

FUTOURISTIC

THE ITS JOURNAL ON HOSPITALITY, TRAVEL, TOURISM AND CULTURE



FILM TOURISM IN MALTA | THE PERCEPTION OF VEGANISM DIET IN MALTA | ECO-CERTIFICATION AMONG 4 STAR HOTELS | THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EXPATRIATES' SERVICE COMPETENCIES & SERVICE QUALITY WITHIN THE F&B SERVICE DEPARTMENT | DEFINING THE AIRPORT | KOREAN TOURISM IN MALTA | A HACCP SYSTEM FOR THE NEW ITS CAMPUS AT SMARTCITY | A HERITAGE TRAIL | IN SEARCH OF A NEW WANDERLUST | ANOTHER FIRST FOR ITS: A DIVING SAFETY MANAGEMENT DEGREE | OFFICIAL DATA ON TOURISM

A photograph of two divers in a blue underwater cave. The divers are silhouetted against the bright blue light coming from the top of the cave. Bubbles are visible rising from their breathing apparatus. The word "Welcome" is written in a white, cursive font across the center of the image. A bright light source is visible behind the text, creating a lens flare effect.

Welcome

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A MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

It is my pleasure to bring to you the second issue of **FUTURISTIC**, the official magazine of the Institute of Tourism Studies. The collection of articles presented here draws from a number research projects carried out in the previous year by academic staff and students of the Institute. The selection of papers aims at reaching one of the objectives of the editorial team, that is, to expose the wide spectrum of research topics and opportunities that are offered by ITS.

The recently published ITS strategy identifies Research as a critical pillar for the overall development of the institute. The document distinguishes three different types of research, namely: Basic Research; Applied Research; and Experimental Development. Basic Research refers to a study which produces new knowledge in field of Tourism, Hospitality or cognate areas and does not necessarily require practical application. On the other hand, the Applied research strand stresses on the practical objectives, application and implementation of the outcome of a specific study. Finally, the Experimental Development strand, supports the production of new materials or services or the upgrading of such which draws from innovative research.

With this concept of research classification, I shall briefly present the articles under the three different categories:

Basic Research

In her article *Defining the Airport*, Fiorentina Darmania Jochimsen provides a rather comprehensive picture of the core components of an Airport by critically reviewing a number of key academic texts relating to the topic. The content here goes beyond the infrastructural elements but deals also with the sociological, psychological, and cultural aspects relating to the airport.

Tourist Guiding student Eun Young Kim, discusses a strategy by which Malta could capitalize on the Korean Tourism Market. The author starts by providing a background on the historical political relationship between the two countries and proceeds with proposing the approaches that the Maltese authority could take to 'infiltrate' this specific tourism market. Kim argues that TV broadcasting is a very

strong promotional element in Korea, that, if exploited properly, could give considerable return on investment.

Another contribution is the one presented by Gastronomy graduate Megan Mercieca who writes about the social implications of veganism. The author argues that there is not enough data on the number of local residents who opt to follow a vegan diet and the determinants of such decision. Mercieca takes a demographic approach towards shedding light on this 'dietary culture'. In her conclusion, she also argues how the benefits of veganism should also be seen in light of environmental sustainability.

A simplified and down-to-earth descriptive piece on Tourism Statistics is provided by Luca di Gennaro Splendore. The author provides concrete examples of this sub-field which is often considered too complicated to understand. He argues that statistics, if used properly, can help in systematically develop a post-covid tourism strategy to revive this important industry.

Raymond J.Vassallo writes about the development of Film Tourism using Malta as a case study. The author discusses how the island was able to attract film production through important financial schemes but also through targeted promotion of its spaces. All this is conducive for a systematic and sustainable development of the film tourism niche in Malta which will create crucial opportunities particularly post-covid.

Applied Research

Charmaine Mercieca's contribution draws from her long-essay submitted as part of her Tourist Guiding qualification. The study aimed to explore the tourists' interest in a Maltese village which is set in the South-East of Malta, namely Zurrieq. Similar research focusing on other areas had previously been carried out with the objective of promoting community-based tourism.

In 2020, UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres published a policy document about Tourism transformation and recovery following COVID19 – Guterres speaks particularly how Tourism post-covid

should become more climate-friendly and sustainable. Sustainable Tourism was the topic that ITS Diploma students following the Travel and Tourism programme had to promote and discuss through digital platforms as part of and ICT-related module. The outcome of three projects, which provides a self-reflective discussion on their blog-posts are briefly presented in this issue.

The relationship between expatriates' service competencies and service quality within the Food and Beverage service department is another article presented by ITS Food and Beverage Service lecturer Charlotte Geronimi. Here, the author discusses employment within the F&B sector in Malta and the competencies or lack thereof of the individuals who are engaged to work in this sector. Geronimi provides practical and useful recommendations to address the problem of lack of skilled F&B workers. This study was conducted prior to COVID19 and the results have to be read in light of the economic situation of that time.

Experimental Development

Now turning to another article by Joseph Casingena which presents the results of a research project aimed to develop a Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) system for the planned ITS campus in Smart City. The author argues that the model may be implemented by other companies operating within the catering industry.

In a similar vein, ITS degree graduate Izilda Massafelli Ribeiro writes about eco-certification hotels. The arguments in this article draw from the perception of hotel managers towards monitoring, operation, and implementation of provisions related to eco-certification and how does this affect the overall hotel performance particularly those which are different in terms of capacity.

Taken together, the articles in this issue represent the wide variety of research topics that the Institute and its collaborators can address. Efforts must be made to promote and increase Applied and Experimental Development research while continue to produce basic research that could eventually feed into the ITS curriculum.

Glen Farrugia

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**On the cover: Photography
by Jellyman**

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On the set of Troy (2004) in Fort Ricasoli, Malta.
Photo credit: Malta Film Commission

FILM TOURISM IN MALTA

RESEARCH BY RAYMOND J. VASSALLO
FORMER ITS LECTURER AND READER IN FILM STUDIES

At no other point in history has the media, be it television, cinema, cyberspace or even print, exerted such a powerful influence on the behaviour of the individual. The blindingly fast pace of media evolution encompasses all levels of society and empowers consumers of information, with game-changing new consequences as people become the ultimate knowledge resource in a highly networked world. Once thought of as with one foot in the grave, film now permeates throughout the entire spectrum of the media thanks to accelerated technological progress.

The film industry has continued to grow and evolve rapidly since its inception in the early 1900s. Over the years, it has gained the attention of every culture in every part of the world. These days, mainly but not exclusively, thanks to Hollywood, it is instrumental in shaping social culture by transforming the viewers' opinions or swaying them one way or another. The idea that a film can have such an enormous impact on people can be difficult for some to digest, however, this same impact may also be a useful tool when used properly and for the right reasons.

Film Tourism, considered by some as the natural successor to literary tourism, may be defined as a traveller's desire to visit a specific location which has tickled his or her imagination or interest after being presented on film, either at the cinema or on TV. In 2014 alone, around 50 million international tourists chose their destination mostly because they saw a film shot in the country of destination (TRAVELSAT Competitive index). Research on Film Tourism reveals that 1 in every 5 tourists are motivated by the Films or TV programmes they've seen (Imagine Magazine, August 2015). The term "film-induced tourism" is now generally held to refer to on-location tourism that follows a successful film or television series produced or set in a specific locale. (Beeton, 2005) Embedding a destination in a film may be considered as the definitive tourism product placement exercise (Morgan & Pritchard, 1998). According to Hudson and Brent Richie, "product placement is an emerging phenomenon, and has been defined as the deliberate admission of products into movies or television programmes with the intent of influencing viewers' product preference and behaviour favourably"

(Hudson & Brent Richie, 2006), in a more sophisticated, targeted and effective way than traditional advertising methods. It can even be regarded as a novel form of "cultural landscape", redrawn and shaped by the director's gaze as well as by the audience. (Jewell & McKinnon, 2008

IMPACT

The most evident impact of film tourism is generally the increase in the number of tourists visiting the country. This, of course, would be of great benefit to the local economy. Film tourism may also function as an adaptable and sustainable long-term tool to help resolve problems of seasonality (Beeton, 2005). Besides the impact of film tourism on visitors' numbers, shooting a film in a destination has further implications to the local economy. The creation of institutions supporting the film industry, such as a film commission, together with a system of financial incentives, funds and marketing strategies can transform a cinematically fascinating territory, provided it has the essential natural and man-made resources, into a worldwide competitive film location. Table 1 provides an idea of the impact of Film Tourism on the tourism industry of a number of destinations.

But what causes a potential traveller to, in fact, decide to travel to a destination related to a film he has recently viewed? What is the nature of the interplay between the viewer and the scene being viewed? John Urry suggests that a 'gaze' is created by the film for the person to interpret and this is what stimulates the viewer to decide to travel to that particular destination. (Urry, 2011) What we are talking about here is the power of the image to communicate its message to the viewer as well as the viewer's desire to participate in the fantasy by, firstly,



Malta has built a reputation as the Mini-Hollywood of the Mediterranean

imagining himself in that location and essentially becoming part of it, and secondly, physically travelling to it. "A real tourist aesthetic is thus advertised, and this aesthesis, as the etymology suggests, is a "feeling". These emotions are collective, conventional and standardized". (Amirou, 2007).

Riley, Baker and Van Doren hold that the viewer may only be termed a film tourist when he or she travels to the film-inspired destination. (Riley, Baker, & Van Doren, 1998).

Once arrived at his destination the tourist is expected to tour the major locations used in the film and record the experience through photographic and/or video equipment to prove to his relations and acquaintances back home that he has really been to said locations. Sites that have been used as motion picture locations have invariably considerably increased their profile and consequently become sources of film-induced tourism. (Riley, Baker, & Van Doren, 1998) These include the Harry Potter films (Oxford), the Lord of the Rings and The Hobbit sequences (New Zealand) and Braveheart (Scotland and Ireland). Indeed, to take the Lord of the Rings as an example, some places have become

strongly identified with specific films, to the extent that the national airline has embedded them in its livery. This identification becomes even stronger when the location itself is essential to the plot of the film; Vienna in *The Third Man* (Reed, 1949), Florence in *A Room with a View* (Ivory, 1985) and Salzburg in *The Sound of Music* (Wise, 1965). Commentators such as Hirschman (Hirschmann, 2000) consider the popularity and subsequent influence of film in terms of myth-telling, stating that “the mythic impulse has always enthralled the human imagination”. This notion of myth, film and tourism has been noted and studied in relation to *The Lord of the Rings* films by numerous scholars,

including Anne Buchmann. (Buchmann, 2006) Sue Beeton suggests a framework describing the forms and characteristics central to Film Tourism. Table 2 specifies how filmic imagery may impact a traveller in choosing a destination related to a specific film. (Beeton, 2005) Popular media manufacture the desire for an object through the creation or reinforcement of specific images attached to the same object. These are termed as “markers” which, once locked onto a target, end up being intimately associated with it, continually representing it within the viewer’s mind. John Urry holds that the Tourist gaze

generates a powerful urge in the viewer to relive the on-screen fantasy he or she has just witnessed. Through signs transmitted via the tourist gaze, the traveller creates markers attached to a potential destination and which are indefinitely fused to it. The tourist consequently makes his choice of destination in anticipation of re-capturing the joy and pleasure he had previously experienced whilst watching the film. (Urry, 2011)

Film and T.V. series are a primary source of the tourist gaze. In inspiring people to visit the locales and destinations where the film was shot, they may also incidentally become excellent promoters of film tourism.

The impact of Film Tourism on the tourism industry of a number of destinations

FILM OR TV SERIES	LOCATION	IMPACT ON VISITOR NUMBERS OR TOURIST REVENUE
<p>Braveheart Heartbeat Deliverance Dances with Wolves Close Encounters of the Third Kind Thelma and Louise Field of Dreams Dallas The Lord of the Rings Steel Magnolias Last of the Mohicans The Fugitive Little Women Bull Durham Harry Potter Mission: Impossible 2 Gorillas in the Mist Crocodile Dundee The Beach All Creatures Great & Small To the Manor Born Middlemarch Four Weddings & a Funeral Mrs. Brown Notting Hill Saving Private Ryan Sense and Sensibility Pride and Prejudice Cheers Miami Vice Forrest Grump Troy Captain Corelli’s Mandolin</p>	<p>Wallace Monument, Scotland Goathland, orth Yorkshire, England Rayburn County, Georgia Fort Hayes, Kansas Devils Tower, Wyoming Arches National onument in Moab, Utah Iowa Southfork Ranch, Dallas New Zealand Louisiana Chimney Rock Park, North Carolina Dillsboro, North Carolina Orchard House, Concord, Massachusetts Durham, North Carolina Various locations in U.K. National parks in Sydney Rwanda Australia Thailand Yorkshire Dales Cricket St Thomas, Leisure Park, England Stamford, Lincolnshire, England The Crown Hotel, Amersham, England Osborne House, Isle of Wight, U.K. Kenwood House, England Normandy, France Saltram House, England Lyme Park in Cheshire, UK Location in Boston Miami Savannah, Georgia Canakkale, Turkey Cephalonia, Greece</p>	<p>300% increase in visitors year after release 3 times the number of normal visitors in 1991 20,000 film fourists a year Gross revvenues \$2 to 3m 25% increase compared with 7% for previous 4 years 75% increase in 1975 20% visit now cause of the film 19.1% increase in 1991 35,000 visits in 1991. Steady increase every year 500,000 visitors per year 10% increase every year 1998 to 2003 from uk 48% increase year after release 25% increase year after release 11% increase year after release 65% increase year after release 25% increase in attendance year after release all locations saw an increase of 50% or more 200% increase in 2000 20% increase in 1998 20.5% increase in u.s. visitors 1981 to 1988 22% increase in youth market in 2000 generated £5m for yorkshire dales 37% increase between 1978 to 1980 27% increase in 1994 fully booked for at least 3 years 25% increase 10% increase in 1 month 40% increase in American tourists 39% increase 150% increase in visitors \$7m in unpaid promotional advertising each year 150% increase in German visitors 1985 to 1988 7% increase in tourism 73% increase in tourism 50% increase over 3 years</p>

Culture is defined as the cumulative deposit of, amongst other things, knowledge, experience, beliefs, values and meanings. Meanings may have different points of origin, circulating through diverse processes and practices to ultimately become an accepted norm shared throughout the community (Hall, 1997). Film as a language may lead to the conception of a “meaning of place” within the representational system common to the members of the same culture. Such an association may lead a potential tourist to select a particular location to visit through a simple viewing of a relative film or T.V. programme (Beeton, 2005).

Media is now so pervasive that it is difficult to ignore its power in shaping our perception of people, places and objects. Mass media, usually supported by mainstream literature and art as well as photography, tends to universally apply stereotypes. Very often film reinforces these stereotypes or even creates its own, especially when it comes to locations. “Landscape as text is the dominant metaphor in film geography because it provides a means to explore the intersection between narration and geography. While a useful and appropriate device to engage landscape, the metaphor also works to constrain the discourse surrounding cinematic landscapes” (Lukinbeal, 1995). Thus, we have a perilous Baghdad; a foggy, rainy London; a murder-ridden Chicago or a treacherous Shanghai. Geographically, cinematic landscapes are essentially simple screenscapes which do not authentically represent actual landscapes. Screenscapes have to be, by their very nature, profoundly altered by the distinctive gaze of the screenwriter, the director and the audience itself.

Objective reality as to a sense of place, is usually all but missing in a film. What a filmmaker does is attempt to approximate what the viewer imagines the place to be like within the pocket universe of the film. During the shooting of *The Count of Monte Cristo* (Reynolds, 2002), the walls of Marseilles, as they presently stand, were found to be inadequate to generate the authenticity

required to bridge the credibility gap between the film and its audience. Instead, the producers turned to the Vittoriosa Waterfront in Malta, as it looked then, in lieu of the 19th Century French port. Filmmakers need the capacity to transform a landscape better to incarnate their cinematic vision. If filmmaking is the construction of other worlds, then filmmaking on location offers the possibility of the transformation of the world we live in – a reconstruction through poetry or fiction, through photogenicity; a frictional politics, a fictional solidarity (Renoir, Jennings). The impulse to search for these locations is irresistible. (Keller, 1994)

Sometimes the narrative of the film requires considerable modification to both the physical landscape of the locale as well as the concomitant social milieu. Depending upon the prior expectations of the traveller, upon arrival at his destination, the film buff would discover, at the very least a far different environment to what he had been expecting from his viewership of the film. At most, he or she would be content just to be present at the film site.

But it is more likely that what he has done is the one sure way not to see the canyon. Why is it almost impossible to gaze directly at the Grand Canyon and see it for what it is...? It is almost impossible because the Grand Canyon, the thing as it is, has been appropriated by a symbolic complex which has already been formed in the sightseer’s mind. Seeing the canyon under approved circumstances is seeing the symbolic complex head on. (Culler, 1990)

THE ATTRACTION

In general, a tourist attraction involves three essential elements: (a) the sight, (b) the visitor and (c) a marker which conveys ‘meaning’ as well as signifying the attractiveness of the locale. Amongst these three elements the marker, as the sight’s de facto transmitter of information stands out in importance.



How filmic imagery may impact a traveller in choosing a destination related to a specific film (Beeton, 2005)

TYPE	DESCRIPTION	MALTA
Film tourism as primary motivation for travel	The film site is an attraction in its own right - strong enough to motivate visitation	Mdina and various (Game of Thrones - King's Landing)
Film tourism as part of a holiday	Visiting film locations (or studios) as an activity within a larger holiday	Popeye's Village (Popeye, 1980)
Film tourism exclusive trip	Visiting sites of films in order to 'pay homage' to the film; possible re-enactments	Game of Thrones, Assassin's Creed, Malta Story, Jurassic Park
Celebrity film tourism	Homes of celebrities; film locations that have taken on celebrity status	Former Azure Window site, Gozo (Game of Thrones); By The Sea (2015) (Gozo), (Valletta): Assasins' Creed
Nostalgic film tourism	Visiting locations that represent	Grand Harbour, Cottonera, Comino (Malta Story)
Constructed film tourism attraction	An attraction constructed after the filming purely to attract/serve tourists	Popeye's Village (Popeye, 1980)
Film/Movie tours	Tours developed to various film locations	Game of Thrones Sites
Guided tours at specific on- location set	Tours of specific sites, often on private land	The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen (2003), Munich (2005), Troy (2004)
Film tourism to places where the filming is only believed to have taken place	Movies and TV series that are filmed in one place that is created to look like another, often in other countries for financial reasons; known as 'runaway productions'	Midnight Express (1978), Gladiator (2000), The Count of Monte Cristo (2002), Munich (2005), Troy (2004), Agora (2009)
Film tourism to places where the narrative takes place, but not filmed in	The films have raised interest in a particular country or place, where the story is based, not where it was actually filmed	Mediterranean Film Studios, Kalkara
Film studio tours	Industrial tours of working film studios, where the actual filming process can be viewed	Popeye's Village (Popeye,1980)
Film studio theme park	Usually adjacent to a studio, specifically built for tourism with no actual filming or production taking place E.G. Universal Studios (Hollywood); Cinecitta'	Planned but only local productions have affected this up to now.
Movie premieres	Particularly those outside traditional sites such as Hollywood or London	European Film Awards (2012), Kinemastic International Short Film Festival, Valletta Film Festival, European Film Festival, Others planned
Film Festivals	Many cities hold film festival that attract film buffs and fans for the	

Markers come under various shapes and sizes: if situated on the site itself they may consist of souvenirs, signage, an artefact, a piece of graffiti or even the tourist-guide. Markers away from the site may include postcards, guidebooks and film and T.V. (MacCannell, 2013)

New York and Paris are two favourite venues frequently seen on screen. Panoramic views of the cities, the Statue of Liberty, the Eiffel Tower, boulevards, avenues, landmark skyscrapers, cafes, night clubs and high fashion establishments are frequently featured. Such on screen displays may be considered as off-site markers as they encourage the viewer to visit and experience these places in person. Ironically, an opposite effect may be imparted. Viewers who have seen innumerable car chases, shootings, muggings, robberies and countless types of murder and mayhem may well be discouraged to embark upon such trips.

