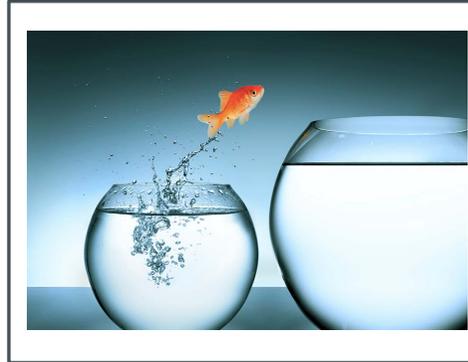




## TOURIST-HOST ENCOUNTERS IN POST-CONFLICT DESTINATIONS

ANNA FARMAKI  
CYPRUS UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

## TOURISM IN TRANSITION



- *Technological advancements*
- *Social trends*
- *Environmental changes*
- *Economic fluctuations*
- *Political instability*

## TOURISM AS A DRIVER OF CHANGE



## THE POWER OF TOURISM

- Tourism, as a social phenomenon, has long been considered as holding unrealised power in improving the perceptions, attitudes and relations among people
    - Contributing to global peace through the cultivation of understanding among people
  - Travel-induced contact has been argued to foster global peace, by reducing cultural and psychological gaps among people
- (Nyaupane et al, 2008)
- Emanating from the inspiring work of D' Amore (1988), who invited researchers to consider the role of tourism in establishing peace, there is a burgeoning body of research on the role of tourism in peacebuilding

## FRAGILE RHETORIC

- Previous research findings remaining inconclusive of the nature of the relationship between tourism and peace
- The causal relationship between tourism and peace has been questioned
  - Travel does not necessarily improve understanding between 'traditional enemies'
  - Economic and political elements relevant to tourism that complicate the role of tourism to stability and peace
  - Past studies report trade issues, political tensions, mistrust, nationalistic sentiments among others as inhibiting tourism's contribution to peace (Altinay & Bowen, 2006; Cho, 2007; Guo et al, 2006; Kim & Prideaux, 2006)

## TOURISM IS A BENEFICIARY OF PEACE; NOT A CAUSE OF PEACE

- Gaps in the literature
  - Past studies adopted the contact theory in their investigation; yet, largely overlooked the nature and context in which contact occurred
    - The organised nature of trips restricts meaningful contact between visitors and the host community
  - Most studies focused on student groups visiting for a short period of time as part of an educational trip (Tomljenovic, 2010)

## RESEARCH RATIONALE

- There is a need to examine the nature of encounter between people from destinations in historic conflict, if understanding on how travel-induced contact might improve perceptions and attitudes – and consequently contribute to peace – is to be gained
- Considering the current context of instability in which global tourism operates, insights from post-conflict settings may advance knowledge on travel behaviour in situations of political vulnerability and instability

## STUDY CONTEXT

- 1960: Republic of Cyprus established
- 1963: Inter-communal tension between the Greek Cypriots & Turkish Cypriots
- 1964: Green line (buffer zone) was 'drawn'
- 1974: Island is divided following war
  - 37% of island's northern part occupied by Turkish forces
  - 185000 of GCs were internally displaced to the southern part of the island
  - 45000 of TCs relocated to the northern part
  - Nicosia, the capital city of the island is the only remaining divided capital in Europe



## SMALL ISLAND, BIG CONFLICT

- Crossing into the 'other' side was made possible only in 2003
- By 2014, more than 13 million crossings were registered for Turkish Cypriots contrary to almost 8 million crossings by Greek Cypriots  
(PIO, 2015)
- Studies looking at GCs' motives for crossing identified: looking for ancestral land, gambling, visiting sacred places and curiosity
- Studies looking at TCS' motives for crossing identified: shopping and employment  
(Webster & Timothy, 2006)

## STAGE I: RESEARCH AIM

- To understand the reasons motivating and inhibiting visitation to 'the other side'
  - In other words, to identify and examine the travel motives and demotives of both GCs and TCs
- Through a concurrent examination of travel motivation and demotivation, we sought understanding on the conditions influencing travel decision-making processes in post-conflict contexts

## METHODOLOGY

- Mixed method approach
  - Phase I:
    - Qualitative research to enable the development of questionnaire
    - 20 GCs & 23 TCs were purposively selected to allow for diversity in sample
  - Phase II:
    - Survey based on quota sampling of both GCs and TCs
    - 267 GCs & 241 TCs were included in the sample
- Data analysis
  - Thematic analysis and Social Network Analysis

