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# The central role of front-line employees in the Luxury Accommodation Product: evidence from Australia

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**Abstract**

**Purpose:** The paper investigates the importance of front-line employees' role in the Luxury Accommodation Product (LAP), in the context of Australian independent hotels.

**Design/methodology/approach:** In this qualitative study, participants were approached through a web-based survey. The sample comprised four managers and ten front-line employees, employed at a single independent luxury hotel in Australia.

**Findings:** The findings suggest that front-line employees are central to the LAP in independent hotels, and their behaviour directly impacts guest satisfaction and business longevity. It was also found that front-line employees understand their role as a highly complex, multi-dimensional position, affected by external and internal variables, such as the guest, operational and personal needs.

**Practical implications:** It is recommended that managers in the short term, should nurture front-line employees' loyalty and sympathy to business operations and business needs. In the long term, managers should explore the needs of the three central LAP stakeholders and consider how these needs can be addressed to reduce the likelihood of conflicting stakeholder needs.

**Originality/value:** Despite their central role in LAP operations, there is a deficit of academic research regarding front-line employees' understanding of the LAP, and their role within it.

This gap is addressed by the study's findings that challenge established theories on the front-line employees' role, discovered to be more complex than previously theorised.

**Key words:** Hospitality Industry; Independent Hotels; Luxury Accommodation Product; Front-line employees; Employee roles; Australia

## Introduction

The accommodation sector is the largest financial contributor to the hospitality industry, contributing $3.41US trillion per annum to the global economy and employing 173 million people (Fletcher et al., 2017). Relevant to this study, Australia's independent luxury hotels and lodges account for approximately 90% of these rooms (ABS, 2021) and 9.9% of Australia's total accommodation products. Australia's independent luxury hotel market contributes a disproportionate 18.9% to Australia's total accommodation earnings (ABS, 2021). Despite a 54.5% higher average room rate cost, Australia's luxury hotels have consistently demonstrated a 14% higher average occupancy rate than other accommodation sectors since 2014 (ILTM, 2014). The independent luxury hotel sector has demonstrated a 33% higher market and consumer market growth rate than other accommodation classifications (Allied Market Research, 2021). This market segment has maintained economic prosperity even when other accommodation markets (budget and mid-priced) have witnessed flat or declining occupancy (Dobrosielski, 2019). Coupled with the increasing global demand for luxury hospitality products and services and a recorded 17% increase in consumer spending on Australia's accommodation products, there is potential for the industry to attain more wealth and value in the future (Rather & Sharma, 2017; TRA, 2019).

The Luxury Accommodation Product (LAP) combines tangible and intangible elements, (Fitzsimmons & Fitzsimmons, 2001), designed and delivered by a complex network of stakeholders, namely guests, managers, and front-line employees. Each stakeholder plays a role in delivering a successful LAP (Walker, 2017), with front-line employees appearing as key stakeholders of the LAP and guest experience formation (Wells, 2013). It can be deduced that front-line employees hold the greatest influence over the customer's experience of the LAP as they are responsible for engaging guests with the LAP while satisfying the guests' needs and expectations (Cambra-Fierro et al., 2014; Homburg et al., 2009).

The literature also suggests that the LAP is highly vulnerable to front-line employees' actions, affecting guest satisfaction, and eventually influencing long-term business sustainability (Ramphal, 2016). Another interesting fact from the existing studies is that managers and guests express, at times, contrasting role expectations of the front-line employees (Cetin & Walls, 2016; Harkinson et al., 2017; Iloranta, 2019). These differences generate a variety of expectations regarding the front-line employees' roles and, by effect, send conflicting messages regarding their roles and behaviour. Consequently, there is an increased risk for front-line employees to demonstrate dissatisfaction towards the guests, which would affect the stability of the business.

The existing research demonstrates a disparity in guests' and managers' understanding of the front-line employees' roles, responsibilities, and expectations (Cetin & Walls, 2016; Iloranta, 2019). This gap is particularly prevalent in research related to front-line employees, especially in independent luxury hotels (Harkinson, 2016). Therefore, this study investigates the research gap surrounding the front-line employees' understanding of their role and responsibilities within the independent LAP.

## Literature Review

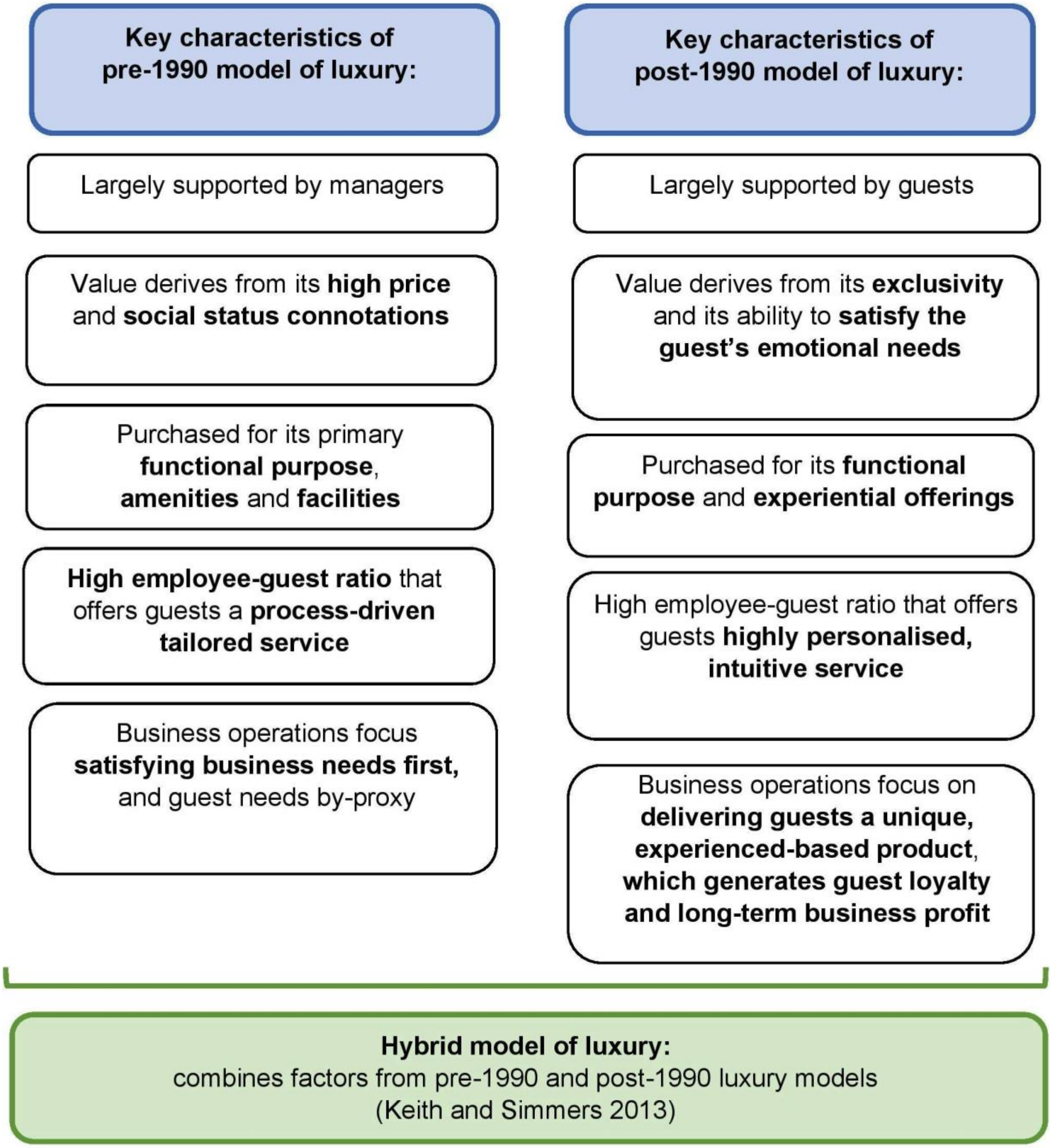
### *The concept of luxury in the accommodation sector*

The word 'luxury' originates from the Latin word 'luxus', meaning 'excess, overstock, extravagance, luxuriance, abundance' (Simpson, 1982, p.373). Regrettably, these terms are subjective rather than quantifiable (Hayes & Lashley, 2017). Whilst Eysenck and Eysenck argue otherwise (cited in Lee-Ross, 2001), factors such as culture, class, personality, personal needs, age, context, and contemporary trends have all been evidenced as altering interpretations of luxury (Kopalle et al., 2010). Several studies suggest (Dahling & Perez, 2010; Fan et al., 2017) that these variations are found across both guests' and employees' understandings of the term and in relation to various accommodation products, owing to varied expectations and capabilities of the products (Walker, 2017).

Broadly categorised into pre- and post-1990s, the key characteristics of the different models and definitions of luxury within the luxury accommodation context are summarised in Figure 1. In pre-1990s definitions, an accommodation product was characterised as 'luxury' because of its quantifiable qualities, including its prime location, large number of rooms, and offered amenities and services such as 24-hour room service, fine dining, business facilities, valet parking, décor, and high price point (Davidson et al., 2006; Kucukusta et al., 2014). Widely recognised as the 'Accommodation Rating System' (Five Star Alliance, 2020), these quantifiable factors were utilised as an inventory for consumers to compare hotel products and services, and managers to model the Luxury Accommodation Products (Nunkoo et al., 2020). The existing research suggests that managers largely support this definition of luxury (Harkinson, 2016). The LAP market oversaturation during the 1980s provoked diversification away from the quantifiable and tangible elements of the LAP model (Jones et al., 2003). O'Sullivan and Spangler (1998) argue that contemporary LAP guests shifted from buying products to making purchases specifically for the experience and emotional satisfaction they deliver. This signpost the so called 'Experience Economy' (Pine & Gillmore, 2011) that affected the conceptualisation of LAP in the luxury hotel sector.

The post-1990s conceptualisation of luxury, largely supported by guests (Cetin and Walls, 2016), suggests that value comes from factors such as facilitating service and staff quality (Chung & D'Annunzio, 2018; Padma & Ahn, 2020), providing personalised services (Iloranta 2019; Lai & Hitchcock, 2017; Sorensen & Jensen, 2015), creating memorable experiences (Holmgvist et al., 2020) and providing 'beyond expectation' service delivery (Potavanich, 2015) over the LAP's tangible components. For example, Alhelalat et al. (2017) identified personal interactions with customers as more valuable than front-line employees' functional duties in the restaurant sector. The post-1990 understanding of luxury is also supported by the Progression of Economic Value theory (Banton, 2020; Pine & Gilmore, 2011) which deduces that the more tailored a product or experience is to consumer needs, the higher value it holds. Cetin and Walls (2016) suggest that the guests' focus on the LAP's intangible elements is exaggerated in independent luxury hotels. Harkinson (2016), for example, argues that independent luxury hotel guests are becoming increasingly willing to overlook reduced opulence or reduced amenities if the hotel delivers more intangible experiential components.

**Figure 1**: Key characteristics of luxury models in hospitality




Despite the evidenced shift in guests' desires, much research suggests that the focus on the LAP's intangible qualities does not negate responsibility to deliver the pre-1990 quantifiable elements effectively and at high quality standards (Iloranta, 2019). Whilst not thoroughly explored in the current study, this line of argument suggests that contemporary luxury should be understood as a hybrid model (Figure 1) of both pre- and post-1990s luxury conceptions (Keith & Simmers, 2013).

The ambiguity surrounding the LAP definition is a chronic challenge for the luxury accommodation sector, laying a foun dation of issues that challenge LAP's viability. The variation in the key stakeholder's interpretation of luxury impedes the effective design and delivery of universally understood and mutually beneficial products, practices and procedures. This, in turn, affects customer satisfaction, measured in various ways such as repeat business, recommendations and word of mouth (WoM), fiscal business health, and business longevity (Lovelock et al., 2015; Walls et al., 2011). It also challenges how the role of the front-line employees in the LAP is understood.

The following sections explore the LAP key stakeholders, focusing on front-line employees.

*The Luxury Accommodation Product's stakeholders*

The LAP comprises two core components: the tangible and quantifiable elements (such as facilities, equipment, and products) and the people who design and deliver the accommodation product and services. Operationally, the LAP is facilitated by a triad of stakeholders (Harkinson 2016): hotel managers, guests, and front-of-house employees, referred to as the front-line employees. Whilst the front-line employees are technically subordinate to the guests and managers (Walker, 2017), each of these stakeholders is imperative to delivering products (and services) that satisfy the guests' perceptions of quality of service (Fitzsimmons & Fitzsimmons, 2002; Lai and Baum, 2005) and business operation and needs (Walker, 2017). Managers are largely responsible for directing the production of the accommodation product in a profitable manner (Mola & Jusoh, 2011), guests consume said accommodation product (Walker, 2017), and front-line employees facilitate the basic operational functions of the LAP, as directed by the manager, and delivers service to the guest (Cambra-Fierro et al., 2014; Wen et al., 2020).

Although it is possible to argue that front-line employees' low pay, low placement on the organisational hierarchy model, and lack of involvement in the LAP design processes reflect their low power or value in the LAP operations (Slack et al., 2010). On the other hand, the counterargument suggests that the front-line employees hold the greatest influence over the guests' experience of the LAP (Sorensen and Jensen, 2015). Cambra-Fierro et al. (2014) suggest that front-line employees are the primary tool for delivering LAP to guests, and the primary point of contact for guests throughout the LAP experience. In addition, the front-line employees are statistically most likely to interact with guests at LAP (Ottenbacher et al., 2009). This proximity makes the front-line employees the most likely source for identifying and delivering the tailored product/service experience demanded of the contemporary LAP by its guests (Homburg et al., 2009). By proxy, erroneous front-line employees' actions may negatively impact the hotel's quantifiable ratings, guest perceptions of the product and long-term business sustainability (Ramphal, 2016). These points are pertinent in independent luxury hotels who possess a higher employee-to-guest ratio, more multi-disciplinary front-line employees roles and a flatter hierarchal structure that increases front-line employees to guests' proximity (Lai & Hitchcock, 2017; Nunkoo et al., 2020; Sherman, 2007). As a direct consequence of their role, front-line employees operate in a way that balances the guests' and managers' understanding of the LAP (Sorensen & Jensen, 2015).

The following section explores the role and responsibilities of the front-line employees in the LAP context. The Functional and the Authentic, Organic Behaviour (AOB) models are applied as key theoretical underpinnings for this discussion.

*Theory of the Role and Responsibilities of front-line employees*

The extant literature suggests two distinctive approaches. Following a critical literature review on this topic, the authors labelled these approaches as the Functional Model and the Authentic, Organic Behaviour (AOB) Model, respectively, as presented below (see also Table 1).

The Functional Model suggests that a front-line employee is a functional tool purposed to facilitate sales, control business costs, and deliver an impression of emotional engagement, which Hochschild (1983) describes as 'display acting'. This approach originates in the pre-1990 model of Luxury and Business Theory (Davenport & Beck, 2002). The Business Theory determines that quality control, revenue control and thus operational control are necessary to ensure standards of service and product are maintained, customer expectations are met, and the business remains profitable (Burgess, 2014; Davenport & Beck, 2002). The Functional Model endorses the standardisation of LAP products and services (Jones et al., 1997; Ramphal, 2016). The Functional Model directs and controls the front-line employees' behaviour via standardised business service scripts (Douglas & Conner, 2003), standardised Role Theory (Bettencourt & Gwinner, 1996) and displaying situationally needed emotion and behaviour for the benefit of guest satisfaction and business needs (Hochschild, 1983; Homburg et al., 2009; Sutton & Rafaeli, 1988). This model suggests that front-line employees should use the above processes to create impressions of employee-guest 'bonding' and meaningful encounters (Gronroos, 1994; Ogbeide et al., 2015). For example, as Iloranta (2019) demonstrated, front-line employees are trained to repeat a guest's name three times in employee-guest conversation. This has the effect of committing the guest's name to memory while delivering the impression of 'authentic, personalised service'. Finally, this model endorses micro-management to ensure employees comply with business processes (Crick, 2002; Nickson et al., 2005;). These systems are thought to reduce erratic front-line employees' behaviour and fiscal spending, which are liable to undercutting the stability of the fiscally fragile LAP business model (Rutherford & O'Fallon, 2007). These processes have been successfully applied to different LAP settings, such as the Ritz-Carlton Group (2021) and Marriott International (2020). Criticism regarding the Functional Model, includes the dismissal of guest and employee subjective understandings and expectations of luxury and the LAP components (Brewster et al., 2016; De Dreu & Nauta, 2009). Despite an inclination to read consumer needs cues or manipulate consumer behaviour, focusing on efficiency and business needs risks overpowering effective customer service and contemporarily demanded personal touches (Alhelalat et al., 2017).

On the other hand, the AOB Model suggests that the LAP front-line employees' roles and responsibilities are to deliver authentic, organic emotive and personalised experiences to guests (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1985; Knox & Walsh, 2005; Sherman, 2007). This model argues that front-line employees' personable and human qualities are central to a LAP's success, including front-line employees' 'creative' 'independently minded' and 'informal' qualities (Xie et al., 2019) and their ability to evoke similar feelings from the guest. This concept is further supported by studies, such as Harkinson's (2016) research, which highlights an increasing guest desire to break the wall between employees and guests and find "moments of truth in the story behind the place and the people that they encounter – and make[ing] connections in the process" (Hemmington, 2007, p.107). In addition, a few studies (such as Gary et al., 2013; Mensah-Kufuor et al., 2015) support the idea of targeted front-line employees' recruitment based on their natural, emotive capabilities and social intelligence.

**Table 1:** Summary of the key characteristics of the Functional and AOB Models

| **Functional Model** | **AOB Model** |
|---|---|
| **Key Characteristics** | |
| Purposed to satisfy business needs. Business longe-vity is achieved through product standardisation. | Adaptive to guest emotional needs. Thus, business needs are satisfied by fostering loyal guests. |
| Commodifies employees as a controllable business tool. | Employees are selectively recruited for their personal qualities. |
| Commodifies emotion by selling impression of the guest-employee emotional-engagement. | Employees have in-role freedom to provide appease guest needs, rather than delivering impression of meeting needs. |
| Supports employee emotional dissonance in the workplace. | Employees are valued for their familiar, organic and sincere interactions with the guest. |
| **Main Weaknesses – Criticism** | |
| Prioritises business efficiency over effective customer service. | Does not allow for heterogenous employee behaviour which contrasts with guest / business needs. |
| Does not accommodate variation in guest or employee needs and expectations. | |
| **Indicative Key Theoretical Contributions** | |
| Hochschild's (1983) Emotional labour work; Gronroos (1994) Nordic model of customer satisfaction; Bettencourt & Gwinner (1996) Categorical knowledge theory on guest needs; Solomon et al. (1985) scripted role modelling; Biddle, (1986) scripted front-line employees' behaviour; Hobfall's Conservation of Resources Theory (cited in Hobfall & Ford, 2007) ; Zaph (2002) Deliberate Dissonance Acting Theory; Homburg et al. (2009) Customer Need Knowledge theory; Vargo & Lusch (2004) The service-dominant logic. | Ashforth & Humphrey (1995) The three stages of emotional labour; Knox & Walsh (2005) Soft HRM Theory; Harkison (2016) The front-line employees' role in luxury accommodation experience; Gremler & Gwinner's (2000) work on the importance of front-line employee – guest bonding; Sorensen's work on the importance of service flexibility, innovation, and personalisation (cited in Sorensen & Jensen, 2015) |

These 'natural talents' were found to be increasingly effective at engaging guests and generating sales, compared to employees receiving cognitive empathy training, perspective training and social intelligence training. To this end, AOB sympathetic scholars suggest that, if the right person is employed in the position, the front-line employees' personal needs, opinions and motivations are largely symbiotic with LAP business and guests' needs (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1985; Sherman, 2007; Xie et al., 2019). Consequentially, it suggests business operations should prioritise employing and enabling suitable LAP employees over implementing rigid, calculated, standardised employee behavioural models. Application of selective recruitment is also found in Forbes (2021), which provides statistical evidence that front-line employees are increasingly hired for their emotional capabilities. Criticism of the AOB Model stems from the reduced business control over the LAP. Despite the AOB's suggested advantages (Potavanich, 2015), it creates a fluid business model, enabling a certain degree of autonomy for front-line employees. This consequently reduces business control over front-line employees' behaviour. By proxy, this increases the risk of service and product inconsistency, ineffective business operations, increased business costs (Hemmington, 2007; Wells, 2013) and a decline in customer satisfaction (Holmovist et al., 2020). These factors challenge the stability of an already economically fragile business model (Rutherford & O'Fallon, 2007), and risks a business' economic longevity (Mandelbaum & Woodworth, 2019). A summary of the key characteristics of the Functional and AOB models can be found in Table 1.

The following section discusses the research approach and methods employed for this study's primary data collection and data analysis.

## Methodology

This study employs a qualitative web-based survey approach for its merits, detailed below. Usually associated with deductive research approaches (Saunders et al., 2014), a survey "collects information from a sample of individuals through their responses to questions" (Check & Schutt, 2012, p.160). This research method tends to generate descriptive data on a targeted topic, which provides the researcher insight into participants' opinions and perspectives. The strength of the web-based survey derives from its ability to access geographically dispersed participants without the constraint of time zones and schedule clashes (Hewson et al., 2016). This was vital to the success of this study, considering challenges such as the geographical and time constraints (U.K., Australia), the travel restrictions imposed by COVID-19, and the short time frame available to complete this study. These challenges prohibited the postponement of the data collection phase to a later date (Altinay & Paraskevas, 2008), when travel restrictions had been lifted. Web-based surveys offered participants the opportunity to respond to questions in their preferred environment, and in their own timeframe, contrasting the time-constrained, often intensive environments of interview data collection methods (De et al., 2020).

On the other hand, the web-based qualitative survey has been criticised as juvenile (Hewson et al., 2016), and unreliable in its reach (Wright, 2005). It is also criticised for its reduced ability to establish strong researcher-participant rapport, capture extralinguistic cues, or probe participants on their answers, both adding value and depth to qualitative responses (Braun et al., 2020). Despite the above criticism, the web-based survey merits credit as a worthy research method (Davey et al., 2019) to achieve this study’s aim. A successful application of this research method during the COVID-19 lockdown and travel ban is examined by Giousmpasoglou et al. (2021), who received valid responses from 50 luxury hotel general managers in 45 countries.

The survey consisted of three sections, each preceded by a brief introduction to the forthcoming section’s rationale and scientific language. The first section explored the participants’ demographic profile, role in this hotel and time spent with guests. The second section comprised four open-ended questions, exploring participant understanding of the key dimensions of the LAP. This section’s questions replicated many of those found in Harkinson’s (2016) study, which investigated a similar topic. The replication of prior tested research questions reduced the risk of creating questions subject to participant misinterpretation or misleading tendencies (Miles et al., 2014). The final section comprised five open-ended questions, exploring the participants' use of emotion in the LAP, a notable point of differentiation between the AOB Model and Functional Model, discussed in the previous section. Together, these three sections were created to collect data that provided insights necessary to achieve this study’s aim. The total survey was designed to take 20-25 minutes to complete, as per the recommendation provided by Reips (2010).

### *Sampling*

This study selected participants using the non-probability sampling technique, which relies on the researchers’ judgment to decide on the research sample instead of random selection (Saunders et al., 2014), reducing the threat of data invalidation, by including responses from participants that are not qualified to comment on the subject (Dillman, 2000). In sum, the specialist nature of this exploratory study’s focus encouraged and validated this type of sampling (Etikan et al., 2016).

Participants were selected based on their experience working in front-of-house roles at a specific Australian independent hotel. This hotel is part of The Luxury Lodges of Australia (https://luxurylodgesofaustralia.com.au/), a network of 19 independent luxury hotels, committed and competent at delivering high levels of service quality. Of the 21 hotel employees who were initially contacted to participate in this study, 19 responded positively, and 14 were finally selected (4 managers and 10 front-line employees). A ratio of three-to-one (front-line employees to managers) was sought to achieve this study's aim. The participants were initially contacted through a social media platform and responded to the survey through their social media accounts or email. Before they participated in this survey, all employees and managers received information regarding the study and digitally signed a consent form. The study received approval from the authors' University Research Ethics Committee prior to the fieldwork.

### *Data analysis*

A three-step analysis process was employed to analyse the wide scope of data collected (Braun et al., 2020), including content analysis for emerging themes (open coding and thematic coding); cross-checking data across the entire dataset; and finally, comparing data with established academic research. Coding approaches data with focus and purpose, examined and built on, to find rationale and linked themes to make analytically-based conclusions (Miles et al., 2014, Brotherton, 2015).

The data analysis in this study followed the content analysis process. Data were compared to the Functional Model and AOB Model and investigated with both open and thematic coding, allowing other data themes to naturally emerge (Miles et al., 2014). This provided the opportunity to identify and open lines of inquiry in established models. Finally, the study's collected data were compared to primary data from Harkinson's (2016) luxury hotel focused study. This comparison enabled the study's data to be measured for validity (Miles et al., 2014), generalisability (Saunders et al., 2014), and added depth to this study's primary research findings (Brotherton, 2015).

## Findings

The collected dataset from the qualitative survey questionnaire was investigated from various perspectives to attain a holistic understanding. Although the dominant themes were apparent from the employees' and managers' responses, the individual transcripts demonstrated a mixed affiliation to the AOB and Functional Models. Rather than voiding relevance or reliance on the data, it should be briefly noted that, all conclusions made should be understood as a guide rather than a rule or definitive conclusion (Crick, 2002; Harkinson, 2016). The discussion below summarises the participants' profiles and the study's emerging themes.

