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## INTRODUCTION



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

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

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

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

Laloumis Dimitris

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## WRITING GUIDELINES

In “Journal of TourismResearch” can be published original articles and research studies dealing with tourism topics. The articles and the studies should have never been published before.

Every scientific paper should not exceed a maximum of 8000 words and should be sent in electronic form at [info@dratte.gr](mailto:info@dratte.gr).

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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- *For papers in journals:* Blangy S. & Nielson T. (1995) Ecotourism and minimum impact policy, *Annals of Tourism Research* 20(2), 357-360.
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After the papers' judgement, the authors will be notified, either the judgement has been positive or not. The approved papers will be published according to priority of chronological order.

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## ***FRANCHISING: BUSINESS FORMULA OF 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY***

**Tadarakov Dimitar**

Professor, Economics of Tourism

University of National and World Economy, Bulgaria

### **ABSTRACT**

The main purpose of the present research report is to present and analyze franchising as an alternative growth strategy for tourism enterprises that combines a variety of products, services and corporate strategies. Special emphasis is laid on the essential characteristics of franchising as a specific business model for company growth and development. With a view to its specific features, franchising is considered to be one of the most successful business formats in 21st century. The focus is put on the role of the so-called 'responsible franchising', which is providing added value to franchisees by teaching them how to achieve a competitive advantage and maintain a wide range of customers willing to consume franchise products and services. The advantages of franchising are analyzed in details as a method of growth and expansion in the tourism industry. Disadvantages and limitations of this financial instrument are considered, too. The profile of the Bulgarian franchise model is studied as well as the present status and trends of franchise development in Bulgaria. Current problems of the franchise market in this country are discussed.

**Keywords:** Franchising, Growth Strategy, Tourism Enterprises, Responsible Franchising.

## **FUNDAMENTAL CHARACTERISTICS OF FRANCHISING**

In recent decades franchising has emerged as popular expanding business tool, which combines diversity of products, services and company strategies. This business model became an **effective opportunity** for small tourism enterprises, which cannot afford to finance their development (Dant & Kaufmann, 2003).

A lot of trade formulas and business strategies are defined with the term 'franchising', but often this denotation is given to them incorrectly (Bermúdez, 2002). Defining the franchising concept is a task related to many difficulties, because depending on the perspective of study (law, trade, institutional, etc.), more attention is paid to some aspects than to others. Franchising is a **commercial relationship** between two agents – franchisor and franchisee, who are legally and financially independent, but share a common goal (Insa-Ciriza, 2003). Franchising is based on a contract, by which the franchisor gives to the franchisee the right to use a **developed business concept**, including brand name, products, marketing services, methods and manners of managing the business, in a specific field against payment. Usually in the franchising system there are several franchisees, which have similar cooperation agreements with one and the same franchisor. This allows them to work together on the market by a cooperative system. In this context Díez et al (2005) define franchising as a **cooperative system** between different organizations, bounded by a contract, by which one of them, called the franchisor, gives against payment to the other party, called the franchisee, the right to use the brand name and/or the commercial formula, materialized by certain distinctive signs. The franchisor guarantees at the same time technical support and the necessary regular maintenance services during the term of the contract. From this definition the following **fundamental characteristics of franchising** can be found:

- Franchising is a cooperative system.
- Relations between the two parties are established by a contract.

- Participants in this system are the main company (franchisor) and the companies which sign the contract with the franchisor (franchisees).
- The franchisor provides to its franchisees brand name, commercial formula or know – how, technical or other support during the term of the contract.

Another definition of this **intellectual and financial tool** is given by Bermúdez (2002). He perceives franchising as a **business system for cooperation** which aims to connect two economically and legally independent units in long-term plan with a contract by which one of them (franchisor) provides in good faith to the other (franchisee) the rights to use its business, production, distribution and marketing of tangible or intangible products with proven quality. This product may include basic and extra services, which might be secured (patents, brands, and etc.) or unsecured (know – how), however all of them should be sufficiently tested, effective and licenced. In return of received rights each franchisee is required to make periodical or lump-sum payments to the franchisor. According to this definition **six interchangeable flows** take place between the parties under this contractual relationship:

- ✓ *Information flow.* Information has to pass between the franchisor and the franchisee,

as well as between the franchisees themselves. This helps for solving emerging problems, exchanging information about the market and various competencies, and for receiving of services and training required by the franchisee.

- ✓ *Material flow.* The right to operate the business of one or more brands with regard to

products, services and know – how, listed in the contract is a prerequisite condition for both parties in a franchise relationship.

- ✓ *Physical flow.* If between the franchisor and the franchisee exists a relationship that aims to exchange material goods, then the physical flow is carried out by the members of the distribution channel.

✓ *Financial flow.* The franchisee has to pay off for the goods, services and ideas that it has received by the franchisor.

✓ *Satisfaction information.* It is necessary to have information about the extent to which the expectations of the contractual parties – the franchisor and the franchisee, are satisfied with a view to making subsequent decisions.

✓ *Transparency.* Giving true and complete information is an important requirement for maintaining a long-term relationship between the parties.

Franchising might be seen as an **alternative growth strategy**, because the owners of franchise companies are not directly responsible for the financial investments, necessary for the expansion of their businesses. This financial responsibility is taken by franchisees that pay to the franchisor the right to use its trademark and business package against payment of an initial fee and royalty. In the future that capital becomes a valuable and a profitable asset for future business expansion.

In terms of business, the franchise system is an **alternative way to create companies with less risk**, which is a consequence of the application of a proven management model. Therefore, franchising contributes to the expansion of business structures that have already been established. It is important to note that not every company or business could operate by using franchise model. For this purpose, franchising needs a key element for success that is already proven by the franchisor, which has to be distinguishable and able to pass to future franchisees by some adequate training. If this process is not realized in the best way, the company will fail in short or medium period of time.

As a **marketing instrument** and a **distribution tool** of products and services, franchising is suitable for certain tourism enterprises. Before any tourism enterprise considers franchising as a **method of rapid expansion**, it is necessary to take into consideration a number of legal and business practices. Many tourism companies prematurely choose franchising as a **growth alternative** or a **strategy for international rollouts**. Other organizations resort to it, driven by unqualified consultants, who are interested in the professional fees received, rather than in the long-term success of the proposed franchise program (Chen, 2010). This causes financial distress and business failures of both, the franchisor and the franchisee and often evolves into litigations. Therefore companies that are part of

a franchise system should be responsible for the establishment and development of their franchise programs. Such attitude towards this financial tools is known as **‘responsible’ franchising**.

## **FRANCHISING ELEMENTS THAT PROVIDE COMPANY GROWTH**

**‘Responsible franchising’** is the only way in which growing tourism enterprises and the franchisees could exist in a harmonious environment in 21st century. It requires a secure foundation on which the franchise program to be developed. The core of the responsible franchise model is based on the understanding of the strategic nature of the business structure. Franchise system consists of **three basic elements** – brand name, operating system and ongoing support from the franchisor to the franchisee (Barnes, 2001).

**The brand name** creates demand that initially helps the franchisee to attract customers. It includes trademarks and service marks of the franchisor, commercial interior, and all the intangible factors that create customer’s fidelity and build market value of the service (Parusheva, 2013). The **operating system** provides the promise that allows franchisee to maintain good relations with its customers and build loyal relations with them. The **constant support** and training boost growth and provide to the franchisee tools and tips for expanding the customers base and for developing an independant market share.

**The responsibly established franchising system** is such a system that provides added value to its franchisees, by training them how to achieve competitive advantage and maintain a wide range of customers, who are willing to consume their products and services. Many of the disputes in franchising relations are based on the difference between the actual needs of the franchisees to retain their market niche and the current support from the franchisor. Major discussions are generated by the wish of the franchisee to acquire competitiveness and the failure of the franchisor to comply with the contractual promises, the initial support and the continuing training (Abrams, 2010).

Every organization which treats franchising as a **method of growth and expansion** should understand its **basic components** that could be synthesized in the following areas:

- ✓ **Proven business concept:** provides a basis for applying the franchise program.
- ✓ **A strong management team** consisting of internal experts and qualified consultants: they must be familiar with both the specific characteristics of tourism industry and the legal and business aspects of franchising as a method of expansion.
- ✓ **Sufficient financial capital:** it is required for starting and maintaining the franchise program; it should be available for the developing tourism company for providing initial support and subsequent assistance to the franchisees.
- ✓ **Availability of distinguishable and protected commercial identity:** it includes registered trademarks, uniformed appearance, and distribution policy that create the overall image of the franchise program.
- ✓ **Patented and proven methods of operation and management:** these shall be presented in a detailed operation manual that helps the franchisees to implement their operational work.
- ✓ **Ability to protect the intellectual products:** it is a key point, in case of duplication of the product range by competitors and it is manifested by clear and objective standards established for quality control.
- ✓ **Comprehensive training program provided to the franchisees:** this shall integrate all the latest education and training technologies.
- ✓ **Ability to use a support staff** by qualified teachers: they shall support the franchisees during the work process periodically, and shall monitor the quality control.
- ✓ **A set of complex legal documents:** they reflect the business strategy and the operating policy of the company. There should assure a delicate balance between the rights and obligations of the parent tourism enterprise and the franchisee, respectively.
- ✓ **Providing continuous market demand for products and services** by the growing tourism enterprise subject to distribution through franchising. The products and services offered in the franchise package must comply with certain minimum quality standards. They should not be a subject to rapid changes to the consumer's preferences. The study and analysis of the market is necessary to comply with the current trends in the economy and with the competitiveness of the tourism industry.

- ✓ **Carefully designed set of uniform criteria for selection** of the site and architectural standards.
- ✓ **Understanding of the competition**, assessment of direct and indirect competitors, and reliable marketing and sale policy, developed by the franchisor for the franchisee's needs.
- ✓ **Agreed relations with suppliers**, creditors, foreign companies, as well as with the key resources related to them.
- ✓ **Secured and tested control system targeted** to define the minimal financial possibilities as well as careful study of the latest trends in hospitality industry, needed for the company's success.
- ✓ **Preparing and analyzing the market profile** of the franchisees.
- ✓ **Effective system for reporting and supporting** the payment of the royalties on behalf of the franchisees.
- ✓ **Exploring possibilities of introducing new products and services** for the consumers through franchise network.
- ✓ **Developing a solid communication system** that facilitates dialogue with the franchisees, and reduces the chances for conflicts and disputes with the franchise network.
- ✓ **Providing stable national, regional and local advertising, marketing and public relations programs** for recruitment of potential franchisees as well as users of websites moderated by franchisees (Spencer, 2010).

## **ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF FRANCHISING FOR TOURISM INDUSTRY**

There are various **reasons** for which the developing enterprises within the tourism industry prefer to use franchising, as a **method of growth and expansion**. Having this tool they manage to:

- achieve efficiency in the working process and economies of scale;
- penetrate quickly on the market at low capital costs;
- effectively redirect costumers by advertisements and promotions;
- achieve sale of products and services using special distribution network;
- satisfy internal company needs and motivate the work force;
- provide training and management of the personnel, local advertising and other administrative activities in favour of the franchisees.



The major **advantages** that franchising provides to the entrepreneurs, and which could serve as a background for using its potential, are summarized in the **following areas**:

- ✓ an option for obtaining a substantial profit, without the need to invest in high-risk operations;
- ✓ opportunities for quick expansion by using foreign resources;
- ✓ use of the advantages of the franchisees' potential and contacts on the local market;
- ✓ saving costs and time in recruiting, hiring and motivating personnel of the separate sites;
- ✓ achievement of economies of scale.

Franchising is **the fastest growing business expansion strategy** that has ever been created. In few years, by applying franchising many companies enlarged, and from several enterprises, or even from a single one, they turned into large chains with many offices. No other approach for business expansion has come closer to the opportunities and scopes that franchising offers. The major part of this success is due to the mutual benefits for both parties (franchisor and franchisee) under the contract (Tadarakov, 2013).

Along with obvious advantages of this partnership concept, the eventual **disadvantages** cannot be neglected, which concern both parties under the franchise agreement. The major disadvantage for the franchisee is the loss of control over the management of their company. Along with the benefits such as the right to use the trade mark, consulting, training, recognition of the offered goods or services, the franchisee is bound to follow the rules, imposed by operation manuals, and as well as to consult about every change that they think might have beneficial effect over the dealings with the franchisor.

Another core problem is that usually an unfair behaviour of either party under the franchise contract, could easily lead to legal proceedings for forfeits. Such franchisee could lead to the loss of confidence in the brand, which is spread over vast territories and to gain again the lost image and good will much efforts and money shall be needed. The opposite assumption is not uncommon, too – when franchisors, due to their incompetence and failure to pay sufficient efforts to the

promotion of the trade mark, at the end they lose their franchisees. This assumption should also be taken into consideration and the franchisee have to be very careful when choosing franchise and studies the contractual terms and conditions.

When launching a franchise, although the parameters are set by the franchisor, it should be taken into account that costs might be higher than those that are initially planned. One of the setbacks of the starting-up franchise is the clause for purchasing the equipment and materials (including raw materials) from the franchisor, which are sold as a rule at higher prices than those at free market. Significant expenditure is also the declared by many franchisors advertising charge, which could be a fixed cost and not an element of the turnover.

Another important drawback is that the strength of the chain is defined by its weakest link. Even if a franchisee puts the utmost efforts to follow strictly the franchise model, there is no guarantee that another franchisee should not discredit the confidence in the trade mark causing the first one to suffer direct losses. Here comes the role of the franchisors themselves to take control over the quality of service with a view to avoid occurrence of such problems in their chains that might have impact over the other outlets of the chain.

## **PROFILE OF BULGARIAN FRANCHISE MODEL**

Franchising is the most successful **business model** in the contemporary world. It allows anyone to start its own business immediately, using the brand and business model of proven franchise chain. That **market growing strategy** possesses a real potential to turn a small business into a large one.

Although **the popularity of franchise** is growing in **Bulgaria**, a small part of the active business entrepreneurs are aware of its specific features and practical focus. **The major reasons** for the fast franchise grow are the offering of a strong and known brand, as well as the established business model, providing know-how and good practices. A few groups of Bulgarian investors are willing to buy franchise rights. They could be specified, as follows:

- **Experienced entrepreneurs in business management**, owning a certain amount of capital for investment and willing to launch a new business.

This is the group of “reasonable” entrepreneurs and the percentage of successful deals with them is very high.

➤ **Entrepreneurs willing to start an additional business.** They prefer franchising because it saves time and financial resources needed for long-term development of a business model.

➤ **Applicants without any business experience.** This group is willing to make benefits

of the strength of the brand and from the offered know-how for its managing.

➤ **Applicants, who are choosing EU funding for launching their own business.** This is a niche, which low cost franchising chains could use and could turn into national chains which is typical for the rural tourism.

➤ **Operating businessmen.** They move into an entirely new field or seek to develop franchise business model as a supplement to their ongoing business and endeavours. The reason is that a large portion of company owners suffered seriously by the crisis and want to diversify their capital and business experience into other sectors, which are not so much affected.

The franchising model offers developed know-how, necessary for launching business. A number of entrepreneurs are facing the dilemma either to struggle with the economic conditions to complete depletion of their financial resources or to move ‘under the wing’ of a big chain. During the past year in Bulgaria more often is practiced the so called conversion franchise. By its help, an existing business is included in a franchise system agreeing to operate under its name and rules, in return of payment of a fee.

In Bulgaria the average term of return of a starting investment in franchise business is 15 (fifteen) months, however it depends mainly on the franchisee’s skills and efforts. The majority of recipients of franchise entitlements believe that after the crisis despite of the low sales, those working under this model will have a higher market share than that of the independent entrepreneurs.

➤ **Average parameters of franchising in Bulgaria**

✓ Average fee, collected by the franchisors for starting a franchise business: approximately about EUR 3,000.

✓ Monthly royalty deposits: average 4.9 % of the turnover.

✓ Some franchisors fix a minimal fee for the use of a franchise (e.g. 5% of the turnover, but not less than EUR 250 per month), others (usually these are forms of a distribution franchise) don't require such a fee, but the franchisees are obligated to buy the goods offered from their franchisors only.

✓ Average fee for the national advertisement fund: 4.2 %.

✓ Total investment for starting a franchise business: about EUR 1 500.

✓ Number of outlets: average 11 outlets per chain.

✓ An average lease term: 5 years.

One of the **problems** related to franchising in Bulgaria is the **unregulated financing of the franchise projects**. Every particular franchisor has the commitment to negotiate with individual banks for financing of their project. There are no specialized bank products to be offered to the clients entering into franchise deals. According to many experts, franchise market in Bulgaria by its features is close to that of Greece. The current trend is associated with the introduction of more specialized franchise models, especially in the sector of tourism services. In support of this is the fact that in the past two years, the number of companies offering franchises in Bulgaria has tripled. The reasons for this are that the start-up investment returns in very short terms (from 1 to 3 years) and especially, the opportunity to follow a proven **business methodology**.

Another problem the franchise in Bulgaria is connected with **organizational and legal issues**. There is no legal regulation of franchise, neither in a separate legal document, nor as a part of the regulation on other matters. It is necessary to be established real competitive conditions between the franchise systems and the traditional mechanisms for sales of goods; the adopted legislative rules and regulations concerning the participants in the franchise system should provide convenience to them, and establish transparency in the system and its elements for the controlling authorities.

**The lack of awareness of the franchising as a business concept** is the major problem for its insufficient development in Bulgaria. The small and medium-sized enterprises are the most numerous and they have a great potential for flexible adaptation to the economic conditions in this country and to the changing market conjuncture. The enterprises in this sector are the most likely buyers of franchise.

For the period 1996 - 2012, in Bulgaria have been invested over 17 billion euros in tourism sector and hotel facilities have been built with over 1.2 million beds. So far, only 3.8 % of these hotels work with franchise agreements. New future of franchising is in the management of rural tourism, which is still undeveloped European and international practice.

Although the mentioned disadvantages, the franchise has established itself as a method of **business cooperation** with a significant lower level of risk, compared to a self-starting and developing of a separate business. In this dynamic economic period, the franchising has the potential and the ability to become the most profitable method for those entrepreneurs, who are willing to launch or grow their businesses.

## **FINDINGS**

- Franchising is reviewed as an alternative growth strategy.
- Owners of franchise companies are not directly responsible for the financial investments.
- Responsible franchise system is the one that provides added value to its franchisees.
- Franchising is a method for fast growing and marketing distribution of products and services.
- Franchising is the new civilization level in tourism industry.
- 

## **CONCLUSION**

The current financial and economic crisis is affecting all market sectors. A lot of tourism enterprises have prematurely chosen franchise as an alternative strategy for their growth and global integration. Other companies apply it following consultants and advisors, who in most cases are interested in the professional fees, rather than the long-term success of the franchise program. In Bulgaria the franchise is a mean to attract foreign expertise and financial capital. As a business form, the franchise has a significant importance for improving quality of servicing in tourism industry, acquiring know-how, getting closer to world standards and last but not least, generating an economic growth for the Bulgarian economy.

