REPORT OF SHORT-TERM SCIENTIFIC MISSION IN DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY, UNIVERSITY OF THE AEGEAN

STSM title: RESEARCH SURVEY AND CROSS-CULTURAL COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF TOURISTS' PERCEPTIONS AND USES OF UGIS

STSM Reference: FP1204

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ABSTRACT

This STSM focused on the part of the analysis of data and drawing of preliminary results out of the collected data. Outputs of this STSM will be used for: a) writing journal article, and b) chapter in COST Action book, which will be the main Action output.

In detail, the STSM was composed of following tasks: (1) Design of the work for the questionnaire survey data analysis and manipulation (in line with the before set objective and hypothesis) using the SPSS program. This stage included ongoing revision of the research data analysis; (2) Discussion on further data analysis and manipulation, at the level of descriptive statistics and at the level of correlation statistics; (3) Discussion on presentation of research findings and results as tables and graphs in publishable form. Data were collected using an extensive interview questionnaire, which aimed at assessing and interpreting tourists' a) perceptions, b) attachments/ preferences, and c) practices/ behaviours vis-à-vis urban GIs, in the cities or towns of their destinations. It was conducted in one city and one town, in 8 countries (2 Baltic, 2 Central European, 3 Southern European and the UK), as follows: Latvia, Lithuania, Serbia, Slovakia, Czech Republic, Portugal, Greece and United Kingdom. Each of above mentioned steps lasted for 7 days, thus the whole STSM lasted for 3 weeks.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STSM

One of the aims of the COST Action GreenInUrbs is to get a more comprehensive understanding of the role of urban forests (UF) in the context of green infrastructure (GI) from a scientific and a socio-economic perspective, in terms of the ecosystem services provided to people and to the urban environment. Furthermore, it will aim to develop guidelines for GI planners and managers on how to implement GI approaches with an emphasis on linking the environmental and social services of UF.

In this framework, the aims of the Tourism Working Group (in WG2) are set at the beginning of the Action. Objectives of tourism target group are:

- Development and implementation of cross-cultural questionnaire survey; analysis of data and drawing of results; compilation of report
- Publication of one joint research article, on the basis of the compilation of all questionnaire survey results + possible publication of country-level research articles
- Contribution of one chapter to COST Action book
- Compilation of urban tourism policy and GI/UF management guidelines for municipalities involved in survey and relevant ministries
- Linking our COST Action research and its outcomes with those of other relevant COST Actions

In order to contribute to the Tourism Working Group aims (and broadly to Action aims), this STSM focused on the part of the analysis of data and drawing of preliminary results out of

the collected data. It is planned to use the outputs of this STSM for: a) writing journal article, and b) chapter in COST Action book, which will be the main Action output.

In detail, the STSM composed of the following tasks:

1. Design of the work for the questionnaire survey data analysis and manipulation (in line with the before set objective and hypothesis) using the SPSS program, for purposes of before mentioned publications (journal article and chapter in the COST Action book). This stage included discussion on decoding an open-ended question answers, and the ongoing revision of the research data analysis

2. Discussion on implementation of the data analysis and manipulation, a) first at the level of descriptive statistics (frequency tests) and b) secondly at the level of correlation statistics (chi square, contingency coefficient, Pearson correlation coefficient, regression analysis, analysis of variance and t-test)

3. Discussion on compilation and presentation of research findings and results as tables and graphs in publishable form for a) the journal article and b) the book chapter

Data that will be analyzed during this STSM were collected using an extensive interview questionnaire, administered to tourists/users of UGIs—in some cases, supplemented with (open-ended) interviews of stakeholders and experts (i.e. tourism entrepreneurs, local authorities, etc.), concerning their evaluation of the importance of urban GIs for tourism. The questionnaire survey aimed at assessing and interpreting tourists' a) perceptions, b) attachments/ preferences, and c) practices/ behaviors vis-à-vis urban GIs, in the cities or towns of their destinations. It was conducted in one city and one town, in 8 countries (2 Baltic, 2 Central European, 3 Southern European and the UK), as follows: Latvia, Lithuania, Serbia, Slovakia, Czech Republic, Portugal, Greece and United Kingdom.

As it was planned, each of this steps lasted for 7 days, thus the STSM lasted for 3 weeks in total.

Strong competence of the host institution in terms of the research in this field as well as rich experience in studying tourism in various countries, contributed to the successful competition of the STSM mission.