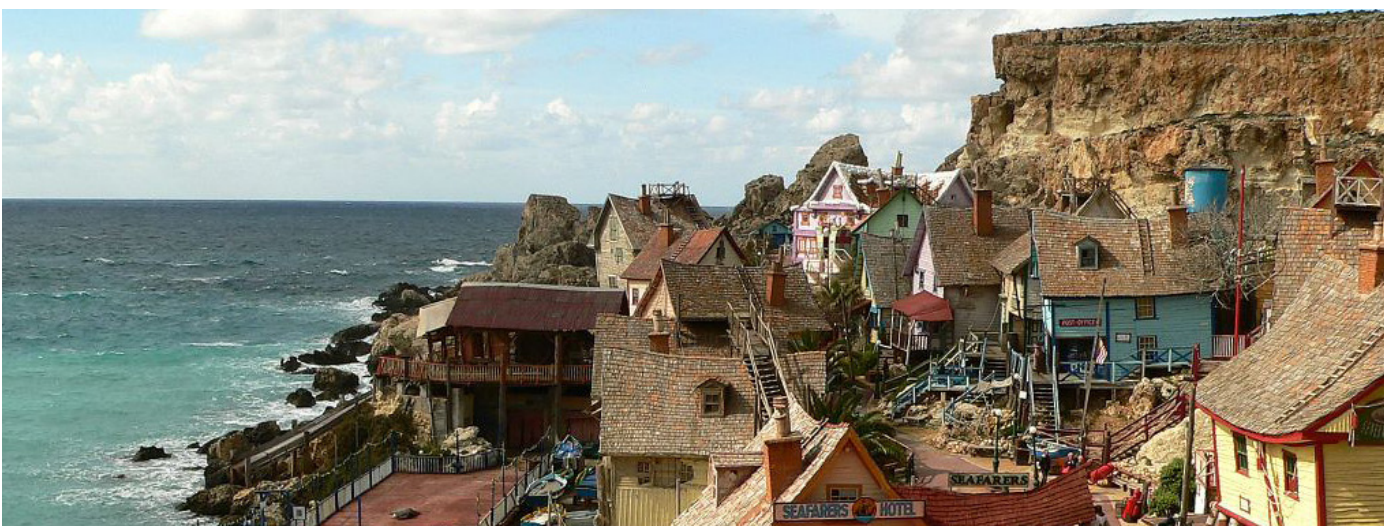
However, film locations which double up as overseas locales would generally not benefit from such off-site markers as the advantage would all go to the country which they are masquerading as. A good example of such misperception is provided by *Braveheart* (Gibson, 1995). Although the film was nearly entirely shot in Ireland, tourists still throng to the Highlands where tour guides earnestly show them the areas where the historic battles took place, although these are not the actual film locales. Even so, the Irish still bravely prevail in trying to draw tourists to the authentic film sites, with some measure of success.

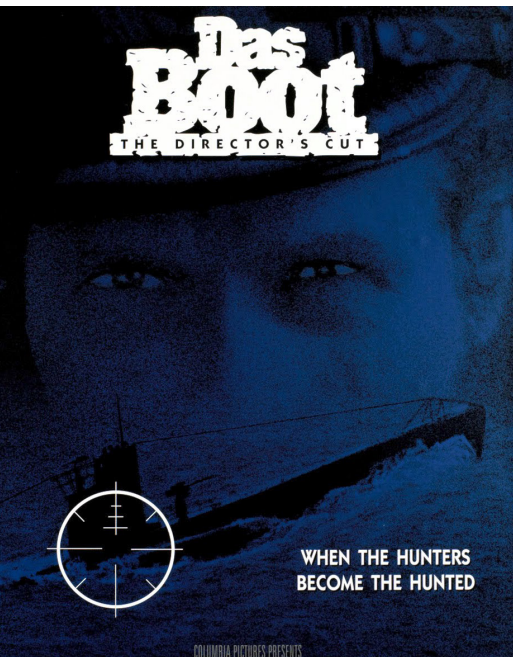
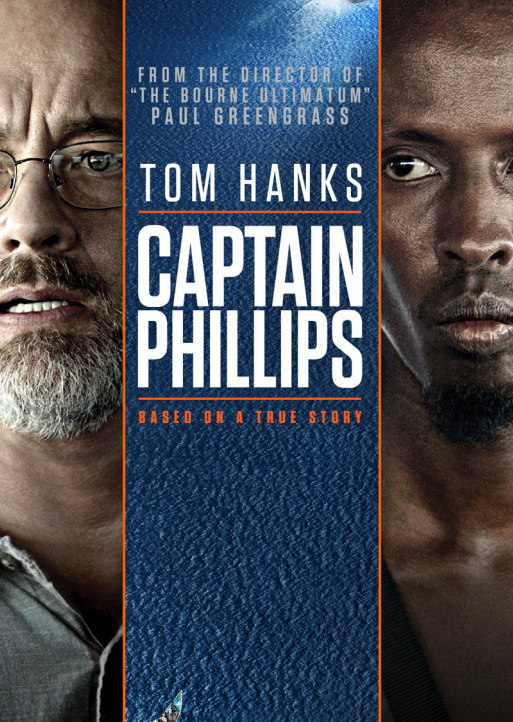
Tourists never visit a destination in possession of full knowledge of a specific site. Upon arrival, their newly acquired experience, sights, sounds, smells, information, acquaintance and interaction will fuse to any prior knowledge they may have had to create a new personal marker as a memory, a photo or perhaps, a souvenir purchased on site. A film site is transformed into a tourist attraction only after the creation of markers. Otherwise, it would remain indistinguishable from other places. In this respect, the quality of the tourist experience which such sites offer, is of paramount importance. John Urry (2011) suggests that tourism itself may resolve into an exercise in photogenicity and travel becomes but a strategy for the collection of photographs.

Writing in the 2002 in the *Times of London*, journalist Daniel Rosenthal commented, "Malta has built a reputation as the Mini-Hollywood of the Mediterranean". This noteworthy observation mirrored the already well-known reputation gained by the island in the film industry.

December 2012 saw Malta as the venue for the 25th European Film Awards, Europe's version of the Oscars. The European Film Awards are organised annually by the European Film Academy, which includes 3,800 European Film professionals. For a number of days Valletta hosted hundreds of filmmakers, actors and producers undoubtedly providing opportunities which developed into actual films shot on location on the islands. There is a possibility that the European Film Awards may again return to Malta in the near future.

The Malta Film Commission emphasizes the fact that "The islands offer a diverse landscape that could double for virtually anywhere old and new in the Middle East or Mediterranean as well as several other places." (Malta Film Commission, 2020) The Malta Film Commission also provides Filmmakers with considerable financial incentives, and this is probably a primary reason why such organisations choose the island for their projects. Very often, places selected for shooting must be completely transformed according to the requirements of the production. Sometimes this may also entail the construction of film sets which are completely alien to Maltese history and culture. These are inserted in the film as either stand-alone scenes or adjacent to actual Maltese edifices. For *Gladiator* (Scott, 2000), Maltese artisans (another strongpoint of Malta's Film servicing industry) constructed a replica of the Roman Coliseum for the gladiatorial fights depicted in the film. Another masterpiece of Maltese artisanship was the city of Troy constructed for *Troy* (Petersen, 2004). Yet again, should tourists have come to Malta to view these memorable locations they would have ended up sorely disappointed as the Coliseum set was disassembled at the end of the shooting and the city of Troy had to be burnt down as part of the screenplay. Of course, the genuine Coliseum in Rome must have got quite a boost after the film was released as, soon afterwards, re-enactors started thronging its immediate neighbourhood charging camera-toting tourists hefty fees to have their photograph taken in their company. In the meantime, touts, and souvenir shops in the city of Canakkale, Turkey, sell scale models





Considering the volume of screen tourism which accompanies typical Hollywood blockbuster films it is apparent that the representation and meaning imparted to the shooting sites used in these productions during the screening of the films to an audience are of quintessential importance in the design of their presentation to the potential visitor as well as in the creation of a suitable motivation for the visit. (Beeton, 2005) (Riley, Baker, & Van Doren, 1998) (Tooke & Baker, 1996)

During film production with its attendant exigencies, filmmakers are constantly required to adapt and manipulate the narrative in myriad fashions. It is only on rare occasions that filmmakers shoot scenes from their production on the actual site mentioned in the story. Such a choice would be subject to several variables not the least of which would be budget, geographical location, climate, and political situation. This decision may also depend on the incentives on offer by the regional authorities. Filmmakers usually resort to a particular region in which various locales are selected to stand in for the original locations as described in the screenplay or story. Hi-tech systems such as CGI make it even easier to create virtual worlds, some of which may not even exist.

Malta has acted as a stand-in for numerous places, both in space and in time. The Malta Film Commission website lists quite a number: Libya, Iraq, Kuwait, Egypt, Israel, Turkey, Palestine, and Italy. Major movies filmed in Malta included Shout at the Devil (Hunt, 1976), Midnight Express (Parker, 1978), Gladiator (Scott, 2000), The Count of Monte Cristo (Reynolds, 2002), Troy (Petersen, 2004), Munich (Spielberg, 2005), Agora (Amenabar, 2009), World War Z (Forster, 2013) and 13 Hours (Bay, 2016). None of the above films featured Malta as a diegesis location.

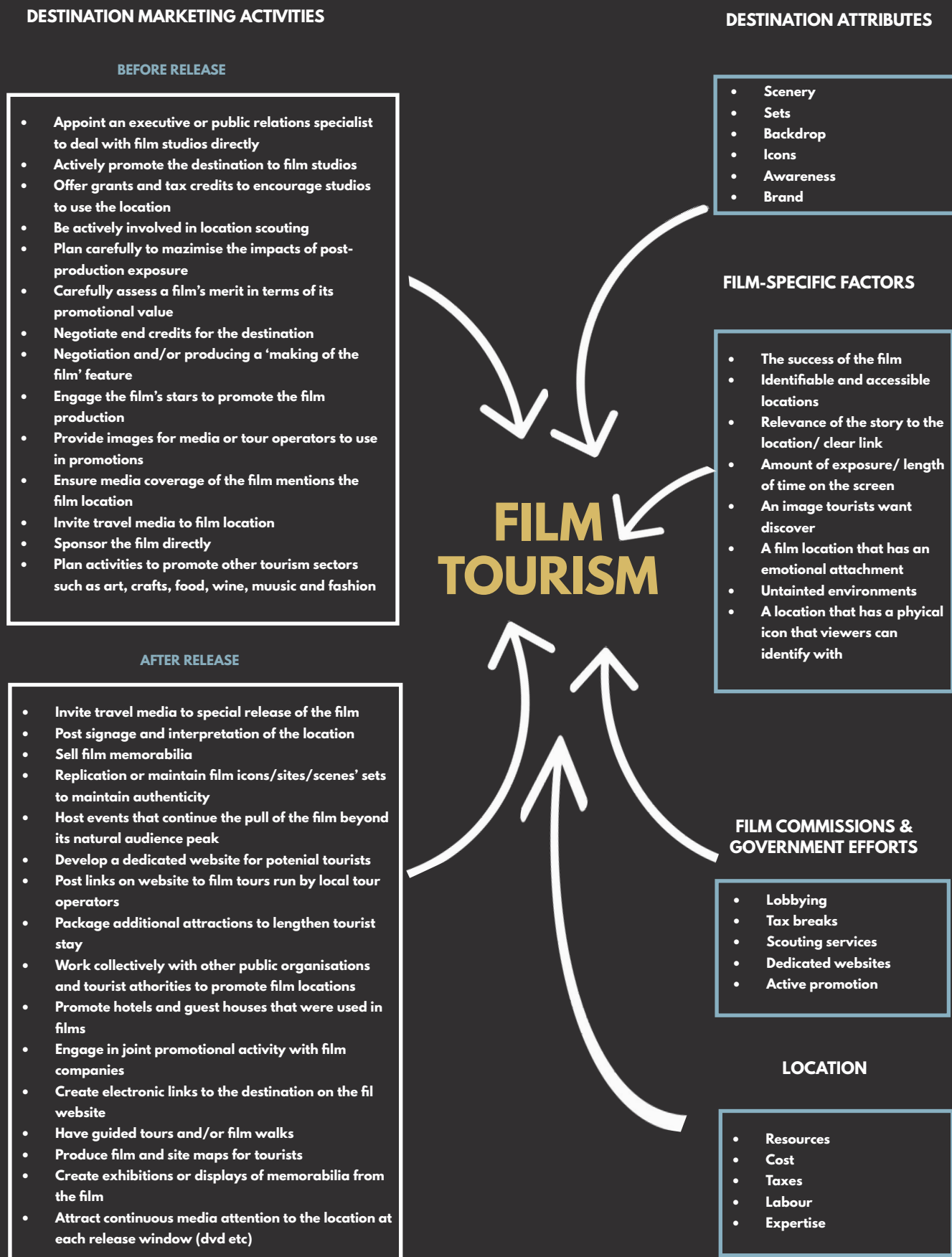
For several years now, the Malta Film Commission offers incentives for filmmakers who choose to include Malta as a diegetic location in their production. A rebate of up to 40% is normally offered to productions coming to Malta, depending upon an evaluation of the cultural substance, context and implications including the insertion of Maltese elements directly in the storyline. (Cultural Test, 2020)

While the film servicing industry is quite significantly developed in Malta, the related sector of film tourism is definitely less so. Paradoxically, the first reason may be linked to the island's versatile landscape which easily doubles up for different countries. Whilst this factor has brought with it significant recognition amongst major production companies it is not inductive to achieve facile and spontaneous recognition with audiences and potential film tourists.

Hudson and Brent Ritchie designed a schematic (see figure 1) whereby Film Tourism may be developed systematically through the elaboration of several planned activities (Hudson & Brent Ritchie, 2006). In many cases Maltese locations can depend on some film-specific aspects such as a film's critical or box-office success or tourists' desire to explore places which emanate popular or personal emotions but, quite often, film inspired destinations may not be easily recognizable as Maltese or are missing easily identifiable markers.

In recent years, some efforts have been made to better develop film tourism through various destination marketing strategies – preceding a film's release. These include media coverage of the film, with clear and present references to the actual shooting location. Websites dealing specifically with film-induced tourism have also been put on-line. These provide the option to download maps and podcasts containing information on film

Figure 1: How Film Tourism may be developed systematically through the elaboration of several planned activities (Hudson & Brent Richie, 2006).



Source: Hudson & Ritchie 2006

tour itineraries. Even though film tourism in Malta is as much advanced as its indigenous film industry, the island can be perceived as an innovator in the use of film for tourism purposes. An initial example is provided by Popeye Village, located in Anchor Bay and originally intended as a film set for Popeye (Altman, 1980) Although originally destined to be demolished upon completion of the shooting period, the set was “saved” from certain destruction through the efforts of the directors Mr. Lino Cassar and Mr. Nancy Calamatta managing Malta Film Facilities, the precursor to the present Mediterranean Film Studios, and is now a major tourist attraction.

At the present time, Popeye Village is partly an open air “museum” and partly a family entertainment complex inspired by a love for film. As advertised on its internet site (www.popeyemalta.com), the emphasis is on the emotional experience exerted by the film on its audience: “the whole family can be part of a unique filming experience with the animation crew and giving you the opportunity to see yourself on the big screen”.

For several years now, the Malta Film Commission offers incentives for filmmakers that choose to include Malta as a diegetic location in their production

The Ministry of Tourism and the Malta Tourism Authority are actively engaged in promoting Film Tourism. The National Tourism Policy 2015 – 2020 identified Film Tourism as one of the numerous sectors to be encouraged within the area of Niche Tourism Marketing. The Malta

Film Commission’s very own National Film Policy 2016 – 2020 dedicated an entire chapter to screen tourism. It identifies which types are relevant to Malta, indicating activities to be undertaken. The document mentions specific film location sites, film-themed attractions, film itineraries, film festivals and conferences, visits to filming underway and celebrity promotion. Furthermore, MTA together with the same Malta Film Commission have, for some years now been exploring and trialling other possible Film Tourism initiatives including: Film Maps, a Film Museum, Film Location signage, hotel packages with inclusive film tours and film set visits. The massive popularity of the Game of Thrones television series has inspired the first private sector ventures into film tourism. Malta Film Tours (www.maltafilmtours.com) offer a variety of film-themed tours first and foremost being the Game of Thrones itinerary. Although official figures relating to Film Tourism are not yet being retained by the Malta Tourism Authority, even though the Coronavirus Pandemic has negatively affected the industry, interest in Malta as a possible film venue is still strong and



The landing of the Greek army on the shores of Troy being filmed on a sandy beach in Malta in 2003 for Troy (2004).
Photo credit: Warner Brothers, through the Malta Film Commission

increasing. The filming of the third season of the Sky TV series *Das Boot* is a case in point.

Looking forward towards recovery after the Covid-19 pandemic, film tourism is regarded as one of developing and emerging segments in the Malta Tourism Strategy 2021-2030 launched earlier in 2021.

Film and tourism are related in various ways. Both are concerned with space, time, place and perception. When it creates virtual worlds for people in which to participate, film affects the perception of time, place, and space. It transforms the audience into ethereal tourists traversing space, time, and place.

As reality and virtuality alternatively rupture and merge into what Baudrillard and Fredric Jameson term as simulacra, tourism itself ends up as yet another spectator event. When the moment passes, the subject may end up with a desire to relive that essentially filmic experience in the real world, once again becoming a tourist and, this time physically traversing time, space and place. (Lukinbeal, 1995)



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The Perception of Veganism as a Diet in Malta

RESEARCH BY MEGAN MERDIECA

B.A. (HONS) GASTRONOMY

EDITED BY DAVID PACE

A vegan is an individual who avoids products of animal origin as much as possible. While this definition may seem simple enough in theory, it does not however account for the intricate social dynamics an individual goes through when veganism is practiced. People who choose to adopt this lifestyle are however kept motivated to do so for personal, social, political or cultural reasons.

All this was taken into consideration when developing this dissertation and the scope of this study was to look at the perception of veganism from the aspect of the vegan, with a focus on the social implications. From preliminary research, a perception emerged that a vegan diet is difficult to follow and that social gatherings where food is served meant that some difficulties were encountered. A hypothesis was

generated based on these findings. If vegan options were more widely accessible, there would be succour, the lifestyle would not seem so difficult to pursue and no need to avoid social gatherings where food is present. Overall, those following the diet would feel included and a valued member of the community, as opposed to an outcast of society.

SIGNIFICANCE

There is a lack of official local statistics or local formal studies specifically focused on veganism in Malta. However, there is no denying that the awareness, acceptance and inclusion of veganism is on the rise, both locally and abroad. The largest community of vegans identified within the Maltese islands was found on the social media platform Facebook in the group 'Vegan Malta Eats'. This group has just over eight thousand members (February

2020). Though its members cannot be assumed to be limited to just vegans, the number may at least be viewed as an indication of those interested in the lifestyle, whether it be for business or personal reasons. The questionnaire used as the research method for this study was published in this group, with one hundred and fifty-seven participants taking part.

This study takes a look at the situation at a local level, with the intention of delving into how vegans feel they are being perceived locally and any difficulties they may be facing. This is being done to better understand the psychological aspect involved when adopting a vegan diet and what can be done to make adopting such a lifestyle easier.

DEFINING VEGANISM

In simple terms, vegans are a strict



Photo by Heather Gill

form of vegetarians, who apart from omitting meat from their diet, also avoid eggs, dairy and honey. Vegans do not make use of products deriving from animals, such as leather or fur, and are against animal testing. The UK Vegan Society defines vegan as: “A philosophy and way of living which seeks to exclude as far as is possible and practicable – all forms of exploitation of, and cruelty to, animals for food, clothing or any other purpose; and by extension, promotes the development and use of animal-free alternatives for the benefit of humans, animals and the environment. In dietary terms it denotes the practice of dispensing with all products derived wholly or partly from animals.” (The UK Vegan Society, 1988).

PERCEPTION

Does a perception of veganism exist? Though veganism is going mainstream,

it is a counterculture movement, challenging the never before unproblematic exploitation of animals. It is important to determine the reasons for which one chooses to adopt veganism as these may be a factor in why it is stigmatised.

For the purpose of the dissertation, the perception of veganism will be looked at from the viewpoint of vegans. The perception will be from a dietary aspect and the social implications involved. From the literature review, some of the points highlighted were a lack of support, perception that a vegan diet is difficult to follow and avoiding social situations where food is involved. With this information, a hypothesis was developed. The hypothesis is that if vegan options were more widely accessible, there would be succour, the lifestyle would not seem so difficult to pursue and no need to avoid social gatherings where food is present. Overall, those following the

diet would feel included and a valued member of the community, as opposed to an outcast of society.

To gain an overview of the local situation, a survey was carried out to be answered by the target group. The questions asked were about the local situation regarding veganism. And the questionnaire was designed to investigate how vegans feel they are being perceived on a local level, to rate different scenarios and to look at any difficulties faced due to the diet that they follow.

