



Sustainable Tourism Management

A Collection of Studies from Malta, Lebanon and Jordan



George Cassar
Editor

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Tourism, Globalization and Identity - Mdina as a Maltese Case Study

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Abstract

Malta, a small island in the middle of Mediterranean, is a melting pot of cultures and identities. For its size and its population, the Maltese archipelago attracts over 1.7 million tourists a year (MTA, 2014). This is a sign of globalization at its best and impacts on the Maltese islands, its culture and its identity. Globalization is therefore an element which has become evident and which needs to be studied and assessed if Maltese society is to safeguard its cultural and natural heritage for posterity. This paper looks at one of the classical tourism destinations in Malta - Mdina, the old and past capital of the island. The small, walled town of Mdina receives about 1.5 million tourists a year, not counting domestic visitors. One can realize how big an impact this creates on the restricted space and resources, and the 237 residents of Mdina, but also on the business community that operates there. Being a historic yet residential town, Mdina's business community views the invasion of tourism as an opportunity for profit and expansion of their business enterprise. On the other hand, the residents have to keep up with all the forms of pollution-noise, waste, overcrowding, and lack of privacy- that tourism brings with it. How much more can Mdina take if it wants to safeguard its culture and identity while continuing to be a magnet for the ever-growing tourism industry in Malta? The dilemma is clear and needs our attention.

Keywords

Cultural Tourism; Sustainability; Mdina; Globalisation

Tourism, Globalization and Identity – Mdina as a Maltese case study

Introduction

The fortified small town of Mdina is located on the hilltop in the western central part of Malta. This town has evidence of at least six strata of settlements beneath the walls of the city with today's present layer being the seventh (Manduca, 2003). It is the second major cultural centre of the Maltese Islands and it attracts 95% of the visitors that visit the Maltese Islands, which in 2014 surpassed 1.7 million. Currently being prepared for UNESCO heritage enlisting, this small fortified town, has been a major subject of debate for the past 20 years, when Boissevain and Sammut (1994) presented the first findings on the impact of cultural tourism activities on Maltese communities. This paper, based on studies conducted within the framework of the HELAND project and applying the ETIS sustainable tourism indicator system, aims to present the impact of an ever growing global tourism phenomenon on this community analysing the reactions of the residential population and the business community within the city.

The Mediterranean is one of the main regions where the effects of globalisation are intense. The region considered to be the “first region of tourism in the world” (Anastapopolous, 2002) attracted 343 million international tourists in 2014 (UNWTO, 2015). Although showing uneven growth in tourism numbers between the Northern rim and the Southern and Eastern rim, this region has sustained a major increase in inbound travel unparalleled by other regions in the two decades between 1990 and 2010 (Lanquar, 2011) and beyond. The onset of low cost airlines has contributed also to the increase in travel and consequently the increase in the globalisation of the region.



The flag of Mdina flying over the main entrance to the city

Literature Review

Prior to delving deeper into the impacts of global tourism on the community of Mdina, it is worth understanding some of the main arguments raised on the topic of tourism impacts on Mediterranean communities.

Physical pressures and unrest between locals and tourists within the Mediterranean is perhaps one of the more salient impacts. The sheer volumes on beaches and at historic centres are the cause of much concern to local populations (Boissevain and Sammut, 1994, Follian, 2002; Lindkund, 1996; Salazar 2010). However not all communities react with such aversion. Boissevain (1996), in his introduction to *Coping with Tourists*, argued that local communities have developed coping mechanisms with which to protect their social integrity and cultural identity. Crain (1996), Black (1996) and Odermatt (1996) speak of how communities devise mechanisms that enable them to enjoy their own culture or leisure habits without sharing these with foreign visitors whose presence would mar the experience of the cultural activity for the residential population.

Another major influence of tourism on Mediterranean societies is that impacting the moral fabric. Mediterranean societies are characterized by rules of moral and social conduct that dictate the way in which people ought to behave (Davies, 1980). These rules govern every aspect of society such as, but not only, religion and the family. Tourism has, however, challenged some of the more 'sacred' characteristics of Mediterranean societies.

Although in Islamic culture, travel plays an important role as it is part of the Islamic religious obligation to travel to Mecca (Din, 1989), the impacts of foreign visitors motivated by ludic behaviour and in search of sun, sex and fun, have left indelible effects. For example certain North African governments, such as that of Algeria, resisted the development of tourism for decades due to the potential impacts this would have on the country's cultural identity (Zoubir, 2001). Prior to the Arab Spring Revolution in 2011, the more westernized countries of Tunisia and Egypt had a thriving tourism economy based on mass tourism. The accompanying factors of hedonism, permissiveness and limited cross-cultural interaction and communication were not seen in a positive light. Tunisia and Egypt have opted to develop tourism by isolating it from mainstream society by constructing enclaves in which the two separate lives of the European visitor and the local service provider run parallel. This contact is not without its concerns. Semi-nude visitors around the pool, and open affection between men and women, offend local populations. Moreover, "visitors knowingly or unknowingly offend Islamic mode of conduct by violating rules of propriety in and around mosques" (Poirier, 2001: 204; see also Bleasdale and Tapselle, 1999). Moreover, Poirier (ibid.) points out that in Tunisia there has been a return to the veil as a symbolic protest against the moral decadence brought about by tourism.

