

The Effect of Demographics on Tourist Experience and Competitiveness of Tourist Destinations in Eastern Macedonia and Thrace

Antonios S. Dalakis, Georgia Yfantidou, George Costa

School of Physical Education & Sport Science, Democritus University of Thrace, Greece
email: *forest@otenet.gr, gifantid@phyed.duth.gr, gkosta@phyed.duth.gr*

Abstract

Demographic characteristics played significant role in previous researches. The present research concerns tourist experience and competitiveness of tourist destinations in eastern Macedonia and Thrace in Greece that offer outdoor recreational activities. The purpose of the survey was to investigate whether the tourist experience and the competitiveness of the different holiday places are affected by the demographic characteristics of tourists. The results indicated that the demographics have affected the research. The results of the study gave some important information to the public sector (municipalities, regions) and to the professionals of tourism (hotels, companies with recreation outdoor activities and travel offices) of the region which are very practical elements. From all the above interventions, the indirect and immediate beneficiaries will be the tourists of the area to whom the research ultimately aims as its final recipients.

Keywords

Outdoor recreational sport activities, tourist experience, competitiveness, destinations, demographic data, regions, tourism.

1. Introduction

Increasing leisure time in modern industrial societies, increasing disposable income, organizational changes in living and working, and multiple needs and choices for destinations have also influenced the tourism market in another way, further leading to segmentation and specialization in destinations. The modern visitor enjoys leisure time in many shorter periods scattered throughout the year and not in a single time period (eg for summer holidays) as in the past. Therefore, the stay at a destination decreases, but the visiting and residence destinations are multiplied (eg winter skiing, nature trips in spring or autumn, sea and beaches in summer, etc.), in one searching for multiple "experiences" during the year, often in conjunction with professional or cultural activities. These changes in behavior affect the tourist market in terms of both the M length of stay and the seasonality but also the competition and the diffusion of demand in space (Hall & Page, 1999).

2. Literature Review

2.1. *Tourist experience*

The experience of tourism has been a key subject of research in the 1960s and has been tackled with a lot of academic work in the field of tourism. The study of tourist experience has been approached from a variety of perspectives due to the complexity of the product itself and the lack of agreement on its meaning and use. There is discussion about the definition of tourism as experience because of its complexity in nature (Li, 2000; Yfantidou, Nakis & Kosta, 2009). Boorstin (1962; 1964) considers tourism to be a popular act of consumption, while MacCannell (1973) considers it an active response to the difficulties of modern life, arguing that tourists are in search of "authentic" experience in order to overcome the difficulties. This discussion is part of a shared experience for all tourists, as if their needs were consistent, regardless of the different social and cultural backgrounds that these needs are.

The term "experience", as well as "quality", may refer to various aspects of a process in a result or product. It could be described as an individual's inner condition, which brought about something that personally experienced, suffered or lived (Cohen, 2000). It could be an organized trip as a product that can be purchased. Another view, generally supported in the literature, is that tourist experience is a process that involves evolution through a series of stages (starting with the expectation that leads to planning, moving to the destination and return journey (Clawson, 1963; Jennings, 1997; Stavropoulou, Yfantidou & Spyridopoulou, 2010). As claimed by Jennings and Weiler, (2006), the nature of the tourist experience is essentially multiple and involves many and complex interactions and contexts.

2.2. *Competitiveness of tourist destinations*

The competitiveness of a country or region is affected and shaped by the competitiveness of the individual sectors of its economy. The competitiveness of each sector, and thus of the tourism sector, is influenced and shaped by the competitiveness of businesses operating in each sector. Business competitiveness is influenced and shaped by their ability to meet demand for products / services they produce / offer better than other businesses (Association of Greek Tourist Enterprises - SETE, 2005; Yfantidou, Spyridopoulou, Kouthouris, Balaska, Matarazzo & Costa, 2017).

The key factors that are expected to continue to shape the tourism industry (Deloitte & NYU, 2005) are:

- *Identity - Branding*: Travelers are becoming more and more demanding in matters related to the "name" and give importance to the experience of travel, and not just to the natural beauties of each destination. The logic of emerging destinations has been built on this philosophy, offering sun and sea opportunities for shopping in luxury shopping centers, sports, skiing and so on.
- *New markets* - Impact of emerging markets (eg China, India, Persian Gulf states) on international tourism developments: these markets also offer opportunities for developing residential complexes as cottages, which opens up a new market and creates demand for similar products (condo hotels, buy for use and let, etc.).
- *People - Demographic changes*: Different socio-political conditions (such as early retirement and more leisure time) enable more than 50 years of age to be active in tourism, being the most basic target market.
- *Technology* - Robust technology development: the implementation of new technology systems and the widespread use of the Internet are shaping the modern tourist market.

2.3. Demographic characteristics impact on tourism

Evidence of such a change is presented by Wilkinson and Mulgan (1995), who claim the behaviour of young men and women (18-34 years old) is now becoming increasingly similar, blurring the boundaries between the genders. For example, Roberts (1996) suggests that gender differences in sport have lessened as young people have taken up more sports, many of which are played by both men and women. However, the presence or absence of gendered differences in the leisure behaviour of young men and women in their home environment cannot be used to predict how men and women behave when on vacation.

