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# Sieving tourism destinations: Decision-making processes and destination choice implications

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## Abstract:

**Purpose:** To introduce and define the concept of sieving tourism destinations as an umbrella term representing faster decision-making processes compared to destination choice models, and to demonstrate its usefulness for both sides of consumption and production of tourism attractions.

**Methods:** Fast decision at the consumers' demand side is demonstrated via an exploratory graphic model. Producers' supply side sieving is measured by observing data elimination on two public serving internet platforms compared to a baseline taken from special interest group tour operators representing Jewish heritage attractions in Sicily and Thessaloniki.

**Results:** On the demand side, nowadays market conditions enable destination choice decision making in a few simple steps often interpreted as spontaneous, intuitive, or irrational. Quantitative analyses on the supply side provided measurable sieving ratios. They reveal careful partial sieving performed at local level editorship, while much harsher sieving occurs on social media platforms. This is interpreted as a market failure related to niche and special interest groups attractions.

**Implications:** The demand side findings call for targeted marketing distinguishing customers not only by income but also by temperament, mood, and personality. The supply side findings call for careful examination of the conditions for inclusion and exclusion from the list of attractions as well as the need to remedy the concealment of minor attractions from social media platforms.

**Keywords:** destination choice, sieving ratio, Sicily, Thessaloniki, Jewish heritage tourism

**JEL Classification:** C44, L83, Z39

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

Sieving is a useful concept in engineering and natural sciences (e.g., Sainju 2006). It is also widely used in archaeology to indicate the process of separating objects of historical significance from dust (e.g., Mays et al. 2012). Sieving has lately penetrated information science with data sieving or data mining (e.g., Pyo et al. 2002; Lu et al. 2012). Although the search for data, relevant to visitors for destination choice (DC), lodging, sightseeing, and itinerary construction involves a process of data sieving, it is surprising that this concept is essentially absent from the tourism literature.

Sieving is not defined here in its physical meaning but as an everyday mental cognitive process, carried out consciously or unconsciously. Here it is related to separating and selecting 'wanted' images or attractive places from among many others which are regarded momentarily as less relevant or less interesting. Since the late 1980s the demand side sieving was treated in the framework of Destination Choice (DC) models (e.g., Woodside & Lysonski, 1989; Um & Crompton, 1990). Concurrently, Mansfeld (1992) pioneered the stages of a behavioral model for travel decision making.

The early DC literature leans heavily on consumer purchase behavior studies (e.g., Nicosia, 1966; Belk 1975). Nowadays it became clear that decision-making related to the purchasing of services, and specifically for tourism services, differs greatly from the purchase of tangible goods (e.g.



Gilbert, 1991; Sirakaya & Woodside, 2005). While DC models for the purchase of services fit the demand side, the suggested sieving process related to sorting and selecting relevant sightseeing attractions has the advantage of encompassing both demand and supply.

Accordingly, the objectives of this study are, first, to discuss the usefulness and suitability of the sieving concept to the current state of the tourism industry; second, to suggest a preliminary demand-side sieving model, and third to exhibit the supply side sieving process related to visitors searching for unique attractions.

The first section of this paper reviews tourism literature on DC and argues for supplementing it with the sieving concept. The review also presents literature reasoning reductions in the supply of attractions on official websites. The second section presents recent changes occurring in the tourism industry and analyzes their impact on travel decision making, while the third section outlines the sieving procedure using a hypothetical schematic model for sieving travel destinations from the demand side point of view. These are followed by a methodological section designed to work out real-world examples of sieving occurring on the supply side using case studies of attractions offered to a special interest group (SIG) of Jewish heritage (JH) travelers in Sicily and Thessaloniki. Following the presentation of the findings, the article concludes by discussing the contribution of the paper and its drawbacks within a broader perspective.

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## 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

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### 2.1 Travel destination choice literature

Several subfields in tourism dealt with the sieving of information without using this term. The main areas are related to destinations and lodging choices and itinerary construction. Sirakaya & Woodside (2005) provide a state-of-the-art review of travel decision making models. They classified these models into behavioral and choice-set approaches. In their concluding section, they indicate that “the literature on behavioral decision making suggests that decision-making styles are individualistic. Therefore, developing a model that fits all decision-makers and every decision situation may not be realistic” (p. 828). Nonetheless, in search for an appropriate verb, they seem to struggle in describing mental-behavioral sieving by using such phrases as ‘funnel-like’ and ‘narrow down’ – e.g., “The [destination] selection process is a funnel-like one, in that travelers narrow down choices among alternatives” (p. 823 and again on p. 825).

Studies on travel DC published at the end of the 1980s and 1990s, concentrated on modeling mindsets involved in selecting a single country as a potential destination (Woodside & Lysonski, 1989). Um & Crompton (1990) suggested a DC model based on the fact that “potential travelers generally have limited knowledge about the attributes of a destination which they have not previously visited” (p. 433). Consequently, they suggest a two-stage choice model that rests on the selection of a destination from an evoked set leaning on a wider awareness set. Although they argue against the presumption “that a decision-maker has an extensive information processing capacity” (p. 446),

their two-stage model still appears a bit complex for the decision-making process of nowadays ordinary travelers.

Crompton (1992) modified this destination choice model to include four sets of considerations for cases “when a non-routine, high-involvement type of decision process” is involved (p. 420). He acknowledges, that his well-structured four-set considerations flowchart is less suitable for the ‘low-involvement’ type of travelers. Sirakaya & Woodside (2005) support this distinction stating in “Proposition 5 [that] Level of involvement influences the decision rules used to arrive at the ultimate choice decision” (p. 826). Bargeman & van der Poel (2006) found in an empirical study “that the vacation decision-making processes are much less extensive and far more routinized than described in the rational choice models.”