Tourism has also brought about a re-evaluation of the social fabric. In Mediterranean societies, women were often confined to the home taking care of their family. In rural, agricultural and fishing communities, women also assisted their husbands in the fields. The new wave of employment on the coastal zone and within urban centres, generated by tourism brought

about a change in these structures. Primarily, women could earn a wage, implying that both husband and wife could contribute financially to the family. However, there are indications that women employed within the tourism sector earn less than their male counterparts, or occupy positions that are unskilled (Kinniard and Hall, 1994). Another related factor is the increased incidence of child labour in Egypt (Abu Stet and Elmhat 1996).

In agricultural societies, tourism led to a situation where males left the hinterlands in order to work in the tourism sector on the coastlines, leaving behind vast lands that could go to waste unless these were worked. In some countries this presented an opportunity for women to take up the economic activity themselves and create new forms of alternative tourism activity, namely agrotourism. In the Greek Islands and in Cyprus, cooperatives of agrotourism businesses run by women were set up with the assistance of female politicians (Cyprus Agricultural Company, n.d). These cooperatives offer accommodation in homes and meals, thus creating an alternative tourism experience that generates income and helps to sustain an activity that would have otherwise been lost.

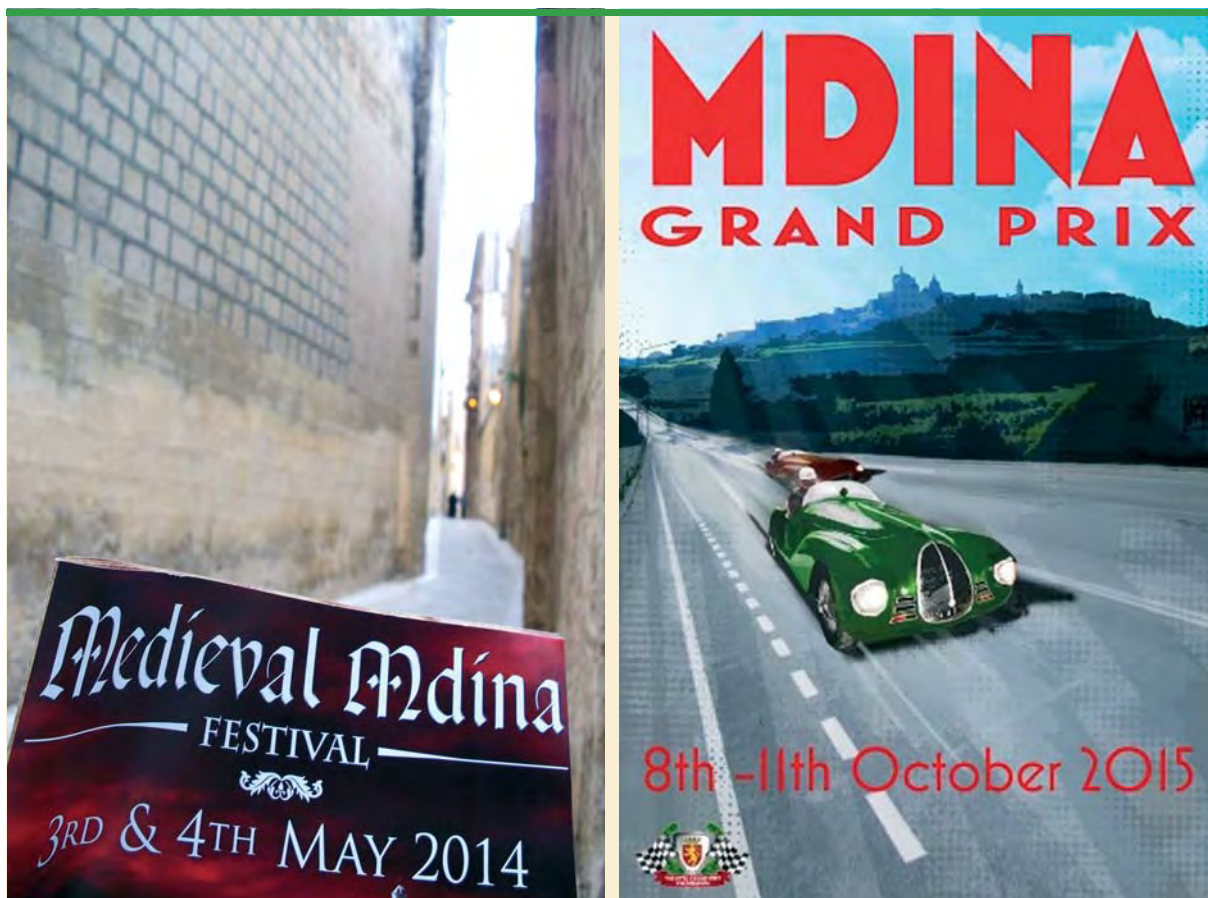
Tourism in the region has also been responsible for generating beneficial impacts. Primarily tourism has led to the creation of employment and it brings about economic and social development through the encouragement of education and training. Tourism has also been beneficial in helping certain Mediterranean societies to conserve or even promote further their cultural identity. One such example is crafts, which have, to a certain extent, boosted local economic systems (Bleasdale and Tapsell, 1999), revived traditional skills and crafts (Theuma, 1997) or created new crafts (Markwick 2001). However Bleasdale and Tapselle (ibid.) caution against the possible temptation of replacing traditional designs in order to incorporate others more in line with the visitors' requests – examples of such commoditisation have already been detected in certain protected communities within the region (Malim, 2001: 74). These points urge us to reflect that while tourism could be used in order to encourage economic prosperity, yet at the same time it needs to allow for the continuity and sustainability of traditional skills.

