Open access online journal

JOURNAL OF TOURISM RESEARCH

Review of Tourism Sciences

Volume 15
March 2017

Tourism Research Institute

ISSN 2241 - 7931

Published by:

Activities for the Development of Tourism and Tourism Education

Tourism Research Institute

13 Gr. Kydonion, 11144 Athens, Greece

Tel: + 30 210 3806877

Fax: + 30 211 7407688

URL: www.dratte.gr

Email: info@dratte.gr, tri@dratte.gr

Editor: Laloumis Dimitris

.

Table of Contents

SERVICE QUALITY AND CUSTOMER SATISFACTION IN AIR TRANSPORTATION

Athina N. Papageorgiou, PhD

Tourism and Hospitality Management, TEI of Athens, Greece

Introduction

Air travel is a tourism product with high demand; this results in a strong competition among airlines leading the air travel industry to a constant effort to improve service quality in order to meet customer's needs (Shukla, 2013). The purpose of this study was to detect the factors that influence air travel customers' satisfaction using the Kano model (Kano 1993).

1. The air-travel product

The air travel "product" is a high-quality service that the customer gets in return for the airplane ticket that he paid. Its main characteristics, representing also the criteria by which the customer will select the air carrier, are (LaMondia et al, 2009, Park et al, 2004, Sultan and Simpson, 2000):

- The type of aircraft, focusing on seat-type and comfort, spacious toilets, multimedia and soundproof interior,
- The flight schedule, focusing on flight times' convenience, multiple available direct-flight destinations, frequency of flights to most popular destinations, timekeeping (consistency in arrival and departure times) and short intervals between flights in stopovers,
- Ticket price and payment policy and
- High-quality customer service provided at purchase and also before, during and after the flight.

2. Factors affecting customers' satisfaction

The vast majority of airline customers are leisure and business travelers. First class travelers are relatively few but their service meets the highest demands, as these customers are the subject of an excessive competition between major airlines in long distance (usually transatlantic) flights. This superior quality is part of the company's image in the airline industry, rewarded by international institutions and web pages (worldtravelawards.com/, britishtravelawards.com/, worldairlineawards.com/Awards/ best first class airlines.html and travelsort.com/blog/10-best-international-first-class-seats-for-award-travel). The same is true for the business class service (travelsort.com/blog/the-15-best-first-and-business-class-airline-awards-in-2012 and businesstravelawards.com/), that is partly the subject of this study.

Our research on quality service demands of leisure and business travelers identified that both groups have nonnegotiable demands on safety, adequate information, guidance, timekeeping, innovation and politeness (Chenm et al, 2015, Tolpa, 2012, LaMondia, Snell and Bhat, 2009), but also exhibit certain differences: for instance price, comfort, time and quality of service are hierarchically the primary criteria for leisure travelers, while time, comfort and quality of service are all primary concerns of business travelers, followed by price as a secondary impact (Baker

2013, Tolpa, 2012, Archana and Subha 2012, Ringle et al, 2011, Atilgan et al, 2008, Sultan and Simpson 2000). Furthermore, important differences within each group can be seen: the leisure travelers' group, regarding price and quality of service can be sub-categorized to schedule and low-cost flight customers, while the business travelers' group regarding the length of flight, can also be sub-categorized to short and long distance travelers (Ariffin et al, 2010, Fourie and Lubbe, 2006, Chen and Chang 2005, Park et al. 2004, Gilbert and Wong 2003, Chang and Yeh 2002).

2.1. Quality of service during information provision and ticket sale

Professionalism, good knowledge of the product and will to serve are the most important factors for customers' satisfaction during the sales process. For this, it is necessary to provide:

- Immediate and efficient service: there should never be a long call-waiting time while the best use of reservation systems (CRS-GDS) should be achieved, i.e. quick search, direct response to booking requests, compliance with booking procedures etc.
- Record and fulfillment of the customers' special service requirements (SSR): special meals, wheelchair use, family consecutive seats etc.
- Clarity in presentation and analysis of the product: price, flight times, time zones, connecting flights, participation in frequent flyer programs etc.
- Excellent airline staff attitude: both the ground handling staff and the flying staff should act as qualified professionals and this can be achieved by appropriate training, updating and audit.

The same quality of service should also be provided by the travel agency staff, if the passenger chooses to buy his ticket from an agency. The agent should understand completely customer needs and propose the best solutions regarding air carrier, price, flights and other details of the air travel. This requests good knowledge of the industry and use of reservation systems. Finally, as many passengers nowadays buy directly from the internet, airlines and travel agencies build easy-to-use and friendly sites where the customer can obtain useful information compare prices, buy directly using a credit card and also have discounts and payment and refund agreements (Shukla, 2013, Amiruddin 2013, Archana and Subha 2012, Tolpa, 2012).

2.2. Customer service before the flight

When arriving at the airport, quality service before the departure must involve

- Quick check in. Separate business class check-in. Self check-in.
- Quick luggage deposit. Separate business class luggage check.
- Customer guidance about security check, shopping and boarding.
- Help provided to elderly and disabled by using electric vehicles.
- Pleasant and helpful staff with foreign language skills.
- Comfortable boarding lounge. VIP lounge even in small airports.
- Passenger information in multiple locations.

2.3. Customer service during the flight

When embarking, quality service must include

- Comfortable seats (able to recline to bed position in long distance flights)
- Wide main corridor-ease to walk to toilets
- Clean and adequate toilets
- Passenger comfort (pillows, blankets, even slippers in long distance flights)
- Excellent behavior of the aircraft personnel (interest, kindness, service, knowledge of foreign languages, help with luggage settlement, information about the destination)
- Quality catering-multiple menus (vegetarians, religious restrictions)
- Entertainment (newspapers, magazines, multiple videos, multiple style music audio)

- Additional facilities if needed (fax and e-mail service)
- Care for families (consecutive seats, children's toys, baby sets, toilet facilities)
- Gifts
- Quality duty-free goods

2.4. Customer service after the flight

The after-the-flight quality service usually involves

- Transfer from one airport to another by means of the company (if connecting flight departs from a nearby airport, i.e. Gatwick and Heathrow). Transfer to hotel if stoppage overnight.
- Quick and effective response in cases of lost or damaged luggage.
- Guidance towards car-hire or taxi hub.
- Arrangements if the passenger has to change destination or cancel return.
- Customs and consular facilities.

Customer satisfaction means that the passenger will probably re-select the air carrier in the future, express satisfaction in social media and company site and provide mouth-to-mouth publicity among family and friends.

3. Quality satisfaction of customers' needs

According to the Kano model, customer's satisfaction can be divided into three categories:

- Satisfaction of basic needs: these are the basic needs or requirements that the customer expects that will probably be met

- Satisfaction of expected needs: these are needs or requirements that the client would like to be met, but he does not count them as absolutely necessary
- Satisfaction of exciting needs: these are needs that the client had no understanding or knowledge of, or he considered them beyond expectations – offering them results in a very pleasant surprise and an exciting experience.

Applying the Kano model to the various findings of the many important studies of the world literature analyzed in this study we can produce a synthesis concerning air travel customer satisfaction. Tables 1, 2 and 3 show the basic, expected and exciting needs of the various groups of travelers described above.

Discussion

Quality service expectations in air travel are extremely important in consumer's behaviour (Parasuraman et al., 1985) as they affect their satisfaction and also lead to buying decisions (Park et al, 2004). Airline passengers understand service quality as a multi-dimensional variable (Parasuraman et al, 1988) and satisfaction is measured by overall service experience based on various factors, including the perception of service quality and also their mood, emotions and other social and economic factors (Tolpa 2012). This concept, based on the premise that customers' assessment leads to a gap between expectations and perceptions of actual performance, has been used by many researchers to measure airline service quality (Sultan and Simpson, 2000, Fick and Ritchie, 1991). When expectations are exceeded, customers think that they receive high quality service and this surprises them. When expectations are not met, customers think that service quality is unacceptable while, when expectations are confirmed by perceived service, they find quality satisfactory. However, if quality is less than expected, it results in severe disappointment that has greater effect than the excitement produced by quality that exceeds their expectations (Tolpa 2012, Atilgan et al, 2008 Fitzsimmons and Fitzsimmons, 2001).

This means that airlines should only offer services that they are capable of delivering, as this differentiates them from the other airlines in terms of service quality. Furthermore, airlines should adopt strategies that enhance passengers' satisfaction by exceeding desired service levels, dealing effectively with non satisfied customers and confronting customer complaints positively. Early confront of customers complaints and quick resolution is therefore very important to change customer's impression and increase satisfaction (Makarand 2012). The bottom line is passenger's loyalty; profit and growth are stimulated primarily by customer loyalty that is a direct result of customer satisfaction (Amiruddin, 2013, Jones et al, 2002, Lee et. al. 2001, Heskett et al, 1997).

The airline industry nowadays faces many challenges (cutting costs, managing fluctuating demand and meeting quality requirements), while trying to maintain superior quality: service quality has become a major area of attention because of its strong impact on business performance, lower costs, return on investment, customer satisfaction, customer loyalty and higher profit (Masarrat and Jha, 2014, Tolpa 2012, Cochran and Craig, 2003, Berry and Zeithaml, 2001, Berry, Parasuraman and Zeithaml, 2001, Rust and Oliver, 1994). The accurate content of service quality however still remains controversial in the world literature, as it is highly personalized leading researchers to propose several confusing types of categorization (Gronroos 1982, Parasuraman et al. 1988, Rust and Oliver, 1994, Dabholkar and Thorpe 1994, Brady and Cronin 2001): it is clear though that passengers' quality perception is largely based on their evaluation of the outcome quality, the interaction quality and the environmental quality of service (Brady and Cronin, 2001).
The delivery of high-quality service therefore became a must for air carriers in order to meet the market pressure (Ostrowski et al., 1993) and companies tried hard to differentiate from their competitors (Stafford, 1996, Angur, 1999; Bahia and Nantel, 2000; Sureshchandar et al, 2002): surprisingly, a survey revealed that passengers could not differentiate between carriers (Ott 1993), while the emergence of low cost airlines has raised doubts on the impact of services provided (Saha and Theingi, 2009). The fact also that airline services are delivered by sales agents, airport authority, catering companies, handling agents and many others may confuse passengers on who delivers service (Chang and Keller, 2002). Therefore, an effective coordination of the various

activities delivered by many organizations is needed for improving airlines' service quality (Masarrat and Jha, 2014).

The services provided by airline companies have certain limitations by their fixed and flexible characteristics. The fixed ones are subject to seat size, cargo storage, type of airplane, and airplane maintenance and the flexible ones include the in-flight meal service and the level of service provided by flight attendants. (Chang et al, 1998). Another important issue is employees' training and continuous education (Shukla, 2013).

In the leisure travel group low-cost carriers are succeeding full service carriers, as the main issue today is cost, despite passenger's occupation (Shukla, 2013, Fourie and Lubbe, 2006). Passengers of low cost carriers also think that caring is the most important dimension of service quality, followed by reliability and responsiveness, and this is why any similar sigh increases their satisfaction (Ariffin et al, 2010). On-line booking, on-time performance, airport check-in, schedule/flight accommodations, gate location, aircraft interior, flight attendants, multiple meals selection, seat comfort, digital service quality, personal entertainment, safety, post-flight service and frequent flyer programs are all very important in several studies on business and long-distance travelers, affecting their overall satisfaction (Masarrat and Jha, 2014, Amiruddin, 2013, Archana and Subha, 2012, LaMondia et al, 2009).

In conclusion, airlines should be able not only to meet passengers' needs, but also to exceed their expectations, in order to increase fame, loyalty and profit. We think that many good ideas can be materialized to increase passengers satisfaction and exceed their expectations since in the vast majority of cases these particular offers are not costly but only demand good coordination with other participants of the airline industry, merely airport authorities, handling agents, security and lost and found.

Table 1. Criteria for customer satisfaction before the flight

Need	Leisure travelers		Business travelers	
	Low-cost carriers	Schedule flights	Short distance flights	Long distance flights
Basic	e-booking Very low fares and offers Flight security Friendly site	Quality sales service e-booking Low fares and offers Flight security Ease of payment Friendly site Free luggage allowance	Quality sales service e-booking Immediate response on requests Flight security Timekeeping Precise and convenient flight times Last time changes Frequency of flights FFP Ease of payment Friendly site	Quality sales service e-booking Immediate response of requests Flight security Timekeeping Precise and convenient flight times Last time changes Ability of reservation changes in emergencies Frequency of flights FFP Ease of payment Friendly site Ability to book certain seats Connecting flights Convenient flight times

				FFP Friendly site Priority Check-in Priority in luggage handling VIP lounge with computer facilities
Expected	Passenger information on embarking and delays	More luggage Help for embankment Constant passenger information on embarking and delays	Fast and separate check-in More luggage and hand-bag allowance Priority in luggage handling Ability of reservation changes in emergencies	More luggage and hand-bag allowance Gifts
Exciting	Quality sales service Increased permitted luggage weight	Fast and separate check-in	Ability to book certain seats Upgrade VIP lounge	Ticket discount Future flight ticket upgrade

Table 2. Criteria for customer satisfaction during the flight

Need	**Leisure travelers**		**Business travelers**	
	Low-cost carriers	Schedule flights	Short distance flights	Long distance flights
Basic	Pleasant cabin crew Neat aircraft Serving special needs, eg wheelchair Passenger information during flight	Pleasant and helpful cabin crew fluently speaking foreign languages Neat aircraft Serving special needs, eg wheelchair Comfortable seats Passenger information during flight Duty free Catering Basic entertainmentη	Pleasant and helpful cabin crew Neat aircraft Serving special needs, eg wheelchair Separate seats section Comfortable seats Passenger information during flight Basic entertainmentη	Pleasant and helpful cabin crew distinct fluently speaking foreign languages Crew arrangement of hand baggage More handbag allowance Neat aircraft Serving special needs, eg wheelchair Separate seats section Comfortable recliner seats Special request catering (i.,e. vegetarian) Passenger information during flight Duty free Advanced entertainment

Expected	Comfortable seats Basic entertainmentη	Special request catering (i.,e. vegetarian) Advanced entertainment	More handbag allowance Crew arrangement of handbags Advanced entertainmentη Caring for families and babies Baby toys	In-craft use of certain facilities (i.e. internet access) Catering with a variety of menu choices Free spirits Gifts
Exciting	Caring for families and babies Baby toys Catering	More handbag allowance Caring for families and babies Baby toys Gifts	Specific crew In-craft use of certain facilities (i.e. internet access) Special request catering (i.,e. vegetarian) Free spirits Gifts	Upgrade to first class a la carte menu from executive chef & wine list from sommelier

			Duty free	

Table 3. Criteria for customer satisfaction after the flight

Need	Leisure travelers		Business travelers	
	Low-cost carriers	Schedule flights	Short distance flights	Long distance flights
Basic	Lost and found service Damaged luggage compensation	Lost and found service Damaged luggage compensation Customs and consular facilities	Lost and found service Damaged luggage compensation Customs and consular facilities Small gifts Quick response to complaints	Lost and found service Damaged luggage compensation Customs and consular facilities Small gifts Change return ticket if needed Escort to rent-a-car hubs Quick response to complaints

Expected	Customs and consular facilities	Small gifts Quick response to complaints	Escort to rent-a-car hubs	Refund in exceptional cases Transport to nearby airports Transfer to certain hotels Gifts
Exciting	Quick response to complaints	Transfer to certain hotels	Transfer to certain hotels Discounts in partner hotel rates and car rental companies Change return ticket or refund in exceptional cases	Transfer to passenger hotel Discounts in partner hotel rates and car rental companies Future upgrade

References

Ariffin, A.A.M., Salleh, A.H.M., Aziz, N.A., Asbudin, A.A. (2010). "Service Quality and Satisfaction for Low Cost Carriers", *International Review of Business Research Papers* 6 (1), pp. 47-56.

Amiruddin, N.H. (2013). “Price, service quality and customer loyalty: A case of Air Asioa, South East Asia”. *Journal of Contemporary Business, Economics and Law*, 2(1), pp 34-40.

Angur, M.G., Natarajan, R., and Jahera, J.S. (1999). ‘Service quality in the banking industry: An assessment in a developing economy’, *International Journal of Bank Marketing*, 3 (3), pp.116-123.

Archana, R., Subha, M.V. (2012). “A Study on service quality and passenger satisfaction on Indian Airlines”, *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research* 2(2).

Atilgan, E., Akinci, S., and Aksoy, S. 2008. “Expectations and perceptions for airlines: The Sun Express case with the gaps model” *Journal of Global Strategic Management, 3*, pp. 68-78.

Bahia, K., Nantel, J. (2000). “A reliable and valid measurement scale for the perceived service quality of banks”, *International Journal of Bank Marketing*, 18(2), pp. 84-91.

Brady, M.K., Cronin, J.J. (2001). “Some new thoughts on conceptualizing perceived service quality. A Hierarchical Approach”, *Journal of Marketing*, 65(1), 34-49.

Chang, Y-H,, Keller, M.R. (2002). “A survey analysis of service quality for domestic airlines”, *European Journal of Operational Research*, 139, pp.166-177.

Chang, T.Z., Chen, S.J. (1998). “Market orientation, service quality and business profitability: a conceptual model and empirical evidence”, *Journal of Services Marketing*, 12(4), pp. 246-64.

Chen, F-Y., Chang, Yu-H. (2005). “Examining airline service quality from a process perspective”, *Journal of Air Transport Management*,11, pp. 79-87

Chen, J.K.C., Batchuluun, A., Batnasan, J. (2015). “Services innovation impact to customer satisfaction and customer value enhancement in airport”, Technology in Society 43, 219–230.

Gilbert, D.,Wong, R.K.C (2003). “Passenger expectations and airline services: a Hong Kong based study”, *Tourism Management*, 24, pp. 519-532.

Dabholkar, P.A., Thorpe, D.I. (1994). “Does customer satisfaction predict shopper intentions”, *Journal of Consumer Satisfaction, Dissatisfaction and Complaining Behavior*, 7, 161-71.

David, M.C., Baker, A. (2013). “Service Quality and Customer Satisfaction in the Airline Industry: A Comparison between Legacy Airlines and Low-Cost Airlines”, *American Journal of Tourism Research* 2(1), 67-77.

Fick, G.R., Ritchie, J.R.B. 1991. “Measuring service quality in the travel and tourism industry”, *Journal of Travel Research*, 30,pp.2-9.

Fitzsimmons, J. A., Fitzsimmons M. J. (2001). *Service Management: Operations, strategy, and information technology*, 3rd edition, Irwin McGraw-Hill, New York, New York.

Fourie, C., Lubbe, B. (2006). “Determinants of selection of full-service airlines and low-cost carriers: A note on business travellers in South Africa”, *Journal of Air Transport Management*, 12, pp.98-102.

Gronroos, C. (1982). *Strategic Management and Marketing in the Service Sector*, Helsinki, Finland: Swedish School of Economics and Business Administration.

Heskett, J.L., Earl-Sasser, W.Jr., Leonard, A.S. (1997). *Service profit chain*, New York, Free Press.

Jones, M.A., Mothersbaugh, D.L., Beatty, S.E. (2002). “Why customers stay: Measuring the underlying dimensions of service switching costs and managing their differential strategic outcomes”, *Journal of Business Research* 55(6), 441–450.

Kano Noriaki (1993), “A perspective on quality activities in American firms”, *California Management Review*, Spring Issue, pp. 12-31.

LaMondia J., Snell Y., Bhat C. R., (2009). “Traveler Behavior and Values Analysis in the Context of Vacation Destination and Travel Mode Choices: A European Union Case Study”. https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=http%3A%2F%
2Fwww.caee.utexas.edu%2Fprof%2Fbhat%2FABSTRACTS%2FVacation_destination_15March2010.doc

Lee, M., Cunningham, L.F. (2001). “A cost/benefit approach to understanding service loyalty”, *Journal of Services Marketing* 15(2), 113–130.

Makarand, U. (2012). “Customer satisfaction measurement in airline services: an empirical study of need-gap analysis”. *International Journal of Management and Strategy*, 3(5), 782-96.

Masarrat, G., Jha, C. (2014). "Assessing Customer Perception of Service Quality: Comparative Study of Airlines in UAE", *World Review of Business Research* 4 (2), 291–303.

Ostrowski, P.L., Terrence, O.B., Geoffrey, G. (1993). "Service quality and customer loyalty in the commercial airline industry", *Journal of Travel Research* 32, 16-24.

Ott, J. (1993). "Airline Customer Service Rated 'Average' in Survey", *Aviation Week and Space Technology*, February 1, p. 31.

Parasuraman,A., Berry,L.L., Zeithaml,V.A. (1985). "A Conceptual Model of Service Quality and Its Implications for Future Research", *Journal of Marketing*, 49(4), 41-50.

Park, J., Robertson, R., Wu, C. 2004. "The effect of airline service quality on passengers' behavioural intentions: A Korean case study", *Journal of Air Transport Management*,10, pp. 435–439.

Ringle C. M., Sarstedt M., Zimmermann L. (2011). Customer Satisfaction with Commercial Airlines: The Role of Perceived Safety and Purpose of Travel, *The Journal of Marketing Theory and Practic*e 19:459-472

Rust, R.T., Oliver, R.L. (1994). "Service Quality: insights and managerial implications from the frontier", in Rust, R.T. and Oliver, R.L. (Eds.), *Service Quality New Directions in Theory and Practice*, Sage Publications, London, 1-20.

Saha, G.C., Theingi, H. (2009). "Service quality, satisfaction, and behavioral intentions: A study of low-cost airline carriers in Thailand", *Managing Service Quality*, 19(3), pp. 350-372.

Stafford, B.M. (1996). *Good Looking: Essays on the Virtue of Images*, London and Cambridge Mass, MIT Press

Sultan, F.Jr., Simpson, M.C. (2000). "International service variants: Airline passenger expectations and perceptions of service Quality", *Journal of Services Marketing*, 14, pp. 188-216.

Sureshchandar, G.S., Rajendran, C., Anantharaman, R.N. (2002). "The relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction – a factor approach", *Journal of Services Marketing*, 14 (4), pp. 363-379.

Shukla, L. (2013). "A Case Study on Customer Acquisiton and Retention on the Airline Service Industry", *Journal of Business and Management* 9(4), pp 15-33.

Tolpa, E. (2012). "*Measuring Customer Expectations of Service Quality: case Airline Industry*". Logistics, Master's thesis, available at http://epub.lib.aalto.fi/en/ethesis/pdf/12898/hse_ethesis_12898.pdf

Westwood, S., Pritchard, A., Morgan, N.J. (2000). "Gender-blind marketing: businesswomen's perceptions of airline services", *Tourism Management*, 21, pp. 353-362

ONLINE TRAVEL AGENCIES' (OTA) PRODUCTS AND SERVICES: COMPLAINTS, BAD REVIEWS AND THE SURVIVAL OF THE TRADITIONAL TRAVEL AGENT AND TOUR OPERATOR. HAVE THE OTAS FORGOTTEN BASIC TOURISM MARKETING PRINCIPLES?

Ourania Vitouladiti

Department of Business Administration-Tourism and Hospitality Management, Technological Educational Institute of Athens (TEI)

Abstract

This article focuses on the current situation of the travel market and the changes that have occurred due to the onset of technology. It takes into consideration secondary data, specifically the opinions of tourists regarding the offering of online travel services. The result is the almost self-evident conclusion that internet is simply an instrument facilitating the service and not the service itself. The basic principles of tourism marketing remain the focal point for a successful and effective business that ensures the fulfilment of customer needs.

Key words: online travel agents, tour operators, tourism marketing, products and services, reviews

Introduction

The complex and competitive nature of the travel market always required of travel entrepreneurs to apply good management and marketing and offer good service. Over the last few years another element, technology and the internet, emerged as a means to connect with business and retail buyers and as a selling point further complicating this volatile sector. E-commerce rose to prominence based on a combination of factors such as access to information, the ability to easily compare products and prices and the convenience of not physically needing to go out to a shop to purchase an item (Kau et al., 2003).

With technology constantly advancing, this situation is irreversible and most travellers are bound to use online instead of traditional travel outlets (Law and Wong, 2003, Law et al, 2004, Pearce and Schott, 2005, Law, 2009). Statistics though clearly indicate that the vast majority of online sales concern simple services like air-tickets and other type of tickets (Euromonitor, 2014, Lefranc, 2014, Abta, 2013) probably due to the simplicity of the service.

It appears that several online entrepreneurs have mistaken the means of achieving a purpose, namely technology, with the purpose of their business that is the provision of reliable travel service. This results to several problems for them that allowed the revival of traditional travel market professionals.

This article attempts to analyse and demonstrate that the purpose of tourism marketing remains unchanged despite the technological advances used to serve it. Specifically, it is a business function that identifies the current unfulfilled needs and wants of a market, defines and measures their magnitude, determines which target the organization can best serve and programs to serve these markets, while the market itself can be a physical or virtual space (Kotler et al., 2003). This means that any interaction in the virtual market is governed by the same tourism marketing rules as those in the physical markets.

The online travel market era

It is a given that the online travel market is the fastest growing sector of the constantly growing online market of goods and services (Lefranc, 2014, Hanne, 2014, Google, 2014, Euromonitor

International, 2014). The market share of online bookings increases geometrically every year, an increase that also includes the online outlets of traditional tour operators and travel agents (Lefranc, 2014, Hanne, 2014).

Statistics indicate that 25% of the total travel sector sales globally for 2013 were via online outlets (Euromonitor, 2014), a percentage that is considerably higher in Europe and North America. As an example, online sales in the travel market of France accounted for 42% of total sales for 2013 (Lefranc, 2014).

Of course, online travel sales are spearheaded by the air ticket sales that make for the bulk of online travel sales, followed by hotels and various other ticket sales like train and ferry tickets (Euromonitor, 2014, Hanne, 2014, Lefranc, 2014) while more complicated products like holiday packages are still relatively low in the preferences for online bookings (Lefranc, 2014, Card et al, 2003), due to their complex nature that requires organization and planning by tourism professionals familiar with the travel market and tourism marketing.

It is a common consensus by most industry researchers that a much larger percentage of internet users searches extensively online even though they still choose a more traditional outlet for the actual booking (Lefranc, 2014, Euromonitor, 2014). Online industry research (Google, 2014, Euromonitor International, 2014) clearly indicates that prospective travelers spend extensive time on a variety of websites before each purchase decision while their research is split in 3 contexts: while choosing a destination, while choosing the services for the desired destination and while actually at the destination.

Travel agencies' role in the travel market

A lot of speculation has taken place over the past 20 years regarding the demise of the traditional travel agency in favor of the direct booking outlets of the various service providers. However, against the initial estimates that internet would allow the individual service providers (airlines, hotels etc.) to access directly the clients, reality has shown that the majority of online travel sales are actually made via OTAs (Online Travel Agencies) and not from the providers' sites.

Travel agencies traditionally serve as a one stop shop providing all travel related services in a single outlet. OTAs' websites serve as a one-stop portal web site that provides extensive useful information about travel products, usually at discounted rates, attracting customers to visit and purchase the products on their web sites instead of those of principal providers (Morosan and Jeong, 2008). Research shows that despite some qualitative differences on the consumer behavior between business and leisure travelers, it is clear that websites benefit by being user friendly and stable (Google, 2014, Euromonitor International, 2014). The same researches indicate that the majority of online travelers opt for the best deal, show little brand loyalty and they seldom distinguish brands and their value points.

Whether physical or virtual the travel agent provides a valuable service that a customer needs and demands. Specifically, the variety of options and prices that a single provider bound from his product cannot offer (Lee, Guillet and Law, 2013). As a result travel agents in one form or another have enjoyed a special place in the travel industry as intermediaries between the service provider and the actual customer (Lee, Guillet and Law, 2013).

The travel market today is more complex than ever (Kracht and Wang, 2009) with consumers visiting, on average, nearly two dozen websites through various outlets (computers, tablets and smartphones) before making their final purchase decision (Thakran and Verma, 2013).

Do OTAs offer a better value to the customers and themselves?

However, the majority of research (Zhang et al, 2015, Morosan and Jeong, 2008, Law and Huang, 2006) and industry statistics (Google, 2014, Euromonitor International, 2014) on OTAs and other travel market websites focus on the efficiency of those websites, their friendliness to the user and the increase of their market share. It is interesting that there is little information and research on the subject of the actual quality of the tourism service they offer.

Very limited academic research appears to have been conducted regarding the overall satisfaction of the travelers from the actual services they receive. Another issue is that no real attempt is made to disseminate the quality of services rendered from enterprises that are solely OTAs (Online Travel Agencies) from those of traditional “brick and mortar” tour operators and travel agencies that have adjusted in the new online era by building their own online outlets. However, both types of tourism enterprises enjoy increase in their sales online (Deloitte, 2015).

Considering that these two types of travel enterprises cohabitate in the internet but come from two different entrepreneurial backgrounds it would be of interest to see how they fair in terms of actual service provided. A simple way to assess the actual service provided could be through the volume and nature of customer complaints and the way these are handled from an OTA and a traditional travel agent or tour operator with internet presence.

This qualitative difference apparently interests mostly the travel industry members and specifically the traditional travel agents and tour operators that attempt to solidify their position as experts offering superior value to their clients against the onslaught of the OTAs.

Respected travel agent associations like ASTA (American Society of Travel Agents) and ABTA (Association of British Travel Agents) that engage in extensive industry research promote the fact that traditional travel agents and tour operators offer superior value to customers due to their expertise that allows them to offer the best deals, save time and most important offer security to their clientele.

This opinion is shared by several authors who believe that traditional travel agencies can provide a better service in terms of human touch, professional counselling and risk reduction (Law, 2009) and that there is a need from the consumers to have "face to face encounters" with their service provider (Dall Olmo Riley et al, 2009). As a result several travel agent and tour operator associations claim to have witnessed a positive reversal in their business volume over the last few years (ASTA, 2014, ABTA, 2014).

State services attempt to regulate the complex online travel system with the interest and safety of consumers as their priority. The EU via the Directorate General for Competition Policy, Consumer Affairs and Fraud Control (DGCCRF) has done extensive efforts to monitor the complaints and issues that arise in the service sector. In an extensive study concerning the French market they came to the startling result that complaints concerning OTAs are 5 times more compared to those of traditional travel agencies (Hanne, 2014, Lefranc, 2014).

The DGCCRF research on travel websites in 2013 indicated that out of 552 sites operating in the 28 EU states that were monitored 382 did not comply with the European consumer legislation on a variety of levels.

Statistics indicate that the percentage of the all around number of complaints for online travel increases annually exponentially (DGCCRF, 2014). Specifically, the increase of complaints between 2011 and 2012 was 25%. However, between 2012 and 2013 the increase was 47%. The complaints expressed by consumers varied and covered an extensive range of issues. The major issue, 35,5% of total complaints for 2013, was the lack of consumer information regarding the services offered and the unfair clauses incorporated in them. It mostly concerns the issue of the fine print details that are not explicitly displayed on websites. Comparatively, the complaints regarding the actual service offered are less than half (17,7%). Other issues like payment problems (9,8%), lack of remedy in case of service failure (6,1%) and reimbursement concerning disputes (5,4%) have a varying share in the complaints listed that is significantly lower than the major complaint issues (Hanne, 2014, Lefranc, 2014).

It is important to note that the percentages fluctuate through the years as more data are incorporated. However, the undeniable fact remains that the rate of increase of complaints on the online travel sector is significantly greater than the increase of its share in the travel market.

These findings correspond with the opinions voiced by industry news outlets (http://www.travelmarketreport.com, 2015) and general media (Forbes.com, 2016) that indicate the alarming number of complaints from the users of OTAs' services for the same reasons indicated in the DGCCRF statistics.

At a time when internet, via social media, various forums and review sites, gives a direct outlet to the frustration and complaints of customers, the increase of negative reviews and complaints appears as the real threat for OTAs and could very well prove disastrous for those that fail to respond effectively.

Online traveler reviews are often perceived as more up-to-date, reliable, and trustworthy information than the content offered by travel service suppliers (Gretzel and Yoo 2008) and prospective travelers consider the recommendations and opinions stated on online reviews (Ring, Tkaczynski, and Dolnicar 2016). A study on the state of social media (Nielsen.com, 2013), showed that 70% of the interviewed consumers indicated they trust online consumer reviews.

Where the problem lies

The 90's and 00's saw the majority of authors, entrepreneurs and media claiming that internet and the way it would simplify the travel market through disintermediation. Authors claimed that the traditional travel agency was a thing of the past forced to either change with the times or fade (Card, 2003, Dolnicar and Laesser, 2007, Law, 2009). However, after almost 20 years the travel agent is still here.

The reasons for this resilience are many. Specifically:

- The excessive flow of information, products and services available online, can be a cause of confusion for consumers (Matzler and Waiguny, 2005).

- Despite the multitude of information available to them many consumers find it difficult to make the most suitable travel choices, mostly due to lack of time, confidence, desire or, most importantly, knowledge (Kauffman and Wood 2007). The average online consumer is asked to understand price options, clauses, regulations, insurance options and effectively take responsibility for his own booking with, often, disappointing results (Forbes.com, 2016).