Choice-set models are useful mainly for the selection of a single country, city, or resort area as a vacation destination. They are less useful, however, for selecting multi-destination vacation trips, and even less so for drafting plans for a multi-locational itinerary of attractions and activities geographically dispersed in a wide area. Choi et al. (2012) reviewed studies criticizing DC models along this vein. They indicate that “skepticism has been expressed by several researchers on their [the DC models] monolithic and deterministic view of the decision-making process (Dellaert, et al., 1998; Decrop 1999; Jeng & Fesenmaier 2002; Hyde 2004; Woodside & MacDonald 1994)” (p. 27). Choi et al. (2012) argues that DC models “cannot encompass multifaceted decisions and purchases, involving a great number of decisions made during the overall course of vacation planning” (p. 27). Chung & Petrick (2016) suggest a partial solution by using two distinct evaluation modes for single or multiple destinations.

Clearly, the main argument is that decisions related to traveling are not singular decision-making acts. On the contrary, as indicated by Hyde (2004) and Decrop & Snelders (2005), “there may exist a plurality of vacation decision-making processes” involved in the preparation and execution of a vacation trip (p. 28). Choi et al. (2012) demonstrate “that travel decision making [indeed] follows a multidimensional, ongoing sequence and is a hierarchical process” (p. 26). Smallman & Moore (2010) review DC literature and call for adapting “a complex process approach [that] accommodates both rationality and irrationality” (p. 417).

McCabe et al. (2016) join the above-cited critique and call for a radical reappraisal of tourist decision-making models. They challenge the assumption that all tourists follow a uniform pattern of decision making, and call for recognizing “the existence of fast, intuitive, affect-driven, and simplified decision-making processes”. The radical reappraisal is required also because “tourism plays a profoundly different role globally now in both the psychological as well as the social and cultural environment than it did previously” (p. 4). Consequently, they propose their revised dual-system model. The core of their model is based on Crompton’s (1992) distinction between low and high levels of involvement.

On the background of the reviewed criticism, including the call for reappraisal of the DC models, alongside with recent changes in the tourism industries (to be reviewed next), this paper calls for adopting another conceptual framework embodied under the umbrella of the suggested sieving process.

The notion of supply-side sieving or concealment of attractions received very little attention in the tourism literature. Sieving of tourism attractions on the supply side occurs when any media - printed or electronic - does not present some of the available resources located in a geographic area. The dissonant heritage paradigm (Tunbridge and Ashworth, 1996) may be regarded as a theory providing mental reasoning for societal disregard or concealment of heritage tourism resources associated with minorities or 'others'. In extreme cases, it may lead to the destruction of others' heritage resources (e.g., Isakhan & Shahab, 2020).

Two other practical lines of reasoning found in the literature may be used to explain sieving made in the supply of attractions. One of these is the fear of promoting trivial attraction sites which may generate feelings of disappointment and hence deterrence of future visitations (Andereck et al., 2006; Michalkó et al. 2015).

The second practical reason demanding exclusion of part of the attractions emerged in the realm of e-commerce. Such exclusion is required to avoid the pitfall known as the 'e-commerce consumer confusion problem' (Mitchell et al., 2004). Provision of too much information may lead to consumers' overloading and detachment. This "may take place when individuals are overwhelmed by an excessive amount of information, which can limit one's ability to process the information precisely" (Lu et al., 2016: 78). Content editors of guidebooks, brochures, and internet sites use their discretionary wisdom to include sites of interest and relevance to as many visitors as possible while insignificant sites of interest to only SIGs would most often be deleted.

The next section presents recent changes taking place in the tourism industry which have profoundly affected the way tourism attractions are chosen.

## 2.2 Recent changes affecting destination choice habits

Paradoxically, vacation decision making processes have become more complicated on the one hand and less so on the other. This is due to major changes taking place in the tourism industry and other related sectors during the last 30 years. These changes are summarized in Table 1. One of the major factors for the increased complexity is the multiplication of destinations. Middleton (1989) was an early voice forecasting oversupply of attractions for the 1990s powered by "a general assumption of continued rapid growth in the leisure market and a belief in the motivating power of heritage" (p. 229).

During the pre-Covid19 years, despite increased security concerns, it is not only that more countries adopted policies of welcoming tourists, but also more and more cities and towns polished their tourism assets and offered them for visitors (Benur & Bramwell, 2015). Deciding what to see and do became so perplexing that lately interactive computer programs and apps are made available to assist in preparing rational itineraries and traveling plans (De Choudhury et al., 2010; Roy et al., 2011; Broeder & Gkogka, 2020). For instance, an automated DC procedure has been suggested by Huang & Bian (2009) wherein a two-stage matching process is involved: estimating travelers' preferences and subsequently evaluating available tourist attractions.

It is argued here that the increased quantity and improved qualities of the inventory of attractive places, together with

several other factors that are to be outlined hereafter, requires a paradigmatic change regarding the DC process. This is not to say that behavioral and DC theoretical frameworks are flawed. People are still searching through 'initial consideration sets' and 'late consideration sets' (Crompton, 1992), applying awareness and evoked sets (Um & Crompton, 1990), using constructs embedded in their mind, or at least in the back of their minds. However, due to a list of major changes - namely the development of many types of tourism (such as urban, rural, nature, heritage, niche, etc.), the multiplication of destinations, dramatically improved access to travel information, decreasing costs of travel and hence increasing travel frequencies - less and fewer decisions of traveling fall into the "non-routine, high-involvement type of decision process" (Crompton, 1992: p. 420).

