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Flows, accommodation and revenue: an analysis of tourism trends in Cyprus

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Abstract

In the last three decades tourism has contributed greatly to the economy of Cyprus, averaging 20% or higher with respect to the overall GDP. With the worldwide climate of economic recession, many industries including tourism face a less certain future. The possible fluctuations in dynamics and the direct effects on society and economy challenge the idea that the tourism industry is a financially sustainable path to follow. At the same time, the current and predicted trends in tourist activities show that this is also not an environmentally sustainable path.

Using published data from the Statistical Service of the Republic of Cyprus (RoC), a set of trends is presented. Since the majority of high energy consumption activities take place during transit and at the destination place, the set includes trends for international travel, as well as local and contextual figures such as the use of rental cars, accommodation, other items of consumption, and overall contribution to GDP from tourism earnings. The paper examines tourism and aviation and calculates CO₂ emissions and energy over an annual period for a selected year. The resulting estimates are discussed with respect to tourists' energy consumption and the effect they have on the national energy use. These are issues pertinent for more sustainable and long-term strategic objectives that Cyprus and other comparable tourism destinations may find useful.

Keywords: tourism in Cyprus, sustainability, air travel, accommodation, car rental, carbon emissions.
Word count (actual) Target <7000.

1. Introduction

"...we are often more concerned with economic rather than environmental stability."
(Girardet, 2009, p.13)

Tourism is a growth industry in Europe and in the Mediterranean region. As an industry, however, it is not defined by the goods and services it produces but on the products it consumes. Tourism consumption is defined as the total expenditure in visitors' consumption during their journey and stay at the destination (Valdés *et al.*, 2007). Gössling (2000; 2002) and Becken (2002) argue that the environmental impacts of tourist travel in the context of sustainable tourism have received less attention than required. Hunter (2002) further discusses other consumption demands, such as the supply of energy, food and water to destination areas, and argues that these supplies are often excluded from studies of the sustainability of tourism products and destinations. Hunter and Shaw (2007) refer to an example from a World Wildlife Fund-UK study (WWF, 2002). This presented an environmental footprint analysis of two typical, two-week package holiday products (flying from Gatwick airport, UK) to the popular Mediterranean destinations of Majorca and Cyprus. Air travel was found to be by far the largest single component of the total holiday footprint, corresponding to approximately 50% in both cases. The WWF study, whilst commenting unfavourably on Cyprus breaks, actually referred to holidays abroad as typical to *"the unsustainable nature of current developed country consumption*