Gender as a category or analytical lens was not on the tourism studies radar in any sustained fashion until the early 90s. Since then, many researchers of tourism have worked to rectify the oversight, rehearsing the steps followed by other areas in the social sciences. This begins with what is known colloquially as the "add women and stir" approach; followed by the move from "women" to "gender"; then the incorporation of the performative body; and, finally, an attempt to factor in the multiplicity of women. The next "eureka" moment for the field, or lacuna in the discourse for grant applicants to identify, will likely be race and ethnicity (Burman, 2002).

Few years later Beerli and Martín (2004) emphasized the importance of sociodemographic characteristics. They referred that relationships between the affective and cognitive components of image and the tourists' sociodemographic characteristics were found with reference to gender, age, education and social class. The country of origin was the socio-demographic characteristic exerting most influence on the cognitive and affective components of image, both in the case of first-time and that of repeat tourists.

In another research in Greece by Yfantidou, Costa and Michalopoulos (2008), there were no differences reported between men and women, but the interaction with age revealed them, especially between the age 17-39. Finally, educational grades revealed in their research a supremacy of university graduates at sport tourists which may be related to income grade and capability of tourism.

Frew and Shaw (1999) suggested that in order to understand the implications more fully, it will be necessary to adopt a more multifaceted approach to behavioral assessment, i.e., ensuring that there is a consideration of other possible moderators, including demographic aspects such as income, the number of dependent children, the stage in the family life cycle, and occasional

travel party size and composition, and the relevance of travel history and familiarity with various attractions. So the purpose of this study is to investigate whether the tourist experience and the competitiveness of the different holiday places are affected by the demographic characteristics of tourists.

3. Methodology

3.1. Sample

The sample of the survey consisted of 3070 tourists / visitors, of whom 1596 men and 1302 women, found in the region of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace, in North Eastern Greece, from 1-1-2015 to 31-12 -2015. The age of the participants was divided into three categories according to Gibson, (1994): a) from 17-39 years of age (early adulthood); b) from 40-59 years of age (middle adulthood); and c) 60+ (late adulthood) (Yfantidou, Costa & Michalopoulou, 2008).

3.2. Description of the Instruments

The questionnaire used in this research was from a similar survey conducted in 2006 in the United States of America in the context of a doctoral research by Meng (2006). The validity and reliability analysis of the questionnaire led to the selection of this questionnaire. The questionnaire contained four main factors and this paper will present two of them (a and b): a) the *Quality of Vacation Experience* phase with four subcategories: the “Pre-Trip Planning Phase”, the “phase of movement from your home to the destination and back” the “On-site Phase” and “After-trip Phase”, b) *Perceived Destination Competitiveness*, c) *Motivation* and d) *Tourism Involvement*.

The questionnaire of this survey consisted of 4 pages. In the present paper, the first and second page was used. The first page included the tourist experience and the three of four subcategories with 25 questions. The second, included the fourth subcategory with 7 questions and the competitiveness of different destinations with 22 questions. The third page included the general tourist behavior of the tourist examined by 5 questions. The last page contained information on the type of holiday which tourists select with seven questions, they were also asked about their participation in outdoor recreational activities by ranking these activities and where do you prefer to make holidays in Greece with 13 choices. Demographic characteristics were also included in.

Fang Meng's original questionnaire was in English, translated into Greek using the back to back method (Yfantidou, Costa, Michalopoulou & Tsitskari, 2010) and adapted for the specific research needs. Then it was translated back to back again in English. It also translated into German, Polish and Bulgarian. The Romanian respondents completed questionnaires in English. All the were given on a 5-point Likert scale with 1 “not significant” and 5 “very important”.

3.3. Measuring Procedure

Participants completed voluntarily the questionnaire. They were informed of the content of the questionnaire and the purpose of the survey and afterwards they completed the questionnaire. In the survey area 4000 questionnaires were shared, 3637 were returned and 3070 were considered suitable for the study (567 were removed because they had not been thoroughly completed).

The participants were searched in various places, such as hotels (*****Thraki Palace Alexandroupoli, AGRIANI Xanthi), on ferries (ferry boats Keramoti - Limenas Thassos, Alexandroupoli - Samothraki line), beaches (on the island of Thassos and Samothrace, in the areas of Xanthi and Alexandroupoli), in places where outdoor recreation activities were organized in various parts of the river Nestos, in the delta of the river Evros, in the gorge of Aggitis River, Lake Vistonida, the waterfall of Livaditis in Xanthi, the Straits of the Nestos River, the Falakro Drama ski center, as well as random visitors, found in different parts of the research area or in urban areas (the cities of Drama, Kavala, Xanthi, Komotini and Alexandroupoli) or in the nature (in the Xanthi forest, in the monasteries of Xanthi, in the area of Nymphaia in Komotini, in the park of Agia Varvara in Drama, in the castle of Kavala, in forest Dadias).

