Marketing Business Tourism in Suburban Areas

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Editorial

Dear Readers,

At the onset, I thank every reader, associates and well wishers who has supported IJOHAT and the heart whelming response and encouraging words that we have received for the inaugural issue. I am extremely pleased to inform the readers that this journal has been listed in Ebscohost, Index Coppernicus, Cabells Publishing INC and CIRET. The members of the Editorial Board have been highly supportive for achieving the recognition of the journal right from the first issue onwards. Thanks to all and each for the all time guidance.

The journal is available in print as well as online medium. We will be pleased to grant subscriptions where ever required at a nominal cost.

This is the second issue in your hands and I am sure it will make an interesting reading as well. This is a special issue and publishes selected papers from 4th ATMC conference (4th Advances in Tourism Marketing Conference) held at Maribor, Slovenia (EU) on 6th – 8th September 2011. Thanks to Sonja Sibila Lebe, University of Maribor (Slovenia) for her regular support to bring out this special issue. All the papers included revolve around the conference theme being "Transforming Experiences – Tourism Marketing from both Sides of the Counter". The authors were supportive as well. Since all the papers met the approval of the referees, no paper is being published in the article section of this issue. The news an events section presents magnitude of information. The book review section includes review of 10 books recently published by Pearson Education inc. thanks to the publishing house for coming up with these titles for hospitality and tourism fraternity. Special thanks to them for sending us review copies.

I would once again like to personally thank all the members of the editorial board, members of the board of reviewers, authors of the papers, Pearson education Inc publishing house, organisers of the ATMC conference, all and each of the readers, all my colleagues, friends and well-wishers. We aspire to bring IJOHAT to great height with your constant support and guidance. My special thanks to the members of society for Social welfare academic advancement and research for funding this journal. I would also like to acknowledge and thank the efforts of Mr. Sumit Mehta our web designer and manager.

Wishing you all an enjoyable reading

Dr. Sonia Gupta
Professor
Hospitality, Research
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MARKETING BUSINESS TOURISM IN SUBURBAN AREAS

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ABSTRATCT:

Business tourism has been investigated by many academics in various aspects mainly on the demand side such as site selection criteria, attendee behaviour, the satisfaction of meeting planners (Oppermann; 1996, Oppermann& Chon; 1997, Hankinson; 2005; Oh et al.; 2009). Studies on the supply side predominantly focus on the relationships among the actors or the role of CVBs (Fesenmeier, 1992, Gartrell, 1991). Hence, since the contributions of business tourism to destinations are brought into question, there is a tendency to relate the issue primarily to the urban development. From the other side of the coin, suburban areas have shown a tendency to be overlooked by destination marketers and city centres have kept being the favourite of the meetings and conferences organisers. Besides, there are only a few studies point out the difference between business tourism taking place in urban centres and business tourism taking place in suburban centres (Mistilis & Dwyer; 1999, Bernini; 2009, Flognheldt; 2007). However, there is no study enlightening the reasons for this difference. This study takes its point of departure from the fact that business tourism predominantly takes place in the urban areas and aims to investigate what could be done in order to boost the business tourism in suburban areas. Through this paper, the author identifies the advantages of suburban areas over urban centres, defines the unique selling propositions (USPs) of suburban aras and examines in what ways those UPSs can be used to achieve success.

KEY WORDS:

Business tourism, meetings industry, suburban, urban tourism, site selection criteria, meeting planner, PCO

INTRODUCTION:

In an increasingly competitive tourism industry, a key challenge for destination marketers is to cut through the noise of competing and substitute products to attract the attention of the consumer-travellers (Pike & Ryan; 2004). Not only the urban areas, but also the smaller cities and towns may also be in the search for a way to become visible in the market place (Kotler et al.; 1993). For this reason, tourism can not only be of enormous importance to the economies of the urban cities but also many other destinations world-wide (Mair&Jago; 2010).

Date back to when Law (1992) was drawing his tourism matrix almost 20 years ago, business tourism was not suggested for suburban development and there isstill a tendency in which business tourism is primarily related to the urban development and it results in the fact that business tourism has been established on the idea that it can mainly be conducted in urban centres (Vandermey; 1984, Edwards *et al.*; 2008). Peripheral areas have shown a tendency to be overlooked by destination practitioners and city centres have kept being the favourite of the meetings and conferences organisers. Mistilis and Dwyer (1999) argue that tourism growth has the potential to deliver economic benefits to remote, rural or underdeveloped areas within countries, yet it appears that major proportions of these benefits accrue to firms located in the major gateway cities, with proportionately small benefits accruing to host regions outside these gateways.

Besides, a large portion of the existing research on business tourism predominantlyfocuses on the demand side, e.g. the buyer behaviour or site selection process (Clark et al.; 1996; Oppermann; 1996, Baloglu& Love; 2005, Chacko&Fenish; 2000, Crouch &Louivere; 2004, Crouch & Ritchie; 1998, Kokkomäki et al.; 2010). Moreover, studies conducted on the supply side predominantly refer to the relationship among the various types of stakeholders and their interactions. For instance, Hye-Rin et al. (2009) evaluated the relationship between the buyers and professional conference organisers (PCOs).Fesenmaier et al. (1992) and Gartrell (1991) focused on the dynamics of the partnerships and the role of convention visitor bureaux (CVBs) in particular.

However, only a few academics brought a geographical analysis into tourism context (Flognheldt; 2007, Hudson & Jackson; 2003, Bernini; 2009). This study differs from the previous research on two levels. First, it investigates the potential for marketing the business tourism in the suburban areas through a geographical situation analysis. Secondly, it looks into the supply side and examines how the suburban areas can survive in a tough rivalry against the urban centres.This study aims to demonstrate in what ways suburban destination compete with the urban centres, therefore a strong positioning approach is attempted to be generated.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Defining the suburban destination

An increasing proportion of the population in most of the developed countries, reside in areas that do not clearly fit into neat categories of ‘urban’ or ‘rural’, instead several terms are used to describe these areas including, ‘suburban’, ‘peripheral’, ‘urban-rural fringe’ or ‘peri-urban zone’ or ‘exurbia’(Weaver & Lawton; 2001). In order to maintain the consistency the term suburban used in this paper. Hence, different meanings can be assigned to the term ‘suburban’ such as socio-economic or cultural (Hinchcliffe; 2005); however the term is only used referring to a geographical space in this study.Many studies on urbanisation define the suburban regions as an interface constitutes an ‘uneasy’ phenomenon usually characterised by either the loss of ‘rural’ aspects (loss of fertile soil, agricultural land, natural landscape, etc.) or the lack of urban attributes (low density, lack of accessibility, lack of services and infrastructure, etc.), (Allen; 2003). Basically, suburban areas consist of a set of what were traditionally called suburbs and further, freestanding urban centres set in a matrix of rural land (Burnley & Murphy; 1995).

Hall (2005, p.229) discusses the difficulty in defining these areas by saying that it is a socially constructed concept as many people’s notion of rural tourism occurs within the daytrip zone of the urban recreational hinterland however in tourism terms, it is beyond the daytrip zone and overnight stays become essential for travellers.In other words, relevance attributed to suburban tourism is mainly composed of day trips and weekend outgoings by urban residents, especially those from a metropolis with a population of more than one million (Wu &Cai; 2006). Weaver and Lawton (2004) claim that despite the evidence of distinct tourism-related dynamics and traits in such areas, including the preponderance of day-only visitors, many of them residents of adjacent urban areas who cannot be distinguished clearly as tourists or locals, there is a lack of studies within the context of the urban-rural fringe. Same-day visitors who do not spend the night in collective or private accommodation in the place visited are not likely to be desired tourists by the tourism providers as their contribution to tourism development is relatively low (González & Bello; 2002).

Destination shadows

Nash (1989) describes imperialism as the expansion of a society’s interests abroad. According to Nash (1989) tourism embodies meanings and attributes from imperialism in the sense that the analysis of tourism development cannot be independent from the productive centres where tourist needs and tourist activities are generated and these centres have a degree of control on the nature of tourism and its development. He points out this power over touristic and related developments abroad that makes a destination and tourism a form of imperialism when the example of such control is seen in the other parts of the world. Despite the fact that Nash (1989) argues the issue in a global context, in the era that we live in which borders have less meaning compared to the time Nash brought this argument, imperialism of tourism may apply to the comparison of closer destinations other than the comparison of countries of borders.

As mentioned before, peripheral areas suffer from the lack of the ability to retain relatively longer tourist stays (Hall; 2005). Hudman and Jackson (2003) introduce the shadow effect that refers to a destination that is near by other major destinations. Same authors discuss that for the reason that peripheral areas are close to the major destinations, tourists will visit these areas but stay less. This explains the effects of unbalance in the power of the destinations in the same proximity. The shadow effect also appears in Flognheldt's (2007) study in which he aims to examine the tourism development in the peripheral attractions of a primary destination; he names them as 'primary attraction shadow'.

Since a geographical analysis is brought into the question, it is inevitable to visit distance-decay theory. Fotheringham (1981) emphasises the significant importance of distance-decay as it measures the relationship between observed interaction patterns and this relationship is assumed to be accurate reflection of the perception of distance as a deterrent to interaction.Hall's (2005) studies on tourism mobility and the spatial interaction of the destination shed a light on the power distribution among the destinations in the same geographical districtby using distance decay and gravity models. He explains it with an example as; despite their equal size, destinations X, Y and Z experience different levels of interactions (travel flows); X will have more interactions with Y compared to Z because Y is nearer, Z is farther from X.

He also uses the intervening opportunities model which was developed by Stouffer (1940). These models argue that the numbers of trips from destination A to destination B increases as the number of opportunities at B increases and the number decreases as the distance between A and B increases (Hall; 2005). In other words, the number of trips from one destination to another depends on two factors: a) the number of the opportunities in the tourist receiving destination (destination B); b) the distance between the tourist generating destination and tourist receiving destination, the first one works in direct proportion and the latter one works in inverse proportion.Accordingly, when a tourist in destination A want to visit one of destination B or C at the same distance to A, will prefer to visit B if there is more attractions are available. Therefore, getting back to the difference in the power level of the destinations stemming from the effects of imperialism, destination B occurs as more powerful compared to C and, destination C encounters theovershadowing effect by destination B.

Factors Affecting the Success of Business Tourism Destinations

Destination competitiveness has reached a point where not every factoris equally competitive for all destinations. Crouch (2011) argues that *'…although a competitiveness attribute may be considered important, it will not be a determinant of competitiveness if there is little difference among destinations on the attribute. For example, if two destinations share a similar climate, the climate will have little or no impact on the relative competitive position of either destination'*. This brings a higher level of complexity into the subject in which the destinations find themselves in the necessity of utilising their competitive advantages in an extreme level and expose their unique selling propositions.

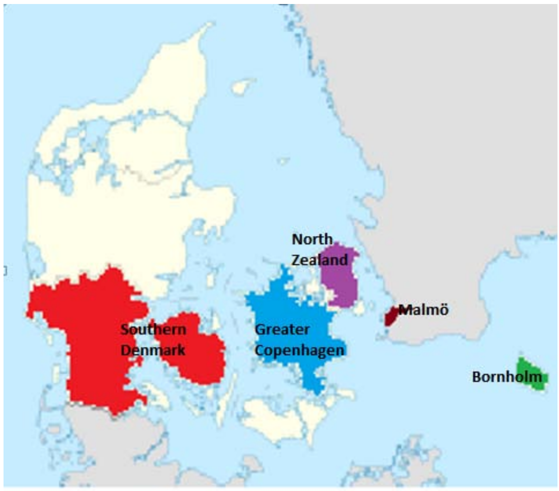
This leads to the fact that different factors might affect the destination success. For instance, a strongly established **collaboration** is stressed by Balakrishnan (2009) as a factor that may add competitive values to a destination. Nurturing the network collaboration requires identifying the stakeholders and their role within the destination. In Bernini's (2009) comparative study, the first destination cluster which is named as 'Convention Capital Towns' indicates successful convention destination attributes. This group of destinations has the characteristics of strong professionalism with a significance presence of professional convention agencies such as convention bureaux (CVBs) and professional conference organisers (PCOs).

When the comparative advantages of the destination are brought into the question, different examples of comparison criteria applied by academics become apparent. Speaking broadly, Bernini (2009) applies a number of determinants consisting of hospitality, accommodation, convention services, educational institutions, transport, population and local resources while clustering the Italian convention destinations. Qu*et al.*'s (2000) comparative criteria involves three main groups as accommodation, convention facilities and others including accessibility, safety & hygiene, infrastructural system and image as the major competitive factors.

From a detailed perspective, **accessibility** of a destination is one of the most important determinants as the distance/duration of travel and the frequency of connections to the destination composes the main concern of the decision makers (Crouch & Ritchie; 1998). Oppermann and Chon (1997) highlights the transportation saying that particularly air hub destinations are often more favourable sites to meet because attendees have fewer connections to make. In addition to this, the **cost** of convention venue is a major factor (Crouch & Louviere; 2004). Van Hessel (1980) argues that not only the venue but also the cost of living in the destination affects the member satisfaction during and after the meeting. The **physical facilities** that the destination provides like the quality and the quantity of the accommodation as well as **technological infrastructure** of the meeting facilities such as audio visual facilities are pointed out as important factors (Var*et al.*; 1985, Shaw & Lewis; 1991).

As is the case with many hospitality industry interactions, the meeting business combines intangible service with tangible products and facilities (Hinkin& Tracey; 2003). Hence, due to the developments of facilities, venues, hotels or overall destinations need to find ways to distinguish themselves (Breiter&Milman; 2006). So putting the tangible assets aside, Davidson and Cope (2003, p. 110-112) point out the **destination image** as an important factor. Hankinson (2004) identifies several attributes composing the image of a destination, including activities and facilities, history, heritage and culture, locals' characteristics. Last but not least **other attractions** such as entertainment, shopping, sightseeing, recreation and organised tours are found significant (Crouch & Louviere; 2004).

DATA COLLECTION



The map of data collection area

Data is collected in Copenhagenwhich is the 6th most popular congress city in the world (ICCA; 2009) and its 4 suburbansurrounding; those were (as shown in the map on the left) North Zealand, Southern Denmark (the island of Fyn and southern part of Jutland) and the island of Bornholm and the city of Malmö(in the south-west coast of Sweden, in the Øresund Region).The criteria of the chosen areas for being peripheral to Copenhagen reflect accessibility in terms of duration of the transportation regardless the mode of transportation. All these areas are in approximately one-hour-distance to Copenhagen in various transportation choices (e.g. railway, airway or main land road).

Data collection method was semi-structure interviews andthe participants profile consisted of 13 tourism professionals in total, such as the representatives of 4 PCOs that operated in both international and domestic market, 2 destination marketing companies (DMCs), the CVBs of 5 regions and an academic. Regarding the ambiguity in the literature, participants were asked to define a suburban area. Secondly, in order to gain a better understanding of the dynamics of the industry, the collaboration and different roles attributed to different groups of players were examined. The next part of the interviews consisted of the discussion on the opportunities and the challenges of suburban areas as well as urban centres. The last part of the interviewing process was composed of identifying the target market that is subject to this research. This research attempted to enlighten the competitive advantages of the suburban areas in comparison to the urban centres. Therefore, describing the competitive advantages of suburban areas is attempted by tracing the advantages of and challenges for both the suburban areas and the urban centres.

DATA ANALYSIS

Challenges for Business Tourism in suburban areas

First of all, the uncertainty of the interviewees proved right the previous research as the participants had difficulties to define the suburban areas.

> *'It also depends where you start the city, I mean it depends...For example, Copenhagen….it has a … of max 1 km from the Town Hall and that 1 km that is the city centre and then anything else is outside the city centre. It depends where the city is… London which is a combination of eight different towns merged together of course the city centre is much broader… When you are in suburban in London terms, you probably need to go further out…'(Participant 5)*

As it is illustrated above, every city is different from each other, therefore it was impossible to define a certain geographical distance that can be common for every single destination.

Regarding the factors affecting site selection process, it was observed that suburban areas experienced several difficulties. Apart from the fact that the participants confirmed the previous research on the fact that accessibility is a major obstacle for developing business tourism in suburban areas, Copenhagen appeared to have anovershadowing effect on the suburban areas. This resulted in the fact that suburban destinations were less attractive in comparison to urban centres (e.g. Copenhagen, Aalborg, Aarhus):

> *And there is a culture in this very small country that the distance from Copenhagen to here is longer than the distance from here to Copenhagen… meaning that if you want to take people out of Copenhagen, it is sceptical for them; 'are we go in the countryside??!!??' 'It is Fynen or is it Jutland all the way?' 'They simply don't want to… In the same way, to set up a meeting in Odense in Middelfart and Kolding at 09:00 for a person from Copenhagen and then they look at it as you must be kidding. But if you have a meeting in Copenhagen, we can come from the rest of Denmark ☺' (Participant 4)*

As demonstrated above, perception of a distance might differ from person to person. This appears as an evidence for Hall's(2005) discussionon the intervening opportunities model as the opportunities in Copenhagen was found more attractive compared to the opportunities in Southern Denmark therefore Copenhagen overshadowed this suburban region as well as the other regions.

The Influencers of the industry

It was indicated by the representatives of the PCOs and destination marketing companies (DMC) that although they considered all the suppliers while making an offer to a buyer, however their first priority would be their contracted suppliers. The reason behind this was given as they had a trust relationship in the sense of quality of the offered services as illustrated below:

> *'…we can work with every hotel in the city, I wouldn't 'NOT try' something else but I guess that we are…we have this twenty four hour rule, we need to answer our customers back within twenty four hours so sometimes if we do have a lot of requests of course it is easier for us to work together with the hotels that we know for instance and that we know the prices often, they have, you know, all the descriptions ready and everything…' (Participant 10)*
>
> *'we would probably recommend the one we are close… so we know them, some we know better, and especially those we are little unsure about especially for ex. Last time you've seen it and it was a little worn And we contact the hotel and ask them if they've done any refurbishing because obviously we don't want to sell something totally worn but yeah, we would probably… we would give the 3 options umm… but... we would choose probably 3 options that we know pretty well already and so we would have a working relationship with them…' (Participant 5)*
>
> *'…all the suppliers that we've done framework agreement, we have been there, we have met the employees, we have usually had a coffee or a dinner or whatever so we can say to our clients that this*

hotel is perfect for this thing, they had very nice rooms and the food is okay, we can recommend it for this kind of meeting…' (Participant 6)

PCOs held a high power in the decision of what hotels or venue to be offered to the buyers. If PCO experience broken promises and inappropriate behaviour during or after contracting a hotel or venue, future meeting business will be impacted negatively (Lee &Hiemstra; 2001). Therefore, sustaining strong relationships with the PCOs as well as keeping them satisfied becomes crucial.

Besides, regarding the nature of PCOs as they were for-profit organisations, it became apparent that they tend not to prefer suburban destinations when delivering their offerings to their clients. As shown below, the fact that was not lucrative because of the extra costs and difficulties due to transportation was given as the reason for this.

*'…because the investment to be built in would be very expensive and customers would always prefer to stay closer to the city centre. You can see for example, in Helsingør, *** in Helsingør, is a very nice venue but it's too far away- one hour from the airport. That's too far. For local business, of course you can have it all over, but not for international business, very rare, of course it exists but I wouldn't put my money in it…' (Participant 7)*

In other words, PCOs and DMCs were influencing actors which were at the same time companies seeking for generating profits from their businesses, therefore preferences of destinations also depended on the return on their investment. Accordingly they wanted to carry out their business in the destination that they can earn more money.

Besides, CVBs appeared to have a vital importance as the majority of the larger conference and congress buyers initially contacted and the requests from these types of buyers were distributed to PCOs as it was indicated that the larger congresses and conferences were taken via CVBs.

'…I would say two or three conferences per year we will have through the CVB like Wonderful Copenhagen but…but of course we will have GOOD conferences by this way…' (Participant 8)

'…international clients usually go to a CVB, so therefore it's very very important that the city has a good convention bureau to sell the city. For the larger association it is usually like this…' (Participant 6)

It becomes evident that the Bernini's (2009) argument on the CVBs and their professional contribution to the destinations is supported by the results of this research as the role of CVBs in which they act as a uniting body for demand and the supply side of the industry (Fesenmaier*et al*.; 1992) Hence, this is consistent to Weber's (2001) claim saying that CVBs are more likely to deal with larger conferences.

Factors affecting the success of the suburban business tourism destinations

Transportation was pointed out as the most important factor for a destination to be chosen by the potential buyers with a high agreement among the interviewees as shown below:

'…It has to be very easy to go there, especially flights, because 90-95% of our guests are flying, so… it is very important that we have an airport with a lot of destinations…' (Participant 3)

The duration of the travel was given as a reason for this as the participants might not find it worthwhile to attend if they had to travel approximately one more hour after their arrival to the airport. Respondents emphasised the importance of being located near by a hub airport with frequent flights to and from other hubs in the world. So, these findings were congruent to what was found in the previous research (Crouch & Ritchie; 1998, Oppermann& Chon; 1997) on the accessibility of a destination.

Respondents cited the lack of **capacity** for hosting the larger meetings and congressesas a weakness as well as the **quality** of servicestandards were claimed to be lower than urban centres as illustrated below:

*'…the facilities are not in the same standard as it is in Copenhagen, it is not as high standards as it is in new hotels built in Copenhagen, we don't have that on ***.' (Participant 3)*

Speaking generally, these factors mentioned so far can be classified as the *inhibiting factors* applied to the suburban destinations. On the other hand, some *advantageous factors* were also identified. Despite the fact that accessibility is stated as a major problem by the academics as well as the findings of this research; the major characteristics of suburban areas were pointed out by the respondent were the **remoteness**and the **isolation**as these areas are where people can be far from the noise of the traffic, hectic atmosphere of the city centres. Besides, respondents argued that the way of living in the suburban areas also differs from the way of living in city centres. Locals tend to adopt a **calm and relaxed lifestyle** in these areas. Apart from that, being close to the **nature** is also an advantage for the suburban areas. **Authenticity** of the suburban areas appeared as an interesting finding in which that the visitors have the chance for feeling the sense of the destination better, experiencing the culture of the country in these areas. This probably refers to the cosmopolitan structure of the urban centres.

Moreover, in the case of Copenhagen and its suburban areas, accommodation facilities in the suburban areas were found more flexible in terms of **servicescape** as more physical areas were available for additional attractions such as spa facilities, fitness centres. Finally, **price**had two-fold effect on the suburban destinations. First, it played a role as some of the conferences could not afford organising the meetings in the venues in the centre, therefore, they might have preferred exurban areas as the prices were relatively lower as seen below:

> *'…It is normally quite expensive in the city centre and of course some conferences do not have a lot of money, so that's the main target…' (Participant 3)*

Secondly, although, it appeared to be lower in the majority of the suburban destinations, some areas had to keep the prices high in order to balance their economy. This might look like a disadvantage yet, in the sense of promoting the **exclusiveness**; price can be transformed into an advantage.

Identified target market for the suburban destinations

Identifying the target market showed a different form in this study compared to previous research as the criteria for choosing a destination tends to show a shift from more explicit factors (e.g. accessibility, price) to more implicit factors such as objectives of the meeting. The reason behind this is that the participantsdescribed their target market as the groups;

- has relatively small number of attendees
- that aim to keep the attendees close to each other
- that aim to keep the attendees' focus only on the meeting
- that spend at least one overnight stay in the destination
- that expects high participation of the attendees
- that aim a high concentration on the mutual aim

Regarding the structure of the meetings, these characteristics apply to the domestic corporate meetings; the Danish corporate meetings market in this case.

> *'…suburban cities, like the one we just talked about, there would be from mainly domestic Danish market, maybe from some Scandinavian markets, Sweden, maybe Norway, more to the closer markets. That's where I believe they have a larger chance of success…' (Participant 9)*

As it is seen above, Scandinavian market was also shown as an alternative for domestic market. This evidence supports the fact discussed in distance decay argumentation stated in earlier sections as Scandinavian countries are closer to Denmark; therefore there is a high possibility in Scandinavian countries to attract potential business tourists rather than the rest of Europe or the world. Another finding became apparent was that the participants identified the unique characteristics and attitude of their target market which is domestic corporate market in this sense:

> *'…the typical Danish values that things will be cared out in a good way, in an effective way, in a nice way… everybody can say that in a well-organised country as Denmark…' (Participant 1)*

As it is seen above, a typical Danish tradition of organising everything in a smooth way, making things done seamlessly occurred and destination in question communicated marketing activities by using this unique element of their target market.

DISCUSSION

Despite the challenges identified, the results of this research have shown that suburban areas have a potential to develop business tourism. The key to utilise this potential and develop fruitful business tourism is to market the area internally and externally. The findings of this research enable to develop the following model. As seen, the first part of the internal marketing consists of a strong collaboration among stakeholders. This collaboration could be structured by bringing different actors in different suburban areas that are in a close proximity and could be led by a local CVB. This may enable to overcome the overshadow issue as they will be more visible altogether.

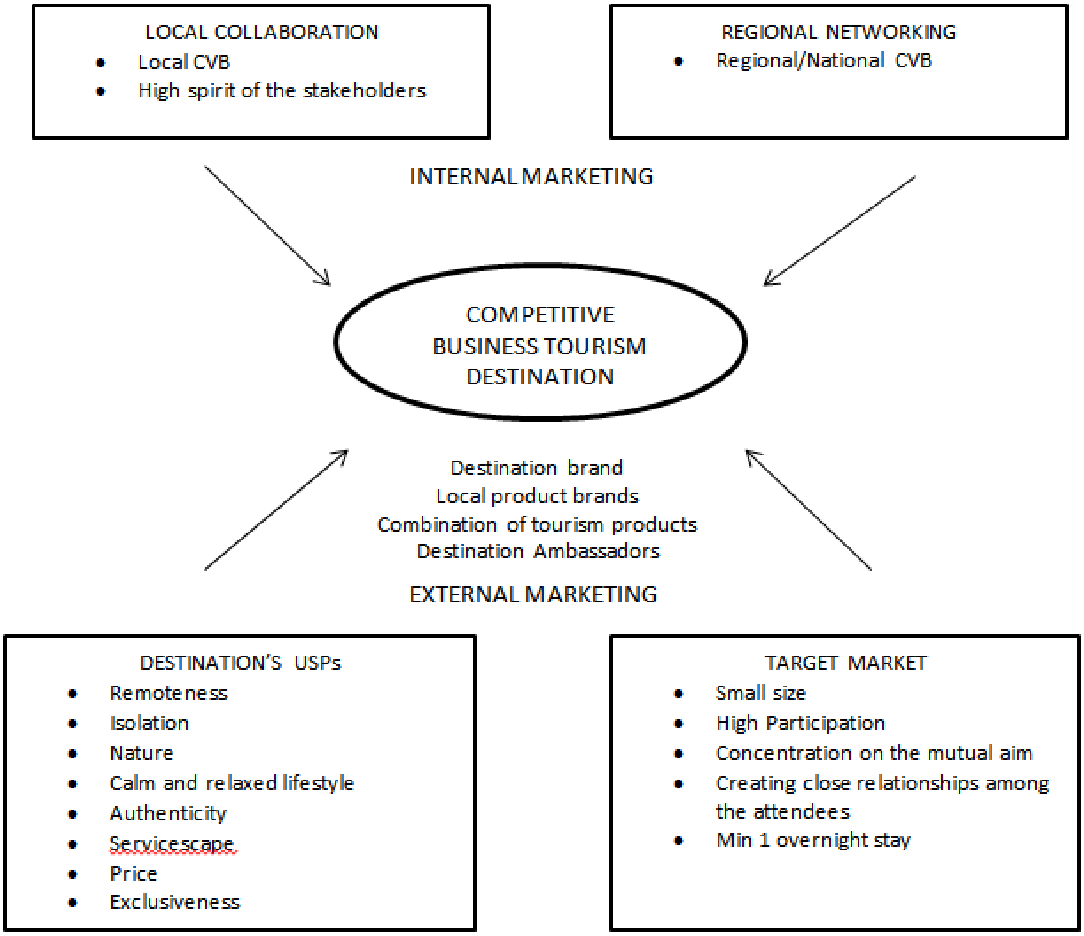


Figure 1.The proposed marketing model of business tourism in a suburban area

When the question 'who influences more than the others?' is sought for, CVBs are in a key position regarding their nature of being the first contact in a destinationwhilst PCOs hold a high level of bargaining power as the customers' preferences strongly relied on PCOs' perspectives and experience unless the customer had a previous experience in the destination.

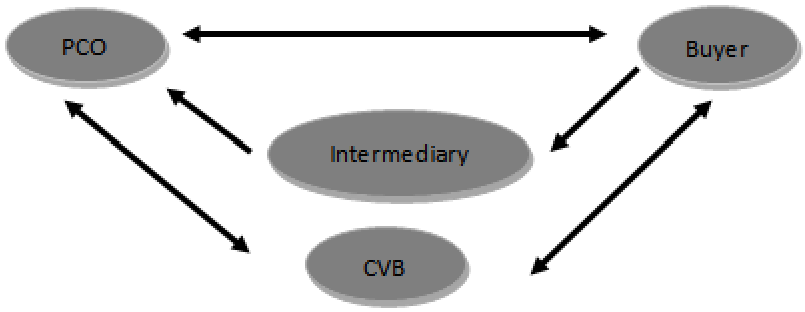


Figure 2. The interrelations among the stakeholders of business tourism

The figure above demonstrates the interaction between the buyer and the PCOs at the initial contact. Buyer refers to corporate organisations or associations and in most cases they contacted to the local PCO directly. In some other cases, the buyers might prefer to get in touch with another intermediary that could be a DMC in the final destination or another PCO in their own destination or they might contact to the final destination's CVB. This indicates the importance of a collaboration that involves in the local CVB, regional CVB and the PCOs in respect to their influence on the buyers.