RESULTS

The results revealed that veganism is more popular amongst females than males, with a ratio of 3 female vegans to every 1 male. This corresponds to what Lea and Worsley (2003) had also observed regarding gender differences and how veganism was viewed more



There is a lack of official local statistics or local formal studies specifically focused on veganism in Malta. However, there is no denying that the awareness, acceptance and inclusion of veganism is on the rise, both locally and abroad. ”

positively by females. It appears that a third of those who participated in this questionnaire were between the age of 26 and 35. The next popular age group was that of between 16 and 25 followed by that between 36 and 45. Although it was expected to be the most popular with millennials, these results could be explained as those between the age of 26 and 35 having the most freedom of expression. Many between the ages of 16 and 25 may still be living at home with their parents who cook for them.

Though the respondents of this questionnaire were meant to be vegan, in transition to becoming vegan or interested in adopting a vegan lifestyle, almost a quarter of them, that is, 38 of them (24%) had weak knowledge or a misconception of veganism. This indicates a need for better education about what it means to be vegan. Of the total number of respondents, just over half followed a vegan diet, while 43% followed a vegetarian-based diet. The fact that such a large percentage of the total respondents are not actually vegan but show an interest in the lifestyle is encouraging for the vegan movement and shows signs of its future growth and popularity. This would also help normalise it and remove any attached stigmas. The growth of veganism and its breaking into mainstream was also supported by business and market projections reported by Forbes and The Economist (2020), which announced 2019 as the year that veganism went mainstream. It is worth keeping in mind though that from the questionnaire results obtained, it was determined that 13% of those who have adopted a vegan diet, were indifferent to other aspects such as clothes and cosmetics, probably adopting a vegan diet for health reasons. However, there is more to veganism than just food, there is animal welfare and environmental considerations too.

Although there are no official local statistics or studies of how it has developed locally, the vegan scene has been observed to have grown drastically in recent years. Just over half of the participants (56%) of this study agree that the hardest part about going vegan is the catering at events such as weddings. This was also reflected when



asked about satisfaction levels of three different situations. The situation of catering at events did the worst, with 57% being very unsatisfied and 29% expressing dissatisfaction. At such events, food is not the main focus and for this reason, it is probably not given priority and catering for dietary requirements is overlooked. A combined total of 4% were satisfied with the catering at events, and these participants are likely to be those that commented that they did not find any difficulties in adopting veganism.

Out of the three scenarios participants were presented with, respondents were the most satisfied with the situation of availability of products in supermarkets, though it still did not score great. Restaurants and cafes did not score great either. In question

6, going out to eat was the second most agreed upon difficulty (50%) with availability of



suitable options/products felt by 26% of the total number of respondents.

Telling family and friends, concern about nutrition and feeling that vegan products are expensive on supermarket shelves were each felt by approximately 20% of the populace.

In question 8, when vegans were asked what they look for when dining out, 59% of the participants reported that they look for the simple availability of a suitable option for them, while 70% are after the variety of options

available. The 11% difference is indicative of wanting to be fulfilled after a meal, while the 59% are after inclusion in social circles. The hypothesis developed for this research supported by the literature review, reveals a lack of support for vegans, a perception that the diet is difficult to follow and also an avoidance of social situations due to lack of being catered for. If vegan options were more widely accessible, there would be succour, the lifestyle would not seem so difficult to pursue and no need to avoid social gatherings where food is present. When asked what vegans look for when dining out, other factors included taste which got 61% of votes and the chef's creativity (48%). When asked about difficulties faced, none of the respondents had ticked boring food, however it was brought up later on in the questionnaire.

Overall, just over half of the respondents feel that the vegan scene is improving in Malta. Twenty-eight percent (28%) of the total number of participants feel that there is room for improvement while 17% deem it bad. Further to this, 55% of all the respondents would like to see veganised versions of Maltese favourites. Twenty-five percent (25%) were not interested whilst 17% were indifferent. It could be that these were foreigners (the questionnaire did not ask about nationality) and did not know anything about local dishes and cuisine. As Brillat Savarin implies with the well-known statement 'you are what you eat', there is a relationship between man and the food consumed, with what is consumed representing our beliefs, cultural and social backgrounds.



The biggest difficulty vegans face is being catered for at restaurants and more so, at events such as weddings

The last question was left open for any comments that were not made in the previous questions. Amongst the comments that were passed, and a somewhat unexpected one regarded the availability and extra cost of opting for milk alternatives, how it was felt to be unfair and discouraged people from adopting veganism. It may seem like something small, especially to those not conforming to a vegan diet, however it is something vegans face regularly, considering how often they go out for coffee.

CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

The hypothesis set for the dissertation stated that if vegan options were more widely accessible, there would be succour, the lifestyle would not seem so difficult to pursue and it would solve the need to avoid social gatherings where food is present. Overall, those following the diet would feel included and valued members of the community, as opposed to outcasts of society.

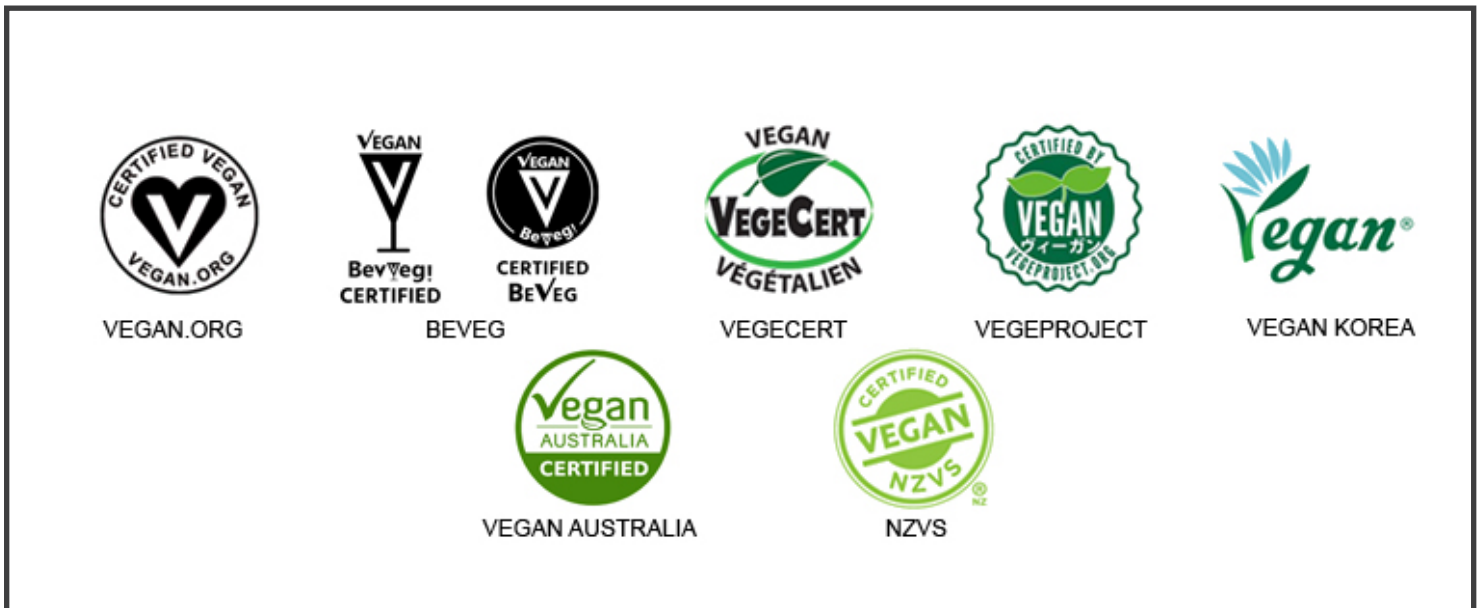
The data obtained from the 157 questionnaires revealed that the

Official Vegan Certification in the World

Europe



Outside Europe



Vegan Agriculture Certification



biggest difficulty vegans face is being catered for at restaurants and more so, at events such as weddings. Fifty-nine percent (59%) of the respondents look for the simple availability of a suitable option for them, while 70% check for the variety of options available. The 11% difference reflects the need for satisfaction from a meal, while the 59% indicates a desire to be included. The need to have to check for the simple availability of an option is reflective of the uncertainty and lack of reliability of the industry. The lack of inclusivity where food is concerned felt by the vegan community suggests that it is true as when vegans are not satisfied with the catering options, it puts a strain on their social life, and on whether or not they are supported in their decision to opt for veganism. Hence, the hypothesis was proven.

This could be overcome by providing satisfying and suitable options on the menu, which would cater for other dietary requirements at the same time, giving the establishment a wider market. Such options would also reflect the creativity and innovativeness of the chef and skills of the kitchen.

FURTHER STUDIES

As noted earlier, there is little information available on veganism in Malta. The information obtained from this research was an attempt to obtain a general idea of the situation. A study

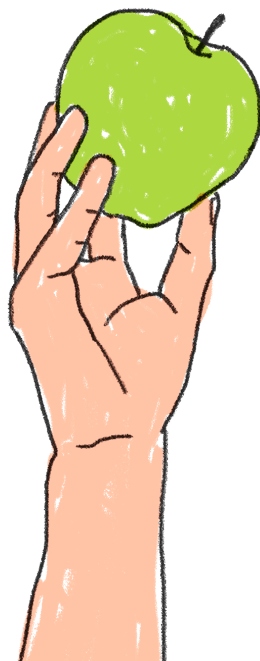


of the availability of options in catering establishments and venues would complement this research. Further studies could also include a



Whether veganism decreases the carbon footprint or not is something that should be delved into deeper

qualitative approach, by interviewing vegans to gain a more in-depth analysis of what they think. This study could have gone into more detail regarding demographic information, asking questions related to level of education and income; and as an initial study, should have focused on the collection of quantitative data alone, streamlining the analysis significantly. Veganism in itself is a growing interest and studying the process of how it has evolved



and entered society would make for interesting research. Furthermore, it would also be interesting to look into the actual perception of non-vegans on vegans and compare the findings.

FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Further studies may look into how the perception of veganism has continued to evolve with time. Another related point, amongst others, which could be investigated is the link between veganism and sustainability, not just as a diet but from an environmental viewpoint as well. Food security and environmental impact are global threats—topics that require more awareness and knowledge amongst the general population. Whether veganism decreases the carbon footprint or not is something that should be delved into deeper.

FINAL NOTE

This study was carried out to highlight and increase the awareness of the difficulties vegans face. The findings can be applied to other scenarios such as where other dietary requirements are involved including gluten and lactose intolerances. It is important to emphasise the need to cater for all dietary requirements. Food should be enjoyed and have a positive effect on our health and wellbeing.



Eco-Certification in the Maltese Hospitality Industry Among Four Star Hotels: Is it Enough?

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An interesting project which is also unique for the ITS as it focuses on eco-certification of hotels by comparing two similarly sized hotels, one of which is eco-certified and the other is not. The researcher also discussed eco-certification in detail providing a number of case studies and managed to obtain some interesting data about the subject. This feature attempts to highlight the research, results and conclusions.

The *Know How Guide* by Sustainable Hotel Certification Schemes published in 2016 provides information on the proportion of hotels with green certification. This report is based on the research of more than 130,000 hotels worldwide of which only 8,000 were found to be eco-certified (Greenhotelier.org, 2016).

The proportions by continent are: North America 10.1%, Africa 3.7%,

Europe 6.1%, South America 2.7%, Oceania 4.8% and Asia 0.9%.

CASE STUDIES & BEST PRACTICES

The Lovat

A fifteen-year old hotel, The Lovat management rethought its ecological footprint after it was refurbished in 2007. A Froling 85KW biomass woodchip boiler was installed, linked by wi-fi to a computer programmed and connected to Property Management System (PMS) to control the temperature of water and air in all rooms and bathrooms, including public areas. This project had a payback of four years and decreased the carbon footprint by 50 tonnes a year. The hotel later introduced the 195Kw biomass woodchip boiler, which resulted in a Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI) payback of £20k annually.

This was further supplemented by a Carbon Management Plan (CMP) leading to a 15% reduction in CO². Also, the hotel was the first hotel in the city

to adopt such technologies; incorporate eco-conscious practices among the hotel staff and help raise awareness within the community. Some of the eco practices adopted were:

1. Use of local suppliers (vegetable, fruits and flowers);
2. LED lighting;
3. PC automated switch off;
4. Reduction of food waste;
5. Carbon rewards program (by encouraging guests to use public transport in exchange for a discount on the bill);
6. Staff engagement, among others.

Planet 21

Accor Hotels has a sustainability action programme called Planet 21. In the first five years, the network achieved significant results; delivering two thirds of the 21 eco-certification goals, decreasing water consumption and energy consumption by 9% and 5.3% respectively and a drop 6.2% in CO₂ emissions. Since 2009, the programme has planted 4.5 million trees. (Accor—The commitment to the planet, 2020).

Photo credit: marinahotel.com.mt

This resulted in an equivalent decrease in CO₂ of a 100 million kilogrammes (or 100 000 tonnes of carbon).

Every drop matters

Sofitel Guarujá Jequitimar in Guarujá on the south coast of São Paulo (Brazil), has continuously invested in ecologically correct practices and recently implemented the “zero-emission” project reusing all rainwater collected at the resort.

The project was implemented a year ago using two plants that capture rainwater so that they can be reused in toilets, gardens, aquariums and for washing purposes. Up till June of 2019, the resort will have prevented the release of 40 million litres of effluents into the environment, hence becoming the first Brazilian hotel to seek international certification on zero-emission of effluents.

The project also recycles all waste produced at the hotel—except organic—about 380 kilos of garbage per day and

participates in a programme created by the Accor Hospitality group together with the UN that plants one tree for every four towels reused in hotel apartments. So far, 1,000m² of land have been covered with planted trees.

Although many Maltese hotels are becoming eco-certified, they still depend a lot on governmental help and there is little effort from any to give back to the environment. It is high time that local hotels start to become involved in tree-planting and other environmentally friendly activities that help to decrease their massive carbon footprints.

RESEARCH ANALYSIS

The student’s dissertation aimed to study the leading sustainable practises applied to four-star hotels in Malta, identify the main obstacles to the application of new eco-friendly measures and to determine which hotels were using more advanced technology in eco-certification.

The Marina Hotel Corinthia Beach Resort

fulfils the definitions of the sustainability tripod in their practices, seeking to execute actions of the three fundamental pillars of sustainability: environmental, social and economic, defined by Elkington (1994) and the compulsory and non-compulsory criteria of the local MTA eco-certification scheme.

On the other hand, the uncertified hotel preferred to remain anonymous and does not meet all the eco-certification criteria listed, neither compulsory nor non-compulsory. Although the anonymous hotel is not eco-certified it has tried to introduce some of the initiatives proposed by the MTA eco-certification scheme (Malta Tourism Authority, 2020).

The MTA scheme consists of a number of sections, each of which includes a list of criteria. Some of these criteria are compulsory and others are voluntary. The researcher compared and contrasted each to examine the hotel’s environmental credentials.

Section One covering environment management was not been implemented by the anonymous hotel. The management did not adopt sustainable practices in their procurement purchasing system, the main goal being to lower costs, and purchased most of their supplies from abroad.

Conversely, the Marina hotel buys a lot of products from Maltese agents trying as much as possible to fulfill this criterion as the management believes in sustainability of local products.

Many compulsory requirements of Section Two—the waste management criteria were being met by both hotels and these included: waste management, reuse and reduction of paper and reduction of linen and plastic on individual portions of breakfast items.

The Marina Hotel fulfills almost all the procurement criteria of Section Three, while the anonymous hotel fulfills the criteria of reusing paper—a measure that is easy to apply rather than changing the procurement practices aiming for greener practices such as using recyclable napkins and toilet paper, which is the case with The Marina hotel.

In Section Four regarding energy use, the Marina hotel has more initiatives in place from the voluntary (non-compulsory) list than the anonymous hotel including energy efficient lighting products, automatic controls and presence sensors. The hotel manager mentioned plans to implement more energy saving initiatives, while the anonymous hotel manager explained that the energy criteria would be implemented when the hotel applied for eco-certification.

Section Five concerns water use which does not have many voluntary requirements. The

only one which both hotels adhered to, was the monitoring of the swimming pool water consumption which has an impact on the hotel's expenses. The criterion of installing automatic turn-off devices on public toilets and showers was not adopted by the anonymous hotel although the manager

explained that they



Although many Maltese hotels are becoming eco-certified, they still depend a lot on governmental help & there is little effort from any to give back to the environment

would be installed before applying for eco-certification due to their positive impact on hotel expenses and the environment.

In Section Six regarding air quality, both hotels have several non-smoking rooms and urge guests to use public transport particularly since both hotels are located close to bus stops. The only other criterion that the anonymous hotel is not adhering to, is boiler emission monitoring due to the lack of equipment.

Both hotels had practically the same answers for Section Seven regarding noise criteria. The only difference is that Marina hotel's rooms are partially insulated while the anonymous hotel's are not. Both hotels feel that noise abatement is not a priority as they have not received any complaints.

Section Eight deals with the building and green areas. The Marina hotel does have native plants in external areas, and landscape mainly using low water consumption plants (which are irrigated by collected rainwater). The anonymous hotel does not have so many plants, but they are native. Neither hotel use natural fertiliser and produce their own compost. The Marina hotel affirm that they do not have space for such a practice yet, while the anonymous hotel declared that it is not needed considering they do not have so many plants.

Both hotels complied to most of the criteria regarding local culture. The differences are that the Marina hotel has some menus in the local language, while the anonymous hotel does not. The Marina hotel also has organic food included on the menu. Both hotels use local dishes as well as serving vegetarian and vegan meal options as part of their menu. They also incorporate elements of their culture in the interior decoration as well as promoting cultural excursions.

The final Section (Ten) regarding information dissemination is mostly non-compulsory. The only two different answers provided were that the Marina hotel does not have a suggestion box, while the anonymous hotel does. Also, the Marina hotel does inform its guests about its environmental practices and their results. Other than that, both hotels inform and encourage guests to participate in their green practices such as reuse of towels and decreasing food waste, as well as informing guests about local environmental activities and initiatives that they can participate in as part of their activities while on holiday.

By comparing hotels and contrasting results, it seems that although the Marina hotel is eco-certified, it is still trying to become a more sustainable hotel. As the eco-

certification criteria are quite exhaustive this explains why the Marina hotel has not practised all of the non-compulsory requirements as it has focused its effort on abiding to the compulsory criteria of the eco-certification. This is mostly due to budgetary constraints.

The anonymous hotel has opted to implement some of the non-compulsory requirements as it has just completed a refurbishment. Budgetary constraints prevented the hotel from implementing a full eco-certification exercise, so the management decided to fulfill the criteria

which did not require too much investment.

The challenges of the Marina hotel are the obligation to renew the eco-certification, which brings more requirements and changes from previous practices; and these may have a negative effect on the return of investment. Another challenge is the capital and investment needed for implementing new measures, particularly those involving new technology.

In the case of the anonymous hotel, its primary concern is expansion and consolidation of the brand rather than

concerns with sustainability and this limits what can be done with the eco-certification process.

Both managers believe that hotels in Malta are ready to implement eco-certification in all ratings (two, three, four and five stars). The general manager of the Marina hotel added: "Even boutique hotels should be included since their number is growing significantly on the island" (Vella, 2019). As for the anonymous hotel's manager, he believes that they are close to achieving this goal since the hotel has evolved a lot and business should evolve to contribute to sustainability.

SWOT ANALYSIS

STRENGTHS

- Training available for all the staff.
- Social programs among the community.
- Eco-certification is seen as an attractive feature sought especially by the Nordic countries (Vella, 2019).
- People started to notice the green movement, therefore, becoming more aware of it.
- Guests contribution's on applied measures.
- Cost reduction: reduce waste and improvement of internal processes.
- Malta is a top destination for tourists.

WEAKNESSES

- Expensive equipment and services needed for the implementation of green practice;
- Absence of an environmental marketing areas;
- Eco-certification seen as a challenge: the need to deliver training more often due to high staff turnover.
- Guests do not engage totally with the hotel feedback towards the green practices.
- Having to adhere to the hotel star classification standards which in some cases are not adequate for sustainable practices.
- Difficulty in obtaining financial support.
- Disarticulation between sectors of society.
- Time-consuming and costly.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Training is being delivered with a more in-depth focus on sustainability.
- In the long term implement proper environmental management.
- Use of refills and packaging with a longer life cycle.
- Reduce plastic present in straws, coffee cups and single-use items as a start.
- Change in the 'mentality' of locals and government (in the sense that climate change is happening, and everybody needs to work together to solve it);
- Adhere to international eco-certification and programs.
- Go beyond the eco-certification criteria list.
- Invest more in green marketing to gain competitive advantage and create competition among hotels.
- Changes in consumption habits.
- Expansion of the economy.
- The emergence of new technologies.
- Contributing to making a more sustainable planet.
- Strengthening business partnerships and new clients.
- Improve the hotel's relationship with the local community.
- Add value to the brand, creating a better image for guests, which value and look for places that are sustainable and responsible.