Another area which has been affected by tourism activity in the region, is the development of cultural activities such as festivals and events. Getz (1991, 1995) argued that festivals and events are a means through which economic activity could be developed, moreover, festivals and events help tourism destination to promote themselves and assert their cultural identity. The Mediterranean countries are well equipped to provide such a cultural activity and can allow visitors to experience a range of festivals and events ranging from religious to cultural (see Boissevain, 1991; Centre for Cultural Heritage Preservation, 2004; and Novelli, 2004). Again, the danger that such events can become corrupted due to the over commercialisation of the event itself remains an issue (Greenwood, 1989; Cremona, 2001).

Food is another cultural aspect whose fate has changed as a result of tourism activity. Hjalagar and Antonioli Corigliano (2000) argue that food plays an important role in creating destination images. Mediterranean food and diet need very little introduction as the region is renowned for its culinary diversity and richness (Wright, 1999). Since 2010, Mediterranean food has been recognised as a World Immaterial Heritage by UNESCO which makes it imperative that it is

protected from external challenges and dilution in quality (Xavier Medina, 2011). The fate of food in a number of cultures has indeed been affected by tourism activity. In Malta, for example, restaurant culture was an alien concept since food was mostly consumed at home. Thus with the onset of mass tourism activity, visitors were provided with a predominantly British or continental cuisine, whilst Maltese cuisine continued to thrive in the home. However, the exposure to more continental tourists and their quest for Maltese food has led to a re-evaluation of local culinary traditions (Theuma, 2004). Similarly, Alcock (1999) describes how in Mallorca, an interest by visitors for healthy vegetarian diets has urged local chefs and restaurant owners to revisit traditional Mallorcan cuisine leading to its revival. Moreover, food tourism presents an alternative route to the development of niche tourism, at the same time sustaining local economic structures. In analysing wine tourism events in Apulia (Puglia) in Italy, Novelli, (2004) outlines how this activity is used to create a new image for the region while at the same time promoting wine-related activities with visits to cellars and wine production structures.

This section has outlined the main physical, social and cultural impacts of tourism on communities with a focus on the Mediterranean region. It is evident that due to its rapid development in the region, tourism has left physical impacts on a fragile environment. The social and cultural fabric of Mediterranean societies has also been effected. Nevertheless, it has been shown that the region has also benefited from tourism in that it has rediscovered aspects of cultural identity which would have otherwise been lost.



Two important annual tourism events organised in Mdina and its environs

Left: The Medieval Mdina Festival which evokes Mdina's historical past

Right: The Mdina Grand Prix which brings together vintage cars that take part in a race in the streets outside the walls of Mdina

Methodology

The study conducted for this paper is based on the European Tourism Indicators System (ETIS) tool for Sustainable Management at Destination Level, prepared by DG Growth (formerly known as DG Enterprise and Industry). This tool provides tourism stakeholders with a toolkit to measure sustainability impacts and benchmark progress and performance in the future (DG Enterprise and Industry, 2013). It measures tourism impacts on a tourism destination level and takes into consideration the environmental, economic, social and cultural impacts on this destination. ETIS is composed of 67 indicators (27 core and 40 optional) divided into four sustainability pillars: Management Impacts; Economic Value Impacts; Social and Cultural Impacts; and, Environmental Impacts.

The study conducted in Mdina included a tourism impact study which was carried out between February 2014 and February 2015. The questionnaires were designed on the ETIS sustainable tourism indicator tool in order to create questions applicable to the different stakeholders in Mdina including the police, the Local Council, residents, the business community, cultural attractions and visitors. For the sustainability research, 238 respondents, consisting mainly of international visitors, were selected using the random sampling method at various entry/exit points in Mdina (there are only 3 entry/exit points into the walled city). Another 38 questionnaires were administered to Mdina residents. Questionnaires included closed ended questions that reflected the ETIS indicator toolkit. For the tourism business community which included restaurants, bars, and souvenir shops, and cultural attractions which comprised museums and audio visual attractions, 36 in-depth interviews were conducted. Given that in Mdina there is only one hotel within the walled space, a separate in-depth interview questionnaire was designed specifically to address the hotel accommodation sector. Data compiled from the questionnaires was then processed and analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS).

Mdina: A Silent City, a Jewel in the Crown, a Museum Town, or a Living City?

