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**“ALTERNATIVE TOURISM FORMS IN THE REGIONS OF CENTRAL
MACEDONIA: A CASE STUDY OF THESSALONIKI, PIERIA AND
CHALKIDIKI”**

A Master’s Thesis

By

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Abstract

This dissertation presents the development of tourism market through the various alternative forms of tourism and presents origins and main definitions that are followed by an analysis of the complexity of classifying the alternative and sustainable forms of tourism that integrate local populations and natural and human environments of host countries. The present research provides an approach of the new alternative forms of tourism development and seeks to describe the theoretical background of alternative tourism in which origins and main definitions are presented followed by an analysis of the complexity of classifying the alternative forms of tourism. This dissertation aims to investigate the existence and further development of alternative forms of tourism in the regions of Thessaloniki, Chalkidiki and Pieria. In order to achieve this aim, a qualitative research was conducted following a semi-structured design that is conducive to spontaneous and candid responses and seem the most suitable way of garnering descriptive analysis. The results of this research prove the existence of alternative tourism forms in the above-mentioned regions, as well as the needs of further strategic planning for establishing these new forms of tourism in the destinations. Each of the main chapters of the particular dissertation investigate different parts of the concept of tourism, focusing on the development of alternative forms of tourism and their potential or already existence in three tourist developed regions of Central Macedonia, namely the regions of Thessaloniki, Chalkidiki and Pieria.

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Introduction

Tourism has been acknowledged for tremendously beneficial economic and social factors, by providing jobs and increasing in GDP, however it has also been accused as a source of various serious problems and especially in developing economies. Macleod (2004) supports that tourism disturbs the cultural identity and the natural composition of the working population from traditional agricultural industries to service-based tourism and hospitality industries. There are mainly four influential phenomena that led to the need of a different approach in tourism, namely economic issues that are connected to poverty and the economic development, political issues reflecting the political economy of the tourism industry which seems to be a continuation of inequalities between the First World and the Third World, environmental issues referring to the influence of mass/ conventional tourism on the environment and social issues such as the social changes in host communities and the post-modern culture's new traveller market. Thus, new and alternative tourism forms aroused, with many people accepting them instinctively without having the ability to precisely defined it, and until today there's not a widely adopted or universally agreed definition of alternative tourism. This different approach of tourism would have fewer negative effects on destinations and their populations; however, it would still benefit them with positive economic effects. The new tourism forms are an emergence as an alternative solution to the negative effects of the most undesired type of tourism, namely "mass tourism" or "traditional tourism" or "conventional/commercial tourism". These forms of tourism appear in various models and different names and serve a more sensitive approach giving priority to natural and cultural resources at the front line of planning and development.

The main aim of this dissertation is to investigate the existence as well as the further development of alternative forms of tourism in the regions of Central Macedonia and namely Thessaloniki, Chalkidiki and Pieria. This was accomplished through a qualitative research conducted with semi-structured interviews with 22 professionals from the tourist sector that have a good understanding of the above-mentioned regions and their possibilities for tourism development. Each of the main chapters of the particular dissertation investigated different parts of the concept of tourism, focusing on the development of alternative forms of tourism.

The first chapter focuses on the conceptual approach of tourism and investigates the concept of tourism and its categories, as well as its historical development. Furthermore, it explores the phenomenon of mass tourism and its consequences and the factors that determine tourism demand and tourism product. The economic theory supports that the most important determining factors of tourism demand are economical, like the income of the tourists, the prices of tourism products and supplies that have a major impact on travelling intentions. These factors are separated in five major categories: Socioeconomic factors (level of income, relevance of prices between the area of residence and the area of visit, age distribution, urbanization, free time), Technical factors (related to the amelioration of communication and transportation), Psychological and Cultural factors (reflect the personal needs and likes of the future travelers) and Random factors (unpredictable events such as political turbulences, weather conditions, natural destructions, illness etc.) The tourism product is well known for a great number of available products that may vary from goods, to natural resources, or services that are offered in a different way. The factors that affect tourism product are among others the price of the product, the goals of the tourism enterprises, and the technological changes.

Chapter two focuses on the effects of tourism development and in particular the economic, sociocultural and environmental effects. Tourism was considered in the beginning as a mild form of economic activity that had no major impact on the environment which was an assumption based on the fact that tourism cannot have the same level of impact as other industrial sectors. However, the development of tourism in a country or a destination will inevitably have caused some effects due to changing in the socioeconomic, cultural and environmental characteristics of the areas that are developed and according to Mathieson and Wall (1982) interaction between political, socioeconomic and environmental factors can cause contradictory consequences that are usually projected in unexpected ways. The most prominent tourism effect can be considered the economic as tourism is vastly considered as a valuable variant of economic growth. According to Mairesse (2008), tourism provides societies with plenty of job offers and increases the income and is the most important source of prosperity for many countries. However, Mieczkowski (1995), points out that the sociocultural and environmental effects were totally neglected because of focusing only in the economic benefits that derive from tourism industry and due to the belief that nature is an infinite renewable source, the environmental causes were until recently not taken into account.

Furthermore, chapter three examines the development of sustainable tourism, going through the conceptual approach of sustainability and tourism sustainability, as well as the life cycle and the carrying capacity of a tourism destination. The meaning of the life cycle of a tourism destination has triggered a lot of research and based on previous research on life cycle of a tourism product, Butler (1980) suggested a model of the development of a tourism destination that projects that the modifications in tourist arrivals in a destination follow a curve of an S shape and that these destinations go

through a developmental cycle, consisted of five stages. These stages consist of exploration, involvement, development, consolidation, stagnation and post-stagnation level that may lead to rejuvenation, reduced growth, stabilization, decline, or immediate decline. The term carrying capacity has been examined over the last few decades along with that of tourism sustainability and these terms are intertwined determining the limits of balance in tourism development. According to Cokkosis & Tsartas (2001) in the frame of sustainable tourism development the carrying capacity is defined as the number of tourists and infrastructure that can be supported by the social, economic and environmental structure of an area, while at the same time maintaining a balance, while another important definition was given by the World Tourism Organization (1981), stating that “carrying capacity represents the maximum number of visitors that a geographic or physical entity can receive without provoking an unacceptable alteration in the physical and social medium nor an unacceptable reduction in the quality of the visitors’ experiences”.

Chapter four dives into the conceptual approach of alternative tourism and its different forms, as well as alternative tourists’ motives. According to Butler (1992) alternative tourism emerged as a solution and opposition to the infamous mass tourism or conventional tourism, as it is against large numbers of visitors, unregulated and clumsy development, as well as homogenization, social alienation and environmental destruction. Since the new wave of tourism arrived, many forms of it have been emerged gradually and the groups of alternative tourists seem to be motivated to travel for multiple reasons, formulating different types of alternative tourism. Alternative tourism is a generic term that encompasses a broad range of tourism forms such as eco, agro, culture, community and rural tourism. The motives behind the development of alternative tourism are directly connected to the standards of tourism development of

the hosting area and totally different than those of conventional mass tourism (Andriotis, 2008). Alternative tourists despise the commercialism of conventional mass tourism and would rather choose an authentic experience when visiting a destination. Alternative tourism is a generic term that encompasses a broad range of tourism forms such as eco, agro, culture, community and rural tourism.

Chapter five briefly examines tourism activity in the 21st century both in global and domestic terms. Tourism activity is known as one of the biggest and most important field in a worldwide basis, contributing approximately 9.8% to the global GDP and creating 9.4% of the global employment opportunities. Tourism in Greece has a seasonal profile that is obvious when looking at the numbers of arrivals that concentrate mostly in the period May-September and reach maximum percentages in the month of July. When compared to other competitor countries, concentration of tourists is greater in Greece and according to Drakatos (1987), considerable differences are observed among the seasonal patterns of particular tourist nationalities arriving in Greece rendering an appropriate redistribution of the number of tourists among the particular nationalities as a considerable factor for reducing the seasonality in concentration. Tourism over the last years has been the locomotive of unemployment reduction and attracts a lot of investments that benefit the country, offering opportunities for a sustainable development (INSETE, 2018) and has a major role in shaping the income of many regions.

Finally, chapter six investigates the potentials of developing alternative forms of tourism in the region of Central Macedonia and more specifically in the areas of Thessaloniki, Chalkidiki and Pieria. A qualitative research design was used to understand the possibilities of alternative tourism development in the regions. The research design of this qualitative inquiry was a semi-structured interview that included

open-ended questioning. The aim of the interviews was to gather information about the region of central Macedonia that are connected to the tourism development of the area, the actions taken to promote tourism in this area, the factors that contributed to the development of tourism, and the possibilities of alternative forms of tourism. While undertaking this study the researcher interviewed individuals that have a key role in Tourism Organizations and Enterprises in the region of Central Macedonia and could therefore give a robust opinion regarding the dynamics of the area and the potentials of alternative tourism development. After investigating the tourism profile of Central Macedonia, the chapter moves to the results that occurred from the previously mentioned interviews, showing that the regions of Thessaloniki, Chalkidiki and Pieria have a lot of potentials to further develop alternative tourism activities, such as ecotourism, agritourism, religious tourism, congress tourism, gastronomic tourism, coastal and maritime tourism and mountain tourism.

Finally, chapter seven includes the conclusion that Greece is gradually abandoning the typical Sea and Sun tourist that prevailed the country for many years, and is being promoted as an alternative destination, offering multiple authentic activities and experiences. However, a lot of measures need to be taken in order for the country to ameliorate the offered experiences, as it is still clear that a lot of tourism enterprises focus solely on the profit by offering and promoting alternative tourism products that are somewhat mislabeled. As for the regions of Thessaloniki, Chalkidiki and Pieria, they have the potential of further developing multiple alternative tourism forms such as cultural, religious, gastronomic, mountain and agrotourism, and they attract different types of tourist who seek a deeper connection with the area they are visiting.

Chapter 1: A Conceptual Approach of Tourism

1.1 The Concept of Tourism

Tourism is an important social phenomenon that meets a rapid growth and social acceptance worldwide. As a major economic activity, tourism is connected to many basic sectors of the global economy. Thus, establishing a commonly accepted definition for a phenomenon that is so closely related to life in the economic, social, cultural and environmental sectors, and that is based on primary, secondary and tertiary production data, proved to be a very difficult task.

Several definitions can be traced through literature review, each one depicting the characteristics of different research fields. For example, economists such as Bull, Davidson, Smith, Walterspiel, etc., observe the economic features of tourism, emphasizing on its consequences in the economic growth of the hosting country, and their research focuses on aspects of tourism supply and demand, foreign currency, balance of payments etc. Geographers like Britton, Ioannides, Massey, Murphy, Shaw, etc., investigate the spatial and temporal aspect of the touristic phenomenon, tourism flows, the development and evolution of tourism destinations, the areas where tourism business are installed, and the effects of tourism in the environment (Vlami, 2008). Thus, the conceptual approaches and the big number of tourism definitions may vary, depending on the point of view and the area of research.

However, the first attempt of a conceptual approach of the term “tourism” was held in 1942 from professors Hunziker and Krapf, who supported that tourism is defined as the total number of relations that derive from a travel that does not lead to permanent accommodation and it is not engaged in speculative activity (Igoumenakis, 1991). One

of the most trustworthy definitions was given from the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) in 1991, which was later approved by the United Nations Statistical Commission (1993). According to that definition, tourism includes the activities of people travelling to and staying in destinations and areas that are outside their usual environment, for a period of time less than a year, for amusement, business or other reasons (Holden, 2000). This commonly accepted way of lifestyle leads to the assumption that tourism was always part of people's lives. However, the term of "tourist" is a new addition to the English language that first appeared in the beginning of the 19th century (Boorstin, 1961: Holden, 2000). A distinction is drawn between the difficult conditions for "travelers"- a term that originates from the French word travail that is equivalent to work, torment and trouble- and the "tourist"- a person for whom the action of travelling has become "an organized and packaged affair" (Boorstin, 1961: Holden, 2000). This idea of travelling for pleasure and not for necessity is a relatively recent activity, given the fact that travelling was not an easy option until the 19th century, yet today, the words "travel" and "tourism" are part of our common language.

1.2 Categories of Tourism

The categories of tourism that exist worldwide are (WTO, 1995):

- Domestic tourism: tourism involving residents of one country travelling only within that country.
- Outbound tourism: comprises the activities of residents of a certain country travelling to and staying in places outside the country of residence (for example a Greek travelling to the Netherlands).

- Inbound tourism: Number of visits to a country by visitors who are not permanent residents of that country (for example a German travelling to Greece).
- International tourism: Inbound and Outbound tourism.
- Internal tourism: covers both Domestic tourism and Inbound tourism.
- National tourism: covers both Domestic tourism and Outbound tourism.

1.3 Historical Development of Tourism

The origins of tourism are difficult to be traced. Coltman (1989) traced the attempts of people trying to organize and ease their transportation in the wide areas of the emerging empires with the construction of land and marital channels, and the gradual improvement of means of transportation and infrastructure. Such improvements proved helpful for the increase of tourists, with the majority of them travelling for business reasons (Avdimiotis et al., 2009). During the Renaissance people were travelling mostly for entertainment, and the so called “Grand Tour” makes its appearance. The Grand Tour was a custom of the 17th and 18th century referring to trips to Europe undertaken by upper class children of French and British families to complete their academic education and their social structure (Varvaresos, 2000). An important contribution to tourism was achieved by the voyagers during the periods of the 14th to the 17th century, who created through their records a database that was a precursor for later travel guides (Tsartas, 1999).

The 19th century had a key role in the development of tourism and shaping the conditions that will later lead to mass tourism, starting from the improvement of the transportation and communication sectors, followed by the economic extension of

tourism in global terms, and completed by the institutional, social and economic classifications that will lead to the industrial revolution (Avdimiotis et al., 2009). During the 1950s the tourism sector started to develop impressively, which is depicted in the rising percentages of tourists as well as in the economic indicators connected to it (Avdimiotis et al., 2009). The modern tourism period was established in 1980 and is characterized by a radical extension of mass tourism and the excessive concentration of tourists areas that had a major impact in the natural environment. The profound consequences of mass tourism led to a more mild and sustainable approach of tourism and the development of alternative tourism forms that do not only focus on the economic profit but also respect the environment and the cultural aspects of the visited area.

1.4 Mass tourism development

As mentioned above, mass tourism started developing in the early '50s and included a transfer of a great number of tourists from Great Britain to Spain, leading eventually to the development of tourism in the West Mediterranean coastline. The most important factors that boosted mass tourism were the increasing income during this period, the aircraft surplus from World War II that could be used for cheaper transportation from Great Britain, the development of tour operators that ameliorated the image of Spain, and the cheap land available for building touristic infrastructure (Holden, 2000).

