

Island Destination Marketing in an Era of Recession

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Abstract

It is common ground that marketing plays a crucial role for the survival and development of any destination. The study examines the consumers' decision making process for destination selection during a period of economic turmoil. The research was held in holidaymakers (N=400) on the island of Zante, Greece. The results confirm that a financial crisis does not entail cancellation of travel; instead it generates various combinations of costly facilities such as accommodation, food, and transport. Additionally, local decision makers alter their decisions according to the crisis circumstances and observe the selection factors used by visitors. It also confirms the important role of central government in destination decision-making and formulation of marketing activities.

Keywords: Tourist destinations, Financial crisis, destination marketing, tourist decisions

JEL Classification: M31, M37, Z33

1. Introduction

The promotion of destinations plays a crucial role in tourist decisions (Pratt et al., 2010). However, external promotional pathways are not the most predominant element in the decision-making process; rather, the content of information is. This, combined with internal beliefs, provides the basis for the formulation of the decision, justifying in parallel the need for the destination promotion to be strong and effective (Stienmetz et al., 2015). Especially during periods of recession, what interests policymakers, tourists and stakeholders is disposable income (Kennedy, 1998). For Greece, tourism is one of the most important constituents supporting the national economy, particularly in periods of recession, and the country consists of various island destinations (*The Economist*, 2015). This study sheds light on how economic turmoil, tourist marketing and tourist decision processes are interrelated in Greece through examining the case of the island of Zakynthos (Zante). It is expected that this study will shed light on many promotional paths and how destinations of this kind could use them to deal effectively with economic turmoil.

More analytically, this study indicates how promotion must be undertaken in islands during recession to stimulate tourist demand. It further examines: (i) the intensity with which recession influences island destination marketing, (ii) the characteristics of relevant selection processes, (iii) the main constituents of island destination marketing and (iv) the factors affecting tourist decisions.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Recession

Many scientific pieces of work have discussed the direct and indirect repercussions of recession on tourism (Sheldon and Dwyer, 2010; UNWTO, 2011), most likely because tourism depends on income elasticity (Lanza et al., 2003; Smeral, 2012). However, there have been shown to be many more factors affecting tourist expenditure. At this point, there are two important questions to be addressed: Do tourists reduce their expenditure? If so, how? (Campos-Soria et al., 2015). In relation to this issue Nicolau and Masiero (2013) state that there is no homogeneity in people's reactions: some tourists maintain their spending attitude, while others are influenced by demographics, the climate of the country of origin, the destination's attractiveness, education, etc. (Eugenio-Martin and Campos-Soria, 2010). It is surprising how the difference between the climate in the country of origin and destination influences people's choices (Eugenio-Martin and Campos-Soria, 2010). In addition, there is a remarkable difference between the two genders: women are more keen on traveling than men (Mergoupis and Steuer, 2003).

The existing literature on tourists' reactions during recession is not rich as high incomes existed until recently (Bronner and Hoog, 2014; Smeral, 2010). Since 2009, Smeral has started investigating the issue, paying particular attention to non-homogeneous consumer reactions. This study could further contribute to such research. The Keynesian Consumption function presents a parallel rise between consumer expenditure and high income (Pettinger, 2011); however, Prideaux (1999) found in Asia that the change was not significant. Moreover, in contrast to inbound tourism (Page et al., 2012), outbound tourism seems to be more vulnerable to crises (Arapa and Leon, 2008). There is also support for the proposition that travel close to the country of origin constitutes a common means of cutting back (Bronner and Hoog, 2012; Papatheodorou et al., 2010). It can reasonably be presumed that the rationale approximates that for the case of climate: tourists examine the relationship between the country of origin and destination based on a cost-benefit analysis and if the destination is found not to be worth the expenditure, staying at home or not travelling too far is taken to be the right choice.

Various scientists have examined serious crises in relation to their respective effects on tourism, for example the United States (US) crisis in 1980 (Frechtling, 1982), the Asian crisis in mid-1997 (Okumus et al., 2005) and the 2001 crisis in Turkey with its effects on Cyprus (Page et al., 2012; Ritchie et al., 2010; Song and Lin, 2010). However, surprisingly, cutbacks usually occur in the form of "fewer days", "lower cost accommodation", "cheaper services" and generally a decrease in expenditure rather than cancelling travel altogether (Bronner and Hoog, 2014; European Travel Commission, 2009).

