

Synergies in Marketing Management in Camping Tourism on the Slovenian Adriatic Coast

Synergies
in marketing
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in camping
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on the Slovenian
Adriatic coast

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose is to investigate synergies in marketing management in camping tourism to properly understand the perceived client behaviour.

Design/methodology/approach – Camping tourism is investigated by using secondary data and the perceived client behaviour by using the primary collected evidence from the interviews and surveys.

Findings – The popularity of camping tourism in Slovenia is increasing among foreign tourists. Camping tourism is more significant in accommodation capacities than in overnight stays due to lower utilization rates of the camping tourism capacities. The word-of-mouth is the most significant single factor of marketing and customer relationship management, whereas natural attractions are an important motivation factor for tourist visits.

Research limitations/implications – There is a need for updating and repeating the research by using more sophisticated methods of data analysis to include the periods of economic growth and economic recession.

Practical implications – The research results indicate the main trends, and the idea on the synergies in marketing management can be used for design of advertising and promotion towards targeting potential and specific consumers and marketing niches in the tourism industry.

Originality/value – The primary survey data are used to identify seasonal factors of tourist camp supplies and demands and the underdeveloped secondary tourist infrastructure with a lack of more targeted marketing and customer relationship management towards segmented tourist niche markets.

Keywords: Synergy, marketing management, camping tourism, advertising, Slovenia

Paper type Research paper

1. Introduction

The aim of this paper is to identify tourist camp consumer behaviours (e.g. Schiffman and Kanuk, 2004) and to suggest target marketing management and communication



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and promotion activities, particularly using advanced marketing communication technologies (e.g. Strauss and Frost, 2001; Sigala, 2006).

Marketing management, communications and customer relationship management are one of the key issues for successful product and business development (e.g. De Pelsmacker, 2001; Kitchen, 2001; Kotler, 2003). Zhang et al. (2006) investigated determinants affecting a traveller's preference switch from traditional travel agencies to e-travel agencies for travel planning and booking in the competitive re-shaping of the world travel service industry using the World Wide Web services by e-travel agencies and travellers. The strengths of traditional travel agencies are seen in travel guaranty and assurance issues when the trips to be taken involve a higher level of uncertainty. Management and marketing of tourist services are activities where advanced marketing management and communication services are among the most widely used (e.g. Kribel and Bojnec, 2007). Zopounidis et al. (2010) develop a methodology for the evaluation and ranking of tourism performance of some Mediterranean countries by using the multicriteria approach with qualitative and quantitative information for marketing strategies and government policies.

In this paper, our focus is on marketing management in camping tourism in Slovenia focusing on the Slovenian Adriatic coast. Nemeč Rudež et al. (2012) provide an in-depth survey analysis on benefit segmentation in the Slovenian Adriatic seaside destination in the phase of market-repositioning focusing on the tourist town of Portorož. Camping tourism is a segment of tourism supply on the Slovenian Adriatic coast as well as in other tourist destinations in Slovenia. Camping tourism in Slovenia is particularly known from the times of mass-tourism development during the 1960's and 1970's, but since then it has been diversified and segmented, offering different quality differentiated offers and products that are targeting different consumer preferences. It still has an image of both natural and cheap tourism, which do not necessarily match each other due to environmental and quality reasons. This kind of stereotype of camping tourism calls for new marketing management and customer relationship management. New ways of global advertising, marketing communication and promotion activities of leisure and sport activities have been developed rapidly, particularly with the introduction of new media and advanced information communication technologies.

Management and principles of tourist services marketing are crucial for international competitiveness (e.g. Palmer, 2006). The service economy, particularly tourism and tourism related activities, is one of the country's top priorities in advertising and promotion activities, including international broadcasting, but it seems less so for camping tourism. The results of these promotional activities have been mixed, suggesting greater needs for an integrated marketing management and marketing communications perspective (e.g. Belch and Belch, 2001; Pickton and Broderick, 2001). Therefore, there might be a need to further strengthen the importance of marketing management and marketing of services (e.g. Berry and Parasuraman, 1991; Kotler, 2003), quality and competitiveness of product and services to maintain loyal customers and attract new ones (e.g. Reicheld, 1996), and to develop a new perspective of brand strategies (e.g. Medina and Duffy, 1998). We highlight these global development patterns focusing on camping tourism services on the Slovenian Adriatic coast. We first present the methodology and data used. Focus group interviews with the tourist camp managers and in-depth surveys with the tourists in the camps

on the Slovenian Adriatic coast are used to investigate tourist supply, marketing and customer relationship management. Finally, the empirical results of analyzes and conclusions are presented.

