same size, same activities, etc.).

are considered. If considering whether visitors are satisfied (i.e. performance in relation to importance), here too, the generalised perception of performance is in favour of the *ECO* certified operators. *ECO*-certified operators however, were not necessarily satisfied with their performance on *Community* and *Customer*.

Objective measures of performance confirmed the overarching perception that *ECO* certified operators are ‘better’ on most attributes – however, these results need to be interpreted with caution, given the small sample size.

Attributes	Visitor perceptions of ...		Operator perceptions of ...		Objective measures of performance – (no statistical tests done due to small sample size)
	performance	aspects of operation that need improvement ⁸	performance (self-assessed)	aspects of operation that need improvement	
Nature	<i>ECO</i> certified ‘better’ than non- <i>ECO</i> certified	<i>ECO</i> -certified performing ‘well’ Non- <i>ECO</i> certified performing ‘poorly’			
Interpretation	<i>ECO</i> certified ‘better’ than				<i>ECO</i> certified

⁸ The term ‘well’ indicates that performance exceeds importance; ‘poorly’ indicates that importance exceeds performance.

	non- <i>ECO</i> certified				'better' than non- <i>ECO</i> certified
Environment		Non- <i>ECO</i> certified performing ' <i>poorly</i> '			Non- <i>ECO</i> certified 'better' than <i>ECO</i> certified
Conservation		Non- <i>ECO</i> certified performing ' <i>poorly</i> '			<i>ECO</i> certified 'better' than non- <i>ECO</i> certified
Community				<i>ECO</i> -certified performing ' <i>poorly</i> '	<i>ECO</i> certified 'better' than non- <i>ECO</i> certified
Culture	<i>ECO</i> certified 'better' than non- <i>ECO</i> certified				
Customer		<i>ECO</i> -certified performing ' <i>well</i> '		<i>ECO</i> -certified performing ' <i>poorly</i> '	<i>ECO</i> certified 'better'

					than non- <i>ECO</i> certified
Marketing	<i>ECO</i> certified 'better' than non- <i>ECO</i> certified				<i>ECO</i> certified 'better' than non- <i>ECO</i> certified

This study found that generally, there is good alignment between the perceptions of visitors and operators. This information may prove useful in marketing campaigns geared to encourage tourism operators in joining certification programs. However, there may be reasons to be concerned given the fact that *Conservation* was ranked 7th in importance by both operators and visitors (out of eight attributes). Clearly, this is in contrast to the goals and objectives of the WTWHA as set out by the Wet Tropics Management Authority (WTMA). WTMA strongly advocates the building and maintenance of ecosystem health and resilience as defensive responses to potential impacts of climate change in the region (WTMA, 2009). Thus, contributions towards *Conservation*, financially or otherwise, are paramount to this cause.

That *ECO* certified operators self-scored higher in performance across the majority of attributes, is of no surprise. Recall that these attributes are core criteria against which businesses are assessed against in order to obtain *ECO* certification. Accordingly, *ECO* certified businesses may have had time to work on those attributes and may have felt more confident in scoring their performance. Moreover, they may have obtained feedback that validated their scores – thus, they present a more realistic performance score. That said, an alternative hypothesis is that there is strategic bias: *ECO* certified operators have a stronger

incentive to score well, or risk losing certification. Another possible reason for the higher scores is that those with *ECO* certification would have displayed superior levels of performance without the logo: it is argued that the vast majority of businesses joining certification schemes are the sustainability pioneers (although there are some businesses who have become more informed through certification). Therefore, how much of the improvement in performance is attributable to certification *per se*, as opposed to prior interest of sustainability remains unclear (UNEP, 2006; Font, 2007). In spite of suggestions that operators' judgement of their own performance may be biased, the results nevertheless reflect visitors' perception of the performance of operators in the region.

Those points aside, several additional comments can be made from that part of the analysis which compares visitor and operator perceptions. On three attributes (*Nature, Community and Marketing*), operators perceived their performance to be better than visitors perceived them to be. The mis-alignment of perceptions may be viewed as a product quality 'problem' which may adversely impact on the outcome of operators' quality improvement strategies. This means that when businesses consider their performance to be better than the consumer perceives it, there is a tendency to be less likely to devote resources towards improving either the customers' perceptions of quality or the products' quality (Morgan & Vorhies, 2001). However, since some attributes are invisible to the consumer (Esparon et al., forthcoming), it is likely that customers will be unable to make appropriate or accurate assessments of operator performance.

When objective indicators are considered, in most areas, *ECO* certified firms showed better execution, while in others their performance was relatively poor. Whilst there is limited evidence to definitely confirm or refute the claim that certification improves performance,⁹ the subjective indicators of performance generally indicated that *ECO* certified operators were outperforming their non-*ECO* certified counterparts. Although, there are few evidenced-based studies on this topic, those that have attempted to explore these claims, were unable to provide decisive evidence either way. For example, in a study conducted over a

⁹ This is mostly due to relatively small sample of operators.

five year period, Rivera et al., (2006) found no evidence to conclude that ski areas adopting the *Sustainable Slopes Program* (SSP) displayed superior performance than non-participants in several areas of environmental protection.

Specific to our region of interest, research by Colmar Brunton (2010), revealed that tourism operators in the Wet Tropics region and surrounds were both positive and apprehensive about environmental issues. Particularly, operators were significantly more likely to agree that: (1) it was important for their business to reduce its carbon footprint; (2) their customers expect them to be environmentally responsible; and (3) climate change is an issue that requires drastic action. But, despite these positive affirmations, the study also found that tourism operators were significantly less likely to agree that they personally need to be more environmentally responsible in their businesses. Zeppel and Beaumont (2011)'s study concur: they found 28% of environmentally certified businesses already carbon offsetting and 37% planning to begin offsetting, while 34% did not consider offsetting necessary.¹⁰

Our findings corroborate those of earlier studies: in general, tourism operators were not implementing measures to mitigate their business' carbon footprint. For instance, only three operators surveyed stated that they measured and/or engaged in practices for offsetting their carbon emissions. Only two operators indicated usage of 100% solar energy as their source. Despite five operators stating that they offer the opportunity to clients to offset the impacts of their travel, none of the respondents was able to identify specific measures that were being implemented, i.e. on the ground actions that actively engage customers.¹¹ Overall, these findings reveal that despite operator concerns and stated intentions over emission issues of their business, actual implementation remains lacking.

¹⁰ Zeppel and Beaumont's study however did not compare those with and without certification.

