

Development of Sustainable Tourism in Malta in the Aftermath of the Global Economic Recession

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Tourism is an important sector of the economy in Malta and was affected by the economic recession of 2008–2011. Maltese economic development strategies and policy reacted to the recession by promoting sustainable tourism. This paper analyses the evolutionary path of the economic development of tourism in three ways. Firstly, comparative analyses of small island economies show the relative impact that the global recession had on tourism in Malta as measured by the number of tourists, size of employment in tourism, and changes in the amount of expenditures in tourism. The main aim of the article is to answer the question: How did the Maltese tourism sector react to the global economic crisis when compared with other small island territories? The mixed methodology used in this paper includes: literature review, statistical data analysis and analysis of expert opinion surveys with tourism administration representatives.

Keywords: sustainable tourism, Malta, tourism economy, island territory, global economic crisis.

Rozwój turystyki zrównoważonej na Malcie w obliczu światowego kryzysu gospodarczego

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Turystyka jest ważnym sektorem gospodarki na Malcie, który został dotknięty w latach 2008–2011 światowym kryzysem gospodarczym. Administracja turystyczna Malty zareagowała na recesję poprzez promocję turystyki zrównoważonej. Niniejszy artykuł analizuje rozwój turystyki na wyspie na trzy sposoby. Po pierwsze poprzez analizę porównawczą małych gospodarek wyspiarskich, pokazując względny wpływ globalnej recesji na turystykę na Malcie, mierzony liczbą turystów, wielkością zatrudnienia w turystyce i zmianami w wielkości wydatków turystycznych. Głównym celem artykułu jest odpowiedź na pytanie: jak maltański sektor turystyki zareagował na światowy kryzys gospodarczy w porównaniu z innymi małymi terytoriami wyspiarskimi? Metody użyte w pracy to: przegląd literatury, analiza danych statystycznych i analiza badań eksperckich z przedstawicielami administracji turystycznej.

Słowa kluczowe: turystyka zrównoważona, Malta, gospodarka turystyczna, terytorium wyspiarskie, światowy kryzys gospodarczy.

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1. Introduction

Many small island economies rely on tourism to add value to the local economy (Oglethorpe, 1985; Shareef et al., 2008). The global economic crisis of 2008–2011 was a time when the tourism sector in Malta and other small island economies were affected, with a decrease in the number of tourists, a decrease in the level of employment in tourism and a decrease in tourism expenditures. Some areas suffered more from the economic crisis than others, and Malta (along with Jamaica, Aruba and St. Lucia) belongs to a group of nations where the tourism sector dealt better with the effects of the economic crisis than some other jurisdictions.

Malta is a small island nation that for years has been registering growth in the number of arrivals of foreign tourists (Malta Tourism Authority, n.d.). In the period from 2000 to 2015 the number of foreign tourists doubled from 1.2 to 2.4 million. Comparing Malta within a group of 17 island areas whose income from tourism is above 10% of GDP, Malta is one of the islands that reacted well to the global economic crisis (Figure 2). Figure 2 shows that the tourism sector in other jurisdictions, for example Seychelles, the Bahamas, the Maldives and Saint Kitts and Nevis, showed better results than Malta. In addition, other small island nations in the Caribbean such as Anguilla and Dominica showed a deep negative impact on tourism after the great recession. This paper addresses previous literature on tourism in small island nations and economies; develops a quantitative analysis for tourism growth and expenditures in Malta and provides an interpretation of policy prescriptions that led to the focus on sustainable tourism. The main aim of the article is to answer the question: How did the Maltese tourism sector react to the global economic crisis?

2. Literature Review

The contribution of tourism to the economic base of small islands and countries is extensive (Briguglio, 1995; Seetanah, 2011; McElroy & Perri, 2010; Armstrong & Read, 2000.) Furthermore, the links between economic policy and tourism were examined by Demira and Gozgorb (2018) and issues related to mass tourism were analyzed by Vainikka (2013). Both research paths discovered that diversity between jurisdictions and policies is the norm (Baldacchino, 2017, 2018). The theoretical and empirical study of tourism is still in its nascent stage (Stergiou & Airey, 2018) and exhibits a variety of critical and pragmatic analytical paths where lack of theoretical consensus is common. Smith and Lee (2010) argue that there is no consensus on a dominant research finding and assert that several theoretical strategies exist. Furthermore, as the tourism field has broadened in scope and quantity over the past two decades, many argue that a multi-disciplinary theoretical approach is relevant (Tribe & Airey, 2007).