Moreover, potential travelers cannot be characterized anymore as having "limited knowledge about the attributes of [yet unvisited] destinations" (Um & Crompton, 1990: p. 433). It is rational to assume that improved access to information and reduction of travel costs make traveling more routine. This reduces the risk and stress which used to accompany the traveling DC process (Sirakaya & Woodside, 2005; McCabe et al., 2016).

Side by side with the proliferation of attractions and the multidimensional nature of travel decision-making processes, other factors that emerged during the last 20 or 30 years made travel decision-making easier than ever. It is argued here that these factors, listed in Table 1, facilitated changes in the vacation search procedures.

Perhaps most influential among these factors is the significantly reduced travel cost (e.g., Donzelli, 2010; Rey et al., 2011). In the past, the cost of an average international touring trip was comparable to the cost of a new car, while today it comes closer to the cost of a regular durable product. Moreover, a durable good is usually purchased for a time span of at least 2-3 years while the frequency of purchasing touring trips is much higher (Eugenio-Martin, 2003; Van Loon & Rouwendal, 2013). It is, therefore, reasonable to assume that the reduced costs did affect mental cognitive processes by which destinations are chosen.

Table 1: Changes affecting travel decision-making procedures, the 1990s vs. 2010s

Features	Destination Choice (the 1990s)	Sieving (the 2010s)	Sources
Tourist arrivals	0.524 Billion (1995)	1.341 Billion (2016)	<a href="https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/st.int.arvl">https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/st.int.arvl</a> Viewed, February 2020.
Decision's character	Singularity	Plurality	Hyde, 2004; Decrop and Snelders, 2005.
Where to go?	Mainly large cities or major attractions	Plentiful locations in more countries	Middleton, 1989 (Oversupply).
What to see and do?	Mainly major attractions	Numerous types of attractions	Benur & Bramwell, 2015 (Diversification).
Travel cost	Relatively Expensive	Significantly reduced	Donzelli, 2010; Rey et al., 2011.
Frequency of travel	Seldom	Frequent	Eugenio-Martin, 2003. Van Loon & Rouwendal, 2013.
Info sources	Guidebooks, travel agents, newspapers, etc.	Mainly Internet	Ho and Lee, 2007; Law et al., 2010; Jacobsen and Munar, 2012.
Scope	Demand	Demand & supply	Supply-side demonstrated in this study.

In the more affluent countries, international trips became rather routinely consumed products purchased annually twice, trice, or even at higher frequency (Van Loon & Rouwendal, 2013). This tendency makes the decision of traveling greatly different from the traditionally compared purchase of durable products. This difference appears to exist even if both carry the same price tag. In both cases, customers are looking for satisfaction. Yet, durable products are bought with the intention not to be concerned with their replacement, at least, in the short run. Travel decisions are just the opposite; once travelers return home, they are ready to start thinking, if not planning, their next trip. Furthermore, touring trips - unlike durable products - are sometimes realized as an impulsive spontaneous reaction to a need for travel (Laesser & Dolnicar, 2012; Rezaei et al., 2016).

The mental stress associated with decisions making on touring trips is further reduced by the spread of the World Wide Web (e.g., Ho & Lee, 2007; Law et al., 2010; Giannopoulos et al., 2020). The accumulation of information on the internet and its convenient use via search engines appear to greatly eliminate the fear of visiting Terra Incognita places. Conversely to Um & Crompton's (1990) assumption, cited above, these tools provide potential travelers with a great deal of knowledge about the attributes of yet unvisited destinations. Once doubts about the attributes of places are removed, the cost of travel is not too high, and touring trip is a frequently purchased commodity, the speed and methods by which decisions are reached is most often faster and simpler. Consequently, the sieving concept is suggested as a general framework within which to discuss what is seen as intuitive or impulsive travel decision-making processes.

The simpler DC procedure may have reached its apex with the coming of the instant era characterized by the massive use of instantaneous messaging platforms (e.g., Lei et al., 2020). In this respect, the impersonal booking of flights, hotel rooms, etc. on the internet, side by side with its instant approval, made travel DC not only easier than ever but also a mundane procedure especially so with the availability of cancelation options.

The aforementioned arguments are not claiming that everybody is applying the simpler sieving procedure. It is probably widespread among the younger and more affluent segments of society. Infrequent travelers, or people planning a major long-distance and long-duration trip, or a trip jointly organized for extended family members, may still be using DC constructs. However, the shorter and sometimes spontaneous pleasure trips appear to be more common. In these cases, decisions seem to be more intuitive and appear to be reached with less contemplation. Even travelers looking for "off the beaten track" destinations, activities and experiences, in fact, essentially tend to look for the available information coming from comparable sources through similar processes of selection and sieving (Novelli, 2005). Decision-making related to lodging has also been drastically simplified due to the use of versatile search engines like Airbnb, Booking.com, and others. As a matter of fact, these search engines apply various levels of sieving procedures ranking lodging opportunities by criteria such as cost, quality (stars), distance from focal points, and so on. The final decision made by travelers involves a secondary level of sieving from among the few most appropriate lodging candidates.