The second part refers to the relationships in a wider network environment in the spatial geography. Networking for the area within the wider region will bring the necessary support to facilitate the infrastructure to accommodate more business meetings. The networking within the internal environment is the key to gain sufficient local support from the collaboration.

On the other hand, the external marketing refers to targeting the right segment of business tourists and offering the unique selling propositions (USPs) of the suburban areas through the potential marketing communication channels. This research shows that applying thorough marketing practices would enable to craft the right marketing mix of the destination. Yet, all these activities do not make any sense unless the destination addresses the right audience. Therefore, finally, the importance of targeting the right market is emphasised and the following matrix may help the destinations to identify the best-fit target market.

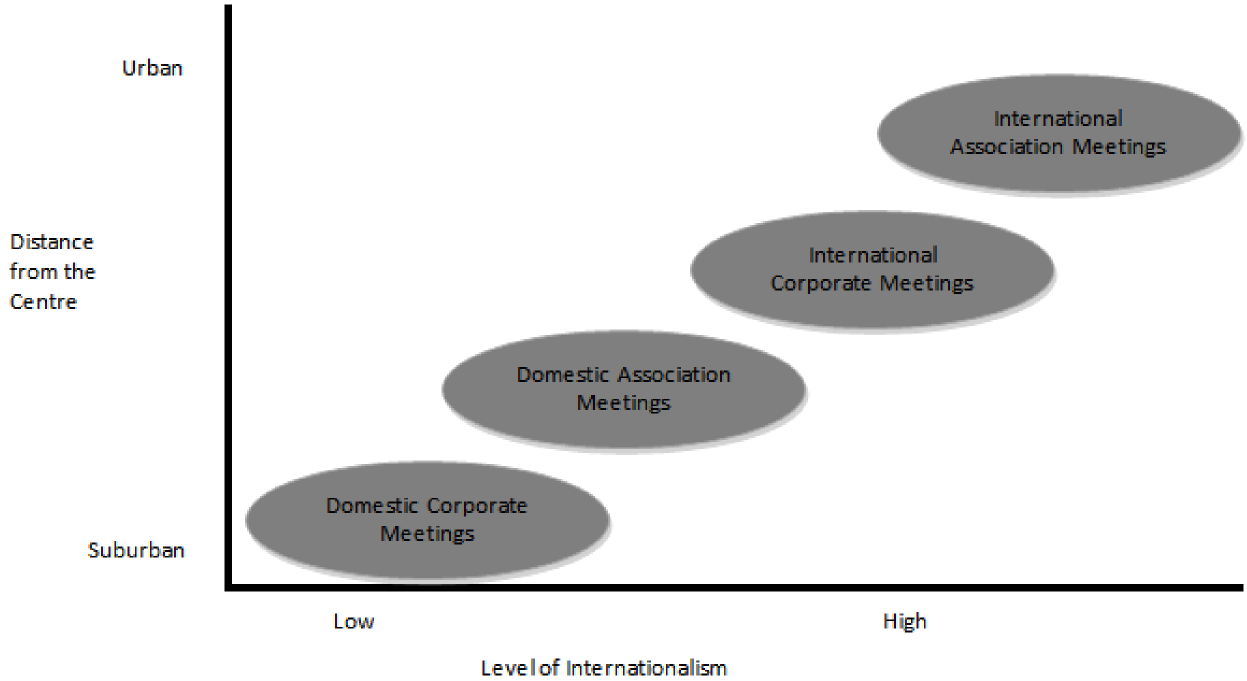


Figure 3. Distance-Internationalism Matrix

CONCLUSION

This paper aimed to identify the potential for business tourism in suburban areas by taking the subject into account from a marketing standpoint. This research has confirmed several points that existed previously. However it contributed to the literature with new findings. For instance, despite the fact that the formerly identified success criteria were accurate, it occurred in this study that it does not necessarily apply to every destination in the world. Stemming from the findings, this study discussed the potential for business tourism in the suburban destination and came to the conclusion that with a thoroughly applied marketing strategy, these destinations hold a high potential of success.

Still, several elements remained as unexamined.For instance, the influence of various stakeholders such as CVB and PCOs appeared at an unexpectedly high level. It was impossible to investigate this determinant within the scope of this study and it is left to be examined in another piece of research.Besides, numerous communication strategies (branding strategies, combining different tourism products) can be used for applying a marketing strategy to peripheral destinations and is suggested for a detailed research work. Findings also showed that external factors like tax regulations, currency exchange rates occurred as a challenge, particularly speaking on the international market, however in order to evaluate to what extent these factors effect business tourism, it is suggested for another study.

Despite the fact that domestic corporate meetings market is found to be a best-fit target segment of suburban areas; mostly the associations but also the corporations tend to rotate within various destinations for every next meeting, yet, destinations have a small chance for retaining the same association to organise the meeting every year in a row. Therefore, meeting planners are in the search for new destinations which were not tried before by themselves, accordingly destinations occur - so to speak- as a 'pass-by' place for each meeting. This creates an opportunity to expand the business tourism in suburban areas towards the association meetings markets. Yet, in that case, the analysis of buyer profile may be required in detail; therefore, it is suggested for future research.

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LINKING ONLINE COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES TO DESTINATIONS' PERFORMANCE: AN EXPLORATIVE

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ABSTRATCT:

This paper is part of the ongoing debate on the relationship between perceived image and attractiveness of the destination and communication effectiveness. Within this stream of studies we focused on the relationship online communication through destinations' tourist portals and destinations' strategic positioning.

The characteristics of destinations' websites are assessed byadapting a framework of analysis already tested in previous academic studies which evaluates the contents of tourism websites according to different perspectives of analysis: the customer perspective, the marketing effectiveness perspective and the information perspective.

Destinations' performance is measured through four indicators: tourism development; tourism maturity; online network density; price competitiveness.

Results show that nowadays websites' friendliness and the attractiveness are a sort of prerequisite of tourism portals, while there is still room for future improvement in the areas of market segmentation and social interaction. Moreover, there are significant variations of the effectiveness of official tourism websites according to destination tourism performance. Effective websites are: developed by cities with a high tourism maturity – measured by the ratio international arrivals/inhabitants -, well connected to the worldwide web, and managed by mass market destinations. The analysis shows no significant results regarding the relationships between tourism development and websites' effectiveness.

KEY WORDS:

Destination management, destination marketing, online communication strategies, destination reputation, performance

INTRODUCTION:

According to the literature on place competition (Dwyer and Chulton, 2003; Gordon and Buck, 2005; Markusen and Shrock, 2006), cities and territories have to work hard to distinguish themselves from other destinations in order to attract different targets, governmental funding and corporate inward investment. Previous studies pointed out that destination's attractiveness strongly depends on the perceived image of the destination (Chen and Tsai, 2007; Bigne et al, 2001; Lee et al, 2005; De Carlo, and D'Angella 2009).The growing and increasingly rapid diffusion of networking technologies over the past ten years has greatly strengthened the role of online communications as a driver for improvement of the perceived image. Among communication channels, the web is no longer an option, but it has become an “information gateway” for destinations (Choi et al. 2007). The portal is the preferred means of communication for destinations. It plays a crucial role in determining their attractiveness to both the local operators, and tourists. As regards local players, the official tourism website supports them in two ways: first, it allows individual players to team up to offer a joint bid; second, it works as a platform to increase the awareness of local tourism firms on the international market. In other words, it is an accelerator of competitiveness and a driver to boost cooperation (aggregation of services into complex tourism products), without constraining the opportunity for single firms to compete even on their own on a large scale. As regards tourists, the destination official tourism website enriches the experience of visitors before, during and after the journey, it gathers consensus around the destination (Gretzel, Law and Fuchs, 2010) and it strengthen destination’s reputation (Go and Govers, 2009, Stepchenkova and Morrison, 2006).

As will be detailed in the following paragraph, in recent years, numerous studies have focused on the effectiveness of online communication through tourist portals with a dual focus: the quality of the site, on the one hand, and effectiveness of interaction with users on the other.Regarding the first approach, some scholars developed models to assess the quality of the interactions with customers and the effects of these interaction on the customer satisfaction and the behavioral intentions. Still less explored is the relationship between the quality of communication through the portals of destination and the positioning of the destination in terms of results.According to this second areas of studies, this paperfocuses on the relationships between the quality of DMOs’ online communication strategies and destination’s performance on the tourism market. Online communication strategies are investigated analyzing the characteristics of the website, using one of the best tourism website Known framework for evaluation, the modified Balanced Scorecard (MBSC) by Morrison, Taylor , Morrison and Morrison (1999), adapted for this study to DMO’s official tourism portals. Destinations’ performance is measured through 4 indicators: the tourism development of destination measured by the evolution of the number of international arrivals (UNWTO rankings) in the period 2008-2010; the tourism maturity of the destination measured by the ratio arrivals/inhabitants; the online network density of the destination measured by the total number links to official tourism website provided by Google (link popularity); the price competitiveness of the destination measured by theHotel Pricing Index.

In the following sections of the paper we reported a brief literature review on the effectiveness of online communication strategies through website evaluation and on the relevance of this driver for destination’s competitiveness. Then in section three we explain the research methods adopted for the empirical analysis, in sections four and five we describe the findings and the discussion of the empirical analysis, and finallyin section six we point out conclusions and limitations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The paper explores the link between destinations’ online communication strategies and destination’s tourism performance in light of the digital environment which is shaping the rules of the game in the competitiveness at destination level. As stated previously, this study analyzes the online communication of destinations focusing on the main instrument of this communication: the official tourism destination website.

Website evaluation is an emergent research area which in the last ten years has been explored by both qualitative and quantitative contributions. The first type of studies assesses the quality of the site in light of factors such as brand, usability, usage patterns, while the latter measure the overall quality of the website through performance index or scores. Law, Qi and Buhalis (2010) propose an interesting and comprehensive overview of these studies and a critical assessment of the methodologies they applied. Within this rich set of contributions, the analysis of the destination website occupies a significant place (Morrison et al, 1999; So and Morrison, 2004; Choi and Morrison, 2005; Benckerdoff and Black, 2000; Frew, 1999, Park and Gretzel, 2007; Qi, Law, Buhalis, 2008, Wober, 2003).

Li and Petrick (2007) pointed out two basic trends in the development of these studies on the effectiveness of the website as a marketing tool for the improvement of the attractiveness of destinations. The first branch of study focuses on the design, content and other aspects that increase the attractiveness of the website from a touristsperspectives (Cai, Card and Col,e, 2004; O'Connor, 2004). The second focuses on the type of interaction with users aiming at assessing the quality with regard to purchasing decisions by customers (Liang and Lai, 2002, Heijden and Verhagen, 2002). An interesting contribution to the research tools of qualitative analysis of websites is proposed by Park and Gretzel (2007). The authors make a comparative analysis of different approaches to evaluate the quality of websites in the literature and they identified nine key factors critical for website success, highlighting the limitations still existing in defining the quality of the websites as a theoretical construct, and consequently in its measurement.

One of the most effective performance measurement of destinations' websites proposed in the literature is that developed by Morrison,Taylor, Morrison and Morrison (1999), which is based on Kaplan and Norton's (1999) Balanced Scorecard. The modified Balanced Scorecard (MBSC) model still includes the classical four dimensions of the company performance of the BSC adapting them to tourist and hospitality website. This new model allows comparingwebsites' performance according to the technical functionality, the customer friendly and usability, the marketing effectiveness, and the level of information offered. This model of analysis has been enriched later (Mills and Morrison, 2002) and it has been widely disseminated and applied in subsequent studies (Douglas and Mills, 2004; Feng, Morrison Ismail, 2003; Kim, Morrison and Mills, 2004, Myung, Morrison and Taylor, 2005).

D-Web is the version of that theoretical model we used in our study, which is explained in details in the next section. It is an effective framework to measure the quality of the online communication through the analysis of destinations' tourism websites for several reasons. First, it highlights priorities in the improvement areas according to the four dimensions of analysis. Second, this model allows researchers carrying out dynamic comparison of a single website over time to evaluate its evolution. Third, this framework provides benchmark analysis within competitive set of destinations.

This paper applies this model to explore the relationship between the quality of the online communication provided by tourism destinations and their positioning on the market. Nowadays every city developed an online communication strategy; however, the results of these strategies are not always satisfying. Thus, it is interesting to go in depth into the link between those strategies and the competitive positioning of tourism destinations. Which are the most effective destinations according in terms of online communication? To what extent the tourism maturity, the level of tourism development, the popularity on the web, the price competitive affect the quality of the destination's online communication as defined above?

To this concern, we check the following hypotheses:

Hp 1: the website effectiveness differs according to the tourism development of the destination
Hp 2: the website effectiveness differs according to the online network density of the destination
Hp 3: the website effectiveness differs according to the tourism maturity of the destination
Hp 4: the website effectiveness differs according to the price competitivenes the destination

RESEARCH METHODS

Research design

The characteristics of different kinds of destination websites are assessed byadapting a model proposed by Morrison (2003) for the analysis of convention bureaus' websites to official destinations'tourism websites. The model developed by Morrison follows a balanced scorecard approach comprised of four perspectives of analysis, each of them related to a specific research question. The adapted model still includes 4 perspectives of analysis but rephrased according to the new focus of the analysis, which shifts from convention bureaus to DMOs. The following table summarizes the components of the original and adapted models.

Morrison's model for convention bureaus' analysis	New model adapted for official tourism websites' analysis
Technical: is the website technically sound in design, and is it effectively registered with the search engines?	***Technical:*** how much dense is the network of online connections of the website?
Marketing: does the website effectively follow the key principles of marketing?	***Marketing:***is the website an effective tool for the promotion of the destination?
Internal: can the website be easily maintained by its sponsoring convention center?	***Destination information***: how much detailed and comprehensive is the information on the destination provided by the website?
Customer: is the website easy to locate, attractive, useful, and user-friendly for meeting planners?	***Customer:*** is the website user-friendly?

The technical perspective has been focused only on the network density of the website, which is considered as part of the destination performance rather than as part of the website effectiveness because the number of links provided by google depends not only on the willingness of the website to be connected in the www, but also on the willingness of other websites to be connected with the destination. Thus, we used this variable for the second part of our empirical analysis and not as part of the D-web.

The marketing perspective is quite unchanged and it aims at measuring how effective the website is in promoting the destination.

The internal perspective has been removed because researchers had no access to this type of information. We deemed interesting to replace it with a new category of variables which analyzes the depth and the accuracy of the information regarding the destination (facilities, transports, events, attractions, infrastructures, ecc.) addressing specific targets (leisure tourists, travel professionals, meeting planners, media).

Finally, the new model maintained the customer perspective, which in both models focuses on the capability of the website to be attractive and easy to use by the different targets.

The model offers a comprehensive check list of the elements to be considered for website evaluation. D-Web score is a synthetic score which measures the overall the quality and completeness of the website with reference to the 86 variables. The websites' evaluation generates mainly dummy variables (Yes = 1, no = 0) as questions seek to establish the existence of specific elements of the website. The only exception is link popularity, which is measured by questions that require a response with a value between 1 and 5 (5 = very high diffusion, 1 = low uptake). Thus, the D-Web scores can range from a minimum of 0 to a maximum of 90 points.

We appliedthe model to a sample which includes 59 top urban destinations according to Euromonitor International's Top City Destinations Ranking and the top 10 Italian cities for arrivals.

Data are collected in May 2009 by a triple check, which aims at reinforcing the external validity of the results.Moreover, the choice to adopt a check list instead of open-ended questions assures high intercoderreliability, however, we use a pilot case as coders' training to ensure the application of the same evaluation criteria by researchers (Lombard et al. 2002).

Research variables

The variables used for these analyses are the followings:

- *D-web*: it measures the overall effectiveness of tourism destinations' websites.

- *The tourism maturity.* It is assessed through the ratio arrivals/inhabitants for each destination.
- *The virtual network densityof the destination.* It is evaluated counting the number of links provided by Google writing the website url as keyword.
- *The tourism development*, measured dividing the sample into 2 sub-groups: growing and declining destinations. Growing destinations show an increase in arrivals from 2006 to 2009, while in declining destinations tourists are decreasing over that period.
- *The price competitiveness of accommodation services*. It is measured by the Hotel Price Index (2009).

The data collection was carried out from May 2009 to January 2011. In particular, the effectiveness of websites,the network density and statistical data on international arrivals were assessed in June 2009, while updated statistical data concerning inhabitants and international arrivals in 2009 were collected later, between the end of 2010 and the beginning of 2011.

Statistical analysis

Data analysis aims at evaluating the relationships between the D-web score – which means website effectiveness – and tourism performance. To carry out this second part of our empirical research we opted for t-test and ANOVA tests.

RESEARCH RESULTS

The first part of the analysis measures the D-web score for each destination included in the sample. The best performers are reported in the following table.

Table 1: Top D-web performers

	Singapore	**Toronto**	**Vienna**	**Vancouver**	**Montreal**	**Top 5 mean**	**Sample mean**
Customer perspective (max 20)	18	18	18	17	16	17	14
Marketing perspective (max 32)	27	26	26	27	27	27	18
Destination information perspective (max 34)	31	31	30	30	30	30	23
Total D-web score (max 86)	76	75	74	74	72	74	55

The leading tourism website is Singapore, followed by Toronto, Vienna and two other Canadian cities: Vancouver and Montreal.The average website effectiveness of these top performers is 74/86, while the average evaluation of the total sample is 55/86. To better understand the gap between the top five and the other cities in the sample we divided the D-web score according to the three perspectives of analysis. The customer perspective shows a little gap between the top 5 (17/20) and the overall average value (14/20). That's because the customer section evaluates the friendliness and the attractiveness of the website, which nowadays are a sort of prerequisites for official destinations' portals. On the contrary, the gap in the other two components of the D-web, which represent the core elements of the online communication strategy, is more relevant.

The marketing perspective registers the highest difference between the top five (27/32) and the total sample (18/32). A little bit less large but still significant is the gap regarding the destination information perspective (30/34 for top 5 and 23/34 as average value).These gaps suggest the need of further efforts to empower the online marketing effectivenessof the destinations analyzed. To this concern, we identify best practices of the top 5 portals which can be considered a starting point to improve less effective websites.

As concern the marketing effectiveness of the websites, Montreal website proposes a detailed segmentation of its offer, which addresses several targets (Montreal at a glance, cuisine, festivals, culture, urbanity, architecture, romance, nightlife, nature, family fun, fashion & design and sport). Videos are quite used to capture the attention of the tourist and give a realistic impression of the local attractions. Particularly effective is the virtual tour (accessible from the home page and from the section "Montreal tv") which dips the audience into the real city. The video makes the tourism experience tangible before the journey and it incentives the choice of Montreal as tourism destination among hesitant potential tourists.

The segmentation of the offer in some cases becomes personalization. Singapore and Vienna allow tourists to create a personal travel plan according to their special interests, the length of the trip, the budget and other variables, suggesting customized tips. Among the two, Singapore leverages more on the web attitude of its tourists, proposing a forthcoming free application "YourSingapore Guide Mobile App" which combines reservations tools, travel guides and an updated calendar of events. (It will be available for download on iPhone &Android in the second half of 2011).

In all the top performers the interaction through social media is guaranteed by facebook, twitter, youtube (with a dedicated channel), RSS, and podcasts. However, blogs are present only in Vancouver and Montreal websites.

Even in terms of destination information perspective we can notice some best practices. In all the 5 websites, the mix of information regards facilities, transportations, and infrastructures. These contents are segmented according to the several tourist targets identified by the website itself.

The general travel information, addressing mainly leisure tourists, is enriched by specific contents for meeting planners, travel professionals, media and other specific tourist segments. Singapore and Vancouver offer special guides to meeting planners, providing information about venues, accessibility and facilities for congresses and conventions. In Singapore's website there is an entire section dedicate to business events, which allows to submitting requests and enquires to the convention bureau. Even Vancouver developed other websites, linked to the home page of the official tourism website, with specific contents regarding meeting, travel trade and media. In each of them people can get in touch with appropriate departments of the DMO, local firms and institutions to gather information or start a transaction.

In the second part of the analysis we focus on the relationships between the websites' effectiveness, which summarizes the destination's communication strategy, and tourism performance. Results confirm propositions 1, proposition 2 and 4, while proposition 3 is not supported.

Table 2: T-test and ANOVA test on D-WEB scores

Hp	Grouping variable		N	Mean	t	sig. (2-tailed)	Hp verification
Hp 1	Tourism maturity (int. arrivals/inhabitants)	Low	29	51.8	-2.0	0.051	VERIFIED
		High	29	58.1			
Hp2	Virtual network density(Google)	1,0	21	48.6	5.4	0.000	VERIFIED
		1,3	2	52.8			
		1,7	1	25.3			
		2,0	11	50.2			
		3,0	5	57.2			
		3,3	1	51.0			
		3,7	2	55.2			
		4,0	6	64.9			
		4,3	1	73.5			
		4,3	2	68.8			
		5,0	7	68.3			
		Total	59	54.7			
Hp 3	Tourism development (variation of intern. arrivals 2006-2009)	declining	24	54.9	-0.3	0.973	NOT VERIFIED
		Growing	24	55.0			
Hp 4	Hotel price competitiveness	Low	21	60.9	2.7	0.011	VERIFIED
		High	21	51.5			

DISCUSSION

Our analyses led to the identification ofsignificant variation of the effectiveness of official tourism websites (D-web score), which is the result of the destination online communication strategy,according to destination tourism performance. Many studies consider tourism performance as the result of destination strategies and activities. Even if there are clear evidences about this relationship, it is difficult to deny that, at the same time, performance affectsin some ways destination strategies – and thus even the online communication strategy - because theyprovide information that destination managers use to make future decisions.Following this second perspective, results show that the effectiveness of the websites synthesised by the D-web score varies according to some key performance indicators at destination level.

Regarding the first hypothesis, from the analyses emerge that are cities with a high tourism maturity – measured by the ratio international arrivals/inhabitants -those with the most effective tourism websites. This means that internet is considered a mandatory communication channelfordestinations with a clear tourism vocation because it allows to reach and to maintain high volumes and high market shares.

In terms of relationship between D-web score and the network density, it seems that effective websites correspond to popular websites, which suggests the idea that the density of the network is a reward for successful portals. In other words, the higher the effectiveness of the website, the higher the number of firms, consortia, museums, institutions and other public bodies which deem it to be a good commercial partner or an effective awareness booster and want to be direct linked to it. At the same time, a high effectivenessgenerates high number of contacts that increase a positive word of mouth that draw the attention of potential partners.

Finally, from the analyses emerge a negative correlation between average hotel prices and D-web score. In this perspective it seems that destinations with an upper scale positioning are less pushed to invest on their websites, while mass market destinations, which attract a complex mix of tourists, signal their price competitiveness through the tourism website, which is typically used by low cost tourists.Moreover, the business model of these kind of destinations is based on low margins and high volumes and, thus, the web, as a direct channel is preferred to indirect and more expensive distribution channels. To this concern, we deem that in the future even niche destinations will implement effective portals because Internet, as information channel, has become an established massive and pervasive practice for all tourism segments that make up the market and thus also for segments with high spending power.

The third hypothesis is the only one which generates not significant empirical results. We deem that we cannot relate the website effectiveness to the level of tourism development because of the multiple functions the portal covers (communication tool, distribution channel, B2B transactions, …),which are important regardless of the stage of tourism development that the destination is going through.

CONCLUSIONS AND LIMITATIONS

This paper is part of the ongoing debate on the relationship between perceived image and attractiveness of the destination and communication effectiveness. Within this stream of studies we focused on the relationship online communication through destinations' tourist portals and destinations' tourism performance.

Results show that nowadays websites' friendliness and the attractiveness is a sort of prerequisite of tourism portals, while there is still room for future improvement in the areas of market segmentation and social interaction. As for the relationship between performance and effectiveness of tourism destination websites, the ANOVA tests indicate that even if tourism websites are in a way mandatory for destinations, there is indeed a difference in the effectiveness of online communication in relation to some key performance indicators. This confirms the relevance of our approach focused on the relationship between online communication strategies and performance.

We are aware of the fact that our study holds some limitations, largely due to the features and the size of our sample, the characteristics of the check list used for websites evaluation – only dummy variables -, and to the great speed of innovation in websites and online applications which therefore makes this type of fieldworkdated quite soon.However, it is part of an ongoing research project and represents just the first step of our work on that topic. As concern the next steps, we are planning a new website analysis based on a larger sample and a new version of our D-web check list. In particular, we are developing a new section of the model focused on web 2.0 tools to better appreciate the interaction between destinations and tourists before, during and after their travel experience. Second, in the next survey websites will be five checked instead of triple checked to further reinforce the external validity of the results.Finally, new data allows us moving from a static study to a dynamic through the assessment of new variables measuring the improvement in website effectiveness over time.

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MANAGER'S AND CONSUMER'S PERCEPTIONS OF THE UK 'GREY' MARKET INTERNATIONAL PACKAGE HOLIDAY EXPERIENCE

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ABSTRATCT:

Research Question

What is the UK 'grey' market consumers' and tour operator management's perspectives on the overseas package holiday?

The UK package holiday market is valued at over £9.4 billion (Mintel 2010). Although over 14.4 million package holidays are expected to be consumed by UK travellers in 2010, the sector has been subject to very little academic research. This paper explores manager's and consumer's perceptions of the international package holiday experience. Review the consumer-decision making and marketing literature with a focus on the consumption element of the travel/tourism service experience.

Objectives

- *Analyse the experience of UK 'grey' market package holiday consumers;*
- *Examine perceptions of the package holiday experience from a consumer and tour operator perspective.*

The motivation for choosing this topic is to address a gap that appears to exist in the experience literature and explore practical implications that may result in an increased knowledge of the consumer experience. Although the challenges researchers face when trying to understand various kinds of consumer/tourist experiences have been discussed by authors such as Ritchie and Hudson (2009), a literature review did not identify any articles that simultaneously explored travel operator managers and consumers perceptions of the travel experience. Identifying and reducing gaps between operator's and consumer's perceptions may ultimately lead to an enhanced consumer experience. The paper focuses on the UK 'grey' market segment because it is a growth area of particular interest to industry. 'Grey' consumers have a high disposable income and more discretionary time than other cohorts and yet it is questionable as to whether the travel industry has a full understanding of their needs and wants (Lehto et al., 2008).

An international package holiday is a high value, unique and complex service that provides a fragmented experience which can take place over several months or more. For UK consumers, it commences in the UK with the main experiential element then taking place overseas. Two large vertically integrated operators (TUI and Thomas Cook) dominate the sector; however several mid market players and numerous small specialist operators also exist. These operators, along with the airlines, destination and accommodation providers and the travellers themselves co-produce the tourist's experience. The operators believe that they provide the services, systems and support but that the consumer makes their own experience. Guests *simultaneously interact with other guests and service providers and undertake additional excursions which add value to their experience.*

Theoretical Background.
The research sits within a marketing management and consumer behaviour theoretical framework. Consumer behaviour models have however been criticised in that they neglect experiential aspects, particularly those of extended service encounters and that there is an over focus on motivators and determinants behind the purchase (Decrop, 1999, Hudson 1999, Swarbrooke& Horner 2007). After reviewing the literature on customers experience within the travel and tourism industry, the paper describes the methodological approach undertaken during this research.

Methodology
Template analysis is used to analyse the results of semi structured interviews with 'grey' consumers on holiday in overseas resorts and interviews with the managers of a leading international leisure travel provider.

Main Results
Manager's and consumer's perceptions of the creation and perception of value and key contributors to the consumer's experience are evaluated. Implications for the travel industry are raised, limitations described and areas for further research identified.

KEY WORDS:
Package, Holiday, Consumer, Experience, Manager, 'Grey'

INTRODUCTION:

The package holiday sector is of a huge economic and social significance and one of the most important products in the tourism industry. The sector is expected to generate 30% of UK international travel trips and 40% of travel expenditure by 2015 (Mintel, 2010). Package holidays have however received little academic focus, as researchers are tending to explore the concepts of tourism and tourists rather than an actual holiday product or associated services. This research aims to fill that gap by exploring the provision of the overseas UK package holiday experience by a leading UK tour operator and also to explore views from UK 'Grey' market consumers.

The objectives of this paper are to:

- critically evaluate consumer behaviour in tourism theory;
- examine the UK package holiday product offering;
- explore how tour operators provide a package holiday and UK 'Grey' consumers package holiday experience;
- develop a framework that incorporates both industry managers and consumers perceptions of the experience; and
- discuss the results and develop conclusions

The paper explores the package holiday offering and some of its characteristics. A critique of consumer behaviour in tourism theory and their neglect of the experiential elements in the traditional models follow. Literature pertaining to the experience and focusing on the package holiday is briefly evaluated and the features of the 'Grey' market and their travel behaviour is discussed.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review that follows commences with an overview of the package holiday concept. Research that falls within a consumer behaviour theoretical framework and its theoretical limitations are discussed. Academic literature in the experiential field is also briefly explored and gaps in the literature on the package holiday experience identified. Features and characteristics of the target segment, the 'Grey' market are discussed.