Mdina, has a very long history as a fortified town. Originally established in the Punic period (starting in 700 BC), it served as Malta's principal, and only, town until the arrival of the Knights of St John. The Order being a maritime power opted to move the seat of administration to the maritime village of Birgu upgrading it to a harbour town. Mdina today qualifies as a city on the basis of its important historical attributes. It is considered as a major historic and cultural city, one attracting about 90% of the total visitor arrivals in Malta every year (MTA, 2013). This is a huge influx of tourists especially when considering that in Mdina there are only 237 residents (NSO 2011), a gradual but steady drop from the 325 residents of 1992. In the mid-1990s, Boissevain and Sammut (1994) had indicated that the residents had been feeling like they were being obliged to sacrifice their privacy and tranquillity for the national good without being given any compensation neither by the government nor by the tour operators. Twenty years down the line, the residential population of Mdina has declined by 25% whilst tourist facilities have increased by more than 365% in certain areas.

Fig. 1 shows the demographic fluctuations of Mdina over the past 110 years. Mdina was always a small town constrained by its fortifications which restricted its physical expansion. Mdina’s population numbers were affected through time by elements including its proximity to Ta’ Qali military airdrome used especially during World War Two, the nearby Mtarfa living quarters for military personnel and their families, and by changes in its legal boundaries. Living in Mdina was not always seen as beneficial since within the town there was a hospital for Tuberculosis patients, and people felt this to be a threat to their health. Mdina started to gain in popularity as a tourism destination from 1957 onwards (Theuma 2002). Mdina itself was known for certain craft items and its hotel (Boissevan and Sammut 1994).

Census Year	Population
1901	304
1911	482
1921	816
1931	982
1948	1384
1957	823
1967	988
1985	421
1995	377
2005	278
2011	237

Figure 1: Population in Mdina since 1901
 (Source NSO: Overview of total population of Mdina: Census since 1901)

As the role of the city shifted from a residential to a more touristic function, the nature of facilities within the city itself changed. Fig. 2 presents the facilities within Mdina in 1994 and in 2015. This table brings out some interesting developments but also some worrying concerns. There has been a major increase in tourism-related facilities, whilst those facilities that served the local resident population have ceased to exist. Moreover, despite an increase in outlets selling souvenirs, one of the two outlets manufacturing traditional crafts and artisan work (a guild) is no longer operative. One has to mention that the increase in heritage attractions is a positive one since the outlets that have started to operate in these years are ones that are intrinsically related to the city itself, hence giving the visitors an enhanced experience of the place.

FACILITIES	1994	2015	% increase or decrease
Hotels	1	2*	+ 200%
Bars / Catering Establishments	2	7	+350%
Restaurants	3	11	+367%
Souvenir/Gift Shops	4	10	+250%
Heritage Attractions	4	12	+300%
Chapels/ Churches/ Cathedral	4	4	=
Tourist Information Offices	0	1	+100%
Police Station	1	1	=
Grocery Shop	1	0	-100%
Traditional Crafts / Artisans	2	1	-50%
Petrol Service Station**	2	2	=

* The second hotel is located outside the Mdina walls and was established post-1994.

** Situated outside the walled city.

Figure 2: Facilities within the walled town of Mdina in 1994 and 2015
(Sources: Boissevain and Sammut (1994); Theuma et al (2015))

The first editions of the Mdina festivals held during the 1992-1994 were a principal cause of concern for the residents. These events created major disturbances and were deemed to be an intrusion on the serenity of the residents (Boissevain and Sammut, 1994; Boissevain 1996). Today Mdina is host to two major events that have somehow become synonymous with the city itself. The first is the Medieval Mdina Festival, which is a festival that brings together re-enactors and is intended to highlight Mdina's medieval past. The event has now become a permanent fixture in the Maltese events calendar. It is worth noting that this event has a major input from the Local Council, something that the previous festivals did not.

The second major festival is the Mdina Grand Prix – a four day event held in October which uses the Mdina backdrop for classic car racing and a number of related events. This festival is a major event that attracts a number of classic car collectors from around the world, giving Mdina added value.

This change in attitude tends to indicate that the community is slowly starting to embrace these events, rather than reacting negatively to them (Theuma et al, 2015). Mdina and its residents have adapted to the intense attention that their city gets during these events, and although the monitoring of the situation is still advocated, it appears that there is consensus among the stakeholders within the city that it is their role to uphold the city and participate fully in these events. A major change that has occurred during the past 20 years is that the Local Council is in favour of, rather than against, such events and this has enabled the city to endorse and accommodate such events better.

There are a number of major issues that need to be addressed but which are beyond the scope of this paper. Mdina's architectural heritage makes it an ideal place for historic festivals; however, the issue of authenticity regarding such 'invented festivals' still remains. Mdina's concern as a cultural city being presented as a tourism product focusses on the authenticity of the offer. Mdina's architectural and historical characteristics are still very much tangibly present. Yet, when it comes to festivals, re-enactments and events that propose to make Mdina's cultural value accessible to tourists, a question at once comes up as to how representative these are of Mdina's authentic heritage. One may legitimately enquire about the level of faithful representation of the reconstructions of the city's historical past which are intended to bring forth how Mdina was at a particular historic time. The fundamental question comes out naturally: 'Is the fast-paced tourism activity commoditizing Mdina for economic reasons to the detriment of the real cultural value of the events, character and setting of those events?' The commercial nature of the tourism industry and the inaccurate depiction of the cultural heritage events raise questions regarding the level of authenticity reached by these tourism oriented manifestations.