**Table 2:** Participant Coding and Demographic Profile

| Participant Coding | Gender | Age | Nationality | Department | Length of Service | Time spent with guests |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Managers** | | | | | | |
| **M1** | F | **32-38** | Polish | Front Office | 2-3years | 80-90% |
| **M2** | F | **39-45** | Australian | GM | 8-9years | 40-50% |
| **M3** | F | **32-38** | South African | Multiple departments | 10+years | 60-70% |
| **M4** | F | **32-38** | South African | Multiple departments | 10+years | 80-90% |
| **Front-line-employees** | | | | | | |
| **F1** | F | **25-31** | Malaysian | Food & Beverage | 2-3years | 80-90% |
| **F2** | F | **18-24** | Zimbabwean | Multiple departments | 2-3years | 80-90% |
| **F3** | M | **46-52** | Australian | Porter | 2-3years | 60-70% |
| **F4** | M | **25-31** | Italian | Food & Beverage | 10+years | 100% |
| **F5** | F | **32-38** | Australian | Food & Beverage | -1year | 80-90% |
| **F6** | F | **18-24** | Australian | Food & Beverage | 2-3years | 80-90% |
| **F7** | M | **25-31** | Australian | Multiple departments | 6-7years | 80-90% |
| **F8** | F | **25-31** | Canadian | Multiple departments | 10+years | 80-90% |
| **F9** | M | **25-31** | Indonesian | Food & Beverage | 2-3years | 80-90% |
| **F10** | F | **18-24** | New Zealand | Food & Beverage | 2-3years | 80-90% |

*Front-line-employees and their understanding of the Luxury Accommodation Product*

*Participants' profile*

Data regarding participant nationality, gender, professional experience, and proximity to guests was collected to enable the researcher to gain insight into participants' personable variables (Saunders et al., 2014). All participants confirmed experience working in front-of-house related managerial roles or front-of-house front-line employee roles within the hotel. As such, all respondents qualified to participate in the study. 92.9% had worked in the luxury hotel industry for more than two years, suggesting that participant responses would be backed by experience. The respondents demonstrated a diverse range of ages, nationalities, and departmental affiliations. Demographic data presented minimal trends except for the high percentage of female respondents and the high response rate from full-time-permanent employees. As such, similarity in results should not be linked to participant variables but considered a reflection of the holistic sample group's understanding/opinion. A summary of the participants' main demographic characteristics and estimated time spent with guests can be found in Table 2.

As argued earlier in the literature review, the participants' understanding of *luxury* in the accommodation sector affects participants' expectations of the LAP. In addition, it explains front-line employees' behaviour and opinions (Lovelock et al., 2005; Mola & Jusoh, 2011). For this reason, this study chose to explore front-line employees' understanding of the LAP prior to exploring their perspective on their role. The first set of questions asked participants what they understood to be the defining features of the LAP and the LAP experience. A plethora of words and phrases were found to be repeated throughout the data, including *'service', 'experience', 'personalise', 'detail', 'quality'* and *'staff'* (Figure 2).

Guided by comparing pre- and post-1990 definitions of luxury (see Figure 1), these words and phrases were coded by their reference to tangible or intangible LAP components. The tangible elements referenced the material construction of the LAP and demonstrated affinity to the pre-1990 definition of luxury. On the other hand, intangible elements referenced both employee action and guest-felt emotion, showing an affinity to the post-1990 definition of luxury. It was also found that front-line employees referenced the LAP's intangible elements more frequently (47% of total references). This supported Alhelalat et al.'s (2017) argument that the modern LAP is understood by the post-1990 definition of luxury, and suggested front-line employees may have an affinity with the AOB Model. Data also showed that 37% of front-line employees valued tangible and intangible elements as of equal importance in the LAP. This suggests that the front-line employees' understanding of LAP may be more complex than the established definitions. It also supports Keith and Simmers' (2013) argument that stakeholder understanding of luxury may be evolving. Managers also presented a strong affinity to both these categories.

**Figure 2:** Most commonly repeated words in participants' responses


The first set of questions also investigated front-line employees' importance to the LAP. All participants indicated the centrality of the front-line employees to the LAP, from a guest experience perspective. Of these, the majority of the front-line employees argued that, employee action is the most influential element of the LAP experience. This supported the Cambra-Fierro et al., (2014) argument that front-line employees are the most definitive element of the LAP. Participants identified the guest-self-generated emotion as the most important factor, linking it to employee action. This reinforces the argument that front-line employees are a highly valuable element of the LAP; this is portrayed in the following participant responses: F1 suggests that "…guests want a thoughtful and individualised service," while F6 argues that "…a big part of a guest having a good experience is when they feel like you really care."

*Front-line employees and their self-understood role*

The second section of the qualitative survey questionnaire explored front-line employees' perception of their role and responsibilities in relation to the LAP. Three potential areas of enquiry from the data analysis emerged: 1) The employee's practical and functional role, 2) The employee's use of emotion, and 3) The employee's attitude to work (effort required to perform the role).

These areas of enquiry were analysed for their affinity to the Functional and AOB Models. It must be noted that primary data demonstrated participant-to-participant and question-to-question variation in answers and affinity to the two models. Thus, whilst dominant themes were apparent, any conclusions should be understood as a guide rather than an affirmative understanding or rule.

*Practical and Functional use*

Front-line employees unanimously suggested they are a functional/practical tool in the LAP, purposed to enable smooth business operations. In line with duties prescribed to front-line employees in their job descriptions, they argued the responsibilities central to their role involve "…delivering personalised and detailed check in process" (F10), "…creating positive atmosphere and deliver competent service" (F2), and "…make[ing] sure that everything about their stay is seamless" (F6).

Whilst front-line employees did use language indicative of the AOB Model in their responses, such as "*personalised*" and "*creating positive atmosphere*", a holistic analysis of primary data identified a tendency to deliver prescribed micro-level business operations, rather than acting out of their formally prescribed duties (Cambra-Fierro et al., 2014). Responses that mentioned product/service personalisation on behalf of the front-line employees, usually originated from standard operating procedures and management direction. This supported the Functional Model arguments that the front-line employees can personalise products only per business processes (Homburg et al., 2009; Iloranta., 2019). This was further supported by data that implied that front-line employees were inclined to fulfil their managers' needs, regardless of the guests' needs and their desires and needs. This was exampled by F8 below:

> The management did not encourage a positive work environment which made it difficult to want to see them succeed. That being said, I would never want a guest to suffer or have a poor experience due to a behind the scenes issue, so I was still motivated to perform well in my role duties. (F8)

Similarly, front-line employees also exemplified the use of the Functional Model's simulated product personalisation, achieved via delivering the impression of personalising the product (Ogbeide et al., 2015). F5 evidenced this:

> [I am influenced by] management needs. This means I can point to something tangible if I need to – 'Company policy states...' In my opinion, if guests are increasingly disgruntled, and staff actions are in line with company policy, then it is an issue that needs to be changed in the policy from the management level. I do however try my best within the boundaries of management needs to satisfy the needs of the guests. (F5)

The findings suggest that the front-line employees understand their role and responsibilities in alignment with the Functional Model. On the other hand, several participants demonstrated behaviour away from their formal job duties. F1, for example, demonstrated that they had the freedom to plan and implement a surprise marriage proposal:

> I received request from guest to plan a surprise proposal over the dinner, it was very exciting for the whole team to plan it together with the guest from decorating table, preparing bouquet, filming, and clapping when the partner says yes to the proposal and carry[ing] on the celebration for their entire stay. (F1)

Planning proposals were not part of the front-line employees' formal responsibilities, but rather was an example of their extra-role behaviour and pragmatism. This alluded to the front-line employees' behavioural freedoms, as Hewegama (2015) suggested. It also supported Praveen et al.'s (2005) argument that employees are increasingly employed for their social intelligence and creative capabilities. Each of these factors supported the argument that the front-line employees understand their role and responsibilities as akin to the AOB model. Furthermore, the findings demonstrated multiple counts of managerial support of front-line employees' extra-role behaviours:

> …[front-line-employee should] strive to identify my guests needs before they are even aware of it themselves and use these opportunities to go above and beyond. (M3)

Whilst managerial support of these freedoms can support the AOB's Model of in-role front-line employee freedoms, it may contradict or deviate from their role responsibilities which include compliance with rules and standardised procedures. The observed managerial support of in-role freedoms could alternatively suggest that these freedoms are a controlled design feature of the LAP's business operations. This is validated by business theory and acknowledgement of the fiscally fragile structure of the LAP (Rutherford & O'Fallon, 2007), which requires stable business operations to enable business profitability (Slack, 2004). Based on the above argument, the front-line employee (controlled) autonomy, may be viewed as management practice rather than affinity to the AOB model (Iloranta, 2019; Ramphal, 2016). This is also supported by Homburg et al.'s (2009) and Hochschild's (1983) arguments. Consequentially, though front-line employees may have understood their role as akin to the AOB Model, the above view suggests that the Functional Model more likely underpins the front-line employees' behaviour.

### *Use of Emotions*

The use of emotions was unanimously perceived as fulfilling emotional guest's needs, holding a central responsibility of the front-line employees' role. Emotional needs refer to guests' desire to engage with a product (or service) and have a positive emotional experience during and after visiting the hotel (O'Sullivan & Spangler, 1988). This is demonstrated by F2, who argues that they should make guests "…feel comfortable and at home". This responsibility can be facilitated by either the Functional Model's false acting, or the AOB Model's authentic, organic employee-to-guest interactions.

Three different types of emotion-related behaviour emerged from the study's findings. The first emotion supported the post-1990 understanding of luxury and the AOB Model. Based on the findings, it can be argued that front-line employees genuinely and organically were inclined to engage emotionally with guests. F7 says that "…genuine emotions are bound to happen when you spend time one on one with guests, which happens often in small luxury lodges." A reference to processes and systems did not accompany demonstration of this type of emotion. Rather it bore true similarity to the AOB Model's suggestion that the independent hotel front-line employees are specifically recruited for their natural affinity to meet guest needs and desire for a guest-employee connection (Harkinson, 2016). This suggests a front-line employee affinity to the post-1990 definition of luxury, prioritising the intangible elements and LAP experience (Hewagama, 2015).

On the other hand, it was also suggested that employees used emotion to tactically distance their personal feelings and opinions from guests. Despite the front-line employees' freedom and ability to engage with guests, many participants appeared to reject this approach. All respondents, for example, demonstrated the use of false emotions while on duty; the exampled display of emotion (Hochschild, 1983) and emotional dissonance (Zapf, 2002) are found in the Functional Model. According to F10:

> One must obviously display emotion when working in a front-of-house role. These emotions are not always genuine. When you're busy and you're running your arse off… you're obviously stressed. However, it's important to look calm and controlled to guests. Guests come to dinner for both the food/drink but also for the atmosphere, it's an event. If you look like a headless chicken, you disturb the atmosphere. (F10)

Supporting Hobfall and Ford (2007) and Zapf (2002), the findings further implied that genuine acting was not always necessary or possible in the job role:

> …[the guests] had unachievable expectations, verbally abusive… I felt disrespected from the moment I extended my hand (as it was dismissed) during introductions and this continued attitude was emotionally taxing. I had to constantly appear calm and accommodating whilst expressing an outward happy welcoming and understating façade. This was deep emotional acting. It felt exhausting and demeaning. (M4)

Practically, this argument was supported by primary data, which evidenced that most participants (of front-line employees) relied on management guidance (70%) and business systems (90%), to inform them on how to display emotion when interacting with guests. It must be noted that, these figures included participants who contested that 'fake' displays of emotion are not acceptable, as well as participants that presented a sincere inclination to connect to the guests. Tactical use of displaying emotion for dissonance implies that the front-line employees view themselves as responsible for delivering practical duties and an expected image of the front-line employee, rather than responsible for delivering authentic, organic and emotional connections. This is further supported by the Functional Model's business theory (Burgess, 2014), which argues that employees should be objective in their behaviour and view their role as simply part of the business transaction. Furthermore, in contrast to the AOB model, data implied that front-line employees' emotions do not innately parallel or satisfy guest needs and emotions. Overall, this use of emotion holds an affinity to the Functional Model.

Finally, most front-line employees suggested that they used emotions to tactically influence guests for the benefit of the business, rather than for personal gains. F3, for example, argues that: "[staff should] display a happy vibe to bring a joyful experience to the guest". More specifically, most respondents suggested they used emotional interactions to gain more information on the guest and deliver a suitably tailored product/service experience. This argument is supported by Homburg et al. (2009), Hochschild (1983) and Iloranta (2019). As argued above, managerial support for this behaviour suggests that the LAP was likely designed to allow and enable these behaviours (Fitzsimmons & Fitzsimmons, 2002). To this end, the findings suggest that front-line employees deliver impressions of employee-guest bonding and meaningful encounters through endorsed manufactured systems and processes based on the Functional Model. Consequently, this tactically appeases the guest's desired LAP experience and influences guest behaviour in a business preferable way.

### *Effort required to perform the role*

The findings also explored the front-line employees' attitude toward their role, or their interpretation of the amount of effort it takes to perform their role. The attitude, or perceived effort required to perform a job, can imply an employee's willingness to go above and beyond their job duties (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1985). This can, in turn, demonstrate a participant's understanding of their job role. The AOB Model, for example, implies that an employee's personal needs, opinions and motivations are largely symbiotic with work or guest needs (Sherman, 2007). Therefore, the front-line employees' affinity for pleasing guest needs requires less effort. By contrast, the Functional Model implies that these factors do not necessarily come naturally or match the front-line employees' needs and opinions (Walls, 2011).

Four 'effort' categories were established from the literature and the study's findings (Table 3): Active Effort, Selective Effort, Detached Effort and Effortless Effort. In this case, effort refers to the amount of acting or labour the employee feels they need to commit to their role to satisfy their work responsibilities. These categories have connotations to Hochschild (1983) and Ashforth and Humphrey's (1985) studies in Emotional Labour. Significant to the following discussion, a distinguishable component of the Selective Effort category was that the extra-role behaviour was understood to be a choice, not an expectation of the front-line employees.

**Table 3**: Description of the Four Effort Categories

| |
|---|
| **Active Effort**: Employees are constantly interpreting, developing, and readjusting the LAP operational processes and how they behave with the guests. The aim here is twofold: to make the experience personalised to each guest's needs, and on the other hand meet the LAP expectations. This is suggestive of the Functional Model's display acting. |
| **Selective Effort:** Employees strive to make the LAP experience and employee-guest interactions appear personalised. Front-line employees need to interpret guest needs cues and tailor the LAP to their needs. In this case, the employees are not obliged to perform duties above their job specification and decide how much they engage guests and value-add behaviour. |
| **Detached Effort:** the guest experience derives from the LAP's tangible components and business operations. The front-line employees are tools to enable effective delivery of the LAP operations. They have no other obligations. This is suggestive of the Functional Model emotional dissonance theory. |
| **Effortless Effort:** The LAP is a completely immersive experience, in which employees 'host' the guest rather than 'serving' the guest or adapting the LAP product to the guest. Employees genuinely want to make guests feel at home. This holds similarity to the AOB Model, which implies front-line employees require no acting to perform their role. |

**Source:** adapted from Hochschild (1983) and Ashforth and Humphrey (1985)

Most front-line employees demonstrated affinity to the Selective Effort model. Half of the front-line employees, for example, suggested that they could choose to go above-and-beyond their role duties, or otherwise (Selective Effort). F5 illustrated this:

> Presenting a professional disposition meaning respectful, helpful, and attentive [behaviour] is necessary. How much emotion is shared thereafter is usually something I would gauge case by case. (F5)

Furthermore, respondents implied that many of the front-line employees' personal needs underpinned their behaviour. F2, for example, demonstrated employee-guest interaction for self-gratification:

> …if the people like me and appreciate me, I feel validated and accepted and feel like I want to help them more. (F2)

Similarly, participant responses show decision-making not to engage in extra-role behaviour or emotively engage with guests:

> …if you check the guests in and first thing you hear is a complaint how hot it is…instead of how are you then I put a fake smile on and check the length of this guests stay hoping it is not too many days. (F6)

Finally, indirectly supporting the above, and similar to the Selective Effort category, data demonstrated that front-line employees recognised the power that their role had on the LAP. F2 exemplified this:

> It is the staff's responsibility to ensure that guests feel good emotion from the staff. I think everyone at one point has interacted with a negative person serving us. It feels horrible and makes us not want to go back. (F2)

The above front-line employee responses point to the Selective Effort Model. Whilst there was no evidence that front-line employees used their autonomy to damage the guest experience or business needs, their responses challenge both models' understandings of the front-line employees' roles. The participants' responses partly reject the AOB model's argument that front-line employees engage in authentic, organic guest-employee interactions willingly and for mutually beneficial purposes. Furthermore, the AOB's selective recruitment strategy is also challenged (Forbes, 2021; Praveen et al., 2005). The findings also diverge from the Functional Model's position that the front-line employees are submissive to business needs (Homburg et al., 2009). The findings suggest that the front-line employees' personal motivation and needs may be more influential in affecting their role behaviour than either the Functional or AOB models allowed for. However, despite this, an overriding disposition submitting to the needs of management was identified. The Selective Effort category supports the LAP hybrid model by recommending an emerging third category in terms of the front-line employees' behaviour. On the other hand, the managers' responses presented the highest affinity to the Active Effort model. This is understandable considering that managers have more obligation to ensure business success (Walker, 2017). The discrepancy between the managers' and employees' responses reveals a gap in understanding the front-line employee roles.

The following section discusses the conclusion, implications, and recommendations from the above findings.

## Conclusion

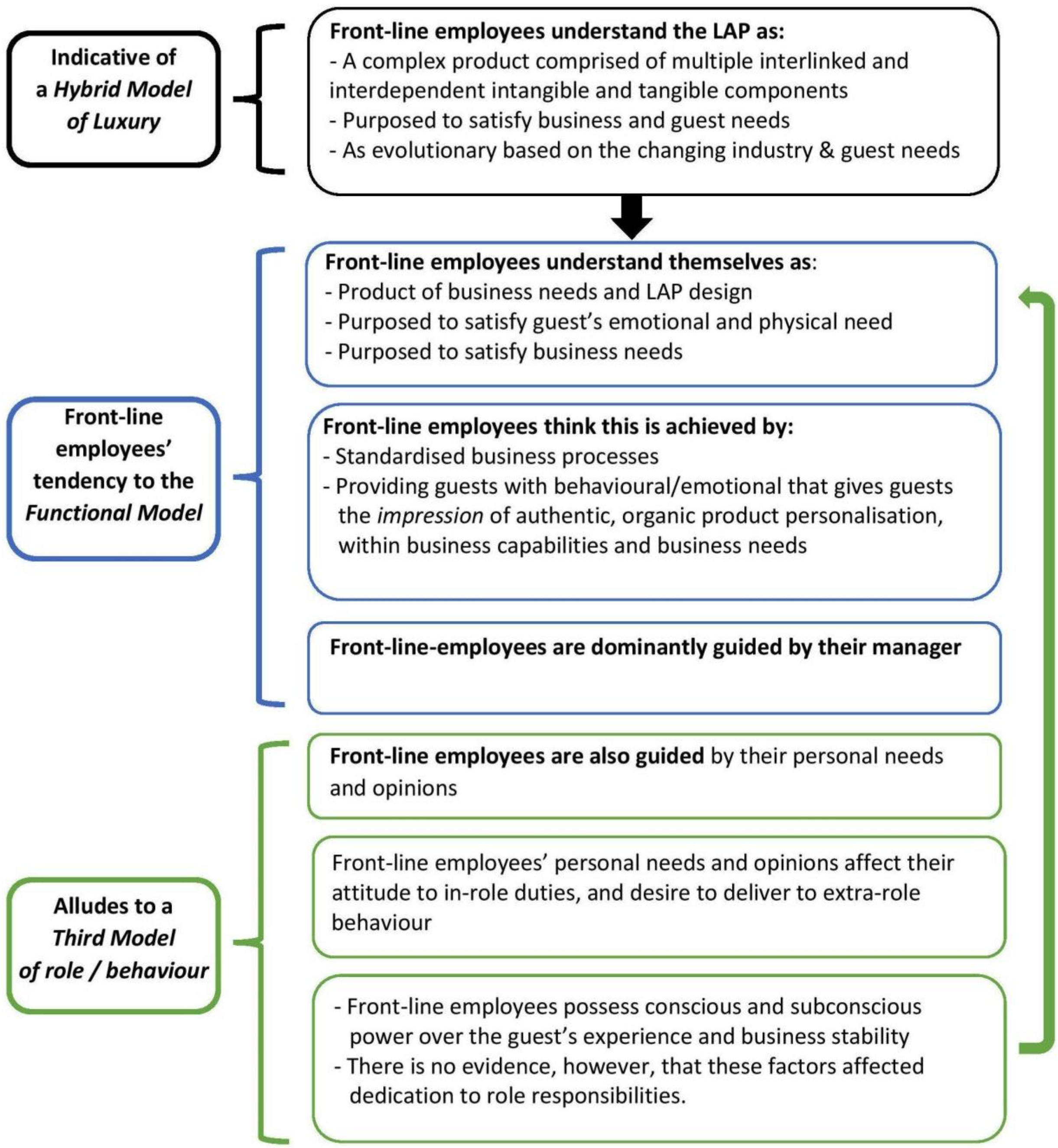
The study's findings propose that front-line employees are central to the LAP in independent luxury hotels, and their behaviour directly impacts guest satisfaction and business longevity, or the opposite. Positioned at the forefront of the LAP, front-line employees are responsible for implementing operational plans, personalisation, and guest emotional engagement. The findings also suggest that front-line employees understood the LAP in independent hotels as a complex, multi-dimensional product, composed of multiple elements such as, employee-induced components, tangible elements, operations elements, and guest-generated feelings. In contrast to the arguments that perceive the LAP as either a product purposed for profit (Burgess, 2014) or to evoke guest pleasure (Hochschild, 1983), this study advocates that, front-line employees understand the LAP as a combination of both. They understand the LAP as primarily an experiential product, enjoyed by guests, and delivered by a cohesive business model that supports business economic and operational needs. It is not surprising that front-line employees view the LAP as a dynamic construction of these elements, based on their formally prescribed job duties, and their placement at the impact point of guest-business needs, opinions, and expectations. Whilst the employee in-role behaviour does not always reflect this view, it indicates that their understanding of the LAP differs from both the guests' and managers' understanding. This also suggests that front-line employees understand luxury that is closer to the hybrid model (see also Figure 1). The above aligns with the findings presented in Cetin and Walls (2016) and Harkinson's (2016) studies.

This study also suggests that the front-line employees largely understand their role as a product of business needs and business design in the LAP settings. In line with Cambra-Fierro et al. (2014) and Walker (2017), front-line employees prioritise rudimentary business operational duties purposed to ensure smooth business operations. Regardless of their internal desires or opinions, front-line employees demonstrate an over-arching disposition to fulfil management needs and expectations, above their own needs and guest needs. The findings also reveal a holistic front-line employee commitment to their formally conscripted functional and practical duties, and an overriding commitment to the business model's service script and role training. This was true even when the front-line employees' personal motivations and opinions conflicted with their business expectations. This holds parallel to the Functional Model. In addition, the findings suggest that the contemporary LAP product concerning the front-line employees' role is in a state of transformation, in support of Keith and Simmers (2013), Forbes (2021) and Praveen et al. (2005).

Front-line employees also unanimously agree that LAP guests have emotional expectations of the LAP. Within this argument, front-line employees suggest it is their responsibility to appease guests' emotional needs. However, whilst most participants demonstrate a desire to emotionally engage with the guests, they perceive this is not required as part of their role. In addition, emotional engagement with guests is largely discouraged by managers and viewed as avoidable. The front-line employees' inclination to use service scripts and managerial guidance to direct their emotional interactions with guests, supports the argument that front-line employees view their role as sympathetic to the Functional Model.

*Theoretical implications*

**Figure 3:** Summary of the study's key findings




The evidence presented above challenges both the Functional and AOB Models in terms of the front-line employees' roles and responsibilities. Despite being holistically submissive to business needs, the front-line employees present decision-making capabilities in their role behaviour. The findings also demonstrate the front-line employees' self-awareness of their power, enabling satisfactory business processes and fulfilling guest expectations of the LAP. Holding parallels to Hobfall and Ford's (2007) findings, it is argued that the front line employees' heterogeneity, personal motivation and personal needs may have more leverage and consequence in the LAP transaction than the AOB or Functional Model are alluded to. Thus, while front-line employees demonstrate a holistic inclination to implement business operations as per their job descriptions and a disposition to submit to management needs, their recognition of power can cause issues in the future. Holding a parallel to the hybrid luxury model, data insinuates that the front-line employees may have an affinity to an alternative understanding of their role, yet to be described.

In summary, the front-line employees demonstrate affinity, and at the same time, challenge both the Functional and AOB Models. It was found that the front-line employees understand their role as a highly complex, multi-dimensional, position that is affected both by external variables, such as the guests' and business' needs, and internal variables, such as personal needs. Overall, the findings demonstrate that it may be too simplistic to define the front-line employees' understanding of their role as holistically akin to either the Functional or the AOB Model. Rather, front-line employees appear to understand their role and responsibilities as a complex-hybrid-model of behaviour. This suggests a third model of behaviour that is worthy of further research. The findings of this study have been summarised in Figure 3.

### *Managerial Recommendations*

In response to the study's findings, managers are recommended to take the following measures, depending on the implementation time. In the short term, managers should nurture front-line employees' loyalty and sympathy to business operations and business needs. This approach is thought to reduce damaging front-line employee heterogeneous behaviour (Praveen et al., 2005). An example of this approach could be incorporating an employee rewards system into their business model. In the long term, managers should explore the needs of the three central LAP stakeholders and consider how these needs can be addressed to reduce the likelihood of conflicting stakeholder needs. This investigation should explore the three stakeholders' opinions and expectations of the front-line employees' roles and responsibilities. A greater understanding of these factors enables the creation of a business model, that is mutually beneficial for all involved stakeholders (Lai & Baum, 2005), reducing business vulnerability to contrasting stakeholder needs or potentially unsavoury stakeholder heterogeneous behaviour. A cohesive and mutually beneficial business model would strengthen business longevity (Burgess, 2014), and thus the successful implementation of the LAP.