Consequently, when threatened by crisis, destinations apply various mixes of marketing strategies, mainly promoting lower prices (Ritchie et al., 2010; Smeral,

2010). However, integrated market research is needed to aid providers of tourism products in accurately forecasting tourists' wants (Gokovali et al., 2007) in order to choose the best strategy to apply, which is essential in achieving sustainable competitiveness (Hystad and Keller, 2008) through value-adding strategies (Sheldon and Dwyer, 2010). Ang et al. (2000) argue that during recession, the need for businesses to revise their tactics and apply cost-effective policies is particularly imperative. In contrast, Rosberg (1979) states that as practice has demonstrated, for those businesses which maintain the same levels of promotional expenditure during recession, the profits generated shortly after the recovery period are huge, while those which reduce expenses of this kind are not as fortunate.

In addition to businesses, there is a considerable need for abundant information on the part of central governments for the application of suitable policies (Okumus and Karamustafa, 2005). Furthermore, relevant, accurate and timely information is needed for their cooperation with the private sector to establish the basis for growth in tourism (O'Brien, 2012). Crucial external policies could be influenced significantly when a country acts either individually or as a member of a wider union in relation to issues concerning currency exchange rates, attracting tourism and investment attraction and attaining a high level of competitiveness (Ang, 2001).

At the micro and macroeconomic levels, local decision makers need appropriate information to predict and therefore successfully manage a local area's tourism demand (Smeral, 2009). Campos-Soria et al. (2015) specify this need in decisions related to employment, the salaries of tourism staff, duration of stay and the price of accommodation.

2.2 Central government policies

Using a cost–benefit analysis approach, Liu and Wall (2006) argue that tourism is a crucial tool for central governments for the development of a country, provided that it reinforces all three dimensions of sustainability (environmental, economic and socio-cultural). Andereck et al. (2005) emphasize the “theory of social exchange”, stating that the potential outcomes and benefits lead to the decision of governments and stakeholders to become involved in tourism issues. In addition to the benefits for destinations, governments should consider all stakeholder groups' interests (Ap, 1992; McGehee and Andereck, 2004). In support of this view, Byrd et al. (2009) point out that representatives of governments invest in local tourism to a greater extent than locals and entrepreneurs themselves.

More specifically, governments should pay greater attention to the “way” in which tourism is used rather than just the “use” of tourism itself (Donaldson and Preston, 1995). Thus, as tourism is of a multidisciplinary nature, various initiatives should be taken (e.g. marketing, promotional activities, facilities, events, infrastructure, etc.) to attract tourists' choice of destinations (Donaldson and Preston, 1995). Donaldson and Preston agree with Liu and Wall (2006) that every government should guarantee sustainability, given their capability to impose necessary regulations and laws.

For these reasons, governments should demonstrate care and responsibility in defining and defending all stakeholders' interests, otherwise the outcome of their policies will not be to attract tourists (Clarkson, 1995; De Oliveira, 2003; Puczko and Ratz, 2000; Yuksel et al., 1999). However, this can be achieved if the importance of the stakeholders' interests is considered in advance (Andereck and Vogt, 2000; Davis and Morais, 2004; Gursoy et al., 2002; Markwick, 2000; Ryan, 2002; Vincent and Thompson, 2002). More precisely, the more thoroughly the groups' interests are understood, the easier it is to avoid conflict and realize plans (Reid et al., 2004; Sautter and Leisen, 1999).

Everyday practice includes an abundance of examples of governments enacting laws to secure various dimensions of sustainability, attracting tourists who are lower in number but higher in quality and income (Beeton and Benfield, 2002). However, Mbaiwa (2005) argues that this policy can prove cost ineffective. Governments should safeguard quality through their policies to exert a positive influence on tourist decisions. Moreover, they need to focus on the provision of services as these constitute an indispensable element of the tourist experience that cannot easily be measured, but can generate profits to be reinvested in the conservation of sights and facilities (Mmopelwa et al., 2007).

By creating a favourable business environment with sound public–private relationships, tourism can be developed as a high-yield economic tool (Hankinson, 2005), which, when linked to new branding techniques, meets the expectations and desired standards of specific tourist segments and attains successfully positioning in the market (Fetscherin, 2010).

2.3 Destination selection factors

The ways in which stakeholders structure their marketing activities must be defined by the criteria used by tourists to form their decisions (Bigné et al., 2001; Chen and Tsai, 2007), usually related to personal ideas and beliefs (Beerli and Martin, 2004; Rozier-Rich and Santos, 2011). In this process, the creation and promotion of a place's image is crucial (O'Leary and Deegan, 2005; Tapachai and Waryszak, 2000). Destination marketing organization (DMOs) and managers should identify the desired characteristics and successfully communicate them to tourists (Grosspietsch, 2006). In addition to the points made by Beerli and Martin (2004) and Rozier-Rich and Santos (2011), Kim et al. (2011) highlight the repetition of choice. On the other hand, Markwick (2001) stresses the importance of elements of "locality" that could lead to successful promotional strategies. In support of Markwick's (2001) position, Pike (2012) stresses the importance of clarity and flexibility in concrete messages; however, he counterbalances these characteristics with their high cost and multiplexity, as well as the existence of competing destinations.

