
Editorial

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Biographical notes: Konstantinos Andriotis is Reader in Tourism and Leisure at Nottingham Trent University. He edits the *International Journal of Tourism Policy* and the book series *Tourism Development and Management – Issues and Approaches*. He is author of five books and over 30 published articles and book chapters. He is a regular reviewer for 11 journals and a member of the editorial board of ten. His research interests are in tourism development, planning, community attitudes and tourism experience.

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This issue of the IJTP is devoted to alternative and special interest tourism. The aim of the Special Issue is to provide a forum for researchers to reflect on and evaluate issues pertaining to alternative and special interest tourism. The call for papers attracted lots of interest from academics from three continents across the world. Indeed, a key feature of this Special Edition is the geographical diversity of contributing authors affiliated to countries such as France, Greece, Ireland, Portugal, Spain, UK, Canada, and Australia.

Although any theme issue is necessarily selective, yet the related explorations represent the current state of major concerns advancing the ongoing debate on issues covering state-of-the-art theoretical, practical and institutional work on alternative and special interest tourism. For instance, the specific interests and needs of special interest and alternative types of tourists are among the main issues of papers in this special issue.

In addition, this issue includes papers devoted to cases from different geographic regions, ranging from Northern European countries such as UK, Ireland, and Germany, to Mediterranean destinations, such as Spain, Portugal and Greece, and regions from other parts of the world, such as Peru, Korea and Australia. In total, this Special Edition comprises eight papers addressing topics related to rural tourism, marketing of golf tourism, segmentation of gastronomic tourists, ethical behaviour of ecotour operators, and music and urban cultural heritage.

The theme of the 'music tourism' as a form of special interest tourism is explored by Gianna Moscardo, Breda McCarthy, Laurie Murphy and Philip Pearce in their paper 'The importance of networks in special interest tourism case studies of music tourism in Australia'. The paper, which is based on the analysis of three music events in regional locations in Queensland, examines stakeholder perceptions of the contributions that music festivals and events could make to the host regions. Employing the grounded theory approach, the paper identifies and discusses links between different characteristics of music tourism development and their socio-cultural impacts on the local regions. The paper concludes that music events and festivals are valuable in the promotion of local resident participation and social networks are critical for positive developmental tourism outcomes.

Issues pertinent to the theme of urban cultural heritage are explored by Peter Schofield in his paper 'Soft city, hard sell: Manchester's popular music soundscape'. The paper, which is based on qualitative research, considers Manchester's popular music heritage, through a discussion of the productions/consumption of the city's music tours. Within this context, the discussion focuses on the music tourists' experiences of the city's streets associated with popular music eras, bands and artists. Schofield convincingly highlights the significance of the consumption of Manchester's music tours in providing an alternative and special interest tourism product for visitors to the city. The paper concludes that music tourism can enhance a city's brand and add to tourism market share.

The paper of Antónia Correia, Miguel Moital, Nuno Oliveira and Carlos Ferreira da Costa, entitled 'Multidimensional segmentation of gastronomic tourists based on motivation and satisfaction', focuses on a relatively under searched area in the study of tourism, namely gastronomic tourism. The study uses a random sample of 377 tourists departing from Lisbon airport (Portugal) and by using two main segmentation variables (motivation and satisfaction) attempts to explore the potential of these two variables in identifying distinct segments of international tourists visiting Lisbon. From the conclusions of the study it is evident that among the two variables, motivation is much more powerful for segmenting gastronomic tourists. Based on this finding the authors draw a number of practical implications for future tourism policy and management.

The starting point in the 'Length of stay in rural tourism: a local case' is that demand for rural tourism has grown in recent decades in Spain, even in areas traditionally associated with sun and sea tourism. Albaladejo and Molera's study of rural tourism in Murcia, a Mediterranean region of Spain highlights the 'length of stay' as an important variable in 'ascertaining tourists' behaviour' regarding products and services and in identifying consumer typologies. Their analysis focuses on those factors which determine how long tourists spend in specific rural areas such as Murcia. The paper concludes that effective promotion of rural tourism accommodation requires knowledge and understanding of rural tourists' motivations, socio-economic characteristics and their

travel patterns. It also suggests that different promotional strategies should be used for 'weekend tourists' and longer stay visitors.

