

Conference Proceedings

September 2009

ICTDM 2009 INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AND MANAGEMENT



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PROCEEDINGS OF THE

**INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF TOURISM
DEVELOPMENT AND MANAGEMENT (ICTDM 2009)**

**Tourism in a Changing World: Prospects and
Challenges**

Kos Island, Greece

11–14 September 2009

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CONFERENCE AIM

Tourism has always been a major social and economic phenomenon of any society. However, the changes and challenges that international tourism faces today have resulted in many negative social, political and environmental repercussions that affect destinations and their populations, virtually in every corner of the contemporary world. In dealing with these challenges, it is imperative to identify future trends and examine various responses with respect to appropriate policies and management techniques. Bearing these in mind, the aim of ICTDM 2009 is to add a perspective to this debate by stimulating discussion and exchange of ideas between tourism professionals, academics, researchers, policy-makers, consultants, practitioners, government officials and postgraduate students of various tourism fields.

CONFERENCE TOPICS

The topics of the conference include but are not limited to the following:

- Tourism Development and Planning
- Responses to Tourism Development
- Economic/Social/Environmental/Cultural Impact of Tourism
- Tourism, Terrorism, Safety and Security
- Authenticity and Commodification
- Tourism Education and its Role in Managing Tourism Development
- Sustainable Tourism
- Alternative and Special Forms of Tourism
- Industry's Role in Managing Growth in Transportation and Tourism
- Tourism Research and Methodology
- Information Technology in Tourism
- Negotiation in Tourism
- Climate Change, Globalisation and Tourism
- The Future of Tourism

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ASPECTS AND DETERMINANTS IN THE DEMAND FOR SCHOOLS' EDUCATIONAL TOURISM: THE CASE OF A MEDITERRANEAN ISLAND

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Schools' educational trips are relevant to the tourism market and play a key role in students' informal learning experiences. This study focuses on this developing form of tourism, with an empirical analysis on the demand side. We looked at tourism with respect to Sardinian schools – actors, values, felt needs, motivations, etc. – based on data collected from school questionnaires and a student focus group discussion. The analysis can provide useful indications for educational tourism products that can be offered.

1. Background

Educational tourism is a promising segment of tourism demand, within which a niche market – schools' educational tourism – deserves consideration. This involves significant movement annually of a relevant number of students and can produce positive pedagogic effects in the process of students' personal development (Gmelch, 1997). In Italy, this phenomenon, according to research by the Italian Touring Club (2008), concerns approximately 4 million domestic students on the move each year, and a 2007 economic turnover of €375 million generated by secondary schools only.

The economic and social effects of this (van 't Klooster et al., 2008) have stimulated research based on the Sardinian context, looking in particular at schools, students, and teachers. The connection between education and tourism (Ritchie et al., 2003) required an empirical analysis of the needs of the demand side of educational tourism. The study highlights the actors involved, motivations driving the choice process and the avenues followed to realise the different emergent needs. The objective of the analysis is focused on the understanding of the determinants that create value for the variegated customers, who are active components in the purchasing process of the educational product. In an attempt to re-enforce this, we consider the wide literature available on tourism demand determinants, combined with the theory of perceived value, and links with the research results.

The research questions, tested through the empirical study, are listed below:

1. Who recognises the need for educational travel? Who formalises the need? Who makes the project live?

2. Who are the actors involved in the purchasing process? In what way do they participate in the decision-making process?
3. What are the motivations and values inspiring the educational travel purchase?

The study context is the 630 primary and secondary schools (Table 1) across Sardinia, and the methodology applied is based on school questionnaires and a student focus group discussion. The derived information and data refer to the period May-December 2008.

2. Literary Review and Empirical Evidence

Literature on demand for tourism, human needs and motivation theories has been examined, with the objective of considering theories useful to analyse the demand for educational tourism. Tourism research has stressed the importance of motivation in the decision to take a holiday, prefer a destination and live the complex experience of travelling (Mayo and Jarvis, 1981; Pearce, 1993; Witt and Write, 1992). Other variables also play a determinant role in the decision-making process, including personal, psychographic and socio-demographic. In addition, attributes of the destination, like price, distance to destination, and transportation, also influence the decision-making process. The single actors involved in the demand side of educational tourism respond to these demand determinants and related variables, but the complexities of the educational travel actors represent a composite entity with particular characteristics to be examined. A composite entity plans, organises, realises and controls the educational travel product, with different personal and socio-demographic characteristics, values and related needs.

