

**CULTURAL TOURISM, YOUNG PEOPLE AND DESTINATION
PERCEPTION: A CASE STUDY OF DELPHI, GREECE**

Submitted by,
Nikolaos Boukas,
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.....Nikolaos Boukas.....

Abstract

The aim of the study is to identify young visitors' perceptions of the archaeological site of Delphi in Greece by measuring their importance and satisfaction levels from a series of cultural attributes through importance-satisfaction analysis. Even though young people are an important segment of the tourism industry little research has been done concerning their actual behaviour towards culture and cultural destinations. Given their significance, an examination of their perceptions towards cultural destinations can give useful insights. This can be done both academically, for the enrichment of theory, but also practically, for the appropriate management of cultural sites according to their needs and wants. In this study it was found that young visitors consider culture as one of the most important motives for travelling. According to the respondents, attributes related to monuments/exhibits at the site are more important than the facilities and amenities provided by its managers. The research identified that, overall, young people were fairly satisfied with Delphi, particularly with its beauty and landscape, but less satisfied with the man-made interventions. Importance-satisfaction analysis indicated that issues concerning the organisation and promotion of the site have positive levels of satisfaction, while issues concerning education and quality have comparatively negative levels. Factor Analysis derived three groups of attributes that should be considered for the future planning of the destination: 'Place and Experience'; 'Amenities and Quality'; 'Facilities and Operation'. Finally, Cluster Analysis indicated that there are three main segments of young visitors in Delphi which, according to their profile, develop

certain behaviours that should also be taken into account for the future promotion of the site; 'The Greeks'; 'The Americans and others'; 'The French'. Therefore, better management strategies according to the needs and wants of this dynamic market would make the site more attractive, contributing to the promotion of cultural tourism in general. The study found that young people are great 'consumers' of culture and seek to enrich their knowledge while visiting cultural destinations. If a cultural destination meets their specific needs and wants, greater levels of satisfaction will be generated. Positive levels of satisfaction will lead to a series of positive consequences: loyalty, mouth to mouth marketing and peer influence. This, in addition to the fact that young people are the tourists of the future, can lead to the creation of consciousness for culture while travelling and to the enhancement of the potential visitation of the site in the following years.

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