## FINDINGS

### Travel Motives

- GCs are mostly motivated to visit northern Cyprus by push factors
  - Nostalgia
  - Curiosity
  - Cultural/Religious attractions
  - Gambling
- TCs are primarily motivated by pull factors present in southern Cyprus
  - Shopping
  - Entertainment
  - Dining

### Travel Demotives

- GCs do not visit northern Cyprus due to:
  - Fear of legitimization of TC administration
  - Ethical dilemma of showing passport and spending money
- No TCs non-visiting community found
- *GCs' active offensive attitudes reinforce passive defensive attitudes of TCs*

## STAGE 2: RESEARCH AIM

- To understand the travel behaviour of GCs in terms of crossing to the 'other side' as well as the nature of encounter between GCs and TCs
  - GCs' travel intentions and actual travel to northern Cyprus
  - The factors influencing travel behaviour of GCs
- Doing so, we sought to offer insights on the conditions in which travel-induced contact may contribute to peace

## METHODOLOGY

- We interviewed GCs residing in the southern part of the island
- Informants were purposively selected based on their background, age and gender to ensure enough diversity within the sample
  - The age of the informants ranged from 19 to 87
  - 43 females and 34 males were included in the sample
- Data saturation was reached after 77 interviews
  - Out of the 77 informants, 54 had visited northern Cyprus in the past while 23 had not visited northern Cyprus
- Data was analysed using thematic analysis

## FINDINGS

1

*Intentional visitors whose positive intentions towards visitation led to a planned visit*

2

*Coincidental visitors for whom visitation was unplanned*

3

*Intentional non-visitors who expressed unwillingness to (re)visit northern Cyprus*

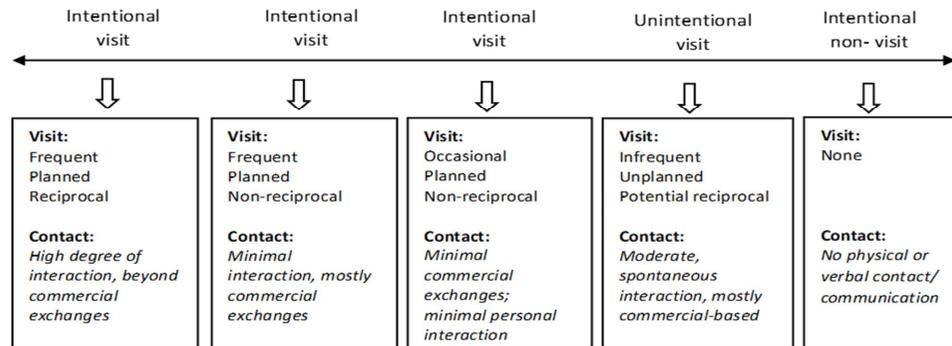
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*Coincidental non-visitors who have not been able to visit northern Cyprus despite the presence of positive intentions*

## FINDINGS

- The tourist-host encounter was conditioned by two factors:
  - the *structure of the visit* including frequency, intentionality and exchange of benefits between the two parties
  - the *nature of the contact* prescribed along the degree of the interaction and the type of the exchange between the two parties
- Five types of tourist-host encounter were identified within the post-conflict context of Cyprus

## A CONTINUUM OF TOURIST-HOST ENCOUNTER



## CONCLUSIONS

- Continuous political turmoil has a permanent effect on people's perceptions and attitudes, as Sonmez & Graefe (1998) suggested
  - The socio-political environment influences the nature of the tourist-host encounter as perceptions and attitudes seem to regulate the degree and nature of contact
- Visitation does not necessarily translate into a close interaction between visitors and the host community
  - Travel motives and the frequency and structure of the visit are influential on the nature of the encounter and on the mutuality of the benefits derived from the contact

## IMPLICATIONS

- Examinations of tourist-host relationships within unstable and fragile settings, such as those found in post-conflict destinations, may inform policymakers and industry practitioners of the sensitivities of travel and how tourism encounters may contribute to peace
- If the literature is to be enriched, there needs to be:
  - a shift of academic focus from evaluations of perceptual and attitudinal change following visitation to examinations of the reasons predisposing or inhibiting visitation to hostile nations
  - a consideration of the conditions and influencing factors shaping the socio-political environment in which the tourist-host encounter takes place
  - future research needs to examine different types of encounters within post-conflict destinations such as service encounters occurring in commercial settings and/or social encounters in non-commercial settings



THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION