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## Conference Reports

### **The 4th Conference of the Interdepartmental Program of Postgraduate Studies in Tourism Planning, Policy and Management**

**Rhodes, Greece – 3 – 5 April 2009**

The search for success is always with us, through planning for the future as well as learning from the past. Such impacts are of critical importance for tourism, travel and hospitality management and education. Success may generate more success, at both a macro and also a micro-environmental level. Based on this philosophy, the 4<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Interdepartmental Program of Postgraduate Studies in Tourism Planning, Policy and Management was hosted and organized by the University of the Aegean in Rhodes (Greece). The units of the university responsible for organising the Congress were: a) the Interdepartmental Program of Postgraduate Studies in Tourism Planning, Policy and Management, and b) the Department of Business Administration. The conference programme included a high quality scientific research track with refereed paper presentations, and cutting-edge keynote speakers. There were also roundtable discussions between representatives from industry, academia and the public sector. Unforgettable activities, such as excursions and field tours were also arranged...

The congress took place at the luxurious Rodos Palace hotel, ideally located by a golden beach on the world-famous island of Rhodes in Greece. Rhodes is a well-known tourism destination renowned for its history, culture and scenery.

The conference opened with a welcoming ceremony containing messages from different politicians as well as the conference organisers. Professor John Tribe then provided an excellent opening keynote speech entitled 'Studying tourism: academic tribes and territories'. Professor Tribe's speech critically analysed tourism studies and how the subject is developing. More specifically, he provided an epistemological enquiry which focused on the nature and structure of the field. Furthermore, he provided a sociological enquiry which focused on the culture and practices of academics in the field. Based on his interviews with different tourism academia in the world, Professor Tribe's speech certainly attracted a large amount of interest from

Professor John Tribe



(Photo: Steve Butts)

listeners. His in-depth understanding of tourism as a subject, the use of different images to support his arguments and also his charisma prove why he was selected to be a keynote speaker. If the first keynote speech was concerned with tourism from a macro perspective, then the second one was more inclined towards a micro perspective. Professor Joseph Chen discussed 'Market analysis of health tourism'. His speech was related to three aspects: scope of health tourism, products and practices, and future agendas. The contrast between the two keynote speeches was a hot topic during that lunch break.

A Best Paper Award was not given at this conference, therefore the author shares here some of the interesting papers that were listened to. A paper entitled 'Using multiple senses in tourism marketing' was presented by Isacson and Alakoski (2009). They argued that in order to create awareness & motivation among future travellers, then tourism communications should not only appeal to the visuals, but also to all of the users senses in an inter medial mix. According to Lindstrom and Kotler (2005), a customer is often attracted towards a brand based upon its sensory experience; hence, smell, sound, touch, taste and sight must be touched, in order for communication to be perceived valuable. If combined with ration and need in addition to user & co-experience involving social media (among other things multimedia and viral marketing) only then can tourism marketing claim to be user driven, future-oriented and engaging. Doussa and Koutoulas (2009) presented a

paper entitled 'Benchmarking Destination Marketing Organisations for the Purpose of Optimising their Operation: The Case of Convention Bureaux'. Their research has been conducted covering national- and regional-level Convention Bureaux globally, based on an extensive content analysis of their corporate and promotional communication through their websites. The researchers provided guidance to policymakers and MICE industry stakeholders in their decisions concerning how to structure, operate and fund Convention Bureaux by being able to make comparisons to the overall CVB industry. Having twice visited Macau, the author was also interested in the presentation by Professor Leong who discussed interactive strategies for cultural heritage tourism and Macau city development from the tourists' perspectives.

On a broader note, why do academics attend academic conferences? Obviously the sharing of knowledge with colleagues from all over the world is of primary importance; but renewing friendships and extending 'soft' but vital social networks are important reasons. Even before this conference started, some delegates began making contacts through emails and/or social media such as Facebook with the aim of organising social events during the conference.

#### Night out in Rhodes



(Photo Steve Butts)

A nationwide general strike in Greece on 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2009 had a negative impact on the conference. The strike disrupted all flights to and from Greek airports between noon

and 3pm (0900-1200 GMT). Even though delegates for this conference received an email alert from the conference organiser, many delegates were not be able to arrive in Rhodes in time for their presentations; some delegates even had to cancel their trips. The impact of this strike became very evident at the first parallel session when only three of the expected eight papers were presented. But it is important to mention that the gala dinner for this conference was well attended even though it didn't start until 9pm. At the dinner a wide range of good entertainment was provided, with many of the Greek delegates showing off their skills in traditional dancing, while other delegates enjoyed delicious local food and wine.