- Online businesses have operational costs just like traditional ones and especially high startup costs. As a result the competitive market is not as competitive or as promising as it appears (Earl and Mandeville, 2009).

- The competitive nature of online business gives access to the direct client to those that manage to get themselves in prime position at the first page on the web searches of customers (Haglund and Olsson, 2008; Jansen, et al., 2008; Griffiths and Brophy, 2005). This means that the market is dominated by few and large companies that manage to pay dearly for their online promotion and offer discount rates even though this can mean marginal or even no profits (Earl and Mandeville, 2009).

- OTAs seem to face serious issues when they are faced with special requirements and most importantly emergencies or mishaps that lead to deviation from the scheduled services like flight cancellations, delays etc. In those cases the customer is basically left on his own to find a solution (Forbes.com, 2016).

- Traditional travel agencies and tour operators are programmed to provide immediate assistance if a problem occurs during a trip. By comparison, OTAs are found lacking on this area (Forbes.com, 2016). This appears to be their most valuable service to most clients electing to use their services (Forbes.com, 2016, ABTA, 2013, ASTA, 2014).

- Traditional travel agencies have significant assets such as their expertise, reputation, customer base and relationships with suppliers etc. OTAs that are not linked with a traditional travel agency or tour operator would need a long period of time to acquire these assets as they require time to build up. Most OTAs have limited expertise in the travel industry and rely mostly on electronic commerce innovation that cannot be a source of sustained competitive advantage as it is easily to be imitated (Cheung and Lam, 2009).

- In several cases OTAs seek collaborations with traditional travel agents and tour operators offering their online expertise while offsetting their lack of expertise in the travel sector (Cheung and Lam, 2009).

- Many traditional travel agencies and tour operators have embraced the new technologies to contact their clients, be accessible 24/7 for emergencies and have exchanged costly prime location office space for more low cost options (ABTA, 2013, ASTA, 2014, Forbes.com, 2016)

Conclusions

As Hoffman and Bateson (2006) suggest, the unique characteristics that distinguish services from goods make failures in service encounters practically unavoidable. It is the way that companies respond to these failures and recover that makes the difference.

It is on the issue of recovery but also fail safe against possible failures where traditional travel agents and tour operators are more experienced, with well-established trade support mechanisms (ABTA, 2013, ASTA, 2013, Forbes.com, 2016).

After the initial shock that led to a steep decrease of travel agents in the early 2000s statistics show a steady increase of travel agents and their revenue in the 2010s (ASTA, 2013). For this surprising revival they have adopted the technological advancements of the online era to communicate with clients and providers alike (ASTA, 2013). Several companies employ social media as a tool for advertising their organization and allow for the creation of the sense of belonging to customers who are offered the opportunity to actively engage with a company's website, blog or forum (Kavoura, 2014). Naturally, the enterprises that fail to take innovative action and meet the needs of their clients find themselves lagging behind and will likely not survive (Papageorgiou and Lytras 2015).

Traditionally, the most important part of business for travel agents is the formation and sustenance of intimate customer relationships (Berne, Garcia-Gonzalez and Mugica, 2011). Customer relationships facilitate trust and lead to repeat purchases which are basic goals of tourism marketing. Apparently the core of the business remains the same even if the means have evolved.

References

ASTA, Agency Profile, A snapshot of ASTA members as of February 2014. March 2014, ASTA

ASTA, Agency Sales & Revenue Trends, Comparison of Full Year 2013 with Full Year 2012. March 2014, ASTA

ABTA, Travel Trends Report 2013. ABTA 2013

Berne, C., Garcia-Gonzalez, M. and Mugica, J. (2011). How ICT shifts the power balance of tourism distribution channels. TOURISM MANAGEMENT, 33(1), 205–214

Card, J.A., Chen, C.Y., Cole, S.T. (2003) Online Travel Products Shopping: Differences between Shoppers and Nonshoppers. JOURNAL OF TRAVEL RESEARCH, 42(133), pp.133-139.

Cheung, R. and Lam, P. (2009) Travel Agency Survive in e-Business World? COMMUNICATIONS OF THE IBIMA, Volume 10, 2009 ISSN: 1943-7765

Dall‟Olmo Riley, F., Scarpi, D., Manaresi, A. (2009). Purchasing services online: a two-country generalization of possible influences. JOURNAL OF SERVICES MARKETING, 23(2), pp.93-103.

Dolnicar, S., Laesser, C. (2007). Travel Agency Marketing Strategy: Insights from Switzerland, JOURNAL OF TRAVEL RESEARCH, 46(133), pp.133-146.

Earl, P.E. and Mandeville, T. (2009) .The competitive process in the age of the Internet. PROMETHEUS, 27 (3), pp. 195-209.

Gretzel, U., and K-H Yoo. 2008. Use and impact of online travel reviews. INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES IN TOURISM (2): 35-46.

Griffiths J.R. and Brophy P., (2005). Student searching behavior and the Web: Use of academic resources and Google, LIBRARY TRENDS, volume 53, number 4, pp. 539–554.

Haglund, L. and Olsson, P. (2008). The impact on university libraries of changes in information behaviour among academic researchers: A multiple case study, JOURNAL OF ACADEMIC LIBRARIANSHIP, volume 34, number 1, pp. 52–59

Hanne, H (2014) The growth of the online travel market in France – evolution of consumer market and consumer complaints. WORKSHOP CONSUMER MARKETS EXPERTS GROUP – 1st October 2014 – European Commission (DG JUST – Unit B1)

Hoffman, K. D. and Bateson, J. E. G. (2006), SERVICES MARKETING: CONCEPTS, STRATEGIES AND CASES. 3rd edition, Ohio: Thomson South-Western.

Jansen, B.J., Booth, D.L. and Spink, A. (2008). Determining the informational, navigational, and transactional intent of Web queries, INFORMATION PROCESSING & MANAGEMENT, volume 44, number 3, pp. 1,251–1,266.

Kau, A.K., Tang, Y.E. and Ghose, S. (2003). Typology of online shoppers. JOURNAL OF CONSUMER MARKETING, 20, 139-156.

Kauffman, R.J., and Wood, C.A. (2007). Follow the Leader? Price Change Timing in Internet-Based Selling, MANAGERIAL AND DECISION ECONOMICS, 28, 7, 679-700.

Kavoura, A. (2014), Advertizing activities in social media and the creation

of a community belonging in the digital era. THE MAŁOPOLSKA SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS IN TARNÓW RESEARCH PAPERS COLLECTION, vol. 25, iss. 2, December 2014.

Kotler, P., Bowen, J.T. & Makens, J.C. (2003). MARKETING FOR HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM. (3rd ed.). Upper Saddle River: Prentice-Hall

Kracht, J. and Wang, Y. (2010), Examining the tourism distribution channel: evolution and transformation. INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CONTEMPORARY HOSPITALITY MANAGEMENT, 22 (5), pp.736 – 757

Law, R., and Huang, T. “How Do Travelers Find Their Travel and Hotel Websites,” ASIA PACIFIC JOURNAL OF TOURISM RESEARCH (11:3), September 2006, pp. 239-246

Law, R. and Wong, J. (2003) Successful Factors for a Travel Web Site: Perceptions of Online Purchasers in Hong Kong. JOURNAL OF HOSPITALITY & TOURISM RESEARCH, 27(118), pp.118-124.

Law, R., Leung, K., Wong, J. (2004) The impact of the Internet on travel agencies, International. JOURNAL OF CONTEMPORARY HOSPITALITY MANAGEMENT, 16(2), pp.100-107.

Law, R. (2009) Research in brief. Disintermediation of hotel reservations. The perception of different groups of online buyers in Hong Kong. INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CONTEMPORARY HOSPITALITY MANAGEMENT, 21(6), pp.766-772.

Lee, H., Guillet, B. D. and Law, R. (2013). An Examination of the Relationship between Online Travel Agents and Hotels: A Case Study of Choice Hotels International and Expedia.com. CORNELL HOSPITALITY QUARTERLY 54(1) 95–107

Lefranc, O (2014) The growth of the online travel market (consumer market and consumer complaints). DGCCRF

Papageorgiou, A., Lytras, P. (2015). The efficacy of alternative tourism development to overcome current crisis: an exploration of the views of the stakeholders of the prefecture of Korinthia. TOURISMOS: Volume 10, Number 2, Autumn_Winter 2015, pp. 97-107

Matzler, K., Waiguny, M. (2005) Consequences of consumer confusion in online booking in: A. Frew (ed.) INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES IN TOURISM, pp.306-317, New York: Springer Wien.

Morosan, C., Jeong, M., 2008. User's perceptions of two types of hotel reservation Web sites. INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF HOSPITALITY MANAGEMENT 27, 284-292.

Pearce, D.G., Schott, C. (2005) Tourism Distribution Channels: The Visitors' Perspective. JOURNAL OF TRAVEL RESEARCH, 44(50): 50-63.

Ring, A., Tkaczynski, A. and Dolnicar, S. (2016) Word-of-mouth segments: online, offline, visual or verbal? JOURNAL OF TRAVEL RESEARCH, 55, 4, 481 - 492

Thakran, K. and Verma, R. (2013). The emergence of hybrid online distribution channels in travel, tourism and hospitality [Electronic version]. CORNELL HOSPITALITY QUARTERLY, 54(3), 240-247.

Zhang, M, Zhong, Z. Luo, J, Zhu, M. (2015) Online Travel Agent Service and Customer Satisfaction Based on Correlation Analysis: A Marketing Perspective in China. JOURNAL OF MARKETING AND CONSUMER RESEARCH, Vol.11

Online sources

http://www.travelmarketreport.com/articles/As-OTAs-Expand-Their-Reach-a-Trail-of-Complaints-Suggests-Online-Booking-May-Not-Be-the-Best-Choice-for-Consumers

http://www.forbes.com/sites/douggollan/2016/09/28/these-travel-agents-are-staying-a-step-ahead-of-google/#26475c53647f

http://www.etoa.org/docs/default-source/presentations/2014-the-new-online-travel-consumer.pdf?sfvrsn=4 (by Euromonitor International, 2014)

https://storage.googleapis.com/think/docs/2014-travelers-road-to-decision_research_studies.pdf

https://www2.deloitte.com/uk/en/pages/consumer-business/articles/travel-consumer-2015.html

http://www.nielsen.com/us/en/insights/news/2013/under-the-influence-consumer-trust-in-advertising.html

ATTITUDE OF TOURISTS TOWARDS ECOTOURISM AT OKOMU NATIONAL PARK, NIGERIA

O. Digun-Aweto

Department of Wildlife and Ecotourism Management, Faculty of Agriculture and Forestry, University of Ibadan, Nigeria

O.P. Fawole

Department of Agricultural extension and Rural Development, Faculty of Agriculture and Forestry, University of Ibadan, Nigeria

Abstract

This paper examines the attitudes of tourist's ecotourism an Okomu National Park (ONP). The park falls under Category II in the IUCN categorization of protected areas. ONP is situated in the rainforest region in south west Nigeria. Primary data was randomly collected from 400 tourists visiting ONP. Quantitative data from questionnaires was analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The findings indicate that 76.8% of the tourists rated being close to nature as very important and 31.1% were very keen on learning about nature. 91.4% of the tourists indicated that the park tour guides actually sensitized them about ecotourism on their trips. The results further revealed that tourists were of the opinion that ecotourism has improved tourist awareness on the need for conservation with the highest mean of (= 4.09). The study revealed

that tourists learn about conservation on their trips to ONP and development of positive attitudes towards ecotourism has a role to play in fostering conservation

1.1 Introduction

Protected areas are a vital in conservation of biodiversity (Rands et al., 2010), and has the ability to enhance local communities' livelihood through nature based tourism which has to be fashioned in a sustainable manner (Scheyvens & Momsen, 2008). Nature based tourism and ecotourism which are often closely related together contribute to the conservation and also the livelihoods of the locals in the area. (Adroin et.al. 2015). This paper assesses the attitudes of tourists towards nature based tourism and the knowledge level of tourists visiting Okomu National Park (ONP). The park was created from the former Okomu Forest reserve and~~,~~ is the smallest park in Nigeria, it falls within the Category II of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) system of protected Area classification and is managed mainly for ecological protection and recreation. Although wildlife is a perceived paramount attraction for tourists visiting ONP, there are other nature based activities which are engaging. Tourists visiting ONP experience the rainforest largely untampered and see several species of flora and fauna. Tourists also can get a good view of the park from the Tree house and can also watch over 150 species of bird from this vantage point. Tourists can also utilize the nature trails to facilitate easy viewing. The park has the following objectives which include to preserve for posterity the unique flora and fauna resources of south-west Nigeria under threat from insatiable demand for timber, farmland and bush meat and to provide a site for ecological education and research, and for training conservationists among others. According to (McDonald and Boucher, 2011), predicting the future of protected area expansion has been very difficult, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa~~.~~ because of low per-capita GDP which means a high level of dependence on firewood for fuel.

Wright (2001) observed that nature-based tourists are sympathetic to environmental issues and are eager to learn. This can be a means to protect the future of protected areas by creating awareness. Orams (1997) stated tourists are more satisfied with their experiences if they are disseminated alongside with educational messages. McGehee & Norman (2001) further stated that these type of first hand experiences with nature can create interests in the natural sciences and can create a sense of responsibility towards the environment. Ecotourism defined by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) (Ceballos-Lascurain, 1993) is ‘environmentally responsible travel and visitation to relatively undisturbed natural areas, in order to enjoy and appreciate nature, that promotes conservation, has low visitor impact and provides the beneficially active socio-economic involvement of local populations’. The International Ecotourism Society (TIES, 1993), defines ecotourism as ‘responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the welfare of local people According to (Weaver, 2008)’~~.~~ Ecotourism advocates for sustainability by minimizing ecological costs to the environment and maximizing ecological benefits. Okomu National Park is one of the youngest parks in the country and there is the need to understand tourist’s attitudes to be able to maximize ecological benefits~~-~~(Honey, 1999, 2008; TIES, 2013) stated that environmental conservation remains a vital principle of ecotourism. this principle encompasses all interactions and activities relating to the natural environment Page and Dowling (2002). This principle also encourages the education of tourists and locals on the importance of conservation. It is against this background that this study was conducted.

The aim of this study is to understand tourist motivation for visiting ONP, tourist knowledge of conservation and attitudes towards ecotourism. The findings of this study hope to help in further development of ecotourism at ONP and also help increase tourist awareness for conservation in Protected areas.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Tourism and conservation

According to Ayodele and Lameed (1999), biodiversity of a place is the totality of the species and ecosystems that exist in that place. In biodiversity conservation, it is important to balance the rate of utilization of natural resources with those of their formation in order to maintain stability and ensure sustainability. It is only through the application of effective conservation strategies that those resources are not depleted. Invariably there is a need for sustainable use of natural resources. It is on this basis that Andrew (1998), explained that the main focus of conservation is to satisfy the needs of the present generation without compromising the interest of the future generation by ensuring rational usage of the resource base. The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN, 2014) defined management as maintenance of a balance between exploitation and conservation, such that management not only requires efficient exploitation of the stock but also its conservation. Reeder (1974) as cited by Ayodele (2002) opined that the conservation program of any species serves to protect what remains and to reclaim some of what has been lost of that species. It is generally accepted that ecological diversity is the best insurance against habitat deterioration and thus, the maintenance of this diversity is the primary aim of conservation.

2.2 Tourist Inflow in Protected Areas

Inflow to natural areas is largely driven by tourist's yearnings to experience natural habitats and to derive pleasure from being close to nature. It is essential for this visits to be guided by sustainable principles to be regarded as an ecotourism adventure. Müllera and Jobb (2009) in a research based on managing natural disturbance in a protected area recommended that there is a need to increase the level of awareness of tourists through educational means because even though tourists are interested in adopting responsible behavior in natural parks and protected areas, their attitudes are usually impartial towards management of these areas. Imrana et.al. (2014) stated that tourists are important stakeholders in protected area management. In addition, tourists represent an important category of stakeholders in aspects related to the management of natural protected areas. A research performed by Müllera and Jobb (2009) has shown that, though interested by adopting a responsible behaviour in protected areas, tourists generally have a neutral attitude towards the management of these areas, especially regarding the existence of possible disruptive factors for the ecosystem. Therefore, it is recommendable to take educational measures meant to increase tourists' degree of awareness, in their quality of stakeholders.

2.3 Attitudes towards protected areas

Attitudes towards national parks and protected areas are paramount ingredients that play a key role in inducing the success of these areas. (Schaal, 2009). Arnberger et. al (2011) stated that "The lower the

acceptance, the lower the probability to protect natural biodiversity and large-scale undisturbed natural processes, promote environmental education, and implement measures for sustainable regional development through eco-tourism". Mose and weixbaumer (2007) notes that in order to record success in protected area management, attitudes are a key factor to take into consideration when planning for management. Attitudes also affect the acceptance of the venture. Negative attitudes reduce success rate while positive attitudes have the potential to increase success rates (Leibenath, 2000).

3.0 Study Area

ONP is situated 60 Km North-West of Benin City, Edo State Nigeria. It lies between latitudes $6^0 15'$ and $6^0 25'$N and longitudes $5^0 9'$ and $5^0 23'$E (ONP, 2014). The park is a rainforest ecosystem gazette from the former Okomu forest reserve in 1935. The park is home to a wide range of flora and fauna and some vulnerable species. Access to the park is by road and the road to the park is in good condition. The main source of accommodation for park visitors are the chalets which are located inside the park. The chalets have a bar, a restaurant and a swimming pool. The hanging bridge is not too far from the chalets. The chalets have reasonable supply of electricity and water supply. Visitors can easily see monkeys and antelopes not too far from the chalets. The park is also home to endemic species of butterflies.

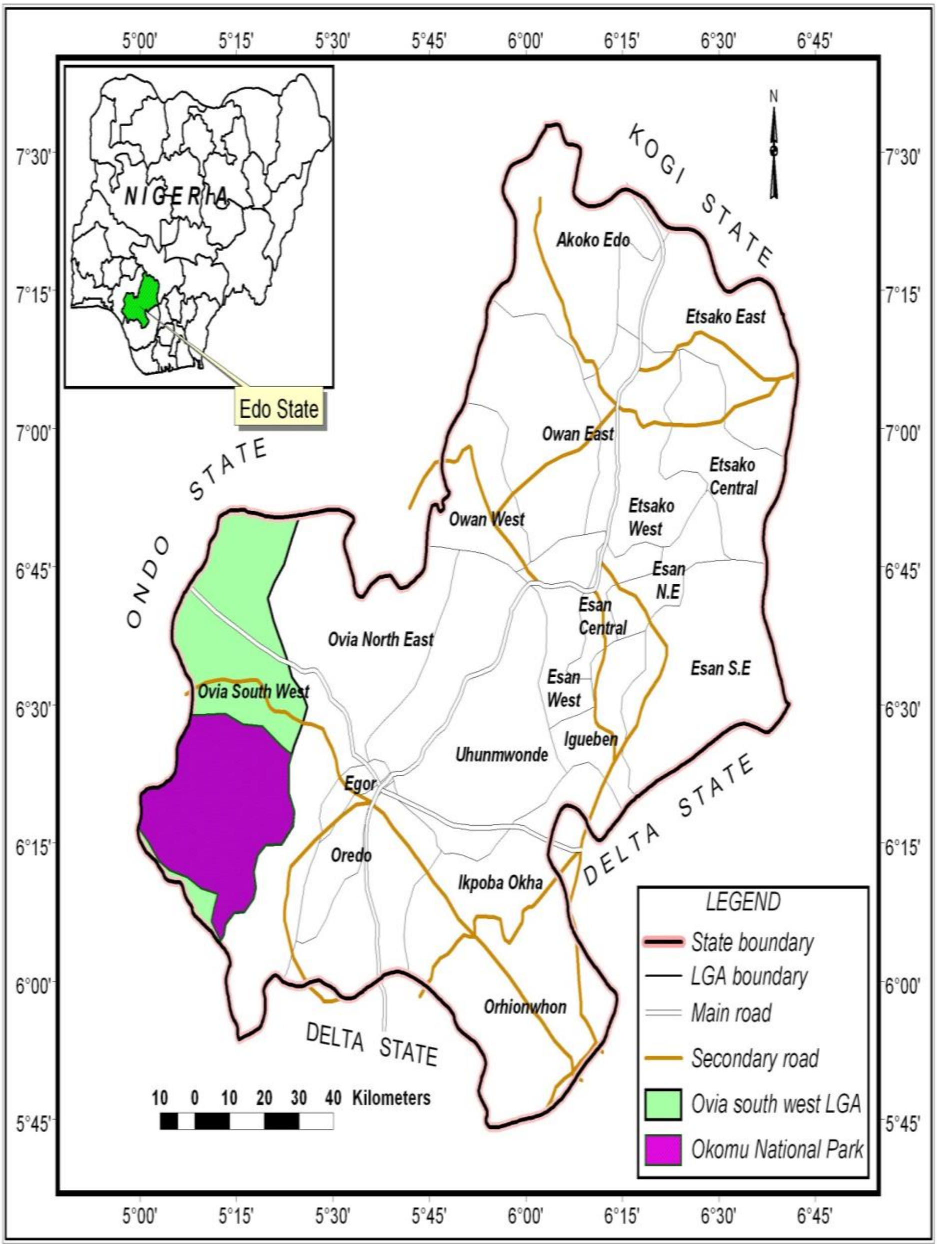

Figure 1: Map of Edo State, showing the location of Okomu National Park

ONP (2012)

3.1 Methodology

A case study approach using quantitative and qualitative methods was employed. Questionnaires and key informant interviews and field observations were used to obtain data. The data obtained included types of wildlife found in Okomu National park, awareness of ecotourism and conservation and attitude towards conservation by the tourists. Information on tourist products and services, the flagship species tourist interaction with wildlife was obtained from prominent members of staff.

A series of questionnaires was administered to sample the views of the tourists, the questionnaire comprised of closed ended questions. A pre-test survey was carried out prior to the actual survey in order to fine tune the questions and to ensure that they will capture the objectives of the study. Information gathered from the key informants was used to refine the survey.

Respondents were randomly selected from tourist visiting the park. On completion of the tours, the questionnaires were administered to the tourists. Both International and local tourist were surveyed. Some questionnaires were also left at the park accommodation and the information centre, which were given to tourists who had undergone the guided tours and these questionnaires were collected from them before they leave the park. A total of 400 questionnaires were returned fully completed. The data was coded and analysed using SPSS version 20.

4.0 Results

4.1 Tourist Motivation for Visiting Okomu National Park

Table 1: Tourist motivation for visiting Okomu National Park

	Activities	1	2	3	4
1	Being close to the rainforest	13.3%	3.9%	6.6%	76
2	Viewing wildlife	5.3%	10.6%	26.5%	57
3	Learning about nature	7.9%	19.8%	41.2%	31
4	Having an adventure	20.2%	26.1%	38.4%	15

Note: Likert scale of Motivation 1= not at all important, 2= fairly Important, 3= Important, 4 = Very important

Probable motivations for visiting Okomu National Park are shown in table 1. Being close to nature and viewing wildlife were the highest ranked reasons for visiting the park followed by learning about nature and lastly having an adventure. Viewing game was also reported by (Kuenzi and Mcneely 2008). Being close to nature had a high agreement (83.4%) and viewing wildlife (84.1%) had the highest ranking of very important and important respectively. This could be due to the fact that ONP is one of the few parks in the rainforest region of the country and its ecosystem is unique when compared with other parks in the savannah region of the country which have vegetation of open grassland and woodland. Although visibility of game is not that apparent in the rainforest because of dense vegetation and trees, visitors still come to view this unique vegetative cover and are usually intrigued by the canopy layers created by the trees. Okomu is the only area on the unique Southwest Nigerian high rainforest ecosystem protected by law (Lee White, 1988). There are still a lot of bird species, butterflies, antelopes, which can be easily sighted. Other animals like the buffalo, elephants, civet cats are rarely seen, only their foot prints and fecal dropping give indication that they exist in the park. Learning about nature ranked third in the overall rating (72.3%) this can be due to the fact that many institutions of learning, especially universities and secondary schools bring their students to the park not only to experience the natural rainforest ecosystem but also to learn about nature. The results from the findings can be used by the park to understand the motivations and preferences of both local and international tourists and in turn tailor their services to specific target groups to attract more tourists and teach conservation education which can help improve the park's conservation objectives.

4.2 Tourist's knowledge of ecotourism and conservation

The results of tourists' knowledge of ecotourism are presented in Table 1. From the results 94% of the tourists were aware that ecotourism has helped in conservation of both plant and animals while 93% of them were aware of ecotourism, 93% agreed that ecotourism can be used as a medium to communicate conservation goals. Also 92% indicated that they were aware that ecotourism is a good way of conserving the environment and 92% were of the opinion that ecotourism has helped in aiding community development. Ninety-two percent of the tourists indicated that the park had done a lot to sensitize tourists coming to ONP about ecotourism prior to entering the park. They were also educated on how to behave responsibly in protected areas. 91% of the tourists indicated that ecotourism has helped in fostering development through contact with the locals, while 85% of the tourists indicated that they were aware of conservation programs being implemented by ONP. Also, 84% were of the opinion that they did not notice host community participation in any activity. A similar study by (Mihai ,2008) also reported that 66% of the tourist had a good degree of knowledge of ecotourism, favoring conservation and environmentally friendly actions.

Table 2: Frequency distribution showing tourist knowledge of ecotourism and conservation

Knowledge	No	Yes
Ecotourism has helped conservation of plants and animals	6.0%	94.0%
Are you aware of ecotourism	6.6%	93.4%
Ecotourism helps educate tourists about conservation	7.3%	92.7%
Ecotourism is a good way of conserving the ecosystem	7.9%	92.1%
Ecotourism aids community development	7.9%	92.1%
Did the park sensitize you about ecotourism	8.6%	91.4%
Ecotourism brings tourists in contact with local communities which fosters development	9.3%	90.7%
Are you aware of any Okomu park conservation programs	14.6%	85.4%
Did you notice any community members involved in park management activities	16.6%	83.4%
Ecotourism sensitization by park is adequate	19.9%	80.1%

4.3 Attitude of tourists to ecotourism

Table 3 gives an overview of the tourist's attitude towards ecotourism with an overall mean of 2.77. From the results, statements with mean scores above 2.77 were taken to indicate a positive attitude towards ecotourism by tourists and those below indicated a negative attitude towards ecotourism tourists were of the opinion that ecotourism has improved tourist awareness on the need of conservation ranked the highest with a (= 4.09). This statement had the highest mean because the park always makes effort to educate tourists coming to the park about the various programs going on in the park and also on conservation. 92% of the tourists indicated that ecotourism has improved their awareness of conservation. This means that their visit to ONP has exposed them to learning about nature which was corroborated by (Amuquandoh et.al, 2011) in a study on tourist experiences to Owabi national park in Ghana. They stated that learning about nature was a high priority for tourists and was the second most important most experience. Stein et.al.(2003) also rated conservation education and interest in learning more about the environment are paramount factors for ecotourists visiting a protected area. One of the criteria for naming an activity as nature based tourism is the educational dimension (Fennel 1999) which was buttresses by the findings of this study, where about 93% of the respondents agreed that conservation education is not a waste of time. About 85% of the respondents stated that ecotourism has created responsible behavior among tourists. Ballantyne et.al. (2011) individual tourist behavior is affected by visits to protected areas. Ecotourism has assisted in developing the surrounding community had a mean score of (= 4.03). Ecotourism had brought tourists to the park that do not only visit the park but also buy food items form host community members who sell various items by the road side which provides an alternative source of income for the locals. Also because of the park, there has been some developmental projects which have come to the area and which will benefit the host communities. In recent times, an example of such a project is the construction of a long stretch of road by the Niger Delta Development Commission which will make transportation of goods and people easier, a road that was hardly pliable in the rainy season.

Due to sensitization of tourists about ecotourism in which the tourists are given a brief introduction to conservation and ecotourism, tourists have become more responsible for their actions in the park (= 3.99). Digun-Aweto et.al. (2016) also noted that sensitization by the management has played a role in creating awareness to both locals and tourists about the need for conservation.

The results also indicated that ecotourism provides a firsthand encounter with the natural environment (= 3.93). The least ranked means were: Games (animals) are meant to be food for the community so why should they be preserved (= 1.83), I will like to hunt game in the park if given the chance (= 1.81), I do not care about the ecosystem (= 0.56), I will never welcome anything that has to do with conservation (= 1.76). The results above indicate that tourist attitude towards ecotourism is favorable because they are in support of conserving the park and also favour -the current management practices being carried out by the park. The attitude of the tourists towards ecotourism can be said to be average because about half of the statements were above the overall mean score of 2.77. The correlation results between attitude of tourists towards conservation and their knowledge revealed that there is a strong positive relationship between the two variables $r(498) = 0.56$, $p < .01$

Table. 3: Frequency distribution of tourist attitude towards ecotourism

Tourist Attitude towards Ecotourism	SD	D	UD	A	SA	Mean
Ecotourism has improved tourist awareness on the need for conservation	5.3%	1.3%	1.3%	62.9%	29.1%	4.09
Ecotourism has assisted in developing the surrounding community	7.3%	-	4.6%	58.9%	29.1%	4.03
Ecotourism has made tourist more responsible in their actions in the park	5.3%	-	7.3%	64.9%	22.5%	3.99
Ecotourism has helped in protecting our wildlife	6.6%	2.6%	2.6%	62.9%	25.2%	3.97

Ecotourism provides a firsthand encounter with the natural environment	6.0%	4.0%	1.3%	68.2%	20.5%	3.93
Ecotourism is a way of increasing household income for host communities	6.6%	4.6%	6.0%	61.6%	21.2%	3.86
Ecotourism enhances sustainable park development	6.6%	2.0%	6.0%	71.5%	13.9%	3.84
Ecotourism has helped in sustaining the livelihood of the host communities	7.3%	13.2%	2.6%	65.6%	11.3%	3.60
Ecotourism has helped in saving our forests	12.6%	9.3%	4.0%	57.6%	16.6%	3.56
Ecotourism has fostered community participation in the park	6.6%	2.0%	39.1%	36.4%	15.9%	3.53
Conservation reduces consumption of animal protein	13.9%	11.3%	5.3%	57.6%	11.9%	3.42
Ecotourism is a means of enabling tourist to exploit the park	15.2%	17.2%	.7%	60.3%	6.6%	3.26
Ecotourism leads to advent of disease	24.5%	43.0%	6.0%	21.2%	5.3%	2.40
Conservation reduces sources of income for host community	19.2%	62.9%	2.6%	9.9%	5.3%	2.19
Ecotourism makes tourism more expensive	16.6%	72.2%	2.6%	4.6%	4.0%	2.07
Conservation of wildlife and flora is foreign to our culture	19.2%	73.5%	2.0%	2.6%	2.6%	1.96
Conservation education is a waste of time	23.8%	68.9%	2.6%	1.3%	3.3%	1.9[illegible]

Conservation is another form of colonization	20.5%	70.9%	6.0%	2.0%	.7%	1.91
Conservation limits the use of traditional herbs	23.2%	69.5%	2.6%	3.3%	1.3%	1.90
Ecotourism is a means of depriving the people of their natural environment	20.5%	74.8%	2.6%	1.3%	.7%	1.87
Ecotourism is one of the ways of exposing the community to danger	26.5%	68.9%	.7%	2.0%	2.0%	1.84
There is nothing to gain from conservation	28.5%	66.2%	1.3%	.7%	3.3%	1.84
Games (animals) are meant to be food for the community so why should they be preserved	25.2%	70.9%	1.3%	1.3%	1.3%	1.83
I will like to hunt game in the park if given the chance	25.2%	70.9%	1.3%	2.6%	-	1.81
I do not care about the ecosystem (forest and animals)	28.5%	68.9%	.7%	2.0%	-	1.70
I will never welcome anything that has to do with conservation	27.2%	70.2%	2.0%	.7%	-	1.70
Grand Mean						**2.77**

Limitations of the study

There was a hindrance to the conducting of the survey during the data collection, the paramount ruler, the Iyase of Udo, was kidnapped by some unidentified youths which disrupted the survey and prevented tourists from visiting during the planned period of data collection. Also, the interview schedules had to be interpreted to some of the respondents for a better understanding of the questions.

5.0 Conclusion

Ecotourism is a rational method for nature reserves to both realize ecological protection and to benefit their local communities. Ecotourism provides platforms to help conserve flora and fauna especially threatened species through improving tourist knowledge and creating positive attitudes but the goals of ONP and ecotourism may not be achieved except there are proper channels for connecting these experiences with action. These can be realized through proper dissemination of the conservation message and to follow through and connect the tourist's motivation based on the experience with their home environments.