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2. Methodology and data used

We use statistical quantitative methods of analysis. The main developments in Slovenian tourism and the importance of camping tourism are analysed using data from the Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia (SORS, 2009). In addition, we make reference to international camping tourism. Recreation, leisure and tourism have become an important activity in the everyday life of a large part of the European population in spending their spare time (Eurostat, 2004, 2006a, 2006b), as well as in several other developed countries (Tribe, 2005). Camping tourism has become particularly important in Europe, including in Slovenia.

To analyze camping tourism on the Slovenian Adriatic coast, we use unique datasets, which are obtained from our own research. The initial interviews with focus groups, focusing on managers and tourist representatives, were conducted to identify relevant research questions and to design a written questionnaire. Next, in-depth surveys using a written questionnaire were conducted with the camping tourists and other customers in segmented camping tourist markets on the Slovenian Adriatic coast.

The 120 surveys (43 percent female and 57 percent male) with advanced prepared questions using the Likert scale in the camps on the Slovenian Adriatic coast were conducted in September 2006. Among the tourists, the large majority were domestic tourists. Among foreign tourists, most were from neighbouring Italy and Germany. By age the structure was the following: 41.67% from 16 to 25 years, 11.67% from 26 to 35 years, 18.33% from 36 to 45 years, 6.67% from 46 to 55 years, and 21.66% above 55 years. This clearly indicates that camping tourism on the Slovenian Adriatic coast is attractive for different age structures of tourists. This finding is further supported by the employment statuses: 28.33% scholars and students, 46.67% employees, 6.67% unemployed and 18.33% retired. By education structure, the structure was the following: 6.67% primary school, 76.66% secondary school, 5.0% two years university, 10.0% three years university, and 1.67% four years university and more.

The focus in the surveys was on supply and demands in the camping markets, marketing management, customer relationship management, advertising and marketing communication.

3. Empirical results

3.1. What do the statistical data tell us?

The number of tourist beds in Slovenia during the establishment of the Slovenian independent state in 1991, and then during the privatisation process in the 1990s, declined slightly (Table 1). Some recoveries in the number of tourist beds have been observed only during the last few years, but at a lower level of tourist accommodation capacities than at the end of the 1980s. An increase in the number of tourist beds is

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1,1**Table 1:**

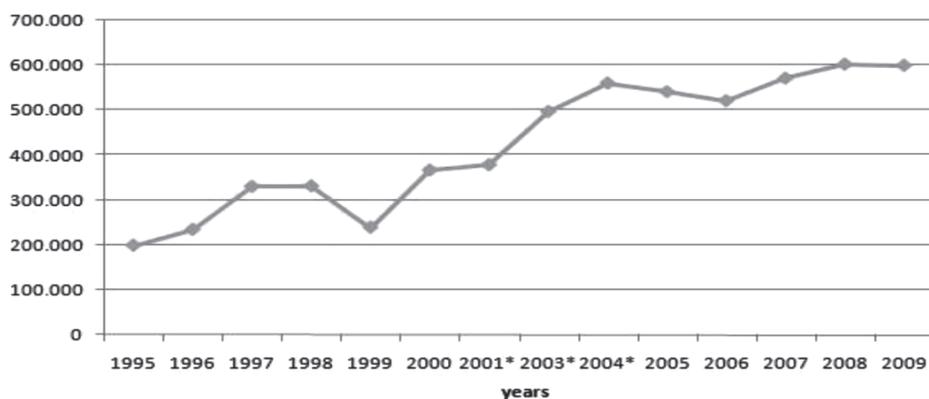
Tourist beds in hotels and camps in Slovenia (in thousands)

	1990	1995	2000	2003	2005
Total tourist beds number	91.2	72.9	79.2	80.7	79.0
Hotels	27.5	28.3	26.7	26.6	28.3
Camps	18.9	16.6	18.2	16.7	16.3
Others	44.8	28.0	34.3	37.4	34.4

Source: SORS (2007).