Also, weekly work plan was performed according to proposed agenda, which can be seen in a following table:

Table 1: weekly work plan

Task		Week 1 (07.12. – 13.12.2015.)	Week 2 (14.12. – 20.12.2015.)	Week 3 (21.12.-27.12.2015.)	
Task 1 - design of the work for the questionnaire survey data analysis and manipulation (in line with the before set objective and hypothesis) using the SPSS program		X			
Task 2 - implementation of the data analysis and manipulation			X		
Task 3 - compilation and presentation of research findings and results as tables and graphs				X	
Drafting a peer reviewed publication				X	

Above mentioned discussions on data analysis were done according to existing research hypotheses. So, all planned data analysis will be obtained in order to provide answers to questions guided by the following hypothesis:

1. Tourists do not have a very developed understanding of GIs, in urban destinations, nor do they know much about a city's GIs, as a rule--unless this city is a destination of special-interest or alternative form of tourism, related to UGIs. Because of this limited understanding of UGIs, tourists do not, as a rule, tend to include them, in their tourism plan.

2. In other cases/forms of tourism (the conventional forms of urban tourism), tourists are not much influenced, in their choice of visited destination, by the presence there of GIs or not. Nonetheless, they find importance in them (UGIs), once they visit them and to the degree that they use them; generally speaking, they have a positive attitude towards them. Normally, they do not initially intend to use GIs during their visit to these cities, but do so circumstantially and incidentally, in the course of their urban tourism.

3. Again, in cases of conventional urban tourism, the shorter the distance of the trip, the lower the family income and the higher the number of accompanying children, the higher the use and incorporation of UGIs, in the tourists' travel plans.

RESULTS

Based on analysis previously done, for two countries, Portugal and Latvia, we can provide several interesting observations and conclusions. First, we can give some descriptions on our sample:

- The relation between men and women interviewed were respectively – 47.5% and 52.5%.
- Almost half of the respondents were in age group from 25-45 years of age, second largest group were tourists who were younger than 25 years (29.5%). Older group generation was tourists, who represented age group from 45 – 65 years and older than 65 years, respectively – 16.5% and 7.0%.
- Most of the respondents were married or partnered, 25% of respondents answered, that they are married with children. This number may differ, because of the fact, that some participants write as a children already adult people or on other side they did not point out the age of the children. 34% of interviewed tourists were not in a relationship at that time.
- Most participants were with university degree or post – graduates, 56.5% and 16.5% respectively.
- In household income category, stands out three categories of annual income – under 12.000 Euro (27%), 12.000 – 30.000 Euro (29%) and 30.000 – 50.000 Euro (27%). There were 15% of participants, who answered, that their annual household exceeds 50.000 Euro per year. Two participants did not want to share their information regarding income.
- Most of the tourists were travelling as a couple (57.0%) or with friends (18.0%) and the majorities purpose of visiting certain city was pleasure, also few respondents answered, that it is mixed pleasure and business.

Also, we can provide some interesting descriptive statistics on perception and behaviour questions.

Perception questions. When it comes to perception questions (Table 2) about how tourists understand GI in relation to urban areas, most people answered, that they think it is parks (51.2%), people also answered green corridors (22.9%) and urban forests (18.3%).

Behavior and activities. When it comes of how people use GIs in the cities, one of the most popular answer was for walking (46.3%), also people chose to take pictures in such areas (25.4%) or make picnics (17.1%).

- Most of the tourists spend around 1-2 hours (30.0%) in green areas in the city, there were quite many, who spends from 2 – 5 hours (13.0%), in more rare case 5 – 10 hours (4.0%).
- 40.5% of participants answered, that this ability to undertake these activities (picnicking, taking, pictures, walking, jogging or other) influenced *somewhat* their choice to visit this town/city. There were 24.5% participants, who answered, that it influences a *little* and for 16.0% this ability did not influence their choice at all.
- But when asked about their opinion, do GIs play a role in tourists choice of cities to

visit, half of respondents answered, that it influences somewhat and 22.0%, that it influences tourists choice very much.