Sharpley (2014) acknowledges that tourism is a critical element of economic development but argues that a development dilemma may exist at many levels. Tensions between tourists and locals may slow the sector expansion (Telfer & Sharpley, 2008). Concerns exist over environment protection, particularly for small island jurisdictions, which bolsters the quest for sustainable development policy strategies (Romao & Neuts, 2017). Finally, a lack of local participation in tourist planning and policy development is often common, as argued by Ortega et al. (2012).

This study proposes three main questions to be addressed, based on an analysis of the literature:

- 1: How did the Maltese tourism sector react to the global economic crisis when compared with other small island territories?

H1: Maltese tourism sector reacted well to the global economic crisis concerning the number of tourists, employment in tourism and tourism expenditures.

- 2: Is there a relationship change in the number of tourists and GDP between 2000 and 2015?

H2: The relationship between the change in the number of tourists and GDP between 2000 and 2015 should be strong.

- 3: How was tourism managed during the global crisis and which public-private policies were developed to market Malta to ensure positive outcomes if future crises occurred?

H3: The activities of the Maltese tourism administration involved using marketing campaigns on emission markets and sustainable development of tourism.

These questions will be further discussed in the Data Analysis section.

There were some tourist destinations without a negative reaction to the global economic crisis (UNWTO). So that is why it was assumed that among island territories Malta was one of the positive examples of reaction to this economic crisis event. In many tourism destinations the relationship between the number of tourist arrivals and creation of GDP was observed. In Spain in 1975–1997 a strong relation was recorded between tourism development and GDP growth (Kim, Chen, & Jang, 2006, p. 926; Balaguer & Cantavella-Jorda, 2002). Due to the results of that research, it was assumed in the article that the relationship between the change in the number of tourists and GDP in the analyzed period should be strong.

According to “Information about anti-crisis actions in chosen countries”, administration usually prepared anti-crisis plans and programs for different sectors (starting from the banking sector). Among island destinations, during the global economic crisis, the Canary Islands were an example of making a large promotion campaign for the European market (Cardona, 2015). According to strategic documents of Malta, this island is developing tourism in a sustainable way so that is why it was assumed that the Maltese tourism administration used marketing campaigns on emission markets and sustainable development of tourism.

2.1. Tourism and Crises

The global recession of 2008–11 had a significant global impact on tourism (Dziedzic, 2012). Ciaveria and Poluzzi (2016) argue that, for the top tourist destinations in the world, the dynamics of growth over time is varied. For Malta, tourism arrivals have seen a small but steady increase in the latest bulletin (Malta Tourism Authority, n.d.).

Okumus and Karamustafa (2005) analyzed the impact of the economic crisis in Turkey in 2001, and its outcomes for the Southern Cyprus tourism sector. In addition, the impacts of other crisis events (crime and terrorist attacks) were discussed by Ryan (1993) and Goodrich (2001), Pizam and Fleischer (2002), Chu (2008), Athanasopoulos and Hyndman (2008) and Blake and Sinclair (2003). Moreover, the influence of different crises on islands was analyzed by Ghaderi et al. (2012) and the impact of natural hazards and disasters on tourism was theorized by Rucińska and Lechowicz (2014).

2.2. Sustainable Development and Tourism

More than 200 definitions of sustainable tourism and development have been stated (Graci & Dodds, 2010). Fiut (2012) argued that the idea of sustainable development is our civilization’s most important project. Sustainable development on small tropical islands was discussed by Jędrusik (2014) and by Briguglio (1995). Kaźmierczak (2010) argues that sustainable development of tourism involves economic, ecological and socio-cultural aspects. Sustainable tourism entails respecting cultural, social and environmental features and conditions, protecting the environmental resources, tradition and life-style of local communities, and providing the local community with opportunities for economic development (Cisneros-Martínez et al., 2016). Ayuso (2003) argues that sustainable development of tourism is based on three pillars: the environmental, the economic and the socio-cultural. The critical tension for sustainable development is to search for a compromise to avoid conflicts between economic and social development and environmental conditions.

