

SUSTAINABLE TOURISM. APPLICATIONS IN
GREECE.

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Dissertation

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1.Abstract

While Greece is on the brink of the economic crisis, there are still sectors which can be productive. At this case, the dissertation examines the case of sustainable tourism in Greece, which can be a way to generate income, growth and employment.

In this case, the dissertation have used a number of examples/case studies such as the case of agrotourism as a method to exploit the opportunities made from agrotourism.

2.Introduction

Today it is well accepted the fact that society and economy cannot use the same development method. The scale of development during the past 30 years had affected negatively not only the environment but also the social and cultural values of tourist destinations. According to the UN (2009) societies and economies cannot continue to expand at the same rates like they did after WW2 since they have wasted a large volume of resources. The economy is a factor that affects our life but it cannot be seen independently from the Earth's resources. On every economic activity we must consider also its impact on both the environment and society (Holmberg and Robert, 2000).

One of the economic activities related to the use of natural resources and the concept of sustainability is tourism. Although tourism has a positive impact on economic activity it also has negative impacts on the society and the environment. According to Tsartas (2010: 15) the integration of environmental and social sustainability can contribute to the minimization of the downsides tourist operations have, while it could provide numerous economic opportunities for businesses that will decide to follow the path of sustainability.

Savitz (2006) notes that sustainability affects all types of firms, though larger firms have more resources and better access to information in order to dedicate more resources to sustainability and initiatives towards the improvement of the environment. On the other hand, smaller firms will have several concerns due to financial and resource limitations. Nevertheless, it is commonly accepted that the development of policies that promote sustainability can bring a number of benefits such as the creation of new markets, the reduction of operating costs,

improving corporate image and improvement on human resource performance (Willard, 2005).

Service industries, like tourism, have seen less scrutiny. However, tourism first derives benefits from the environment since tourist firms that operate on rural areas are using the natural resources and the environment as a source of competitive advantage and differentiation. Second, it has a negative impact on the environment either directly or through operations related to tourism, such as transportation that have a substantial impact both on the consumption of resources (fuels, water, etc.) and on the quality of the environment (atmospheric pollution, noise, etc.). (Vernon, 2003).

As far as Greece is concerned, during the 80's and 90's the country has been a major destination mainly of mass tourism. The result was a poorly planned development that although it had a positive impact on local economies, it affected in a negative way the environment and the society. During the late 90's and early 00's it was obvious that the model of "mass-tourism" was overrated while tourists turned their back preferring alternative ways of tourism, such as quality driven tourism and eco-tourism (Tsartas, 2010: 42).

One mode of environment-friendly tourism is agrotourism, which relies on the combination of agricultural activities, such as organic farming, with tourist activities. For example there is growing number of tourist units in rural areas in Greece where the visitors can stay into traditional settlements, taste organic food while on some occasions they can take part on the farming activities and/or learn traditional local recipes using the local products. An example as such is the wine roads in Nemea and Northern Greece where tourists are visiting wine production units, they buy organic wine while they can stay on those units (Tsartas, 2010:190).

There are examples from all over the world on how agricultural tourism can improve local economy without affecting the sustainability of the areas. Daniels et al (2001) refer on the example of ranch recreation firms in Wyoming where tourists can live on a farm, take part in their daily activities or take advantage of the natural environment for a number of recreational activities such as horse riding, climbing, or walking. The benefits are many, including creating jobs locally, regenerating local economies and sustaining local societies.

This dissertation aims at examining the potential of sustainable tourism in Greece and how it can contribute on the further development of the tourist industry. The study is based primarily on examples, from the Greek agricultural-tourist section but also from abroad.

3. Literature review

In reviewing the literature the emphasis will be placed on presenting the conceptual framework of sustainable tourism. The chapter will focus on issues such as the definition of the tourism industry, its impact on the environment and some key tourist dimensions. Having in mind that tourism has a negative effect on the environment so we recommend sustainable tourism as a solution to the long-term problems that mass tourism created.



3.1 The tourism industry

Tourism for many countries constitutes a major source of prosperity and income. A lot of people travel abroad so as to admire the beauty of the nature gain experience of different cultures, and relax in a comfortable setting away from the everyday activities. The word “tourist» usually is connected with images of beaches, hot sun, and relaxation. However, the official definition of the word is much broader.

The World Tourism Organization defines international visitor as any person who travels to a country other than its usual residence and outside its usual environment for a period of more than 12 months. International visitor’s main purpose of visit is mainly the implementation of an activity remunerated within the country visited.

Usually international tourists have some characteristics such as:

1. Long or short-term period tourists usually stay at least one night in collective or private accommodation in the country visited.
2. Same-day visitors: Some visitors due to their economic, professional or personal conditions decide not to spend the night in a collective or private accommodation in the country visited.

Consequently, the official definition of a “tourist” involves those traveling for educational or cultural purposes so as to relish nature, visit museums and archaeological sites, attend sporting events such as the Olympic Games, or for professional trips such as participating in professional conferences. It is clear that one of the main incentives countries have in hosting international sporting events is the promotion of their tourism destinations.

However, except from the above reasons the main purpose for traveling in a country is for leisure. Millions of people visit beach resorts every summer with some clear pattern in terms of destinations. For instance, Americans prefer the Caribbean beaches while Europeans prefer the Mediterranean ones.

These tourists are usually interested in finding a hotel next to the beach with good food and a lot of sunshine. The production of tourism services necessitates the use of several inputs such as natural resources, which include beaches and sunshine and ski slopes and cultural sights. The most essential role

of these inputs suggests that tourism services are basically a “national” product. This, consecutively, implies that national and regional policies have an essential role in determining the quality of a country's tourist product. For that reason competition in the global tourism industry has been very extensive among countries.