### *Limitations and Research Recommendations*

Despite this study's merits, several limitations emerge, largely associated with time, travel and resource restrictions. The first limitation is related to the study's scope. Due to time constraints, this study focused on a single LAP property, which raises questions regarding applying the findings to the wider independent luxury hotel sector. The second limitation was a direct consequence of the chosen qualitative data collection method (web survey). Although it held merit in counterbalancing the study's geographical and time constraints, issues were identified regarding the strength of provided data and the ability to interpret the information in participants' responses, as predicted by O'Conner et al. (2008). For example, whilst the large portion of transcripts provided rich answers required for an interpretivist, deductive, qualitative study, some participants provided little to no rationale or insight into their answers. Therefore, the reduced opportunity to probe participants, or rather, reduced control over the data collection method, hindered data collection and should be acknowledged.

Several recommendations for future research have grown from this study's key findings and limitations. First, it is recommended that this study could be replicated with a wider scope of participants and luxury establishments in different locations/countries. It is also argued that the sample should include guests. According to Harkinson (2016), this would potentially strengthen and validate the current study's findings, increase insights into the discussion, and identify trends more clearly. Secondly, it is recommended that any future replication of this study, could use a semi-structured interview format to collect primary data. Whilst the interview method is not flawless, it has the potential to increase depth and clarity in participants' responses, which were occasionally missing in this study (Miles et al., 2014). Finally, it is recommended that future studies explore contemporary trends, such as the experience economy and co-creation, in relation to the LAP. This study demonstrates that these trends appear to directly impact front-line employee perceptions of their role in the LAP. Consequentially, an investigation into these may provide further insights into the front-line employees' understanding of their role and contribute to the successful creation and implementation of future LAPs.

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# TOURISTS' PERCEPTION OF STREET MUSIC: THE CASE OF ISTIKLAL STREET, ISTANBUL, TURKEY

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**ABSTRACT**

Recently, street art has gained recognition as a popular and interesting social activity in public spaces. Indeed, Street music is considered one of the most distinguished and attractive forms of street art. Worldwide, many destinations have started to embrace street music as a tool for developing urban areas, promoting tourism, and reviving neglected areas. Istiklal Street; one of the most well-known tourist hot spots in Istanbul is famous for the presence of various street musicians who give this street a special appeal. This paper aims to investigate how street music could create a unique memorable tourist experience. Specifically, it seeks to explore the tourists' perception of street music in Istiklal Street to highlight the potential tourism value of street music as public art. Also, it aims to learn from the case study of Istiklal Street the key factors that could help promoting street music in other tourism destinations which have cultural potential such as Egypt. An online questionnaire was conducted and primary data were collected from 255 participants**.** Exploratory factors analysis was performed to identify tourists' perception of the significance and impact of the street musicians in the cultural, social and tourism context of the street. The findings showed that street music could enhance the tourist experience of Istiklal Street. Furthermore, the exploratory factors analysis indicated that the factors determining the success of street music in Istiklal Street from the tourists' perspective are street music as; an important element in creating a sense of place, an exciting and interesting practice, a social and cultural activity, and a tourist attraction. Accordingly, the results of this study could be a baseline for the Egyptian authorities and those of other destinations to adopt strategies to support the street musicians in promoting street music as a new tourist attraction. The paper ends with important recommendations for the Ministry of culture and tourism, local municipalities, and destination marketing organizations.

**KEYWORDS:** Street art, street music, tourist experience**,** tourist perception, Istiklal Street, Istanbul.

## INTRODUCTION

Worldwide, public art has become one of the unique forms of art in many cities. It is a cause of several changes in community life and urban spaces (Gemci & Ferah, 2020). Public art presents the cultural and heritage character of many places, attracts visitors, and gives unique meaning to numerous sites (Frost et al., 2015; Gemci & Ferah, 2020). Before going further, it is important to mention that the terms public art and street art are used interchangeably (Bengtsen, 2013). Miles (1997) defines Public art as making and presenting art outside its traditional and ordinary setting such as art galleries. According to McCarthy (2006), public art is 'site-specific art in the public domain'. Specifically, it refers to all the forms of art that have been presented and taking place in public spaces like gardens, plazas, squares, and back streets. Public art has various roles, it is a part of urban planning for cities; it gives a good image to the streetscapes, contributes to the place's atmosphere, and brings art in an easy way to people (Pappalepore et al., 2014). As mentioned by (McCarthy, 2006), public art is an essential component of place identity. Recently, destination management organizations announced that graffiti is a tourist attraction in some cities such as Melbourne (Best, 2012). However, in many destinations, public art might not be highlighted on tourist maps or routes.

Commonly, the popularity of Street art has increased in many cities as a tool for gaining esteem, attention, and as a competitive advantage in the cultural context of tourism. Several cities attempt to increase their potential attraction by introducing value-added products (Dwyer & Kim, 2003).In this light, street art is becoming an increasingly important tourist resource.

Although the ambiguous perspectives and attitudes, and the lack of prestige, street music continues to flourish. Indeed, the "presence effect" of street musicians is strengthening in the urban soundscape since the turn of the millennium (Rotenberg, 2020). Obviously, when music is presented as a performance, stimulates hearing, seeing, and feelings. Musicians and audiences share this memorable experience in the street (Akkuzu, 2021). Every city has its distinctive street music genres, style, and instruments. The interaction of street musicians with their context depends mainly on their spots, their relation with the onlookers, and the other musicians (ROTENBERG, 2020). Street musicians have several roles in the cultural, social, and tourism context. They are entertainers, promotional agents, and influencers as their music could give life to the city. For example, street music in the city centers of some famous touristic cities such as Paris, New York, Bath, Rome, and Bristol enhances the tourist experiences and offers a unique soundscape (Clua et al., 2020).

Previously, numerous studies have discussed street performances in the context of urban planning, sociology, architecture, ethnography, and public spaces. They have focused on street performances and the way people perceive these performances within public spaces (Thompson et al., 2005; Carlin, 2014; Ho & Au,2021), the ethnographic and environmental aspects of street performances (Ho& Au,2021) street performances as a tool for promoting city culture (Frost et al,2015; Rodrigues,2019 ).

In the 1980s the quality of public spaces within street music performances and their role started to be discussed (Carmona et al., 2012; Slynn, 2017). Also, some previous studies have highlighted the historical, cultural and social, ethnographic perspectives of street music (Watt, 2016; Kozyr, 2016; Wees, 2017), the role of street music in creating a sense of place (Kong, 1995; Fullerton,2011; Doubleday,2018), street music in some European cities (Yasuda, 2001; Floch,2007; Grygier, 2013; Bennett & Mckay, 2019), challenges and conflicts around street musicians practices and government regulations (Green, 2020; Clua et al., 2020), tourism and street music (Kaul, 2014).

Furthermore, other earlier studies have explored street music in Istanbul, particularly Istiklal Street. For example, the effect of street music on the perception of public spaces (Gemci & Ferah,2020) the migrant Syrian street musicians in Istanbul and their role in the context of political issues (Hajj, 2016; Öğüt, 2021) the social role of street music in public spaces (AKKUZU, 2021)

Despite the multiplicity of studies on street music from cultural, political, urban, ethnographic, and sociable perspectives, street art in general and particularly street music has not yet received enough attention in  tourism literature. Accordingly, unlike mentioned studies, the current study aims to investigate how street music could create a unique memorable tourist experience in Istiklal Street. Specifically, it seeks to explore the tourists' perception of street music in the case of Istiklal Street as well as highlight the potential tourism value of street music as public art. Additionally, the study aims to explore the factors determining the success of street music in Istiklal Street from the tourists' perspective which could help promoting street music in other tourism destinations such as Egypt where several cultural potentials are not yet exploited.

**Hence, the research questions are**:

1. To what extent street music in Istiklal Street could create a unique tourist experience?
2. What are the factors affecting the tourists' perception of street music in Istiklal Street?
3. What are the recommendations, which could be useful for other tourism destinations to promote street music as a potential tourist attraction?

## THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

### Street Art Concept

The concept of "Street art" is still in debate as until now there is no comprehensive definition (Yan et al., 2019). Blanché (2015) stated that the term "street art" has a changeable meaning with time. Also, Radosevic (2013) explained that the overlapping relation between graffiti and street art makes understanding this concept so difficult. Nevertheless, Blanché (2015) has presented a practical definition of street art as “self-authorized pictures, characters, and forms created in or applied to surfaces in urban space that intentionally seek communication with a larger circle of people” (p. 33). Furthermore, Rodrigues (2015)noted that street art can create a public dialogue about the political, social, and cultural effects of arts. For example, Brooke (2007) stated that graffiti as an interactive form of art could create a dialogue between the artists and the writers.

Moreover, Arts Council England defined street art as a comprehensive term that includes several forms of art such as music, theater, dance, carnival, spectacle, and circus (Rodrigues, 2019). In Europe, street art has different names such as urban cultures, street theatre, public art, in situ theatre, and art in open space (Floch, 2007).In fact, Street art is presented to the public for free, usually presented in outdoor and non-traditional places. It attracts a wide range of audiences who can follow it in rural and urban settings (Floch,2007).In this context, Skinner and Jolliffe (2017) discussed that street arts are presented without fees and there are no fixed hours to follow them so it usually has a big number of audiences(Yan et al., 2019).

Actually, Street art has several vital roles in the tourism context and place making (Kusumowidagdo & Wardhani, 2018); Firstly, street art serves as an attraction to many cities and neighborhoods; it can add life and entertainment to small and neglected areas in the cities. In addition, street art can provide visitors with a unique experience as it symbolizes the identity of the place and local community (Rodrigues, 2019). Secondly, many governmental and tourist authorities recognize the sociocultural and economic importance of street art. Accordingly, they consider street art as a part of urban planning, and economic and cultural development (Kusumowidagdo & Wardhani, 2018). They adopted policies and practices to develop street art as a new tourist attraction that offers new experiences (Gemci & Ferah, 2020). For example, many cities promote street art by organizing some festivals and street art walking tours. One of the most successful examples is Melbourne, which gained a good reputation through utilizing its street art in central business districts (Young, 2010).In short, It's important to emphasize that street art is unlike other iconic attractions as it is hard to copy and always reflects the uniqueness and authenticity of the places (Kusumowidagdo & Wardhani, 2018).

**Street performances and artists**

As stated in the Oxford Dictionaries "Busker" is an individual who presents music or any other form of entertainment in public spaces or streets for financial aid and donations. Generally, the performance of artists in the street or a public place is known as "street performance" or "busking"(Rodrigues, 2019).In this regard, Simpson (2011) defined street performance as an activity by which several nonmusical and musical performances take place in urban places to collect donations from onlookers. Likewise, Lemay et al. (2013) noted that street performers amuse the pedestrians as they walk through the streets and public spaces seeking reward or recompense for their effort and time.

It is clear that street performances can play various roles socially and culturally. Tanenbaum (1995) clarified that street performance could transform public spaces into warm and friendly places, and create contact among onlookers, environment and people. Accordingly, street performances could make cultural changes and transform cities and communities into sustainable urban places (Rodrigues, 2019). Moreover, street performance is a creative activity presenting cultural identities to attract diverse onlookers, especially tourists and visitors (Floch, 2007; ROTENBERG, 2020). However, street performance is still perceived as "Begging work" by some opinions (Rodrigues, 2019).

**Street music**

Street music, for years, has been the only accessible form of music for low-income categories. For example, at the beginning of the 19th century, London's streets were full of bands, drummers, panpipes, and roller organs of buskers who amused passersby with popular music (Prato, 1984; Gemci & Ferah, 2020). In this regard, Watt (2016) stated that in the 1960s, street musicians were representatives of public art. During this decade hippie music has emerged as a result of the political and cultural movement of the young generations. The songs in native languages, the traditional instruments, and Rhythm were means to attract people with common interests in public areas. Gradually, street entertainment became a part of social activity which is nowadays developed to be street music (Gemci & Ferah, 2020).

According to Stäbler & Mierisch (2021), street music refers to the music presented and performed in the streets. Nevertheless, this definition needs more specification and further limitations as street music are not all forms of music that can be heard in public places, for example; mp3 music, radio music, songs during religious ceremonies, and public concerts for audiences. As mentioned by Gemci & Ferah (2020) this kind of music is a part of something called "soundscape”. Further, Grygier (2013) defined street music as a genre of music that is performed in closed or open spaces such as metro, buses, streets, gardens, or cemeteries. A key aspect of this definition is determining to whom this music should be performed; it should not be played only for performers and their friends, but also for public audiences or onlookers who stop to hear it. On the other hand, Stäbler & Mierisch (2021) explained that street music performances have main four features:

**A. The location or the pitch**

Street musicians do not have a fixed location so they may move from one place to another (Watt, 2016; Slynn, 2017). They do not give much importance to the location of their performances; they focus more on the suitableness of the venue. Nevertheless, this place may reflect a deep meaning for local residents as well as the street music and this could increase their attachment to the place (Slynn, 2017). Moreover, Smith (1996) mentioned that street musicians play their music in a place called "Pitch". The key element of attractive street music performances is choosing a good pitch (Gemci & Ferah, 2020). Most pitches are in public spaces especially hot spots with attractive backgrounds, less noisy and more visible (Gemci & Ferah, 2020). In this regard, David & Greenwood (1981) added that good pitches are located close to cafés, restaurants, bars, shopping malls, transportations, bazaars, tourist attractions as well as famous and popular squares. Street musicians usually take permission from those places to perform their music (Green, 2020). This means that the street plays a significant role in shaping the music identity; it is linked to the shops, gardens, and roads where noise and sounds are always blended (Watt, 2016). On the other hand, the perceptions of street musicians and performances are often associated with the term "creative autonomy", which refers to the identities of musicians as performers .The commercial and hot spot spaces are considered as creative sites for street musicians to practice diverse forms of music (Green, 2020).

Musicians leave a hat or instrument cover in front of them during the performance to encourage passersby to put their donations inside it, sometimes they move close to the people who are seating and hear them to ask for money(Rodrigues, 2019; ROTENBER,2020).

**B. The type of street musicians**

The Musicians can be Native or foreign, groups or individuals. Occasionally, the natives and foreign musicians gather together in one performance to attract more onlookers. Additionally, street musicians can be classified into; "individual musicians" who permanently play music all around the year and gain their income from performing music in the streets and "occasional musician" who plays music irregularly either during holidays and weekends (Grygier, 2013).

**C. Type of playing music**

The street musicians play various types of music such as folk, rock, jazz, pop, ethnic, classic and western music and often combined different styles of music (Gemci & Ferah,2020; Green,2020). It can be noticed that buskers play diverse instruments (e.g. flutes, harps, violins, accordions, guitars, saxophones, and clarinets), and some of them sing during their performances. These musical styles and instruments reflect the cultural identity of those musicians (Clua et al., 2020).

**D. The performance form**

The Performance is classified into planned or unplanned acting and stimulates onlookers to dance and participate. Also, the language and the instrument of the song can make the performance more attractive (Stäbler & Mierisch, 2021).

Recently, Street music becomes a unique attraction in many tourism destinations whereas Street musicians can be seen everywhere playing their music and attracting many onlookers. Behind this spreading and flourishing various reasons:

***1. Enhancing the audio-urban environment of the city:*** one of the new urbanism ideas is to create a friendly environment to combat noise pollution in urban ecologies. Thus, the street musicians become one comfortable feature of the soundscape of the city.

***2. Improvement of global transport systems***: the musicians can easily move from one place to another and overcome the problem of long distances seeking a cultural exchange.

***3. Documentation and recording of all the information about street musicians in mass media:*** buskers are not only part of the geographical soundscape, but also the virtual media. Everyday many onlookers share blogs and videos of street musicians on social media. Furthermore, numerous amateurs collect and publish their performances on many websites and pages (ROTENBERG, 2020; AKKUZU, 2021). For instance, in 2012, a group of fans from all around the world launched a project entitled" World Street Music project," and posted more than 200 videos on YouTube channels.

***4. Local authorities support street music***: globally, street music festivals are often held with the support of municipalities. In this light, the city councils play an important role in designing the performance spots for street musicians. Tel Aviv and Montreal are the best examples of this experience (Gemci & Ferah, 2020).

5. ***Street music is considered as an important element of the urban economy***: many cities started to add street musicians, graffiti, and other informal arts in tourist brochures. Street musicians have a vital role in promoting marginal and neglected areas and attracting tourists and visitors to these places and thus supporting the local economy (Kaul, 2014).

***6. The role of modern technology in improving the quality of the music:*** for example, more than 10 years ago the Roland Company produced a line called "street" which consists of new equipment produced mainly for street musicians such as microphones and speakers (ROTENBERG, 2020).

## Street music as a social and cultural activity

The rhythm of street music motivates audiences and attracts them to stop, engage and dance close to their friends or even with strangers. Such a circle creates a social interaction between onlookers who dance hand in hand and join the song’s lyrics (AKKUZU, 2021). This example describes the unique social interaction with others through street music (Gemci & Ferah, 2020).In this way, street music in public spaces could be a tool for social attraction, where people can meet (Fullerton, 2011). Similarly, Doumpa (2012) argued that music performances in public spaces could create a social activity. Furthermore, street music performance encourages visitors to interact with each other and with musicians as well, as engage in social contact. Thus, sharing spaces with street musicians may create memorable experiences between different groups in the street (Doubleday, 2018). Also, friendships might be established in this atmosphere between visitors and musicians. (Fullerton, 2011).

On the other hand, street music as a part of street setting is considered as a cultural activity. It shows both the traditional culture and art of any city, as well as its cultural assets (Rodrigues, 2019). In this regard, Doumpa (2012) noted that street musicians could be native or foreign from various cultural backgrounds and this adds diversity to their performances.

Additionally, many people can consume street music as a cultural product as it is easy to access without any limitation. It improves creativity, promotes the city culture, and enhances the sense of belonging between locals. Certainly, street music changes people's perception of the street, which is no longer just a way to reach a destination but a place of joy and entertainment

(Green, 2020).In short, street music could display the urban and cultural life of the cities, and create a positive environment that encourages people to interact and spend interesting moments (Rodrigues, 2019).

**Street music performances and sense of place**

Music has an important role in shaping the identities of people and places and creating a sense of place both through its production and consumption. In addition, it can be a means of developing a strong emotional or spiritual attachment to a place (Kong, 1995; Hudson, 2006). Definitively, music can create unforgettable images of the place and contribute significantly to its production in many different ways (Cohen, 1995).

Lin (2012) suggested that the experience of any place is a "total sensory experience". Thus, the sense of place is a meaning-oriented concept that is shaped by emotions. Also, it refers to the attachment of individuals or groups to a place (Gemci & Ferah, 2020). As mentioned by Relph (2016), a sense of place is derived from lived experience in the place and its intangible essence. In this light, Lin (2012) highlighted that a sense of place may be enhanced by factors such as purpose, frequency and time of visit, types of activities and recreation, and familiarity with a place.

The individual's perception of the place is mainly shaped through senses such as touch, smell, sound, and sight (Cross, 2015). Accordingly, "Sensory" experiences can be created through sounds and visuals which strengthen our senses (Mazumdar, 2003).For example, particular aspects of a place such as hearing distinguishes sounds, smelling specific scents, and other features evoke the memory of a certain place in the minds of tourists (McLane,2011).

Street music in pedestrian spaces creates an intimate experience and adds different feelings to the settings through encountering face to face other people (Fullerton, 2011; Doubleday, 2018). The audiences feel various senses and emotions while following the street music performances. The sound of instruments, the movements of the musicians, and their costumes attract passersby to stop and watch the performance (Lin, 2012; Doubleday, 2018). This audiovisual experience created between musicians and the audience builds unforgettable memories and makes the visitors more connected to places (Fullerton, 2011). The traditional meaning of place does not exist anymore, places are always linked to the outside which distinguishes and gives them unique characteristics (Doubleday, 2018). Based on this, street musicians can be this linkage and contribute to the life of the place (Kusumowidagdo & Wardhani, 2018).

**Street music as a tourism attraction**

Street music has a global appeal around the world as it is an attractive tool for storytelling in any city or public space (Gemci & Ferah, 2020). Five decades ago street art was an important component of urban development. In this context, many cities started to recognize arts as consumable cultural assets of tourist attractions (Rodrigues, 2019). For example, several European cities used street music as an important tool for enhancing culture and competitiveness, fostering new tourist attractions, experiences, and promoting the image (Floch, 2007; Rodrigues, 2019).

Also, the increasing numbers of tourists interested in arts motivate destinations to invest in arts and renew the traditional forms (Craik, 2002). For instance, street performers are considered one of the main tourist attractions in England, particularly in a city called "Bath" which receives about 3.8 Million visitors (day trips). They perform their art mainly in the city center and add a unique atmosphere to the streets (Simpson, 2011; Rodrigues, 2019).

Sometimes numerous public spaces may lack tourist attractions so that street music may offer the potential to be a new attraction (McKay, 2020). According to PPS (2008) street music performers attract people from different social and cultural backgrounds. People gather nearby the street music spots around musicians, singing, clapping, and dancing with the rhythm creating positive vibes in the street, which attract other passersby (Gemci & Ferah, 2020). Furthermore, street music could shape the visual image of public spaces and streets. For example, street music performances bring attention to neglected corners and buildings on the street (Kaul, 2014). Once musicians start to play music close to these buildings, people stop to listen, clap and be attentive to these spots. Therefore, street musicians choose coffee shops, restaurants, and shopping areas as spots for their performances to attract more onlookers to these locations (Gemci & Ferah, 2020).

It can be said that street music is an expression of the cultural identity of both city and the musicians. In several places such as city centers and crowded areas musicians and their performances display the cultural aspects of the city, bring life to the streets (Rodrigues, 2019). Many tourists record these memorable moments by photos or videos during performances and share them through social media (ROTENBERG, 2020). Sometimes street musicians wear traditional clothes and costumes reflecting their culture, which could increase the visibility of the places and appeal more tourists and onlookers (Grygier, 2013; Carlin, 2014).

## Case study: Istiklal Street, Istanbul

### *Background of Street music in Istanbul*

Istanbul is a city with a great history mixed with a religious background that enhances the storytelling of its cultural and historical origins. Many tourists visit Istanbul and enjoy the heritage sites (Poria et al., 2009; Grygier, 2013). Added to this, Istanbul is distinguished by its artistic appeal, which is one of crucial components of its identity and socio-cultural aspects (Frost, 2015). The roots of street musicians come from the Turkish culture, they were known as "Traveller musicians "in ancient times. They are also called ‘Asik’ or’ Ozan' and usually travel, play music, and ask for food, money, or shelter. Those musicians have various roles as storytellers of verbal culture, educating the community, and even criticizing the political life at this time (Malkoç, 2018). Some of the characteristics of traveller musicians can be observed among the current street musicians, their performances have become a means of socializing and entertainment (Akkuzu, 2020).

Nowadays, Istanbul has a distinctive style of street music that has been influenced by West European arts. Interestingly, street music performances can be seen in crowded areas such as main streets, metro stations, and ferryboats crossing the Bosphorus (Gemci & Ferah, 2020).

### *Street music in Istiklal Street*

Two centuries ago, the Beyoglu district, specifically Istiklal Street, has been a public area influenced by the architecture of European style. This street has been a symbol of art and culture as well as a hot spot for transportation and a center of governmental bodies. In 1991, the municipality of Istanbul decided to close the street and prevent any vehicle to enter. This contributes to the increase of footers who come for shopping or enjoy their meals in restaurants or coffee shops (Gemci & Ferah, 2020; Öğüt, 2021)

The length of this street is around 1.7 Km and extends from Taksim square to Beyoglu Tunnel, while the width is around 15 meters. Istiklal Street is famous for its various dynamic and social activities, shops, hotels, old buildings, consulates, cultural centers, and religious attractions. The area hosts every day a flow of tourists and visitors from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds (Can, 2012). Additionally, this street is populated by diverse residents who bring with them different styles of music (Watson, 2009). According to Akkuzu (2020), Istiklal Street has witnessed several changes and transformations, which affected its dynamic, but music has survived anyway. Street music plays a dynamic role in Istiklal Street (Table 1) and other places close to it; it continues to be a unique part of the street's identity (Grygier, 2013). Currently, Istiklal Street has a special atmosphere that makes it the most favorite street for the street musicians, tourists and visitors. In this regard, Gemci & Ferah (2020) mentioned in their study that there are more than ten spots for street musicians in Istiklal Street to attract the passersby.

In 2020, Istiklal Street has hosted "**Müzik Durakları**" as a local street event within the project of the European Capital of Culture. Since 2005, this street has become a destination for many street music performances such as Sumner-Boyd and freely (AKKUZU, 2021).


**Figure 1**: Musicians performing street music, Istiklal Street, Istanbul 2021
**Source:** Author

**Table1**. Street music in Istiklal Street

| Location (the hot spot) | Music style | Musician's nationality | The language of the performance | The instrument | The duration of the performance |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| • Close to metro station<br>• Near to tram line<br>• Taksim square<br>• Near to the most famous attractions in Istkilal street e.g.,<br>✓ Art galleries<br>✓ Historical buildings<br>✓ Churches<br>✓ Consulates<br>✓ Chain restaurants and fast food<br>✓ In front of graffiti | • Individuals<br>• Groups<br>✓ Ethnic group (consists of two musicians) | • Local musicians (Native Turkish)<br>• Foreigners musicians (from Middle East countries and ethnic groups) | • Close to metro station<br>• Near to tram line<br>• Taksim square<br>• Near to the most famous attractions in Istkilal street e.g.,<br>✓ Art galleries<br>✓ Historical buildings<br>✓ Churches<br>✓ Consulates<br>✓ Chain restaurants and fast food<br>✓ In front of graffiti | • Individuals<br>• Groups<br>✓ Ethnic group (consists of two musicians) | • Local musicians (Native Turkish)<br>• Foreigners musicians (from Middle East countries and ethnic groups) |

**Source**: Author adapted from Gemci & Ferah, 2020.

## METHODOLOGY

### Sampling technique and data collection

In this study, data were collected using convenience sampling. This technique saves time and helps scholars to collect data from a huge number of participants located in different geographical locations (An et al., 2019). In this light, Belza et al. (2017) highlighted that in pedestrian areas with high traffic, convenience sampling is commonly used to sample passersby.