Ecotourism has become a large value-added part of the services sector as disposable income grows in many parts of the world (Honey, 2008). According to The International Ecotourism Society, this term refers to

responsible trips to environmental areas which result in better protection and improved living standards for local people. This type of tourism also provides an educational aspect (www.ecotourism.org). Nunkoo et al. (2010) studied the relationship between tourism development and community attitudes toward islands' economies and Scheyvens and Momsen (2008) provided examples of positive development paths to sustainable tourism in small island states. Kokkrankal et al. (2003) investigated the links between island tourism and sustainability in a study of the Lakshadweep Islands, analyzing specific development and management patterns, and strategies for promoting sustainable tourism. Controlled and segregated enclave tourism proved to be effective in avoiding the negative consequences of tourism. Bianchi (2004) addressed sustainable tourism initiatives by the regional government in the Canary Islands. One of the actions was a temporary moratorium on tourism development and the setting of normative guidelines for sustainable tourism. According to Parrilla et al. (2007), the Canary Islands rely on tourism and show signs of "Dutch disease", which is the economy reacting to rapid changes in the export of natural resources. According to Padilla and McElroy (2005), the tourism penetration index provides a universal measure of the economic, social and environmental impact on small islands. Sustainable development of tourism on the Aegean Islands was also discussed by Karampela et al. (2007) drawing on an extensive review of the literature and the Samothraki Islands' experience of sustainability transitions were discussed by Petridis et al. (2017).

2.3. Sustainable Tourism in Malta in the Face of the Global Economic Crisis

Malta is situated on the Mediterranean Sea, 90 km south of Sicily, and is an archipelago consisting of: Malta, Gozo, Comino and smaller islands with a population of over 432,000 (*Malta Profile*, 2018). Malta is an all-year tourist destination, but the greatest intensity of tourist movement is observed from June to October. Sustainable development of tourism became a strategic policy initiative in 2000s, when the government stated that tourism development should happen in a sustainable way to ensure improved quality of life though consideration for, and maintenance of, environmental and socio-cultural resources (Ministry for Tourism and Culture, 2006). According to "Towards Sustainable Tourism Development ..." (2017), Malta is better structured in terms of its ability to attract tourism markets. On this island, tourism plays a significant role in the economy (the share of tourism is 29% of total GDP). If tourism is not considered as a strategic sector by policy makers, there is no effective public framework or clear vision for sustainable development of tourism in public policy. To create sustainable tourism development in Malta, the University of Malta has engaged in the TOSTODEM research project, which promotes awareness of sustainable development in the tourism sector. According to Briguglio

and Briguglio (1999), the development of tourism in Malta has increased demand for building to further develop the sector. Malta's chances for the development of sustainable tourism are found in alternative types of tourism such as eco-tourism, cultural tourism, health tourism and silver tourism and Malta has experienced a consistent growth in tourist arrivals since 2006 (Briguglio, 2008).

3. Data Analysis

The first objective of the article is to obtain a response to the following question: How did Malta deal with the global economic crisis in terms of tourist movement, employment in tourism and tourism expenditures in comparison to other island areas? The second objective is to answer the following question: Is there a dependency between changes in the size of tourist movement and changes in the GDP of Malta in 2000–15? The third objective of the article is to answer the question: How was tourism in Malta managed during the global economic crisis and what tools were used by the tourism administration in Malta to counteract the effects of the global economic crisis in the tourism sector, and is Malta providing sustainable development of tourism? The following hypotheses were made: hypothesis one – Malta coped well with the global economic crisis in tourism concerning the number of foreign tourists, employment in tourism and tourism expenditures; hypothesis two – there was a strong positive dependency between changes in tourist movement and changes in the GDP, which meant that in the years when the number of arrivals of foreign tourists increased, Malta also registered a proportional increase in the GDP value, and in the years when the number of arrivals of foreign tourists decreased, there was a decrease in the actual GDP. The third hypothesis concerns the manner of managing tourism during the crisis; it is assumed that the activities of the tourism administration mainly involved using marketing campaigns on emission markets and that the Maltese tourism authority ensures sustainable development of tourism.

The methods used in the article include: statistical data analysis – Spearman's rank and Kendall's tau correlation coefficient, typology, a literature analysis and a survey of expert opinions (representatives of tourism administration).

Tourism constitutes a very important source of income for Malta, and, in the longer term, joining the European Union resulted in an increase in tourist movement. Increases in the number of incoming tourists were registered a year before Malta joined the European Union (2003) and in the longer term (2005–2008). Figure 1 shows the number of arrivals of foreign tourists visiting Malta in 2000–2015.