As we already mentioned, tourism is a major source of income many countries. Most of the countries that earn a high percentage of their GDP from tourism are usually small, such an example is Greece, since is visited each summer by many tourists attracted by its famous and sunny islands.

In 2001, global receipts from tourism reached \$462 billion, half of which went to Europe and the one-quarter to the Americas. The United States is by far the biggest recipient of tourism income in absolute terms, while France is by far the first in arrivals (Papatheodorou,1999:1).

Both private and public sector contribute to the touristic product in various ways. Each sector offers some facilities and services that attract tourists. Specifically:

- Private Sector such as airlines, hotel chain operators and owners, tour operators, credit card companies, tourist attraction operators and real estate agencies are services that attract tourists
- Public Sector such as city managers, transportation planners, bus and train operators, information departments, economic development agencies, national parks, national tourist organisations increase the

beauty and the environmental sustainability, which is necessary for the good reputation of the country.

- *Touristic Institutions* such as museums, art galleries, historic facilities and educational organisations increase the cultural profile of the country and attract more tourists (Memoire, 1999:45)

The combination of the above sectors can result to many positive opportunities for the tourism of the country and can increase the country's popularity as a touristic destination.

3.2. Tourism key dimensions

Tourism depends on three key dimensions. These dimensions are (Memoire, 1999:48):

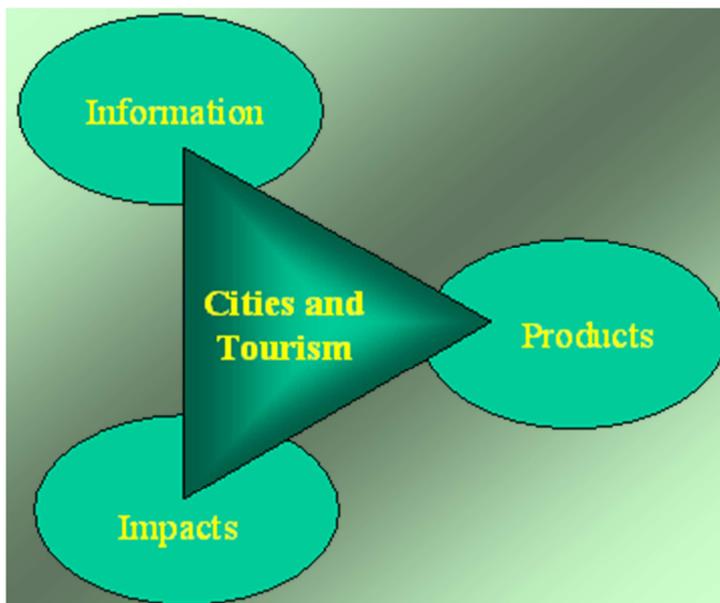
- **Products:** These include special events and packages offered by tourist attraction providers; theme parks, operators of events such as sports, shows, museums and hotels. In the product dimension we also account natural attractions and famous agricultural products. For example Greece is well known for its olive oil and Mediterranean diet. That attracts many tourists that appreciate good food in addition to enjoying natural beauty.
- **Information:** Through information a country makes itself more tourist friendly. Tour operators, hotels and residents, can provide information about the country and its sights. The information that is provided to

tourists should aim to attract tourists, to satisfy their needs and to offer them the best services.

- **Impacts:** economic and development chances as well as the impact of tourism growth on sustainable development, transportation, cultural and environmental, social and economic aspects are some impacts that tourism can bring to a country.

Figure 1 illustrates the interconnections among the three dimensions.

Figure 1



Source: Memoire Aide, 1999, "Tourism and the city: the challenge of sustainability", Spain

3.3. What can tourism bring

Tourism in a country can bring many benefits but also problems as well. The main advantages that the tourism may bring are the money income that can help the country economically, improve infrastructure and facilities, and increase reputation.

Moreover through the increased reputation the country can manage to improve the presentation of its cultural heritage and traditional lifestyle and to promote it to tourists. Furthermore the people that are occupied in the tourist sector are educated so as to satisfy customer's needs. This education provides them input about a country's culture, the need for sustainability and environmental prosperity. Any increase in tourism demand automatically decreases unemployment and creates a lot of opportunities for young people (Batra, 1989:37).

However, there are some problems that can be created by the tourism industry. The most important is the environmental impact that mass tourism may create. This kind of tourism, as we already mentioned, does not necessarily take into the protection of the environment and the respect of the cultural profile of the country. So tourists, sometimes do not respect the cultural and the environmental profile of the country, creating a lot of problems. This fact is more usual to young people that do not receive the appropriate education for the importance of the culture and the tradition of a country.

Another serious problem that may appear is the fact that only some people may have benefits from tourism and some revenues may go to outsiders. Specifically some hotels are managed from other countries so the gains do not benefit the country.

An example is Hotel Hilton that has its basis in the USA and has been expanded all over the world, however the US managers direct Hilton.

Table 1 below presents the problems and the opportunities that the tourism industry has.

Table 1

Problems	Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Sometimes most of the money can go to outsiders.- Sometimes only some people in communities get benefits<ul style="list-style-type: none">- This breaks communities and culture.- Sometimes outsiders do not respect culture.- Community people can start to do traditional activities for money, not for culture.- Environmental damage.- Young people learn not to respect traditional culture.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Money for community development- A chance to educate outside people- A chance to have more people understanding indigenous people's problems and issues.- A chance to make income from community.- A chance to rebuild the value of traditional culture.

