

Original Article

**Location and activities that eco-tourists prefer in Greece. The case of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace**

ANTONIOS DALAKIS<sup>1</sup>, GEORGIA YFANTIDOU<sup>2</sup>, EFSTRATIA TSITSKARI<sup>3</sup>, GEORGE COSTA<sup>4</sup> & GEORGE TZETZIS<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1,2,3,4</sup>Department of Physical Education and Sport Science, Democritus University of Thrace.

<sup>5</sup>Department of Physical Education and Sport Science, Aristotles University of Thessaloniki., GREECE

Published online: July 30, 2016

(Accepted for publication June 12 2016)

DOI:10.7752/jpes.2016.s1101

**Abstract**

Holiday and recreation destinations play an important role in people's lives in modern societies. Outdoor recreation activity programs do not concern themselves with participants' physical improvement or empowerment, rather with their feelings of satisfaction and pleasure. This results in benefits that arise effortlessly, prompting participants to engage in life-long exercise without making any demands on high performance on their part. Contemporary hectic lifestyle and the degraded natural environment that characterize modern cities constitute outdoor recreation and participation in outdoor recreation activities (O.R.A.), both important and highly necessary. Many scholars claim that increased interest in exercise helps people enhance its resulting benefits that directly relate to the quality of their lives. 86 people took part in a research that was carried out in Eastern Macedonia and Thrace, in the North-East of Greece. Researchers examined the intentions/desires and the criteria of choice set by the visitors in relation to this uniquely beautiful site. The results of the MANOVA multivariable fluctuation analysis showed that there was no statistically significant effect on the sex of the participants with the Pillai's trace test showing  $F_{(1,59)} = 1,061$  and  $sig=.398$ . The researchers continue the research by expanding the sample with foreign tourists visiting the area of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace.

**Key words:** Destination, Outdoor Recreation Activities, Tourist Region

**Introduction**

Tourism is regularly mentioned as "service industry" or "recreation industry". In its modern mass form, it covers a broad range of understanding and providing these services which are able to satisfy the "tourist – consumer", and which are not only limited to the provision of accommodation services. The positive tourist outcomes highly depend on the adequate satisfaction of the tourists' needs such as the change of scenery, the relaxation away from the urban centers, the physical exercise, the social interaction, the gain of new experiences, etc (Morisson, 1996; Poon, 1993). Nowadays, tourists are more experienced, demanding, and eclectic and thus, a new foundation for competition is created for the tourism industry. Tourist entertainment during the holiday season also plays a major role since there is abundance of free time (Afthinos, 1998; Finger & Gayler, 1993; Costa, 1998, Lytras, 1993; 2002; Opaschowski, 1996; Yfantidou, Costa & Michalopoulos, 2008).

Travel and tourism is one of the world's highest priority industries. Tourism has been firmly established as the largest industry in many countries and regions and the fastest-growing economic sector in terms of revenue and employment (WTO, 2005). With people's higher standard of living in many countries, leisure tourism has been growing to be an international business. The World Tourism Organization (WTO) has reported that international tourist arrivals reached an all-time record of 763 million in 2004, an 11% growth rate over the year of 2003 (Meng, 2006).

The tourist destination is the central component of the functional tourism system. In the current competitive tourism market, competitiveness has increasingly been seen as a critical influence on the performance of tourism destinations. A growing body of literature is being established regarding tourism destination marketing, management, and competitiveness issues. A successful tourism destination must embrace an integrated approach towards the many components of the tourism system (Ritchie & Crouch, 2003; Jones & Haven-Tang, 2005; Dalakis, Costa & Yfantidou G. 2013). The major players in the tourism system – the government, tourism enterprises, tourists, and local communities – may have very different approaches to destination competitiveness. To date, most studies have evaluated destination competitiveness from the industry practitioners' perspective, generally considered a supply-side approach. The existing literature rarely examined the competitiveness of tourism destination from the demand side, i.e., the tourists' perspective. The purpose of this article is to examine destination competitiveness from the viewpoint of tourists. The guiding principle of this study is that from the tourist's perspective, the overall competitiveness of a destination is dependent upon the perceived quality of their tourism experience with a particular destination.