- **The Package Holiday**

As a concept, the modern overseas package holiday is widely credited to VladimarRaitz, a Russian emigrant to the UK (Evans, Campbell & Stonehouse, 2003). In 1950 Raitz chartered a plane to Corsica and provided accommodation in the form of tents with camp beds, to make up the package (Bray, 2001). Raitz' s company was called Horizon holidays, which remains today a trading name of TUI Travel PLC. The legal definition of a package holiday is "the pre-arranged combination of at least two of the following components when sold or offered for sale at an inclusive price and when the service covers a period of more than twenty-four hours or includes overnight accommodation. a) Transport, b) accommodation, c) other tourist services not ancillary to transport or accommodation and accounting for a significant proportion of the package" (Legislation.gov.uk, 1992). Package Holidays are a type of Bundling; two or more products and/or services are put together in a single package, and at a special price (Guiltinan, 1987; Rewtrakunphaiboon & Oppewal, 2004). Sheldon &Mak(1987) and Ryan (1995) argue that the main reasons why tourists purchase package holidays are based on convenience and price. Rewtrakunphaiboon & Oppewal (2004) maintain that research into bundling has mostly been from an economic perspective focussing on a change of profits and that only a few studies have examined the concept from a consumer behaviour perspective.

The package holiday product is complex; the product is fragmented with the whole experience from holiday booking to return taking place over several months or more and in differing geographical regions (Leiper, 1979; Ryan, 2002). These characteristics coupled with the intangibility of the product, the provision of various parts by different service providers, the length of stay and the management of the experience all present challenges to service providers, although limited research has been conducted in this area. (Van Rekom, 1994; Baum, 2002; Cliff & Ryan, 2002; Crouch, Perdue & Timmermans, 2004; Swarbrooke & Horner, 2007; Frochot & Kreziak, 2009; Ritchie & Hudson, 2009).

Ryan (1995) cites Laing (1987) who claims that the primary reason for consumers taking package holidays was that little planning was needed and research showed that 16% of respondents felt that there was no risk involved. Laing (1987, p.179)state "A closer grasp is needed of the individual's perception of package tours and their associated meaning."

- **Consumer Behaviour in Tourism**

Erasmus, Boshoff & Rousseau(2001) argue that theorists such as Engel, Blackwell &Miniard(1995) believed that the dominant research perspective in consumer behaviour was logical positivism which had developed out of traditional consumer behaviour models that assume a sequential decision making process.The traditional or 'Grand Models' of consumer behaviour have been critiqued for having no time dimension (Hudson, 1999), because they are based on the purchase of goods rather than services and individual purchases rather than jointly made ones, (Gilbert, 1991)and because consumer decision making is not alwaysrational(Mowen & Minor, 2001).

Decrop(1999) further critiques these traditional models as they do not take into account emotions and feelings, while Hyde (2000) states that they neglect an explanation of consumer behaviours whilst on holiday. All these critiques give weight to interpretive approaches to understanding consumption and the experiences that consumers undergo (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982; Paul Peter & Olson, 2005).

Traditional models of the tourism decision making processes and consumption have been adapted by authors interested specifically in the tourism choice process and are evaluated by Swarbrooke& Horner (2007),Decrop(1999) and Hudson (1999). However, it appears that they too neglect the very important experiential element of consumption and focus primarily on motivators and determinants behind the purchase (i.e. the pre-holiday choice).

The study of consumer behaviour within the field of tourism is therefore complex.A package holiday uses up, for a majority of people their valuable annual leave entitlement with a cost that represents a sizeable proportion of the holiday maker's income (Seaton & Bennett, 1996). Any decision to purchase a holiday is of emotional significance in terms of a high spend, high involvement and high risk decision on an intangible, heterogeneous product which is also experiential and cannot be inspected in advance (Mayo & Jarvis, 1981; Mathieson & Wall, 1982; Goodall, 1991; Cai, Feng & Breiter, 2003). The paragraphs that follow explore and define the experience in more detail.

- **The Experience**

The pioneering work by (Pine & Gilmore, 1998) argued that economists had categorised experiences with services, "but experiences are a distinct economic offering, as different from services as services are from goods." (Pine & Gilmore, 1998). They introduced the concept of the fourth economic offering, 'The Experience Economy' as consumer's desire experiences. This concept can be explained by seeing the services as a stage and the intangible goods as props; this way, customers can be engaged in individual experiences.

Pine and Gilmore's work was not without criticism as research focus and subsequent publications moved towards a consumer focus. Staging performances became regarded as superficial and product centred (Holbrook, 2001; Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004). There was a move to adopt a more strategic approach to the experience based on shared values and allowing consumers to create their own experiences thus allowing them personal growth (Morgan & Watson, 2009).

Two strands of literature have therefore emerged; one from a management perspective and the other from a consumer perspective (Morgan & Watson, 2007; Jackson, Morgan & Hemmington, 2009). There is considerable challenge in bringing together the two perspectives in order to understand how to best manage tourism experiences. 'The Tourism and Leisure Experience, Consumer and Managerial Perspectives' text (Morgan, Lugosi & Ritchie, 2010)addresses these challenges in the tourism and leisure industries and discusses both perspectives. This paper goes further by exploring both consumer and management perspectives of the experience in the package holiday industry. Morgan and Watson (2007) claim that the convergence of the two perspectives shows that "consumer satisfaction can be seen as something that emerges over the course of the whole experience, rather than as a response to individual attributes of the service."

Jennings (2010, p.82) posits the question "How can experience providers remain competitive?" This is against the backdrop of an uncertain and unpredictable global economic environment. She advocates the development of quality experiences (Jennings & Nickerson, 2006) and value adding strategies endorsing the use of qualitative holistic studies to capture the multi-dimensional and multi-phase nature of experiences (Jennings, 2010). The demand for multidimensional research has been made my many authors (Andereck *et al.*, 2006; Jennings & Nickerson, 2006; Patterson & Pegg, 2009; Ritchie & Hudson, 2009; Volo, 2009). This makes this study particularly relevant, as the package holiday is an extended service experience which is multi-dimensional and multi-phased.

It is beyond the scope of this paper to explore the traditional foci of either motivations or post-evaluation research. However, quality and satisfaction clearly impact upon a consumer's evaluation of experience (which may or may not lead to loyalty) and any discussion without them would be incomplete. These concepts are therefore briefly explored here in the context of their relationship with the consumer experience. A tourist experience involves interactions with service deliverers, other guests and the wider host society and satisfaction is seen as a consequence of the tourist experience (Hanefors & Mossberg, 1999; Crouch, Perdue & Timmermans, 2004; Bowen & Schouten, 2008)

Previous researchers have studied the value of experience to a brand (Mitchell & Orwig, 2002a), the relationship experience (Payne *et al.*, 2009) and loyalty (Dimanche & Havitz, 1994)Given the highly competitive market place that tourism and hospitality organisations operate in, loyalty has become a key focus with providers seeking to continuously design and create enhanced experiences (Pullman & Gross, 2003). Frochot&Kreziak(2009) discuss the complexities of understanding satisfaction in an experiential context and over a long stay. Satisfaction clearly shares many characteristics related to a desirable experience but its relationship with behavioural intention and repeat booking have been questioned (Palmer, 2010). Palmer (2010, p.199) sees satisfaction and quality as "parallel or contributory constructs" to the experience. Consumer perceptions and judgements of events experienced and an evaluation of experiences can also be regarded as an outcome variable which affects satisfaction and future purchase behaviour of similar products (Woodside, 2000; Yuksel & Yuksel, 2002). These judgements will influence the sense of satisfaction and the likelihood of returning to a destination and 'word of mouth' to others (Crouch, Perdue & Timmermans, 2004).

- **The Package Holiday Experience**

A definition of the tourism experience is by no means straightforward and it seems that a definitional debate is still being undertaken(Andrews, 2009; Scott, Laws & Boksberger, 2009). Morgan (2006, p.305) has written extensively on the experience and his definition is one of the most straight forward; "The word experience is widely used in leisure, retail and other services sectors to describe the essence of what customers are seeking and paying for"(Morgan,(2006, p.305). This simple definition is applied to this research on the package holiday. The 'essence' can be regarded as the summary of the holistic elements provided by operators and experienced by package holiday makers.

Academic research pertaining to the package holiday experience is, as has been stated, limited. Wickens(2002) researched holiday makers experiences in Chalkidiki, in Northern Greece. She developed the theme of 'escape' defined by (Cohen, 1972; Cohen, 1979) as a need for rest and recovery. Wickens(2002) found that a common theme amongst her research participants was 'to forget about work' or 'to forget about everyday life'. Although these can be construed as motivating factors, they clearly make up an important part of the tourist experience. Van Rekom (1994, p.22) further regards tourism as providing consumer's with an escape from everyday life. He cites Jafari and Gardner (1991) and their analogy comparing the tourist experience to that of a reader of a book in that tourism offers a "counter-everyday non-ordinary experience." They assert that the tourist goal is an aesthetic experience with the elements of the trip – e.g. "hotels, restaurants, monuments, exotic beaches, pleasant waiters and so on" (Jafari and Gardner, 1991, cited in Van Rekom, 1994, p.22) being the means of achieving this aesthetic experience. The tourism industry and particularly the tour operator, are responsible for providing the means for the journey; as Van Rekom (1994, p.22) states, (the tourism Industry's) "societal function lies in making the non-ordinary experience accessible to the stressed customer." Van Raaij&Crotts(1994)add to this contending that consumers partake in travel and tourism in order to increase their stimulation in case of boredom. Van Rekom (1994) criticises the industry for a lack of differentiation in products and argues that the criterion of price is key. Although some of this literature is now dated, the concepts still stand and there is no more current research available.

Ryan (1995) in his research with the over 50's in Majorca found that the main reason for visiting Majorca by UK visitors was to escape the British winter and that a holiday met a need to relax and 'get way from it all'. This could be regarded as a motivational factor however sunshine and climate are clearly built into the holiday experience. Wickens (2002) in her typology of the 'Heliolatrous type' also emphasised the importance of sun. "The sun definitely is one of the main reasons that I'm here...." and "I love the sun..."Wickens(2002, p.840).

The results of research by Wickens(2002)suggest that 'ontological security' was a common theme amongst tourists, i.e. "that a package holiday makes you feel safe if anything goes wrong"Wickens(2002, p.843). Wickensalso found that for many holiday makers their holiday is underlined by minor health problems and that in such cases, they choose to take a pre-packaged holiday as they see it as free from health risks and physical hardships. An elderly respondent endorsed this by saying that there are many advantages to returning to the same place and the same hotel, more than once. She commented on the security that this provides and that the familiarity is extremely important, as is being made to feel welcome.

It was found that for some tourists, particularly those taking package holidays (Seaton & Bennett, 1996; Ryan, 2002), that the actual choice of destination was not as important as factors such as price, timing, departure airport and general convenience factors. This was particularly the case when the break in question was a get away / sun break. Ryan (1995) found that older travellers rated their past holiday experience and destination experience as more important in destination selection than other age groups. Future purchase decisions were related to resort familiarity and risk evaluation and Ryan points out that the perception of 'safety' to older holiday makers needs to be explored further.

Socialising and social interaction is also important to the tourism experience. This could include social settings interactions with staff and other holiday makers (Trauer & Ryan, 2005; Andereck *et al.*, 2006; Mossberg, 2007; Cutler & Carmichael, 2010). Opportunities for strolling around and changes of scene are also important to older travellers (Ryan, 1995).

- **The 'Grey' Market**

The 'Grey' market segment has been selected as the focus for this research. This market is also sometimes referred to as 'Seniors' (Littrell, Paige & Song, 2004) or the 'Mature' market, the 'Older Market' or the 'Muppie Market' (Shoemaker, 2000). Authors use a variety of ages to define 'Greys' with Mintel (2004) categorising 'Greys' as those over 45. This research categorises those aged 50 and over as 'Grey' as this covered a majority of definitions and also fitted with the Thomson Holidays profile of their Gold Consumer from whom the sample was selected. The Gold product does not stipulate an age other than that consumers must be over 16 (Thomson, 2011).

Despite being a promising segment on account of size and potential for future growth, 'Grey' travellers are often overlooked in the tourism literature; (Littrell, Paige & Song, 2004). Shoemaker (2000) comments that consumers aged 55 or over, are one of the fastest growing market segments. By 2050 it is estimated that over two billion people will be aged 60 or over, this is 22% of the world's population; it was 10% in 2000, (United Nations, 2000)Patterson &Pegg (2009) argue that older adults will be responsible for an increasingly larger share of holiday spending – and more than younger cohorts; in 1999 over 593 million international travellers were aged 60 or over and accounted for a third of total holiday spending. By 2050 it is estimated that this figure will be more than 2 billion trips annually (*World Tourism Organization*, 2009). 'Greys' have more discretionary time in retirement years and this is important for the industry as they prefer to travel at off season or shoulder season (Patterson & Pegg, 2009). Therefore, the industry can sell them beds and flight seats at times which are not so easy to fill. They are also pre-disposed to spending much lengthier periods on holiday in the resort than other vacationers (Littrell, Paige & Song, 2004) amounting to several weeks and even months. Furthermore, the number of holidays taken each year by the average 'Grey' consumer is growing. 'Grey' consumers have a higher discretionary income and less consumer debt, children may have left home leaving parents as empty nesters with the mortgage having been paid off or having significantly decreased (Ryan, 1995; Littrell, Paige & Song, 2004).

Evans, Jamal & Fox (2009) recognise that the over 50's can be more loyal which is important for organisations offering products to this segment. Given the highly competitive market place that tourism and hospitality organisations operate in, loyalty has become a key focus with providers seeking to continuously design and create enhanced experiences (Pullman & Gross, 2003).

METHODOLOGY

A two pronged approach was taken to this research. Thomson holidays, a brand of TUI PLC, the worlds leading leisure travel company was the organisation chosen for this research in that they are a very well recognised British operator with a 'Grey' market product in their Gold Hotels. Consumer research was undertaken initially with Thomson providing access to their Gold clients.Consumers were interviewed in the Los Gigantes Hotel in Tenerife in January 2011. The sampling method was non probability convenience sampling owing to time and financial limitations. The interviews used semi structured questions which were formatted from the researcher's own knowledge from previously working in the industry, the literature reviewed and a pilot study. Twelve interviews were conducted ranging from half an hour to an hour. It then became evident that saturation had been reached. Respondents were relaxed and interested in the topic and it became evident that these consumers had a wealth of knowledge which they were very happy to impart. The result was that rich, descriptive data was obtained on their package holiday experiences. The interviews were recorded and the data analysed using Template Analysis (King, 2004; King & Horrocks, 2010).

The second strand of the research was to ascertain management perspectives on the consumer experience. A semi-structured interview was conducted with a TUI PLC senior executive in TUI's UK headquarters. The key findings from the interviews conducted with consumers were discussed with additional questions asked on the management's approach to service delivery of package holidays and specifically 'Grey' market package holidays. The key themes were extracted and the findings written up, which together with the consumer interviews provided the framework which is later presented.

A social constructionist epistemological stance was adopted for this research with an interpretivist approach using inductive qualitative methods and undertaking phenomenological interviews. In doing so it answers calls from other researchers who argue that there is a need to study how holiday makers express their feelings about their particular holiday experiences (Ryan, 1995; Jackson, White & Schmierer, 1996; Patterson & Pegg, 2009). Morgan &Xu(2009, p.222) state that *"as service experience is inherently interpretative, subjective and affective, qualitative approaches would seem best suited to understand and analyse it."*

RESULTS

The results of the literature review, the interviews of a TUI PLC senior executive as well as 'Grey' consumers undertaking package holidays were integrated to develop a framework that describes the package holiday experience. A series of themes emerged from all 3 sources that were complementary and provide a rich understanding of the experience. Before the framework is presented, the results of the interview of the TUI PLC senior executive are discussed.

The interview suggested that like many other operators, Thomson Holidays core business used to be that of a holiday broker that offered a vast variety of package holidays over a broad range of destinations and utilised many different accommodation suppliers. However, over the last 20 years Thomson has focused on a move away from this provision towards the development of a business revolving almost completely around what it calls 'Concept Hotels.' The Thomson 'Concept Hotel' brand includes:

- Sensatori – Luxury 5 star hotels
- Thomson Couples – Designed for just adults aged 40 - 60
- Thomson Gold – For adults aged 65 plus, British entertainment provided
- Family Resort – Water parks and educational

This 'concept' model of product development and delivery incorporates the design of an experience leading to differentiated hotels with an emotional connection with the Thomson brand. Thomson takes over hotels on an exclusive basis and develops features such as waterslides for families or British style entertainment for the 'Grey' segment. Thomson now regards themselves as a hotel company specialising in supply. They act as an operator and a service provider and in some cases manage the hotel themselves. The service is the experience and tapping into consumers emotional needs is fundamental to their product offering.

Thomson claims that only 30% of their tour operator business involves acting as a broker, however their main competitor remains approximately 50% broker. Low cost airlines such as Easy Jet compete as brokers and provide substitute products which enable travellers to package their own tailor made holiday. A key part of Thomson's strategy is to manage the hotel in its entirety (ownership assists this in some cases) meaning that they can design the concept experience and therefore have total control over their guest's experience. In the Costa Del Sol, all Thomson hotels are 'Concept Hotels.' Thomson Gold hotels are for adults only and focus on the 'Grey' or seniors market.

According to Thomson, high ratings are received for these hotels which lead to repeat business. This is a very different business model from for instance LastMinute.Com who do not own hotels and primarily act as brokers. Control is a key element to Thomson who argue that as soon as you become a distributor, control is lost and the product becomes a commodity. Many operators' distributors have little contact with their hotels which means that consumers could arrive in a hotel to find hardly anyone else booked in. This would not happen in a Concept Hotel, which as a result of exclusivity is generally at least 80% full. Therefore according to Thomson, the guest experience and socialising will be a positive one.

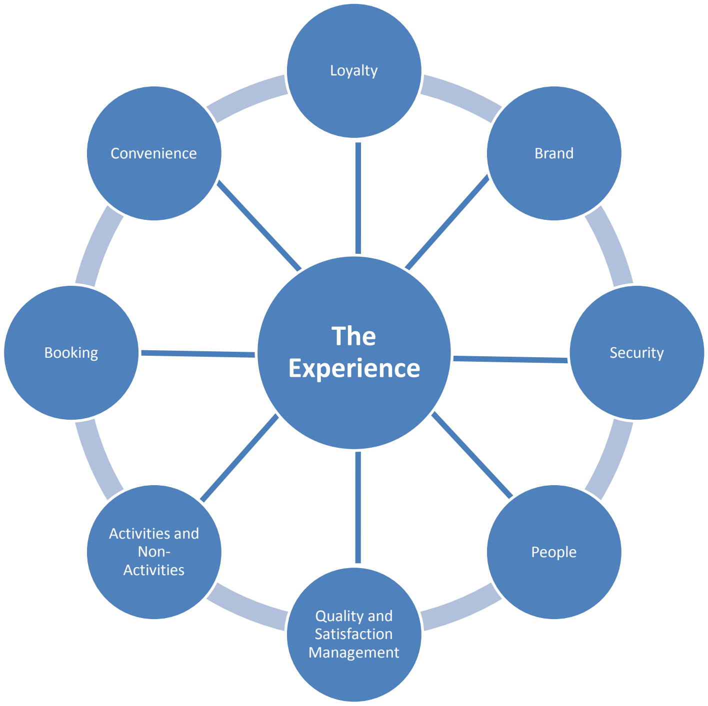
A framework that describes the package holiday experience at Thomson's LosGigantes hotel is presented in Figure 1. It has been labelled an experience wheel and has 8 key themes that often overlap. Each theme contributes directly to the consumer experience and is linked to all other themes by a series of spokes. The framework is consistent with the results of the literature review and incorporates both managerial and consumer perceptions of the experience. Quotes from 'Grey' holiday-makers are presented in Table 1 and highlight each theme from the consumer's experience.The results from the interviews with Thomson PLC relevant to each theme are described in the paragraphs that follow.

Table 1: Quotes from 'Grey' Consumers

Booking
"If you're booking with Thomsons it's a good idea to have the internet price because then when you go in the shop they will honour that....." "I will look it up (the holiday) but I wouldn't book it (on the internet)". "I always book mine on the internet...coz it's a lot cheaper."
Convenience
On Package Holidays "Well I think especially now, I mean as we've got older we want as least hassle as possible" "I always take packages." "I like it just sorted and done" "They (the tour operator) just sort everything, the tickets, the transfers, the room." "You know we want things done more or less for us if possible"
Loyalty
"I think you just don't want to take the chance of having a bad experience so if you've had a good experience with them, it's just so easy to ....say let's stay with it." "We first stayed in the hotel in 1973" "We come every year....for at least 25 years..maybe twice a year "Some people have been here fifty times.""They'd been God knows how many times – 20 odd" "When you arrive (at the hotel) it's like coming home."
Brand
"I have to say that actually we always travel with Thomsons because we always have a good experience." "Yes they've never really let us down" "I tend to go with the big boys; I am not worried that Thomson's will go bust....if Thomson's went down there probably wouldn't be too much left of the economy anyway*!"* "I mean with Thomson I think you'd feel more secure than with some outlandish company you'd never heard of"
Security
"When you get to our age ...you want to know where you are and you never know if something's going to go wrong and you haven't got the capacity you might have if it went wrong, you panic more I think "We've had people here that have got seriously ill and in hospital and Thomsons sort of get them sorted out and get them home, we even had a lady die here, didn't we?" "Any of us can be taken seriously ill and you know if the one person left on their own, they would need somebody to help them to get back." "The reps sort it all out for them I think...and if there is anything wrong with your room, they'll put it right straight away On the package "it gives you security" "There's always such good support you know..."
People
"The way (the manager) runs this place is incredible.....if I'd met this guy before I retired it would have probably changed the way I managed (my business) because he is *so* hands on" "We always meet loads of people" "We always make friends wherever we go." "Those people, we only met them a couple of days ago....we've had such fun with them." "He greeted us as we walked in and shook our hands, Welcome Home he said."
Quality and Satisfaction Management
"The hotel is way beyond what we expected actually" "Yes they've (Thomson) never really let us down" – "Of course they run their own airline which helps."

"As a matter of fact the hotel has exceeded our expectations" On no children in the hotel "It is a big plus with this hotel""We like the fact, it sounds awful, but there aren't any little children." "I think that's why the hotel does so well, two main things...there's no children and it's British. Two big factors at this hotel.....especially for the elderly and middle aged to elderly people." On returning to same place "You know where everything is, you haven't got to find out where and also you know our friends come at the same time so we meet them all here". "Well if you don't mind me saying I think this business of coming back to the same place is an age thing.." "When you get to our age ...you want to know where you are and you never know if something's going to go wrong and you haven't got the capacity you might have if it went wrong, you panic more I think."
Activities and Non-Activities
"I just like to come and relax because I work so hard." " I like to walk a lot" "We do like walking." "We like to have a walk after dinner." "We just like to relax...and read, It's lazy really." "The sun is important" "This is perfect (the weather) I mean you couldn't expect anything better." On socialising and meeting people " Oh yes, it's a big thing here, that's why we keep coming back On the most important experience – "the weather and the company...........meeting friends and all that On what they like about the set up of the package..."Peacefulness...when I come here, there's nobody telling me what to do and what should I do ...."

Figure 1: The Package Holiday Experience Wheel



Booking

The booking experience is important and it is vital that consumers choose the right concept for themselves – this is assisted by the fact that Thomson are a vertically integrated organisation with 80% of their products distributed by their own internet and high street agents and they operate on a customer pull policy. Trip Advisor is used in the brochure across all hotels.

Convenience

Local airports are important to 'Grey' clients and Thomson offer 22 departure points in the UK. A convenient departure airport for consumers is as important as the destination choice and the web site facilitates this.

Loyalty

Thomson recognises that many of their 'Grey' clients are tremendously loyal. They know their booking habits, and e-mail loyal clients with certain offers. Each customer is different and valued for their own idiosyncrasies. They are not interested in having a Nectar Type Scheme which they feel is contrived and argue that technology can provide better. Loyalty is important but they don't believe in doing it in an Airmiles way.

Brand

The concept hotel brand is fundamental to the product and it is this that designs and sets the experience for each target market. Consumer familiarity and trust of the brand is paramount.

Security

Thomson recognises that 'Grey' consumers need 'hand holding' with familiarity and security being important to them. Security is implicit in a package holiday, particularly for older travellers.

People

The tone used by the hotel staff is identical, even in different hotels and destinations, with the management of the brand being key, for example, in the Hotel Los Gigantes in Tenerife, a Gold Hotel, there is a 100 point specification for the hotel to adhere to.

Quality and Satisfaction Management

Quality and satisfaction are managed differently in Thomson's Concept Hotels where the experience is developed around the hotels. A lot of effort goes into the management of the experience and there is an acknowledgement that their customers are knowledgeable and able.

Activities and Non-Activities

British entertainment – day and evening is a focal part of the product offering. Consumer choice is important and where possible two pool areas are provided, a noisy, active one and a more peaceful one. Evening entertainment is the same with the provision of a quiet room/bar for those who don't want to watch the entertainment. The negative conditions of some package holidays are acknowledged by management and a 'Hi de Hi' approach is avoided at all costs.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This research has explored the package holiday experience from the view of the providers - the tour operators, consumers and the literature. The literature review commenced with a critique of the traditional consumer behaviour models on account of the lack of focus on the actual consumption experience. The package holiday concept, the experience literature and related concepts and the 'Grey' market were explored. Interviews with Thomson Holiday Gold consumers confirmed the findings of the literature reviewed and these, along with the primary findings from an interview with a senior executive of TUI PLC were used to assist with the development of a framework for the experience of their 'Concept Hotels' of which the Thomson Gold product is one brand.

The value of the experience and it's link to the brand (Mitchell & Orwig, 2002b) was illustrated by the emphasis on booking with a well known brand and the security that this provides. Ryan (1995) and Laing (1987) claimed that the primary reason for consumers taking package holidays was that the holiday was organised for them and that there was a lack of risk. This was strongly reflected in the consumers' views on security. 'Grey' travellers are more

concerned about security, illness and the avoidance of danger, i.e. smooth travel plans (Littrell, Paige & Song, 2004). This links with the concept of 'ontological security' as advocated by Wickens, (2002).
Holiday booking by 'Greys' was either direct by using the internet or more often than not by taking the internet price to the local branch of Thomson for price matching. This supports the arguments that consumer's book package holidays because of convenience and price (Guiltinan, 1987; Sheldon & Mak, 1987; Ryan, 1995; Rewtrakunphaiboon & Oppewal, 2004). Holiday activities, or inactivity's found to be important to the consumer were relaxation, and peace aided by sunshine and warmth and socialising, meeting other guests and strolling or walking; this concurs with the literature (Ryan, 1995; Wickens, 2002; Trauer & Ryan, 2005; Andereck *et al.*, 2006; Mossberg, 2007; Cutler & Carmichael, 2010)

The management of the concept hotels in their entirety by Thomson facilitates the control of the service delivery helping to improve quality and satisfaction. This concurs with Van Rekom (1994) who maintains that the travel industry and tour operator provides the means of the journey and the experience. Experiential literature on the management and the consumer (Morgan & Watson, 2007; Jackson, Morgan & Hemmington, 2009) evolving from Pine & Gilmore's initial contention that Companies must stage experiences in order to be competitive is relevant to this research. This paper illustrates how tour operator management can provide an experience which can result in consumer loyalty and relationship building as a result of satisfaction (Dimanche & Havitz, 1994; Woodside, 2000; Yuksel & Yuksel, 2002; Crouch, Perdue & Timmermans, 2004; Payne *et al.*, 2009; Palmer, 2010). The consumer findings demonstrate how very loyal some of these customers are and that they have a strong disposition to visiting the same destination each year for reasons of security.

Limitations to the research are that it is based on one hotel and one interview with a senior executive from TUI PLC, and therefore the findings, although consistent with author practitioner knowledge, cannot be generalised.

Recommendations for further research are that these original findings be further explored in the context of the literature on the co-creation of the experience and co-production of the experience as this would make a valuable contribution to knowledge on the little researched package holiday experience and the role of consumers and managers.

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TOUR OPERATORS' CUSTOMER INFORMATION VERSUS RENDERING EXPECTED CUSTOMER EXPERIENCES

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ABSTRATCT:

It is unascertained whether South African tour operators are able toprovide their customers with memorable expected experiencesand/or whether they should transform their business practices and tourism offerings to be proficient in facilitating positive post-purchase behaviour. Tourism and the consumer behaviourof tourists are dynamic and tour operators ought to be knowledgeable about their current customers' needs, wants, and preferences, as well as emerging trends, such as the 'new tourist', and potential new target markets.However, tour operators can only provide their customers with expected experiences if they are conversant about their customers' expectations. This is where a marketing information system (MkIS), if available and accessible, should be used as a management tool that will enable tour operators to make informed decisions which will contribute towards the future business success of the tour operation.A comprehensive marketing information system incorporates the market environment, of which the target market (customers) is part of.

An extended and comprehensive search of published material and electronic databases did not uncoverprevious research studies undertaken in South Africa in this regard. Thus, there is uncertainty as to whether South African tour operators are knowledgeable about their existing and future target markets, or even trends; especially since tourists nowadays prefer to be part of the tourism experience (co-producers, according to Bove, 2003), also referred to as 'in-depth' tourism (Chen et al., 2009).

The purpose of this paper wasto investigate if South African tour operators' marketing information systems enable them to provide their customers with their expected experiences. The objectives were to investigate for what reasons tour operators use computer technology;whether their marketing information systems inform them sufficiently so that they are conversant concerning thecustomersin their current target market(s), possible trends, and potential future target markets; and to investigate the information needs of tour operators should their marketing information systems not provide them with the information they need. Should the marketing information systems of tour operators provide them with exploitable customer-related information, then they would be able to provide expected customer experiences. Conversely,they would need to adapt their business practices and tourism offeringsso that it is in line with the requirements of their customers, which incorporatemarketing information system innovation.