The participants in the survey were asked to complete the questionnaire according to their location and those who did the outdoor recreation activity filled it up immediately after the action, the people who travelled with the ship completed it during the trip, hotel guests in their rooms, etc.

3.4. Geographical area of research

The survey was conducted in the 13th Region of the country, Eastern Macedonia and Thrace, including five prefectures with a total area of 14,157 km² (GNTO, 2003). The total population of the region is 608,182 inhabitants (census 2011) (Hellenic Statistical Authority, 2017). The prefectures of the region are the prefecture of Drama, the prefecture of Kavala, the prefecture of Xanthi, the prefecture of Rodopi and the prefecture of Evros. The capital of the region is the city of Komotini, the capital of the Rodopi prefecture. There are two islands in the area, the island of Thassos, which administratively belongs to the prefecture of Kavala and the island of Samothraki, which administratively belongs to the prefecture of Evros. In the south the region is washed by the sea in four of the five prefectures, the Thracian Sea. The northern borders of the region are covered by the mountain range of Rodopi with the highest mountain Mount Falakro (2,229 meters) in the prefecture of Drama. The eastern point of the region is the country's border with Turkey, using for the most part the river Evros, the second largest river in the Balkans (Hellenic Statistical Authority, 2017). The western border is the prefecture of Serres. The survey was conducted in northeastern Greece in the region of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace. The reason the survey was conducted in this area is that the headquarters of the university that the survey was conducted is in the area. Following also the results of the pilot survey it was decided that this region is a large tourist destination for the northern Greece and it is important to conduct a research.

Furthermore, the area is famous for its incredible natural beauty, with areas protected by the international convention RAMSAR (Ramsar Convention, 2018) and the European treaty NATURA 2000 (European Union, 2009). Thus, there are 4 of the 11 areas of the country protected by the Ramsar Convention, the delta of the River Evros, Lake Ismarides, Lake Vistonida and the delta of the Nestos River. Of the 24 areas protected by the European treaty NATURA in the region there are 4: Dadia-Lefkimmi-Soufliou Forest National Park, Evros Delta National Park, Eastern Macedonia and Thrace National Park (Nestos, Vistonida, Ismarida) and National Park Rodopi mountain range. The area has a total of 6 rivers, the Strimona river, the Angitis river, the Nestos river, the Lissos river, the Arda river, Erythrotamos river and the Evros river. The area also has important lakes such as Lake Vistonida and Lake Mitroikos belonging to the Ismarida Lake group. The area also has important mountainous parts of the Rodopi mountain range with the highest mountain Mount

Falakro, which also has the northernmost ski resort of the country. The island of Thassos with a perimeter of about 100 km and the highest mountain “Ypsario” with a height of 1206 m. The island of Samothraki with a perimeter of about 59 km which has the mountain Saos with the peak “Moon” of 1611 m. The district has 638 different categories of accommodation (from 5-star hotels to ecotourist hostels) (EMT, 2018).

3.5. The outdoor recreational research activities

The activities carried out by the participants in the survey were divided into two categories: a) moderate (canoe-kayaking at sea, river and lake, archery, athletic shooting, orienteering and mountain hiking) and b) vigorous (rafting, diving, cycling, mountaineering, rock climbing-rappel, rope games (flying-fox), water sports, parapente and motor sports).

3.6. Design of Research

The independent variables of the survey were the gender, marital status, age, education, total annual income and occupation of the participants. The dependent variables were: the tourists’ experience with 32 questions and the competitiveness of different destination with 22 questions.

Research demographics and multivariate analysis were conducted for research purposes. Data were analyzed by MANOVA multivariate analysis in order to examine the independent variables with all dependent variables.

4. Results

Participants in the survey came from seven different countries and their entries in the survey are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Participants in the survey by country.

COUNTRY	MEN	WOMEN	TOTAL
Greece	873	793	1666
Great Britain	138	113	251
Germany	152	81	233
Poland	67	89	156
Bulgaria	292	169	461
Cyprus	36	31	67
Romania	37	27	64

The Greek participants were living or residing in 47 of the 51 prefectures of the country. The counties have been numbered according to the Ministry of the Interior (<http://www.ypes.gr/el/regions/aytodioikhsh/statesmunicipalities/>). The counties of which there were no participants were Argolida, Grevena, Laconia and Phocis.

The results appeared that most of the participants are “men”, “singles”, 17-39 years old, with a University degree, with total annual income <20.000€ and student.

4.1. Tourist experience and demographics

The multivariate analyses MANOVA between tourist experience and demographic characteristics showed the following results which are presented in table 2. At the table below if there is an interaction it will be presented only this, if not, all F prices will be shown.

Table 2. MANOVA analysis for tourist experience and demographics.