The data collection method used in this article was a quantitative approach, which is the most suitable approach for this study. The researcher designed the questionnaire to achieve the study's objectives and address the research questions. To reach a large sample, the questionnaire was shared online through Facebook, some bloggers and many pages and groups related to tourism in Istanbul. 255questionnaires were submitted online in one month from November 15 to December 15 of 2021.

### Questionnaire design

The questionnaire was written in Arabic and English language to ease its understanding and increase the chance to gather data from a huge number of tourists. A total of 22 items were developed based on previous studies and according to the objectives of the study. At the beginning of the questionnaire, the participants were asked whether agree or not to participate in the survey. The questionnaire included four sections. **The first section** describes the socio-demographic profile of the respondents (gender, nationality, age, educational level). **The second section** consists of nine questions that explore the tourists' experience of street music performances**. The third section** contains 22 statements that identify the factors affecting tourists' perception of street music particularly in Istiklal Street.

### Data analysis

Descriptive statistics such as frequency distributions, percentages, standard deviation and means were used to describe the respondents' socio-demographic profile and the respondents' preferences and experience of street music performances in Turkey, particularly Istiklal Street. The 22 statements related to the tourists' perception of street music were rated on a Likert scale from one (1) (strongly disagree) to five (5) (strongly agree). The mean and standard deviation were calculated to determine the importance of each statement. In addition, the researcher conducted an exploratory factor analysis to identify the factors affecting the tourists' perception of street music. Only factors with Eigenvalues greater than one were considered essential (Luo & Deng, 2008).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Socio-demographic characteristics

Table 2 describes the socio-demographic profile of the respondents. Of the sample, 60.78%were women, 50.98% aged between 18-30 years old, 60.40% had Bachelor's degrees and 32.94% of the respondents originated from the Middle East and North Africa. These findings are consistent with Aerny-Perreten (2015) who indicated that women are the most participants in the online questionnaire. Further, this is in line with the study of Fullerton (2011) who mentioned that it's likely the participants between 18-30 are the majority of the survey because the pedestrians' streets contain stores and entertainment venues that target customers of this age range. In addition, in terms of nationalities, the respondents reflected the diversity of tourists who visit Istiklal Street.

**Table 2**. Socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents (n=255)

| **Variables** | | **Frequency (n)** | **Percentage (%)** |
|---|---|---|---|
| Gender | Men | 100 | 39.22 |
| | Women | 155 | 60.78 |
| Age | 18-30 years old | 130 | 50.98 |
| | 30-40 years old | 84 | 32.94 |
| | 41-50 years old | 20 | 7.84 |
| | More than 50 years old | 21 | 8.24 |
| Education level | High school | 13 | 5.10 |
| | Bachelor | 154 | 60.40 |
| | Master/Doctorate | 88 | 34.50 |
| | Middle East and North Africa | 84.00 | 32.94 |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Nationality | USA | 16.00 | 6.27 |
| | Europe | 70.00 | 27.45 |
| | Latin America | 9.00 | 3.53 |
| | North America | 24.00 | 9.41 |
| | Asia | 37.00 | 14.51 |
| | Africa | 15.00 | 5.88 |

**The tourists experience of street music performances in Istiklal Street**

Table 3 describes the tourists' experience of street music performances in Istiklal Street. It shows that most respondents came to Turkey for tourism purposes (56.47%), most of them preferred historical sites as tourist attractions (52.94%) and most respondents (52.55%) watched street music in the streets and main squares. In addition, Table 3 showed that more than half of the sample (50.98%) visited Istiklal street between 1-5 times, 54.51% of the respondents spent between 1-5 minutes watching street music in Istiklal Street, 40.78% of them watched about 2-3 street music shows and 45.09% of them watched these street performances in the Turkish language. With regards to the kind of music, 45.09% of the respondents enjoyed the most Turkish music whilst 20% of them enjoyed Arabic music. Furthermore, 44.31% of the respondents suggested that the quality of sound and instruments of street music in Istiklal Street should be improved.

Consistent with the findings, the previous study by McCarthy (2006) revealed that public art in all forms is mainly performed in public spaces such as squares and pedestrian streets**.** It was evidenced by Gemci & Ferah (2020) who stated that playing authentic instruments and singing songs in native languages could attract people. They added that many groups of musicians (foreign or local) and individuals perform songs in several languages such as Turkish, Arabic, English, or Persian. Similarly, the study conducted by Fullerton (2011) showed that the majority of respondents visited the Third Street Promenade in Santa Monica, USA 1 to 5 times. This pedestrian street is distinguished by its unique ambiance that mixes shopping and street performances. Moreover, the results of this study are aligned with Koziol (2013) who explained that some onlookers suggested that the quality of street music and instruments in public spaces should be improved.

**Table 3**. Tourists' experience of street music performances in Istiklal Street (n=255)

| **Variables** | | **Frequency (n)** | **Percentage (%)** |
|---|---|---|---|
| The primary purpose of visiting Turkey | Tourism | 144 | 56.47 |
| | Business | 95 | 37.25 |
| | Conference | 5 | 1.96 |
| | Visiting family and friends | 11 | 4.31 |
| Most favorite tourism attraction | Historical sites | 135 | 52.94 |
| | Natural sites | 82 | 32.16 |
| | Performing arts | 25 | 9.80 |
| | Cultural festivals | 13 | 5.10 |
| The areas the participants stopped and watched street music | Metro underground | 50 | 19.60 |
| | Metro bus | 31 | 12.16 |
| | Tram | 40 | 15.69 |
| | Street and main squares | 134 | 52.55 |
| Number of times the participants visited Istiklal street | 1-5 times | 130 | 50.98 |
| | 6-15 times | 65 | 25.49 |
| | More than 15 times | 60 | 23.56 |
| The duration the participants spent | 1-5 minutes | 139 | 54.51 |
| | 6-10 minutes | 80 | 31.37 |
| | 11-15 minutes | 20 | 7.84 |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| watching street Music at Istiklal Street | More than 15 minutes | 16 | 6.27 |
| The number of shows seen by the participants | Only one show | 35 | 13.72 |
| | 2-3 shows | 104 | 40.78 |
| | 4-5 shows | 31 | 12.16 |
| | More than 5 shows | 85 | 33.33 |
| Language of the performed street music | Turkish | 115 | 45.09 |
| | English | 45 | 17.65 |
| | Arabic | 51 | 20.00 |
| | Kurdish | 29 | 11.37 |
| | Persian | 15 | 5.88 |
| The kind of music the participants enjoyed the most | Turkish music | 111 | 43.52 |
| | Western music | 45 | 17.64 |
| | Arabic music | 60 | 23.53 |
| | Kurdish music | 23 | 9.03 |
| | Jazz music | 16 | 6.27 |
| The aspects that should be improved in street music performance in Istiklal street | The organization | 97 | 38.03 |
| | The venue | 45 | 17.65 |
| | The quality of sound and instruments | 113 | 44.31 |

**Tourist's perception of street music in Istiklal Street**

The respondents were provided with 22 statements regarding their perception of street music in Istiklal Street. A scale of one to five was used to rate the importance of each statement (strongly disagree to strongly agree). The mean and standard deviations of each statement are presented in Table 4. The five most important perceptions according to the mean values are: 'street music makes Istiklal street alive and the atmosphere exciting and amazing' (4.62), 'street musicians improve the atmosphere of shopping in Istiklal street by providing something out of the ordinary (4.33), 'I prefer to take photos and record videos for the street music performance' (4.11), 'street music makes Istiklal street as a unique place' (4.04), 'I prefer staying in restaurants or coffee shops close to the street musicians'(3.95).

**Table 4.** Tourist's perception of street music in Istiklal Street

| **Statements** | **Mean** | **S.D** |
|---|---|---|
| Street music makes Istiklal street alive and the atmosphere exciting and amazing | 4.62 | 0.94 |
| Street musicians improve the atmosphere of shopping in Istiklal street by providing something out of the ordinary. | 4.33 | 0.84 |
| I prefer to take photos and record videos for the street music performance | 4.11 | 1.04 |
| Street music makes Istiklal street as a unique place | 4.04 | 0.71 |
| I prefer staying in restaurants or coffee shops close to the street musicians | 3.95 | 0.76 |
| I discover some places worth visiting close to the street music venues | 3.91 | 0.68 |
| I Prefer shopping in Istiklal street and enjoying the street music performances | 3.59 | 0.99 |
| The presence of street musicians influenced positively my decision to visit Istiklal street | 3.57 | 1.15 |
| Street music is a noisy practice | 3.55 | 1.05 |
| I'm always sharing both videos and photos on social media (Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp) | 3.51 | 1.01 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Street music makes Istiklal street more crowded and less enjoyable | 3.41 | 0.99 |
| Street music increases the illegal practices like thieving | 3.22 | 1.35 |
| I can't imagine Istiklal Street without listening to the musical instruments of the musicians | 3.18 | 1.25 |
| The street musicians in Istiklal street create memorable experiences that make me attached to the place | 3.18 | 1.25 |
| I'm always experiencing different emotions when looking at the performers' movements and costumes | 3.16 | 1.19 |
| Street music reflects the cultural identity of both musicians and the place | 3.05 | 1.07 |
| I feel I'm watching an authentic and local performance | 3.04 | 1.18 |
| Street music is an opportunity to knowing about other cultures | 2.93 | 1.16 |
| I prefer dancing close to strangers as well as my friends | 2.90 | 1.21 |
| Street music is an opportunity to make a relationship with onlookers | 2.87 | 1.16 |
| I prefer sometimes to interact with musicians (dancing, singing, and talking ) | 2.80 | 1.11 |
| I prefer following the street musicians only without participation | 2.73 | 1.14 |

***S.D refers to Standard Deviation***

**Exploratory Factor Analysis**

Exploratory factor analysis was conducted on 22 statements to explore the patterns of the responses. Only 18 of 22 statements were kept after factor loading and evaluated as essential based on their eigenvalues greater than or equal to one (Luo & Deng, 2008). Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) was determined to check the sampling adequacy. With a value of Chronbach alpha of 0.788 and a KMO value of 0.889, the study sample had good reliability and adequacy of the sample.

Previously, Hair et al. (2010) stated that a value of KMO greater than 0.6 reveals good adequacy of the sampling.

The factor analysis showed four-factor solutions that account for a total variance of 70.190%. These factor solutions were (1) street music as a valuable element in creating a sense of place (2) street music as an exciting and interesting/annoying or even dangerous practice (3) street music as a social and cultural activity, and (4) street music as a tourist attraction.

The percentage of variance interpreted by each factor and its Eigenvalue is shown in Table 5. With a total variance of 70.190%, factor one accounted for 35.342% and therefore it is the most significant factor-affecting tourists' perception of street music. **Factor one is namely "street music as an important element in creating a sense of place "**contributes 35.342% to the total variance and included five items; 'the street musicians in Istiklal street create memorable experiences that make me attached to the place', 'I'm always experiencing different emotions when looking to the performers' movements and costumes', ' I can't imagine Istiklal Street without listening to the musical instruments of the musicians', 'I feel I'm watching an authentic and local performance, Street music makes Istiklal street as a unique place'.

These results are supported by Kämpfe et al. (2011) who explained that street musicians could create memorable experiences and construct perceptions of the emotion generated through music. In this regard, Doubleday (2018) mentioned that visitors are struck by a variety of emotions as they focus on the movements and the costumes of the street music performers. She pointed out in the same study that the audiovisual experiences, which are generated between onlookers and street musicians, create memorable and intimate connections to places. Furthermore, the results of our study come in line with Sancar (2003) and Kämpfe et al. (2011) who noted that music as a background particularly in public areas can directly convey feelings, enhance emotions as well as revive memories and perceptions.

Moreover, these findings were discussed previously in Wagemans (2011) who clarified that public art especially street music could create a sense of familiarity and belonging to the places. In this context, McLane (2011) stated that street music performances could induce various sensations through interaction, sounds, and movements and this could be a base for a strong connection to places. Likewise, these findings are consistent with Doubleday (2018) who highlighted that street music can generate a level of attachment to the place, as it is accessible and available to all not like the scheduled planned shows.

Based on previous results and discussion, the street music performances in Istiklal Street contribute to the development of a sense of place through these encounters and memorable experiences.

**The second factor**, " **street music as excitement and interesting/ annoying or even dangerous practice"** ’contributes 16.565% to the total variance and contains six items; ‘Street music makes Istiklal street alive and the atmosphere exciting and amazing', 'I'm always sharing both videos and photos on social media (Facebook, Instagram, Whatsapp) ', 'I prefer to take photos and record videos for the street music performance', 'street music makes Istiklal street more crowded and less enjoyable', 'street music is a noisy practice', 'street music increases the illegal practices like a thieving'.

These results are aligned with the study of Simpson (2011) who stated that in public spaces, street performers and buskers enrich public spaces, give them a sense of life, and enhance interactions. He added that such activities keep the streets alive. Likewise, Doubleday (2018) argued that onlookers feel excitement and enjoyment once they stop to listen and watch the street musicians and this enhances their experience in city centers. However, Simpson (2011) and Green (2020) clarified that street performances may emerge as a danger and a threat that should be regulated, mapped, and well managed. Furthermore, these results are similar to the study of Rotenberg (2020) who noted that many onlookers prefer to document these pleasant moments by capturing videos and photos of street musicians, posting them on social media, and sharing them with their friends and relatives. This increases the visibility of street music and promotes their performances.

**The third factor named " street music as a social and cultural activity** " explained the total variance by 10.110% and included four items; 'street music is an opportunity to make a relationship and interact with onlookers, 'I prefer sometimes to interact with musicians (dancing, singing, and talking) ', 'street music is an opportunity for knowing about other cultures, 'street music reflects the cultural identity of the musicians and place'. These findings are consistent with Simpson (2011), Doumpa (2012) and Doubleday (2018) who confirmed that buskers and their music are a medium of interaction and a potential friendship between musicians and onlookers.

Also, Gemci & Ferah (2020) mentioned that street music could create a pleasant atmosphere for interaction and building even relations among strangers. In this light, Rodrigues (2019) referred that street music performance is a social process that originates from this interaction.

Moreover, this result is in line with Doughty & Lagerqvist (2016) who noted that regardless of the differences between street musicians and audiences such as language and cultural background, the music is able to meet all these differences, foster feelings, and encourage the onlookers to share memorable moments with the musicians.

Similarly, the study conducted by Fullerton (2011) found that street music is a tool for cultural exchange regardless language barriers. According to Doumpa (2012), native or foreign musicians, representing different cultural backgrounds, perform street music. Moreover, Doubleday (2018) stated in her study about the Third Street Promenade in the USA that visitors experience multi-sense street performances and various cultural expressions. Likewise, Rodrigues (2019) indicated in his findings that street music plays a significant role in the city's culture.

**Finally, factor four is named** ‘‘**street music as a tourist attraction**’’ explains only 8.172 % of the variance. It contains only three items; 'Street musicians improve the atmosphere of shopping in Istiklal Street by providing something out of the ordinary, 'I Prefer shopping in Istiklal street and enjoying the street music performances’, ‘street music performances make ignored corners of Istiklal Street interesting and bring a vital attraction to them’. These findings are in agreement with the studies by Fullerton (2011) and Doubleday (2018) who explained that street music could enhance the shopping experience, particularly for women, it is a combination between shopping and enjoyment. They added that musicians and their bands are an attractive background for many visitors, tourists, and locals. The loud sound of music, the distinctive clothes, and the movement of the musicians are the popular ways to attract them.

Likewise, the study conducted by Gemci & Ferah (2020) discussed that street musicians always choose specific places in pedestrians' streets as pitches for their performances for example; buildings with unique architectures or neglected corners. This means that street music can transform these places into tourist attractions as the onlookers gather around musicians and spend part of their time watching the performances and sharing those memorable experiences (Rodrigues, 2019).

**Table5**. Factors affecting tourist perception of street music in Istiklal Street

| Statements | Factor1 | Factor2 | Factor 3 | Factor 4 | Com |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Factor 1: Street music as a valuable element in creating a sense of place** | | | | | |
| The street musicians in Istiklal street create memorable experiences that make me attached to the place | 0.935 | | | | 0.807 |
| I'm always experiencing different emotions when looking at the performers' movements and costumes | 0.913 | | | | 0.787 |
| I can't imagine Istiklal Street without listening to the musical instruments of the musicians | 0.898 | | | | 0.773 |
| I feel I'm watching an authentic and local performance | 0.866 | | | | 0.736 |
| Street music makes Istiklal street as a unique place | 0.852 | | | | 0.755 |
| **Factor 2: Street music as exciting and interesting/ annoying or even dangerous practice** | | | | | |
| Street music makes Istiklal street alive and the atmosphere exciting and amazing | | 0.89 | | | 0.71 |
| I'm always sharing both videos and photos on social media(Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp) | | 0.873 | | | 0.682 |
| I prefer to take photos and record videos for the street music performance | | 0.803 | | | 0.637 |
| Street music makes Istiklal street more crowded and less enjoyable | | 0.787 | | | 0.576 |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Street music is a noisy practice. | | 0.719 | | | 0.615 |
| Street music increases the illegal practices like thieving | | 0.298 | | | 0.149 |
| **Factor 3: Street music as a social and cultural activity** | | | | | |
| Street music is an opportunity to make a relationship and interact with onlookers | | | 0.94 | | 0.759 |
| I prefer sometimes to interact with musicians (dancing, singing, and talking ) | | | 0.91 | | 0.735 |
| Street music is an opportunity to knowing about other cultures | | | 0.838 | | 0.656 |
| Street music reflects the cultural identity of both musicians and the place | | | 0.651 | | 0.477 |
| **Factor 4: Street music as a tourist attraction** | | | | | |
| Street musicians improve the atmosphere of shopping in Istiklal street by providing something out of the ordinary. | | | | 0.878 | 0.668 |
| I Prefer shopping in Istiklal street and enjoying the street music performances | | | | 0.863 | 0.689 |
| Street music performances make ignored corners of Istiklal street interesting and bring a vital attraction to them | | | | 0.861 | 0.724 |
| **Eigenvalue** | **6.772** | **3.124** | **2.073** | **1.698** | |
| **Variance (%) (total= 70.190)** | **35.34** | **16.56** | **10.11** | **8.172** | |
| **KMO= (0.889)** | **0.950** | **0.870** | **0.899** | **0.905** | |
| **Chronbach alpha (total=0.788)** | **0.950** | **0.870** | **0.899** | **0.905** | |

## CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to investigate the role of street music in enhancing tourists' experiences and explore the tourists' perception of street music in Istiklal Street. The results showed that tourists had a positive perception of street music performances in Istiklal Street. Also, the results indicated that four factors; street music as an important element in creating a sense of place, an exciting and interesting practice, a social and cultural activity, and a tourist attraction affect tourist perception of street music in Istiklal Street.

Furthermore, the presence of street music in Istiklal Street adds a distinctive sense of place to the street as well as improves the connection between tourists and the place. Accordingly, street music could increase the city's attractiveness and create a memorable tourist experience. Based on the study findings, street musicians are evidently a dynamic component of Istiklal Street and could significantly contribute to its success and growth.

## RECOMMENDATIONS:

### a. For the case study

Based on the above-mentioned results Turkey Ministry of culture and tourism and policymakers should consider street music as a valuable feature of public spaces in Turkey and particularly in Istanbul. Thus, there is an urgent need to create tourist routes to highlight the various locations of street musicians in Istanbul. These street music routes could be one of the must-see attractions in Istanbul. In addition, they will allow musicians to grow and promote themselves, the cultural identity of the city, and the country's image. To increase the visibility of street performances in the city, it could be be helpful to learn from the previous best practices of other cities such as the Porto project in Portugal to develop a tourist route.

The Ministry of culture and tourism should improve the collaboration with the municipality to organize a street music festival and change the people's perception of street art as a form of art for the poor. This event should be added to the city tourism agenda and will significantly influence the country's economy and foster cultural esteem. Furthermore, the city council needs to implement clear regulations to control and arrange street music performances in Istanbul, specifically in Istiklal Street.

**B. For other destinations**

They should:

✓ Explore the phenomena of street music in main tourism destinations in Egypt to document the existing street music potential in these cities for example; Cairo, Alexandria, Sharm Elshiekh, Luxor, Aswan, and Nubia.

✓ Assess the residents' perceptions of street music as a social, cultural activity as well as a potential tourist attraction.

✓ Investigate the needs and challenges of the musicians to promote street music in some key touristic destinations.

✓ Propose a legal regulation of street music performances in tourism destinations through collaboration between the local authorities, the musicians and the DMOs.

✓ Adopt a project to promote street music as free public art in some main Avenues, squares and public spaces as hot spots for street musicians such as Tahrir square, Elmoaz Street, Nile Cornish, Parks and shopping hubs. This project could play a vital role in reinvigorating tourism in many spots.

**C. For Destination marketing organizations (DMOs)**

DMOs should promote a variety of attractions in tourism destinations to increase tourism demand. In addition, they should improve the competitive advantages of the destinations by offering unique and memorable experiences. It's important for DMOs to promote street music performances as a new tourist attraction, an integral part of the destination's culture, and emphasize on its economic and social value. In that sense, it's essential for DMOs to use social media, blogs, and storytelling in order to market street music. Ultimately, Street music should be added to the official tourism websites as a new attraction.

## FUTURE RESEARCH

More studies are needed to explore the phenomena of street music and its potential in other tourism destinations such as Egypt, which has many cities, squares and streets that are distinguished by authentic music and cultural resources. Future studies are required to discuss the role of street music performances in the context of tourism as a tourist attraction. Actually, further research should address the role of street music in creating a sense of place and how buskers could be place makers. Finally, it is also necessary to examine how various governments can embrace Street performances in public places. All these studies could enhance the tourist experience and support the DMOs to target special interest tourists.

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# Motives for the Visit of the Literary Tourist In Skiathos of Papadiamantis

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**Abstract**

In the present work we will analyze the phenomenon of literary tourism through the perspective that determines the motivations. Specifically, the psychological motivations that push tourists to get to know the places they have lived or mentioned in their works are examined.

Then we will study the reasons that push a tourist to visit Skiathos because he was influenced by the works of Alexandros Papadiamantis

**Keywords**: cultural tourism, literary tourism, tourist motivations, tourist psychology, Papadiamantis, Skiathos

### 1.1 The Motivations In Choosing A Cultural Destination

Tourism, as a tourist activity, seems to be a necessary way out of the modern rhythm of life, if we consider that both the social and psychological obligations of individuals make everyday life very stressful. A key factor in encouraging consumers to travel is the cultural dimension of tourism, as it enables consumers of tourist packages to :therefore, numerous factors that motivate tourists to travel and buy a tourist product (Igoumenaki, 2007).

Cultural tourism "is a form of tourist activity where the main motivation of the visitor is to visit cultural attractions in order to learn, discover and experience the cultural heritage of each tourist destination." (Ministry of Tourism, 2018) and includes cultural heritage, cultural thematic routes, cultural events and festivals, city tourism, wedding tourism and film tourism. Manola (2019a) mentions as literary tourism the subcategory of cultural tourism that concerns readers who travel in order to feel the protagonists of their favorite literary readings.

### 1.2 The Concept of Incentives in Tourism

Before referring to the theories of incentives in relation to the tourism industry, it is advisable to take a brief approach to the definitions of incentives, from the point of view of consumer psychology.

The complexity and variety of theories that try to describe the nature of motivation as influential forces in the behavior of individuals has already been identified. Forgas et al. (2005) remind us of the early attempts of philosophy and psychology to interpret motivation, under the behavioral action of individuals and the view that these (motivations) reveal a course of action.

A simple interpretation of motivations could be what describes them as the driving force that drives people to take action, according to their particular levels of desire or need. Shanks (2011) even notes that behavior is motivated by various needs, the satisfaction of which has the character of reward.

Despite the abundance of theories about motivation, what can be universally supported is that they are the motivating factors of a person's behavior and that they justify the actions taken to meet his needs or desires.

According to Kotler (2002), individuals are led into an action if a need is pressing enough, asking to be met.

The study of consumer behavior includes - among others - those actions that aim at the purchasing process, which follows or follows the acquisition of products and services (Wertenbroch et al., 2020).

Regarding the dynamics of psychological factors (psychological factors) in purchasing decisions, Kumar et al. (2020) emphasize their importance in the procurement process,

Richards (1996) based his study on cultural tourism, argued that tourists who visit a cultural site show a significant level of total tourism consumption, usually on short trips. At the same time, he clarifies that not all visitors to a cultural site are characterized as predominantly cultural tourists, because a visit to a place of cultural heritage can only be a subset of the overall travel experience. In this light, Galí-Espelt (2012) characterizes the motivations of cultural tourists as "primary" or "secondary", classifying the motivations according to the duration of the visit and the level of experience gained by tourists in this category in a cultural place.

A reported motivation that appears as a motivating factor for visiting cultural sites, is the intention to return to these places in the future, in relation to the level of satisfaction that has affected the specific tourist experience (Chang, Backman and Chih Huang, 2014).

It is important to note that it is not easy to capture the dimensions of the concept of motivation under a narrow travel context, although we can note that these include:

- The idea that travel is initially associated with human needs and this is evidenced by desire and motivation or drive, as a motivator of human action.
- The perception that motivation is based on the sociological and psychological aspects of rules, cultural views or perceptions acquired during a person's lifetime, thus leading to forms of motivation that revolve around his behavior.
- The view that the image of the tourist destination created through a variety of communication channels, affects the motivation and therefore the form of travel that will ultimately be chosen by the tourist (Siomkos, 2018)

### 2.1 The Characteristics of the Literary Tourist

The flourishing of literary tourism is based on the strong motivation of a special category of people to visit a specific place, for which either a reference has been made to a literary work, or the author maintains an emotional relationship with it (Busby and Klug, 2001). This category of tourists seems to have a developed need to recreate in their imagination the images, landscapes and stories that stem from the "consumption" of literary readings, when they visit the landscapes that refer to them.