¹¹ For example, guests participating in tree planting as part of the business' own carbon offset/bio-sequestration project). A search on Ecotourism Australia's website revealed ~15 operators (inclusive of both marine and terrestrial) in the Wet Tropics region having Climate Action Certification Program. This is clearly a low number in respect to the hundreds of operators known to operate in the area.

CONCLUSION & WIDER IMPLICATIONS

We set out to examine the alignment between visitor and operator perceptions on the importance of different attributes of certification. We found the same attributes were perceived to be important by both visitors and operators. These attributes were: *Nature*, *Marketing* and *Community*. Although there were some divergences in the bottom three attributes, overall, it can be concluded that visitors and operators value the same things. We also searched for evidence that certification improves performance. Evidence was sought in three ways: by looking at operators' subjective views of their own performance (i.e. self-assessed); by considering visitors' subjective views of operator performance; and by validating those perceptions of performance with actual objective measures (indicators). We found that *ECO*-certified operators self-scored higher in performance than their non-*ECO* certified counterparts, and visitor perceptions of operator performance corroborated. According to visitors, the performance of *ECO*-certified operators was significantly better on *Nature*, *Interpretation*, *Culture* and *Marketing*. Objectively, we are unable to conclude that certification improves performance; however, *ECO*-certified operators appear to be performing 'better' than their non-*ECO* certified counterparts on most attributes measured – *Environment* being the exception.

The lack of data on indicators provided by operators is an important limitation of the study, but it is a limitation of all previous research on certification in the tourism industry. If we are ever to assess the 'true' impact of certification on sustainability, then a baseline dataset needs to be established and backed by science: at present, tourism certification schemes lag others in this domain (the FSC and MSC certification programs for example, which certifies sustainable timber and fishery respectively, are well-known for their rigorous science). Importantly, certification providers need to publicize the contribution of certification. This could be done by perhaps making public an anonymous database of data collected from certified operators.¹² That such information is not

¹² Font (2007) recommends that data is collected by agents independent from the actual certification program so as to ensure credibility. But, that may increase costs. In the short-run, it may be 'quicker' to

available to the general public means that the true impact of certification is essentially 'hidden'.

This information asymmetry must be addressed. As rightfully noted by Font (2007), certification programs must show how their actions contribute to their aims. The ability to demonstrate the measurable benefits of certification may not only contribute to greater confidence and consumer interest and operator participation in such programs (Liu, 2003; Dalton et al., 2008; Valor, 2008) but may also provide certification programs with the benefit of securing financial and promotional support, a requirement which has received much success in other industries (e.g. the Marine Stewardship Council) (Rome et al., 2006).

Undoubtedly, there is a clear need to obtain data with respect to environmental and social impacts and this is especially important in areas like the one focused on in this study: the WTWHA. As documented in the literature, the WTWHA contains ecologically sensitive ecosystems, and some sites have already experienced degradation from heavy usage (Talbot et al., 2003; Turton, 2005). Thus, managing the high volumes of visitation is clearly challenging. If *ECO* certification can be found to mitigate such impacts, then it could prove to be a useful management tool (e.g. via legislation) for tourist access to ecologically sensitive areas within the WTWHA. Alternatively, WTMA could devise its own certification scheme (similar to the PAN Parks certification)¹³ tailored to suit its own requirements and geographical needs. Information from this study could be used as key inputs on what aspects needs special attention. But, until, or unless, better information is available, one cannot make a case for such radical public interventions.

Finally, the study found a lack of concern over some attributes, which are generally believed to be vitally important to the sustainability agenda. This suggests that there may be a need to consider using public awareness campaigns

provide existing data, however in the long-run, the goal could be to get external agency to verify those data.

¹³ The PAN Parks certification is one such example. This program aims to protect Europe's natural habitats and fragile ecosystems while balancing high quality tourism with environmental protection and sustainable local development. For more information see <http://www.panparks.org/what-wedo/mission> and Puhakka & Siikamaki (2011).

(or similar) to highlight their importance and thus raising private demand for certified products, promoting sustainability. Although this study was conducted in the WTWHA, the implications of its finding are likely to extend to other protected areas (marine and terrestrial) and to other products in different industries promoting sustainability. The fundamental issue here is the fact that consumers and businesses may not perceive some attributes to be important (e.g. *Conservation*). Public awareness campaigns coupled with more and better information may thus help revitalise the business-to-consumer (B2C) marketing campaigns, which to date, have been deemed as unsuccessful and may also enhance that of business-to-business (B2B) campaigns for further support of certification and increase market uptake.

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REGIONAL SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES. THE CASE OF MARATHON MUNICIPALITY

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ABSTRACT

The paper aims to analyze the current situation of rural tourism in the municipality of Marathon and to identify ways of improvement. The research methodology followed is primary, quantitative analysis with a sample of 44 companies which offer tourism services in the region. The companies that participated in this research are categorized as followed 82% are in the food service sector such as restaurants and bars, 14% are hotels, 2% are rooms to let and 2% are travel agencies. The questionnaire used is trying to depict the attitudes and the perception of tourism professional about the rural tourism development. The findings lead to the conclusion that even though the area has a wide range of rich resources in order to develop a sustainable tourism model, the reality is far from the potential of the region. This gap can be covered through a number of initiations that the local community and the tourism companies must undertake. The research takes into consideration only the attitudes and believes of tourism companies and not the citizens and the local community and public

administration. The changes proposed by this study are going to improve the local economy and the social life in a sustainable way. This is the result of the unique characteristic of the study as it analyses the available resources and the professionals' opinion that are running their own business in the tourism sector in the specific area of Marathon.

Keywords: Sustainable development, tourism, Marathon

1.INTRODUCTION

The human tendency to seek nature when manifested in the form of tourism is called "cluster of Anteo's" by various psychologists which means that man owes his existence in nature, he takes strength from it and is reborn every time he is in contact with it (Sfakianakis, 2000).

There are several effects of organized mass tourism vacations in the environment, the society and culture as they reinforce the tendency for development of alternative tourism standards. Since 1980s there have been recorded many significant changes in tourism demand, which were initially related to the motives of tourists while tour operators began to seek an environment friendly package tour.

Given the decisive role of the above in the production of tourism packages, started the change of direction and growth of various alternative tourism models (Spilanis and Vayanni, 2003) based on three major lines:

- Creation of new impulses.
- Mitigation of tourist traffic and parallel to the economic development of areas of the region.
- Effective use of natural, cultural and human resources of the region.