	Sex-Marital status	Age-Grade of Education	Total annual income-Profession
Pre-Trip Planning Phase	$F_{(6,2758)} = 1.468$ $p = 0.185 > 0.05$ $F_{(1,2758)} = 1.766$ $p = 0.184 > 0.05$ $F_{(6,2758)} = 8.656$ $p = 0.00 < 0.05$	$F_{(12,2815)} = 1.732$ $p = 0.054 > 0.05$ $F_{(2,2815)} = 8.046$ $p = 0.00 < 0.05$ $F_{(6,2815)} = 2.677$ $p = 0.014 < 0.05$	$F_{(30,2731)} = 5.593$ $p = 0.00 < 0.05$
Phase of movement from your home to the destination and back	$F_{(6,2793)} = .785$ $p = 0.667 > 0.05$ $F_{(1,2793)} = 2.662$ $p = 0.070 > 0.05$ $F_{(6,2793)} = 14.193$ $p = 0.00 < 0.05$	$F_{(12,2848)} = 3.155$ $p = 0.00 < 0.05$	$F_{(29,2761)} = 6.222$ $p = 0.00 < 0.05$
On-site Phase	$F_{(6,2775)} = 2.119$ $p = 0.004 < 0.05$	$F_{(12,2827)} = 2.387$ $p = 0.00 < 0.05$	$F_{(30,2739)} = 3.770$ $p = 0.00 < 0.05$
After-trip Phase	$F_{(6,2800)} = .683$ $p = 0.664 > 0.05$ $F_{(1,2800)} = 3.327$ $p = 0.068 > 0.05$ $F_{(6,2800)} = 2.823$ $p = 0.010 < 0.05$	$F_{(12,2859)} = 1.265$ $p = 0.232 > 0.05$ $F_{(2,2859)} = .992$ $p = 0.371 > 0.05$ $F_{(6,2859)} = 1.083$ $p = 0.370 > 0.05$	$F_{(30,2774)} = 1.397$ $p = 0.074 > 0.05$ $F_{(7,2774)} = 3.015$ $p = 0.004 < 0.05$ $F_{(7,2774)} = 1.724$ $p = 0.099 > 0.05$

Multiple comparisons were performed and the results showed on a case-by-case basis the following:

Pre-trip Planning Phase

For the detection of statistically significant differences between the categories, the LSD multiple comparison test was applied and a statistically significant difference between the "singles" (M = 4.034) and "married" (M = 4.213), "widowed" (M = 4.210), with "cohabiting" (M = 4.149), as well as "married" (M = 4.213) with "separated" (M = 4.062).

For the detection of statistically significant differences, the LSD multiple comparison test was performed and a statistically significant difference between the "age" of "17-39 years old" (M = 4.062) and the "40-59 years old" (M = 4.369). As regards the grade of "level of education", there was a statistically significant difference between the "primary school" (M = 4.426), with "doctorate" (M = 3.999), as well as "college" (M = 4.356), with "university/technological institute" (M = 4.117) and "doctorate" (M = 3.999), as well as "university/technological institute" (M = 4.117), with the "master degree" (M = 4.381) and finally the grade of "master degree" (M = 4.381), with "doctorate" (M = 3.999).

For the identification of statistically significant differences, the LSD multiple comparison test was applied and a statistically significant difference between the "annual income" "less than 20,000€" and the "profession" in grade "*freelancer*" (M = 3.844), with the grades "housewives" (M = 4.487), "unemployed" (M = 4.042), "student" (M = 4.100), "civil servant" (M = 4.185), and "other" (M = 4.104), as well as "*private employee*" (M = 3.867), with "housewives" (M = 4.487), "unemployed" (M = 4.042), "student" (M = 4.100), "civil servant" (M = 4.185), and "other" (M = 4.104), as well as "*pensioner*" (M = 4.018), with "housewives" (M = 4.487), as well as "*housewives*" (M = 4.487) with "unemployed" (M = 4.042), "student" (M = 4.100), "civil servant" (M = 4.185), and "other" (M = 4.104), and finally "*unemployed*" (M = 4.042) with "civil servant" (M = 4.185). At grade "20.001€-40.000€", the "*freelancer*" (M = 4.107) with "private employee" (M = 4.206) and "civil servant" (M = 4.262), as well as "*private employee*" (M = 4.206), with "student" (M = 4.014) and finally "*student*" with "civil servant" (M = 4.262). At grade "40.001€-60.000€" the "*freelancer*" (M = 4.250), with "student" (M = 3.695), as well as "*private employee*" (M = 4.291), with "student" (M = 3.695), as well as "*pensioner*" (M = 4.542), with "student" (M = 3.695), as well as "*student*" (M = 3.695), with "civil servant" (M = 4.196) and finally "*other*" (M = 5.000), with the "student" grade (M = 3.695). At grade of "60.001€-80.000€", the "*freelancer*" (M = 4.426), with "private employee" (M = 4.015) and "unemployed" (M = 3.500), as well as "*private employee*" (M = 4.015), with "pensioner" (M = 4.625), as well as "*pensioner*" (M = 4.625) with "unemployed" (M = 3.500), and finally "*unemployed*" (M = 3.500), with "student" (M = 4.350). At grade "80.001€-100.000€" the "*freelancer*" (M = 4.187), with "student" (M = 3.000), as well as "*private employee*" (M = 4.450), with "student" (M = 3.000) and finally "*student*" (M = 3.000) with "civil servant" (M = 4.425). At grade "100.001€-120.000€" the "*freelancer*" (M = 4.750), with "other" (M = 3.333). At grade "more than 140.000€" the "*freelancer*" (M = 3.775), with "housewives" (M = 4.750), "student" (M = 3.094), as well as "*private employee*" (M = 4.083), with "unemployed" (M = 3.000), and "student" (M = 3.094), and finally "*housewives*" (M = 4.750), with "unemployed" (M = 3.000), and "student" (M = 3.094).