National parks are an important means to achieve conservation but to muster support for conservation in Nigeria which is regarded as a developing country, there is the need for tourists to have a good experience in viewing wildlife and enjoying the natural scenery and trails. Tourists were motivated by viewing the rainforest and also viewing wildlife but visibility of game in the rainforest is highly limited because of the vegetation. ONP is one of the few national parks in the rainforest region in Nigeria and because of its small size, it should be promoted to attract both international and domestic tourists. Also the management needs to create a management plan that can aid viewing of wildlife such as hanging walkways through the canopy layers. This can even assist in fighting poaching of elephants in the park and also other game. The proposed walk way can turn out to be very effective because it will increase the area that can be covered in a short distance and can be the eye in the sky for poachers on the ground. Acquah et.al. (2016) stated that visit to protected areas can help in creating the right attitude towards conservation for primary, secondary schools and universities which is also being done at ONP. Students who come to the park are sensitized towards conservation, this can be used by the national park service to help inculcate conservation awareness in the youth in the country

References

Ardoin, N. M., Wheaton, M., Bowers, A. W., Hunt, C. A., & Durham, W. H. (2015), ' Nature-based tourism's impact on environmental knowledge, attitudes, and behavior: a review and analysis of the literature and potential future research,' *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, *23*(6), 838-858.

Stergiou, D. & Airey, D. (2012), 'Using the Course Experience Questionnaire for evaluating undergraduate tourism management courses in Greece', *Journal of Hospitality, Leisure, Sport and Tourism Education*, 11(1), pp. 41-49.

Arnberger, A., Eder, R., Allex, B., Sterl, P., & Burns, R. C. (2012), 'Relationships between national-park affinity and attitudes towards protected area management of visitors to the Gesaeuse National Park, Austria,' *Forest Policy and Economics*, *19*, 48-55.

Andrew, S. (1998), Sustainable Rural Development and Sustainable Agriculture (2nd Ed) London, Great Britain, 293 pp.

Acquah, E., Dearden, P., & Rollins, R. (2016), 'Nature-based tourism in Mole National Park, Ghana', *African Geographical Review*, 35:1, 53-69.

Amuquandoh, F.E., Boakye, E.A. & Mensah, E.A. (2011), 'Ecotourism Experiences of international Visitors to the Owabi Wildlife Sanctuary, Ghana'. *Ghana Journal of Geography*, 3:250-284.

Ayodele, I. A. (2002), Essentials of Tourism management (2nd Edition), El-Shaddai publications, Ibadan, Nigeria. 2-4.

Ayodele, I. A. and Lameed, G. A. (1999),' Essentials of Biodiversity Management: The Current Status of Biodiversity Management,' Publishing house town, Ibadan. Nigeria. 74.

Ballantyne, Packer, & Falk. (2011),' Visitors' learning for environmental sustainability: testing short- and long-term impacts of wildlife tourism experiences using structural equation modelling,' *Tourism Management,* 32(6), 1243-1252

Ceballos-Lascurain, H., Lindberg, K., & Hawkins, D. E. (1993), 'Ecotourism as a worldwide phenomenon. *Ecotourism: a guide for planners and managers.*, 12-14.

Ceballos-Lascuráin, H. (1996). Tourism, ecotourism and protected areas: The state of nature-based tourism around the world and guidelines for its development. Gland, Switzerland, and Cambridge, UK: IUCN, The World Conservation Union.

Digun-Aweto O., Ayodele I.A. and Fawole O.P.(2016) Attitude of local dwellers towards ecotourism at Okomu National Park, Edo State Nigeria. *Czech Journal of tourism* 4 (2)

Glucu, K. & Karahan, F. 2004. A review: the history of conservation programs and development of the national parks concept in Turkey. *Biodiversity and Conservation*. 13:1371-1390.

Imrana, S., Alama, S. and Beaumont, N., (2014),' Environmental orientations and environmental behaviour: Perceptions of protected area tourism stakeholders,' *Tourism Management*, 40(5), p. 290.

IUCN (2014). IUCN Protected Area Management Categories Retrieved from http://www.biodiversitya-z.org/content/iucn-protected-area-management-categories on the 24th of August 2013 at 5.40 pm.

Kuenzi, C., & McNeely, J. (2008). Nature-based tourism. Global Risk Governance, Springer Netherlands. 1, 155–178.

Leibenath, M., 2000. Development of national park regions through regional marketing: Investigated the example of the Müritz region. *European publisher of sciences*, Peter Lang, Frankfurt am Main.

McDonald R. I., & Boucher, T. M. (2011),' Global development and the future of the protected area strategy' *Biological Conservation*, 144 (1), 383–392.

McGehee, N.G., & Norman, W.C. (2001),' Alternative tourism as impetus for consciousness-raising. *Tourism Analysis*, 6(3-4), 239-251.

Mose, I., & Weixlbaumer, N. (2007),' A new paradigm for protected areas in Europe. *Protected areas and regional development in Europe. Towards a new model for the 21st century*, 3-20.

Müllera, M. and Jobb, H., 2009,' Managing natural disturbance in protected areas: Tourists' attitude towards the bark beetle in a German national park,' *Biological* Conservation, 142(2), p. 375.

ONP.(2012). Okomu national park quarterly report by the ecology and ecotourism departments.3, 2012.

ONP. (2014). Okomu national park quarterly report by the ecology and ecotourism departments 4, 2014.

Orams, M.B. (1997),'The effectiveness of environmental education: Can we turn tourists into 'greenies,' *Progress in Tourism and Hospitality Research*, 3, 295-306

Rands, M. R., Adams, W. M., Bennun, L., Butchart, S. H., Clements, A., Coomes, D., & Scharlemann,J. P. (2010),' Biodiversity conservation: Challenges beyond 2010,' Science, 329(5997), 1298–1303.

Schaal, P., 2009. 'Synthesis of Case Studies: Future Perspectives of Protected Area Planning,'

In: Moses, I. (Ed.), Perception and Acceptance of Large Areas of Protection. Perceptual Geographic Studies Volume, 25. BIS Publishing House of Carl von Ossietzky University,

Oldenburg, pp. 199-214.

Scheyvens, R., & Momsen, J. H. (2008),' Tourism and poverty reduction: Issues for small island

States,' *Tourism Geographies*, 10, 22–41.

Stein, T. V., Denny, C. B, and Pennisi, L.A. (2003), 'Using visitors' motivation to provide learning opportunities at water-based recreational areas, *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 11, (5), 404-452.

The encyclopedia of ecotourism New York, NY: CABI Publishing. 37-62.

TIES. (1993). The International Ecotourism Society. Ecotourism Guidelines for Nature Tour Operators. Burlington, VT, USA, The International Ecotourism Society.

Weaver, O. 2008. Ecotourism (2nd edition). Queensland: John Willey & Sons Australia Ltd.

White L (1988) The Okomu Forest Project, *Primate Conservation*, 9, pp. 28-29.

Wight, P.A. (2001). Ecotourists: Not a homogenous market segment. In D. Weaver (Ed.),

E-LEARNING ADOPTION IN HOSPITALITY EDUCATION: AN ANALYSIS WITH SPECIAL FOCUS ON SINGAPORE

Revi Nair

Senior Lecturer, Temasek Polytechinic, Singapore

Babu P George

Associate Professor of Management, Fort Hays State University, USA

Abstract

This paper explores issues and challenges in the adoption of e-learning in hospitality education, with special reference to Singapore. Hospitality being a 'high-touch' profession and many hospitality related skills being largely intangible, there has been significant industry resistance in technology adoption. There has been concerns from multiple stakeholder groups as to how effectively can technologies compensate for the loss of social context of traditional hands-on learning. However, in Singapore, some polytechnic based schools have practically demonstrated the ways by which technology could be meaningfully integrated into hospitality education.

Keywords: E-Learning Adoption in Hospitality Education: An Analysis with Special Focus on Singapore

Introduction

The hospitality industry in Singapore has been facing challenges to combat the slower workforce growth. The potential manpower shortage is expected to intensify due to the fact that there will be an additional 14,000 hotel rooms by 2018 and limited local graduates joining the industry annually (Singapore Tourism Board, 2015). Diseases like the severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) and the middle-east respiratory syndrome (MERS) have caused educational institutions to close and not being able to finish curriculums. The inability to complete curricula on time has pushed the Singapore government to emphasize the importance of online classes.

Singapore's education ministry has been encouraging the use of information technology (ICT) to its institutions so that they are able to change learning and teaching methods in a way that students can understand (Ministry of Education, Singapore 2013). The hospitality industry is one that is manually intensive with a fair amount of interaction between service staff and customers. Bull (1995) stated that the hospitality industry adapted to technology late. This belatedness by the industry and academics may have had a substantial impact on students' overall perception towards technology. The advent of technology in the industry does not often facilitate distance education and the required hands-on learning experience.

Lin (2002) hypothesized that industry professionals must be encouraged by hospitality educators to assist them in continuously updating curriculum in order for the institutions to meet the demands of the industry. Part of updating curriculum includes online learning. Information by these industry professionals is also useful for students currently pursuing hospitality diplomas. The collaboration between hospitality institutions and industry professionals will serve as a reference for students to understand competencies in the industry. According to Adler and Adler (2004), large numbers of workers leave the hospitality industry after five years. Hospitality institutions can then incorporate their current programs to suit the industry's needs and to perhaps entice hospitality workers to stay longer, it is expected.

In this context, this paper addresses the dissonance of whether online courses taught in Singapore based hospitality schools are preparing students with the necessary service skills for the hospitality industry. It examines the demand for online learning among the Singaporean hospitality students who will be entering the hospitality industry. The larger purpose of this study is to explore the effectiveness of online hospitality programs and their usefulness for students to understand the intricacies of the industry. This study can also be applied to assess whether online programs prepare them well for a career in the hospitality industry.

Advantages and Disadvantages of Technology in Education

Radovic-Makovic (2010) proposed that there are many advantages and disadvantages in the use of online teaching platforms when compared to the traditional pedagogical approaches. American higher education faculties have been the leaders in the field of online education. As a result of well-funded research, educators have been able to make significant improvement on their pedagogical content to their students. One advantage is the easy availability of research material online which has enhanced virtual teaching platforms and has benefitted the learning of students and enhanced the interaction between instructors and students. According to Radovic-Makovic (2010), online hospitality courses are becoming more popular than normal institutions delivering face-to-face instruction. As compared to the traditional ways of learning, online learning has increased study efficiency, which results in studies being completed in a shorter time frame. This favors the learner, especially when he is eager to start his career in the workforce as soon as he completes his studies. Online learning is becoming popular when delivering information in the fastest time. Kathawala and Wilgen (2004) mentioned that cost efficiency, made-to-order learning 24/7, superior learning capabilities that involves retention in a risk-free, reliable, and interactive environment are strong reasons to adopt online methods. Song (2010) stated that online learning technology can simplify a concerted student-centred learning environment. This will allow students to be actively involved and be able to pace their independent learning.

However, in some areas of the world, like Myanmar, where students do not have the opportunity to have regular internet connection, online learning is still only something they can hope for (Calderaro, 2015). Some institutions also lack the technology and software to implement online learning. In some quarters, traditional educators are of the opinion that online learning does not replicate face-to-face instruction to the extent of replacing it. It will take some time for educators who are in responsible positions to make changes. According to Calderaro (2015), the hospitality industry should also accept students who have completed online courses on par with traditional institutions.

Kruse (2004) stated that there are confines to instructors when they are conducting online classes. Instructors have to study whether the current technological infrastructure of the institution is capable of fulfilling their training goals. Additional expenditure for soft and hardware technology must be justified to the stakeholders. Furthermore, the soft and hardware to handle e-learning must also be compatible with the current system. As for the learner, technology issues like unavailability or inconsistency of the required technologies needs to be addressed. One of the strengths of online learning is the propagation of all tools of learning like computers, mobile phones, and personal devices. The over dependence of these learning tools might be a detriment to the user if ever there is a technological malfunction beyond their control.

Daymont and Blau (2008) stated that although some students find online learning satisfying, there are skeptics amongst administrators and employers. One reason for the skepticism is due to the fact that, historically, online programs were run by not so respected for-profit institutions. A survey of corporate recruiters recorded that there are employers who think that graduates of online programs is somewhat inferior to graduates from traditional educational institutions. Although this negativity towards online learning is slowly diminishing, as research has indicated, it will still take some time to totally eradicate the biasness towards conventional methods of instruction in educational institutions (Daymont & Blau, 2008). Song (2010) determined that the flexibility of an online learning environment given to students may be a detriment to their motivation towards completing their studies. Facilitation mediated by computers can distract and alienate students if they are not motivated enough. The success of any online program hinges on whether students are motivated enough.

Situating e-Learning in the Hospitality Context

The definition of online learning incorporates more than just the use of the internet. It is defined as the delivery of learning materials and content through the many forms of technology, like e-learning, computer-based learning, and multimedia technologies (Kathawala & Wilgen, 2004). Online learning is a popular way where a student can be educated without the need to have face-to-face classes on campus**.** Students are able to learn while they attend to commitments that are simultaneously taking their time. Mayadas and Miller (2014) identified that online courses uses distance as the differentiating factor between the learner and the educational institution. Online courses accelerate bringing the three main elements together; the teacher, the student, and the content. Online learning, or e-learning, has changed the global mind-set in higher education. The applications have become more and more varied and this diversity has made it difficult to distinguish the many variations of online learning (Mayadas & Miller, 2014).

Technology-enhanced learning has changed face-to-face instruction to one of promoting distance learning. Online learning has managed to blur the traditional relationships of face-to-face instruction versus distance learning. It is becoming very difficult to define the common methods of instruction between face-to-face and online instruction. There needs to be a standard by which these different learning environments can be compared. In this way, the learner will be able to judge by himself, his best approach to learning. Online learning must be able to meet the needs of the learner and must be appealing enough to capture the online learners' needs and expectation. According to Daymont and Blau (2008), there are several reasons why students are turning to online courses for their education. Some students might assume that online learning suits their learning style or their personality. Students may prefer written communications instead of face-to-face instruction.

Technology Enabled Education Initiatives in Singapore

Singapore's education ministry has been encouraging the use of information technology (ICT) to its' institutions so that they are able to change learning and teaching methods in a way that students can understand (Ministry of Education, Singapore 2013). The Singapore Ministry of Education (MOE) started the use of non-computer aided technology in education in the 1970s. Examples of these would be overhead and slide projectors (Koh & Lee, 2008).

During the 1970s, teaching aids like overhead and film projectors, and television were frequently used to enhance learning for interested students. The instructors were not given the opportunity to improve their teaching methods and they were also not competent enough to experiment with any new technology. This was mainly due to the mindset of teachers not accepting new technology. Locally produced resources were lacking and most teaching tools were imported. In the 1980s, the Singapore Ministry of Education (MOE) developed a plan that was to provide some basic background and infrastructure to all institutions of learning from all levels starting from primary school (Koh & Lee, 2008). Phase 1 (MP1), from 1997- 2002, was to provide a basic infrastructure in schools and to train teachers. The total cost to the government was SGP$6 billion over the course of six years. Phase 2 (MP2)'s inauguration began in 2003 and ended in 2008. This phase emphasized information and communications technology into learning and the government spent more than SGP$470 million over a span of five years. The final phase (MP3) started in 2009 and ended in 2014. This time, the emphasis was on interactive development through a two-way environment that benefited students' ability to think. Institutions were given the opportunity to revise their teaching methodologies (Temasek Polytechnic, 2015a). Since it was a directive from the MOE, online learning had to be incorporated into the various educational institutions' curriculum.

Polytechnics Leading the Hospitality Education in Singapore

The Singapore hospitality industry is driven by business from the casino integrated resorts, medical tourism, and the Meetings, Incentives, Conventions and Exhibitions (MICE) business. As such, there is need for skilled and competent workforce that is specifically trained to cater to the businesses (Singapore Tourism Board, 2015). The Singapore government's agencies have mandated that educational institutions raise the capabilities of students who are entering the hospitality industry. B. Tan (personal communication, September 19, 2015) stated that the Singapore government planned for the polytechnics to be capable of preparing a skilled workforce for the hospitality industry. All five of the government polytechnics offer programs that have some components of tourism and hospitality.

There are five polytechnics in Singapore that are under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education. They are, Temasek Polytechnic, Nanyang Polytechnic, Ngee Ann Polytechnic, Republic Polytechnic, and Singapore Polytechnic. At the polytechnics, the MOE left the decision of incorporating online learning to the individual institutions. Since the directive is flexible and largely self-directed, there is a level of inconsistency between Singapore's five polytechnics in terms of adopting online learning in their respective syllabi. The mandate from MOE is for the polytechnics to have modules that have some elements of electronically prepared tutorials and lectures (Singapore Polytechnics, 2015).

There are three polytechnics in Singapore that offer programs specifically in hospitality. They are Nanyang Polytechnic, Republic Polytechnic, and Temasek Polytechnic. The other two polytechnics offer related programs but with more emphasis on tourism. Each of the three polytechnics offer an average of two hospitality related courses, like Hospitality Marketing and Customer Service Management, which are entirely online. Almost all of the courses offered by these three polytechnics have some element of online learning. They are a combination of tutorials and lectures that are uploaded on a learning portal, like Blackboard (Singapore Polytechnics, 2015).

Temasek Polytechnic's Diploma in Hospitality and Tourism Management, for example, has incorporated this directive to include at least four hospitality related courses that are delivered totally online (Temasek Polytechnic, 2015a). Temasek Polytechnic has placed their emphasis on online learning towards that of the Singapore Ministry of Education's directive. Instructors have the opportunity to go through three phases of training within 12 hours of online-teaching. Students are also given the opportunity to engage in online learning in the courses of their discipline. The School of Business, for example, is mandated to have at least one course for each diploma to be facilitated entirely online. The School of Business has three diplomas that are focused on hospitality. They are the Diploma in Hospitality and Tourism, the Diploma in Leisure and Events Management and the Diploma in Culinary and Catering Management (Temasek Polytechnic, 2015b).

Diversity of the e-Learning Platforms

Polytechnics in Singapore have become recognized training grounds for established companies who want to be part of the Adult Web-Based Learning (AWBL) system (H.W. Tan, personal communication, November 01, 2015); contentcan be delivered through online courses or a mixture of face-to-face classroom instruction and online (Sawyer, 2005). With its obvious advantages, it is popular with the hospitality industry. With the demands of their job function, hospitality practitioners found working part time and obtaining an education via online highly attainable. With such high demands, educational institutions became popular and are competing with other institutions for the attention of the eager student who wants to improve himself.

The change in computer technology has improved the training landscape and has been adapted by many educational institutions of higher learning with the use of virtual teaching platforms (Dale, 2003). Since the economy has now changed from industrialization to information, there is a quest for employees to strive to improve their education. This demand has influenced educational providers to include online courses in their curriculum (Sawyer, 2005). As a result, there is a great demand for online teaching and learning tools and the eventual delivery of courses have become popular. Stakeholders like the government, businesses, educational institutions and associations started to include invest in the delivery of quality online teaching and learning tools (Sawyer, 2005).

Everly (2011) stated that although there are numerous types and models of online platforms available, they contain common functions like content availability, assessment tools and course management materials. According to Keengwe and Kidd (2010), online learning platforms not only involve contexts that are online but also include a delivery method that uses all genres of technology across all areas of discipline. Some of the computer-based platforms include the use of new media that are fixed and mobile. In Asia and the United States, Blackboard is the most popular tool that educational instructors use to facilitate lessons online to enhance their teaching efforts. The open source platform Moodle is a serious contender. WebEx, Canvas, Adobe Connect, Skype in the Classroom, Google for Education, etc., are also used by some institutions. Blackboard uses technology to capture applications like video, audio, animation and others to their site for students to enhance their learning (Blackboard, 2015). Learning with technology is increasingly common in the management of learning and development amongst educators in hospitality institutions. The use of a learning management system, like Blackboard, is common due to its versatility and user friendliness. Educators and students are greatly encouraged when there is ease of use towards the various applications.

Lomine (2002) report that before 2001, facilitators had not used the internet to teach. Superior IT skills were required to use visual aids and multimedia capabilities to their full potential. Faculty of hospitality institutions were faced with the challenge of using online course material for their entire syllabi. It would also permit instructors to manage the course requirements with much more ease. With regards to assessments, components like quizzes, reflections, tests, examinations, and essays can be easily monitored. Students also have greater flexibility to fulfil these requirements at their own time. They can take the quiz and tests at their own convenience. Online teaching platforms also engage the learner to evaluate their performances and view their mistakes to enhance learning. An example would be the ability for students to view their grades that are posted onto a dedicated website. This confidential information can be accessed by the student from virtually anywhere at their own time. Instructors can have greater awareness of their cohort's progress in real time, instead of waiting for the next face-to-face meeting with the student (Costen, 2009).

Expectations of the Singaporean Hospitality Industry

According to S. Wong (personal communication, November 10, 2015), the demand for qualified labor in Singapore hotels has reached an all-time high. There is an obvious gap between what hospitality institutions are teaching and what skills hotels require for entry level positions. Hospitality is a fast growing industry and it is natural that educational institutions are responding by offering related courses. This growth has also led to the hospitality industry requiring a higher competency level for graduates entering the industry. Expectations by the hospitality industry recruiters are for staff to be competent in the knowledge of the industry, coupled with technical ability and most importantly, to have the proper attitude.

It has been acknowledged that there are inconsistencies in hospitality institutions and there is a call for a more standardized way of verifying subject content in the curriculum so as to judge the competencies of new hires on the same playing field (Ricci, 2010). In order for hospitality educators to keep their syllabus current, they need to customize it to meet the needs of the industry. Oftentimes, hospitality curriculum has been criticized for not being relevant and out of date. And this is due to educators' unwillingness to engage with the industry. Researchers have oftentimes lamented that there is a need to engage with the industry for their input when establishing hospitality pedagogy. It is vital that industry input towards curriculum set-up is continuous, current, and applicable (Ravinchandran & Arendt, 2008).

Scott-Halsell, Blum and Huffman (2011) stated that managers in the hospitality industry need to be service oriented and guest attentive. To be successful, hospitality managers need to possess other skills that are not technical in nature. Qualities connected with emotional intelligence (EI) will make the difference for hospitality professionals to be successful. It was claimed that hospitality institution graduates do not have sufficient levels of EI to be effective leaders. EI qualities include the ability to handle unpredictable situations regarding guest service in the most positive manner that is accepted by all. Hospitality educators are encouraged to articulate plans to bridge the gap and incorporate EI into their curriculum. As high levels of interpersonal skills are required, it would be difficult to present this through online learning as live face-to-face facilitation from instructors are needed. The study showed the differences between a hospitality graduate's EI is significantly lower than that of an industry professional. This difference will be narrowed once the graduate enters the industry as they are forced to refine their EI skills while on the job. The study also recognizes the fact that to include EI to their curriculum, educators will face constraints such as budget and credit hours (Scott-Halsell et al., 2011).

As noted by Bilgihan et al. (2014), there is an obvious gap between what industry needs and what is being taught in hospitality institutions. Management skills are usually taught in the third year but they do not include strategic decision-making tools that are required by the industry. Bilgihan et al. (2014) suggests that Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) be offered to hospitality students. When it is offered in their curriculum, students will be able to perform accurate strategic marketing research and analysis. This skill is useful in the hospitality industry as the data collected will be used to make executive decisions. It will benefit students if they possess this skill to enhance their competence in the field of their choice. Seidel (2011) suggested that hospitality online learning in social media can be used to create awareness. Users of social media tend to adopt a more relaxed approach to obtaining information. The use of learning portals should also be adopted to provide tailor-made training to match the specific needs of the learner.

Hospitality Student Demographics: Its Millennial Characteristics

Typical ‘millennial students’ primarily make up the student population pursuing a Singapore polytechnic hospitality diploma (Temasek Polytechnic, 2015b). Kotler and Armstrong (2009) stated that the majority of hospitality students around the world belong to the millennial generation. These are students that are born between the years 1981 – 2000. Raines (2002) identified that the characteristics of a millennial student is one that is well-educated, talented, definitely open-minded and most importantly, achievement oriented. The millennial generation’s learning styles are different as they are exposed to various issues and trends like globalization, multi-culturalism and technological advances.

Frand (2000) advocated that the learning styles of the millennial generation must include mediums that involve teamwork, heavy use of technological products and structural activities that are experiential in nature. Communication is the key and the voluminous use of emails and other means of social media are warranted if students of this generation are to be engaged. As supported by Howe (2003), the millennial generation is always looking to obtain the best technology available wherever they are. Song (2010) suggested that the challenge for hospitality educators is to recognize differences in the students’ way of learning. The course developers need to understand the different learning patterns of the students that are related to their characteristics and behaviors.

Educators must recognize that previous learning theories and pedagogies need to be modified to suit the needs of students from the millennial generation. This modification includes interactions between students and their peers that would not compromise teaching standards. Hospitality educators need to understand that students from the millennial generation have different expectations. Their approach to learning is determined by the amount of access to information though technology. The suggestion was that there should be a complete rethink of teaching practices to meet the needs of the millennial generation. Part of the direction is to have educators consider themselves as co-learners with the students. There have been instances where educational providers offer poor and inconsistent training to instructors who are not qualified. Some institutions would provide this inconsistent training just to obtain government grants and training subsidies. The professionalism in training is diluted and the end users are the ones that are not benefiting (McHaney, 2011).

A recent graduate from the millennial generation does not seem to wait for promotion. Training and education does provide them with the required skills but their behavior is a matter of concern. Having a general poor work ethic, enthusiasm, attitude, and passion results in low selfesteem. A person belonging to the millennial generation will end up having unrealistic expectations upon entering the hospitality industry. This could be the reason for the high attrition rate of the number of hospitality students entering and remaining in the industry (H.W. Tan, personal communication, November 08, 2015).

Bilgihan et al. (2014) conducted a survey for their study to investigate the level of prominence that technological skills of hospitality students as it is observed by the industry. The result of their survey found that amongst the hospitality executives that were interviewed, only a little more than 20% of them graduated with a concentration in hospitality. This specialization in hospitality does not translate that these executives were ready for the industry. Evidence from these graduates determined that their information technology skills were limited to basic software available in the market. It does not conclude that online learning or the lack of it was a factor to their overall learning and readiness to the industry.

Information Technology Skills of the Hospitality Students

During our interviews with hospitality students at Temasek Polytechnic on the effects of online learning, a high percentage said that that they did not feel confident when they were preparing for employment in the hospitality industry. Student A felt that the subjects that were taught entirely online did not have the specific details, like face-to-face time, that their other courses had. Student B gave the example of an online course that had a strong component of customer service skills instruction. The course had too much information and reading that students felt overwhelmed and could not participate in tutorial exercises. Role playing exercises were not effective online as students needed feedback instantaneously (male student, 20 years of age). C. Hogg (personal communication, July 31, 2015) claims that Singapore polytechnic students might be intelligent when it comes to memorizing certain ideas and concepts but they lack the certain soft skills that can only be taught in person. The courses that these students learn online would benefit them in the long run but not when they initially enter the hospitality industry. The students need to optimize the time with their instructors and peers in order to understand and practice soft skills that will prepare them for a career in hospitality.

Temasek Polytechnic's Diploma in Hospitality and Tourism Management offers a course that has the practice of property management systems (PMS) in its curriculum (Temasek Polytechnic Singapore, 2015d). However, the time spent on learning the PMS is restricted to only five weeks out of a curriculum of fifteen weeks. Hospitality lecturer M. Rahim (personal communication, October 19, 2015) emphasized that in order for a learner to fully understand the complexities of the PMS, there must be some face-to-face time together with the instructor. Direct and immediate feedback are warranted to ensure that learning is maximized. There were occasions where the teaching of PMS was done online as an experiment and it turned out to be a failure as the students were not able to perform simple functions. This was also highlighted by industry partners when the students were hired as interns (M. Rahim, personal communication, October 22, 2015). According to S. Leow (personal communication, September 12, 2015), due to this lack of time in training, graduating students find it a challenge to function according to industry standards when it is time for them to enter as the job market in a full-time entry level position at a hotel.

Lomine (2002) conducted research with students at the University of Gloucestershire, England, on the effects of online learning and teaching. A total of 140 questionnaires and four focus groups were engaged for a semester. The majority of the students did not mention any difficulty during the semester with regards to obtaining material and participating with their cohort and their tutor online. The students said that they welcomed the fact that they did away with the conventional methods of face-to-face classroom time. They mentioned several advantages like being flexible and having support material available almost instantly. However, there were some students who were still apprehensive about using their IT skills and were afraid that they would be left behind. It took the students some time to understand the requirements of the subject and to participate to their full ability (Lomine, 2002). Kruse (2004) stated that online learners are at a disadvantage as they are not able to participate in communication tools that are being taught face-to-face. With the use of technology, teaching of communication mechanisms like body language and peer-to-peer learning cannot be delivered to produce the required results. This is especially so in hospitality learning where the demonstration of communication tools is important.

Information technology has become an essential part of hospitality. Owners and operators of hospitality services have to accept that adopting IT far outweighs that of the negative. As a result of this, hospitality institutions have to react to provide their students with the required skills in IT for them to participate in the very competitive job market. According to Bilgihan et al. (2014), the hospitality industry has stressed the importance of adopting technology in their operations. Technology has become indispensable in the way hotels, for example, become more efficient in their service delivery. Even for back of the house operations like human resources, technology will enable them to deal with hiring requests, communication, and training with potential candidates. Information technology is even more evident when hospitality services use it for profit-driven departments. The field of revenue management has embraced information technology initiatives wholeheartedly as results have proven that the extra revenue gained by hotels is due to automation. The Property Management System (PMS) of a hotel is an example of available technology in hospitality that is widely accepted and thriving when it is used to its maximum capacity. Offering IT training is a key component for hospitality schools to provide an effective and relevant education. It is also suggested that hospitality institutions continue to identify the challenges of the industry and to offer its students ample opportunity to excel in the areas of their specialization (Lashley & Barron, 2006). While it has been identified that skills in information technology are vital in a hospitality institution's curriculum, it is difficult to present these skills in an online learning format. Busby and Huang (2012) stated that due to the lack of technical knowhow of faculty, it is even more difficult to offer related subjects online.

Busby and Huang (2012) indicated that information technology is an area that has not been fully recognized by hospitality institutions to dedicate more time to their respective curricula. They have identified three main reasons for this. Firstly, hospitality institutions do not have enough resources to provide coaching in technological knowledge. The second reason is the lack of faculty that are competent enough to facilitate classes that require the frequent use of technology. And finally, in this fast changing environment, involvement of faculty with their industry partners is not widespread. Technological advancements are constantly changing at such a rapid pace that it is difficult for hospitality institutions to adapt to these changes and at the same time, attempt to facilitate a curriculum that is relevant to the industry. This difficulty to keep up with technological changes has stymied growth for government-run hospitality institutions that are progressive in nature but lack funding for areas of technological advancement (Busby & Huang, 2012).

Challenges of E-Learning in Hospitality

According to Lomine (2002), there are many myths to explain why hospitality faculty are disinterested in engaging in online learning and teaching activities in their subject curriculum. It is difficult to develop such curriculum and it takes time, resources, and expertise to offer to students to enhance their learning. The types of problems subject developers face when trying to introduce online learning are technological and pedagogical in nature. Hospitality academia face the practicality of running online classes that are relevant to the industry.

In a survey conducted by Sciarini, Beck and Seaman (2012) on the popularity of online learning coursework, it was found that almost 35% of hospitality students indicated that the delivery of face-to-face material is the same as in the online mode. However, almost 50% stated that face-to-face delivery was more effective. Only 20% said that online delivery was superior when it concerns the demonstration of content. The survey also recorded that more than half of the hospitality administrators believed that face-to-face content is greater than online when it concerns communication between students and tutors. In general, 80% of hospitality administrators show that they favor face-to-face instruction over online learning styles. The availability of library resources through the internet has made the availability of information viable to a lot more learners. Improved technology has also made the accessibility of complex information easier. Social media has also allowed learners to participate in formal and informal learning methods. However, in the area of hospitality, the survey showed that online learning methods are still not advanced enough for industry practitioners to be convinced that it encompasses all that there is to learn about the industry.

A study of hospitality education administrators conducted by Mejia and Phelan (2014), found that instructors who primarily teach through the face-to-face method are not comfortable delivering online courses. The main reason was that these instructors are concerned that they do not have the ability to achieve the required personal interactions when they deliver customer service related courses online. The hospitality industry has also expressed their apprehension when the teaching of service delivery is online. The core value of the hospitality industry, which is service orientation, is diluted when face-to-face instruction is not available.

The above study also concluded that the reluctance of faculty to teach online is a factor in the quality of hospitality courses available to suit the industry. Hospitality education administrators interviewed have a difficult time persuading faculty to produce and teach online courses that are accepted by their peers. The faculty claim that they are ostracized by their peers when they deliver online classes. Some also say that they are negative towards online teaching because of the extra amount of time taken to develop and load a course online. Faculty members of hospitality educational institutions also believe that they are unable to obtain tenure because online teaching is not part of the criteria for promotion. The feedback from faculty also suggests that students are passive when they are engaged in online learning. Instead of aggressively contributing, like the traditional method, students tend to be more relaxed and watch demonstrations on video rather than participating (Mejia & Phelan, 2014).

Instructors interviewed in the study favoured a combination of online and face-to-face instruction. This blended program approach was approved by more than 82% of the respondents. It is believed to be the best of both worlds as the benefits of interacting with students and the inclusion of information technology will ensure that students' learning is captured. The faculty also cited operational challenges as a very serious matter that cannot be entirely eradicated. With online learning, instructors feel that students will have many opportunities to cheat in their assessments.