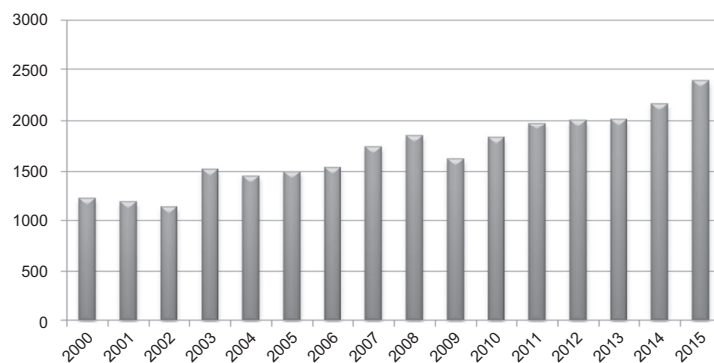


Fig. 1. Arrivals of tourists and one-day visitors to Malta in 2000–2015 (in thousands).
Source: Own calculation on basis of UNWTO.

From 2004 to 2008 the number of foreign tourists visiting Malta increased by 27%. 2009 brought a decrease of 12%, similar to that in numerous island areas. Only in 2010 did the losses in incoming tourism begin to reverse. In 2011 incoming visitor figures corresponded to the situation from before the global economic crisis, while 2011–2013 experienced a slight increase of several percent. Comparing 2013 to the year before the crisis (i.e. 2008), there was an increase of only 9% in 5 years.

Figure 2 presents the types of island territories by tourism sector reaction to the global economic crisis and the extent of the crisis in terms of employment in tourism and income from tourism. Concerning the changes in the number of people employed in tourism and the changes in the size of tourism expenses, Malta was in the group of islands which managed well, the same concerning tourist expenditures. Figure 2 shows in comprehensive way the reactions of selected island territories to the global economic crisis. The data from 2011 (the end of the economic crisis) and 2008 (the beginning of the economic crisis) were compared.

Figure 3 presents the changes in the number of incoming tourists and one-day visitors as well as the changes in the gross domestic product in Malta in 2000–2015. It can be clearly seen that the greatest increases occurred in 2003, 2007 and 2010. Meanwhile, decreases are observed in the number of incoming foreign tourists in 2001, 2004 and 2009. GDP grew most dynamically in 2008, 2007 and 2010, and it decreased in 2001, 2004 and 2009.

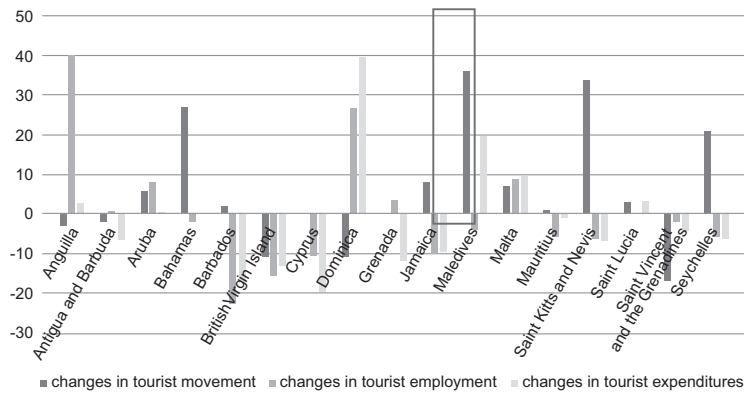


Fig. 2. Island territory types by tourism sector reaction to the global economic crisis – changes in tourism movement, changes in tourism employment, changes in tourist expenditures (in %) 2011/2008. Source: Own elaboration on basis of data: www.unwto.org, www.wttc.org.