THREATS

- Rising costs with changes in equipment and technologies.
- Deficiency in the consolidation of public policies.
- Change in regulations.
- Depending on the practice, the acceptance of locals and guests.
- Little involvement of the local community.



Photo credit: marinahotel.com.mt

“Although many Maltese hotels are becoming eco-certified, they still depend a lot on governmental help and there is little effort from any to give back to the environment”

CONCLUSION

The hotels which were compared and contrasted in this dissertation are two four-star hotels, based in St. Julian's, in Malta, with approximately the same number of rooms, food outlets, location and views on eco-certification. One hotel being the Marina hotel, Corinthia Beach Resort, and another which preferred to remain anonymous. This dissertation sought to identify how both managers perceived the process of eco-certification, and the importance of sustainability in the hotel industry (the managers' perceptions were investigated and assessed through an interview). The objective of the interview process was, among other things, to identify whether both hotels are currently executing the basics of sustainable practises, even though one is already eco-certified, and how easy or difficult it has been or will be for the hotels to comply with the requirements of the evaluation and accreditation process of eco-certification.

Aside from the difference of one hotel being eco-certified and other not, the interviews revealed a considerable effort from the anonymous hotel to reduce its impact on the environment by implementing some of the voluntary criteria listed by the MTA (2020). The Marina hotel, on the other hand, revealed significant interest in contributing to the preservation of the environment and its community by going beyond implementing the compulsory criteria on the eco-certification list.

The Marina hotel fulfilled 44 out of the 63 non-compulsory (voluntary) requirements and the anonymous hotel 26. In this regard, the anonymous hotel lags behind its commitment to decrease its environmental impact. This is mostly due to different priorities. The anonymous hotel is more focused (currently and financially) on its refurbishment process and cannot offer as much time and financial resources to eco-certification.



The need to focus more on environmental education from both hotels was also lacking, particularly aimed at both island and hotel residents. This shows rousing environmental awareness to provoke a transformative experience in people is still lacking.

Despite the advances recorded in the hotels studied, it is essential to note that there are opportunities for improvement in the implementation of environmental strategies in the hotel sector, even in eco-certified hotels with a well-defined environmental policy. The big challenge is to encourage the hotel industry and the tourism sector as a whole to incorporate the environmental thinking into their decision-making process.

Furthermore, it is a challenge nowadays for businesses (such as the hotels examined in this dissertation) to engage the public's desire to overcome the hurdle of a material society and develop a healthier more environmentally balanced

world that benefits the collective needs of society, rather than businesses simply focusing on a single objective namely economic growth and consumer needs. It is my belief that managers, staff and guests should reflect more critically on the issues raised, and that they should serve as inspiration for the implementation of actions, and also the decision making process in determining what becomes relevant actions that meet the concept of sustainable development presented in this research.

The interview with Mr. David Pace (Pace, 2020), who has been lecturing hoteliers, managers and hospitality students about eco-certification, agrees that it is not a perfect system.

Small hotels find it particularly difficult to implement, and that is why there are so few certified in Malta. Certain changes regarding waste management can be implemented in a large hotel because it produces a large amount, while a small boutique hotel can manage its waste sustainably without resorting to eco-certification benchmarks.

Although the government and the MTA (2020) provide quite a lot of support to hotels so that they can implement eco-certification successfully, there is very little help regarding the use of new technologies such as organic digesters, new water purification technologies and in dealing with the problems of economies of scale.

P.S. This research project was concluded before the COVID-19 pandemic break-out.

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The relationship between expatriates' service competencies and service quality within the Food & Beverage service department

WORDS BY CHARLOTTE GERONIMI
LECTURER IN F&B SERVICE AND EVENTS AT ITS

Along the years, Malta's hospitality industry has managed to reinvent itself through the evolution and diversification of tourism services (Alosio & Fenech, 2017). During the past decade, Malta's tourism industry returned to strong growth, thus increasing hotel investment through the refurbishment, or upgrading of hotels to attain a higher star classification, the opening of international restaurant chains and the transformation of old town houses into boutique hotels to offer higher quality standards (Times of Malta, 2018; Zammit, 2018).

This sector continues to be a key economic contributor to the industry, but constant growth has brought along certain organisational concerns with employee shortage being the top-most concern. In fact, local hotels have been showing difficulty when recruiting employees to run their operations (Manduca, 2018). Due to the low unemployment rate and the expansion of Malta's economy beyond available resources, the only solution for employers to fill in vacant posts is to recruit expatriates (Mifsud, 2018).

MORE FOREIGN WORKERS

Whereas Grima (2018) agrees that this is evident across all sectors of the Maltese economy, the employment of expatriates is said to have drastically increased within the Food and Beverage (F&B) sector (MTA, 2017). Expatriates working in F&B were in minority in 2010, yet today, 52 percent of the employed expatriates are working in F&B (Malta Hotels and Restaurant Association, 2010), increasing the ratio of expatriates to indigenous employees in local F&B establishments to 6:4 (Xuereb, 2017).

Although the hotel industry has, along the years resulted in a healthy growth for F&B, this progression has also brought about

adverse challenges and issues (Schuetzendorf, n.d.). One of the major challenges is the flow-on effect unskilled workers could have on service quality (SQ) (McKay, 2014). In 2017 alone, over 11,000 new jobs were created in Malta but only 2,500 indigenous workers applied and filled these posts, resulting in an upsurge of expatriates (Cassar, 2017; Dimech, 2017; Caruana, 2018; Borg, 2019).

Although most locally employed expatriates are considered highly qualified in their home country, their qualifications are not always linked with the job they find away from home. Reviewed statistics show that to meet this shortage, expatriates with limited or no skills relevant to the industry are generally employed, posing serious challenges to the delivery of SQ as required by industry standards (NSO, 2015).

Moreover, Na (2010) states that the hotel service sector accounts for 38 percent of the value added in the World Economic Community, with SQ playing an irreplaceable role. Consequently, ensuring a high level of SQ through employee service competencies in F&B is essential because maintaining and surpassing industry standards guarantees business competitiveness and growth (Borg, 2019).

The extraordinary influx of expatriates has been instrumental in mitigating labour market shortages. Given that inbound tourism continues to increase and SQ delivery expectations are high, gaining an understanding of the characteristics of this segment is critical. Therefore, this study aimed to examine the relationship between expatriates' service competencies and SQ delivery within the F&B department of five-star hotels. Additionally, since this study focused on the service competencies of expatriates and their impact on SQ from



Most employed expatriates are underqualified to work in F&B

the employees' perspective, selected SERVPERF factors impacting SQ were used to identify 12 performance items (table 1). Since SQ is largely determined by service receivers, most research surrounding SQ focuses on understanding SQ from the guests' point of view (Brown et al., 1993), with few studies examining the multi-dimensional and hierarchical conceptualisation of SQ in F&B from the employees' perspective. However, seeing that labour shortage was identified as a major issue of this research phenomenon, studying the employees' perception of SQ was considered essential in unveiling practical perspectives of their perception.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Since it was impossible to study Malta's hotel industry in its entirety and studying the entire population of expatriates working in this same industry was also unmanageable, one hotel and its employees were chosen through purposive sampling as a representation of Malta's hotel industry. Similarly, purposive sampling was used to select the F&B department. The F&B department was chosen mainly because it requires the employment of competent employees that are in constant contact with guests (Kumar & Bhatnagar, 2017) and because of its direct impact with service competencies and SQ.

Consequently, for the purpose of this research, a local 5* hotel, hereinafter referred to as the hotel, served as the unit of analysis and the F&B department served as the sample frame. The reason this specific hotel was chosen is twofold. Firstly, because the F&B scale of operations of this hotel provides a good sample of the Maltese F&B industry and secondly because the number of expatriates working at the hotel ensured validity and reliability of data. The F&B department at the hotel is composed of 37 indigenous and 79 expatriate employees.

A structured interview was used to collect data from the Culinary Director whilst mini focus group discussions and self-administered questionnaires were implemented with F&B employees.

All posed questions were based on secondary

data and in relation to the specific subject area and although none of the referred tools directly involved the participation of hotel guests, purposely structured questions used to gather the guests' perspective from employee feedback were implemented. 75 respondents took part in this study including 1 interview respondent, 16 focus group contributors and 58 questionnaire respondents.

DATA ANALYSIS

To achieve the aim and objectives of this research, collected qualitative research data was analysed through thematic analysis whilst descriptive statistics were used to analyse quantitative data. Thematic analysis was the most suitable system for analysing qualitative data because after going through the primary data records several times, data was collaborated into themes and patterns, and then put into categories, so that primary data

could be triangulated with secondary data. The important emergent categories were then reflected in the questionnaire's design.

These data analysis systems produced valuable data that were used to test the proposed hypotheses that sought to identify the relationship, if any, between the service competencies of expatriates and the SQ offered in the F&B department at the hotel. Gathered themes have been structured around the research objectives and identify the gap between self-claimed vs industry specific service competencies, the importance of employees' service competencies for SQ and the relationship between expatriate's F&B service competencies and SQ.

DISCUSSION

Reviewed literature indicates that labour shortage in Malta's hospitality industry was

Table 1: Identified performance factors related to pre-identified service competencies. Adapted from Cronin and Taylor (1994)

FACTOR NAME	ITEM
Tangibles	Expatriates have the skills to work with tools and technology
Assurance - responsiveness	Expatriates have the skills to be guest focused
	Expatriates have the appropriate skills to provide prompt service
	Expatriates work in a team to ensure guest's interest
Empathy	Expatriates have sound communication skills to attend to guest
	Expatriates have the skills to serve food and beverage correctly
	Expatriates have knowledge to cater to various dietary needs
Reliability	Expatriates have the skills to perform service right first-time round
	Expatriates have the skills to solve guest issues
	Expatriates have up-selling and cross-selling skills
	Expatriates are knowledgeable about industry standards
	Expatriates have food safety knowledge

formerly seen as a temporary problem during peak seasons but due to the limitation of local supply and high economic growth, labour shortage has become a permanent concern (Malta's Employer Association, 2016; Bugeja, 2017). Therefore, employers are left with no option but to employ expatriates to fill the high vacant posts (Cassar, 2017).

Gathered respondent data reveals that non-EU nationals account for 57 percent of the F&B employees at the hotel, followed by indigenous nationals and other EU nationals (figure 1.1). These figures collaborate with published statistics stating that regardless of the free movement of labour within the EU, hospitality establishments are still struggling to find enough EU nationals to fill their vacancies, thus the need to employ TCN (Orland, 2019). This was also confirmed by the Culinary Director who stated that management are "constantly looking to recruit indigenous workers but because of the shortage of such workers, the hotel meets this gap through the recruitment of expatriates."

This phenomenon was also brought up by focus group participants where indigenous employees confirmed that "the industry cannot rely on the supply of indigenous employees alone" and that without the recruitment of expatriates "many local establishments would be forced to shut down" because there would be no employees to service the industry needs. Expatriate participants further explained that they are generally employed because the younger indigenous cohort does "not want to work in this demanding industry."

Labour market experts argue that Malta's rate of low-skilled employees is one of the highest in the EU (Dimech, 2017) and that the industry is relying on expatriates that are underqualified in this sector but are willing to learn the industry's basics (NSO, 2016). Primary data coincides with this theory, with data evidently showing that most F&B

expatriate employees at the hotel hold a qualification that is not industry related (figures 1.2 and 1.3).

In contrast, whilst previous literature (MaltaProfile, 2017) shows high levels of indigenous qualified hospitality graduates, gathered data notes that industry qualified indigenous employees were in minority (figure 1.3). This indicates that the number of indigenous workers willing to work in this industry is relatively low, thus confirming grounded theory that identifies recruitment problems when searching for qualified indigenous talent (Championing Better Work and Working Lives, 2018).

A discrepancy lies between those employees claiming an industry related qualification. Whilst 37 percent of the indigenous employees claimed an industry related qualification, only 25 percent of the expatriates selected a relevant qualification. This coincides with qualitative data where it was stated that although management look to "employ F&B front-liners with relevant qualifications and pre-defined service competencies, most employed expatriates are underqualified to work in F&B." Similarly, it also corresponds with reviewed literature that confirms the difficulty in employing skilled employees due to the significant changes in labour force composition and gap increase between labour demand growth and labour supply (OECD, 2012).

The industry specific service competencies management consider during the recruitment of F&B front-liners include "strong communication, upselling, and attention to detail, flexibility, language fluency and responsibility." These competencies also share common aspects with Malta's National Occupational Standards, with service procedures, guest

Figure 1.1
What is your nationality?

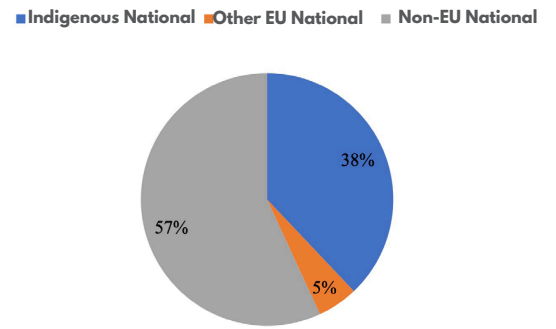


Figure 1.2
Your highest educational qualification title: Expatriate cohort

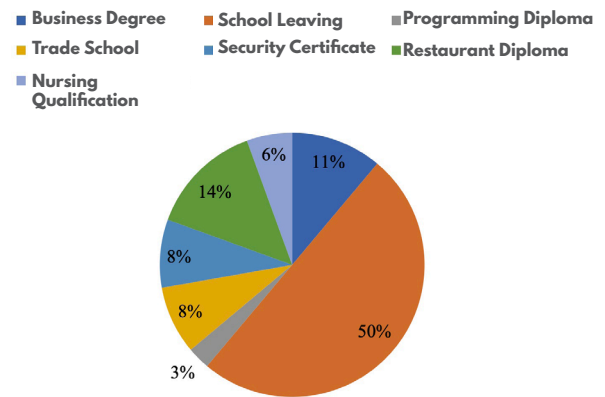


Figure 1.3
Your highest educational qualification title: Indigenous cohort

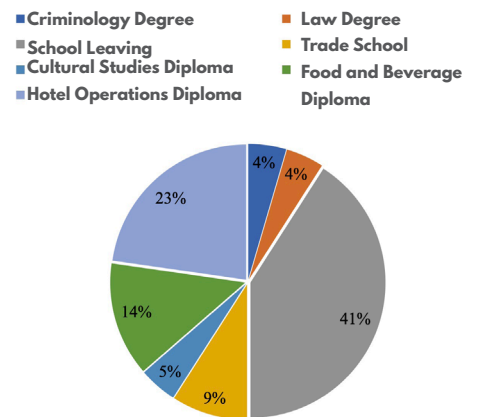
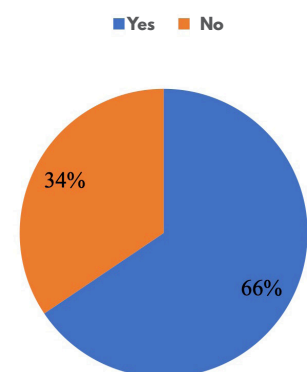


Figure 1.4
Do you feel you hold the relevant service competencies required to carry out your job?



service and work ethics being regarded as common service competencies.

Similarly, focus group participants regarded these competencies as essential competencies F&B employees need to meet industry standards with the indigenous participants further denoting F&B service employees “as a core part of the service product” and as “the hotel’s representative for guests.” Further literature also confirms that in such a labour-intensive industry, employee competencies are central to ensuring SQ (D’Annunzio-Green et al., 2000). Most questionnaire respondents conveyed this importance with 69 percent of the respondents claiming to hold relevant F&B service competencies (figure 1.4). When analysing this data according to respondent nationality, it was noted that the expatriate cohort accounted for 71 percent of this segment.

However, most focus group participants argued that although certain employees claim to be in possession of such competencies, once on the job, it sometimes transpires that they lack certain competencies. Both the expatriate and indigenous respondents agreed that this meant that “quality standards were not

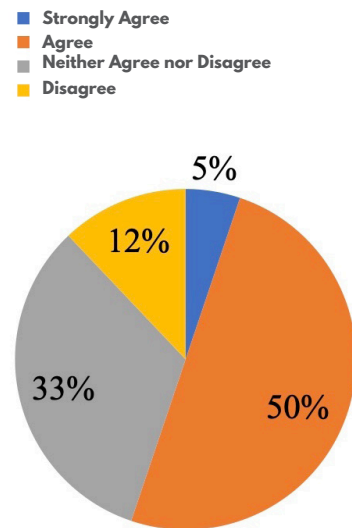
always met.” Additionally, the Culinary Director stated that no employee is “perfect,” and that the F&B department is best filled with employees that have different competencies and personalities.

Since this study focuses on expatriates’ service competencies, a deeper analysis into the amount of service competencies expatriates claim to possess shows that the average claimed competencies amount to 4.8 competencies which will be rounded down to 4 competencies. This showed that most expatriates believe they have more competencies than the average expatriate.

When further analysing the self-claimed F&B service competencies questionnaire respondents were asked to earmark, it is evident that indigenous employees claim to be in full possession of F&B service skills, teamwork, strong communication and guest-centric service dimensions.

Incidentally, when evaluating their F&B service competencies, expatriates considered these same dimensions to be their weakest points, yet highlighted technology competencies as their strongest. This coincides with focus group discussions where indigenous respondents stated “expatriates work better with technology” but indigenous employees master “teamwork, communication and are more customer focused” than expatriates. In contrast, all focus group participants and questionnaire respondents collectively considered themselves to lack operational procedures and salesmanship competencies. Most questionnaire respondents admitted they lack salesmanship skills and although the reason behind this was not evaluated during the questionnaire, most focus group respondents stated that they “did not feel confident to upsell” because they did not have “the required product or service knowledge,” thus hindering their possibility of “exceeding guest expectations through personalised experiences.”

Figure 1.5
SERVPERF tangible performance factor
Do expatriates have the skills to work with tools & technology?



Additionally, the Culinary Director also stated that although expatriates generally lack relevant industry experience, they make themselves immediately available to meet job requirements, thus according with secondary data that suggesting expatriates’ availability as one of the main factors expatriates cause a positive relationship on organisational performance (Achim et al., 2017).

To evaluate the relationship between expatriate’s F&B service competencies and SQ within the hotel’s F&B department, 12 pre-identified SERVPERF performance items were used to measure SQ from the employees’ perspective through the self-administered questionnaire. The first question looked to identify the tangible performance factor, were most employees agreed that expatriates had the required competencies to work with tools and technology (figure 1.5).

This result is an advantage for the management because the industry heavily relies on technology to help reduce costs and enhance operational efficiency to improve services offered. This also corresponds with previous literature that

Service Quality offered in previous years comes nowhere close to that being offered today and frequent guests regularly comment on this



identified technological advancement initiatives as one of the resources that saw management achieve their goal of being the 'most trusted and respected brand worldwide' (Schroeder, 2007).

Results from the analysis of assurance performance factor questions show a tighter gap in employee perception.

Although most employees seem to agree that expatriates have the competencies to be customer focused, provide prompt service and work in a team to ensure customers' interest, the quantity of employees that neither agree nor disagree with these statements are similar in number (figure 1.6).

The importance given to the assurance performance factor by the participants also corresponds to a similar study carried out in the F&B department of Turkish hotels where assurance and responsiveness of service delivery were regarded as essential dimensions of SQ (Giritlioglu et al., 2013).

Unfortunately, the perception gap with regards to empathy performance factors appears to be even wider with most employees stating that expatriates do not have sound communication competencies to attend to guests' needs and to perform their role in F&B correctly and efficiently (figure 1.7). In

All data participants identified language, cultural barriers, teamwork, and lack of experience as common factors affecting SQ

2013; Myoungjin & Sunghyup, 2019). Therefore, since employee empathy helps to create an enjoyable guest experience that motivates guests to write positive reviews, recommend the services to friends and family and increases the chances of repeat custom, issues surrounding this performance factor need addressing.