Specifically, the research attempts to identify the factors that are likely to influence tourists' perception of destination competitiveness, and proposes a theoretical model to investigate the relationship between quality of tourism experience and tourists' perception of destination competitiveness. Additionally, tourist involvement is examined to see if it influences the relationship between quality of tourism experience and perceived destination competitiveness (Meng, 2006).

Growth of tourism and the consequent increased competition have sparked interest in managerial strategies targeting tourism destinations, and underscored the importance of competitiveness in the market. The tool of evaluation of the competitiveness of tourism destinations is now considered to be of great importance in analyzing both their strategic advantages and their weaknesses (Pearce, 1997a, 1997b; Faulkner, Opperman & Fredline, 1999; Hudson, Ritchie & Timur, 2004). In a similar vein, Ritchie and Crouch also highlighted that the issue of competitiveness has "tremendous ramifications for the tourism industry and is therefore of considerable interest to practitioners and policy makers" (2000b, p.6). On the same line, Dwyer, Forsyth and Rao (2000a, p.10) maintain that it is "useful for the industry and government to understand where a country's competitive position is weakest and strongest". Research offers two approaches to defining "competitiveness". A macro-perspective approach views competitiveness from a national point of view with its primary aim to achieve greater income numbers. Practically, competitiveness is a multi-faceted construct that incorporates all socio-cultural and economic dimensions that may affect a nation's performance in the global market (Ritchie & Crouch, 2003; Porter, 1990; Dwyer & Kim, 2003). A micro-perspective view, on the other hand, views competitiveness from the company-level attitudes and performance. Moreover, this "resource-based" approach emphasizes company resources and their distinct array of provisions, capabilities and dynamics (Barney, 1991; Grant, 1991; Prahalad & Hamel, 1990). At this level, competitiveness concerns the company's capability to find its place in the business, root and grow in economic terms. Tourism is a structured system comprising the constructs of origin and destination. Origin refers to tourism demand and destination refers to the provisions and facilities offered. The supply side incorporates the company tourism perspectives, which is associated to the economic aspect of the destination, whereas, the demand side is tied to the overall tourism experience. Tourism products differ significantly from any other commercial product in terms of "intangibility, perishability, inseparability of production and consumption; heterogeneity; and independence" (Shostack, 1977; Gronroos, 1978; Zeitaml, Parasuraman & Berry, 1985; Bowen, 1990; Onkvisist & Shaw, 1991; Hartman & Lindgren, 1993; O'Connor, 1999; Meng, 2006). So, it would be safe to state that tourism is a versatile industry which comprises a set of different services and a number of infrastructures that construct the total appeal of a place. Moreover, these provisions are interdependent and critically influence the overall tourist experience. Therefore, a wide range of products needs to be on offer (Gunn, 1994) as competitiveness is closely tied to the tourists' activities and experiences. The distinct character of varied destinations makes it difficult to measure and compare (Formica, 2000). However, a widely accepted instrument for measuring destination competitiveness needs to be developed. So far, literature has made attempts to address this issue through either supply-oriented or demand-oriented approaches. Ritchie and Crouch (2000b) maintain that the destination experience is at the core of the tourism experience. Destinations compete by emphasizing their strategic appeal (Ritchie & Crouch, 2000b, 2003). For a destination to promote its competitive advantages, superiority to other destinations must be ensured (Dwyer et al., 2004; Dwyer & Kim, 2003). So, quality becomes the central element around which advantages of destinations revolve. This is the case with pleasure travelers as well. Travelers' perception of the competitiveness of a destination is related to quality services and affects their future attitude towards the destination. Therefore, it seems that there is a connection between destination competitiveness and tourist perceptions about the quality of their overall experience, which calls for further investigation from the tourists' perspective.