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## ***GLOBAL CHOICE OF CULTURAL DESTINATIONS VIA NEW TECHNOLOGIES***

**Parusheva Tanya**

Professor, Economics of Tourism

University of National and World Economy, Bulgaria

### **ABSTRACT**

The scientific report aims to reveal the opportunities for global choice of cultural destinations via new technologies. The role of the global information society is emphasized by providing contacts and interaction between different cultures. Globalization process is reviewed as a stimulus for implementing changes in tourism. The importance of global electronic and communication technologies and media for tourism development is underlined. The opportunities for creating global transparency in choosing tourism destinations are indicated. Levels and factors affecting globalization of tourism are identified. The global network is viewed as a mean for dissemination of global culture. Attention is focused on the role of new technologies for traveling throughout the world. Special accent is given to the expansion of short-term trips to exotic and cultural destinations worldwide. Issues concerning establishment of growing interest in cultural destinations are discussed and attractive cultural destinations for the year 2012 are analyzed in details. The interrelation 'choice - image' of a tourist destination is explained. Special attention is drawn to cultural values as a key to successful destination development. The author considers that the new technologies are a

helpful instrument for attracting tourists to unknown locations having great cultural potential.

**Keywords:** Globalization, Tourism, New Technologies, Cultural destinations

## INTRODUCTION

International tourism is the most visible expression of globalization. Its economic dimension represents the global movement of the largest flow of people, goods and capital. The development of global tourism is associated with the availability of common information space. The entities in tourism industry are elements of the global network. Tourist travels everywhere in the world connects more and more tourist destinations in the global economy. Global tourism is a process of a constant contact and interaction between representatives of different cultures. It is a field where the tolerance of a huge number of people is being verified.

## GLOBALIZATION AS A STIMULUS FOR CHANGES IN TOURISM

Globalization stimulates the growth of tourism through global electronic and communication **technologies and networks**, and the **global media**. Electronic technologies help to implement fast-functioning and economical systems for transport and hotel reservation services all over the world. Contemporary media, especially **Internet**, creates a global transparency thus multiplying the potential in choosing tourist destination.

The impact of globalization on tourism takes place on **two levels**:

- 1) Creating prerequisites and conditions for performing tourist activity;
- 2) Changing the postmodern tourist's lifestyle relating to formation of motivation for tourism.

There are a number of **factors** that play a significant role in the process of tourism globalization (Mpofu, 2009). These include:

- Expansion of global business and trade;



- Technological development in transport and communication;
- Increasing cultural and political interdependence
- Development of multinational and transnational corporations.

Globalization of the world economy plays a key role in implementing changes in **business tourism**. Trade and foreign direct investment (FDI) are associated with travel abroad. No doubt they contribute to further globalization and growth of the hospitality industry. The removal of trade barriers stimulates business tourism (Tadarakov, 2012). The development of global tourism and movement of tourist flows are facilitated by the transition to free markets.

Modern man may obtain information through the **global network** about hundreds of destinations and attractions all over the world. That is one of the ways in which globalization affects the choice of cultural destinations. Effective marketing helps attracting more tourists to a particular tourism destination. Thus, visitors can experience **culture and customs** of the tourist place and become familiar with the specificities of the region, and the indigenous people.

The geographic enlargement of connections between tourist places has become a major factor in global tourism development. It is leading to internationalization of tourism, **global culture**, effective use of leisure time, **global tourist flows** worldwide and increased competition. The phenomenon of globalization is contributing significantly to the **global tourist journey** to the most remote places of the Earth.

## **THE ROLE OF NEW TECHNOLOGIES FOR WORLDWIDE TRAVELS**

Implementation of new technologies is one of the frequently discussed drivers of globalization. Technological improvements in transportation and communication have contributed to the movement of foreign tourists. New opportunities for business, trade and internet banking are found out. Globalization process has advanced significantly via technological development of **transport, communication, internet, computer reservation systems (CRS), and e-commerce**.

Due to the growth of **air transport**, global travels to distant destinations become shorter in terms of time and distances. **Internet** is an important achievement in

favor of globalization. It makes national borders become 'invisible'. Internet expands capabilities of the potential tourists in searching for **new information** and opportunities for **global travel** to various destinations in the **global world** (Parusheva, 2012b). Many international and regional agencies, airlines, hotels, travel associations and public sector organizations maintain their own **web sites** targeted to promote tourism in the **global environment**. The purchase of online-based entertainments has facilitated the **global spread** of new forms of leisure services. This has strengthened the role of the **global media** in the social construction of the desired lifestyle.

The emergence of **low cost airlines and cruise lines** is a growing trend in tourism industry. The new transportation vehicles are distinguished not only by their speed and convenient in overcoming great distances. They affect fashion in travel and tourism, tourists' motivation and imagination (Pencheva, 2011). The most important factors in determining travel routes during a given epoch are the means of transportation, their features and price. In XVIII century Spain and Portugal are considered as **exotic destinations** by the British and the Central Europeans. Nowadays, the transport innovations change the place of exotics to the Caribbean, Africa or less known places in Asia. Sociological studies indicate that Asia is the most preferred place for cultural tourism by the modern Europeans.

The modern air transport plays an important role in tourism development. Studies show that low-cost airlines are causing expansion of the short-term trips targeted to **cultural tourism**, aiming at visiting cities with huge cultural heritage.

Information technologies are a great achievement in organization and management of tourism. The introduction of computerized reservation systems (CRS) and global distribution systems (GDS) support **global supply** of tourist services (Parusheva, 2010). Studies show that above half a million terminals of the global distribution system have connected the major portion of world airlines with potential tourists. They have allowed passengers to choose airline, check flight time, and get acquainted with the rules of travel and book tickets online.

Nowadays, along with the rapid progress of information technologies and transport, the **global phenomena** change societies in the world. The contemporary globalization radically transforms the global economy and the **global society**.

## **GROWING INTEREST IN CULTURAL DESTINATIONS**

Tourism develops rapidly and turns into a modern global economic sector. It becomes a fundamental **tool for world development**. Globalization is establishing new configuration of social time, which reflects in **global mobility** and **fragmentation of vacation time**.

Today, despite the tension of the everyday life and stress, people go on holidays and vacations which sometimes are for longer periods, but in most cases they last shorter time. Geographical mobility has changed its static character. More and more "holiday hunters" could be met at any spot of the globe. This process is favorable for the development of tourism and increases the demand for **cultural tourism**.

According to World Tourism Organization in 2020 more than 720 million foreign tourists (non-Europeans) will spend their holidays in Europe. The 'International Business Times' has presented a study of the top 20 destinations of the year 2012. Following the trend of increasing interest in cultural tourism, special attention is paid to cultural destinations. The most attractive cultural destinations in 2012 follow hereunder (Parusheva, 2012a):

### **Muscat, Oman**

Unlike its neighboring Arab countries, which are using their oil wealth to build skyscrapers, mega shopping malls and convention centers, Oman pays attention to construction of opera and theater halls. Muscat has become an attractive destination for cultural tourists from all over the world.

### **Bentonville, Arkansas - USA**

Have you ever heard about Bentonville, Arkansas? This is the hometown of the retailer Wal-Mart. This small town, situated in the center of the United States, has become a cultural destination of world-class. The most impressive of all is the Crystal Bridges Museum of American art.

### **Trinidad, Cuba**

Only a three and a half hours distance southeastwards from the Cuba's capital of Havana spreads a city with a 500-year history, named Trinidad. According to tourists the whole city is like a museum. UNESCO has officially recognized and entered in their lists its cobblestone streets, Spanish colonial architecture and the colorful houses specific for this country.

### **Hampi, India**

Hampi is one of the fastest-growing tourist cities in India. It combines both desert and oasis. The ruins, still visible today prove that its population numbering 500,000 has lived in splendor, could be compared with those of Angkor Wat.

### **Portovenere, Italy**

Portovenere shares its UNESCO status together with Cinque Terre and it is just as picturesque as the latter with its boats, towering catholic churches and meandering trains. The town streets are filled with history and breathtaking sea views.

### **Guimaraes, Portugal**

In 2012 Guimaraes become the European Capital of Culture. This city is a symbol of Portuguese nationality from the XII century and it skillfully manages to combine both authenticity and modern look. Guimaraes is developing due to its young population and rising arena of culture

### **Kazan, Russia**

Kazan, the third capital of Russia combines in harmony Christian and Muslim culture. The city is famous for its museums, theaters, restaurants and river views. They all create reminiscent of Central Asia. Sport is one of the major interests of the people of Kazan.

The cultural tourism has **magical potential**. It brings additional incomes due to the inexhaustible resources of the tourist place. In recent years, it has gained a great importance in the **global community** as a foundation for economic development.

### **THE INTERRELATION 'CHOICE - IMAGE' OF A TOURIST DESTINATION**

Tourism is highly dependent on the development ability of the **cultural attractions**. An important feature of the cultural heritage is that to a large scale it determines the **image of the tourist destination**. The heritage is not only a source of historical knowledge that affects the attractions themselves, but it also affects the destination as a whole.

Every tourist has the opportunity to choose among a **set of destinations** offering multiple products and services. A strong influence on the choice of destination may play the so-called **"push" and "pull" factors** that determine the tourist's motivation to choose one destination over another. "Pushes" are the primary factors associated with instinctive desires of individual tourists (such as: desire for escape, rest, relaxation, adventure, prestige, etc.). "Pull" factors are mainly related to the **attraction of destination** and the external physical characteristics (such as: beaches, ways of accommodation, relaxation facilities, cultural and historical resources, etc.). The success of "pull" factors depend on the personal preferences of the individual tourist.

A huge proportion of cultural tourists come mainly from the neighboring countries. They are usually aware of the specificity of **cultural values**. However, the more distant destinations are, the more attractive they are. Cultural tourists have a high level of knowledge of cultural life. They are attracted both by the experience and memories of past visits, and by their personal knowledge about the cultural heritage.

Forecasts indicate that tourism will continue to dominate on the international travel scene. Therefore it is considered to be the **key to a successful destination development**. At any part of Earth tourism is treated as a **source of profit** and an instrument contributing to better **environmental protection**.

## **FINDINGS**

- Globalization of tourism provides high potential in choosing cultural destinations via new technologies.
- Cultural tourism has a major market share in the world tourism.
- Modern communication technologies “bring” attractive tourist destinations to prospective tourists.

## **CONCLUSION**

The major economic asset of the global tourism is the cultural wealth of the tourist destinations. The cultural heritage and attractions more and more sensitively are becoming centres of attraction for the majority of tourists and improving the image of the particular tourist destination. New technologies could be a helpful vehicle for attracting visitors to less-known places that possess great cultural potential.

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# INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION, A KEY FACTOR FOR SUCCESSFUL INTERNATIONAL ACADEMIC CONFERENCES

**Kefalaki Margarita**

PhD. Communication, Instructor

Open University of Greece

## **SUMMARY**

Entertainment activities in an international academic conference, remains an important factor for its success. The question is if there is an optimal communication strategy for the organization of the conferences entertainment program in order to attract a large number of potential researchers. Can social event(s) ameliorate the participants' of an international academic conference experience? This is the research question of this paper.

The entertainment part of an academic conference can have an important impact on the overall event. An adequate communication strategy that takes into account its *interculturality* and so the difficulties of facing a *cultural confusion* is more than important for the overall success of the conference.

**Key Words:** Intercultural Communication, Academic conference, cultural confusion, cultural shock





## **INTRODUCTION**

Attending conferences is one important element in the work of the academic community. Researchers, professors, PhD and master students need presentations in international conferences to acquire feedback on a paper, get informed about the work of others, communicate with colleagues from the same or from other disciplines and exchange ideas (Borghans L. et al., 2010). The participation in conferences can also help academics ameliorate their Curriculum Vitae, obtain the opportunity of new collaborations, and finally even have some nice time off, which can be combined, for example, with holiday vacations, immediately after the conference. Actually, the need of participants to combine their scientific activity with relaxation has been identified by researchers on the field. In this paper we focus on the need of academics for relaxation and communication.

We consider the entertainment activities that exist in an international academic conference an important factor for its success. The question is if there is an optimal communication strategy for the organization of the conferences entertainment program in order to attract a large number of potential researchers and which is the role of intercultural communication. Our research question is the following: Can social event(s) ameliorate the participants' of an international academic conference experience?

Our research is based on literature review, the observation of academic international conferences and the unofficial discussion with its participants. We focus on international, multicultural (more than 10 different nationalities per conference), academic conferences. The participants of these conferences had the opportunity to interact 4 days (duration of the conference<sup>1</sup>). It is also important to notice that we are referring to non-rotated conferences that take place in Athens, Greece, with a minimum of 50 to a maximum of 150 participants.

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<sup>1</sup> The international conferences we are referring to include 2 days of presentations and 2 days of possible participation in entertainment activities.

This paper is separated in 5 different parts, including the introduction. In the second part, we analyze some of the elements to take into account for a successful conference. We then examine the communication strategy steps needed for the organization of a successful event, as far as multicultural events are concerned, taking into account the effect of *cultural shock* or *cultural confusion*. We finally take a look at the infrastructure elements and more particularly the entertainment services that can ameliorate the participants' perception of academic conferences.

## **I. ELEMENTS TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT ...**

The interest and value of academic conferences is growing. According to the statistics of the International Congress & Convention Association (ICCA), Greece has the 21<sup>st</sup> position in meetings per country and the numbers of meetings is growing each year (see figure 2).

International academic conferences location is an important factor of attractiveness for the organization of scientific conferences (Terzi M. et al., 2013). The evaluation criteria regarding this factor include a) infrastructure, that must be able to meet the needs of both conference organizers and participants (accommodation, food quality, entertainment services, ability of a destination to offer sightseeing), b) historical and cultural heritage, c) appropriate weather conditions, d) adequate availability of travel services, e) variety of transportation modes, f) safe destination (free of high terrorism, theft and injuries), g) calm environment, as far as local community is concerned, h) adequate health conditions, j) the use of English as an international language that can help the participants communicate.

123 academics and students participated in a quantitative research, conducted by Terzi M. C. et al. (2013) that was completed to evaluate the role of the location for a conference success. This research concluded that evaluation criteria are able to influence the decision making process of potential delegates, regarding their participation since the more the factor of "Conference Location" is satisfied, the higher the levels of participation. The evaluation criterion of

Infrastructure was considered as very important, according to 74% of respondents. A percentage of 87.8% considered their transportation options (ease of access to and from the destination in which the conference is held) as one of the major criteria for the choice of a conference destination. The criterion of security with a rate of 77.2% was also approved as one of the elements that had also a great impact on participants' reaction. Concerning the evaluation criterion of hygiene (destinations free from bad hygiene, infectious diseases and poor cleanliness), 87% of the sample consider it very important for a successful conference. Finally, English was approved as the official language for academic conferences for 83.7% of the sample as academic conferences usually attract scientists from different countries. The use of a united code of communication among participants is therefore needed. Terzi M. C. et al. (2013) also noticed that the communication strategy based on the pillars of the factor "conference location" is able to increase the levels of participants' satisfaction and by extension the levels of their participation. Judging from the above, the organization of conferences should develop a communication strategy by highlighting the evaluation criteria of the factor conference location in order to attract more participants. As far as infrastructure and entertainment elements are concerned, before organizing our communication strategy we should take into account the *interculturality* of the event and so the effect of cultural shock.

## **II. THE EFFECT OF "CULTURAL SHOCK" - "CULTURAL CONFUSION" ...**

Hottola (2004) proposes the theory framework of "dynamic model of culture confusion", to explain the theoretical understanding of short-term transitions. This is the term we also consider adequate for the intercultural adaptation needed for the participation in an international conference. Conference participants can be regarded as short term tourists, as the event takes place from 2 to 4 days and the stay can be extended (to meet new places, monuments and people, establish collaborations, etc).

The term '*cultural confusion*' (also known as '*culture shock*'), describes a variety of difficulties experienced while meeting other countries and people. Oberg (1960:177) has defined culture shock as a 'transitory concept precipitated by the anxiety that results from losing all one's familiar signs and symbols of social

interaction'. For Guanipa (1998), the expression 'culture shock', introduced in 1958, describes the anxiety (lack of direction, feeling of not knowing what to do or how to react), produced when someone moves to a new environment. The feeling of culture shock generally sets in after the first few days of coming to a new place and can be described as the physical and emotional discomfort one suffers when coming to live in another country or a place different from the place of origin (different language, social rules, etc.) (Oberg, 1960). Some of the symptoms might be loneliness, melancholy, pains and allergies, health troubles (insomnia, desire to sleep too much, depression, feeling tired, anger, irritability, resentment, unwillingness to interact with others), identifying with the old culture or idealizing the old country, loss of identity, feelings of being lost, overlooked, feeling exploited or abused. These symptoms of cultural shock can appear at different times. Nevertheless, we should also add that culture shock can also become an opportunity for redefining one's life objectives and acquiring new perspectives.

Culture shock can have different stages (Guanipa, 1998), that can be ongoing or might only appear at certain times. These different stages remind us the U-Curve of Culture Shock (Oberg, 1960) (see figure 1). At the first stage, the new arrival may feel euphoric and be pleased by all of the new things encountered. This time is called the "**honeymoon**" stage, as everything encountered is new and exciting. At this point we have to observe that conference participants usually stay on this first stage, due to their short time of stay.

In the second stage, the person may encounter some **difficult times and crises** in daily life. For example, communication difficulties may occur such as not being understood. In this stage, there may be feelings of discontent, impatience, anger, sadness, and feeling incompetence. This happens when a person is trying to adapt to a new culture that is very different from the culture of origin. Transition between the old methods and those of the new country is a difficult process and takes time to complete. During the transition, there can be strong feelings of dissatisfaction. The third stage is characterized by gaining some understanding of the new culture. A new feeling of pleasure and sense of humor may be experienced. One may start to feel a **certain psychological balance**. The new arrival may not feel as lost and starts to have a feeling of direction. The individual is **more familiar** with the environment and wants to belong. This initiates an evaluation of the old ways versus those of the new. In the fourth stage, the

person realizes that the new culture has good and bad things to offer. This stage can be one of double integration or triple integration depending on the number of cultures that the person has to process. This integration is accompanied by a more solid **feeling of belonging**. The person starts to define him/herself and establish goals for living. The fifth stage, called the "**re-entry shock**", occurs when a return to the country of origin is made. One may find that things are no longer the same. For example, some of the newly acquired customs are not in use in the old culture.