A pioneering empirical study was undertaken and a self-administered computer aided questionnaire was used as research instrument. A sample frame (list) of all tour operations whose e-mail addresses could be obtained from various published and electronic sources was compiled and invitations to participate in this primary research were forwarded until 1 000 invitations were successfully delivered. The predetermined parameters applicable to this study were that (1) tour operators (sample units) must be South African businesses and (2) they must currently make use of some type of marketing information system. Incentives were provided in an endeavour to increase the response rate and the questionnaire was viewed by 360 tour operators. A completion rate of 42.45% was achieved and this paper is based on these responses.

The results obtained indicate that tour operators use computer technology mainly for retrieving data and for communication (responding to enquiries) purposes. It was also revealed that 59.6% of the tour operators who participated do make use of some type of marketing information system and 68.4% indicated that they are satisfied with theirmarketing information system in use. This is in contradiction when tour operators were requested to indicate if their marketing information system provides them with all the information they need about their customers and their preferences – only 34.9% of the tour operators 'Agree' with this statement. However, this is in concurrence with the 40% who indicated that their perceived information needs are based on information concerning the market environment, specifically regarding customers.

These findings alone serve as evidence to conclude that there is animperativeneed for marketing information system innovation within the tour operating industry in South Africa. Tour operators will not be in a position to transform their business practices and/or offerings to satisfy the expected experiences of today's tourists unless there is marketing information system innovation. Further research is recommended and should be extended to include not only tour operators but also travel agents, as well as all the other sectors of the tourism industry in South Africa.

KEY WORDS:

Marketing, tour operators, customers, expectations, marketing information systems, South Africa

INTRODUCTION:

South African tour operators should recognize that being aware of customers' travel motivation will enhance their awareness of their customers' needs (Huang & Hsu, 2009). It will also enable them to customize their services, to create memorable experiences, and to facilitate positive post-purchase behaviour.This can be achieved only through information. Marketing informationsophisticationand innovation needs to transpireso that tour operators can transform experiences on both sides of the counter. It is imperative that tour operators understand the nature of tourism experiences since "providing tourists with high quality, memorable experiences constitutes the essence of tourism and tourism management" (Ritchie *et al*., 2011).

Tour operators need to be knowledgeable about their customers' needs and preferences – a task complicated by the dynamic nature of the environments within which tour operators and customers function. Information technology (IT) could "generate an analysis of consumers' behaviour"because this "facilitate and improve the customisation of services" (Aciar*et al.*, 2007). Marketing information systems (MkIS)willcontribute toward the increased importance tour operators place on the support they render to their customers "while the cost factor diminishes" (Andronikidis*et al.*, 2008). It is therefore imperative that tour operators invest in IT and software that will enable them to be fully conversant regarding all aspects of their target markets. Only then would they be able to make decisions in terms of how to provide their customers with memorable experiences and/or whether they should transform their business practices and tourism offerings.

An extensive search of published information and databases did not yield research information on tour operating and marketing information systems in South Africa. It is thusundetermined if the marketing information systems used by South African tour operators do provide them with the information they need for decision-making purposes. Research is needed to determine if tour operators do have adequate customer-related information that will enable them to provide their customers with memorable expected experiences.

Tour operating and marketing information systems are extensive branches of learning and cannot be covered comprehensively in one single research study or paper and this paper sets out to obtain insight on the following:

- To investigate for what reasons tour operators in South Africa use computer technology.
- To investigate if the marketing information systems used by tour operators provide them with customer-related information.
- To investigate the customer-related information needs of tour operators.

This paper consists of four sections and starts with a background review of relevant literature. This is followed by an explanation of the research methodology and a presentation of the findings. The paper concludes witha discussion of the main inferences and the final conclusion.

BACKGROUND REVIEW

Mathieson and Wall (quoted by Tripathi*et al.*, 2010) proposed a travel buying behaviour model in 1982 which starts with travel desire and ends with travel satisfaction outcome and evaluation. Otto and Ritchie (1996) stated that tourism management practices are concerned with quality and productivity, but that the psychological environment (the subjective personal reactions and feelings) of customers are neglected and an understanding of this should be developed and a means found for its measurement – then only will the difference between the 'quality of the service' and the 'quality of the experience' surface. This is supported by Stamboulis and Skayannis (2003) who profess that the emergence of new tourism and innovation can be "considered a new framework of analysis that distinguishes experience as a distinct value attribute." Value should be perceived as a dynamic variable (Sánchez *et al*., 2006) which is experienced from before purchasing a tourism offering until long after detachment. 'Value for money' is specifically a critical attribute, according to Ramanathan and Ramanathan (2011). Added to this is tourists' holistic view of perceived value, which is; "the complete experience that fulfilmultiple tourism needs, and provides corresponding benefits" (Xu, 2010). Customers also establish brand knowledge through direct and indirect experiences and brand managers should take the holistic view into consideration (Xu& Chan, 2010) because customers are more likely to trust direct experiences. Relationship marketing and dealing with customers' compliments and complaints can also be seen as a factor contributing towards a customer's experiences (Gruber, 2011).

Sánchez *et al*. (2006) developed a scale for measuring the overall perceived value of a purchase and it is called GLOVAL, which is a multidimensional approach. However, it is important to keep in mind that "value is measured as a trade-off between benefits and sacrifices" (Dodds quoted by Williams &Soutar, 2009) and that perceptions of value in a tourism context differ because of the perceived risks involved in making a decision, including the complex mixture of functional, objective, and tangible elements. Williams and Soutar (2009) made use of the PERVAL framework developed by Sweeny and Soutarand included utilitarian and socio-psychological dimensionsto research the value construct in an adventure tourism context.

Measuring customers' actual experiences can be undertaken by analysing narratives where the customer's perspectives of 'How' and 'Why' is taken as the starting point and this provides a unique way of tapping into a customer's experiences because "there is not one universal way of evaluating a tourist experience" (Guthrie & Anderson, 2010). Martin and Woodside (2011) took this one step further and conducted 'storytelling' research (analysing stories posted on the Internet) to examine tourists' interpretations of their visits seeing that this method "clarifies and deepens knowledge of how people resolve paradoxes triggered in their minds by unbalanced states".

Tourism can also be used as a tool to generate cross-cultural understanding by involving tourists in the sharing of culture and traditional ways of life (Kutzner& Wright, 2010). This can be achieved through interaction, contact, and active provoked participation (Stamboulis&Skayannis, 2003) between employees, hosts, and guests. Once achieved, this could then lead to memorable experiences that most likely would be shared with others.Included is interpretation as a tool for increased knowledge and managing specific tourist behaviour (Powell *et al*., 2008).Cederholm (quoted by Maitland, 2010) argues that 'being' rather than 'doing' is emerging as a tourism value and that the focus should be on the tourism experience and its potentially transformative effects. This equally calls on tour operators and marketers to re-evaluate their resources, business practices, and tourism offerings.

The above discussion emphasisesthat it is essential that tour operators are knowledgeable about their current and future customers and this calls for information cornucopia. Not only is it obtaining the information but processing it into knowledge to support and guide decision-makers. Information is said to be "the lifeblood of tourism" (Buhalis, 1998) and change will force tourism businesses to compute, to utilise information technologies to its fullest benefit. The author made the following statement: "Only creative and innovative suppliers will be able to survive the competition in the new millennium" and recommends that technology should be utilised in tourism by adopting a strategic approach because unprecedented opportunities will emerge through information technology.

A research article was published by Wood (2001) and the results indicate that small- and medium-sized tourism enterprises "make use of informal marketing information systems which mainly concentrate on internal and immediate operating environment data. Important wider market intelligence is underutilised owing mainly to the resource constraints of these smaller businesses. The Internet has not yet been considered as an important source of market intelligence". It was discovered that by the middle of this decade, that only half of the Bed-and-Breakfast owners in Canada adopted the Internet as a marketing tool (Hudson & Gilbert, 2006) and it is most likely even less for tour operators in South Africa.

Buhalis and Licata (2002) professed just after the turn of the century that the Internet will create opportunities and that tourism-related businesses should "reengineer their business processes" so that they can utilise the opportunities to the benefit of the business. Added to this is the ability to get to know their customers through electronic relationships. The nature of tourism offerings does not facilitate pre-purchase trial and tourists rely on information to reduce perceived risks and "virtual experiences can be used to approximate such vividness and interactivity through a real-time contact" (Hyun *et al*., 2009) by technological applications, referred to as 'V-Tourism'. Various Web 2.0 applications should be used by tourism-related businesses, such as collaborative trip planning, social and content sharing networks seeing that "these new tools transform passive tourists into active 'prosumers' (producers and consumers) of travel experiences"(Tsiotsou& Rattan, 2010).

The revolutionary changes of information and communications technology (ICT) has a major impact on all aspects of a tourist's value chain. The AIDA-model was adapted by Dentsu (quoted by Carvão, 2010) into the AISAS-model (attention, interest, search and sharing) to incorporate user generated content (UGC). According to this model, tourists can now exchange information of their experiences (something that is engaging and memorable) with others. This changes touristsinto active players in influencing the experiences of others, who would want to "differentiate themselves based on real, original, tourist experiences" (Hudson, 2010). Tour operators should use ICT to "record customers' preferences and then provide more personalized services, thereby developing a long-term relationship with customers" (Ip*et al*., 2011). However, it is debatable if there are marketing information systems that can facilitate tour operators in South Africa to talk to their customers, to understand their expectations, to study their attitudes, seeking feedback, and accumulating information for analyses and research purposes, as explained by Mohsin and Lockyer (2010).

Gounaris*et al*. (2007) conducted research on information systems (ISs) and marketing information systems (MkISs) on the hotel industry in Greece and stated in their findings that information systems "improves functional effectiveness and corporate climate and....its [hotels] adaptability to market conditions". This is supported by the findings of Chatzipanagioutou and Coritos (2010) who indicate that the adoption of marketing information system applications contribute towards the overall effectiveness of marketing and the ability of a marketing orientated organisation to cope with the changing demands of tourists. Added to this is the adoption of ICT to assist businesses in dealing with the rapidly changing environments (Sirirak*et al*., 2011).If tour operators in South Africa adopt ICT, then they would be able to align their business outcomes according to the conditions of and changes taking place in their target markets.

The evolution of technology continues to place more importance on information because "growing market dynamics raise information needs" (Wöber, 2003). Lassnig (quoted by Pike, 2007) indicated in a paper presented at the 13th ENTER conference in 2006 (Lausanne, Switzerland) that "the tourism industry lags behind other sectors in e-business applications." Could this be still applicable to tour operators in South Africa?

The above review indicates that being knowledgeable about customers and their expected experiences requires a sophisticated marketing information system that is integrated, interconnected, and compatible with the technology used by customers. It is unascertained if South African tour operators do have such marketing information systems and/or whether they do have access to exploitable customer-related information.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Descriptive empirical research was conducted in South Africa and the research population targeted weretour operations. Apopulation frame was assembled from a variety of published and electronic sourcesbecause there is no certainty how many tour operators there are in South Africa.The predetermined parameters are that sample units must be (1) a South Africa tour operation and (2) they must use a marketing information system. A non-probability convenience sample was selected from the research frame and the web-based online survey tool, QuestionPro.com, was used and the license wasrestricted to1 000 successfully delivered invitations.

A structured web-based questionnaire was used as research instrument and every sample unit received a personal e-mail which explained the purpose of this study and inviting them to participate. A hyperlink activated the self-administered questionnaire and responses were automatically captured into a database hosted by QuestionPro.com. There were instances where a sample unit had to be substituted with another, due to incorrect or terminated e-mail addresses, until 1 000 invitations were delivered. Only two reminders were dispatched to non-responders.

The descriptors used to better understand the research population include the type of tour operation; the number of years in existence; the size of the tour operation, and whether or not they have a marketing information system. The results obtained are indicated in Table 1.

Table 1: Research population description

Descriptor	**n**	**%**
Type of tour operation		
Domestic	21	9.59
Incoming	153	69.86
Outgoing	34	15.53
Other	11	5.02
Years in existence		
Up to 5 years	68	31.0
6 – 10 years	68	31.0
11 – 15 years	41	18.72
16 years and more	42	19.18
Size of tour operation		
Small (up to 5 staff)	135	61,36
Medium (6 – 10 staff)	46	20.91
Large (11 plus staff)	39	17.73
Information system		
Yes	131	59.55
No	89	40.45

* The total number of responses (n) varies because responding was not obligatory and there were some omissions.

A significant percentage (61.4%) of tour operators operate from small tour operations with up to five staff members, they focus on the international incoming market (69.9%) and have equally been in business for up to five years (31.05%) and between six and ten years (31.05%). Only 59.5% of the tour operators indicated that they do have some type of marketing information system.

Further statistical tests did not reveal any statistically significant differences between the descriptors (type of tour operation, number of years in existence, size of the tour operation) and their likeliness of having or not having a marketing information system. Further research should be conducted to investigate the reason(s) for this finding.

Having or not having a marketing information system served as a qualifier and tour operators who indicated that they do not have a marketing information system was branched out and their participation was terminated because they would not have been able to respond to the questions of the survey. The following results are based on the responses obtained from tour operators who indicated that they do have a marketing information system.

RESEARCH RESULTS

Descriptive statistics was obtained and a cross analysis was performed on linked and test variables and a uni-variate descriptive analysis was also performed. The following inferential statistics were used: Cross-tabulations; Chi-Square based measures of association with Exactp-values; MANOVA and ANOVA; practical statistical significant tests; and the Tukey'sStudentized Range (HSD) Test.

Reasons for computer use

Tour operators were requested to indicate for what reasons they use information technology and a list of uses were provided to them to which they could respond either 'Yes' or 'No'. The results obtained indicate that computer technology is used mainly for retrieving data and for communication purposes (responding to enquiries) whilst more advanced uses of technology hardly feature. This could have an adverse effect on tour operators' ability to accumulate and process valuable customer-related information that will enable them to provide their customers with memorable experiences. The data set was subjected to further statistical testing and the results obtained are indicated in Table 2.

Table 2: Chi-Square comparative statistics:descriptor*versus* computer technology reasons

Reason	Type		Years		Size	
	Vale	p	Value	p	Value	p
To communicate with other people	0.5042	0.9180	3.5105	0.3194	4.1171	0.1276
To retrieve data	*		*		*	
For word processing and publishing	6.3175	0.3886	3.6990	0.7173	4.9316	0.3556
To respond to enquiries	*		*		*	
To send and receive reports	7.8126	0.2522	3.1704	0.7872	1.2758	0.8655
To analyse data and statistics	7.0686	0.3145	7.0408	0.3171	10.6661	0.0306
To produce management reports	5.0516	0.5372	6.1639	0.4051	16.1785	0.0028
For storing data and statistics	1.9667	0.5794	9.3601	0.0249	2.9557	0.2281
To process data and statistics	3.1507	0.3690	4.9288	0.1771	10.9381	0.0042
To make/display graphical outputs and reports	9.6592	0.1398	2.7922	0.8344	3.8903	0.4211
For decision-making and simulation						
To conduct 'what-if' analysis	8.5208	0.2024	7.8638	0.2483	9.4560	0.0505
For coding computer programmes	6.7684	0.3428	11.7254	0.0684	3.8051	0.4330
	4.3623	0.6278	18.8743	0.0044	11.8708	0.0183

* All respondents indicated 'Yes' only

Statistically significant differences are indicated for the years and type descriptors. The results obtained indicate that the time span tour operations have been in business tend to influence the reasons why they use computer technology but no evidence could be found that this is a determinant of using advanced data analysis for decision-making purposes. Small tour operations tend to use computer technology for more basic purposes whilst medium and large operations appear to have more advancedsoftware available.

Customer-related information

Customers indisputably have an impact on a tour operation's capability to create value and rendering customer satisfaction and this is why intelligence about this market environment variable is of paramount importance and why a marketing information system is a valuable management tool.

Tour operators were requested to indicate the importance they place on the ability of a marketing information systemto provide them with marketing intelligence and the attributes respondents could select from ranged from 'Extremely important' to 'Extremely unimportant'. When combining the responses 'Extremely important' and 'Important' and expressing it as a percentage, then 79.6% (20+23÷54) of the tour operators highly value information about the market environment. Surprisingly, micro (internal) market environment intelligence obtained the highest score (82.7%). However, there are tour operators who take a neutral stance and there are also tour operators who do not view marketing intelligence information about their customers as important.

Further statistical tests did not reveal any statistically significant differences between the type, the years, not the size of the tour operation as determinants of the importance tour operators place on marketing intelligence information (all ANOVA p-values are >0.05) and this is confirmed by the Hotelling-Lawley Trace test and also by the Kruskal-Wallis Test.

Tour operators indicated that their marketing information systems do provide them with customer-related market environment information. They were provided with the following statement: Our marketing information system provides us with all the information we need about our customers and their preferences; and the attributes ranged from 'Strongly agree' to 'Strongly disagree'. The results obtained are illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Information provided about customers

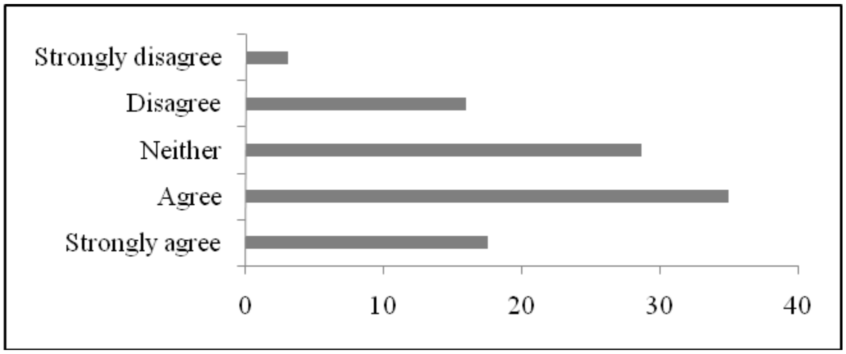

Figure 1illustrates that tour operators do have access to customer-related information from their marketing information systems because they indicated that they 'Strongly agree' (17.5%) and 'Agree' (34.9%). However, it is alarming that 47.6% are neutral and tend towards the negative. This could cause a problem in future because information about the market environment factors is of utmost importance for management decision-making, especially since today's tourists prefer to part of the experience.

Further statistical tests did not reveal any statistically significant differences between the type, years, nor the size of tour operations as determinants of the customer-related information tour operators obtain from their marketing information systems because all p-values are .0.05. These results are confirmed by the p-values of the Kruskal-Wallis Test results, as well as by the Hotelling-Lawley Trace Test (type – p=0.8308; years – p=0.7712; size – p=0.2434).

Information needs

Tour operators' decision-making would improve should they utilise systematic thinking and the collection of appropriate data and information – this calls on tour operators to redefine their data and information needs, to refine the methods applied to obtain data and also how this is processed into needed and/or required information and knowledge. Tour operators were requested to express their perceived information needs in an open-ended question and the responses received from tour operators were grouped according to the components of the marketing environment. Tour operators indicated that the sequence of information needed is as follows: *firstly*, market environment-related information (40%) and surprisingly the most mentions were made regarding information about customers (trends, statistics, contact information, markets of origin, customer preferences, spending patterns, and their profiles). This was followed by information about competitors (their activities and prices) and suppliers (prices and special offers, and what products they have to offer). However, this is in contradiction to the results obtained when tour operators indicated that micro marketing environment information is the most important. Marketing-related information did receive a number of mentions and refer to a system that will integrate information, information that will guide tour operators in their pricing and price changes decisions, trends in the market, and also relationship marketing.

CONCLUSION

It is debateable if tour operators' current marketing information systems do provide them with marketing intelligence information - and this could result in tour operators missing out on viable opportunities in the tourism market. It is recommended that tour operators should consider the proper organisation of information flow as an investment, and business success and innovation, and the introductionof new offerings is influenced by the pattern and the frequency of conducting environmental scanning. If tour operators are not provided with sufficient marketing intelligence then how will they be able to provide their customers with their expected experiences?

It is recommended that tour operators and all the other sectors of tourism in South Africa, including DMOs (such as SA Tourism), collectively endeavour to "understand how to apply their own mobile strategies to augment the value-added travel experience for mobile travellers" (Hyun *et al*., 2009). It is recommended that tour operators take cognisance of the fact that Baby Boomers (Zoomers – 'baby boomers with zip') "have no intention of leaving their youthful pursuits behind as they age, and are looking for more active travel pursuits" and "the demand for boomers to have a learning experience as a part of their vacation" and "vacations that provide opportunities for authentic, hands-on, or interactive learning experiences, featuring themes" (Hudson, 2010).Ritchie and Ritchie (2002) proposed guidelines for the establishment of a comprehensive state/provincial destination marketing information system (DMIS) for the tourism industry in Alberta, Canada, based on a mandate for greater public-private sector partnership for the benefit of Travel Alberta (the provincial destination marketing organisation) and local tourism operators. Further research should be conducted to investigate if tour operators in South Africa would be interested in an information system that operates from a central location on a national basis.

It is recommended that tour operators should specifically ensure that their marketing information systems also provide for price research as this was found to be the most important of all the cognitive components in tourists' perceived value of a tourism offering (Sánchez *et al*., 2006).

Tsiotsou& Rattan (2010) said that "tourism firms are currently re-evaluating and altering their business models in order to accommodate the needs and wants of their customers, and make them more involved into their business decisions." The success of the tourism industry, tour operating, and the development and application of information technology should be viewed as a multi-disciplinary involvement because system engineers and IT specialists would be needed to enable tour operators to fully understand customers and their expected experiences.

The results of this paper indicate that tour operators do not have exploitable customer-related information and the inference is made that tour operators in South Africa cannot, based on the customer-related information currently at their disposal, provide expected customer experiences. It might just be that tour operators rely on experience and intuition and succeeded up to now. But for how long would 'Lady Luck' be in their favour? The magnitude of marketing and information system development and investment is too immense for tour operators and calls on the involvement of all role players (public and private) from all the sectors of tourism in South Africa to collectively contribute towards such development. This could even be extended to incorporate all fourteen member countries of the Southern African Developing Community.

Tour operators in South Africa do not utilise advanced IT and they do not keep up to date with software-developments to enable them to provide their customers with memorable expected experiences. This also has a direct impact on their decision-making as whether they should transform their business practices and/or tourism offerings. The prevailing situation is conducive to an enormous domain of unexploited research opportunities in the field of transforming customer experiences on and from both sides of the counter in South and southern Africa, if the necessary information technology is in place.

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EVALUATION OF TOURISM DESTINATION PRODUCTS BY CONSUMERS. THEORETICAL MODEL

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ABSTRATCT:

It is assumed that there are three main evaluative factors consumers use in the service market. These are as follows: perceived quality of services, customer value and customer satisfaction. Many authors emphasise the fact that a customer's loyalty to a particular destination should be the result of the consumer's high evaluation of quality of services/customer value/satisfaction. However, perceived quality, customer value and satisfaction are interrelated. Their definitions as well as the methods of their measurements are the subject of many academic discussions. Understanding the mutual relations between these three factors is crucial for researching customer behaviour in the service market, but a comparison of the results on many studies shows that descriptions of relations between perceived quality, customer value and satisfaction depends mainly on the way these factors are defined. One can state that discussion on the proper methods of measurement and research on relations between perceived quality, value and satisfaction should be preceded by a profound discussion on their definitions and logical analyses of their interrelations, which is not present in current literature despite some attempts. In such a case, statistical research conducted in the area of mutual relations between the three evaluative factors has led to incoherent results as obtained results obviously reflected definitions assumed by researchers.

The aim of this article is to discuss conceptual ranges of perceived quality, customer value and satisfaction in the case of tourism destination products and to elaborate on a proposal of a model of mutual relations between these concepts on the basis of the most common views from the literature. This aim is achieved through critical analysis and deduction, using the concept of a tourism product selection process. A review of the literature has allowed for the identification of approaches to perceived quality, customer value and satisfaction that are both disputed and commonly agreed upon as well as to find approaches to all of these factors that might be consistent with one another. Logical recombination of concepts and approaches found in the literature and the deductive process led to the creation of a model of a coherent system of mutual relations between the three evaluative factors as well as relations between them and other terms used in descriptions of customer behaviour.

In the elaborated model, the following set of relations between analysed issues was proposed: an image has influence on perceived product quality which has influence on the level of customer value, which, in turn, has influence on satisfaction. Satisfaction shapes future market behaviour and loyalty of a customer. Quality is regarded as a functional measure. Apart from quality and financial and non-financial costs, elements that shape perception of received value are conditional, social, emotional and epistemic elements. Both quality and received value are measured without references to customer expectations and satisfaction is related to those expectations. This assumption is essential from the article's point of view as it enables clear and precise separation of conceptual scopes of perceived quality and customer satisfaction. Further on, the article includes the role of loyalty, limitations in decision making processes and customers expectations.

The proposed model, reflecting relations between perceived quality, customer value and satisfaction, gives a good starting point for further academic discussions in this subject. Without future agreement on detailed definitions and the creation of a systemic description of interrelations between perceived quality, customer value and satisfaction, precise understanding of customer product evaluation would be difficult or even impossible as different research results would be incomparable.

KEY WORDS:

Perceived quality, customer value, customer satisfaction, customer loyalty, destination choice, customer experience evaluation.

INTRODUCTION:

The specificity of the modern tourism market, where the main burden of competition has shifted from competition between companies to competition between tourism destinations (Ritchie and Crouch, 2000; Sainaghi 2006) and companies offering tourism services depend on tourists' choices regarding the destination (Go and Govers, 2000), creates a situation where concepts of competition and competitiveness of tourism destinations acquire a special importance not only for public entities, which are responsible for social and economical development of spatial units, but also for the widely understood tourism sector functioning within a particular area. Assuming that competitive advantage is achieved by regions that tourist products satisfy expectations and meet the needs of customers to a higher extent than the competition, it can be noted that a specific measure of competitive position of tourism destination may be the fact that its offer is chosen more often and more willingly by desired tourists (people, belonging to the market segment in which a particular destination is trying to compete) than offers proposed by its competitors (Pike, 2006). Thus, most consumers perceive this destination as offering a product of higher value than its competitors. One key piece of information for evaluating competitiveness of a tourism destination is evaluation of the consumed product, done by visitors. It is a complex, multidimensional, dynamic and time variable evaluation and its criteria vary for particular participants of the tourism movement. However, in practice one of the biggest obstacles to conducting such an analysis can be the large degree of chaos in the literature that leads particular authors to conclusions and suggestions seem to contradict one another. There are many indicators used as measures of how consumers evaluate a product, but none of them is clearly defined and without controversy. Even more difficult is the question of their mutual relations. Some researchers try to search for those relations in empirical research, but the lack of coherency of results of their trials proves that at the very beginning a theoretical debate leading to the creation of systematic relations between all those measures is necessary. That is why the main aim of this article is an attempt to conduct and terminologically order the most important terms used in evaluating tourism products from a consumer perspective and the mutual relations between them. This is achieved by a literature review and logical recombination of the thesis of previously published studies leading to the finding of a coherent system of mutual relations between perceived quality, customer value, customer satisfaction and customer behaviour.

INDICATORS USED IN EVALUATION OF PRODUCTS BY CONSUMERS AND THEIR MUTUAL RELATIONS

It is assumed that there are three basic evaluative factors for consumer evaluation of products in a service market. These are perceived service quality, customer value and customer satisfaction (Chen and Tsai, 2007). Many authors stress the fact that a result of high consumer evaluation of quality/value should be loyalty to a destination. The main problem is the fact that perceived value and satisfaction are terms closely related to each other and there are many discussions on their definition and proper ways of measuring these values that leads to a situation where, depending on assumed definition, it is necessary to have an individual approach to conducting and interpreting research. Thus, results of different research projects are not easy to compared and lead to varying conclusions. This is why, one of the most popular issues raised by researchers of service markets, including tourism, are relations between these factors and their influence on the purchasing behaviour of consumers. In general, research has proved that perceived quality has influence on customer value and it, in turn, influences the customer's market behaviour in the future (Oh, 2000, Petrick, 2004). Mutual relations between satisfaction, quality and value induce more controversies still. Admittedly, Petrick (2004), among the verified by him models of relations between perceived quality, customer value, satisfaction and market behaviour of customers, does not assume such a possibility that satisfaction has influence on quality, in all analysed variants assuming the opposite relation. However, Lee *et al*. (2004), on the basis of broad studies on the literature, has notice that research cannot agree on which of the two terms has a wider scope and which of them is the prerequisite of the other. There is also no compromise on relations between customer value and perceived satisfaction. Petrick (2004) presents numerous examples of service market studies that showed an occurrence of perceived value influencing customer satisfaction (Cronin et al, 2000, Tam, 2000), and studies that positively verified the opposite relationship (Chang, Wildt, 1994, Petrick and Backman, 2002b). Relations between quality and customer value is a less disputed issue being as almost all authors agree that evaluating quality is an initial point for determining customer value.