The success of Spain in enhancing its economy through tourism motivated other governments to integrate tourism as part of their economic strategy, offering a vast variety of opportunities as well as economic motives, such as loans, tax exemptions etc. (Holden, 2000). The combination of social changings with the encouragement of

tourism development by national governments led to a rapid growth in the number of travelers after 1950 (Holden, 2000). Mass tourism essentially offers standardized products and experiences and requires a major development of infrastructure in destinations. The diagram below portrays the quantitative growth of tourism and its clearly depicted that the number of 25 million international tourist arrivals in 1950 gradually started to increase to 278 million in 1980, 528 million in 1995, and reached 1,4 billion in 2019. It is also estimated that the number of international tourist arrivals will approach 1.8 billion by 2030 (UNWTO, 2015).

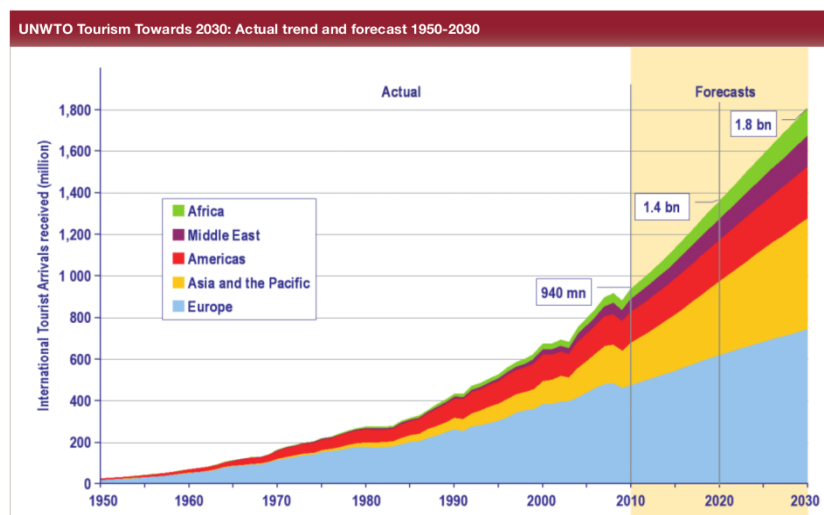


Diagram 1.1: International Tourist Arrivals (1950-2030)

Source: (UNWTO, 2014; UNWO, 2015)

Briefly mentioned, different factors contributed in the rapid development of tourism (Burkart & Medlik, 1981):

- The general development of west countries.
- The rapid development of means of transportation (airplane).
- The activities of tour operators.

- Travelling with charter flights and the creation of tourism packages.
- The amelioration of working conditions and salary of the employees.
- The increase of free time in combination with the paid annual leave.
- Emerge of new tourism destinations (ex. Southeast Asia).
- The expansion of technology (use of computers, internet, computer reservation systems etc.).
- The promotion and advertisement of a tourism product in a wide range (through television, radio, etc.).
- The higher level of education and the increasing number of people with an academic background, given that comparative research proved that tourism activity depends on the educational level of the traveler.
- The wide age range of tourists, with seniors and former excluded groups (ex. Handicapped) entering the market.
- A change in consumption models as tourists now are seeking and demand a more advanced and different tourism product.

1.5 Factors that Determine Tourism Demand and Tourism Product

A lot of research concerning tourism demand has been held during the years and its results determine the factors that affect it. The economic theory supports that the most important determining factors of tourism demand are economical, like the income of the tourists, the prices of tourism products and supplies that have a major impact on travelling intentions.

Cunha (2001) separates these factors to five major categories: **Socioeconomic:** level of income, relevance of prices between the area of residence and the area of visit, age distribution, urbanization, free time, **Technical:** related to the amelioration of communication and transportation, **Psychological and Cultural:** that reflect the personal needs and likes of the future travelers, and **Random factors:** concerning unpredictable events such as political turbulences, weather conditions, natural destructions, illness etc.

The term tourism product refers to the sum of psychological and physical satisfaction that is provided to tourists during their travelling and focuses on services and facilities that are specially designed in order to meet the tourists' needs. The tourism product is well known for a great number of available products that may vary from goods, to natural resources, or services that are offered in a different way. The factors that according to Lagos (2005) affect tourism product are:

- The price of the product that determines the raise or the reduction of the production.
- The goals set from the tourism enterprises that mostly target to a steady level of profit and the extension of the tourist season.
- Changes in technology that affect the production and offer of a tourism product.
- The predictions and expectations of producers concerning future prices of the tourism products.
- The number of tourism production units.

Tourism is a rapidly growing socially accepted phenomenon worldwide that is connected to important sectors of the global economy, and a commonly accepted definition is difficult to be established. WTO (1995) categorized tourism as domestic, outbound, inbound, international, internal and national, while tourism origins cannot be exactly determined. It can be traced as an activity in the attempts of people who were trying to organize and ease their transportation in different cities for business and later on for entertainment. The 19th century has a key role in the tourism development as well as in the development of the infamous mass tourism which is characterized by excessive concentration of tourists in destinations, having a major impact in the natural environment. Mass tourism's consequences led to sustainable approaches of traveling that do not only target profit but respect the natural balance of the destination. Finally, based on research, tourism product and tourism demand are two intertwined terms that are determined by several factors; regarding tourism demand, these factors are categorized by Cunha (2001) to socioeconomic, technical, psychological-cultural, and random factors, while tourism product is mostly affected by the price, the enterprise's goals, the changes in technology, the producers' expectations as well as the number of production units (Lagos, 2005).

Chapter 2: The Effects of Tourism Development

Tourism was at first considered as a mild form of economic activity with no major impact on the environment, an assumption based on the fact that tourism cannot have the same level of impact as other industrial sectors. However, the development of tourism in a country or a destination will inevitably have cause some effects due to changing in the socioeconomic, cultural and environmental characteristics of the areas that are developed. Lea (1998) supports that there is no other international activity that

includes such a profound interaction between political, socioeconomic, and environmental factors as tourism. Such interaction can cause contradictory consequences that are usually projected in unexpected ways (Mathieson and Wall, 1982).

The most prominent among the major tourism effects can be considered the economic ones as tourism is vastly considered as a valuable variant of economic growth. Tourism provides societies with plenty of job offers and increases the income, therefore tourism is the most important source of prosperity for many countries (Mairesse, 2008). However, because of focusing only in the economic benefits that derive from tourism industry, the sociocultural and environmental effects were totally neglected and due to the belief that nature is an infinite renewable source, the environmental causes were until recently not taken into account (Mieczkowski, 1995). It is only after the 1960s that a great concern over the environment was raised and led to adopting actions that will lead to the preservation of nature and will promote respect for the environment (Mairesse, 2008).

2.1 Economic Effects

2.1.1 Positive Effects

➤ The Increase of Income and the Positive Balance of Payments

Tourism nowadays offers the possibility for a state to secure a big amount of foreign currency which lays ground for the development of currency flow that stabilizes the economy and lead to an increase of population's income. Tourism industry was highly evolved during 1970-1990 with a rate of 300% and 540 million dollars of salaries and

wages, while for many developing countries tourism is the only outbound industry that contributes to the gross domestic product (GDP) (Andriotis, 2000).

➤ **Regional Development**

The development of tourism in the countryside instead of city centers was a solution to a problem faced by many governments for the equal distribution of development of the country and the strengthening of the development of mountainous or deprived regional areas. The development of tourism increased the income, the investments and widened the local economy that stopped immigration and ameliorated the quality of life (Burkart & Medlik, 1981).

➤ **Increase of Investments and Amelioration of Infrastructure**

Tourism activity increases the pace of investments in an area and broadens the productive base of the local economy which leads to an amelioration of the infrastructure (electricity, communication networks, public transportation etc) in the hosting country and better living conditions follow naturally the above mentioned (Kontis et al., 2020). At the same time, the investments in the tourism industry facilitate private initiative through the creation of new enterprises that are involved in the field, which contributes to a more intense entrepreneurship.

➤ **Employment Increase**

One of the major contributions of tourism though is its impact on creating new job opportunities. Tourism industry is recognized as a labor-intensive sector and is an

employment generator during a crucial period of time that is vastly characterized of high percentages of unemployment and a downward tendency in the demand of workforce (Brown, 1985). The importance of travelling and tourism in the creation of new job opportunities is portrayed in the WTTC (2015) research, according to which during 2014 travelling and tourism offered 105.408.000 job opportunities (3.6% of the total employment) a number that constantly increases as by 2025 it is estimated that around 130.694.000 of direct job opportunities will be available because of tourism (2% increase for the next ten years) (Diagram 2.1).

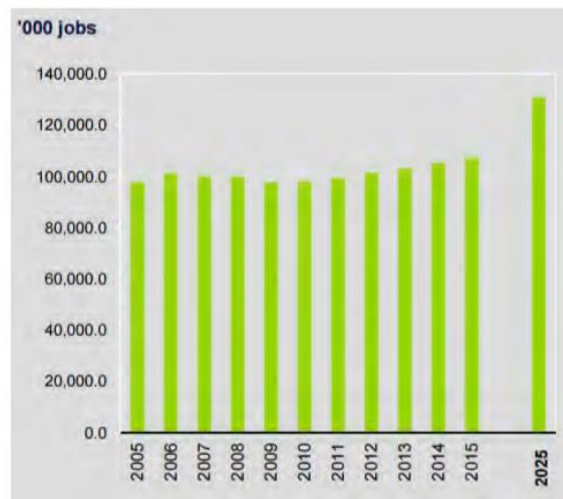


Diagram 2.1: Direct Contribution of Tourism in Employment

Source: (WTTC,2015)

Furthermore, the development of tourism is closely related to jobs offered by subsectors of tourism economy such as tourism enterprises, hotels, travel agencies, restaurants etc as well as in the sectors construction, retail trade, and services. Considering the above mentioned, the total contribution of tourism in employment corresponds to 276.854.000 jobs for the year of 2014 (9.4% of the total employment)

and by 2025 this number is estimated to increase to 356.911.00 offers (10.7% of the total employment) which means an increase of 2.3% per year. (Diagram 2.2).

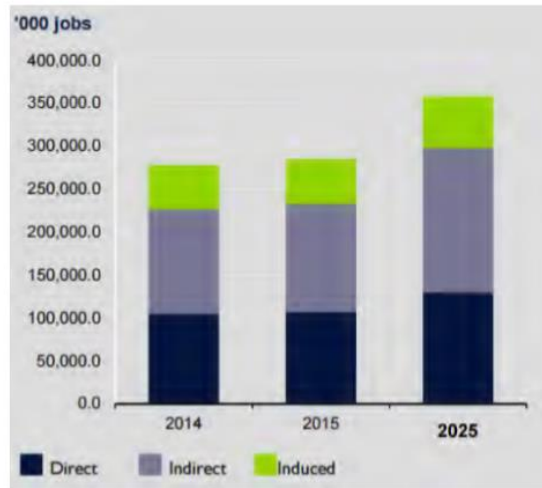


Diagram 2.2: Total Contribution of Tourism in Employment

Source: (WTTC, 2015)

A lot of people, however, have stood against the job opportunities offered by the tourism industry and highly criticized this issue, as it is well known that in most cases these opportunities are low-skilled, seasonal, and unfairly paid (Lea, 1998).

➤ **Increase of the State Revenue**

In order for the tourism industry to develop, governments invest a lot of money per year in order to maintain organizations such as the Greek National Tourism Organization, that are responsible for the promotion of the country as a tourism destination, as well as in the necessary infrastructure and services that tourism demands. The majority of the investments for the tourism industry (sewage and refuse disposal,

hospitals, energy, communications systems, means of transportation, airports, harbors, railways and road network) also benefit the local citizens.

To cover the infrastructural and service expenses of the tourism industry, governments aim to achieve a surplus through taxation in airports, products, services and income of hospitality employees. The increase of the State revenue depends on the tax and law structure of the country (Andriotis, 2000). According to WTTC, in 1998 the total contribution in taxation (direct, indirect and personal) was above 800 billion dollars worldwide, while in 2005 reached 1.405 billion dollars (Andriotis, 2000).

2.1.2 Negative Effects

➤ Currency Leak

According to Priniotaki & Kapsis (2008), the more tourism expenses enter the economy, the more the general performance of the area grows, multiplying this way the job opportunities and increasing the personal income. The above results are considered as indirect contributions of the tourism activity. When the economy in an area is small the possibilities of revenue dissemination are low, while importing products to cover the consumers' demands is taken as granted. As an example of the above statement could be the case of small islands economies that have a very low productive base and tourism plays a determining role in their economies (Priniotaki & Kapsis, 2008). As Shareef (2005) points out, a big percentage of tourism revenue is extracted from the economy to cover the importation of products that are necessary for tourism. He also suggests that meat and dairy products in Caribbean, as well as importing infrastructural material in Maldives and employing personnel in the tourism industry are also factors that contribute to a currency leak (Priniotaki & Kapsis, 2008).

Another factor that leads to a currency leak is the policy of governments to integrate in their economy foreign capital with low or no taxation, aspiring to boost and increase their economic power. This policy is mostly seen in the so called tax heavens (small developing economies with low structure of taxation and control), where extremely low prices, almost zero taxation and bank confidentiality can be found, which allows big companies and organizations to invest and develop their activities (Priniotaki & Kapsis, 2008). Destinations such as the Bahamas, Bahrain, Bermuda, Cayman islands etc., are among the list of the tax heavens and face a massive foreign capital inflow that will later offer no benefits to the economy of the original country (Priniotaki & Kapsis, 2008).

➤ **Promotion of Illegal Economy and Regional Disparities**

It can also be stated that tourism enables local citizens to use tourists' ignorance to their interest. Many local enterprises that are directly connected to tourism such as hotels, restaurants, bars etc. can make a huge profit from tourism activities that are difficult to be traced, increasing this way the levels of tax evasion. Furthermore, in areas where tourism is massively developed the costs of living are also raised; at the same time, tourism industry focused so far on particular thriving areas, which disrupted the balance of the regions. Thus, some touristic destinations can no longer bear any further development, while others are completely neglected, which creates disparities to regional income distribution, a problem faced by many areas.

2.2 Social and Cultural Effects

Tourism development is intertwined with both negative and positive effects on sociocultural aspects. Its effects mostly depend on the form of tourism that is developed in an area and the level of coherence among the social structures of the host country, while at the same time the competent institutions are responsible for taking measures that will deteriorate the negative effects (CTO, 2005).

2.2.1 Positive Effects

➤ Urban Regeneration and Promotion of Understanding

The positive economic effects such as job opportunities and increase of income benefit also the coherence of the society, enable the continuation of the local citizens' activities and prevent emigrating, creating this way a stronger economy for the local community (Andriotis, 2000). Moreover, different cultures meet through tourism activities, which enables people to share their experiences, knowledge, and beliefs, being a part of a bigger community that is supported through tourism and preserving a peaceful atmosphere among people (Andriotis, 2000).

➤ Cultural Regeneration

Tourism contributes in preserving cultural heritage in various ways. Ancient monuments, monasteries, churches, and traditional villages that meet a great cultural value were all preserved thanks to the tourism development. Furthermore, tourism supports the strengthening of local traditions and arts, crafts and cultural activities by offering people who visit an area the opportunity to participate at such activities. In the last few decades the number of actions for the revitalization of traditional cultural

events is increased, a positive outcome for the society that derives from the constant search of new and sustainable ways of tourism activities and the effort of upgrading the tourism product (SETE, 2010).