Source: <http://www.recoftc.org>

3.4. Tourism industry and its impact on the environment

The revenues that the tourism industry brings to each country are many. However the impact that the tourism has to environment is negative. In 1929, the world travel revenue estimated at 30 thousand million dollars, which was the 2% of the world product. In 1979, this earning increased to 450 thousand million dollars, which was about 6% of the world product. Later in 1982 the world tourist arrivals were 28.6 million in comparison with the arrival figure of 415 million persons during 1990 that spent more than US\$249 billion. France and USA are the largest tourism destinations. Specifically from 1991 until 1992 over 59.5 million tourists visited France. The USA at the same period attracted 44.6 million (Narayan and Narayan, 1991)

Many countries all over the world spent \$1.4 billion in order to promote their country to people so as to attract them for vacations. The greater expenditure of every tourism destination is advertising and promotion.

The tourism industry is considered to have essential growth and it is the second largest industry in the world in terms of turnover, after the oil industry. However the environment is also an important element, which develops the foundation of a nation's tourism industry. As the environment is a vital component of the tourism industry, it is expected that tourism developers of a country should ensure that the environment is properly protected, secured, cared and preserved.

However such a perfect situation is very rare as the consequences of tourism and tourists on natural environment is far from beneficial and quite harmful.

When there is a harmony between tourism and the environment the last benefits from the former or vice versa. The palace-hotels are a main source of great fascination for tourists and offer revenue for those who own them. In the same way, the natural environment has benefited from tourism in a number of ways. For instance the establishment of wildlife parks and shelters has led to the protection of wildlife and of scarce plants and flowers. The income created from tourism can be used again so as to protect the environment of a country. Tourism also gives an incentive to the local community to produce traditional products that will be embraced by tourists and will have many benefits (Tsartas, 2010: 189)

Alternatively, tourism is believed to be in conflict with the environment because when a large number of tourists arrive at a destination leads to congestion, which further leads to depletion of natural resources and causes damage to the environment. Plants suffer from steady crushing by feet and smoke produced by the pipes of automobiles also cause damage to the delicate environment.

3.5 Tourism categories and notions

Generally tourism is considered as the activity that is associated with rest, relaxation, sports and access to culture and nature. Tourism should be planned and implemented as an advantageous mean of individual and collective fulfilment.

Tourism activities should have as main the promotion of human rights and, more specifically, the individual rights of the weak groups such as children, the elderly, the handicapped, ethnic minorities and indigenous peoples.

All forms of tourism development are conducive to saving scarce and precious resources, in particular water and energy, as well as preventing possible waste production. So the local public authorities in order to promote tourism should give priority to the above beliefs and should encourage efficient policies.

Mass tourism is the dominant type in the world tourism market for a long time. But with change in times, tourism has taken various forms. Except for the mass tourism, as we already said, in the past few decades new forms of tourism have emerged such as: ecotourism, alternative tourism, sustainable tourism, community based tourism, pro – poor tourism, village tourism and cultural tourism.

As we can see each category is focused on specific activities, so tourists could select among these categories, according to their desires and needs.

Below we will present and analyze each tourism category (Pepper, 2004:3-7).

Ecotourism

Ecotourism is defined as the form of tourism that aims to avoid negative consequences that can damage or destroy the reliability or character of the natural or cultural environments being visited. Moreover ecotourism aims to educate the traveller on the significance of environmental protection, directs the revenues for the security of natural areas, brings economic benefits to local economies, emphasizes on the needs for sustainable growth of the tourism industry and tries to guarantee that tourism development will not surpass the social and environmental capacity.

In other words, ecotourism aims to promote the ecological tourism, to inform people about the advantages that the environment has, and to encourage them to protect the environment.



Alternative tourism

Alternative tourism is another form of tourism that is in harmony with natural, social and community principles and that allows both hosts and guests to enjoy positive and useful relations and shared experiences. Consequently we can understand that ecotourism can be defined as one form of alternative tourism (Wearing and Neil 1999). A lot of theorists presented many characteristics of alternative tourism. Specifically alternative tourism operates in a small-scale area and is usually owned by local people. Moreover this kind of tourism deals with travelling to quite remote, undisturbed natural areas with the objective of admiring and enjoying the scenery and the wild plants, animals and cultural attributes. Kunwar (1997:25) noticed that alternative tourists visit places where nobody has been before in order to forget civilization for a while and to enjoy contact with the local people. An alternative tourist is expected to be well educated and to gain more than average income.

Sustainable tourism

According to the World Tourism Organisation (2007:4) sustainable tourism development satisfies the needs of present generation tourists and hosts regions and at the same time protects and enhances opportunities for the future. Sustainable tourism is expected to lead to management of all resources in a way that economic, social and aesthetic needs are satisfied while sustaining cultural honesty, vital ecological procedures, biological assortment, and life support systems. Below we will present some objectives for guaranteed sustainable tourism.

- The natural, historical, cultural and other resources for tourism are preserved for continuous use in the future and for bringing benefits to the present society.
- Tourism development is designed and managed so that it does not produce serious environmental, social and cultural problems in the tourism area.
- The benefits of tourism are widely expanded throughout the society. The major principle for sustainable development focuses on the management of natural and human resources for visitor enjoyment increase and local benefit and at the same time eliminating the negative consequences on local population.