Figure 1:

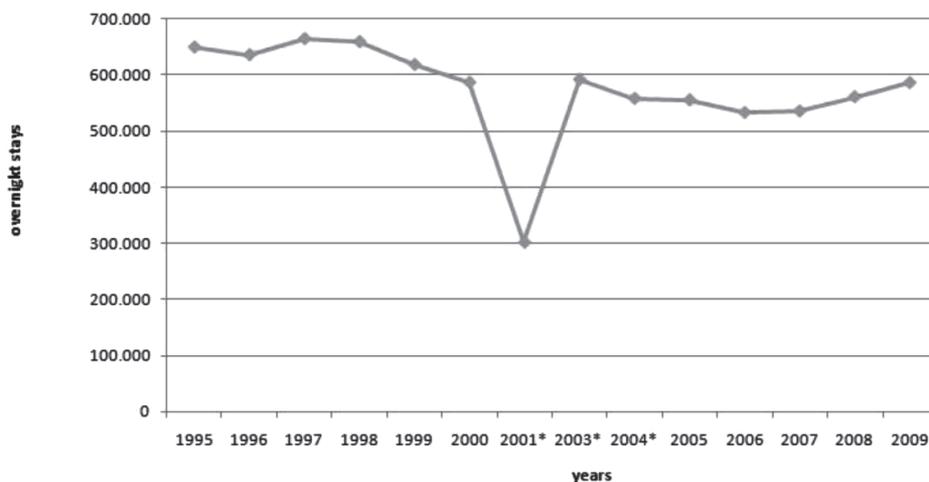
Overnight stays in camps (in thousands) in Slovenia by foreign tourists



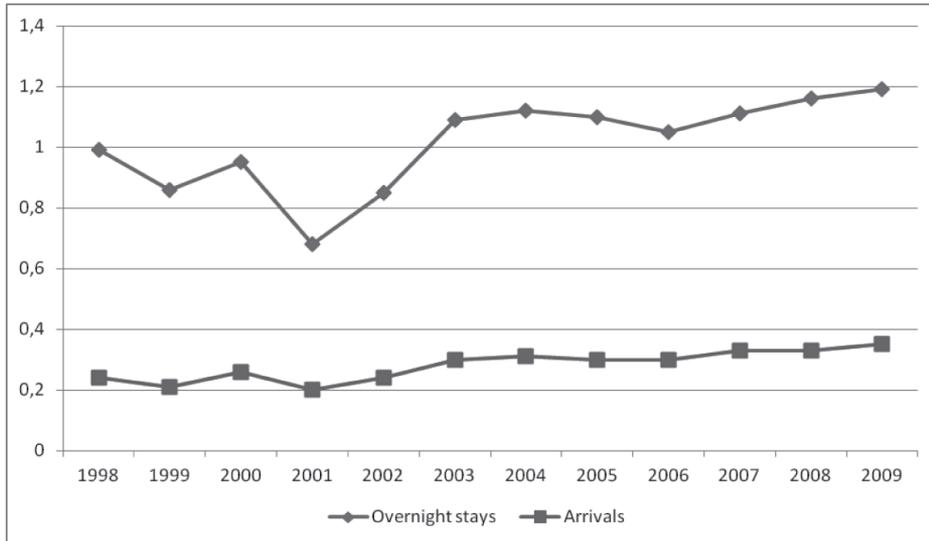
Source: Chart on the basis of data obtained from SORS (2009).

Figure 2:

Overnight stays in camps (in thousands) in Slovenia by domestic tourists



Source: Chart on the basis of data obtained from SORS (2009).



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Figure 3:
Overnight stays and
arrivals in camps
(in millions) in Slovenia

Source: Chart on the basis of data obtained from SORS (2009).

seen particularly in the hotel tourist beds. The number of tourist beds in the camps has slightly declined.

It has been found that the popularity of camping tourism in Slovenia is increasing among foreign tourists, as illustrated in Figure 1 by an increase in the overnight stays.