A destination's image strongly influences tourists' impressions of quality and the degree of their satisfaction, in turn affecting their intention to revisit the place (Sirgy and Su, 2000; Sönmez and Sirakaya, 2002). Destination image is created by many factors, both informal (e.g. family and friends) and informal ones (e.g. advertisements in newspapers and on television), promotional campaigns, tourist businesses, DMOs, etc. (Molina and Esteban, 2006). To these influences on tourist decision and image

creation, Guttentag (2010) and Pan and Fesenmaier (2006) more specifically add the Internet. Pike (2012) proposes that this helps people obtain sufficient information to distinguish easily between destinations and shape a “mental picture” of a destination in their minds. In addition, the Internet motivates tourist choice (Ryan and Glendon, 1998) by reducing the anxiety that the decision-making process entails (Buckley, 2012; Fodness, 1994) and continuously interacting with personal values, culture and beliefs (Frías et al., 2011; Reynolds and Gutman, 1988; Rokeach, 1968–1969).

The sound presence of local authorities is frequently noted in the form of companies establishing public–private partnerships (Bornhorst et al., 2010; Palmer, 1996). For this reason, Pike and Page (2014) consider that DMOs and local authorities are capable of connecting purely tourist activities (e.g. destination marketing) with broader activities (e.g. general location marketing). In addition, the presence of locals is proved to be a robust factor through the “transfer” of their identity to the place where they live through their contribution to its management and planning (Gu and Ryan, 2008; O’Neill, 2006; Wood, 2006; Woosnam et al., 2009). In addition, Andereck et al. (2005) (cf. 2.2) examine the locals’ role from the perspective of “social exchange theory” (Jurowski and Gursoy, 2004; Lawton, 2005; Wang and Pfister, 2008). According to this theory, locals bear in mind any potential advantages and disadvantages when interacting with visitors and the general tenor of such encounters define the destination’s competitive advantage and the tourists’ impressions of the destination (Garrod et al., 2002).

The destination selection factors influence the tourist attributes offered and consequently the way in which these are offered influences the final decisions of tourists (Rewtrakunphaiboon and Oppewal, 2008). The Australian government’s encouragement of tourism providers offering innovative types of tourist experience constitutes a sound example of influence on the purchasing behaviour of visitors (Tourism Australia, 2007). Agendas and suitable yield management techniques are useful tools in governments’ hands (Leask, 2010). While it has been established that various aspects, such as expenditure, length of stay and travel time are crucial in influencing the decision-making process (Hyde, 2008; Seddighi and Theocharous, 2002), little is yet known about the relationship between travel options and governmental policies (Oppewal et al., 2015). However, due to their significance, it is necessary to include local decision makers in the formation of governmental policies (Garrod and Fyall, 2000).

2.4 Local decision makers

At a local level, DMOs aim to encourage collaboration between stakeholders to ensure the successful management of tourism problems (Dwyer and Kim, 2003). According to D’Angella and Go (2009), while DMOs bear the responsibility of planning and coordinating destination marketing, they also tend to be linked to bureaucracy and complex governmental regulations and laws.

During recession, the role of local stakeholders is prominent for tourist destinations and is strongly related to: (i) communication encouragement, (ii) media influence and (iii) contribution to the formation of a destination’s image (Hystad and Keller, 2008). This role is of a dynamic and continuous nature and the commitment of the

stakeholders to achieving the strategic goals that have been set, following a relevant plan, reinforces their performance and improves the quality of the outcomes of their collaboration (Medeiros de Araujo and Bramwell, 1999; Williams et al., 1998). Thus, the clarification of their duties must be regarded as essential (Hystad and Keller, 2008). As is also stressed by Pike (2012), the importance of the DMOs' role is considerable for the competitiveness of marketing activities, the satisfaction of tourists' desires and therefore the creation of differential advantage, something which is also linked to the actions of local decision makers. He notes that the budget available for marketing seems to follow the size of the DMOs in that small DMOs do not usually have the capacity to apply an extensive range of positioning schemes.

