

Social Tourism: the role of the third sector providers in a period of austerity

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Abstract

Access to participate in holidays may be a universal right but is unequal in most societies. Social tourism is a mechanism that attempts to provide holidays for disadvantaged members of society, thereby equalising up inequalities. Much of the research undertaken on social tourism has focussed on the demand side issues, such as the different experiences of social tourists. In contrast, there is limited evidence on the supply side. This paper develops a supply side view of social tourism providers in the UK which is dominated by the charity or third sector. It is based on a wide ranging survey of such providers during a period of increasing austerity. Two surveys were undertaken in 2009 and a more recent one in 2013-14 at a time of increased financial issues and constraints. The purpose of the latter survey was to capture data on the operation of the third sector and to contrast patterns of behaviour over the period 2009-2014. This paper reports on the results of a cluster analysis of these organisations, based on one set of variables from the wider survey, relating to their attitudes and towards the impact of the economic climate on their operations. It goes on to examine how such small third sector organisations operate and co-operate together in an attempt to improve their effectiveness to potential clients.