2.2.2 Negative Effects

➤ Conflicts between Local Citizens and Tourists

The negative sociocultural effects of tourism are mainly detected in two different but at the same time related levels: the relations between the members of local communities and the relations of the local citizens with the tourists that visit a destination. When it comes to the first case, it has been observed that people that make a profit from tourism activities are most likely to be in the target of the rest of the community due to their success and welfare (Gee et al., 1997). As far as the relations of local citizens and tourists, Doxey's research (1976) portrays the levels of feelings that locals form for tourists over time. In particular there are four main levels:

1. Euphoria: Tourists are welcomed, with no control on the part of the local community.
2. Indifference: Tourism arrivals are considered de facto and relations between locals and tourist are typical, commercial and is achieved for marketing reasons.
3. Disruption: Locals are questioning the position that tourism should have in their community due to fears of saturation of the area. At the same time the competent institutions instead of deteriorating the constant development and bearing in mind the carrying capacity of a region, they pay attention to the enhancement of infrastructures.
4. Competition: The negative feelings of locals towards tourists are now obvious and tourism activity has created major damages on the regional environment.

Local citizens gradually understand the violations of psychological and social carrying capacity limits of their region, which massively affects their attitude towards tourists. Their loathing lies mostly on the grounds of the disintegration of the local culture that is prominent through the corrosion of traditions, the alternations on local music and cultural activities, the language adaption to a more “international” dialect, as well as the differentiation in local cuisine, dressing or architectural standards for the sake of tourism activity (Doxey, 1976).

➤ **The Imitation Effect and Changes in Culture and Customs**

According to Smith (1989) the imitation effect is a social phenomenon that radically changes the consumption patterns of the hosting country. The most profound change is the trend of young people to idolize tourists as the only way of promoting contemporary ideas, and to gradually reject the characteristics of the social structure of their place of residence by considering it obsolete (Tsartas, 1998). The local citizens imitate not only the consumption activities of the tourists, but also some cultural aspects and attitudes that tourists are unable to project in their hometowns, which leads to the adoption of corrupting social patterns such as alcoholism and gambling that adversely affect the social and cultural features of the area.

At the same time culture is commercialized and a great number of products is tailor made for tourism purposes. Commercialism can also be traced in traditional music and dance for the sole purpose of satisfying tourism needs and tourism market. The positive or negative outcome of tourism effects mostly depends on the level of tourism development as well as on the form of tourism, as things tend to be more balanced in cases where tourism development follows a sustainable pattern (SETE, 2010).

2.3 Environmental Effects

As Krippendorf (1982) points out, tourism is closely intertwined with the environment as it is a source of attraction for tourism activity and economy and at the same time the quality of tourism product is connected to the quality of the environment. Despite tourism directly depending on the environment in which tourism activity is developed, its careless development usually provokes a disruption in the environmental balance.

2.3.1 Positive Effects

➤ Preservation of Important Natural Areas

Tourism might prove to be helpful providing the necessary revenue in order for some important natural areas to be preserved through the construction of natural national parks that are a source of attraction for many tourists that seek an alternative way of tourism. Without tourism areas such the Marine Parks of Zakynthos and Alonissos, Kerkini and Prespa lakes could be used for other purposes that would lead to the corrosion of the environmental heritage (SETE, 2010).

➤ Amelioration of the Environmental Quality

Tourism development can trigger actions that benefit the protection of the environment through controlling the water, air and noise pollution, as well as through the modernization of the waste control system. At the same time it can also contribute to the amelioration of the environmental aesthetics through spatial planning programs,

proper building design and better conservation of the existing ones, and use of ecological methods in tourism accommodations.

➤ **Amelioration of Infrastructure**

Local infrastructure of airports, roads, communications, water and sewage system, waste disposal, and waste-water treatment can be further ameliorated because of the needs of tourism activities and lead to the reduction of pollution and the upgrade of the environmental quality of the area. Tourism development also demands high levels of water use, which gradually creates innovative ideas and efforts for better water management (SETE, 2010).

➤ **Elevated Environmental Awareness**

Tourists' interest towards nature and the realization of the importance of its perseverance has raised awareness at some areas where local citizens showed at first limited interest. Tourism efforts for the perseverance or amelioration of the environment lays on the grounds that the natural, structured and cultural environment are necessary conditions for creating a tourism product that its quality is highly dependable on the quality of the environment (SETE, 2010).

In conclusion, the highly connected relationship of tourism and the environment is also show by Mieczkowski's "environmental part of tourism" (Diagram 2.3). As already stated, the quality of the natural environment is the key factor of tourist attraction. Thus, for the tourism industry to survive it is urgent to achieve a balance and harmony between nature and human activity in order for the tourism impact to the environment to be reduced (Mairesse, 2008). These actions refer to the so-called sustainable tourism, which is going to be further analyzed in the upcoming chapter.

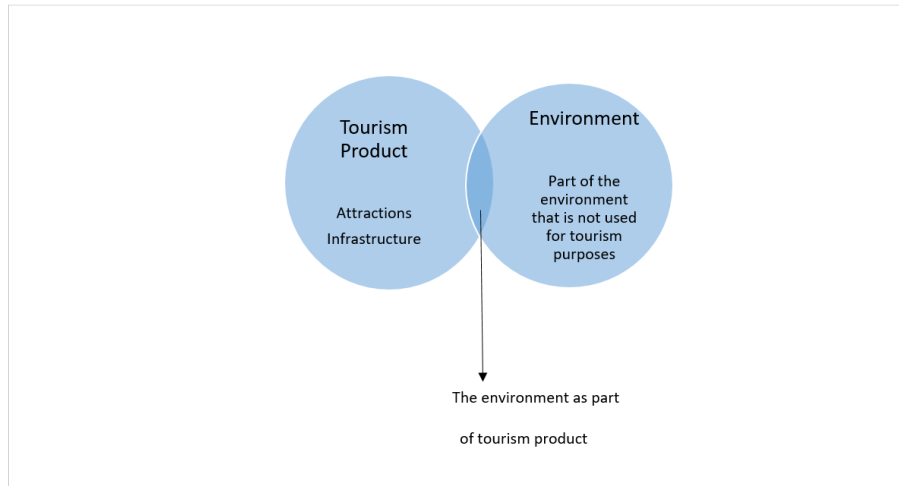


Diagram 2.3: Relationship between Tourism Product and the Environment

Source: (Mieczkowski, 1995; Mairesse, 2008)

2.3.3 Negative Effects

The environmental consequences that derive from tourism can be divided in two different categories: (a) **the permanent** ones that are caused by the constant development of tourist infrastructures and superstructures, with these alterations damaging the natural structure of the environment which is urbanized. (b) the **seasonal** ones that are mostly caused by the tourist accommodation activities and include water and energy consumption, waste and noise production. Tourism activity mostly affects coast and island regions, in which the percentages of visits are higher (WWF, 2013).

According to Holden (2008), the negative effects of tourism activity on the environment can be grouped in three different categories that concern the wrong use of natural sources, the general behavior of visitors towards the environment during their stay and the pollution caused by human activity in water and air. Furthermore, Butarbutar and Soemarno (2013) have also examined the potential threats of tourism

development for the environment and its impact (Table 2.4) through a variety of components (Flora and Fauna, Pollution, Urban Environment, Values and beliefs etc).

| Component of Environment | Negative Impacts | Tourism Activities which have induced Negative Impacts |
|---------------------------------|---|--|
| Flora and Fauna | Breeding Disorders | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Bird Observations ■ Motion path |
| | The loss or extinction of animals | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Poaching ■ Animals were preserved or souvenirs made from animal body parts ■ Special Cuisine ■ The natural environment is crowded with visitors |
| | Changes in migration patterns of animals | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Tourism activities in the migration path |
| | Damage to vegetation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Development of new tourism facilities ■ Tourist activities in protected areas |
| Pollution | Water Pollution | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Liquid waste ■ Spills (oil or other hazardous chemicals) ■ Disposal of solid waste into water bodies |
| | Air Pollution | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Motor Vehicles emission |
| | Noise pollution | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Motor vehicles ■ Traffic jam ■ Unbridled nightlife |
| Erosion | Erosion of surface soil | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The traffic is too dense |
| | Landslide | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Built environment of unbridled ■ Deforestation |
| | Damage to the riverbank area | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Tour boating unbridled ■ Riverside area is too crowded with occupants / visitors |
| Natural resources | Depletion of ground water and surface water | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Too many wake region ■ Damage to water sources |
| | The high possibility of fire | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Uncontrolled fire ■ Tourist irresponsible |
| Impacts scenery | Regions wake –looking | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ There is no planning and control (landscape) |
| | Dirty Landscape | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Garbage ■ Cleanliness unguarded |

| Component Environmental | Negative Impact Phenomena | Tourism Activities Negative Impact |
|--------------------------------|--|---|
| Urban Environment | Improper land use | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The location of tourism facilities that are not true ■ Implementation plan ineffective land use ■ There is no planning |
| | Changes in hydrological patterns | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Uncontrolled urban development |
| Impacts scenery | Change city skyline | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ New architectural style ■ Growth wake region |
| | Changes in lifestyle in the city | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Changes in behavior ■ Changes in demographics ■ Changes in economic life |
| Infrastructure | Infrastructure too heavy burden | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ High Density ■ Development of infrastructure supporting tourism activities are not adequate |
| | Utilization of facilities incorrectly | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ There is no urban environmental management |
| Urban form | Changes in land use | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Shifting the location of residential and workplace ■ Inappropriate tourism resources |
| | Social changes in the urban communities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Changes in work and community customs ■ Changes in patterns of social interaction |
| Component Environmental | Negative Impacts | Tourism Activities which have induced any Negative Impacts |
| Values and beliefs | Adoption of the values and beliefs that do not fit | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Intensive interaction with local residents ■ Hedonist lifestyle |
| | Not heeding customary values | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ No respect for local customs ■ Not understanding the local customs |
| Moral | Prostitution | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Promotions unofficial negative ■ Tourists who like to become prostitutes |
| | Drunk | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Adoption of a bad drinking habits of tourists ■ Easily obtain alcoholic beverages |
| Behavior | " Westernized " behavior | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Modernization obscures with the behavior of Westerners ■ Western lifestyle interesting |
| | Ignoring the Indonesian characters | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Conduct an attractive stranger ■ The behavior of tourists who " free to do anything " |
| Arts and crafts | Losses of indigenous arts | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Commercialization art ■ Original indigenous art form is not attractive to tourists |
| | Damage and loss of cultural objects | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Bad actions tourists ■ Cultural objects are not well protected ■ Uncontrolled access to cultural objects ■ The lack of care |
| Legal and discipline | Increased lawlessness | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Criminals attract tourists ■ Narcotics and other drugs ■ Tourists as a courier gang /criminal group ■ Not understanding the legal system Indonesia |
| History | Miss-perception on nation history | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Inaccurate historical facts ■ Historical facts are ignored ■ Distorted historical facts |

Table 2.4 Potential Negative Impacts of Tourism on Cultural Environment

Source: (Butarbutar & Soemarno, 2013)

➤ **Ecosystem Degradation**

Disruption in ecosystems is not only caused because of tourism, but tourism activity can strongly influence the imbalance, mainly due to the expansion of the infrastructures that seek to cover the elevated tourism demand in many areas. Urbanization of the areas works against natural habitats and is one of the most important consequences of tourism development and activity (WWF, 2010).

✓ **Coral Reefs**

A major example of the degradation of the ecosystems are coral reefs that only cover a 0,17% of oceans but host around 25% of marine species and contribute to the general balance of the ecosystems and the economy as well, as they attract millions of tourists; it is estimated that coral reefs contribute an amount of 375 dollars in the USA per year (Holden, 2008). These sensitive ecosystems are threatened by many tourism aspects such as accommodation expansions in Sri Lanka, India, Maldives, East Africa where extraction of building materials is made, insufficient measures for waste disposal and also locals' and tourists' behavior towards the environment (Holden, 2008).

✓ **Wetlands**

Wetlands cover about 6% of the planet and are characterized by a vast biodiversity and have multiple functions in nature such as enriching deep aquifers, preventing from floods, protecting from soil erosion, working as natural cleaning filters of the waters and absorbing carbon dioxide. However, the limited space availability in coastal regions led to the destruction of this ecosystem due to the aggressive development of tourism (Holden, 2008). Greece is a major example of the above as many wetlands on its islands, where a great number of important and endangered species live, are now degraded and sometimes vanished because of structure and waste disposal (SETE, 2010).

✓ **Mountain Areas**

Mountain regions are the second most famous tourist destinations after coastal regions. Ecosystems in these areas are slowly developing due to low temperatures and thin soil, which makes it even difficult for destroyed vegetation to reborn. Mountain tourism development demands the construction of accommodation and infrastructures that have a negative effect on natural resources. Deforestation for infrastructural purposes significantly reduces the amount of water that is absorbed during rainfalls, as well as the soil stability that renders the mountain slopes prone to landslide (Holden, 2008).

➤ **Environmental Destruction**

Tourism development is accountable for many ecological problems, mostly due to the use of land that affects the biodiversity of the area and the soil quality. Furthermore, mass visitation in sensitive natural areas can be a deterrent for vegetation growth in protected areas, while animal behavior can be disturbed due to noise and feeding from tourists. Ecology in caves might be altered from using lightning systems that increase temperatures and fragile ecosystems in the desert can lose their balance when vehicles are being used out of roads (SETE, 2010).

➤ **Waste of Resources**

Water use for tourism activities in a particular destination often exceeds the limits of normal consumption. According to the Greek law, tourism accommodations can consume around 450L per night for luxury accommodations and 150L for the rest (SETE, 2010). Water needs for tourism development includes quantities for cleaning, drinking but also for maintenance of gardens and infrastructure such as golf fields, pools etc. Wheeler and Nauright (2006) state that a single golf field demands approximately 3000-5000 cubic meters of water per day, a quantity that equals water

consumption of 15000 people per day. Based on UNO's calculations for the minimum water consumption per day, 9.5 million cubic meters of water that are used for watering golf fields could actually be used by 4.7 billion people or 4/5 of the earth, when at the same time 1.2 billion people do not have access to drinking water.

Tourism development and its facilities are threatening water reserves and quality. Furthermore, the over-abstraction of water has led to extensive forest fires, and in particular around 2000 km² of Mediterranean forests are destroyed by wildfires per year. Water consumption for tourism activities can also work against other forms of consumption such as agriculture and farming as it weakens the water table and affects the total development of the area (WWF, 2010). Finally, high demands on water during summer season are a big problem especially for islands and coastal regions. Most islands have a limited carrying capacity as they lack water reserves that can satisfy the needs during high season months. Over-abstraction of water supplies can lead to irreversible results such as salinization (WWF, 2010).

➤ **Pollution**

Pollution of the natural environment that occurs from tourism development can take place in various spatial levels, even in areas that are not directly connected to tourism, due to shifting of pollution.