Community based Tourism

Community based tourism lately has been accepted as a new form of tourism. This kind of tourism happens when decisions about tourism activities are managed, organized and implemented by the host community. This form of tourism usually includes some kinds of cultural exchange where tourists meet with local communities and lifestyle. However such local communities may be influenced by outside characteristics and decisions about the way tourists are

hosted. Community based tourism can create a sense of pride in the local population and may create funds offered for keeping cultural assets such as archaeological ruins and historic sites. This kind of tourism can improve the quality of life; it can bring the community together, and can solve community problems. Furthermore, community based tourism provides opportunities for exchange of knowledge and culture between tourists and helps to provide extra income for individual members of the community and for community development (Tsartas, 2010:50).

Pro-Poor tourism

Pro-poor tourism appears when the benefits for the poor are better than the costs that tourism entails to them. So by definition, it is obvious that not all community based tourism is pro-poor tourism. Pro-poor tourism strategies focus on giving opportunities for the poor within tourism, rather than expanding the overall size of the tourism business (World Tourism Organisation, 2007:24).

Village Tourism

Village tourism urge tourists to visit villages and to stay in or near the villages. Village tourism should have special types to attract visitors. The main characteristic of this kind of tourism is that the tourists become part of the village for the period of their stay. This kind of tourism allows visitors to immerse themselves in the local environment and gives them an opportunity to know local and cultural practices.

Cultural Tourism

Cultural tourism is not considered as a new form of tourism but can be traced from ancient history. This kind of tourism aims to promote the culture of a place and to inform tourists about its cultural significance. Cultural tourism is

regarded as a “power for cultural conservation”. Moreover is defined as the absorption of features by tourists approaching of past societies lifestyles observed through house styles. Cultural tourism also includes education for visitors and encourages sensitivity towards cultural environment. Lastly it is important to mention that cultural tourism is combined with ecotourism (World Tourism Organisation, 2007:24).

3.6 The concept of sustainable tourism

According to the UN World Tourism Organisation (2002:10) “*Sustainable Tourism —meets the needs of present tourists and host regions while protecting and enhancing opportunities for the future. It is envisaged as leading to management of all resources in such a way that economic, social and aesthetic needs can be fulfilled while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity and life support systems*” .

Hatchey et al (2010) has summarized the positive impact of sustainable tourism in compare with the negative impacts of regular tourism on the environment, the economy and the society.

	Positive	Negative
Environmental	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides direct financial contributions to conservation • Improves management and planning • Increases awareness of environmental issues • Protection and preservation • Improves regulatory measures • Improves area's appearance (aesthetic) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Depletion of Natural Resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Water, oil, food and other raw materials ▪ Land degradation - minerals, fossil fuels, fertile soil, forests, wetland, and wildlife • Pollution and greenhouse gas emissions • Air, noise, solid waste, littering, sewage, and aesthetic • Physical impacts • Loss of landscape and open space • Construction and Infrastructure development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Deforestation and intensified land use ▪ Marina development • Trampling on vegetation and soil

<p>Socio-cultural</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improves quality of life • Strengthens communities • Facilities developed can benefit residents • Revaluation of culture and traditions • Civic involvement and pride • Promotes cultural exchange (educational experience) • A force for peace 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change or loss of local and indigenous identity • Culture clashes - negative changes in values and customs • Job level friction through economic inequalities • Exclusion of locals from natural resources • Displacement of residents for tourism development
<p>Economic</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foreign exchange earnings • Increases in tax revenues • Employment generation • Stimulation of infrastructure • Contribution to local economies • Creates diverse business opportunities • Contribution to income and standard of living 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increases cost of living for locals • Goods and services • Land and housing • Regional inequalities from concentrated tourism • Infrastructure costs • Economic dependence of the local community on tourism • Seasonal character of jobs

(Source: Hachey et al, 2010:18)

According to Robert (2000) the concept of sustainable tourism is often too wide to provide a specific definition and on each case it must fit with the business and natural environment of each destination. In general it concerns with the optimum combination of the economical, social and environmental resources where each of those variables must be in alignment with the others. Tsartas (2010) writes that during the 70's and 80's there was a perception among the supporters of sustainability, that sustainable development could be achieved only if the major economic activities were in halt. However this changed during the 90's where it was commonly accepted that if the economic progress was put in halt in advance of the protection of the environment, then we would have a reverse phenomenon which would be the decline of the economic performance of the. However this would be a disaster for societies. For this reason it was accepted that the economic development should come in alignment with environmental protection. This would occur through the use of natural resources which would be easily replaced. For example if a firm was to build a hotel, it would make sure that for the trees that would be cut for the construction of the building, there would be an equal number of trees planned around the hotel. In this way there would be a balance between those two variables. Of course there is a third variable, that is often forgotten, which is the cultural environment of the society. Whatever is the plan to develop a destination, it should always come in alignment with the protection of the heritage and of the cultural characteristics of an area (Tsartas, 2010).

It is noted that tourism has changed over the period of time, especially during the past years. New destinations have appeared on the map of global tourism where the focus is given not on how to achieve a great number of tourists but rather on how to use their heritage and nature but without damaging those resources. Instead they try to exploit their resources in a way where tourist activities co-exist with the preservation of the destination's resources.

Authors like Horobin (1996) claim that sustainable tourism has been the response on the problems and concerns that tourism has created over the last years. In many cases small entrepreneurs regarded sustainable tourism as a means of sustaining the local economy without damaging its key characteristics. Horobin (1996) has examined the case of UK destinations that focus on sustainable tourism. Their research indicates that there is a growing interest from entrepreneurs who see a number of advantages in this mode of tourism. The key advantage is that it needs less capital than mass tourism. Instead of creating large hotels, they can focus on smaller units while activities such as agrotourism combine tourist operations with other business operations such as farming and making wines. For example, there are agrotourist units in Scotland where customers participate in the production of whiskey while they have their chance to make a number of tours around the Highlands. For Totaro and Simeone (2001) changes on tourists behaviour has contributed on the development of sustainable tourism along with the need to preserve the cultural heritage of the tourist areas.