Modern fast pace living in degraded urban environments emphasize the importance and necessity of participating in outdoor activity programs. Outdoor recreation offers opportunities and possibilities for the development of skills which people can apply in their tough daily lives in the cities in order to develop personally (Boulougouris, 2010). Boulougouris (2010) noted the positive effects of outdoor recreation taking into account the physical and psychological aspects, since these are the key issues of the inactive and sedentary way of life (Goulimaris, Mavridis, Genti & Rokka, 2014). Recreation and entertainment activities improve one's physical state, reduce stress and contribute to mental stability. Chroni and Zourbanos, (2001) also highlighted that participation in outdoor activities is related to feelings of pleasure, achievement, success and satisfaction, which reinforce and protect mental health and also greatly contribute to one's well-being.

Outdoor recreation activity programs do not concern themselves with participants' physical improvement or empowerment, rather with their feelings of satisfaction and pleasure. This results in benefits that arise effortlessly, prompting participants to engage in life-long exercise without making any demands on high performance on their part (Dantsi, Balaska & Alexandris, 2008).

According to Tzetzis, (2007), increased interest in exercise helps people enhance its resulting benefits that directly relate to the quality of their lives.

Recently, outdoor activity programs have become one fruitful way for participants to spend part of their holidays on (Chroni, S. & Zourbanos, N. 2001). So, Greece has developed sites where these activities can be

carried out and participants can now have easy access to them all year round (Woosnam, McElroy & Van Winkle, 2009; Kouthouris, 2009).

The activities and programs take place in natural sites such as National Forests, National Parks, woodlands, indoor waters, coast areas, urban and rural parks, as well as open green spaces (Zafiroudi & Hatzigeorgiadis, 2008).

According to Leitner, (1996), outdoor recreation comes from the interaction “developed” by an activity and the outdoor natural environment which eventually contributes to the natural, psychological, emotional and social recreation of a person. Accordingly, Kouthouris (2009), defines outdoor recreation and outdoor activities as those kinetic activity programs which are conducted outdoors, e.g. canoeing – kayaking, rafting, hiking, climbing, orientation, mountaineering, skiing and other related activities. Participation in such programs promotes the spiritual, mental and physical health of the person taking part. Consequently, people participate in recreation and entertainment activities not only to pass their free time, but also to satisfy their inner needs. They may not consciously realize which needs are covered, but the way in which they entertain themselves is a way of expressing and covering certain needs. Outdoor recreation may include any environmental, athletic, recreational activity of social awareness in the form of a simple experience or a structured program which takes place in a natural environment (Kouthouris, 2009).

The present study had the following 5 objectives:

1. To examine the connection between attractiveness and loyalty of the visitors to the area.
2. To examine the participants' opinion about the outdoor recreation activities.
3. To examine the participants' opinion about the accommodation and location and what is provided from the aspect of amenities and convenience.
4. To examine the participants' desires in relation to their emotions about the location they visited and stayed at, and finally
5. To collect the participants' demographic data, so that the researchers can form a picture of the people who visited the above location and participated in the outdoor recreation activities.

The aim of the research was to measure the intentions/desires of the tourists in terms of the choice of the particular holiday location which offered the opportunity for outdoor recreation activities.

## Methodology

The research was conducted in Eastern Macedonia and Thrace, in the North-East of Greece. This is an area of unique natural beauty, comprising 2 islands (Thasos & Samothrace), 4 rivers (Evros, Nestos, Aggitis & Strimonas), 2 lakes (Vistonida & Ismarides) and the southeast point of the Rhodopi chain with a peak of 1827m. In this region, there are 4 out the 11 locations in Greece which are protected by the International Ramsar Convention and 2 locations which are protected by the Natura 2000 Convention. Finally, this is a fast developing area in outdoor recreation in our country, with 4 companies carrying out all known recreation activities all year long.



Picture 1. Map of the area where the research was conducted.