These stages are presented at different times for each person. Additionally, each person has its own way of reacting in the stages of culture shock (cultural confusion). As a consequence, some stages will be longer and more difficult than others. Many factors contribute to the duration and effects of culture shock. For example, the individual's state of mental health, the type of personality, previous experiences, socio-economic conditions, familiarity with the language, family and/or social support systems, and level of education can differentiate its duration and effects.

In our globalised society we experience the difference in mentalities and cultures every day, especially when people travel, this is why we can't speak of a culture shock, even if we might like to call their confusion a shock because that sounds more exciting (Hottola, 2004). 'Culture confusion', as we have already noticed, seems more accurate in the context of intercultural adaptation. Culture confusion focuses both on the problematic part of the adaptation process and on the presence of enjoyment, success, and learning. It acknowledges the reality of mixed emotions instead of clearly definable stages of emotional dominances (Hottola, 2004). In other words, culture confusion recognizes the complexity and diversity of people behavior and feelings while communication with a new, different culture.

Cultural confused people need special communication treatment. In our view, the organization of successful social events can very much help the ameliorations of possible *cultural confusions*. An adequate intercultural communication strategy could also help overcoming situations of cultural confusion.

### **III. WHAT INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION STRATEGY?**

Cultural communication influence the way people communicate across different cultures. Effective intercultural communication is very difficult and sometimes even impossible to achieve. In this research we focus on intercultural contact and adaptation in a multicultural environment of an international conference that takes place in Athens, Greece. Our field study involves the time people meet during the conference. In this case we can speak of a first cultural confusion. The steps for an adequate communication strategy are the following:

First of all we need a communication plan: what do we hope to achieve? What are our objectives and goals? A SWOT-analysis should follow, to see our project's communications strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. Then, we need to know our target group and the message we should share with this group. Messages used necessitate being appropriate and interesting for our audience. In addition, each audience is reached by different tactics and different communication tools. The selection of communication tools, the responsibilities of each member of the team, the timeline to follow, the budget and the way that the plan will be evaluated, have also an important role for our communication strategy concerning the organization of a successful conference event. Our objective is to accomplish an event that will help academics coming from different parts of the world. The interculturality, which can easily provoke cultural confusion, should be also taken into account.

Varying characteristics of a conference can influence both its overall attractiveness, but also the type of researchers interested to participate. Selecting these characteristics is therefore a strategic instrument for the communication strategy scientific associations to reach their goals (Borghans L. et al., 2010). These basic characteristics are the following: First of all, the expenses for the scientific conferences participation (conferences fees and travel costs) are generally fully covered by the researchers' universities, when presenting a paper at the conference participation. This is why the price of the registration fee will not so much affect conference participation. Elements such as conference destination, the brand name of the university/association that organizes the conference (conference reputation), specialists participating in the academic committee, and possibilities for networking are important for the attraction of participants'

attention. More particularly, Borghans L. et al. (2010) consider conference characteristics like the quality of keynote speakers and the attractiveness of conference location as the most important characteristics as far as the European Association of Labour Economists (EALE) conferences are concerned. On the other side, the type of social events, the conference venue and the time of the year, are considered as less important for the successful organization of a conference.

Borghans L. et al., (2010) carried out a research among 1310 former participants in at least one of the EALE-meetings in between 2001 and 2008, who could still be contacted by their email-address. In total, 437 participants filled in the questions on conference participation. On a 5-point Likert scale, 89% of survey participants answered that getting international feedback on their research and networking is an important reason for conference participation. **33% are attending conferences for fun.** 61% prefer attractive conference locations and 80% easy-to-reach places. Then, 57% agree with the statement that travel costs should be low. At the same time, 78% explained that travel expenses are mostly fully covered by the institution a researcher works for if the participant is accepted for presenting a paper.

Researchers can value conference characteristics differently (Borghans L., et al., 2010). Their cultural background and country, their character, their emotional condition at the moment of the event, their age and discipline have certainly a role to play. This is also a fact for the entertainment part of a conference.

For Borghans L., et al. (2010), researchers prefer an informal garden barbecue instead of more formal events like formal dinners or a reception in the city hall. During our informal contact with participants of academic conferences, academics expressed their preference for 5 star hotels as conference locations. These kinds of hotels have organized conference sales and meeting places, not to forget restaurant, accommodation and entertainment facilities. In this way conference participants can refresh themselves or even take a small nap during the posses of the conference. Restaurant fully booked for conference participants with good, clean Greek food and Greek entertainment events is also something that is preferred by conference participants. This kind of event can help them communicate and get to know each other better in a more informal environment. Collaborations can also be privileged in such an environment. It is important to



notice that certain rules should always be taken seriously into account by the entertainment activity organizers. First of all, the start and finish time of the event should be announced and followed. We can't say that the event will start on 20.00 and the participants wait until 21.00, for example. Then, when food is included, we should always check and be sure of its good quality and sufficient quantity. It is also important to notice that the amount of alcohol consumed should also be controlled. More than one or two glasses of wine could cause troubles during the event. Finally, participants require good service and encouragement to participate. The animation part has an important role to play here.

Additionally, Newcomb (1961) model of artistic communication emphasizes the dynamic nature of the relationship between each audience member and the performance/ performer (In Hill L. et al., 2003). In case of artistic performance, it is the dialogue between the performers and the audience that will each time give a different performance (figure 3).

Generally speaking, mutual respect, good communication and understanding will help everybody have a good time, meet new people, taste local cuisine and participate in local entertainment activities.

#### **IV. CONCLUSION**

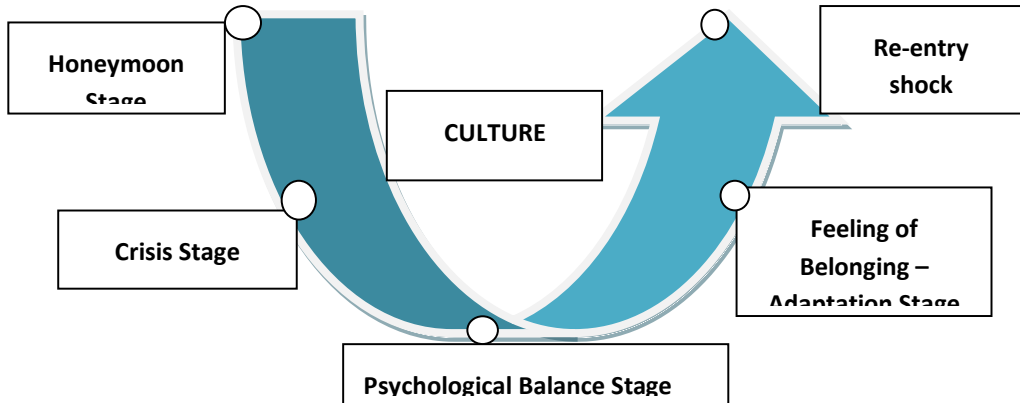
At what time academics who participate in a conference can combine their presence with a nice experience, the conference can attract new participants the years to come. In order to achieve such a mission, an adequate communication strategy, is a necessity! The intercultural academic character of the conference should be certainly taken into account, as far as the organization of intercultural events with multicultural participants is also concerned.

The entertainment part of an academic conference can have an important impact on the overall event of an academic conference. An adequate communication strategy that takes into account the *interculturality* of the event and so the difficulties of facing a *cultural shock* or a *cultural confusion* is more than important for the overall success of the conference. Certainly, as far as the event itself is concerned, the interaction between the participants and the animators/ artists is finally that makes the difference.

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## V. Annexes



**Figure 1:** Stages of Culture Confusion

Rank	Count	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
1	U.S.A.	538	468	571	587	620	648	645	651	637	595
2	Germa	325	299	314	339	409	415	449	525	450	458
3	Spain	212	221	304	302	387	352	316	365	385	360
4	Italy	243	278	293	317	329	324	323	350	350	350
5	United m	321	231	310	323	315	389	390	368	381	345
6	France	297	273	283	283	372	360	370	340	397	341
7	Brazil	124	105	107	128	161	186	231	223	255	293
8	Japan	176	213	211	197	205	232	243	265	281	257
9	China-	83	79	130	81	229	226	255	264	262	245
10	Austri	101	103	111	156	165	188	240	243	212	236

	Nethe	191	186	170	190	230	234	229	235	253	<b>236</b>
<b>12</b>	Switze	106	117	154	170	169	193	189	205	204	<b>214</b>
<b>13</b>	Canad	168	156	190	168	204	199	209	247	270	<b>213</b>
<b>14</b>	Swede	142	141	140	143	164	157	171	161	177	<b>184</b>
<b>15</b>	Repub orea	53	106	113	93	149	139	167	147	184	<b>176</b>
<b>16</b>	Austra	207	165	168	166	189	186	207	212	197	<b>169</b>
<b>17</b>	Portug	82	88	116	133	148	153	155	199	186	<b>168</b>
<b>18</b>	Denm	88	111	136	102	109	110	126	118	128	<b>151</b>
<b>19</b>	Argent	67	73	53	55	84	93	90	120	136	<b>145</b>
<b>20</b>	Belgiu	98	92	115	97	122	145	150	157	152	<b>130</b>
<b>21</b>	Greec	58	85	116	97	116	123	157	156	147	<b>128</b>
<b>22</b>											

**Figure 2:** Number of meetings per country. In the association of meeting markets 2000-2009. Available at: <http://www.iccaworld.com/dcps/doc.cfm?docid=1130> [Accessed on 21 Mai 2013].

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## ***PROFESSIONAL TRAINING OF TOURISM PERSONNEL IN BULGARIA DESTINATION***

**Asya Pencheva, Ph.D**

Economics of Tourism

University of National and World Economy, Bulgaria

### **ABSTRACT**

Tourism, as a dynamic field of human activity, is a leading industry in the modern economy and globalizing world. The successful functioning of tourist activities depends on numerous factors, such as: natural environment, cultural prerequisites and last but not least – training and qualification of tourist personnel. The constantly increasing requirements towards the level of training of future specialists in this field require by the Bulgarian managers to impose updating of the content, methods and technologies of professional training in tourism.

The present scientific report is aiming at presenting and analyzing the significance of tourism as a crucial factor for the development of labour market as well as the necessity of implementing of modern training and qualification requirements towards the personnel. A special emphasis is laid on the vocational training and its rules and regulations. Attention is focused on the role of the Bulgarian National Agency of Vocational Education and Training in ensuring quality of professional training in tourism. A series of indicators set out in the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training are highlighted. In this context, the need of an active support by the institutions

providing training and implementing of the European expertise and strategies is underlined. Current outstanding issues and challenges faced by the vocational education and training system in tourism in Bulgaria destination are discussed.

**Keywords:** Tourism, Professional Training, Personnel in Tourism, Quality of Vocational Training.

## **TOURISM: A KEY FACTOR FOR LABOUR MARKET DEVELOPMENT**

The priorities of 'Europe 2020' strategy for smart and inclusive growth are the fundamentals of the perspectives for the progress of Bulgaria as a Member State of the European Union. Their accomplishment at national level is highly conditioned by the development policies of Bulgarian education. The **high quality of professional training** is a prerequisite for refining the obtained skills and acquiring new ones. This is the basis for achieving compliance with the requirements of the labor market, improving employment and increasing the economic growth.

Tourism, as the fastest growing industry in the world, is in **dire need of qualified managers** to meet the global demand. The successful operation of tourism activities relies on numerous factors: natural conditions, cultural prerequisites, and last but not least - training and qualification of tourism personnel (Hayes & Ninemeier, 2008).

One of the priorities of the National Strategy for Sustainable Tourism Development in Bulgaria for 2008-2013 is stimulating the role of **tourism as a crucial factor** for the labor market progress and implementation of modern requirements towards training and qualification through:

- development of various tourist services based on up-to-date knowledge technologies;
- wider use of modern communication technologies and devices in tourism;
- improvement of quality of training and professional qualification of tourism personnel at all levels - service, marketing, management, etc.;

- monitoring of the human resources training and qualification system and designing mechanisms for sustainable partnerships between training institutions and business;
- emphasis on alternative methods of training, such as distance, multimedia and interactive form (National Strategy for Sustainable Development of Tourism in Bulgaria 2008–2013).

In comparison with other industries of the economy, the **human factor in tourism** is determinant in terms of the main characteristics of tourism product. Observations and results out of some studies suggest, on one hand, a shortage of qualified personnel, and on the other - a shortage of professional and personable qualities of the specialists and managers. Due to that the lagging behind in training of future specialists and managers shall affect negatively not only the quality of the tourism product, but also its competitive power (Tadarakov, 2013).

The **competitiveness of tourism activities** is highly dependent on the different professionals, their knowledge and skills, working habits and behaviour. Entrepreneurs and managers strive to improve the technologies of the tourism product and to increase their profits mainly through qualification and professionalism of their personnel. The human factor in particular is that, which combines physical, financial and information resources in the tourism product. They not only manufacture the product but also plan, organize and control the processes running simultaneously (World Tourism Organization, 2010).

Issues of human factor have been studied and analyzed in recent years. The World Tourism Organization (WTO), regional and national tourism organizations and units ground, recommend and implement requirements and rules aiming at improving and refining the training of tourism personnel. The **focus of the institutions** listed above is mostly professional. There are some deviations from the problems of comprehensive educational preparation of students, their general knowledge and personal responsibilities. Namely these educational issues are the foundation on which those working in the tourism system upgrade their professional skills and experience, develop and strengthen their individual and group qualities.

It is a common fact that at the core of tourism management lies the **human resource management**. It is characterized by distribution of roles,

leadership behaviour and management by the manager both in the cultural-entertaining activities and in the tourism activities themselves. This requires a constantly refreshing paradigm orientated towards formation of leadership and executive skills in those working in tourism industry, their renewal and optimization.

The **peculiarities of training** a specialist in the field of tourism determine specific demands to the organization of the teaching process. Any future professional with high potential of managerial and executive actions shall implement their competence in the management system in different fields of the hospitality industry as a manager, consultant, analyst, researcher, executor, designer, and functionary (Cannon et al., 2013). He/she shall need to be able to orientate in socio-economic, organizational and technical situations, possess entrepreneurship, analytical skills, initiative and social activeness as well as knowledge of human psychology. In this regard, there is a need for development of **methodological and content tailored training programs** to support resolving of professional and creative tasks. Such targeted programs increase **effectiveness of professional training** of managers in tourism in the course of which the tutors use adequately:

- ✓ dialogue in debatable situations that run on the basis of specific acquired knowledge for individual and group solutions to problems arising in unusual conditions;
- ✓ training sessions that help students to transform learning into skills to solve real life situations;
- ✓ didactic games and exercises to reassert the material and strengthen the motivation for learning;
- ✓ design of projects related to new strategies for vocational training of managers in tourism, which takes into account the characteristics of their social and intellectual development.

According to Palchuk (2007) the main **qualification characteristics** of the professional manager in tourism are:

- systemic acquisition and upgrading of modern economic knowledge;



- level of professionalism (ability to plan upcoming activities, to report on the fulfillment of the tasks assigned, to control the quality of performance, to possess managerial and organizational skills, to analyze the processes of the economic activities and the results thereof);
- development of economically important personal qualities (enterprise, organizational skills, businesslike manners, creative attitude to work, responsibility);
- level of socio-psychological readiness (presence of inner conviction, value orientations, striving for continuous professional growth).

**The nature and functions of professional training** in tourism are objectively determined by socially important values and the existing needs of the society. Therefore, specialization in tourism is considered as a publicly necessary and socially regulated system.

Based on the fundamental necessities and development of the labour market and professions, and according to the paradigm developed in the research of Novikova (1999), vocational education includes the following **qualitative indicators**, which characterize the modern vocational training:

- ability to transform the acquired theoretical knowledge and apply it in practice;
- ability to communicate in various tourist activities;
- ability to adapt to the professional activities, subject to the ability of problem solving and performing creative tasks, active participation in discussions;
- ability to self-assess the targets set with a view to their future professional career;
- ability to work effectively in a team;
- ability to influence (a manifestation of leadership).

## **PARTICIPANTS IN THE PROFESSIONAL TRAINING IN BULGARIA**

**Key players** in providing high quality vocational training in Bulgaria are the main institutions and units that legally or as a social duty have clear responsibilities, rights and obligations in respect of professional training. Their

**functions** are implemented through individual actions and/or interactions with other institutions involved in this process.

The institutions in relation to professional training in Bulgaria could be studied in two directions:

➤ ***Institutions at systemic level:***

**Ministry of Education, Youth and Science.** Its main functions related to ensuring the quality of training are:

- ✓ performing the overall management of the system that provides high-quality vocational training and is responsible for its condition;
- ✓ executing conceptual, legal and planning activities to improve the quality of vocational training;
- ✓ analyzing resources and usage of financial funds for vocational training. It develops and proposes for approval suggestions for their improvement;
- ✓ providing the necessary administrative structure and procedures for effective operation of the system for achieving high-quality professional education and training;
- ✓ preparing analyses and proposing measures for improvement of the overall performance aiming at providing high-quality vocational training;
- ✓ discussing with the social partners opportunities for development of the material and technical facilities for vocational training and possibilities for its modernization, especially for practical training;
- ✓ confirming state standards for acquiring professional qualification, monitoring their application and initiating their actualization and developing new ones;
- ✓ studying international experience in order to adopt good practices, ensuring compliance with the requirements and recommendations of the EU on improving quality of vocational training;
- ✓ interacting with the social and institutional partners to solve important organizational and resource issues - conducting

examinations, providing the required quality and quantity equipment for practical training, developing standards, curricula, etc.

**National Agency for Vocational Education and Training (NAVET)** is the state body responsible for the licensing of the activities in the professional education and training system, as well as for the coordination between the institutions related to vocational guidance, training and education. NAVET designs projects of the state educational institutions for acquiring professional qualification for the system of vocational education and training, creates and updates the List of Professions for Vocational Education and Training, regulates the vocational training carried out in licensed centers for vocational training and in various kinds of professional schools.

Through coordinating the activities of the development of strategies for advance and improvement of the vocational education and training, the Agency:

- ✓ contributes to the improvement of the quality of vocational training;
- ✓ participates in the development of conceptual, statutory, regulatory and planning documents in the field of quality assurance of vocational training;
- ✓ ensures the development of high-quality public educational requirements for acquiring vocational qualification by professions and majors;
- ✓ provides monitoring and control over the vocational training centers and makes recommendations for improving the quality of their work;
- ✓ supports an information system for adult vocational training, which traces changes in their quality;
- ✓ makes recommendations to the centers for vocational training for improvement of the quality of education, fulfillment of the state standards, improvement of curricula and syllabuses, and monitors their implementation.