Indeed, the more environmental awareness improves among the general population, the more consumers are concerned with the impact of their activities. Tourists feel that they are responsible for the damage that occurred on several destinations. An example is the Mediterranean resorts of Spain; huge concrete hotels were built by the sea resulting in a number of issues that affected negatively the natural environment. Tourists feel that they are responsible for the consequence of their activities and somehow they seek to make sure that this will not happen again. The same rule applies for a number of tourist entrepreneurs and tourist operators. Jayawardena (2003) claims that the industry is quite sceptical with the new developments. The reason is that there have been huge investments in large tourist resorts, while there are thousands of jobs at stake. A possible shift from mass tourism to sustainable

tourism may mean less jobs and less development for some areas. However Tsartas (2010) claims that for the jobs lost due to this change, new jobs are currently created in rural areas while sustainable tourism creates a number of externalities, such as boosting economies on rural areas which brings a balance between the losses due to this change.

The boost of sustainable tourism is not only because of the interest of consumers and changes on their behaviour but also due to government and institutional intervention. For Cooper et al (1999) important role on the growth of sustainable tourism have the policies of EU and of national governments. For this reason the EU has a Commissioner who deals only with the issues of tourism and a number of initiatives that funds projects associated with sustainable tourism. Rose (2001) has studied the development of tourism in Crete and found that a number of government and EU initiatives have promoted sustainable tourism in Crete. She refers the example of the Green Globe hotel chain which has a number of branches in Crete; in one case an olive oil mill was re-developed into an agricultural unit while at the same time it produces oil where tourist can take part on the production or to purchase organic oil. Those initiatives have been funded from the Community Support Framework and other EU initiatives like LEADER +, LIFE and THERMIE. We must also refer on newest programs such as EQUAL and NOW which support agrotourism. More precisely, those two programs focus on the development of agrotourist activities from various social groups such as women. Especially EQUAL focuses on the creation of agricultural unions from women so to strengthen their role in rural areas. Rose (2001) refers also to a number of other cases where sustainable tourism has boosted local economies in rural areas of Crete, while at the same time its key destinations, such as Malia, seem to cope with the problems of overcrowded massive tourist resorts.

Besides Greece and the Mediterranean there have been other surveys such as the one of Boxill (2004) who examines the case of Jamaica and how it has shifted from mass tourism into sustainable tourism. The driver behind this shift stands the government's initiatives to push for quality driven and alternative tourism. Another reason is that because the island has flourished as a popular resort for American and British holiday makers, there have been numerous cases of crimes against tourists. The country has managed to develop tourist infrastructure but it did not manage to close the social and economical gaps that exist in this country. There have been reports of criminal activities against tourist, especially in the Trench Town which is a region with high crime rates but it is also an important tourist attraction since it is the place where Reggae music was born, hence tourists can visit Bob Marley's museum. In the case of Trench Town the government pushed forward the development of cultural and heritage tourism where local people found jobs on the tourist industry. In the long run the government's initiative managed to close the social and economical gaps, to redevelop the area and minimize the rate of crimes against tourists. Parallel to this the government has managed to retain the cultural identity of Trench Town and to provide jobs for the young people living in this area. Another example provided from Boxill (2004) is the case of Spanish Town in Jamaica where the government has managed to retain the colonial style of the neighborhood and at the same time to increase tourism but without provoking negative effects on the area.

Another research has been made from Font and Ahjem (1999) who along with Totaro and Simeone (2001) have referred to the case of sustainable tourism where there is a need for collaboration between the private and the public sector. In this case the government can set the legal and technical framework of

the sustainable planning, while private companies will have to develop their operations in a way that will bring profit and will create vacancies but will also respect the legislation and the sustainable planning that the government has set.

To conclude, sustainable tourism is a mean of achieving development in a region but without wasting the natural and cultural resources of the area. We examined various approaches which emphasize the nature of sustainable tourism which is to allow tourism development to bypass the negative effects of massive tourism

4. Sustainable tourism in practice- The case of agrotourism

Agrotourism is a broad term and stands for every tourist activity that involves operations based on the agricultural activities, where tourists come in contact with the daily operations of an agricultural unit. This unit can have a number of different forms such as olive oil mills, wine production units, farms or even ranches. On many occasions agrotourism can include the purchase of products made from agrotourist organizations such as organic food, wine and other forms of products are included in the nature of agrotourism (Daniels et al, 2001).

Sfiakanakis (2004:150) provides a wide examination of agrotourism. As part of the tourist industry it relates with a number of issues such as biological agriculture, rural development and externalities for the local economies. As far as the relation of agrotourism is concerned with biological products, Sfiakanakis (2004:150) refers to the fact that for decades agriculture is based on mass production with the use of various biological and chemical substances that allowed the industry to increase its production capacity, but, on the other hand, it reduced the quality of products and in some cases affected the health of its users. During the past 25 years the agricultural industry used the latest advantages on agricultural production methods in order to produce products without the use of chemicals or other dangerous materials. Indeed, the use of chemicals affected not only the health of consumers but also the quality of life on agricultural areas. The materials used, including toxins to protect the plants from bacteria and insects, incur a negative effect people's health living across agricultural areas (Klinger, 1998). The negative effects of heavy-industrialised agricultural production pushed the industry to seek alternative ways of

producing products that would not harm the environment and the health of the users as well as those of the farming communities. This answer was found on organic / biological farming. Sfiakanakis (2004:151) defines biological farming as a production method that can guarantee the sustainability of the farming communities through the use of non-toxic production materials. In most cases the farms are certified from national and European authorities for the quality of the products and for not using toxics.