The main categories of pollution concern water, air, noise and aesthetic pollution.

✓ **Water Pollution**

Water pollution is one of the biggest problems that many tourist regions of the world have to deal with. A major example is the Mediterranean, where only 30% of 700 coastal regions adhere to waste water treatment regulations before disposing waste in the sea. Likewise, the Caribbean that has 100 million visits from tourists per year,

processes approximately 10% of its waste disposal before dumping it in the sea (Holden, 2008).

Apart from the pollution caused by waste dumping, waters are severely polluted by fertilizers and herbicides that are used in gardens and golf facilities in hotels. This water contains chemicals that are absorbed by inland waters and end up in rivers, lakes and oceans. However, tourism activity is only one of the factors that cause water pollution; research shows that other activities such as industrial waste oil spills and chemical substances that are used for agriculture are the main factors that create water pollution (Holden, 2008).

✓ **Air Pollution**

Air transportation is one of the main factors of carbon emission in the atmosphere. Emissions in the European Union produced by international flights increased by 87% after 1990, as travelling by plane costs less and its potential damages to the environment are not taken into consideration. On a worldwide level air transportation contributes to greenhouse effect by damaging the ozone layer, while on a regional level it leads to acidification, eutrophication and ground-level ozone formation through emitting polluting substances in the air (UNWTO, 2008). According to research for tourism and climate change (UNWTO, 2008), tourism industry is responsible for 5% of worldwide emissions of CO₂, 4% of which is attributed to transportation and the rest 1% to tourism accommodations and other tourist activities (Diagram 2.5).



Diagram 2.4: Percentage contribution of tourism sub-sectors to CO₂ emissions

Source: (UNWTO, 2008)

✓ **Noise Pollution**

Noise pollution from airplanes, cars, buses and music as well is a continuously rising problem and apart from its effects on human beings, it also stresses nature and especially fragile ecosystems (Holden, 2008). For example, noise from loud music in coastal enterprises can deter sea turtles nesting.

✓ **Aesthetic Degradation**

The development of tourism facilities can also lead to a degradation of the aesthetic quality of the environment as it is based solely on maximizing the profit without taking into consideration issues such the aesthetic of the area (Holden, 2008). This mentality has created a pattern of building facilities of the same structure that do not get along with the local architecture and are not well adjusted to the natural environment (SETE, 2010).

Tourism as a social phenomenon was at first considered as a mild activity that would have no major impact on the environment. However, tourism development influences the socioeconomic, cultural and environmental characteristics of a destination, and due to multiple factors interacting with each other, a lot of contradictory consequences may occur (Mathieson and Wall, 1982). Tourism activity has multiple effects and the most prominent ones can be considered the economic effects as it is considered as a valuable variant of economic growth and is a basic source of income for many countries. The positive economic effects of tourism include among others the increase of income and investments in the hosting country, the positive balance in payments and revenue, regional development, but can also promote the development of illegal economy, currency leak, as well as regional disparities. Regarding the sociocultural effects, tourism promotes urban and cultural regeneration, however, negative effects such as imitation in culture and customs and conflicts among locals and tourists are also to be taken into account. Finally, tourism has a major impact on the environment, both in a positive and a negative aspect; tourism is now promoting the preservation of important natural areas and the amelioration of environmental quality and infrastructure, but before that a lot of permanent as well as seasonal negative effects were caused by tourism activity due to the constant and unconscious infrastructural and superstructure developments, as well as tourism consumption and waste production.

Chapter 3: Sustainable Tourism Development

3.1 Conceptual Approach of Sustainability

The term of sustainable development can be traced back in 1972 when the essay with the title “Limits of Growth” was published, depicting the environmental situation on

the earth (WCED, 1987). This essay predicted that if the economic activity continued growing with that pace, it would reach its limits within 20 years and so, sustainable development was proposed as an alternative model that can create a radical change in society that would focus on the socio-economic development. As stated by the World Commission on Environment and Development- WCED in 1987, this kind of development would cover the needs of the present without endangering future generations, rendering sustainability as an opportunity to ensure full use of natural resources without causing permanent or irreversible damages to the environment. This new development model is based on economic growth and efficiency, social coherence, and the protection of the environment but in order for these three factors to work, a variety of conditions need to be met.

- **Human needs**

Aronsson (1993) suggested that sustainability refers to the conservation of multiplicity in a natural area and at the same time to the development of a certain society that will ensure a better life quality for people. His approach emphasizes on satisfying the basic human needs such as food, clean water, housing and clothing, as well as on the amelioration of life quality with a higher standard of living, security and holiday opportunities. As Owen et al. (1993) stated, sustainable development doesn't necessarily contradict economic development given that economic activity is an important factor when it comes to dealing with poverty, the protection of the environment and the amelioration of life quality. An economic growth is the only way to secure equal opportunities for everyone, fight against poverty and environmental threats (Andriotis, 2000).

- **Preservation of resources**

Sustainable development respects the needs of future generations and seeks ways of preserving natural resources instead of wasting them. Sustainability principles state that each profit deriving from development should be used- when needed- for ameliorating natural resources and preserving the balance of ecology for future generations.

- **Restrictions**

Sustainability requires some restrictions regarding the tolerance towards some activities that are highly connected to the carrying capacity of the region. The general frame of sustainability is formed based on 12 principles (Dekleris, 2000):

1. The state is responsible for sustainability
2. Preservation of natural environment and forbid any means of degradation.
3. Maintaining the ecosystems and avoid any kind of development that goes beyond their carrying capacity.
4. Restoration of lost natural heritage.
5. Preservation of biodiversity.
6. Common goods cannot be privatized.
7. Development in fragile ecosystems should adhere to the carrying capacity.
8. Development plans and activities should strive to preserve the carrying capacity of the ecosystems.
9. Preservation of cultural aspects (e.g. monuments)

10. Preservation of life quality in cities and prevent of big cities construction.
11. Preservation of the environment and constructing without damaging it.
12. Raise the environmental awareness of the citizens.

3.2 The Concept of Tourism Sustainability

Tourism has been a developmental factor for many areas since the early 50's but tourism activity created multiple negative effects both in natural and cultural resources, as well as in the economies and societies of the hosting countries which led to a belief that tourism is a threat for the sustainability of many areas (Andriotis, 2000). Taking into consideration the problems caused by the intensive exploitation of some areas and the mass tourism development, a new approach of tourism was necessary, an approach that would respect the natural and cultural environment of the hosting county and target to its economic, social and cultural sustainable growth.

Sustainable tourism is a term used to express the principles of the sustainable development of tourism industry (Fenell, 1999). The World Tourism Organization (WTO) defines sustainable tourism as “tourism that meets the needs of present tourists and host regions while protecting and enhancing opportunity for the future. Rather than being a type of product, it is an ethos that underpins all tourism activities”. Muller (1994), notes that sustainable tourism development includes the concept of qualitative development, which is the amelioration of life quality that is succeeded through reducing the use of nonrenewable energy resources and avoiding high exploitation of the environment. Schematically Muller projects sustainable tourism development in a

pentagon that includes the economic health, the well-being of locals, the protection of resources, the healthy culture and the satisfaction of guests, and these aspects interact by two with each other (Figure 3.2) (Muller, 1994).

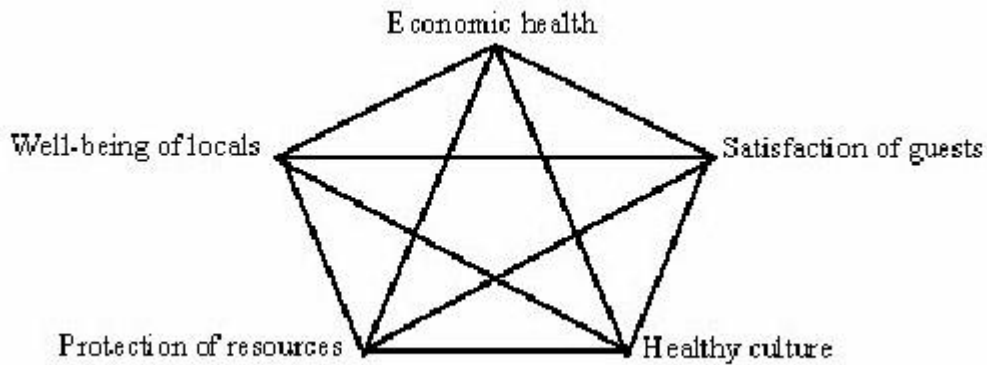


Figure 3.2: Tourism development's magic pentagon

Source: (Muller, 1994)

Toth's (2002) approach for sustainable tourism states that it can create a balance between social, environmental, cultural and economic interests. The concept of sustainable tourism has three dimensions including environmental conservation, economic efficiency, and social equity (Figure 3.2)

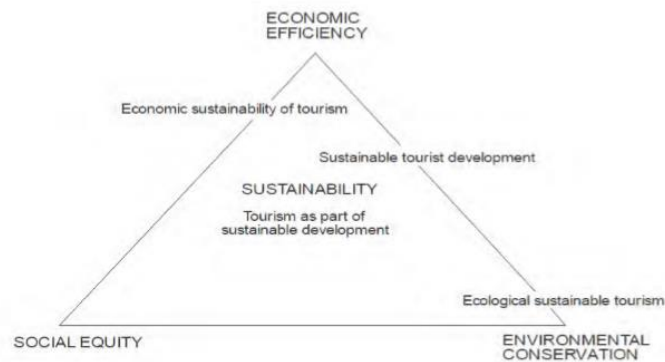


Figure 3.2: Three dimensions of tourism sustainability

Source: (Toth, 2002)

Finally, Sharpley (2009) believes that sustainable tourism should increase the environmental benefits that are important for tourism development by maintaining natural heritage and biodiversity through the adoption of ecological methods. Furthermore, he supports that cultural heritage should be taken into consideration and the conservation of traditions and customs should be promoted, as well as the diversity of cultures in every destination. Last but not least, Sharpley states that sustainable tourism should support long-term economic and cultural activities that offer opportunities for income increase, stable work and social services and at the same time contribute against poverty in local societies. Therefore, one can suggest that sustainable tourism development necessitates conscious participation of the local society, as well as important political decisions that will lead to an active participation of all local operators in constructing tourism infrastructures that are respectful to the environmental laws. Creating and maintaining tourism sustainability is a continuous process that must be constantly supervised for suggesting potential preventive measures where needed. It is important that sustainable tourism satisfies the visitor's needs by offering interesting experiences in a way that will raise the environmental awareness (Sharpley, 2009).

3.3 Life cycle of a Tourism Destination

The meaning of the life cycle of a tourism destination has triggered a lot of research over the years. Gilbert (1939) traced three levels: Exploration, Development and Decline. Defert (1954) suggested a theoretical approach of tourism development, according to which a tourism destination can be “born” “grow up” and eventually “die”,

and he was the first one to express the possibility for a destination to escape degradation by adapting in the new tourism demands (Andriotis, 2000). Based on previous research on life cycle of a tourism product, Butler (1980) suggested a model of the development of a tourism destination (Figure 3.3). This model projects that the modifications in tourist arrivals in a destination follow a curve of an S shape and that these destinations go through a developmental cycle, consisted of five stages.

According to the concept of tourist area life cycle, a tourist destination gradually progresses through five main stages: exploration, involvement, development, consolidation, stagnation, and post-stagnation (Figure 3.3) (Bojanic, 2005). A tourist area has different possibilities during the post-stagnation stage that range from decline to rejuvenation. The process illustrated in Figure 3.3 has two axes that represent the number of visitors and time and an increase in either direction suggests a general reduction in attractiveness and quality after capacity levels are reached (Butler, 1980).

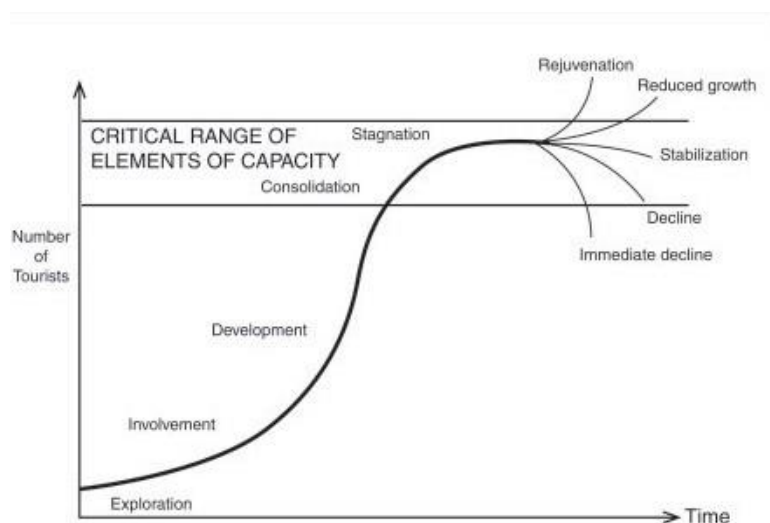


Figure 3.3: Tourism Life Cycle

Source: (Butler, 1980)

During the stage of exploration, there are a few adventurous tourists who visit sites with few public facilities and these visitors are initially attracted to that particular destination because of an extraordinary natural feature. The destination at this point only attracts a very small number and specific type of visitors (Bojanic, 2005). As the destination gradually moves into the stage of involvement, the interaction between tourists and the local community is limited, resulting in only basic services, while a definite market area begins to emerge and an increased advertising creates a pattern of seasonal variation (Bojanic, 2005).

The stage of development is the last stage where a continued growth in the number of tourist arrivals can be detected and there is also a noticeable augmentation of tourist facilities and promotional efforts. At this point the destination faces a shift in control to outsiders, while the number of tourists at high periods massively outnumbers the residents which results in an antagonism toward tourists (Bojanic, 2005). The destination enters the stage of consolidation when the growth rate of tourist arrivals starts decreasing. Tourism is now a major component in local economy, and a well-outlined business industry has begun shape. However, some of the facilities are outdated and the area tries to prolong the tourist season, which leads to the stage of stagnation, where the highest numbers of capacity levels and tourists are reached. The destination is well-known, but it is no longer popular which leads the lodging facilities to erosion and turnover (Bojanic, 2005). Finally, the destination reaches the stage of post-stagnation with options varying from decline to rejuvenation, represented by different levels of change (either positive or negative) in the number of visitor arrivals and the result depends on the area's ability to adjust itself and create a viable market (Bojanic, 2005).

3.4 Carrying Capacity of a Destination

The term carrying capacity has been examined over the last few decades along with that of tourism sustainability and these terms are intertwined determining the limits of balance in tourism development. The carrying capacity in biology is defined as the number of people, animals, or crops that a region can support without leading to an environmental degradation (Kokkosis & Tsartas, 2001). In the frame of sustainable tourism development the carrying capacity is defined as the number of tourists and infrastructure that can be supported by the social, economic and environmental structure of an area, while at the same time maintaining a balance (Kokkosis & Tsartas, 2001). One of the most renowned definitions was given by the World Tourism Organization (1981), stating that “carrying capacity represents the maximum number of visitors that a geographic or physical entity can receive without provoking an unacceptable alteration in the physical and social medium nor an unacceptable reduction in the quality of the visitors’ experiences”. According to Liu (2003), the concept of carrying capacity is generally seen as the maximum number of tourists a destination could actually accommodate without creating excessive deterioration in the environment or declining tourist satisfaction. In other words, to maintain the quality of the natural resources and provide a visitor experience of high quality (Papageorgiou & Brotherton, 1999).