Uploading quizzes, exams and other components online does not guarantee that students are completing them on their own (Mejia & Phelan, 2014).

It is difficult to get hospitality academics to adopt the use of online learning and teaching (OLT). Along with this notion come myths about OLT in hospitality. The most common myths are that hospitality is not suitable for online learning and teaching. Academics feel that it is not appropriate to use OLT because most of the subjects have a strong element of practical exercises. Academics also feel that in order to engage in OLT, superior IT skills with a strong support infrastructure must be set up. On the other hand, faculty with appropriate IT skills will go overboard with their knowledge and unknowingly confuse students with unrelated jargon and terminology, thereby putting them off. As the hospitality education industry is a reactionary one, the lack of feedback from students who want OLT cannot be ignored. Although these are myths, they cannot be debunked entirely. There is insufficient research available to prove that the virtues of OLT are overwhelmingly accepted by students and the industry (Lomine, 2002).

Song (2010) reported that critics of web-based learning programs have concerns regarding integrity and effectiveness. Their concerns are that online learning lack face-to-face interaction and because of the isolation, it lacks appropriateness of content material. Critics argue that traditional classroom environment cannot be replicated on the internet in terms of social presence. Facilitators of traditional classroom methods of education usually receive instantaneous verbal cues from students with regards to their understanding of material. Online instructors do not always receive immediate feedback from students in terms of course content and instructions.

Active and Experiential Learning in Hospitality

Most hospitality programs have been designed to have face-to-face interaction with instructors and require interactions with peers as key components in the learning. It would be a mistake to take the curriculum and create it wholly online (Lomine, 2002). What Lomine (2002) suggested was to be selective in the material that is presented online. Perhaps only parts of the curriculum, case studies and required readings can be loaded online for easy access. Some classes can have the variation of being conducted away from the traditional method of classroom interaction. Students will be encouraged to use various resources to obtain material online. The challenge is to convince the instructors to see the value of online learning and to engage with the cohort on their playing field.

In a study conducted by Song (2010) to understand satisfaction with online learning, it was found that hospitality students' method of learning is more contact driven rather than focusing on information and systems. This study created awareness amongst hospitality curriculum developers that they need to identify the quality and style of interaction with the students over the number of information and systems to obtain maximum student's satisfaction in the course. The study suggests that hospitality administrators and educators have been pitching their course material in a way that was not accepted by the students. As online learning is a form of self-directed study, the lack of physical interaction is a concern whenever educators want to enhance the quality of learning. They invariably focus their attention to the quality of interaction with the students instead of improving content. Song (2010) concluded that this might be one of the reasons why students felt that they were not prepared when they entered the hospitality industry.

The hospitality industry demands that graduates possess certain relevant skills and it is difficult for these skills to be taught online. Software like Point of Sale Systems, SPSS, and PMS need face-to-face interaction to make the learner totally understand its intricacies to the maximum. Bilgihan et al. (2014) also stressed that in order to arm students with the required skillsets; hospitality academia and industry professionals must agree on the curriculum. For the hospitality industry to engage with online learners, the agreement must address this issue.

Scott-Halsell et al. (2011) stated that Cornell University's Master in Management in Hospitality program uses problem-based learning (PBL) to assist students in their cognitive and behavioral skills. PBL activities include active listening skills, writing reflection papers, managing humor, and taping of meetings. This method of learning is also common in Singapore polytechnics (Singapore Polytechnics, 2015). S. Fu (personal communication, September 15, 2015) suggested that skills for job interviewing are one of the key areas for hospitality professionals in Singapore to learn.

Hospitality institutions must be able to prepare students to perform job interviews as it can be useful to gauge if a candidate is suitable for a designated position. As a practice for the position of front office manager, situational question interviews through PBL, will provide a better understanding of the person than other types of interviews like behavioral and unstructured ones. Situational job interviews focuses on the job descriptions and lists the skills and responsibilities required for the position. The answers can be descriptive and to the point and based on the answers, the interviewee will be able to connect directly to the job. In this respect, the only way to assess if a student is performing with this skill well is to have face-to-face interaction with the instructor. It would be very difficult to assess if this learning were to be done online (S. Sathianathan, personal communication, Nov 02, 2015).

The learning styles of hospitality students in Britain, Australia, and Asia differ greatly. It was revealed in a study conducted by Lashley (1999), that a majority of students in a British and an Australian hospitality program exhibited learning styles that enjoyed practical activity. Yet, these students were not comfortable with conjecturing and reflection. However, hospitality students in Singapore, surveyed for the study, showed preferences for learning through observation and from thinking before acting. These students find studying case studies difficult as they need sufficient information and notice before they embark on a task. It would be difficult for Singapore hospitality students surveyed for the study to be active in online learning as there are few opportunities to engage in their preferred learning styles. Commonalities among the studies reviewed supported a strong desire to use online learning as the method of instruction in hospitality institutions (Radovic-Markovic, 2010, O'Neill, 2012 & Stewart et al., 2007).

Discussion

Studies conducted by Busby and Huang (2012), Mejia and Phelan (2014), Song (2010), and personal communications by industry professionals, conflicts with the perception towards online learning. There is a call for a blended approach as not all hospitality related programs can be delivered entirely online. This contradicts studies conducted by Radovic-Markovic, (2010), O'Neil, (2012), and Stewart et al., (2007) which concluded that online learning is the choice of instruction for hospitality institutions. Mejia and Phelan (2014) and Song (2010) emphasized that there is reluctance from hospitality educators to increase online learning. The many reasons given justify a more blended approach. Current hospitality institutions are on a quest to having more courses online to facilitate a wider market of students. Hospitality administrators need to ensure that their faculties are competent enough to pursue online teaching using up-to-date tools available to them.

Enhanced technology has changed the way online learning is viewed. There is a drive towards adopting technology despite its disadvantages to the learner in the area of hospitality training. There is still a necessity for learners to have face-to-face instruction in certain areas. In the field of customer service, for example, practical role plays are needed to enhance student learning. This sort of instruction needs immediate feedback from the instructor and hence, cannot be duplicated online (Radovic-Markovic, 2010). Keengwe and Kidd (2010) emphasized the use of technology must include new media that are not only fixed but also ones that are mobile. This is evident when new technical applications are introduced to mobile devices that are free and easy to use.

As Blackboard is a popular learning platform, hospitality institutions are advised to adopt this medium to be able to use all applications to enrich learning. Facilitators need to be aware that there are applications to deliver their material so that it involves greater flexibility to the user and the administrator. Learning methods, like self-directed learning, can be implemented to further encourage learning. A blended approach between online delivery of content and self-directed learning is a possible method for students to study. One major challenge for institutions is funding. Non-profit educational institutions have the challenge of finding funds to upgrade their software. Public institutions like polytechnics will always be faced with a situation where constant upgrades in both hardware and software serve as challenges to attract students to enroll in their courses.

With the advent of technology, online facilitators need to be able to use it to reach students to the best of their ability. Lomine (2002) suggested that online instructors need to be able to utilize the technological resources available to engage with the millennial generation. Mayadas and Miller (2014) and Seidel (2011) also suggested the active use of social media to encourage online learning. Understanding the learning styles of students must be a pre-requisite skill for instructors engaging in online learning. Despite budget constraints, educators need to be able to encourage learners through social media. Singapore polytechnics have started engaging with students through social media but they have not been consistent and it is more on social activities rather that used as a learning tool (B. Tan, personal communication, November 09, 2015).

The interaction between faculty and online learners must be identified between individual hospitality institutions. Bilgihan et al. (2014), Lashley (1999), Lomine (2002), and Song (2010) concluded that if hospitality institutions demand that students be equipped with certain sets of skills, the opinions of students and the industry must also be engaged. The mindset and learning of Singapore polytechnic students must change from that of observation to learning through practical activity. A study is necessary to facilitate changing online learning from observation to practical activity. Learning from practical activity is most useful for hospitality learners but is also one of the most difficult pedagogies to be presented to the online learner.

Communicating in English is standard in the hospitality industry. The language skills of instructors must be competent enough to engage their students. Although there are no empirical research to support this claim, it is important for online instructors to make themselves understood when they are preparing pedagogy in the English language. From personal interviews with hospitality veterans and research by Keengwe and Kidd (2010) and Lomine (2002), online instructors need to engage in advance technology and be competent in making their pedagogy easy to understand for students.

Consistencies among the studies reviewed supported a strong desire to use online learning even more. The studies conducted by Mayadas and Miller (2014) and Mejia and Phelan (2014) both called for well-established online platforms to be developed. Hospitality programs in institutions continue to develop and expand to reach wider untapped populations. The management of these online programs and courses need to be flexible to accommodate student's learning. Academic and industry practitioners must be consulted to influence students to enroll in online programs. In order for future hospitality online programs to expand, the technical ability of faculty must also be enhanced. Busby and Huang (2012) and Lashley and Barron (2006) concluded that IT training for faculty is a vital component for hospitality institutions to succeed when delivering relevant and effective pedagogies to their students. It has always been assumed that faculty of hospitality institutions teaching online hospitality courses are competent. The literature review regarding online instructors signifies that the key to the enhancement of any program requires the dedication and knowledge of faculty understanding the needs and wants of students and the industry.

The implication for the hospitality industry is to be involved in continuously updating hospitality courses to make it relevant and current. However, it is evident that whenever the industry is solicited for feedback, the response rate is low (Bilgihan et al., 2014). It is essential that hospitality professionals are sought to identify essential skills and competencies that are required for success. Hospitality educators are also criticized for not including their industry contacts when they are updating curricula. This reluctance not to include industry professionals has led to educators embracing syllabi that are antiquated. Ravinchandran and Arendt (2008) recommended the use of survey research methods to engage with hospitality professionals. As the level of professionals responding towards academics is low, more must be done to engage them. Industry feedback is greatly needed so that academics can gauge what competencies and skills that are relevant and essential for students to comprehend. A study is suggested to identify strategies that are successful when surveying hospitality professionals for their feedback. When hospitality professionals were interviewed, online surveys seem to be the strategy that could potentially provide the best response rate.

If students are to be successful in the industry, holding management positions, they need to know their strengths and weaknesses. The students' skillset also need to be very adaptable to all types of situations. While technical skills are easier to comprehend and perform, Scott-Halsell et al. (2011) recommends that students obtain a sufficient level of emotional intelligence (EI). Hospitality educators and professionals need to strategize the formulation of incorporating EI into pedagogies. Along with that, competencies like strategy management and analysis should be explored so that is can be included in the curricula of polytechnics delivering hospitality online courses. By understanding and applying hospitality industry practices, educational institutions will be able to assist students towards their job satisfaction. Both industry and educators must understand that millennials require a different way of motivation. The distinct needs of these students, as suggested in the literature review, are currently not being met. As suggested by Frand (2000), Howe (2003), and Song (2010), hospitality organizations are making calculated steps needed to inculcate a culture of pride and job satisfaction with the millennial generation. One major step is definitely to engage with hospitality institutions with regards to developing relevant pedagogy.

Conclusion

Students, industry professionals, and hospitality instructors interviewed by us were of the opinion that there is still a place for traditional face-to-face instruction in hospitality, despite all the promises given by the technologies. From the interviews, there is still the social element of face-to-face instruction that is appreciated by the learner. A medium between online and classroom teaching methods should be explored. This exploration must involve all interested stakeholders mentioned previously. A major challenge is to ensure that this medium is researched and delivered after positive feedback. Student satisfaction is an important component when marketing hospitality education. There needs to be better understanding between online learning variables and what influences student satisfaction. Millennial generation students are generally energetic and need to participate in classroom activities in order to learn. While independent work, like self-directed learning, is greatly encouraged, students would also prefer to have precise instructions during face-to-face classroom time. Classroom time is appreciated by students as they can also discuss issues that might not be related to the topic presented. In order to engage with students, online course material needs to be organized so that the students do not get confused and eventually get disinterested.

There exists limited research based literature for hospitality educators to set strategies on how to make their pedagogy appropriate to the industry. The only way educators can set their strategies is to actively engage with students and hospitality professionals. Most hospitality educators have at some point in time worked in the industry. Educators need to be able to use their industry knowledge and contacts to further enhance relevant teaching material. By constantly engaging with students for constructive feedback, hospitality educators can gauge the relevance of their pedagogy.

There is a disparity between what the students are learning in online platforms to what they need to prepare them for the industry. This disparity is evident in Singapore. This dissonance is still being debated by educators and hospitality professionals. Most of the research found was on online hospitality education. More research is required to gain a better understanding of how online learning in hospitality education can prepare students to be valued contributors once they enter the industry. Online hospitality program developers have the misconception that students are looking for more information and systems in their curriculum. But in actual fact, students would like to be engaged in interactive learning with either their peers or together with their instructors. Personal communication that we had with hospitality professionals conclude that the knowledge of polytechnic students can be enhanced if they had more courses that engages them with their tutors and peers. The hospitality professionals should also understand the millennial generation more in order for them to be enticed to enter and remain in the industry. For online classes, it is a difficult process and must be managed constantly to produce the desired goals.

Hospitality institutions have an obligation to their students when it comes to equipping them to enjoy the benefits of online learning. The expectation of an online learning facilitator must be competent enough to understand the learning outcomes of the subject and be able to make changes to encourage student learning. There are some challenges within the online curriculum that needs to be fine-tuned, so that hospitality students from polytechnics are able to project the desired requirements to perform well in the industry.

More educational institutions are adopting online programs as opposed to traditional classroom learning in order to expand their reach to potential students. However, there are costs involved in terms of faculty, facilities, funds, and time to adopt online programs. This must be justified to the stakeholders, not only to administrators but to the hospitality industry as a whole. Based on the fact that the personality of millennials need to be engaged with interactive online curriculum, it cannot be assumed that this is identified by hospitality educators. The commitment towards student satisfaction with online learning must be emphasized by both educators and industry professionals. Hospitality educators must continue to add value towards their delivery of relevant curriculum when they understand the student's needs.

References

Adler, P.A. & Adler, P. (2004). Paradise laborers. Hotel work in the global economy. Ithaca, Cornell University Press.

Bilgihan, A., Berezina, K., Cobanoglu, C., & Okumus, F. (2014). The information technology IT) skills of hospitality school graduates as perceived by hospitality professionals. JOURNAL OF TEACHING IN TRAVEL & TOURISM, 14(4), 321-342.

Busby, G., & Huang, R. (2012). Integration, intermediation and tourism higher education: Conceptual understanding in the curriculum. TOURISM MANAGEMENT, 33(1), 108-115.

Blackboard. Retrieved from http://blackboardsupport.calpoly.edu/content/about/whatis.html

Calderaro, A. (2015). Connecting Myanmar: Internet Governance Capacity Building in Political Transitions. Media Development in Asia". New York: Routledge.

Chua, B.H. (2005). TAKING GROUP RIGHTS SERIOUSLY: MULTIRACIALISM IN SINGAPORE. Working Paper124, Asia Research Centre, Murdoch University.

Collins, G.R., & Cobanoglu, C. (2008). HOSPITALITY INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY: LEARNING HOW TO USE IT (6th Ed.). Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company.

Costen, W. (2009). The value of staying connected with technology: An analysis exploring the impact of using a course management system on student learning. JOURNAL OF HOSPITALITY, LEISURE, SPORTS AND TOURISM EDUCATION, 8(2), 47-59.

Dale, C. (2003). Carry on talking: The use of online discussion groups as a learning tool. LINK8- E-LEARNING. LTSN FOR HOSPITALITY, LEISURE, SPORTS AND TOURISM, 9(2), 59-63.

Daymont, T., & Blau, G. (2008). Student performance in online and traditional sections of an undergraduate management course. JOURNAL OF BEHAVIORAL AND APPLIED MANAGEMENT, 9(3), 275.

Everley, M. (2011). Training methods. THE ROSPA OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH JOURNAL, SEP, 29-32.

Flick, U. (2006). AN INTRODUCTION TO QUALITATIVE RESEARCH (3RD ED.). London: SAGE.

Frand, J. (2000). The information age mindset: Changes in students and implications for higher education. EDUCAUSE REVIEW, 35(5), 15-24.

Howe, N. (2003). PRESIDENTS INSTITUTE: UNDERSTANDING THE MILLENNIAL GENERATION. Retrieved from The Council of Independent Colleges: http://www.cic.org/publications/independent/online/archive/winterspring2003/PI2003_millennial.html

Kathwala, Y., & Wilgen, A. (2004). E-learning: Evaluation from an organization's perspective.TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT METHODS, 18, 5.01-5.13.

Keengwe, J. & Kidd, T.T. (2010). Towards best practices in online learning and teaching in higher education. MERLOT JOURNAL OF ONLINE LEARNING AND TEACHING IN HIGHER EDUCATION. 6(2), 533-541.

Kotler, P., & Armstrong, G. (2009). PRINCIPLES OF MARKETING. Upper Saddles River, NJ: Pearson.

Koh, T., & Lee, S. (2008). INFORMATION COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY IN EDUCATION: SINGAPORE'S ICT MASTERPLAN, 1997-2008. Singapore: World Scientific Pub.

Kravetz, D. (2015). Managing the millennial hospitality employee. HOTEL MANAGEMENT, 230(2), 12. Retrieved from http://ezproxy.library.unlv.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/1661094838?

Krueger, R. (1998). ANALYZING AND REPORTING FOCUS GROUP RESULTS. London: SAGE.

Kruse, K. (2004). The benefits and drawbacks of e-learning. Retrieved from http://www.e-learningguru.com/

Lashley, C., 1999. On making silk purses: developing reflective practitioners in hospitality management education. INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CONTEMPORARY HOSPITALITY MANAGEMENT 11 (4), 180–185.

Lashley, C., & Barron, P. (2006). The learning style preferences of hospitality and tourism students: Observations from an international and cross-cultural study. INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF HOSPITALITY MANAGEMENT, 25(4), 552-569.

Lee, M.J., Olds, D.A., & Lee, C. (2010). JOURNAL OF HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM EDUCATION 09/2010; 22(3), 20-26.

Lin, S. (2002). Exploring the relationships between hotel management courses and industry required competencies. JOURNAL OF TEACHING IN TRAVEL AND TOURISM, 2(3/4), 81–101.

Lominé, L. L. (2002). Online Learning and Teaching in Hospitality, Leisure, Sport and Tourism: Myths, Opportunities and Challenges. JOURNAL OF HOSPITALITY, LEISURE, SPORT & TOURISM EDUCATION, 1(1), 43-49.

McHaney, R. (2011). The new digital shoreline: How web 2.0 and millennials are revolutionizing higher education (1st Ed.) Stylus Pub.

Ministry of Education, Singapore: Press Releases - Integrated Online Learning Space to Enhance Students' Learning. (2013). Retrieved from http://www.moe.gov.sg/media/press/2013/09/integrated-online-learning-space-to- enhance-students-learning.php

Mayadas, F. & Miller, G. (2014). Retrieved from http://onlinelearningconsortium.org/updated-e-learning-definitions/

Mejia, C., & Phelan, K. (2014). Hospitality Instructors' Preference for Blended Teaching: A Bridge to Full Online Course Delivery? JOURNAL OF TEACHING IN TRAVEL & TOURISM, 14(4), 343-364.

O'Neill, J. (2012). Using focus groups as a tool to develop a hospitality work-life research study. INT J CONTEMP HOSPITALITY MNGT INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CONTEMPORARY HOSPITALITY MANAGEMENT, 27(8), 873-885.

Raines, C. (2002). MANAGING MILLENNIALS. Retrieved from www.generationsatwork.com/articles/millenials.htm

Radovic-Makovic, M. (2010). Advantages and disadvantages of e-learning in comparison to traditional forms of learning. ANNALS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF PETROSANI, ECONOMICS, 10(2), 289-298

Ravichandran, S., & Arendt, S. (2008). How to Increase Response Rates When Surveying Hospitality Managers for Curriculum-Related Research: Lessons from Past Studies and Interviews with Lodging Professionals. JOURNAL OF TEACHING IN TRAVEL & TOURISM, 8(1), 47-71.

Ricci, P. (2005). A comparative analysis of job competency expectations for new hires: The relative value of a hospitality management degree. Published a dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Education University of Central Florida Orland, Florida

Ricci, P. (2010). Do Lodging Managers Expect More From Hospitality Graduates? A Comparison of Job Competency Expectations. JOURNAL OF HUMAN RESOURCES IN HOSPITALITY & TOURISM, 9(2), 218-232.

Sawyer, E. A. (2005). Online learning programs: Goals, benefits, problems and communities of practice (Order No. 3190050). Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (305343093). Retrieved from http://ezproxy.library.unlv.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/305343093

Sciarini, M., Beck, J., & Seaman, J. (2012). Online Learning in Hospitality and Tourism Higher Education Worldwide: A descriptive report as of January 2012. JOURNAL OF HOSPITALITY & TOURISM EDUCATION, 24(2/3), 41-44.

Scott-Halsell, S., Blum, S., & Huffman, L. (2011). From school desks to front desks: A comparison of emotional intelligence levels of hospitality undergraduate students to hospitality industry professionals. THE JOURNAL OF HOSPITALITY LEISURE SPORT AND TOURISM EDUCATION, 5(3), 3-13.

Seidel, P. (2011). 7 trends driving the future of corporate training services in community colleges. TRAINING INDUSTRY. Retrieved from http://www.trainingindustry.com/blog/blog-entries/7-trends-driving-the-futureof-corporate-training-services-in-community-colleges.aspx

Singapore Polytechnics. (2015). Retrieved from http://www.polytechnic.edu.sg/introduction/available-courses? Page=4 Singapore Tourism Board. (2015). Retrieved from https://www.stb.gov.sg/

Song, S. M. (2010). E-learning: Investigating students' acceptance of online learning in hospitality programs (Order No. 3438813). Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (848922079). Retrieved from http://ezproxy.library.unlv.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/848922079

Stewart, D., Shamdasani, P., & Rook, D. (2007). FOCUS GROUPS: THEORY AND PRACTICE (2ND ED.). London: SAGE.

Temasek Polytechnic. (2015a). INNOVATIVE TEACHING AND LEARNING. Retrieved from Temasek Polytechnic: http://www.tp.edu.sg/home/courses/ftc_acad.htm

Temasek Polytechnic. (2015b). Retrieved from Temasek Polytechnic: http://www.tp.edu.sg/home/courses/ftc_acad.htm

Temasek Polytechnic. (2015c). HOSPITALITY & TOURISM FOCUS GROUP AUGUST 2015. Singapore: Temasek Polytechnic.

Temasek Polytechnic. (2015d). LODGING MANAGEMENT SUBJECT REVIEW 2015. Singapore: Temasek Polytechnic.

HARNESSING POSSIBLE UPGRADE OF ARINTA WATERFALL, IPOLE-ILORO AND ASSESSMENT OF ITS POTENTIAL IMPACT ON THE COMMUNITY

FUNMILOLA AJANI

Department of Wildlife and Ecotourism Management, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria

OLUFEMI O. OLUYISOLA

Department of Wildlife and Ecotourism Management, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria

FADEAYO A. AKINWUMI

Department of Wildlife and Ecotourism Management, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria

ABSTRACT

Tourism is the world's largest industry and so it is of vital importance to the global economy.There is a recent desire for nature based tourism (ecotourism). This craving has inspired the need to harness possible upgrade of Ipole-Iloro waterfall, a site that is not fully developed and utilized.This study is to perceive the potential impacts of a well developed ecotourism site to the Ipole-Iloro community and to assess their knowledge and attitude towards ecotourism.

A multi-stage sampling procedure was adopted in this study. Ipole-Iloro community is divided into six (6) quarters, out of which three (50%) were randomly picked. Each of the selected quarters has an estimated 50 households, with an average of 5 members per household. This gives a total of 250 members in each quarter. Purposive sampling was then used to sample youths and the elderly . This restricted the sampling frame to 150 dwellers in each of the three quarters. Using simple random sampling technique, 40% of rural dwellers were selected in each of the sampled quarters, and this gave a total of 180 respondents. One set of structured questionnaire, one hundred and eighty (180) was used during this research. An interview session with a key informant of the study area who is the king (*Oba*) was conducted and the director of Ekiti state tourism board was interviewed. Also, Focus Group Discussion was conducted for groups of local people having six to ten members . Data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics.

From the overall results, 54.2% respondents perceived a high level of potential impact to the environment, socio-cultural life and to the economy of the community. Some of the challenges identified by the residents concerning low patronage were lack of publicity, inadequate promotional activities and low level of development of the tourist destination .The study further reveals that Marital status (χ^2 =8.39, P=0.02) and religion(χ^2=7.82, P=0.02) has significant relationship with the respondents perception on the impacts of ecotourism to the environment.

The study thereby concludes that there is a high potential impact that the development of Arinta waterfall can provide to the environment, social and economy of the local community, hence an upgrade is necessary . Suggestions were made towards the possible upgrade of this ecotourism site.

Keywords: Water-based tourism, Community perception, Potential impact, Arinta waterfall

INTRODUCTION

Tourism has continued to drive itself onto the radar of developing countries' policy makers as an important foreign exchange earner (Kareem, 2008) and it is concomitant to sustainable development. It is a great generator of economic wealth for developed countries like Unite States of America, Germany, Japan, France and Canada. A number of countries have tailored their tourism industries adaptly to reflect this desire and have reaped economic rewards while minimizing the environmental and social impacts of growth. Costa Rica led way in developing the ecotourism concept, followed closely by Equador, Tanzania, Kenya and Nepal. Tourism can develop and grow when local residents have a positive attitude towards it and when they see their role in the process of the tourism development (Ambroz, 2008).

Development of tourism in rural areas has wide ranging positive and negative impacts on host communities, especially those living in and around the destination. Residents in most of the communities seem to have positive perception towards tourism. This does not imply that they do not have concerns on its negative impacts of tourism in their communities. According to Ijasan and Izobo-Oladunni (2012), tourism development is a dynamic process and is conducted in an ever changing environment, a blend of economic, political, cultural, technological and geographical reality of events.

In Nigeria, little attention has been given to tourism development (Aiyelabola , 2006). The reason for this is not unconnected with the low economic structure as well as the rural economic base of the country. However, the nation is very rich both in ecology and culture; it has a wide variety of biodiversity and equally blessed with many traditional festivals and cultural attractions.

Idumah *et al*.,(2009) noted that most of the environments of the tourist destination in Nigeria are characterized by the dearth of aesthetics and infrastructure facilities that can serve as an avenue to improve tourist's patronage. Ekiti state is blessed with abundant tourism potentials, such as beaches, spectacular rock formations, hydrological bodies, wildlife, waterfalls and other rich festivals, architecture and craft which has necessitated towards existing tourism drive in the state (Kayode, 2010).

The study site, Arinta waterfalls, situated in Ipole-Iloro, is a good tourist attraction and natural wonder in Ekiti State. This site is not as developed as Ikogosi springs. The Arinta waterfalls are a wonder spectacle to behold, cascading down rocky hills from a great height amidst natural forest vegetation to form a flowing pool of spring water. The place is ideal for relaxation, picnics, mountain-climbing, hiking, bush trails and religious retreats.

Ijasan and Izobo-Martins (2012) worked on the assessment of community engagement in tourism planning and development of Arinta waterfall tourist resort, Ipole-Iloro Ekiti. Kayode and Ayodele (2012) in their research on the assessment of the strength of tourism potentials of Ekiti state, resulted that Arinta waterfall, Ikogosi warm spring are strongly rated as tourism potential destinations, so developing the site can add to the state visitor proposition which is a key challenge to developing economic benefit through tourism. Only Ikogosi warm spring, out of all the tourism potentials in the state have been converted into tourism resort (Bankole, 2002) while others are still left fallow without any conscious effort by the government and private individuals towards their development. Thus, this study aims to harness possible upgrade of Arinta waterfall and to assess its potential impacts on the people of Ipole Iloro community, Ekiti state.

METHODOLOGY

Geography of the Study Area

Arinta waterfall is located in Ipole Iloro Ekiti, it is 6km away from Ikogosi warm spring tourist centre, Ekiti State, Nigeria. The project town is located in Ekiti State of Nigeria which is situated in the heart of the tropics of the country. It is located between longitudes $4^0\,45^1$ to $5^0\,45^1$ east of the

Greenwich Meridian and latitudes 7^0 45, 8^1 50^1 north of the equator. The state comprises of sixteen (16) Local Government Areas (LGAs) with its state headquarters at Ado-Ekiti. The state is mainly an upland zone that rises over 250m above the sea level.

Temperature and Climate

Temperature ranges between 21^0C to 28^0C with high humidity. Two distinct seasons are witnessed in the state, which are raining season, between April and October and dry season between November and March.

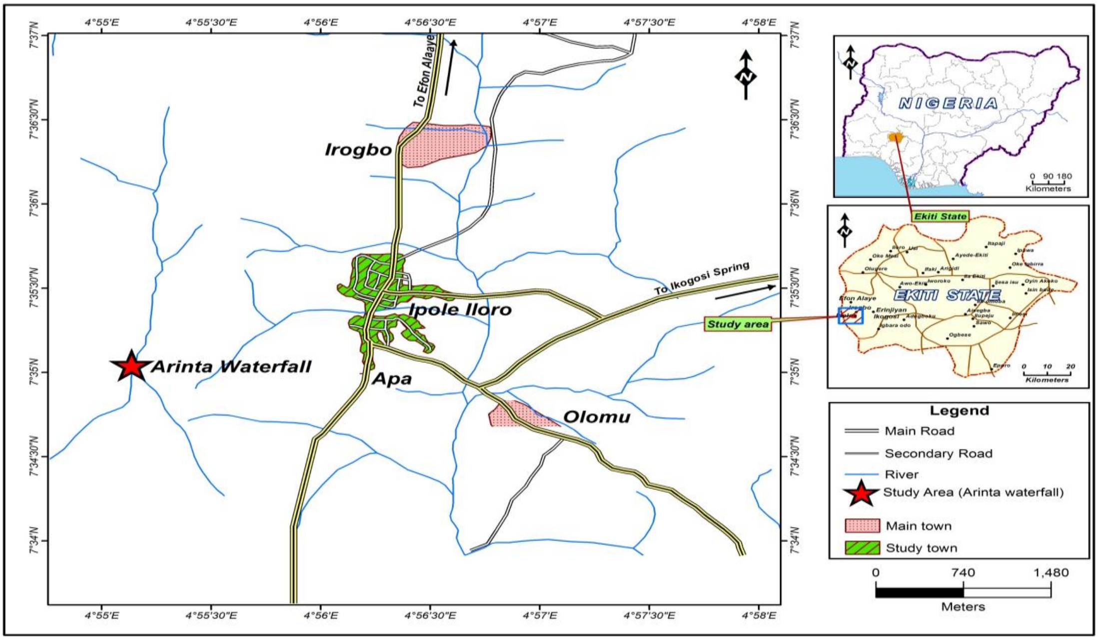

Figure 1: Map of Ipole Iloro Ekiti State, showing the location of Arinta waterfall.

Sources of Data Collection

The method used to obtain data for this research includes:-

1) Structured Questionnaire
2) In-depth Interview
3) Focus Group Discussion

1) Questionnaire: - One set of structured questionnaire, one hundred and eighty (180) was used during this research and one hundred and sixty six (166) completed and returned. Due to the perceived educational level of the people of the community, two enumerators were trained on how to collect relevant information, how to approach respondents and how to manage data.

   Aside personal observation, data was also collected from various secondary sources such as journals, thesis, research papers and textbooks.

2) In- depth Interview: - A semi-structured interview guide was developed for an interview session with a key informant of the study area who is the king (*Oba*) of the village, about the impacts of the ecotourism site on the community. Also, the director of Ekiti state tourism board was interviewed.

3) Focus Group Discussion (FGD):- FGD was made to supplement the data collected by the questionnaires. It is advantageous in allowing for in-depth discussion and to avoid exaggerated opinions. The FGD conducted was a group of local people having six to ten members in a discussion group of a male and female section.

Sample Size and Sampling Procedure

A multi-stage sampling procedure was adopted in sampling respondents for the study.

Ipole-Iloro community is divided into six (6) quarters, out of which three (50%) were randomly picked. Each of the selected quarters has an estimated 50 households, with an average of 5 members per household. This gives a total of 250 members in each quarter. Purposive sampling was then used to sample youths and the elderly who are deemed more appropriate since they should understand the potentials of Arinta waterfall. This restricted the sampling frame to 150 dwellers in each of the three quarters, giving a total of 450 members as the overall sampling frame. Using simple random sampling technique, 40% of rural dwellers were selected in each of the sampled quarters, and this gave a total of 180 respondents. However, only a total of 166 instruments were subjected to statistical analysis while the remaining ones were condemned due to incomplete information, giving a return rate of 92.2%.

Measurement of Variables

Independent Variable

Independent variables measured were age, sex, religion, marital status, level of education, occupation, average monthly income and indigeneship.

Dependent Variable

The dependent variable for the study was the respondents' view on the impacts of Ecotourism on the Environment, Socio-Cultural and Economic aspects in their community and it was measured using a 5 point likert scale of Strongly Disagree [ ], Disagree [ ], Neutral [ ], Agree [ ], and Strongly Agree [ ], with scores of 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 assigned respectively, for positive statement but a reverse for negative statement. The mean potential score was computed and used to categorize respondents into high perceived potential and low perceived potential, using the mean score as the benchmark.