#### Views of Lindos



(Photos: Mary Rose Stafford)

Finally, it should be acknowledged that Prof. Dr. Paris Tsartas and Dr. Evangelos Christou together with their team, coordinated a very professional conference. The three days flew by and all who were lucky enough to experience the conference trip to Lindos enjoyed their experience.

Reviewed by Rong Huang, University of Plymouth, UK

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### **The 2009 EuroCHRIE Annual Conference**

#### **Helsinki, Finland 2009**

The 2009 EuroCHRIE Annual Conference was hosted by HAAGA-HELIA University of Applied Sciences in Helsinki, Finland. The conference was equipped with a broad based theme, "From Services to Experiences in Tourism and the Hospitality Industry and Education", and, as a result, the papers that were presented had an eclectic and vocationally relevant feel to them. The organisers had gone out of their way to fill the programme with a series of high notes: including key note speakers, industry related workshops and receptions; culminating in conference dinner. If there is a problem associated to EUROCHRIE conferences it appears in the form of expectations in relation to the provision of hospitality. Successive hosts aim to raise the bar (literally in some cases) incrementally, so that those who follow are faced with a challenge to meet and probably exceed what went before in the name of hospitality. Helsinki did not disappoint on these terms and the various receptions, meals, refreshment breaks and the conference dinner were remarkable in their quality and in creating a mood and socially inclusive atmosphere that was fitting for this conference. The students and their lecturers, the staff and the volunteers deserve recognition and praise for their parts in this respect.

But what of the various presenters and did the research keep to the 'cool' side of the paradigm? Being 'Cool' was the conference 'motto' and while it was on the cold side outside, there was a pervasive warmth within the conference venue. The key-note

speakers were represented by Marco Steinberg, Director of Strategic Design, the Finnish Innovation Fund. Steinberg is an Associate Professor of Architecture in Harvard Design School and his introductory session drew on his research work which is focused on applying strategic design to improve the quality of healthcare delivery and in particular, stroke care in the US. His session was thought provoking in demonstrating the critical realities of examining design by becoming aware of the contextual realities.

Author Rolf Jensen is the Chief Imagination Officer at the Dream Company and his key-note session reflected on the power of storytelling. Kalle Ruuskanen, the Managing Director of Select Service Partner Finland and a Haaga University alumni, presented an account of innovative practice at Helsinki Airport and demonstrated how his company changed customer perceptions about what an airport can be. Finally the last keynote speaker Jaakko Nuutila a well known Chef and the Finish Ombudsman for Food Culture presented his views on sustainability and responsibility in the food chain.

The research output was impressive. A large number of full papers, working papers, professional papers and posters were presented in the space of two days. The number of sessions meant that there were 6 or 7 parallel sessions to choose from with subject matter changing rapidly to address marketing, operations, training and education, technology, human resources, tourism, food and drink, events management and the cruise industry. It was good to see a wide range of disciplines represented within the research papers including: education, business, social science, marketing, IT and psychology. There were really useful opportunities for researchers to talk about their work and to respond to challenges but, apart from that, everyone had something to learn from what was presented. As has been the case for a few years, Tourism dominated the agenda but, pleasingly, Hospitality was represented strongly and it was clear that Events practitioners and researchers are now beginning to make inroads and to get their collective voice heard.

EUROCHRIE is a difficult conference for a novice conference goer to comprehend but the organisers have recognised this by singling this group out for an induction

activity. If one was to look for negatives and be picky it may have been possible to have modified the programme to meet some delegates needs by grouping topics more sensitively but ultimately the scale of the proceedings does create challenges. Ultimately, the outcome is best measured by observing the way the delegates reacted to what they saw. In this sense, it can be confirmed that delegates were very responsive to the programme and ultimately the consensus seemed to be an emphasised 'thumbs up' – it was indeed a cool conference.

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**Advances in Tourism Research Conference, University of Bolzano, Brunico  
Site,  
Alto-Adige, 27-29 September 2009**

What an interesting venue – the Brunico site of the Free University of Bolzano, one can hardly call it a campus for it is just one historic building in the centre of town. There were around thirty invited participants involved with this small conference, emanating from Uruguay, Mexico, Spain, Greece, Italy and UK. The beauty of such a small conference is, of course, that it's possible to talk with virtually everyone.

Matias Álvaro (Universidade Lusíada de Lisboa) presented a paper entitled 'The economics of casino gambling: evidence for Portugal' – more interesting than might appear at first. A key question posed by the research was: do gambling receipts come mainly from international tourists or Portuguese nationals? Why does it matter? Clearly, there are different policy and management implications. In Portugal, taxation on gambling is 50 per cent of gross total receipts – that amount of taxes goes straight to the budget of Turismo de Portugal. The phenomenon of Casino Lisboa was cited as a relatively recently opened attraction which was already more important than that at Estoril.