Carrying capacity might have different definitions depending on the economic, social and environmental dimensions of a destination. These types of capacity can constitute what is known as tourist carrying capacity, which could encompass the relationship between all the aspects that affect the tourist area and that show their “holistic” character. Several authors, however, stated that this concept is useful but also

problematic when it comes to using it in practice to help the sustainable tourism development (Swarbrooke, 2002; Liu, 2003). The tourist carrying capacity is approached in the academic literature from a theoretic view as empirical studies on this issue are few in the twentieth century. This can be seen in a revision of literature that was carried by Kokkosis et al. (2001) and detects the absence of specific methods regarding the carrying capacity research; these methods seek to identify the number of tourists, not in order to detect a “magic number” but to measure it as a rigorous and scientific approximation.

In conclusion, the term sustainable development can be traced back in 1972 with the publication of “Limits of Growth” that depicted the environmental situation on earth (WCED, 1987), and covers the needs of the present without endangering the future. This new developmental model is based on economic growth and efficiency, social coherence and the protection of the environment, however, for these factors to work, a variety of conditions such as human needs, preservation of resources and restrictions need to be taken into account. Regarding sustainable tourism development, based on research there are multiple approaches trying to define the term, all having as a common that sustainable tourism has three dimensions including environmental conservation, economic efficiency, and social equity. The life cycle of a destination has triggered a lot of research and according to Butler (1980), it consists of five stages that follow an S shaped curve. These stages consist of exploration, involvement, development, consolidation, stagnation and post-stagnation level that may lead to rejuvenation, reduced growth, stabilization, decline, or immediate decline. Finally, the term carrying capacity has been also examined along with a destination’s life cycle and according to Kokkosis & Tsartas (2001) this term is defined as the number of tourists and

infrastructure that can be supported by the social, economic and environmental structure of an area, while at the same time maintaining a balance.

Chapter 4: Alternative Tourism

4.1 Conceptual Approach of Alternative Tourism

Tourism contribution to economic and social profit of a destination is beyond questioning, as tourism industry provides multiple jobs and increases GDP. However, tourism has also been accused of causing a wide range of irreversible problems, mostly in developing economies given the fact that the major investments in tourism come from the MNEs (Western Multinational Enterprises) and the income from tourism activity would flow back at them, causing a huge economic leakage (Smith, 1989). Tourism shifts the working population from traditional agricultural industries to service-based hospitality and tourism industries, causing alteration to the community and its cultural identity (Macleod, 2004).

There are four major influential phenomena that led to the need of finding different approach in tourism. To begin with, economic issues and the fact that the growth of economy did not lead to the solution of poverty problems, as well as environmental issues concerning mass tourism's influence on the environment. Furthermore, there are political issues that reflect the political economy of the international tourism industry that proved to be a continuation of inequalities between the First World and the Third World. Finally, social issues such as the rise of a new traveler market of the postmodern culture. Although the "new" form of tourism could not be precisely defined, many where those who accepted it instinctively. This different approach on tourism could

have fewer negative effects on an area and its population, and could still trigger positive economic effects, being the optimal solution (Triarchi & Karamanis, 2017).

Alternative tourism emerged as a solution to the infamous mass tourism or conventional tourism, as it is against large numbers of visitors, unregulated and clumsy development, as well as homogenization, social alienation, and environmental destruction (Butler, 1992). What mass tourists enjoy the most is the convenience of not having to arrange their own travel, not having to spend a lot of time or a large amount of money, and not to be obliged to learn the local language for buying goods or enjoying services in their chosen tourist destination and in this way, these tourists are actually abandoning the authentic and genuine contact with the local culture (Butler, 1992). The new forms of alternative tourism appeared in developing countries in the 1970s and early 1980s, and their major goal is to tackle the consequences of mass tourism. Alternative forms of tourism serve a different approach prioritizing cultural and natural resources when it comes to development and planning. These forms appeared in various models and different names but they shared the same values which mainly focus on improving the situation of an area and preserving its original appeal. Alternative tourism forms characteristics involved small-scale projects, with low-level investments, respectful towards nature, self-sustaining and independent, and at the same time demanding the participation of locals (Table 5.1).

| Management | Regulation | Contribution in economy |
|--|--|--|
| <p>The development process is low and controlled development</p> <p>planned-pace is not so important, concept-centre,</p> <p>Impacts awareness turn to reduce negative effects</p> <p>The developer is local</p> <p>The energy consumption is often inefficient in saving fuel</p> | <p>Local community control's, Local decision- making</p> <p>Amount: Extensive; minimizing local negative impacts</p> <p>Ideology with respect to public intervention in the development process, excluding external influences.</p> <p>Emphasis on community stability and well-being; integrated, holistic</p> <p>Its time frame is long-term</p> | <p>Role of tourism is complementary to the existing activity</p> <p>Linkages and leakage are respectively mainly internal and minimal</p> <p>Medium multiplier effect and High income distribution</p> |

Table 5.1: Main Characteristics of Alternative Tourism Forms

Source: (Weaver, 1998; Hunter & Green, 1995; Butler, 1992)

The involvement of locals would improve their contacts with the foreign visitors and would also offer a more authentic, satisfying as well as meaningful experience for both tourists and hosts. Deroi (1981) related the term of alternative tourism to the accommodation style as “in alternative tourism the client receives accommodation directly in or at home of the host with, eventually, other services and facilities offered there”. He then added some other features to alternative tourism claiming that alternative tourism targets at establishing a personal, direct and cultural understanding between the host and the tourist (Deroi, 1988). His definition supports the improvement of contacts between tourists and locals, in order for a cultural exchange to be obtained.

The term of “alternative tourism” is nowadays usually related to the sustainable development. Holden (1984), supports that sustainable tourism is more respectful towards the natural environment than conventional mass tourism as in the last one vegetation and animal habitats made the way for building new infrastructure through deforestation that harmed the ecosystem and natural landscape. Sustainable tourism is

becoming so popular over the years and some argue that what is presently called alternative will be considered mainstream in a decade (Triarchi & Karamanis, 2017).

4.2 Alternative Tourist's Motives

The motives behind the development of alternative tourism are directly connected to the standards of tourism development of the hosting area and totally different than those of conventional mass tourism (Andriotis, 2008). Alternative forms of tourism include vacations where tourists participate in activities such as trekking, climbing, and exploring, as well as volunteering, participation in archeological excavations or joining agricultural activities. Alternative tourists despise the commercialism of conventional mass tourism and would rather choose an authentic experience when visiting a destination. They do not only seek a break out of their routine, but also aspire to a spiritual development and balance through their contact with social, cultural and environmental aspects of the area they are visiting (Andriotis, 2008).

Their basic characteristics are (Andriotis, 2008):

- They try to visit unspoiled areas.
- They are attracted by the feeling of wandering.
- They try to avoid big cities.
- They try to communicate with the locals.
- They do not seek luxury infrastructure.
- They collect most of their information before and during their travel.
- They travel alone or in small groups.
- They are well educated.
- Their income is above average.

- They try to stay in a destination for more days than a conventional tourist.

4.3 Classifying the Alternative Tourism Forms

Since the new wave of tourism arrived, many forms of it have been emerged gradually and the groups of alternative tourists seem to be motivated to travel for multiple reasons, formulating different types of alternative tourism. Alternative tourism has been receiving continuous academic attention but the different approaches in its interpretation caused a contentious definition and terminology (Triarchi & Karamanis, 2017). The only main point shared by academics is their opposition towards conventional or mass tourism. Some suggest that “the alternative tourism paradigm must be examined as an overarching umbrella term, under which the diversity of other forms of tourism or niche markets lay” (Benson, 2005). In some cases, ecotourism, sustainable tourism and justice tourism are described as synonyms to alternative tourism while sometimes as different forms, complicating the classification process.

There are several forms of alternative tourism that promote ecological and societal restructuring, such as ecotourism, sustainable tourism, community-based tourism, pro-poor tourism (PPT), peace through tourism, and volunteer tourism (Isaak, 2010). Especially eco-tourism seems to be one of the best ways to combine economic development and environmental sustainability, while Butler’s concept of sustainable tourism is that of ‘tourism in the context of sustainable development’ (Triarchi & Karamanis, 2017). PPT is a term that focuses on tourism development and management that strengthens the conjoins between tourism businesses and poor people, and targets to the elimination of poverty through improving the quality of life and giving poor people the opportunity to take part to the development of the product. Peace through tourism focuses on the kinds of tourism that encourages and nurtures more peaceful and

harmonious relations and can be a contributor to the reconciliation of two nations or groups of people in conflict situations, securing their co-existence (Isaak, 2010). The form of volunteer tourism was a response to the numerous physical disasters and environmental and social issues in developing countries as well as to terrorism's attacks, including short-term projects that intend to serve communities in need (Triarchi & Karamanis, 2017). According to Wearing (2001), volunteer tourists have been defined those who “volunteer in an organized way to undertake holidays that might involve aiding or alleviating the material poverty of some groups in society, the restoration of certain environments or research into aspects of environment” (Wearing & Grabowski, 2011).

Research tourism is contextualized within the alternative tourism paradigm, specifically in the educational, scientific, and volunteer sectors (Benson, 2005). Educational tourism focuses on the opportunities offered by colleges and universities for students to travel and study abroad. It includes “school trips and language schools, university and college students in terms of study abroad, fieldtrips and exchanges, and the adult and seniors market, including cookery, art, gardening courses in exotic locations, and specialist organizers and nature-based and cultural educational tourism programs” (Benson 2005). Scientific tourism is sometimes seen as a form of ecotourism as it protects environment and motivates groups or individuals to visit different ecosystems under the guidance of highly qualified scientists (Mieczkowski, 1995).

Alternative tourism is a generic term that encompasses a broad range of tourism forms such as eco, agro, culture, community and rural tourism; ecotourism, involves ecological awareness that ensures the preservation and conservation of the environment, while community tourism can be found within the local community, who are socially and economically empowered through tourism and rural tourism, takes

place in the countryside and showcases the rural life, art, culture and heritage at rural locations, benefiting the local community socially and economically and at the same time enabling interaction between the locals and the tourists for a more enriching tourism experience (Awang, & Nor'ain, 2014).

According to Christou (2012) the forms of alternative tourism can be classified in six main categories:

- i) Cultural and Historical tourism (based on the unique identity of visited site)
- ii) Health Tourism (based on the resource and type of facility)
- iii) Conference-Congress Tourism (based on the type of activity, and the aim of the meeting)
- iv) Sports Tourism (based on excitement and the ability to perform the activity)
- v) Ecotourism (based on preserving the environment)
- vi) Entertainment Tourism (based on availability of wide range activities depending on amusement).

Fragaki (2003) narrows it down to five categories:

- i) Conference and Exhibition tourism (organizing conferences and international exhibitions in areas that also offer other facilities)
- ii) Sports tourism (combination of tourism with sport events, training or individual sports)
- iii) Tourism for Religious purposes (including visits to churches, monasteries, religious festivals etc.)
- iv) Culture tourism (visits to monuments or cultural events)

- v) Ecotourism, (combines local economic development, protection of the quality of the environment and promotion of the natural advantages and the history of an area).

As has been noted, alternative tourism emerged as a solution to the so-called mass/conventional tourism and according to Butler (1982), it is against large numbers of visitors, unregulated development, homogenization, social alienation and environmental destruction. Alternative tourists despise the commercialism of conventional mass tourism and prefer to live an authentic experience when travelling to a destination by blending in with the local customs and traditions as well as with activities and aspiring to a spiritual development through their contact with social, cultural and environmental aspects of the area they are visiting. Alternative tourism has been receiving a lot of academic attention and the term-as the term of sustainable tourism- has many different approaches and thus, no exact definition and terminology (Triarchi & Karamanis, 2017). However, all academics share one main thought in their approach, which is the opposition of alternative tourism towards the irreversible destructive effects of the traditional forms of mass tourism. Finally, the classification of alternative tourism forms again varies among academics, with ecotourism, culture tourism, religious tourism, sports tourism and conference tourism being the most prominent terms that cover alternative tourism forms.

Chapter 5: Tourism in the 21st Century

5.1 Global Tourism

Tourist activity is known as the biggest and most important field in a worldwide basis. It is estimated that tourism contributes approximately to 9.8% of global GDP and

creates 9.4% of the global employment opportunities (276.845.000 job offers), based on statistics for the year of 2014. More specifically during 1950-1995 the levels of international tourism in terms of arrivals had an annual expenditure growth of 7.2% and in terms of earnings a growth of 12.2%. International tourism arrivals increased from 25 million in 1950 to 529 million in 1995 and the revenue from 2.1 billion to 381 billion dollars (Kostanidis, 2009). However, from 2008 till the first half of 2009 global tourism was affected by the economic crisis; in 2009 global arrivals decreased by 4.2% comparing to 2008, reaching 880 million. In the beginning of 2013 World National Tourism Organization (UWTO) predicted that international tourism arrivals would increase by 3%-4% comparing to 2012, a number that finally increased to 5% reaching

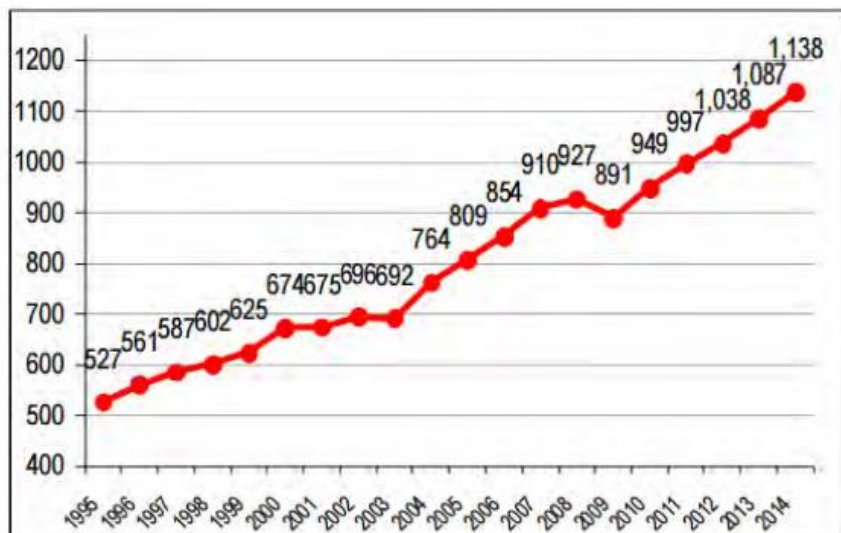


Diagram 5.1: Global Tourism Arrivals

Source: (UWTO, 2015)

On a regional level there's an increase in all geographical units and according to statistics taken from the UWTO World Tourism Barometer (2019) international arrivals grew 4% in the first six months of 2019 and specifically:

- International arrivals between January and June grew 4% comparing to the same period of 2018
- The leading role of growth was held by the Middle East (8%), Asia and the Pacific (6%). Europe follows with 4% and Africa with 3%, while America had moderate growth with 2% (Diagram 5.2).
- When it comes to subregions, the Caribbean showed the highest growth of 11%, followed by North Africa with 9% and South Asia & North-East Asia with 7%.
- There is still confidence in global tourism performance but there are also signs of moderate growth.
- Up to this point growth was driven by a strong economy, increased air connectivity, affordable air travel and visa facilitation. However, weak economic indicators, the Brexit confusion, geopolitical challenges and tensions seem to have an impact on consumer confidence.