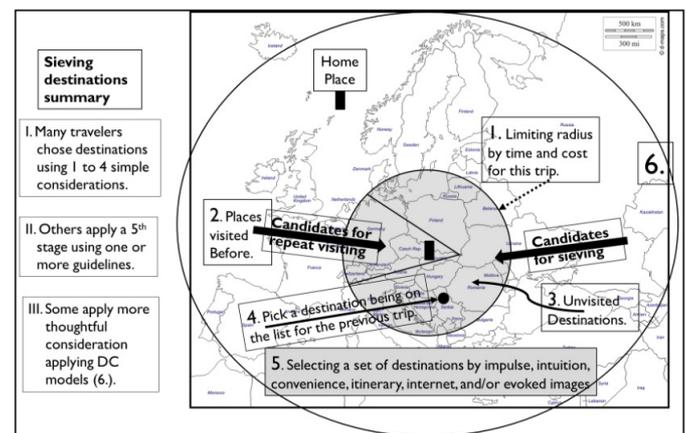
Given the criticism of DC rational modeling, combined with the ease of acquiring information on non-visited destinations (Rezaei et al., 2016), and the reduced cost, make the destination selection choice a more routine procedure for which the less committed sieving process seems to provide a more appropriate conceptual framework than the aforementioned DC models. Another shortcoming of the DC model lies in its treatment of the demand side only. Unlike the DC models, the sieving concept provides a wider canopy capable of taking care of both sides of the production and consumption of tourism attractions, as demonstrated in the next sections.

### 2.3 Outlining the demand-side sieving process

There is no intention to provide here a full-scale conceptualization of the sieving process involved in neither the selection of travel destination concerning the demand side nor the exposition of attractions on the supply side. The following is no more than a preliminary descriptive outline suggested to be further developed in the future. A hypothesized demand-side sieving process is schematically presented in Figure 1.

The sieving procedure seems to start with the most forbidding constraints – time and money budgets allocated for the next trip (Van Loon & Rouwendal, 2013; Nicolau & Ma's, 2006). Regularly, for any given level of traveling convenience, a balance between these two factors sets the radius or distance of destinations to be selected from. This radius is represented in Figure 1 by the inner small circle (see box 1). Places already visited inside this radius, represented graphically by the angular section, may be used for return visits (box 2), if desired (e.g., Alegre & Cladera, 2006).

Figure 1: Schematic representation of sieving attractions, the demand-side point of view (Baseline map source: Courtesy of d-maps.com, UK)



The remaining area contains yet unvisited destinations (box 3). However, according to Stewart & Vogt's (1999) case-based vacation planning theory, based on Hammond's viewing planning as a memory task (1989), future vacation trip planning rests largely on retrieval of previous knowledge and memories. Moreover, for many travelers, selecting a set of destinations may be a straightforward task. Often, they may pick a set being on their list of potential destinations as a second-best for the previous trip (box 4), or even as a first priority trip that could not be realized at that time.

It should be noted that during these three or four steps (box I) there was no need for a complex set of considerations for choosing destinations. Even in the absence of a previous list of unvisited but desired destinations, or if such list is ignored, the sieving procedure will go on selecting a set of destinations by one or few decision support techniques such as spontaneous feeling (Laesser & Dolnicar, 2012), intuition, impulse, convenience, favorite itinerary, internet assistance, and evoked images (boxes 5 and II). Utilizing one or more of these techniques may end-up in the selection of a set of desired destinations to be visited in the upcoming trip (Xiang & Fesenmaier, 2020). The use of these techniques still appears to leave potential travelers in the low-involvement zone (Crompton, 1992; McCabe et al., 2016) as much as cognitive and mental efforts are concerned.

The final decision along with the sieving procedure probably depends mainly on personal habits and preferences. It can be reached by consultations either with friends, partners for the current trip, travel agents, and/or by searching the web (Lei et al., 2020). It may depend on the fit of the set of activities available in these destinations to personal preferences. It may also depend on the feasibility of adjusting the desired itinerary to the allocated dates, and even to such subtleties as flight schedules (Wen et al., 2020). A flight schedule that better fits the personally convenient timetable may result in preferring a second-best destination.

Beyond any doubt, for some travelers and certain types of trips, a well-thought-out DC process (Um & Crompton, 1990) may be called upon. These types of trips are represented by the large circle in Figure 1 (boxes 6 and III), portraying an effort to go beyond the initial limiting factors of cost and time. However, these methods do not appear to be the prime decision-making tools for nowadays ordinary travelers (Sirakaya & Woodside, 2005; McCabe et al., 2016). These methods are probably called upon by some people for the more demanding trips.

Given the new conditions emerging in the tourism and flight industries outlined in Table 1, the presented sieving procedure helps to select the momentarily most appropriate trip without too much deliberation. This procedure is applied without fearing the loss of a rare opportunity since the temporarily rejected destinations can be visited shortly thereafter in one of the following trips.

Studies related to the quantification of the supply side sieving procedure are unavailable. The methodology presented in the next section is designed to provide an estimate of the decrease in the supply of attractions occurring during the sieving process. For comparative reasons, two supply-side case studies of sieving are exhibited following the presentation of the methodology.

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### 3 METHODOLOGY FOR MEASURING SUPPLY-SIDE SIEVING

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The aforementioned literature review (Tunbridge & Ashworth, 1996; Mitchell et al., 2004; Andereck et al., 2006; Michalkó et al., 2015) suggests that one cannot expect platforms representing destinations to exhibit a full list of all tourist attractions; the least significant ones are most often ignored. This section proposes an exploratory methodology for estimating just how much of the tourism assets are

excluded along the chain of attraction supply when moving from the particular to the general platforms, and therefore do not reach the attention of the ordinary customers (Wu, et al. 2018).