The questionnaire that was given to the participants in order to measure their intentions/desires for the particular holiday location and also their participation in the outdoor recreation activities were parts of other Greek researchers' questionnaires, from the same scientific area, that were used in previous studies and in other

parts of the country where there is progress in tourist outdoor activities. So, the questionnaire consisted of 54 questions about attractiveness (Alexandris et al., 2008), 9 questions about connection (Alexandris et al., 2008), 9 questions about loyalty (Alexandris, Douka, Papadopoulos & Kaltsatou, 2008) and 16 questions about involvement (Iwasaki & Havitz, (2004). To examine residence, accommodation types and duration of stay we used part of Kaplanidou & Vogt, (2007) questionnaire with 3 questions about residence and 17 questions about the location and its facilities. We also used another part of the same questionnaire to examine the tourists' feelings for the place which they were visiting (5 questions). We used 2 questions addressing the outdoor activity program companies, 1 question concerning the possibility to revisit the place, 1 question on how the visitors accessed information about the location and 7 questions about demographics. We casebook data which concern their relationship with the outdoor activity programs and their general attitude toward sports with 5 questions and finally asked them about their origin, permanent residence and place of birth.

The questionnaire was answered voluntarily by the clients of the outdoor recreation activity companies in the area, right after their participation in one of the activities. The answers were given in a Likert scale with "1" being DISAGREE and "5" being AGREE.

## Results

86 participants, (42 men & 44 women) took part in our research during the summer of 2014. The general characteristics of the participants were the following: their age average was 36 years, university graduate with a monthly income of 1500€, 33,7% were married with one child. Most of the participants visited the area for only a couple of days, travelled a distance of about 128km and decided to engage themselves in organized outdoor recreation activities which were conducted in the area.

29,1% of the participants had been exercising by taking part in outdoor recreation activities from 1 to 4 years, 22,1 % from 11 to 15 years and finally 14% of the participants had been exercising for 61 or more. The above participants had been exercising by taking part in outdoor recreation activities "frequently", in a scale from 1 to 5, so this was translated as a "4", and they desired to be involved in such activities on average from 31 to 61 days per year in order to be satisfied. The participants had also been exercising "frequently", in a scale of 1 to 5, the result being a "4", by taking part in activities other than outdoor recreation ones. 91,1% of those daily life activities referred to team sports (basketball, football, volleyball etc.) and 49,9 % to individual sports (cycling, running, gymnastics etc.).

The results of the MANOVA multivariable fluctuation analysis showed that there was no statistically significant effect on the sex of the participants with the Pillai's trace test showing  $F_{(1,59)} = 1,061$  and  $sig=.398$ .

Of the 6 factors measured, only the "connection" factor had a statistically significant effect as far as the two sexes are concerned with the Pillai's trace test showing  $F_{(1,59)} = 6,241$  and  $sig=.015$ .

In all the different questionnaire groups, women brought back better scores than men, with the results being shown in table 1.

**Table 1. Average delivery of the two sexes in the different teams of the questionnaire.**

	Men	Women
Attractiveness	3,739	3,823
Connection	3,791	4,013
Loyalty	3,660	3,714
Conviction about the activity	5,508	5,538
Emotions provoked by the activities	6,374	6,462
General local facilities	5,023	5,048

The MANOVA multivariable fluctuation analysis showed that there was a statistically significant effect of the sex of the participants and the timing of the experience with outdoor recreation activities, with Pillai's trace test showing  $F_{(1,59)} = 2,566$  and  $sig= .004$ . The results of the fluctuation analysis one way Anova with an independent variable, showed that in one of the 6 dependable variables measured in the questionnaire, which was "involvement", there was a statistically significant difference with  $F_{(3,22)} = 4,931$  and  $sig= .009$ . The *sex* and *how often you take part in outdoor recreation activities* had a statistically significant effect, with Pillai's trace test showing  $F_{(1,59)} = 1,875$  and  $sig= .038$ . The results of the one way Anova fluctuation analysis with the independent variable being the *sex*, showed that in one of the 6 parameters measured in the questionnaire, there was a statistically significant difference with  $F_{(3,22)} = 4,255$  and  $sig= .016$ . Finally, there was no statistically significant effect on *sex* and *how many days per year would you consider satisfying in order to take part in outdoor recreation activities*, with Pillai's trace test showing  $F_{(1,59)} = 1,072$  and  $sig= .394$ . Here, the results of the one way Anova fluctuation analysis with *sex* as the independent variable, showed that in none of the 6 parameters measured, statistically significant differences were found.

All participants were Greek. The participants lived in the areas shown below and in a ratio that can be found in Table 2.