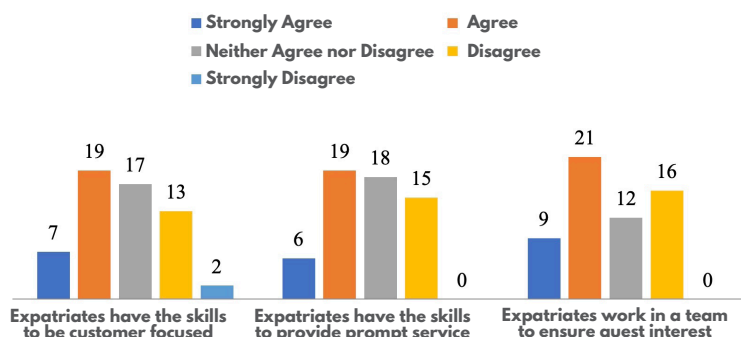
The employees' perceptions in relation to reliability are slightly more mixed. Whilst most believe that expatriates do not have the required competencies to perform service right the first-time round and lack the knowledge on industry standards, the perception gap on expatriates not having the competencies to solve guest issues and the required food safety knowledge is evidently tighter. Nonetheless, the majority employees rated the expatriates to be lacking attributes pertaining to the reliability dimension.

These results appear to differ with a previous study carried out amongst employees in the United States that states how expatriates' skills and knowledge leave no negative effects on productivity (Borjas, 2003). In contrast, they tend to coincide with results gathered by Marino et al., (2011) that state ethnic diversity at work lowers productivity.

To further test the relationship between expatriates' F&B service competencies and SQ delivery, each pre-identified SERVPERF attribute discussed earlier (table 1.1) was rated 1 to 5, thus assuming the perfect score to be 60. By indicating how close expatriates were to the presumed perfect score, this analysis was able to identify how SQ delivered by expatriates is rated according to the hotel's F&B employees.

At first glance, it is evident that most F&B employees perceive expatriates to provide poor SQ. This perception shares similar evidence with previous literature that

Figure 1.6
SERVPERF assurance performance factor



reports agency workers in Australian hotels to lack commitment that negatively impacts their performance standards and provision of SQ (Fu, 2015).

The gathered results were divided according to respondent nationality, thus eliminating the possibility of distorted results due to potential respondent bias. Indigenous respondents appear to be torn between perceiving expatriates as poorly skilled and highly skilled in relation to SQ delivery. When compared to the assumingly perfect expatriate employee with a presumed score of 60, 27 percent of the indigenous respondents perceived expatriates to offer a very low level of SQ (0 - 29) with 36 percent stating that expatriates offer a very high level of SQ (50 - 60).

In contrast, indigenous focus group participants that have been working at the hotel for several years confirmed that "SQ offered in previous years comes nowhere close to that being offered today" and that frequent guests "regularly comment on this." Similarly, discussions with the Culinary Director also uncovered issues of diminishing SQ where it was confirmed that this issue was captured by repeat guests. Gathered results from the expatriate cohort yield similar data with that gathered from the indigenous focus group participants.

Whilst most of both cohorts rated the level of SQ delivery by expatriates as being very low (0 - 29), it is interesting to note that the higher percentage of employees stating so were expatriates themselves.

CONCLUSION

Secondary data has revealed that the issue of labour shortage lies in the fact that the number of vacancies outnumbers those indigenous workers willing to work (Malta Profile, 2017) mainly because after attaining a hospitality qualification, most indigenous employees are opting for jobs with better working conditions (Jobs Plus, 2013; Darmanin, 2018). This data positively

correlates with primary data that identifies expatriate employment as a necessity to meet vacancy needs.

Additionally, there appears to be a significant correlation between collected focus group and questionnaire data where the respondents' perceptions in relation to self-claimed versus industry specific service competencies are closely related. However, when dividing the gathered data according to respondent nationality, results seemed to vary quite a bit, with the most prominent finding being the high variance in self-claimed service competencies.

Complete opposites were noted during the rating of self-claimed service competencies between expatriates and indigenous employees where it was distinguished that the service dimensions indigenous employees considered to be their strong points, were regarded as the weakest points by the expatriates and vice-versa.

Both the management's and the frontline employees' perspectives seem to be like one another, with the main difference being that according to focus group participants, not all employees truly possess claimed competencies and that the notion of exceeding customer expectation referred to by the Culinary Director was not always adhered to.

Whilst most employees claim a school leaving certificate as their highest educational qualification, it is apparent that the indigenous cohort holds more industry related qualifications. Likewise, the comparison between employees' previous F&B work experience and their length of employment within the hotel, shows that certain expatriate employees had been working within other departments before moving to F&B. Similarly, staff turnover analysis identified that whilst expatriate employment was associated with high staff turnover; their intentions were not to leave Malta for good but to change hotels,



The issue of labour shortage lies in the fact that the number of vacancies outnumbers those indigenous workers willing to work, mainly because after attaining a hospitality qualification, most indigenous employees are opting for jobs with better working conditions.



thus linking this phenomenon to the employment of agency workers.

All data participants identified language, cultural barriers, teamwork, and lack of experience as common factors affecting SQ. Most respondents stated that due to extreme cultural differences between EU and non-EU employees, it was difficult for expatriates to communicate and integrate, which could potentially affect the overall SQ offered. This was statistically confirmed where most questionnaire respondents stated that the F&B server's nationality does alter the guests' impression of SQ. A significant correlation was also noted in relation to the responses that justified why study participants believe guests' change their impression of SQ depending on their server's nationality.

Questionnaire data concluded that the dimensions with the highest disagree scores were empathy, reliability, assurance, and tangibles whilst the dimensions with the highest agree scores were tangibles, assurance, empathy, and reliability. Since intangible factors are given more importance when compared to tangible factors (Coyle & Dale, 1993), results gathered from this SERVPERF measurement

scale should be used to highlight the importance of employee service competencies in improving SQ through guest contact.

The hypotheses initially presented at the beginning of this study were explored and based on the overall performance scores gathered; it is safe to conclude that there exists a positive relationship between the expatriates' service competencies and SQ delivery within the hotel's F&B department, thus rejecting the null hypothesis that assumed a negative relationship between expatriates' service competencies and the quality of service provided.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To increase employee commitment, management could further invest in staff training and development through partnerships with the Institute of Tourism Studies where onsite courses at the hotel itself could be implemented with the intention of instilling expatriates, that have limited-service competencies and no F&B experience, with a profound culture on the importance of SQ in F&B service. Expatriates could also be given short practical courses related to the Maltese

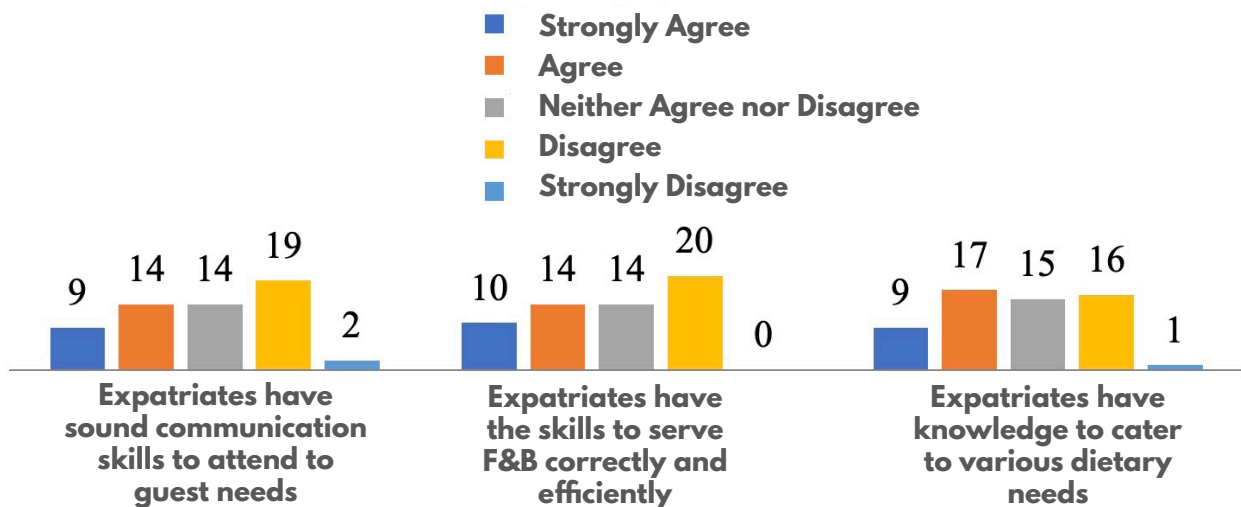
hospitality experience including local cuisine and brief cultural background so that they are more at ease when it comes to carrying a conversation with both colleagues and guests. In doing so, expatriates could be awarded an informal certificate that could also improve the SQ they deliver through training and empowerment.

Similarly, experienced expatriates that might have started an industry related qualification in their home country but never had the opportunity of completing it could be provided with the chance of topping up their current qualification with credits from ITS courses. Such part-time courses will provide expatriates with a formal industry certificate and the opportunity to enhance their service competencies.

Management could also establish on the job mentoring programmes that train and encourage high-skilled and experienced employees to be mentors to low-skilled and inexperienced expatriates. This could facilitate dynamic competency growth through the F&B department whilst also fostering a sense of community amongst the staff.

Figure 1.7

SERVPERF empathy performance factor





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The Institute of Tourism Studies unveils its Strategic Plan for 2021-2025

The Institute of Tourism Studies (ITS), has published its Strategic Plan for 2021-2025. The result of extensive internal and external consultation with staff, partners and stakeholders during the past two years, the plan aims to put ITS in a position to provide excellence and innovation in tourism, through teaching and learning,

quality research, advice, and realisation of innovative business concepts.

The Tourism and Hospitality Industry is going through an important transformation, even more so because of the Covid-19 pandemic, and ITS feels now is the right opportunity to reposition itself and the industry to provide a higher quality infrastructure, experience and service. This would in itself require

considerable upskilling and re-skilling of workers especially since the number of graduates in this industry is very low in Malta. As the Institute for Tourism Studies has now ventured into the provision of educational programmes at MQF Level 6 (undergraduate) and Level 7 (Master's), it can act as a key player in contributing towards the development of a better tourism product mix in the Maltese Islands.

NEW REVISED MISSION

Shaping Excellence and Innovation in Tourism, through teaching and learning, quality research, advice, and realisation of innovative business concepts

RESEARCH | EDUCATION | INNOVATION | ADVISORY

The Institute of Tourism Studies will lead the transformation of tomorrow's international tourism industry by directing its resources to:

- Create comprehensive and systematic knowledge through high quality research,
- Develop innovative and relevant higher and further education and training

programmes combining technical, generic and behavioural skills.

- Deliver such programmes through a student centred and inclusive learning environment, integrating theory and practice whilst promoting modern leadership approaches.
- Provide expert advice to established

players.

- Mentor entrepreneurs in successfully commercialising innovative business concepts in the Tourism Industry.

The above Mission and Vision will be achieved through the development of the following core competencies.

- Leading Change and Best Practices in the Tourism Industry
- Distinctive Leader in Quality Education blending Theory and Practice in defined tourism markets
- Student Centric Personalised Learning
- International Reach and Spread
- Catalyst for Entrepreneurship in Tourism
- Agile Decision Making and Flexibility to Adapt to Change
- Leveraging People and Technology as key assets

RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENTS

The Research and Development Unit is a relatively new function that is expected to be set up within the Academy. The Research and Development Function is a vital element of the proposed new mix of the Academy since this is expected to reposition itself from a follower into a leader in the Tourism Education Industry. The first step for the Research and Development unit was the launch of FUTOURISTIC, the ITS journal on Hospitality, Travel, Tourism and Culture.

or through the application of innovative concepts that leverage return on investment through the combination of client specific data and knowledge to expert advice and experience of the advisory network of ITS.

CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT, ACCREDITATION AND LICENSING

The ITS continues improving its study programmes, as well as develop new study programmes for the needs and requirements of this changing industry. ITS will evaluate the current and future educational needs of the tourism industry with the aim to develop innovative, relevant and high quality accredited programmes content independently or in joint partnership with international institutions in order to subsequently assign rights for its delivery to qualified education delivery providers.

EDUCATION PROGRAMME DELIVERY

The purpose of this unit is to achieve excellence in education to build tomorrow's tourism leaders and professionals through the delivery of higher and further education programmes accredited through the official accreditation structures.

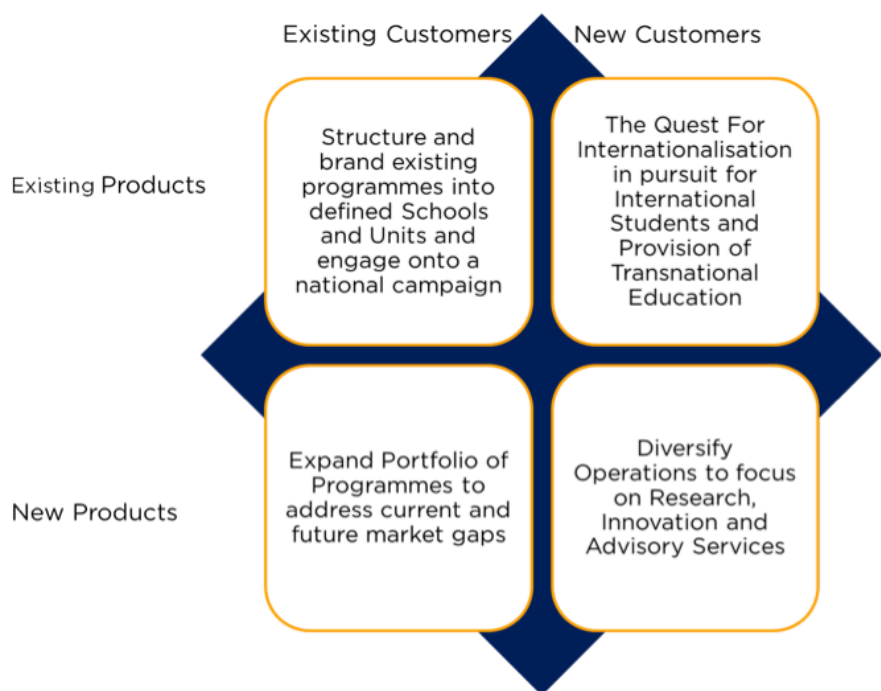
TRAINING SCHOOL

The training school will place an emphasis on immediacy and is expected to provide a flexible programme which may not necessarily lead to the award and/or conferment of a formal qualification. The Training School will also be targeting both local and international markets in line with its internationalisation strategy.

INCUBATOR

Create an environment and a support structure that acts as a catalyst for the development, creation and sustainability of innovative start-ups in the Tourism Industry in Malta.

“MISSION AND VISION”



ADVISORY

On the basis of the proposed Mission and Vision, the Institute for Tourism Studies will seek to take on multiple strategic routes with a view to enhance the achievement of the above objectives.

The strategic plan's vision is to lead the transformation of tomorrow's international tourism industry by directing its resources towards the following key strategic business units.

The Advisory Services function ties in seamlessly with the academic affairs of the Academy since it involves the practical application of concepts developed and disseminated through the various educational programmes that are delivered throughout the scholastic year.

The overall purpose is to add value to key industry players through improved efficiency, enhanced customer experience

Defining the Airport

WORDS BY FIORENTINA DARMENIA-JOCHIMSEN
SENIOR LECTURER AT ITS





The International Air Transport Association (IATA), a trade association of the world's airlines founded in 1945, defines an airport through the three descriptions, which it states are of equal and relevant value. The first, dealing with movement, is that of 'a facility where a transfer is made between the surface mode and the air mode'. The second, taking the marketing aspect is of 'a commercial enterprise whose mission is to provide passengers and shippers with facilities and services that meet their needs'. Referring to the economic view, the third describes an airport as 'a business centre with important local and regional economic benefits', hence as 'a complex intermodal facility meeting the needs of passengers and shippers'. (Introduction to Airport Operations, 2015, pp. 47-48.)

The article entitled "*Framework for airport outbound passenger flow modelling*" provides a vivid depiction of an airport despite solely concentrating on the passenger. Here, the airport systems of 'departure passenger flow and ... arrival passenger flow', are focused on. Procedural factors are then listed, such as 'airport access facilities, check-in security screening and immigration for the former and baggage claims, customs and immigration for the latter'. (2017, p.1101.) While these postulate a clear view of the facilities being dealt with by the airport, they fail to provide its factual characterisation.

This characterisation is delineated by Kamau Kofi Smith in his dissertation entitled the "*Impact of Airport Servicescape on Passengers Satisfaction*", where he analyses the 'public area (non-sterile) and the secured area (sterile)' parts of the airport. He depicts the open area as those sections including check-in, ticket sales and arrivals waiting. While the secured areas being mainly those concerning checkpoints for security, passport controls and lounges. He continues by further defining those sections within both areas which relate to the airport visitor and passenger's specific requirements, namely chapels, restrooms, and smoking areas. However, no mention is made of the retail and food and beverage and entertainment outlets which are of equal relevance and importance for both the passenger and visitor alike, as well as to the airport itself. (2018, p.3.)



Despite the various definitions of an airport, the trend is moving towards making an airport as attractive to the passenger and visitor as possible. The benefits of this are not solely for the financial development of the airport, but also serve, although some might disagree, as leverage for the country or area in its own right



Huang, Xiao and Wang (2018), on the other hand, describe the airport as a liminal space, where the possibility of the airport reaching the point of becoming a 'micro-destination' and an attraction in itself, rather than being solely an intermediate point and a 'means to an end' is discussed. Their research centres around the notion that, from as early as the 1960s, 'rituals/rites, liminality and communitas have been extensively explored' concerning travel and tourism. In their article, the authors propose that in the anthropology of tourism, travel is an essential planned relief from 'ordinary life' and, as described by Graburn (1977, p. 17) is very much a 'sacred journey'. They posit the tourist as the pilgrim whose 'mental, expressive and cultural needs' are fused together. They further their application of Graburn's work 'through a ritual of reversal'. Here they associate the tourist's experience of 'the period or state of liminality in the non-ordinary places ... visited', with the 'communitas' whose 'positive experiences are not' as easily obtainable at home. (Korstanje, 2015; Huang, Honggen, & Want, 2018, p..)

In support of this concept, Wattanacharoensil, Schuckert, & Grahah (2016) argue about the importance of understanding airport experiences from the 'sociological, psychological and service 'marketing' perspectives. Through this, they confirm the need of the airport to serve as a connection with the area, city or country and that passengers find that airports are 'ambassadors or representatives' of the same area, city or country.

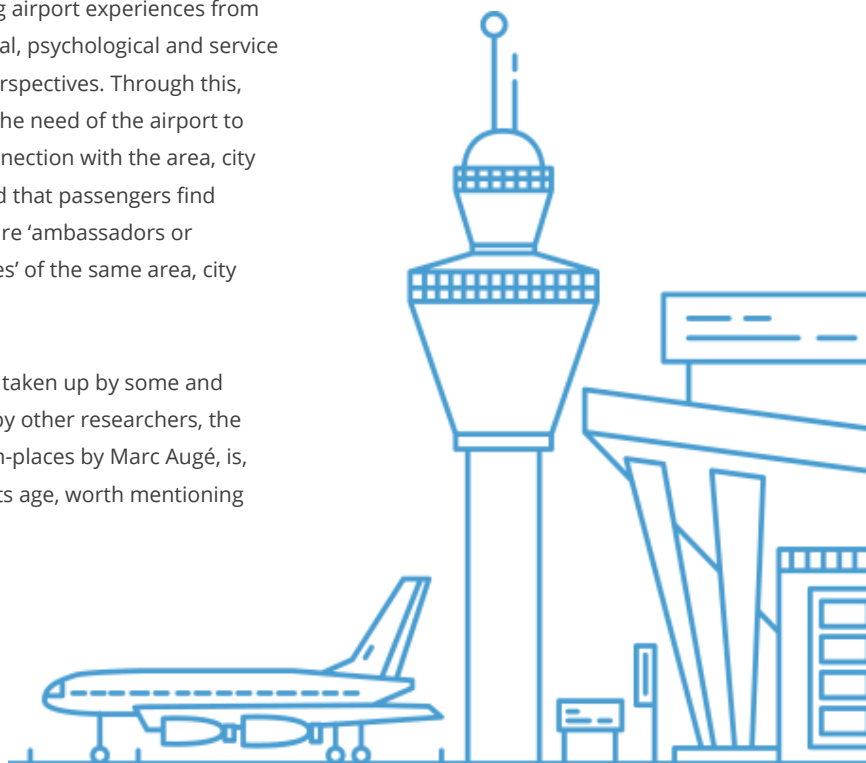
Despite being taken up by some and contradicted by other researchers, the referral to non-places by Marc Augé, is, here despite its age, worth mentioning due to the

unusual perspective he applies to the airport, as well as the effect this has on the customer. His definition of a non-place positions the airport as a space which is used daily but has no historical or relational value, nor any concern on involvement with identity. At airports, according to Augé, humans remain anonymous and alone in an area which does not hold enough significance to be regarded as a place and therefore does not contribute to the development of their social identity (Augé, 1995, p.79).