Data Analysis

Data was analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentages and mean data were used while inferential statistics, Chi-square, was used to access whether significant differences exist between selected demographic variables and respondent's perception towards impacts of ecotourism .

RESULTS

Table 1 Demographic characteristics of respondents

	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)	Mean ±SD
Age			
≤ 20	24	14.5	
21-30	74	44.6	
31-40	28	16.9	
41-50	13	7.8	
51-60	16	9.6	
61-70	8	4.8	
above 70	3	1.8	33.39±14.08
Monthly Income			
less than #20,000	76	45.8	
#21,000-#40,000	69	41.6	
#41,000-#60,000	13	7.8	
#61,000-#80,000	1	0.6	
above #80,000	7	4.2	#28,733.73± #34,608.06
Sex			
Male	95	57.2	
Female	71	42.8	
Marital Status			
Single	81	48.8	
Married	81	48.8	
Widow	4	2.4	

Educational Status		
Non-formal	16	9.6
Primary	19	11.4
Secondary	67	40.4
Tertiary	64	38.6
Occupation		
Student	54	32.5
Civil Servant	27	16.3
Trading	15	9
Professional	9	5.4
Farming	31	18.7
Artisans	30	18.1
Religion		
Islam	37	22.3
Christianity	121	72.9
Traditional	8	4.8
Indigene	125	75.3

Table 2 Respondents Ecotourism Related Characteristics

Variables	**Frequency (f)**	**Percentage (%)**
Go for ecotourism	141	84.9
Place visited		
Zoo	27	16.3
Waterfall	118	71.1
Cinemas	10	6
Ever visited a waterfall	136	81.9
How many times visited Arinta		
Never	40	24.1

Once	15	9
Twice	11	6.6
Thrice	13	7.8
Several occasions	87	52.4
Interest during visits		
waterfall	121	72.9
Rocks	23	13.9
Vegetation	20	12

Table 3 Respondents View of Environmental Impacts

Variables	Mean	SD	STAT
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS			
Noise Pollution	3.91	1.04	D
Exhaust from vehicles	3.95	1.18	D
Littering	3.7	1.1	D
Degradation	3.67	1.15	D
Over crowdedness	3.6	1.23	D
Ease road access	3.72	1.26	A
Improved environment	3.86	1.15	A
Enhance environment	3.87	1.1	A
Better environment	4.02	1.11	A
Inculcate good habit	4.05	1.08	A

Table 4 Respondents View of Socio-Cultural Impacts

Variables	Mean	SD	S
SOCIO-CULTURAL IMPACTS			
Affect residents negatively	3.79	1.03	D
Increase in alms begging	3.68	1.28	D
Tourism enhances criminal activities	3.8	1.17	D
Tourist influence residents value	3.64	1.19	D
Interest in learning tourist culture	2.96	1.11	U
Tourism influences mode of dressing	3.22	1.39	U
Residents show warm welcoming	3.61	1.35	A
Tourists prefer local food	3.99	1.27	A
Cordial relationship between tourists &residents	4.12	1.3	A

Table 5 **Respondents View of Economic Impacts**

Variables	Mean	SD	Stat
ECONOMIC IMPACTS			
Improve local income	3.71	1.03	A
Improve employment opportunity	3.76	1.12	A
Raise standard of living	3.92	0.97	A
Increase rate of investment	3.98	0.96	A
Good road network	4	1.05	A
Purchase of souvenirs	4.04	1	A

Table 6 Distribution of Respondents by Level of Potential Impacts (Overall)

Level of impact	F	%	Mean	SD
Low	76	45.8	94.57	12.43
High	90	54.2		

Table 7 Relationship Between Respondents Demographic Variables and their Perception of Ecotourism Impacts.

	Environmental			Socio-cultural			Economic		
Variables	χ^2	df	P	χ^2	df	P	χ^2	Df	P
Sex	0.63	1	0.43	0.76	1	0.38	0.68	1	0.
Marital Status	8.39	2	0.01*	0.9	2	0.64	4.29	2	0.
Education	0.93	2	0.63	1.79	3	0.62	3.8	3	0.
Religion	7.82	2	0.02*	3.19	2	0.20	1.68	2	0.
Indigene-ship	3.2	2	0.20	1.26	2	0.53	2.5	2	0.

P <0.05 = significant*.

Report of In-Depth Interview (IDI) and Focus Group Discussion (FGD)

The report of the FGD and IDI revealed that there were no restrictions of entering the site as everyone is allowed to go in with a certain gate fee. While students are made to pay a mandatory sum of ₦100, their adult counterparts pay ₦200 as gate fee. The study further revealed that no illegal activities are done on the site. It was stated during the FGD session that there were no challenges faced by the community as a result of tourist visits. The respondents were asked about their desire for a development of the site, like everyone who desires something good especially after identifying a great importance of it, they responded that they wish that the government will help develop the tourism site so that more tourists will come visiting.

There were responses to the benefits enjoyed from tourists visits to the site. “Our farm produce are been displayed and we experience a great sale especially during festive seasons due to the influx of tourists during that season” – according to them. They further revealed that there will be increase in employment opportunities for their youths so they don’t have to travel and leave the village in search of jobs. “Non-governmental organizations will visit our community and invest in it by building hotels, and when this is done there will be improvement in our social amenities like electricity, road and so on”. When enquired about their relationship towards visitors, they stated that there is always tourist’s interest in learning the language and culture of their host. The king further added that villagers learn the culture and also through host-visitors interaction, the villagers are enlightened on what development occurs in the city, which implies that visitors serve as agent of civilization to the community.

When asked if citizens of the community are involved in the decision making of the ecotourism site, they replied that they were not involved before, until they lodged their complaints through the king to the appropriate authorities and that brought about the employment of an indigene as a member of staff. The king’s response also agreed to their statement while he showed displeasure in the way the government is handling the place because there is no thorough supervision by the government officials who just left the running of the site in the hands of the staff who at times, are not truthful in remitting the gate fee paid by tourists to the government.

Finally, the respondents showed great interest and expressed a great joy when enquired if they desire for a development of the ecotourism site and their suggestion towards the development, they stated that if there is a development at the site, it will be of great benefit to their community as more of their goods will be purchased and transported outside the village and the that their community will also be internationally recognized like their neighboring village ‘Ikogosi’ and they further noted that a development of the place can provide portable water for the village use if dammed and also can be useful for fish farmers. They also showed the willingness to contribute to the development of the tourist site if given the opportunity and if given the assurance that their suggestions will count in the decision making.

On the path of Ekiti state tourism board, the director who was interviewed also welcomed the idea of upgrading the ecotourism site, Arinta water fall but the only clog identified was lack of funds. According to him, the government would not mind to partner with private investors to carry out an upgrade of the fall for recreational purpose and which will be able to compete favourably with standard tourism sites.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Personal characteristics of the respondents indicated that they were mostly in the age bracket 21-30years and they are either married or single. The proportion of the male respondents was slightly higher than the female. It was also gathered that the average monthly income of the respondents is ₦34, 608.06 and most had attended or completed secondary school and are also mostly Christians.

The level of education of the residents ,to a reasonable extent, influence their level of comprehension of issues. Their opinion that ecotourism activities will rather improve and enhance the environment to causing environmental pollution and noise from tourists is borne out of a shallow perspective . It is very clear that their response is myopic because they have not been able to conceive the true picture of the extent of what an upgrade is capable of doing to their environment.

Turker and Ozturk (2013) concluded that residents are positive towards tourism development by the reason of the economic impacts in their community. They further stated that tourism is viewed as a means of rejuvenating the area, creating jobs and attracting people back to the area to work in the tourism industry which was emphasized during the interview sessions held. However, when the concept of ecotourism was explained, the residents had a very positive attitude to it and readily welcomed the idea of the development of the ecotourism site, this they admitted when asked during the group discussion.

The socio-cultural impacts of tourism such as showing cordial relationship were perceived positively by the residents of Ipole-Iloro. Although they were conservative, they generally welcome tourists and also have cordial relationship with them. There is a high level of visitation of residents to the site especially during festive or holiday period. The joy of seeing visitors amidst them create a sense of acceptance by the residents, showing a cordial relationship as reflected with a total mean of (M=4.12).

Some of the challenges identified by the residents concerning low patronage were inherent lack of publicity, inadequate promotional activities and low level of development of the tourist destination . These has made a quite low turn up by visitors compared to other well known tourism destination like Ikogosi warm spring ,situated about 10km away. According to what Ambroz (2008) noted, tourism will develop and grow effectively when local residents see their role in the process of the tourism development. Reverse is the case in this particular instance. Residents complained of not been allowed to be involved in the decision making and development of the tourist site. The intervention of the king and his kinsmen only yielded the employment of an indigene as a member of staff on the ecotourism site. This is far from been adequate. There is need for residents of the community to have a sense of recognition as an important stakeholder .Choi and Sirakaya (2005) advocated that residents are major stakeholders in leisure and tourism management which suggests that the support of the community is essential for tourism development, successful operation and sustainability of tourism. In the course of the focus group discussion, it was gathered that the residents are willing to support and contribute to any development to the system if given the opportunity and assurance that their suggestions will count in the site's decision making.

It is in the opinion of the respondents that tourism activity can improve their local income, employment opportunity and infrastructure opportunities. They also noted that tourists on their visit, purchase their crafts and other local items when leaving. An observation made was that most tourists that visit are excursionist, who after their visit to the site, leaves for the capital city or a well developed nearby city to lodge in a comfortable hotel. Lack of adequate facilities such as hotels, restaurants, telecommunication to mention a few are the challenges.

The relationship between selected respondents demographic characteristics and ecotourism related variables with their perception on ecotourism impacts reveals that Marital Status (χ^2=8.39, P = 0.02) and religion (χ^2=7.82, P=0.02) of the respondents has significant relationship with the respondents perception on the impacts of ecotourism on the environment. This implies that marital status and religion of the respondents has effect on what the respondents think about the impacts of the development of ecotourism on their environment. The study further reveals that Sex (χ^2=0.77, P=0.38), Education (χ^2= 1.79, P=0.62) and Religion (χ^2= 3.19, P=0.20) has no significant relationship with the respondents perception on the impact of ecotourism on the socio-cultural aspect of the community. Also, there is no significant relationship between respondents' demographic variables with the economic impacts . This implies that sex, religion and education do not have effect on what household perceive about ecotourism economic and socio-cultural impact on their community.

SUGGESTED UPGRADE FOR THE ECOTOURISM SITE

The pathway leading to the fall is just a path formed due to frequent passage which may cause slip-off and injuries to tourists if they dash their feet against the rocks, so a boardwalk should be constructed. This will ease tourist access to the waterfall. A Boardwalk is a constructed pedestrian walkway along or overlooking beaches, usually built with wood board; or as walking paths and trails over bogs and wetlands and above fragile ecosystems. Iroko tree can be used for this boardwalk as it has been researched as being durable (Kurjatko *et al.,* 2006) and does not require regular treatment with oil or varnish when used outdoors (Westin and Mike, 2013). The use of boardwalk has its environmental significance as it does not get hot as composite decking at the beach or in direct sunlight. An annual maintenance is necessary as most timber boardwalks can continue to look nice for 7-12years.

Old trees which are on the pathway leading to the waterfall need to be felled, cut into chunks and sold. There were instances in which some of the trees had fallen unexpectedly. This can endanger the lives of the tourists visiting the site. It is suggested that new trees be planted along the sides of the proposed boardwalk leading to the waterfall.

The broken plastic seats made for relaxation of the tourists should be replaced. The huts meant for tourist relaxation, which are not in good shape should be upgraded. A beautiful landscaping with beautifying flowers should be done (figures 1 and 2).

The dilapidated signboard in figures 9 and 10 should be replaced with an attractive signboard which should be erected at strategic points for awareness and direction to the waterfall.

A proposed View of the Entrance from the Gate in figure 6 with beautiful landscaping with a befitting car park with trees planted for shade and beautiful flowers should be adopted.

A swimming pool can be carved out from the rocks as seen in Fig 8, with its source from the waterfall. Some ,who cannot stand the direct downpour of the torrential fall of water can seize this opportunity to do their swimming. Tourists can engage in swimming there instead of the usual sightseeing which most tourists engage in.

CONCLUSION

It is evident that Arinta waterfall is a potential geotourist site capable of promoting recreation and tourism and on the other hand, improving the standard of living of the residents of Ipole-Iloro Ekiti, Ekiti State. As identified by the residents, which on the overall, showed that there is a higher percentage of positive potential impacts of ecotourism to their community, an upgrade of the site and its attendant infrastructures is imminent to enhance the development of the host community, Ipole-Iloro Ekiti.

Recommendations

1. Private investors should be encouraged to take up the responsibility of the development of the site so it can reach a globally accepted ecotourism site but this should be subject to the community opinions and suggestions through adequate consultations and engagement. This is important as lack of community acceptance can have a negative effect on the development.

2. There should be adequate publicity and promotional activities of this tourist site through the media and other sources.

3. The distance of the community to the waterfall is about 42km. It will be necessary that shuttle buses be made available for tourists' easy access to the village. This could also serve as a good source of income to the members of the community.

4. Infrastructures like good hotels, motels, good restaurants should spring up either by private entity or Private Public Partnership (PPP). This will encourage more tourists to come for vacation, honeymoon etc and this will add to the economic benefit that will accrue to the town.

Plate1: Showing a Relaxation Hut for Tourist

Plate 2 Showing a Proposed View of a Relaxation Hut.

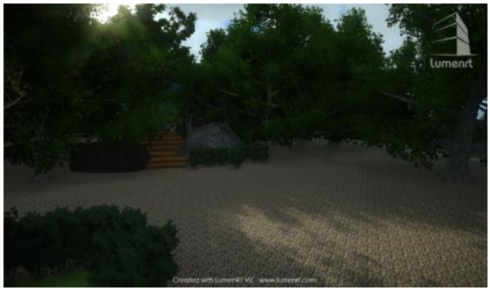

Plate 3: Showing a Footpath Leading to the Waterfall

Plate 4: Showing a Proposed View of Developed Foot Path Leading to the Waterfall

Plate 5: Showing the Entrance to Arinta Waterfall

Plate 6: A proposed View of the Entrance from the Gate

Fig. 7: Showing a Section of the Waterfall

Fig. 8: A Scenic View Showing a Proposed Construction of a Swimming Pool

Plate 9: Showing a Dilapidated Signpost

Plate 10: Showing a Damaged Signpost Showing Direction to Arinta Waterfall

REFERENCES

Ambroz, M. (2008). Attitudes of local residents towards the development of tourism in Slovenia: the case of the Primorska, Dolenjska, Gorenjska and Ljubljana regions. Anthropological Notebooks, 14 (1), 63-79

Aiyelabola, O.O. (2006). *Planning for Tourism: A case study of Arinta waterfalls tourist resort, Ipole Iloro, Ekiti state* (Unpublished Project) Nigerian Institute of Town Planners and Registration council. Nigeria

Bankole, A. (2002). "The Nigerian Tourism Sector: Economic Contribution, constraints and opportunities." Journal of Hospitability Financial Management vol. 10(1):71-89.

Choi, H.C. and Sirakaya, E. (2005). Measuring residents "attitude towards sustainable tourism: development of sustainable tourism attitude scale. *Journal of Travel Research*, 43, 380-394.

Kareem, O.I (2008). A Panel Data Analysis of Demand for Tourism in Africa", Ibadan Journal of Social Sciences, Vol 4, No 1.

Kayode, I.B. (2010). Survey of tourism potentials of Ekiti State. M.Sc thesis, Department of Wildlife and Fisheries Management, University of Ibadan.

Kayode, I.B., and Ayodele, I.A. (2012). Assessment of the Strength of Tourism Potentials of Ekiti State, Nigeria. Obeche Journal 30(1): 381-388; ISSN 0078-2912.

Kurjatko, S., Kúdela, J., Lagaňa, R. (2006). Wood Structure and Properties '06. Arbora Publishers. ISBN 9788096886845.

Ijasan, K.C. and Izobo Martins, O. (2012) Assessing community engagement in tourism planning and development in Nigeria: A case study of Arinta waterfall tourist resort, Ipole Iloro Ekiti state, *Transnational Journal of science and technnology*, 2(4), 11-19

Turker, N., and Ozturk, S. (2013). Perceptions of Residents towards the impacts of Tourism in the Kure Mountains National Park, Turkey.

Westin, M. (2013). Upgrading Your Boat's Interior. A&C Black. ISBN 9781408159095.

Idumah, F.O., Onyeanusi, A.E., Akinyemi, O.D. and Bello, M.A.(2009) *Prospects and challenges of ecotourism development in Nigeria. Journal of Environmental Extension, Vol 8.*

TOURISM BUSINESS AND LIVELIHOOD OUTCOMES OF HOST PEOPLE IN SOUTHWESTERN NIGERIA

K. Oyebisi BAKARE

Department of Family, Nutrition and Consumer Sciences, Faculty of Agriculture, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria

Abstract

The study examined the influence of tourism business on livelihood outcomes in Southwestern Nigeria. The study employed survey research design with the use of primary data. The study was carried out in the twelve host communities of six states (Ekiti - Ikogosi Warm Spring and Ipole – Iporo Water-falls; Lagos - Onikan Museum and Whispering Palms Resorts in Badagry; Ogun - Adire Market in Itoku and Olumo Rock; Ondo - Idanre Hills and Oke-Maria; Osun - Olumirin Waterfalls in Erin – Ijesa and Osun Osogbo Shrine; and Oyo - Oyo National Park and University of Ibadan Zoological Garden. The sample for the study consisted of 784 business owners selected using inclusion criteria of residence around tourism sites, age not less than 18 years, and engagement in business in and around tourism destinations. The results of regression analysis on tourism business and livelihood outcomes revealed coefficients of multiple determinations of income ($R^2 = 0.816$, f = 22.5); food security ($R^2 = 0.729$, f = 19.7); and reduced vulnerability ($R^2 = 0.603$, f = 31.4) indicating prediction of 82%, 73%, and 60% respectively of the variations in the study. Based on the findings, the study concluded that tourism availed business opportunities in the rural areas and contributed considerably to livelihood outcomes such as increased income, food security, and reduced vulnerability for the host people.

Keywords: Tourism business, Income, Food security, Reduced vulnerability, Small business, Entrepreneurship, Livelihoods.

INTRODUCTION

Livelihood is often synonymous with life itself. The degree of fulfilling both material and experiential needs is crucial to living hence; it is a major concern for most societies, nations, and the world at large. Livelihoods are not simply a localized phenomenon, but connected by environmental, economic, political and cultural process to wider national, regional and global arenas. Individuals often engage in varying job and business endeavours to earn living that will translate to food security and income generation to cope with stress, shocks, and emergencies that may arise at any point in time (Bakare, 2016). The sustainable livelihoods framework (SLF) helps in thinking holistically about the things that poor might be very vulnerable to, the assets and resources that help them thrive and survive, and the policies and institutions that impact on their livelihoods (DFID, 1999). The framework shows how, in differing contexts, sustainable livelihoods are achieved through access to a range of assets which are combined in the pursuit of different livelihood strategies. The livelihood outcomes that appear in the generic framework include; more income (cash); increased well being (awareness of self, wellbeing); reduced vulnerability (how better they are resilient as a result of increase in livelihood assets); improved food security (increased financial capital to buy food); natural resource sustainability (ownership of land based property), with cognizance to socio business characteristics.

It has generally been established that, 60-70% of rural dwellers in Nigeria and other developing countries in the Global South who depend on agriculture as their source of sustenance are living in absolute poverty (Kolawole & Torimiro, 2006). To be precise 70.2 % of Nigerians live below the poverty line (World Bank, 2006). It was also observed that the share of people living in poverty is larger in Africa than any other region in the world (Gasu, 2013). Furthermore, Oyesiku (2009) emphasized that 52% of sub-Sahara Africa's population was poor in 1985, which rose to 63% in 1990 and was estimated at 63.5% in 2009). It was finally concluded by World Bank (2006) that poverty is a rural phenomenon.

A good working definition of livelihood is provided by Ellis (2000) "the assets (natural, physical, human, financial and social capital), the activities, and the access to these (mediated by institutions and social relations) that together determine the living gained by individual or household" (livelihood outcomes). These livelihood outcomes often manifest in terms of food security, income, and reduced vulnerability with interdependence on personal socio business variables (Bakare, 2016). Livelihood outcomes in form of achievement of livelihood strategies such as more income, increased well being, reduced vulnerability and improved food security obtainable from participation in non-farm work exerts a positive and statistically significant effect on household income and food security status (Shahbaz, 2008).

Odeleye and Oyekanmi (2013) alluded that that tourism and rural development are of paramount importance in order to achieve the much needed economic diversification as a way out of the current global economic meltdown. It was suggested that government should leverage private sector involvement in providing requisite infrastructure in selected tourist areas in the country. Due to numerous economic benefits of tourism and its potential growth it helps in the increase of standard of living of the people by offering new and better jobs, which in terms helps them to improve the quality of life and their families (Zaei & Zaei, 2013). The traits of creativity, risk-taking, innovation, strategic thinking and constructive engagement against the government by discontented Nigerians could as well be directed to entrepreneurship development (Anyadike, Emeh - Ikechukwu, & Ukah, 2012). Olowookere and Elegbeleye (2014) submitted that entrepreneurship serves as a guarantee for sustainable development of any economy. Igwe, Adebayo, Olakanmi, Ogbonna and Aina (2013) reported that the National Institute for Social Research (NISER) and the World Bank revealed Nigeria's unemployment rate to involve over 55% of her working population. Given the immense socio-economic contributions of entrepreneurship, the small business sector is highly recognised as increasingly the main profitable source of all financial houses (Agyapong, Agyapong & Darfor, 2011). With the current rate of unemployment and poverty level in Nigeria, Bakare (2016) adduced that small business has been recommended via research as the only source of livelihood to millions of Nigerians, more importantly tourism based business in the rural areas. Agbenyagah (2013) averred that small business sector is a major role-player in various economies world-wide. About 60% of all the business established in Nigeria is on small scale level (Okeke, Ezenwafor, & Femiwole, 2013). It is against this fact that tourism business is alternated to mean small business as it has with it all the attributes spelt out by Alaye-Ogan (2012) - a small business as companies with capital base between twenty thousand naira and thirty million naira (equivalent of $125 to $193,500), Hatten (2012) - a company is considered small if it is independently owned, operated, and financed; has fewer than 100 employees; and has relatively little impact on its industry. The Central Bank of Nigeria (2014) defined small and medium enterprise (SMEs) as business with asset base of between five thousand and five-hundred million naira, and staff strength of between 1 and 300 people. Financial decision-making is of utmost significance to small businesses (Marx, De Swardt, Beaumont-Smith, & Erasmus, 2010). At the same time, empirical research outcomes indicate that roughly 30% of the owner-managers lack skills including business skills (Roodt, 2005). According to Ligthelm and Van Wyk (2004), owner-managers of small businesses lack relevant skills such as financial acumen and accounting, information technology and business skills. There are several factors that limit the performance and success of small businesses. These factors are interdependent and on most occasions, are equally related to each other. Alarape (2010) adduced non encouraging situation of small business in Nigeria to inadequate infrastructure, poor access to funds and implementation of policies, restricted market access, overbearing regulatory and operational environment.

Improving food security of rural households requires integrated development interventions aimed at improved natural resources management and diversification of livelihood strategies including interventions to create non-farm employment opportunities. On the other hand, due to shortage of startup capital, limited skills, weak marketing systems and inadequate policy attention, employment opportunities in non-farm or off-farm activities are extremely rare in rural African communities (Gebrehiwot & Fekadu, 2012). Bazezew, Bewket, and Nicolau (2013) adduced that food insecurity is a chronic problem in that, on average, households consume from own production for only about six months and reported negative and significant correlation between family size and household incomes. Improving food security of rural households requires integrated development interventions aimed at improved natural resources management and diversification of livelihood strategies including interventions to create non-farm employment opportunities

Mthembu (2012) employed survey approach in his study found that largest percentages of people agree that tourism development can contribute positively to the creation of job opportunities, development of entrepreneurial skills and the generation of increased income. However, the mentioned outcomes may or may not be relevant in any given situation. The main difficulty with this part is that the livelihood outcomes are not always consistent but surely incommensurable. For example, it is not easy to measure the relative values of increased well being as compared to increased income. Most tourism and small business literature concentrate on the financial problems of small scale businesses (Adisa, 2008), but the study concentrate on livelihood potentials of tourism business by taking cognizance of increased income, food security, and reduced vulnerability. The study attempted to make important addition to the existing literature by investigating livelihood outcomes in the context of the sustainable rural livelihoods framework and by taking into account the opportunities inherent in tourism resources which abound naturally mostly in less advantaged, rural communities that are generally tourism endowed.

Objectives of the study

i. indentify the socio-economic characteristics of tourism host people
ii. assess the contribution of tourism business to livelihood outcomes in the host communities

Hypothesis

i. There is no significant relationship between tourism business and rural livelihood outcomes.

Methodology

The study was carried out in Southwestern Nigeria comprising six states: Osun, Oyo, Ondo, Ondo, Ekiti, Lagos and Ogun. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The study relied on primary data, using interview guided questionnaire that was author-designed. The tourist sites selected for the study included: Ikogosi Warm Spring and Ipole – Iporo Water-falls (Ekiti); Onikan Museum and Whispering Palms Resorts in Badagry (Lagos); Adire Market in Itoku and Olumo Rock (Ogun); Idanre Hills and Oke-Maria (Ondo); Olumirin Waterfalls in Erin – Ijesa and Osun Osogbo Shrine (Osun); and Oyo National Park and University of Ibadan Zooological Garden (Oyo). Two destinations were selected from each state of six (6) states in Southwestern Nigeria using purposive sampling techniques, bearing in mind the rurality of the neighborhood and functionality of the attractions.

The population for the study was adult rural dwellers in and around host communities in the Southwestern Nigeria. Inclusion criteria was employed to select 784 respondents included; age 18 years and above, residence within and around the tourism destination, and engagement in businesses in and around tourism sites. Livelihood outcomes were measured using three indices of income, food security, and reduced vulnerability on 4-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Agreed (4) to Strongly Disagreed (1). A four point modified Likert scale was used, which ranged from Sustainable (5), Fairly Sustainable (3), Low Sustainability (1), and Not Sustainable (0), to collect information on rural livelihood capitals. The reliability of the instrument was achieved through a test-retest method of two weeks interval. The draft of the questionnaire was given to four (4) experts in psychometrics for validation and necessary suggestions. The reliability test gave Cronbach's Alpha (α) ranging from 0.66 to 0.81.

Regression analysis was used to test the hypothesis. Explanatory variables for the regression modeling included selected personal and business characteristics that are assumed to influence livelihood outcomes of respondents in the study area. Rural livelihood outcomes are generally influenced through tourism business by a range of personal factors and business characteristics.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Personal Characteristics of Respondents

Characteristics	Variable Descriptions	Freq. (n=784)	%
Age	18-30 years	197	25.13
	31-60 years	463	59.06
	60 years and above	124	15.82
Sex	Male	316	40.31
	Female	468	59.59
Level of education	No formal education	139	17.73
	Primary education	241	30.74

	Secondary education	247	31.51
	Tertiary education	157	20.03
Marital status	Single	231	29.46
	Married	451	57.53
	Others	102	13.01
Age of Business	Less than 2 years	635	80.99
	2-5 years	127	15.20
	Above 5years	22	2.81
Number of people involved in the business	Self (1)	511	65.17
	2-5	203	25.89
	6-10	57	7.27
	11-50	13	1.66
Income per month	Less than ₦5,000	115	14.67
	₦5,000-₦20,000	153	19.52
	₦21,000-₦50,000	282	35.97
	₦51,000-₦100,000	133	16.96
	Above ₦100,000	101	12.88
Source of start up capital	Family	122	15.56
	Friends	34	4.34
	Personal saving	511	65.18
	Loan	84	10.71
	Credit facility	33	4.21

Business Focus	Trading	463	59.91
	Service Rendering	197	25.13
	Production	73	9.31
	Value addition	51	6.51
Number of people involved in the business	Self (1)	511	65.17
	2-5	203	25.89
	6-10	57	7.27
	11-50	13	1.66
Business inspiration	Media	113	14.41
	Family / Friends	255	32.53
	Parents	221	28.19
	Government	124	15.82
	School	71	9.06
Entrepreneurship training ever attended	None	514	65.56
	NGO	43	5.48
	LG	62	7.91
	SG	14	1.76
	FG	00	00
	Individual/Politician	16	2.04
	Club	31	3.95
	Cooperatives	104	13.27

Money / Loan ever received	None	293	37.37
	NGO	82	10.46
	LG	23	2.93
	SG	11	1.40
	FG	9	1.15
	Individual	67	8.55
	Club	34	4.34
	Cooperatives	204	26.02
	Family/friends	61	7.78

Field Study, 2015.

Personal Characteristics of Respondents

Table 1 showed the personal characteristics of respondents. It showed that a little above half (59.06%) of the respondents falls between 31 and 60 years of age which fall within the vibrant active years of life. One quarter (25.13%) of the respondents fall within 18 and 30 years of age while only 15.82% were old people from 60 years and above engaging in one business or the other around tourism areas. Quite above half (59.59%) of the respondents was female while the remaining 40.41% were males. The results on table 1 also indicated the distribution frequency of the educational background of the respondents who participated in the study. It showed that 17.73% of the respondents had no formal education, about one third (30.74%) of the respondents had primary education, 31.51% had ever attended secondary school, while one fifth (20.03%) of the respondents had tertiary education being anything above secondary education. From the results, it can be deduced that the tourism destination is habitable and conducive for different people irrespective of their educational background. The marital status of the respondents as indicated on the table was single (29.46%), more than half of the respondents being represented by 57.53% were married, while others (13.01%) were regarded as divorced, separated or widowed.

The income of respondents monthly revealed that 14.67% being represented by 115 respondents had less than ₦7,500.00 average incomes per month. This implies that only about 1/6th of the respondents earned less than minimum wage of ₦7,500.00 per month with engagement in tourism based businesses. About 36% of the respondents earned between ₦21,000 and ₦50,000 per month, another 16.96% earned between ₦51, 000 and ₦100,000 per month, while the remaining 12.88% representing 101 respondents earned above ₦100,000 per month. The start-up capital for engaging in tourism business by the respondents showed that 122 representing 15.56% had their financial support from family, 34 respondents being represented by 4.34% had support from friends. Majority (511) of respondents representing 65.18% secured financial aid for business from their personal savings. Eighty-four of the respondents representing 10.71% had their start-up capital from loans while 33 of respondents (4.21%) had their business capital from credit facility. The business focus of respondents showed that trading activities with 463 respondents representing 59.91% involved in buying and selling around tourism destinations while a quarter (25.13%) of the respondents were involved in service rendering which includes hair making, shoe repairing, tour guiding, entertainments, and hoteling among others. While 6.51% of the respondents were involved in value addition, only 9.31% were involved in production of one good or the other.

Age of business or number of years engaged in business around tourism destinations showed that 635 respondents representing 80.99% had been in business for less than 2 years, 15.20% of the respondents had been in business for 2 to 5 years while only 22 respondents representing 2.81% had been in business for over 5 years. The implication is that tourism business is serving as a panacea for the increasing unemployment rate. People around tourism attractions are taking advantage of the emerging tourism in their locality to earn a living for themselves. Number of people engaged in business showed that over half (65.17%) of the respondents were solely involved in their business. This means that they did not employ staff from the family or community to partake in business. Only 25.89% of the respondents had two to five people including self involved in their business and another 7.27% of respondents had between 6 and 10 staff including self employed in their business. While 13 respondents representing 1.66% had between 11 and 50 staff including self in their businesses. Business inspiration of respondents revealed that 255 representing 32.53% got business inspiration from family and friends, 28.19% got their own business inspiration from parents, 14.41% were inspired to business by media including both prints and non prints, and 15.82% were inspired by government interventions and programmes. While 9.06% of the respondents were inspired by school / education or the type of exposition they had via their course of study or discipline. Over one third (37.37%) of the respondents had never obtained loan from any quarters. Only 10.46% got loan or monetary aids from NGOs, 26.02% had ever got loan from cooperatives, 2.93% got loan from Local Government, and one quarter (26.02%) of the respondents got loan from cooperatives. Another 1.15% of the respondents got loans federal government, while state governments issued loans to 1.40%.

Table 2: Regression analysis of tourism business and livelihood outcomes (Income)

Variable description	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t-value	P value
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	19.759	1.660		11.904	.000
Age	0.233	0.503	0.096	0.464	.646 (NS)
Sex	0.171	0.677	0.041	0.253	0.802 (NS)
Marital status	-0.244	0.346	-0.152	-0.704	0.486 (S)
No of dependants	-0.536	0.314	-0.279	-1.708	0.097 (S)
Age of business	0.936	0.720	0.217	1.302	0.201 (S)
Educational level	0.171	0.677	0.041	0.253	0.802 (NS)
Entrep. Inspiration	0.152	0.032	0.176	1.027	0.585 (NS)
Access to capital/credits	1.115	0.680	0.271	1.640	0.111 (S)
Business focus	1.114	0.669	0.231	1.639	0.111 (S)
No of people involved in business	-0.252	0.232	-0.176	-1.088	0.285 (NS)
Entrep training	-0.151	0.061	-0.312	-2.489	0.004(S)

S – significant; NS - not significant; F = 22.5; df (11, 772); p < 0.001; r = 0.912; R^2 *= 0.832.*

Field Study, 2015.