En-route Phase

In order to identify statistically significant differences, the SIDAK multiple comparison test was applied to both factors and a statistically significant difference between the "family status", "*singles*" (M = 3.990) with "married" (M = 4.279), and "cohabitation" (M = 4.175). For the second factor there was a statistically significant difference between the grade of "marital status", "*singles*" (M = 4.338), with "married" (M = 4.418), and "widow" (M = 4.157), and finally "*married*" (M = 4.418), with "divorced" (M = 4.150).

In order to identify the statistically significant differences, the SIDAK multiple comparison test was applied to both factors and the statistically significant difference for the first factor between the grade of "age" and "level of education" in "*high school*" with "17-39 years old" (M = 4.076), and "40 - 59 years old" (M = 4.247), as well as "*college*" with "17-39 years old" (M = 4.194) and "60+ years old" (M = 3.619) as well as "*university/technological institute*" with "17-39 years old" (M = 3.931), "40-59 years old" (M = 4.292), and "60+ years old" (M = 4.263), as well as "*postgraduate*", with "17-39 years" (M = 4.051), "40-59 years old" (M = 4.380), and "60+ years old" (M = 4.778), and finally "*doctorate*" with "17-39 years" (M = 4.214) and "60+ years old" (M = 3.000). For the second factor there was a statistically significant difference between the grade of "age" and "level of education" in "*doctorate*" with "17-39 years" (M = 4.643), "40-59 years old" (M = 4.178), and "60+ years old" (M = 3.667).

In order to identify the statistically significant differences, the SIDAK multiple comparison test was applied to both factors and the statistically significant difference for the first factor

between "annual income" "less than 20,000€" and the "freelancer" (M = 3.784), with "housewives" (M = 4,351), "unemployed" (M = 4,076), "student" (M = 4,046), and "civil servant" (M = 4.233). At grade "private employee" (M = 3.963), with "civil servant" (M = 4.233). At grade "student" (M = 4.046), with "civil servant" (M = 4.233). At grade "20.001€-40.000€" and the "freelancer" (M = 4.156), with "student" (M = 3.831), "civil servant" (M = 4.405), and "other" (M = 3,500). At grade "private employee" (M = 4.267), with "student" (M = 3.831) and "other" (= 3.500). At grade "pensioner" (M = 4.197), with "student" (M = 3.831), and "other" (M = 3.500). At grade "student" (M = 3.831), with "civil servant" (M = 4.405). At grade "civil servant" (M = 4.405), with "other" (M = 3.500). At grade "40.001€-60.000€" and the "freelancer" (M = 4.433), with "student" (M = 3.761). At grade "private employee" (M = 4.413), with "student" (M = 3.761). At grade "student" (M = 3.761), with "civil servant" (M = 4.294). At grade "60.001€-80.000€" and the "freelancer" (M = 4.235), with "student" (M = 3.312). At grade "private employee" (M = 4.278), with "student" (M = 3.312). At grade "pensioner" (M = 4.250), with "student" (M = 3.312). At grade "student" (M = 3,312), with "civil servant" (M = 4.310). At grade "more than 140.000€" and the "housewives" (M = 4.667), with "student" (3.608). In the second factor, there was a statistically significant difference between the grade "less than 20,000€" and "freelancer" (M = 4,388), with "civil servant" (M = 4.649). At grade "private employee" (M = 4.362), with "civil servant" (M = 4.649). At grade "unemployed" (M = 4.234), with "civil servant" (M = 4.649). At grade "student" (M = 4.328), with "civil servant" (M = 4.649). At grade "civil servant" (M = 4.649), with "other" (M = 4.306). At grade "20.001€-40.000€" and "freelancer" (M = 4.344), with "civil servant" (M = 4.697). At grade "private employee" (M = 4.227), with "student" (M = 4.379), and "civil servant" (M = 4.697). At grade "pensioner" (M = 4.197), with "civil servant" (M = 4.697). At grade "student" (M = 4.379), with "civil servant" (M = 4.697). At grade "80.001€-100.000€" and "freelancer" (M = 4.917), with "civil servant" (M = 4.167). At grade "100.001€-120.000€" and "freelancer" (M = 5.000), with "other" (M = 3.778). At grade "120.001€-140.000€" and "freelancer" (M = 4.667), with "student" (M = 3.500). At grade "more than 140,001€" and "private employee" (M = 4,111), with "housewives" (M = 5,000).