The suggested methodology (below) leans on resources of attractions available on the internet (e.g., Law, 2006; Choi, et al., 2007; Xiang & Gretzel, 2010). A chain of three types of websites are going to be used to assess the magnitude of the elimination of attractions on the supply side. Type one has to be well-targeted, all-inclusive websites in order to set up a baseline for comparison with the other more selective websites. Well-targeted webpages designed for members of SIGs or associations sharing a specific heritage, hobby, or profession appear to fulfill this condition; they simply tend to include even trivial attractions as long as they are relevant to the groups' interest. This is in congruence with the "authorized heritage discourse" model proposed by Smith (2006). According to this model, certain groups and stakeholders tend to highlight some specific elements, aspects, and representations of heritage for several reasons, including a perceived stronger appeal for their clients.

When one moves, however, from these types of pages to the second type of general internet platforms, such as municipal sites, it becomes clear that some of SIGs' information disappears for various reasons, including fear of dissatisfaction (Andereck et al., 2006; Michalkó et al. 2015), and the e-commerce consumer confusion problem (Mitchell et al., 2004; Lu et al., 2016). These reasons cause municipal site editors to adopt a selective approach resulting in the elimination of what they perceive as minor attractions. The number of eliminated attractions, compared with the potential baseline, is the figure needed to establish the sieving rate.

Hence, the methodology for measuring the sieving of attractions on the supply side suggests starting with a list of attractions taken from type one webpages covering all sites relevant to a certain group and using it as a baseline. Then, the attractions coverage on type two platforms at the same location is compared to this baseline. The number of eliminated attractions divided by their overall quantity appearing at the baseline provides a measure of the sieving intensity or the sieving ratio. Differences in the magnitude of this ratio among different places and websites allow performing comparative analysis of the degree of sieving. It will allow also searching for the reasons generating these differences and forming policies to overcome the misrepresentation of the local attractions.

The following demonstration of sieving on the supply side utilizes lists of Jewish heritage (JH) attractions as a baseline (Ashworth, 1966; Corsale & Krakover, 2019; Krakover, 2019). This is a typical niche segment gradually turning into an increasingly standardized mainstream tourism product and thus attracting more and more attention and investments from public institutions and private operators (Gruber, 2002). This SIG and its related tourism assets are listed in detail on internet sites of tour guides and tour operators specializing in Jewish heritage tourism (JHT). Two different geographic places were surveyed by the authors for drafting the baseline lists; one is the island of Sicily where the Jewish relics offered by tour operators are distributed among ten towns and cities. These places represent municipalities exhibiting one or more Jewish related relics of any kind considered as worthwhile visiting elements by at least one JHT tour operator. The other

geographic place is the city of Thessaloniki, Greece, where practically almost all JHT resources are concentrated in the central districts. The data for Sicily were collected in 2017 while for Thessaloniki in 2019. It is expected that more of the JHT assets will be excluded in Sicily than in the case of Thessaloniki due to their different pattern of dispersion.

The whole island of Sicily was selected as a study area, since places scattered all over the island used to host large Jewish communities from the Roman through the Aragonese domination (Renda, 1993). In 1492, due to the Alhambra Decree, the Jews were expelled from the island. Consequently, JH in Sicily was largely concealed, neglected, destroyed, or forgotten. Currently, more than five centuries later, the relics of JH are going through a gradual rediscovery and are increasingly seen as significant tourist assets (Corsale & Krakover, 2019).

JHT resources in Thessaloniki are composed of physical remnants and remembrance sites attesting to the flourishing Jewish community residing in the city for centuries under the Ottoman Empire and the Greeks since 1912. The physical remnants are those assets that survived the great fire of 1917 and then the Nazi occupation during WWII. The remembrance sites are those commemorating the city's 45,000 Jews that were deported by the Nazi regime to death camps in occupied Poland in 1943. Of the survivors, only a few returned to live in the city (Sidiropoulou, 2018).

The lists of JHT assets in both places is composed of all those appearing on the internet sites of four specialized tour operators. The compiled lists of sites, as well as links to the utilized tour operator webpages, are portrayed in Tables 2 and 3. These lists provide baselines for comparing how much of the JHT assets are excluded when moving to other more general websites.

For the examination of the first level of sieving, websites of each one of the ten municipalities in Sicily having JH attractions were checked to find out which attractions appearing in the tour operator pages are published in the municipal internet sites and how many of them have disappeared. In Greece, the Thessaloniki Tourism Organization (T.T.O.) website was used. On the one hand, the municipal interest is to exhibit as many sites as possible on their webpages to serve a maximum range of potential visitors. Due to the reasons indicated above, type two websites content editors apply a certain level of censorship removing attractions they consider to be less attractive.

Social media internet sites, hosting user-generated content (UGC), play a rather neutral role in the selection processes, as they neither represent SIGs nor the municipalities involved (Miguéns, et al., 2008; Christou, 2010; Sigala et al., 2012); thus, they appear to be appropriate candidates for third type websites required for the calculation of a second-level sieving ratio. In fact, social media sites are driven by demand. The inclusion of attractions and their scaling depends on the posted opinions of actual visitors (Munar, 2011). However, once the content is posted, it presents the local supply in a scaled manner. Practically, it functions as a means for potential visitors to make decisions concerning where to visit and what to see and do at any destination (Dwityas & Briandana, 2017).