2. THE NEW ERA OF MASS TOURISM

The last two decades under the influence of sociology of tourism, there were made efforts to create new tourism standards where modern demands require pure natural environment, respect to local social specificities, decentralization and participation of residents in tourism development processes. These trends have created two fields of research (Ambrož, Ovsenik, 2011). To the first one, the emphasis is in the modern motives of tourists and trends in development issues and the second level refers to the changes in consumer and social patterns of tourists, leading to convert passive viewers of tourism activities into energetic tourists that influence the tourism development.

Many countries have tried to develop their economies through tourism. This was mainly in Third World countries but also in other areas with tourist resources and attraction areas for holidays (such as mountainous or coastal areas), which was the first choice of tour operators. The result of this development had positive and negative positive impacts in other sectors of the economy (such as technology, crafts, construction, agriculture, etc.). The final yield however was less than expected (Britton, 1982). The items that were detected and focused on review were:

- Even though the primary target was the right combination of "quality - price" then it was replaced by the "quantity-price." The result was a decrease in revenues, stagnation in investment and social tensions for the inefficiency of the tourism sector.
- Creation of economic arguments against mass tourism and the benefits of tourism development.
- Tourist's reception areas display social and environmental problems and the profits are reduced, due to the competition among areas that have the same tourism product.
- The identical way of tourism development, with the same characteristics of the infrastructure and services brought to saturation having as a result tourists' dissatisfaction and seeking of new tourism services.

2.1 Model of sustainable tourism development

Sustainable tourism development is defined as development that aims to equitable satisfaction of needs, that is, development that meets the needs of the current generations and does not preclude future generations from meeting at least the same level of needs (Fotiadis, 2009)

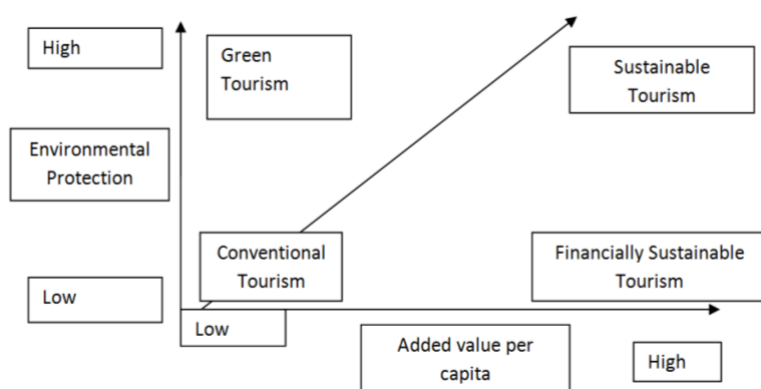
Sustainable development refers to creating the necessary conditions for the sustainability and maintenance of a specific activity and there are limits to growth and exploitation of natural resources in such a way that is profitable, socially justifiable and ecologically tolerated.

The tourism industry has two sides. On the one hand, contributes to the economic prosperity of a region in various ways, and on the other hand it must be environmental friendly and socially responsible.

According to a number of WTO surveys (www2.unwto.org) the majority of tourists today, wish to visit areas of high environmental quality and strong elements of local culture. Sustainable development pays particular attention to alternative forms of tourism which were rapidly developed the last two decades, as they were considered a effective tool to improve the quality and quantity of services, which is important to overcome competition.

Diagram 1

A model of sustainable tourism development

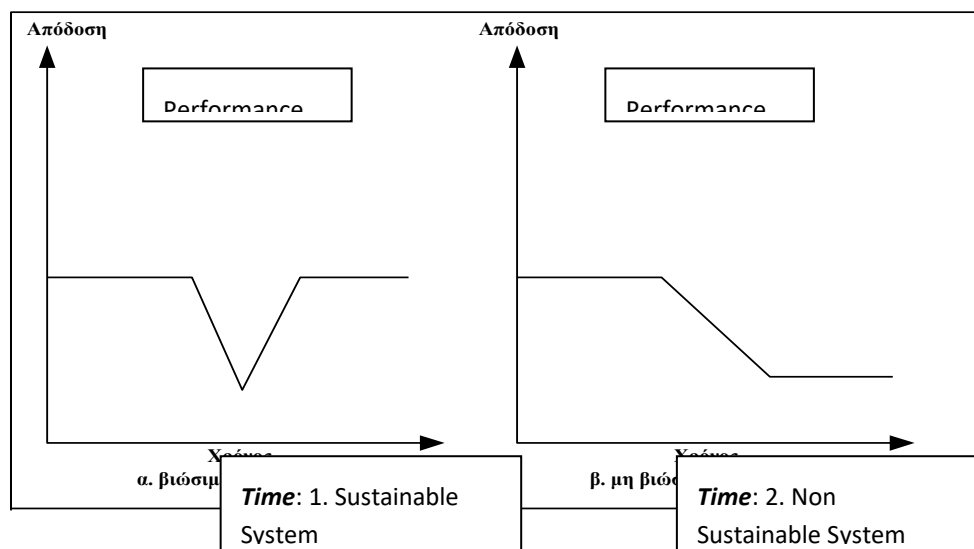


Source Fotiades, 2004

The locality has been closely linked with policies and actions for the development of modern tourism, where the cooperation of the State, the private sector and local government are necessary. The private sector contributes more and more through institutional and professional representative bodies at the local level, such as businessmen, hoteliers, tourism workers and others. This change was required by initiations (Elliot, Radcliff, 2006) such as: a) the need to protect the environment by reducing the unsustainable use of non-renewable energy sources, control water consumption, reduce waste, the congestion, access control tourists to ecologically vulnerable areas, etc. b) changing motivation for tourists and turn in quality tourism using tourism innovations, new technologies friendly to the environment and promotion of alternative forms of tourism compatible with the principles of sustainable development.

The move of mass tourism into alternative tourism financially and expertise supported by community programs, emerged a dynamic field of sustainable tourism development, by connecting different productive activities, in addition to environmental protection, the protection and promotion of traditional agricultural activities, highlighting monuments and activities of local culture, as well as programs changing the land use from problematic rural areas to implement alternative forms of tourism. Also local innovative initiatives systematically strengthened, particularly those created positions and many of these movements were based on activities related to the above forms of tourism. However, the final conclusion is that the promotion of alternative tourism does not concern tourists and locals in the same way and both contribute to the consolidation of it by their behavior.

Diagram 2. Sustainability of an ecosystem in the Conway theory



Source: Conway, G. R. 1983. Agroecosystem Analysis. London: Imperial College of Science and Technology.