Destination On-site Phase

In order to identify statistically significant differences, the SIDAK multiple comparison test was applied to all three factors and the statistically significant difference between the "gender" of the male and the "marital status" "singles" (M = 4.110), with "married" (M = 4.332) and "separated" (M = 4.045). Among the grade of the "gender" woman and the "family status" "singles" (M = 4,026), with "married" (M = 4,418) and "separated" (M = 4.389). In second factor there was a statistically significant difference between the "gender" grade of a man and the grade of "family status" "singles" (M = 4.111). Between the "gender" grade of a woman and the grade "family status", "singles" (M = 4.218). In third factor there was a statistically significant difference between the "gender" grade of a man and the grade of "marital status" "singles" (M = 4.521), with "married" (M = 4.351), "divorced" (M = 4.264) and "cohabitation" (M = 4.266). Among the "gender" grade of a woman and the grade of "family status", "singles" (M = 4.406), with "married" (M = 4,470), "divorced" (M = 4.559) and "cohabitation" (M = 4.398).

In order to identify statistically significant differences, the SIDAK multiple comparison test was applied to all three factors and the first factor was statistically significant difference between the grade of "age" and "level of education" in "high school" with "17-39 years old" (M = 4.084), and "40-59 years old" (M = 4.376), as well as "college" with "17-39 years old" (M = 4.345) and "60+ years old" (M = 3.786) and finally in "university/technological

institute" with "17-39 years old" (M = 4.017) and "40-59 years old" (M = 4.375). In the second factor there was a statistically significant difference between the grade of "age" and "level of education" in "high school" with "17-39 years" (M = 4.101) and "40-59 years old" (M = 4.225) and finally in "university/technological institute" with the grade "17-39 years old" (M = 4.124) and "40-59 years old" (M = 4.209). The third factor did not show statistically significant differences between the "age" and "level of education" grades.

In order to identify statistically significant differences, the SIDAK multiple comparison test was applied to all three factors and a statistically significant difference was found for the first factor between "annual income" of "less than 20,000€" and "*freelancer*" (M = 4.004), "housewives" (M = 4.500) and "civil servant" (M = 4.296). At grade of "*private employee*" (M = 4.066), with "housewives" (M = 4.500) and "civil servant" (M = 4.296). At grade "*pensioner*" (M = 3.969), with "housewives" (M = 4.500). At grade "*housewives*" (M = 4.500), with "student" (M = 4.135) and "other" (M = 3.972). At grade "*student*" (M = 4.135), with "civil servant" (M = 4.296). In grade "*civil servant*" (M = 4.296), with "other" (M = 3.972). At grade "20.001€-40.000€" and "*freelancer*" (M = 4.267), with "student" (M = 3.878) and "civil servant" (M = 4.550). At grade "*private employee*" (M = 4.066), with "student" (M = 3.878). At grade "*pensioner*" (M = 4.372), with "student" (M = 3.878). At grade "*housewives*" (M = 3.975), with "civil servant" (M = 4.550). At grade "*student*" (M = 3.878), with "civil servant" (M = 4.550). At grade "40.001€-60.000€" and "*freelancer*" (M = 4.367), with "student" (M = 3.777). At grade "*private employee*" (M = 4.440), with "student" (M = 3.777). At grade "*student*" (M = 3.777), with "civil servant" (M = 4.301). At grade "60.001€-80.000€" and "*self-employed*" (M = 4.463), with "unemployed" (M = 3.375) and "student" (M = 3.719). At grade "*private employee*" (M = 4.375), with "student" (M = 3.719). At grade "*pensioner*" (M = 4.469), with "student" (M = 3.719). At grade "*student*" (M = 3.719), with "civil servant" (M = 4.431). At grade "80.001€-100.000€" and "*freelancer*" (M = 4.875), with "student" (M = 3.750). At grade "more than 140.001€" and "*freelancer*" (M = 4.528), with "student" (M = 3.883). In second factor there was a statistically significant difference between "100.001€-120.000€" and grade of "*private employee*" (M = 4.000), with "other" (M = 2.667). At grade "student" (M = 3.933), with "other" (M = 2.667). In the third factor there was a statistically significant difference between "less than 20,000€" and "*unemployed*" (M = 4.243), with "civil servant" (M = 4.501). At grade "*student*" (M = 4.347), with "civil servant" (M = 4.501). At grade "20.001€-40.000€" and "*private employee*" (M = 4.249), with "civil servant" (M = 4.478). At grade "100.001€-120.000€" and "*private employee*" (M = 4.833), with "other" (M = 3.333) and finally "*student*" (M = 4.467), with "other" (M = 3.333).

After-trip Phase

For the detection of statistically significant differences, the LSD multiple comparison test was applied and a statistically significant difference between the "marital status", "*singles*" (M = 4.374) the "widow" grade (M = 4.275) and "separated" (M = 4.215). At grade "*married*" (M = 4.391), with "widow" (M = 4.275) and "separated" (M = 4.215). Finally, at grade "*separated*" (M = 4.215), with "cohabitation" (M = 4.363).