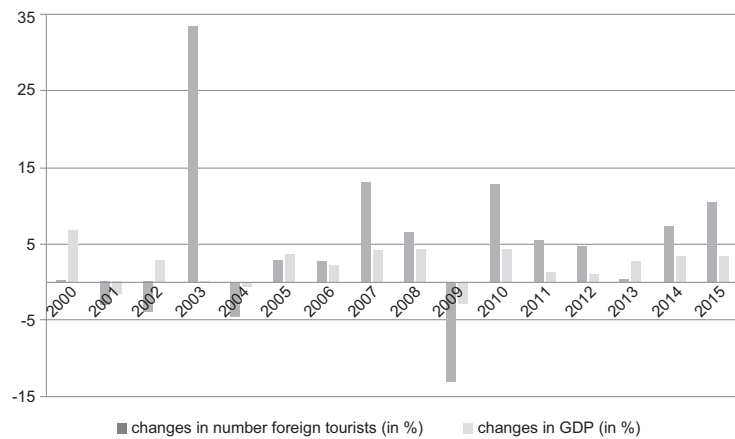


Fig. 3. Changes in number of incoming foreign tourists and one-day visitors and in GDP in Malta in 2000–2015 (%). Source: own calculation on basis of UNWTO and World Bank.

Spearman’s rank correlation coefficient (Norcliffe, 1986; Ostasiewicz, Rusnak, & Siedlecka, 1999) and Kendall’s tau correlation coefficient (Abdi, 2007) were calculated for the changes in the number of incoming foreign tourists and one-day visitors and the changes in the GDP in Malta in 2000–2015. The Spearman’s rank correlation coefficient was 0.438, indicating

a **positive moderate** correlation. In the case of Kendall's tau correlation coefficient, the value was slightly lower, at 0.300, which can be interpreted as a **positive, noticeable, but low correlation**.

The diversification index of foreign markets in incoming tourism is 11.8¹, which means a high degree of diversification. This is a good result, as only six of the 17 islands achieved as high a degree of diversification in incoming tourism as Malta did. The most important markets of incoming tourists to Malta are: Great Britain, Italy, Germany, France and Spain (OECD, 2016).

According to the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) methodology² (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2015) concerning the determination of the significance of tourism in the national economy of selected countries, the share of tourism in the GDP of Malta in 2014 was 15%. Meanwhile, the broader tourism economy in Malta created 24% of GDP in the same year. Additionally, the 'induced effect', i.e. additionally taking into account the purchasing power of people working in tourism, of the broader tourism economy in Malta generated 29% of GDP. The number of tourist entities in 2010–2014 in Malta was estimated at 22,000, and the number of travel agencies at approximately 1,000 (OECD, 2016, 2014, p. 355).

Analyzing the chart concerning the reaction of the sector of tourism employment in Malta in relation to the reaction to the global economic crisis, it can be stated that there was a small decrease in tourism workplaces in Malta if we compare the year 2009 to 2008, but when the years 2011 to 2008 are compared, the decrease was balanced. At the weakest moment, the number of people working in tourism decreased to 20,000 (in 2008). Meanwhile, in the following year, the number increased, and in 2010 reached 25,000 (and 27,500 in 2010). This may confirm sustainable development of tourism in Malta in terms of the social and economic aspects.

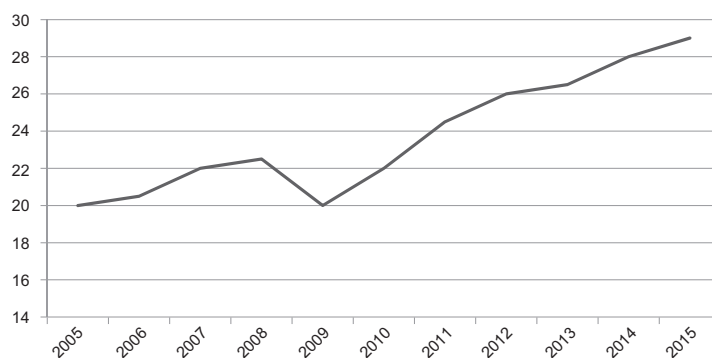


Fig. 4. Employment in tourism (in thousands of people) in Malta in 2005–2015. Source: own calculation, based on *Travel & Tourism Economic Impact 2015, Malta, 2015*, World Travel & Tourism Council, London, p. 3.

Figure 5 presents the extent of expenses incurred by foreign tourists and one-day visitors to Malta in 2000–2015. The chart shows that this country was in a good situation, and, as one of only a few islands, can be proud of making up the financial losses in the tourism sector related to the global economic crisis. Comparing the data on expenses in 2015 and the year before the economic crisis, i.e. 2008, a 23% increase can be observed. This also confirms sustainable development of tourism in the economy.