In this regard, it is particularly important the role of NAVET for quality assurance of the vocational training, and for the active support for the institutions

offering training as well as for the implementation of European experience and strategies. Considering this purpose, the Agency monitors a series of indicators underlying in the European Quality Assurance Reference framework concerning the quality of the professional training, such as:

- ✓ training for trainers;
- ✓ successful completion of training programs;
- ✓ level of unemployment among graduates of training courses;
- ✓ adaptation of the training to the changing challenges of the labor market;
- ✓ access to the available vocational training.

The institutions, which offer vocational training in Bulgaria, are subject to licensing and continuous internal and external control. This aims at constant improvement of training and elimination of identified deficiencies. The systematic documentation and analysis of qualifying measures play a basic role. By December 2012, NAVET has issued 977 licenses and 650 of them are for vocational training in tourism.

**National Employment Agency:** its main commitments related to vocational training are to:

- ✓ organize and control conducting of vocational training for adults - both unemployed and employed in accordance with the Law on vocational education and training;
- ✓ organize the implementation and ensure provision of the required quality of vocational training for adults under the programmes financed by the EU Structural Funds;
- ✓ perform check-ups on the overall quality of vocational training for adults;
- ✓ assist methodologically the operation of the quality assurance system for vocational training of employed and unemployed;
- ✓ provide systematized information on the quality of completed vocational training for adults;

- ✓ give assessments, prepare analyses and make suggestions to the higher authorities in the process, including on the quality of the available vocational training;
- ✓ make suggestions for improvement of the organization of vocational training, curricula, syllabuses and content;
- ✓ carry out vocational guidance and career counseling.

Other institutions at systemic level, which support the higher quality of vocational training, are:

- ✓ Independent body for assessment of the quality of vocational training to the Council of Ministers
- ✓ Regional Education Inspectorates
- ✓ Regional Employment Service
- ✓ Labour Office Directorates
- ✓ Industrial Ministries

➤ ***Nationally represented organizations of the social partners:*** these include employers' organizations, on one hand, and the employees' organizations on the other. The former invest in the improvement of existing equipment and ensure financial support for the development of vocational training and the latter distribute the necessary information about the application of quality standards for training and assist in providing real job positions.

➤ ***Institutions providing vocational training:*** personnel training and up-skilling and their retraining are mainly provided by several bodies: vocational schools, vocational training centers, colleges, universities, which:

- ✓ implement the state policy on the quality of vocational training;
- ✓ create and provide conditions for the functioning of the internal quality control system of the offered vocational training;
- ✓ prepare self-assessment of the completed vocational training, analysis and a plan to improve its quality;
- ✓ include all stakeholders in the activities related to establishment and improvement of the quality of vocational training;

- ✓ create real conditions and take measures for settling and maintaining a high culture of quality assurance of vocational training.
- **Teaching staff:** Although teachers are a part of the institutions providing vocational training, given their particular importance and in relation to highlighting the shared responsibility in the process of quality assurance of vocational training, they are separated as another group of key players. They participate in the learning process with all their psychological, professional and moral potential. Their qualification is a crucial element of the quality of vocational education and training.
- **Trainees:** they have a specific place in the provision of high quality vocational training. As direct and primary consumers of the activities of vocational training they have a significant impact on its quality and act as a corrective.

## **PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES TO PROFESSIONAL TRAINING IN BULGARIA**

The dynamic development of Bulgarian tourism in the last few years, the rapid growth of accommodation facilities, and of the employment in this sector highlighted the problem concerning preparation of highly qualified specialists. In recent years we have seen a rapid expansion and modernization of tourist infrastructure as well as an increase in its capacity. Under these conditions, mobility of Bulgarian tourism is determined by the professionalism of the employees in the sector. The rapidly developing Bulgarian tourism experiences acute deficit of contemporary vocational training staff. The solution of this pivotal problem in these market conditions suggests achieving an optimal match between supply and demand. This match should be implemented in two ways: first – as demand and supply of education and training services and second – as labor demand and supply. The peak efficiency could be reached, when the chain is closed and the needs of education and training are implemented in an adequate labour demand with relevant quality professional characteristics.

In recent years in Bulgaria a steady trend has appeared of increasing interest in vocational training of tourism specialties and in the professions of tourism. Increasing numbers of young or unemployed people are turning to vocational training and career in the field of tourism, mainly encouraged by the new jobs and new opportunities for starting a business. But unfortunately it is not

yet established in this country and there is no such a **system for career guidance**, which to inform, consult and advise students, unemployed and other people in their choice of profession and career development according to their personal characteristics and needs of the labour market. This is evidenced by the fact that so far in Bulgaria there is no licensed information and guidance center due to the **lack of entrepreneurial initiative**.

The **professional nosedive** is one of the main reasons for **loss of huge staff potential** in tourism as regards to young recruits with foreign language proficiency, good communication and motivation. At the same time the supply of vocational training in the tourism sector is expanding. There are numerous vocational schools, which are turning to current and prospective jobs in tourism. The largest is the offering of qualification courses in tourism vocations and majors by licensed training centers. In the prevalent part, however, these are companies that do not have their own equipment, training experience and potential. Some of these centers are licensed for vocational training in a very wide range of diverse vocations and majors, which raises reasonable doubts about the level of professionalism in the learning process.

A key problem of vocational education and training in the field of tourism is its **poor relation to the needs and requirements of actual tourist business and expectations and claims of employers**. In most cases educational plans and programs just end in themselves and are detached from the practical needs. Graduates of vocational education and training acquire primarily theoretical, but very insufficient practical skills to successfully deal with their professional duties and responsibilities at the workplace. The main reason for this is the lack of conditions for efficient implementation of students' practical training in a real production environment, which should occupy more than a half of the length of the process. Vocational schools and centers do not have their own facilities for practical training, and in the place where they exist, they are primitive. Tourism management refrains from providing a work placement and work experience in its enterprises because it prevents the normal production rate and extremely committed qualified staff to deal with the trainees.

The **insufficient quality of vocational training** also is due to multiple other reasons, such as:

- ✓ most of the teachers are good professionals, but they lack the required pedagogical skills and experience in adult education, they are not familiar with the innovations in tourism, modern methods and forms of tourist services;
- ✓ the lecture form is still widespread, which is less effective. Extremely insufficiently are applied interactive forms of learning – presentations using visualization tools, tests, discussions, case studies, business games, training, individual work in small groups, solving practical problems and others;
- ✓ there are no suitable textbooks and didactic materials for practically applicable training in tourism professions and majors. Especially needed are written technologies, procedures and standards for specific activities and operations related to the performance of the basic and additional services;
- ✓ up till now only state educational requirements have been developed and approved for acquiring a qualification in certain tourist professions. For the other professions in tourism in fact there are no regulations on the level of compulsory vocational training, knowledge, skills and professional competencies that must be acquired in the training process. In the development and evaluation of these documents trained personnel is not involved, and their expectations and real needs are not considered;
- ✓ the management in tourism business neither invests in company training nor supports partnerships and contacts with vocational schools or training centers. Instead of participating in the necessary professionals preparation, often employers prefer to attract executives from other travel companies unfairly;
- ✓ the motivation of specialists for professional development in the Bulgarian tourist business is unsatisfactory. A significant part of the specialists trained in our country seeks opportunities abroad. This situation is very unfavorable. It is caused primarily by the pay systems and staff assessment, the seasonal nature of employment and by the absence of prospects for career development in the Bulgarian tourism companies (Infotourism, 2012).

All these circumstances are profound reflection questions, which create **initiatives for change**. The decision of a big part of these problems could be



sought by establishment of National Centre for Vocational Education, Training and Implementation of Tourism Staff. According to the social status, its founders might be interested industrial organizations. This center can help for:

- ✓ more active involvement of tourism management in the process of training and education;
- ✓ better vocational education quality by improving teacher training, preparation of training materials, monitoring of teaching in vocational training centers, conducting strategic forums and public discussions, accelerating the development and improving the quality of public educational requirements for acquiring professional qualification in tourism professions, certifying educational plans and programs, etc.;
- ✓ establishment and development of partnerships of competent public authorities, tourism management, trade unions, NGOs and tourism training institutions to raise the level of vocational education and training in tourism in line with European standards;
- ✓ promotion and support intercompany action to enhance the staff skills in tourism businesses;
- ✓ actualization of the list of professions and vocational education and training majors in tourism, according to the needs of the tourism industry;
- ✓ creation of an information data system, containing graduates from vocational education and training, to assist employers in their recruitment;
- ✓ provision of professional assurance and advices of successfully completed vocational education and training for acquired knowledge, skills and competencies that will give them an advantage in the candidates selection process for employment in tourism enterprises;
- ✓ conduction of pilot training courses for new and prospective professions and specialties and dissemination of such educational and training products.

Mentioned facts do not exhaust the problems of vocational education and training in tourism. The strategic importance of these sustainable development

problems of Bulgarian tourism makes even more urgent the **broad public debate** on the demand for better solutions.

## **GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE TO PROFESSIONAL TRAINING IN 2020**

European development, which is **based on the knowledge**, and opening of European labour market is the biggest challenge to the vocational education and training in Europe and to all stakeholders. The same is true about the **need of these systems to adapt continuously to new developments and changing needs of the society**. Enhanced cooperation in vocational education and training will help to ensure a successful enlargement of the EU, and to achieve the objectives set by the European Council in Lisbon. The European Development Centre for Vocational Training and the European Training Foundation are important institutions in supporting this collaboration. The opportunities, which EU gives to its citizens for life, education and work in other countries, contribute to **cross-cultural amity, personal development and full realization** of the Union economic potential (Parusheva, 2013).

Bulgarian public management takes into account European strategies, policies and practices in the field of vocational training. For our country leading in this respect are the Lisbon strategy, the Strategy for Lifelong Learning, the European Employment Strategy and others (Pencheva, 2011). **Education reform** in general and in particular – in vocational education and training in Bulgaria is facing an important task – to ensure such terms for training that allow continuous maintenance of the workforce quality and its employment suitability under the requirements of the labour market and knowledge economy.

By 2020 European vocational training systems should become more attractive, applicable, directed closely to careers, innovative, affordable and flexible than they currently are, and should contribute to excellence and equity in learning lifelong learning, by providing:

- ✓ attractive and inclusive vocational training with highly qualified teachers, innovative learning methods, high quality infrastructure and facilities, a high relevancy on labor market and opportunities for further education and training;

- ✓ high initial vocational training, which shall be an attractive choice, having the same value as general education for students, parents and society as a whole. It should provide students to acquire both key competences and specific skills;
- ✓ easily accessible and career-oriented continuing vocational training for workers, employers, independent contractors and unemployed, which facilitates both competence development and career changes;
- ✓ flexible vocational training systems, approach focused on achieved learning outcomes, which shall support both flexible learning programs and allow passage between the different subsystems of education and training (school education, vocational training, higher education, adult education) and also provide validation of formal and informal learning, including competences acquired through the work experience;
- ✓ European education and training area using the transparent qualifications systems, allow the transfer and accumulation of learning outcomes and qualifications and competences recognition and increase transnational mobility;
- ✓ significantly improved opportunities for professionals transnational mobility in vocational training;
- ✓ easily accessible and high-quality information, guidance and lifelong counseling forming a coherent network that allows citizens to take solid decisions and to manage their learning and professional development beyond the traditional gender lines.

The **strategic objectives** for tourism development to the period 2008-2013 are aiming at establishing a human resources development system and creating tourism integrated information system. Priority is given to the workforce training and retraining for the real needs of the economy to be met, and in this way the available training to comply with the demand.

## **FINDINGS**

- Tourism, as the fastest growing world industry, needs qualified managers to meet the global demand.
- At the core of tourism management lies the human resource management.
- There is an objective necessity of active institutional support providing vocational education and training and the implementation of European experience and strategies.
- The problems and challenges of vocational education and training require broad public debate on demand for better solutions.
- European development, which is based on the knowledge, and opening of the European labor market is the biggest challenge to the vocational education and training.
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## **CONCLUSION**

The challenge that society meets at the beginning of the new century is to achieve full employment and to maintain worldwide economic growth. In terms of developing globalization and continuous improvement of the knowledge society, the education and training are important priorities. The requirement for continuous improvement of the level of knowledge, skill and competence is a precondition for all citizens' personal development and also guarantees their participation in all ongoing important social processes and their active involvement in the labor market. Efforts are targeted to ensure the employment quality and quantity based on the new educational and training strategies.

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## ***QUALITY SYSTEMS AND PRACTICES IN AGRO-ECOTOURISM ENTERPRISES: A CASE STUDY IN THESSALY.***

**Pitoska Electra Ph.D**

Assistant Professor, Financial Applications Department

School of Management & Economics

Technological Education Institute of Western Macedonia

### **ABSTRACT**

Tourism comprises a self- contained phenomenon synonymous to consumption and spare time and its growth, due to the development of technology and the improvement of the standards of living, has taken global dimensions. As a result tourism has developed to a pure industry, leading the economy and society in local, regional, national and global level to important changes. Based to the quality and the value of the natural and cultural heritage, as well as to the growth of the level of the given services, tourism is directed to the boom of alternative types of tourism and especially agro-ecotourism, which went through an enormous rise and demand. The change of the consumer's behavior and the tourist's consideration of the environment has led organizations taking actions in the sector, to the adoption of high level of standards in all aspects of the generative procedure. The main reason for this continual improvement of the service level and the quality of the given services, as well as the clamp-down for the protection of the environment, was the reason that sustainable tourist growth

became a strategic aim. The quality and the practices that ensure sustainability are a continuous procedure which is accomplished with the implementation of quality systems, aiming to achieve the Total Quality. Companies which comply with the specific standards receive quality marks, which conform to this kind of favour that will remain to the consumer's consciousness.

In that perspective, the aim of the research was to examine whether agro-ecotourist enterprises are certified for the given services, for the protection for the consumers/ tourists, as well as for the protection of the environment. The research was carried out in the first two months of 2013 in the region of Thessaly, and more specifically in the prefecture of Karditsa.

Through the use of questionnaires and personal interviews, data was gathered and analyzed with the use of SPSS. Through statistical analysis, we detect that the majority of the organizations do not apply any certification system for the services that offer. However, most of the entrepreneurs were disposed to learn them and apply them to their companies.

**Key words:** Tourism enterprises, quality systems, consumer's protection, Karditsa, Greece.

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

The current challenges make the constant search and adoption of sustainable touristic development necessary. This kind of development has both the human and the environment in the centre of interest. The touristic development should aim to both increase the level of the offered services' quality and to incorporate activities that would upgrade the environment. The first main point of environmental certification took place in 1985, when the first blue flags were

awarded as a way to encourage the abeyance of the European Council's legislation for swimming water quality.<sup>2</sup>

In 1996, the organization of international standards launched ISO 14001, which is awarded to organizations, industries and touristic enterprises. In 1998, the environmental program of the United Nations published its first report concerning ecological signs for tourism. EMAS was invented by the local authorities and it is the only version for the services.

The incorporation of an environmental direction to the touristic enterprises may well contribute to their sustainable development. On the one hand the preservation of the quality of the environment is necessary to maintain a good quality level in the touristic industry. On the other hand, being environmentally conscious and developing such activities, may be used as tools by the touristic enterprises in order to attract visitors.<sup>3</sup>

The main strategic target of touristic development is the constant improvement of the services and products provided.

## **2. QUALITY AND CERTIFICATION IN THE GREEK TOURISTIC INDUSTRY**

According to the evaluations and predictions so far, the visitability of the Greek touristic destinations has been severely damaged by the crisis while other destinations' visitability has remained intact or ever increased. The current adverse situation brings forward the eternal problems of Greek tourism and it makes it necessary for the touristic enterprises to change their developmental strategies.

Since the beginning of the 90s, the characteristics of the activity of the Greek touristic industry have utterly changed. However, Greek tourism has not managed to live up to the modern challenges and expectations. Little attention was paid to

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<sup>2</sup> Avlonitis S. (2003) Control Data & Quality Ensurance, Ellin publications, Athens

<sup>3</sup> Spanos I., Lagoudi A. (2002) Complete environmental management for hotel units. The prerequisites of development, [www.hotel-restaurant.gr](http://www.hotel-restaurant.gr)



the development of the general touristic product and to the upgrade of the services offered.

The current decade is characterized by deep recession that has brought into surface all the structural weaknesses and the problems of the Greek touristic industry. The establishment of special institutions and scientists brought about the necessity to adopt new entrepreneurial policies that would focus on the upgrade of the services and the pursuit of quality in order to ensure sustainability and competitiveness.

The Greek touristic industry is in the middle of a critical crossroad. The consumerist attitude has changed, new destinations and markets have appeared, new forms of tourism have developed, new technologies have emerged and the touristic products now follow different paths.

Under the shadow of the current adverse situation, quality is considered to be one of the main targets that will eventually lead the touristic industry out of the crisis.

Despite the excessive touristic mobility and the large profits made out of it, it is a fact that we have not yet reached the desired level of services and infrastructure.<sup>4</sup> Many hotel units, small or large, have adopted policies and strategies so as to improve the quality of the services they offer.

The installation of standardization qualifications prepares the ground for satisfied customers, high productivity, satisfied employees and increased competitiveness.

### **3. CERTIFICATION SYSTEMS IN GREEK AGROTOURISM**

So far in Greece there is no commonly accepted certification system. The term "certification" is widely used but every time it refers to different things.

All the touristic institutions agree that the qualification systems for sustainable tourism should incorporate elements of both the procedure and the execution. However, the emphasis should be on execution. The certification signs are

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<sup>4</sup> Tsiotras G. (2002), Quality Improvement Mpenou publications, Athens

awarded by non-governmental organizations, private companies and governmental organizations. They are awarded to all those businesses that meet certain criteria.

The lack of specific methods to impose sustainable development in the touristic industry has provoked the emergence of a number of voluntary initiatives in the form of ethic codes, guidebooks, awards and ecological signs. There are many ecological signs that are characterized by different meanings, criteria, geographical field, complex messages, covering thus the requirements of an evaluation process. Due to the large number of the existed qualification systems, there is a confusion concerning the advantages of each one.

The certification systems that exist today are:

♥ **Agrocert certification system:** it provides certification to protected destination of origin and protected geographical indication products as well as to special poultry products.

♥ **Agrotourism Certification System:** it was established in Greece by AGROTOURISTIKI S.A and it is awarded to touristic businesses of the countryside.