Despite the strong role that tourism has in Mdina, the locality does not have a tourism sustainability plan and it is not represented by a pilot site management organisation. There are 41% of the residents that have claimed that they have a role or are involved in the planning of tourism activities within their city. Although the percentage is relatively low, this is still quite significant since tourism activities are not included within the current remit of Local Councils; hence the fact that members of the community feel that they are participating indicates that the locality is forward looking and understands that unless there is full endorsement by the community, very little can be done.

In the study conducted in the 1990s, the Mdina resident community had shown discontent with the way tourism activity was carried on within their locality. Residents complained bitterly about the constant flow of visitors going round their tiny city, at times rendering them like objects to be gazed at (cf. Urry, 2002). One resident even commented that "we are not carpets" (Boissevain and Sammut, 1994). Despite this imbalance between tourist and resident numbers, Mdina residents today claim that, overall, they are satisfied with tourism in their locality albeit with some minor differences from one to the other. When one takes a look at their response according to the seasons, for spring 84.4% claimed to be satisfied, for summer it was 78.1%, for autumn then, the positive response was 75%, while for winter this reached 71.9%. The relationship of the residents with tourism seems to be ambivalent however, since it was less than half of the population (46.2%) that fully agreed with the statement that they



Mdina has lost its traditional businesses - the Guilders shop has closed down and the city is also losing its peace due to the large number of tourists every day

were satisfied with the residents' involvement in the planning and development of tourism in Mdina. Another 38.5% of the residents claimed not to have an opinion on this, meaning that they were neither positively nor negatively moved. Lastly, 15.4% expressed themselves in disagreement with the statement.

Residents were asked about the most popular events in Mdina and which of those events they deemed to be most authentic and thus reflected their local cultural traditions (Fig. 3, Fig. 4). The event scoring highest among the locals was the Medieval Festival, the annual event mentioned above and organized by various tourism stakeholders in Malta including Malta Tourism Authority, re-enactment groups, cultural and tourism attractions.

Please mention biggest events held in Mdina	Frequency	Percentage
Medieval Festival	29	87.9
Religious Feasts	15	45.5
Concerts	11	33.3
Shooting of Movies	8	24.2
Activities in local council premises	3	9.1