Looking forward to capturing the characteristics of literary tourists, Hudson and Richie (2006) identify their need for artistic and philosophical pursuits as well as their high level of education, as they are lovers of literature. For this category of tourists, the authors also single out their personal disposition for continuous education and literacy, while from the analysis of their demographic characteristics they seem to belong to the middle and largest income category, as they have money to make a domestic need a reality. giving great value to experiencing an authentic experience, while wishing to escape from their daily lives. It is worth noting that they usually prefer to travel alone and not en masse.

### 2.2 The Motivations of the Literary Tourist

According to Maslow (1948) there are two types of mechanisms that lead to meeting human needs:

• Lack of motivation intensity.

• The stimulating motives of interest.

Maslow argued that the incentive model is holistic and dynamic and that it can be applied to both everyday life and the workplace. His humanitarian values seem to have led him to believe that man should look forward to his self-realization.

According to Maslow's ranking of needs, a traveler reaches the highest point of satisfaction when he feels complete. Thus, according to Hendrix (2007), the existence of literary paths that are experiential, are motivated by the deepest inner desires of man, which challenge the reader, both as a spiritual and as an emotional entity, to identify and unite - even for a short time. space- the real world with the one made by his imagination.

Literary experiential journeys began because some readers go beyond Squire (1994), beyond the intellectual exchange of texts, and seek a kind of material contact with the author of these texts or with the places that the texts describe.

"Literary places" are places that identify either with the authors in their real life, or are built as a theatrical or cinematic setting in one of their works.

Motivation is also considered to be the experience of emotions provided through activities with the unique ability to evoke intense emotion through experiences, landscapes and drastic changes in daily life.

Beyond the places, the author himself can also be considered as a motivator, since he is the creator, and therefore the focus of interest. So there are many travelers who seek to spend valuable time with familiar faces.

According to Epitropakis (2011), motivations classified can be classified into four general categories.

In motivations directly related to climate and nature.

• In motivations related to culture.

• In financial incentives.

• In psychological motivations.

Some studies suggest that travel shows the responsibilities that the individual has applied to himself and what he intends to draw from this experience (Korstanje, 2013).

**2.3 How Needs Are Related to Tourism Incentives**

Tourism needs are directly related to tourism incentives and their categories, as a strong link is identified between incentives and satisfaction of basic needs.

Motivations that contribute to a consumer's need to buy a product - in this case a tourism product for the purpose of traveling - are defined as a set of needs and attitudes that enable him to act in a particular way.

In other words, needs and motivations contribute to creating a form of motivation for the tourist.

As literary tourism gains space easily, it is realized that it can be a remarkable economic capital not only for local but also for national economies.

In China according to Wang H.J. and Zhang D. (2017) for example, began to develop many literary sites such as: "The Grand View Garden" in Beijing and Shanghai, Luzhen in Shaoxing, etc. According to Jia (2009) places used as "sets" in novels were cleverly transformed into successful tourism products.

"KZN Literary Tourism" according to Watson (2009) is a research program on literary tourism in South Africa that began in 2002. Those in charge plan literary trips, organize conferences and workshops and offer scholarships to those who want to work in publishing.

### 2.4 Literary Tourism in Greece

Cultural tourism is one of the six main categories offered in Greece along with the rest, which are "maritime tourism", tourism "city break", "medical tourism", the category "sun and see", and MICE tourism (meetings, incentives, conferences, exhibitions), composing the main pillar of strategic development of the Greek tourism product for the next decade.

The phenomenon of literary tourism, as part of the cultural, can be perceived, under certain conditions, to function efficiently in our country, given that Greece has to show several notable literary personalities, such as Papadiamantis who is then a case study (Manola, 2019b).

## 3. Case Study - Alexandros Papadiamantis[1]- In the Steps of Alexandros Papadiamantis

### 3.1. The Museum - Papadiamantis House

Skiathos is a popular destination, but for a lover of literature, it is an even more interesting place to visit because of the cosmopolitan writer. One of the most important points that the island has to show is the house of Papadiamantis.

According to Karagiannioti (2012), his house is located in a square in the center of Skiathos and is a few meters from the port. Apart from the fact that it is known because of the author, it is at the same time a representative sample of Skiathos folk architecture, without subsequent alterations and changes.

It was built around 1860 by the author's father. Since 1954, this building belongs to the Municipality of Skiathos and in 1965 it was designated by the Ministry of Culture as a historical monument.

Today, the floor of the house is preserved as the residence of Papadiamantis with authentic furniture and objects of the time, while the ground floor functions as an exhibition space of old and new editions of the author. In this way, each tourist realizes the life and daily life of the author he admires, while at the same time trying to listen to the environment that made such a great person.

[1] Alexandros Papadiamantis was born in 1851 in Skiathos. He lived for a few months on Mount Athos and then enrolled in the Athens School of Philosophy, which he did not complete. From 1887, as mentioned by Kostelenos (1979), he settled in Athens, while at the same time he visited his homeland at infrequent intervals. In 1908, Alexandros Papadiamantis returned to his island in Skiathos, while in January 1911 he finally died of pneumonia. Today, the writer's cart is kept in the church of the Nativity of the Virgin in Skiathos and his grave is located in the cemetery of the island.The era during which Alexandros Papadiamantis lived was a transitional stage of political and social change.

The house gives the visitor the impression that it springs from his stories. The objects that decorate the space are the only material property he left behind. The same visitors become carriers of its dissemination.

The local community participates to a large extent voluntarily in the activities and has understood the value of the museum as a tourist attraction.

### 3.1.1 The Landscape of the Island

The Skiathos landscape, but also idioms are identical with the descriptions in the works of Papadiamantis, since he used them extensively in his short stories.

In conclusion, both the interesting personality of the Greek author and his unique works are an occasion for the development of literary tourism in Skiathos, where he stayed most of his life, because part of the tourism is due to a literary audience. The writer, through his works describes an ideal landscape, emphasizing his worship of nature.

The reader, reading his works, acquires the need to experience for himself a part of the carefree daily life described by Alexandros Papadiamantis on the island depicted, thus increasing his tourist demand.

### 3.1.2 Athens - The "Cell" of Papadiamantis

Alexandros Papadiamantis lived a large part of his life in Athens, where he was called to face conditions of great misery. Most of the time he lived in small rented rooms in the yard, in Psyrri, in a place from which he was forced to leave when in a bad weather his roof collapsed and his life was in danger.

At the beginning of 1880, after the author was having difficulty paying the rent and his health condition was bad, according to Chaperas (2021), he took refuge in the church of Agioi Anargyroi in Psyrri, where a childhood friend from Skiathos, the monk, worked. Nifon who hosted him in the same cabin where he slept, in the churchyard. This small room, today has been named "The cell of Papadiamantis", because it resembles the monastery cells.

In this part, the writer wrote one of his most important works, "Fonissa", in the paper bags that Kachrimanis gave him food from his tavern, while at the same time he participated in the church services as a cantor.

In 2021, this room was renovated and so, it is now open to the public with free admission. On the walls of the cell are various portraits of the author and a podcast with one of his stories.

### 3.1.3 In the Tank

In 1906, an old friend of Alexandros Papadiamantis, hosted the author for a while in his room in Lycabettus, near Dexamenis Square. On a side wall of the square, there is a relief portrait of the writer, which nowadays has been almost forgotten. This portrait was created by the sculptor Thomas Thomopoulos in 1923.

### 3.1.4 Cultural Events

From the time the great writer Alexandros Papadiamantis passed away until today, various kinds of events are organized in his honor, mainly through his Museum in Skiathos. More specifically, in Zappeion in 2011 on the occasion of the 34th book festival, a mental visit was made to the author's house. The history of the Museum was presented through pictures, excerpts from the works of Papadiamantis were read, while 110 publishing houses participated. Finally, the public could watch a documentary dedicated to the writer who had donated the ERT archive.

Another cultural event organized in connection with Alexandros Papadiamantis, is at the Athens and Epidaurus Festival in 2011, a theatrical performance on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the author's death.

A tribute in memory and honor to Alexandros Papadiamantis was held in Graz, Austria by the Austro-Greek company of the city. The people who inspired this event were academics and professors of the Music School of the University of the city, who had the chance to visit the Papadiamantis Museum in Skiathos. There, during their tour, they came up with the idea of holding a similar tribute to what the Museum is doing in Austria.

The event took place at the Palais Meran Princely Palace, now part of the Graz University of the Arts complex and hosting various other cultural events.

The content of the event in honor of the writer was presented in Greek and German. In the last part of the tribute, excerpts from one of the greatest works of the author, "Fonissa" and two of Papadiamantis's hymns dedicated to Saint Antipas were read.

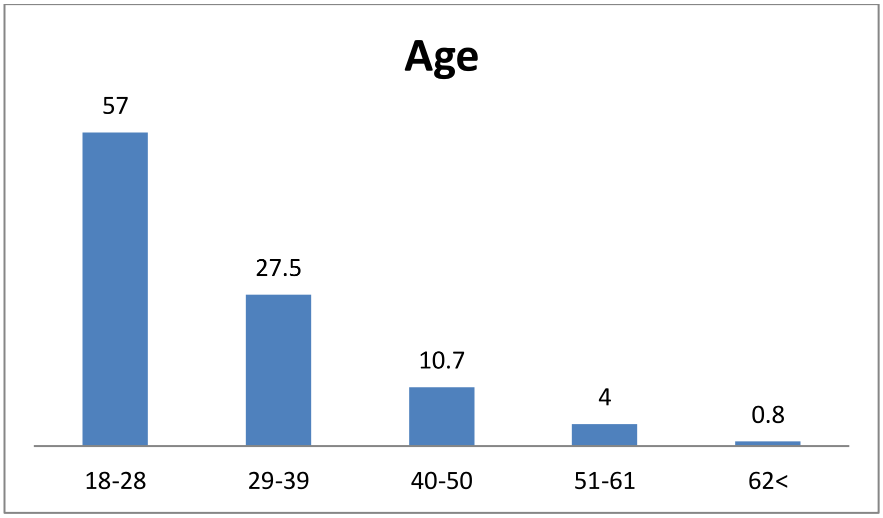
At the same time, in the space of the event, a painting exhibition inspired by the works of Alexandros Papadiamantis was hosted and his short stories that have been translated into German were presented.

Finally, there were books available for visitors with translations of Papadiamantis works in English and German.

## 4.The survey

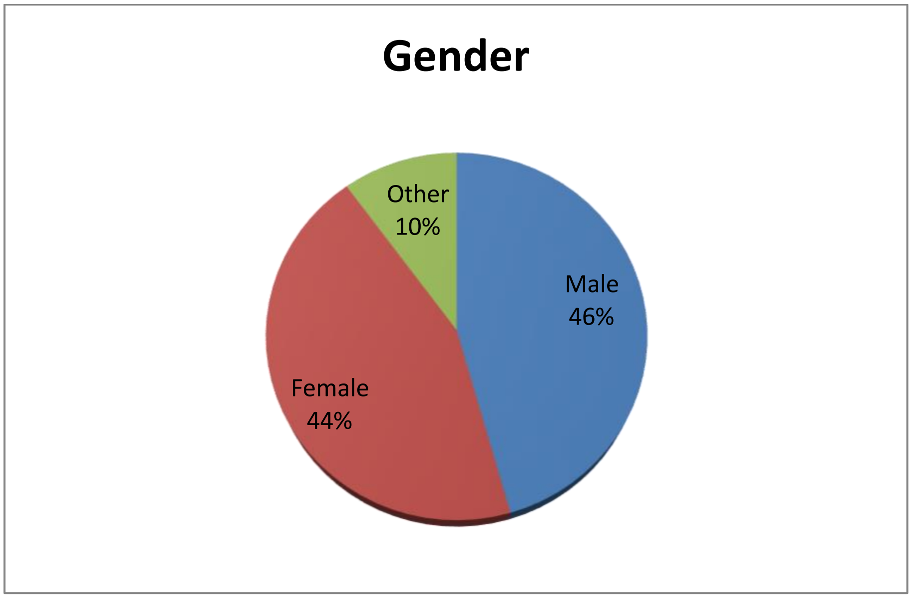
In the survey conducted online through the google questionnaire, 151 people took part and answered 16 questions the two were demographic and the rest multiple choice about their motives and their opinions.

Demographic characteristics




**4.1.Graph 1:** “Age”

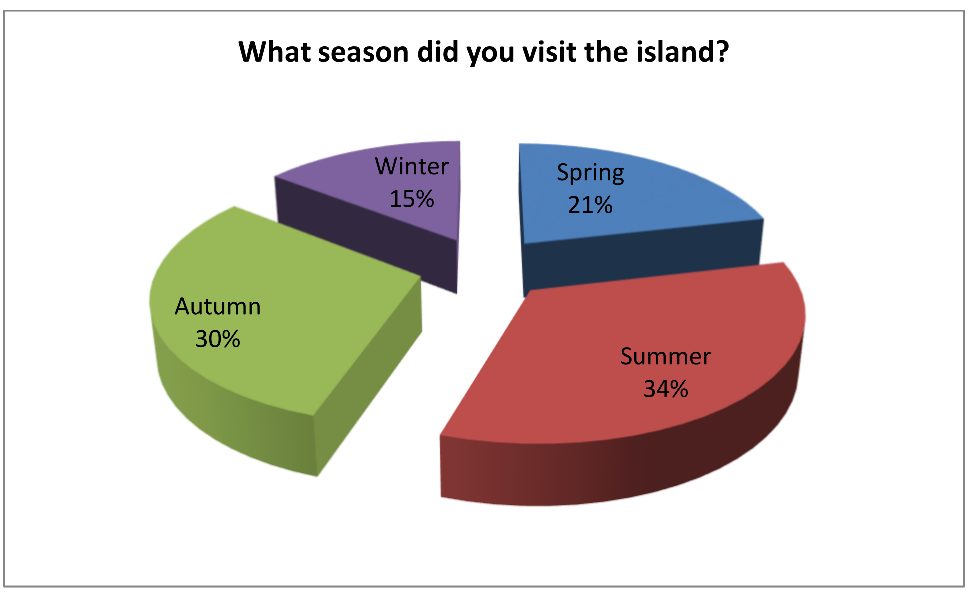
As shown to the graphic according to the answers, 57%, ie 86 people belong to the age group of 18-28 years and the immediately most numerous is that of 29-39 with a percentage that reaches 27.5%.




**4.2Graph 2**: “Gender”

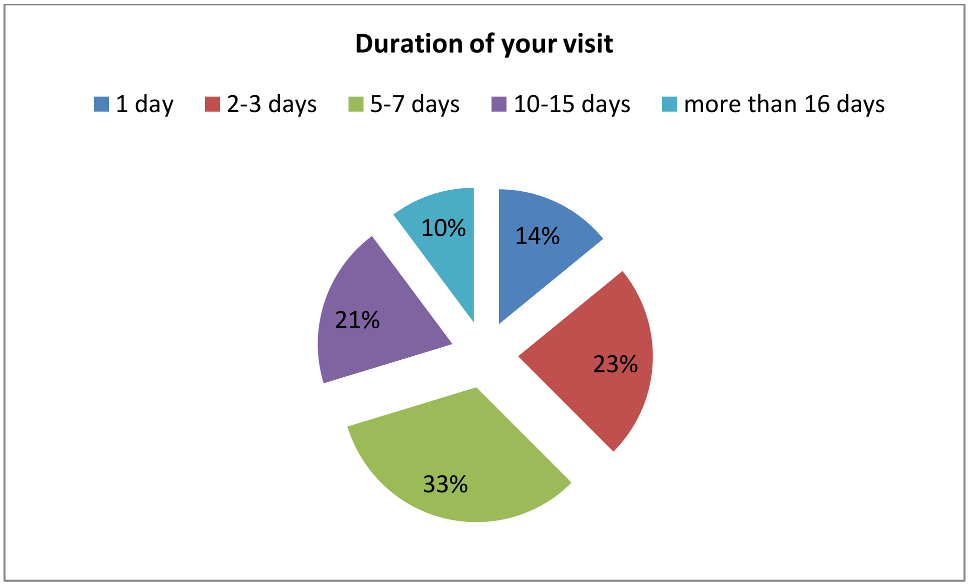
Regarding the question "gender", 44.3% said they were women, 45.6% said they were men, while 10.1% gave the answer another, differentiating the biological from the social gender.

Characteristics and Motives



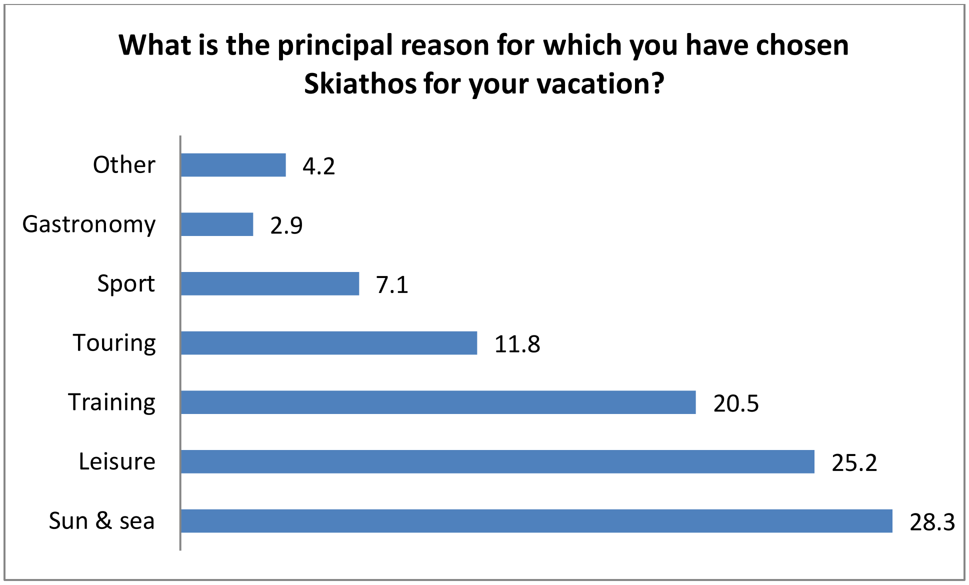
**4.3.Graph 3**: "Season of visit"

In the fourth question, that is, "when did you visit the island", we have  a clear lead in the summer and autumn months, which in total cover 64.0% of the answers.




**4.4.Graph 4**: "Visit duration"

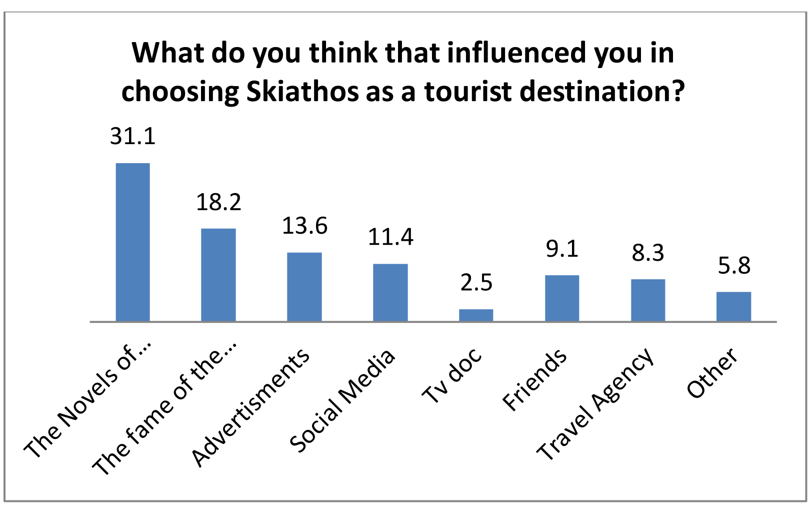
The fifth question concerns the duration of vacation in the island. As can be seen from the graph, 18 people preferred Skiathos for a one-day trip, a percentage of 14%, while 42 people, ie 33, answered from 5 to 7 days. The choice from 2 to 3 days follows with 23% while here it is worth emphasizing that in a total percentage that amounts to 30%, Skiathos is a favorite destination for multi-day vacations of 10 days or more.




**4.5.Graph 5**: “motive”

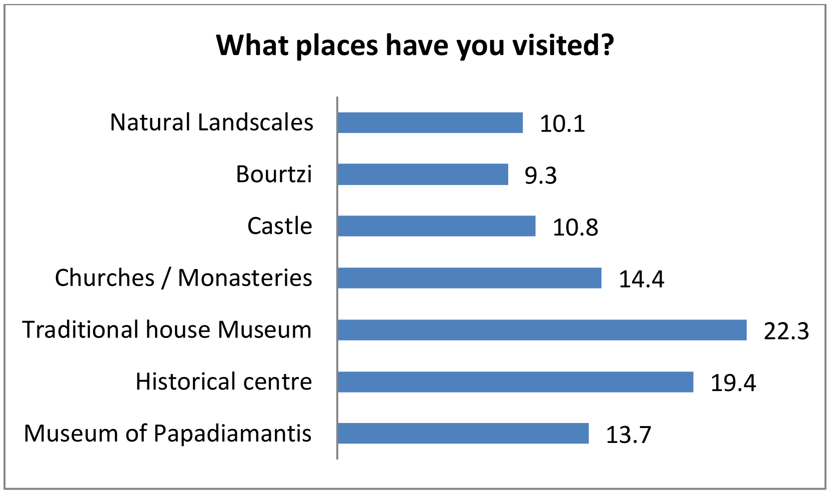
The reason for this choice is shown in the graph of the sixth question "reasons why you have chosen Skiathos" which shows multiple answers of which the most friendly with 28.3% is the diptych "sun-sea", followed by 25.2% the answer "leisure". Here, however, it is worth noting that it appears as a motivation to visit the island and in fact at a rate of 20.5% "training - education" and at a rate of 11.8% “touring-cultural tourism” as a response was given to participation in cultural events.

The answers show that although the triptych "sun-sea-leisure" continues to monopolize the interest of tourists , a large percentage occupy other forms of tourism such as cultural, literary and educational, but also sports, gastronomy could work as a motivation



**4.6.Graph 6**: "influence"

Following the previous one, question seven asks the participants for clarifications on the reasons that influenced them regarding the choice of Skiathos for a tourist destination and at a rate of 31.1% it seems that the novels of Papadiamantis holds the lead. It is followed by the fame of the island with a 18.2%, while the advertising is 13.6%, the media and Social 11.4%. Recommendations from friends or travel agencies total 17.4%.

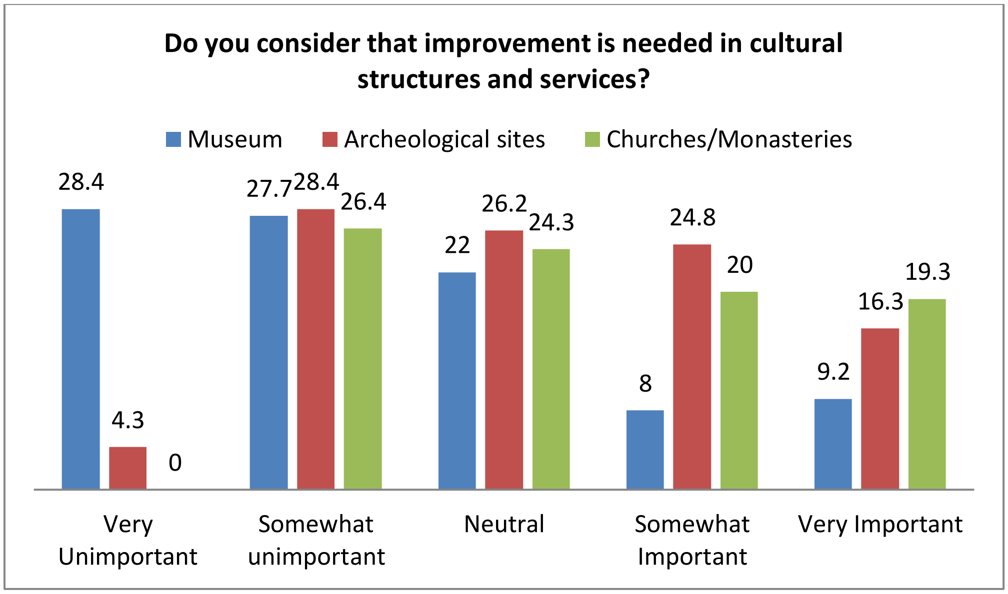



**4.7.Graph 7:** "places"

The answers to the graph show as a disposition of tourists beyond the classic sun sea vacation to combine cultural interests.

**Opinions**

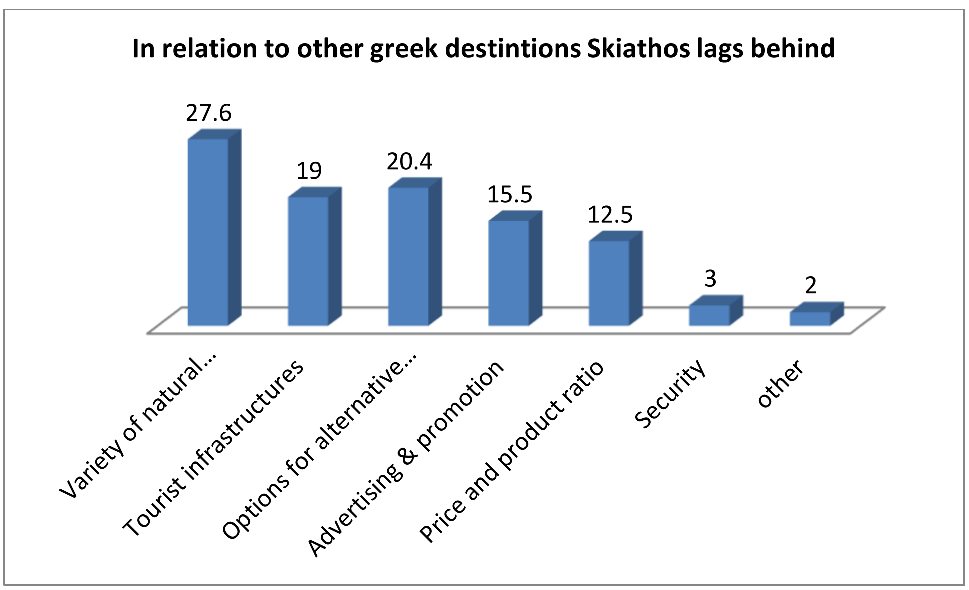
Do you consider that improvement is needed in cultural structures and services?