Three schools of thought, represented by Riedel (1972), Bornhorst et al. (2010) and Jamal and Getz (1995), provide clear views on the way in which people perceive participation in local processes and the interaction between local decision makers within the context of marketing activities. According to Riedel (1972), most people approve participation under positive circumstances only. Bornhorst et al. (2010) and Jamal and Getz (1995) partially disagree with Riedel, arguing that what motivates people's participation is the acquisition of benefits independent of the nature of the circumstances. In full contrast to Riedel (1972), Zhao and Richie (2008) state that most people aim to participate in both positive and negative circumstances except when the peripheral environment does not encourage this. For this reason, they recognize legislation as an extremely useful tool to facilitate people's actions. Within the context of Agenda 21, Harrison et al. (2003), in line with Zhao and Richie (2008), also pay attention to the sustainable nature of local participation. They contend that locals can undertake multidisciplinary activities, e.g. discussions at the level of negotiations, running analysis and monitoring the local environment and public dialogue, in which integrated decentralization could prove beneficial (Royo et al., 2011).

It is important for locals to have strong belief and enhance their ability to develop their self-efficacy in their efforts to create a successful and sustainable tourist destination (Andriotis and Vaughan, 2003; Choi and Sirakaya, 2006; Hanley et al., 2009). More precisely, the attainment of sustainable relationships with prospective visitors is one of the most difficult tasks for local communities (Morgan and Hunt, 1994) as against the financial dimension, which is the easiest to achieve in contrast to the other two dimensions (sociocultural and environmental) of an area's sustainable development (Morgan and Hunt, 1994). In this regard, a good start could be made by using the mistakes and negative experiences of the past as guidance (Mason and Cheyne, 2000).

However, the responsibility of local decision makers is even greater. Fairness and equality in the distribution of the benefits generated by their actions are within their remit (Byrd et al., 2009; Easterling, 2004; Ryan, 2002).

2.5 Marketing activities

Destination selection factors could exert a great influence on marketing activities, which in turn could affect tourist decisions. Frias et al. (2008) and San Martin and

Rodriguez del Bosque (2008) also support this, stating the means through which this process could be achieved, i.e. the emotions and reasoning that are used intensively throughout the decision-making process, especially during the creation of images in tourists' mind (Chen and Tsai, 2007).

In relation to this, Qu et al. (2011) argue that promotional activities must not overpromise or consist of misleading impressions as in the end what rests in tourists' minds is the real image and experience as actually "lived". Pike (2012) adds that non-overpromising, non-misleading marketing activity that is well organized, based on the ideal balance between "emotional" and "rational" elements, is not sufficient on its own. Rather, it should be better when compared to that of competitors, meaning that it should be unique, difficult to emulate and certainly attractive. In this effort, "innovation" is the key to the success of marketing activities and must be demonstrated throughout all the elements in the marketing mix (Doolin et al., 2002; Mariadoss et al., 2011; Naidoo, 2010; Sok and O'Cass, 2011; Tang et al., 2012; Weerawardena, 2003).

In releasing a competitive message, the inclusion of a combination of central and peripheral cues in the marketing activities and the degree of tourists' involvement in the information search define their final decision (Tang et al., 2012). These contribute to the formation of the "selling proposition", which aims to be "unique" and is supposed to provide the most suitable solution – in comparison to other destinations – to the eventual "problem" of "which is the best destination to choose" and "why" (Pike, 2012).

Here, the presence of the Internet is important in the information search (Buhalis and Law, 2008). However, aligned with Pike (2012), Auger (2005) strongly argues that a lot more is needed than simply an online presence; this presence must be carefully constructed and given competitive characteristics (Berthon et al., 1998). The reason is that it influences all stages of the decision process: "a. information receiving, b. cognitive processing and c. formation of attitude – conation" (Tang et al., 2012, p. 39; see also Kaplanidou and Vogt, 2006). It is therefore proposed that tourism business managers should adopt integrated and holistic approaches and policies as the majority of people naturally have multiple means of information retrieval and promotional strategies to hand, such as magazines and blogs, in which an enterprise has to have a robust presence (Choi et al., 2007), progressively creating the demand for sophisticated tourism marketing (Ottenbacher, 2007).

2.6 Tourist decisions

For a long time, family, with a particular focus on the wife–husband couple (Thornton et al., 1997) and the children (Borgeman and Van der Poel, 2006; Palan and Wilkes, 1997; Wang et al., 2004), has been regarded as one of the most influential factors in the decision-making process (Kang and Hsu, 2005; Kirchler, 1993, 1995; Spiro, 1983). However, the genders demonstrate differentiated behaviour (Kozak, 2010): unlike males, who seem to be constrained in terms of information seeking, women and children have acquired a more powerful role (Flurry, 2007; Rose et al., 2002; Shoham and Dalakas, 2003).

Gitelson and Crompton (1984) state that the relationship between tourist expenditure and travel time and duration affects the tourist decision, although not so that travel is necessarily cancelled, especially if a destination demonstrates characteristics which attract human interest (Nicolau and Más, 2006). Accommodation (Kozak, 2001) and services (Zeithaml et al., 1993) are among the most delicate and important elements of tourist selection, with the role of friends and relatives also being influential (Inman and Zeelenberg, 2002; Tsiros and Mittal, 2000).