Table 2: Summary of perception questions

Question	Answers	%
How do you understand the term GI, in relation to urban areas?	Urban forests	18.3
	Parks	51.2
	Green corridors	22.9
	Other	7.6
How important are GIs to a city/town?	Very much	78.0
	Somewhat	17.0
	Little	2.0
	Not at all	0.0
	I don't know/Other/ No answer	3.0
How did you come to find out about these GIs?	Internet	36.0
	Media	7.9
	Tourist office/tour operator	23.2
	Other	32.9
How much did this understanding influence your choice to visit this city?	Very much	12.0
	Somewhat	26.5
	Little	26.5
	Not at all	30.0
	I don't know/Other/ No answer	5.0
What GIs do you like or prefer most?	Urban forests	33.6
	Parks	47.7
	Green corridors	17.0
	Other	1.7

Based on all previous results we can draw several more general conclusions:

- Results of collected surveys in Portugal and are quite similar to each other.
- Results show, that the majority of tourists are not very familiar with term green infrastructure nor with GIs features it offers in the cities. Usually tourists recognize GI as parks, more rare as green corridors or urban forests, some think it is flower boxes, cycle paths for tourists etc;

- Majority of respondents answered, that GI is very important to a city and it does play a role of tourists choice to visit a city, but on the contrary it was not a main deal breaker for choosing certain city as travel destination;
- We can say, that GI is connected with society and this environmental connectivity could be improved by investigating society's actions in such areas.
- Majority of the participants like such GI spaces as big parks or urban forests

According to all previous findings, and in line with research objectives and hypothesis, following analysis was planned as a result of this SSTM:

First, in order to increase the reliability of the answers it is proposed to form several indexes which will be used in further analysis. Those indexes will be composed from answers in several questions providing more stable indicators of measure concepts.

Following INDEXES were proposed

- Number of answers on Q02, Q04 and Q05, combined with scaled answer on Q03 (importance) and Q06 (influence) – all these can be combined into one score saying how interested one is into GIs (the more he perceives he/she is more interested into it)
- One the same manner Q10, Q11 and Q12 can be combined into one index score saying about tourists intentions on GIs usage – whether they will use it more or less
- Also Q14 and questions about costs (C and D at the end) and Q19 can be combined into one score index saying how much are tourists willing to invest into GIs
- Q22, Q23 and Q24 can be considered as one index of Socio-Economic-Status (SES)

After computing proposed scores, following relations are about to be tested:

- Country differences on proposed indexes (taking two cities separately)
- Country differences on all separate questions (taking two cities separately)
- Correlation between all biographical information (Q19-Q28) with proposed indexes
- Correlations between Q05 and Q03
- Correlations between Q10 and Q03
- Correlations between Q11 and Q12
- Correlations between Q17 and Q03 and between proposed indexes above

CONSLUSION

Based on all mentioned above we can conclude that all three tasks of this STSM were completely and successfully finished (1) Design of the work for the questionnaire survey data analysis and manipulation; (2) Discussion on further data analysis and manipulation; (3) Discussion on presentation of research findings and results as tables and graphs in publishable form.

LETTER OF ENDORSEMENT

Dear Dr Rosìo Alonso del Amo,   Athens, November 14, 2015

With this letter, I would like to endorse the application of Dr Oliver Tošković, Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology (Laboratory of Experimental Psychology), University of Belgrade, Serbia, for an STSM in the COST Action FP1204 'GreenInUrbs'.

Our invitation, from the part of the Department of Geography—University of the Aegean, aims at serving the purposes of this Action's WP2 Tourism Target Group, by contributing to our survey research data analysis and publication deliverables, namely an article in a peer-reviewed journal and a chapter in the Action's book. The invitation is to the University of the Aegean Campus, in Lesvos, Greece, for a collaboration period of 3 weeks, under my personal supervision, to be completed by the end of 2015.

This work will be conducted in the context of the Tourism Target Group's cross-cultural comparative study of tourists' perceptions and uses of UGIs, conducted in various European countries, in order to understand and assess the ways that tourists relate to urban GIs and urban forests in the cities and towns they visit. Specifically, the proposed STSM serves this purpose, in the following ways:

1. Design of the work for the questionnaire survey data analysis and manipulation, using the SPSS program--including decodification of open-ended question answers, and ongoing revision of the research data analysis

2. Implementation of the data analysis and manipulation, a) at the level of descriptive statistics and b) at the level of correlational statistics

3. Compilation and presentation of research findings and results as tables and graphs, in publishable form for a) the journal article and b) the book chapter

Remaining at your disposal, for any additional information and clarifications,

Sincerely,

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