Tourism and sustainable development are interrelated constituent elements since they always refer to quality features and timeless presence. Sustainable development not only takes account of economic factors, but also environmental and sociocultural. That means that we approach the development with a sense of "economic sustainability tourism" and the concept of sustainable tourism development. (Fennell, 1999).

In Greece the sustainability of tourism is administrated by the law JMD 107017.28/8/2006 which is the result of the European Union Directive 2001/42/EC.

The **Chamber of Environment and Sustainability** objected because the proposed framework has these characteristics:

The basic principles and targets for sustainable tourism development are:

- Tourism development should be from time to time, environmentally friendly and socially equitable for the locals.

- Tourism should be always interested in the cultural heritage and traditions of the local community.
- Compliance with the natural environment
- To protect and improve the natural environment and the cultural environment should be working together all operators of the local community.
- The main goals of tourism development should be to preserve the local destination and the service of tourists in the context of sustainability.
- To contribute significantly to the opportunities of the local economy.
- To contribute effectively to improving the quality of life of residents and the social-cultural enrichment of the tourist destination.
- The environmental sensitive areas should be given special care.
- There should be an emphasis on using alternative energies.
- The adoption of alternative and special forms of tourism should be in harmony with the local culture environment.
- Raising awareness to all, about the implementation of these principles objectives.

Sustainable development indicators:

Hughes (2002) analyzes sustainability into three categories:

1. Ecological sustainability to protect the ecological system and varieties of fauna and flora. The limits of the ecosystem should not be exceeded due to the development.
2. Social and cultural sustainability for the maintenance of identity and characteristics. This is achieved through the direct and active involvement of residents.
3. Economic sustainability to ensure resources for the maintenance of society and future generations.

For the above categories should be created laws that will support sustainability and sustainable development.

Major types of rural tourism

Areas of natural environment except the urban and marine areas are the rural areas and the countryside. In the countryside are developed different tourist activities that make up the various options, and special forms of tourism. The most important are:

- Rural tourism being developed in rural areas
- The agricultural tourism being developed in rural areas
- Tourism of observation of flora and fauna
- The ambulatory tourism developed in rural walking paths
- Tourism of Outdoor sports
- The Trekking tourism, excursion tourism, health tourism. if the forms are developed in the countryside
- Adventure Tourism
- Eco-tourism and environmental tourism which does not mean focusing only on the protection of nature but also on the protection and promotion of cultural heritage.

If the concept of rural consists also of mountains then mountain tourism is also a form of rural tourism. Decentralization and removal of tourism activity from the coastal areas and channeling them within the country, is a common characteristic resulting in the development of new areas and maintenance of remote areas.

3. MARATHON AS A RURAL TOURISM DESTINATION

At the following map 1, we see that the majority of lowland of Marathon takes up rural areas. They are also basic economic factor for the residents of the area, since one third of the economically active population mentioned that is occupied with farming. The most important agricultural core is surrounded by housing associations of Judicial officers. The Grava, the Schinias and Saint Panteleimon. A

second core is located around the village of Agios Georgios, Kato Souli and Aura. Smaller rural areas are north of association and between the village of Marathon and Kalentzi.



Source: National Technical University SCHOOL: ARCHITECTURE-ENGINEERING

Marathon Natural resources

1. The artificial lake of Marathon

Marathon lake is a very important part of natural wealth of the region. Beyond the exploitable water resources, the lake has a rich natural ecosystem and offers a picturesque natural beauty. In a relatively short distance from Athens.

2. Mountain ranges in the north and northeast of the municipality.

These tumors are not as important natural wealth for the region as that of Penteli mountain, especially after the recent fires and illegal reconstruction. However, they are an important forest reserve.

3. The Blessed Source

The source gushes today beside the road Bei-Kato Souliou, at the northeastern end of the valley. Once, Athens was supplied by the rich waters of it, and this is evident from the pumping station located there. During German possession was protected by guard. Still survives untouched the small fort of the German army. Today waters enrich the arena of the Olympic Rowing Centre

4. The Pentelic mountain

It is the western municipality and a unique source of greenery and oxygen for residents of the entire basin. From this point several streams start and lead to the sea where they have been preserved, creating a pleasant microclimate for surrounding areas.

5. National Park of Schinias-Marathon

This is an area of increased ecological importance, both for Schinias, and for the entire Attica Basin. Includes the biotope the coastal zone of the pine forest, of 3 km length and 450 m width about and certain crops north of the wetland. West of the park lies the plain of Marathon. The area Schinias is of particular interest from an ecological point of view, both because of the variety and rarity of habitats and wetlands and also because it has been strongly degraded and is likely to be completely destroyed by the continuing and increasing human interventions.

The National Park Schinias Marathon is the important coastal ecosystem of Attica, while it is extremely interesting as a location and is based on a sensitive water balance. Its area is 13.84 sq km and comprises the forest of Koukounaria. The Great Swamp, the Hersonissos of Kynosoura, the coast and the sea zone includes protected species of flora and fauna, such as water ducks and one rare endemic type of fish around the world. In 2000 the land and sea areas of the Schinias, were marked as National Park and established zones and activities permitted per zone. The law stipulates the integrated planning and development of the area while locating the Olympic Rowing Center. The area was described as supra-

environmental resource for the preservation, promotion and enhancement of ecological features and natural ecosystems.

Recently, and as the rowing remains closed to the public after the Games, the organization of Olympic Properties, issued a press release whereby the Rowing reopens its doors to the world: 'The aim is the utilization of Olympic facilities and the chance to learn the future athletes / sportsmen of our country for the sport. As well as contact and acquaintance of the public with rowing but also with the environment of the National Park Schinias Marathon.

Points of attraction of the study area (City Marathon)

The areas bordering the National Park of Schinias are broader segments of the National Park of Marathon. Are in order of the habitat, the rowing and pine forest with the beach of Schinias. The rowing and the beach work as a sports city, while pine forest and habitat areas are of particular interest because of its natural beauty and rare species of flora and fauna they host. The region Tymvos is a dipole point of interest, the trophy of the battle of Marathon and the church of Panagia Mesosporitissa. The trophy is a copy of the original, parts of which are in the Archaeological Museum of Marathon. From the information appears that there were buried in groups dead Persians because they found bone remains irregularly arranged, which seems to belong to hundreds of victims. North of rowing is another archaeological site which is located north of the village of Kato Souli. In this region is located the Blessed Source, the waters of which provided input to Athens, while these waters today are used to enrich the track of rowing. At this point is the church of Agios Athanasios, and the estate Benaki with neoclassical villa. The property has an area of 2500 acres and belongs to the institution of the Benaki Museum since 1962. Older residents recognize the contribution of the estate Benaki to the survival of area in difficult times. Finally, the area with the number 7 includes the archaeological site of Rhamnus. Although formally not wholly owned by the municipality of Marathon, it is located very close to the settlement of the Aura and is accessible through the main street that runs through the study area. The archaeological site of Rhamnus is the most extensive archaeological site in the area and has a huge archaeological

significance as it includes walled shrines of holy Themis and Nemesis, burial buildings, ancient theater and settlement of the 4th century BC.