On the other hand, the number of overnight stays in Slovenian camps by domestic tourists is tending to decline. A particular drop is recorded in 2001 (Figure 2).

Tourist arrivals and overnight stays in the Slovenian camps are seasonally dependent on the relatively low utilization rates of tourist capacities outside the main summer season. Yet, even during the main summer season, the tourism supply largely depends on climatic conditions, which is confirmed by much more stable tourist arrivals than their overnight stays (Figure 3), implying the need for investments in secondary tourist infrastructure to diversify tourist offers and to extend the season.

3.2. Websites of tourist campsites

Evidence on campsites is available from different sources or data from tourist and similar travel organisations and individual campsite suppliers at different websites. Due to the structure of tourist arrivals and overnight stays, we briefly present two international organisations' websites and the Slovenian Tourist Organisation website, where it is possible to find Slovenian campsites.

First, the German automobile club, or Allgemeiner Deutscher Automobil Club (ADAC, 2011), with its guide and presentation of supply of the European campsites. In the ADAC guide there are around 20 Slovenian campsites, and 2 out of 8 on the Slovenian Adriatic coast (Camp Lucija in Portorož and Camp Adria in Ankaran). Campsites in the

tourist guide are categorised according to uniform comparable ADAC categorisation using more than 100 different criteria. This categorisation offers useful information to tourists about the size and quality of supply of a certain tourist camping site, and also provides useful feedback for tourist camp services suppliers regarding the quality and quantity of buildings, land and park areas, parking areas, facilities, equipment, recreation opportunities, overall quality and quality of specific services, and similar of the tourist camp supply. In Slovenia, the average size of tourist campsites is around 3.7 hectares (ha). Minimum size is 0.5 ha and maximum 15 ha. On the Slovenian Adriatic coast tourist camps are on a land area between from 1.5 ha to 7 ha. It is important that tourist camps are well arranged in a pleasant green environment with other important natural and other tourist attractions to meet tourist demands.

Second, the Camping Cheque network of top European campsites was created in 1997 and has evolved every year (Camping Cheque, 2011). It is important for assuring quality at a competitive and reasonable price. Campsites are located in Europe's most attractive natural locations and regions, or close to tourist centres and major cities. Each campsite within the Camping Cheque network is represented on one entire page in the Site Directory to provide information on its facilities, services, leisure facilities, the number of pitches, directions and the dates when the campsite accepts Camping Cheques. The Camping Cheque scheme has become one of the most popular means of travelling in Europe in the low season. A Camping Cheque is a voucher, valid in low season, that offers a traveller flexibility when travelling with a motor home, a caravan or a tent. It is also possible to pay for a stay with the Camping Cheque Gold Card (chip card), which boasts new members. For a single attractive price one can visit the best campsites in Europe. Slovenia is represented in the Site Directory for Camping and Caravanning with its campsites (e.g., Camp Koren, Camping Bled, Ljubljana Resort, Camp Adria Ankaran, Camping Menina, Camp Natura Terme Olimia, Thermal Ptuj, and Lipa Thermal Lendava). These campsites are in different regions in Slovenia. On the Slovenian Adriatic coast is the Camp Adria Ankaran.

Finally, the Slovenian campsites are presented by the Slovenian Tourist Board's official tourism and travel guide to Slovenia with an on-line accommodation booking reservation system (STB, 2011). Slovenia is implementing a new 1-5 star classification system for campsites to be inspected in order to be granted their star classification.

3.3. Focus group interviews

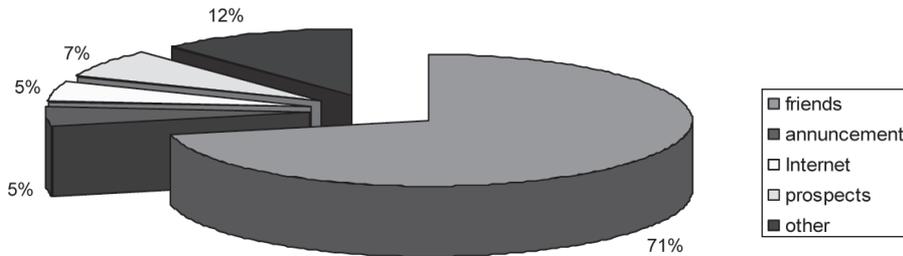
The interviews with managers of camps on the Slovenian Adriatic coast identify the importance of quality of tourist services in the camps, missing or underdeveloped internet and marketing communications tools, significance of investments in recreation and events for visitors, and sport facilities on the Slovenian Adriatic coast, such as swimming pools and other opportunities for water sports and playing courts.