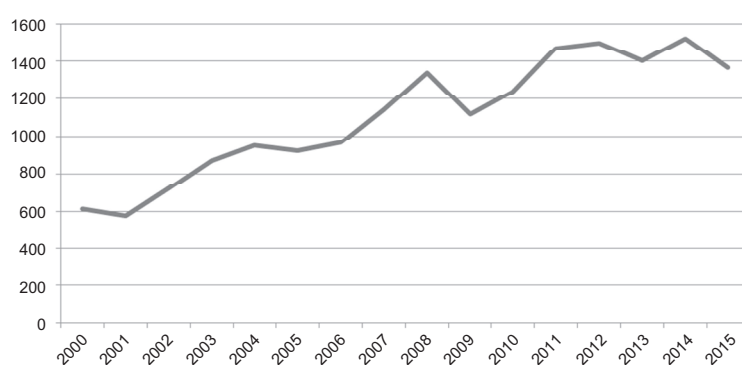


Fig. 5. Expenditures of foreign tourists and one-day visitors in Malta in 2000–2015 (in thousands of USD). Source: data for 2000–2001, *Compendium of Tourism Statistics. Data 1997–2001. UNWTO (2003), Madrid*; data for 2003–2007, *Compendium of Tourism Statistics. Data 2003–2007. UNWTO (2009), Madrid*; data for 2008–2015, *UNWTO database*.

4. Tourism in Malta in Comparison to Other Island Areas

An analysis of the tourism management method in Malta was performed. The document entitled *Malta's National Tourism Plan* was included in the analysis. The analysis was performed in comparison to the strategic documents of other island territories using the point bonitation method. In the assessment, it was considered whether a separate strategic document for tourism was in operation (0 to 10 points were assigned in this category), including its inclusion in another document (max. 5 points). Moreover, it was verified whether there was a separate document for the marketing strategy (0–5 points); whether the document contained a detailed diagnosis (0–5 points); whether the document indicated a mission, vision or strategic goals (0–5 points), operational points (0–5 points), a list of funding sources (0–5 points), a list of strategy implementation measurements (0–5 points), and a list of development scenarios (0–5 point); and whether evaluation of the strategy was expected (0–5 points). Particular islands' strategic documents could receive max. 50 points.

The document *Malta's National Tourism Plan* presents guidelines for tourism development for 2007–2011. The problems for the development of the tourism sector in Malta are related to the large number of low-category beds. The priorities are development of “e-business” and application of innovative solutions, as well as creation of new distribution channels. Table 1 scores the strategic documents of selected island territories. Malta obtained 32 points for its strategic document, which is significantly above the average.

Island territory	Total
Anguilla – <i>Sustainable Tourism Master Plan</i>	40
Antigua and Barbuda – <i>Antigua and Barbuda. Strategic approach to tourism as an export and development opportunity in small states</i>	10
Aruba – <i>Two Steps Ahead. Tourism Policy 2012</i>	32
Barbados – <i>UNEP's Assistance in the Implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (SIDS)</i>	10
British Virgin Islands – <i>British Virgin Islands Protected Areas system plan 2007–2017</i>	13
Cyprus – <i>Strategic Plan for Tourism Development 2003–2010</i>	13
Dominica – <i>The National Development Corporation, Commonwealth of Dominica</i>	30
Grenada – <i>Grenada Strategic Development Plan 2030</i>	17
Jamaica – <i>Master Plan for Sustainable Tourism Development</i>	43
Maldives – <i>Maldives Third Tourism Master Plan 2007–2011</i>	38
Malta – <i>Malta Tourism Policy 2007–2011</i>	32
Mauritius – <i>CBD Strategy and Action Plan</i>	25
Saint Kitts and Nevis – <i>St-Kitts and Nevis Tourism Sector Strategy</i>	29
Saint Lucia – <i>Sustainable Tourism in St. Lucia</i>	30
Seychelles – <i>Strategy of Tourism 2017, Seychelles Sustainable Development Strategy</i>	18
Bahamas Islands – <i>The commonwealth of the Bahamas. National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan</i>	9
Average number of points for all islands territories:	24

Note: Saint Vincent and Grenadines – no strategic document indicated.