There will be no statistically significant difference in the "age" and the "level of education" of the participants in the phase in which they have returned from the trip.

For the identification of statistically significant differences, the multiple comparison test (LSD) was applied and a statistically significant difference between the "annual income" "*less than 20,000€*" (M = 4.373) with "120.001€-140.000€" (M = 3.750) and "more than 140.001€" (M = 4.098). At grade "*20.001€-40.000€*" (M = 4.304), with "120.001€-140.000€" (M = 3.750) and "more than 140.001€" (M = 4.098). At grade "*40.001€-60.000€*" (M = 4.234), with

"80.001€-100.000€" (M = 4.525) and "120.001€-140.000€" (M = 3.750). At grade "60.001€-80.000€" (M = 4.381), with "120.001€-140.000€" (M = 3.750) and "more than 140.001€" (M = 4.098). At grade "80.001€-100.000€" (M = 4.525), with "120.001€-140.000€" (M = 3.750) and "more than 140.001€" (M = 4.098). Finally, at grade "100.001€-120.000€" (M = 4.475), with "120.001€-140.000€" (M = 3.750) and "more than 140.001€" (M = 4.098).

4.2. Competitiveness and demographics

With regard to the competitiveness of the different destination sites the results showed.

	<i>Sex-Marital status</i>	<i>Age-Grade of Education</i>	<i>Total annual income-Profession</i>
Competitiveness different destinations	(F _(6,2644))= .632 p= 0.916>0.05) (F _(1,2644))= 1.343 p= 0.251>0.05) (F_(6,2644))= 3.515 p= 0.00<0.05)	F_(12,2703)= 1.385 p= 0.040<0.05)	(F_(28,2636))= 2.581 p= 0.00<0.05)

Perceived Destination Competitiveness

In order to identify the statistically significant differences, the SIDAK multiple comparison test was applied to all four factors, and a statistically significant difference in first factor was found between the "family status", "singles" (M = 4.190), with "married" (M = 4.316) and finally "married" (M = 4.316) with "widow" (M = 4.144). For second factor there was a statistically significant difference between "singles" (M = 4.025), with "married" (M = 4.154), "divorced" (M = 4.266) and "cohabitation" (M = 4.148). For third factor there was a statistically significant difference between "singles" (M = 4.202), with "married" (M = 4.330). For fourth factor there was a statistically significant difference between "singles" (M = 4.158), with "married" (M = 4.243).

In order to identify the statistically significant differences, the SIDAK multiple comparison test was applied to all four factors was found for the first factor and the statistically significant difference between "level of education" and "age" in "college" with "17-39 years old" (M = 4.262) and "40-59 years old" (M = 4.240) and finally "university/technological institute" with "17-39" (M = 4.149), and "40-59 years old" (M = 4.278). In second factor there was a statistically significant difference between "level of education" and "age" in "high school" with "17-39 years old" (M = 4,086) and "40-59 years old" (M = 4.211) and finally "university/technological institute" with "17-39 years old" (M = 3.963) and "40-59 years" (M = 4.142). In the third factor there was a statistically significant difference between "level of education" and "age" in "high school" with "17-39 years old" (M = 4.201) and "40-59 years old" (M = 4.331) and finally "university/technological institute" with "17-39 years" (M = 4.148) and "40-59 years" (M = 4.328). Finally, the fourth factor found a statistically significant difference between "level of education" and "age" in "college" with "17-39 years old" (M = 4.249) and "40-59 years old" (M = 4.433) and finally "university/technological institute" with "17-39 years old" (M = 4.109) and "40-59 years old" (M = 4.187).

For the identification of statistically significant differences, the SIDAK multiple comparison test was applied to the four factors was found for the first factor and the statistically significant difference between "annual income" grade of "40.001€-60.000€" and "freelancer" (M = 4.353),