Among the social media websites, TripAdvisor has a remarkably large and geographically widespread consumers' ranking of 'what to do and see' section (Lee et al., 2011).

Therefore, it is selected as the third type of website for measuring the second level of supply-side sieving of attractions at the aforementioned destinations. At this level, sieving is expected to be harsher than at the previous level since TripAdvisor is a global platform serving international visitors (Miguéns et al., 2008). As such, major attractions are overemphasized while trivial attractions related to niche tourism or SIGs are obscured (Wu et al., 2018).

The omission or reduction of information when moving from one type of website to the other provides a notion of the sieving process occurring at the domain of the supply. Based on the above-cited literature, it is hypothesized that severe sieving of touring sites takes place when one moves from the overall original baseline to the municipal websites and even more so on the social media platforms. The following section presents the practice of calculating sieving rates by applying this methodology alongside the findings and results obtained for Sicily and Thessaloniki.

As mentioned above, the pertinent websites ascribable to the three categories (SIG tour operators, institutional municipal pages, and TripAdvisor sections), for the two case studies, were thus specifically targeted, identified, browsed and compared by the authors in order to extrapolate the relevant information and data.

#### 4 FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

The sieving results are presented alongside the data in Tables 2 and 3. Table 2 portrays results of the three types of internet surveys related to all municipalities in Sicily for whom JHT relics are recorded in tour operator internet sites. In this Table, the total number of Jewish touring elements detailed in tour operator itineraries for all municipalities sums up to thirty-two (3rd column). This figure is used as a baseline and it is higher by twelve over the JHT sites mentioned on municipal websites which sum up to twenty only (4th column). The ratio of 12 to 32 provides an overall sieving ratio of 0.375.

*Table 2: Jewish heritage sites appearing on tour operator webpages, Municipal webpages and TripAdvisor, Sicily, 2017*

Location in Sicily	Cities and towns	No. of JH attractions on tour operators' websites*	No. of JH sites appearing on municipal websites	No. of JH Sites on TripAdvisor
West	Palermo	8	4	0
	Erice	2	2	0
	Marsala	1	0	0
	Trapani	2	2	0
East	Syracuse	7	5	1
	Catania	2	2	0
	Taormina	3	0	0
	Messina	4	1	1
Center & South	Agira	2	4	1
	Agrigento	1	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>10 places</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Sieving ratio</b>		<b>Baseline</b>	<b>12/32=0.375</b>	<b>29/32=0.906</b>

\* Surveyed Jewish heritage tour operator websites (last visited 28.07.2017)

[http://www.sicilytravel.net/Jewish\\_Sicily\\_tour.htm](http://www.sicilytravel.net/Jewish_Sicily_tour.htm)

<http://www.isolabella.it/sicily-luxury-tours/cultural-tours/jewish-itineraries-in-sicily-2>

<http://www.jewishheritagetourseurope.com/9-day-sicily-tour/>

<http://www.jewishtravelagency.com/product/jewish-sicily>

This means that local internet site editors omitted from their lists about one-third of the Jewish tourism sites appearing on the lists of the specialized tour operators. This rate of omission seems to be reasonable given the pitfalls associated with publishing places of marginal attractiveness to the general public.

The second level of sieving, as observed on TripAdvisor, reveals a much higher rate of omission. Only three JH sites were found on TripAdvisor webpages related to three of the ten municipalities of Sicily while 29 are obscured. With the original baselines, these results generate a sieving ratio of  $29/32=0.906$ . This means that places recommended as worthwhile patronizing by general inbound tourists are less than 10 percent (3/32) of those listed in the Jewish tour operators' itineraries. In other words, fans of JHT are going to have difficulties in finding the rich JHT resources of Sicily, unless looking them up bits and pieces in several specialized tour operator websites promoting their own packages.

The second stage of sieving is calculated by the JH sites omitted on TripAdvisor pages relative to the number of JH sites published by the municipalities. This provides a sieving ratio of 0.850 (17 to 20) which is not much better than the sieving ratio found using the tour operators' baseline.

Table 3 exhibits JHT sites in Thessaloniki. Seventeen sites were found on the four surveyed tour operator websites. The official Thessaloniki Tourism Organization (T.T.O acting as MDO) has published 12 of them. However, the T.T.O website added three JH sites that could not be found on the surveyed tour operator websites. These additional sites are listed in the footnote below Table 3. Following several examinations, it was decided to add these sites to both sides of the equation, to the tour operator list as well as the municipal list.

As a result, there is 20 JH site as a baseline, 15 of them were published on the municipal site and 5 omitted. The resulting sieving ratio is 0.250, somewhat lower than in Sicily. On TripAdvisor, only six JH sites were included while 14 excluded, which generate a sieving ratio of 0.700, pretty high but lower than in Sicily. The sieving rate of TripAdvisor relative to the municipal website is lower,  $9/15=0.600$ , but still represents a high level of exclusion. TripAdvisor's ranking of the six JHT sites of Thessaloniki ranges from 22 to 110 out of 124 listed attractions. The actual ranking may pose another challenge to be considered for the calculation of the sieving ratio.

The data presented for Sicily and Thessaloniki demonstrate not only the existence of significant sieving on the supply side but also the usefulness of the sieving ratio for comparative analysis. While all websites involved are taking care of their best interests, there appears to be a serious market failure concerning the presentation of the less significant sites such as niche tourism and SIGs' tourism. Most of these sites are overlooked on social media sites as if they do not exist. A preliminary examination of the situation on Lonely Planet and Fodor sites revealed similar, if not a lesser representation of these kinds of tourism.