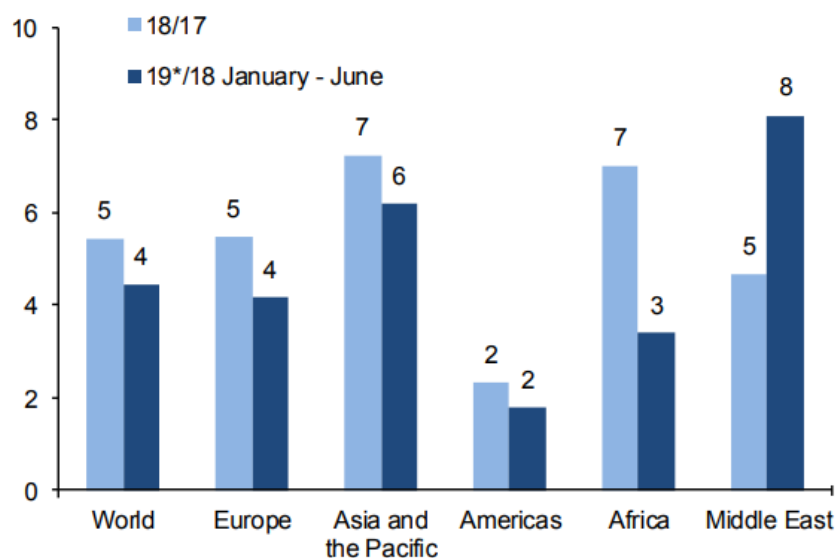


Diagram 5.2: International Tourist Arrivals

Source: (UWTO, 2019)

5.2 Tourism in Greece

5.2.1 Tourist Arrivals in Greece over the years

Despite the fact that Greece has above 3.000 islands and island complexes as well as 30.000 beaches scattered in a 15.000 km of coastline in its territory, tourism appeared as a fully organized economic activity only after WWII (Beriatis & Papageorgiou, 2010). It was after the late 50's when major changes in tourist arrivals in Greece occurred, rendering tourism activity as an important factor for the economic and regional growth of the country.

Taking into consideration multiple statistical researches by SETE, one can easily detect the progress of tourist arrivals in Greece and the benefits of tourism in the Greek economy. In 1953 the number of tourists that arrived to Greece was 90.397 (SETE, 2015) which increased to 399.438 in 1960 reaching an increase of 340%. Likewise, in 1970 tourist arrivals reached 1.609.210- an increase of 303%. A similar situation occurred in the following decades: 227% for 1970-1980, 85% for 1980-1990, 40% for 1990-2000, while from 2000-2020 the average increase was estimated between 3.1% - 6.5% per year and for the period 2010-2020 the average increase is 5% per year.

Greek tourism has a clear seasonal profile a statement proven by the number of arrivals that concentrates mostly in the period May-September and reaches its maximum percentages in the month of July. Concentration of tourists is greater in Greece comparing to almost all other competitor countries and considerable differences are observed among the seasonal patterns of particular tourist nationalities arriving in

Greece rendering an appropriate redistribution of the number of tourists among the particular nationalities as a considerable factor for reducing the seasonality in concentration (Drakatos, 1987).

5.2.2 Tourism in the Greek Economy

Tourism over the last years has been the locomotive of unemployment reduction and attracts a lot of investments that benefit the country, offering opportunities for a sustainable development (INSETE, 2018). Furthermore, tourism has a major role in shaping the income of many regions of the country and according to ELSTAT's 1st estimate, the country's GDP in 2018 stood at € 184,714 million increased by + 2.5% compared to 2017 (€ 180,218m) (INSETE, 2018). According to research carried by INSETE for 2018, here is also an increase in foreign revenue by +11.3% or +1,842 million (travel expenses and receipts from cruises included), as well as a significant investment activity of 5.0 billion, 1.9 billion of which concerned the added domestic value. Many Greek regions depend their economy solely on tourism activity as its contribution to regional GDP stands at 47.2% in Crete, 71.2% in the Ionian islands and 97.1% in the islands of Southern Aegean. The above-mentioned regions have the highest GDP of the country proving that tourism leads to an improved standard of living in the areas (INSETE, 2018). Finally, tourism covered with travel receipts 72% of balance of goods deficiency indicating the importance of tourism for the Greek economy (INSETE, 2018).

All things considered, tourism has been one of the most remarkable industries which only began on a massive scale during the 1960's and has rapidly grown over the last years. This phenomenon shows no signs of uncertainty or slowing down, despite

unpredictable factors. Forecasts predict 1.6 billion tourists by 2020, which calculates to 2 trillion euros per year or 5 billion euros per day. More and more governments recognize the key role of tourism in the economy due to the foreign exchange, the creation of new job opportunities, and its contribution to the tax revenues. Tourism is an extremely complex endeavor as there are a lot of money at stake and is contributing to understanding people of different backgrounds, as well as providing a way out of routine. Tourism in Greece started to develop after the second World War when major changes occurred that rendered tourism as one of the major activities and important economic factors of the country. Greek tourism has so far, a seasonal profile with most arrivals occurring during the summer period, with a maximum of arrivals in July. Finally, the tourism industry seems to be a locomotive in reducing unemployment in the country, as well as attract foreign investments that are beneficial for the region.

Chapter 6: Methodology. Research Results

6.1 Introduction

The aim of this particular chapter is to clarify the methodological approach adopted to examine the development of alternative forms of tourism in the region of Macedonia. This chapter will present the aim of the research and the methodological approach undertaken. It will, also, present the sample that was selected and will set out the method used for data collection along the process of data analysis. Finally, during this chapter, ethical issues and limitations associated with this study will be discussed.

6.2 Research Goals and Design

The aim of the interviews is to gather information about the region of central Macedonia that are connected to the tourism development of the area, the actions taken to promote tourism in this area, the factors that contributed to the development of tourism, and the possibilities of alternative forms of tourism. Furthermore, the questions that arise from this research focus on

- a) the types of alternative tourism that are dominant in the research areas (e.g. cultural, religious, ecotourism, agritourism, gastronomic),
- b) the forms of tourism could be further developed in the areas,
- c) the overall situation of tourism in the research areas
- d) the natural and cultural resources that are important for the tourist development,
- e) the ways the research areas can be promoted and
- f) the potential problems that entrepreneurs of alternative tourism forms might face.

A qualitative research design was used to understand the possibilities of alternative tourism development in the region. “Qualitative research is especially helpful when it provides us with someone’s perceptions of a situation that permits us to understand his or her behavior” (Krathwohl, 1998). Qualitative data are suitable for finding the meanings they place on events and processes by emphasizing on people’s experiences. Furthermore, according to van Manen (1977), qualitative research connects their perceptions of the social world and the data collected through interviews describe and reveal the way things are (Gall et al., 1996).

The research design of this qualitative inquiry was a semi-structured interview that included open-ended questioning. Questions were sent to all the participants before the

interviews which were held either in person or via Skype calls for convenience of the participants. With each participant approval, the interviews were recorded and shall be used exclusively for an accurate transcription from the interviewer and typed notes were taken during every interview as well, enabling the researcher to track key points to use during data analysis. Semi- structured interviews are conducive to spontaneous and candid responses, characteristics that allow a clearer exploration of reflections, feelings and perceptions, and seem the most suitable way of garnering descriptive analysis (Bogdan & Bicklen, 2003).

6.3 Sampling, Participants and Data collection

The goals in a sampling approach may significantly vary and reflect the purposes directing the study (Punch, 1998). When choosing the sample of participants, the researcher chose a purposive sampling method, a form that is essentially strategic and attempts to establish a good correspondence between the sampling and the research questions (Bryman, 2004). While undertaking this study the researcher interviewed individuals that have a key role in Tourism Organizations and Enterprises in the region of Central Macedonia and could therefore give a robust opinion regarding the dynamics of the area and the potentials of alternative tourism development.

Data collection took place between February and April 2020 and participants were contacted with detailed information regarding the purpose of the research as well as the core of the interview. Limitations were encountered by the researcher during the process of this study, mainly due to the COVID-19 outbreak that affected the participants availability, as well as the small number of participant's, which suggests that the researcher must be extremely cautious when generalizing the findings. No

matter the limitations and the time-consuming process, the use of semi-structured interviews proved to be useful in gaining meaningful data from the participants. The interviews were carried out with a total number of 22 participants working in different tourism sectors:

1. Thessaloniki Hotels Association (1 participant)
2. Region of Central Macedonia (4 participants)
3. Municipality of Thessaloniki (1 participant)
4. Helexpo (1 participant)
5. Greek National Tourism Organization (4 participants)
6. Thessaloniki Convention Bureau (4 participants)
7. Thessaloniki Tourism Organization (2 participants)
8. Pieria Hotels Association (1 participant)
9. Chalkidiki Hotels Association (1 participant)
10. Camping Association of Halkidiki (1 participant)
11. Pieria-tourism.gr (2 participants)

6.4 Tourism profile of Central Macedonia

The region of Central Macedonia is one of the 13 regions of Greece and the second biggest region of Central Northern Greece (18.811 km²) with a population of 1.880.058 citizens. The region consists of 7 regional units (Imathia, Kilkis, Pieria, Pella, Chalkidiki, Serres, Thessaloniki), with Thessaloniki being the region's capital and considered as a doorway to Europe and the Balkans (Strategic and business plan for developing thematic tourism in the region of Central Macedonia, 2019). Regarding its geomorphological characteristics, the region is mountainous and has a Mediterranean

climate. Tourist flow in the region of Central Macedonia is 18.2% of the total flow of the country (Strategic and business plan for developing thematic tourism in the region of Central Macedonia, 2019). The region of Central Macedonia is an important component for tourism, having as a major characteristic its coastal areas of Pieria and Chalkidiki. Since these areas attract many tourists during the summer, tourism demand is low during the rest of the year, which creates an issue of seasonality for the region. Apart from the tourist developed areas, the region consists also from areas that have high potential for developing alternative forms of tourism (Kerkini lake, Vermio, Kaimaktsalan, Edessa, Veroia, Naousa and Olympos), while other areas such as Athos, Thessaloniki and Olympos are the major religious attractions for the region (Strategic and business plan for developing thematic tourism in the region of Central Macedonia, 2019).

Furthermore, based on the strategic and business plan of Central Macedonia (2019) the region has a variety of cultural resources dating back to the prehistoric era as well as modern history, however the region lacks proper promotion of the cultural monuments of the area mostly due to individual actions. There are, also, 23 recognized traditional villages in the region, as well as a number of preserved monuments and buildings that constitute the basis for urban development in accordance with specific rules for the protection of the environment and sustainability. The dynamic of tourist in Central Macedonia represents 10% of the country's total number. The coastal regions along with the city of Thessaloniki account for 90% of the region's hotel superstructure. According to a research carried by the Greek National Tourism Organization (2003), the region of Central Macedonia has three major types of "tourism zones" with different characteristics and potentials for development:

- A. The developed coastal areas (South Pieria- Olympus, Strymonian Gulf, Ierissos, Sithonia and Kassandra Peninsulas).
- B. The urban- metropolitan complex of Thessaloniki
- C. The emerging zones of thematic or soft tourism (Vermio mountain, Veroia, Naousa, Voras mountain, Edessa, Kerkini- Doirani- Strymonas valley, Lagadas lakes).

Furthermore, the region of Central Macedonia has approximately 10% of the total number of hotel infrastructure in Greece and 8% of the total tourist traffic. Its hotel capacity is estimated in 1.192 units and 87,596 beds of which:

- The Prefecture of Chalkidiki is the most developed tourist area of the Region and is ranked fourth as an established tourist destination after Crete, Rhodes and Corfu. It also has 54.60% of the total hotel capacity with 514 hotel units and 46.051 beds.
- The Prefecture of Pieria has 388 hotel units and 19.941 beds.
- The Prefecture of Thessaloniki has 140 hotel units and 14.353 beds.
- The region has also 91 organized camping areas with a capacity of 32.031 people, as well as 60.000 beds in rooms and apartments to let.

Based on the Operational Programme for Macedonia and Thrace 2007- 2013, the Region of Macedonia displays the following potential for tourism development:

- Variety in cultural and natural resources
- Low prices
- Potential demand
- A well-structured transport network (charter flights)

- A good geographical location near the countries of Eastern and Western Europe, as well as other markets
- Recognized as an important European destination
- Continuous demand of the “sun and sea” product
- Safe destination
- Possibilities for pilot projects that will promote thematic tourism

In addition, the strategic objective of the Region is planning and implementing policies, as well as social, economic, and cultural development through conservation and management of its natural resources (Business Plan of Central Macedonia for 2012-2014). According to its strategic priorities, the Region of Central Macedonia has all the potential to become a strong European and national tourist destination and can achieve continuous tourist traffic by using all its resources (history, gastronomy, market, natural resources, entertainment etc.). The combination of the above advantages can lead to an enhancement of the socio-economic activity and sustainability of the Region and bring in quality tourism (Strategic and business plan for developing thematic tourism in the region of Central Macedonia, 2019).

Thessaloniki can be transformed to a congress, exhibition and purchase pole of attraction and the development of thematic tourism in the region (health tourism, wellness tourism, cultural tourism, gastronomical, urban tourism, agro-tourism, religious tourism, sports tourism etc.), could create a continuous flow of tourism throughout the year and boost the development of thematic tourism in the Balkans (Strategic and business plan for developing thematic tourism in the region of Central Macedonia, 2019). The multitude of natural, cultural religious, congressional and gastronomic resources that are available in the area due to its rich history create a strong

foundation for rendering the region as a central attraction of domestic and foreign tourists throughout the year.