3.4. Surveys evidence

The 120 surveys with the written questionnaire were conducted in tourist camps on the Slovenian Adriatic coast in September 2006. The questions were designed using the

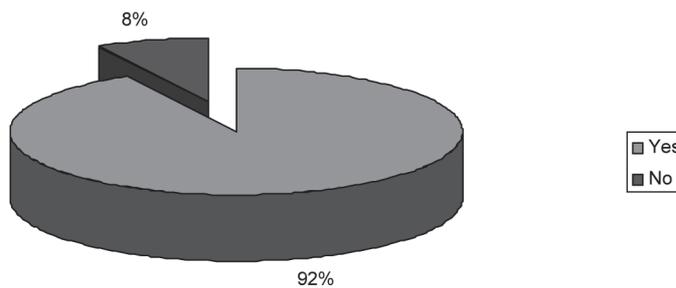
Likert scale, and open questions were also used to provide opportunities for comments and suggestions. We focused on tourist supply, customer satisfaction, quality of tourist services and customer relations management and on marketing management and marketing communications.

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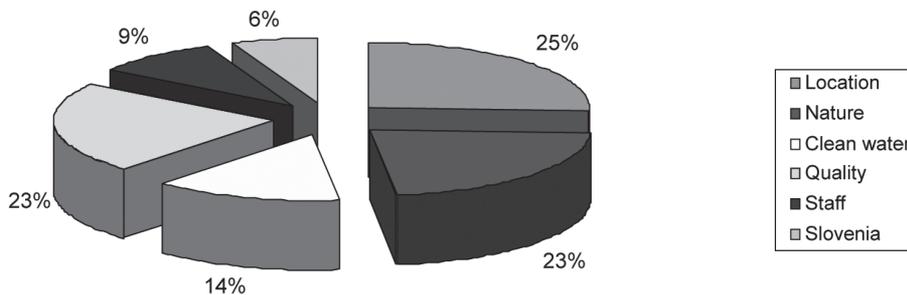
Source: Results of own surveys.

Figure 4: Marketing communications in the camps on the Slovenian Adriatic coast



Source: Results of own surveys.

Figure 5: Intention to visit the camps on the Slovenian Adriatic coast again



Source: Results of own surveys.

Figure 6: Reasons for visiting the camps on the Slovenian Adriatic coast again

The word-of-mouth and friends (71 percent), different announcements (12 percent), internet (7 percent), prospects (5 percent) and other marketing communication channels are crucial factors of marketing management and for providing information to visit the tourist camps on the Slovenian Adriatic coast (Figure 4). These results suggest rather traditional marketing management and marketing communication channels.

Most visitors (92 percent) to the tourist camps on the Slovenian Adriatic coast expressed their intention to visit the tourist camp again (Figure 5).

The main reasons for visiting the tourist camps include: location on the Adriatic coast (25 percent), nature (23 percent), quality of tourist services (23 percent), clean water (14 percent), staff (9 percent) and image of Slovenia as a country (6 percent) (Figure 6). These results indicate strong links between tourist demands and natural attractions. This is consistent with the main characteristics of camping tourism, which promotes nature and openness with some interferences and overlaps of the attractive natural environment with the development of other tourist supplies. This finding is in line with the finding of Gil-Saura et al. (2011) on the positive indirect influence of relationship value on long-term orientation in generating benefits for customers through offering value-added services and customer loyalty as important in setting up relationships between tourism suppliers (travel agencies) and their main providers with their customers. The strong activity synergy and attractiveness are an issue that should be strengthened in development, advertised and promoted, where advertising communication and promotion management is the proper tool for doing so (Rossiter and Percy, 1996; Wells et al., 1998).