While a positive relation between customer value, quality of services and satisfaction and desired market behaviour seems to be unquestionable, both in light of results of empirical studies and reasonable observations, the scale of this influence and the character of relations between particular measures are still being discussed, which is particularly demonstrated by a comparison of empirically verified models that shows that these relations include essential differences between them. For example, some research positively verified models which describe relations between product quality and/or customer satisfaction and his or her market behaviour, which does not consider the term of customer value (Lee *et al*., 2004, Baloglu et al., 2003, Hui *et al*., 2007). It may be assumed that results of research conducted only in a particular part of the touristic market, e.g. the Korean demilitarized zone in studies of Lee *et al*. (2007), or the market of golfers or cruise ship trip participants in studies of Petrick (2004, Petrick and Backman 2002a) cannot be uncritically extended to the whole market as a rule. Additionally, Petrick pays attention to the imperfections of tools for measurements of perceived quality, customer satisfaction, and especially customer value, which can significantly make analysis of their relations more difficult and lead to incoherent conclusions (Petrick, 2004). However, it seems that the most important issue is found elsewhere. Getz *et al*. (2001) notice that properly defining relations between quality and satisfaction depends mainly on the way quality is defined. The fact that the same methods (e.g. importance-performance analysis or Kano's model of satisfaction) are used without important modifications, both for measuring perceived quality of services and customer satisfaction, can indicate the existence of serious definition problems, which can lead to naming the same measured value as either perceived quality or satisfaction, depending on the researcher. It may be admitted that the discussion on the proper way to measure and study relations between perceived quality, customer value and satisfaction should be preceded by a profound discussion of their definitions and a logical analysis of their relationships. In other words, it is important to ask whether it is necessary to use all three terms, which are often used alternatively and are defined variously. In the case of an affirmative answer to such a question, it is then necessary to precisely determine semantic scopes of these terms, which will eliminate vagueness in interpretation. One of important problems is the fact that a true majority of the most cited definitions of perceived quality, customer value and customer satisfaction, both in the context of the tourism market and the widely perceived service market, were proposed in separate ways without considering the consequences of the indicated definition on the interpretation of the other two terms. These terms should be considered only as elements that are mutually linked in a systematic way. All three elements form a feedback chain, mutually empowering themselves. This is why they should not be studied individually, a fortiori they should not be contrasted with each other. At the current stage, when there is no commonly accepted definition or at least ways of defining perceived quality, customer value and satisfaction, it seems pointless to conduct statistical studies that prove the character of relations between them, as their results are predetermined, depending on the accepted definition of particular terms.

THE CONCEPT OF PERCEIVED QUALITY IN TOURISM

Perceived quality of tourism services can be defined as a grade in which material and non-material elements of a tourism product meet customer expectations (Fuchs and Weiermair, 2003). One of the most popular approaches to the concept of perceived quality is treating it as the difference between received service and previous expectations of customers. This view originates mainly from works of Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry who defined perceived quality of services as a grade of positive inconsistence between customer expectations or needs and their perception of these services (Zeithaml *et al*., 1990). Their method of evaluating service quality – SERVQUAL (Berry *et al*., 1988) - is based on, popular in psychology, the expectation disconfirmation model, which elaborated on the fundamentals of societal psychology and theory of organisational behaviour during the 1970s. The model of services quality, described by Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry is still one of the most popular models of evaluating services quality. However, it is not the only model and assumptions of service quality evaluation according to SERVQUAL and the paradigm of expectation disconfirmation is increasingly criticised (Cronin and Taylor, 1992, Brown et al., 1993, Crompton and Love, 1995, Oh, 1999). In a case where a high quality experience for the customer is the difference between receiving a service and expecting it, achieving a result of high quality perception requires an increase in the level of performance or a decrease in expectations of potential customers. This approach makes customer satisfaction an autonomous value and omits the fact that a particular tourism destination functions in a competitive environment and is forced to attract customers who will choose its offer from many available offers on the basis of their own high expectations regarding its quality and value. Thus, it is difficult to agree with suggestions advising activities that lead to decreasing customer expectations. What is more, it is worth focusing on research results that indicate statistically significant positive influence of a positive image during the pre-consumption phase, and so high expectations as well, on perceived quality in the post-consumption phase (Chen and Tsai, 2007, Chi and Qu, 2008).

An additional problem is the fact that expected quality in this model seems to be an ambiguous concept, defined in two possible ways: expectations, which a particular customer has towards a particular service provider and what the customer knows about the company as well as what the customer expects from such a type of service in general, regardless of service provider (Tribe and Snaith, 1998). Additionally, customer expectations are a dynamic and time variable category (Kozak, 2001) which makes the results of SERVQUAL measurements strongly dependent on the moment of surveying.

In the field of criticism of the approach to measuring service quality based on comparing received quality with consumer expectations, an alternative approach has been elaborated consisting of evaluating only performance of particular attributes (*performance-only approach*). This approach assumes that independently from earlier expectations, customer satisfaction increases when a particular element of a product is executed at a desired level (Kozak, 2001). The most popular method based on evaluating only performance is SERVPERF, elaborated by Cronin and Taylor (1994). In many comparative studies, including ones applying to tourism, it was shown that results obtained through this method are more reliable than those from the SERVQUAL method (Crompton and Love, 1995, Yuskel and Rimmington, 1998 Baker and Crompton 2000, Solnet 2011). However, Parasuraman *et al.* (1985) claim that evaluating only received services without knowing expectations is not reliable, as it does not provide information on whether a high customer mark results from actually appreciating mastery in performance or from just a slight crossing of minimal expectations. Additionally, Tribe and Snaith (1998) indicate that evaluating only received services is not effective in cases of products that attract customers only by their low price. Then, customer expectations are significantly underrated and perceived quality levels of particular attributes of services that would not be accepted in other offers may be regarded as satisfactory in this case. In general, similar reservations could also apply to other products, in which case customer expectations are underrated due to other reasons.

CUSTOMER VALUE IN THE PROCESS OF EVALUATING PRODUCTS OF TOURISM DESTINATION

The perceived quality of a product is a measure of the excellence of that which a customer received after incurring particular costs, the concept of customer value is a balance between the benefits and the sacrifices of purchasing a particular product (Zeithaml, 1988, Lee et al., 2007). Thus, a sense of high value obtained as a consequence of purchasing a particular product can result not only from its high quality but also from the very low cost spent on its purchase or a positive relation between quality and cost. Customer value can be perceived as a surplus of subjectively perceived benefits over costs, related to purchasing and using particular products. It must be stressed that costs incurred by a customer are not only limited to financial costs. In the case of tourism products, the amount of invested time also plays a crucial role. Other possible costs can include discomfort, effort, negative emotions, etc. Gallarza and Gil Saura (2006) observe that the concept of quality has a more functional nature while customer value and satisfaction also include other factors.

Reflection of this wide view on customer value is the idea proposed by Sheth *et al.* (1991), according to whom there are five basic measures of customer value: functional, social, emotional, epistemic, and conditional. Functional measure results from the product's ability to better meet the functional, physical or utilitarian aims of the customer. Social measure describes perceived utility of a product as a result of its association with one or several specific social groups. A product acquires social value by associations with positively or negatively associated demographic, socio-economic and cultural-ethnical groups. Emotional measure results from the product's ability to cause some feelings or emotional states. Epistemic measure results from the product's ability to induce curiousness and provide novelties and/or sate 'hunger' for knowledge. Conditional measure is related to the situation specificity or context experienced by a customer when making choices. A product acquires a conditional value as a consequence of particular conditions that increase its functional or social value, which would not be possible in other cases (Tapachai and Waryszak, 2000).

Thus, for the sake of further considerations in this article, differentiation of concepts of expected value and received value is very essential (Woodruff, 1997). Expected value can be defined as a surplus of subjectively perceived expected benefits and costs, related with purchasing and using a particular product. The received value can be defined as a surplus of subjectively perceived benefits over subjectively perceived costs that were incurred by a customer as a result of purchasing and using a particular product. Thus, the first term is a basis for choices of customers and is strongly related with the concept of utility, which is a part of the consumer choices theory, while the second one is a foundation of customer satisfaction.

CUSTOMER SATISFACTION IN THE TOURISM MARKET

According to Oliver (1997), satisfaction can be defined as feeling that a product or service (or their features) would provide (or provides) a satisfactory level of expectation fulfilment, including cases of exceeding or not meeting expectations. In relation to tourism destination products, Tribe and Snaith (1998) define satisfaction as a grade in which a tourist's evaluation of particular attributes of a product exceeds expectations of this tourist. This definition unequivocally indicates the paradigm of expectation disconfirmation as a proper way of defining and measuring satisfaction in the tourism market.

In contemporary works (Fuchs and Weiermair, 2003, Fuchs and Weiermair, 2004, Deng, 2007, Füller and Matzler, 2008), it is assumed that a proper approach to customer satisfaction analysis should give consideration to so called three-factor satisfaction model, which originates from works of Japanese researchers, headed by Kano (1984). The primary reason the Kano model has gained great popularity is the empirically proved theorem that customer satisfaction is not sufficient for achieving desired effects in terms of their market behaviour, such as future purchasing of the product or positive word-of-mouth recommendation. In order to achieve such results, it is necessary to win customer delight (Oliver *et al.*, 1997), defined as the state of positive emotions, resulting from exceeding a consumer's expectations by a surprising level (Rust and Oliver 2000, Füller and Matzler, 2008).

Another fundamental assumption, underlying the three-factor model of satisfaction is the observation that the current approach to analysis of customer satisfaction is not sufficient to clarify perceived satisfaction in a satisfactory way (Löfgren and Wittell, 2005), as the relationship between the level of delivering particular factors (partial satisfaction) and global customer satisfaction is not always linear, as it was assumed in earlier models. New view of Kano's team on the satisfaction theory was inspired by Herzberg's motivation theory (Herzberg, 1966), which was popular in social sciences (Bolster, 1993). Kano noted that criteria of customers evaluation of services can be grouped in three categories: one-dimensional requirements (satisfiers, performance factors), must-be requirements (dissatisfiers, basic factors) and attractive requirements (delighters, excitement factors). Kano determined factors related to the traditional concept of satisfaction as one-dimensional or causing one-dimensional satisfaction,. It means that customer satisfaction is directly proportional to the intensity of a particular feature. Apart from one-dimensional criteria, Kano also observed the existence of must-be conditions and attracting conditions that increase satisfaction level over the expected value (Högström, Rosner, Gustafsson, 2010). Meeting must-be conditions does not result in positive reactions from consumers, however, a lack of meeting them is regarded as a significant decrease of product quality. From the customer's point of view, they are so obvious that they do not focus on them as long they are delivered (Liu, Jang, 2009). Thus, they are hygiene factor, according to Herzberg's motivation theory. On the other hand, attracting factors relate mostly to needs that the customer was not aware of and did not expect being satisfied and their lack does not cause dissatisfaction. However, their existence leads to the over-proportional increase of customer satisfaction. In contrast to previous types of conditions, they are often unconscious and not expressed by consumers. They are analogical to motivators of Herzberg's motivation theory. In Kano's method, apart from these three basic groups, two other situations are also considered. Indifferent factors are factors the change of which does not cause any significant change in satisfaction (Mikulic, Prebežac, 2011). Also, a situation is indicated in which a particular group of customers decreases their satisfaction due to a particular factor. Such factors are regarded as reverse factors (Bailom *et al*., 1996).

The approach to analysis of customers satisfaction proposed in the three-factor satisfaction model seems to have special importance for analysing tourism destinations. The utility of this model, which describes the relation between the evaluation of a particular product's attributes and the product's entire evaluation, relates mostly to complex products, evaluated in light of numerous features and elements. A tourism destination product is an example of such a product and understanding relations between satisfaction of visitors resulting from particular services and tourism goods, which they used when staying in a particular place, and overall satisfaction of the stay is especially important for properly elaborating on the structure of this tourism destination. Elements of a tourism destination product that are often perceived in the structure of this product as elements of a generic product, thus basic services for tourists, i.e. related to accommodation, transport, gastronomy, are mainly must-be factors, according to Kano's theory. Thus, their role in creating customer value consists mainly in counteracting a sense of dissatisfaction. Of at least similar importance in creating customer value is these product elements that are specified as elements of an augmented product, which, in Kano's theory, are attracting factors. As in most questionnaire surveys, the importance of such unconscious, unexpected factors was only slight; the role of extended product elements could have been underrated in the process of shaping tourism destination products. Thus, in many cases, the factor that decides on product competitiveness is not perfectness and high quality of basic services (their level can be only satisfactory) but rather the success of a product is based on details that give the product its uniqueness among others and positively surprise visitors, causing their delight and shaping future market behaviour, indicating loyalty to a particular region.

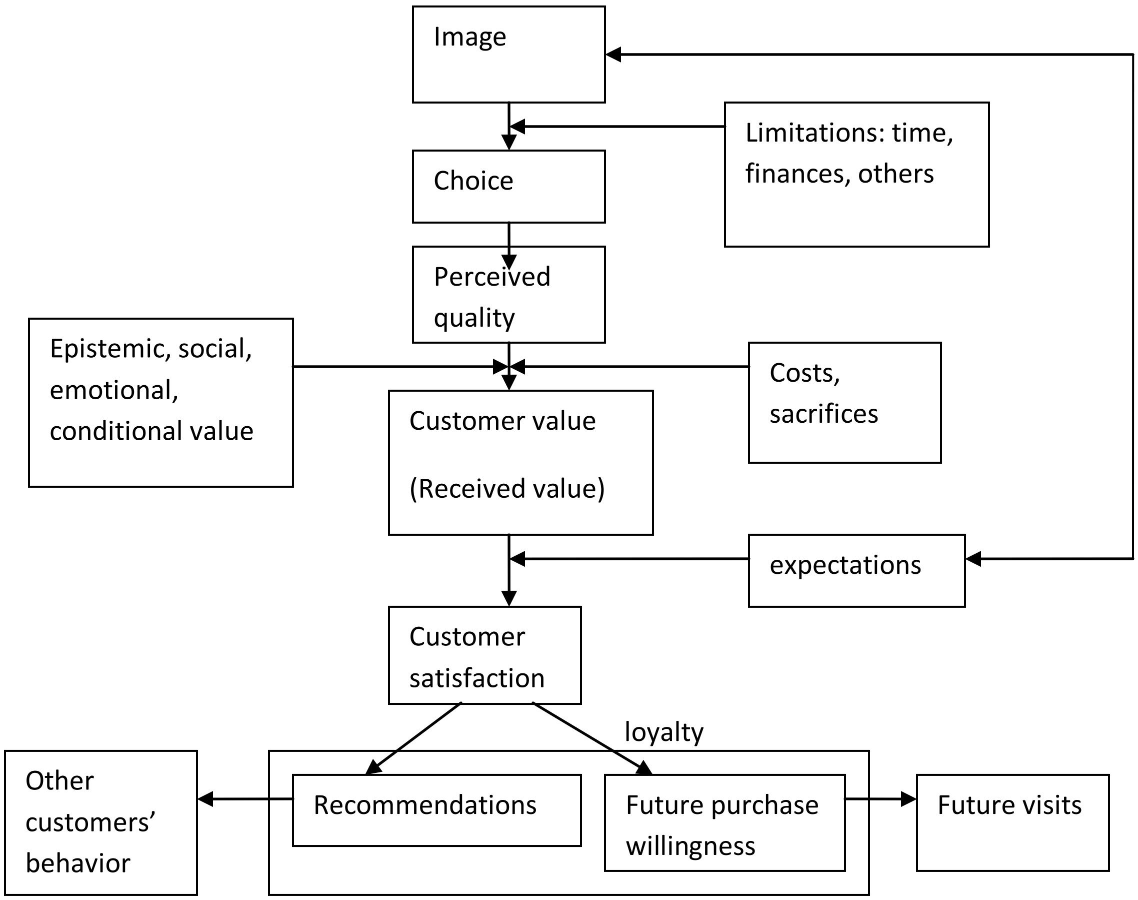
THE CONCEPT OF LOYALTY IN TOURISM

Customer satisfaction should not be regarded as an autonomous aim of the activities of a company or destination. It is rather a step towards realising the aims of variously defined customer market behaviours of consumers or, in a wider sense, their loyalty (Pong and Yee, 2001). Customer loyalty is their tendency to return to a company or a destination and their willingness for partnership activity in aid of the company or destination, for example, in the form of a recommendation. Loyalty leads further than to just repeat purchases as it indicates a customer's readiness for investment or personal devotion in respect to strengthening relations. From a customer's point of view, it can mean maintaining cooperation with a supplier that delivers a proper value in long-term cooperation, even if this supplier does not offer the best conditions in particular transactions (Reichheld, 2003). Pong and Yee (2001) show eight measures of customers loyalty, where future purchase is only one element, along with recommendations, purchase frequency, price sensitivity, future purchase willingness, preferring particular supplier, limiting behaviour related with searching for new options and selection and maintaining the top position in the customer's eyes. Thus, loyalty includes specific customer attitudes and their behaviour resulting from these attitudes. In the case of tourism destinations, it may be observed that many customers, in their market choices, follow cognitive motives and look for new experiences, thus, prefer new places over returning to those visited in the past, regardless of product satisfaction. In such cases, loyalty is indicated not by returning to particular place but by recommending it to other people. In tourism, it is particularly important as potential visitors pay special attention to positive references of relatives and friends.

PROPOSITION OF A MODEL OF RELATIONS BETWEEN QUALITY, CUSTOMER VALUE, SATISFACTION AND CUSTOMER LOYALTY IN THE TOURISTIC MARKET

A good summary of considerations over relations between quality, customer value, satisfaction and loyalty in the tourism market can be the scheme presented in Figure 1, which depicts the process of selecting and evaluating tourism offers. A starting point for this scheme is the model, empirically verified by Chen and Tsai (2007) and Chen and Chen (2010), in which, an image has influence on perceived product quality, which, in turn, influences customer value. Customer value influences satisfaction and it shapes future market behaviour of customers and their loyalty. Despite the fact that, as mentioned earlier, some researchers of the tourism market have positively verified other relations between quality, customer value, satisfaction and loyalty, the process presented by Chen and Tsai seems to be most in step with most of the literature. The presented scheme, in comparison to the model of Chen and Tsai, in a more expanded way, indicates additional elements which shape relations between these elements and offers a wider view on issues of tourism market choices.

Figure 1. The process of choice and destination product evaluation and customer loyalty



A positive view on a particular place is an attractive factor that has a positive influence on a particular person's willingness to visit a particular tourism destination (Prayag, 2009). However, the final choice is a compromise between expected benefits and limitations, the character of which is mostly financial and time related. After selecting a destination, consumption of its tourism product and evaluation take place. Product quality is evaluated in first turn. According to observations of Gallarza and Gil Saura (2006), quality is regarded as a measure of functional character. Thus, elements which shape the perception of received value, apart from quality and financial and non-financial costs, are conditional, social, emotional and epistemic elements. Additionally, the arguments of critics of the paradigm of expectation disconfirmation in quality evaluation were also considered. Thus, both quality and received value in the scheme presented in Figure 1 are evaluated in an absolute way without relating to customer expectations. This assumption is key from the point of view of this article as it allows clearly and precisely separate conceptual scopes of perceived quality and customer value. Such relations set between perceived quality, received value and customer satisfaction allow us to fully take into account the demands of the three-factor satisfaction model based on Kano's model. Each element for evaluating quality, costs and values can influence the global evaluation of a tourism destination product as a one-dimensional, attracting, must-be, neutral or reverse factor. The proposed model is based on a clear distinction of partial and global satisfaction and indicates the need of analysing their mutual relations. What is more, satisfaction resulting from matching received value and expected value should be analysed in five basic measures, similarly as customer value: functional, social, emotional, epistemic, and conditional (Yuskel, Yuskel, Bilim, 2010).

It is worth focusing on the dual character of images and expectations in the presented model. It is obvious that an element of the positive image of a tourism destination is the high expectations of a particular customer in relation to the benefits acquirable during a stay in a particular place. On the other hand, the same high expectations also become a factor that decreases satisfaction from a stay in a particular area, according to the model of expectation disconfirmation. However, image and expectations cannot be regarded as identical concepts. Image relates to a particular tourism destination while visitor expectations, apart from image, is also influenced by their idea related to a particular way of spending time, regardless the place. So, an image relates to a particular tourism destination and expectations relate mainly to particular product types, such as ways to spend time offered by a particular destination. By now, the character of relations between an image and expectations, the existence of which should be regarded as undisputed, has not been profoundly studied in relation to tourism destination.

Finally, in the post-consumption phase, customer satisfaction shapes customer loyalty (Lee, 2009), which is indicated mostly in two desired reactions – recommendations and future purchases, where the first is a success factor, influencing future market choices of other consumers, and the second influences future choices of a particular visitor. Despite the fact that in Figure 1, satisfaction has a direct influence on customer market behaviour, leading to achieving a particular position by a particular tourism destination, the presented scheme fully confirms Woodruff's (1997) statement that offering over-average value for customers is the key to achieving competitive advantage. Unlike satisfaction, customer value is not relativised by customer expectations. Thus, while acquiring loyal customers thanks to a high level of satisfaction can be a one-time phenomenon, resulting from accordance of the offer with expectations of a particular person, offering higher value than the competition should lead to achieving a privileged position, regardless customer expectations levels. This should not suggest trivializing recognizing and adjusting to expectations of particular customers. One must remember that customer expectations relate not only to the whole offer and expected value but also to particular elements as is shown in the tri-factor model. Particular elements of an offer have diversified importance for customers. It is important to know customer expectations regarding particular elements and to create an offer adjusted to their needs (Chi and Qu, 2008). On the other hand, perceived quality in the presented model is a worse indicator of competitiveness than customer value as it does not include elements of costs incurred by purchasers and benefits of a non-functional character.

There is feedback between particular measures of the consumed offer of a tourism destination and its image. The character of the received product, its quality, perception of received value and satisfaction can significantly influence a particular destination's image for a particular tourist. Considering the fact that past experiences are one of the most reliable sources of information in creating the image of a tourism destination for particular people, evaluation of a consumed product can be of key importance for the future image of a particular destination, which, in turn, has a significant influence on a customer's future market choices.

CONCLUSION

Thorough knowledge of customer evaluation of a consumed product is the basis for a tourism destination's marketing activity, especially in light of the relationship marketing paradigm. Acquiring this knowledge is possible through measurement of perceived quality, customer value or customer satisfaction. Each of these indicators brings an important message to destination marketers. However they will not work efficiently if not treated in the systematic way. The existing situation where in most scientific works each of these indicators is defined separately leads to chaos and misunderstanding among researchers who are measuring the same feature but labelling it differently or giving different features the same label. Surprisingly enough, the attempts to define at least one of these indicators in regards to others have been rare and looking for the answer in statistical analysis is purposeless as results are reflections of definitions accepted a priori.

An extended review of the literature reveals the existence of many concepts and approaches to defining and measuring perceived quality, customer value and customer satisfaction in the service market. In some cases, a scientific dispute on the most suitable approach can be observed, e.g. supremacy of the expectation disconfirmation model or the performance-only model in service quality measurement, while some other concepts seem to be commonly accepted, e.g. the three-factor model of customer satisfaction. Considering those circumstances, the attempt to build systematic relations between perceived quality, customer value and customer satisfaction was undertaken in this paper. Additionally, all three indicators were connected with other measures used in the context of customer behaviour like destination choice, image, loyalty, recommendations, etc.

The presented proposition of mutual relations between perceived quality, customer value and customer satisfaction might be controversial as controversies are still present in approaches to these indicators. The task for both the author of this paper and for other researchers seems to be further discussion of the relations and debates presented here on enhancements and/or major changes in the proposed model. Without working out the commonly accepted definitions and approaches clearly presenting mutual relations of three major indicators of customer product evaluation, research of customer behaviour in the context of tourism destinations, and also wider: in the context of the service market, will lead to nowhere. So, the first step was offered, further discussion is welcomed.

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SERVICE QUALITY IN HOTELS: THE CASE OF COASTAL SPA HOTELS IN SLOVENIA

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ABSTRATCT:

The main purpose of this study is to determine the level of expectations and perceptions regarding service quality in coastal spa hotels in Slovenia. In order to measure hotel guests' expectations and perceptions of service quality, a field survey has been conducted. Convenience sampling was used and 177 hotel guests in spa hotels in the coastal region were asked to cooperate in the research. The basis of questionnaire is a SERVQUAL model with some adjustments. To describe and evaluate hotel guests' expectations and perceptions scores we used a descriptive statistical analysis, by which we have also described hotel guests' demographic characteristics. The study revealed an overall discrepancy between hotel guests' expectations and perceptions regarding to service quality in coastal spa hotels in Slovenia that were included in the sample. The discrepancy is small and negative so it can be argued that the hotel services were performed almost in line with hotel guests' expectations. The study also reveals the problem of parking areas, because this attribute got the highest negative SERVQUAL score. This should be a clear signal to the management of the hotels that parking areas are a weak spot that needs improvements. Two important facts also arise from the study, namely the fact that more than 95 percent of the hotel guests who participated in our study will recommend their hotel to friends. Word of mouth is the best kind of advertising a company can wish for. The second important fact is that almost 90 percent of hotel guests will stay at the same hotel if they visit the Slovenian coast again. This suggests a high degree of loyalty of hotel guests in the hotels participating in our study.

KEY WORDS:

Guest's expectations, guest's perceptions, service quality, spa hotels, servqual, hotel quality.

INTRODUCTION:

According to Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry (1985) services in general have got three unique features: intangibility, heterogeneity and inseparability of production and consumption. Therefore service quality can't be measured objectively. As a fact, according to Akbaba (2006) and Atilgan, Akinci, &Aksoy (2003), service quality as well as identifying guest's expectations in hospitality industry play an important role when it comes to success of hotel business. Hospitality is specific in its nature in the sense thatdemand for service is not evenly distributed throughout the year. Hence it is difficult to provide and maintain consistent service quality (Mei, Dean, & White, 1999). In the international business environment, as well as in Slovenia, we find the inefficiencies at the established quality systems (such as ISO standards) in the case of tourism. The main criticism of such systems is that they are not fully adapted to specific features of tourism industry. The most effective tool for ensuring quality of service is a formation of internal service quality standards (Uran& Conti, 2006).

The main purpose of this study is to determine the level of expectations and perceptions regarding service quality in coastal spa hotels in Slovenia. The research question of this paper is: is there a discrepancy between hotel guest's expectations and perceptions regardingservice quality. The paper is organized as follows. In the first section we describe the statistical data about Slovenian tourism in the year 2010 and some theoretical basis for service quality. These are followed by the presentation of the study carried out in coastal spa hotels in Slovenia, interpretation of the results, discussion and conclusion.

Statistical data about tourism in Slovenia in 2010

Slovenian tourism industry has in the last decade become one of the most important service industry in Slovenia (Banka Slovenije, 2011). In the year 2010 11.8 percent of the total GDP of Slovenia was generated by direct travel and tourism industry plus indirect and induced contributions, including the contribution of capital investment spending. In the same year the number of jobs generated directly in the travel and tourism industry plus the indirect and induced contribution was approximately 102.000, which represents 12,1 percent of all employments in Slovenia (WTTC, 2011).

If we look at the statistic data, we can see that in Slovenia the total number of beds is 117.947. The number of total tourist arrivals is 3.006.272, the number of overnight stays has reached 8.906.399. The relationship between domestic and foreign tourists in is favour of the latter; the share of overnight stays by foreign tourists is 56,1 percent and the share of foreign tourist arrivals is 62,2 percent. The average length of stay is 3 days and the value of tours sold abroad is 1.742.999.000 € (STO, 2011).

Statistical data about tourism in Slovenian coastal region in 2010

The total number of beds is 24.080, which represents 20,4 percent of all beds in Slovenia. The number of total tourist arrivals is 559.267 (18,6 per cent of total tourist arrivals), the number of overnight stays is 1.981.141 (22,24 per cent of total overnight stays). In the coastal region the relationship between domestic and foreign tourists is also in favour of the latter; the share of overnight stays by foreign tourists is 53,6 percent and the share of foreign tourists arrivals is 50,6 percent (SURS, 2011).

Health spa tourism in Slovenia

In Slovenia there are 15 registered health spas and they are organized in the Slovenian Spas Community. Slovenian health and spa resorts are based on thermal springs, thermal water and mud. In Slovenian health and spa resorts accommodation facilities are three, four and five-star hotels. Apart from hotels, the guests can also choose from bungalows, apartments, vacation houses and also special camping sites. An important part of health and spa resorts are wellness centres. Wellnesscentersoffer a widerange of services such as physiotherapy,balneotherapy, fitness, solariums, Turkish and Finnish baths, whirlpools and various baths, massages (SSNZ, 2011). We can say that health spa tourism is the flagship of Slovenian tourism. Slovenian natural health resorts are accordingto the Director of Slovenian Spas Community "the most comprehensive and recognizable thematic tourism product" (Altbauer, 2010). In the current *Development Plan and Policies of Slovenian Tourism* Slovenian spas are presented as one of the most important tourism products of Slovenian tourism (Uranet al., 2006).

In the last few years in Slovenian health and spa resorts many investments have been carried out. Resorts have acquired new and modern facilities, both in residential complexes, as well as in offer of wellness products.

Investments have been encouraged by the overall economic growth, and by grants from the European funds. All investments now provide the highest standards of accommodation and treatment programs, rehabilitation, prevention and wellness. All this speaks in favour of the good results achieved in Slovenian spas. In order to maintain good performance, Slovenian spas should be able to adjust their offer as well as their sales channels to meet guests' expectations. Of course, the effects of the financial crisis are visible in Slovenian health resorts, especially in the downward trend in visits and overnight started in the fall of 2009). Nevertheless Slovenian spas have responded with marketing activities of high intensity (Altbauer, 2010; STO, 2009; STO & SSNZ, 2009). Tourists are more and more aware of the importance of maintaining both physical and mental health. Hence there is an increase in demand for wellness products. The trend of demand for such products is growing also due to the fact that Europe is characterized by demographic trends showing that the population is ageing (STO & SSNZ, 2009). Therefore Slovenian spas should be able to take advantage of these facts.