♥ **Local Quality Agreements:** Globalization and open markets have resulted in the increase of competitiveness for the agricultural regions. In order to face the new situation, to promote themselves in the market, to support their local services and products, many regions in Greece and Europe have established the "Local Quality Agreements". The Local Quality Agreements in tourism focus on the improvement of the quality of the services offered in the countryside. They differentiate the touristic products by incorporating elements of traditional legacy (architecture, gastronomy), that is the identity of each region. The target is to exploit the local production of agricultural products.

There are the following certification systems in the field of the research:

♦ **Local Agreement PINDOS:** The main target of this certification is to form the appropriate circumstances for sustainable development in the mountains. The implementation of an alternative developmental model aims to withhold the current population and to attract new. The entrepreneurs that will be awarded by PINDOS, will obtain several privileges, such as the preservation of the agricultural

identity, the designation of cultural legacy and the proposition and implementation of initiatives.

◆ **The Local Quality Agreement “Xenios Zeus”**: The local quality agreement for tourism in the prefecture of Kozani, titled as “Xenios Zeus”, is a modern cooperation of private character that is charged with the responsibility to benefit the society and its citizens. This company, which was created mainly for the local quality agreement, is of social, educative, scientific, environmental and nonprofit nature.

## **4. THE EMPIRICAL RESEARCH**

### ***4.1 The methodology of the research***

In order to examine the degree of adaptation and implementation of certification systems in agrotourism, a field research was realized in March 2012. The field of the research was certain agrotouristic enterprises in the prefectures of Kozani and Florina. These two prefectures are engaged with an agrotouristic identity and development that has been upgraded during the past decade.

The 25 enterprises that participated in the research invested on their businesses and were funded by the Community Initiative operational Program LEADER+ and by the programs of agricultural regional growth (OPAAB) in order to upgrade or establish restaurants and coffee shops.

The research was realized through structured questionnaires that were completed by the means of personal interviews. The questionnaire includes four units. The first unit is about the demographic characteristics and it consists of two subunits which have six and five questions respectively. The second unit includes eighteen questions and examines the evaluation of Leader+ in the prefectures of Kozani and Florina. This unit defines and assesses the impact of the program, positive or negative, on the local economy. The third unit consists of nineteen questions that refer to the evaluation of the certification systems ISO and HACCP, the respective local systems and their contribution to the increase of competitiveness. Finally, the participants make their propositions and talk about their plans to acquire a

kind of certification system and they also talk about the future of agrotourism in general and their business in particular.

#### ***4.2 The findings of the research***

After statistically processing the answers, the following conclusions can be reached:

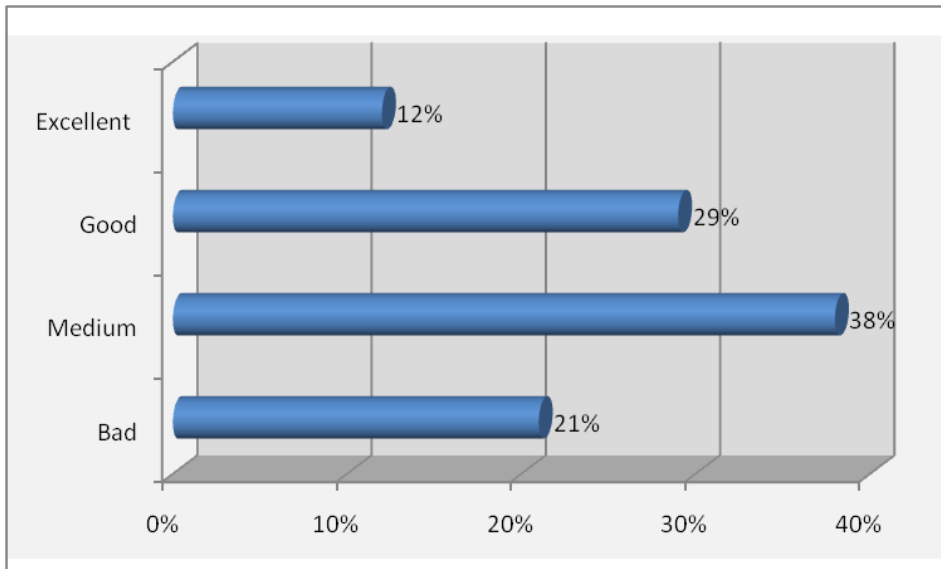
The majority of the participants in the research are men between 31 and 40 years old while women of the same age represent on 8% of the respondents. 21% and 13% of the participants are men of 41-50 and 51-60 respectively while the respective percentage for women is much lower: 4%.

What is quite interesting is the level of education of the participants. 71% of them are secondary education graduates. 21% of them are upper education graduates and only 8% are primary education graduates.

Most of the respondents (54%) have been working in the touristic industry from 6 to 10 years. Those who have been active in tourism business from 1 to 5 and from 11 to 15 years share the same percentage: 21%. Only 4% have been in the business from 16 to 20 years. Therefore, the research is mainly about “young” enterprises.

The participants’ evaluation about the level of quality of agrotourism in the prefectures of Kozani and Florina was recorded as follows: medium (38%), good (29%), bad (21%) and excellent (12%). Here is the relative graph:

1<sup>st</sup> Graph: Level of quality in Agrotourism



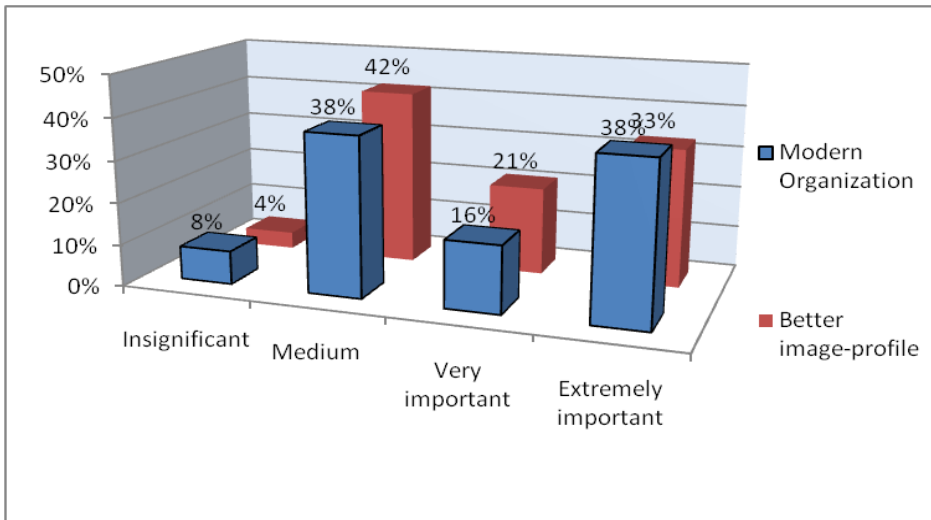
The vast majority of the agrotouristic enterprises (92%) are not ISO certified. That leaves only a percentage of 8% of enterprises that are certified.

The agrotouristic enterprises argue that an ISO certification gives an enterprise a comparative advantage. This comparative advantage concerns the modern organization, the better image, the better quality of services offered and eventually the satisfied customer.

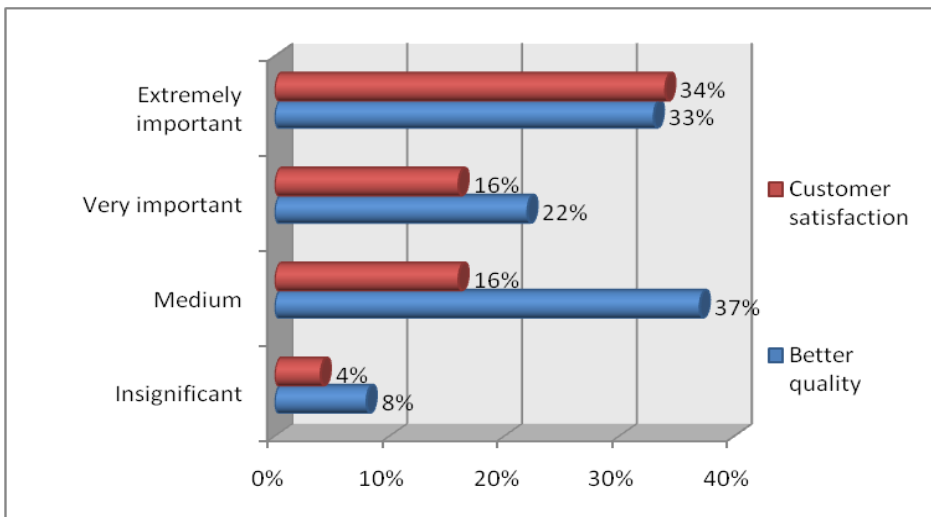
More particularly, the advantages are evaluated to be of medium importance to of extreme importance. Only a low percentage of the participants (4-8%) consider that the advantages from an ISO certification are indifferent.

These evaluations are presented in the following diagram:

2<sup>nd</sup> Diagram: Evaluation of the advantages from ISO certification



3<sup>rd</sup> Diagram: Evaluation of the advantages from ISO certification



Only 8% of the enterprises are ISO certified.

The biggest part of the participants consider that the benefit from HACCP certification is extremely important. The evaluations are presented in the following table:

**3<sup>rd</sup> Table: Evaluation of the advantages from HACCP certification**

	Medium	Much	Very Much
Costumer's satisfaction	21%	33%	46%
Food quality	21%	29%	50%
Product Security	25%	33%	42%
Employees' Security	25%	29%	46%
Sanitary Production Conditions	21%	33%	46%

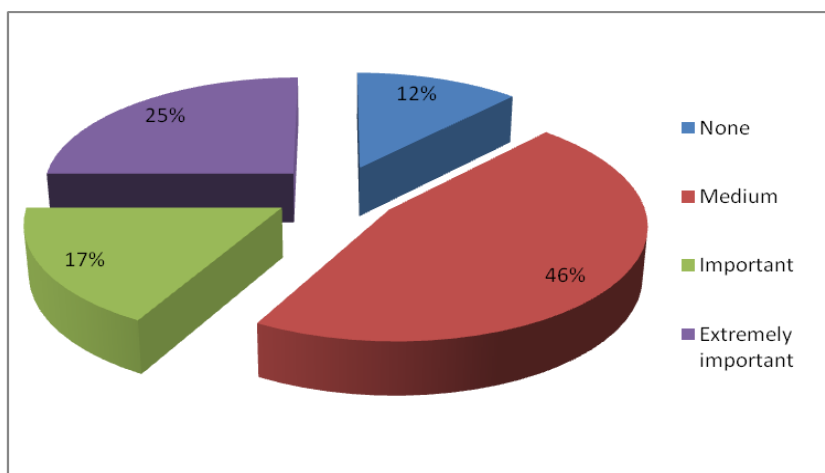
The only local certification that same of the enterpreses have been awarded to, is the local quality agreement "Xenios Zeus". 17% of the participant enterprises are certified by "Xenios Zeus".

Most of the respondents consider that the contribution of local certification systems to the increse of competitveness in agrotouristic enterprises is of medium importnace. The evaluations are presented in the follwing graph:

When it comes to the contribution of the program Leader+, the evaluations seem to consider it of medium importance for the reduction of local enqualities (34%), the new investments (35%), the upgrade of traditional settlements (42%) and the utilization of local products (34%).

The respondents think that the impact of Leader+ on the enhancement of entrepreneurship (46%), on the creation of new jobs and attraction of new investments (37%), is important.

4<sup>th</sup> Graph: Contribution of local certification systems to the increase of competitiveness in agrotouristic enterprises



The majority of the participant enterprises think that the local economy has been importantly benefited from the new investments by creating new jobs and additional incomes.

The participants seem to consider medium or minimum the impact on the rise of prices (37%), on the income outflow (37%). They also believe that the negative impact on the local economy is of minimum importance (46%).

Many respondents appear to be rather pessimistic about the future course of agrotourism due to the economic crisis, the problematic infrastructure and the limited accessibility and transportation.

Another restraining factor is that a big part of the funding was given to entrepreneurs that did not have the technical knowledge to offer quality services to the costumers.

The majority of the respondents predict that the future of their enterprises will be from stable to worse and they mainly justify this prediction to their pending bank loans.



## **5. CONCLUSIONS**

The current challenges make the constant search and adoption of sustainable touristic development necessary. This kind of development has both the human and the environment in the centre of interest. The touristic development should aim to both increase the level of the offered services' quality and to incorporate activities that would upgrade the environment.

The Greek touristic industry is in the middle of a critical crossroad. The consumerist attitude has changed, new destinations and markets have appeared, new forms of tourism have developed, new technologies have emerged and the touristic products now follow different paths.

Under the shadow of the current adverse situation, quality is considered to be one of the main targets that will eventually lead the touristic industry out of the crisis.

Despite the excessive touristic mobility and the large profits made out of it, it is a fact that we have not yet reached the desired level of services and infrastructure.<sup>5</sup> Many hotel units, small or large, have adopted policies and strategies so as to improve the quality of the services their offer.

The lack of specific methods to impose sustainable development in the touristic industry has provoked the emergence of a number of voluntary initiatives in the form of ethic codes, guidebooks, awards and ecological signs. There are many ecological signs that are characterized by different meanings, criteria, geographical field, complex messages, covering thus the requirements of an evaluation process.

The realization of the empirical research leads us to the following conclusions:

The majority of the Greek agrotouristic enterprises consider that the certification systems in tourism, local or not, contribute from moderately to significantly to the competitiveness of their enterprises.

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<sup>5</sup> Tsiotras G. (2002), Quality Improvement Mpenou publications, Athens

While most of the agrotouristic enterprises seem to be interested in ISO and HACCP certifications, only very few of them are certified or wish to get certified in the future.

The agrotouristic enterprises are aware of the advantages of a certified business: modern organization, better profile, better product quality, more satisfied costumers, and sanitary conditions of production, food quality and security for both their employees and their products.

Most of the enterprises are not familiar with the Local Quality Agreements, even though the entrepreneurs are young. Most of the participants do not intend to acquire a sort of certification due to lack of information and reservation during the economic crisis.

Many respondents appear to be rather pessimistic about the future course of agrotourism due to the economic crisis, the problematic infrastructure and the limited accessibility and transportation.

Another restraining factor is that a big part of the funding was given to entrepreneurs that did not have the technical knowledge to offer quality services to the costumers.

The majority of the respondents predict that the future of their enterprises will be from stable to worse and they mainly justify this prediction to their pending bank loans.

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***STRATEGIC ASPECTS OF THIRD STREAM  
ACTIVITIES IN GLOBAL HIGHER  
EDUCATION: CASE STUDY OF 5  
UNIVERSITIES IN THE NORTH EAST OF  
ENGLAND***

**Watson Derec**

Program Director, University of Sunderland, Faculty of Business & Law  
Sunderland, United Kingdom

**Lynne Hall**

Professor, University of Sunderland  
Sunderland, United Kingdom

**Richard Li Hua**

Professor, University of Sunderland  
Sunderland, United Kingdom

**ABSTRACT:**

Third stream activities are vital for Global Higher Education, with reciprocal benefits for both International Higher Education and the global business community including key impacts/benefits. Although evidence implies that Universities are actively embedding and integrating third stream alongside first

and second stream curriculum activities, the paper would challenge such rhetoric and is far from the truth. The paper reports a study in the North East of England, involving all 5 universities. The results synthesized validate this stance and with the aid of tangible evidence further implies that there is in fact a clear miss-match of perceptions and a situation in which many Universities are clearly struggling to demonstrate tangible internal and external third stream key performance indicators. Empirical research conducted in 2012, discovered executive and procedural failings that clearly stifled academics in actively becoming involved participants in external activities. The paper concludes in presenting both an operational and strategic theoretical framework to embed 'Third Stream' activities within Higher Education and its effective integration within 'First and Second Stream' initiatives.

**Key Words:** Government; Third stream Activities; University Procedures; Community of Practice; Third Stream Solutions.

## **Introduction:**

Third stream activities, concerned with the generation use, application and exploitation of knowledge and other university capabilities outside academic environments (Thune, 2007), are vital to the success of the HE sector. Universities are required to add both direct and indirect value to social and economic development (Cable et al., 2011), with impact studies monitoring the sector's contribution as part of the overall excellence profile for the 2014 Research Excellence Framework (HEFCE, 2012).

The Russell Report (2002) and the Lambert Review (2003) emphasised that Third Stream activities should be seen as a core activity of Higher Educational Institutes. Many University Executives have responded to government initiatives and focus by establishing Third Stream policies and infrastructures within their institutes. Prima facie evidence would suggest that we are actively embedding and integrating third stream alongside first and second stream activities. However, a decade later, Wilson's Review (2012) provides troublesome reading, for whilst it identifies good practices and exemplary approaches, it highlights the continuing

low take-up and patchy provision of Third Stream activity along with 30 recommendations for improvement. HE collaboration with SMEs has been identified as critical for future growth (EU documentation, TSB documentation, Strategy for growth 2011), with significant UK and EU funding initiatives aiming to stimulate cooperation.

So, if Third Stream activities are so essential, as recognized by the government, industry and the HEI executives, why then aren't we seeing considerable growth in Third Stream activity to ameliorate the loss of income from the first and second streams in the HE sector and to meet the economic imperative? This paper discusses a study that is part of a wider project aiming to identify an effective approach to growing Third Stream activity in Higher Education. The results presented here highlight academics' perceived priority of the various streams of academic activity in their institutions and their limited involvement in, and awareness of, Third Stream activities.

## **Method & Participants**

163 academics from the Business Schools of the 5 North Eastern Universities, 2 Russell group (Durham, Newcastle) and 3 post-92s (Northumbria, Sunderland and Teesside) completed an online 20-question questionnaire in February 2012. Participants completed questions on the prioritization of the three streams of activity and on awareness and perceptions of Third Stream activity, policy and infrastructure at their institutions.

59% of the sample were Lecturers/Senior Lecturers, 17% were Professors/Readers and 24% were academic managers (e.g. Associate Deans, Head of Departments, Principal Lecturers, etc.).

## **Results & Interpretation**

### **Prioritisation of Activity**

Academics were asked to rate the priority that each of the three streams of activity have at their institution (1 = lowest rating, 10 = highest rating). Paired

samples t-tests were used to calculate whether there were significant differences in the mean scores assigned to research vs. teaching, research vs. Third Stream activity, teaching vs. research and teaching vs. Third Stream activity. This was significant for research and teaching as priorities ( $t(162) = -4.01$ , two-tailed  $p < .001$ ), indicating that teaching ( $M = 7.66$ ) was given a higher overall mean priority rating compared to research ( $M = 6.45$ ).

