

Island Tourism: Economic and Labour Market Implications



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SYMPOSIUM ABSTRACTS

Introducing Island Tourism

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ABSTRACT

Island tourism is not just about tourism that happens to take place on islands: islands are not just the *locus* of touristic events but can be seen as the *focus* of the adopted analytical frame towards studying tourism. This presentation offers such an ‘island studies’ perspective to island tourism. It reviews the different types of islands; their appeal and lure as tourism destinations; the contribution, opportunity and threats offered by tourism to their typically small economies and societies. It also proposes five challenges to island tourism that are especially pertinent to islands: **Accessibility** (getting to/from the island by ship or plane); **Extension of benefits beyond capital/port city**; **Identity** (leveraging a suitable island brand); **Overdependence** (avoiding a mono-service economy) and **Ultra-islandness** (handling multi-island/ archipelagic destinations).

Keywords: island tourism, accessibility, identity, ultra-islandness, overdependence, benefit extension beyond capital/port city.

The Possible Impacts of Brexit on Island Country Tourism

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ABSTRACT

The United Kingdom's (proposed) departure from the European Union has left more questions than answers with respect to the real economic impact on all industries conducting business with and within the UK. While predictions are speculative, at best, there are historical trends that can be examined and closely watched to better understand specifically what variables are impacted and to what extent.

This study specifically seeks to examine the potential effect of Brexit on island country tourism by examining data sets from the UK National Statistics department and the World Travel Organization. Data is being examined for island countries with a high percentage of tourists from the UK. Conducting this examination for two years leading up to Brexit and then continuing to track the data 'live' and as it is occurring could be beneficial to tourism organizations in these countries. This would be of particular importance in those countries where tourism is a significant component of their economic outlook

Documented results could be used to examine the impact of UK tourists traveling to island countries and determine if Brexit has contributed to any change; as well as the initiation of an 'impact' timeline that could be utilized to better examine and compare future long term effects. Each of these results could lead to a documented economic benefit or detriment of Brexit on island country tourism.

Keywords: Brexit, United Kingdom, European Union, tourism, economic impact studies, historical trends

Island resilience, precarious work and underemployment; insights from the Greek regions during recession

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the interconnection between resilience, precarious work and underemployment by focusing on Greece and its three island regions (North Aegean, South Aegean and the Ionian Islands). It draws upon an analytical framework which allows for identifying the interfaces between diverse regional patterns of precariousness and underemployment in the tourism sector, on the one hand, and processes that enhance regional resilience, on the other. For this, statistical data is analysed for two distinct epochs: the 2005-2008 period of economic expansion; and the 2009-2012 period of recession.

Using shift-share analysis and other relevant methodologies, the paper discusses the reasons why some of the island regions have been the most resilient, at least when compared to mainland or the metropolitan ones. Better performance and overall robustness in certain islands are seen as outcomes of regional competitive structures among which specific market-driven, productive and institutional settings and priorities are significant. The paper suggests that post-crisis patterns illustrate the shift of most island labour markets – even the more resilient ones – towards higher shares of precarious, low-paid work and underemployment in a context of employment devaluation and decline in most of the sectors.

Keywords: precarious work, underemployment, crisis, island regions, tourism, Greece

What does Mass Tourism mean? Lessons from some Mediterranean islands

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ABSTRACT

Mass tourism is commonly defined as “a form of tourism in which large numbers of tourists travel to similar places at similar times”. Furthermore, a key idea of the tourism literature is that mass tourism supply has some specific features.

This contribution compares some Mediterranean island destinations and emphasizes that the term ‘mass tourism’ covers a variety of situations. By focusing on the case of the island of Corsica, I show that, while inhabitants believe that the island is a typical mass tourism destination, a careful analysis of the data shows a different picture. It is argued that mass tourism is not that much a matter of supply and demand characteristics but essentially a matter of residents’ perception and social carrying capacity.

Keywords: islands, mass tourism, Mediterranean, resident perceptions, carrying capacity

The socio-economic impacts of seasonality in Corsica

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ABSTRACT

This contribution presents the main results of a study carried out on the socio-economic impacts of seasonality in tourism. The study focuses, on the one hand, on seasonal workers; on the other on tourism enterprises. The conclusions of a survey of more than 400 workers are first presented, emphasizing some of the crucial issues related to human resources management in tourism for an island. For example, how to find and make loyal trained people when the labour market is as narrow as in Corsica? Then, the results of a second survey on 250 enterprises are analyzed and the findings seem to fit the situation of several small islands, especially in the Mediterranean.

Keywords: seasonality, tourism, socioeconomic impacts, seasonal workers, Corsica, small islands, Mediterranean

Higher Education and Island Tourism in the Islands of Scotland

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ABSTRACT

Higher education institutions are knowledge dynamos that play a significant role in the economic development of small and remote island territories. This role becomes even more significant in the case of the tourism industry and its multiple demands for a skilled labour force.

This paper will review these ideas in the context of the University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI), a young, multi-campus university serving various small and remote island communities in Scotland, U.K.