with "student" (M = 4.091), the "housewives" (M = 4.917), as well as "private employee" (M = 4.283), with "student" (M = 4,091) and "civil servant" (M = 4.295). At grade "120.001€-140.000€" and "freelancer" (M = 3.969), with "student" (M = 2.875). In grade "more than 140.001€" and "freelancer" (M = 4.375), with "student" (M = 3.555) and finally "private employee" (M = 4.080), with "student" grade (M = 3.555). In second factor there was a statistically significant difference between "20.001€-40.000€" and "freelancer" (M = 4.006), with "private employee" (M = 4.213) and finally "private employee" (M = 4.213), with "student" (M = 3.949). At grade "more than 140,001€" and "freelancer" (M = 4,083), with "unemployed" (M = 2,000) and "student" (M = 3.406), as well as "private employee" (M = 3.864), with "unemployed" (M = 2.000), as well as "housewives" (M = 4.083) with "unemployed" (M = 2.000), and finally "unemployed" (M = 2.000) with "student" (M = 3.406). In the third factor there was a statistically significant difference between "annual income" "20.001€-40.000€" and "private employee" (M = 4.329), with "student" (M = 4.125) and finally "student" (MO = 4.125), with "civil servant" (M = 4.362). At grade "40.001€-60.000€" and "freelancer" (M = 4.370), with "student" (M = 4.020), as well as "private employee" (M = 4,049) with "student" (M = 4.020) and finally "student" (M = 4.020), with "civil servant" (M = 4.336). At grade of "60.001€-80.000€" and "freelancer" (M = 4.338), with "student" (M = 3.743), as well as "private employee" (M = 4.322), with "student" (M = 3.743), as well as "pensioner" (M = 4.371), with "student" (M = 3.743) and finally "student" (M = 3.743) with "civil servant" (M = 4.452). At grade "80.001€-100.000€" and "student" (M = 3.600), with "civil servant" (M = 4.725). At grade "100.001€-120.000€" and "student" (M = 4.050), with "other" (M = 3.067). At grade "120.001€-140.000€" and "freelancer" (M = 3.900), with "student" (M = 3.100). At grade "more than 140.001€" and "freelancer" (M = 4,200), with "student" (M = 3,588). At grade "housewives" (M = 4.667), with "student" (M = 3.588). At grade "unemployed" (M = 4.600), with "student" (M = 3.588). The fourth factor revealed a statistically significant difference between "20.001€-40.000€" and "housewives" (M = 4.550), with "other" (M = 3.781). At grade "40.001€-60.000€" and "private employee" (M = 4.316), with "student" (M = 4.043).

5. Conclusion

The conclusions of this research are summarized as follows:

- The two sexes do not differ in how they approach the holidays.
- The marital status of the participants is the strongest factor among the six variables tested, with many differences between the different tiers of the factor.
- Age shows significant differences in tourism choices among people.
- The educational grade is very important in terms of choices they make on holidays.
- Annual income plays a role in choosing the way and type of holiday that tourists will take.
- The occupational status of people influences their decisions on how to spend their holidays.

In detail, the overall picture of the survey results showed that gender was the weakest factor since it showed the fewest statistically significant differences in most of the categories examined (out of seven only two were statistically significant). This shows that holiday is

something that everybody wants regardless of their gender and that the things that happen at this beautiful moment of their life find them all in agreement.

The "family situation" appeared to be the most important of the factors examined, since it was statistically significant in the seven phases. Thus, the different family status of the participant seems to be of decisive importance for holidays and effects the selection of something different.

The different "age" of the participant appeared to be significant, since it was different in five of the seven categories examined. The age group of 17-39 years old seemed to be more willing to take part in holidays and activities, than the age group of 40-59 years old and the age group 60+. This, of course, did not mean that there was a shorter mood for holidays, but a lesser desire for a change in everyday life and different categories depending on the age of the participants.

The different "grade of study" appeared to be a very important factor since it was different in six of the seven phases investigated. The results showed that, regardless of their grade of education, all people want holidays, everyone understands and chooses different type of holidays depending on the stimuli they have.

The "total annual income" appeared to be a very strong factor since it was statistically significant in the seven phases, which were examined and influenced to a very large extent the remaining five at any stage of the survey. The most important effect appeared to be in the competitiveness phase of holiday sites, with the second the four phases of the tourist experience, the third phase of the engagement, and the fourth the phase of holiday incentives.

Finally, the "occupation" of the people was of particular importance, since in six of the seven phases investigated, it was statistically significant. That is, with regard to the way in which one chooses his holiday, his occupation is of great importance, since it has to do with the previous category of research, the annual income, usually derived from the profession.

In 1998 Gibson referred that sport tourism is one of the fastest growing sectors in the tourism industry. Active sport tourism will develop unchecked, and before long, if the present trends continue, instead of becoming democratized and open to all, (at least those who would like to be sport tourists), irrespective of gender, race or class, it is likely that sports vacations will become more exclusive. The results highlighted in the paper of Carr (1999) have indicated that, within the limits of the sample and data collection site selection, there seems to be little difference in the leisure activities of young men and women tourists. The explanations provided for their behaviour by the tourists who took part in the in-depth interviews also seem to be similar, irrespective of gender and this is with accordance to the present study. These findings question the results of previous work on gendered differences within tourism and leisure environments which have claimed men and women tend to behave differently. Lepp and Gibson presented similar results about sensation seeking in tourism and gender. Although males were higher in overall sensation seeking, gender was not a significant predictor of tourist role or international travel experience.

Finally, the proposals that the research suggests to the public and private stakeholders in the region are to direct their advertisements upon demographic characteristics. From all the above interventions the indirect and direct beneficiaries will be the tourists / visitors of the area to whom the research is ultimately aimed as its final recipients.

Proposals for future investigations

It is suggested in a future survey that the questionnaire be translated into other languages in order to be answered by tourists from other countries. Also, the questionnaire can be distributed to other regions of the country that have similar characteristics in order to make a comparative study.

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