The t-test comparing mean differences between research priority and Third Stream priority was also significant ( $t(162) = 10.59$ , two-tailed  $p < .001$ ), research ( $M = 6.46$ ) prioritised significantly higher than Third Stream activity ( $M = 3.72$ ). Significant differences also emerged in the priority ratings assigned between teaching ( $M = 7.66$ ) and Third Stream activity ( $M = 3.74$ ) ( $t(162) = 16.98$ , two-tailed  $p < .001$ ). This confirms that teaching was prioritised more highly than Third Stream activities.

No significant differences were revealed between academic position and priority ratings for teaching, research or Third Stream activities with general agreement across all levels on prioritization.

Independent t-tests were carried out to calculate whether there were significant differences in priority ratings given to T/R/TS by Russell Group Universities compared to Post 92 Universities. Unsurprisingly, Russell Group Universities had a higher priority for Research ( $t(134) = 8.30$ ,  $p < .001$ ), with Russell Group Universities ( $M = 8.43$ ) rating Research as a significantly higher priority than Post-92 Universities ( $M = 5.50$ ). Teaching Priority Ratings ( $t(160) = -5.39$ ,  $p < .001$ ) were the opposite, with the means illustrating that Post-92 Universities ( $M = 8.28$ ) rated teaching as a significantly higher priority compared to Russell Group Universities ( $M = 6.31$ ). However, the Third Stream Priority Ratings ( $t(159) = -3.21$ ,  $p < .001$ ) means highlight that Post-92 universities ( $M = 4.13$ ) rated Third Stream activity as a significantly higher priority compared to Russell Group Universities ( $M = 2.88$ ).

### **Rich Picture Analysis**



**Figure 1: Rich Picture Analysis of Key Challenges and Change Solutions**

### **Participation in Third Stream Activities**

Over 60% of academics had not participated in any Third Stream activities. A third of the sample had been doing some consultancy activities for 12 months or more. No significant association was found between length of participation in third stream activities and University type (Russell Gp vs. Post 92) ( $X^2(2) = 4.67, p = .10$ ). However, the percentages indicate that more Russell Group individuals (74.5%) had never participated in activities compared to Post-92 (57.1%).

### **Awareness of Third Stream Targets**

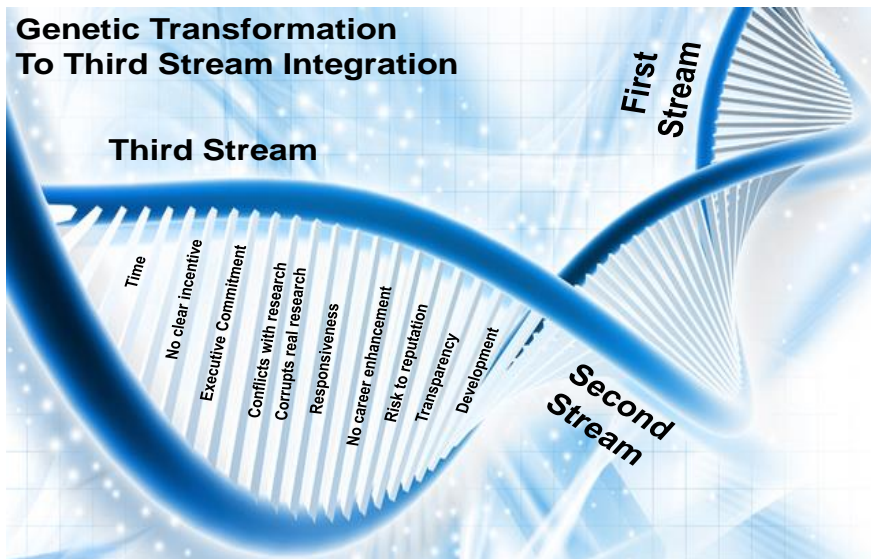
Although only 15% of academic staff actually knew the target for Third Stream activities, there were significant associations between university type and



knowledge of the target for consultancy activities. Chi-square cross-tabulation between university type and knowledge of the target figure for consultancy was significant ( $\chi^2 (1) = 6.36, p = .01$ ). Only 4.1% ( $n = 2$ ) of individuals from Russell Group universities indicated that they knew what the target figure for consultancy activities were compared to 19.4% ( $n = 21$ ) for Post-92 universities.

## Discussion

Third Stream activity is considered to be critical for the Higher Education sector and for the economy as a whole. However, whilst government, policy makers, funders and University senior management have the clear aim of integrating Higher Education through Third Stream activity, our results would indicate that the most essential element of the Third Stream mix, academic engagement, is missing.



**Figure 2: Genetic Transformation To Third Stream Integration as a Strategic**

## **Theoretical Framework.**

Our results show a significant lack of academic engagement in Third Stream activity in Business Schools across 5 quite different Universities. Only 15% of our sample (which covered all levels from lecturer to Faculty management) knew the Third Stream targets for their institution, with under 40% of academics engaging in Third Stream activity.

Further analysis of the results helped construct a rich picture analysis, (See figure 1) and in doing so synthesized nine core drivers, (See figure 2), which it is felt, that if addressed, would significantly dissipate those barriers raised by respondents in the research exercise. Thus aiming to counteract the perceived perception that third stream is a 'bolt on exercise'.

With innovation and knowledge seen as fundamental to economic growth and Universities increasingly expected to be the primary provider or at least a significant contributor, Third Stream activity is key, however, the challenges are significant. Our study clearly identifies that academics do not perceive Third Stream to be of the same priority as teaching or research. And this difference in prioritization is vast, with research and teaching both being high priority and Third Stream at best semi-priority for post-92s and of low priority for the Russell Group universities.

The response to engaging Higher Education with business has focused on senior management and high level policy, supported through the implementation of high quality infrastructure and support services. However, the product of the University is the academics themselves. Knowledge and innovation is expressed as artifacts and outputs, however, it is embedded in us. Unlike research and teaching, many Universities did not previously have third stream activity as a core function within their mission statements (Ramos-Vielba, 2009). Further, as most academics entered higher education because of first and/or second stream interests, even where the University has changed the mission and established infrastructure this may not have filtered through to faculty, with corresponding low levels of activity and growth in Third Stream activities in almost all institutions [Hoskins, 2011].

Progressing Third Stream activity from low to high priority is essential. Whilst academics continue to view Third Stream as being of significantly less priority than research and teaching, low take-up of Third Stream activities will continue. The challenge lies in changing the academic perception of Third Stream activity. This requires new approaches and models, both to embed Third Stream activity into the first and second streams, and to establish equivalence between Third Stream activity and the other streams in terms of academic career progression. Further, an academic-centric approach is needed, one where the needs and expectations of the academic, as well as the institution and the wider economy, are met. Our current work focuses on the development and implementation of a “grass-roots, buy-in” model, where we are looking at adapting attributes of Third Stream activity that inhibit and provide barriers (even if unintended) to academic engagement.

At the University of Sunderland the author has developed an operational theoretical framework named the ‘Business Clinic’ as noted in figure 3. The Business Clinic offers a viable ten step procedure whereby external enquiries can be channeled into three third stream initiatives such as first stream teaching, second stream research and third stream external engagement gateways. The Business Clinic has proven both successful and attracted further interest via the academic and business community in the formal invitation to attend research conferences, business networking forums and overseas Universities such as the Meiji University in Japan.

Higher Education has always evolved and reinforced its presence as a major pillar in society or what is now referred to as the ‘knowledge economy’. The wheels of change were historically driven or paced by universities themselves. However, as with all public sectors both the government of the day, business and public opinion have started to question their autonomous role.

We face a current and continued situation in which Higher Education is in the ‘lime light’ of scrutiny and fuelled by the economic recession. The academic community has in many cases struggled to adapt to what many feel is the commercialisation of their profession. However, with professionalism comes commitment and academics have shown that they are willing in the main to adapt. However, research reveals many academics feel that their institutes are

failing to provide the necessary policies, infrastructure and management styles to foster a proactive third stream culture.

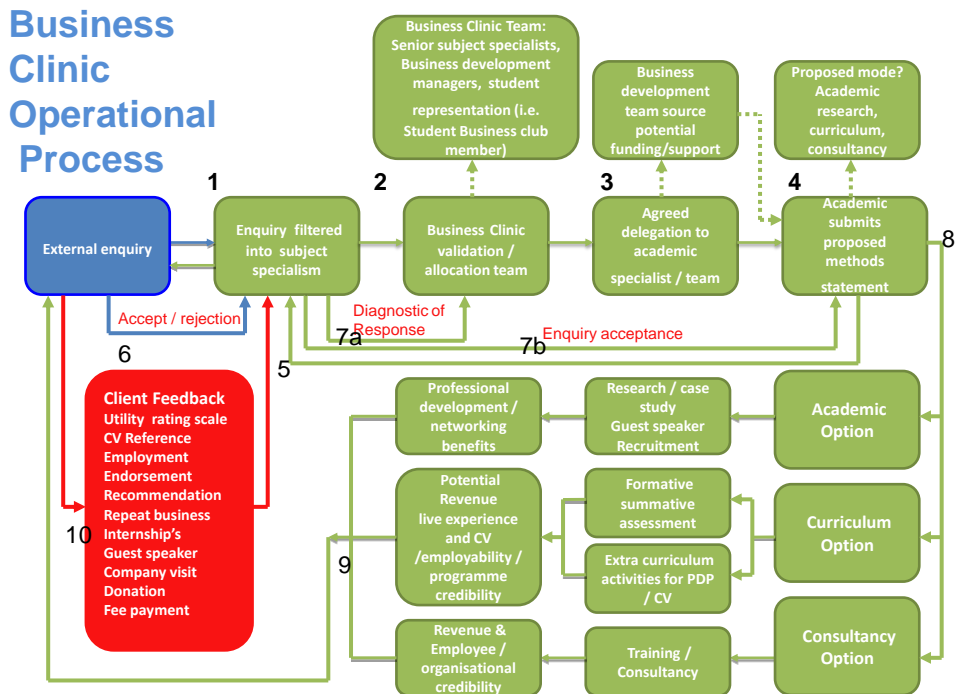


Figure 3 Operational Theoretical Framework 'Business Clinic Model'

The paper concludes by clustering respondents' feedback into nine key challenges that need to be addressed and a route map / business clinic to enhance the adoption of third stream activities. It is anticipated that readers can relate to both the feedback and proposed solutions. Hopefully, the paper will act as a catalyst for academics to lobby decision makers to further validate and explore workable solutions within their own institutions.

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## *THE IMPACT OF MARKETING UPON THE KITCHEN ORGANIZATION, OPERATION AND MANAGEMENT. COULD THAT IMPROVE THE CUSTOMERS' SATISFACTION?*

**Laloumis Athanasios, MA**

Instructor, Technological Education Institute of Athens, Greece

### **ABSTRACT**

Marketing is a science that probes our life more and more. It was a matter of time till the field of restaurants, were conquered. Although the restaurant marketing is well known today, the direct impact and influence from the marketing to the food production is quite limited. The marketing procedures are used in a few kitchen tasks such as menu planning and menu engineering. The great issue is whether marketing can affect the organization, operation and management of a kitchen directly. And let us suppose that this is feasible, can it lead to increased levels of the guests' satisfaction? It is essential that we know who we are, who is the guest, develop the equivalent profiles, study the reasoning for consumption and finally manipulate the production process in a way that will provide the potential buyer with a product that is irresistible.

**Keywords:** Marketing, Kitchen, Customer satisfaction, Personalization of the product

## **INTRODUCTION**

The marketing process provides an enterprise with the ability to customize their products and services to the clients' needs and wants (Kotler, 1991). The beginning of that process defines the profile of the clientele. At first the marketer needs to take under consideration the common characteristics of several groups of people, regroup those characteristics and finally create segments of the general social group (Laloumis, 1998). Those segments are parts of the society that demonstrate a number of characteristics which are combined among them on a different logical basis. This determines a group of people which for example belong to an age spread from the early twenties to the early fifties. In actual life this age spread displays a number of differences, which lead to a completely opposite consuming behavior. Within the marketing process though, those ages can be bound by other common characteristics such as a tendency to search for brand new experiences that lead them to be willing to consume a certain product or service (Yankelovich, 2006).

## **CULINARY MARKET SEGMENTATION**

The nature of the culinary product is obviously met as a component in any kind of tourist product. The basic need for food will be fulfilled. Additionally, there are tourists who will seek a different experience out of their basic need. There are also tourists that travel basing their destination choice on the food and drink that they will find there. The appropriate segmentation under today's circumstances, are presented by Ignatov (2003) which breaks them down to three specific target groups. Those target groups are people who are interested in food, those who are interested in wine and those who are interested in both (Kivela et al, 2005).

It is proven that culinary tourists, are quite older than generic tourists, more highly educated and they tend to spend an average of the double amount than the generic tourist. (Wade et al, 2005, Hall et al, 2003). There are two main directions in which culinary tourists spread. These directions are the food and the wine. Culinary tourists demonstrate significant differences among visitors interested in food-based tourism, wine-based tourism, and food and wine-based tourism. Those segments differ in demographic characteristics, travel activities

and spending during travel. Culinary tourists who aim to both food and wine tend to have the highest socio-economic profiles, engaged in more activities than the other two sectors (Ignatov, 2003).

Middleton (et al, 2001) indicates that there are seven main ways to segment markets in the tourism market:

- The purpose of travel
- The buyer needs, motivations, demands and anticipations
- The consuming behavior
- The demographic, economic, and geographic profile
- The psychographic profile
- The geodemographic profile
- And the price

On the other hand Buckley (1993) defines that those characteristics can be divided into three categories.

- Demographic
- Psychographic and
- Behavioristic

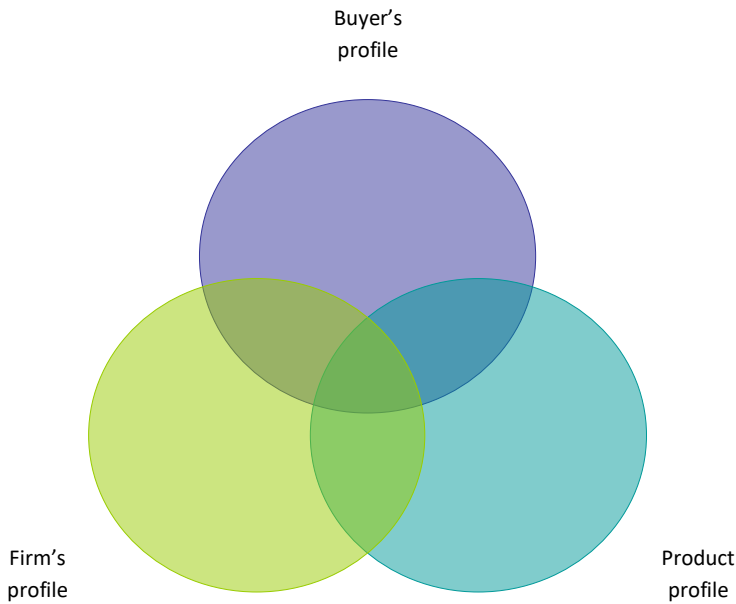
Those characteristics suffer the regrouping process providing a certain model of a large group of people which demonstrate common facts that lead them to specific consuming behaviors. That allows the enterprise to specify the product accordingly.

The segmentation process analyzes and reorganizes the characteristics of the enterprenual profile (Auty, 1992). The enterprenual profile is basically consisted of a list of characteristics which translate the firm's identity into the customer's consuming language. Those characteristics are the following (Scanlon, 1985, Minor et al, 1984):

- The type of the enterprise
- The category of the enterprise



- The cuisine
- The fame
- And the product



Those characteristics can provide the buyer with an accurate image of what to expect from the restaurant. On the other hand the enterprise will profit out of this comparison a more detailed aspect of the potential buyer's profile which will enable the marketer to design and develop a product or service that will satisfy the target group (Seaberg, 1983). According to Buckley (1993) the enterprise must go through a tunnel that will get the firm much closer to the target group. This tunnel is crossed in four steps:

1. Perceiving,
2. Understanding,

3. Stimulating,
4. And satisfying the customer's needs

The enterprise is provided with the appropriate data that describe best the customer's needs. Apart from the needs, wants and expectations must be taken under consideration (Laloumis, 2002). It is an expected reaction that consumers easily jump from satisfaction to expectation and from expectation to demand.

It is a major step reading the guest's body language to perceive and understand his needs. The buyer may be in a hurry, may be on a diet, may be on a budget, may not understand the menu or may face some quality problems. In all cases the personnel must provide the customer a reason for consumption (Smith, 1990).

At this point the restaurant possesses all the information needed in order to develop the product profile. The product is the chain part that bonds the buyers with the enterprise, by studying and comparing the equivalent profiles.

### **CONSUMER BEHAVIOR**

Consumer behavior is the procedure via a buyer comes to a decision of what to purchase, the criticism of the choice and the potential of repeating this purchase.

According to Assael (1992) consumer behavior is the humans' reaction to a process of exchange.

Wilkie (1990), declares that consumer behavior is the one that potential buyers demonstrate while they research, buy, use, evaluate and accept or reject a product or service depending on their needs' satisfaction.

As Peter (et al, 1990) indicates consumer behavior is the procedure of decision making and reactions during a purchase of goods or services.

Mowen (1990) defines consumer behavior as all the activities that are relevant to the purchase of a product. This includes the thoughts and stimulus

before, during and after the purchase of a product along with each factor affecting that procedure.

The first step for the buyer is to define the needs and wants which have to be satisfied. Right after the buyer collects information referring to the available products and services that can satisfy those needs, evaluates the source of the information and comes to a decision. The buyer purchases the product, uses the item, compares the expectations with the actual experience, develops a critic opinion about his purchase and finally rates the overall experience as worth repeating or not (Siomkos, 1994, Gabbott et al., 1994).

### **THE CONSUMER**

The consumer is the one who decides whether a product is worth buying or not. There are four basic types of consumers (Laurent et al, 1985).

- The economic type. This type is totally rational, basing all decisions on the best balance between spent and profit, knowing all the needed details and being untouched by external stimulus.
- The pathetic type. This type represents the guided person who decides according to what the external stimulus suggest.
- The knowledgeable type. The information collector, being more down to earth compared to the economic type.
- The emotional type. The one who decides depending on the emotion.

Consumers might demonstrate a mixture of characteristics depending on the external social, family and financial environment (Siomkos, 1994). The external environment cannot be measured thus an approach to define sound types of consumers is notrational.

### **DECISION MAKING**

The decision making process begins with the stimulus which declares an unsatisfied need (Moorman, 1990). The consumer will gather the appropriate

information, come up with a shortlist of potential goods or services, analyzes the positive and negative facts and comes to a decision (Keller et al, 1987). The quality and quantity of the information play a key role in the decision making. Higher quality of information, lead to better decisions. Quantity wise it is not always the same. In some cases the volume of the information, tend to confuse the consumer (Hauser et al, 1993).