In one of her many articles Ellen Dunham-Jones reviews two books entitled *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Super Modernity* and *Atlanta Photographs and Placing Identity* (2000) where she analytically reviews Augé's theory.

She supports Augé's description of non-places as 'exuding a sense of the generic or prototypical' where there is a 'lack of identity' and relation 'to anything local and instead replaces the historical reference with the urgent perpetual present'.

She relates to Augé's



highlighting 'the degree to which wordless transactions and nonverbal communication dominate non-places'.

The non-places where everyone is 'addressed anonymously' and personal identity is 'subsumed' under the airport temporary condition of passenger, guest and/or shopper. Identities that relate to 'solitary contractuality'. (Dunham-Jones, 2000, p.15.)

According to Augé, the concept of non-place opposes the notion of anthropological place, which he explains offers people a space that empowers identity, where they can meet others who share their 'social references'.

Augé states that non-places are those which constitute neither meeting spaces nor contain any common references to a building related to any group. Instead, he describes that in non-places the lack of concentration on the personality of each individual brings about detached and aloneness, therefore confirming that non-places augment the person's isolation. (Augé, 1995, pp. 42-44)

However, Augé's somewhat unusual view is taken from the angle of an ethnologist. Shih Pearson (2018, pp. 37-39) points out that Augé's concept of airports is aged and prefers, instead, to relate to cultural theorists thinking of third space, defining the airport as a 'global city, terraformer and heterotopia'. Dunham-Jones, on the other hand, explains that for the person employed at the mall, another by Augé defined non-places, the mall is not a non-place, nor an area of transition, but one where the employee is paid to attend

regularly. Furthermore, she points out that while malls in Italy are considered and utilised as non-places by the older generations, 'digital natives', in contrast, make use of the mall as a place for meeting friends, socialising and having fun. Hence providing for the deduction that the theory and perception of a non-place, is solely relevant when viewed through the eyes of some of the beholders, but certainly not for all. (Dunham-Jones, 2000, p. 15.)

Despite the various definitions of an airport, the trend is moving towards making an airport as attractive to the passenger and visitor as possible. The benefits of this are not solely for the financial development of the airport, but also serve, although some might disagree, as leverage for the country or area in its own right. Here the airport's input into customer satisfaction both at the initial and final stages of the visit to the country or area, serve to elevate or depreciate the travel experience of the whole journey.

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Korean tourism in Malta: A strategy for the expansion and sustainability of Malta's tourism market

RESEARCH BY EUN YOUNG KIM
HIGHER NATIONAL DIPLOMA IN TOURIST GUIDING
EDITED BY DAVID PACE

This study aims to promote and develop Malta tourism specialised in Korean characteristics, and find examples of efforts made by other countries to promote the Korean outbound tourism market, seeking ways to promote the Korean market through expert interviews and provide services that can sustain it. This study can be a stepping-stone for Malta, for developing Northeast Asian and Asian tourism markets, and to further grow the Korean market and strengthen the Malta-South Korea relations beyond tourism.

MALTA AND SOUTH KOREA RELATIONS

Malta and South Korea established diplomatic relations in April 1965, but diplomatic relations were frozen in September 1971 after the Labour government refused to accept the credentials of the South Korean ambassador. After the Nationalist Party government took power in May 1987,

bilateral relations were normalized in January 1988. Since then, Malta and South Korea have been actively pursuing political, economic, and cultural cooperation. In September 1989, Nam Ki Lee, a special presidential envoy, came to Malta to celebrate the 15th anniversary of the Independence of Malta, and in August 1990, Prime Minister of Malta Edward Fenech Adami visited South Korea. Most recently, Foreign Minister Byung Se Yun visited Malta in July 2016 to agree to provide new momentum for a leap forward in bilateral relations and agreed to further develop regional and multilateral cooperation. (Overseas.mofa.go.kr. 2020)

In 2019, Malta aimed to more actively promote Korea. At the Korea-Malta aviation conference held in Seoul in April 2019, the two countries agreed to allow three weekly flights between the two countries. Accordingly, if any national airlines apply for the air traffic rights, direct flights between S. Korea and Malta can be established up to three times a week. Although no Korean national airline is preparing the launch of Malta

yet, considering the growing demand for flights to Malta in South Korea and the demand of Northeast Asia countries that do not have direct flights to Malta, there is a possibility that the application for traffic rights will be made soon. (Choi, 2019). In addition to the agreement of air traffic rights, the MTA (Malta Tourism Authority) hosted the 2019 Product seminar with Alitalia airlines to further promote Malta to Korea. Alitalia operated the Incheon – Rome – Malta routes before the Covid-19 pandemic, which provided 4 flights a week from Incheon to Rome and daily flights from Rome to Malta, which strongly supports South Korea – Malta relations by operating flights. (Kim, 2019)

MARKETING FOR KOREAN TOURISM

The key to a successful marketing campaign is to find successful Korean tour marketing cases in other countries that used to be barren of Korean tourism and focus on these success stories.

One of the easiest ways to access the Korean market is through TV Media.



Many European countries, which used to be barren of Korean tourists, had great promotional success through Korean media. Among them, the Czech Republic is the fastest growing tourist destination for Koreans.

The Czech Republic, which projects a good image of Eastern Europe for Koreans, was not a popular tourist destination for Koreans compared to other western European countries. In 2005, a Korean broadcaster produced a Korean TV romance drama set in Prague, the capital of the Czech Republic. (Johnston, 2017) As a result, the number of Korean tourists doubled in two years from 50,000 in 2005. (Soper, n.d) to 290,000 visitors in 2017 and 26.8 percent growth compared to 2016 (Kuritkove, 2018). In addition to this growth, Prague is not only a tourist city but also a stable and mature market for Koreans and is now receiving a lot of investment economically from South Korea (Thomson, 2019). Most recently, another country has suddenly become popular with Koreans for the same reason. Croatia was an unknown land

to the Korean market. In 2013, a Korean broadcaster hosted a travel program set in Croatia, and as a result, 252,000 Korean tourists visited Croatia in 2014. This was five times the number of Korean visitors in 2012. Croatia's tourism industry accounts for about 15 percent of GDP and about 7 billion Euros a year. Official figures in the first nine months of 2014 showed that the tourism industry earned 6.7 billion Euros or 2.5 percent more than the same period a year earlier (South China Morning Post, 2015).

Due to this popularity, Korean Air operated direct flight Incheon – Zagreb in September 2018 (Fabinger, 2020). The Croatian example is a reminder that the Maltese tourism industry can also develop new regional markets with the appropriate publicity. It is possible to tap into the Korean tourism market using direct flights instead of the Korean Media. In 2019, a number of south-east Asian airlines created direct flights to less well-known destinations causing a change in the flow of sky routes.

Among them, Vietnam's small cities, Phu Quoc and Nha Trang which became the biggest beneficiaries. Vietnam is already a well-known destination for South Koreans and Da Nang is one of the most visited cities. The number of South Korean tourists to Vietnam in 2018 jumped 44.3 percent to 3.48 million in a single year, continuing an upward trend over the past few years. (Pham, 2019)

With the launch of new flights by Eastar Jet and T'way Air which are low-cost airlines in February 2019, Phu Quoc tourism rose by a yearly 81 percent followed by Nha Trang with another yearly 10 percent gain. Phu Quoc is a UNESCO-designated biosphere reserve that has a clean and beautiful landscape and Nha Trang also has a long, wide tropical beach, which is 6 km long and is called the Asiatic Naples. So natural attractions are common to both destinations and for South Koreans, who are plagued by air pollution, the two cities provide 'clean air, blue sky' destinations and are expected to grow rapidly (Seo, 2019).

INTERVIEW WITH A KOREAN TRAVEL AGENCY IN SOUTH KOREA

Qualitative data about the current demand and status of the Malta tour market in South Korea was obtained by interviewing a major travel agency located in South Korea. The travel agency was established in 1993 and ranks first in sales and customer satisfaction (Hana Tour: Global No.1 Culture and Tourism Group, n.d.). The interview was conducted with the Deputy Section Chief of the travel agency. Due to the Covid-19 situation, the interview was conducted through e-mail.

Name: Jun Hoe Heo

Title: Deputy section chief

Email: tudojune@hanatour.com

What is the current Korean demand for tourism in Malta and the image of tourism in Malta?

I think the demand for tourism in Malta is still not high in Korea. Of course, there is occasional demand for tourism, but it seems to be limited to tourism for special purposes rather than general tourism.

First, there is a demand from honeymooners, but it is not well known as other regions, and it is thought to be a second option or a two-day stopover, not the main destination.

Second, we can't find a Malta-only product among the package products. Europe is a long-stay destination compared to other regions, and I think there is no reason and no profitability to stay for more than 7 days in Malta.

Third, Malta's main image is that of an inexpensive English language learning destination. This is an image of a place where you can study English at a lower price than in England or other English-speaking countries while feeling the atmosphere of Europe as an English-speaking country.

Fourth, it's a very small island and a holiday spot for Europeans. I think it is a tourist

destination where Arab and European cultures mix, but there are many things to see, but not enough to attract Koreans to visit.

What is the prospect of tourism in Malta?

Due to the increase in individual travel and FIT (Foreign Independent Tour) travel, the prospect of tourism is good, but there are many problems that need to be solved. The positive factor of Malta tourism is its English-speaking population and the cheap prices of its resorts. In addition, there are various one-day tour packages offered by 'My Real Trip', and the fact that Malta has been introduced through the TV series 'Games of the Thrones' recently, so prospects are good. However, it is far from South Korea and there are no direct flights. Even if there were flights, these last 9 hours and tourists like to stay for more than 7 days, so I still think it is not attractive enough. It will remain a vacation spot for 2-3 days tied together with other Mediterranean/European destinations.

What is the current trend of outbound tourism in South Korea? (Considering decreases in package tours, and more personal backpacking, and local one-day tour packages that are gaining popularity.)

In a worldwide trend of decrease in package travel and increase in individual travel, the demand for individual travel is expected to increase even more after the Covid-19 pandemic. It is expected that the one-day tour will be popular, not just a package tour guide, but VIP, and small-scale group guided tours that can be experienced in person and locally, not just by looking at tourist attractions and taking pictures.

For example, Airbnb offers a variety of experiences such as picking grapes and learning K-pop dance at an Italian wine farm, rather than the usual one-day city tour, and such personal tours are likely to increase.

How will Korea's outbound trend change in the future? (Eg - Individual travel will increase, and 1-day city tour packages are likely to increase in popularity.)

Travel is expected to change from package to individual and free travel. While package tours will not be eliminated, there will be an increase in new forms of packages or occasional one-day tours that will take advantage of the individuality of the tourist. In addition, not only will domestic travel increase but tours will be based on various flexible travel packages such as one-day tours or experiences provided by foreign travel companies.

What is the most urgent need in preparing Malta to attract Korean tourists and sustainable forms of tourism? (Eg - Korean audio guide, training Korean tour guide, developing souvenirs, etc.)

First, it is essential to develop special content to attract travelers to Malta. For example, Hawaii needs content that customers can firmly recognize such as Honeymoon tours, while they visit Guam to shop for Gucci, Vladivostok because it is close to Europe, and Bali for surfing.

Second, continuous exposure to influential broadcasts and channels such as entertainment and dramas are needed based on the content. I think active investment is essential in this regard due to the explosive increase in the demand for overseas tourist attractions such as teen TV drama 'Boys over flowers', soap-opera 'Descendants of the Sun', and Supernatural Fantasy 'Goblins'.

Third, I think it will be more efficient to attract Korean tourists by direct flight after the two above are laid out. I understand that three direct flights a week were operated by Alitalia in 2019, but there was a lack of publicity and marketing to the extent that even travel agents didn't know about it.

INTERVIEW WITH A KOREAN TRAVEL AGENCY IN SOUTH KOREA

To find out about the demand and actual situation of the Korean tourist market in Malta, Mr. Shingo Endo, Japan & South Korea Representative of MTA (Malta Tourism Authority) was interviewed. The main purpose of the interview was to find out the exact status of Korean outbound tourism in Malta and see what Malta is preparing for the Korean tourism market. Due to the current situation of Covid-19, the interview was conducted through e-mail.

Many interesting points were discussed with Mr. Shingo Endo and the MTA. Regarding the current demand and state of the Korean Tourism market in Malta, it was revealed that the main reasons Koreans visit Malta three:

1. Overseas study (English learning)
2. Honeymoon
3. Historical tourism (FIT & Group)

Figure 1 shows that the number of Korean visitors to Malta is increasing by about 2,000 every year, starting from 3,545 who visited Malta in 2017. It is important to note that the number of English learning Korean students is similar every year, but the number of tourists is increasing every year. In this regard, the MTA normally participates in the main travel fair in South Korea (SITIF, BITF, HANA TOUR Travel Fair, MODE Tour Travel Fair, etc.) and in overseas events in the main Korean cities (Seoul and Busan) to increase the visibility of the Maltese touristic product. There is also Media promotion (TV programs, Drama, etc.) and the planning of a Malta promotion video created by a Korean production company in 2021 as a marketing tool.

MTA is also planning to promote MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions) in Malta much strongly next

year (2021). Since the Seoul Metropolitan Government has announced that they will support 500 MICE companies located in Seoul with a projected cost of 5 million won each. In order to prepare in advance for MICE companies, they are virtually closed to open events so that they can proactively respond to MICE trends that have changed since the end of the new coronavirus infection. The purpose is to support a minimum cost as a preparation for each event.

CONCLUSION

Since the declaration of the liberalisation of overseas travel in 1989, the Republic of Korea has achieved rapid economic, industrial, and tourism development. Among these, the overseas tourism sector in Korea is breaking records every year, and so, many countries have already prepared a lot for the Korean tourist market.

The range of South Koreans' choice of overseas destinations is gradually expanding although the top priority in South Koreans' preference for travel destinations is the popularity of the tourist destinations. As a result, many countries that were not known to South Koreans have recently been placed in the spotlight as preferred destinations. Malta, which

is not yet well known in South Korea has a possibility of becoming one such new destination. To become so, research was conducted to learn more about product development and attracting South Korean tourists according to the characteristics of South Korean tourists. This provided a number of conclusions:

1. It is necessary to develop products specially tailored to South Korean characteristics. Currently, South Korea's tourism trend is not about package tours, but individual trips and daily local tour programmes. In line with this, Malta should more actively support Korean language services for the convenience of individual South Korean travelers. Currently, there is not a single tourist attraction in Malta that supports Korean language services.

2. More aggressive promotion is needed. So far, the South Koreans' image of tourism in Malta is that of a vacation spot or a temporary stop during tours to other European countries. Malta's presence on tourist circuit is not known by many South Koreans.

Recently, various video and TV broadcasts are slowly making Malta more known to South Koreans, and this is resulting in

Figure 1: Annual figures of Korean visitors to Malta

YEAR	S. KOREA TOURIST	S. KOREA STUDENT
2017	2,514	1,031
2018	4,518	1,004
2019	6,088	1,156

higher numbers of South Korean visitors every year. At this point, Malta must build an image of being a destination that specialises in history, archaeology, film-making, etc, to compete with other European and Mediterranean countries, and to make it more attractive to South Koreans.

If these simple suggestions are taken on-board, then investment in flights should be made. Malta could join the sky road that was mentioned earlier that attracts tourists from Hawaii, Bali, Vietnam and other destinations. The Korea-Malta air route could be a result of this cooperation, but will need a certain investment.

Presently, many people are having a hard time due to the Covid-19 Pandemic. This has been particularly hard on the tourism industry making the future uncertain. However, only those preparing for after this period can help re-invigorate tourism by introducing new forms and new routes. Clearly, the Pandemic will make individualism and sanitation more important in the tourism industry. But many experts in South Korea believe that tourism will boom again after Covid-19 is controlled and in choosing a travel destination, people will tend to visit tourist attractions that are not well-known. Malta is a country that fits this requirement and the MTA is already preparing for a new promotion to South Korea in 2021, presenting a golden opportunity for Malta, and a new South Korean tourism market.

RESEARCH LIMITATIONS & FUTURE STUDIES

It is interesting to apply the same research questions to other Northeast Asiatic companies focusing on whether there should be flights to S. Korea and nearby countries such as Japan and Taiwan. This will make flights from south-east Asia more feasible.

It is also regrettable that the current South Korean tourist market is almost at

detailed and accurate conversations with the interviewees. It is also regrettable that

the first stages of development in Malta, so there is no previous precedent, and it has to follow other countries' cases even though these might not be directly relevant to South Korean tourism.

It is important that MTA follows the current travelling trends in Korea and acts upon the way they are changing. It is also hoped that this study will become a foundation stone and more research on the Korean market will take place in the future.

Another limitation was the the current Covid-19 Pandemic situation which restricted the research method. All interviews had to be done by email or online, so it was difficult to have more

the demand for Maltese tourism has been stopped in South Korea due to restrictions on Korean overseas travel, so it was not possible to conduct a survey on South Korean tourists visiting Malta directly.

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Photo by Daniel Nijland on Unsplash

A HACCP System for the new ITS Campus At SmartCity

WORDS BY JOSEPH CASINGENA
LECTURER AT ITS

The author has developed a Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) system that fits the purpose of the Institute and serves as a showcase for the catering industry. This was the result of findings through research, interviews and questionnaires distributed to external stakeholders, ITS staff and students at different levels, which were then published in a Master's thesis.

The ITS HACCP manual has been adopted and is limited to individual working group requirements, students, support staff and lecturers. The handbook contains essential information that one must have to ensure food safety. Such information includes the ITS Food Safety Policy, responsibilities,

standard operating procedures, food safety hazards pertaining to the individual working groups and how to control these hazards. Given that the institute hosts individuals with limited educational backgrounds and nationalities, the language used is very simple and well understood thereby ensuring a clear understanding.

Pegged with quality assurance the role of

a Food Safety Management System is to prepare, safe and innovative food in an environment and culture which promotes continuous improvement; promotes creativity and innovation; and nurtures the right attitude of wellbeing and positivity and a sense of customer satisfaction.

ITS can achieve this by ensuring that the processes are owned by the various players,

who work in harmony with all stakeholders in the food chain, share the same values and create a learning platform not just for our students but for the industry in general.

ORIGINS

Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) was developed in 1959 by the NASA space programme during the first manned space missions, the Pillsbury Dough Company and the US army were also involved in the project. As one can imagine food poisoning especially Salmonella and Staphylococcus aureus are not an option in Zero-G conditions, and these can lead to fatalities and there also were food safety issues with the US army during its military campaign in Korea. The idea of HACCP has been derived from a similar proactive engineering approach known as Failure Mode Effect Analysis (FMEA) which in its essence depicts the effects of failure in engineering systems that can have very adverse reactions depending on the scope of the engineering project.

Though HACCP was created for the space age, essentially it is not rocket science and the philosophy behind it is very simple. In the past, HACCP food safety was based on what was known as end product testing. Though it might seem straightforward, end-product testing relied on final laboratory testing before its release and any sort of contamination of the final product meant that the product had to be destroyed.

HACCP takes a more proactive approach whereby all the processes that are involved in the product line are checked for errors that might occur at every step - the so-called critical control points.

EU LAWS

Throughout the years HACCP has been proven to be the most effective way of managing food safety because it is simple, cost effective and confers a responsibility

to all those involved in the food chain. Now HACCP is a legal requirement in accordance to EU852 2004 and 853 2004 whereby the system has to be applied all through the food chain from farm to fork. The system is an essential requisite for due diligence defence should there be a food safety issue.

The World Health Organisation and the Food and Agricultural Organisation have made the system more user friendly through the Codex Alimentarius thanks to their publications, such as Food Hygiene Basic Texts 4th edition (2009). Laws have been designed in line with these publications.