**Table 2. Ratio of participants according to their residence location.**

	Participation Frequency	% Percentages
<b>Xanthi</b>	34	39,5%
<b>Komotini</b>	20	23,3%
<b>Alexandroupolis</b>	6	7%
<b>Thessaloniki</b>	12	14%
<b>Igoumenitsa</b>	1	1,2%
<b>Other Locations</b>	13	15%

The participants' origin location was different from their residence location, as shown in Table 3.

**Table 3. Participants' origin location.**

	Participation Frequency	% Percentages
<b>Xanthi</b>	33	38,4%
<b>Komotini</b>	12	14%
<b>Alexandroupolis</b>	3	3,5%
<b>Thessaloniki</b>	19	22,1%
<b>Kormitsa</b>	1	1,2%
<b>Serres</b>	1	1,2%
<b>Igoumenitsa</b>	7	3,5%
<b>Other Locations</b>	10	16,1%

### Conclusion – Discussion

Researchers believe that there were no statistically differences concerning the holiday location because the site offered satisfactory services that rendered it worth visiting. The average two-day stay is rather limited in order for someone to thoroughly explore the area. When the holidays are short, one would prefer to visit the most important sights in the area, and thus, it is not expected to find differences in that between the two sexes. The variety of accommodation choices (guest houses to 5\*\*\*\*\* hotels) was a great advantage for the area favored by all participants regardless of their sex. Also, the great variety of food (eastern cuisine) was considered a leading advantage for the choice of location, which is something that both sexes liked. Finally, the most important asset of the area involved the locations' natural beauty, a factor which was a major selection criterion set by the participants, regardless of their sex.

In regard to the non-differentiation between the two sexes as far as outdoor recreation activities are concerned, results show a lack of competition between the participants during the activities. The great number of activities offered in the area, which covered the needs of most men and women who participated in them, is another advantage for the choice of the location but also the reason why there were no statistically significant differences between the two sexes. The different categories of the level of difficulty of the activities available (kayaking in serene waters to kayaking of number 3 level of difficulty, climbing with difficulty level 5 to 8) were considered from the participants to be options of great value and covered different choices.

Considering the difference between the sexes in the parameter of "connection", the researchers make a hypothesis that the choice of holiday location and participation in outdoor recreation activities is influenced by the characteristics of each sex, which in turn, define their choices. The choices that men make include criteria such as how impressive a location is, the height of the mountain, the fast rivers or locations with unique and impressive characteristics, while on the other hand, the women's criteria favor qualities like the serenity and quiet beauty of a location. Concerning the choice of the outdoor recreation activities, men feel more connected to more intense activities, whereas women to more relaxing activities.

The reason why the researchers believe that women had better scores than men, is due to the fact that when the location or the activity does not present any elements of strong competition men does not make any considerable effort.

During the years of their previous involvement in outdoor recreation activities, there seemed to be statistically significant differences between the two sexes because of the fact that men participants took part in intense activities such as rafting or climbing – rappelling among others. This explains the differentiation between the two sexes.

The degree of participation in the outdoor recreation activities was different between the two sexes because of the fact that when men participate in an activity, they do so with greater intensity than women, who in turn consider their participation to come under more relaxing circumstances. Men involvement also seems to be reflected on the number of activities and degree of participation in them in relation to women's, whose participation choices seem to be more random and relaxing.

Finally, the days of participation in outdoor recreation activities over the course of a year did not seem to present any statistically significant differences between the two sexes because the number of days is an easily changeable factor which does not carry any significant value.

The researchers consider that this particular comprehensive study, seen from the different categories of questions related to a holiday location or the choice of an outdoor recreation activity, is a good start to begin forming a set of guidelines for the local boards and recreation companies. This way, the local boards will be more equipped to organize better targeted tourism exhibitions and thus, be more effective advertisers. As for the recreation companies, they will be able to make more informed decisions when they create or renew the programs offered to their clients and as a result, they will become more profitable.

#### **Future research**

For future research, the researchers suggest enriching the sample of the study with foreign tourists visiting the area, who may have different criteria and attitudes towards holiday destinations and outdoor recreation activities.