**4.8.Graph 8:** "improvement"

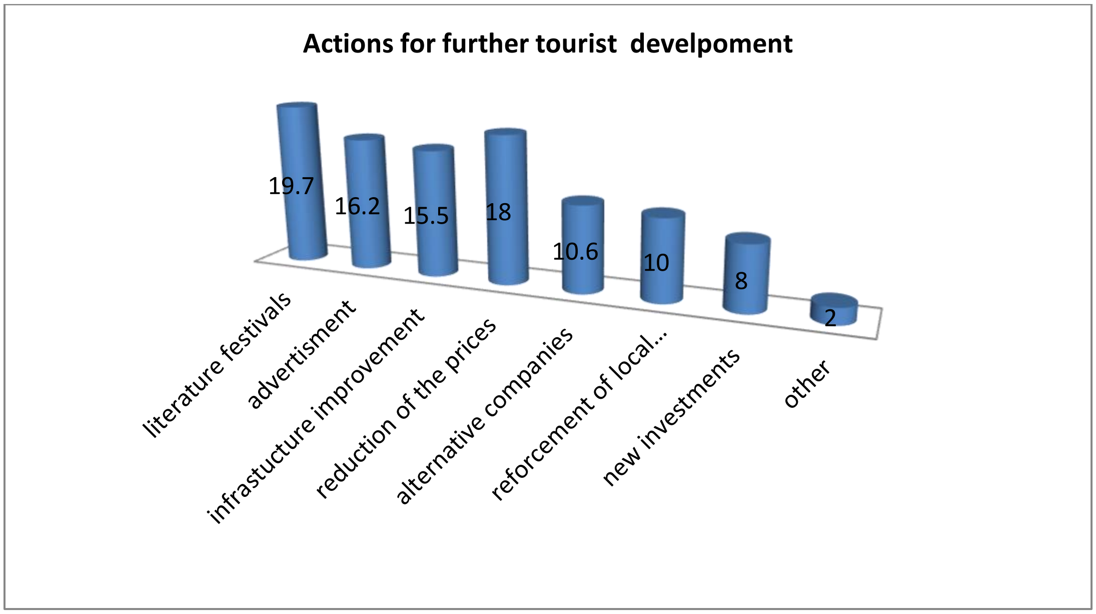
Also of interest are the participants' answers about their satisfaction with the infrastructure.

Thus, regarding the museums in a large percentage of 28.2%, ie 40 people were very satisfied with the facilities, only 9.2% of people consider that it is absolutely necessary to improve the infrastructure in the museums.




**4.9.Graph 9:** "relation to other destinations"

In the fifteenth multiple-choice question, where the opinion of the participants is asked about the point at which they consider that Skiathos lags behind in relation to other Greek destinations, the answers vary. The largest percentage of 29.6% answer that they lag behind in financial support of the cultural structures , a 20.4% consider that the options for alternative activities is missing. The tourist infrastructure seems to be incomplete for 19%, while a 15.5% sees a deficit in the promotion of the island and the ratio price/product arrives at 12.5%.




**4.10.Graph 10**: “Actions for development”

In the sixteenth question, which is given multiple answers regarding the actions to be taken by local authorities for the further tourism development of the region and the extension of the tourist season, the participants suggest a percentage of 19.7% to promote literature festivals, , 18% ask for price reductions, 16.2% of the answers converge on the increase of advertising, 15.5% talk about improving infrastructure, in a total of 20.6% mention to involve young people in alternative and sustainable agencies by focusing to the local population, and finally a 8% suggest an orientation to new investments.

## Epilogue

Alexandros Papadiamantis is an important source of literary tourism. The author's audience visits the places where he lived and wrote his short stories, in order to get in his place and better understand his living conditions at the time. Tourism in places of Athens such as Psyrri, is increasing due to the desire of people to know in every possible way the author of their favorite short stories.

Finally, there is the phenomenon of literary tourism through the cultural events that take place on the occasion of Papadiamantis's works, but also in his honor.

In conclusion, after the case study on the occasion of Alexandros Papadiamantis, it turns out that with the proper utilization of material and intangible wealth there is a great impact on the local community as the needs of a literary tourist are met in various ways.

This is primarily because the physiognomy of the literary tourist who as previously analyzed is an example of a mild form of tourism, and then because it is so interesting in places where events are held, that with proper promotion many tourists do not hesitate to travel.

Greece is a place with a rich literary heritage and based on some of the actions that have been taken in foreign countries, which have been proven to bear fruit, the state and the private sector must turn to the exploitation of this wealth.

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# LEGAL AND ECONOMIC DIMENSIONS OF SHORT-TERM RENTALS IN GREECE

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**ABSTRACT**

The main purpose of this paper is to dissect the institution of short-term rental in Greece. First, the basic concepts of the sharing economy and short-term rentals are analyzed; along with those specific characteristics of short-term rental that make it difficult to categorize it as a specific type of lease, despite similarities with typical lease. This is followed by a review of the legislative framework that determined the nature of short-term rental in Greece, with an emphasis on the basic provisions of Law No. 4446/2016 and Law No. 4472/2017. More specifically, the study outlines the main restrictions set by the previous Article 111 of Law No. 4446/2016, with the aim to hinder the substitution of legal accommodation by illegal accommodation, as well as the institutional changes brought by Article 84 of Law No. 4472/2017 to Article 111 of Law No. 4446/2016. Next, the Airbnb phenomenon is investigated: its positive effects on the economy—mainly due to the exploitation of real estate, the creation of new jobs, and the strengthening of public revenue through taxation—but also the negative effects, such as the increase in rates of conventional rentals, the increasing trends in the real estate market prices and rental prices and the removal of the "permanent" population from those places where Airbnb is dominant. Furthermore, the study describes the oversupply of Airbnb-type accommodation in Greece and the concentration of properties in the hands of a few individuals or small groups of individuals, which shows that the concept of the said institution is now moving away from the logic of supplementing the host's income that existed at the birth of the phenomenon. The regulatory interventions in the Airbnb market in Greece are also analyzed, with the aim of limiting arbitrariness due to the abuse of the institution. The paper also presents the consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic on short-term rentals and short-term rentals' impact on the hospitality industry in Greece. The study concludes that only with the adoption of some useful legal restrictions will short-term rentals not end up as a controlling instrument in the hands of a few individuals, but will remain within the framework of the "sharing economy" and not simply become a "platform economy".

**Key Words:** short-term rentals, Airbnb, sharing economy, Greek law, restrictions, pandemic.

## INTRODUCTORY CONCEPTS

The Airbnb phenomenon emerged in 2007, when two young housemates in San Francisco, in order to find money to pay their monthly rent, sublet the living room of their house (Aydin, 2019). In 2008, in partnership with an entrepreneur, they created Airbnb, which operated as a digital platform and took its name from "Airbed & Breakfast", a phrase describing the services provided to customers, which were air mattresses and breakfast.

The phenomenon of short-term rentals as a way of exploiting real estate has developed in the context of a new economic model which emerged in the last decade, that of the "sharing economy" in our society rapidly evolving with new technologies (Martos-Carrión & Miguel, 2022). "*The sharing economy is defined as any model where digital platforms create an open market for the temporary use of goods or services often provided by individuals*" (Article 111(1)(b) of Law No. 4446/2016 (Government Gazette A΄ 240 22.12.2016). Specifically, Efstathopoulos et al. (2019) argued that this system is based on the sharing of assets or services, free of charge or for a fee, directly between individuals (p. 11). Today, with the use of the internet and digital platforms, the sharing economy is also understood as the exchange of tangible and intangible resources (including information) between members, during which transaction the intermediary-manager is replaced by a digital platform.

The sharing economy presupposes the existence of at least three players, namely: a) the service providers, who offer available assets, resources, time, or skills and who may be private individuals or professionals; b) the users/recipients of these services; and c) the intermediaries, who connect the providers with the users/recipients through a digital platform, thus facilitating transactions between them.

**The concept of short-term rental, in the light of Greek law**

In/Under Greek law, according to Article 111(1) of Law No. 4446/2016, "a short-term rental is defined as a rental of real estate concluded through digital platforms for a specific period of less than one year". Also, POL Circular No. 1187/2017 "Short-term rental of real estate in the context of the sharing economy" provides in Article 1(1) that " 'Short-term Rental' in the context of the 'sharing economy' is defined as the rental of 'Real Estate' concluded through digital platforms for a specific period of time, less than one year and containing the elements defined in Article 6 hereof".

A short-term rental of real estate requires the involvement of at least three parties, namely the lessor, who may act in person and/or through the property manager; the platform, which usually acts through its manager; and the lessee. The manager of a short-term rental property is defined by the provision of Article 111(1) of Law No. 4446/2016 as "the natural or legal person or any kind of legal entity that undertakes the process of listing real estate on digital platforms for the purpose of short-term rental and generally arranges for the short-term rental of that real state. The property manager may be either the owner of the property or a possessor or a usufructuary or a sub-lessor or a third party".

According to Article 111(1) of Law No. 4446/2016, "digital platforms are defined as electronic, bilateral or multilateral markets, where two or more groups of users communicate online through the mediation of the platform operator in order to facilitate a transaction between them". Thus, a condition for the inclusion of short-term rental in the provisions of Article 111 of Law No. 4446/2016 is that the short-term rental must be concluded through a digital platform. The role of the digital platform is intermediary on both sides, i.e. on the platform-host as well as the platform-guest side. The digital platform (a market dominated by Airbnb) brings the host and the guest into contact in order to sign the contract for the short-term rental of the property and is responsible for handling the process. The revenue of the company that manages the platform is the commission (the percentage) that it retains from each agreement (booking) made. In other words, individuals pay a percentage of the rent as a fee to the platform for the brokerage services it provides. The platform actively intervenes in the process before the contract is signed, as it identifies the most suitable accommodation for the user concerned, taking into account several criteria (e.g. prices, duration of stay/seasonability, changes in demand, special events, reviews, other services provided, etc.) (Busch, 2019).

It follows from the above that if a short-term rental of a real estate property is concluded outside the digital platform, the latter does not fall under the provisions of Law No. 4446/2016 and the lessor does not have the obligations imposed by Law No. 4446/2016. The user of the digital platform, which may be the lessor or the lessee of the real estate, enters into a contract with the digital platform, which is governed by the terms of the platform. As Spyridonos (2019) remarks, this contract is purely a contract of adhesion, because the user of the platform has no power to modify the terms by negotiation (p. 123 et seq.).

Moreover, the Greek legislator in article 39A of Law No. 4172/2013 stipulated that "the income earned, by natural persons, from the short-term rental of a property of the sharing economy, as defined in Article 111 of Law No. 4446/2016, as applicable, is income from real estate and the provisions of Article 3 and Article 40 (4) of Law No. 4172/2013 (A' 167), as applicable, if the real estate property is rented out furnished without the provision of any service other than the provision of bedding. In case any other services are provided, this income constitutes income from business activity according to article 21 of Law No. 4172/2013, as applicable"[2]. In other words, the Greek legislator wanted to imprint a non-business status to the phenomenon of short-term rentals, since the income earned by the lessor is income from real estate property.

## The legal classification of short-term rental

According to Greek legal theory, short-term rental is a special type of lease which has its own particular characteristics and cannot easily be included in a specific type of lease. Short-term concession of the use of real estate has elements of various types of contracts, such as the hospitality contract, the hotel contract, and the typical lease. In short-term rental—despite its specific characteristics, such as the short duration of the lease, tourism-orientation, and the fact

[2] If the property is rented out furnished and without the provision of any service, other than the provision of bedding, the income earned by the lessor is income from real estate, while if any other services are provided, this income is income from business activity (Finokaliotis, 2020, pp. 375-376).

that it is concluded between individuals and not between commercially active persons, in the context of the sharing economy, and via an online platform—the core of the agreement is the granting of the use of the accommodation by the lessor/host for a consideration, which is the basic content of the lease contract.

Arguably, then, short-term rental has the most functional similarities with traditional leasing: it displays elements of a residential lease, as it is almost always employed in cases of residential use, and as such cannot be subject to the protection of PD No. 34/1995 1995 "Codification of the provisions of the laws on commercial leases" (Katras, 2020, p. 571). In this light, the provisions of Articles 576 et seq. CC, 583 et seq. CC, 585 CC, and 588 CC may be applied to this form of lease as well. In addition, the general provisions on the abnormal development of reciprocal contracts (failure to perform – default – substandard performance), adapted as appropriate, may also apply to this form of contract (Christakakou-Fotiadi, 2019). As stated in Spyridonos (2019), short-term rental sometimes exhibits elements of commercial leasing (p. 28); it is observed that, in practice, private individuals lease their urban properties to businesses in order for the latter, having the right to use them and receive the rent, to sublet them further.

## Legal framework regulating short-term real estate rental in Greece

In Greece, short-term rentals in tourism—and especially the ones concluded through digital platforms—were initially established in 2013 with a number of laws and circulars. The most important laws for short-term rental are: A) former Law No. 4446/2016, and in particular Article 111 thereof, which set the conditions and regulations for short-term rentals through a digital platform and provided the definitions of the "sharing economy" and "digital or online platforms"; B) Law No. 4472/2017 (Government Gazette A΄ 74/19.05.2017), where: 1) based on article 83 of Law No. 4472/2017, article 39A was added to Law No. 4472/2013 which defined income from short-term rental of real estate in the context of the sharing economy as income from real estate and not income from business activity; and 2) based on Article 84 of Law No. 4472/2017, Article 111 of Law 4446/2016 was amended and "short-term rental" was characterized as "short-term rental in the context of the sharing economy".

**Law 4446/2016 (in its previous version)**

Specifically, Article 2 of former Law No. 4446/2016 provided for conditions and set limits in order to apply the system of short-term rental through digital platforms, which should be followed cumulatively and were the following: **a.** The lessor or sub-lessor would have to be a natural person, registered in the "Short-Term Stay Property Registry" and would receive a unique registration number in it, which would be indicated in any posting on a digital platform, as well as in any medium of display; **b.** No more than two (2) real estate properties per income earner's TIN number were allowed to be registered; **c.** The property should have a minimum area of nine (9) square meters and should have natural lighting, ventilation, and heating; **d.** The property should meet all legally required building permits or be preserved in accordance with the provisions of Law No. 3843/2010 (A΄ 62) or be subject to the provisions of Article 24 of Law 4014/2011 (A'209); **e.** A general maximum rental period was also set which should not exceed ninety (90) days per calendar year. Another special limit complemented the above provision and concerned the conclusion of short-term rentals for islands with less than ten thousand (10,000) inhabitants, where the rental of each property should not exceed sixty (60) days per calendar year.

Exceptions to the above provisions on the determination of the time limit of the rental were set by the legislator himself in the same paragraph 2, indent e', subparagraph 2 where the limits of ninety (90) and sixty (60) days were justified if the total income of the lessor or sub-lessor, from all the properties available to let or sublet did not exceed twelve thousand (12,000) euros in the same tax year. Finally, a restriction was introduced in paragraph 2, indent f' of the same article, whereby the properties had to be let furnished, without the provision of any service other than the provision of bedding.

Article 3 provided for administrative penalties in the event of a breach of indents (a) and (b) of paragraph 2, an independent administrative fine of five thousand (5,000) euros and the lessor was obliged within fifteen (15) calendar days to undertake the necessary compliance actions, otherwise in case of recidivism within the same fiscal year from the issuance of the act imposing the fine, this fine was imposed at twice the amount, and in case of each new violation, at four times the amount.

**Law No. 4472/2017**

Law No. 4472/2017 amended Article 111 of Law No. 4446/2016 in its entirety and introduced statutory changes in relation to Law No. 4446/2016. It provided for statutory recognition of the person of the "Manager" as the natural or legal person or any kind of legal entity that undertakes the process of listing a real estate property on a digital platform in order to rent it out on a short-term rental and, in general, as the person who takes all the necessary actions to achieve the short-term rental. Thus, the property Manager can now be either the owner and possessor of the property or the possessor thereof or the usufructuary thereof or the sub-lessor thereof or even any third party. The previous restriction that the owner should be a natural person is removed from the concept of the property Manager. The only restriction imposed was to be registered in the Short-Term Stay Property Registry which is now kept at the Greek Independent Authority for Public Revenue (AADE) (instead of the previous "Register of Short-Term Rental Properties" which was kept at the General Secretariat for Public Revenue).

Following the above changes, the changes that followed are very important, especially since the provisions of the previous Article 111(2), indents b, c, d, e and f have been completely removed, as set by Law No. 4446/2016 to which we referred in detail above, i.e. the provisions relating to the restrictions set by Law No. 4446/2016. The restriction of two (2) properties per TIN, the restriction of the area of the leased property which had to be larger than nine (9) square meters, the restriction of having a building permit, and the restriction of the time limit of 90 days for all properties or 60 days for properties located on islands with a population of less than 10,000 inhabitants, were abolished. The income limit of 12,000 euros per owner set by Law No. 4446/2016 and the high administrative fines in case of violation of the above restrictions, which were tightened in cases of recidivism, were also abolished.

To compensate for the removal of these restrictions, the possibility was maintained that a subsequent tripartite Joint Ministerial Decision (KYA) of the Ministers of Economy and Development (the Ministry of Development and Investment as of April, 2022), Finance, and Tourism may (in the future), for reasons related to the protection of housing, define specific geographical areas where restrictions on the availability of real estate for short-term rentals will apply.

**The impact of AIRbnb on the economy**

Firstly, the positive effects of the phenomenon include the fact that the increase in short-term rentals has resulted in the arrival of still more tourists, thus creating new business activities directly linked to the business in question. The reconstruction of existing accommodation has given a notable boost to the construction sector and related trades; it has also created new jobs and stimulated the activity of professions such as decorators, graphic designers, web designers, and advertisers who promote accommodation and services. The creation of new types of food outlets, but also new professions created to serve short-term rentals, has provided jobs for people who were not employed. In addition, new services have been created in the service sector, such as the creation of a reception area for tourists' properties, the delivery and collection of keys, on-site tours, cleaning and transportation services or guided tours of the cities, provided by the lessors' themselves or by dedicated companies, which must of course be highly professional and comply with labor legislation.

In practice, however, it has so far been shown that labor legislation is not even remotely guaranteed for those employed in the aforementioned sectors, because these services are usually provided with "black money", thus violating the rights of workers in these sectors and depriving the state of considerable revenue. For this reason, it is necessary to create a legal framework capable of guaranteeing the labor rights of these categories of workers employed in professions created owing to the short-term rental market.

The negative effects of the Airbnb phenomenon in large urban centers are numerous. First, there have been upward pressures on rents for conventional rentals as well as upward trends in the purchase and rental prices of real estate. This is because the already existing number of properties intended for long-term rentals is giving way to short-term rentals serving other types of tenants or visitors. Thus, the following have been observed, inter alia: a) a reduction in the number of properties offered for long-term rentals; b) an increase in lease rates for long-term rentals due to the previous reduction in the number of properties; c) the emergence of "over-tourism" and any consequences this inflicts on the "permanent" population; and d) the gradual displacement of the said "permanent" population away from the areas in which Airbnb is developing.

## The Airbnb phenomenon in Greece

The Airbnb phenomenon coincided with the economic crisis that Greece experienced in recent years, with soaring unemployment levels and the existence of several memoranda (MoU) that suspended economic growth in the country. The way for short-term rentals was opened by the passing of Law No. 4336/2015 (Government Gazette 94 A΄ 14-8-2015) and specifically subparagraph A.3 of Article 2(4) (part B) of this law. According to this provision, "*par. 1 of Article 2 of Law No. 4276/2014 (A΄ 155) and par. 7 of Article 2 of Law No. 2160/1993 (A΄ 118) are repealed as of 1 November 2015*". This provision abolished the requirements for the granting of a Special Operation Mark to tourist accommodation and the inclusion in the definition of tourist accommodation of leases less than 30 days, thus opening the way for short-term rentals of real estate to individuals without the need to issue a Special Operation Mark by the Greek National Tourism Organization (GNTO). Thousands of owners have been given the opportunity to rent out their homes through popular online platforms, like Airbnb, or through private rental contracts without the need to issue a Special Operation Mark from the Greek National Tourism Organization. As such, the popular Airbnb platform has spread rapidly in Greece.

The increase in demand, combined with the changing tourist identity of most major Greek cities, Athens included, has led to a boom in the phenomenon of short-term rentals through digital platforms. The oversupply of real estate even in destinations that previously did not find a place on the tourist map, tempted the tourist market. The conditions of the economic crisis therefore favored the development of the Airbnb phenomenon and led Greece to claim a large share of the tourism market. Today, the oversupply of accommodation in Greece has led to a decrease in occupancy and revenues, proving that Greece has reached a critical saturation point which indicates that supply is much higher than demand. Plus, the geographical dimension of the Airbnb phenomenon, with the majority of available accommodation concentrated in Athens[3], demonstrates that the way in which the short-term rental model is developing in Greece is far from the sharing model on which Airbnb was originally based.

The uneven way in which the Airbnb phenomenon is developing gives the opportunity for speculation by only a few players in this market. Moreover, even within the same city, the uneven

[3] In Athens, in 2022, 9,774 dwellings are available, of which 87.6% are entire homes/apartments, 9.6% private rooms and 1.2% shared rooms. See more at: http://insideairbnb.com/athens/ (*March 2022*).

distribution of properties is evident: whereas in the central areas there is an increased concentration of properties, in the areas farthest away from the center of Athens the concentration of properties is low. For example, in the center of the city, many investment companies have bought apartment buildings—especially in low-cost neighborhoods, but also in more gentrified areas such as Exarcheia or Koukaki—in order to make them available for short-term rentals, with the result that there is now a shortage of housing in the center of Athens for residents wishing to secure permanent accommodation. Finally, the image of Airbnb has changed, compared to the past, since owners no longer live in the accommodation they offer and the majority of it tends to be owned by a few owners or managers or management companies, thus creating an oligopoly.

## Regulatory interventions in the operation of short-term rentals

Airbnb has now grown to employ more than 6000 employees and is worth tens of billions of dollars[4], giving rise to what is called "platform capitalism". This means that in today's world, goods-sharing services such as Airbnb and other platforms, e.g. Uber, which commercialize all kinds of goods without having any ownership of them themselves, derive from these goods a profit invented by them (Srnicek, 2017). The resources belong exclusively to the provider who contracts with the platform and this platform, by offering networking services, addresses a huge market in which there are only minimal limits.

Therefore, justified objections were raised and that is why there have been regulatory interventions in the Airbnb market to limit the arbitrariness created by the (over)practice of this institution. Some of the regulatory interventions introduced in European cities relate to the length of time a tenant is allowed to stay in the property (Juul, 2017). For example, this length of time cannot exceed 30 days per year in Amsterdam, 90 days in Madrid, Brussels, Berlin, and London, and 120 days in Paris (Barry, 2020). In Barcelona, due to the rise of "over-tourism", a ban on renting out private rooms was introduced in August 2021 and only the renting out of entire horizontal properties is allowed.

Greece has made a regulatory intervention consisting of the obligation to declare the property to the competent administrative authority, through which a special permit for the property is obtained

[4] https://craft.co/airbnb.

and a unique register number is issued[5]. This action ensures a minimum of legality to the short-term rental itself and is carried out on a property-by-property basis and not on an owner-by-owner nor manager-by-manager basis.

Finally, restrictions can be imposed by law in the light of the geographical definition of the areas in which short-term rentals can be applied, because in areas where there is a large supply thereof, the lease rates of long-term rentals have increased dramatically since their supply decreased. Guttenberg (2017) comments that there is not a one-size-fits-all regulatory framework for all destinations, and legislators and policymakers must independently assess the issues surrounding Airbnb in order to formulate the most sensible approach for their communities.

### Consequences of the pandemic on short-term rentals

According to a study by Grant Thorton, conducted in 2019 on behalf of the Hellenic Chamber of Hotels, entitled "Sharing Economy: Social impacts and regulatory interventions", in Greece prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, the size of the sharing economy recorded an annual growth of 25% (Grant Thorton, 2019). In particular, revenues from short-term property rentals amounted to €1.9 billion, which is close to 10% of annual tourism expenditure. The figures translate into an annual turnover that approached €2 billion in 2019, the last year before the pandemic (Bellos, 2022).

The outbreak of the COVID 19 pandemic resulted in restrictions on travel for citizens due to the quarantine measures enforced, which severely affected global tourism. Short-term rentals, which have been subject to numerous cancellations since the beginning of the pandemic in the year 2020, could not be left unscathed by the pandemic vortex. As soon as the measures were relieved, bookings of short-term rentals through domestic tourism increased by visitors who preferred mainland destinations that were easily accessible by private car. The coronavirus pandemic, despite the cessation of tourist travel that it imposed, did not destroy the short-term rental market and the latter managed to recover to a significant extent (Taulli, 2020), without, of course, returning to pre-pandemic level (Fairley et el., 2021). This was helped by the leasing of so-called

[5] According to Article 111(2)(a) of Law No. 4446/2016, *"the possibility of short-term rental of real estate through digital platforms in the context of the sharing economy is provided for, under the following conditions: a) The property manager must be registered in the "Short-Term Stay Property Registry" maintained by the Independent Public Revenue Authority (AADE)..."*

private accommodation "vacation rentals" (Schaal, 2020), which are properties that are rented as a whole as opposed to renting individual rooms in a property, because these are usually located in isolated areas and are considered "safer".