Other points of attraction

- Olympic Rowing Center of Schinias

Created for hosting the rowing race and canoe kayak during the Olympic Games and is part of the National Park of Schinias, which has joined the program NATURA 2000. The facility enables you to host activities and programs of environmental education and research, and related functions with the principles of sustainable development and conservation of the area of Schinias. The main lake has a length of 2.2 km and is associated with a second auxiliary lake, which during the period of the Olympic Games was used for training and warming up athletes. The total water surface area of the facility is approximately 470 acres, while the Olympic Rowing Center grandstands of Schinias has 1000 seats.

- The “trophy” of the battle of Marathon

The copy of the trophy of the battle of Marathon, is located next to the church of Panagia Mesosporitissa. From the information appears that there were buried in groups dead Persians because bone remains found irregularly arranged, that seem to belong to hundreds of victims. The remains of the real trophy are in the Museum of Marathon

- Archaeological site of Rhamnus

In the borders of the municipality of Marathon and Grammatiko extends the archaeological site of Rhamnus the best preserved ancient township of Attica. Two shrines have revealed - the temple of the strict goddess Nemesis , connected with the biggest names in classical art of Phidias and Agorakritos - and the temple of god Amphiaraos. Seaside fortress is preserved, which has been used as a fort for Athens for long periods, burial monuments and houses.

- Panagia Mesoporitissa

The Church of Panagia Mesoporitissa is located at the SW edge of Megalo Eleos. Celebrated on November 21, of the Presentation of Mary. In terms of style, striking impression makes the roof of the temple which consists of thin wooden logs. Beside the church they found the remains of the trophy of the battle of Marathon, built in a tower from the time of the Middle Ages.

- Benaki estate

On the avenue of Kato Souli, about 4 km from Marathon, are the estate and the magnificent villa Benaki. The property once reached up the Limiko (Rhamnus). Today it has an area of 2500 acres and belongs to the Foundation of the Benaki Museum (since 1962). Older recognize the contribution of the estate Benaki to the survival of area in difficult times

4. FIELD RESEARCH

The aim of this is to gather information that would determine if there are opportunities to support the possibility of developing alternative tourism focusing on activities of mild rural tourism (Brown, 2003).

In the new Kallikrateio Municipality of Marathon and mainly in the area of Nea Makri and Marathon Beach have been developed in standards of mass tourism and not organized, various tourism businesses. Also in the municipality there are too many holiday houses. The previous Municipalities and communities had no organized plan with tour operators, since the destiny of the tourism product transferred by secretariats to secretariats and from ministry to ministry. The possibilities that existed were many as the tourism standards have changed since the 80s, and the tourist attractions of alternative tourism are many and motivations of tourists are also too much.

The objective of this research which was carried out on questionnaires forms which will be recorded and analyzed is to find appropriate ways of developing alternative tourism with an emphasis on outdoor activities. The effort will be, so that all operators with the initiatives of the municipality, and with new

jurisdictions that provide the NLF or involved in tourism, initiate projects and programs targeting to the internal and external tourism. The specific research questions of the research are:

1. If there is an alternative tourism in the Municipality of Marathon
2. Investigation of alternative forms of tourism that may help in the tourist development of the Municipality of Marathon
3. If there are tourist activities in the countryside Municipality of Marathon.
4. Evaluation of all parties involved, associations and local government and the degree of participation.
5. If they know the tourism attractions of alternative tourism activities and particularly in the countryside of the municipality Marathon and if they have goals for a sustainable development of alternative tourism with an emphasis on outdoor activities.

Presentation and analysis of research results

The statistical analysis of the data was performed by using the statistical package SPSS 17.0 version for Windows. The descriptive measures considered are a) Frequencies of variables and b) The averages of variables scale likert, of 4, 5, 7 and 10 degrees used in the questionnaire. The results are presented graphically in pie Charts or bar graphs

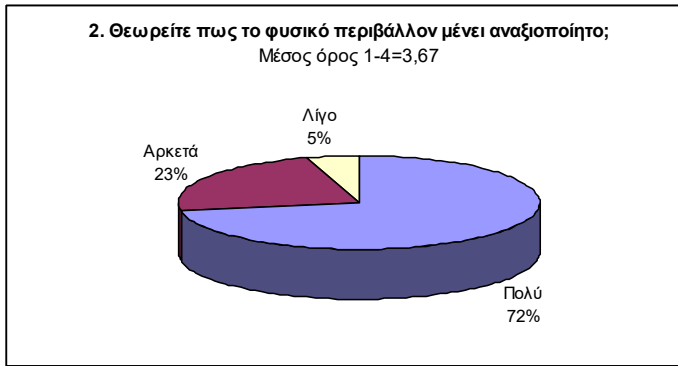
The Sample

From the 44 companies of the sample, the vast majority are catering companies and general health interest (82%), 14% are hotels while only 2% are the rented rooms and 2% travel agencies. The 81% of companies operates all year round, which is probably due to the permanent operation of the catering business in the region.

Results

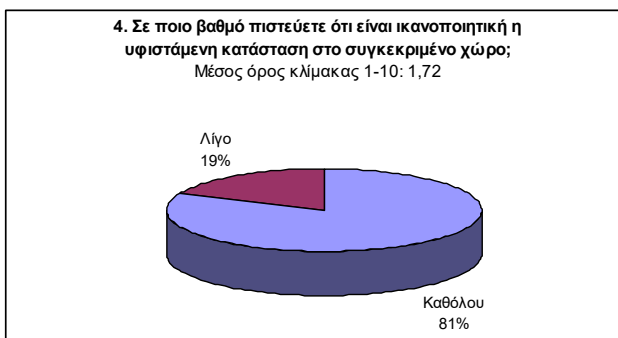
The answers to the research questions are depicted in the following charts.