The quantitative measure of sieving depends on the selected baseline and the chosen comparative websites. One may use as a starting point other SIGs or other sources listing all attractions. The principle remains the same: once attractions exposed on official or social media websites are compared to

the wider or more specialized baselines, one should expect a fairly high degree of sieving of the supply. Less significant attractions or those of interest to specific groups of visitors will most likely be omitted.

Table 3: Jewish heritage sites appearing on tour operator webpages, Municipal webpages and TripAdvisor, Thessaloniki, 2019

	Internet Survey – Tour Operator list	T.T.O.*	TripAdvisor Rank/Total
1	Jewish Museum	√	22/124
2	Monastirion Synagogue	√	73/124
3	Yad LeZikaron Synagogue	√	
4	Matanot LaEvionin Jewish School		
5	Holocaust Monument	√	
6	Old Railway Station Memorial		
7	Old Jewish Cemetery Memorial		
8	Memorial at the New Cemetery		
9	Baron Hirsch Hospital	√	
10	Casa Bianca (Villa Fernandez)	√	99/124
11	Malakopis Gallery	√	
12	Saul Modiano Gallery (Stoa Saul)	√	49/124
13	Modiano Market	√	35/124
14	Villa Mordoch	√	
15	Jewish Hamam		110/124
16	Yakko Modiano mansion	√	
17	Villa Allatini	√	
<b>Total</b>	<b>17 Attractions + 3*</b>	<b>12 + 3*=15</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Sieving ratio</b>	<b>Baseline=20</b>	<b>5/20=0.250</b>	<b>14/20=0.700</b>

Surveyed Jewish heritage tour operator websites (Last visited: 15.08.2019):

<https://www.milkandhoneytours.com/jewish-tours/thessaloniki/>

<https://saloniki.jewishguide.travel/>

<http://jewishandthecity.gr/villas/> + <http://jewishandthecity.gr/walking-tours/>

<https://www.greece-is.com/10-stops-jewish-thessaloniki/>

\* T.T.O. - Thessaloniki Tourism Organization – exhibited the following 3 Jewish heritage sites not found on tour operator websites: Salem Mansion, Ouziel Complex, and Allatini Mills. Sieving ratios were calculated after adding these sites to the T.T.O as well as the tour operators' columns.

## 5 DISCUSSION

Following the growing discomfort (e.g., Smallman & Moore, 2010; Choi et al. 2012; McCabe et al., 2016) concerning the psychologically laden DC models developed several decades ago (Um & Crompton, 1990; Crompton, 1992) - and the need to find a term suitable to embrace such terminologies as funnel-like, narrow-down (Sirakaya & Woodside, 2005), spontaneous (Laesser & Dolnicar, 2012), irrational (Smallman & Moore, 2010), “fast, intuitive, affect-driven, and simplified” (McCabe et al., 2016) decision-making processes - this paper suggests to adopt the use of the sieving concept as an umbrella term representing fast decision-making processes related to selecting attractive destinations. This is in line with Sirakaya & Woodside's (2005) observation that “there can be tourism purchases where very little functional decision-making is involved” (p. 829).

Sieving has been defined above as an everyday mental cognitive process, carried out consciously or unconsciously. This process may include, among other things, tasks carried out daily by children and adults in making habitual decisions regarding clothing, diet, friends, and more. Arguably, such accustomed personal sieving and filtering habits are applied also to selecting a set of attractive destinations, everybody according to his or her personal temperament, mood, personality, and financial abilities. This may account for the use of different vocabulary to describe the fast purchase of

touring goods. Some are accustomed to fast spontaneous sieving reactions, while others use intuition or what appears as irrational behavior.

The faster sieving practices compared to traditional DC models appear to better fit current changes in tourism and tourism-related industries, namely, the proliferation of attractions (Benur & Bramwell, 2015), low-cost flights and lodging, and widely spread pre-trip information sources (Ho and Lee, 2007; Law et al., 2010; Rey et al., 2011; Jacobsen & Munar, 2012; Chatzigeorgiou & Christou, 2020). It is also in congruence with “the current psychological, social, and cultural environment” noticed by McCabe et al., (2016: 4). In the last decade or so, the growing volume of instant messaging (Lei et al., 2020; Suhud & Allan, 2020) has added its impact to speedy reactions. These factors, coupled with rising incomes, make the purchase of tourism trips more frequent and mundane.

It has been shown in the paper that sieving practices encompass the choice of destinations made by both customers and suppliers. Customers on the demand side consider affordable destinations and sieve them step by step through a set of simple considerations. Nowadays, stress and risk of making wrong decisions are reduced due to information available on the internet, prevailing low-cost deals, the proliferation of attractions in many countries and cities, and the high frequency of traveling that enables visiting the missed destination in the next trip. As a result of such factors, McCabe et al. (2016: 8) argue that “many holiday decisions could be characterized as being essentially risk-free”. These considerations have been demonstrated hypothetically using a cartographic illustration (Figure 1). At this stage, the arguments used are exploratory and should be tested in future research.