Tourism Business and Income - Table 2 showed the regression analysis of significant relationship between tourism business and livelihood outcomes (income). The results revealed that there were associations between independent variables (marital status, number of dependants, age of business, and access to credits, business focus, and entrepreneurship training. However, there were no associations between some independent variables (age, sex, educational level, entrepreneurship inspiration, and number of people involved in business). Marital status (t = -0.708; p 0.486) was negatively associated with income. An increase in the number of years of business (t = 1.302; p = 0.201). Access to capital showed positive and significant correlation with average monthly income (t = 1.640; p = 0.111). This implies that as capital availability increases by one unit, average monthly income increases by a factor of 0.271. The finding of the results has corroboration with the findings of Mthembu (2012). Business focus (t =-1.639, p=0.111) was positively and significantly correlated with income which is one of the major elements of livelihood outcome. Other variables held constant, the type of business, product (tangible) or service (intangible) increases respondents' incomes by a factor of 0.231. The judgment for this may be adduced to the fact that some products are portable while services are extremely immobile. Entrepreneurship training was found to be associated with livelihood outcomes (income) of respondents in the rural area. It was found that entrepreneurship training increases average monthly income by a factor of 0.312. This result was consistent with the findings of Bazezew et al (2013) who reported negative and significant correlation between family size and household incomes. The findings also revealed the significant relationship between tourism business and livelihood outcomes; income (r = 0.912; p<0.001). The maximum likelihood estimates of the multiple regression model showed that marital status, number of dependants, age of business, access to capital, and business focus, and entrepreneurship training were the important factors influencing average monthly income of respondents, and thus their livelihood outcomes. The finding is in agreement with Zaei and Zaei (2013). The coefficient of multiple determinations is 0.816, indicating that about 82% of the variation in total annual income of the sampled host people was captured by the model while the f-ratio is 22.5 significant at 0.0.5. From the table, tourism business as a variable captured influence of engagement on respondent's average monthly income.

Table 3: Regression Analysis of Tourism Business and Food Security

Variable description	**Unstandardized Coefficients**		**Standardized Coefficients**	**t-value**	**P value**
	B	**Std. Error**	**Beta**		
(Constant)	14.303	2.326		6.150	0.000
Age	1.689	0.623	0.294	2.710	0.008(S)
Sex	1.182	0.314	0.514	1.106	0.629(NS)
Marital status	0.780	0.703	0.164	1.109	0.271(S)
No. of dependants	-0.071	0.269	-0.030	-0.263	0.793(NS)
Age of business	0.340	0.534	0.184	0.636	0.127(S)
Educational level	-0.044	0.132	-0.031	-0.331	0.741(NS)
Entrep. Inspiration	1.132	0.417	0.164	0.246	0.613(NS)
Access to credits	-0.793	1.235	-0.275	-0.642	0.223(S)
Business focus	0.189	0.261	0.093	0.722	0.473(S)
No of people involved in business	2.801	0.084	0.010	0.335	0.738(NS)
Entrep training	0.600	0.774	0.095	0.775	0.441(S)

S -significant at 0.05; NS - not significant; F=19.7; df(11, 772); p<0.001; r=0.743; R^2=0.552.

Field Study, 2015.

Tourism Business and Food Security - From Table 3, the results of regression analysis identified age (t = 2.710, P=0.008), marital status (t =1.109; p= 0.271), age of business (t = 0.636, P=0.127), access to credits (t = -0.642, P=0.223), business focus (t = 0.772, P=0.473) and entrepreneurship training (t = 0.775, p=0.441) and tourism business as significant determinants of food security of the respondents. The coefficient of multiple determination is 0.729, indicating that about 73% of the variation in food security of the respondents was captured by the model with f-ratio of 19.7 at 0.05 significant level. From the table, tourism business as a variable captured influence of engagement on respondent's food security. The findings also revealed the significant relationship between tourism business and food security (r = 0.743; p<0.005). It was found that respondents in tourism sites earned more income and were able to secure food better than those in the tourism neighborhoods. The reason for this is not far-fetched as they will sell more and earn more than their counterparts in the neighborhoods and be able to expend enough money on food. An increase in the number years of business increases the demonstration of food security by a factor of 0.184. The older the business the better the acumen gathered from operations over the years whether in a hard way or otherwise. Access to credits showed positive and significant correlation with food security (t =0.642, P=0.223). As credits access availability increases by one unit, the means of procuring food will increase by 0.275, thereby aiding food affordability. The result is in agreement with Bakare (2016) that stated that outcomes are also determined by the types of assets people have which maybe in terms of their socio-economic characteristics. This is in agreement with (Shahbaz, 2008 that averred that participation in non-farm work exerts a positive and statistically significant effect on household income and food security status.

Table 4: Regression analysis of tourism business and reduced vulnerability

Variable description	**Unstandardized Coefficients**		**Standardized Coefficients**	**t-value**	**P value**
	B	**Std. Error**	**Beta**		
(Constant)	16.811	1.370		12.268	0.000
Age	1.363	0.481	0.252	2.834	0.005(S)
Sex	0.654	0.428	0.184	1.528	0.129(S)
Marital status	-0.172	0.288	-0.054	-0.598	0.551(S)
No of dependants	0.000	0.342	0.000	-0.001	0.999(NS)
Age of business	1.025	0.520	0.179	1.972	0.051(S)
Educational level	0.213	0.201	0.267	1.014	0.011(S)
Entrep. Inspiration	0.321	0.131	0.136	1.031	0.021(S)
Access to credits	0.773	0.631	0.179	1.226	0.224(S)
Business focus	0.340	0.534	0.084	0.636	0.127(S)
No of people involved in business operation	-0.151	0.178	-0.080	-0.846	0.399(S)
Entrepreneurship training	0.059	0.667	0.008	0.088	0.930(NS)

S - significant at 0.05; NS - not significant; F = 31.4; df (11, 772); p < 0.005; r = 0.777; R^2 *= 0.603.*

Tourism Business and Reduced Vulnerability - From table 4, Linear regression analysis identified age (t = 2.834; p=0.005), sex (t = 1.528; P=0.129), marital status (t = -0.598; , p=0.551), age of business (t = 1.972; p=0.051), educational level (t = 1.014;p=0.011), entrepreneurship inspiration (t = 1.031; p=0.021) and access to credits (t = 1.226; p=0.224), business focus (t = 0.636; p=0.127, number of people involved in business (t = -0.846; p=0.399) and tourism business as significant determinants of reduced vulnerability of the respondents. Reduced vulnerability of rural dwellers in the study area requires improving some socio economic characteristics of rural dwellers. Interventions aimed at improved livelihood strategies for diversification for improved livelihoods including engagement in businesses that arise from tourism events in the rural areas need to take cognizance of the significant factors predicting tourism business.

The coefficient of multiple determination is 0.603, indicating that about 60% of the variation in reduced vulnerability of the respondents was captured by the mode with f-ratio of 31.4 at 0.05 significant level. The findings also revealed the significant relationship between tourism business and reduced vulnerability (r = 0.777; p<0.001). The implication is that an increase in the level of educational background of respondents increases the experience of reduced vulnerability by a factor of 0.267. The older the business the more the ideas and understandings of the business strategies to reduce the incidence of vulnerability. Access to credit showed positive and significant association with reduced vulnerability. As credit access increases, the respondents were less prone to vulnerability. The finding is at variance with Ligthelm and Van Wyk (2004) that owner-managers of small businesses lack relevant skills such as financial acumen and accounting, information technology and business skills.

Conclusion

The objective of the study was to contribute knowledge to the discussion on influence of tourism oriented business on host people in Southwestern Nigeria. The study indicated that tourism resources in the host communities which are mostly rural areas created linkages between the personal socio business characteristics of the individuals in the host communities. There was positive implication for business creation which further translated to livelihood outcomes. The study revealed that the personal socio business factors were significant to seizing opportunities in tourism business for livelihood outcomes among host people. It was observed in the study that tourism availed business opportunities in the rural areas and was a vital component of host community livelihoods. A good number of business trickled from tourism affiliations of the host communities. It was discovered that these businesses contribute considerably to livelihood outcomes such as increased income, food security, and reduced vulnerability considering personal socio business characteristics. The fact that tourism entrepreneurs were mostly residents contributed significantly to the sustainability of rural and small communities by pulling patrons from the teaming urban and city population towards host communities. The characteristics of host people were found to influence their involvement in tourism oriented businesses. The significance of attractions in rural areas cannot be over-emphasised as it formed the major pull factor for crowd (tourists) who constitute patrons for products of innovation by the host people. It was obvious in the study that rural dwellers were benefiting from tourism on the basis of job creation and income generation. It would be difficult for Nigeria to attack its poverty myriad unless it takes advantage of tourism development for peoples livelihoods especially in the rural areas which are mostly blessed with scenic assets. If people have social and economic infrastructure, the height of crimes and hunger will lessen and tranquility will be experienced all over.

Thus, the study has practical significance for designing a more targeted and effective livelihood outcome (income, food security, and reduced vulnerability) generated related development interventions in the study area, and in other similar environments in the country. For effective and sustainable livelihood outcomes in the host communities, there is need for governments to embark on training and infrastructural development programmes that will improve the personal socio economic characteristics of the people. Strengthening both formal and informal education (vocational training) should have to be promoted to increase rural participation in more viable livelihood options and offer better prospects for improving livelihoods.

REFERENCES

Adisa, T. A. (2008). *The failure of small businesses in Nigeria*. Dissertation submitted in part fulfilment for the Degree of BA (Hons) Business Management, London South Bank University (Unpublished).

Agbenyegah, A. T. (2013). Challenges facing rural entrepreneurship in selected areas in South Africa. A Ph. D. thesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree *Philosophaie Doctor* in *Business Administration* at the Potchefstroom Campus of the North-West University.

Agyapong, D., Agyapong, G. K. Q., & Darfor, K. N. **(**2011). Criteria for assessing small and medium enterprises' borrowers in Ghana. *International Business Research, 4*(4),132-138.

Alarape, A. A. (2010). The effects of entrepreneurial orientation on the performance of small and medium scale enterprises in Southwestern Nigeria. An unpublished Ph. D. Thesiss submitted to the Department of Management and Accounting, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria.

Alaye -Ogan, E. (2012). *A practical guide to running successful small businesses in Nigeria: challenges, peculiarities, and effective resolution support*. Lambert Academic Publishing, Deutschland.

Anyadike, N., Emeh - Ikechukwu, E. J., & Ukah, F. O. (2012). Networks: A content analysis approach" *Research Policy*, *41*(3), 565-579.

Bakare, K. O. (2016). Tourism entrepreneurship and rural livelihoods in Southwestern Nigeria. An unpublished Ph. D. thesis submitted to the Department of Management and Accounting, Faculty of Administration, Obafemi AWolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria.

Bakare, K. O. (2010). The influence of tourism activity on people's livelihoods in selected tourist centres in Ogun State. Nigeria. *Research Review of Institute of African Studies Publication (iaspub)*, *26*(1): 113-126.

Bazezew, A., Bewket, W., & Nicolau, M. (2013). Rural households' livelihood assets, strategies and outcomes in drought-prone areas of the Amhara Region, Ethiopia: Case Study in Lay Gaint District. *African Journal of Agricultural Research, 8*(46), 5716-5727. DOI: 10.5897/AJAR2013.7747. ISSN 1991-637X ©2013 Academic Journals http://www.academicjournals.org/AJAR

Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) (2014). *SME Finance*. http://www.cenbank.org/Devfin/smefinance.asp (Accessed on 26/04/2014).

Department for International Development [DfID] (1999). Sustainable Rural Livelihoods Guidance Sheet. London.

Ellis, F. (2000). Rural Livelihoods and Diversity in Developing Countries. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Gasu, M. B. (2013). Socio-Economic Characteristics and Livelihood Assets of Wetlands Users at Ede Region, Southwestern Nigeria. *Studies in Sociology of Science, 4(*4), 1-10. DOI:10.3968/j.sss.1923018420130404.2741

Gebrehiwot, W., & Fekadu, B. (2012). Rural household livelihood strategies in drought prone areas: A case of Gulomekeda district, eastern zone of Tigray National Regional State. *Ethiopia. Journal of Develop. Agric. Econ. 4*, 158-168.

Hatten, T. S. (2012). *Small business management: entrepreneurship and beyond*. South-Western Cengage Learning, USA.

Mthembu, M. B. J. (2012). Rural Tourism Development: a Viable Formular for Poverty Alleviation in Bergville. *Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences, 4*(1), 24-26.

Igwe C. N., Adebayo, M. S., Olakanmi, O. A., Ogbonna, I. G., & Aina, O. S. (2013). Promoting Wealth and Job Creation in Nigeria – Review of the Role of Entrepreneurship. *Journal of Sustainable Development Studies, 3*(1), 80-100.

Kolawole, O. D., & Torimiro, D. O. (2006). Nigerian poor majority: Issues and challenges in the 21st century. *Research Journal of social Sciences*, *1*(1), 11-20.

Ligthelm, A. A., & Van Wyk, A. M. A. (2004). Informal trading in Tswane: Regulatory, spartial and economic framework. Pretoria: Bureau of market research, University of South Africa.

Marx, J., Deswardt, C., Beaumont-Smith, M., & Erasmus, P. (2010). Financial management in South Africa.3rd ed. Cape Town: Pearson.

Odeleye, D. A. & Oyekanmi, A. O. (2013). Tourism and rural development as means of combating global economic melt-down in Nigeria: Implications for counseling practice. *Universal Journal of Education and General Studies, 2*(1), 021-025, January, 2013 Available online http://www.universalresearchjournals.org/ujeg.

Okeke, A. U., Ezenwafor, J. I., & Femiwole, R. M. (2013). *Entrepreneurs' Reported Challenges and Opportunities of Global Financial Crisis on Small Business Operations in Anambra and Ekiti States, Nigeria*. Paper presented at Global Awareness Society International 22nd Annual Conference –Rome, Italy, May 2013.

Olowookere, E. I. & Elegbeleye, A. O. (2014). Relevance of prosocial behaviours to rural entrepreneurship development in Nigeria. *Case Studies Journal*, 3(4), 8-17.

Oyesiku, O. K. (2009). City liveability: Implications and challenges. Paper presented at the 2009 Commonwealth Association of Planners West Africa Workshop on Planning for Liveable Humman Settlement: The West African Challenges. Victorial Island, Lagos, Nigeria.

Roodt, J. **(**2005). Self-employment and required skills: research policy and practice. *Journal of the Southern African Institute for Management Scientists 14*(2), 18-33.

Shahbaz, B. (2008). Risk, vulnerability and sustainable livelihoods: Insights from northwest Pakistan. Sustainable Development Policy Institute, Islamabad, Pakistan.

World Bank. (2006). *World development report 2007: Development and the next generation.* Washington, D.C.: World Bank.

Zaei, M. E. & Zaei, M. E. (2013). The impacts of tourism industry on host community. *European Journal of Tourism Hospitality and Research*, *1*(2), 12-21.

KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT IN GREEK TOURISM

DIMITRIOS BELIAS

Department of Business Administration, Technological Educational Institute of Thessaly, Greece

EFSTATHIOS VELISSARIOU

Department of Business Administration, Technological Educational Institute of Thessaly, Greece

DIMITRIOS KYRIAKOU

Dept. of Economic Sciences, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece

LABROS VASILIADIS

Dept. of Business Administration, T.E.I of Central Greece

LABROS SDROLIAS

Department of Business Administration, Technological Educational Institute of Thessaly, Greece

GEORGE ASPRIDIS

Department of Business Administration, Technological Educational Institute of Thessaly, Larissa, Greece

ATHANASIOS KOUSTELIOS

Dept of Physical Education and Sport Science, University of Thessaly, Greece

ABSTRACT

In the modern digital age what is particularly important is the management of information. For this reason, a particular issue is how organizations have access to information and knowledge in general. This paper is considering the case of knowledge management in relation to tourism. It should be mentioned that the study shows that knowledge management can be an approach that aims to properly manage the crisis and gain a competitive advantage (Mantas, 2016). Of course, what it needs to be done is to have a specialization in relation to the management of knowledge in terms of the Greek tourism. For this reason, this study conducts an investigation of the feasibility studies for the use of knowledge in tourism management. Than it appears, for any tourism business it is useful to have and the appropriate management of data and information available in order to then be useable tourist information as well as to provide a significant competitive advantage for the tourism business (Gretzel, 2011). It should be noted the lack of relevant research in Greece, so it would be very useful to future empirical research to the point.

Keywords: Knowledge Management 1, Tourism 2, Greece 3, Tourism business 4

JEL Classification: L83, L84, M31

1 INTRODUCTION

Information and communication technology has contributed in several stages of the tourism industry transformation. First, starting with computerization of reservation system of tourism offers (GDS). A chain appeared around these systems, linking vertically suppliers to tourists through the intermediary players. Then, Internet and related technologies radically affect the sector's economy by overturning this vertical organization. Change appeared through direct sales strategies of suppliers' websites. However, direct exchange between tourists and suppliers was only the beginning of a new era. ICT has also given the opportunity to many new players to introduce themselves into tourism market. From now on, travel agencies and tour operators are not the only ones able to connect supply with demand. Internet has also contributed in changing the tourist's demands and activities. Tourism is no longer limited to a mass product (Dimitriou, 2005). The tourist can inform himself and even get involved in the organisation of his travel experience. Hence, an important challenge is how to acquire the necessary data but also from the side of the tourist organizations to be able to handle all this data. Hence, the aim of this paper is to examine usage of Knowledge Management from Greek tourist organizations, which is a research where there is a complete lack of similar research.

2 METHODOLOGY

This is a literature review which will examine the value of information and data management for a tourist company. Hence the methodology of this paper relies on the use of already made researches and papers; this is a literature review. The source of papers has being from various databases such as science direct and ESCBO. The paper will introduce the concept of knowledge management, while it will discuss how knowledge management is being used on the tourist sector. The value of this paper is that it will connect the concept of Knowledge Management with the concept of tourism and how it is applied on the tourist sector.

3 LITERATURE REVIEW ON KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

3.1 TYPES OF KNOWLEDGE

In the management literature, a passionate debate about what knowledge is and what forms or types of it are available can be identified. One can distinguish the positivist and constructivist standpoints in this debate (Vera and Crossan, 2003). Chiva and Alegre (2005) also identify a similar classification of approaches to knowledge: the perceptive or cognitive approach, and the constructionist or social approach. Another distinction made in the literature is between the perspective that emphasizes knowledge as something people have or possess and the one that regards knowledge as something socially constructed and thus particular emphasis is place on the process (Chiva and Alegre, 2005). In fact, the positivist, cognitive and knowledge as a possession approaches are related, and so do the constructionist, social and knowledge as a process approaches. For one school of thought, reality is objective and can be comprehended accurately, while for the other all meanings are context specific. In this section, we will do the same as Chiva and Alegre (2005) and use the “cognitive-possession” and “social-process” labels to discuss about these two major schools of thought in the organizational knowledge literature. However, it should be noted that it is not always clear whether a particular author is situated in the one or the other school, as can be seen below. According to Spender (1996) and Chiva and Alegre (2005), followers of pure cognitive-possession school believe that knowledge is justified true belief. They all share the idea of knowledge as perceptive and as a commodity. Thus, emphasis is placed on the possession of knowledge. Followers of this view regard the cognitive system as a machine to process information. Knowledge is defined as a collection of representations of the world that is made up of a number of objects and events. It is the result of a systematic analysis of our cognitive system of a knowable external reality. Also, it exists prior to and independently from the knowing subject, who creates no knowledge in the act of appropriation. It is possible to codify, store and transmit knowledge between people. This school posits that knowledge is universal and, hence, two cognitive systems should come up with the same representation of the same objects or situations. Learning, in this perspective, is the improvement of representations.

However, researchers in this school have moved beyond positivist notions of knowledge and adopt a more pluralist point of view. They have recognized that knowledge may be difficult to codify and communicate, that it may be deeply rooted in action and involvement in a specific context. Some have proposed that organizations have different types of knowledge, and that identifying and examining these will lead to more effective means for generating, sharing, and managing knowledge in organizations (Orlikowski, 1996). As a result, classifications of knowledge have been developed and then used to examine the various strategies and techniques, through which different types of knowledge are created, codified, converted, transferred, and exchanged. Such researches are grouped under an approach that is often referred to as “taxonomic” (Tsoukas, 1996). A well-known example in this case is the distinction between explicit and tacit knowledge put forward by Nonaka (1994) based on the work of Polany. Explicit knowledge refers to knowledge that is transmittable in formal, systematic language. Tacit knowledge has a personal quality, which makes it hard to formalize and communicate. Explicit knowledge can be converted to tacit knowledge and vice versa. Although Nonaka argues that tacit knowledge has a cognitive element centering on mental models, he does recognize its technical element, which is rooted in specific contexts. Grant (1996) can also be put in this group with their distinctions of knowing-how versus knowingabout and routines versus skills, respectively.

Similarly, Alavi and Leider (2001) conclude from their review of the literature that knowledge can also be referred to as declarative (know-about or knowledge by acquaintance), procedure (know-how), causal (know-why), conditional (know-when), and relational (know-with). Additional knowledge taxonomies such as individual versus social (Alavi and Leider, 2001), local versus universal, codified versus uncodified, canonical versus non canonical, know-how versus know-what (Tsoukas, 1996), routines versus experiences (Orlikowski, 1996) have also been elaborated.

Jarzabkowski and Spee (2009) find that there exists a related perspective to the cognitive-possession one: the connectionist. This perspective shares with the cognitive-possession one the view that knowledge, in other words the representations of the environment, arises as a result of information processing.

However, the process of representing is different in that it believes knowledge to be generated through networks and relationships, and not by individuals. From this perspective, organizations are networks made up of relationships and managed by communication. Knowledge, thus, is found in the connections that exist between the organization and its people. A concern of researchers in this school is the distinction between individual and organizational knowledge. Being connectionists, Jarzabkowski and Spee (2009) state that there exists individual knowledge, group knowledge, organizational knowledge, and network knowledge. Individual knowledge belongs only to the individuals. Group knowledge is created by the teaching of individual knowledge through frequent interaction within small groups. Cross-group interactions, in turn, help create organizational knowledge. Network knowledge is created when individuals of the organization establish interactions with external actors such as suppliers or buyers. In the cognitive-possession school, there have been several different views about the relationship between individual and organizational knowledge. The first approach defines organizational knowledge as individual knowledge shared by all members of an organization (Chiva and Alegre, 2005). This approach can be seen in Grant's (1996) view of knowledge (Chiva and Alegre, 2005). He argues that the creation of knowledge is individual and thus companies should aim at applying knowledge to the production of goods and services rather than creating and acquiring knowledge. The second approach, put forward by Nonaka (1994), examines the interaction between individual and organizational knowledge. His idea is that organizational knowledge is created through continuous dialogue between tacit and explicit knowledge. In the study of knowledge, although the cognitive-possession school is the predominant one, it has been increasingly challenged and complemented by the social-process school (Vera and Crossan, 2003), shifting the notion of knowledge as a commodity that individuals or organizations may acquire, to the study of knowledge as socially constructed and held collectively in organizations. This school proposes the idea that reality is socially constructed or conceived and is based on social interactions and discursive behaviours (Chiva and Alegre, 2005).

According to Heaton and Taylor (2012), it makes an assumption that, given the limitations of our physiological constitution as living beings, the only kind of reality we can consciously know is constituted by the kind of distinctions we make in language. When people live in different operational contexts, they perceive different realities. What we know as humans, therefore, is not a universe, but a "multiverse" of modes of knowledge creation. This approach understands knowledge as not as a representation, but a constructing or creating acts, in other words, as a process. It is something which we do, not something that we possess (Chiva and Alegre, 2005). The notions of practice and communities of practice are very important in this school of thought. The basic argument inherent in many views in this school of thought is that knowledge is embedded in practice and is readily generated when people work together in the communities of practice. A community of practice is “a set of relations among persons, activity, and world, over time” (Lave and Wenger, 1991).

A community of practice can also be viewed as an activity system about which participants share understandings concerning what they are doing and what that means in their lives and for their communities. The participants are united in both action and in the meaning that that action has, both for themselves and for the larger collective (Lave and Wenger, 1991). The practice of a community of practice is the specific knowledge that the community members develop, share and maintain. It can contain ideas, information, documents, or styles that community members share (Wenger, McDermott, and Snyder, 2002). It is “the way in which work gets done and knowledge is created” (Brown and Duguid, 2001), or “the coordinated activities of individuals and groups in doing their “real work” as it is informed by a particular organizational or group context” (Cook and Brown, 1999). Practice is not behavior or action. Doing of any sort is behaviour, while action is behaviour imbued with meaning. Practice is action informed by meaning drawn from a particular context (Cook and Brown, 1999).

3.2 KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT IN PRACTICE

Knowledge can be seen from the cognitive-possession and the social-process views. As different views of knowledge lead to different perceptions of knowledge management (Alavi and Leider, 2001), two contrasting schools to knowledge management have developed accordingly. They are often considered as the first and the second generations of knowledge management (McElroy, 2000), reflecting the dominance of the cognitive-possession school in the past and the increasingly influence of the social-process school in the more recent years. The distinction has been named differently in the literature, such as “cognitive” and “community” models , personal knowledge and organizational knowledge orientations , information technology and human approaches , and content and relational perspectives (Sanchez, 2005). These authors use different terms but they essentially talk about a same thing. This research uses the terms cognitive and social to distinguish the two schools.

The cognitive school believes in the cognitive-possession view of knowledge, which argues that valuable knowledge is located inside people's head and can be identified, captured, and processed via the use of information technology tools and then applied in new contexts (Bresnen et. al., 2003). The definitions of knowledge management put forward by this perspective in the literature often have a strong prescriptive element. Knowledge management is understood as "managed learning" and is assumed to have a positive impact on performance (Vera and Crossan, 2003). For example, it is defined as "the explicit control and management of knowledge within an organization aimed at achieving the company's objectives", "the formal management of knowledge for facilitating creation, access, and reuse of knowledge, typically using advanced technology", "the process of creating, capturing, and using knowledge to enhance organizational performance", or "the ability of organizations to manage, store, value, and distribute knowledge" (Vera and Crossan, 2003). The goal of knowledge management is to capture, codify and distribute organizational knowledge via the application of information and communication technologies so that it can be shared by all employees. It focuses on knowledge use, not knowledge creation. The target of all investments in first generation of knowledge management is the individual workers and the extent to which he or she has access to, and can leverage information needed to get the job done (McElroy, 2000). Alavi and Leider (2001) find that three most common applications of IT to knowledge management consist of the coding and sharing of best practices, the creation of corporate knowledge directories, and the creation of knowledge network that focuses on bringing individuals distributed across time and space together so that knowledge is shared. The most fundamental advantage claimed by this approach is that once an individual's knowledge is articulated in an explicit form, information system can be used to disseminate that knowledge, thereby freeing an organization from the limitations of time and space. Moreover, codified knowledge is easier to leverage. It is also visible and can be discussed, debated, tested further, and improved, thereby stimulating organizational learning processes. The codification of knowledge also minimizes the risk of loosing expertise due to employee turnover (Sanchez, 2005). With the idea of knowledge as perceptive and as a commodity, which can be codified, stored, and easily transmitted, learning is separated from knowledge and thus, can be dealt with separately (Chiva and Alegre, 2005).

However, the knowledge management literature tends to see knowledge as a resource, a raw material to be leveraged, processed and utilized for the benefit of the organization. For the first time, it is claimed that knowledge has to be managed as a thing itself. However, the cognitive school has been vastly criticized. Debates have questioned the emphasis on explicit knowledge and the codification of knowledge through technology (Bresnen et. al., 2003). Critiques have been being mounted of the cognitive approach precisely on the grounds that it ignores the social architecture of knowledge exchange within organizations (Easterby-Smith and Lyles, 2003) and completely side-steps the question of how knowledge is created, disseminated, renewed and applied (Cavaleri, 2004). The critiques have led to the emergence of the social school, which believes in the social-process view of knowledge. Understanding how knowledge is created, how it is shared, and diffused throughout an organization – and not just how to codify and record it in artificial form, or map it into business process – lies at the very heart of the social school (McElroy, 2000). It is also recognized that the creation, diffusion and application of knowledge is situated and heavily influenced by the context of practice. In this context, developing communities of practice has been viewed as a popular approach for knowledge management because they favor situated and context-dependent learning and knowledge creation (Wenger, 2004).

Knowledge management objectives in this school emphasize and promote social networks and the cultivation of trust, norms and shared values amongst employees that constitute "communities of practices" (Bresnen et. al., 2003). A well-known article is that of Wenger and Snyder (2000), in which effective knowledge management is characterized as the "cultivation" of communities of practice within the organization. This idea has been frequently cited in the literature and widely adopted in the business world (Ardichvili et. al., 2003). Moreover, in an era of globalization and worldwide communication networks, it is claimed that communities of practice with virtual interactions have emerged (Hildreth, 2003). Virtual communities of practice are described as containing any community of practice that cannot rely on face-to-face meetings and interactions as its primary means for connecting members. Typically, virtual communities of practice cross multiple types of boundaries, linking people across time zones, countries, and organizations (Wenger et. al., 2002). It is stated that virtual communities of practice are becoming a knowledge management approach of choice for an increasing number of multinational corporations, including many well-known industry leaders such as Hewlett Packard, British Petroleum, IBM, and Shell (Ardichvili et al., 2003).

The practice perspective sheds more light on how to study the actual doing of the knowledge managers. First, for practice theory, people count and can be taken as a research phenomenon. Second, according to this perspective, one may take the knowledge managers as the creative agents being at the focal point to examine how they amend and reproduce the stock of practices on which they draw. This perspective enables the researcher to look closely at how the knowledge managers move back and forth between their understanding of knowledge management landscape and their performing of knowledge management tasks. The perspective offers to investigate the doing of the knowledge managers in their job as situated practices in a particular context. Moreover, studying the knowledge managers from a practice perspective is also in line with the current trend in the knowledge management literature. At this stage, the research direction can be reformulated as the situated practices of the knowledge managers in their specific organizational context.

3.3 KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT IN TOYRISM

In modern societies it is increasingly recognized in recent years that the sustainable competitive advantage of a state in the global market depends on its ability to exploit the knowledge, as opposed to more traditional societies. This resulted in the dissemination and commercialization of research, up to a point, which has become a key issue for governments initially and business secondly. These are the most recent developments are indicating the importance of knowledge as the key competitive tool for private businesses. Tourism has being developed as one of the most important areas in the world, should be directly adapted to new data. Thus, it is assumed that if the modern enterprises wishing to remain competitive in this era of change, adopting Knowledge Management practices is urgently required to enable them to exploit the tourist market data and their intellectual capital. With the adoption of Knowledge Management public and private businesses can become more effective, profitable, competitive and efficient resulting work smartest on the market and create the same knowledge (Easterby-Smith and Prieto, 2008) .

The result of the commercialization of knowledge that has an organization is the creation of tourist products and services that meet the needs and requirements of tourists and exploitation of business opportunities that arise. Okumus et al. (2014) have conceived the idea of the Chain of Knowledge Value (value chain knowledge). The concept of Knowledge Value Chain refers to the main stages of Knowledge Management, from its creation to the commercialization and distribution of knowledge for the benefit of tourist companies. An example can be the views or perceptions that tourists have about a hotel or some internal knowledge such as how to prepare dinner or how the bar can operate in an efficient manner.

The importance of the information and communication technology and particularly the Internet has played an important role in the tourism industry and has grown considerably recent year. The tourist industry is an industry which relies on information in which the Internet plays a very important role where information and data are playing an important role on how internet tactics are set up for the hotels.

The outcome is that knowledge is defined as the most important form of content, which in principle has the form of data, then information is everywhere and finally evolves into knowledge. For this reason, the information collected from tourist, has even greater value when converted into knowledge. The tourist agencies, who manage to exploit the information and to the transform knowledge into effective are they there, shall be winners. The competitiveness of companies operating in these areas dependent tail to a very large extent on how effectively they acquire, maintain, exchange and access to knowledge and whether they can convey the appropriate information to the right person and the right time (Gronau, 2012).

Knowledge Management is addressed to the company's effort to adapt to survive and be competitive in a constant changing environment. In the tourism sector, this environmental change is barely noticeable, so in the supply chain, and the constant change in consumer behavior. The destinations are constantly adapted to different situations with the creation and use knowledge that responds to different conditions, as was done for post 11/9 environment where appropriate measures were taken for the safety and Civil Protection, which relied on the smooth flow of data between the tourist companies (Hallin and Marnburg, 2008).

Despite the extensive literature of the tourist industry, there are few reports on the relationship between Knowledge Management and Tourism. However reported some models which are based either on knowledge stocks, or cross Flow letters. The knowledge stocks in an organism or an destination to both the empirical and the recorded knowledge (Law and Jogaratnam, 2005).