1. Do you believe that psychical environment is not part of the local tourism product?



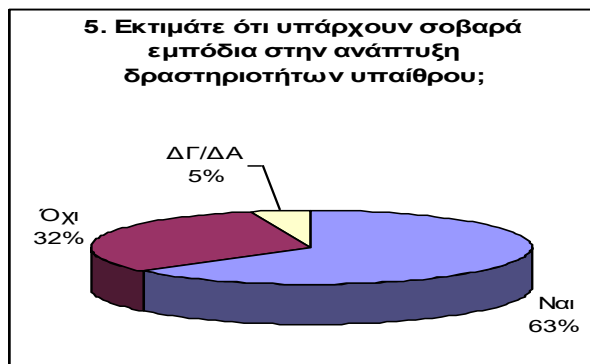
The majority 72% believes that environment is completely unexploited

2. Do you believe that rural tourism is well developed in Marathon?



The majority 81% believes the current situation is unsatisfactory.

3. Do you consider there are problems in rural development in Marathon?



The majority 63% believes that there serious obstacles in Marathon's rural development such as:

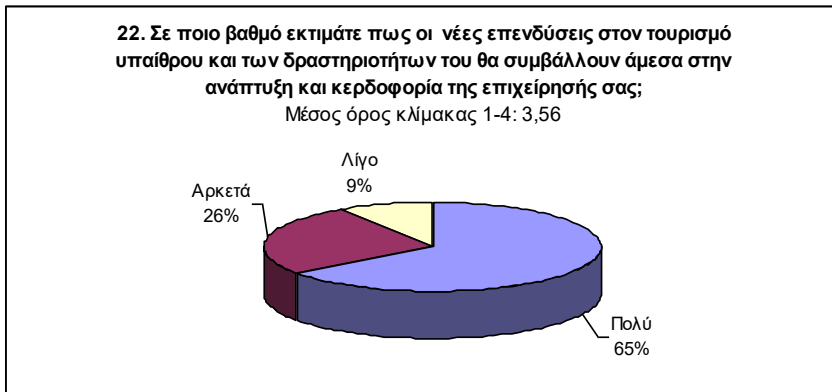
- Lack of infrastructure
- Lack of know how in rural tourism development
- Limited marketing efforts to promote the destination
- Lack of competition in the field
- Lack of capital and other resources

4. Do you consider that the Municipality of Marathon promotes rural tourism?



The majority 88% believes that it is not interested at all.

5. Do you believe that rural tourism will increase tourism companies profitability?



The vast majority (65+26) 91% believes that it will be for the benefit of the tourism companies.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The research results prove that Marathon is a very attractive destination for rural tourism development although up to now there are very limited initiations to this direction.

According to Wray et al. (2010) who have conducted a research in Australia focused on the best practices in sustainable regional tourism destinations there twenty two best practices which, keeping in mind the research results, could also be implemented in area of Marathon:

1. Establish long-term strategic planning processes to guide the sustainable management, development and marketing of tourism.
2. Establish an effective destination management structure to lead and facilitate stakeholder cooperation for the sustainable development, management and marketing of tourism.

3. Have a strong level of support from their state or territory tourism organisations.
4. Business involvement supported by effective regional tourism organisations and/or local tourism organisations that lead and coordinate tourism and business involvement.
5. Have a good level of support from their local governments.
6. Have a good level of support from parks agencies and other relevant government authorities.
7. Undertake research to support decision-making for tourism.
8. Establish methods to improve funding for tourism.
9. Educate and communicate the significance and local values of tourism to visitors, the community, governments and business (Venetzanopoulou, 2006).
10. Foster service excellence.
11. Develop crisis management plans for tourism.
12. Improve access for visitors by planning and developing effective transport infrastructure and systems (WTO, 1994).
13. Plan and develop appropriate infrastructure and support facilities for tourism.
14. Plan and develop a range of appropriate visitor products and experiences.
15. Plan for the preservation of natural, built, socio-cultural environments.
16. Foster a cooperative approach to marketing.
17. Develop strategic marketing plans.
18. Establish an effective and consistent destination brand and image that is used to position and promote the destination to attract appropriate visitor markets and guide the development of appropriate tourism product.
19. Identify and target appropriate visitor markets.
20. Develop innovative advertising, sales and promotion strategies to support the destination brand and image.
21. Provide quality visitor information and interpretation services.
22. Develop festivals and events that support the destination image.

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WILLINGNESS TO INVEST IN MEDICAL TOURISM IN GREECE

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ABSTRACT

Introduction : Greece is experiencing a deep economic crisis while seeking for new sources of revenues. Nowadays, medical tourism seems to be an effective mean of economic growth which could facilitate the way out of the crisis.

Purpose : To investigate tourism companies' willingness to invest in medical tourism in Greece.

Material & Methods : A nationwide survey was carried out in 2012. The target population consisted of all the 337 5-star hotels across the country and 28 companies-members of the Hellenic Association of Professional Congress Organizers (HAPCO).

Data was gathered by emailing a structured questionnaire to the executives of the abovementioned companies. The questionnaire investigated the executives' opinion and experience regarding the characteristics of the tourism facilities of

their company, their evaluation of the existing medical tourist infrastructure in Greece and perspectives for future investment in the field.

Descriptive and econometric analyses have been performed. The willingness to invest in medical tourism (1: yes, 0: no) has been used as the dependent variable. The companies' characteristics (the degree to which the actions taken regarding tourist awareness on medical tourism are effective in attracting tourists, the personnel training on medical tourism etc.) as well as the ability of the local market to support medical tourism were used as the independent variables.

Independent variables were rated in a four category Likert Scale (1: very low - 4: very high).

For the econometric analysis of the willingness to invest in medical tourism and given that the response variable was dichotomous, logistic regression was applied.

Results: According to our findings, 177 hotels and 15 members of HAPCO responded and completed the questionnaire, corresponding to a 53% and 54% response rate respectively.

According to the analysis, the willingness to invest in medical tourism depends on the personnel's training on medical tourism as well as on the ability of local community to support medical tourism.

Half of executives (50%) evaluated the personnel's training on medical tourism as low and 43% responded that the ability of the local community to support medical tourism is high.

The econometric analysis indicates that the likelihood of willingness to invest in medical tourism is positively associated with personnel's training on medical tourism (OR=4.56). Additionally, the higher the ability of local community to support medical tourism, the higher the likelihood to express willingness to invest in medical tourism (OR=3.11).

Conclusions: High class hotels seem to be willing to invest in medical tourism, since they have the ability and the relevant infrastructure to develop it.

Obviously, medical tourism in Greece should constitute an important source of national income and consequently, an alternative for the country to exit the economic crisis.

Keywords: Medical tourism, investments, infrastructure, medical care, Greece.