In the F&B sector the decision making process is randomly implemented since the buyer's knowledge regarding the product is very limited. In this case the main factor that leads to a decision is the restaurant's fame. An important factor is that the product is evaluated mostly after the consumption. It is preferred by the enterprises that the product is bought in advance to the consumption.

### **CONSUMER PERCEPTION**

The consumer's perception in comparison with the actual reality, play a significant role in the buying process.

The perception is the procedure when a buyer makes sense out of a certain stimulus (Siomkos, 1994). The same applies to situations when the experience makes sense for a consumer.

### **RESTAURANT MARKETING**

The marketing process aims to draw a landscape in the market, in which the most efficient position will be selected as a target for the restaurant to accomplish. This will enable the enterprise to obtain an advantage when communicating the product to the target group and being visited by the target group. The main target is to achieve a minimum level of sales which can guarantee a sustainable operation. There is a number of tools which under proper usage, can contribute a considerable increase in the sales and the income. The product promotion is an important part of selling (Breitfuss, 2008). There are a few techniques that can increase the sales in a restaurant (Breitfuss, 2008, Κοσσένας, 2007). Those techniques are the following:

## THE EXTRA PRODUCT

*This simple technique is broadly adopted by fast food restaurants. the employee communicates possible combinations as a new potential or a reminder. in case of repeated purchases the guest will go for some of those combinations.*

### Demonstrate knowledge of the product

Trying to sell a drink might not be as accurate as it should. Trying to sell a specific drink that matches the guest's order proves that the waiter possesses knowledge of the product. This will develop a relationship of trust among the guest and the enterprise.

### Offering

*Offer, suggest. Wear a pretty smile and introduce the product to the guest. The potential buyer is more likely to expand the order if he is not dealing with the unknown.*

### Show Enthusiasm

*Enthusiasm is essential. It develops the image of an honest person. On top of that the message that the waiter believes in the product assures the guest that his needs will be met by all means. There is also a strengthening of the trust between the waiter and the guest.*

### Listen

*Listening is a difficult task. Letting the sound get through the ears is not enough. In many situations people hear the words but they do not listen at all. Listening is the major step that can lead to understanding the buyer's needs and getting sound knowledge of your buyer.*

### Know your guest

*Knowing the guest equals to knowing the needs, wants and demands. That information can customize the product to the guest's needs and guarantee the sales delivering the message "we can offer exactly what you want".*

### Assume the sale

*This state of selling offers the buyer the choice of not choosing. For example a waiter can ask the guest if there is a need for water. Since the guest replies positively the waiter asks if there is a preference between still and sparkling water. There is no reference on tap water. The waiter gives the guest the choice to buy, hiding the existing alternative of not buying. Statistically, it is rare that the guest will head for tap water.*

### Incentives

*This method aims to provide the consumer with the needed motivation in order to achieve a better sale agreement.*

### Ask

*This technique enables the employee to develop a more efficient image of details that customers seek. Those details create a database that will lead to personalizing the product to each and every buyer.*

### Downselling

This is a quite similar technique to up-selling. In this case the waiter suggests the most expensive alternative. If the guest turns this alternative down, the waiter goes for the second most expensive. The achievement in this technique is that the guest will most probably settle in the middle between his original

intention and the waiter's suggestion. Thereafter there is not a direct sale, but a direct increase in the average spent.

### Crossselling

In this case there is needed a state of trust between the guest and the waiter. The concept is that the waiter tries to lead the guest to a completely different choice against the buyer's determination for a certain product. For both down-selling and cross-selling the negotiation relies on the superior quality of the product.

An important alternative is that the selling techniques contribute a considerable value to the consuming experience. This derives from the perspective that the additional sales tend to meet the needs and wants that the consumer was not aware of until this time. Thus the consuming experience becomes rich and pleasant beyond the point that it was expected in the first place.

## THE OTHER SIDE OF THE PASS

The marketing process can be implemented effectively enough in the dining room of a restaurant. The question is what is happening on the other side of the pass? It is well known that the marketing claimed a large field on the menu planning process (Seaberg, 1983). The menu is a tool via which the marketing reaches the kitchen. Is it though possible that the marketing can affect the kitchen in a direct manner?

## MENU PLANNING AND ENGINEERING

The menu is not a simple list of dishes that are offered in a restaurant. It is mostly a selling tool (Minor et al, 1984). This tool is based on marketing procedures which reflect the needs of the clientele. Thus the menu plays an important communicative role, which can broaden to mild advertising by using pictures or impressive description of the available dishes.

Historically the first menu was the *escriteau*. The *escriteau* was a simple communicative list between the aristocrats and the chefs during the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

This list was the guideline of the dishes that should be prepared, while it provided the appropriate information for the ingredients to be supplied as well. The local restaurant, attempted to flutter their clientele by using an *escriteau* in a poster size hanging outside the entrance (Green et al, 1978). During the 1880's and the 1890's the *escriteau*, moved on to the table, receiving today's size and transformed to what is known today as menu. The first book that contained commercial menus in their former image was written by Hanna Glasse in 1747 (Scanlon, 1985). The menu as it is today was developed in the post war years.

The menu is developed in two phases. The menu planning and the menu engineering phase (Scanlon, 1985).

The menu is the prime kitchen item that is mostly affected and manipulated by marketing. There is a number of factors that affect the menu planning process. Those factors are (Scanlon, 1985, Seaberg, 1983, Fuller et al, 1991):

- The type of the enterprise
- The category of the enterprise
- The target group
- The cuisine
- Variety of ingredients
- Variety of colors
- Diet balanced
- Tempting the senses
- The employees' capabilities
- The equipment capabilities
- The marketability
- Profitability

It is obvious that marketing plays a very important role in the menu planning process. The key factors that determine the elimination process, through



which the menu is created, are the clientele profile, the enterprenual profile and the product profile.

The target group is analysed above. The product itself, regardless the assistance from any advertising campaigns, will definitely summon potential customers who do not belong to the adopted target group (Laloumis, 1998). This will result in two possible outcomes. Either the target group will be enriched absorbing the additional guests redefining the overall clientele profile, or the target group will reject the additional potential groups in a long mild process. There are several examples of target groups that cannot be easily put together.

The menu engineering process on the other hand, runs procedures that monitor the efficiency and the effectiveness of the menu whilst on production aiming to correct any mistakes that lead to an uneven operation (Dittmer et al, 1989).

The menu engineering process uses two main pieces of data in order to complete the checking process. Those are the profitability of a menu item and its popularity (Kotchevar, 1987). A basic information system that allows the enterprise to draw accurate conclusions is the sales statistics. The sales statistics provide the appropriate data for the estimation of a menu item's popularity. Additionally the menu items that display high popularity can be analyzed on the basis of their characteristics. Herein the goal is to analyze the menu item and specify the highest number of possible characteristics. The category of the item is not as important as other factors such as the rich or poor flavor and aroma, the pricing, the complexity or simplicity of the flavors and the presentation of the menu item. The determination of the demanded product character is based on the demographic and psychographic characteristics of the clientele (Buckley, 1993). The more educated, well – living and highly ranked in the social status is the target group, the more complex product will be required.

### **Kitchen organization**

The kitchen organization expands on two levels. The first one is the layout organization (Laloumis, 1998) and the second one is the personnel organization (Laloumis, 2002).

The main factor that determines the layout of the kitchen is the menu (Fosket et al, 2003). Rationality and reasonability in the kitchen layout oblige that the equipment that should be used must be selected in a manner that will meet the operational needs further on. The equipment layout should be adapted to the available space providing increased levels of utility for both the equipment itself and the available room (Eshbach, 1979). It is essential that the layout will not create obstacles to the production process. The kitchen departments should be clearly defined in all levels. The basic productive equipment should be combined by the equivalent supportive equipment so as to create a post that will enable a person or a team to operate without facing the interference of other employees. For example, the grill post should be organized around the griller along with the appropriate passes, fridges, microwave ovens and any other needed equipment. This layout must output an even productive operation diminishing the need for another employee to invade into that post. Thus the operation can run smoothly without unnecessary frustrating incidents (Knight et al, 1979). A manner in which the marketing process could affect directly the equipment organization of the kitchen is the demand for a more detailed plan of satisfying the guests' needs. Thus the equipment layout could possibly follow a path of aiming to customize the product the buyers' needs such as offering slower or faster service. This can be achieved by manipulating certain elements such as the flow of work, time management and the use of portable equipment accordingly. The marketing can directly come to decisions relevantly the production process and setting the equipment in the appropriate order.

The same rationality is employed in personnel organization. The number and the specialization of the employees are determined by the operational needs, the forecasting process and the menu to a minor extent (Laloumis, 2002). There are three major issues over which marketing plays a significant role indirectly to the personnel organization procedure. Those issues are the following:

- The personnel responsibilities
- The team work
- The communication with the serving staff

The marketing possesses a limited list of methods that can affect the kitchen organization directly. The total contribution marketing can demonstrate upon the personalization of the product to each guest's needs is high, perceiving that this contribution makes the difference to customer satisfaction and increased sales.

### **Kitchen operation**

As kitchen operation is referred the actual production process that outputs the consumable product. The operation is the sector which suffers the most influence from the marketing process (Fosket, 2003). The operation process is the physical continuation of the organization process. The kitchen organization quality reflects the smoothness of the operation carried out.

Marketing increases the feasibility of interference with the kitchen itself on the operational basis. The marketing process can exploit a large volume of data which derive from the service operation (Minor, 1984). That data contain opinions, demands, preferences and a detailed list of the guests' needs. The restaurant manager cooperates with the kitchen manager, analyze that data and translate it into guidelines, orders and information that will allow the employees to take steps towards the production of a dish that reflects the buyer's needs, wants and demands at most.

The production process can be adjusted to the customers' needs evenly at every level that is required. The information from the manager to the employee, will determine the speed of the production according to the desired speed of service, how well it is done, the levels of salt and pepper, the heavily or lightly spiced dish, details regarding the presentation and any other detail that could bring the dish as closer as possible to the guest's image (Knight, 1979, Laloumis, 2002).

### **Kitchen management**

The kitchen management process can be broken down to 6 basic tasks (Laloumis, 2002). Those tasks are:

- Monitor the effectiveness of the organization
- Monitor the efficiency of the operation
- Track down any problems
- Analyze the problems
- Take action to solve the problem
- Evaluate the improvement

At this point it is necessary to make clear that the aim is not to provide a kitchen manager's job description. For that reason any tasks which have to do with organizing or operating the kitchen along with menu planning and engineering processes are set aside since they were analyzed above.

### **Research method**

Semi structured interviews were used to collect the primary data. A number of three interviews on four star hotels and an equal number on five star hotels were carried out in the region of Athens. The nature of the objective leads the researcher to the adoption of that method since the required information was not to be discussed on a narrow manner.

There are some limitations to that process. Primarily the marketing in the regional market of hotels has barely found its way to the kitchen. An additional limitation was the heavy schedule of the head chefs and the F&B managers which led to mostly telephone interviews.

The interviews were consisted of three sections. The first section aims to define the organization, operation and management of the kitchen. At this stage it

is important to be clearly defined the exact enterprenual environment. The role of the culinary product in the overall plan for the customer satisfaction issue is a key element.

The second section aims to define the marketing impact both in a direct and an indirect manner to the food production process. The researcher's scope is to obtain an accurate picture of the practical application of the marketing within the kitchen along with the potential reconsideration of the operational factors.

The third section aims to define the impact of the marketing process and the kitchen overall function upon customer satisfaction and vice versa. Here lays an attempt to measure the differences in guests' criticism and their response to the customization of the product.

### **Data analysis**

The data was analyzed mainly by using four tools. Those tools are key-words, key-phrases, key-ideas and key meanings. The process focuses on the data details and elements that provide sufficient information to build a part of the answer. Further on the usable elements were reorganized and regrouped in order to provide a fully comprehensible image of the final objective.

### **Discussion of the findings**

As seen through the secondary research the marketing process analyzes the customers' profile, the enterprenual profile and the product profile. This tactic reorganizes the picture of how things should be. The same process needs a considerable time period for the market research, the planning, the implementation and the evaluation of the outcomes to be completed. Furthermore marketing adopts a specific logic which displays a long term character. On the other hand food production process is a group of tasks with a short term character. It is a difference the fact that the kitchen operation is based on the day to day running. The researching procedures that are adopted by the

kitchen logic are different to the marketing logic heading for completely different data between each other. Additionally the organization displays everyday results, assists the everyday operation and the only long term procedure is the managerial one.

The marketing process aims to draw all the necessary information that will lead the restaurant to produce the best possible product, while keeping an eye on possible changes that have to be made. On the other hand the kitchen product bases on standardization. Either in favor to the idea, that the guest will not have any surprises, or in favor to the “automated productive operation”, the kitchen cannot follow the marketing reasoning.

There are very few details on the everyday kitchen operation that the marketing may manipulate. The marketing mostly affect the menu planning and engineering processes and some parts of the product planning and development such as pricing and a general framework that will define the product profile.

There is a high number of factors affecting the food production, which cannot be manipulated. The inflow of the guests, the possibility of having malfunctioned pieces of equipment and the constant chance of the employees making a mistake are a few of those. Thus the operation is flexible and in addition to the organization and management process there are plan Bs and Cs in case of an unexpected problem. On the contrary the marketing process employs a poorly maneuverable approach. The adjustment to any changes in the micro or macro environment is executed in a low rate.

The employees in the food production sector have limited access to the clientele. This leads to drawing information indirectly through the service or the marketing personnel. This leads easily to misunderstandings. Direct communication between the guest and the kitchen personnel can provide a much more effective tackle of a complaint and improve the consuming experiences. Moreover the indirect communication reduces the detailed comprehension of the guests’ needs, wants and demands. Hence the kitchen staff may not be able to come to secure conclusions regarding the product details that need reconsidering concerning the exact characteristics of a dish.

The marketing process is not treated always as a must. It is still today a common practice, that a chef will develop the menu and the edible part of the culinary product according to his ideas. The main selling tool in the restaurant is designed by a person who does not rely on information relevantly the guests' demands and needs. Thus the opportunity of meeting the guests' needs is eliminated resulting to minor customer satisfaction.

## **Conclusions**

The final results are important for several reasons. It is a success story for a restaurant to keep all the guests happy and satisfied. The marketing process aims at creating the appropriate circumstances under which this success story will be a reality. Marketing tends to affect the procedures where there is a direct communication between the guest and an employee. The marketing process has very few things to do with departments such as the kitchen, the supplies and the housekeeping. Though information regarding consumers' needs, wants and demands is considered to be crucial, in the food production sector the tactic is to rely on a chef's ideas without any guarantee that those ideas much the consumers' ones. A major issue is that the scholar training of chefs in Greece offers no marketing courses. This results in a heavy lack of knowledge on the marketing field from the food production employees. The working experience that is gained in the future covers a part of this lack though in an unorganized manner leading to poor usage of that knowledge. The final conclusion is that the meaning of customer satisfaction and the outcome of that is treated as a good idea and not as an important goal to be achieved. The marketing process can play a minor direct role in the kitchen organization, operation and management, though it can make the difference from success to failure based on the increased customers' satisfaction and repeated sales.

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# *TOURIST CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR INSIGHTS IN RELATION TO ALL INCLUSIVE HOTEL RESORTS: THE CASE OF ANTALYA, TURKEY*

**Tamer Ayik**

IMI University Centre Switzerland

**Theodore Benetatos**

IMI University Centre Switzerland, Postgraduate Programme Leader

**Ioannis Evagelou M.Sc.**

Lecturer IMI University Centre Switzerland

## **ABSTRACT**

This research investigates tourist customer satisfaction levels in all-inclusive resort hotels in Turkey. The paper investigates changes in patterns regarding all-inclusive hotel packages as well as changing consumer behaviour of tourists preferring such establishments. The research was conducted in the region of Antalya and data is analysed by using SPSS with descriptive statistical analysis, and correlation analysis. The results suggest, among other, that new tourists that purchase all inclusive package are now more diverse in profile while the products themselves are significantly better than what all-inclusives were associated with. Relevant

criticism is being addressed and suggestions for further research are being made. Finally, the study emphasized the effect of all inclusive system on customer satisfaction in 5 star hotels in Antalya.

**Key Words:** *Consumer Behaviour, All-inclusive Resorts, Tourism Planning, Tourism.*

The on-going financial crisis, initially after 2008 in the US and lately in the EU zone has created new playing fields and norms in the hospitality industry. Although it is relatively early to draw conclusions, it seems that hospitality firms exposed to debt were severely damaged and traditional tourism markets, such as destinations in the Mediterranean, found themselves in an interesting but also dramatic equilibrium between trying to be competitive and deliver quality products and services. Large firms tried to cut their losses while SMEs struggled simply to continue to exist in an environment where the cost of capital remained expensive and average hotel prices remained significantly lower than the 2008 mark (Hotel Price Index Data, 2012). However, the tourism and hospitality industry has shown great reflexes in the following years allowing global Travel & Tourism direct contribution to GDP to increase by a healthy 3.2% in 2012 (WTTC, 2013) but this does not reflect equally the majority markets. Political turmoil in Africa has enabled traditional markets like Greece and Spain or the nearby Dubai to maintain or even increase their competitive position mainly due to displaced demand (Ernst & Young, 2012). However, it seems that Turkey will outperform the Mediterranean resort market capitalizing on long term effects of the devaluation of the lira which has made the Turkish tourism product very attractive in comparison to Eurozone markets (Ernst and Young, 2012). According to the same source, it seems that this projected growth is mostly revolving around the *Sun and Sea* all-inclusive offerings that Turkey is well known for and which is a growing segment on a global scale, despite the fact that it is not a new product. It is however a new boost of all-inclusive facilities supply which provided the segment with a second youth. These interesting developments are receiving old criticism which still applies since authors have argued in the past about how all inclusive packages bode ill for many small business people - restaurant owners, craft vendors, taxi drivers - establishments owned by small business people (Henry, 1989). Critics of all-inclusive resorts accuse the firms for alienating the tourists

from the local context by importing provisions and discouraging them in many ways tourists from ever leaving the properties (Issa and Jayawardena, 2003). This creates an adverse effect on the expected outcomes of tourism development. Furthermore it has been argued that early all-inclusive practices were not up to the desired standards with the adoption of unified pricing system leading to a decline in employee satisfaction as well as customer perception of overall service quality, and finally, in customer satisfaction (Kozac, 2006). Further evidence has shown that hotels around the globe are increasingly adopting all-inclusive policies and it has been documented that this trend has reduced the revenue per stay as well as the customer satisfaction levels (Aguilo and Rosselio, 2012).