Keywords: higher education institutions, small islands, UHI, Scotland, tourism, human resource development, skill development

Labour Market Dimensions of Small Island Tourism Economies (SITEs): Developments in the Caribbean cases of Aruba and Sint Maarten

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ABSTRACT

Aruba and Sint Maarten are two constituent countries of the Kingdom of the Netherlands situated in the Caribbean that have embarked on a dedicated tourism-driven development track, making them early examples of Small Island Tourism Economies (SITEs). The resulting demand for labour lead to a continuous intra-regional migration pattern, turning these SITEs into long-term labour-attracting growth nodes.

Population growth in both islands appears to have kept abreast of real GDP growth, making real per capita GDP flat line since mass tourism became the principal economic activity. This in turn suggests an absence of labour productivity growth and therefore an extensive type of economic development that contradicts the territories' apparent success.

While the average real income did not increase, there is a clear difference between social groups. A steady trickle of new immigrants occupies the ever-increasing number of basic jobs in the hospitality industry, while those who settled earlier or count themselves among the 'original' population gradually move into better paying jobs, with a penchant for private enterprise and the government sector, and therefore perceive a marked improvement in their socio-economic position.

Keywords: Aruba, Sint Maarten, tourism, small island tourism economies (SITEs), mass tourism, immigration

Challenges of Coastal & Marine Eco-Tourism in small central Mediterranean islands

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ABSTRACT

Most central Mediterranean islands have, over the past decades, evolved from economies based largely on fisheries and agriculture to ones that mostly depend on tourism. This has left an impact on the relevant societies in economic terms and has led to changes in the lifestyle of the respective communities.

Various tourism stakeholders, including policy makers and operators, in these islands have been slowly but steadily shifting their attention from '3S' tourism to other, higher value, tourism products. Owing to the high level of biodiversity and level of protection, including the presence of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), one such product that such destinations can offer is coastal and marine ecotourism.

Such a niche industry can leave a positive economic impact on the islands throughout the entire year and offer jobs to locals all year round, something that '3S' tourism is currently failing to ensure. However, there are still various challenges that need to be overcome for such a niche to establish itself on such islands. One of these is to move from a tourism industry that is more quality than quantity driven. The second is to carve out eco-tourism services from island coastal regions that can already be under serious stress from existing multiple users (artisanal fishing, recreation, swimming, hospitality, industrial activity (such as ship-repair and yacht yards), ports, ferry services, pleasure craft, cruise ships, etc.)

The comparative study examines a number of small central Mediterranean islands, all parts of the 'Sicilian archipelago': the Maltese Islands (Malta, Gozo and Comino), the Pelagian Islands (Lampedusa and Linosa), the Aegadian Islands (Favignana, Levanzo and Marettimo) and Pantelleria. It seeks to explore which of these have the potential to become coastal and marine ecotourism destinations. Over 175 interviews were held on the islands under study with relevant stakeholders. The research has shown that, should adequate policies be adopted and a number of measures are implemented, coastal and marine ecotourism can leave a positive economic impact on these small islands and their communities.

Keywords: central Mediterranean islands, tourism, coastal and marine ecotourism, marine protected areas.

Return to Base: Expatriates as Tourists revisiting their former Island Home

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ABSTRACT

Malta has served as a military base since the dawn of history. From Phoenician and Roman times the island has been an important strategic post in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea. Malta's military and naval role ended officially on 31 March 1979 which means that its economy has been tied directly to military exigencies throughout whole centuries and millennia. With the closing down of the NATO and British base, the Maltese government had to show its resilience through diversifying the focus of the local economy, and tourism was considered to be the plausible substitute. Ex-service personnel continued to feel an affinity with the island base which they had come acknowledge as a home later on in life. They thus made it a point to visit the island to at least once in their remaining life, now not as soldiers, airmen or sailors but as tourists. With them came family and friends. Return to base meant a stronger tourist activity for the ex-colony now an independent and flourishing nation state.

Keywords: military base, tourism, Malta, resilience, diversification, history

Intercultural Competence for Labour Markets in Small Island Tourism: Focus on Malta

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ABSTRACT

Tourism brings into contact individuals upholding different norms and values. Operators in this sector require a degree of cultural competence in order to identify potential issues arising from cultural diversity that, if unattended, may sour a visitor's experience.

In a small island state like Malta, the relative success of the economy and particularly of the tourism industry has created a labour shortage in both specialised sectors (e.g. chefs, guides) and in other areas requiring less skills. This shortfall is being covered by an increase in the number of non-Maltese nationals, hailing from different countries, working in the tourism sector in Malta.

A scenario is being observed whereby certain characteristics associated with the Maltese tourism experience (e.g. friendliness, 'local' knowledge of sites visited by tourists) are not being experienced by the visitors. This may result in a disappointing visitor experience, and 'erode' the competitiveness of the distinct Maltese Island experience.

This research paper explores whether a blended learning approach may facilitate the acquisition and accreditation of intercultural competence by undergraduate tourism studies students. The participants comprised both Maltese and foreign students.

Their experience involved interacting with a purposely designed blended learning environment and recorded using qualitative methods. The initial results suggest that, at tertiary level, this approach may be successful, provided that a cultural competence framework is provided. With intercultural competence, students felt more confident in dealing with issues arising from cultural diversity during their work placements.

Keywords: island tourism, blended learning, expatriate employees, intercultural competence