INTRODUCTION

Medical tourism, nowadays, represents a wide range of activities, including wellness and spa treatments, all kinds of cosmetic services as well as some of the most complicated medical operations. In the past, medical tourism referred to wealthy patients of developing countries who often journeyed from less developed countries to medical centres in more developed countries, where they received health care services that were not available in their countries of origin. As technology and medical know-how dissolved to emerging market countries, a new model of medical tourism – from rich to poor countries – evolved over the last two decades. Rich country tourists started to exploit the possibility of combining tourist aspects with medical ones. (Horowitz et al. 2010)

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. Also, it has been shown that 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, 2010). Recent U.S data show an average annual rate growth on medical tourist arrivals by 4% from 1996 to 2008, a decrease by -4.2% in 2009 due to recession as well as to severe epidemiological issues and an increase by 6.9% in 2010 mostly related to the U.S economic recovery (CBO, 2010; Caballero et al, 2006; Deardorff, 2005). In economic terms, worldwide business in medical tourism grossed about \$60 bn in 2006 and it is expected to rise to \$100 bn in 2012 (Deloitte, 2008a). 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. At the same time, USA and European hospitals – especially in the UK as well as in Germany – are able to attract foreign patients for high quality and specialized care.(Hungarian, 2010 c)

In Greece, data on medical tourist flows are poor and consequently, its impact on the health sector and the overall economy is difficult to estimate. Furthermore, the lack of standardised and integrated information systems in the public administration across the country prohibits collection and elaboration of relevant data. 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. However, medical tourism has been very recently prioritised in the political agenda mainly due to the economic recession and the tuff austerity measures taken in the country.

In this context, the aim of this study was to investigate tourist executives' opinions, aspects and beliefs in medical tourism and to examine factors affecting their potential investments in the country.

Tourism health related terminology and historical background

“Medical tourism” or alternatively called “health tourism” and “wellness tourism” is a term that has risen from the rapid growth of an industry where people from all around the world are travelling to other countries to obtain medical, dental and surgical care while at the same time touring, vacationing and fully experiencing the attractions of the countries that they are visiting. The combination of medicine, i.e. providing complex medical services and tourism is a relatively new type of tourism showing a high rate of growth. It combines travelling with the provision of various, often serious medical services, such as operations, transplantations, plastic surgery, dental procedures, as well as other more simple medical interventions. This kind of health tourism most often involves cross border travelling, where the provision of medical services is the only or the primary motive for travelling (Connell 2006). There is a difference between the use of terms “health and medical tourism” based mainly on the type of intervention on the body (Cook, 2008). Health tourism aims to improve tourists' health status by relaxing in spa or providing alternative treatments, whereas medical tourism implies diagnosis, hospitalization and surgical operations to improve or restore health in the long term(Connell 2006).

Since the end of the 19th century, richer citizens and the elite from underdeveloped countries travelled towards medical centres in more developed countries i.e Europe, for diagnosis and treatments which were not possible to obtain in their own countries. Also, rich patients from northern countries of Europe travelled towards tourist destinations such as the Swiss Alps and on the Mediterranean coast in order to be treated in sanatoriums for tuberculosis. In the last few decades, this emigrational flow has taken a new direction. More specifically, an increasing number of patients from developed countries have been travelling to medical centres of less developed countries in order to obtain certain medical services (Horowitz et al. 2010). It should be noted that numerous factors of medical tourist demand and supply have influenced this change of direction, such as the inability to obtain health service in their own countries due to the high health care costs, the absence of public or private insurance schemes coverage, long waiting lists, the non existence of specific health technologies, contracting with well known western clinics and hospital universities and other ethical and religious issues (Connell, 2006; Horowitz et al. 2010).

MATERIAL & METHODS

This is a nationwide survey conducted through the use of a questionnaire given to 337 five-star hotels in Greece as well as to 28 member companies of the Hellenic Association of Professional Congress Organizers (HAPCO).

The questionnaire, consisting of three parts, was the survey's key tool which investigated executives' opinion and experience regarding the characteristics of their companies' tourist facilities, their evaluation of the existing medical tourist infrastructure in Greece and the perspectives for future investment in the field. The first part includes respondent demographic data, the second part contains questions regarding spa tourism and the economy, while the third includes questions concerning the funding of spa tourism.

At first, a pilot survey was conducted so that the initial questionnaire would be corrected and rendered perfectly understandable. The pilot survey took place at 3 hotels and 2 member companies of the Hellenic Association of Professional Congress Organizers (HAPCO).

Our focus will be on non-cosmetic surgery and medical treatment. In this case, tourists sought sophisticated, often technologically advanced services that were typically not available in their home countries.

The questionnaire was emailed to respondents and it was sent back the same way.

Descriptive and econometric analyses have been performed. The willingness to invest in medical tourism (1: yes, 0: no) has been used as the dependent variable. The companies' characteristics (the degree to which the actions taken regarding tourist awareness on medical tourism are effective in attracting tourists, the personnel training on medical tourism etc.) as well as the ability of the local market to support medical tourism were used as the independent variables. Independent variables were rated in a four category Likert Scale (1: very low - 4: very high). For the econometric analysis of the willingness to invest in medical tourism and given that the response variable was dichotomous, logistic regression was applied.

RESULTS

According to our findings, 177 hotel and 15 members of HAPCO executives responded and completed the questionnaire, corresponding to a 53% and 54% response rate respectively. Based on the descriptive analysis, the sample characteristics are presented in Table 1.

Table 1 Demographic characteristics

	Frequency	Percent
Gender		
Female	40	20,8%
Male	152	79,2%
Age		

20-35	38	19,8%
36-45	72	37,5%
46-55	76	39,6%
56+	6	3,1%
Education		
High school -college	12	6,3%
University	105	54,7%
Master	75	39,1%
Family status		
Single	41	21,4%
Married	140	72,9%
Widow	2	1,0%
Divorced	9	4,7%
Position		
Owner	67	35,3%
tour-operator	4	2,1%
Employee	113	59,5%
Other	6	3,2%

According to table 1 the ratio of female and male respondents is 20.8% and

79.2% respectively. 39.6% has an age between 46 and 55 years old, 37.5% is between the age of 36 and 45 years old, 19.8% is between the age of 20 -35 years old and the rest 3.1% is above the age of 56 years old. Regarding the issue of education 54.7% of the respondents have a University degree, 39.1% have a master degree and the rest 6.3% is a graduate of either a high-school or a college. On the issue of family status 72.9% of the respondents is married, 21.4% is single, 4.7% is divorced and the rest 1% is widow. Finally, 59.5% of the respondents are employees, 35.3% of the respondents own the hotel, 2.1% are tour operators and the rest 3.2% gave a different answer.