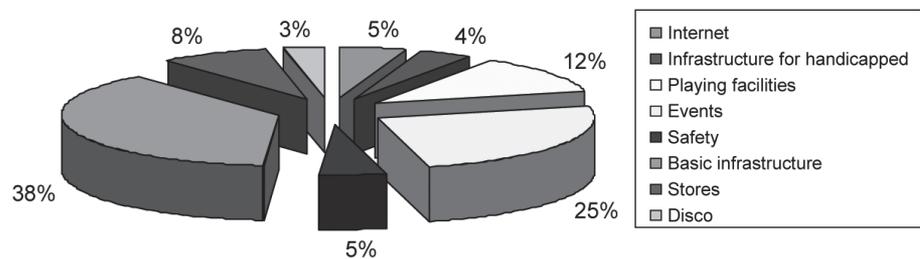


Figure 7:
Shortcomings in the
camps on the Slovenian
Adriatic coast

Source: Results of own surveys.

Among the shortcomings in the tourist camps on the Slovenian Adriatic coast are identified: a lack of basic infrastructure (38 percent), events (25 percent), playing facilities (12 percent), stores and shopping areas (8 percent), use of internet (5 percent), infrastructure for handicapped, disco and similar (3 percent) and other (5 percent) (Figure 7). These results suggest that, in spite of demands for the natural attractions, there is also a strong demand for quality of tourist services in the tourist camps and in synergy with a broader tourist destination. In this regard it would be important to investigate the association between the implementation of quality management and the results achieved (Albacete-Sáez et al., 2011). The identified shortcomings in the tourist camps on the Slovenian Adriatic coast underline needs for investments

not only in infrastructure, but also in events, sports and other playing facilities and new tourist products, as well as the need for more advanced marketing and customer relationship management practices using more advanced information-communication technologies.

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Conclusion

Camping tourism is a specific segment of tourism with some common, but also some different and peculiar consumer behaviours that have been analyzed. The image that camping tourism favours natural attractions has been confirmed. It is also more demanded by the younger, but this is not always the case; it need not be cheap tourism. The natural and tourist environment, openness and quality of overall and tourism services have become more diversified, innovative and segmented by different categories according to location (seaside, hilly, spa, capital town, and other tourist resorts), natural and other attractions, events and sports opportunities.

For the Slovenian tourist camps, focusing on the tourist camps on the Slovenian Adriatic coast, there have been identified: seasonality, need for investments in infrastructure and quality improvements, customer relationship management, advertising, promotion and marketing communications towards segmented markets and market niches. Quality and customer relationship management have been improved, and advanced information and communication technologies have become common in advertising, promotion and marketing communications. The design of advertising and promotion towards targeting general potential consumers or specific consumers and marketing niches – especially in the tourism industry – has become important for domestic and international tourists.

The seasonal element in Slovenian camping tourism plays a significant role, rising challenges for management and marketing by offering new and more attractive tourist offers through more efficient and recognized advertising and promotion, different ways of networking and a more recognized country's image as a European Union tourist destination. The seasonality in Slovenian camping tourism is significantly determined by the natural weather conditions. Investments in secondary tourism infrastructure can mitigate seasonal weather disturbances, and have been particularly successful in the Slovenian spa tourism.

The tourist segmentation has become important in camping tourism. Tourists have become more demanding in terms of value for money that they expect from the camping tourism suppliers. The camping tourists have also improved their mobility from one to another tourist place due the improved road infrastructure. Particularly, a network of highways has been built that improves mobility of tourists with their own transportation-housing equipment that is used in camping tourism. This special segment of tourists has not been investigated so far and is an issue for future research into the synergies of marketing management and promotion for the tourism sector on the Slovenian Adriatic coast in comparison with other tourism segments in Slovenia and in the competitive neighbouring tourist destinations.

Among the suggestions and opportunities for further research is also an updated analysis by using more sophisticated methods of quantitative data analysis. The updated analysis

and the updated research results can reveal the most recent trends in the tourism sector and can capture potential changes that have occurred in camping tourism in comparison between the periods of economic growth and economic recession. The economic recession has influenced the average tourists' spending, while the number of tourist arrivals has been more stable. These most recent changes are a challenging issue for further research in order to better understand tourist behaviours, which is important for tourism supply responses and innovative activities towards the changing client and tourist behaviours.

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