Service quality

Quality consists of two components, namely technical and functional quality. Technical quality refers to a room in a hotel or a meal in a restaurant while functional quality refers to the process of implementation of the service or product. Technical quality is ensured through different systems of categorization of hotels while functional quality is ensured through a variety of quality systems. It is important to know that functional quality can be used to create a competitive advantage in hospitality industry (Uran& Conti, 2006). When measuring service quality we have to know the concept of perceived quality. According to Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1988, pp 16)the "perceived service quality is the degree and direction of discrepancy between consumer's perceptions and expectations."

Because of the fact that service quality as well as identifying guests' expectations in hospitality industry plays an important role when it comes to success of hotel business (Akbaba, 2006), a lot of different measurement tools were developed. All these tools are widely used in hospitality and academic sphere (Atilganet al., 2003). Numerous authors have focused on service quality and guests' expectations in hospitality especially in health spas (Armstrong, Mok, Go, & Chan, 1997; Choi & Chu, 2001; Juwaheer, 2004; Snoj&Mumel, 2002). These studies have contributed to a better understanding of importance of both the service quality as well as guests' expectations.

The number of service quality errors (errors by departments such as bathroom, catering, etc.) is often used as a measure of quality in studies of service quality in hotels worldwide. Several authors have tried to develop models of service quality with which managers in hotels could set new standards in service quality. At the same time they could measure customers' expectations and perceptions of quality of service (Meyer/Matmuller model Gronroos model, SERVQUAL, Muller model). All listed models try to identify the factors that have a major impact on the quality of services. SERVQUAL is, despite criticism, the most popular standardized questionnaire and has a major impact on service quality research. However, there is evidence that the SERVQUAL model has proved to be unstable in the case of applications in hotels (Carman, 1990; Ekinci& Riley, 1997). Criticisms relate mainly to the theoretical and operational base of the SERVQUAL model (Buttle, 1996). The original aim of SERVQUAL is to measure expectations and perceptions (Caruana, Ewing, &Ramaseshan, 2000). Some authors, who researched service quality in hospitality, used SERVQUAL as a foundation when creating a new measurement instrument for hospitality (Akan, 1995; B. Knutson, Stevens, Wullaert, Patton, & Yokoyama, 1990; Mei et al., 1999) such as LODQUAL, LODGSERV, HOLSERV, LODGEQUAL (B. Knutson et al., 1990; Marković&Raspor, 2010; Mei et al., 1999). Ekinci& Riley (1999) have developed"Q-methodology" which has proven as a suitable model for measuring the service quality of the hotel. All these new measurement instruments have been developed in order to develop a measurement instrument taking into account all features of hospitality.

It is widely known that there exists a positive relationship between loyalty of guests and profitability (Bowen & Chen, 2001), 2001, 213). In their research, Sasser&Reichheld (1990) demonstrated that if a hotel increases the number of loyal guests for only 5 per cent, the profit of a hotel rises for 25 per cent. Loyal guests are also crucial when it comes to promotion of a hotel because they give recommendations about a specific hotel to their friends and acquaintances. In their researches Bowen and Chen (2001) as well as Bowen and Shoemaker (1998) confirmed the hypothesis that the loyal guests are bigger consumers of food and beverages in a hotel, compared to non-loyal guests. The hotel with loyal guests has got lower costs, because loyal guests already know the offer of the hotel. Sometimes loyal guests also give information of a hotel offer to other hotel guests. The authors also confirmed the non-linear relationship between satisfaction and loyalty of hotel guests (Bowen & Chen, 2001). Banker et al. (2000) analysed a six-year monthly data of 18 business units in a hotel chain. They confirmed the link between non-monetary indicators of guest satisfaction and internal processes with future contributions of general operating profit. Loyalty of hotel guests is also recognized as a dominant factor in business success in a hotel (Kandampully&Suhartanto, 2003). In her study Kimes (2001) researched the link between service quality and business performance of the franchised hotels Holiday Inn Worldwide. She has confirmed a strong correlation between business performance, product and service quality and guest satisfaction. Some research in the field of guest satisfaction and service quality in hospitality have already been carried out in Slovenian hotels (Snoj&Mumel, 2002; Uran, 2003, 2004).

The Slovene Ministry of the Economy, The Directorate of Tourism is aware of the importance of quality in tourism industry and it has issued several handbooks on this topic (Grlica, 2009).

From the literature review the importance of service quality is evident. With our research we wanted to find out if this is true also in coastal spa hotels in Slovenia. Therefore we tried to determine the level of expectations and perceptions regarding service quality in coastal spa hotels in Slovenia.

METHODS

In order to measure hotel guests' expectations and perceptions of service quality, a field survey has been conducted. We used convenience sampling. 177 hotel guests in spa hotels in the coastal region were asked to cooperate in the research. All the guests were intercepted in the lobby of the hotel. The survey was carried out by students of the Faculty of Tourism Studies Portorož – Turistica in June 2010. The students visited three spa hotels (three and four star hotels) in the coastal region. Before the study was carried out, we had asked the management of the hotels for their permission to conduct our study in their hotels.

5 questionnaires were not included in the analysis because they were incomplete. Hence the final analysis is based on 172 valid questionnaires. The programme SPSS was used for the analysis of the results.

To conduct our study we used a questionnaire that had been developed on the basis ofSERVQUAL model. The questionnaire is adjusted with some attributes in order to capture the specific aspects of the hotel industry (Akbaba, 2006; Marković&Raspor, 2010; Parasuramanet al., 1985, 1988; Snoj&Mumel, 2002). As a result of these modifications, the questionnaire has 29 attributes. Expectations and perceptions were measured on a seven point Likert-type ordinal scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Each attribute was recast into two statements – one statement measured the expectations about hotels in general while the other statement measured perceptions about a particular hotel (the hotel in which the guests were staying in). The questionnaire consisted of two parts. The first part measured guests' expectations and perceptions. The interviewees were asked to give their opinion about their expectations of the quality of service in a hotel. In the next step they were asked to give their opinion about their perceptions of the quality of service in the hotel they were staying in. In the first part we also asked the hotel guests about the level of their satisfaction with different hotel departments. The level of satisfaction was also measured on a seven point Likert-type ordinal scale ranging from 1 (strongly dissatisfied) to 7 (strongly satisfied). In this part some questions were also asked regarding loyalty to the hotel. With the second part of the questionnaire some socio-demographic and travelling data was collected. Travelling data consisted of the purpose of visit and the duration of staying in a hotel. To describe and evaluate hotel guests' expectations and perceptions scores we used a descriptive statistical analysis, by which we have also described hotel guests' demographic characteristics.

RESULTS

For the analysis of the results we used SPSS. The demographic data of the respondents are presented below.

Table 1: Profile of respondents (n=172)

Variables		Frequency (s)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Female	91	52,9
	Male	81	47,1
Age	16-25	15	8,7
	26-35	30	17,4
	36-45	50	29,1
	46-55	46	26,7
	56-65	23	13,4
	66 and over	8	4,7
Country of residence	Slovenia	93	54,07
	Italy	27	15,7
	Germany	13	11,05
	England	11	7,56
	Austria	9	6,4
	Other	19	5,23
Level of education	Higher education	70	40,7
	University and above	50	29,1
	Secondary school	47	27,3
	Primary school	5	2,9
Purpose of visit	Vacation	130	75,6
	Others	18	10,5
	Business	17	9,9
	Visiting relatives, friends	7	4,1
Duration of staying at a hotel	1-3 days	53	30,8
	4-7 days	86	50
	8-15 days	31	18
	16 days and above	2	1,2

In Table 1 the basic socio-demographic and travelling data are presented. As can be seen, there were slightly more females (52,9 per cent) than males (47,1 per cent). The highest proportion of hotel guest were domestic guests (54,07 per cent) and the highest proportion of the hotel guests fell into the 36-45 year age group (29,1 per cent). 40,7 percent of hotel guests had higher education and almost 76 per cent of the respondents stated that the main purpose of their visit was vacation. 50 per cent of them stayed at a hotel for between four and seven days.

To describe and evaluate hotel guests' expectations and perceptions scores we have used a descriptive statistical analysis. The means and SERVQUAL score were computed for each attribute. A SERVQUAL score was calculated for each attribute by subtracting the expectations' mean from the perceptions' mean. A positive SERVQUAL score indicates that the service was performed above expectations, while negative SERVQUAL score indicates a poor quality.

The results of the descriptive statistical analysis of hotel guests' expectations and perceptions are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: The means and SERVQUAL score for each attribute (n= 172)

Attribute	Expectations mean	Perceptions mean	SERVQUAL score
Modern-looking equipment	5,65	5,97	0,32
Visually appealing physical facilities	5,92	5,97	0,05
Neat hotel staff	6,48	6,23	-0,25
Visually appealing materials (pamphlets, web-sites)	5,9	5,84	-0,06
Clean and tidy hotel	6,64	6,27	-0,37
Appropriate location	6,01	5,97	-0,04
Parking area	6,26	5,71	-0,55
Performing service in the promised time	6,42	6,1	-0,32
Interest in solving guests' problems	6,48	6,12	-0,36
Performing services right the first time	6,15	5,98	-0,17
Service without delays	6,22	6,04	-0,18
Error-free service	6,12	6,05	-0,07
Knowing the exact time when service will be performed	6,19	6,06	-0,13
Hotel staff provides prompt service	5,94	6,09	0,15
Willingness to help guests	6,42	6,34	-0,08
Hotel staff has time to answer guests' questions	6,25	6,12	-0,13
Hotel staff instils confidence	6,38	6,22	-0,16
Courteous hotel staff	6,53	6,34	-0,19
Hotel staff has the knowledge to answer questions	6,21	6,19	-0,02
Feeling safe and secure	6,58	6,35	-0,23
Providing individual attention	5,92	5,91	-0,01

Convenient opening hours	5,72	5,98	0,26
Hotel staff provides personal attention	5,58	5,81	0,23
Guests' best interests at heart	6,3	6,17	-0,13
Understanding guests' specific needs	6,08	6,02	-0,06
Ease of finding one's way around the hotel	5,95	6,01	0,06
Available and clear information in the hotel	6,41	6,2	-0,21
Offering a variety of facilities	5,83	6,27	0,44
Typical service quality for hotel category	6,41	6,34	-0,07
Overall mean for all attributes	6,17	6,09	-0,08

It is evident from Table 2, that the mean scores of hotel guests' expectations range from 5,58 to 6,64. The highest expectations are related to the attribute "clean and tidy hotel", while the lowest expectations are related to the attribute "hotel staff provides personal attention". Overall mean for all attributes regarding the hotel guests' expectations is 6,17.

The mean scores of hotel guests' perceptions range from 5,71 to 6,35. The highest perceptions were related to the attribute "feeling safe and secure", while the lowest perceptions was related to the attribute "parking area". This suggests that hotels participating in our study don't offer a satisfactory parking area. Overall mean for all attributes regarding the hotel guests' perceptions was 6,09.

According to the results in Table 2 the positive SERVQUAL score was related to seven attributes: "modern-looking equipment", "visually appealing physical facilities", "hotel staff provides prompt service", "convenient opening hours", "hotel staff provides personal attention", "ease of finding one's way around the hotel" and "offering a variety of facilities". For these elements of hotel service the hotel guests' perception was higher than expectation, so we can say that hotel guests enjoyed a quality hotel service.

For all other attributes the SERVQUAL score was negative. The highest negative SERVQUAL score was related to the attribute "parking area". Such a high negative score indicates a big disproportion between the expected and the perceived hotel service. Attributes "clean and tidy hotel", "interest in solving guests' problems" and "performing service in the promised time" also have high negative SERVQUAL score. Hotel managers should pay attention to this attributes. In some cases the negative score was quite low where this indicates a small difference between hotel guests' expectations and perceptions of hotel services.

Overall mean for all attributes regarding the hotel guests' SERVQUAL score was -0,08. Therefore it can be argued that the hotel services were performed almost in line with hotel guests' expectations.

Table 3: Five the most important attributes of hotel guests' expectations (n= 172)

Attribute	**Expectations means**
Clean and tidy hotel	6,64
Feeling safe and secure	6,58
Courteous hotel staff	6,53
Interest in solving guests' problems	6,48
Neat hotel staff	6,48

From Table 3 it is evident that for hotel guests cleanliness and tidiness are very important and hotel guests have high expectations in that. They also expect to feel safe and secure as well as the hotel staff's courtesy and willingness to solve problems. All these attributes (except cleanliness and tidiness) have one common feature of hotel services: intangibility. According to the figures in Table 3 we can conclude that hotel guests' expectations are quite high.

Table 4: Five the most important attributes of hotel guests' perceptions (n= 172)

Attribute	Expectations means
Feeling safe and secure	6,35
Neat hotel staff	6,34
Willingness to help guests	6,34
Typical service quality for hotel category	6,34
Clean and tidy hotel	6,27

According to Table 4 the attribute concerning safety and security got the highest score from the hotel guests. We can also conclude that hotel staff was neat and willing to help guests. All these five attributes got a higher mean than the overall mean for all attributes.

Table 5: Level of hotel guests' satisfaction with hotel departments (n= 172)

Attribute	Means
Housekeeping department	6,28
Reception department	6,24
Overall satisfaction with hotel visit	6,12
Food and beverage department	6,09
Price	6,04

We can see from Table 5 that the mean scores of hotel guests' satisfaction with different hotel departments ranged from 6,04 to 6,28. As we can see, hotel guests were mostly satisfied with the housekeeping departments (room's comfort and cleanliness, amenities in the room) and they were the least satisfied with the price of hotel services. Hotel guests were also quite satisfied with the overall hotel visit.

Table 6: Loyalty of hotel guests (n = 172)

Attribute	Percentage (%)	
	YES	NO
Recommendation of hotel to friends	95,9	4,1
Revisit of the same hotel	89,5	10,5

It is evident from Table 6 that almost all hotel guests will recommend the hotel they were staying in to their friends. Also almost 90 percent of hotel guests will stay at the same hotel if they visit the Slovenian coast again. We can conclude that both attributes in Table 6 suggest a high degree of loyalty of hotel guests in hotels which have participated in our study.

DISCUSSION

We can conclude that there is an overall discrepancy between hotel guests' expectations and perceptions regarding to service quality in coastal spa hotels in Slovenia that were included in the sample. The discrepancy is small and negative so it can be argued that the hotel services were performed almost in line with hotel guests' expectations. The study also reveals the problem of parking areas, because this attribute got the highest negative SERVQUAL score. This should be a clear signal to the management of the hotels that parking areasare a weak spot that needs improvements. The study has also revealed that hotel guests find cleanliness and tidiness very important. Many studies have reached a similar conclusion (Akbaba, 2006; Callan& Bowman, 2000; Gu& Ryan, 2008; B. J. Knutson, 1988; Lockyer, 2002).

Two important facts also arise from the study, namely the fact that more than 95 percent of the hotel guests who participated in our study will recommend their hotel to friends. Word of mouth is the best kind of advertising a company can wish for. The second important fact is that almost 90 percent of hotel guests will stay at the same hotel if they visit the Slovenian coast again. This suggests a high degree of loyalty of hotel guests in the hotels participating in our study.

Due to the small sample size and the fact, that only three spa hotels cooperated in our study, we can't generalize the results of this study. But the study findings will certainly help mainly in preparing new, innovative products in spa hotels, as well as in the preparation of new curricula in the field of tourism. Hotel managers should be aware of the results of such studies, which helpthem meet their hotel guests' expectation more efficiently. Future research should be conducted with the same questionnaire on the entire population of spa hotels in Slovenia.

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EVALUATION OF JAPAN AS A TOURIST DESTINATION - CASE OF EAST ASIAN PEOPLE WHO HAVE BEEN TO JAPAN

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ABSTRATCT:

The object of this study is to analyze the estimation of Japan as a tourist destination with a target of the tourists who have been to Japan. Soul, Taipei, Beijing, Shanghai and Hong Kong are the targeted area.

Showing the hypothetical tour plans to the respondents, we obtained the preference data. In the survey, questions were asked in the situation of taking a company trip that provides recreation for employees, so there would be no financial burden for the participants. While conjoint analysis was used to analyze the preference, MDS and cluster analysis were used to consider the competition environment among the tour plans.

From the result from conjoint analysis, Japan shows the highest value for the respondents from the four cities excluding Seoul. It can be said that Japan is evaluated as a site which respondents would like to visit again. The result of MDS and cluster analysis shows that the preference formation of the targeted consumers, firstly the destination area is selected and then the tour contents (round trip/stay or urban/nature) is considered.

The future assignments are as follows; Firstly, although the evaluation by a tourist who has been to Japan has been identified, that by a tourist who has not been is not clear. The same kind of study for the latter group should be conducted to clarify the difference between the two groups. Secondly, although Japan is highly evaluated, concrete attributes for the high evaluation are not known. In order to analyze the evaluation more closely, the follow-up study such as a group interview should be conducted.

KEY WORDS:

Overseas travel destination, East Asian market, Evaluation of Japan, conjoint analysis, MDS.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to analyze evaluation of Japan as a travel destination through surveying people who have traveled in Japan from East Asia. Our studies were conducted in the following 5 cities: Seoul, Taipei, Beijing, Shanghai and Hong Kong. These cities have experienced a rapid economic growth so that people have a burning desire to travel abroad. In this paper, we focus the people who have been to Japan and research to find out whether they would be repeaters or not. There are two points that we should to research. One is the overseas travel preference of the people in five cities. Another is the competitive environment among tourist destinations (regions). These two points are our research theme in this paper.

In Japan, inbound tourism market is generally understood in terms of countries such as China or South Korea. However, the accuracy of the market understanding is in doubt when it is studied by country. For example, China has a big land and therefore Chinese people have different mind-set and needs depending on the area they live. Japan is often appealed as a quick travel destination, however, the distance varies depends on where they live, and there may be closer countries from where they live. For such case, Japan is not a near-by country. Also, there are differences between people that have never been to Japan and those that have been to Japan. For inviting tourists from foreign countries, invitation strategies must be developed by areas taking into consideration in view of uniqueness by country and regional differences. Further, in order to attract repeat travelers, it will become important to survey whether travelers would want to visit Japan more than once, and which other countries they weigh against Japan when deciding a travel destination.

Based on the above conditions, we study East Asian market by city and define the evaluation of Japan as an overseas travel destination through surveying people that have traveled in Japan. Our analysis is conducted using conjoint analysis for people’s preferences on overseas travel. Also, using multidimensional scaling and cluster analysis, we confirm competitive environment among tour plans. Regional differences on preferences are studied based on the analysis of the results through a regional comparison. This paper consists of the following 4 sections: in Section 2, current inbounds and repeat travelers from East Asia are discussed; in Section 3, precedence study on preference analysis are reviewed; in Section 4, survey methods, analysis, and results of analysis are discussed, and Section 5 is discussion and summary.

INBOUND TOURISTS FROM EAST ASIA TO JAPAN

According to the Japan Tourism Agency, as of 2010, the number of inbound tourists in Japan is approximately 8 million. Among them inbounds from East Asia accounts a great percentage, and East Asia is an important inbound market for Japan. Of all, according to the Japan National Tourism Organization (2010), as of 2009, 50% of all inbounds are 2nd time or more repeat travelers to Japan. Looking the inbounds by their originations, 80% of Hong Kong tourists, 70% of Taiwan tourists, and 60% of South Korea tourists are repeat tourists. The percentage had increased from 2008 in all of these countries. The percentage of repeat travelers from China was approximately 25%, though this was a great increase compared to 19%in the previous year. Although Japan National Tourism Organization (2010) research target are including sightseeing, business, visiting friends in Japan and others, it is clear that repeaters are increasing.

From the survey result, it can be said that repeat traveling to Japan is common among people from East Asia. However, we don’t know how these repeat travelers would choose Japan and what other travel destinations are in their options. In this study, we attempt to identify evaluation of Japan as a travel destination through surveying on the tourists that have been in Japan. The target of this paper is the people whose purpose is sightseeing in Japan.

PRECEDENCE STUDIES

Precedence studies on preference analysis on tourist sites are as follows: Rugg (1973) used Lancaster’s approach to show that tourists choose destinations to maximize their utility within the constraints of time and income. Based on Rugg (1973), Morley (1992), Papatheodorou (2001) and Seddighi and Theocharous (2002) considered models of tourist behavior. Morley (1992) aimed to develop a microeconomic model of tourism demand and applied a model of transportation mode choice to tourism demand. Seddighi and Theocharous (2002) considered the decision-making process. They focused on the possibility of revisiting Cyprus and analyzed the data from questionnaires of visitors to Cyprus using a logit model. Although Papatheodorou's (2001) study did not include an empirical analysis, it considered an analysis method with a logit model.

Several studies have been conducted on foreign tourists in Japan by Japan Tourism Agency and Japan National Tourism Organization (JNTO). As discussed in Section 2, JNTO have been conducting a survey every year on tourist sites that foreign tourists visit in Japan and publishing the results by purpose of their visit, times of their visit and so on. However, most of these surveys are categorized by country. As mentioned in Section 1, market must be grasped by areas based on each country's characteristics taking into consideration, and invitation strategies must be developed by areas within the country. Precedence market research study categorized by area includes "Hibino, Morichi and Shimada (2011)." In this study, Chinese tourists in Japan are categorized by their living area in China, and their behaviors in tourist sites were analyzed. According to the study, tourists from Beijing, Northeast China, North China, Central China, and South China tend to visit 3 tourist sites during a visit while tourists from Shanghai tend to visit just one area in either Kanto or Kansai. Additionally, higher percentage of tourists from Beijing and Shanghai tend to choose Hokkaido as their travel destination compared to other areas' residents. Behaviors of repeat travelers from Beijing and Shanghai are similar to those travelers' from Taiwan and Hong Kong. Hibino, Morichi and Shimada (2011) defines the differences of tourists behaviors according to the area where the tourists are from, not by country, thus indicates the importance of understanding the market by area.

SURVEY AND ANALYSIS

-Summary of survey

As mentioned above, all of those surveyed have visited Japan. The five cities surveyed here include Seoul, Taiwan, Beijing, Shanghai, and Hong Kong. Those cities were chosen because we could easily find consumers that can afford to travel overseas in those cities due to the recent economic growth. We conduct surveys by city and analyze using conjoint analysis, multidimensional scaling and cluster analysis, and define evaluation of Japan as a tourist destination.

We surveyed consumers living in the five cities using questionnaire. Conjoint analysis, Multi Dimensional Scaling (MDS) and cluster analysis are employed to analyze the data obtained from this questionnaire. Conjoint analysis is conducted to derive people's preferences on overseas travel. It is also important to clear the competitive environment among destinations. In this paper, MDS and cluster analysis are conducted to confirm competitive environment among tour plans.

In survey, first of all, the respondents were screened by filter question, because the target of this research is the people who have been to Japan. After the respondents were screened, in the survey, questions were asked in the situation of taking a company trip. Some companies sponsor an all-paid company trip for their employees as a gesture of appreciation, so there would be no financial burden for the participants (employees). The purpose of these companies trip is leisure. Because of this assumption, participants could freely choose the destination they truly would like to visit for leisure without financial restrictions. We indicated various overseas travel plans as shown in Table 1. All overseas travel plans indicated in Table 1are hypothetical. The attributions of the setting include 1) nature/urban, 2) destination region (Japan, North America, Europe, China, or South Korea), and 3) round trip/stay. In addition, we referred actual travel package plans from Internet. Duration of trip was 7 days. The destinations were modified based according to the city the subject lived (See Table 1).

For conjoint analysis, we asked respondents to choose top 8 overseas travel plans that they would like to visit. For MDS and cluster analysis, respondents were asked to point out most similar plan as their image for the top 8 plans.

The Internet survey was conducted by JTB and Video Research in December, 2010. The result of this questionnaire is not affected from the Great East Japan Earthquake happened on March 11 in 2011.

Table1 Questionnaire survey: Overseas tour plans shown to respondents and its attributions

	Tour plan	**Attribution**		
		Destination Type	**Region**	**Travel Type**
1	Tokyo Free 7days	City	Japan	1 destination-stay
2	Tokyo/Osaka/Kyoto Round Trip 7days	City	Japan	3 destinations-round trip
3	HokkaidoStay7days	Nature	Japan	1 destination-stay
4	Tokyo/HokkaidoStay7days	Nature	Japan	2 destinations-stay
5	San Francisco/Los Angels Free 7days	City	North America	2 destinations-round trip
6	San Francisco Stay 7days	City	North America	1 destination-stay
7	Vancouver/ Canadian Rocky Stay7days	Nature	North America	2 destinations-stay
8	San Francisco/ Canadian Rocky Round Trip7days	Nature	North America	2 destinations-round trip
9	ParisFree7Days	City	Europe	1 destination-stay
10	Paris/ Rome/Milan Round trip7Days	City	Europe	3 destinations-round trip
11	Swiss Alps Stay 7Days	Nature	Europe	1 destination-stay
12	Swiss Alps/ Munich Stay 7Days	Nature	Europe	2 destinations-round trip
13	Phuket, Thailand Stay7Days	Nature	Southeast Asia	1 destination-stay
14	Cheju, Korea Stay7Days	Nature	Korea	1 destination-stay
15	Bangkok/Kuala Rampur/ Singapore Round trip7days	City	Southeast Asia	3 destinations-round trip
16	Chengdu/Tibet Round trip7Days	Nature	China	2 destinations-round trip
17	Beijing/ Shanghai Round trip7Days	City	China	2 destinations-round trip

Note) For respondents in Seoul, Plan 14 is not included. For respondents in Beijing and Shanghai, Plan 17 is not included. Attribution is not shown for respondents.

ANALYSIS AND RESULT

-Sample size and attributes of respondents

The sample size and the attributes of the respondents are shown in Table2. "No answer" is not counted in the number of answers (sample size). As a result, about 500 respondents in each city answered the questionnaire. All respondents have their job and almost of them are employees except Beijing and Shanghai. Maximum paid holidays, in average, about 10 days. The respondents in Seoul and Taipei are able to take paid holidays lower than 10 days. It might be said that people in these cities visit to near country if they go overseas travel. In this survey, the respondents were also asked which country they want to go. Except in Seoul, Japan is considered the most attractive country in other four cities. (See Appendix-1 for the detail.)

Table2 The number of answers (Sample size) and attributes of respondents: number (ratio)

	Seoul		Taipei	
Sample size	402		533	
Sex (Man, Female)	259 (64.4)	143 (35.6)	283 (53.1)	250 (46.9)
Marital Status (Married/unmarried)	139 (34.6)	263 (65.4)	249 (46.7)	284 (53.3)
Overseas education [Note1] (Yes/no)	226 (56.2)	176 (43.8)	158 (29.6)	375 (70.4)
Occupation[Note2]	1	267 (66.4)	1	252 (47.3)
	2	15 (3.7)	2	65 (12.2)
	3	25 (6.2)	3	111 (20.8)
	4	95 (23.6)	4	105 (19.7)
Paid holidays (actual)(Days)	Average	12.8	Average	13.5
	Maximum	30	Maximum	30
	Minimum	0	Minimum	0
Maximum paid holidays (Days)	Average	6.5	Average	7.3
	Maximum	30	Maximum	30
	Minimum	0	Minimum	0

Table2 The number of answers (Sample size) and attributes of respondents: number (ratio) (continued)

	Beijing		Shanghai	
Sample size	527		610	
Sex (Man, Female)	267 (50.7)	260 (49.3)	309 (50.7)	301 (49.3)
Marital Status (Married/unmarried)	92 (17.5)	435 (82.5)	105 (17.2)	505 (82.8)
Overseas education [Note1] (Yes/no)	250 (47.4)	277 (52.6)	296 (48.5)	314 (51.5)
Occupation[Note2]	1	163 (30.9)	1	228 (37.4)
	2	26 (4.9)	2	34 (5.6)
	3	39 (7.4)	3	52 (8.5)
	4	299 (56.7)	4	296 (48.5)
Paid holidays (actual)(Days)	Average	21.9	Average	21.1
	Maximum	100	Maximum	100
	Minimum	1	Minimum	1
Maximum paid holidays (Days)	Average	12.4	Average	12.4
	Maximum	40	Maximum	50
	Minimum	1	Minimum	1

Table2 The number of answers (Sample size) and attributes of respondents: number (ratio) (continued)

	Hong Kong	
Sample size	514	
Sex (Man, Female)	254 (49.4)	260 (50.6)
Marital Status (Married/unmarried)	193 (37.5)	321 (62.5)
Overseas education Note1 (Yes/no)	300 (58.4)	214 (41.6)
Occupation Note2	1	276 (53.7)
	2	49 (9.5)
	3	44 (8.6)
	4	145 (28.2)
Paid holidays (actual)(Days)	Average	17.5
	Maximum	120
	Minimum	0
Maximum paid holidays (Days)	Average	11.9
	Maximum	120
	Minimum	0

(Note 1)For the detail of the destination and years of study, see appendix-2.
(Note 2)The number of occupation indicates as follows;
1: Paid office work/ researcher, 2: Paid labor/manual work, 3: Sales/service, 4: Management

-RESULT

1） Conjoint Analysis

Based on the answer data, a conjoint analysis was conducted, using IBM SPSS Conjoint 19.0. The result of the analysis is shown in Table 3. Figure1 visualizes the result in Table 3.

First of all, the most important attribution is “region” when they consider the plan of overseas trip. The preference formation will be analyzed by MDS and cluster analysis in this paper.

As the destination, Japan shows the highest value for the respondents from the four cities excluding Seoul, followed by Europe and the North America. This consists with the result that Japan is the number one destination by other question of a country they want to go (Appendix-1). As a destination, South-East Asia and China shows negative value. It can be said that Japan is evaluated as a destination which respondents would like to visit again. Although, for attribute of nearness Japan is same as South East Asia and China, Japan is most preferred. The result of Seoul is difference the four cities. The reason can be considered that almost people in Seoul have already been to overseas countries in several times and they become want to go to farer countries, like Europe.