In table 2 below the level of information given to tourists regarding the medical tourism is been presented.

Table 2 Level of tourist information on issues of medical tourism

	Frequency	Percent
Little	81	45.0
Moderate	18	10.0
A Lot	49	27.2
Very much	11	6.1
I don't know/refuse to answer	21	11.7
Total	180	100.0

Table 2 shows that almost half of the responders (43.3%=10%+27.2%+6.1%) considered at least moderate the information given to tourists on issues of medical tourism while 45% considered that the amount of information is not enough. Also 11.7% of the respondents refused to answer or they did not have an opinion on the specific issue. It is obvious that the executives are divided on this issue which could be interpreted as a sign that the level of

tourist information on issues of medical tourism should and can be improved not only by increasing the quantity of the information given but improving also the quality of the information.

Table 3 Personnel training on issues of medical tourism

	Frequency	Percent
Little	86	46.0
Moderate	20	10.7
A Lot	52	27.8
Very much	13	7.0
I don't know/refuse to answer	16	8.6
Total	187	100.0

In table 3 the level of personnel training on issues of medical tourism is presented. Almost half of the responders (46%) evaluated at low level the personnel training on issues of medical tourism while 45.4% evaluated the training as at least sufficient. Also 8.6% of the respondents refused to answer or they did not have an opinion on the specific issue. It is obvious that the executives are divided on this issue which could be interpreted as a sign that the level of personnel training on issues of medical tourism should and can be improved by increasing not only the time of training but also improving the quality of the training.

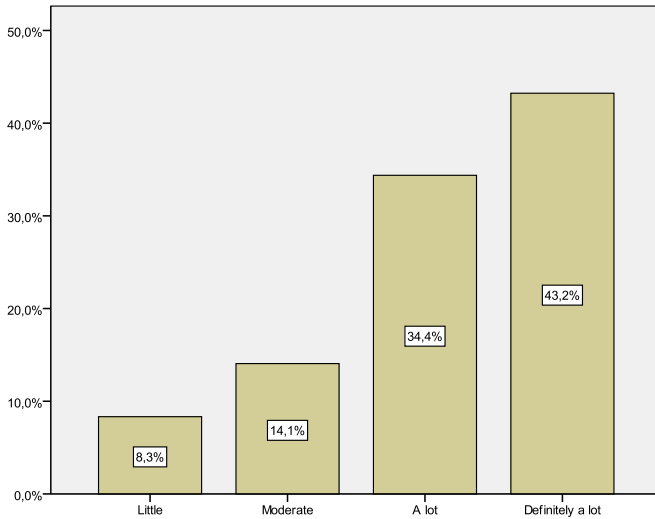


Figure 1: Ability of local community to support medical tourism

According to figure 1 that presents the ability of local community to support medical tourism it seems that the majority of the executives (91.7%) evaluated highly this ability and only 8.3% evaluated at a low level. They also stated that the local community is ready to support medical tourism if it has the chance to do so.

Table 4 Willingness to invest in medical tourism

	Frequency	Percent
No	14	7.4
Yes	153	81
I don't know/refuse to answer	22	11.6
Total	189	100.0

In table 4 below the willingness to invest in medical tourism is presented. It seems that the majority of the executives (81%) evaluated it positively while a 7.4% of the executives expressed negatively towards the willingness to invest. Also 11.6% of the respondents refused to answer or they did not have an opinion on the specific issue. It can be noticed from above that there is a strong and realistic will based on the executives' opinion for investments in the medical tourism sector.

In table 5 below the results of the econometric analysis regarding the dependent variable of 'willingness to invest in medical tourism' are been presented.

Table 5 Multiple logistic Regression (Willingness to invest in medical tourism)

	OR	Std. Err.	z	P>z	95% Confidence Interval	
Ability of local community to support medical tourism	3.108363	1.404452	2.51	0.012	1.282134	7.535813
Personnel training on medical tourism	4.56318	2.831116	2.45	0.014	1.352571	15.39484

According to table 5 results, it can be observed that the ability of local community to support medical tourism affects in a statistical significant level the willingness to invest in medical tourism ($p=0.012$). The same applies for the personnel training on medical tourism ($p=0.014$). Moreover the direction of influence of both independent variables to the dependent is positive.

Regarding the index McFadden $R^2 = 0.2092$ (satisfactory values above 0.20), and the $p_{\text{Likelihood Ratio Test}} < 0.001$, the model can be considered at least sufficient. Moreover on the basis of Link Test, the model does not have any specifications

error since $p_{\text{hat}} < 0.05$, $p_{\text{hat}}^2 > 0.05$. Moreover since $p_{\text{Hosmer \& Lemeshow}} - \text{Goodness of fit} = 0.3022 > 0.05$ the model fit very well to the data.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to investigate tourism companies' willingness to invest in medical tourism in Greece. A nationwide survey was carried out. The target population consisted of all the 5-star hotels across the country and the companies-members of the Hellenic Association of Professional Congress Organizers (HAPCO).

The majority of the executives evaluated highly the ability of local community to support medical tourism and the willingness to invest in medical tourism positively. Furthermore, the personnel training on issues of medical tourism along with the tourist information given on issues of medical tourism was evaluated below average. This result indicates that the environment for investing in medical tourism is fruitful if the right choices will be done. The support of the local community which is the most important factor has a strong presence, suitable therefore environment for investments. Meanwhile the level of tourist information on issues of medical tourism has some problems that must and can be improved in the future not only by increasing the quantity of the information given but also improving the quality of the information.

The econometric analysis indicated that the likelihood of willingness to invest in medical tourism is positively associated with personnel's training on medical tourism. Additionally the higher the ability of local community to support medical tourism, the higher the likelihood to express willingness to invest in medical tourism.

These results are very important for our country, since they show that Greece, even being under great depression has the ability to overcome the obstacles and enter the international tourism competition if it makes the right choices by implementing rational national policies. One of these policies should be the development of the medical tourism. The growth of this sector will bring

prosperity to the country. Local communities and the whole Greek population are in favor of medical tourism and will support any kind of investment in this sector.

CONCLUSIONS

The outcome from the whole analysis was that high class hotels seem to be willing to invest in medical tourism, since they have the ability and the relevant infrastructure to develop it. Obviously, medical tourism in Greece should constitute an important source of national income and consequently, an alternative for the country to exit the economic crisis.

Since, medical tourism has been very recently prioritised in the political agenda and given the positive willingness to invest in this field, further research is needed on their potential impact on the national economy.

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