However, evidence shows that times have changed and practices vary between properties. Increasing volume of tourists preferring all-inclusive packages might show a shift either in the quality of the delivered services or the tolerance of the tourists who might be willing to compromise the quality for a good price. Based on these prevailing conditions, the main objective of this research is to investigate consumer perceptions on services provided by all-inclusive resorts. Turkey as a premium and growing all-inclusive provider has been chosen for the research with a specific focus on the region of Antalya.

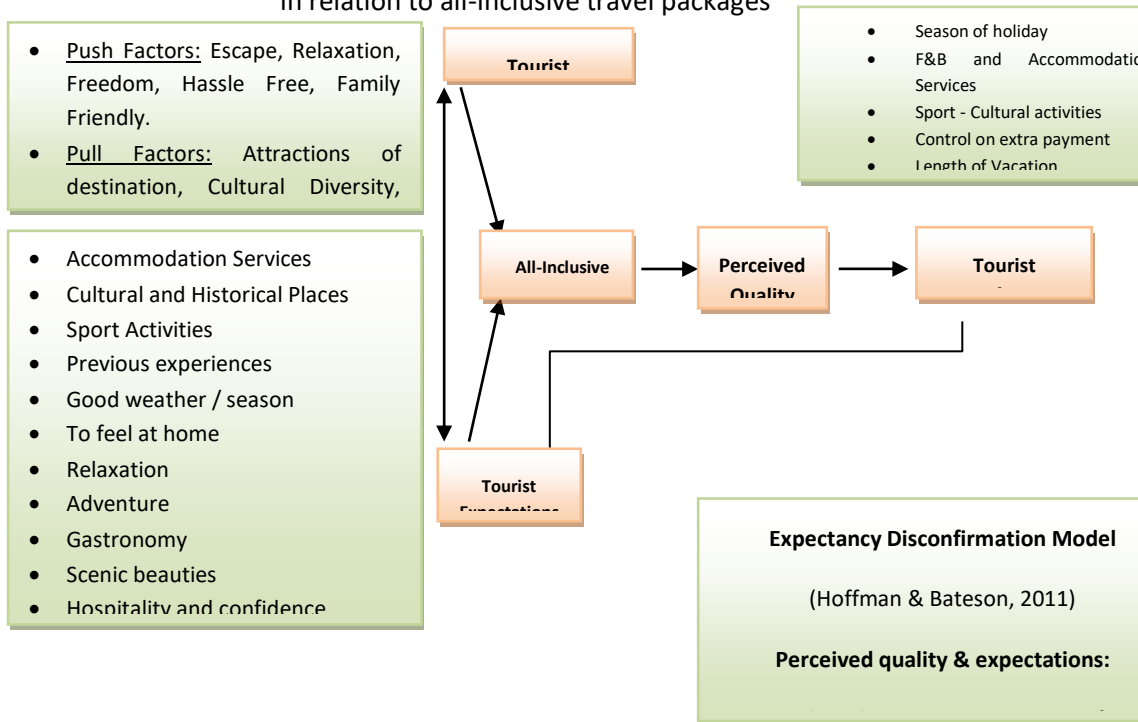
Over recent years, several studies have focused on tourist satisfaction in particular tourism destinations and from there information was drawn on the elements that create attractive tourism products and services. This study concentrates on customer satisfaction with the service performance of all inclusive resort seeking to identify key variables which are related to customer satisfaction and holiday selection patterns.

The basic definition of all-inclusive holidays is where all travel, accommodation, food and beverage, entertainment, trips or sports coaching costs are paid for when booking for one established price. Issa and Jayawardena (2003), established that the all-inclusive holiday concept was first introduced in holiday camps in Britain in the 1930's and was a different holiday concept where a guest had to carry no form of currency while on a holiday. It was a package designed to eliminate extra charges that can sour the sweetest of vacations.

Issa and Jayawardena (2003) further explain that all-inclusive clubs had a major impact on the concept of hospitality service. In the 1950's, 'Club

Mediterranean’, popularly known as ‘club-med’ introduced the concept on the Spanish island of Mallorca and later spread all over the globe. An explosion of the concept was later realised along coastal strips in the late 1990s. At this point, the all-inclusive concept was a fundamentally different type of holiday where a guest had to carry no form of currency, paper, coin or plastic to a hotel, resort or while on a cruise. Poon (1998) describes the all-inclusive concept as an important product innovation in the international tourism market place, as it packages various elements of the tourism product. The main idea of all-inclusive system is, minimize monetary transactions during the holiday, do not to make some decisions about money spending during the holiday and to eliminate the anxiety because of spending money, stress or problems for tourists (Poon 1998). The all-inclusive system has so far been dominated by European based providers such as Italy, Greece, Turkey and France.

Figure One: Tourist Motivational Factors and consumer decision making processes in relation to all-inclusive travel packages



Additionally, the Caribbean, Central America, Dominican Republic and other tourist destinations such as Thailand have entered the market with accommodation facilities (Menekse, 2005). German and Italian tourism enterprises have played a key role in spreading all-inclusive system in Europe, Asia and Africa. For example, main tour operators, such as TUI, NUR, ITS, preferred to implement all inclusive system in tourist destinations, such as, Spain, Turkey, Greece, Italy, Austria, Switzerland, Kenya, Sri Lanka, the Canary Islands, Tunisia, Senegal, Thailand and Ibiza with resorts operated by themselves like Robinson Club, Club Calimera and Club Aldiana (Poon 1998; Voss 2003).

This development has led to increased research interest mostly around motivational factors driving tourist consumer behaviour. Literature for some years now has recorded various factors which have impacts on consumers' purchasing decisions, such as cultural, social, personal and psychological (Mucuk, 1998). Other studies provide generally accepted classification of factors influencing consumer behaviour collected in four main groups such as personal factors (age and life cycle, occupation, economic status and lifestyle), cultural factors (culture, subculture, social class), social factors (reference groups, family, roles and status) and psychological factors (motivation, perception, learning, beliefs). These factors cannot be controlled by marketers generally, but necessarily be taken into account and to be emphasized on these factors (Kotler, Bowen, and Makens, 2006).

All these factors affect tourist decision making process. These decisions can appear in a simple structure or sometimes, be connected with multiple decisions in more complex structures (Decrop 2006). These processes usually consist of the following steps of; identification of variables of the problem addressed by a purchase, evaluation of alternatives as solutions to the problem, and the related returns, and finally selecting the best alternative using the appropriate decision criteria to get the best result (Clemen and Reilly 2001). Consumer behaviour models emphasize that needs and motivation factors are closely associated with each other (Kozak 2002). Additionally motivation factors explain how tourists are pulled by various factors when deciding on their purchase and how tourists are pushed towards their holiday destination (Baloglu and Uysal 1996; Kozak 2002; Yoon and Uysal 2005).

Key motivational factors and consumer behaviour processes can be summarized as seen in **figure one**.

For the purpose of this study satisfaction levels were measured exclusively in 5-star all-inclusive hotel establishments in the highly touristic province of Antalya which has one of the most widely all-inclusive systems in Turkey. The main research questions to be answered were 'Why do the tourists prefer All-inclusive system?' determine the satisfaction level towards the hotel services and features and last to identify the comparison with all-inclusive 5 star hotels with standalone 5 star hotels.

This research applied mostly quantitative research methods in consequence of the means available as well as the nature of this study. A survey of 18 questions was employed and 10 of the survey questions were close ended. The questionnaire contained 4 main sections. The first section was designed to determine the demographic characteristics of tourists. The second section measured satisfaction levels on food and beverage services, staff performance, and the general features of the hotel during the tourists stay. The third section investigated the importance of holiday destination features in decision making. The fourth section was designed to determine the importance of selection elements related all-inclusive resort hotels. Generally 5-point Likert-type scales were used and data obtained from the study were analyzed with SPSS (Statistical Program for Social Sciences). Demographics have been considered and the significant data have been continually evaluated. Reliability was also tested with Cronbach's Alpha Reliability test.

### **3.1 Sampling and Hypotheses**

The study sample was chosen from 8 different 5 star hotels in the province of Antalya to represent the best of the population. According to data from the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, Turkey in 2011, 7.5 million tourists had visited in Antalya. Approximately 70% of tourists staying in Antalya prefer all-inclusive properties. To assume reliability a confidence level of 95% with a sample of 384 tourists would be ideal. However, we managed to gather 174 usable surveys



which poses certain limitations but could be still considered an acceptable sample size for the needs of this research. The study sample was randomly selected.

According to the study aims certain hypothesis were created to identify the relationships between demographic characteristics of tourists and tourist's satisfaction with all inclusive resort hotel services. The hypotheses are:

H1.0: There is no relationship between education level and reason to choose All-inclusive holiday.

H1.1: There is relationship between education level and reason to choose All-inclusive holiday.

H2.0: There is no relationship between gender's food and beverage department satisfaction and overall satisfaction.

H2.1: There is relationship between gender's food and beverage department satisfaction and overall satisfaction.

H3.0: There is no relationship between the education levels of tourist with comparison the all-inclusive hotels quality to standalone 5 stars hotels quality.

H3.1: There is relationship between the education levels of tourist with comparison the all-inclusive hotels quality to standalone 5 stars hotels quality.

H4.0: There is no relationship between reasons to choose an all-inclusive resort hotels and involving any activity outside of hotel during the stay.

H4.1: There is relationship between reasons to choose an all-inclusive resort hotels and involving any activity outside of hotel during the stay.

The sample demographics were appropriate with fair age and gender distribution. The largest age range is 36-45 age group with 43,1% 26-35 age group is second group with 24,1%. Furthermore, 46-55 age range has 23,0%, 18-25 age group has 5,7% 56 and above age group has 4,0%. The Gender distribution was almost a 50-50 split which is also representative in nature.

The geographical origin distribution of the sample poses slight limitations to this study since the distribution was not ideal. The vast majority of the respondent were Germans representing 44,3% . The next big segment were the Russians with 19,0% and the Ukrainians with 9,2%. From there on 5,2% were from Austria, 4,0%

from Switzerland. On the positive side tourists from 18 different countries were surveyed in total.

The marital status was also even with 49,4% being married. Interesting enough 74.1% had no children and this was not expected in all-inclusive establishments but this could be justified from the age band of the interviewed tourists.

Another very interesting element refers to the education level which seems to be exceptionally high. 48,3% had BA university degree and amazingly 19,5% had doctoral degree. This is very interesting since it has been the impression in the past that well educated tourists prefer more independent travel products so this should be further investigated. 22,4% had high school degree and 9,8% had primary school degree.

The next set of questions aimed in identifying the level of satisfaction on Food and Beverage quality, staff performance, hotel facilities and crucial factors that affect purchase decisions. In total 24 different factors were investigated and the results were again somewhat surprising. It has been argued that in recent literature, that all-inclusive establishments suffer in terms of quality and (Aguilo and Rosselio, 2012) therefore brand loyalty but clearly here this is not the case. 51,1% were strongly satisfied with freshness of food while 52,9% were strongly satisfied of the food which was served in food and beverage outlets during their stay in 5 star all inclusive resort hotels. Menu descriptions and diversity of beverages have more satisfied tourists than strongly satisfied tourists. In total none of the participants were dissatisfied or strongly dissatisfied with any of the aspects of the food and beverage services.

Similarly tourists were satisfied with the performance of staff with none of the respondents providing a negative answer. Having said that some of the answers were at the neutral zone which could be an indication of indecisiveness of what good performance of staff means or there was a struggle in compromising the quality level for a good deal. In the same fashion Hotel facilities were also very highly rated with total satisfaction levels that borderline the average of an 85% (strongly or just satisfied). Interesting enough the lowest scores went to children facilities rates.

Concluding this part of the research, important elements for holiday choice were investigated and the outcome was more or less the expected. *Price* of hotel is the most important feature for the survey participants with 88,5% specifying that it is very important element for choosing holiday product. Second most important factors are *Relaxation* and *Rest* with a percentage of 72, 4%. Amazingly 67, 2% did not consider the *Location* of hotel as an important element for deciding holiday which can be interpreted in various ways. It seems that the effect of choices provided by tour operators might render destination irrelevant but this is just an assumption and should be further investigated. What we can safely say though is that this proves that some of the on-going criticism presented earlier seems to apply. To further these arguments only 3, 4% seek for both amenities of destination and for Cultural and Historical places as important elements for deciding on holiday destination.

With regards to distribution channels used the analysis shows that 32,8% made their reservations through the travel agencies and 31,0% via tour operators. This means that 63,8% use the specific channels which illustrates a fairly high dependency on this means. Internet bookings were at 17,8% and this could also refer to the same as above channels of all-inclusive resorts. Finally, direct hotel bookings were at 18,4% which illustrates the early quoted dependency on certain channels and might also explain the high concentration of certain markets that seems to be key clients (Germany).

Finally a very important section of the research revolved around the identification of elements that lead tourist to all-inclusive resorts. The key motivational factor here is *Low Extra Expenses* that all-inclusive resort hotels offer to the tourist with a percentage of 84,5%. 81% of the respondents specified that no obligation for tracing the extra expenses is another very important reason to stay in all inclusive resort hotels. Hence we can conclude that tourists more focused on initial price and overall cost at the end of their vacation. The third most important motive is not to have to engage with holiday plans standing at 59,8%. Interesting enough 36,8% specified that it's of no significance to them if the establishment is family friendly but this can be possibly explained by the demographics and could vary in different destinations. Also to reject some of the criticism discussed, more than 90% were satisfied with the whole experience 46,0% of which were very satisfied and none was dissatisfied.

This first image of the analysis was somewhat expected but interesting findings were made and conclusions were drawn. However, the final part of the analysis refers to the investigation and testing of the stated hypotheses.

*H1.1: There is relationship between education level and reason to choose All-inclusive holiday.*

As mentioned previously, there were 7 elements of importance to choose all-inclusive resort hotels. These were, low extra expenses, all inclusive resort hotel services, being family friendly, sun, sea and sand features of the destination, no obligation for tracing the extra expenses, being holiday plan is ready and sport activity diversity. With cross tabulation we found that there is a relationship between education and perceived low extra costs which is probably connected also to the income level of the more educated respondents. On the Chi-square test, P-value was found 0.00. Since the P-value is between  $0.00 < 0.05$  which is true for all the elements so H1 hypothesis is accepted.

*H2.1: There is relationship between gender's food and beverage department satisfaction and overall satisfaction.*

To identify the relationship between genders satisfaction level from the food and beverage outlets with overall holiday satisfaction, Spearman's rank correlation coefficient test was applied. In the results of test, r value was calculated at 0.337 without consideration of gender. When the gender was considered, r value was calculated at 0.408. This confirms that there is relationship between gender's food and beverage department between satisfaction and overall satisfaction.

*H3.1: There is relationship between the education levels of tourist with comparison the all-inclusive hotels quality to standalone 5 stars hotels quality.*

Results show the cross tabulation and chi-square test results between education and comparison of all inclusive resort hotels with standalone 5 star hotels. We can say that there is relationship between the education levels of tourist with comparison the all-inclusive hotels to standalone 5 star hotels. As the education

level increased, satisfaction level from all-inclusive hotels increased, which is very interesting. Also another not expected outcome was that once comparisons are done by tourist, it can be observed that 5 star all inclusive hotels are perceived to serve higher quality than standalone 5 star hotels. This however is an indication that needs further research in other geographic areas and different clientele geographic distribution in order to have more conclusive results. It is however, a clear indication of shifting perceptions on all-inclusive establishments.

*H4.1: There is relationship between reasons to choose an all-inclusive resort hotels and involving any activity outside of hotel during the stay.*

This hypothesis was created to understand whether tourist stay in the hotel during their holiday or they do involve any activities outside of the hotel. Spearman's Chi-square test results show that there is significant statistically negative relationship between no obligations on tracing extra expenses and involving any activity outside of the hotel. When we do correlation analysis between involving in any activity outside the hotel with the reason to choose all-inclusive system is the relationship, the  $r$  value was -0.615. This indicates that there is a strong negative relationship between these two variables. Therefore we can conclude that people who never go out of the hotel are mainly preferred all-inclusive system the reason is clear they do not have to consider spending or tracing extra money. Additionally 39,7% of the survey respondents *never went out of the hotel*, which is also consistent with previously described criticism. The reasons however need to be further investigated since we are not clear on whether this relates to convenience or whether the establishments implicitly or explicitly discourage the tourists to leave the premises.

All-inclusive accommodation establishments and tour operators have become an indispensable element of a fast growing segment. All-inclusive package tours offer economical and hassle free holiday options, which is why it is often preferred by middle-income tourists and as this research illustrates now other profiles are joining the target market. Despite the heavy criticism on the negative impacts

associated with all-inclusive resorts mostly with regards to the lack of recognition of local cultures and limited contribution to the development of local economies of the destinations, the segment seems to be set for further growth.

This study illustrates that, tourist consumer behaviour is generally changing due to convenience reason and this affects heavily the choice of holiday types as well as destinations. Tourists are now more price sensitive than ever and this is clearly the most important factor for holiday product type selection. In general, there has been a belief that all-inclusive system preferred by low-income tourists but the current analysis showed that income levels of tourists in all-inclusive resorts in Antalya higher than expected. This should be an interesting observation for hotel business pricing strategies as a means to influence on tourists' buying preferences. The quality of the hotel considered to be important factor when choosing an all-inclusive holiday by any type of tourist standards. Education level was not found to be important and interesting enough when the educational level of tourist increases the satisfaction degree obtained from an all-inclusive system is increasing, too. This could be due to excellent services or a broader perception of what constitutes a good deal. The destination's natural beauty, historical riches and cultural elements could be included in all-inclusive package tours but these research shows that the destination elements are less significant in the choice of holiday and this should be further investigated since it poses major issues to service providers and marketer who will find it rather difficult to identify differentiating features to compete with.

Concluding we feel that despite the criticism received, all-inclusive tourism products will only grow especially among Mediterranean countries mostly due to prevailing economic conditions and consequently shifting consumer patters. This will leave destinations, providers and marketers in a conundrum with regards to tourism development options as well as marketing promotion approaches. The segment of all-inclusive products is changing by becoming more sophisticated with better provisions and by attracting new types of tourists.

The survey had been conducted solely on international tourist who stayed at 5 star all inclusive hotels in the province of Antalya. The province of Antalya has a big scale of resort area and definitely indicative but this research should be also

open to other areas since this might change the synthesis of tourist and possibly the outcomes. Larger sample size would also be beneficial.

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