An example of knowledge mapping for tourist companies. In practice, the mapping of knowledge provides a design that visualizes the knowledge so it can easily be tested, improved and be exchanged with other users who are not knowledgeable. The database may include takes a list of skills, knowledge, experience, skills and information communication society. Some of the knowledge can be stored in a database along with data associated with tourists. The knowledge map can also be used has been as an interactive tool which unites different concepts of the world. Mapping knowledge helps in easy identification of key sources and restrictions on the flow of knowledge and creation. If the map makes it easier finding knowledge, reuse of knowledge is favored. This has as resulting higher costs for inventing knowledge and reduce search time and recovery. These important skills are more visible on the map and the exchange knowledge becomes easier and more widely. This results so tha the tourist company’s staff to find the necessary knowledge to be reduced, while on the other the customer response, making the problem solving-decision significantly improved with the providing of access importance in the applicable knowledge (Okumus et al, 2014) .

From the map, users can discover important practices which take country learning. The knowledge map may be used as a baseline for measure progress in the projects of Knowledge Management, as well as storage and evaluation of knowledge available to the company. There are several criteria that must be borne in mind when preparing a map knowledge. Such criteria are for example the determination of knowledge as to its origin as well as the structure and use of knowledge. More specifically, A knowledge map should take into account the location, possession, timing, access rights, storage methods and usage statistics. When designing a knowledge map should be taken of the various publications are the relationships that exist between them. To create a map requires extensive research and communication with the relevant stakeholders of the company ding transport and exchange processes and organizational culture Real knowledge is not a static structure but is dynamic as it was caused shall be in pieces of knowledge and information which depends on various conditions. The mapping process should be a continuous process and It will be upgraded to be useful (Law and Jogaratnam, 2005).

Another example is the use of knowledge management in the tourist research. As a matter of fact, the tourist companies are in a need of tracing in an easy and fast way necessary data so to turn it into knowledge. Although the tourist research has shown tremendous progress in recent years, most tourism businesses find it difficult to exploit the opportunities offered in the industry. This is also due the fact that the tourism industry, especially in Greece, dominated by SMEs, which do not participate in the global research effort. As a result, the industry, the management knowledge

ing is not a very popular approach. As is growing and more the tourism sector, its importance is increasingly recognized member as a result of spending more money on research on tourism. Unlike the tourism industry, the successful adoption of knowledge management from companies in other industries, such as logistics, combined with the informational technologies, helped to move with haste to success and growth (Shaw and Williams, 2009)

4 DISCUSSION

Knowledge management has been widely accepted as being a managerial approach which allows the tourist companies to utilize the data and information which have on their disposal. A research made from Mantas (2016) indicated that Greek companies tend to avoid using such advanced managerial methods, though whenever those have been used they have helped the firms to overcome the negative impact of a crisis. Dimitriou (2015) has mentioned that many

Greek tourist companies are using state of the art technologies and knowledge management systems but still they have not created an integrated Knowledge Management strategy and this is their weak point, along with the lack of similar research.

The existence of knowledge management related systems means that companies in the tourist sector know how to use them but they are not aware that they have proceed with a knowledge management strategy. It is well accepted that information and its proper usage can lead into a competitive advantage. However, it is essential for the tourist sector in Greece to further invest into the production of applications and software which will help the firms to acquire this information and to convert it into valuable knowledge. The previous chapter provided two examples (knowledge mapping and knowledge research systems) that will enable a tourist company to enhance its knowledge management strategy. For this reason it is important for the tourist organizations to establish KM practioners. The KMers are like the practitioners, who draw on “a complex bundle of practices involving social, material and embodied ways of doing that are interrelated and not always articulated or conscious to them” (Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009), to perform their praxis. For example, the social practices are drawn on in the case of Alex, as he is obliged to follow the existing norms of knowledge management. Similarly, Carol makes a bet in carrying out her communication campaign, because the top management is neither for nor against the idea. The material practices clearly influence Helen. The IT issues make her always include a brief instruction on how to obtain a particular knowledge document from the sharing database when she informs people of its arrival. The embodied practices, which are the “repository of background coping skills upon which actors unconsciously draw as part of their everyday being within the world” (Chia, 2004), are seen in the way the KMers seek help from the strategic helpers through constant follow-up.

5 CONCLUSIONS

To sum up, knowledge management is an important managerial concept. The paper has identified that there is a gap in the literature and research regarding the use of Knowledge Management in the Greek Tourist sector but also in the tourist sector overall. Despite of the fact that most of the tourist companies are already using knowledge-management based systems, such as to utilize the information retried from internet sites, the missing point is having an integrated knowledge management strategy but also to have KM managers. For this reason, it is suggested that a future research must be a primary research which will investigate the views and perceptions of the tourist industry's professionals regarding their views on knowledge management but also to identify some best practices from their experiences. This will help the authors to understand the current practices and to develop some new ones.

REFERENCES

Alavi, M. and Leidner, D. (2001).Review: knowledge management and knowledge management systems: conceptual foundations and research issues. *MIS Quarterly*, Vol. 25, No. 1, pp. 107-136.

Ardichvili, A., Page, V. and Wentling, T. (2003), 'Motivation and barriers to participation in virtual knowledge-sharing communities of practice', *Journal of Knowledge Management*, Vol. 7, No. 1, pp. 64-77

Bresnen M., Edelman L., Newell S., Scarbrough H., Swan J. (2003). Social practices and the management of knowledge in project environments. *International Journal of Project Management*, Vol. 21, pp. 157-166.

Bresnen M., Edelman L., Newell S., Scarbrough H., Swan J. (2003). Social practices and the management of knowledge in project environments. *International Journal of Project Management*, Vol. 21, pp. 157-166.

Brown, J. S. and Duguid, P. (2001). Knowledge and Organisation: a social practice perspective. *Organization Science*, Vol. 12, pp. 198-213.

Cavaleri, S. (2004). Leveraging organizational learning for knowledge and performance. The learning organization, Vol. 11, No. 2, pp. 159-176

Chiva, R. and Alegre, J. (2005). Organizational learning and organizational knowledge: towards the integration of two approaches. *Management learning*, Vol. 36, No. 1, pp. 49-68

Cook, S. and Brown, J. (1999). Bridging epistemologies: the generative dance between organizational knowledge and organizational knowing. *Organization Science,* Vol. 10, No. 4, pp. 381-400

Dimitriou, N. (2015), *Systemic knowledge management strategy for the development and operation of virtual enterprises: application to the design, analysis and implementation of a web information system to support the development of a virtual tourism enterprise*, PhD Thesis

Easterby-Smith, M. and Prieto, I. (2008), "Dynamic capabilities and knowledge management: an integrative role of learning", *British Journal of Management*, Vol. 19 No. 3, pp. 235-49

Grant, R. M. (1996). Toward a knowledge-based theory of the firm. *Strategic Management Journal,* Vol. 17, pp. 109-122.

Gretzel, U. (2011). Intelligent systems in tourism: A social science perspective. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 38(3), 757–779.

Gronau, N. (2012), "The knowledge cafe´ – a knowledge management system and its application to hospitality and tourism", *Journal of Quality Assurance in Hospitality & Tourism*, Vol. 3 No. 3, pp. 75-88.

Grotte (2015): *New Trends in the Hospitality Industry*, 6TH International Conference on Tourism & Hospitality Management, Athens, Greece, 5-7 June 2015

Grotte (2008): *How does a new technology affect the operation of the hospitality industry*?; The 11th International Scientific Days, Gyöngyös 2008.03.27-28. ISBN 978-963-87831-1-0 (503.-510.o.)

Grotte (2015): *The Internet Impacts' on the Travel Habits of The Hungarian Tourists*, 4TH International Conference on Tourism & Hospitality Management, Athens, Greece, 19-21 June 2014

Hallin, C. and Marnburg, E. (2008), "Knowledge management in the hospitality industry: a review of empirical research", *Tourism Management*, Vol. 29 No. 2, pp. 366-81

Heaton, L. and Taylor, J. (2012). Knowledge management and professional work. *Management Communication Quarterly*, Vo. 16, No. 2, pp. 210-236.

Hildreth, P. (2003), 'Going virtual: distributed communities of practice', Idea group publishing

Jarzabkowski, P. and Spee, A. P. (2009), Strategy-as- practice: A review and future directions for the field, *International Journal of Management Reviews*, Vol. 11, No. 1, pp. 69–95

Lave, J. and Wenger, E. (1991), *Situated learning. Legitimate peripheral participation*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Law, R. and Jogaratnam, G. (2005), "A study of hotel information technology applications", *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, Vol. 17 No. 2, pp. 170-80.

Mantas,C. (2016), *Knowledge Management in Greece*, PhD Thesis University of Leicester

McElroy, M. (2000). Integrating complexity theory, knowledge management and organizational learning. *Journal of knowledge management*, Vol. 4, No. 3, pp. 195-203.

Nonaka, I. (1994). A dynamic theory of organizational knowledge creation. *Organization Science*, Vol. 5, No. 1, pp. 14-37

Okumus, F., Altinay, L. and Chathoth, P. (2014), *Strategic Management for Hospitality and Tourism*, Elsevier, Oxford

Orlikowski, W. J. (1996). Improvising organizational transformation over time: a situated change perspective. *Information systems research*, Vol. 7, pp. 63-92.

Sanchez, R. (2005). *Knowledge management and organizational learning: fundamental concepts for theory and practice*. Working paper series. Lund Institute of Economic Research

Shaw, G. and Williams, A. (2009), "Knowledge transfer and management in tourism organizations: an emerging research agenda", *Tourism Management*, Vol. 30 No. 2, pp. 325-35.

Spender, J. (1996). Making knowledge the basis of a dynamic theory of the firm. *Strategic Management Journal,* Vol. 17, pp. 45-62.

Tsoukas, H. (1996). The firm as a distributed knowledge system: a constructionist approach. *Strategic management journal*, Vol. 17, Winter Special Issue, pp. 11-25

Vera, D. and Crossan, M. (2003). Organizational learning and knowledge management: toward an integrative framework. In Easterby-Smith, M. and Lyles, M. (Eds) *The Blackwell handbook of organizational learning and knowledge management*. Blackwell Publishing Ltd., USA

Wenger, E. and Snyder, W. (2000). Communities of practice: the organizational frontier. *Harvard Business Review*, Vol. 78, No. 1, pp. 139-146

Wenger, E., McDermott, R. and Snyder, W. (2002). *Cultivating communities of Practice*, Harvard Business School Press

COMPLAINTS MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES IN GREEK HOTEL UNITS

LABROS SDROLIAS

Department of Business Administration, Technological Educational Institute of Thessaly, Larissa, Greece

ATHANASIOS MOURGAS

Economist, Agios Thomas, Larissa-Greece

ALEXANDROS SAHINIDIS

Department of Business Administration, Technological Educational Institute of Athens, Aegaleo, Athens-Greece

NIKOLAOS KAKKOS

Department of Business Administration, Technological Educational Institute of Thessaly, Larissa, Greece

DAGMAR ŠKODOVÁ-PARMOVÁ

Department of Regional Management, University of South Bohemia, Ceske Budejovice-Czech Republic

ALINA HYZ

Department of Accounting and Finance, Technological Educational Institute of Piraeus, Aegaleo, Athens-Greece

DIMITRIOS BELIAS,.

Department of Business Administration, Technological Educational Institute of Thessaly, Larissa-Greece

NIKOLAOS PEROS

General Director, Rodos Palace Hotel, Rodos-Greece

PARASKEVI PEROU

Department of Business Administration, Technological Educational Institute of Thessaly, Larissa-Greece

ABSTRACT

The hypercompetitive, globalized tourism industry, has come to heavily depend on the "attention to detail" strategy by the players aspiring to prosper, especially at the level of the Hotel Unit, for which it has become a sine qua non, given today's competitive threats. A Hotel Unit encompasses a diverse set of functions, demanding highly versatile personnel, with a plethora of capabilities and skills, all of which need to be managed in the most efficient way possible. One rather common characteristic of "Customer-Employee" relationships is the occurrence of conflict, sometimes benign in nature, while other times intense. While the customer may freely express his/her complaints, the employee is expected to receive it, whether it's justified or not. Higher level employees typically, abide by the dictum "the customer is always right" a short-sighted view, failing to address issues in an impartial manner. The employees often feel the lack of support by the management, leading them to being alienated from their work, becoming less engaged and reducing their effort, involvement as a result. The answer to these problems is a high quality leadership, which with the help of a powerful coalition will enable employees of all levels to resolve conflicts in ways acceptable to both the employees and the customers. Nevertheless, these leaders' qualities notwithstanding, the organization, in order to secure its prospects of survival and growth will need to formulate and implement the appropriate strategies and organizational structures that will fairly address the issue of complaint handling, regardless of their origin.

Key-words: Complaint Handling, Strategic Processes, Organizational Structure, Hotel Unit, Greece

1. INTRODUCTION

Each of the developing conditions of the contemporary local and international touristic environment presupposes that the existence and evolution of a hotel unit should be based on its qualitative integrity and its competitive force. A primary role in the achievement of these objectives is played by the provision of goods and services of the highest level by the unit itself, combined with the marketing of these objectives in such a way that will satisfy to the fullest extent the needs, desires and up to a point the traits of a customer (Oktay, 2011: 4239).

But as it frequently occurs, the extent and quality of the offered goods and services are construed with different evaluating criteria and disposition by the customers (Plymire, 1991), it is expected and in short inevitable that complaints will emerge and as a result conflictive situations between them and the staff will arise for which in most cases their resolution requires the arbitral intervention of the senior executives of the Hotel Unit (Ngai et al., 2007; Asimakopoulos et al., 2011).

And although the appearances of complaints on the customers' behalf are often inevitable, the satisfaction of the customer as to the above issue plays a major role in the proper function and survival of the Hotel Unit (Ngai et al., 2005; Chen et al., 2010). If, in fact, we take into account that each customer comes from a different background who views the Hotel Unit as a single and inseparable organization (Defranco et al., 2005 ; Chen et al., 2010), such negative opinions have a harmful impact in all proportions in both its internal and external surroundings (Mayer, 2015).

Therefore, the executives and employees should realize and comprehend the reasons for which these complaints arose and the customers' associated behavioral ways of expression, so that they will be in the position of diminishing or even eradicating them (Defranco et al., 2005). Moreover, every intention to conceal them acts inhibitory in the prospect of undertaking any correctional initiatives on the administration's behalf, while simultaneously hindering any well meaning disposition to convert a dissatisfied customer into a loyal satisfied customer (Oktay, 2011).

It is also worth mentioning that a customer's expression of complaints should not automatically signify that his reaction is justified. In many cases the customer is excessive and even unjust which may expose the employee to undesired situations and dangers; given the common perception of the administration that even the unjust customer prevails over the just of the employee.

Based on the above references, the purpose of this assignment is the development of innovative strategies of customer complaint management in a Hotel Unit, via utilization of appropriate structural groups and functional processes in an attempt to radically face any of the Unit's members who raise issues that will create and express complaints.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The evaluating process of the "consumption" of a product or a service in a Hotel Unit may be defined as the means of confirmation, questioning and concealment of a value and its utility from the customer's perspective (Oktay, 2011: 4240). In this context, confirmation is realized in situations where the offered product and service satisfy the expectations of the customer, questioning-which is usually demonstrated in the form of dissatisfaction; often as a complaint; appears when there is a clear deviation between expectations and effectiveness of the "consumption" of the product or service from the customer, and finally concealment is perceived intuitively in situations when similar to the former case deviations exist, but for some reason the customer does not wish to demonstrate and much more express them (De Klerk, 2006; Oktay, 2011: 4240).

Research has recorded an inverse relation between the expression of a complaint and the satisfaction of a customer. Therefore, the more the number of the exposed customer complaints towards the administration of the Hotel Unit increases the less the Unit satisfies them and vice versa (Ali et al., 2010; Oktay, 2011: 4240).

According to Oktay (2011) the demonstration and expression of complaints signifies the starting point of diverse behavioral complaints of customers. Chronologically, before and after the expression of the above view, the field of behavioral complaining has been studied relatively well, at least as to why the customer expresses his reaction (Davidow, 2003: 225). Most of the times these behaviors are caused by the perceived dissatisfaction of the customer in relation to the response deficit of the hotel enterprise and its associates in the cost of purchasing their tourist package (Barlow and Møller, 2008; Oktay, 2011). In fact, Jacoby and Jaccard (1981) determine the behavioral complaints of their customers as an individual activity which entails the conveying of negative perceptions and messages to the Hotel Unit or even to the external parts of the Unit.

Particular research significance was given to the form of expression of behavioral complaints of the customers, as well as to the way of determining, classifying and facing the above complaints on the behalf of the Hotel Unit (Singh, 1998; Velazquez et al, 2006; Oktay, 2011) given the fact that they play a significant role in sales and profit, but foremost in the preservation of today's complex and intensely competitive global tourist field (Ngai et al., 2007; Samaraki, 2010; Mayer, 2015).

Similar gravity was given to the thorough examination of the cases of non behavioral replies that are referred to the situations where the customer either forgets or doesn't wish to express his dissatisfaction (Day et al., 1981). It was clearly found that taking or not taking action, regarding the complaints, customers initially proceed to an intuitive benefit analysis (Plymire, 1991; Blodgett and Granbois, 1992; Maxham and Netemeyer, 2002). Therefore if the cost of expressing a complaint and the time spent provide a greater benefit for the customer then he will act accordingly, in the opposite situation he will remain inert and quiet (Huppertz, 2003; Oktay, 2011: 4241).

Recently, extensive research has been carried out on different types and sizes of Hotel Units, on the employee and customer relationships according to the degree of the satisfaction of the latter. In the majority of the cases it was found that that relationship sustains high level satisfaction, a fact that ensures the necessary loyalty and therefore the re-visiting of the same Unit. In some cases, a rupture in the employee-customer relationship was found which was expressed in a form of complaint on behalf of the customer. The most important cause of complaint was attributed to the excessive demands of a customer on behalf of the employees. Most customers have certain expectations regarding the satisfaction of their needs. When their personal experiences coincide with these expectations, they seem completely satisfied.

Otherwise, depending of course on the development of the problematic situation and to the extent of his feeling victimized, the customer is led to the expression of his complaint with the notion that only then will there be a positive reaction on behalf of the Hotel Unit. The customer evaluates positively the offered service and feels the needed satisfaction only if the total value is greater than the total cost which he is asked to pay for. In the opposite case his dissatisfaction is indisputable. (Samaraki, 2010: 9-10).

Unfortunately, less emphasis has been placed on the consequences of the customers' behavioral complaints towards Hotel organizations regarding the human resource; especially when these behaviors are labeled as excessive (Davidow, 2003: 225). In the majority of the cases the employee feels deeply hurt and very often exposed to several dangers that may even lead to his loss of employment. The handling of such situations by management can be superficial and excessively unfair for the employee in order to achieve a positive "reaction" from and/or "impress" the customer.

3. THEORETICAL APPROACH

The hotel unit in its full function entails an aggregation of diverse human characteristics and features which it must mange in the best possible way. In the common bipolar relationship "customers-employees" often arise certain mild controversies to intense conflicting situations. The customer expresses these situations in the form of a complaint, while the employee is forced to succumb.

The complaints in situations like this are perceived as "productive" and "behavioral" gaps of the greater organization of the hotel unit, which determine the extent of the customer's trust in his relationship with the unit and improve its effort to offer qualitative services for the greatest satisfaction of its customers. Under no circumstances should they be considered as the means of restitution, but as the tool used for the improvement of quality inside the unit. The expressing of complaints on the one hand and the improvement of the quality of the services, on the other, constitute initially a "conducive function" which is finally addressed as a "managerial necessity" for those complaints (Somaraki, 2010:10-11)

According to Samaraki (2010:10-11), Complaints Management in hotel units is determined as a strategical procedure whose aim is to successfully deal with "critical omissions and occurrences" that arise from the problematic communicative relationship between the employees of these units and the customers, in relation to restituting the satisfaction of the customer making the complaint and to stabilize the vulnerable customer-employee relationships. It presupposes taking all the necessary measures which the hotel unit is obliged to sustain and which fundamentally have to do with both improving the type and quality of the offered goods and services and the problematic stance of the staff towards the customers and vice versa (Tronvoll, 2007).

As these enterprises have to mostly deal with the human factor and people often make mistakes, the common prevailing notion that "the customer is always right" constitutes a short-sighted perception from which the high rank executives of the hotel units rarely truly wish to be disengaged and alter it. On the other hand, the employees intensely feel the lack of the executives' support and therefore frequently show signs of provocation, occasionally verbal aggressiveness towards the customers while in other cases spiritual alienation behaviors from their work.

For all the above, which function on a "thin red line", the leading figure and the high quality guidance coalition can become the basic factor for the mitigation or even the resolution of these situations completely (Kotter, 1996). But besides human quality, the enforcement of the appropriate strategical processes and organizational compositions for the development of a complaints management model, in a spirit of fairness of any aspect of the above - mentioned bipolar relationship originates.

3.1 The Procedure of Temporary Management of a Complaint

Since the moment of expression - statement of a complaint on behalf of the customer, an atmosphere of internal turmoil is created within the hotel organization. The intensity and range of this turmoil depends on both the extent of turmoil the customer wishes to achieve and the resistance of the hotel unit and managerial skills of the unit's executives. In fact, in some special or extreme situations this intensity reaches "epidemic" proportions and is easily spread throughout the whole organization with extremely negative consequences, sometimes even beyond the unit (Mayer, 2015).

As previously mentioned in several cases the complaint issue is blown out of proportion, or even if that is not the customers intention; and as a result an intense atmosphere of dissatisfaction is created this time on the employees' behalf, whose fate depends on the greatness and sensitivity of the hotel unit's administration.

Therefore, the flows and interactions of the created relationships since the moment of making the complaint on behalf of the customer are multidimensional and are expressed in a form of a Complaint Relationship Cycle ***(Figure 1).***

The poles of this cycle are the customer, the employee, who usually bears the greatest burden of the expression of the complaint and the hotel unit itself with its authorized for the matter administrative bodies. A special reference must be made to the formation of two basic forms of relationships during the expression of the complaints. On the one hand, the indirect relationship between the customer and the employee where the hotel unit intervenes conductively and on the other hand the direct relationship between the customer and the employee from which mutual explanations and resolutions are given without the issue reaching harmful proportions for all the involved parties of the hotel organization. Also worth mentioning are the development relationship flows that have a two dimensional physiognomy. One stems from the customer and the other from the employee, in a different form each time.

It is therefore obvious that the exploitation of this circular logic concerning complaint management should constitute the basis and the priority of the hotel unit if it wishes to achieve positive results towards the resolution of the matter of complaints and its consequences for the unit itself and its human factors.

3.1.1 Determination and approach of the cycles and cultural web of the customer

The hotel unit usually accommodates customers who come from different countries and therefore different cultures. In this case the added value of a hotel unit is also characterized by the capability of its administrative executives to identify all those particular surroundings variables that determine the individual and total cultural physiognomy and behavior of people from those countries (Hofstede, 2001). These particular variables can be expressed in the form of a range of "cultural cycles", the composition and co-existence of which will develop a web called the "cultural web" (Johnson et al., 2015) ***(Figure 2).***

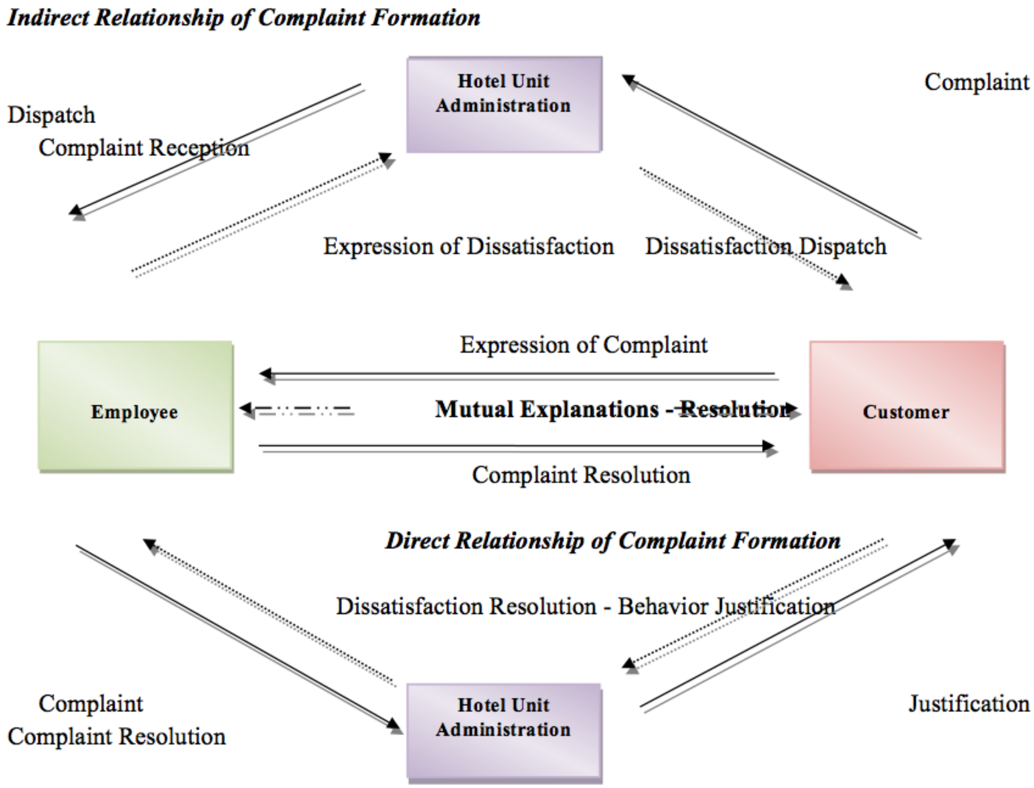

Figure 1: Complaint Relationship Cycle
Source: Own Depiction

Figure 1: Complaint Relationship Cycle

Source: Own Depiction

The "cultural web" as a plan and procedure identifies and records "systemic" a total of specific individual and social variables that co-exist in extensive cultural surroundings and determine the variables and their way of interacting. The more complete the collection and recording of the variables it entails is, the more successful and effective the determination and results of their relationship (Staehle, 1990; Johnson, 1992). In this particular study case, the case of a customer of a hotel unit, this format consists of those forces that act on their goals, expectations, planning, programming, the strategy and their every customer's tactics. Its full comprehension often impinges on the debility to exactly take into consideration all the parameters (here: cultural cycles) that may influence the stance and behavior of a customer.

It is therefore required on the hotel unit's behalf to thoroughly detect, haste and prediction of the cultural format of each customer in other words an "environmental investigation" which as a function of early warning is materialized via a wide ranging and pervasive procedure of detection of the above mentioned parameters that determine even its minimal portion (Brownlie, 1995).

In fact, the same "environmental investigation" will be enabled to predict the possibility of change and interacting that will gradually occur and which indisputably affect the reputation, business and even the existential status of the hotel unit, and on the other hand, its results will guide it to a correct prospect of implementing the necessary procedures for an effective organizational and functional re planning of the unit itself, to diminish or even the permanent resolution of critical situations and omissions, like that of complaint expression on behalf of the customers and the mistaken handling of the administrative executives which expose the hotel organization significantly (Tufts, 2014).

As those variables are deeply engraved in the subconscious of the customer, he bears them in all formats he experiences and reacts accordingly. If suddenly he realizes a series of negative for him modifications towards his awaited expectations in regard to the extent and way of satisfying his tourist needs and mainly he realizes an indifferent and provocative behavior of the hotel unit's staff, it is logical that he will react through expressing a complaint. In this case the administration of the unit should ***(Table 1)***:

· Have plans and alternatives prepared as to how to manage complaints, exploiting the strategical tool of the cultural cycles and the cultural web which are relevant to the complaining customer (Kau et al., 2006).

· To implement the "open door" policy. To, in other words, offer the customer the opportunity of easy access to competent bodies for the direct expression of a complaint. This policy is evaluated as a highly constructive hypothesis, as the content of the complaint is openly discussed and offers of moral or material restitutions to the customer are provided almost immediately (Drigotas et al., 1995).

· To notify the members of the hotel organization and the customer of the consequences that the person responsible for creating this situation will suffer. In this way, on the one hand the customer and his trust are restored and on the other hand the organization itself is protected from the possibility of similar accusations being made (Oktay, 2011).

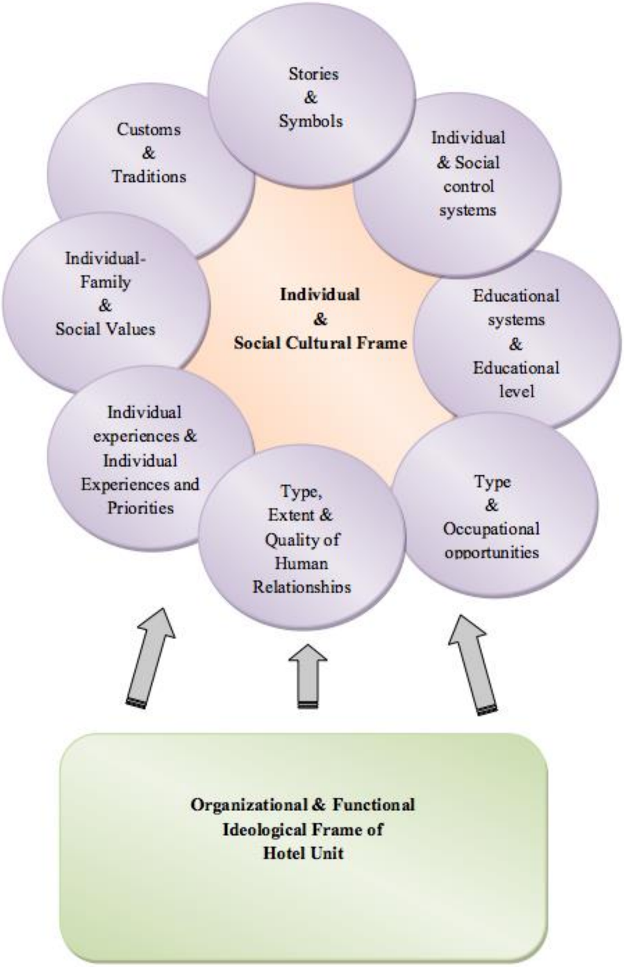

Figure 2: Cultural Cycle and Cultural Web of a customer of a hotel unit

Source: Johnson et al., 2015 & Own Depiction

3.1.2 Organizational and functional reformation

Because of the intense competition, the complexity of the internal and external surroundings of the hotel unit and its high operational intensity, the organizational and functional reformations are often necessary. It is also impossible nowadays for this to occur by only one person. Therefore, the creation of a powerful team is imperative, a powerful "guidance coalition" with a great degree of trust and with a common goal and vision (Kotter, 1996). The main duty of this team will be to strengthen the position and reputation of the hotel unit in a broader tourist field, via making vital strategical decisions.

Exploiting the power of its position, leading skills and its members' credibility, it will be able to act promptly and effectively on the significant matters that will occupy the hotel unit. As for the issue of appearance and expression of complaints on behalf of the customers of the hotel unit, the coalition will be in position to:

- Plan and clarify the strategical handling of such critical matters without discrepancies, insinuations and queries.
- Express itself less with austere logic or in some cases complacently and with more soul and emotions.
- Train and incite the employees to undertake behaviors and actions on their behalf that will not expose themselves and the unit to such issues.
- Promote the just and moral even if it causes dissatisfaction to the customer and satisfaction to the employee.
- Pursue the exchange of opinions and ideas with the executives, the employees, but also with the customers regarding the reasons of creation and the ways of handling such issues, emphasizing the significance of a customer's value and the employees offer.
- Systematically examine and face the mental and emotional reactions of the customer, the evaluation of the negative incident which caused the complaint and its expression to the administration. In this particular case, the expression of the complaint creates a stressful situation itself for the customer but he evaluates his skills for the handling of an unpleasant experience and on the other hand the severity of the impending harm which it is expected to bring to the unit (Lazarus, 1991).

3.2 The Procedure of Handling a Complaint Definitively

The resolution of a complaint should be considered on behalf of the administration as a temporary procedure. Its definitive resolution will be obvious much later and will depend on the out coming negative consequences for the hotel unit. As such, may be considered the bad reputation and the propagation of negative information from the customer to his family and friendly environment or to the touristic organization that provided him with the touristic package, but also the loss of repeating his preference for the same hotel unit (Kim et al., 2003).

For this reason the administration of the hotel unit should develop a system of collecting and processing actual facts which must be based on the below axes ***(Figure 3):***

- To the point of *degree of satisfaction* on behalf of the customers after they return to their place of residence, so that definitive impressions and views are stabilized during their stay at the hotel unit. The implementation of this procedure can be achieved by sending appropriate questionnaires via e-mail from the executives of the hotel unit or communicating on the telephone with the customers as in this way an element of intimacy is promoted.
- To the extent and degree the customers *repeat* their preference towards the hotel unit.
- To the extent of the size of the hotel's choice of new customers, as a result of their *constitution* by former complaining customers.
- To the extent of *neutrality* of the local and international touristic organizations that cooperate with the hotel unit and to what point this extent indicates indirectly the definitive or problematic adjustment and resolution of the issues that have to do with the expressed complaints of customers.