The intense competition inherent to the short-term rental market has already kept the prices of real estate significantly lower than those of hotels. It is foreseen that the short-term rental market will grow even more in the future, especially in destinations that have not received many visitors so far due to them being more isolated and remote and without much tourist traffic. The need for individual accommodation that provides security, privacy, and hygiene will lead visitors to avoid mass travel, thus contributing to the development of domestic tourism. Nowadays, the short-term rental market has almost recovered and continues to grow, mainly due to the flexibility of this market, which adapts immediately to any new demand.

On the contrary, hotel tourism is more inflexible and maladaptive, as it cannot easily adapt to the new needs of tourists who seek "authentic and personalized experiences" and who want to interact with and live like a local. It is also worth to note a major difference of renting through platforms, such as Airbnb and HomeAway, compared to hotels. Hotels operate within a specific, defined time frame each year, often depending on their geographical location. For example, hotels located in cities operate all year round, while hotels in island destinations, due to the seasonality of tourism, tend to operate for certain months (seasonally).

On the contrary, for accommodation rentals from Airbnb and HomeAway, the supply is constantly changing according to demand. To showcase, some accommodation may appear available for rent on the platforms for a certain period of time or even for a few days, but it then "exits" the platform. In periods of high demand (either seasonally or for a major event, e.g. matches, concerts, exhibitions) more accommodation appears for rent on the platforms, while in periods of low demand, many are seen to "leave" the platform. Moreover, the owner may reside in the accommodation in question themselves and then attempt to rent it out to someone else on the days when they are scheduled to be away, thus earning some extra income with no interest in further renting (Ikkos & Rasouli, 2019).

Greek hotel owners consider businesses that rent out residential properties and self-contained rooms that operate as hotels—under the guise of short-term rentals—as unfair competition that has reached uncontrolled proportions. Unfortunately, there appear to be dozens of businesses around the country, and especially in metropolitan areas, that operate entire buildings with self-contained rooms that they rent out to foreign travelers through online platforms such as Airbnb; these buildings seem to operate as hotels, but without the tax and other obligations that this requires. They do, however, absorb a significant share of incoming and domestic traffic, undermining the functioning of the coordinated hotel industry through practices that hotel owners describe as clearly unfair.

## Closing remarks

The policy on the issue of short-term rentals has gone through many ups and downs, and the equation that needs to be solved has many parameters. What is certain is that the policy followed must strike a balance between the state, the property owners, and the digital platforms. The preservation of free competition must also be taken into account. This relationship becomes complicated because favoring one category—for example, by reducing restrictions—creates an unwarranted abuse of short-term rentals, with the result that hotel tourism is affected, signs of "over-tourism" surface, levels of conventional rentals increase, the cost of living rises and the quality of life of the local community in question is reduced. On the other hand, by restricting the use of short-term rentals, competition is reduced, revenues to the state are reduced, no new market for short-term rental-related products and services is created, no "over-tourism" complications emerge and permanent residents are not displaced. Thus, it seems that the above equation has many parameters which are difficult for the State to balance without affecting one or other sector or the general interest of the citizens.

The current economic model of the digital sharing economy is far from its primary purpose and the practice of Airbnb has moved away from the original concept of the platform. Today, the economic power of the platforms has increased so much that they both influence local communities and also give birth to new forms of tourism. The sharing economy, which has evolved into a "platform economy", has had a negative impact on the property market, public revenues, the labor market, the environment, and social cohesion (Grant Thorton, 2019). The originally inspired terms of "sharing economy" and "collaborative economy" have been almost entirely replaced by "platform economy", which is now a term referring exclusively to the medium, i.e. the digital platform that brings the host and the guest together in order to draw up the relevant short-term rental contract.

The regulatory challenges created by Airbnb clearly demonstrate how the emerging collaborative economy has produced important and difficult questions about regulation in the digital age. In Greece, there are currently no legislative restrictions on the use of short-term rentals, since there are hardly any strict conditions for their implementation, as is the case in many other European cities which have safeguarded citizens' rights to a greater extent by imposing significant restrictions. The dimension that the Greek legislator wanted to invest the phenomenon of short-term leasing with by former Law No. 4446/2016 was one more in line with the principles of the sharing economy, i.e. the sharing of goods and services to enhance the income of the owner and not the over-profit from irrational business activity. The provisions of former Law No. 4446/2016 were set as restrictions to suppress arbitrary practices and prevent short-term leases from falling prey to monopolistic or oligopolistic schemes. This aimed to secure that such leases would not be concentrated in the hands of a few since, on the one hand, the use of the system was limited to only natural persons (legal persons or entities were excluded) and, on the other hand, even these natural persons had to conform to a limitation of two properties per owner's VAT number (lessor or sub-lessor).

Law No. 4472/2017 provides the legislator with the possibility, if and when they observe that conditions apply which require the existence of these restrictions, to establish such restrictions by means on a Joint Ministerial Decision (KYA) of the Ministers of Development and Investment, Finance, and Tourism. To date, however, the said restrictions have not been imposed on short-term rentals, even though many areas of Greece are literally "suffering" from the existence of a multitude of properties available on the platform; besides, there are also issues related to the security of the properties themselves in the absence of the strict urban planning framework established by former Law No. 4446/2016.

In conclusion, what is required is a legislative framework with clear operating rules, which will both provide for restrictions on short-term property rentals and include mechanisms to monitor the implementation of the regulations and the restrictions imposed, so that short-term rentals remain within the framework of the "sharing economy" and not turn into a "platform economy".

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# Usability and effectiveness of a formal metadata model as compared to a collaborative, centrally controlled folksonomy, when used in the description and related organization of events in a special purpose repository

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## INTRODUCTION

During our effort to implement a digital repository for the complete description, categorization/organization, digital preservation and maintenance of the cultural events that are held in the region of Crete, and their subsequent discovery from the public, other creators as well as scholars, we had to take an important decision: "shall we adapt the events' description process to a formal metadata model for such entities, or instead use few mandatory descriptive elements along with tags that are submitted by the creators and match the audience perception of the events"?

We were aware for the pros and cons of both approaches theoretically, but in order to end up with a usable and effective implementation of the service, we decided to perform an empirical study by use of an online survey with dependent questions, where potential users evaluated the process of content navigation and discovery, when described by each of the above mentioned methods.

Almost two hundred participants form three main user categories (audience, events' creators and scholars) contributed to our study, and the outcomes were close to those expected: simple description and social tags are welcomed by the audience, that locates events through tags and simple searches, and of course by events' creators,

who find the detailed description workflow process tedious, while complete descriptions based on a formal metadata model are the scholars' choice.

Conformed to the above results we implemented a metadata assisted events description process in our digital repository by use of adequate elements from a formal model along with tags submitted by events' creators, which consist a folksonomy of events and are centrally approved by the repository's curators.

**Keywords**: events' repository; formal metadata model; folksonomy; empirical study; dynamic online survey

## Parent Project

In a research project with title *"Promotion of the tourism and cultural product through the symbolic representation of certain components in a VR360 map: the events' case study",* which is funded through the Research, Technological Development and Innovation (RDTI) Action "RESEARCH – CREATE – INNOVATE"[6], we have been working on the development of an innovative web mapping service for the cultural events that take place in the region of Crete.

The service can be considered an **"Events' spatiotemporal map"[7]** as it depicts on a map (spatially) all events held within the region of Crete in certain time periods (temporally), and is comprised of the following core components:

- A content management system or repository[8] where events' creators or managers/promoters register and describe events in a step-by-step manner that complies with a formal metadata model (adjusted version) for events (Hage W. et al., 2009). During the deposit process, terms and tags which are mainly selected from centrally updated controlled vocabularies are used.

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[6] SINGLE RTDI STATE AID ACTION "RESEARCH – CREATE – INNOVATE", with the co-financing of Greece and the European Union in the context with Operational Program "Competitiveness, Entrepreneurship and Innovation (EPAnEK)" of the NSRF 2014-2020.

Co-financed by Greece and the European Union

[7] Currently accessed from http://ncrawl.nmlabs.gr/ui/index.action

[8] Currently accessed from http://ncrawl.nmlabs.gr/ui/login

- A tool used to collect and analyze data of the venues where cultural events take place, in order to support decisions on the creation of VR360 videos of added value for those venues.
- An interactive map interface where events are represented in locations in which they take place by use of markers, that spring apart when clicked. Each separate marker, when clicked, pops-up a card with a brief description of the corresponding event, which in turn is linked to its full description (Figure 1). In the full description, comments and evaluations of the event submitted by certified users are also shown, while events discovery is accomplished by use of faceted search along with clickable tags (Helic et al., 2011) and a related tag cloud representation (Figure 2).

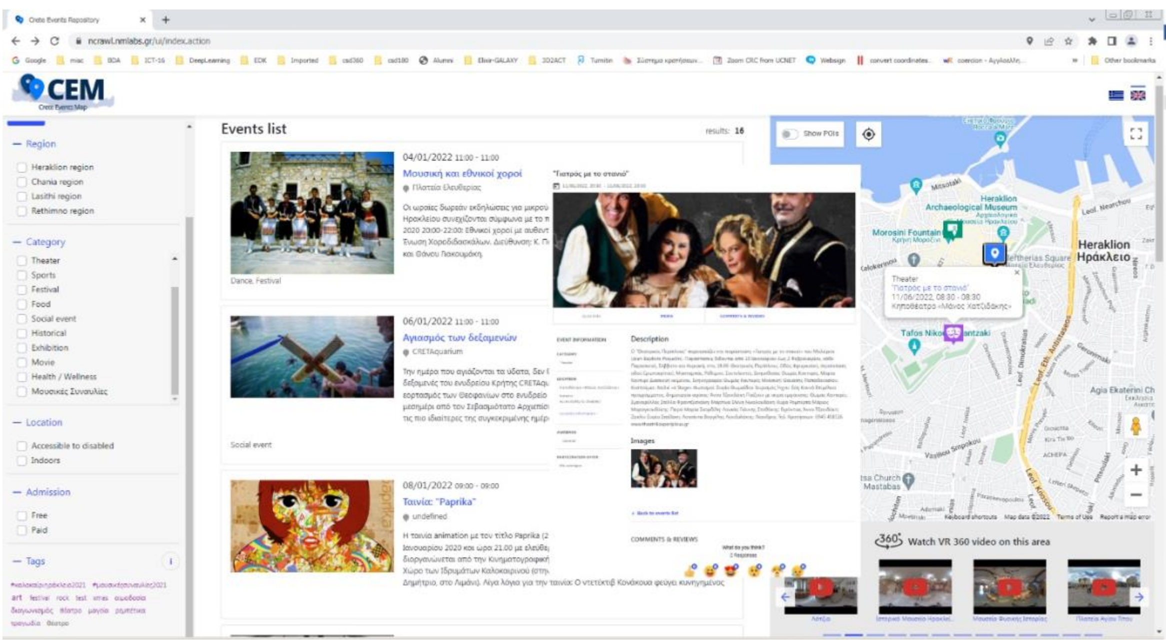


Figure 1. The interactive Events' map interface with brief and full description.

During the events' registration process in the corresponding repository, an important question aroused: *"Which is the best way to describe events in terms of easiness during the deposit process and of course when considering events' discovery"?* A brief related discussion is presented in the subsection that follows.

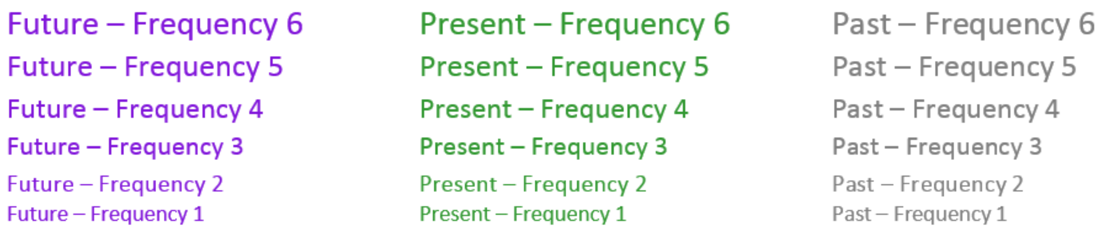


Figure 2. Tag Cloud Representation: Size is for the Frequency of Occurrence, Color Represents the Time of Occurrence - Purple for Future, Green for Present and Grey for Past Events.

**Metadata: Formal Schemas, Controlled Vocabularies and their Creation and Usage**

As the realm of web resources continuously grows and evolves, the use of metadata in the resources organization, description and discovery, correlation and grouping, and their overall utilization, becomes more and more important if not mandatory. Metadata are compared to an investment that, if wisely managed, can deliver a significant return on intellectual capital (Gilliland A.J., 2016).

The three main features of web resources, *content, context and structure,* have to be adequately reflected through metadata. According to this, metadata is not just "data about data" but value added information frequently governed by community-developed and community-fostered standards and best practices used to ensure quality, consistency, and interoperability (Gilliland A.J., 2016).

In order to describe metadata records (containers), i.e. the *metadata structure,* we make use of *formal schemas, or metadata element sets*, while the *values* that we use to populate the metadata elements come from *controlled vocabularies or thesauri* that usually follow certain rules and codes in their format and syntax. To give an example, in schema.org[9], which creates, maintains and promotes schemata in a collaborative way through the activity of its community, one can find the *Event Type*[10], a metadata schema for events which is comprised of all required elements that concern anything that happens at a certain time and location, such as a concert, lecture, or festival

[9] Accessed from https://schema.org/
[10] Accessed from https://schema.org/Event

(Schema.org, 2022), and is equivalent to the class dcmitype:Event (Dublin Core, Metadata Innovation, 2020). As for a controlled vocabulary, one can refer to the "Library of Congress Name Authority File" as a thesaurus used for names of persons, organizations, events, places, and titles aiming to the identification of these entities and the provision of uniform access to bibliographic resources (Library of Congress, 2022).

Originally metadata creation and maintenance was an exclusive domain of the library community (Zhang, A., & Gourley, D., 2014), a fact that very soon changed, following the diversity of available web resources. Similarly, formal metadata schemas and thesauri are nowadays created collaboratively by all kind of users, rather than by trained information professionals, resulting to more accurate, well adapted schemas as well as social tagging and folksonomies, that come as additional elements to enhance existing formal schemas and collaborative thesauri that reflect the perception and language usage in the web, respectively.

## Events' Description Process in our Project

From the title of our project, one can easily conclude that it mainly targets to the promotion of the tourism and cultural product in the region of Crete, by use of electronic services where events are deposited, organized, preserved and discovered from potential attendants.

Of course, other important objectives have been set throughout all stages in the design and implementation process that are summarized in the questions that follow:

- *Do cultural events formulate history? If we record, organize and maintain the presence of cultural events in various locations in time, do we eventually obtain an alternative inventory of some important aspects of a place's history?*
- *Do cultural events comprise an important component of the tourism product, and furthermore, is their description, presentation and successful repeatability able to regenerate and redefine tourism?*
- *Does the spatiotemporal map of events contribute to the touristic and cultural experience by depicting "routes" and creating tourists-travellers, or is it to be considered as unnecessary?*

- *Are the VR360 videos of the locations (venues) of cultural events as well as of the broader geographic, political and cultural environment capable of providing a sensory and cognitive foretaste of the experience of the events?*
- *Additionally, do VR360 videos consist an effective means of inspiration for the creation and implementation of novel cultural and other events in a particular place?*
- *Eventually, is it the case that, a spatiotemporal map of events ("eventful"), boosts investments related to tourism and culture ("investful")?*

To measure the achievement of the above mentioned objectives targeted studies should be conducted, but before that, appropriate content has to be deposited into the "Events' repository" (mentioned in the previous section) that will be adequately described by appropriate metadata.

As one can easily imagine, the most important portion of the content that has to be created in the repository is related to the metadata themselves: it is them that potential attendants / visitors search in order to locate events of interest and it's the metadata historical archive that will drive scholars to new historical hypotheses. **This proves the importance of the description procedure to be adopted during the registration of events in our repository.**

In the subsections that follow we present the metadata schema that we have chosen to use from existing formal such schemata and the adaptations performed after certain evaluation processes, along with controlled vocabularies from whom we have, so far, obtained values in certain elements of the model.

## From the Core Public Event Vocabulary to our Event Schema

In our effort to identify which metadata objects' syntax should be applied in our case, in order to best meet the needs of the information creator, repository, and users, we accomplished a comprehensive study of existing broadly used schemas for events. In the following we present a list with URLs that correspond to those that we considered as most appropriate:

(1) https://semanticweb.cs.vu.nl/2009/11/sem/
(2) https://developers.google.com/search/docs/data-types/event
(3) https://schema.org/Event
(4) https://joinup.ec.europa.eu/solution/core-public-event-vocabulary
(5) http://linkedevents.org/ontology/

(6) https://github.com/italia/daf-ontologie-vocabolari-controllati/blob/master/Ontologie/CPEV/v0.4/CPEV-AP_IT.ttl

From the above we ended up to metadata descriptions for events in our repository that are **at least comprised of the following properties:**

| **Property** | **Description** |
|---|---|
| title | The title property captures the "formal" name given to the event. Titles may be provided in multiple languages with multiple instances of the title property. |
| description | This property contains detailed characteristics of the event. Descriptions may be provided in multiple languages with multiple instances of the description property. |
| url | This property links to the website of the event. The value of this property is a URL. In case of non-existence, the handle from submission of the event in the repository is provided. |
| region | It refers to the geographical name in the form of region-prefecture-municipality/village (values from a controlled vocabulary). |
| location name | This property is about a certain toponym i.e. "Koule Fortress" or a brand name of a place i.e. "Cine Studio", where events are held (values from a controlled vocabulary which is centrally updated). |
| location description | A short description of events' locations with optional reference to its capacity but mandatory to accessibility facilities and to whether it is an open air or covered place. |
| date | This property links to two DateTime instances specifying the start and end time of the event. |
| category | This property contains the nature or genre of the event. Examples include music, theater, festival, conference, exhibition, city council meeting, and |

| | |
|---|---|
| | many more (values from a controlled vocabulary which is centrally updated). |
| creator (single, multiple or group) | This refers to the main creators of the event. We will try to get values from specific authority files if the existing ones have been adequately updated, or create a controlled vocabulary for the purpose of our project. |
| creator’s birthdate | The property is about the date of birth of the main creator and will be potentially used from scholars for sociological studies in the depth of time. |
| creator’s specialization | The special category to which a creator belongs to i.e. “Lyricist”, “Bassist”, “Pianist”, etc. It may have multiple values (obtained from a controlled vocabulary which is centrally updated). |
| is part of | It is a link to a “broader event” (more general) to whom is a part of, i.e. “The Municipality of Heraklion Summer Festival”. |
| audience | This property links to an Audience instance and specifies the group for whom the resource is intended or useful (values from a controlled vocabulary). |
| language | The language (values from a controlled vocabulary) of the content or performance or used in an action with optional note if translation/interpretation is provided (in sup/subtitles, via interpreter etc.). |
| attendance offer | It refers to the cost of the tickets/attendance and may have multiple values or none, related to: presales offer, normal offer, discount, free or unknown offer. |
| attendance booking url | A url to a ticket or seat/attendance booking service. It can be left empty. |
| implementation sponsor | This property specifies one or more entities (values from a controlled vocabulary) that financially or otherwise support the implementation of the event. It can be left empty. |

| | |
|---|---|
| communication sponsor | Entities (values from a controlled vocabulary) that contribute to the promotion/advertisement of the event. It can be left empty. |
| has organizer | This property specifies an entity (values from a controlled vocabulary) that organizes or coordinates the event with refer to communication details (implicitly or via the organizer's website). |
| has multimedia | Multimedia documents for the event. It can also refer to url where such material is deposited for access. |
| has (social) tags | Tags that are characteristic to the event and do not consist values in any of the above mentioned elements. They are provided by the events' creators chosen from a controlled vocabulary (**folksonomy**) or submitted as new entries to be approved and appended to the vocabulary. |

Table 1: Properties of the metadata schema we used in the "Crete Events' Repository"

As referred to the descriptions of an event's properties in the above table, most of them take values from controlled vocabularies, either existing ones or especially built during our project implementation. Next we are going to describe those that are of more interest.

**Controlled Vocabularies and the Corresponding Elements**

Since the very beginning of the testing phase of the Events' Repository, from all distinct categories of potential users (attendants, creators and scholars), it was apparent that the use of controlled vocabularies when assigning values to metadata elements would be unquestionable. This was not only because of the numerous ways of expressing the value of a property with semantically equivalent terms, but also because in many cases users are aware of idiomatic/idiosyncratic expressions of terms and not the term in its correct (exact) form.

From table 1 we may observe that the use of controlled vocabularies applies in almost half of the elements in the metadata schema we have adopted: *region, location name, category*, *creator*, *creator's specialization, audience, language, implementation sponsor, communication sponsor,* *has organizer* and *has (social) tags*. In fact, they are related to elements that can be used to organize hierarchies, search buckets and straightforward tags of events.

We will briefly discussed those that proved to be of special interest for our project.

### Location name

Events' locations were a considerable entity from the very beginning of our project. They are the venues where events take place, but also those that we decided to promote by capturing them in vr360 videos where narration about their history and technical characteristics:

- provides events' attendants with a sensory perception of the place they are going to visit in order to participate to the event,
- gives to visitors (tourists) and integrated view of places they plan to visit, and
- enhances the perception and knowledge of the venue to events' creators that haven't been visited the place and plan to use it in a future production.

Using a controlled vocabulary for location names was not only a prerequisite so that the included locations would match POIs and Google maps elements and could subsequently pin pointed to our events' spatiotemporal map (which uses Google maps), but also a necessity that contributes to the interoperability with other mapping/positioning systems and the composition of a constantly updated list o authorities that related to events' venues for the region of Crete.

The vocabulary is built up by checking locations' names as they appear in Google maps, as well as other official web sources (information from the Regional Directorate of Crete, libraries and scientific reports and references).

### Category

Assigning events to categories is very important in both a faceted search of events from the public and the study of events from scholars perpetually.

Of course an initial list of events' categories was provided to the repository's users from the beginning, but as new events come to light, the need of new categories acquires non zero possibility.

### Creator

Names of events' creators are often the best way to advertise events to the public, as lots of events are aimed at fans of their creators. The use of authority files for artists' names (Library of Congress, 2022) was a good start, but because many others, not internationally known creators, especially local artists, educators, animators etc. submit events to the repository, a controlled vocabulary with creators' names proved to be a must.

**Has (social) tags**

Social tagging on repositories has become a trend for many years. It has emerged as one of the best ways of associating metadata with web resources. With the increase in the kinds of web resources becoming available, collaborative tagging for them is also developing vastly, and metadata generated in the form of tags can be efficiently used to improve web search, for web resources classification, for generating ontologies, for enhanced browsing etc. (Gupta M. et al, 2011).

Regarding our Events' Repository service, it became clear from its very first uses, that social tags should be an extra element in the metadata schema to be used during the events' deposit procedure. This was mainly because it has proven that mostly events' creators as well as their fans and followers, especially of younger ages, preferred tags that they created as primary metadata elements, to either describe or search for events. As a result, we provided our service's users with an extra way of events' classification and search (via the dynamically generated tag cloud), adding a folksonomy feature (Wikipedia, 2021) apart from the standard taxonomy which was based to the metadata schema we mentioned previously.

The tags are proposed from users and approved for use by curators that are responsible for the final content in our Events' Repository, making them "abnormal" in a sense, as they finally build up a controlled vocabulary.

Subsequently, a tag cloud for browsing the events is given as a feature in the spatiotemporal events' map.  The cloud follows the representation shown in Figure 2.

Before closing this subsection we have to mention that the update process in all controlled vocabularies that are used in giving values to metadata elements, is the same as for the *has (social) tags* element.

That is, during the deposit procedure, if one cannot find an appropriate value for a certain element in the provided controlled vocabulary, it completes what considers as most suitable and the value is marked with a "For approval" label. When a curator enters the repository, all values that are to be approved are listed and he/she proceeds with their approval, either as they are or as he/she suggest they should be.

After approval, description of events that had elements in the above condition is considered as completed, and the events are available to be searched and are shown in the Events' map service. Of course, each new value in the controlled vocabularies, when approved, becomes available for use by all next users of the Events' repository service.

## Evaluation and Conclusions

So far, we have well demonstrated the question regarding "the most effective and easy to use method when describing events in a repository", that we faced during the implementation of our project.

In order to end up to a conclusion, we conducted a research among potential users, through a web questionnaire, *with dependent questions* and answers in the form of predefined values in the Likert scale (Fowler Jr, F. J., 2013).

In order to clarify what we mean by dependent questions we give the following example: *If in the question "What sort of user you consider yourself?" a participant answers "Event's Creator" (the other two values were "Event's Attendant", "Event's Scholar"), then a question "Do you consider the events' description process, tedious and demanding" will appear in the following.*

Our questionnaire was built by use of the EUSurvey service (European Commission, 2022) and participants were invited via a special feature embedded to the service.

In less than ten days we had collected 197 contributions that were analysed by tools that the EUSurvey service provides while for the composite quantitative variables that we produced the Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient was computed (Gravetter F.J. & Wallnau L.B. 2017). From the analyses the following conclusions were derived:

- Formal ontologies are mostly welcomed by scholars that want to analyse the contents of the repository in perpetuity, in order to derive information that will aid them in their historical or sociological studies. They are also well accepted and effectively used by older events' attendants and location visitors, who perform faceted or scenario based searches to locate events of interest.

- For events' creators, the use of formal ontologies to describe the events they submitted, seemed rather complicated and tedious when all the ontology elements that were defined as non-empty were considered mandatory. In that case, they claimed they prefer them to be set optional, but when they realised that when they left them empty, it was very possible that the events they published were not among the results in related searches they changed their mind. This was not the case when the events were published by events' promoters, who in their vast majority considered the use of the metadata schema with mandatory elements a must.
- Tags was something that both events' creators and younger events' attendants considered as a desired element for the events' descriptions and searches. Scholars considered them useful in studying the means and language constructs by which people identify and refer to objects in certain periods.
- Last, but not least, *detailed descriptions by use of the metadata schema in which social tags are also a basic element*, were considered the best choice for most of the users in all three categories, **a conclusion that conducted the final implementation of the events' description procedure in our repository service.**

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# CULTURAL JOURNEY IN THE MONASTERIES OF BOEOTIA RELIGIOUS SOUVENIRS AND TOURIST INTEREST.