The question 'Are travellers' perceptions sufficient in evaluating eco tour operator ethics? A case study of Tambopata Reserve, Peru' is considered by Agnes M.K. Nowaczek and Bryan Smale. A self-administered questionnaire was distributed to travellers participating in ecotours to Tambopata Reserve, in Peru. The principal purpose of the questionnaire was to understand participants' perceptions of operators' ethical behaviour. Participants were asked to rate the operators' ethical behaviour on six dimensions – "general ethics, local people, environmental education, operator professionalism, contribution to conservation, and accommodation/transportation". The analysis of data obtained from 228 participants suggests that overall 'travellers' perceptions of operators' ethical behaviour were favourable on all six dimensions and their perceptions were strongly related to satisfaction with received service. The study however, shows that travellers were not on site long enough to question any operators' ethical practices and thus it questions whether the perceptions of travellers are effective indicators of operators' ethical behaviour.

Although the theme of rural tourism is also addressed in Vrana and Zafiroopoulos' paper their main focus is on the websites of rural tourism lodgings in Mediterranean countries. Based on a quantitative analysis their paper discusses the websites of rural tourism lodgings in terms of "interactivity, navigation and functionality" as well as "site marketing practices on the internet". Although the internet is recognised as a "flexible way of doing business" and websites are said to enable tourism-related businesses to become international, Vrana and Zafiroopoulos' comparative study of Mediterranean rural tourism lodgings websites shows that many small companies do not take full advantage of the emerging technologies. A key finding in the 'Rural tourism lodgings' websites: a comparative study among Mediterranean countries' is that none of the websites examined were offering features such as 'Online Payment' and 'Online Reservation'. The authors conclude that SMTs in the hospitality sector need support to maintain and enhance their presence on the web. The results of this study will be of interest to both academics and National Tourism Organisations.

The paper of Paskaleva, Besson and Sutherland, 'Tourism and European capitals of culture: the role of destination competitiveness governance', deals with a topic of great interest for both academics and practitioners in the cultural tourism and heritage management fields. The paper takes as cases four Northern European tourist cities, namely Lille (France), Cork (Republic of Ireland), Belfast (Northern Ireland) and Karlsruhe (Germany), participating in the European Capital of Culture Programme. The authors explore how the four cities can benefit from an integrated and inclusive bidding programme (the governance paradigm) and increase their competitiveness as tourism destinations. Among the main conclusions of the study include that European Capitals of Culture require further innovation in policy and programme implementation in order to successfully integrate the policy, planning and management of cultural tourism within the urban system.

The exploration of 'Queensland as a golf tourism destination: from South Korean market perspective' is the focus of the last paper of the Special Issue, written by Kim and Lee. The paper uses marketing material (web-pages, brochures, booklets and guidebooks) available from internet search engines, travel agencies, hotels, golf resorts, and visitor information centres to explore how Queensland (Australia), as a golf tourism destination, is marketed to the South Korean market. Through content and semiotic

analyses of tourism marketing material the authors propose different prominent themes that have emerged from the respective markets of general and golf tourists. The study concludes with the provision of implications to product developers and marketers, proposing the need to prepare more specialised marketing material for golf tourists in an attempt to develop further this niche market for Queensland.

The papers in this Special Issue adopt a multidisciplinary perspective focusing on practical perspectives that concern the development, marketing and management of alternative and special interest tourism. As interest in the field of alternative tourism continues to develop, we are delighted to bring to you such a diverse set of papers which, we are sure will appeal to both academics and practitioners.

The Special Issue has benefited from the help of many people. We are immensely grateful to the contributors and the reviewers who assessed the papers.