#### **Photos from activities**



#### **References:**

- Afthinos, G. D. (1998). Exercise - exercise - kinetic recreation - organizational dimension. Athens: University of Athens, TEFAA.
- Alexandris et al., (2008). Examining the relationships between leisure constraints, involvement and attitudinal loyalty among Greek recreational skiers. *European Sport Management Quarterly*, 8(3), 247-264.
- Alexandris, K., Douka, S., Papadopoulos, P. & Kaltsatou, A. (2008). Testing the role of service quality on the development of brand associations and brand loyalty. *Managing Service Quality* Vol. 18, No 3, p.p.239-254.
- Barney, J. B. (1991). Firms resources and sustained competitive advantage. *Journal of Management*, 17, 99-120.
- Boulougouris, B. (2010). Back to nature. *Journal "REPUBLIC"*, 24-12-2010. [www.dimokratia.gr](http://www.dimokratia.gr).
- Bowen, J. (1990). Development of a taxonomy of services to gain strategic marketing insights. *Journal of Academy of Marketing Science*, 18(1), 43-49.
- Chroni, S. & Zourbanos, N. (2001). Psychological benefits of participating in outdoor recreational activities. Physical activity and quality of life. Special issue: Administration Activities Recreation, 1 (6).
- Costa, G. (1998). Animation - philosophy - history - overview. Notes from the course: Athletic Tourism, T.E.F.A.A., Democritus University of Thrace, Komotini.
- Dalakis, A., Costa G. & Yfantidou, G. (2013). Participants' choice of outdoor activities based on demographic data. The 21<sup>st</sup> E.A.S.M. Conference. Sport Management for Quality of Life. Istanbul, Turkey 2013.
- Dantsi, Ph., Mpalaska, P. & Alexandris, K. (2008). Investigation of the relationship between inhibitors and commitment of citizens to massively outdoor recreation programs. *Sports & Recreation Management*, 5 (2), 41-52.
- Dwyer, L. & Kim, C. (2003). Destination competitiveness: determinants and indicators. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 6(5), 369-414.
- Dwyer, L., Forsyth, P. & Rao, P. (2000a). The price competitiveness of travel and tourism: a comparison of 19 destinations. *Tourism Management*, 21(1), 9-22.
- Dwyer, L., Mellor, R., Livaic, Z., Edwards, D. & Kim, C. (2004). Attributes of destination competitiveness: a factor analysis. *Tourism Analysis*, 9, 91-101.
- Faulkner, B., Oppermann, M. & Fredline, E. (1999). Destination competitiveness: An exploratory examination of South Australia's core attractions. *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, 5(2), 125-139.
- Finger, C. & Gayler, B. (1993). *Εγχειρίδιο Animation στις Διακοπές (Τόμος Α' Β' Γ')*. Αθήνα: Ελληνικός Οργανισμός Τουρισμού. Δ/νση Γ' Εκπαίδευση. Πρόγραμμα Regionoc.
- Formica, S. (2000). *Destination Attractiveness as a Function of Supply and Demand Interaction*. Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Blacksburg.