It is easily perceived that the higher the indicative figures, the less potent these negative consequences are for the hotel unit in relation to the former ways of managing complaints and vice versa.

4. CONCLUSIONS

In the contemporary touristic environment, the business prospect of a hotel unit mainly depends on the degree of its structural systems and the functional capabilities. In its full function it contains diverse human elements which must be managed with particular attention and increased effectiveness. In the prevailing ambivalent relationship "Customers- Employees", often arise mild controversies to intense conflicts. The customers express the situations in the form of a complaint, whereas the employee is forced to fairly or not succumb. The prevailing opinion that the customer is always right does not stand and unfortunately the high rank executives of the hotel unit do not always desire to change it. On the other hand, the employees intensely feel the lack of compassion and support from those executives and as a result feel deeply disappointed. The leading physiognomy of the administration, and so the high quality guidance coalition can become the determining factor for the limitation and even the full resolution of these situations. In addition, the implementation of the appropriate development strategies of a complaint management model from whichever side of the bipolar relationship it originates is considered imperative and it should constitute one of the basic priorities of the hotel unit if it wishes to maintain its participation in the touristic market.

Table 1: System of customer complaint management of a hotel unit

Methods & Procedures	**Features**	**Advantages**	**Disadvantages**
1. Proactive Reaction- Initiative	1. - Frequent communication with the customer to assure that all is well - Emission of a constant positive feeling on behalf of the employees of the hotel unit	1. - The generation of dissatisfaction (complaint) from the customer must be avoided - Satisfaction of the customer for the particular interest shown on behalf of the hotel unit's administration	1. - The negative feeling on behalf of the customer that everything is being done typically and purely out of personal benefit and not out of true human concern
2. "Face to face" policy	2. - Developing communication with the prominent will and the capability of the administrative executives to listen carefully and realize the complaint of the customer - Disposing sufficient time and the necessary sensitivity towards the customer to detect the true causes of the creation	2. - The expressed suggestions comprise essential information (data) for the hotel unit itself - It contributes to the necessary correctional acts that have to be taken on behalf of the administration of the hotel unit - It contributes significantly to the enhancement of the	2. - There is a danger of spiritual exhaustion and internal disappointment, when the customer realizes ,as time goes by, that the suggestions which should have been accompanied with the equivalent solutions are continuously decreasing

3. "Ope door" policy	of the complaint. 3. - The door of each managerial executive is open to the customer to express his complaint	actual yield and extent of the expressed complaint 3. - It encourages the customer to express himself freely, to open communication, conversation and feedback for the matter of the complaint - Deviating the supervising, for this issue, employees that could cause delay and distortion of the content of the complaint - Quick adjustment of complaint management for all involved with transparent and effective procedures - It contributes to the enhancement and strengthening of the relationships, leading towards mutual trust, cooperation and respect between the administration and the customer	3. - While the "Open door" policy intends to encourage and instill a sense of transparency and openness, some customers hesitate to speak or to be honest because of fear of being intimidated, criticism or even censure

Table 1: System of customer complaint management of a hotel unit ***(continuity)***

Methods Procedures	**Features**	**Advantages**	**Disadvantages**
4. Written expression of a complaint *5. "Balanced arbitration" policy*	4. - Supporting the will of a customer to submit a written complaint if for some reason he wishes to keep his anonymity - Supporting of the customer on behalf of the administration for the written expression and deposition of his complaint - Written reference and justification of the complaint on behalf of the customer 5. - Tripartite in the procedure of managing a complaint, the customer, the employee who caused the problem and the authorized high rank administrative executive of the hotel unit. The same framework is applied when the complaint is expressed on behalf of the	4. - The customer feels that he will be taken seriously into consideration when his accusation is formally registered - The written reference acts as a means of official confirmation for the administration and its employees, as well as a means of control - It ensures a specific and highly responsible accusation on	4. - The negative consequences of not resolving the issue of complaint can be unpredictably harmful for the hotel unit - In some cases, the official written policies which are supported by the administration are considered as threats by the customers, especially in the case when mistakes or omissions appear, a fact that makes him abstain this initiative 5. - There is a danger of aberration due to the expression of a single point even if it was not intentional - As time proceeds, it becomes clear as to whose side the "scales tilts" and as a result

	employee for misconduct from the customer - The administrative executive plays a coordinating and arbitrary role to the positions of the other two sides - Everything concerning the unfortunate incident is described and recorded in the form of a discussion - The definitive formation of its final position by the administration on this matter is not taken at that time, but alone in the direct future	behalf of the customer 5. - It is probably the most open and just procedure of approach of the underlying causes of the issue of the complaint - Exaggeration is avoided when the managing of the conversation is done in a very responsible and just manner by the authorized administrative executives of the hotel unit - After some time an atmosphere of laxity and relief is created, contributing	certain facial expressions of the involved can be distinguished, some stressful feelings and difficult human situations - In rare occasions, for example, for reasons of emotional preference, haste or gain the danger of unjust managing of the matter on behalf of the administrative executive exists and as a result leads to moral disappointment and personal bitterness of the unjustified party (usually the employee)

		to the finding of a final solution	

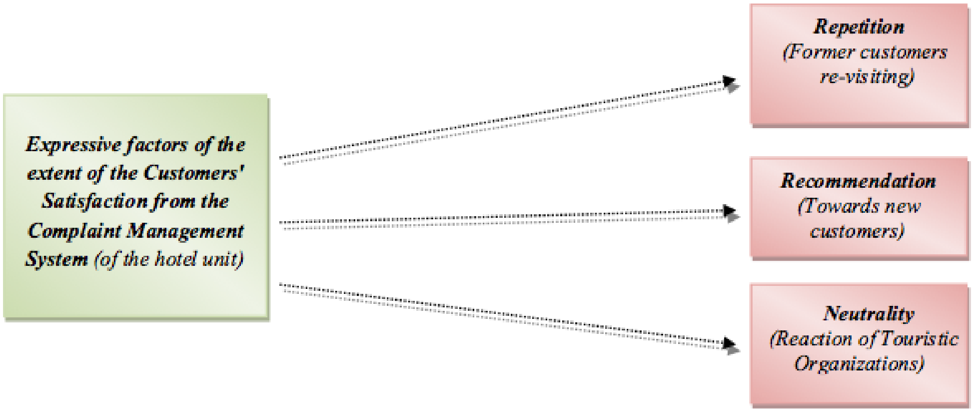

Figure 3: Axes of collecting and processing information System in relation to the complaint

of the customers of the hotel unit
Source: Own Depiction

REFERENCES

Ali, J.F, Ali, I., Rehman, K., Yılmaz, A.K., Safwan, N., Afzal, H. (2010), "Determinants of consumer retention in cellular industry of Pakistan", *African Journal of Business Management,* 4(12), pp. 2402-2408.

Assimakopoulos, C., Papaioannou, E., Sarmaniotis, C. (2011), "The Contribution of CRM Marketing Variables Towards Improving Company's Performance: A Case of Thessaloniki Area Hotels", *Arabian Journal of Business and Management Review,* 1(1), pp.17-31.

Barlow, J. & Møller, C. (2008), *A complaint is a gift: recovering customer loyalty when things go wrong*, San Francisco, California: Berrett-Koehler Publishers.

Blodgett, J. G. & Granbois, D. H. (1992), "Toward an integrated conceptual model of consumer complaining behavior", *Journal of Consumer Satisfaction, Dissatisfaction and Complaining Behavior*, *5*(1), pp. 93-103.

Brownlie, D. (1995), "Analysing the Environment". In M. J. Thomas (Eds.), *Gower Handbook of Marketing* (pp.55-80), Aldershot, Hampshire: Gower Publishing.

Chen, C., Hu, J., Liao, J. (2010), "Tourists' nationalities and the cost efficiency of international tourist hotels in Taiwan", *African Journal of Business Management,* 4(16), pp. 3440-3446.

Davidow, M. (2003), "Organisational Responses to Customer Complaints: What Works and What Doesn't", *Journal of Service Research,* 5(3), pp. 225-250.

Day, R. L., Grabicke, K., Schaetzle, T., Staubach, F. (1981), "The hidden agenda of consumer complaining", *Journal of Retailing,* 57(3), pp. 86-106.

Defranco, A., Wortman, J., Lam, T., Countryman, C. (2005), "A Crosscultural comparison of customer complaint behaviour in restaurants in hotels", *Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research,* 10(2), pp.173-190.

De Klerk, H. M. (2006), "Dissatisfied consumers' complaint behaviour concerning product failure of major electrical household appliances - a conceptual framework, *Journal of Family Ecology and Consumer Sciences*, 34(1), 41-55.

Drigotas, S., Whitney, G., Rusbult, C. (1995), "On the peculiarities of loyalty: A diary study of responses to dissatisfaction in everyday life", Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 21(6), pp. 596-609.

Hofstede, G. (2001), "Culture's recent consequences: Using dimension scores in theory and research", *International Journal of Cross Cultural Management*, 1(1), pp.11-17.

Huppertz, J. W. (2003), "An effort model of first-stage complaining behavior", Journal of Consumer Satisfaction, Dissatisfaction, and Complaining Behavior, 16, pp. 132-144.

Jacoby, J. & Jaccard, J. J. (1981), “The sources, meaning, and validity of consumer complaint behavior: A psychological analysis, *Journal of Retailing,* 57(3), pp.4-23.

Johnson, G. (1992), “Managing strategic change - strategy, culture and action”, *Long Range Planning,* 25(1), pp. 28-36.

Johnson, G., Whittington, R., Scholes, K., Angwin, D., Regnér, P. (2015), *Fundamentals of Strategy*, Harlow: Pearson.

Kau, A. K. & Wan-Yiun Loh, E. (2006), “The effects of service recovery on consumer satisfaction: A comparison between complainants and non-complainants”, *Journal of Services Marketing*, 20(2), pp. 101-111.

Kim, C., Kim, S., Im, S., Shin, C. (2003), “The effect of attitude and perception on consumer complaint intentions”, *Journal of Consumer Marketing,* 20(4), pp.352-371.

Kotter, J. P. (1996), *Leading Change*, Boston: Harvard Business Press.

Lazarus, R.S. (1991), *Emotion and Adaptation,* New York: Oxford University Press.

Mayer, N. O. (2015), *Online reputations: Why hotel reviews matter and how hotels respond,* Zurich: PWC Publishing.

Maxham, J. G. & Netemeyer, R. G. (2002), “Modeling customer perceptions of complaint handling over time: The effects of perceived justice on satisfaction and intent”, *Journal of retailing*, 78(4), pp. 239-252.

Ngai, E. W., Heung, V. C., Wong, Y. H., Chan F. K. (2007), “Consumer complaint behaviour of Asians and non - Asians about hotel services: An empirical analysis”, *European Journal of Marketing*, 41(11/12), pp.1375-1391.

Oktay, E. (2011), “Customer complaints and complaint behaviours in Turkish hotel restaurants: An application in Lara and Kundu areas of Antalya”, *African Journal of Business Management,* 5(11), pp. 4239-4253.

Plymire, J. (1991), “Complaints as opportunities”, *Journal of Consumer Marketing,* 8(2), pp. 39-43.

Singh, J. (1988), "Consumer complaint intentions and behaviour: Definitional and taxonomical issues", *Journal of Marketing,* 52(1), pp. 93-107.

Somaraki, M. (2010), *"Organization and Administration of Customer Complaints in Tourism Services in Hotel Units",* Bachelor Thesis, Department of Management of Tourism Enterprises, School of Business Administration and Economics, Technological Educational Institute of Crete, Heraklion, pp.1-112.

Staehle, W. (1990), *Management* (5 Aufl.), München: Verlag Vahlen.

Tronvoll, B. (2007), "Customer complaint behaviour from the perspective of the service-dominant logic of marketing", *Managing Service Quality,* 17(6), pp. 601-620.

Tufts, S. (2014), "The hotel sector in an age of uncertainty: A labour perspective". In D. Jordhus-Lier &A. Underthun (Eds.), *Hospitable world ?:Organizing work and workers in hotels and tourist resorts* (52-66), Oxon & New York: Routledge.

Velazquez, B.M., Contri, G.B., Saura, I.G., Blasco, M.F. (2006), "Antecedents to complaint behaviour in the context of restaurant goers", *The International Review of Retail Distribution and Consumer Research,* 16(5), pp. 493-517.

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE EFFECTS ON ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE. AN EMPIRICAL STUDY OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

ALEXANDROS G SAHINIDIS

Department of Business Administration, TEI of Athens, Greece

DIMITRIOS KALLIVOKAS

Department of Business Administration, TEI of Athens, Greece

ANTHOULA MARKANTONATOU

Department of Business Administration, TEI of Athens, Greece

LABROS SDROLIAS

Department of Business Administration, TEI of Thessaly, Greece

ABSTRACT

The relationship between Emotional Intelligence (EI) and Academic Performance, although investigated in previous studies, has failed to yield consistent findings raising the need for further study. The purpose of this study is to further illuminate the link between EI and student scholastic achievements, closing the gap in the extant literature. Furthermore, the gender differences were investigated in regard to possible differences of EI and its facets and their respective relationship to performance. The 30-item Likert scale questionnaire used, was completed close to 600 university students who were asked to respond to the 30 EI- related questions and report their GPA, both the actual and the one they perceived they deserved. A regression analysis was used to determine the explaining power of EI over the student performance. The results indicate that there is a statistically significant relationship between EI, overall as well as two of its facets with academic performance. Furthermore, gender differences were also found in self-control and emotionality. The implications of this study for educators and academic policy makers are considerable, since the systematic fostering of EI in students could lead to greater educational outcomes and more effective institutions

Key Words: Emotional Intelligence, Academic Performance, University Students

INTRODUCTION

Emotional Intelligence (EI) studies abound, since the popularizing of the concept by Goleman (1995) in the mid- 90's, examining the relationship of the concept with various personal as well as organizational outcomes (Karim, J. Bibi, Z. Rehman, S. and Khan, M, 2015); Jordan & Troth, 2011). The research on EI followed two diverging streams the Trait EI and the Ability EI. Among the leading scholars in the Trait EI approach Petrides and his associates define EI as "a constellation of behavioral dispositions and self-perceptions concerning one's ability to recognize, process, and utilize emotion-laden information." (Petrides & Furnham, 2003, p. 278). Trait EI is typically studied through self-reports along with other personality traits. Ability EI refers to "the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions" (Salovey & Mayer, 1990, p. 189). Ability EI is measured through performance based questionnaires, in a similar way to the cognitive ability measurement (Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2000). The ability EI approach is particularly challenging since it requires the construction of relevant items that can be objectively scored as correct or incorrect, posing thus measurement problems. Trait EI, on the other hand is relatively easy to use and it has been used by several researchers in the literature (Bar-On, 1997; Schutte et al., 1998; Petrides & Furnham, 2001; Petrides et al., 2016). Various researches have well-documented the empirical differences between the two approaches (Warwick & Nettelbeck, 2004). Although the two streams use different operationalization of their constructs both have shown strong predictive ability in regards to numerous academic, career, and life outcomes (Petrides et al., 2016; Amdurer, Boyatzis, Saatcioglu, Smith, & Taylor, 2014). The present study mainly concerns the first stream, that is, trait EI.

Several researchers endeavored to examine the relationship between trait EI and ability EI with academic achievement, investigating in parallel EI relationship with factors impeding or fostering student performance such problem-solving skills (Salovey, Mayer, Caruso, & Yoo, 2008), year retention at the university level (Qualter, Whiteley, Morley, & Dudiak, 2009), psychological wellbeing (Salami, 2011), quality of interpersonal relationships (Afolabi, Okediji and Ogunmwonyi, 2009) and Academic Achievement measured by standardized test scores, grade point average on graduation (Fernández, Salamonson, & Griffiths, 2012; Hogan et al., 2010; Keefer, Parker, & Wood, 2012; MacCann et al., 2011; Perera & Digiacomo, 2013). The influence of EI, as a facilitator, within academic domains has mostly been attributed to student abilities to manage the complexities of the social-emotional environment of academic environments (Matthews, Zeidner, & Roberts, 2002). More specifically, EI has been linked to psychological constructs that are believed to directly or indirectly contribute to academic success — such as need for achievement (Afolabi et al., 2009), adaptive coping strategies (MacCann et al., 2011; Tugade & Frederickson, 2008), and positive peer interactions (Mavroveli, Petrides, Rieffe, & Bakker, 2010; Petrides et al., 2008; Perera & Digiacomo, 2013).

TRAIT EI AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

Trait EI in general refers to various affective personality traits, related to typical behavioural patterns, fellings and thoughts, associated with self-control and self-motivation dispositions. (Perera & Digiakomo, 2013; Petrides, 2011; Petrides, Furnham, & Mavroveli, 2007). Studies have shown that the EI trait is genetics-related, with the latter explaining variation at levels of between 20% and 80%, co-varying with other super-factors, such as the Big Five (Perera & DiGiacomo, 2013). Performance in occupational and educational settings is typically influenced by the ability to perform or achieve (Blumberg & Pringle, 1982; McKenzie, Gow, & Schweitzer, 2004; Mouw & Khanna, 1993). Ability to perform is indicative of intelligence, skills and competences, while willingness to achieve centers on motivation, initiative and determination. Students with high EI trait are achievement oriented, and that leads them to set academic goals in order to attain superior academic outcomes (Mount, Barrick, & Strauss, 1999). The determination of these students generates greater commitment to achieving their academic goals. One would expect then that high trait EI students would perform academically better than their low trait EI counterparts. In addition, relating to a student's proclivity to low impulsiveness (Petrides, 2009, 2011), students with a high EI trait will tend to delay momentary gratification in the service of environmental demands and pursuit of established goals (Petrides, 2009). Low trait EI individuals, contrariwise, strongly tend toward impulsivity, yielding to the temptation of immediate gratification (Petrides, 2009; Petrides et al., 2004). In the words of Perera & DiGiacomo, (2013, p. 9) “To the extent that individuals set academic goals, which is typical of those with high trait EI, dispositional self-control tendencies may promote goal-approach and temptation avoidance in the service of maximising academic outcomes.”

It follows from the above that there are compelling reasons to further pursue an inquiry, into the relationship of EI with Academic Performance, in spite of the “inconsistent findings” reported in various studies (Mavroveli et al., 2007; Newsome, Day και Catano (2000); Mavroveli & Sánchez-Ruiz, 2011). The purpose of this study then, is to investigate the relationship of trait EI with academic performance in the setting of a Greek university. No other studies with a similar sample have been conducted in Greece, to our knowledge and that is the contribution of our effort.

METHODOLOGY

The research was conducted in a large university in the area Athens, and it included students from a variety of schools and departments. In the period between October 2016 and February 2017, we invited the student population of the university to complete the online questionnaire we had set up and communicated it to them by electronic means. The respondents were 648, ranging in ages between 18 and 36. The questionnaire used in the present study TEIQue (Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire) has been developed and tested widely by Petrides & Furnham, (2001) and Petrides , Pita and Kokkinaki (2007), among other researchers and it is considered to be among the most valid in the trait EI approach in the extant literature. Petrides & Furnham, (2001), proposed the measurement of EI with the use of 15 characteristics, which could then load on four factors:

- Wellbeing
- Self-control
- Emotionality
- Sociability

To avoid potential translation problems we used the Greek version of the EI instrument available by Petrides, Pita & Kokkinaki, (2007). The questionnaire used in this study is the 30-item short form which is o concise form of the original 153-item one used originally by the authors above. After a number of tests Petrides et al., (2007), concluded that the short version is almost as effective as the long one, while at the same time it offers brevity and maintains the answering persons' attention.

The respondents were asked to complete the 7-grade Likert scale indicating agreement with the statement, while there were a number of reverse scored questions (7, 9, 10, 12, 13, 15, 17, 18, 19, 21, 23, 27, 30, 31, 33).

SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) 20.0 was used for the data analysis.

To measure Academic Performance, we used three different measures, the grade point average (GPA)which is used elsewhere in the literature, the GPA, "I deserve", to discern potential differences with the actual one, and to foster the respondents to be honest in disclosing their grades and a third one depicting the most recent performance of the student the GPA of the latest semester (Fernández, Salamonson, & Griffiths, 2012; Hogan et al., 2010; Keefer, Parker, & Wood, 2012; MacCann et al., 2011).

RESULTS

The statistical analysis produced the following EI scores for each of the factors of EI

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Self-control	648	25,22	4,063	11	39
Well-being	648	26,95	3,568	16	42
Sociability	648	26,18	3,687	15	36

Emotionality	648	29,72	5,162	16	51
Total EI	648	124,42	11,588	91	186

We subsequently conducted a t-test to detect possible differences between the sexes.

Table 2. T-Test Independent Samples (Male-Female)

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		***t-test for Equality of Means***				
	F	***Sig.***	***T***	***df***	***Sig. (2-tailed)***	***Mean Difference***	***Std. Error Difference***
Self-Control	,707	,401	-1,844	407	,066	-,721	,391
			-1,830	373,840	,068	-,721	,394
Well-being	,263	,608	-1,754	407	,080	-,641	,366
			-1,755	386,993	,080	-,641	,365
Sociability	,494	,483	-1,729	407	,085	-,642	,371
			-1,736	391,587	,083	-,642	,370

Emotionality	2,014	,157	,135	407	,893	,072	,533
			,137	404,263	,891	,072	,524
General EI	,051	,822	-1,695	407	,091	-1,948	1,149
			-1,702	392,566	,089	-1,948	1,144

No significant differences are reported between the sexes, in all of the EI factors and the Total EI as well. This is not surprising since in previous studies only one has reported a significant difference between genders (Mayer et al. (2000) and Schutte et al (1998).

In order to test the relationship of EI with the GPA (our main measure of Academic Performance) we used a three-way split of the GPA scores: Low GPA (5.0-6.49), Medium (6.5-7.9), and High (8-10)

Table 3. ANOVA

		Sum of Squares	*df*	*Mean Square*	*F*	*Sig.*
Self-control	***Between Groups***	30,508	2	15,254	,924	,398
	Within Groups	10649,492	645	16,511		
	Total	10680,000	647			
Well-being	***Between Groups***	11,754	2	5,877	,461	,631
	Within Groups	8224,462	645	12,751		
	Total	8236,216	647			

Sociability	***Between Groups***	17,389	2	8,695	,639	,528
	Within Groups	8777,845	645	13,609		
	Total	8795,235	647			
Emotionality	***Between Groups***	34,048	2	17,024	,638	,529
	Within Groups	17207,272	645	26,678		
	Total	17241,319	647			
General EI	***Between Groups***	343,531	2	171,766	1,280	,279
	Within Groups	86532,296	645	134,159		
	Total	86875,827	647			

Table 3 (One-way ANOVA .indicates no relationship between the EI factors and performance measured by the GPA. The findings of the present study are in agreement with earlier finding reported in related research and they should not come as a surprise (Newsome, Day & Catano, 2000; O' Connor & Little, 2003, Jaeger, Bresciani & Ward, 2003; Lyons & Schneider, 2005; Bastian, Burns & Nettekbeck, 2005; and Vishwanathan, 2008).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

A large number of studies suggest that EI relates to work performance. Occupational success, in a similar way to academic achievement is linked to setting reasonably high goals and achieving them, so as to experience the sense of accomplishment and at the same time avoiding the unpleasant experience of not attaining one's goals. We expected that in the face of diverging findings reported by researchers heretofore, we will lend further support to the notion that EI does have a positive effect on student performance and the student support mechanisms in universities can actually help students improve their academic standing by adapting to the particularities of the local environment, helping them handle relationship problems and overall manage potential affective deficiencies.

The results of our study nevertheless do not support our expectations. According to Perera & DiGiacomo, (2013) it is possible that the use of any of the other two widely used instruments, i.e., Bar-On Emotion Quotient Inventory [EQ-i] and Schutte Emotional Intelligence Scale [SEIS], could lead to different outcomes as compared to TEIQue. Another possibility also is that the use of the long version of the instrument could result to other conclusions. The role of moderators which did have a role in the Petrides et al., (2004), study, has not been investigated in this study and it could potentially be an important limitation of it. Moderating variables such as age of the respondents, year of study, along with the instrument used could be important factors affecting the outcomes of the study and they may be taken into account in future studies.

REFERENCES

Afolabi, O., Okediji, A., & Ogunmwonyi, E. (2009). 'Influence of emotional intelligence and need for achievement on interpersonal relations and academic achievement of undergraduates.' *Educational Research Quarterly*, 33(2), pp. 15–29.

Amdurer, E., Boyatzis, E. B., Saatcioglu, A., Smith, M. L., & Taylor, S. N. (2014). Long term impact of emotional, social, and cognitive intelligence competencies and GMAT on career and life satisfaction and career success. Frontiers in Psychology, 5, 1–15.

Bar-On, R. (1997). BarOn EmotionalQuotient Inventory: technicalmanual . Toronto: Multi-Health Systems Inc.

Bastian, Veneta A., Nicholas R. Burns, and Ted Nettelbeck. "Emotional intelligence predicts life skills, but not as well as personality and cognitive abilities." Personality and individual differences 39.6 (2005): 1135-1145.

Blumberg, M., & Pringle, C. D. (1982). The missing opportunity in organizational research: Some implications for a theory of work performance. Academy of Management Review, 7, 560-569

Fernández, R., Salamonson, Y., & Griffiths, R. (2012). Emotional intelligence as a predictor of academic performance in first-year accelerated graduate entry nursing students. Journal of Clinical Nursing, 21, 3485–3492. http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2702. 2012.04199.x.

Goleman, D. (1995). Emotional intelligence: why it can matter more than IQ. London: Bloomsbury.

Hogan, M. J., Parker, J. D. A.,Wiener, J.,Watters, C.,Wood, L.M., & Oke, A. (2010). Academic success in adolescence: Relationships among verbal IQ, social support and emotional intelligence. Australian Journal of Psychology, 62, 30–41.

Jaeger, A. J., Bresciani, M. J., & Ward, C. S. (2003).Predicting persistence and academic performance of first year students.An assessment of emotional intelligence and non-cognitive variables.M.A. North Carolina State University. Retrieved December 9, 2017, from http://www.ncsu.edu/assessment/resources/news/nov03.pdf

Karim, J. Bibi, Z. Rehman, S. and Khan, M (2015) Perceived Work-related Outcomes: Mediating Role of Workplace Incivility Victimization, Pakistan Journal of Psychological Research, Vol. 30, No. 1, 21-37

Keefer, K. V., Parker, J. D. A., &Wood, L. M. (2012). Trait emotional intelligence and university graduation outcomes: Using latent profile analysis to identify students at risk for degree noncompletion. Journal of Psychoeducational Assessment, 30, 402–413.

Lyons, J.B., Schneider, T. R. (2005). The influence of emotional intelligence on performance. Personality and Individual Differences 39, 693–703.

MacCann, C., Fogarty, G. J., Zeidner, M., & Roberts, R. D. (2011). Coping mediates the relationship between emotional intelligence (EI) and academic achievement. Contemporary Educational Psychology, 36(1), 60–70.

McKenzie, K., Gow., K., & Schweitzer, R. (2004). Exploring first-year academic achievement through structural equation modelling. Higher Education Research and Development, 23, 95-112.

Mavroveli, S., Petrides, K. V., Rieffe, C., & Bakker, F. (2007). Trait emotional intelligence, psychological well-being and peer-rated competence in adolescence. British Journal of Developmental Psychology.

Mavroveli, S., Petrides, K. V., Rieffe, C., & Bakker, F. (2010). Trait emotional intelligence,

psychological well-being and peer-rated social competence in adolescence. British Journal of Developmental Psychology, 25(2), 263–275.

Mavroveli S1, Sánchez-Ruiz MJ. (2011) Trait emotional intelligence influences on academic achievement and school behavior, British J Educational Psychology Mar;81(Pt 1):112-34.

Mayer, J. D., Salovey, P., & Caruso, D. R. (2000). Competing models of emotional intelligence. In R. J. Sternberg (Ed.), Handbook of human intelligence (pp. 396–420). New York: Cambridge University Press.

Mayer, J. D., Caruso, D. R., & Salovey, P. (2000). Selecting a measure of emotional intelligence; the case for ability scales. In R. Bar-On & J. D. A. Parker (Eds.). The handbook of emotional intelligence (pp. 320-342). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Mount, M. K., Barrick, M. R., & Strauss, J. P. (1999). The joint relationship of conscientiousness and ability with performance: Test of the interaction hypothesis. Journal of Management, 25, 707-721.

Mouw, J. T., & Khanna, R. K. (1993). Prediction of academic success: A review of the literature and some recommendations. College Student Journal, 27, 328-336.

Newsome, S., Day, A. L., & Catano, V. M. (2000). Assessing the predictive validity of emotional intelligence. Personality and Individual Differences, 29, 1005-1016.

O' Connor, R. M., & Little, I. S. (2003). Revisiting the predictive validity of emotional intelligence: Self-report versus ability-based measures. Personality and Individual Differences, 35, 1893-1902.

Perera, H., & Digiacomo, H. (2013). The relationship of trait emotional intelligence with academic performance: A meta-analytic review. Learning and Individual Differences, 28, 20–33.

Petrides, K. V., Mikolajczak, M., Mavroveli, S., Sanchez-Ruiz, M. J., Furnham, A., & Pérez-González, J. C. (2016). Developments in trait emotional intelligence research. Emotion Review, 8(4), 335–341.

Petrides, K. V. (2009). Technical manual for the Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaires (TEIQue) (1st edition, 4th printing). London: London Psychometric Laboratory.

Petrides, K. V. (2011). Ability and trait emotional intelligence. In T. Chamorro-Premuzic, A. Furnham, & S. von Stumm (Eds.), The Blackwell-Wiley Handbook of Individual Differences (pp. 656-678). New York, NY: Wiley.

Petrides, K. V., Sangareau, Y., Furnham, A., & Frederickson, N. (2008). Trait emotional intelligence and children's peer relations at school. In J. C. Cassady, & M. A. Eissa, (Eds.), Emotional intelligence: Perspectives on educational and positive psychology (pp. 63–76), Peter Lang Publishing New York, NY.

Petrides, K. V., Furnham, A., & Mavroveli, S. (2007). Trait emotional intelligence: Moving forward in the field of EI. In G. Matthews, M. Zeidner, & R. D. Roberts (Eds.), The science of emotional intelligence: Knowns and unknowns – Series in Affective Sciences (pp. 288-304). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Petrides, K. V., & Furnham, A. (2001). Trait emotional intelligence: psychometric investigation with reference to established trait taxonomies. European Journal of Personality, 15, 425–448.

Petrides, K. V., & Furnham, A. (2003). Trait emotional intelligence: behavioral validation in two studies of emotion recognition and reactivity to mood induction. European Journal of Personality, 17, 39–75.

Petrides, Kostantinos V., Ria Pita, and Flora Kokkinaki. "The location of trait emotional intelligence in personality factor space." British Journal of Psychology 98.2 (2007): 273-289.

Qualter, P., Whiteley, H., Morley, A., & Dudiak, H. (2009). The role of emotional intelligence in the decision to persist with academic studies in HE. Research in Post-Compulsory Education, 14, 219–231.

Salami, S. O. (2011). Personality and psychological well-being of adolescents: The moderating role of emotional intelligence. Social Behavior & Personality: An International Journal, 39(6), 785–794.

Salovey, P., & Mayer, J. D. (1990). Emotional intelligence. Imagination, Cognition and Personality, 9, 185–211

Salovey, P., Mayer, J. D., Caruso, D., & Yoo, S. H. (2008). The positive psychology of emotional intelligence. In J. C. Cassady, & M. A. Eissa (Eds.), Emotional intelligence perspectives on educational and positive psychology (pp. 185–208). New York: Peter Lang.

Schutte, N. S., Malouff, J. M., Hall, L. E., Haggerty, D. J., Cooper, J. T., Golden, C. J., & Dornheim, L. (1998). Development and validation of a measure of emotional intelligence. Personality and Individual Differences, 25, 167–177.

Schutte, N. S., Malouff, J. M., Hall, L. E., Haggerty, D. J., Cooper, J. T., Golden, C. J., & Dornheim, L. (1998). Development and validation of a measure of emotional intelligence. Personality and individual differences, 25(2), 167-177.

Thomas, Cassady and Heller (2017) The influence of emotional intelligence, cognitive test anxiety, and coping strategies on undergraduate academic performance. Learning and Individual Differences 55:40 – 48.

Tugade, M. M., & Frederickson, B. L. (2008). Positive emotions and emotional intelligence. In J. C. Cassady, & M. A. Eissa (Eds.), Emotional intelligence: Perspectives on educational and positive psychology (pp. 145–168). New York, NY: Peter Lang Publishing

Vishwanathan, R. (2008). Relating Academic Performance to Emotional Intelligence a Predictive Model. The Icfai Journal of Higher Education, Vol. 3, No. 2, pp. 25-32.

Warwick J , Nettelbeck T . 2004 . Emotional Intelligence is … ? Personality and Individual Differences ,Vol. 37 , No.05 ,pp: 1091 -1100