Figure 3: Most popular cultural tourism events in Mdina

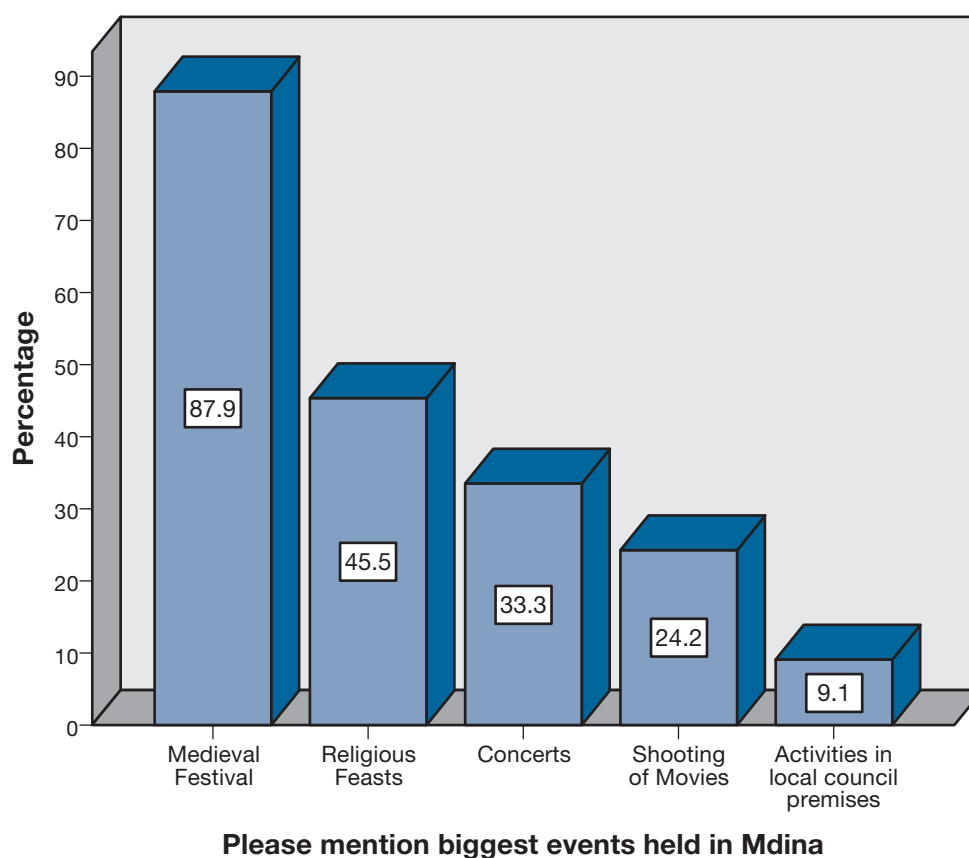


Figure 4: Most popular cultural tourism events in Mdina

When the question was put regarding which event best related to local culture and tradition in Mdina, 64.3% of the residents considered religious events to be the most related to their heritage. This shows that despite the fact that the most popular events are the ones organized by stakeholders from outside Mdina’s local community and are very popular since they are mostly advertised and visited by tourists, on the other hand the ceremonies and events that most represent the traditions of the local community are the ones that are the ‘living ceremonies’ practised by the residents of the place. The question that begs an answer here would be: ‘Is Mdina’s tourism product moving towards a commercialized organized offer or is it still being true to the local cultural traditions of the place?’

Indicate which events are based on the local tradition and culture	Frequency	Percentage
Medieval Festival	6	42.9
Religious Feasts	9	64.3
Shooting of Movies	1	7.1
Classic Car Race	2	14.3
Flower Festival	2	14.3