Most of the participants outside University of Bolzano building in Brunico, 29 September.



(Photo: Graham Busby)

Demand for casino gambling in Portugal is mainly driven by *residents* – contrary to general assumptions, please note, advised Álvaro. It's not the tourists who gamble, in general terms; there are, therefore, two assumptions – firstly, tax policy: if casinos do not work so much as tourist attractions is it fair to tax receipts so heavily for tourism purposes? Secondly, residents have a different demand profile when gambling compared to tourists and, hence, a) a mix of services offered needs to be considered, b) whether the shows offered are relevant to them, c) strategic marketing, and d) other pertinent issues. Note, however, that residents may include domestic tourists – and the model needs further explication, as Álvaro emphasised. In response to a question from this reporter, it was advised, amazingly, that none of the nine casinos undertake their own research.

Fortezza – on the main line between Italy and Austria – change here for Brunico.  
Train shown funded by autonomous province of Alto-Adige.



(Photo: Graham Busby)

Paolo Figini (University of Bologna) began by referring to the title of his paper – ‘Tourists are a flock of sheep! Herd behaviour in purchasing tourism services’. Apparently, herding can be the equilibrium behaviour of rational players, that is, what other people are doing reflects information; this information may dominate a player’s own private information. However, herding is inefficient, i.e. information of late movers is not utilised... There are several implications, it was advised; financial bubbles being cited as one example. The basic model was discussed in some detail but this reviewer was lost when the concept of the Bayes Nash equilibrium was raised. Conclusion: herding might trigger investment in low quality restaurants... and that provision of happy hour might well be worthwhile!

Two separate papers addressed DMOs in the Alpine area – Umberto Martini presented ‘Patterns of application of destination management and governance: a comparative analysis of the main tourist regions in the Alps’ and Harald Pechlaner, together with Frieda Raich, considered ‘Elements of corporate governance in tourism

organizations: an empirical survey in South Tyrol (Italy), Austria and Switzerland. In their own way, both papers identified the need for strategic thinking besides operational activities, the development of human resources, and interaction and networking with other industries. Furthermore, both papers illustrated that there is still much to research in this particular field.

An interesting source of data was suggested in a paper delivered by Anna Maria Parroco (University of Palermo) entitled 'Estimating unobserved tourism: an integrated approach with examples from Sicily'. Anna Maria and colleagues compared official overnight stays with solid urban waste production... The point being that with 4,000 bedspaces in private houses not registered at the Register of Commerce, the need for a survey in Cefalu (Sicily) and the Aeolian Islands was needed. On the other hand, it seemed that tourists could also end up being counted more than once. Another paper also addressed the phenomenon of 'unobserved' tourism; this was not from an academic, rather an official from Banca d'Italia, Andrea Alivernini. It seems there are shortcomings in the Bank Reporting System; for example, gross flows end up being underestimated and it is no longer suitable with the introduction of the euro. The border sample survey, on international visitors to Italy, provides information about tourism expenditure, the number of nights stayed, types of accommodation used, purpose of visit and destinations.

From another continent, Romano Gino Segrado (UQROO, Mexico) discussed the economic impact of cruise tourism upon Cozumel, based on a survey undertaken between 2003 and 2007. Methods employed were direct observation and interviews for the geographic and economic impact with additional evidence from Datatur. Cruise visitor expenditure was estimated at between \$US 5 and \$US 15 per person per day with the exception of a few locations where it rose as high as \$US 50. What put all of this into perspective for this reviewer was the statement that 10,000 cruise visitors arrived in Cozumel PER DAY!

Finally, to illustrate the eclectic nature of the participants, Rodolfo Baggio (Bocconi University) presented a paper entitled 'Network science: an interdisciplinary

contribution to tourism studies' – it undoubtedly was that for the researcher was originally a physicist. Having stated that "... you never know where to begin because it's a strange area" – referring to network science – Rodolfo went on to deliver what must have been the most inspired paper of the conference. So much so, that this reviewer was captivated and wrote no notes!

Upon reflection, this review does not do sufficient justice to the variety of presenters – how many conference reports do? It was held in Brunico which is located in the fascinating autonomous province of Alto-Adige or South Tyrol. All participants thanked the efforts of Juan Gabriel Brida, Linda Osti, Stefan Schubert and Serena Volo for organising such an interesting conference – including superb dinners and accommodation at The Hinterhuber Hotel Royal.

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