For the type of sites, respondents in Seoul and Hong Kong prefer “Nature”. However, in Taipei, Beijing and Shanghai, the result shows opposite. Although the difference is slight, we found the difference in preference among tourists by region. The type of sites is related to the purpose of visiting. For example, the purpose of visiting to “City” is shopping and so on. In the case of “Nature,” to enjoy outdoor activities or to see beautiful nature sights.

For the type of tour, respondents in all the area tend to prefer a round trip with many destinations. Their maximum paid holidays are 10 days or so as shown in Table 2, so that they probably want to visit to many destinations in an overseas trip.

Table 3 Estimation result: Conjoint Analysis

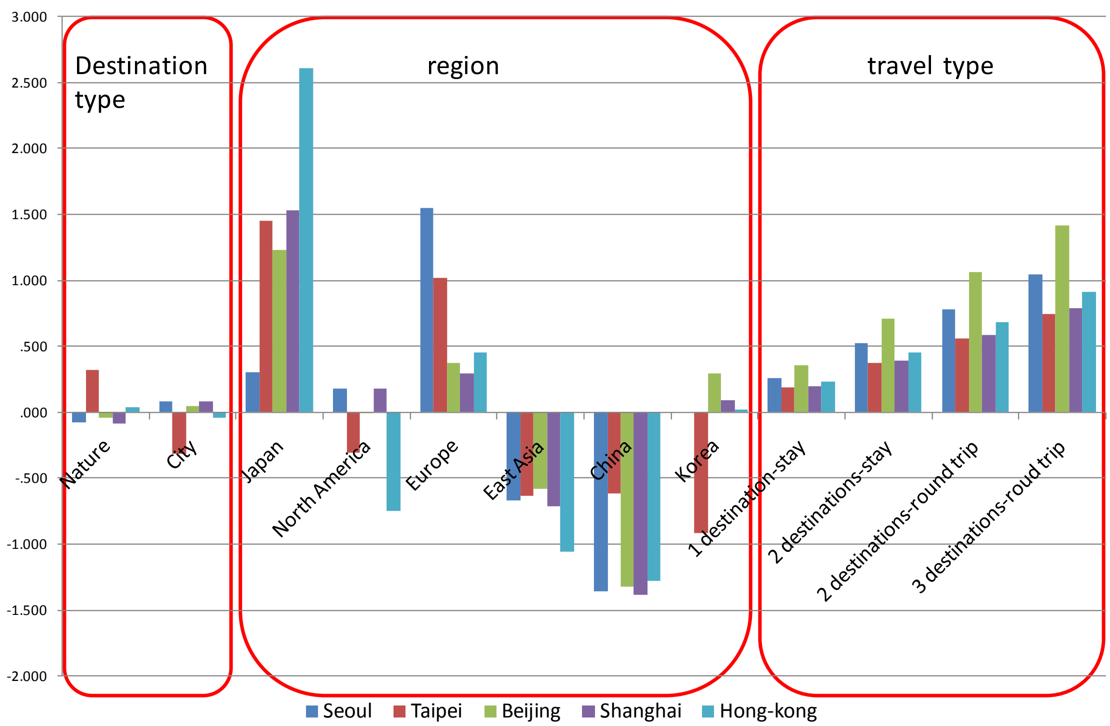
Attribution		Seoul		Taipei	
		Estimated Value	S.D.	Estimated Value	S.D.
Destination Type	Nature	-.080	.150	.316	.136
	City	.080	.150	-.316	.136
Region	Japan	.306	.276	1.451	.259
	North America	.177	.272	-.302	.258
	Europe	1.550	.272	1.019	.258
	East Asia	-.673	.352	-.631	.336
	China	-1.360	.361	-.620	.347
	Korea	.000	.000	-.917	.475
Travel Type	1 destination-stay	.260	.135	.187	.121
	2 destinations-stay	.521	.269	.373	.242
	2 destinations-round trip	.781	.404	.560	.364
	3 destinations-round trip	1.041	.538	.747	.485
Constant		2.330	.357	2.299	.306

Attribution		Beijing		Shanghai	
		Attribution	S.D.	Estimated Value	S.D.
Destination Type	Nature	-.045	.160	-.083	.134
	City	.045	.160	.083	.134
Region	Japan	1.229	.297	1.533	.248
	North America	-.001	.295	.179	.246
	Europe	.373	.295	.292	.246
	East Asia	-.580	.377	-.714	.315
	China	-1.318	.528	-1.384	.441
	Korea	.297	.523	.093	.437
Travel Type	1 destination-stay	.353	.134	.197	.112
	2 destinations-stay	.707	.268	.393	.224
	2 destinations-round trip	1.060	.402	.590	.336
	3 destinations-round trip	1.414	.537	.786	.448
Constant		2.104	.355	2.437	.296

Table 3 Estimation result: Conjoint Analysis (continued)

Attribution		Hong-Kong	
		Estimated Value	S.D.
Destination Type	Nature	.040	.125
	City	-.040	.125
Region	Japan	2.613	.238
	North America	-.747	.237
	Europe	.454	.237
	East Asia	-1.062	.309
	China	-1.280	.319
	Korea	.022	.437
Travel Type	1 destination-stay	.228	.112
	2 destinations-stay	.457	.223
	2 destinations-round trip	.685	.335
	3 destinations-round trip	.914	.446
Constant		2.319	.281

Figure 1 The preference of each region



2）Competitive environment among tour plans

To clear the competitive environment among destinations is also important. Base on the result above, this section looks into a competitive environment among the tour plans by Multi Dimensional Scaling (MDS) and cluster analysis.

MDS analysis will be conducted by computing the distances between each of the top 8 plans and the most similar plan. In this analysis, unpopular plans which were rated as "the Top plan" in the fewest times were excluded. MDS can be also analyzed by LOGMAP that is more a statistically optimal method for MDS. This is one of the future assignments for us to conduct MDS by LOGMAP (For the details of LOGMAP, see Katahira (1990)).

Table4 shows the dimension of each city at the Kruskal's stress value around "0.10" that means the fitness of estimation is "faire." It can be said that three-dimension solution is valid for respondents in Hong Kong and for other cities four-dimension solution is valid. In other words, the dimension of each city means people's cognition of competitive environment among the tour plans.

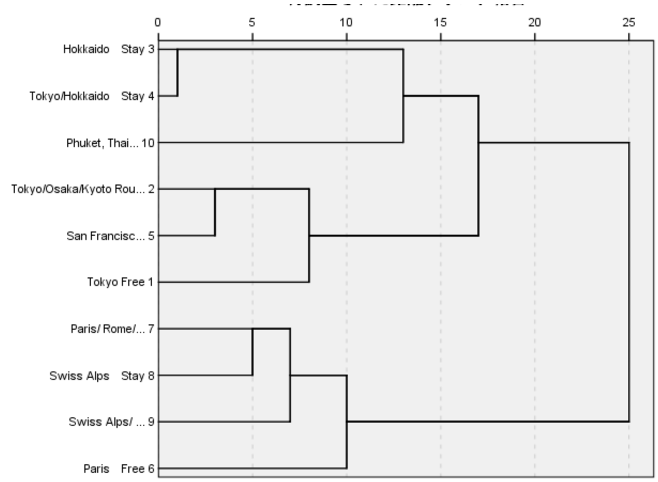
Table 4 Dimension and Kruskal's stress value

City	dimension	stress value	City	dimension	stress value
Seoul	4	0.13	Shanghai	4	0.11
Taipei	4	0.13	Hong Kong	3	0.09
Beijing	4	0.11			

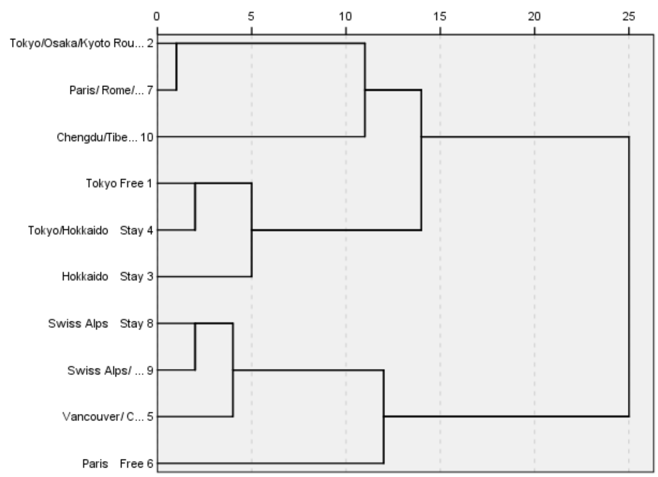
In addition, based on the multidimensional data derived from MDS, a cluster analysis is conducted to analyze the competitive environment among the tour plans. The purpose of conducting cluster analysis is that confirming the MDS result. The result of cluster analysis is shown in Figure 2- Figure6. Almost cluster grope of each result can be categorized by the destination region. Because of this, for the preference formation of the targeted consumers, firstly the destination region is selected and then the tour contents (round trip/stay or urban/nature) is considered. The respondents in Seoul are an exception and the reason needs to be considered further.

Figure 2 The result of Cluster Analysis

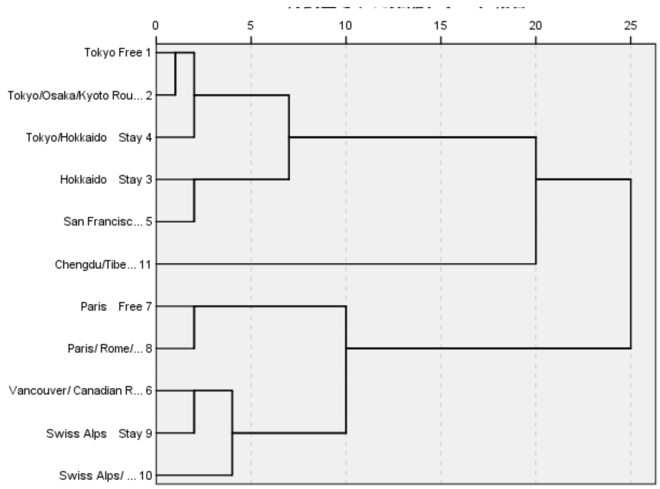
Seoul



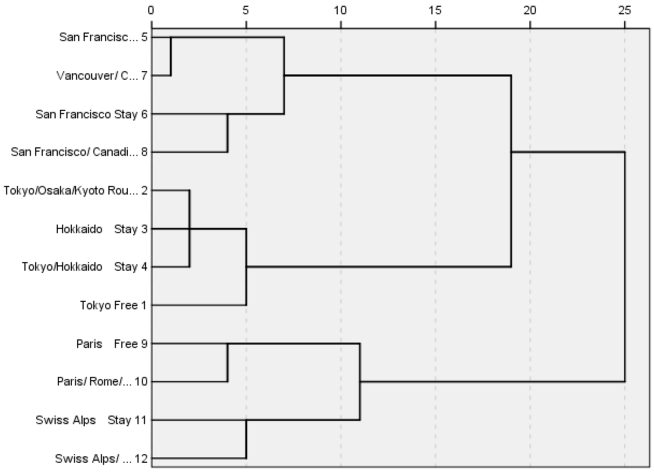
Taipei



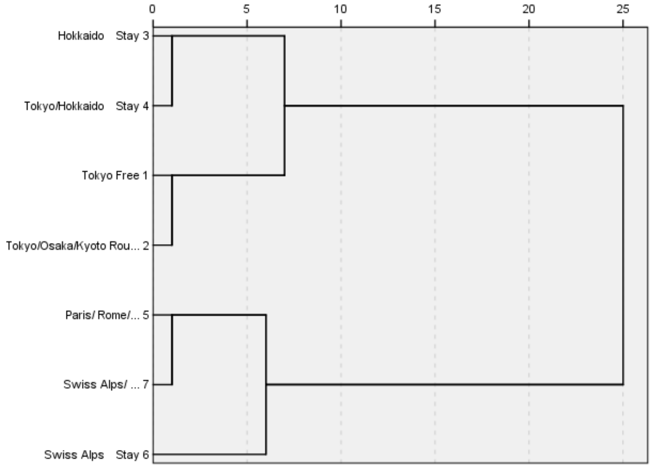
Beijing



Shanghai



Hong Kong



CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study is to analyze the evaluation of Japan as a tourist destination with a target of the tourists who have been to Japan. Seoul, Taipei, Beijing, Shanghai and Hong Kong are the targeted cities. Showing the hypothetical tour plans to the respondents, we obtained the preference data. While conjoint analysis was used to analyze the preference, MDS and cluster analysis were used to consider the competition environment among the tour plans. From the result of conjoint analysis, Japan shows the highest value for the respondents from the four cities excluding Seoul. It can be said that Japan is evaluated as a site which respondents would like to visit again. The results of MDS and cluster analysis shows that the preference formation of the targeted consumers, firstly the destination region is selected and then the tour contents (round trip/stay or urban/nature) is considered.

The future assignments are as follows; Firstly, although the evaluation by a tourist who has been to Japan has been identified, that by a tourist who has not been is not clear. The same kind of study for the latter group should be conducted to clarify the difference between the two groups. Secondly, although Japan is highly evaluated, concrete attributes for the high evaluation are not known. In order to analyze the evaluation more closely, the follow-up study such as a group interview should be conducted.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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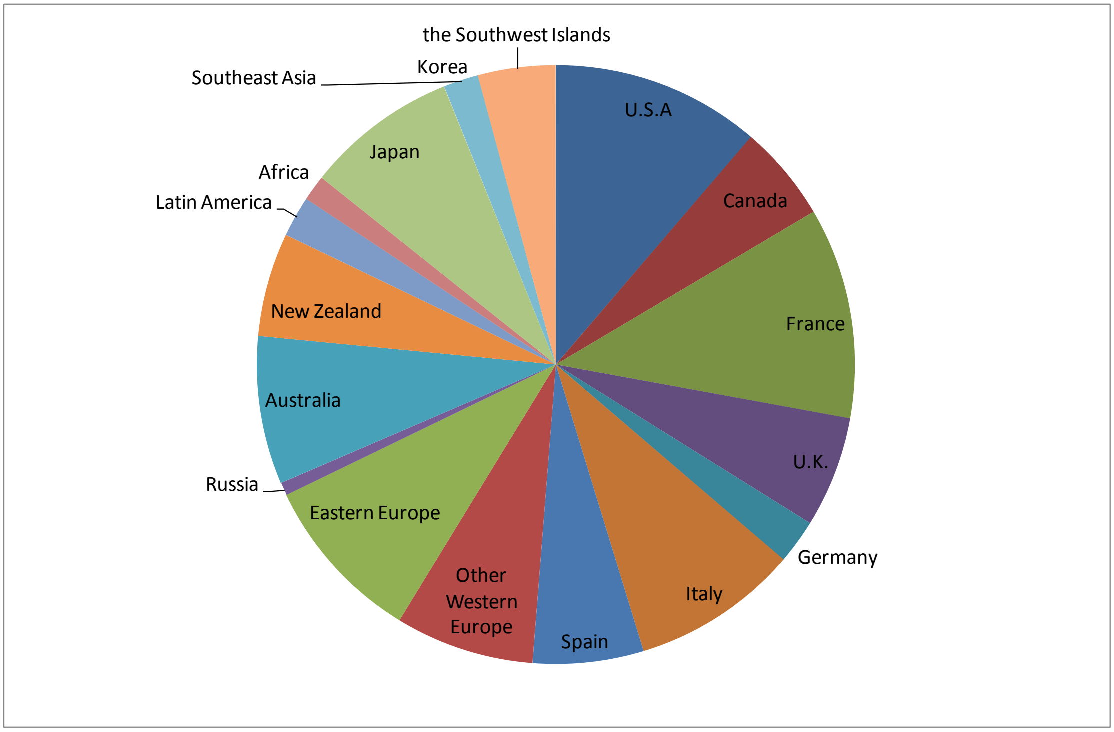
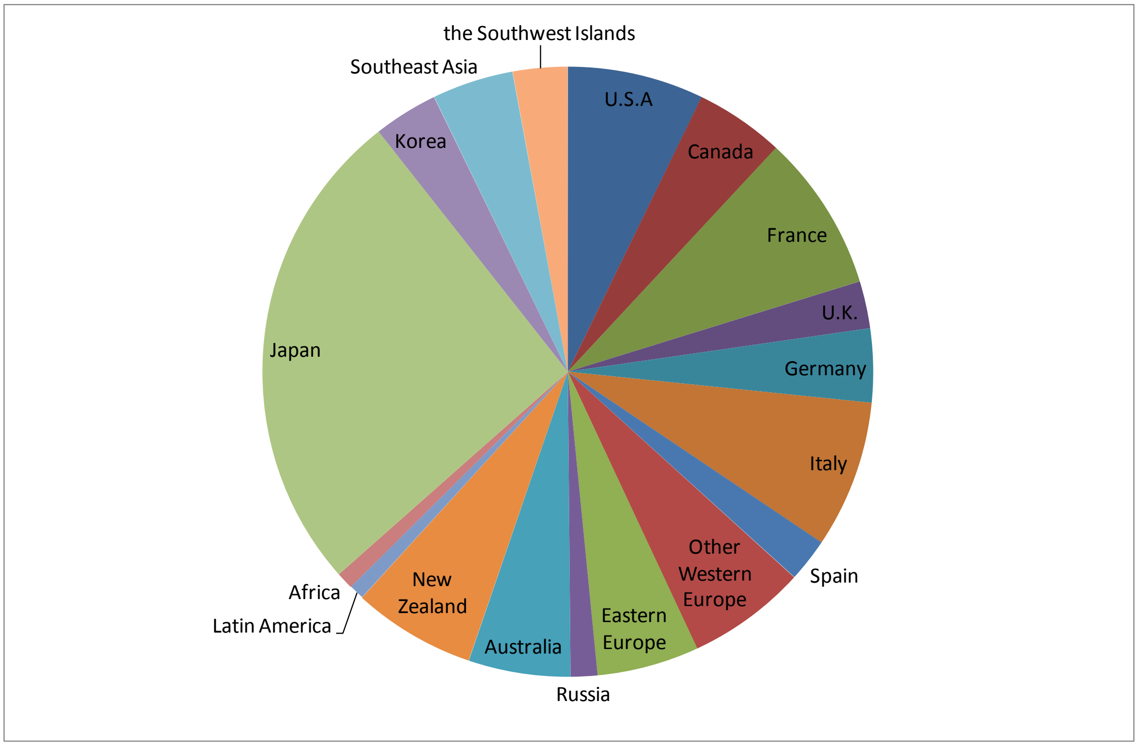
APPENDIX

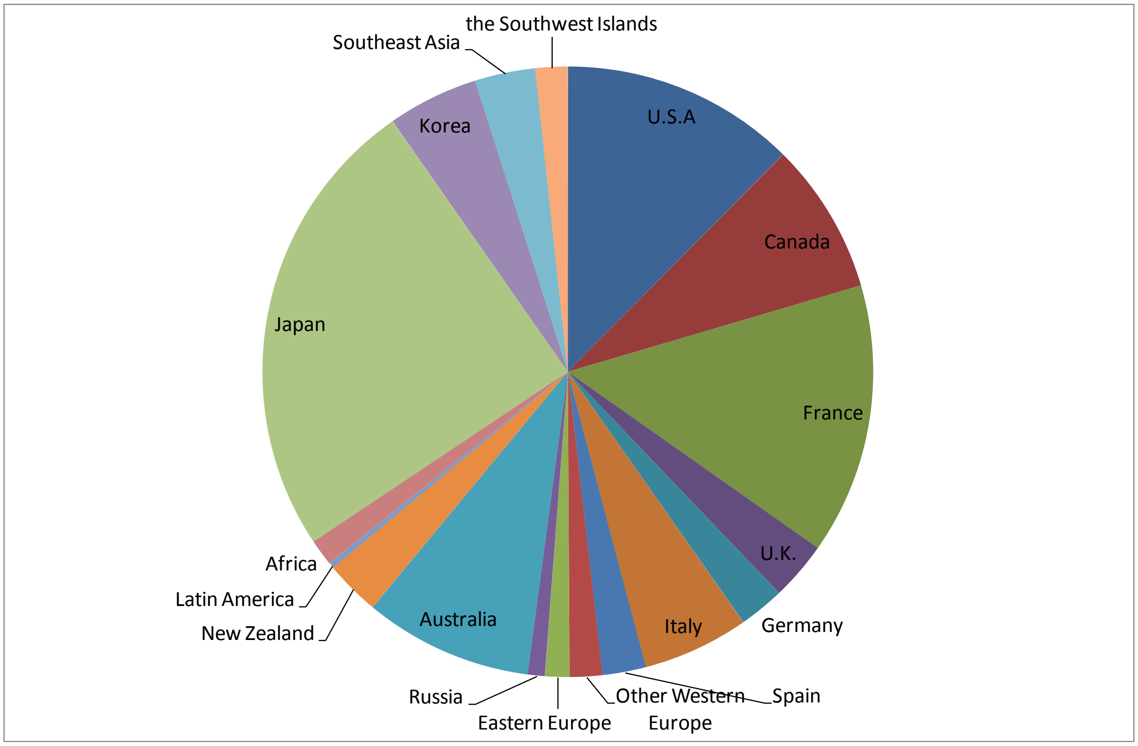
Appendix1 Desirable destination



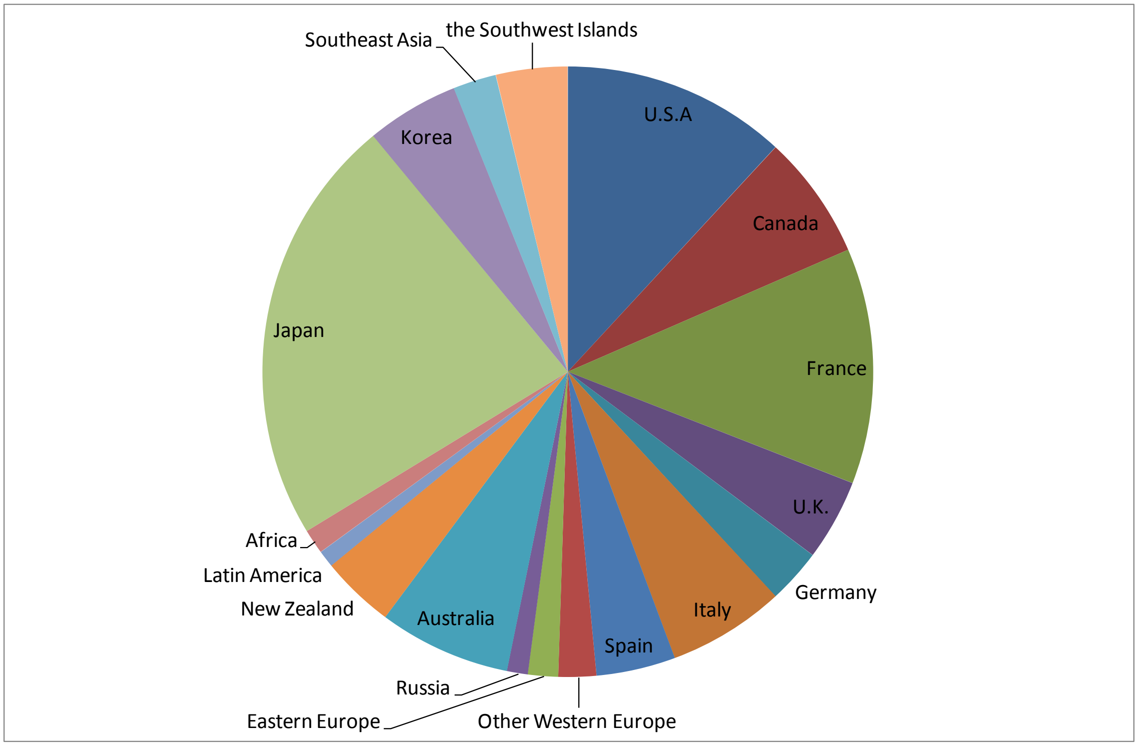
Seoul



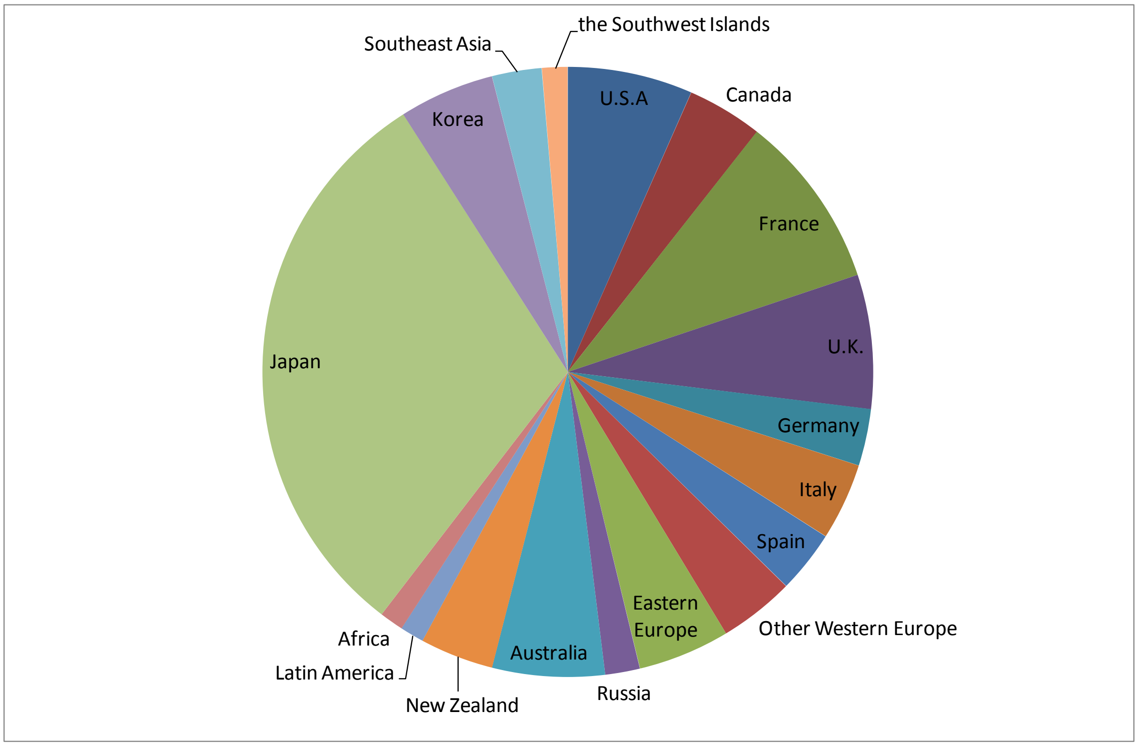
Taipei



Beijing



Shanghai


the Southwest Islands
Southeast Asia
U.S.A
Canada
Korea
France
Japan
U.K.
Germany
Italy
Spain
Eastern Europe
Other Western Europe
Africa
Latin America
Australia
New Zealand
Russia

Hong-Kong

Appendix2 Overseas Education of respondents

	North America	Europe	China	Japan	Korea	South East Asia	Oceania	Others	No experience
Seoul									
Overseas education	69	65	64	127	—	31	16	6	176
Rate	17.2	16.2	15.9	31.6	—	7.7	4	1.5	43.8
Years	1.6	1.4	1.4	1.4	—	1.2	1.6	1.2	—
Taipei									
Overseas education	18	10	52	77	9	17	19	9	375
Rate	3.4	1.9	9.8	14.4	1.7	3.2	3.6	1.7	70.4
Years	2.5	1.7	2.1	1.6	1.2	1.4	2.3	2.1	—
Beijing									
Overseas education	17	57	—	188	46	27	13	7	277
Rate	3.2	10.8	—	35.7	8.7	5.1	2.5	1.3	52.6
Years	1.7	2	—	1.8	1.8	1.6	2.5	1.6	—
Shanghai									
Overseas education	24	55	—	217	47	44	8	20	314
Rate	3.9	9	—	35.6	7.7	7.2	1.3	3.3	51.5
Years	2	1.9	—	1.9	1.5	1.7	1.5	1.6	—
Hong Kong									
Overseas education	62	81	139	129	27	25	22	13	214
Rate	12.1	15.8	27	25.1	5.3	4.9	4.3	2.5	41.6
Years	2.4	2.3	1.7	1.7	1.7	1.5	2.2	2.1	—

(Note1) Unit of each data in the table are as follows; Overseas education: The number of students, Rate：%、Years：Average Staying Years
(Note2) Rate: The percentage of the number of students in the total number of overseas students

News & Events

NEWS

Program: Places, People, Stories 2011 Conference
Organized by: Linnaeus University
Date: 28-30 September 2011
Venue: Kalmar, Sweden
Website: http://www.lnu.se, http://lnu.se/about-lnu/conferences/places-people-stories-2011?l=en
Details:

This conference investigated the relations between people and places, focusing on the role of stories in constructing meaning and affecting human emotions. Both rural and urban landscapes contain numerous locations that become meaningful places through their association with stories. These stories were told orally by narrators or by material design. The stories were linked, for example, to the vegetation, the geology, the wild life, the cultural heritage, the mundane built environment, or metaphysical creatures. Main aims of the conference were:

1. To explore the relations between people, places, and stories in the context of notable trends in the Experience Society such as the role of affect, emotion, and sensual stimulation.
2. To investigate how the visual and per formative arts can complement academic research by generating both new questions and new kinds of responses to topics at the interface between places, people and stories.