The option to use the sieving concept in the supply side area is an innovative point brought up and demonstrated in this paper. The prevalence of sieving made by suppliers has been hypothesized based on the literature (Tunbridge & Ashworth, 1996; Mitchell et al., 2004; Andereck et al., 2006; Michalkó et al. 2015) and was approved above by empirical testing. While careful partial sieving done by local authorities or MDOs is understandable due to pitfalls such as disappointment and information overloading, the harsh sieving found on social media UJC is interpreted as market failure. This finding is in line with Wu et al. (2018) claiming that social media websites obscure much of the niche tourism resources.

Attractions not listed on social media sites are not only hard to find but also devoid of previous visitors' recommendations and scaling. It has been shown that the number of attractions appearing on social media sites is significantly smaller than those published by the local municipal media. Moreover, most places appearing on the agenda of SIG tour guides tend to disappear whatsoever.

The sieving ratio has been introduced as a measure for the volume of sieving. Comparative application of these measurements opens a venue for a better understanding of the sieving that goes on during the supply of attractions.

### 5.1 Managerial implications

The sieving process has some obvious managerial implications. On the supply side, the usefulness of the sieving ratio is instrumental for comparative analyses estimating the

attractiveness of places and types of attractions offered for the tourists. Moreover, the sieving procedure outlined in this paper classifies local attractions to those who are selected and included, and those who are excluded. The latter suffers from clear losses of exposure, visitors, and income. Stakeholders of excluded attractions should analyze the reasons for being left-out and what policies or strategies should be undertaken for improving their representation. The promotion of adequate and appealing narratives, including intangible heritage, could possibly upgrade the significance of minor tangible attractions and spread interests and benefits coming from the visitors. The included attractions should also be analyzed to understand what thresholds must be crossed to be included and what the conditions are in order to remain in this group for as long time as possible.

The managerial implications of the demand side sieving are strongly related to marketing. First, the marketing of short pleasure trips should be separated from the marketing of longer duration family trips since these are related to two different decision-making processes (Crompton, 1992; McCabe et al., 2016). Second, more emphasis should be placed on taking care of the different personalities of travelers such as spontaneous and impulse decision-making customers (Laesser & Dolnicar, 2012; Rezaei et al., 2016). Third, different marketing schemes should be prepared for repeat visitors vis-à-vis those who prefer breaking new grounds; And fourth, public agencies such as DMOs, should take care of overcoming the market failure identified with respect to the omission of many minor attractions from main UGC platforms. Alternatively, private sector entrepreneurs may find the way to establish a profitable platform giving space to such attractions (Wu et al., 2018).

### 5.2 Limitations and suggestions for further research

Despite its innovative sections, this paper can be considered incomplete at least in two aspects. First, the paper does not lay down clear theoretical foundations for the faster travel decision-making process connected to sieving. It appears that more empirical testing is required to enable linking the sieving of attractions with sound theoretical constructs. This is in agreement with Sirakaya & Woodside's (2005) concluding remark: “simplified and field-specific models should be created and empirically tested to fill the gap in this [DC] area” (p. 829). Furthermore, in this study's context it is not entirely obvious that a single theoretical construct will be able to encompass sieving on the demand and supply sides in the same conceptual framework and for all types of travelers (Sirakaya et al., 1996).

It should also be noted that the supply side sieving procedure is scale-dependent. The wider the area presented, the harsher the sieving is. National and regional sources of information tend to exclude most minor places of interest and leave room for only the high-level attractive sites. They tend to present attractions potentially catering to mass tourism.

On the demand-side there is room for further theoretical conceptualization and psychological analysis of the decision-making processes involved in the fast-sieving procedures. On the supply-side, differences in the magnitude of the sieving ratio among different places and websites allow performing comparative analysis of the degree of sieving, searching for the reasons generating these differences, and forming policies to overcome the misrepresentation of the local attractions.

The suitability of the sieving concept for destination, lodging, and flight choices as well, and its usefulness for itinerary construction, should be further studied and deliberated. New, rapidly developing technologies applied to websites, social media and apps should be considered in order to observe how marketing, information, communication and representation keep intermingling in innovative ways and might affect the mechanisms of sieving and destination choice.

## 5 CONCLUSIONS

McCabe et al. (2016) call for a reappraisal of destination choice models. This need has been re-established here considering a number of dramatic changes which have been taking place in the tourism and tourism-related industries. In fact, recent literature appears to agree that travel decisions are made today faster than ever (e.g., Sirakaya & Woodside, 2005; Laesser & Dolnicar, 2012). Differences prevail, however, with respect to the naming of this phenomenon. This paper suggests to use the term sieving as an umbrella term covering many forms of fast travel decision making. Mentally, the act of selecting one preferred object or behavior from among the rest is an acquired habit accompanying human beings since early childhood. Since the number of satisfactory destinations is on the rise, travel cost is reduced, pre-trip information is abundant, and frequency of trips is growing, the selection of a destination is less risky and less demanding.

The term sieving has the advantage of fitting both sides of demand and supply. Customers are sieving a set of attractions to visit in their coming trip according to their financial and mental abilities. Producers of attractions supply information are presenting and editing the attractions available in destinations. However, this study shows that, when moving along the chain of attraction supply from the particular to the general platforms, a lot of niche and special interest group attractions are excluded. The rate of exclusion serves as a measure of the sieving ratio. In particular, the sieving ratio of SIG attractions on social media internet sites is found to be very high, which can be defined as a market failure with potentially significant impacts on local development.

Thus, the introduction of sieving as an umbrella term for fast travel decision-making, and the suggested measurable sieving ratio on the supply-side, constitute the main contributions of this research and a basis for further studies, tests, and discussions.

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