The development of the agricultural units producing biological products was associated with agrotourism (Hatchey et al, 2010). The reason was primarily economic. Organic products were of premium quality but had the disadvantage of high production costs. Hence organic products were cultivated mostly for particular market niches. Agrotourism is related with farms that produce organic food in terms that both cases aim on sustainable development, while agrotourism can be a mean to assist the farms to have economic sustainability.

Sfiakanakis (2004:152) analyses the case of agrotourism with rural development. He points out that during the past decades two opposite socioeconomic phenomena have occurred. The first is the reduction of rural population. The agricultural population in Europe has declined due to the fact that there was a lack of young farmers. Young people from rural areas immigrated to the cities in order to find better jobs and quality of life. Being a farmer has its difficulties and young people are not willing to become farmers. Nevertheless, Tsartas (2010:18) indicates that there has been a new generation of young and well educated farmers that rely on organic farming, but this has happened during the past years. On the other hand, the opposite phenomenon is the boost of tourist economy. The combination of tourism and the development of state of the art farms, which are the two key elements of agrotourism, have led to the rapid development of rural areas, especially in Canada, US and

Western Europe (Daniels et al,2001). Therefore, rural development is highly associated with agrotourism. Actually we can claim that agrotourism is the key mode of development for rural areas. The development of agrotourism brings also various economic externalities. Sfiakanakis (2004) notes that the development of agrotourism create a parallel economy from activities related to the construction and daily operation of those units. Activities like building, development of heritage sites, various small retail shops like gift shops and public works that create employment and boost aggregate demand. So, agrotourism is related with a number of benefits for rural areas and associated with issues such as organic agricultural products, rural development and economic externalities.

Authors like Biuso (2007) claim that agrotourism is a niche of sustainable / alternative tourism that has a significant growth in large markets, such as the US, Argentina but also in Northern Europe. As a tourist niche there is emphasis on white-collar tourists who are willing to pay a considerable amount of money so as to spend few days in a farm or even to purchase organic products made from the agro-farms. Biuso (2007) claims that agrotourism, though it has not been widely promoted from mass media and the tourist industry, it has managed to attract the interest of a large volume of tourists who seek for premium tourist services. Examples of agrotourist units can be an olive oil farm in Crete and a grape farm in California's San Verno Valley

For Daniels et al (2001) agrotourism can be used not only for business / tourist purposes but it can also be used for educational and recreational reasons. Indeed the recent economic crisis and the fact that agricultural products from Western market have to face competition from cheaper products made from third world countries, such as oranges from Tunisia and olives from Egypt,

have forced the agricultural industry to seek sources of income / activities from other related activities. For this reasons a number of agrotourism units are not used only for tourist purposes but also for other activities like educational visits from schools, weddings and similar activities (Totaro and Pocho, 1999). In this way the owners of farms and other agricultural units can overcome the problems created from economic hardships and changes in the nature of the agricultural market.

However, agrotourism has to face a number of challenges as well. Tzschentke et al (2008) refer to a number of obstacles that an agroutourist unit will have to face, including the fact that tour operators – though they are aware of alternative tourism – do not seem to encourage and promote alternative tourism. Though that it is addressed for tourists with high income, the fact that agrotourism and other types of alternative tourism do not aim on quantity but rather on quality discourages tour operators from promoting such activities. Therefore agrotourist firms will have to rely on their own distribution and promotion resources, which may increase their cost. Another issue is that most of the agroutourist units are located in rural areas, away from urban and tourist centers and they have low brand awareness. In order to attract the interest of tourists they will have to rely on word of mouth and on good networking. Having in mind that most of the agrotourist entrepreneurs have limited knowledge and resources related to the promotion of their operations, this will make difficult to organize and promote an agrotourist firm.

Although there are several obstacles, Stern (2000) refers on the unique advantage of reconnecting the farmer – producer – agricultural entrepreneur with the consumer. On the traditional agricultural economy the consumer purchase an agricultural product from a retailer without having any knowledge

on who produced the product, how it was produced and what are the elements used for the production of the agricultural product. In the agrotourist model the consumer has the choice to become part of the production procedure, to see how the agricultural product is made, what are the materials used to produce it and finally to take part in the production processes. In this way the consumer reconnects with the producer and is aware that what is purchased is a quality produce which has nothing to do with the industrialized farming procedures.

4.1 Agrotourism in Greece

The growth of agrotourism in Greece has attracted the interest of rural communities, especially in the mainland of Greece. During the past years there has been a boost in the economy of rural areas with the development of alternative tourism and activities such as mountain skiing, hiking and many other forms of alternative tourism. Eventhough that agrotourism has been the subject of sustainable development on rural areas of the USA and Western Europe (Lane, 2002), in Greece, it attracted the interest of GNTO and other tourist authorities only recently. Sfiakanakis (2004:156) writes that in 1982 GNTO decided to make the first research on the opportunities of developing agrotourism in Greece and to set the legal and strategic framework of agrotourism. Land (2002) calculates that 70% of the American, Australian and German tourists will visit a rural area at least once a year. The same research indicates that tourism in rural areas is a secondary mode of tourist activity, while holidays on summer resorts is the most popular mode of tourist activity. The same survey also indicated that agrotourists are consumers from 50 to 70 years old but recently there has been a shift towards younger segments of the population (Hatchey et al, 2010).