In this influential process, the interference of national and individual cultural elements can be observed on the part of both tourists and destinations (Arora and Fosfuri, 2000; Kacen and Lee, 2002), accompanied by linguistic factors (Basala and Klenosky, 2001; Henderson, 2003) and characteristics of cultural proximity (e.g. everyday life style, intimacy, etc.). In addition, similarly to the provision of information, these influential factors derive their deeper roots in the process from their capacity to release the anxiety of tourists regarding their choice (Buckley, 2012; Fodness, 1994; Ng et al., 2007).

3. Methodology

3.1 Secondary research

With an emphasis on tourism, marketing and the financial crisis, the study examined secondary data in the form of existing literature on the topic. According to Sekaran (2003), through the use of secondary data the researcher acquires information that constitutes the outcomes of previous studies to shed light on the area of interest and develop another study that is realized at a later stage. In this way, general information is used that provides the environment for the new research to take place.

In this research, the vast majority of the data were derived from online published journals, most of them of high quality, allocated 3* and 4* in the Association of Business Schools' (ABS) Academic Journal Quality Guide (2010), except those in hard copy, distinguished for their contribution to academic knowledge and business operations. The journals that were used as sources belonged to multidisciplinary thematic groups, e.g. tourism business, marketing, information technology, psychology and finance. Books and grey literature were also used (e.g. reports of national and international bodies, such as the European Travel Commission), as well as online newspapers and press releases usually generated by worldwide organizations, e.g. UNWTO (Burns and Burns, 2008).

Secondary data are invaluable in providing two main advantages, time efficiency and cost effectiveness, which are crucial in research demanding the provision of accurate details and needing to meet certain deadlines (Malhotra, 2009). However, because it is

not possible to tailor secondary data to the needs of a concrete study (Saunders et al., 2009), primary quantitative research was also used.

3.2 Research design

Malhotra (2009) states that a research design should be either exploratory or conclusive and that a conclusive design can either be descriptive or causal. Finally, descriptive research could potentially be either cross-sectional or longitudinal (Malhotra, 2009). More precisely, exploratory research provides relatively generalized ideas and information to the researcher that can help draw a brief outline for the problem under investigation (Churchill and Iacobucci, 2005). For this reason, in most cases, conclusive research follows exploratory research (Sekaran, 2003). For the needs of this research, exploratory research took place in the form of analysis of secondary data, which formed a basic, brief background to the issue (Malhotra, 2009). Following the exploratory phase, a conclusive design helps define the kind of information that is essential for the study and the most appropriate method to acquire this information (Wilson, 2012). Within the context of this research, a quantitative approach was chosen to examine hypotheses and relationships.

According to Malhotra (2009), descriptive research is suitable for providing a brief description of a phenomenon, as well as identifying various characteristics and behavioural types of people and market segments. To better serve the aims of this study, a quantitative survey was also used. As the survey drew on a market segment that was questioned only once, upon arrival at Zakynthos airport, a cross-sectional design was applied (Saunders et al., 2009). A longitudinal design has the advantage of providing a large amount of accurate data (Wilson, 2012). However, unlike the cross-sectional design, it demands repeated examinations of the sample (Churchill and Iacobucci, 2005), which in this case would not have been feasible; indeed, it would have been costly and time consuming. Nor was causal research, one of the two types of conclusive research design, applied (Malhotra, 2009) as the study was not undertaken on the basis of a cause-and-effect relationship.

3.2.1 Sampling

According to Malhotra (2009), the sampling or sample design is related to issues such as the type and requirements of a sample, its size and characteristics, its configuration, the efficiency of respondents, etc. Those who were interviewed in the context of the research and thus provided information during the survey constitute the “elements”. They comprise a “representative sample” as they represent a small part of the total population, in contrast to the total population, which would constitute a “census” (Saunders et al., 2009).

The design of the sample (Burns and Burns, 2008) was as follows:

- The “target population” consisted of tourists arriving for a holiday. The sample comprised 400 people. The geographical area (“extent”) of the research was Zakynthos and the “time frame” was the period from mid-July to early August.
- Only adults were included in the “sampling frame”.