Figure 5: Cultural tourism events based on local tradition and culture

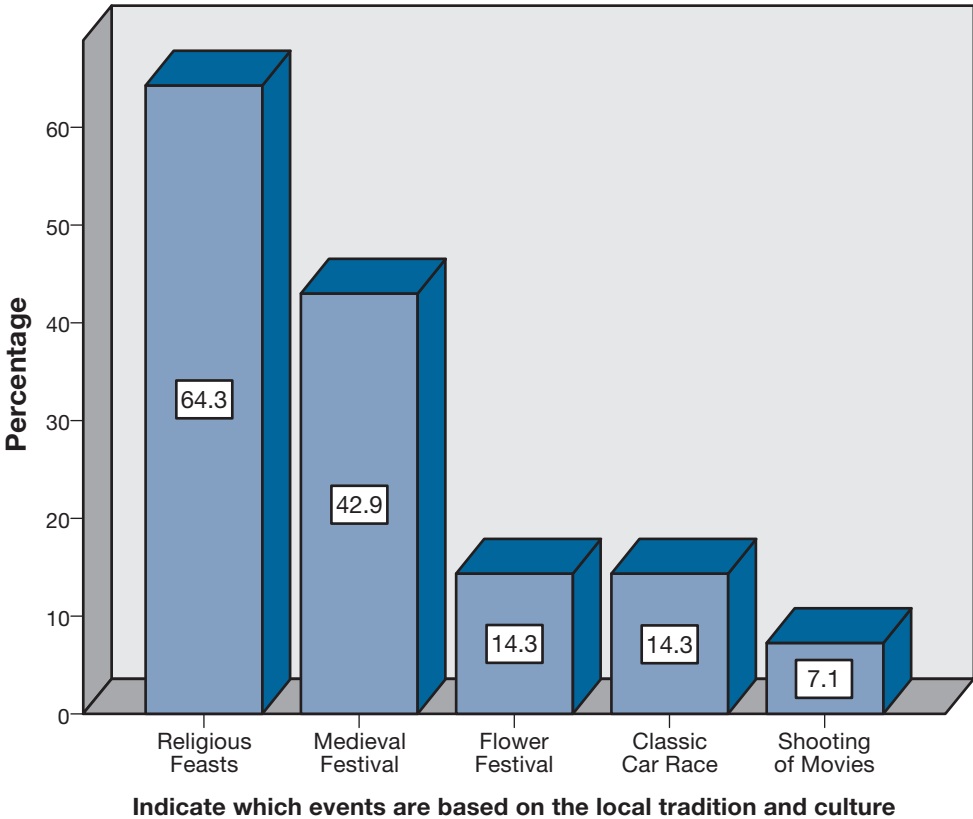


Figure 6: Cultural tourism events based on local tradition and culture

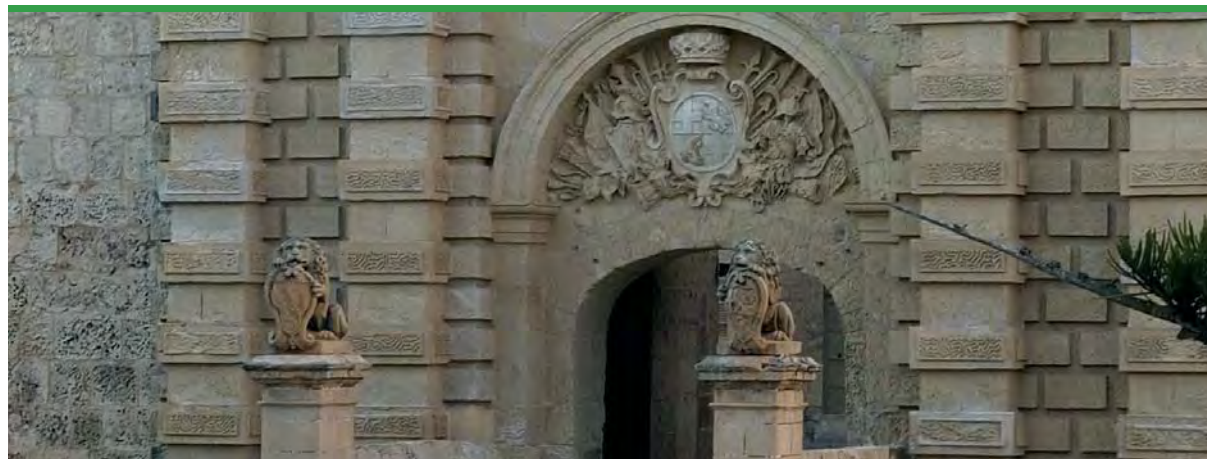
The Visitor

During the data collection phase, the sample of respondents was derived from various parts of the world. The highest number (25%) were from the UK and the second highest came from Italy (20.4%). The visitors were mainly from continental Europe, however there were also respondents from North America (4%), Australia (2%), South America (1%) and Asia (0.5%). This distribution of visitors generally reflects the distribution of visitors to the Maltese Islands. From the sample population of visitors, 22% stated that they had visited Mdina in the past 30 years, with 83% of the visitors to the city reporting that they were very satisfied with their experience in Mdina.

Although Mdina has two accommodation facilities, one within the city walls and one just outside the walls close to the town of Rabat, most of the visitors to Mdina are day visitors who come either on organised tours or on their own. Our sample was composed of 98.3% day visitors and 0.7% overnight stays. Most visitors spent an average of 3 hours touring the city, whilst it was only 7% (the 0.7% are included here) who spent 5 hours or more. Compared with what the city has to offer this is relatively low. Fig. 7 outlines the average time spent by visitors in Mdina.

Time spent (hrs)	Percentage of Visitors
1	13
2	30
3	36
4	14
5 or more	7
TOTAL	100

Figure 7: Time spent in Mdina



The Vilhena lions and the baroque entrance of Mdina

Visitor expenditure went on accommodation, transportation, food and drinks, shopping, entertainment, and entrance to museums, amongst others. The total per capita expenditure for a visitor to the Maltese Islands is of €910 (MTA 2014). Since most of the visitors were day trippers, our data does not include average spend on accommodation within or outside the city. The expenditure by visitors to Mdina ranges between €200 and less than €25, with the majority, that is 72%, claiming that they spent less than €25 during their visit to Mdina. This might be explained in relation to the relatively short stay by tourists with most remaining on site for about 3 hours while only very few stay for half a day or more.

The tourist spend was then matched to the length of stay. Fig. 8 and Fig. 9 clearly show that notwithstanding the length of stay being less than 1 hour, or 5 hours and more, the majority of visitors still spent less than €25 per head. Only 4 (1.68%) visitors out of 238 were overnight visitors.

How much did you spend per person per day during your stay in Mdina? (incl. transport, accommodation, food & drink, shopping, entertainment, other services)		Visitor spending			Total
		less than €25	€25-€50	€50 or more	
Length of stay at Mdina?	1 hour	26	2	2	30
	2 hours	61	7	2	70
	3 hours	66	15	3	84
	4 hours	17	10	5	32
	5 hours or more	10	6	0	16
Total		180	40	12	232

