



ATLAS Annual Conference 2017

Destinations past, present and future

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Abstract Book

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Planning, Integrated Coastal Zone Management and 'Blue Growth Strategies' with sailing and yachting identified as a key growth potential. It is such ideas that have transcended new tourism thinking in Malta by re focussing tourism strategies that are linked to the 'blue economy' which primarily focuses on the sustainable use of marine resources. The research primarily focuses on the development of such markets specifically the impact of sailing and yachting events, their strengths, weaknesses and future contribution to the Maltese tourist economy. The general premise of the research reviews the current status of Malta as a tourism destination and questions whether the current tourism strategy is optimizing the full benefits from developing the yachting and sailing sectors and associated events. In this context, the research raises questions that seek to give answers to i) the overall impact of such events on the Maltese tourism economy; ii) how such events can be improved to enhance its contribution to Maltese tourism; and iii) what challenges or barriers such events face in contributing to Malta tourism as a driver for change. This research focuses upon an inductive approach using qualitative and case study research methodologies. Secondary data is used to provide the contextual background. At a macro level event management, sports tourism and sustainable tourism development provide the main 'backdrop' for the study. At a micro level Maltese tourism policy backgrounds and niche market development provide a more focused framework. Primary research is used to collect qualitative data which is based on purposeful sample selection of interviews from professionals associated with Maltese maritime industries and key stakeholder groups. The data is analysed through discourse analysis techniques utilising grid matrices to evaluate and ascertain common themes and responses that occur from the discussions and questions asked. Results point to lessons learnt and future policy directions for the Blue economy and sailing and yachting as drivers for change.

Website evaluation of lodging facilities along the inner Saint James' Pilgrim Way (North Portugal)

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Purpose: An increasing number of consumers use the Internet to plan and purchase their holidays. Thus, ever more people contact with the region they want to visit through the individual websites of lodging facilities. Consequently, if we want to enhance cultural and experience orientated entrepreneurship, than it is important that these entrepreneurs know how to promote and sell not only their own "primary" product, but their region as a whole and preferably tourism packages in which they themselves or the tourism services provided by other stakeholders are included. This article is based on a research exercise executed within the CULTOUR+ project (an Erasmus+ initiative with identifier 2015-1-ES01-KA203-016142), which studies the Saint James' pilgrimage route that passes through the interior north of Portugal. The general purpose of this study is to explore the hotel website potential along this pilgrimage route. Specifically we wanted to determine the number of existing lodging facilities along this route (with and without websites); to analyse the quality of their websites in terms of some important dimensions (user-friendliness, site attractiveness, marketing effectiveness, F&B informativeness, wine information, spa information and pilgrim information); to verify if the lodging units website performance is different when compared to certain profile variables (location, size, among others); and to provide some improvement proposals to help hotel managers increase their marketing efforts.

Design/Methodology/Approach: Departing from a balanced scorecard approach, a team of 30 trained students evaluated the websites in seven dimensions. Our approach favors a reflection on customer and marketing related aspects like user friendliness, attractiveness, transfer of information and does not deepen technical aspects. To evaluate the lodging units we used a quantitative approach based on uni and bivariate data analysis methods. From the

identified 187 lodging units, this study will only analyze 119 (as 68 units did not have a functioning website).

Findings: User-friendliness was evaluated with 14 items. Globally, the evaluation of this dimension was positive. The web site attractiveness attributes are present in most of the observed lodging units with high scores between 75% and 94%. The lowest percentages refer to the efficient use of page space and aesthetic appeal. The higher percentages refer to the legibility and clarity of the text and to the contrast between background and text. As for the 50 marketing effectiveness features, too much critical information was missing on numerous websites. Regarding F&B informativeness, the majority of the websites does not have an online menu, vegetarian menus, food vouchers, information regarding high chairs for children, information on the composition of the breakfast, among others. Almost all the lodging unit's websites simply did not mention attributes and features related to wine, spa and pilgrim tourism. Overall, the results revealed that the performance of websites measured with the selected set of dimensions is low, that is, the studied lodging units did not work out nor executed an effective online communication strategy.

Implications: For tourism practitioners, the findings of this article can serve as a checklist to help them identify the strengths and weaknesses of their websites and possibly determine their relative position in the marketplace, but most of all can enable them to improve the quality of their website. For academic researchers this study is expected to inspire them to put the knowledge triangle into practice: share their findings with local communities and help implement good practice examples.

The potential of value co-creation with local resources through tourist-community encounters in rural tourism

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Rural tourism has received increasing interest from both rural destinations and actors, wishing to find alternatives to a declining agricultural sector, and the continuously growing travel market, looking for new, varied and involving experiences (Kastenholz, Carneiro & Marques, 2012). Many rural areas provide unique experience settings, rich in natural and cultural heritage (Garrod, Wornell, & Youell, 2006), which innovative local actors may use as central ingredients to co-create appealing and distinct tourist experiences (Kastenholz, Carneiro & Marques, 2012; Kastenholz & Lima, 2013). The recognition of the tourist experience as the core driver of tourist demand and essential to destination competitiveness (Stamboulis & Skayannis, 2003) justifies a closer analysis of the nature of this experience, particularized for the destination context visited and type of experience sought. Rural tourist experiences are frequently associated with a quest of relaxation, tranquility, closeness to nature, cultural authenticity, traditional and calm lifestyle, small-scale facilities and services permitting closer host-guest relationships, where visitors may escape from the habitual, modern, massified, standardized, congested and polluted city life (Kastenholz, Carneiro & Marques, 2012). Co-creation, based on active customer participation, is increasingly recognized as a most relevant facet of the tourist experience, making it more involving and meaningful to the traveler (Kastenholz & Lima, 2013; Prebensen, Vittersø & Dahl, 2013). Co-creation of rural tourist experiences may involve tourists, local agents of supply and residents interacting with them. It would typically evolve over themes associated with nature and cultural heritage of the place/ region, may provide a sense of 'authenticity' and lead to stimulating host-guest encounters, enriching and meaningful to both sides. This communication is a result of a three-years research project undertaken in three hinterland villages in North and Central Portugal, selected from heritage-based thematic networks. In this paper, we will focus on qualitative data collected from visitors, local agents of supply and residents in the Schist Village Janeiro de Cima and the Wine-producing Village Favaios. This