Tab. 1. Scoring of the strategic documents of selected island territories. Source: own calculation: www.gov.ai/documents/Final_STMP2.pdf, www.chamberofcommerce.sx, www.unep.org/barbados_programme_for_sids.pdf, www.visitcyprus.com, www.mta.com.mt, www.sids2014.org, www.egov.sc, www.caribbeanelections.com, www.mot.gov.jm/

[content/jamaica-tourist-board-jtb](#), [www.jtbonline.org](#), [www.tourism.gov.mv](#), [www.tourism.gov.mv](#), [www.tourism.govmu.org/English/Pages/default.aspx](#), [www.nevisisland.com](#), [www.caribbeanelections.com](#), [www.stkittstourism.kn](#), [www.govt.lc](#), [www.iisd.org/tkn/pdf/tkn_tourism_stlucia.pdf](#), [www.seychelles.travel](#), [www.egov.sc/documents/strategy2017.pdf](#), [www.bahamas.co.uk](#), [www.cbd.int/doc/world/bs/bs-nbsap-01-en](#), [www.bahamas.com/contact](#), [www.tourism.gov.vc](#), [www.sids2014.org](#), [www.sustainabledevelopment.un.org/pdf](#), [www.dominica.dm](#), [www.caribbeanelections.com/eDocs/strategy/bv_strategy/bv_Protected_Areas_System_Plan_2007_2017.pdf](#), [www.intracen.org](#), [www.chamberofcommerce.sx/images/2stepsahead.pdf](#), [www.un.org](#), [www.gov.gd](#), [www.caribbeanelections.com](#), [www.cbd.int](#), [www.google.pl/search?q=Sustainable+Tourism+in+St.+Lucia&ie=utf-8&oe=utf-8&gws_rd=cr&ei=15spWlq5KIOksAHeq4XgBA](#)

Furthermore, priorities also entail development of a tourist product and creation of an integrated marketing plan. The strategy provided for activities aiming to create new workplaces and secure proper human resources for tourism. Ministries and government organizations, and the *Malta Tourism Authority* are the executors of the strategy.

The *Malta Tourism Authority* was created based on applicable legal regulations in 1999 (Malta Tourism Authority, 2014). The main role of this institution is to promote Malta as a mature destination for incoming tourism; it also has a consulting role for the government. Improving the quality of human resources working in tourism is also important. The Agency has offices in Great Britain, Germany and Italy, as well as smaller representative offices in most European Union countries (Malta Tourism Authority, 2014).

Tourist movement in Malta is definitely more seasonal than in other destinations in the Mediterranean basin (OECD, 2016). The level of governmental expenses on tourism is in line with the European average (in 2015 the state budget for tourism was 48 million euros). Tourism is managed by the Ministry for Tourism, which is connected with the Malta Tourism Authority, Air Malta, Malta Air Traffic Services, the Institute for Tourism Studies and the Mediterranean Conference Center. The largest threats to tourism in Malta include: dependency on the economic situation of other countries, the small internal market³, the seasonality of tourist movement, and a large dependency on air transport.

The main strategic goals were: improvement of the number of flights, diversification of emission markets, increasing tourist movement outside the peak season (op. cit.). Malta also implemented activities to increase the number of direct flights (they were increased from 45 flights a day in 2006 to 90 in 2014). This certainly contributed to the good results of the tourism sector.

5. Expert Survey: Tourism Policy in Malta

An expert survey concerning activities undertaken during the global economic crisis was conducted at the Malta National Tourism Organization. In Malta, a strategic document entitled “Malta Tourism Policy 2015–2020” cur-

rently applies. Meanwhile, during the global economic crisis the applicable strategic document in Malta was the “Malta Tourism Policy 2007–2011”. In Malta, a special “Crisis Committee” was established to counteract the effects of the global economic crisis in tourism. It was managed by the Ministry for Tourism. The team consisted of representatives of the Malta Tourism Authority, representatives of Malta International Airport, representatives of Air Malta and representatives of the Malta Hotels and Restaurants Association.

The team’s goal was to collect information and share results of research. The team’s operation brought benefits because organizations, which had operated in certain isolation before, now learned to share the results of research and experience. The consequences of such cooperation can also be observed after the end of the global economic crisis. Efficiency of cooperation improved. For the team, it was particularly important to use short-term data. There has been no special expert opinion survey conducted concerning the impact of the global economic crisis on tourism in Malta. However, a special marketing campaign concerning incoming tourism was prepared; Malta advertised competitive prices and presented them in local currencies. An aggressive policy to increase the number of flights from various parts of Europe turned out to be successful, as during the global economic crisis numerous other flight destinations stopped functioning. Concerning other crises in tourism in 2000–2015, it was stated that the most important crises were relations with Libya during the Arab Spring in 2011, the volcanic eruption in Iceland in 2010 and the 11th September 2001 terrorist attacks; minimal decreases were also observed during pandemic diseases such as, for example, SARS.