EU Reg 852 2004 On (Hygiene Of Foodstuffs) particularly requires that the food industry has to follow the 7 steps to HACCP in accordance with the Codex:

Step 1 : **Conduct a hazard analysis**

Listing of all the potential hazards related to food processes. Our responsibility at ITS is to track all process flows from the intake of raw material up to the service of food.

Step 2 : **Determine the critical control points (CCP)**

A CCP is a step in the food process where control is essential, otherwise food safety of the end product is not guaranteed. E.g. core temperature of high risk food or potential foreign body in food.

Step 3 : **Establish critical limits**

Parameters of CCP's that cannot be exceeded. E.g. High risk food should be kept at a temperature of less than 5°C if cold or above 63°C if hot.

Step 4 : **Establish system to monitor CCP**

Continuous observations of a CCP to ensure that the process is safe. E.g. Checking of refrigeration temperatures of high risk food or the checking of internal cooking temperatures of poultry.

Step 5 : **Establish corrective action**

If the result of the monitoring is showing

that the CCP is not controlled or the critical limits have not been achieved then a corrective action has to be taken to ensure the process is returned to safety. Typical corrective actions include the further cooking of high-risk food or disposing a high-risk food product that has been at ambient conditions for too long a time.

Step 6 : **Establish verification procedures**

Observations that are over and above simply monitoring to ensure that the requirements of HACCP are observed. These can take the form of audits or inspections.

Step 7 : **Establish documentation**

All records of traceability, monitoring and corrective actions must be kept so that if an issue of food safety arises, these are used as a tool in due diligence defence.

HACCP takes a more proactive approach whereby all the processes that are involved in finishing a product are checked for errors that might occur at every step of the process, the so-called critical control points.

A heritage trail around the village of Żurrieq: An analysis based on reviews by tourists and Maltese nationals

RESEARCH BY CHARMAINE MERCIECA
HIGHER NATIONAL DIPLOMA IN TOURIST GUIDING

Photo by Charmain Mercieca: The Xarolla windmill and chapel dedicated to St. Andrew in Żurrieq

This article is based on a study, conducted by the author, which analyses the potential to create tours for destinations which are not so popular with tourists and Maltese nationals. The study focuses on the village of Żurrieq and examines what it offers and how it is appealing to tourists.

Through the analysis of the findings, the study clearly illustrates that the creation of structured tours in any location in Malta can prove to be of interest to tourists, exposing better Maltese history and culture, ensuring its survival in the future and attracting a more varied range of tourists which will help the economy to flourish.

INTRODUCTION

Żurrieq offers a visual of the history of

the Maltese islands concentrated in a single village. Walking around the Xarolla area and the village core will take you from the Punic era to post-war Malta, spanning the various epochs in between. Although already popular with tourists and locals for its seaside attractions, the village itself is quite off the beaten track and merits more exposure as it still retains the characteristics of a traditional Maltese village.

The objective of the study was to create a new type of tour aimed at tourists and locals who are interested in exploring in-depth a particular village where in addition to the regular historical information, tours are enriched with a series of curious facts, interesting accounts and anecdotes related to the site/building/monuments, etc. being visited. This will hopefully form the grounds for the creation of a new type of niche tourism which can be applied to other localities in Malta.

METHOD

Part of the data for the study was collected through the use of two sets of questionnaires. One set was formulated for Maltese nationals and the other for tourists and expats. These questionnaires were used to determine the level of interest in the promoted tour as well as the level of detail and data that the tour goers would be interested in.

DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

Maltese Nationals Questionnaire

This questionnaire was intended to provide data of knowledge the average Maltese had on Żurrieq and the interest of locals for the type of tour that the author is proposing. It was carried out on 25 Maltese nationals who came from the different localities around Malta. Their age groups ranged from 20 to 65



“Walking around the Xarolla area and the village core will take you from the Punic era to post-war Malta, spanning the various epochs in between”

years. Of the 25 respondents 1 person despite being a Maltese resident, never visited Żurrieq. The participants were asked to name one or more landmarks in Żurrieq. It is important to point out that those who mentioned Wied iż-Żurrieq were not aware that it forms part of the nearby village of Qrendi.

The respondents were asked four questions in order to assess their knowledge about Żurrieq. While a number of respondents answered the questions correctly, others lacked knowledge about Żurrieq strengthening the fact that a specific tour of the town is required (figure 1). This however was backed up by 100% of the respondents answering that they would be interested in a tour that would explore the various archaeological and historical sites in Żurrieq. This clearly indicates that locals are willing to learn about Żurrieq, and possibly other locations via an in-depth tour of the locality.

The set of questions (figure 2) were tour related, in which the author assessed the criteria for tour goers to select a tour, their preparation and areas of interest – with specific focus on anecdotes, curious facts and interesting accounts.

Tourist and Expat Questionnaire

The questionnaire was completed by 25 foreigners who came from the UK, Italy, Germany, Spain, Greece, Russia, USA, China and Japan. The interviewees were 20 tourists and 5 expats, and the scope of the visit of the tourists was also identified. 11 of the tourists interviewed

were on their first visit to Malta and 9 had visited Malta more than once. Their age group ranged from 20 to 75 years.

Those who heard or had been to Żurrieq were those who had already visited Malta before. The respondents were also asked to name a landmark in Żurrieq. While 8 didn't know any, especially the first-time visitors, Wied iż-Żurrieq and Blue Grotto were by far the most popular destinations known by tourists.

However none were aware that Wied iż-Żurrieq formed part of the nearby village Qrendi.

As seen previously with the results of the Maltese respondents, 100% of the foreign respondents answered that they would be interested in taking a specific tour of Żurrieq, further strengthening the fact that similar niche tours are needed and there is a high demand for them.

The set of questions (figure 3) is aimed at identifying the criteria that make the tours interesting for the tourists. As expected, the results are quite similar to those of Maltese nationals.

The results of both questionnaires came out positive in both cases. Both Maltese and foreigners showed a marked interest in visiting the village once they knew what it had to offer. The findings showed

that there was limited or no knowledge of Żurrieq even by the local population. Conversing with some of the locals who filled in the questionnaire, it was noted that they were unaware that Żurrieq had such a long and rich history, and they expressed a specific interest for a tour as was being proposed in the study.

On the other hand, the first time tourists were intrigued by this village after they completed the questionnaire. Even the tourists that had visited Malta more than once were interested in learning more about Żurrieq as their knowledge of the village was limited to the most common tourist attractions which are popular for the sea and views they offer.

The majority of both tourists and expats were eager to visit Żurrieq, asked more questions about the historical aspect of the village. Some tourists even asked for

suggestions and recommendations for other places similar to Żurrieq which they could visit, as they were intrigued by a village that not only retains the traditional way of life, but also has a significant historical importance.

CONCLUSION

This study made evident the interest there is for tours that highlight the typical Maltese way of life, tradition and culture, which sadly is disappearing from a lot of villages and cities, and hopefully Żurrieq will retain this aspect as it is still a village that hasn't been contaminated by modernisation. This further confirms the existence of a niche of tourists that given the opportunity would take this kind of tour. This factor, will not only increase tourism, but will also help maintain and preserve the Maltese culture and way of life.

Figure 2: The criteria for tour goers to select a tour, their preparation & area of interest

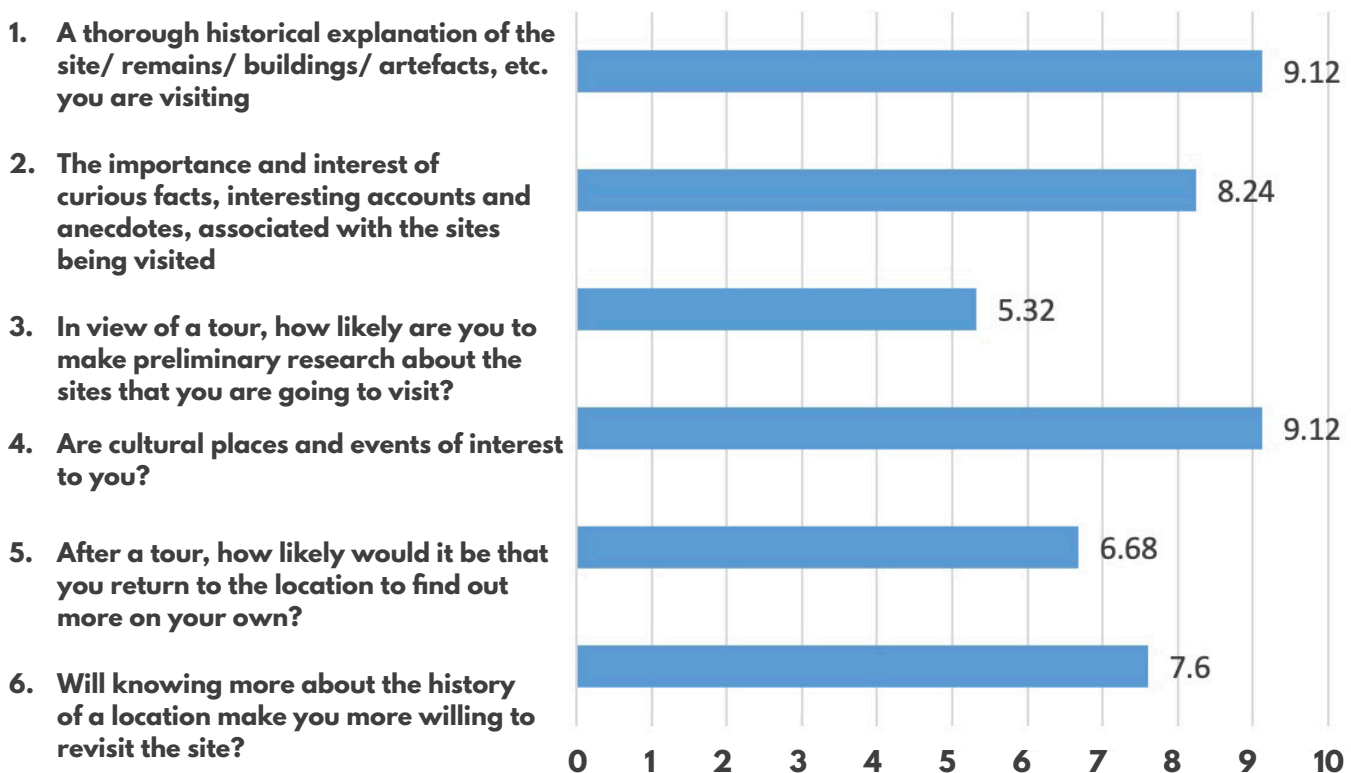


Figure 1: Almost half the respondents aren't aware of Żurrieq's rich heritage but they're most interested in a tour of the town

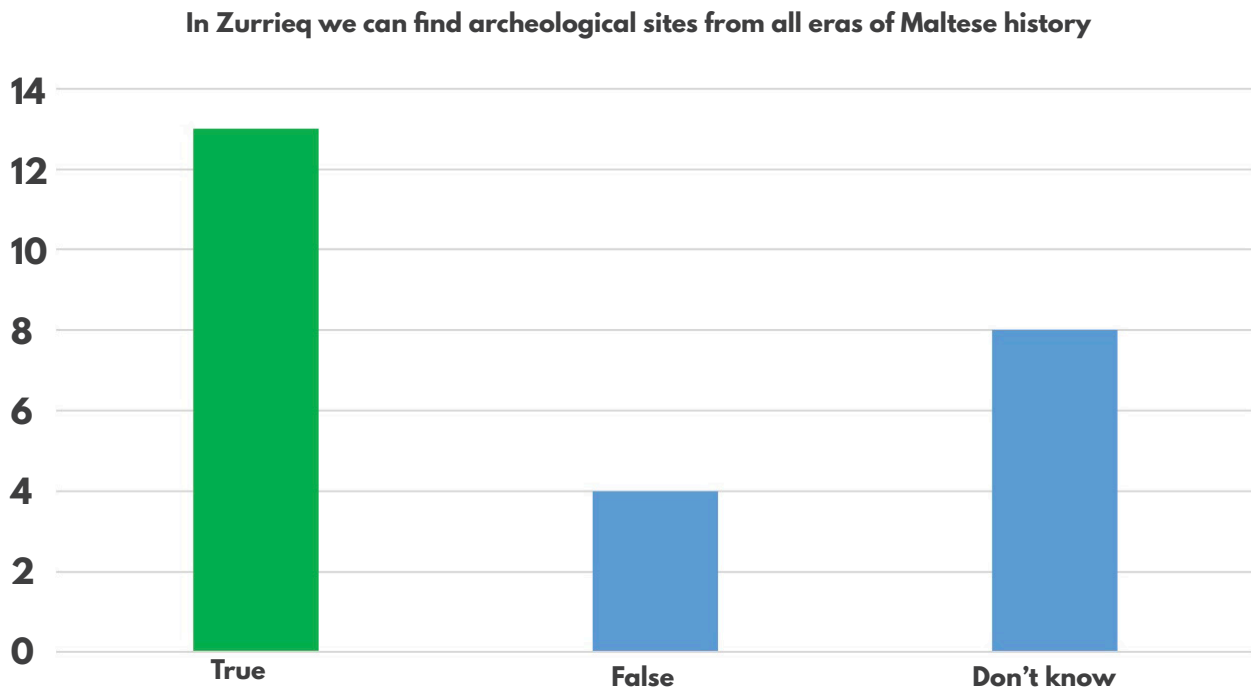
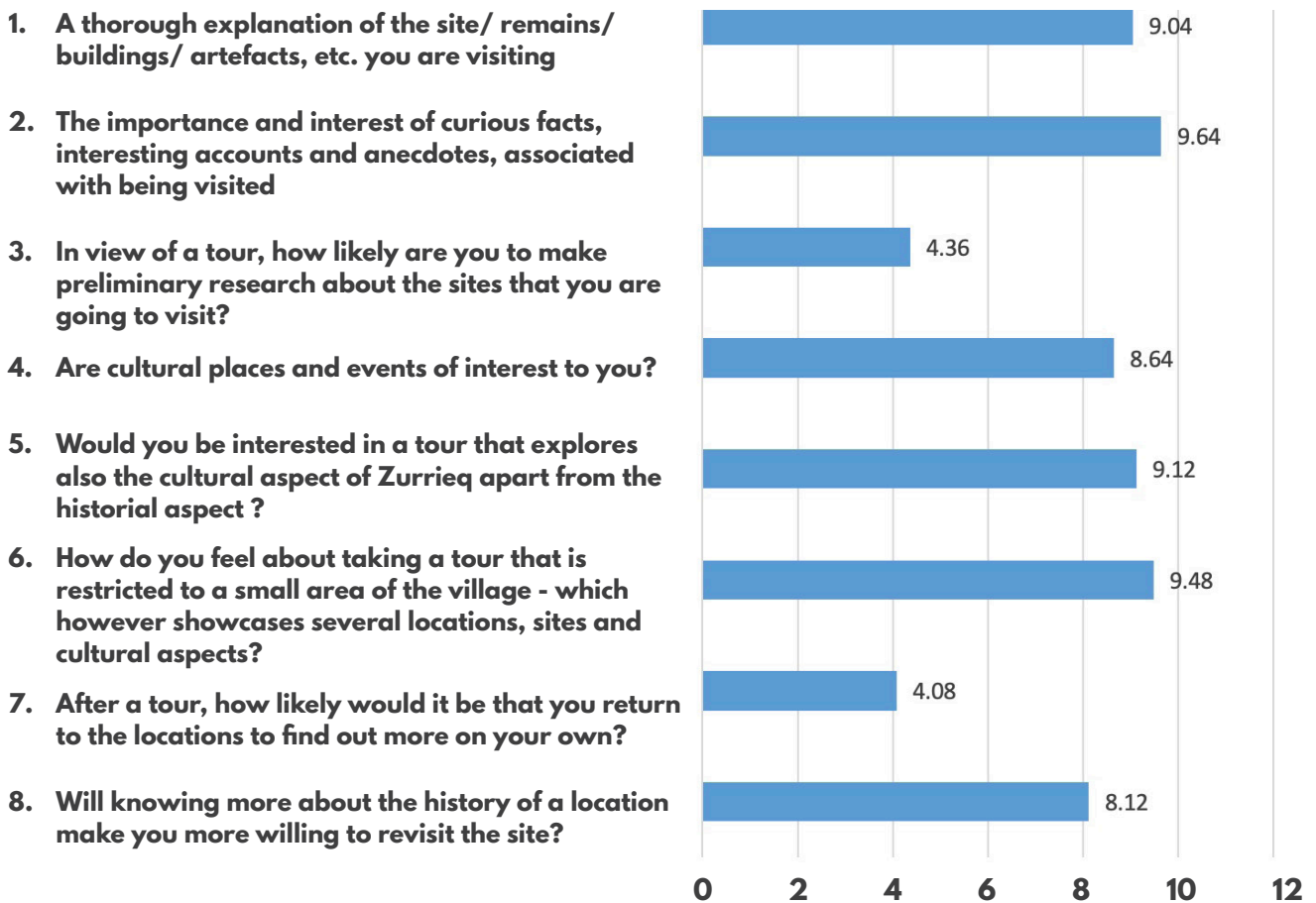


Figure 3: The criteria that make the tours interesting for the tourists



In search of a new Wanderlust

Photo by Erik Odin on Unsplash

Students of the Diploma in Travel and Tourism at ITS have a clear idea of what constitutes sustainable, yet exciting, travel and tourism in a post Covid-19 scenario. Three diploma students – Alexia Borg Shields, Miguel Bugeja, and Julianne Micallef – share with **FUTOURISTIC how they envision this future. The following contributions were part of their coursework for a practical ICT-related unit where they utilised online platforms to create blogs, Facebook pages and other digital content.**

Up & Away – ALEXIA BORG SHIELDS

Wanderlust! What a powerful word.

Unfortunately, we cannot presently use this travelling adjective because of the current situation we are living in due to the pandemic. I bet you have that particular trip or holiday already planned so that once we get the green light, we are back at the airport, we are back at the duty-free shops buying cheap perfume, we are back in the

cramped plane seats, and we are finally on the road to re-discover the world!

Many of us face multiple issues when it comes to travelling. It could be a simple problem; for example, you forget your toothpaste, or it can be one heck of a headache, like being overweight (the luggage, not your head) after a shopping spree in London. Many issues can be avoided in advance through simple planning and research. This is what I have managed to do in order to help all those newbies who are travelling for the first time or even for the experienced who just love to go abroad multiple times a year. It is my pleasure to introduce you to my

new online blog: “Up & Away – Travel Tips”. The main goal of “Up & Away” is to guide prospective travellers from day one, which is the day they decide to travel abroad, till the end of their trip on the way back home. Primarily, one must check and compare flights from different airlines. One must not only keep an eye for the lowest price, but it is important to be flexible with travel dates. Go for the national airline if possible, book your flights well in advance and finally a personal suggestion, book on the cheapest days (Monday to Wednesday at around midnight seems to be the right time).

If you are planning to go for a relaxing cruise, then you need to take a completely



“My advice? Every time you take a trip, make a list!”

different approach. Most importantly, the best option is to use a travel agent, then you need to understand and know the additional fees, book early to get cheap prices and cabin availabilities, think long and hard about a drink package (trust me think about it!) and avoid expensive internet packages. Cruising is all about experiencing new destinations and making new friends. It does not have to be about overspending or staying on the internet 24/7 (it should be a holiday!). It will take some research but saving several hundred euros could well be worth it.

One must also know how to stretch their travel money by going through these 5 steps:

1. Do your research and plan beforehand, most importantly know what you want to spend money on;
2. Check transport costs since these may

vary from taxis, buses etc;

3. Know what you want to spend money on like hotels, tours, and transportation;
4. Create your ideal budget, write down all the things you want to do and how much they will cost.
5. Keep track of all your expenses, track every expense from accommodation to that snack you purchased. An important tip is to just be smart and realistic about your budget so that you can make your money last longer. If you are planning to go for a long holiday, then you need some tips on how to pack light. Some travellers opt to overpack, which is never a good idea.

My advice? Every time you take a trip, make a list! Know exactly what you should pack and do your laundry on the

road. Do not pack more than two pairs of shoes only pack one casual pair and one pair for formal occasions. Wear your bulky items, do not pack them. Do not fold your clothes but roll them. Weigh your bag before you get to the airport so that you will not pay the overweight baggage fees. Photocopy interesting pages of a guide and lastly opt for a soft sided suitcase since it offers more pockets, expansion opportunities to squeeze in a few more items.

We are slowly approaching the end of this pandemic and thanks to the roll out of vaccinations, we are seeing the light at the end of the tunnel. I hope that you have saved money and have your travel plans ready, because now it's time to get Up and Away!