Figure 8: Length of stay and average spend

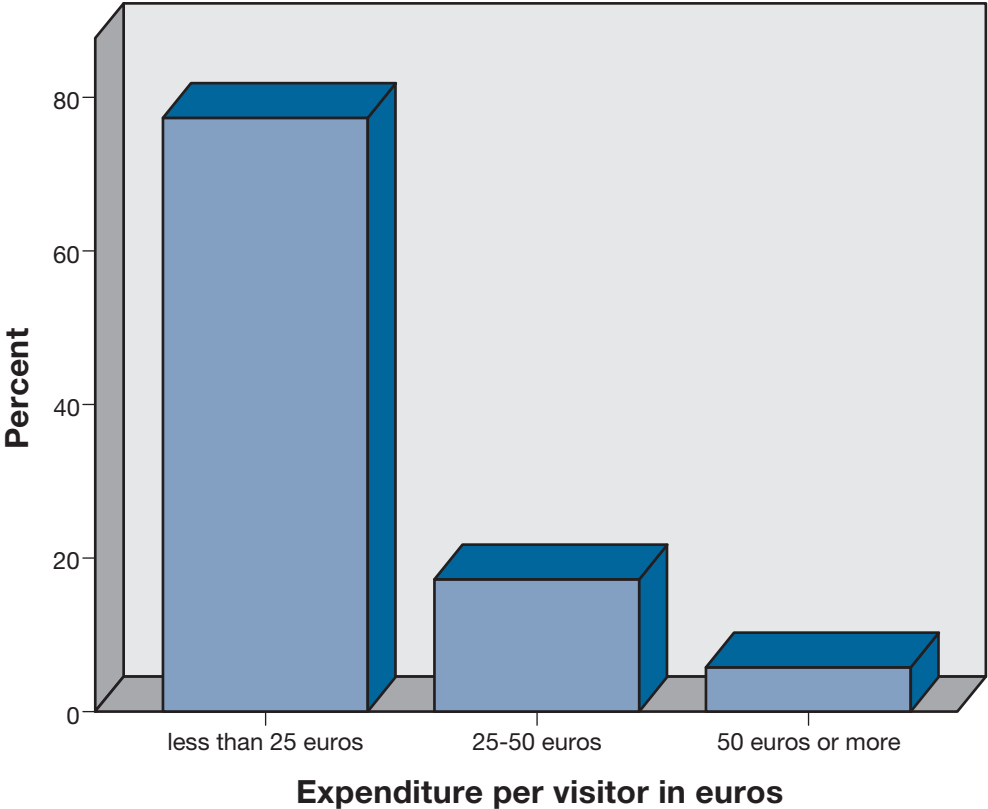


Figure 9: Average spend per visitor

From the tourist sample in this study, the most preferred attractions in the city were the Cathedral (40.7%) and the architectural landscape of the Mdina streets (24%). On the other hand 19.1% of visitors preferred to just walk through the winding streets of Mdina. Museums were chosen by 11.4% of the visitors; heritage homes by 4.5%; whilst St Paul's Catacombs (which are in nearby Rabat) were preferred by 2.1%.

Employment in Tourism

Tourism related entities in Mdina generate employment for 456 persons split up as follows: 69% are employed on a full-time basis, 26% on a part-time basis; 4.8% are seasonal employees, and during the time of our research, 0.2% of the employees were classified as trainees. More than half of the tourism related entities have a male manager (57.1%); 34.3% of the establishments are run by female managers, whilst 3.3% of the establishments have both male and female managers. When it comes to employees, 34.3% of the establishments have predominantly male employees in customer service, whilst 48.6% of the establishments have females employed in customer services; 14.3% of the establishments have an equal number of males and females in their customer relations section whilst 2.9% do not have any employees in customer relations.

The paper has so far focused on the relationship of locals with tourism activity in the city of Mdina. The remaining part will address the way in which tourism stakeholders, and in particular heritage attractions and other service providers, are addressing the carbon footprint and sustainability issues.



Religion is a central activity which represents the people of Mdina best - the interior of St Paul's Cathedral (Photo by: Mario Galea - viewingmalta.com)

Tourism Related Establishments

The results from our study show that tourism enterprises and cultural attractions mostly source food and drinks to service tourists through importation. These food and drink services were categorised into three groups: foods and drinks which are sourced from the primary local area of Mdina, Rabat and Dingli (a village which is close to Rabat); foods and drinks which are sourced from the secondary local area including Malta; and foods and drinks which are imported from foreign providers. The study shows that most foods and drinks are imported, with the majority of the consumables, 40-60%, being imported from abroad, 20-40% being sourced from Malta, and 0-20% being brought from the primary local areas of Mdina, Rabat and Dingli.

Like other tourism SMEs, tourism and cultural attractions, are starting to become more aware of the use of sustainable activities such as environmental and/or sustainable certification as part of their tourism management and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) policy. Results indicate that up till now the uptake of such initiatives is relatively low with only 25% of these entities stating that they already uphold a CSR policy in their organisation, with 31.6% of these stating that they contribute towards organising educational activities and 26.3% contributing towards conversation on biodiversity. At 10.5% each, the organisations contribute towards 'green' activities such as planting of trees and also towards heritage landscape protection.

Despite changes in the way business is conducted, Mdina tourism stakeholders still operate individually rather than collectively with only 17% stating that they participate in cooperative activities. Such cooperative activities include involvement in associations of tourism enterprise and common promotional advertising programmes. This lack of community efforts to promote sustainability measures from a community point of view is not mitigated by local authorities since, from the in-depth interview with the Local Council it resulted that Mdina does not have initiatives or policies in place to promote the purchase of local trade products and/or fair products and services.



The Medieval Mdina Festival 2011
(Photo by: Ray Attard - viewingmalta.com)

When it comes to the internal environment of these same organisations, such concerns were indeed considered. In fact, 69.4% have a positive environmental conscience with regard to waste separation with 66.7% switching to energy saving lighting including LEDs.

Despite the positive environmental culture within organisations, renewable energy sources are not on the high end. When asked whether the enterprise or cultural attractions benefited from renewable energy sources such as solar panels, solar heating and other sources, 86% said they do not have any such environmental systems. It was however pointed out, that Mdina, being a city of high heritage value made it more difficult for them to install exterior systems, such as solar panels, due to visual pollution. Also, the Planning Authority of Malta had strict regulations on what should be permitted on the walls and the roofs of such buildings.

Conclusion

Mdina is a city with many facets. It is a tourist destination of the highest order. It is also a residential city where people go about their daily life. It is a small walled city and therefore has restricted space and little where to expand. Being a heritage site also has its consequences which are not always easy to remedy. It is evident that Mdina is now bearing the brunt of its own popularity and tourist attractiveness; indeed of its uniqueness. Its residents have to cope with pressures which they did not bring about themselves but which they have to live with whether they like them or not. Escaping from one's own prominence is never an easy task and Mdina knows that this is also its destiny. The question revolves around how long Mdina would be able to continue to weather the pressure of people, needs, and exigencies created by an all year round strong and aggressive tourism activity.



One medieval corner in Mdina - Palazzo Santa Sofia

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