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**ABSTRACT**

In this article an attempt will be made to present the history and the cultural heritage of the Holy Monasteries of Boeotia. Through short interviews with the abbots of the monasteries and Statistics, the preferences of the travelers regarding the souvenirs they choose for religious memorabilia from their visit to the monasteries will be investigated.

**Key words:** Religious souvenirs, Monasteries of Boeotia, historical tour, cultural heritage, religious tourism.

## INTRODUCTION IN THE HISTORY

The monasteries of Boeotia stood as a beacon on a spiritual and militant level for all of Central Greece during the period of Ottoman rule and during the Greek Revolution, and hold rare treasures of the general cultural heritage of Boeotia and the entire Greek territory.Between Athens, on the road towards Lamia and central Greece, the historic site of Boeotia is situated and tourists and travelers can visit it. From ancient times, the area was already known as a sacred place. Born in

Thebes, Dionysus was the god of wine and entertainment, while the hero and demigod Hercules was born here. According to Berman (2015), many sanctuaries and temples of the ancient Greek religion were scattered in the area.

With the arrival of Apostle Paul in Boeotia and the placement and stay of his faithful follower, Evangelist Luke in the region, the new religion of Christianity was cultivated in the area and with great reverence the inhabitants began to worship the one and only God.

According to Archbishop Ieronymos (2005)[11] small catacombs, such as the well-known catacomb of St. Catherine in Thebes, and small churches began to be built in order for the faithful to worship the new religion. With Its stabilization we have larger temples, while the solitary movements begin to develop significantly, and monasteries are built throughout the poor and rich territories, of Boeotia during the 9th century AD.

## CULTURAL JOURNEY IN THE MONASTERIES OF BOEOTIA

Antonios the Great from Alexandria, Egypt, is recognized by Christian tradition and history records as the Original, the First monk, who left the world of the living in 367 AD. According to Matsoukas (2008), Antonio's deciple Paxomios, organized the scattered monks, who wandered in the desert in a system of common worship and life. Somehow, we can say that the so-called "coenobitic"[12], considered until today as the ideal type of monasticism, emerged.

Many monasteries were built over the centuries on Boeotian land and were either abandoned or destroyed by barbaric raids and natural disasters. Today several monasteries, which accompany male and female monks that stand out, are:

The Holy monastery of Sagmata, which the visitor starting from Athens can meet at the 80th km of the national road to Lamia and 8 km away from Thebes. The male historical monastery of the Transfiguration of the Savior - Sagmata is one of the oldest monasteries in the area, built at an

[11] Archbishop Ieronymos the Second (2005). Christian Boeotia AD. Center for Archaeological, Historical and Theological Studies, Livadia. Archbishop Ieronymos the Second is a Greek Orthodox clergyman, archaeologist and theology professor and Archbishop of Athens and all of Greece since 2008, while until 1981 he was the Head of Church of Thebes and Levadia.

[12] The general term monasticism is followed by two distinct manifestations, ascetic monasticism and coenobitic monasticism. Ascetic monasticism is the second type of monasticism in which men and women of all ages and types of life humbly seek to live in secluded areas, untouched by civilization, in order to devote themselves to their spiritual pursuits - especially in Egypt and Syria and often without even a garment on them.

altitude of 747 meters on the top of Mount Sagmati in the High Boeotia. In Boeotia, land of gods and heroes on that mountain in ancient times, was a majestic statue and temple of the High Zeus. In the Byzantine years and with the continuous spread of monasticism after Mount Athos and mainly in Greece, it is the time when the name of the mountain changes from Ypation to Sagmation. The construction and completion of the Holy Monastery dates back in the 12th Century. As reported by the Archbishop of Athens and all Greece Ieronymos (2005), the Founder of the monastery is Osios Klimis and the financial benefactor was emperor Alexios Komninos himself, who in fact granted special privileges with his golden bull in 1106. According to Archimandrite Thotokatos and Theodoropoulou (2018), the monastery was probably part of a plan of a general imperial building program, like the Holy Monastery of Pelagia (of the same chronological period of foundation), in the neighboring Akraifnio. In the central area of the monastery of Sagmatas we have the katholikon of the holy monastery that was built also in the 12th century in a cruciform architectural style inscribed with a dome. This dome, as we see in Vogiatzis (2007), resembles the katholikon of the Tsatsari monastery, in neighboring Asopia. In the 16th century we have the construction of the exonarthex and the bell tower which is made of thin multicolored mosaics. The rarest work of its time is the floor of the church. In recent years and especially during the period of Bavaria (1834-1862) the holy monastery that had already been stripped of its treasures fell into despair. The Head of the Churches of the area decided to remove the monastery from its obscurity in spite of the building having gradually suffered material damages, due to partial abandonment. In 1970 Holy Father of Thebes and Levadia Nikodimos and later the successor of Mr. Ieronymos (now Archbishop of Athens and all of Greece) carried out restoration programs. These renovations were so decisive that in 1977 a small fraternity was installed in the monastery. Today the monastery has a lot of visitors which consist of Greek and foreign pilgrims. Inside the monastery, there is also a chapel of St. Luke the Physician, Archbishop of Simferopol and Crimea, who is very popular among Greek and Russian flock.

The Holy Monastery of Saint Luke is situated 165 km from Athens and 32 km from Livadia. It is the most important monastery of the 11th century, built at an altitude of 450 meters, on the picturesque slope of Elikon near ancient Sterida. Having a unique art form, and also dedicated to the local Saint, the monastery, as we see in Karatzoglou (2005), became a model for the next monastic buildings throughout Greece and particularly affected the neighboring monasteries of Saint Seraphim of Domvos and Evangelistria of Aliartos. In the monastery we find surviving from the foundation of the Holy monastery, the two temples of the Virgin and the Catholic, the Crypt the bell tower and the cells of the monks. According to Guidobaldi (2003) Saint Luke died in 953, and an anonymous student wrote his memoirs in 962, giving us important information about the founding of the Monastery stating that Saint Luke had close relations with the Officials of the Area who respected him. In particular, it is stated that at the expense of Krinitis, a church dedicated to St. Barbara, which today is identified with the church of the Virgin Mary, began construction, while in a house of worship, in the shape of a cross, the Saint was buried.

The Katholikon of the monastery is the one that gives it the name "King Monastery", since the sponsorships of three Byzantine Emperors until about 1056 contributed to its construction, as reported by Conor (1993).

Arletti, Fiori and Vandini (2010) inform us that the contribution of the Holy Monastery during the years of Ottoman rule as a spiritual center for central Greece was decisive. While during the Struggle of the National Polygenesis in April 1821 the proclamation of the Revolution takes place in Boeotia in this monastery. Today in the monastery we find that remarkable spiritual work had been done that lead to an influx of many visitors, as one of the most important sights in Central Greece.

The Holy Monastery of Saint Seraphim Domvous, which is dedicated to the Transfiguration of the Savior, built at an altitude of 650 meters, overlooking the Corinthian Gulf, is located 10 km from the village of Prodromos in Thebes. It was founded by Saint Seraphim in 1598 and never stopped operating. The monastery has suffered enormous damage over time, while the relic of the Saint is kept in its place. Marcel (1957) informs us of the existence of important manuscripts of the Holy Monastery and in its library one can find a sequence with the life of Saint Seraphim but also some exceptionally beautiful Gospels of the 13th and 14th century. During the preparation of the Revolution, it was a place of training of the fighters, according to Marcel (1957), due to the fact that it is adjacent to the lair of the Revolutionaries, Dombraina. For this reason, it was looted by Omer Vryonis in 1822. According to Charitos (2001), after the Revolution, George Karaiskakis had the monastery as his base for the subsequent liberation of Roumeli in 1826.

The Holy Monastery of Makariotissis is located at an altitude of 700 meters, 7 km after Dombraina, in the valley of Dombraina and 40 km from Thebes. It is organized in a convent of about 20 monks, with the establishment of a fraternity since 1992. The foundation of the monastery is placed in the

12th century with renovations that took place in the 17th and 19th century according to Clement (1970). During the Turkish occupation, like the neighboring monastery of Domvous, the monastery of Makariotissa played a prominent role in the preparation of the fighters of the Greek Revolution. In fact, due to its contribution to General of Roumeli Karaiskakis, during the battle of Dombraina, it was burned down by the Turks in 1826. Helping the Greek nation, the Holy Monastery contributed during the Macedonian battles, with the sacrifice of the Hieromonk Chrysostom the Captain (1904-1908). Also, during the German Occupation, the monk Agathangelos Aggelou was burned and murdered by the Germans.

At 12 km west of Aliartos we find the Holy Monastery of Evangelistria which according to Fappas and Galanakis (2013) was constructed and flourished in the years of the local Saint John of Kaloktenis, Bishop of Thebes, in the 12th century. During the years of Ottoman rule the important Crypt of the monastery became a spiritual center for the teaching of the young people of the area and a place for the protection of the relics of the monastery. The monastery spent years of complete desolation but always with a small presence of a believer. In 1834 in the Bavarian period[13], according to Kalhember (2006), all the monasteries with less than 10 monks were closed, as well as the monastery of Evagelistria. However, the Crypt of Evagelistria, which was dedicated to the Holy Trinity, contributed to the struggle against the Axis by hiding soldiers during the Second World War. There is even a letter of thanks from Colonel Alexander to the Monastery. In 1959, according to Maniatopoulos (2020), the nun Anthousa Manta organized as the first Elder, a female fraternity, which operates to this day. Elder Anthousa in the 70's gave the landowners of the area the lands of the monastery. The monastery today hosts about 25 nuns and celebrates on March 25 and August 15 each year.

Near Davlia, Boeotia, we find the Holy Monastery of the Assumption of the Virgin Irusalem, which stands at the same place as an 11th century building. It is the most important monument of Byzantine art on Mount Parnassos. In the center of the monastery is the katholikon in architectural style of a cruciform inscribed quadrangle with the addition of two pillars to the west. During the 18th century, and the period of Ottoman rule, the monastery was under the jurisdiction of the Holy Monastery of Sinai, in order to receive better treatment and to protect its property. In the Revolution that became known as “Orlofika” in 1770 the monastery received the catastrophic blow

[13] The period of Otto's Regency where the Bavarians ruled the political life of Greece (1833-1835)

of an invasion of the Albanian - Turks. During the Greek Revolution of 1821 it played an important role according to Kalhember (2006). Three battles were fought in the monastery at that time. In the monastery we find the cave temple of Faneromeni which was a place of practice of monasticism. Today the monastery has some exceptional samples of portable icons of the 17th century, of the Cretan School, painted by Nikolaos Kallergis[14]. The monastery celebrates on the 23rd of August every year.

## RELIGIOUS SOUVENIRS AND TOURIST INTEREST

We are in an era of ever-increasing interest in Religious Tourism of all kinds and shades (Moira, Mylonopoulos & Kondoudaki, 2012). Anastasiou (2008) states that religious tourism packages are short-lived and cheaper than other tourist packages. Central Greece has a fairly high traffic that as we see in **Chart 1**[15] below, although Greece experienced in 2013- 2016 a deep financial crisis, there was an increase in visitors. Typically, in 2013 193.104 tourists visited the region of Central Greece, with the increase being continuous and reaching in 2018 to 372.461 visitors. This increase was about 50% in just six years[16].

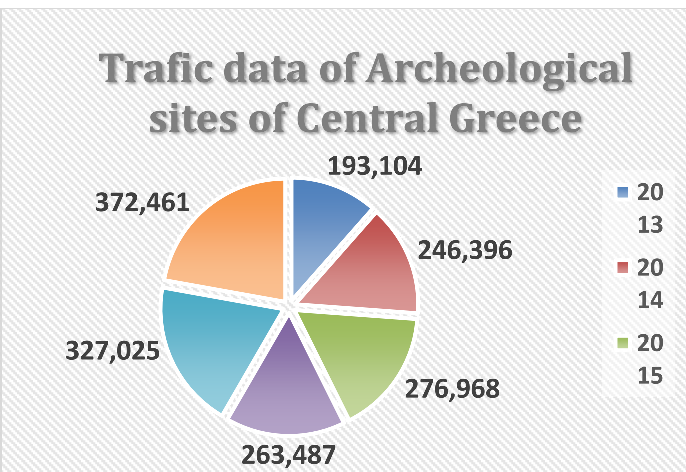


**Chart 1**

[14] Kallergis, Nikolaos (1675 - Zakynthos 1734). Hagiographer. He came from the famous Cretan family of Kallergides. He was a representative of Byzantine Cretan art.

[15] Hellenic Statistical Authority of the Hellenic Republic. Traffic data of archeological sites of Central Greece.

[16]https://www.statistics.gr/el/economicactivities?p_p_id=com_liferay_portal_search_web_portlet_SearchPortlet_INSTANCE_3&p_p_lifecycle=0&p_p_state=maximized&p_p_mode=view&_com_liferay_portal_search_web_portlet_SearchPortlet_INSTANCE_3_mvcPath=%2Fview_content.jsp&_com_liferayportal_search_web_portlet_SearchPortlet_INSTANCE_3_redirect=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.statistics.gr. [3/5/2021]

The overnight stays in the area and especially in the accommodations that have some attractions near them are constantly increasing. The economic crisis that has hit Greece since 2009 has been a key factor in the reduced arrivals in the Sterea region. In Boeotia in particular, the research data show that there is a noticeable gradual increase in traffic and overnight stays from 2006 to 2010. Typically, in 2006 overnight stays in the prefecture of Boeotia were 93.449, while there is a rapid increase, by approximately 44% in 2009 to 114% in 2009. Unfortunately, the economic crisis did not leave Boeotia unaffected. As we see in Chart 2 in 2010 the city had the overnight stays it had around 2006, losing in one year the gradual increase it had in the previous four years[17].

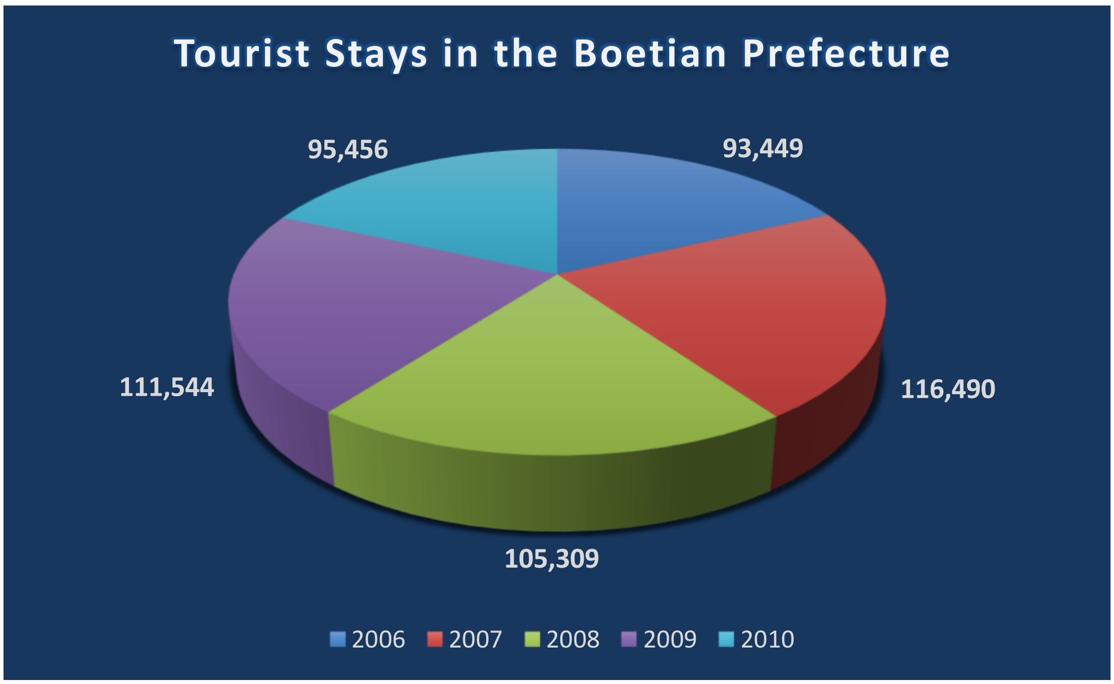


**Chart 2**

The most important monastery of Boeotia and an UNESCO World Heritage Site is that of Saint Lukas to Steiri. The Monastery has a large number of visitors which makes it an important pilgrimage in all the Balkans. During the first years of the financial crisis (2010-2013), it had a relatively small attendance of less than twenty thousand pilgrims, as we see in **Chart 3**. From 2014 to 2017 we gradually see an extremely large number of visitors to the Monastery, which received

[17]https://www.statistics.gr/el/economicactivities?p_p_id=com_liferay_portal_search_web_portlet_SearchPortlet_INSTANCE_3&p_p_lifecycle=0&p_p_state=maximized&p_p_mode=view&_com_liferay_portal_search_web_portlet_SearchPortlet_INSTANCE_3_mvcPath=%2Fview_content.jsp&_com_liferay_portal_search_web_portlet_SearchPortlet_INSTANCE_3_redirect=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.statistics.gr. [3/07/2021].

in 2017 45.799 visitors, which is more than 100% more than in the years 2010-2013. In the years 2018 and 2019, the Holy Monastery of Saint Luke is visited by a large number of pilgrims over fifty thousand per year. The monastery received, like all visit able monuments around the world, the devastating blow of the corona virus pandemic. That in numbers translates to only 5.470 visitors in the year 2020.

In **Chart 4** we see the jump in revenue of the Monastery which while it had 30.171€ revenue in 2010, in only nine years' time in 2019, it jumped to 127.790€, a revenue increase of more than 400%, compared to 2010 when the Economic Crises begun. In 2020, the year of the pandemic, the Monastery had just 6.926€ in revenue[18].

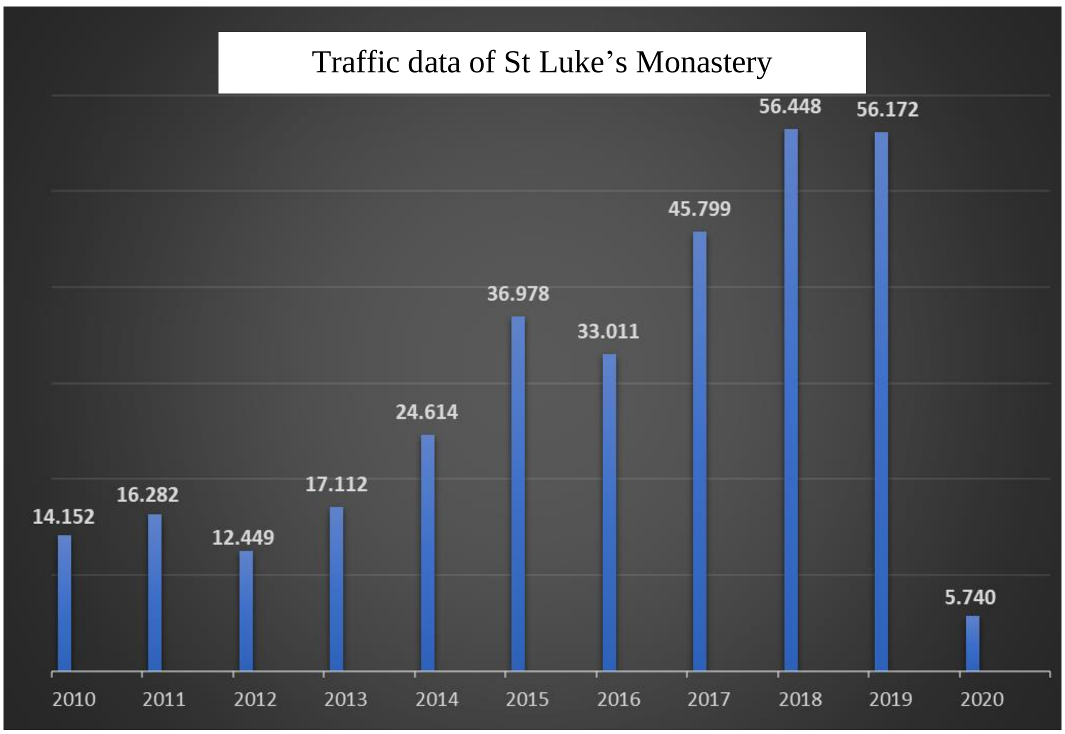


**Chart 3**

[18] https://insete.gr/perifereies/

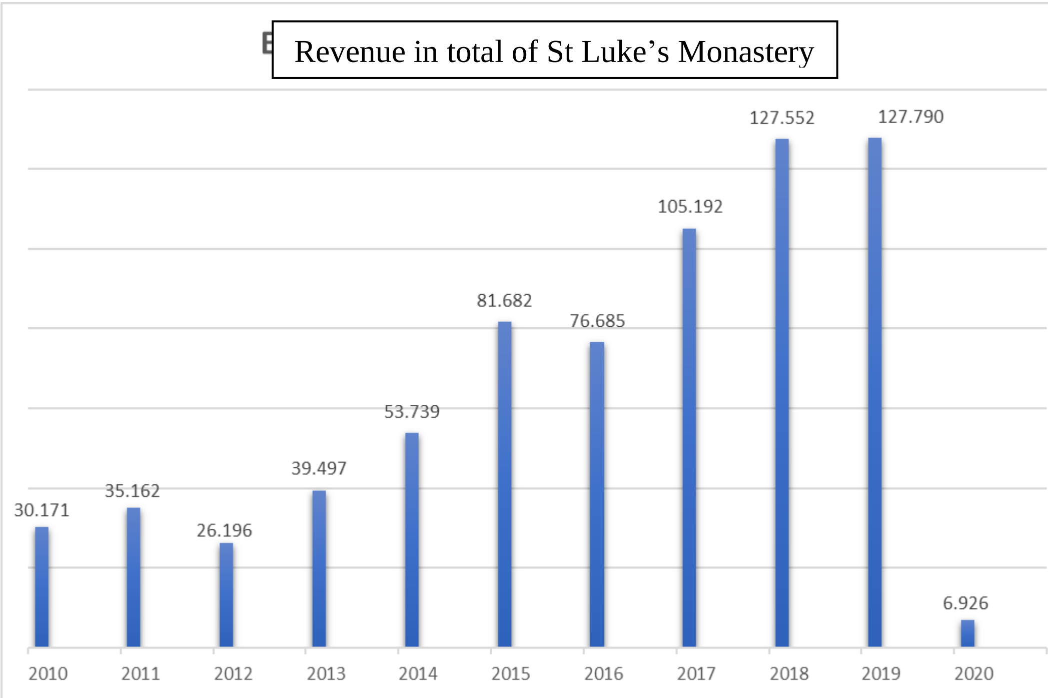


**Chart 4**

Many of the revenues of the holy monasteries, as we saw in **Chart 4** for Saint Luke, come mainly from the shops owned by the monasteries. Various souvenirs are sold, which help in the financial income of the monasteries. The religious souvenirs function as an element of remembrance and reverence from a religious place visited at some point in the life of the pilgrim-tourist. Derived from the French language, souvenir means memory, remembrance, and as Manola (2020) states, they are bought by tourists to remind them of the place they visited. Souvenirs are samples of the culture of a Nation or place, and characterize an area as we see in Manola and Balermpa (2020).

After interviews with the Abbots of the Historical Monasteries of Boetia with open-ended questions, according to the manner followed by Katerelos and Hagifotiou (2018), we learned that remarkable work has been done to collect and distribute in the shops of the Monasteries exceptional religious memorabilia. The Monasteries are visited and many souvenirs are purchased, mainly by religious tourists, pilgrims, researchers and historians.

In **Chart 5** we see what are the most important religious souvenirs received by the visitor - pilgrim from the main monasteries of Boeotia. The Holy portrayal that is usually the one that the visitors want to possess and eventually take with them, according to the Abbot of the Monastery, is that of Saint Clement. Saint Clement came from a wealthy family in Athens and at a young age became a monk. He settled on Mount Sagmatio where he became known for the miracles he performed through prayer, fasting and practice and his fame reached Emperor Alexios I Komnenos, who donated relics and estates to the Monastery. In the Holy Monastery of Saint Luke, the pilgrim will be able to take as a souvenir the Holy portrayal of Saint Luke. In the Holy Monastery of Saint Seraphim of Domvos the pilgrim will take the holy portrayal of Saint Seraphim as a souvenir and rosaries given by the monastery. Inside the monastery operates an award-winning dairy unit whose products can serve as an agro-tourism "souvenir". While, in the monastery of the Assumption of the Virgin Jerusalem in Davlia, the Abbess Xeni tells us that the pilgrim is mainly interested in having the holy portrayal of the Virgin Mary from the Holy Monastery, but also the image of St. Jerusalem and Her Holy Children.

| **Holy Monastery** | **Holy Icons of the monastery's Saint** | **Holy Icon of the Virgin Mary** | **Holy Icons of various Saints** | **Prayer rope (Rosary)** | **Other religious Souvenirs** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Saint Luke | √ | - | - | - | - |
| Sagmata | √ | - | √ | - | √ |
| Makariotissa | - | - | √ | - | - |
| Saint Seraphim Domvous | √ | - | - | √ | - |
| Evagelistria | - | - | √ | √ | - |
| Ierusalim | √ | √ | - | - | - |

**CONCLUSION**

The historical holy monasteries of Boeotia need more publicity from the competent bodies. The important monasteries of the area also have some exceptional souvenirs of religious, artistic and literary value. The manuscripts of some of the monasteries can be used as a cultural product for tourism, as has been done by others, similar to the Holy Monasteries of Boeotia. Besides, as Vagianni (2008) rightly states, a high yield of a tourist product exists if the tourist market is organized at a local level. Thus, we believe that the competent political and religious bodies can take organized initiatives to promote this religious tourism product, with a more intense and modern digital look.

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