In comparison to other island areas, Malta was significantly active in its response. Other islands, such as Mauritius, designed special financial instruments, such as the Leasing Equipment Modernization Scheme, to encourage companies to buy new technological solutions and equipment. During the crisis other island territories such as Seychelles implemented special marketing campaigns entitled “Affordable Seychelles Marketing Campaign” and “Market Source Over Satisfaction Supported by Air Access”. Meanwhile, on Dominica, no survey of expert opinion was performed in relation to the global economic crisis and no special promotional campaigns were implemented.

6. Summary, Conclusions and Future Work

The reaction to the great economic recession of 2008–11 resulted in further development of sustainable tourism in Malta. This is seen as a priority for tourism administrators and policy. **This paper’s first hypothesis is confirmed** – the tourism sector in Malta reacted better to the global economic crisis than other island territories. Comparing the tourist economy

of seventeen island areas, Malta had a good reaction concerning changes in tourist movement under the influence of the global economic crisis, the extent of the crisis related to employment in tourism and the extent of income from tourism. This confirms sustainable development of tourism in Malta. **The second hypothesis is partially confirmed with a moderately positive dependency** – there was a strong dependency between changes in tourist movement and changes in GDP. **The third hypothesis is also partially confirmed** – that Malta's tourism management bodies ensure sustainable development of tourism. On the one hand, the strategic document created in Malta scored well compared to the other island countries⁴ (significantly above the average) and the expert survey confirmed that the authorities of Malta used numerous activities aimed at counteracting the effects of the global economic crisis. These included appointing a special team and implementing a special marketing campaign and an aggressive policy to increase the number of flights to the island. The strategic document provided the aims for sustainable development of tourism. However, it must be stated that good results of Malta may be also due to the position of other bigger tourism destinations, which might be competitive to Malta (e.g. the position of Greece during the global economic crisis).

These findings are mixed, but promising, particularly with respect to the identification and promotion of sustainable tourism, which has been seen by many as a critical future direction for Malta and other small island economies (Mierzejwska, 2017; Scheyvens & Momsen, 2008). Sustainable development of tourism can bring many advantages to a small island nation such as Malta, and local government policy support can promote the tourist economy through identification of key economic targets, such as increasing the number of people employed in tourism and increasing the level of tourist expenditures.

The results of this multi-method, multi-scalar analysis provide a comprehensive contribution to tourism research. The outcomes show how to actively cope with an economic crisis event by providing a tourist campaign, multisectoral cooperation and a good strategic document. The outcomes provide the example of best practices which could be observed in the management of tourism administration in Malta.

Future research should expand a comparative analysis of selected small island jurisdictions to further investigate the importance of place and distance as identified by Wites (2009). Distance is an important factor in a stabile economic situation; during an economic crisis event, if the main sectors are at a short distance and face economic problems, tourism authorities of small island economies should search for new markets in average- and long-distance countries with a better economic situation.

Endnotes

- ¹ To study the diversification level of markets in incoming tourism, the modified indicator of the economic base diversification of E. Amemiya was used (Gwosdz, Ciechowski, & Micek, 2010; Jerczyński, 1973).
The formula for the incoming tourism diversification index:
- $$\text{Coefficient of diversification} = \sum_{i=1}^n \frac{n}{n-1} \left(\frac{Wri}{Wr} - \frac{1}{n} \right)^2$$
- n – number of distinguished markets, Wri – size of a given market, Wr – size of the entire market.
- ² The World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) calculates a larger impact of tourism, which is called tourism economy with a high multiplier effect. This term includes not only expenditures connected strictly with tourism, for example expenditures on hotels, restaurants and travel agencies, but also those connected indirectly with tourism and travels – expenditures of visitors on transport, food, fuel, insurance.
- ³ National tourist movement in Malta is estimated at approx. 200,000 people (OECD, 2016).
- ⁴ Arias (2015, pp. 134–43) made a review of strategies and suggests a system to balance multiple compliance management strategies.

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