- A “probability” sampling technique was used, including elements (respondents) with a known or equal chance of being questioned if the selection is random. More precisely, the probability technique is in line with “systematic sampling”, in which after a random start every “*i*th” flight is selected (Malhotra, 2009). For the needs of this study, the questionnaires were distributed to inbound tourists on every fifth flight.
- Concerning the sample size, the population questioned was based on Akis et al.’s (1996) study, calculated with a confidence of 95%, statistical error of 5% and possibility of uncertain conservative response 50/50 as follows:

$$N = \frac{(t - table)^2 (hypothesis)}{S^2} \Rightarrow N = \frac{(1.96)^2 (0.5)(0.5)}{(0.5)^2} \Rightarrow N = 384.16,$$

rounded to 400 (Fragkogianni, 2015, p. 7).

- Finally, to facilitate the process, the author qualified the elements (tourists) through preparatory questions and provided sufficient guidance before and during the completion of the questionnaires.

3.2.2 Data analysis process

For the analysis of the data the descriptive statistics – means, standard deviations, skewness and kurtosis – were calculated for all the questions using SPSS 18.0. Cross-tabulation was used to analyse the effect of recession on a long-term basis.

4. Results

4.1 Descriptive statistics

Burns and Burns (2008) state that there are two types of statistics: descriptive and inferential. Descriptive statistics summarize groups of data to facilitate their description and transform them into values of a conceivable character. Moreover, Burns and Burns (2008) separate descriptive statistics into measures of a central tendency and measures of deviation. In relation to the measures of central tendency, indicating whether the distribution of the majority of scores lies around a specific value, the average, frequently reported as the “mean”, constitutes the most common measure of central tendency, “suitable for numerical values and attitudinal statements” (Palihawadana, 2013, p. 19).

Because of the constrained time limit, demographic analysis was not applied as it was considered unnecessary in view of the purposes of the research. The descriptive analysis of the 400 questionnaires distributed, measuring the various constructs (all responses given on a five-point Likert scale), generated the values shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Descriptive statistics

	<i>Statement: Recession</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Dev.</i>
R1	The current recession has led me to take fewer holidays	3.81	.982
R2	The current recession has led me to reduce my length of stay on holiday	3.39	1.045
R3	The current recession has led me to select cheaper transport	2.66	.933
R4	The current recession has led me to select cheaper accommodation	3.88	.900
R5	The current recession has led me to select a destination closer to home	3.33	.992
	<i>Statement: Central Government Policies</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Dev.</i>
CGP1	It is important for central government tourism policies to focus on destination planning	3.92	.666
CGP2	It is important for central government tourism policies to focus on destination marketing	3.96	.662
CGP3	It is important for central government tourism policies to focus on strengthening destination branding	4.06	.623
CGP4	It is important for central government tourism policies to focus on destination positioning	3.81	.691
CGP5	It is important for central government tourism policies to focus on product development	3.74	.704
CGP6	It is important for central government tourism policies to focus on visitor management	3.92	.617
CGP7	It is important for central government tourism policies to focus on the provision of sufficient information to visitors	4.01	.618
	<i>Statement: Destination Selection Factors</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Dev.</i>
LDM1	Destination stakeholders should focus on providing good accommodation	4.30	.599
LDM2	Destination stakeholders should focus on providing good shopping opportunities	4.08	.470
LDM3	Destination stakeholders should focus on providing a good natural environment	4.21	.462
LDM4	Destination stakeholders should focus on creating a well-known image for the destination	4.19	.557
LDM5	Destination stakeholders should develop the friendliness of locals living in the destination	4.13	.452
	<i>Statement: Local Decision Makers</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Dev.</i>
LDM1	Destination stakeholders should focus on providing good accommodation	4.30	.599
LDM2	Destination stakeholders should focus on providing good shopping opportunities	4.08	.470
LDM3	Destination stakeholders should focus on providing a good natural environment	4.21	.462
LDM4	Destination stakeholders should focus on creating a well-known image for the destination	4.19	.557
LDM5	Destination stakeholders should develop the friendliness of locals living in the destination	4.13	.452
	<i>Statement: Marketing Activities</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Dev.</i>
MA1	During a crisis, advertising should be maintained	4.32	.504
MA2	During a crisis, destinations should promote new products	4.36	.505
MA3	During a crisis, destinations should implement alternative pricing	4.34	.524

MA4	During a crisis, marketing should focus on new customers	4.26	.526
MA5	During a crisis, destinations should seek out innovative marketing ideas	4.37	.527
	Statement: Tourist Decisions	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Dev.</i>
TD1	I made my final decision by compromising my needs due to recession	3.36	.771
TD2	I made my final decision by obtaining the seller's opinion	3.90	.841
TD3	I made my final decision after bargaining with the seller	3.52	.950
TD4	I made my final decision by obtaining my friends'/relatives' opinions	4.12	.736
TD5	I made my final decision by obtaining my family's opinion	4.27	.614
	Statement: Factors Important for Destination Selection	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Dev.</i>
F1	Expenditure	4.52	.510
F2	Safety & security	4.30	.579
F3	Accommodation infrastructure	4.20	.568
F4	Sanitation	4.46	.528
F5	Sightseeing	3.95	.580
F6	Convenience	4.17	.608
F7	Activities I can participate in	3.98	.572

In relation to the respondents' attitudes towards **recession**, the fourth statement (R4) concerning the selection of cheaper accommodation gained the highest proportion of agreement (agree: 189/400 [47.3%]; strongly agree: 100/400 [25%]), while the third statement (R3), focusing on the selection of cheaper transport, gained the greatest overall disagreement of 50.8% (disagree: 186; strongly disagree: 17) (see Table 1).