Iakovidou and Turner (1995), but also Sfiakanakis (2004) and Tsartas (2010) have focused in a particular segment which is the Women's Agrotourist

Cooperatives in Greece. Throughout the 80's the rural development in Greece relied in a model of collective cooperatives. Emphasis was given to the involvement of women into entrepreneurship. Agricultural cooperative were always a mean of strategic development in Greece, in comparison with other countries whose cooperatives had less power. During the '80s the new government of Greece strengthened the power of unions and cooperatives and their funding. The government managed to reduce unemployment among women in rural areas during the 80's and it was a successful initiative that boost employment on rural agricultural areas.

Iakovidou et al (2001) note that Greece has all the perspectives to develop agrotourism despite several obstacles, such as bureaucracy, the lack of training and knowledge from farmers but also culture. While younger farmers have taken the opportunity to develop state-of-the-art agrotourist units, along with some hotel chains like Grecotel which has built an agrotourist unit in Crete, the majority of the entrepreneurs in rural areas seem to have several hesitations and they prefer the traditional methods of development where they combine agricultural activities during the winter with mass tourist functions like rooms to rent and bars during the summer season (Papageorgiou, 2003).

Kasapidis et al (2003) examines the case of Grevena in Northern Greece. It is considered as the poorest area of Greece and one of the poorest in EU. The area is found in the mountains of Northern Greece and for decades it was isolated from the rest of the country. The boost on local economy came with the construction of Vassilitsa Ski center and then with the construction of infrastructures such as roads, learning centers for farmers along with the appropriate funding from EU and the Greek government. The outcome was that young people remain at the villages of Grevena and started developing their own businesses. On many occasions they turn empty villages into winter

resorts that included wine production units, farms where people could interact with the daily routine of farming but also other activities such as skiing and hiking in the forests of Pindos.

4.2 Case Studies

The case of Toronto and ecotourism

Ecotourism is a new form of alternative tourism that has attracted a lot of tourists worldwide. The promotion of urban green tourism in Toronto was considered as a necessity due to the fact that tourists selected to travel to urban destinations rather than the city core. The promotion of urban green tourism influences tourists to make "green" choices beyond the city limits, creating prospects to widely spread the values of sustainable tourism and local responsibility.

Urban green tourism can be defined as the travel and exploration within and around an urban area that offers visitors enjoyment and appreciation of the city's natural areas and cultural resources

Urban green tourism as defined by the World Tourism Organisation (2002:9) is referred to four main pillars:

1. Environmental responsibility
2. Local economic vitality
3. Cultural sensitivity
4. Experiential richness

Toronto aims to develop the concept and practices of urban green tourism. In 1993, a group of individuals in the Toronto area, representing a range of interests, businesses, organizations and government agencies, came together to implement the concept of "ecotourism in the city". Their main purpose was to develop and to cultivate a green tourism industry in the Toronto region (www.greentourism.ca)

So Toronto in order to develop ecotourism, promoted some products known as the *other* Map of Toronto, The *other* Guide to Toronto, which focused on promoting its members and Toronto as an urban green tourism destination. The result of this promotion in Toronto was to attract about 100 members and 25 partners or sponsors who supported ecotourism and its mission. Members, partners and funders obtained a lot of benefits mainly from media and marketing exposure, which has been successfully demonstrated in the green map and green guide.

Toronto, as a case for the development of urban sustainable tourism, reveals that there is market demand for such innovations. Future research on the impacts of urban green tourism and its potential to develop in other cities is now needed. Ecotourism in the city is an essential vision for government, industry, communities and individuals that holds a wealth of potential for all involved.

Bringing ecotourism to the city takes advantage of consumer trends, demographics, capitalizing on the efficiencies of the urban form to advance sustainable development goals, as well as supporting and enhancing the quality of life and local economies of regions. Successful implementation of ecotourism or urban tourism creates demand for more sustainable products and

services and offers a unique learning experience to the tourist (Gibson et al , 2003).

Bosnia and Herzegovina case of alternative tourism

Bosnia and Herzegovina's tourist sector is in the same situation as that of the other new States of the former Yugoslavia that does not have a specific coastline. The tourism industry in this period was mainly developed along the Adriatic Sea. Bosnia and Herzegovina was therefore only a destination for transit tourism, in other words for tourists that spent a few days in Sarajevo, Mostar and other attracting places on their way to the coast.

Tourism development in Bosnia was encouraged by the hosting of the Winter Olympics in Sarajevo in 1984, at which time tourism infrastructure was developed in the mountains of Jahorina and Bjelasnica. Historic monuments, dating from the Ottoman Empire, and the Second World War, the spiritual pilgrimage of Medjugorje, and the Mediterranean tourism in the city of Neum have been the main attraction for tourists for many years.

The territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina is gifted with a valuable natural and cultural heritage, which, if carefully managed, may become the source of one of the country's most valuable and profitable development sector

The development of tourism in Bosnia - Herzegovina includes a lot of alternative forms. Specifically

- Mountain and sport tourism with activities such as rafting, canyoning, trekking, skiing. Part of the mountains belonging to the Dinaric range, which extends to the Prokletija Mountains bordering with Serbia and Montenegro and Albania and the Sutjeska National Park offers a wide range of ecotourism activities.