6.5 Research Findings- General Tourism Characteristics of Thessaloniki, Pieria and Chalkidiki

Based on the outcome of the interviews that were held with tourism professionals of the regions regarding the overall situation of tourism in each destination the interviewer can easily deduct a general satisfaction when it comes to the levels of tourism flow every year. Tourist flows are particularly concentrated during summertime, and tourism organizations of the areas are determined to promote these destinations as an all year-round destination and increase the percentage of visitors in winter times as well. Furthermore, the profile of tourist varies, depending on the region; when it comes to the selection of a travel destination consumer's decision is influenced by self-actualization, escape, culture exploration, nightlife, adventure, quality of the accommodation, level of prices and quality of services and activities. Tourists who choose to go for holidays in the regions of Thessaloniki, Pieria and Chalkidiki are usually motivated by the offered activities such as beach and sports activities, excursions, restaurants, nature, climate, ecotourism activities, tradition, nightlife, local architecture, archaeological and historical monuments, as well as the existence of a nearby airport and the travel costs. Overall, tourists usually spend approximately a week in their destination and they usually combine it with travelling around nearby areas to further explore the region and the culture. Due to their proximity, these regions are easily combined and therefore create an ideal destination for tourists who desire to explore different aspects of Greece and combine cultural visits with beach activities and nature.

6.6 Alternative forms of tourism in Thessaloniki, Pieria and Chalkidiki

The regions of Thessaloniki, Pieria and Chalkidiki provide the visitors with different options of tourism to choose from thanks to their natural resources, their cultural inheritance, their tourist infrastructure, local cuisine and products etc. In these regions, visitors can find many different forms of alternative tourism and participate in different experiences. Based on the results from the interviews, the research regions have already developed or will develop multiple alternative forms of tourism such as ecotourism, agrotourism, religious tourism, congress tourism, gastronomic tourism, coastal and maritime tourism, and mountain tourism.

6.6.1 Ecotourism

The concept of ecotourism is an outcome of uprising of the environmental movements that showcased the sustainability limitations of mass tourism. The ecotourism concept became popular during the 1970s and 1980s and emerged as opposition to the negative social and environmental impacts caused by mass tourism, a form of tourism that places emphasis on income and profit, rather than environmental conservation (Ziffer, 1989). Concerns about the impact of mass tourism on the natural environment and cultures, together with the appearance of the sustainable development concept (WCED, 1987), resulted in the rise of the popularity of sustainable and alternative forms of tourism, including ecotourism. According to Ceballos-Lascurain (1987) defined ecotourism as: “... Travelling to relatively undisturbed or uncontaminated natural areas with the specific objective of studying, admiring, and enjoying the scenery and its wild plants and animals, as well as any existing cultural manifestations (both past and present)

found in these areas". In the 1980s ecotourism was perceived mostly as visitation to natural regions for the purposes of education as well as enjoyment (Ceballos-Lascurain, 1987), and the term got broadened and included environmental and cultural preservation, ethical issues and human rights (e.g., Donohoe and Needham, 2006; Fennell, 2008). Ecotourism is opposite to mass tourism, however there is some ambivalence today as to its true meaning and purpose. For example, there are those who argue that ecotourism is just a marketing tactic, and that its purpose is not clearly understood by many, having as a result the misuse of the concept to attract conscious tourists to nature based touristic activities under the banner of ecotourism, often generating negative social and environmental impacts (Courvisanos and Jain, 2006; Drumm and Moore, 2002; Wheeler, 1993).

Regarding the development of ecotourism in the regions of Thessaloniki, Pieria and Chalkidiki, the majority of interviewers from all areas agreed that the natural beauty of the region of Thessaloniki creates ideal conditions for developing nature-based activities. In particular, 10 of the interviewees mentioned visiting lakes of Koroneia and Volvi that are located in the geological basin of Mygdonia and offer plenty of activities such as horse riding, that allow the visitors to enjoy the unique landscape and wildlife. Lake Volvi also offers a majority of sport activities such as bike riding, wind surfing, as well as bird watching. Furthermore, they also mentioned that one can visit Aliakmonas and Loudias Rivers, as the entire area is home to rare species of birds and enjoy a breathtaking view of the Thermaic Gulf and the Aliakmonas river delta. This area is an ecological paradise, even though not even locals are aware of some of these locations. The fact that the majority of the interviewees pointed to the above-mentioned destinations and activities, proves that the tourism potentials of these areas are well known. Another option of ecotourism according to every interviewee from the region

of Chalkidiki is Petralona, located in the peninsula of Chalkidiki. The village located in the Katsika mountain which provides the visitors with a breathtaking view of the entire peninsula of Chalkidiki and one can find different activities such as visiting the cave of Petralona.

6.6.2 Agrotourism

Nowadays, agrotourism is a significant component of communities and rural countryside's in different parts of the world. Agrotourism is one of the key strategic directions for a successful tourism development until 2020 (Temirbulatova et al., 2015). For this growth there are two major drivers, and in particular changes in the agricultural sector have led farmers to seek additional sources of income, one of which is developing agricultural tourist activities (Busby & Rendle 2000; Canoves et al., 2004). Furthermore, the rapid industrial development and the population's dynamic lifestyle created the need of new tourist activities that can offer something beyond the common "3 S" (sand, sea, and sun) pattern and deliver authentic experiences, which led to a growing interest in the areas where the needs and requirements of the tourists can be satisfied through the development of agrotourism. This form of tourism has been promoted as a policy instrument in many countries and is a feature to rejuvenate regional economies as well as to preserve traditional societies and landscapes (Hjalager, 1996; Busby & Rendle, 2000; Canoves et al., 2004). A variety of policies towards farmers have been adopted by governments of countries around the world, and in Europe for example, there are well-funded programs aiming to preserve farm landscapes and also to support farmers (Hjalager, 1996; Busby & Rendle, 2000).

Agrotourism has so far received attention by many academics but an examination of the available literature reveals that there is not an exact and universal definition of this

type of tourism. However, there are different existing definitions of agrotourism that are based on a variety of characteristics, and these definitions share the view that this term comprises a wide range of farm activities offered to the public mostly for educational or recreational purposes. Hilchey (1993) defines agrotourism as “any business conducted by a farmer for the enjoyment or education of the public, to promote the products of the farm and to generate additional farm income”, while Che et al. (2005) defines agrotourism as “any agricultural operation that caters directly to the general public with retail sales and/or the provision of services involving farm products and conducting sales at the production location”.

Based on the findings of the research, agritourism has a lot of potential of developing in the areas and visitors can experience an authentic agricultural way of life by participating in a variety of activities. For example, 4 of the interviewees mentioned Lefkochori, which features some real agritourism characteristics and various activities related to this form of tourism. Furthermore, according to 2 Chalkidiki’s executives, the establishment of green village in Arnaia is a very well-known destination for agritourism, while it is also believed that the village of Varvara has a lot of possibilities of developing agrotouristic activities. Apart from that, the peninsula of Chalkidiki as well as the region of Pieria are famous for their agricultural activities and their local products such as honey and olive, so the thought of creating more concrete agricultural units, where people can participate and experience the whole process throughout the year, is common among the different interviewees that participated in the research.

6.6.3 Religious Tourism

Religious tourism, sometimes called spiritual tourism, has gained an increasing role throughout the world. Due to its initial component, pilgrimage, it is often considered

the oldest form of tourism, dating thousands of years back. Travels to the ancient holy places did not have today's logistical support, but they had the same human motivation: faith. This faith, sometimes extreme, was the basis for shaping religions. Religions' variety and complexity can be justified through human typology, the environment in which their adepts live, culture, and last but not least, society's stage of development. Today millions of people decide to travel around the world, searching for spiritual guidance and reaching places that are considered holy, and the most concentrated flows a Hindu pilgrimage in India that attracts around 70 million people and a Muslim pilgrimage in Saudi Arabia that attracts approximately 2 million people (Tala & Padurean, 2008). At a global level, the cultural openness from the past few years is also a benefit for religious tourism. The world is an interesting religious mosaic: it could be an interesting mosaic for religious tourism as well (Tala & Padurean, 2008).

Religious attractions are spread throughout the regions of Thessaloniki, Chalkidiki and Pieria. 15 of the interviewees mentioned that Thessaloniki is well known for its historical monuments dating back from archaeology, Byzantium, Ottoman Empire and Christianity, which make the city an ideal destination for those who want to explore different types of culture and attracts a high percentage of tourists throughout the year. Furthermore, 7 people pointed the Holy Mountain of Athos in the peninsula of Chalkidiki as a very important asset for religious tourism attraction. Athos has been declared as a world heritage site by UNESCO and hosts many monasteries that are home to approximately 2000 monks. Women are not allowed to enter Mount Athos and men must apply for a permit months before they visit, nevertheless the area attracts a big number of people who want to admire the site, even by sailing around and watch the monasteries and other sights from a distance. Finally, Pieria's executives mentioned that the region focuses on highlighting a number of 33 pilgrimages that are linked to

the journey of Apostle Paul in an attempt to enhance the development and establishment of alternative forms of tourism in the area.

6.6.4 Congress Tourism

The process of globalization, rapid technological development, as well as more numerous networks of scientific research and educational institutions, created the need to exchange experiences in various fields of human knowledge and educate personnel from the economic and non-economic activities. Modern scientific and technological development has influenced the need for closer co-operation between businesses and scientists in national and international level. In order to achieve cooperation, and at the same time there was an exchange of experiences and opinions, organizes a number of different types of sets. Their program contents depend on the structure of the professional participants. The abundance of organizing these meetings and contributed to the creation of new forms of tourism - business tourism. Business tourism includes various meetings, seminars, conferences, conventions, symposiums, exhibitions, prize trips, events that contribute to connecting people and sharing of knowledge and information. This form of tourism because of the high tourist consumption and involvement of all economic and non-economic activities in the implementation of these developments, consists one of the most profitable forms of tourism (Šušić & Mojic, 2014). In the office of tourism as a separate market niche called congress tourism, in fact, congress tourism can be seen as a subset of the broader field of tourism - business tourism (Ficarelli, et al., 2013, p. 7). However, despite the daily use of the term ICCA (International Congress and Convention Association) has not proposed a single definition of congress tourism.

Visitors within congress tourism travel for specific purposes that is often related to their workplace. Although in the framework of congress tourism are in the domain of business trips are often mandatory and conditional workplace, task or project, all tourist receptive countries are very happy and these passengers fall into the group of tourists, calculating the income of congress tourism total tourist revenue. In accordance with the characteristics of participants who attend various meetings, congress tourism is considered one of profitable forms of tourist movements. Of all the groups in tourism, the participants of conferences are guests of your money and expect services with the label: accuracy, reliability, quality, comfort, speed, suitability, flexibility, originality, creativity and innovation. These are the basic principles according to which should be organized every congress.

Based on the results of the interviews, congress tourism in the region of Thessaloniki is becoming more and more popular. According to ICCA, Thessaloniki is moving up as an international MICE destination and in 2018 hosted 29 conference events with 5,770 participants in total. Thessaloniki Convention Bureau (TCB) is a member of ICCA and aims to establish the northern port city as an attractive MICE destination by providing high quality services. TCB's executives that took part in the interview process are very satisfied with the region's highest ranking the last years that reflect the Thessaloniki's dynamics and congress potential. TCB's members support that the city has all the potential of becoming a conference destination when it comes to venues and the ability to host events, taking into consideration that 97% of conferences registered by the ICCA are up to 2.500 people. What Thessaloniki really needs is to improve its infrastructure overall, which is expected to happen within the next four to five years and will help the bureau to claim even more conferences. Thessaloniki might be the leading area out of the three when it comes to congress tourism, however both

Chalkidiki and Pieria have the potential of supporting conferences. Pieria's and Chalkidiki's diverse scenery together with the infrastructure offer a variety of choices to host conferences in fully equipped hotels that are continuously upgrading their amenities, placing the areas among the leading contenders for business and leisure combined meetings.

6.6.5 Gastronomic Tourism

Gastronomic tourism is considered a new form of tourism (Chaney & Ryan, 2012) and there are many different terms used for this type of tourism including: food tourism, culinary tourism, gastronomy tourism, and tasting tourism (Hall & Sharples, 2003). Ignatov & Smith (2006) defined it as "tourism trips during which the purchase or consumption of regional foods (including beverages), or the observation and study of food production (from agriculture to cooking schools) represent a significant motivation or activity.". There are many definitions for culinary tourism; According to Horng et al. (2012), culinary tourism is based on the food experience is defined as participation in the "special or unique food experiences related to a tourist destination". Ottenbacher & Harrington (2011) explain culinary tourism as "tourism where an opportunity for memorable food and drink experiences contributes significantly to travel motivation and behavior". Furthermore, Karim and Chi (2010) use the terms "gastronomy tourism", "food tourism", and "culinary tourism", and explain them as travelling to experience different tastes and foods in different destinations. Finally, Smith and Costello's approach (2009) culinary tourism is defined as "visitations to primary and secondary food producers, food festivals, restaurants, and special locations for which food tasting and/or experiencing the attributes of specialist food production as the primary motivation for travel".

Over the centuries, the city of Thessaloniki was home to multiple peoples and cultures that contributed to the tastes and recipes that were later demised as a gourmet treasure to the city. The variety, the incomparable nutritional value and the uniqueness of the Greek land and sea products are combined harmoniously with the gastronomic culture along with the passion of the people of the city to satisfy their guests. According to the interviewees from Thessaloniki Tourism Organization, the city has the potential to become a culinary destination due to its multicultural background together with the organization of food festivals that allow the food to be treated as symbol and a commodity and provide a meaningful and authentic experience for the tourists when experiencing new flavors and cultures. Thessaloniki Food Festival (TFF), aims to establish the city as a culinary destination, however it seems to be a lack of active participation from the locals and there is not enough communication. Apart from the yearly organization of the food festival, the city has over the years developed its gastronomic infrastructure, with the opening of many new and alternative shops and restaurants that provide their guests with innovative gastronomic ideas and unique experiences. Furthermore, smaller scale food festivals can be also found in the region of Chalkidiki, aiming to promote regional products such as tsipouro, sardines, olives and honey, while Pieria has also a lot of different traditional flavors that could attract tourists. However, the interviewees related to the area did not focus their attention on the particular tourism form.

6.6.6 Coastal and Maritime Tourism

Maritime tourism refers to sea-based activities such as cruising, yachting, boating, nautical sports and their land-based services. Coastal tourism refers to land-based activities that include sunbathing, swimming, surfing and other coastal activities for

recreation that take place on the coast for which the proximity to the sea is a condition (Ecorys, 2013).

Maritime tourism is one of largest industries of contemporary tourism in the world and participates significantly in the development of the tourist economies of the countries (Hall, 2001), as well as with a tendency for fast and continuous rates of development (Orams, 1999). However, a precise estimation of its real size is not accurate, since the recording process of statistical data is difficult, and the exact number of tourists that choose maritime tourism is still unknown (Miller, 1993; Warner, 1999). Therefore, there is an approach to estimate the size of the maritime tourism and is commonly attempted through its percentage participation in the total tourist activity of a specific region. This approach has many limitations and can just provide an approximate estimation.

The world's maritime tourism market was estimated at 174 billion for 2005 which is 10.5% of the total expenditure of tourism, but there is a controversy on how much of it can be attributed to each "sub-sector" (specific activity) (Douglas-Westwood, 2005). However, it is important to note that the above-mentioned total does not include the expenditures and the trip in coastal regions, which would formulate a wider definition if it was included.