In relation to the respondents' attitudes towards **central government policies**, the third statement (CGP3), concerning the importance of central government tourism policies to focus on the strengthening of destination branding, and the seventh (CGP7) statement, concerning the importance of central government tourism policies focusing on the provision of sufficient information to visitors, showed the highest proportion of agreement (343/400 [85.8%]; 336/400 [84.1%] respectively). Contrary to CGP3 and CGP7, the fifth statement (CGP5), related to the importance of central government tourism policies focusing on product development, as well as the fourth statement (CGP4), referring to the importance of central government tourism policies focusing on destination positioning, had the lowest proportions of agreement ([67.1%] 268/400; [73.8%] 295/400 respectively), revealing a general tendency towards agreement (see Table 1).

In relation to the respondents' attitudes towards **destination selection factors**, the second (DSF2) statement concerning the importance of overall tourism expenditure in selecting a destination obtained the highest proportion of agreement (agree: 175/400 [43.8%]; strongly agree: 220/400 [55%]), while the third statement (DSF3), related to the importance of cultural attractiveness as a destination selection factor, gained the lowest proportion of overall agreement 68% (agree: 216; strongly agree: 56), which demonstrates a general tendency for agreement (see Table 1).

In relation to the responses related to attitudes towards **local decision makers**, the first statement (LDM1), referring to the obligation for destination stakeholders to focus on the provision of good accommodation, acquired the highest proportion of agreement (agree: 222/400 [55.5%]; strongly agree: 148/400 [37%]), while the second

statement (LDM2), which refers to the obligation for destination stakeholders to focus on the provision of good shopping opportunities, had the lowest proportion of overall agreement at 92% (agree: 308/400; strongly agree: 60/400), which demonstrates a general tendency towards agreement (see Table 1).

Concerning the statements related to responses towards **marketing activities**, that referring to whether the destinations should seek innovative marketing ideas during a crisis (MA5) attained the highest proportion of agreement (agree: 235/400 [58.8%]; strongly agree: 156/400 [39%]), while the fourth statement (MA4), which refers to whether marketing should focus on new customers during a crisis, had the lowest proportion of overall agreement at 96% (agree: 266/400; strongly agree: 118/400), indicating a general tendency towards agreement (see Table 1).

Dealing with the perspectives of the respondents concerning **tourist decisions**, the fifth statement (TD5), referring to whether they made their final decision by obtaining their family's opinion, obtained the highest proportion of agreement (agree: 233/400 [58.3%]; strongly agree: 139/400 [34.8%]), while the first statement (TD1), referring to whether they made their final decision by compromising their needs due to recession, acquired the lowest proportion of overall agreement at 41% (agree: 140/400; strongly agree: 24/400), indicating a general tendency for agreement (see Table 1).

Concerning respondents' views on factors deemed important for **destination selection** (see Table 1), expenditure attained the highest proportion of agreement (agree: 186/400 [46.5%]; strongly agree: 212/400 [53%]), while sightseeing showed the lowest proportion of overall agreement at 82.8% (agree: 279/400; strongly agree: 52/400), indicating a general tendency towards agreement.

4.1.1 Long-term impact of the recession

The long-term influence of recession was considered by the respondents to be relatively moderate as the mean was 3.58 (Std. Dev. = .826). The majority of the respondents (N=248) considered that the recession would continue to affect their decisions, while 105 respondents were neutral with regard to the impact of the recession. Table 2 illustrates the justification produced by the respondents concerning this respective influence: 386 respondents answered this and 21 respondents gave more than one answer. In total, 407 responses were collected. The most frequent response was related to salary stagnation (36.6%), followed by the continuation of the crisis in Europe (26.3%) and prospect of high unemployment (15.5%).