- Cultural and rural tourism. The villages and towns of Bosnia and Herzegovina are evidence for the different cultures that have passed through the country over the centuries. From the Roman mosaics, Ottoman architecture and ancient Catholic to Orthodox decorations, the country is rich in cultural heritage and this fact can attract a lot of tourists.

- Adventure tourism: The pristine natural sites of Bosnia and Herzegovina offer great potential for adventure tourism. Near to Sarajevo is the Bjelašnica mountain range, which hosted the 1984 Winter Olympics. It includes traditional Bosnian villages, watermills and mountain huts (OECD, 2004).

Cyprus and agrotourism

The program for the development of agrotourism in Cyprus was first implemented in 1999 from the Cypriot Organization of Tourism having at the same time the support of government. The program aimed to encourage the villages and the urban areas through a multilateral approach. The program focuses on the renovation of old and historical buildings in urban areas for their use as tourism hostel or stores that will sell traditional products.

Until now the program managed to renovate 52 traditional houses in 30 villages, and in 50 villages some programs were implemented for the reformation of traditional places

The Cypriot Agrotourism Program managed to:

- Sustain the natural and traditional heritage in urban Cypriot areas
- Attract tourists because of the culture and the beauty of the island
- Attract tourists with specific interests
- Increase job vacancies
- Decrease the seasonal character of tourism
- Create job opportunities in urban areas, especially for women and to
- Avoid the centralization of citizens to the core country

The tourism policy that Cyprus follows emphasizes on the tourism product development and on the encouragement of alternative forms of tourism. At the same time, Cyprus focuses on the sustainability and on the protection of natural and traditional environment of the country. Based on this aim the Cyprus Organization of Tourism in cooperation with others, implements some programs so as to develop tourism in the area. Specifically it has provided motives for trips, encourage athletic tourism, health tourism, religion tourism, traditional tourism and agrotourism.

Moreover Cyprus tourism policy gives priority to the development of tourism programs that will reinforce traditional products such as food, activities, health centers and water parks.

The Cyprus Organization of Tourism recognized the significance of customer satisfaction and developed a strategic plan for the development of tourism until 2010 in order to make Cyprus attractive to tourists and to the European market.

This plan aims to

- Reinforce the sustainability in tourism so as to encourage the natural and traditional environment
- Maximize the contribution of tourism to the economy and to secure the sustainability of investments in tourism industry
- Prepare the tourism industry so as to satisfy the tourists' needs.
- Increase the competitiveness and to make Cyprus and attractive area

The construction of a strategic plan was a result of cooperation between government, investors and regional authorities so as to achieve its strategic aims.

Cyprus believes that agrotourism is a product of high priority and in agreement with the strategic plan of tourism. Generally the agrotourism program is an initiative of public sector that supports investments for the development of tourism (Saveriaeis, 2004:23).

Romania and ecotourism

The environment and tourism are two different but connected notions. Their relationship is based on the fact that tourism should be sustainable and should protect the environment and on the other hand environment is the basis for the development of tourism activities.

Except for the traditional forms of tourism, a new form appeared based on the value of region. This new form was first referred in a Conference of World Trade Organization in 1994. In the meantime the researches in agrotourism became a sustainable means through the development of tourism in natural areas having the tendency to be implemented and in other forms of tourism too.

The ecological development of tourism in regions with touristic abilities and chances includes four areas of activities:

1. Economical: In this field what should be done is to increase the financial resources so as to invest to other regions too and to make them more attracted.
2. Ecological: The right use of all natural resources makes them more sustainable and reduces waste
3. Social: The tourism development increases job opportunities and sustains some traditional occupation related to tourism
4. Traditional: The exploitation of special and authentic aspects of culture, art and civilization are necessary for the encouragement of agrotourism.

The Minister of Tourism in Romania is ready to implement a policy for ecotourism. This policy will be based on tourism development and to its sustainability (Panait, 2004: 34).

5. Conclusions

Tourism industry has changed rapidly over the last few years as nature, heritage, and leisure destinations became more important and as conventional tourism is forced to implement tougher environmental requirements and policies. These changes created new challenges for governments and private enterprises so as to develop new types of tourism products that are more friendly to environment. Specifically we should point out that tourism industry is considered to be successful when it provides benefits to local populations economically, culturally and provides them with incentives to secure, control and protect their natural resources, the main assets that attract tourists and create better conditions for relaxation and leisure. Thus the tourism industry in collaboration with the governments should develop strategies that are environmentally friendly, socially acceptable, economically feasible and efficient.

The last years except for international tourism, a lot of new forms of tourism appeared. These new forms are believed that are more sustainable than mass tourism and that can provide qualitative holidays and services. Mass tourism is losing its fame so other forms of tourism have the opportunity to become more popular. Mass tourism has some disadvantages in comparison with ecotourism or sustainable tourism. The main disadvantage is that “mass tourism”, does not deal with the environmental and ecological categories of tourism and its only aim is to bring more tourists in a place. However, lately a lot of tourists are attracted from different kinds of tourism that focus on specific categories or activities that could let them live new experiences by using and enjoying with respect the local landscape but also the whole environment . Such an example is agrotourism.

According to Tsartas (2010:42) Greece's concept of 3 S (sun, sand and sea) is exhausted and new forms of tourism that would take advantage of the rich natural resources that Greece has are developing. According to Hatchey et al (2010:4) there are numerous case studies that indicated that agrotourism and other forms of alternative tourism can become vehicles of development for rural areas.

From the case studies that the dissertation examined, there is clear evidence that various forms of sustainable tourism can be beneficial. In particular agrotourism surely has a positive impact on the economy and the society and it can be an important factor promoting development.

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