Program: The Australian Sociological Association Conference.
Organized by: The University of Newcastle,
Date: 28 November to 1 December, 2011.
Venue: NSW, Australia
Website: http://www.tasa.org.au/tasa-conference/2011-tasa-conference/
Details: The conference theme was Local Lives/Global Networks.
Keynote speakers: Saskia Sassen, Mitchell Dean and Johanna Wyn.

Program: International Conference: Tourism Futures
Organized by: Stenden University Leeuwarden
Date: 2nd – 5th of November 2011
Venue: Leeuwarden, The Netherlands
Website: www.etfi.eu/conference
Details:

The annual conference of the European Tourism Future Institute (ETFI) will primarily address the issue of tourism futures. These themes include diverse topics such as rapid technological developments and the search for authenticity. Examples of technological developments are the rapid growth of alternative sources of energy and transportation, information technology, nanotechnology, biotechnology and robotica. The search for authenticity can be seen in the intensification of visitor-local relationships within creative cities and the slow movement in food and tourism. If we take into account that tourism is the largest and fastest growing industry in the world, it leaves no question that it is a significant challenge to think about tomorrow's tourism and tomorrow's tourist. Although there are valuable initiatives to monitor trends and developments worldwide, this will not be sufficient. We will have to stimulate our creativity and imagination to anticipate how various forces in our contemporary society will affect the demand and supply for leisure and tourism in the decades to come. The aim of the conference is to actively engage some of the world's leading experts in future studies, academics and practitioners in a vibrant discussion and debate, to exchange information.

We invite delegates to submit papers relating to the overall theme of the conference as well as related themes. Specific workshops will be dedicated to:

- Creative cities: The rise of the citysumer
- Hotel of the future
- Slow Marketing
- Global shift of economic and political power: Emerging and submerging countries

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Program: 30th Annual ISTTE Conference, The International Sounds and Tastes of Tourism
Organized by: The International Sounds and Tastes of Tourism Education (ISTTE)
Date: October 20-22, 2011
Venue: Miami, Florida
Website: www.istte.org/conference.html
Details:
This was themed around "International Sounds and Tastes of Tourism Education (ISTTE)" Workshops, presentations and roundtable discussions provided a forum for international educators, scholars, researchers, industry executives, consultants, vendors, administrators, and government officials to explore issues related to travel and tourism at all levels. Topics on teaching, learning and delivery were particularly popular. Workshops and presentations were designed to provide an opportunity for a focused presentation of topics of special interest to travel and tourism educators.

Program: International Hospitality and Tourism Research Conference 2011
Organized by: International Hospitality and Tourism Research Conference
Date: 10 – 11 Nov. 2011
Venue: Luzern and Sorenberg, Switzerland
Website: http://conference.ihrcs.ch
Details:
The conference theme was Contemporary Issues in Hospitality, Tourism and Events Management.
The keynote speakers were as follows:
Professor John Tribe – He is Professor of Tourism and Subject Group Leader at the University of Surrey. He is Co-Chair of the UN World Tourism Organisation Education Council, Editor-in-Chief of Annals of Tourism Research and Chair of the Editorial Board of Higher Education Academy. He has an extensive publication record and his specific research interests are within the area of sustainability, epistemology and tourism education.
Dr. Noëlle O'Connor - She is Senior Lecturer in Tourism and Hospitality Studies at the Limerick Institute of Technology and was previously the Acting Head of Department of Languages, Tourism and Hospitality in Waterford Institute of Technology (Ireland). She edited the recently published book Tourism and Hospitality Research in Ireland (2007) and has published widely, particularly in film induced tourism.

Program: The 5th Asia-Pacific Conference on Exercise and Sports Science (APCESS 2011)

Organized by: Asian Council of Exercise and Sports Science (ACESS) and Shanghai University of Sport (SUS).

Date: Nov. 2-5, 2011

Venue: Shanghai, China

Website: http://www.apcess2011sus.org/

Details:

The conference theme was “Better City Better Life, Through Active Healthy Lifestyles and Sports Science”. The notion that “the well-being of life lies with sports” has taken root in the hearts of the people and sports have achieved unprecedented development. As a consequence, the breadth and depth of research work on exercise and sports science have been extended to a much greater range. Sports are beyond national boundaries. The conference was hosted for sharing with the participants the most update research findings in this domain, and for realizing and promoting the contributions of exercise and sports science in bringing a more harmonized, healthy and beautiful life to human beings.

EVENTS

Event – 01

<u>Conference - 'The Influence of Tourism on Global Activity: Central or Peripheral?'</u>

Organized by: Institute for Tourism Research (INTOUR) and the Division of Tourism and Leisure at the University of Bedfordshire

Event Scheduled on: June 2012

Venue: neo-Elizabethan manor house of Putteridge Bury, in a countryside near LONDON

Website: www.beds.ac.uk/intour2012

Details:

The principal aim of this conference is to offer a forum for knowledge exchange and debate on the role of tourism in global society, attempting to evaluate its centrality as an agent of social change. Key questions may be asked about the relevance of tourism to society, incorporating economic, cultural, social and ethical dimensions. These could include for example: why is tourism important to society?; is there a case for the use of public resources for the planning of tourism?; how should inward investment be targeted?; does tourism merit inclusion as a subject of study at higher education level?; in an increasingly mobile world, how does tourism influence the identities of diasporas?; is the ability to participate in tourism a right of citizenship?; is there an ethical case for the use of limited natural resources for an activity that despite increasing numbers remains an activity of the world's minority?; and can tourism be used as a means of advancing of social democracy?

Conference keynote speakers include:

- Professor Richard Sharpley, University of Central Lancashire, UK
- Nigel Huddleston - Industry Head for Travel at Google
- Professor David Fennell, Brock University, Canada

Selected papers will be published in a special edition of the journal Tourism Analysis

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Event – 02

<u>The 20th International ENTER 2013 conference</u>

Organized by:

The International Federation for Information Technology and Travel & Tourism (IFITT)

Event Scheduled on: January 22-25, 2013

Venue: Innsbruck, Austria

Website: http://www.enter-2013.org

Details:

The theme of the conference is "eTourism: Opportunities and Challenges in the Next 20 Years".

ENTER 2013 offers a worldwide and unique forum for attendees from academia, industry, government, and other organizations to actively exchange, share, and challenge state-of-the-art research and industrial case studies on the application of information and communication technologies to travel and tourism. While celebrating its 20th anniversary, ENTER 2013 will focus on main trends and emerging technologies which are likely to influence eTourism in the next twenty years. Issues to be covered at the conference include, but are not limited to, the following areas:

- Advanced Distribution Systems

- Consumer Inspiration through ICTS
- Crisis and e-Tourism
- Distribution Strategies
- E-Learning
- E-strategy and e-Business models
- Electronic Marketing
- Information Search and Retrieval
- Technology Acceptance
- Eno-Gastronomic Tourism
- Information Interfaces and Presentation
- Travel Search and Meta-Search
- ICT Adoption, Use, and Value Creation
- Intelligent Systems
- Web 2.0 and Web 3.0
- ICT-enabled Partnerships and Segmentation
- Legal and Social Aspects
- Website Design and Evaluation
- ICT and Sustainability
- Mobile Services
- Context-Aware Systems
- ICT for Development
- Recommender Systems
- Location based services

Event – 03

International Conference on Tourism, Climate Change and Sustainability

Organized by: School of Tourism, Bournemouth University, UK
Event Scheduled on: 13th -14th Sept 2012
Venue: Bournemouth University, UK
Website: www.bournemouth.ac.uk/climatechange2012
Details:
The International Centre for Tourism and Hospitality Research (ICTHR), Bournemouth University, is pleased to announce this conference with an aim to debate the broader conceptual ideas and contested relationships between climate change, sustainability and tourism as well as to examine worldwide responses and exchange cutting-edge research.

Themes for abstracts
Advancements in sustainable tourism; climate change and sustainability – common ground; indicators and planning; green knowledge economy; ecosystem services; small island developing states; sea-level rise; natural disasters; protected areas and heritage conservation; road transport and aviation; hospitality and green issues; greenhouse gases; climate change adaptation; climate change mitigation; emerging techniques; and future research implications.

Keynote speakers

- **Mr Luigi Cabrini**, Director UNWTO Sustainable Tourism
- **Dr Ishwaran Natarajan**, Director UNESCO Division for Ecological Sciences
- **Dr Richard Butler**, Emeritus Professor, University of Strathclyde
- **Dr Stephan Harrison**, University of Exeter & Oxford University
- Representative from the Tourism Unit European Commission
- **Panel Discussion:** policy agencies and key industry players.

Event – 04

Transformational Leadership for Tourism Education

Organized by: Tourism Education Futures Initiative conference - TEFI

Event Scheduled on: 28 – 30 June 2012

Venue: Bocconi University, Milan, Italy

Website: tefi6milan@gmail.com

Details:

Tourism transforms people and places. It shapes how we think about the world, how we understand ourselves and others. Tourism can no longer be conceived narrowly as a business sector or industry, but must be framed as an agent of socio-cultural, political, economic and environmental change. Given these transformational effects, strong, informed and inspirational leadership is required to positively shape the benefits of tourism as a world-making activity in the future. Tourism students today will be the leaders of tomorrow. Tourism educators, whether in industry or in the academy, have a vital role in shaping these future leaders and in building their capacity to confront future challenges.

This year, Bocconi University, Milan, Italy, proudly hosts the sixth Tourism Education Futures Initiative conference (TEFI 6) – Transformational Leadership for Tourism Education. The conference seeks to build on previous TEFI work by stimulating engaged visionary dialogue about transformational leadership in tourism education. What does it mean to transform and how? The aim is to open up debate, break down traditional divides, learn by example, be future oriented, and inspire participants to become leaders of tomorrow's tourism education programs or industry. Themes underpinning TEFI 6 include:

- Empowering academic leadership
- Inspiring change and world-making in industry
- Transformational leadership in higher education organizations
- Curricula for tomorrow's tourism leaders
- Transformation through collegiality
- Leading change through partnerships and collaboration
- Tourism leadership and innovation in the third sector
- Change-making through tourism research and leadership

Event – 05

The 2012 TOSOK International Tourism Conference

Organized by:
Event Scheduled on: 4-6 July 2012
Venue: Ulsan, Korea
Website:
Details:

The 2012 TOSOK (Tourism Sciences Society of Korea) international tourism conference will be held in Ulsan, Korea from 4th to 6th, 2012. The Goal of the TOSOK international conference is to bring together international researchers, educators, postgraduate students, government officers, and industry practitioners interested in tourism, leisure, and hospitality management and to provide an opportunity to share their research.

Event – 06

3rd QATEM Workshop Quantitative Approaches in Tourism Economics and Management

Organized by: University of Perpignan, and University of Corsica
Event Scheduled on: 13 July 2012
Venue: Corte France
Website: http://ejtr.vumk.eu/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=91&Itemid=53
Details:

QATEM 2012 is the third event under a workshop series on Quantitative Approaches in Tourism Economics and Management. The workshop is co-organized by University of Perpignan (EA 4606, CAEPEM) and University of Corsica (UMR CNRS 6240, LISA) and will be held in Corte (France) on Friday 13 July 2012. By focusing on the theme of quantitative approaches in tourism economics and management, QATEM 2012 will provide an opportunity for gathering, analysing, and debating state-of-the-art academic research in this recent field of economic and management sciences. The scientific committee would welcome submissions on both parametric and non-parametric approaches. Theoretical contributions are also encouraged.

Publication: A selection of the papers presented at QATEM 2012 will be proposed for publication in an issue of the international journal European Journal of Tourism Research

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Event – 07

Enlightening Tourism: 1st International Conference

Competition and Innovation in Tourism: New Challenges in an Uncertain Environment

Organized by: Center for Tourism Policy Studies
Event Scheduled on: 13th-14th September 2012
Venue: Naples (Italy)
Website: http://www.irat.cnr.it/ET_Conference2012/contacts.html
Details:

This Conference is born as a result of the academic cooperation among researchers from around the world in the field of tourism.

This cooperation has led, among other initiatives, to the launching of a new title: ENLIGHTENING TOURISM. A PATHMAKING JOURNAL (ET).

The Conference aims are:

1) To provide a platform for debate and dissemination of research findings, new research areas and techniques, conceptual developments, and papers with practical applications;
2) To scope out innovative thinking in traditional topics such as different types of tourism and tourists, their needs and expectations;
3) To promote collaborative interactions between senior and junior researchers. This will include mentoring by senior researchers in a Workshop for Junior Researchers (WJR);
4) To provide a platform for full paper presentations, that further mutual understanding of the research lines being developed by participants;
5) To provide examples of best/good practices and technological innovation.

TOPICS

The Conference theme "**Competition and Innovation in Tourism: New Challenges in an Uncertain Environment**" reflects the current situation of great uncertainty, which characterizes tourism worldwide. Within this theme, the following specific topics have been identified:

- Innovation Strategies
- Knowledge Management Processes and Practices
- Innovation and Technology
- Entrepreneurship
- Organisation Innovation
- Territorial System and Cultural Heritage
- Market Changing
- Complexity, Planning and Development
- Environmental Risk and Security including Climate Change
- Others linked to the previous ones

Special sessions will be also organised for presenting ideas for future research projects and stimulating the interaction among potential partners.

Event – 08

Transforming and Managing Destinations: Tourism and Leisure in a Time of Global Change and Risks

Organized by: IGU Commission on Tourism, Leisure and Global Change, Global and Working Group Leisure and Tourism Geography of the German Geographic Society

Event Scheduled on: 22 to 25 August 2012

Venue: **Trier, Germany**

Website: http://www.leisure-tourism-geography.de/igu-symposium-2012.html

Details:

Constant change is typical of tourism as a spatial and social phenomenon. Tourist destinations, activities, products, segments, mobilities etc. are constantly changing and they are also transforming the physical, social, cultural and economic environment of tourism. This dualistic nature of tourism has contributed to regional development and economic growth, in general, but also created challenges and problems to environment. In addition, the intensified global change, including globalisation, has created risks for tourism development and tourist destinations. All this calls for better knowledge on tourism and tourism development and management, and also more sustainable practices in growth management.

The overall purpose of this symposium is to discuss the transformation of tourism as a geographical idea and the management of tourist destinations in a time of intensified global changes and evolving risks.

The symposium is organised in 13 sessions analysing the main idea under different angles and approaches:
I Global risks and risk management in tourism
II Achieving sustainability in tourism
III Challenges for the positioning of tourist destinations
IV Governance aspects in destination development
V Local communities and small tourism businesses: Inequalities and exclusion in tourism development
VI Innovations in tourism development
VII War Memorials and Tourism
VIII Tendencies in tourism development
IX Tourism landscapes and heritage in change
X ICT related challenges in tourism (e-marketing and social media)
XI Tourism in rural areas
XII Transformation processes in tourism destinations
XIII Cross-border aspects in tourism

Event – 09

ATLAS annual conference 2012

Organized by: University of East London
Event Scheduled on: 12 - 15 September 2012
Venue: University of East London
Website: http://www.atlas-euro.org
Details:

The hosting of the 2012 London Olympic and Paralympic Games in Stratford, East London, on the doorstep of the University of East London, offers a timely opportunity to reflect back upon earlier studies linking tourism and revitalisation of urban spaces, as well as to encourage critical reflection upon the complex relationship between mega-events such as (but not exclusively) the Olympics, sports, tourism and wider questions of urban regeneration, economic development. It will also invite reflections on the role of sustainability and social justice in the context of recreating the global city for the cultural and creative industries, and tourism, given the emphasis of the London Games on both the sporting legacy as well as sustainability. Once it is has been built the Olympic Park will be one of the largest urban parks in Europe, while the London 2012 Games themselves, it is argued, will provide a much needed stimulus for economic development, centred on the construction of new housing, transport improvements and world-class sporting and leisure facilities in what is one of the most deprived and neglected areas of East London. However, the task of evaluating the long term effects of hosting a sporting mega-event such as the Olympics, as well the long-term effect on tourism, heritage and the cultural industries, and indeed, urban regeneration, remains a complex and ideologically-contested endeavour.

Event – 10

4th ITSA Biennial Conference

Organized by: Universitas Gadjah Mada, Yogyakarta
Event Scheduled on:, 23-25 August, 2012
Venue: **Bali, Indonesia**
Website: http://www.itsa.cn/article/conference/201112011895.shtml
Details:

The 4th ITSA (International Tourism Studies Association) Biennial Conference will be held on the island of Bali in the Republic of Indonesia on August 23-25, 2012. This exciting island tourism destination provides a fantastic and appropriate venue for all the participants. ITSA will use the Conference to focus experts and scholars on tourism destination planning, development and marketing, and to generate further dialogue in Asia and around the world.

The 4th ITSA Biennial Conference has the overall theme of "Challenges and Contemporary Solutions for Tourism Destination Planning, Development and Marketing -Building Better Places; Attracting Newer Faces." The Conference will address the most important issues in building and running tourism destinations around the world in the 21st century

Challenges and Contemporary Solutions for Tourism Destination Planning, Development and Marketing
Building Better Places; Attracting Newer Faces
Delegates will have the opportunity to present papers under one or more of eight broad themes within the conference:

• Tourism Planning and Development
• Tourism Investment and Financing
• Tourism Marketing and Promotion
- Digital marketing
- Destination marketing
- Domestic marketing
- International marketing
• Tourism Distribution
- M-commerce and smartphones
- Online travel agencies (OTAs)
• Tourism Capacity-Building
- Establishing destination management organizations (DMOs)
- Human resource development in tourism
- Professional certification and accreditation
• Tourism Research
• Tourism Policy
• Design Hotels and Destination Resort Hotels
• Tourism Crisis Management

Event – 11

International Conference on Tourism and Events: Opportunities, Impacts and Change

Organized by: Ulster Business School, University of Ulster, Northern Ireland
Event Scheduled on: 20th, 21st & 22nd June 2012
Venue: Belfast, Northern Ireland
Website: http://www.business.ulster.ac.uk/hospitalitytour/conference/index.html
Details:

As part of 2012, a potentially significant year for tourism in Northern Ireland, the Department of Hospitality and Tourism Management, at the University of Ulster, plays host to an International Conference on Tourism and Events: Opportunities, Impacts and Change.The conference will take place in the four star Europa Hotel, Belfast between June 20 and 22. The conference will incorporate the 2012 Tourism and Hospitality Research in Ireland Conference (THRIC).

Conference Aims and Scope

The conference takes place in 2012 and this year is significant for hallmark and one time occurring events. London is host to the Summer Olympic Games; Northern Ireland as a destination looks to leverage from the wider impact and legacy of the games. Belfast, the host city where the conference will take place commemorates in April 2012 the 100th anniversary of the launch and tragic sinking of the Titanic, as well as the signing of the Ulster League and Solemn Covenant. These events will generate different levels of response both locally and internationally, in terms of the extent to which leverage can occur and the legacy they leave. The interrelationships that exist between urism and event hosting are important to destinations and their Destination Management Organisations. This conference is designed to bring together leading academic scholars with industry practitioners in an open forum of keynote lectures, industry panel discussions, individual paper presentations in a number of concurrent sessions in which a wide range of issues and challenges facing tourism and events are debated and where best practice can be disseminated between academia and industry.

Conference Themes

In light of this, individual papers are encouraged on the following 3 themes which are broad and cover a diverse range of topics and issues. However, we welcome any other topic not listed provided there is an emphasis on tourism and events.

Tourism and event planning/ development, Government involvement/ role of the public sector, Tourism policy and events, Tourism events and regional development, Networking and collaboration, Visitor attractions and events, Event Management, Event marketing, Sponsorship and funding of events, Volunteering and human resource management, Film, social media and innovative communications, Safety and security, Impact and legacies, Economic development

Event leveraging, Social regeneration, Cultural exchange, Responsible and sustainable events

Keynote Speakers

Currently the following academic keynote speakers have been confirmed:

- Professor Donald Getz
- Professor Simon Hudson
- Professor Tom Hinch
- Professor Alan Fyall

Details on each of the above keynote speakers are available on the Conference website.

Book Reviews

BOOK REVIEWS

ORGANIZATIONAL BEHAVIOR FOR THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY

Name of the Author:	Florence Berger and Judi Brownell
Title of Book:	Organizational Behavior for the Hospitality Industry
ISBN:	9788131765739
Publisher:	Pearson
Edition:	2012
No. of Pages:	425
Price:	INR

Uttpal Baul
Birla Institute of Technology, Mesra, Ranchi

Organizational Behavior for the Hospitality Industry is the most recent organizational behavior text that focuses on the hospitality industry, delving into the concepts that are relevant to students who plan to enter that hospitality industry. Hospitality organizations today must achieve excellence in human relations, and that success starts with quality organizational behavior. The text is organized into three sections: Organizational behavior essentials, the individual and the organization, and key management tasks. Additionally, each key topic includes detailed exercises, providing students with the hands-on experience they'll need in order to succeed in the industry.

Features of the book include key trends in the hospitality industry, including the quality of customer service, the use of technology, diversity, and team-based approaches to organizational behavior. It also includes hospitality industry expert cases – leaders in the hospitality industry discuss their personal experiences, providing students with valuable industry insight and expertise. Power point slides are provided for each chapter, giving instructors a lively and colorful tool to enhance their lectures.

AN INTRODUCTION TO REVENUE MANAGEMENT FOR THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY

Name of the Author:	Kimberly Tranter, Trevor Stuart – Hill and Juston Parker
Title of Book:	An Introduction To Revenue Management For The Hospitality Industry
ISBN:	9788131765715
Publisher:	Pearson Education Inc.
Edition:	2012
No. of Pages:	335
Price:	NA

Gupta Atul
Institute of Hotel management and catering Technology, Bhopal

The first of its kind, this book was written to address the emerging course in hospitality focused in revenue management. Based on author's years of industry experience, this book includes a model of understanding the revenue management process and reveals four basic building blocks to revenue management success. With chapters dedicated to consumer behavior, economic principles, and strategic management, it outlines key processes and stages of revenue management planning. Four unique application chapters tailor concepts to specific segments of the industry and professional profiles help students learn about possibilities within the field. Internet exercises appear at the end of each chapter. RevMAP model provides a guiding framework.

MARKETING FOR HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM

Name of the Author: Philip Kotler, John T. Bowen and James C. Makens
Title of Book: Marketing for Hospitality and Tourism
ISBN: 9788131759349
Publisher: Pearson
Edition: Fifth 2011
No. of Pages: 683
Price:

Rajeev Shrivastav
M.P. Audyagik Vikas Nigam

The most widely used Hospitality Marketing Text – this leader is comprehensive and innovative, managerial and practical, state-of-the-art and real world. Building on the author's expertise, it used an integrative approach to discuss the major marketing decisions hospitality marketing managers face in today's global marketplace. Video cases, chapter examples and marketing highlights showcase real people and companies and demonstrate how marketing impacts every member of the hospitality team. Experiential exercises and new material on social networking, database marketing and revenue management help solidify the book's position as the definitive source for information on hospitality marketing.

FOUNDATIONS OF LODGING MANAGEMENT

Name of the Author: David K. Hayes, Jack D. Ninemeier, Allisha A. Miller
Title of Book: Foundations of Lodging Management
ISBN: 9788131765623
Publisher: Pearsons
Edition: 2012
No. of Pages: 406
Price: INR

Gupta Sonia
Leeds metropolitan University, U.K., Bhopal Campus

Witten in an easy to read, easy to understand style, Foundations of Lodging Management, 2 E explores how the lodging industry and the hotels in the industry operate. With coverage of both small and large hotels, it addresses each department, including the Front office, Sales and Marketing, Housekeeping, Maintenance and more! This edition features more on green initiatives, expanded discussion of revenue optimization, and an updated Front office Simulation that helps students learn how to manage a hotel's front office and better understand the complexity of the entire property.

The book identifies and defines lodging language, covers small hotels along with the large ones. It provides extensive discussion questions and team activities for each chapter. The book includes all in a day's work vignettes that are numbered for easy identification. It also includes Pearson's Front Office Management Simulation.

SPA MANAGEMENT AN INTRODUCTION

Name of the Author:	Mary S. Wisnom, Lisa L. Capozio
Title of Book:	Spa Management an Introduction
ISBN:	9788131765753
Publisher:	Pearson Education
Edition:	2012
No. of Pages:	250
Price:	NA

Gupta Atul
Institute of Hotel Management and Catering Technology, Bhopal

This book provides a contemporary look at the Spa industry, and the unique aspects of Spa operations, and management. Complete with photos, figures and tables, it addresses spa industry basics, how to establish a spa business, operations and management, business skills and knowledge, and future trends in the industry. Each chapter includes a realistic view of operations and is accompanied by creative exercises and assignments. An appendix of the industry resources and robust online resources help readers understand what it takes to manage a spa and succeed in this evolving industry.

EXPLORING THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY

Name of the Author:	John R. Walker, Josielyn T. walker
Title of Book:	Exploring the Hospitality Industry
ISBN:	9788131765647
Publisher:	Pearsons
Edition:	2012
No. of Pages:	343
Price:	

Asit Mishra
IHM Mumbai

Exploring the Hospitality Industry, 2e offers broad coverage of the hospitality industry in an easy to read, conversational style. Written by bestselling author John Walker, this book is less theoretical and more industry relevant than most – emphasizing the people, companies and positions that make up the hospitality industry today. Moving beyond just restaurants and hotels, it includes new growth areas such as event management, meeting planning, cruising, theme parks, attractions and entertainment. With a new focus on sustainability, this edition features case studies, practitioners and corporations that engage and involve readers as they explore the trends in this ever growing field. The book identifies and analyses current industry trends. It includes career information within each chapter and highlights career paths and corporations of excellence.

FUNDAMENTALS OF MANAGEMENT ESSENTIAL CONCEPTS AND APPLICATIONS

Name of the Author:	Stephen P. Robbins, Sanghamitra Bhattacharyya, David A. DeCenzo, Madhushree Nanda Agarwal
Title of Book:	Fundamentals of management essential concepts and applications
ISBN:	9788131721469
Publisher:	Pearsons
Edition:	2011
No. of Pages:	468
Price:	NA

Vasundhara Raj
IHM Bengaluru

Organized around four traditional functions of Management – Planning, Organizing, Leading ND Controlling – this book covers the foundational concepts with a strong practical focus, also including the latest studies in the field. While it retains its global context, this edition of Fundamentals of Management: Essential Concept and Applications has been significantly restructured to incorporate relevant cases from Indian industries to cater specifically to the needs of Indian students. This book discusses such contemporary topics as globalization, technology, entrepreneurship, ethics, empowerment, and diversity, and includes interesting features to increase a student's decision making ability and the ability to operate in a team environment.

ACCOUNTING AND FINANCIAL ANALYSIS IN THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY

Name of the Author:	Jonathan A. Hales
Title of Book:	Accounting and Financial Analysis in the Hospitality Industry
ISBN:	9788131763339
Publisher:	Pearsons
Edition:	2011
No. of Pages:	295
Price:	NA

Khare Vivek
Leeds metropolitan University, U.K., Bhopal Campus

This book explains how to use numbers and fundamental accounting to operate a successful hospitality department or business. Focusing on the basics, sections progresses from accounting and financial analysis to financial statements and management reports to budgeting and forecasting. Throughout the book current hospitality examples, photographs and illustrations are used. This edition includes the latest from the Uniform System of Accounts for the Lodging Industry, tenth revised Edition, Expanded material on Department Profit anf Loss Statements, coverage of the 2009 recession and new practice exercise throughout.

PURCHASING A GUIDE FOR HOSPITALITY PROFESSIONALS

Name of the Author:	David K. Hayes, Jack D. Ninemeier
Title of Book:	Purchasing a guide for hospitality professionals
ISBN:	9788131765616
Publisher:	Pearson education
Edition:	2012
No. of Pages:	392
Price:	NA

Venu Rao
Rao consultancy, Bengaluru

With a focus on food service operations, this book outlines a ten step purchasing process and includes product specifications for meats, produce, non-food items and more. Unique coverage is given to make/buy analysis, payment processing and purchasing evaluations. A separate chapter is devoted to purchasing technology and services. Complete with two integrated Buyer's Guides, the book outlines how to manage the purchasing process and identify quality products you want to buy.

The book includes Buyers at work case studies throughout each chapter. Chapters titled Professional Purchasing Prevents Problems identifies purchasing related problems and provide suggestions for their resolution. A chapter on Did you Know Elements provides supplemental information applicable to the chapter's topic. It rounds out the readers understanding of the topic and provides interesting anecdotal information.

FUNDAMENTALS OF MEAL MANAGEMENT

Name of the Author:	Margaret McWilliams
Title of Book:	Fundamentals of Meal Management
ISBN:	9788131765746
Publisher:	Pearson education
Edition:	2012
No. of Pages:	328
Price:	NA

Gupta Sonia
Leeds Metropolitan University U.K., Bhopal Campus

Fundamentals of Meal Management, Fifth Edition has been revised to incorporate the influences of contemporary lifestyle and world politics on meal management in restaurants, institutions and the home. Among the concerns that have come to the forefront are food safety and the importance of food for achieving and maintaining a healthy weight while also maximizing the sociability, pleasure and comfort that good food can bring to our lives. This book has been revised to facilitate the mastery of the knowledge required to produce and serve healthful, appetizing, and beautiful meals.

The main features of the book include extensive examination of the causes of food borne illness. It informs students of issues of particular importance in today's world. It includes discussion of kitchen planning and organization and presents crucial topics for meal preparation. The book integrates current dietary recommendations and requirements. It presents idea to help use this information in planning menus. The book also features presentation of attractive meals and guidelines for gracious dining. There are plenty of photos and illustrations as supplements for clear understanding. Margin definitions and study questions provide students with aids to reinforce the material covered. Website addresses provide resources for further learning.

Publication Details

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Table – 1 about here

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