Table 2

Long-term effects of recession

	Reasons	Long-term Influence					Total
		Not at all	A little	Somewhat	Significantly	A lot	
1	Salary stagnation	0	0	39	94	16	149
2	Continuation of European crisis	0	0	31	68	8	107
3	High unemployment	0	0	20	37	6	63

4	Europe will overcome the current crisis	5	22	2	0	0	29
5	Instability of Euro monetary unit	0	0	5	14	1	20
6	The European economy will improve	1	10	2	0	0	13
7	Continuation of political instability	0	0	5	4	0	9
8	The economy of the respondent's country will improve	0	7	1	0	0	8
9	Other	0	3	3	3	0	9
	<i>Total</i>	5	39	102	209	31	407

5. Discussion

5.1 Correlation analysis concerning the recession

The correlation analysis (Table 2) revealed that the highest impact of recession concerns the statements examining consumers' destination selection factors. For all relevant statements there is statistical significance, while the highest correlation occurs in the statement concerning the importance of social considerations (e.g. social unrest) for potential travellers in selecting a destination (DSF4). A series of correlations were also found for the statements concerning tourist decisions. As the results indicate, the highest correlation concerns the formulation of tourist decisions and the compromising of consumers' needs due to recession (TD1). Surprisingly, the only cluster of statements to exhibit no statistical significance in the correlation analysis seems to be that dealing with marketing activities (MA). It appears that even though the descriptive statistics (Table 1) clearly highlight the importance of marketing during recession, the economic crisis itself affects the influence of marketing formulation, but not to any great extent concerning marketing penetration in the market.

Table 3

Correlation in terms of recession's influence in consumers' decision-making

Item	CC	Item	CC	Item	CC	Item	CC
CGP1	-.011	DSF1	.119*	LDM3	-.088	MA5	.043
CGP2	.089*	DSF2	.125*	LDM4	-.088	TD1	.155**
CGP3	-.005	DSF3	-.116*	LDM5	-.108*	TD2	-.119*
CGP4	-.010	DSF4	.216**	MA1	.001	TD3	.058*
CGP5	.009	DSF5	.135**	MA2	-.018	TD4	.046
CGP6	-.006	LDM1	-.051*	MA3	-.063	TD5	-.041
CGP7	-.096	LDM2	-.044	MA4	.000		

Notes: CC = correlation coefficient. *Correlation is significant at the .05 level. ** Correlation is significant at the .01 level.

5.2 Managerial implications

Sheldon and Dwyer, (2010) argue that integrated market research is necessary for tourism stakeholders to arrive at relevant, accurate and timely information that permits them to adapt effectively to constantly changing circumstances. Thus, it can be assumed that successful management is necessary for tourism businesses to recruit sufficiently qualified employees with the ability to access information and data. By providing sufficient information concerning the current situation, they can help managers predict the future status of the tourism industry. Moreover, given that during periods of recession tourist expenditure is a severe concern for the vast majority of people, suitable yield management is crucial in the business sector to reduce operating costs and thus also develop the capacity to provide accommodation and other facilities at a lower cost. Careful study must be undertaken at this stage to ensure the results of investigation are relevant over the long term, leading to a destination's sustainable development and providing a powerful means of fighting recession (Gokovali et al., 2007). In relation to tourism businesses, operational and promotional activities should also demonstrate continuity as consistency (Rosberg 1979) strengthens business while also being very attractive to tourists.

According to Ang (2001), a country's national and international behaviour greatly affects its attractiveness to prospective tourists. For this reason, every country that aims to achieve touristic success should take care of its international presence. In addition, it should be careful to maintain favourable external relationships with other countries to attract as many tourists as possible.

According to the research findings, local stakeholders hold a pivotal role in the construction of a destination's image, as shown in the existing literature as well as by the findings of the primary research, which revealed that positive interactions with locals are highly appreciated by the respondents. It should be noted that innovation must characterize every marketing plan, while a successful promotional strategy can be drawn up only through constructive cooperation between all the stakeholder groups that have interests in the tourism sector.

6. Conclusions

6.1 Limitations of the research

This study aims to shed light on a topic about which very little is known (Bronner and Hoog, 2014; Smeral, 2010). As with any study, this has its limitations. First, as the survey was run within a constrained timescale (mid-July to the beginning of August), a survey of longer duration should be undertaken. It should also be noted that the central harbour is an additional important entry point for visitors to the island, especially from Italy. However, issues with circulation and harbour operations made full access to the travellers technically impossible. Thus, the airport was chosen as being more representative of international tourists.

6.2 Future research directions

This study presents fundamental aspects of tourism and destination marketing using the small island of Zakynthos as a case study. However, to provide more integrated and representative research, the survey should be repeated in a tactical manner. In this way, any change in circumstances and people's behaviour could be more effectively observed. In this case, the behaviour of important local stakeholders and the opinions of the residents, as well as their reactions to everyday life, should also be investigated. This process could be applied in the case of every other destination with a similar profile, provided that the research is adapted to their particular characteristics.

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