AN ECO-ESCAPE – MIGUEL BUGEJA

First and foremost, you need to understand the term 'sustainability' to comprehend the importance of sustainable tourism. Initially you can practice sustainability by switching from disposable to re-usable items, such as replacing paper napkins with cloth napkins. Sustainability will make a difference to our environment, and by our daily actions we'll make it a better place.

While travelling, we make use of many disposable items, harmful/toxic materials (such as detergents used in hotels to clean linens), restaurants and cafes (food and its waste), and transport. The carbon footprint generated by these items results in a negative impact on the environment, e.g. using a wax cup with a plastic lid for hot drinks instead of a

Travelling sustainably isn't just to feel proud of yourself and posting a picture of it on Instagram, it encourages everyone around you to follow suite and be more sustainable.

reusable cup. The installation of a carbon footprint calculator on your mobile device before leaving for a trip will guide you throughout your stay.

Airlines tend to use many disposable items such as coffee cups, plastic cutlery, plastic packaging and so on. One could avoid these by taking your own cutlery set and travelling cup (ideal for both hot and cold beverages). You can choose from many different types of transport, whether you're adventurous or not. You could always walk or take bike rides in cities and even in the country. If you opt for a taxi, look out for electric or hybrid vehicles. Some countries are already converting their public transport to electric buses, such as in England and Holland. Trains and metros are an efficient means of transport as they carry a lot of passengers in terms of space and do not use fossil fuels.

Vacation rentals can save on energy consumption compared to hotels. Usually hotels keep the common areas lighting on for 24/7, however, when you stay in a rental you can switch them on only when necessary. B&Bs could be another good choice since they are smaller than hotels, so easier to adapt to a sustainable system and everything is produced for smaller number of guests, reducing food wastage where catering is concerned. You can dine responsibly by looking out for restaurants that use locally grown or organic products. Choosing fish restaurants in overfished destinations should be avoided. Opting for vegetable-based dishes is also better, as research is increasingly pointing to meat production being a major factor in climate change.

Shopping will most probably be part of your itinerary. Try looking for products labelled 'Fairtrade', any cruelty free labels and the 'GOTS' (organic textiles). You should also avoid textiles which are polyester or acrylic, instead

opting for natural materials such as cotton, and wool, and those made from recycled materials. Other ideal sustainable activities include support towards small businesses, protected parks and marine zones, doing voluntary work in nature parks or sanctuaries and visiting sustainable sites such as Nail's Yard, London, offering a variety of shops, restaurants and services that are organic.

Travelling sustainably isn't just about feeling proud of yourself and posting a picture on Instagram, it encourages everyone around you to follow suit and be more sustainable. It is the foundation of new way of life that will make the world a better place.

SCENIC WALKS IN MALTA – JULIANNE MICALLEF

I have decided to use Instagram, Facebook, and Blogger to talk about hiking in Malta immersing ourselves in natural beauty. I have used www.blogger.com to create a website and talk about what routes to take and providing specific directions. I use Facebook to promote my website whenever I update it and whenever I describe a new route. Finally, I used Instagram to post the pictures taken during the hikes.

My inspiration behind this concept was the pandemic itself. Ever since the pandemic reached Malta and the number of cases shot up, people started to get scared and so they chose either to stay indoors or else go for walks in the countryside to keep the social distance. I took a chance to start writing about scenic walks in Malta to not only enjoy Malta's beauty but have a breath of fresh air when it is needed.

Scheduling time into your weekend or even throughout the week to go on a walk/hike may lead to many positive things. These include lower



blood pressure, better quality of life, boosts your serotonin, improves sleep, and reduces anxiety and enhances relationships with friends and family. Studies suggest that to maintain mental well-being throughout the pandemic, it is advisable to go outside. Whether this is hiking, walking or even just going out for a breath of fresh air, this will surely help you to stay on track. Today, many of us live in cities, surrounded by polluted air and separated from nature. Hikes and walks give us a chance to connect to our roots.

I first decided to use Blogger because ever since I was a little girl I have always liked the idea of writing about something I love. In this case, it's about the wonders of Malta. I talked a bit about myself and mentioned some hiking trails. Some of these include the Rabat to Mġira l-Ferħa Route, the Marfa Ridge Walk and also the Dingli to Blue Grotto Hike. The latter is

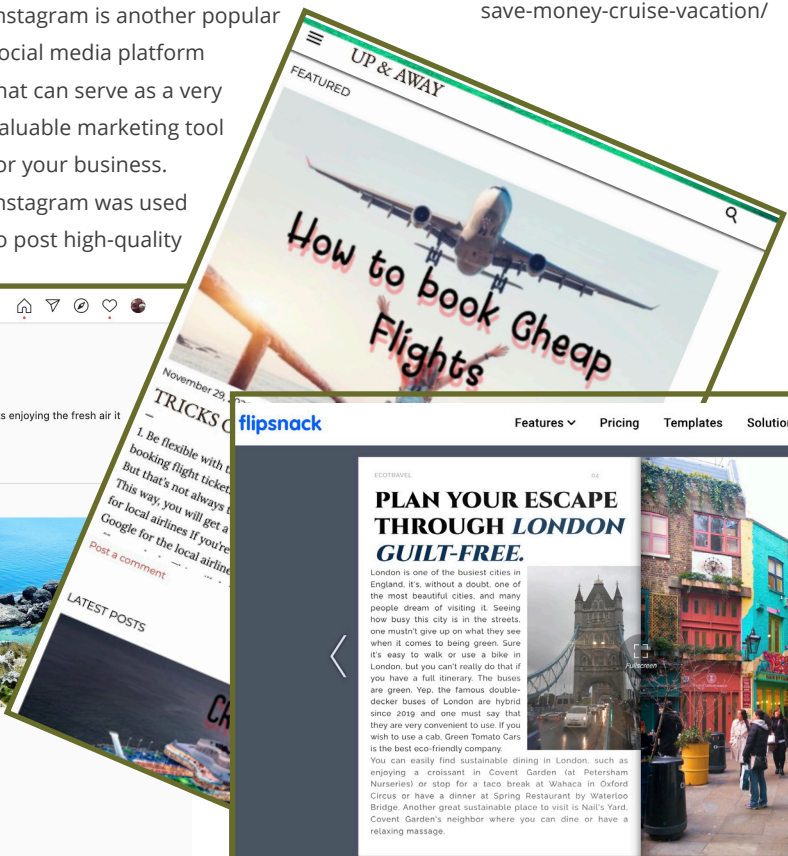
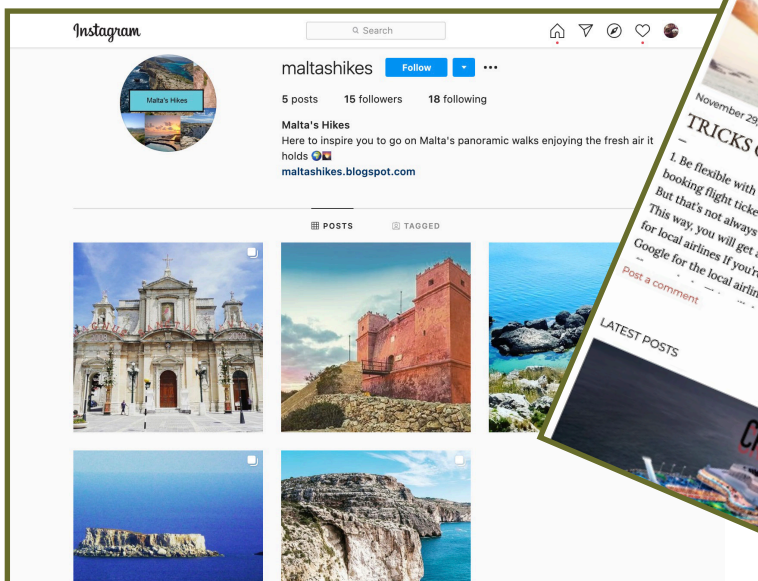
my favourite one since I love being near the sea and during this walk, you feel close to nature surrounded by majestic sea cliffs. Spring is the best time to go for these walks since you will find the island lush with greenery, colourful wild flowers and our wonderful sun that never disappoints to come out behind the clouds even if it just for 10 minutes. Facebook posts include finding the right motivation to start these hikes and adding motivating quotes, scenic images, and ways to contact me, to discuss and share our adventures. The decision to use Facebook was based on the fact that it is easy to use and its 'Pages' feature is very reliable when you want to showcase your blog.

Instagram is another popular social media platform that can serve as a very valuable marketing tool for your business. Instagram was used to post high-quality

photos and using hashtags effectively. This platform was the best way to interact using pictures. Many people get inspired from just looking at pictures and that is enough to start blogging.

FURTHER INFORMATION

- <https://www.healthyfamiliesbc.ca/home/blog/health-benefits-hiking>
- <https://wildlandtrekking.com/blog/10-reasons-to-start-hiking/>
- <https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/environment/pollution-and-air-quality/cleaner-buses>
- <https://www.alltherooms.com/blog/why-vacation-rentals-are-eco-friendly/>
- <https://www.worldnomads.com/responsible-travel/make-a-difference/participation/6-tips-for-shopping-sustainably-around-the-world>
- <https://in.musafir.com/Blog/tricks-to-book-cheap-flight-tickets.aspx>
- <https://www.moneycrashers.com/tips-save-money-cruise-vacation/>





Divers in Comino (next to Comino Caves) with a school of saddled bream (kahli in Maltese)

Another first for ITS: a diving safety management degree

WORDS BY DR SIMON CARUANA

ITS VISITING LECTURER AND CERTIFIED DIVING INSTRUCTOR

In October of 2020, the Institute of Tourism in collaboration with DAN (Divers Alert Network) Foundation embarked on a new ambitious academic programme: a Bachelor of Science (EQF Level 6) in Diving Safety Management (BScDSM). This is a world-wide first and another feather in the cap for ITS.

The brainchild behind this initiative is Professor Alessandro Marroni, the founder of DAN Europe

and co-founder of DAN international. He is a pioneer in hyperbaric medicine who is still very much active in the field. Indeed, he is one of the experts behind the latest Covid-19 protocols that have been adopted by the Professional Association of Diving Instructors (PADI) to be used in scuba diving establishments throughout the duration of this pandemic.

When Professor Marroni presented his proposals to the ITS, these were immediately taken up and a team composed of both academic and dive safety experts was set up to draft the programme of studies.

The programme covers the following areas:

1. Business management applied to tourism and hospitality
2. Scuba diving training (of both recreational and technical nature)
3. Advanced first aid and introduction to hyperbaric medicine
4. Hazard and risk assessment, legal and insurance related aspects
5. Equipment used in diving and diving centers; functions, maintenance etc.
6. Future trends (e.g. wearable technologies, wireless transmission of data applied to underwater environments)
7. Industry placements (local and international)
8. Research methodologies and a research project.



The initial offering of a new professional path was fulfilled.

The placements and the research are compulsory for all participants. In the other sections one can find a series of compulsory modules complemented by a set of elective modules from which the student has to select a number. The choice of the elective units may be such that the student can either focus on modules that are more inclined towards dive resort management. Alternatively, one may choose elective units that are more oriented towards technical diving and hyperbaric medicine that may prepare the student for a career oriented in that sense.

PARTICIPANTS

The course is aimed at those who wish to start off a career related to the diving sector or to experienced practitioners who need to upgrade their academic knowledge in addition

to the professional qualifications and experience.

In the case of experienced practitioners, they can have any diving qualifications (from any recognised organization) in their possession assessed and subsequently accredited as part of the course by means of the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL).

On the other hand, those with no official professional diving qualifications, need to show proof that they possess at least EN/ISO level 2 standard of an ‘Autonomous Diver’. (PADI Rescue Diver or equivalent). Moreover, they must also have proof of at least 50 dives. Both are important as the students will then be doing the EN/ISO level 3 standard of a ‘dive leader’ and more. If not in possession, students will be advised to acquire them during the first academic year independently.

The current situation is such that the course is being delivered in a blended-learning format. Students are able to attend all the academic portion of the



course online. Naturally, this course has numerous hands-on or practical-based exercises. These will be carried out at the ITS premises on the island of Gozo specifically dedicated for this course. This has a series of lecture rooms, a medical research laboratory where all the aspects related to first aid and hyperbaric medicine can be carried out and a 'teaching diving centre' – a small but fully equipped diving centre that will provide all the necessary equipment for both diving courses, equipment repair and stress testing and gas blending,

including various diving equipment parts and all the internal parts of a diving compressor disassembled for teaching purposes.

SUCCESS

Feedback from the students so far has been outstanding, keeping in mind that this programme is being delivered for the first time and some teething issues are expected.

Audrey Farrugia runs a 5-star PADI dive centre and scuba diving school in St.

Julian's. She enrolled as a student to learn new things, to improve the overall level of service of her diving school, and increase her personal credentials within the industry. "I would definitely recommend this bachelor's degree to anybody who has at heart the scuba diving industry," she told Futouristic.

"Although from my previous experience I have dealt with several aspects of some of the modules, like HR, training and development, and IT, it clearly was truly a positive experience having an

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I would definitely recommend this bachelor's degree to anybody who has at heart the scuba diving industry

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Simon Caruana near the remains of the Azure Window in Gozo

advantage to expand and build up my knowledge in these areas. As for the new modules, these were of certain high level of knowledge that are beneficial to further my professional safety aspects and diving”.

Faycal Marouf is a PADI/SSI (Scuba Schools International) open water scuba instructor. He joined the programme quite by chance. “I initially joined the course because of a Facebook advert offering free courses to those who were feeling the brunt of the Covid Pandemic.

Looked into ITS, hoping to find a course in hospitality/ tourism/ catering and was surprised to find the BScDSM. Signed up without knowing what the syllabus was. So far it has opened quite a few options in a future “career” plan, so I guess the initial offer of a new professional path was fulfilled. Would I recommend it? Definitely and I have been following the course almost since day one.

I think a lot of the information provided to dive professionals is the way the industry is going, even if I don’t agree

with most of the regulatory aspects. But that’s another issue and probably another potential business plan”.

ITS is proud to have a team of highly dedicated academics from the ITS faculty together with a a good number of specialised practitioners from DAN and other international organisations who are leaders in their field of expertise worldwide. This will expose the student to the latest research when it comes to dive safety management and give them that competitive edge in the job market.



Official Data on Tourism

RESEARCH BY
LUCA DI GENNARO SPLENDORE

STATISTICAL CONSULTANT, DATA ANALYST AND
ELECTORAL EXPERT

The aim of this paper is: (i) to analyze the role of statistics in tourism business and during the COVID-19 health crisis, (ii) to summarize the main sources of official data on tourism, (iii) to trigger the discussion about statistics on tourism

Statistics can solve real problems and data driven decisions can help us to take the right decision. Nowadays, the main challenge is the dissemination and communication of statistics.

Statistics is found everywhere (newspapers, work, TV, etc), but almost no one has knowledge of it. Having a basic knowledge of statistical visualization and elementary quantitate skill are very important today.

Statistics is not mathematics.

In some way, statistics is the rationalisation of our thinking.

Big Data has become fashionable nomenclature for enormous amounts of data (thanks to the internet and new computer technology) and is mostly under-used. For instance, the internet is an incredible source of data on tourism. All tourism business goes around the web in one way or another.

Open Data refers to data that is published openly and freely from all entities, companies and institutions that have a public interest. The aim of open data is transparency and accessibility of data.

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Official statistics provide essential information to measure progress in society, the economy and the environment



Both open and big data, will stimulate research, business and public opinion. They provide an invaluable opportunity for the divulgation and communication of statistics. With graphs, charts and tables, statistics helps every presentation and field in the visualization of ideas, figures, and aggregations of data. These visualisations or percentages are often used as a tool to persuade public administrations and public opinion. But there is a lack of images and visualization to promote, divulgate and communicate statistics. For all these reasons, it is crucial that the tourism industry invests in statistical literacy, data-driven culture and in the production of trustable data.

OFFICIAL DATA ON TOURISM

Nowadays we have many sources of official data in Malta and outside Malta. The National Statistics Office of Malta produces a lot of data on tourism. It is free and accessible on the internet at <https://nso.gov.mt>. Here, there is a lot of interesting data: Outbound Tourism, Inbound Tourism, Regional Tourism, Collective Accommodation Establishments and Cruise passengers. All the data is combined together with a full explanation of the data sources and methodology used. Another source of information on the Tourism in Malta is the Malta Tourism Authority (www.mta.com.mt). Further information can be found in Attard (2019).

To compare tourism among European countries, Eurostat has data for all over Europe (go to - <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat> > Eurostat > Data > Database > Data navigation tree > Database by themes > Industry, trade and services > Tourism).

The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) is a specialized agency of the United Nations focusing on tourism. It can provide a lot of interesting

information. In the webpage, there is numerous data (<https://www.unwto.org> > RESOURCES > Tourism data dashboard). This data is crucial for understanding tourism trends and comparing different situations. This data provides a framework for the production of surveys and microeconomic data on Tourism.

WHAT ARE THE OFFICIAL STATISTICS?

The media dedicates more space to figures of official statistics, than the best football player or singer. Every day, in the news, we listen to the employment rate, the GDP, mortality rate, car accidents and so on. All these statistics are collected, produced and then disseminated by the National Statistics Offices (NSOs) around the world. The irony of it all is that, at the same time, it is quite unlikely that the media dedicates time and space to explain the responsibility of such NSOs around the world.

Official statistics provide essential information to measure progress in society, the economy and the environment. It is important that they are communicated clearly and succinctly so that a broad range of audiences can understand and use the valuable information contained within.

National statistical offices focused the majority of their resources on collecting and producing statistics and less on analysing, disseminating and communicating the results.

To be relevant in the actual information age, statistical organizations are placing greater emphasis on publishing data and metadata in a variety of forms to reach a growing audience of data users.

Statistical indicators provide an overview of the social, demographic and economic structure of society. Moreover, these

indicators facilitate comparisons between countries and regions. The description of the indicators helps users find out more information about what they are measuring, the context in which they are used and possible differences between them and the European and international standards.

Social and economic statistics are the core of the modern NSOs, this is because the aim of the national accounts is to provide a comprehensive conceptual and accounting framework for compiling and reporting macroeconomic statistics for analysing and evaluating the performance of an economy. Policymakers depend on data produced by the NSOs. Macroeconomic data have become indispensable to economic policymaking and academic research.

From the social statistics point of view, the census is the pinnacle of social statistics. The word "Census" has a long history all over the world. For instance, in China and other countries, they started a systematic count of the population from 1600 -1700 B.C. according to Zhu (1987). The churches, historically, kept records of the births, marriages and deaths. Between 2005 and 2014 more than 6 billion people, more than 90% of the world's population, were enumerated by population census. Only 21 countries did not conduct a census (United Nations Fund for Population Activities (2016)). Every country has one NSO in charge of the decennial census, that is, the social statistics and the main economic statistics. Every 10 years, the census is implemented all over the world. Normally, the census is carried out when the year ends with the number "1" (e.g. 2001, 2011, 2021) and it is carried out during the first week of November.

COVID-19 AND DATA

For instance, to better understand COVID-19, it is useful to understand the elementary notion of statistics and the concept of data quality. Generally speaking, data quality is based on the usefulness,

accuracy, and correctness of data in its application and the need to satisfy the requirements of its intended use. COVID-19 had a great impact on the tourism industry, so it is useful to fully understand all the implications.

Regarding the COVID-19 pandemic, the aim of medical figures is not to describe the spread of COVID-19 or the overall socio-economic implications of the outbreak. Unfortunately, figures produced by health authorities cannot give crucial information (see Luca Di Gennaro Splendore, (2020)).

If you don't do any blood tests then you don't have high cholesterol!

The cases of COVID-19 depend on how many persons each country are tested and how they were tested (see Luca Di Gennaro Splendore, (2020, 2020a)).

So, how can we acquire information on COVID-19?

There are only two possibilities to obtain this information: either a census of the population or a random sample representative of the population. In most countries, a census is not practical, so a random sample representation of the population is taken. Different sample designs and different possibilities can be implemented. Every person in the sample who is tested for COVID-19 also needs to answer a questionnaire that includes questions about the clinical evaluation, socio-demographic characteristics, personal characteristics, housing characteristics, and lifestyle of the individual.

CONCLUSION

Without data, tourism cannot possibly be understood. Without data we cannot manage the industry which is so important for so many countries.

The prolonged lifespan of the COVID-19 pandemic provides a big challenge to the

tourism industry. Only the work of National statistics offices will be able to disseminate correct data on tourism.

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