According to the interviews this type of tourism is suitable for the regions of Chalkidiki and Pieria due to their extensive coastal areas. Both regions are known for attracting big numbers of tourists each year, who seek to enjoy land-based activities by the beach. Also, the regions offer a variety of activities that visitors can join during their stay along with their relaxation. This type of tourism contributes to the economic boost and development of the regions, however there is still a long list of improvements. The

infrastructure of these regions must meet the needs of their visitors and the municipalities should adopt measures that will protect the areas from the effects of mass tourism.

6.6.7 Mountain Tourism

In recent years, tourists seem to show an augmented preference towards mountain tourism at an international level and the main reason is the strong relationship that has been developed between man and nature, which renders mountains a destination of great tourist influx. These tourist flows result in the development of a sustainable activity that is capable to improve the economic conditions in these areas. According to Jafari (2003) mountain tourism appeared for the first time as a new form of tourism in *The Encyclopedia of Tourism* and gradually increases its positioning among the diverse forms of tourism and shows a rapid development throughout the years (Moss & Godde, 2000). Mountain areas are currently established as the second most visited destination after coastal areas (UNEP/PNUMA, 2007), and contribute to 15-20% of tourism worldwide, which translates to a number between 70 and 90 billion per year (Mohd Taher et al., 2015).

The relationship between mountains and tourism is undeniable, as mountains are a destination with a large tourist influx, so a well-focused form of tourism would result in the development of a sustainable activity, that would contribute and improve the economic conditions of these places, that frequently host low-income populations (UNWTO, 2005, Maroudas, et al., 2004). Promoting economic development and raising environmental awareness about protecting nature through the promotion of

mountain tourism was one of the key issues during the 3rd Euro-Asian Mountain Resorts Conference of the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2017).

The Mount Olympus is located in the borders of the regions West Makedonia and Thessaly in Greece and is the highest mountain in Greece. It has been declared as a National Park and it is included in the international network of Biosphere Reserves. The Mount Olympus offers a variety of activities that attract alternative tourists such as ski mountaineering, hiking and trekking, alpinism, trail running and mountainlike. It is considered one of the most famous mountain destinations in Greece and has the potential to further develop mountain activities by improving the infrastructures. Since mountain tourism is becoming more and more popular in Greece, the number of trekkers, who are interested in exploring the variety of flora and fauna of the area, is increasing. Finally, Chalkidiki offers a number of walk and hike routes of different levels of difficulty that a visitor can enjoy while visiting the region, while Thessaloniki's interviewees did not focus on this tourism form possibly due to the morphology and the landscape of the area.

6.7 Challenges/ Difficulties of developing Alternative Forms of Tourism in the Regions

Based on the findings that derived from the interviews that were carried regarding the existence and the development of alternative forms of tourism with local officials some obstacles were identified that impose significant direct and indirect costs on the economy. Alternative tourism enterprises are subsidized by the government which encourages corruption. There are some agrotourism areas that have adopted the name but not yet the essence of alternative agrotourism, including mass tourism activities in their offering product. Furthermore, the offered agrotourism activities are limited, do

not really educate tourists on rural life and impose stress on the environment instead of preventing it. Agrotourism activities should contribute to a rise in income, the growth of local products and the protection of the environment, as well as preserve local economy and culture. However, there are a number of cases that encourage the opposite and there is no state intervention to prevent the situation. Moreover, some ecotourism spots largely depend on mass tourism facilities to host their guests, and the environmental pressure and the noise of these accommodations are destroying nature. Mislabeling ecotourism violates its core values which entail travelling to natural areas where tourism related facilities conserve the environment and help to improve the life quality of local people. Furthermore, the interviewees pointed out a lack of funding when it comes to the development of alternative tourism activities that lead to insufficient infrastructure that do not contribute to an authentic experience. Greece's brand is also connected to summer tourism with few tourists knowing the possibilities of mountain tourism in the country but according to Greek National Tourism Organization's executives, their initiative of promoting Greece as an all year-round destination increased the numbers of mountain tourism in the country. However, until recently, there was not a concrete strategic plan for the steps that should be followed for the further development of alternative forms of tourism in these regions but across the whole country as well. Tourism enterprises seem to rely to the fact that the country will most likely attract tourists every year no matter what type of tourism they promote and thus, not all of them are willing to invest to the development of alternative tourism by readjusting their enterprise and their values.

6.8 SWOT analysis

This stage aims to evaluate the results deriving from the qualitative research regarding alternative tourism forms in the regions of Thessaloniki, Pieria and Chalkidiki, by identifying the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. As is shown in this table, in this study area there are in total six strengths points and five weakness points while there are six opportunities and five threats for the alternative tourism forms development in the regions. Generally, the advantages for the development of alternative tourism forms in these regions are superior to the limitations and a coherent and targeted planning that will focus on strengths and take advantage of the existing opportunities can create an effective step to further develop alternative tourism forms in the regions and eliminate the weaknesses and threats.

| <u>Strengths</u> | <u>Weaknesses</u> |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="304 1173 823 1279">• Strong political will for development of alternative forms of tourism<li data-bbox="304 1469 823 1648">• Significant resources (natural, religious, wellness, cultural, ski resorts etc.)<li data-bbox="304 1767 584 1800">• Reasonable prices<li data-bbox="304 1912 576 1946">• Potential demand | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="898 1173 1358 1207">• Absence of traditional character<li data-bbox="898 1323 1417 1503">• Malfunction between public management and other tourism related organizations<li data-bbox="898 1621 1417 1727">• Decrease in the population of remote areas<li data-bbox="898 1845 1417 1951">• Insufficient services and lack of professionalism in some cases |

| | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Network of transport • Increased demand for the product “sun and sea” | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulty in developing tourism activity during low season (December- March) |
| <p><u>Opportunities</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuous technological development in digital media communication • Recognition of the destination in overseas countries and in Europe • Secure travel destination • Good geographical location • Development of new forms of tourism according to the tourists needs | <p><u>Threats</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased competition in the Balkans and other European destinations • Demand controlled by Tour Operators • Environmental degradation due to mass tourism • Stagnation in overseas markets • Continuous and more pressing marketing actions to attract tourists |

| | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Attract various international events | |
|--|--|

When planning the development of alternative tourism forms in each destination, it is essential to evaluate the attractions and introduce them to the tourism community, investigate the existing facilities in that area, taking into consideration the current opportunities and capabilities, and finally analyze all the various aspects of tourism influences on the hosting destination and its environment. This analysis attempts to recognize the potentials as well as the limitations of the regions that will have a valuable impact on the planning and the development of alternative tourism forms in the areas. Ultimately, appropriate strategies need to be followed in order to eliminate the weaknesses and threats and boost the strengths and opportunities for the regions of Thessaloniki, Pieria and Chalkidiki. The analysis of tourism in the above-mentioned regions using the SWOT analytical model, suggests that these regions have favorable context in terms of planning the development of alternative tourism forms that overcome any the threats faced by this industry.

Chapter 7: Conclusions & Recommendations

The purpose of this dissertation is to investigate the existence and further development of alternative forms of tourism in the regions of Thessaloniki, Chalkidiki and Pieria. This was accomplished through research carried by semi-structured interviews with 22 tourism professionals that have a good understanding of the above-mentioned regions and their capacities. Each of the main chapters of the particular dissertation investigated different parts of the concept of tourism, focusing on the development of alternative forms of tourism.

The first chapter of this research focuses on the conceptual approach of tourism and investigate the concept of tourism and its categories, as well as its historical development. Furthermore, it explores the phenomenon of mass tourism and along with its consequences and the factors that determine tourism demand and tourism product and namely socioeconomic, technical, psychological, cultural and other random factors. Chapter two focuses on the effects of tourism development and in particular the economic, sociocultural and environmental effects as the development of tourism activity in a country or a destination will inevitably have cause some effects due to changing in the socioeconomic, cultural and environmental characteristics of the areas that are developed.

Furthermore, chapter three examines the development of sustainable tourism and analyzes the conceptual approach of sustainability that refers to a development that respects the needs of future generations and seeks ways of preserving natural resources instead of wasting them, as well as tourism sustainability that meets the needs of tourists and host regions while protecting and enhancing opportunity for the future. Also, it

focuses on the life cycle of a destination with its five main stages and the carrying capacity of a tourism destination that triggered a lot of research in the last few years.

Chapter four dives into the conceptual approach of alternative tourism that emerges as a solution and opposition to the mass tourism or conventional tourism and its different forms, as well as alternative tourists' motives that are directly connected to the standards of tourism development of the hosting area and totally different than those of conventional mass tourism (Andriotis, 2008).

Chapter five briefly examines tourism activity in the 21st century both in global and domestic terms, as tourism activity is known as one of the biggest and most important field in a worldwide basis that contributes to the global GDP and creates employment opportunities. Tourism over the last years has been the locomotive of unemployment reduction and attracts a lot of investments that benefit Greece, offering opportunities for a sustainable development (INSETE, 2018) and has a major role in shaping the income of many regions.

Chapter six investigates the potentials of developing alternative forms of tourism in the region of Central Macedonia and more specifically in the areas of Thessaloniki, Chalkidiki and Pieria. A qualitative research carried out in order to understand the possibilities of alternative tourism development in these regions. The aim is to gather as much information as possible about the regions of central Macedonia that are connected to the tourism development of the area, as well as the factors that contributed to the development of tourism, the actions taken to promote tourism in this area and the possibilities of developing alternative forms of tourism and the overall image of tourism in the areas. Several questions arise from this research and focus on the types of alternative tourism that are dominant in the research areas (e.g. cultural, religious,

ecotourism, agritourism, gastronomic) and which forms could be further developed in the areas. Also, the overall situation of tourism in the research areas and the natural and cultural resources that are important for the tourist development, as well as the potential problems that entrepreneurs of alternative tourism forms might face and the ways the research areas can be promoted.

Based on the findings of this research, all the regions have the potential of developing or have already started developing alternative forms of tourism in the area, however, most of them lay in a very basic level and they lack of a strategic plan to further establish their foundations. The main types of alternative tourism that prevail in the research areas sometimes differ, due to the differences in the morphology of each area. This question is not directly answered, however, based on the answers of the interviewees one can deduct that the region of Thessaloniki mostly offers ecotourism, agritourism, congress and gastronomic activities. The region of Chalkidiki is widely known for its coastal tourism but has also focused on ecotourism, agritourism, religious tourism, while it gradually develops mountain and gastronomic activities. Pieria's dominant alternative tourism form is mountain tourism, due to its proximity to Mount Olympus, however the region is constantly working on developing and promoting other alternative tourism forms that can be also found in the area (e.g. agritourism, religious tourism, congress, coastal). Furthermore, regarding the important cultural and natural resources, the research areas have plenty of attraction to offer, such as natural lakes, rivers, coastal areas, caves, traditional villages, products, and religious sightseeing. These locations are spread throughout the research areas, which creates a lot of potentials of combining these destinations for multiple alternative tourism experiences.

The results of the interviews that were carried regarding the existence and the development of alternative forms of tourism identified some obstacles that impose significant direct and indirect costs on the economy. There are some areas that have adopted alternative tourism concepts but not yet their essence, since they focus mostly on the profit they can make out of this situation, instead of preventing stress on the environment. Also, some alternative activities are mislabeled and do not offer an authentic experience to the visitor, which will potentially mislead future visitors. Furthermore, the lack of funding is another crucial factor that leads to insufficient infrastructure, while Greece has been connected for many years to the label of 3 S's tourism as well as summer tourism and therefore, its other beauties and abilities are not so well known to the world. Tourism executives need to put a lot of effort in overcoming that label and create a plan for further promoting the country's possibilities in the foreign market. Finally, many tourism businessmen seem to lack interest in further developing or ameliorating the concept of tourism in Greece, as they rely on the fact that the country or their facilities will either way attract visitors, choosing quantity over quality for their enterprises. Abandoning this thought would be very helpful for the industry since the more businesses adapt to new ideas the better it is for the general image of the destination on the market.

Fortunately, actions are being taken to further promote alternative tourism in Greece in general, as well as in the research areas. Over the last few years Greece's Tourism Organizations seem to go beyond the typical "Sea and Sun" tourism and promote the country as an alternative destination in different fairs worldwide, with an increasing number of international travelers ditching the all-inclusive packages and choosing more authentic experiences and new possibilities. These types of holidays gradually include many different types of alternative tourism such as cultural, religious, agritourism,

ecotourism, and Greece has the potential of developing many different forms due to its countless options and its outstanding natural beauty. However, the country still has a long way to go in terms of ameliorating the offered activities and focusing on the authentic experience of the travelers. Regions such as Thessaloniki, Chalkidiki and Pieria are gradually developing different activities related to alternative tourism and attract different types of tourists who do not only seek a break out of their routine, but also aspire to a spiritual development and balance through their contact with social, cultural and environmental aspects of the area they are visiting.

Also, it is important to mention that not all the research areas can develop the same alternative tourism forms, as they all have different features and morphology. However, due to their proximity, these areas could be combined and create a very attractive alternative tourism package that can offer different and authentic alternative experiences at once. The above-mentioned idea needs further research as well as a strategic planning and marketing from the part of the tourism authorities of these regions to promote the destinations on the market. Finally, further measures need to be taken in order for these regions as well as for the whole country to establish itself as a destination with authentic alternative tourism experiences and a coherent strategic plan shall be created by which tourism enterprises need to abide and follow the necessary rules.

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Appendix

Questionnaire

1. Does the presence of alternative forms of tourism have a positive effect on the tourist development of the area and increase its recognizability? If so, to what extent and how? If not, for what reasons?
2. What special forms of tourism do you think that dominate in the area now? (cultural, religious, ecotourism, agrotourism, wine tourism, gastronomic tourism, etc.)
3. What is the overall situation of tourism in the area? (arrivals, overnight stays, occupancy, income, tourist profiles) and what are the preferences of tourists during their visit to your area?
4. Prioritize the natural and cultural resources that you consider most important for the tourist development of your area.
5. What forms of alternative tourism do you think could be further developed in your area? What do you think are the key factors for the further development of alternative forms of tourism in the region? (e.g. subsidies, incentives, local information, infrastructure improvement, more effective promotion, etc.)
6. What do you consider to be the strong points / comparative advantages and what are the weak points of your area regarding the development of special and alternative forms of tourism?
7. How do you think you can promote the area to the alternative tourist and establish it as an alternative destination?
8. How could the region be compared to competing countries in terms of offering alternative products?

9. What alternative forms of tourism do you think can be further developed in the area according to social, environmental, cultural resources available?
10. What benefits do you think alternative tourism offers to tourism in the area versus the dominant model of mass tourism?
11. Is there interest (demand) for alternative tourism in the area?
12. What are the characteristics of alternative tourists? (nationality, financial status, marital status, level education, etc.)
13. Are alternative forms of tourism advertised and promoted satisfactorily and in different ways (internet, exhibitions, brochures, travel agencies, etc.)?
14. What potential problems are entrepreneurs of alternative forms of tourism face? (e.g. lack of government support, high operating costs, limited demand, etc.)
15. Further comments and suggestions?