- Goulimaris, D., Mavridis, G., Genti, M. & Rokka, S. (2014). Relationships between basic psychological needs and psychological well-being in recreational dance activities. *Journal of Physical Education and Sport*, 14, 2, 277-284.
- Grant, R. (1991). The resource-based theory of competitive advantage: Implications for strategy formulation. *California Management Review Spring*, 114-135.
- Gronroos, C. (1978). A service oriented approach to marketing of services. *European Journal of Marketing*, 12(8), 588-601.
- Gunn, C. A. (1994). *Tourism Planning* (3rd ed.). New York: Taylor and Francis.
- Hartman, D. & Lindgren, J. (1993). Consumer evaluations of goods and services - Implications for services marketing. *Journal of Services Marketing*, 7(2), 4-15.
- Hudson, S., Ritchie, B. & Timur, S. (2004). Measuring destination competitiveness: an empirical study of Canadian ski resorts. *Tourism and Hospitality Planning & Development*, 1(1), 79-94.
- Iwasaki, Y. & Havitz, M.E. (2004). Examining relationships between leisure involvement, psychological commitment and loyalty to a recreation agency. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 36(1), 45-72.
- Jones, E. & Haven-Tang, C. (2005). Tourism SMEs, service quality and destination competitiveness. In E. Jones & C. Haven-Tang (Eds.), *Tourism SMEs, Service Quality and Destination Competitiveness* (pp. 1-24). Cambridge, MA: CABI publishing.
- Kaplanidou, K. & Vogt, C. (2007). The Interrelationship between Sport Event and Destination's Image and Sport Tourist's Behaviors. *Journal of Sport & Tourism*, 12:3-4, 183-206).
- Kouthouris, C. (2009). An examination of the relationships between motivation, involvement and intention to continuing participation among attachment skiers. *International Journal of Sport Management Recreation & Tourism*, 4, 1-19.
- Leitner, T. (1996). *Genetic variation of HIV-1*. Thesis. Karolinska Institute, Stockholm, Sweden.
- Lytras, P.N. (1993). *Tourist Psychology*. Interbooks: Athens.
- Lytras, P.N. (2002). *Society Leisure. The leisure activities on holiday*. Interbooks: Athens.
- Meng, F. (2006). Doctoral thesis, Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University.
- Morisson, A. (1996). *Hospitality & travel marketing*. Delmar Publishers: Ελληνικές Εκδ. ΙΩΝ, Αθήνα.
- O'Connor, P. (1999). *Electronic Information Distribution in Tourism and Hospitality*. Wallingford, UK: CAB International.
- Onkvisit, S. & Shaw, J. (1991). Is service marketing really different? *Journal of Professional Services Marketing*, 7(2), 3-17.
- Opaschowski, H. (1996). *Tourismus. Systematische einföhrung. Analysen und prognose*. Opladen, Leske & Budrich.
- Pearce, D. G. (1997a). C destination images: analysis of association meeting planners' perceptions. *Tourism Management*, 17(3), 175-182.
- Pearce, D. G. (1997b). Competitive destination analysis in Southeast Asia. *Journal of Travel Research*, 35(4), 16-25.
- Poon, A. (1993). *Tourism, technology, and competitive strategies*. Cab Intern., Wallingford.
- Porter, M. E. (1990). *The Competitive Advantage of Nations*. New York: Free Press.
- Prahalad, C. K. & Hamel, G. (1990). The core competence of the corporation. *Harvard Business Review*, May-June, 79-91.
- Ritchie, J. R. B. & Crouch, G. I. (2000b). The competitive destination: a sustainability perspective. *Tourism Management*, 21(1), 1-7.
- Ritchie, J. R. B. & Crouch, G. I. (2003). *The Competitive Destination: A Sustainable Tourism Perspective*. Cambridge: CABI Publishing.
- Shostack, G. (1977). Breaking free from product marketing. *Journal of Marketing*, 41, 73-80.
- Tzetzis, G. (2007). Evaluation of benefits and self-efficacy of students in physical activity programs. *Sports & Recreation Management*, 4 (1), 36-47.
- Woosnam, K., McElroy K. & Van Winkle, C. (2009). The role of personal values in determining tourist motivations: An application to the winnipeg range theatre festival, a cultural special event. *Journal of Hospitality Marketing & Management*, 18(5), 500-511.
- WTO (2005). *UNWTO Tourism Highlights 2005 Edition*. Retrieved on Feb. 16, 2006 from <http://www.world-tourism.org/facts/menu.html>.
- Yfantidou, G., Costa, G. & Michalopoulos, M. (2008). Tourist Roles, Gender and Age in Greece: A Study of Tourists in Greece. *International Journal of Sport Management Recreation & Tourism* 1, 14-30.
- Zafiroudi A. & Xatzigeorgiadis A. (2008). Environmental interest, human behavior and participation in outdoor recreational activities. *Sport & Recreation Management*, 5 (2), 23-40.
- Zeithaml, V., Parasuraman, A. & Berry, L. (1985). Problems and strategies in services marketing. *Journal of Marketing*, 491, 33-46.