To gain a better understanding of an appropriate model, the study identifies some dimensions of travel for education in this context: the actors in the different phases of the decision-making process, starting from the moment the need arises, to the acquisition of information useful for defining the destination, transportation, accommodation, and, subsequently, the intermediary for reservations, tickets, etc. The composite nature of the decision-making entity suggested the adoption of the organisational buying model by Webster and Wind, properly adapted to the study context. Consequently, the consideration of the school as a buying centre seems appropriate, as "organisational buying is a decision-making process carried out by individuals, in interaction with other people, in the context of a formal organisation. The organisation, in turn, is influenced by a variety of forces in the environment" (Webster and Wind 1972, p. 13, a). Therefore, a buying centre is a group of people making a purchasing decision together, where each person involved has a specific role in the purchasing decision-making process. The existence of a communications system, values and rules represents a guide orientating each member's behaviour (Webster and Wind 1972, b).

With educational travel as our product, the purchasing decision centre actors are:

- students
- teachers
- head or substitute
- students' parents, guardians or family.

The empirical research has been targeted to acquire information about diverse needs, motivations and values, in order to put together a profile of every actor in the school buying centre. When analysing the empirical results we considered the theory of consumption values

(Sheet, Newman and Gross 1991), which distinguishes the following values categories we tried to test through the questionnaires answered by the different actors:

- Functional - perceived utility of an alternative able to play a functional, practical or physical role (head or delegate, teachers).
- Social - perceived utility is connected to positive or negative association to social groups, for example, socio-demographic groups, ethnic-cultural groups (head or delegate, teachers, students).
- Emotional - utility of alternative choice depends on capacity to create feelings or affective reactions (students).
- Epistemic - perceived utility is based on capacity to generate curiosity, to satisfy knowledge needs (teachers, students).
- Situational - utility is influenced by a situation or a specific decisional context (head or delegate, teachers).

3. Research Instruments: Questionnaire and Student Focus Group Discussion

A questionnaire was sent to Sardinian schools by e-mail, with an identification code. The questionnaire consisted of four sections. In the first section, respondents were asked to provide general data about the school: typology, name, address, head's name, number of classes and students, with the specification of classes and students who attended a school trip. The second section dealt with the forecasting of educational travel: who identifies the need and proposes the trip, in which way students participate in the process, the subjects involved and the forecasting period. The third section focused on travel data: tools used in the acquisition of information, motivations in the choice process, length of stay, destinations, students' participation and confirmation problems. Finally, the last section of the questionnaire was directed to verify the existence of feedback methods after the educational travel conclusion.

The questionnaire was managed with software – lime-survey – adopted for online compilation and administration. All sections and questions were to be completed. A questionnaire database was generated and analysis conducted.

The data analysis revealed the necessity of an additional step – so students' opinions were collected using a selected focus group discussion. Twelve students from different Sardinian high schools made up the group. They were asked about the roles they play in the different phases of the decision- making process.

4. Results and Conclusions

196 questionnaires were collected, corresponding to approximately 31% of the total sent. 47 of these were rejected due to being incomplete. Completed and accepted questionnaires totalled 149 (Table 1), about 24% of those initially sent.

As part of the data collection and analysis, we needed to show the roles and values of schools' different actors and the consequent effects on their purchasing decisions. Considering the teacher, for example, he or she can assume diverse roles: accompanying teacher, head's delegate, or class council component. The role determines values he or she considers more important in the decision-making process.

Table 1. Schools and percentage of completed questionnaires

Type of school	Total sent	Completed questionnaires	Response rate
Kindergarten	136	10	7.5%
Primary school	193	54	27.8%
Middle school	171	31	35.3%
High school	130	24	18.5%
TOTAL	630	149	23.7%

The study analysis highlights the complexities of the decision-making process in the purchase of schools' educational trips. Determinants of this intricate process include the number and the nature of people involved and the value systems they support. Actors and values can interact in different ways as, over time, situations change: the school can prefer a new destination, or repeat visitation but with different accommodation and places to visit. In Italy, there are regulations regarding the procedures to be adopted in the decision-making process. Nonetheless, every school can determine their own organisational aspects of the programme.

The complexities of this form of tourism provide indications for tourism products to be offered and destinations marketing and management strategies. The existence of a buying centre – the school – requires identification of all the components involved in the purchasing process and the values inspiring the choice process, to direct the specific educational product to the appropriate actors and markets. Schools' educational products need to be consistent with values, motivations and felt needs emerging from the schools' systems.

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Aims and Scope

Tourism is becoming increasingly important to the world economy. However, the many changes and challenges international tourism faces today have resulted in many negative social, political and environmental repercussions that affect destinations and their populations in virtually every corner of the contemporary world.

In dealing with these challenges, it is imperative to identify future trends and examine various responses with respect to the appropriate policies and management techniques. Bearing all these in mind, the conference aims to add to this debate by stimulating discussion and exchange of ideas between tourism professionals, academics, researchers, policy-makers, consultants, practitioners, government officials and postgraduate students from all tourism-related fields.

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