

ACCESSIBILITY VERSUS ADVERTISING FOR MOUNTAIN TOURISM: THE CASE OF NAFPAKTIA

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The paper examines the factors influencing visitors' preferences in the mountainous area of Nafpaktia, Greece and the implications for an advertising communication programme. The study is a survey and 500 respondents filled in a questionnaire. It describes visitors' characteristics, the research and the estimation of the number of visitors of the area, the description of the reasons of visiting the area, the duration of their stay and the research and analysis of their needs and expectations. The empirical work succeeds in making a theoretical and practical contribution to the way sustainable development presented for Nafpaktia, Greece can consist of a typical recourse for mountainous disadvantageous areas of the Mediterranean. Tourism management in mountainous regions may concentrate on the ways of attracting the visitors and mainly on accessibility, tourism infrastructure, preservation of natural beauty contrary to the hypothesis made that informative advertising promotional material locally, nationally and internationally is a necessity.

Keywords: *sustainable tourism development, accessibility versus advertising and mountain tourism*

JEL Classification: *L83, M1, O1*

INTRODUCTION

The general tendencies in economy do not favor the reinforcement of the traditional mountainous economy. On the contrary, animal husbandry and agriculture at present level is a very difficult task to sustain. Thus,

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mountainous societies need to take advantage of their comparative benefits which are not anymore the open fields in the mountains, but the mountainous environment where its original value is transformed to a rising market due to the urban and busy centres dwellers' demand to get in touch with Nature (Dietz, 1999). A basic element in the attainment of the sustainable development of tourism can be found among the harmonious relationship of the area, the visitor and the local community. The satisfaction of the excursionists' needs in sustainable tourism, consists one of the most important prerequisites and a basic determinant for the reinforcement of competitiveness and the guarantee of sustainable development of the rural businesses and areas.

Mountain regions have unique mountain- specific resource characteristics; these include diversity, marginality, inaccessibility, fragility, niche and aesthetics (Nepal and Chipeniuk, 2005; Nyaupane and Chhetri, 2009). Advertising efforts have recently been associated with the management of specific forms of tourism -such as wine tourism- (Bruwer and Alant, 2009; Vlachvei, Notta and Ananiadis, 2009) or rural tourism combined with cultural and heritage tourism (Dallen, 2005). We hypothesise in this study that the provision of promotional material can also be significant for mountain tourism associated with free time activities in mountains and is a necessity so that a tourist visits the area. The possibility of increasing knowledge about the mountain region are among the factors that positively affect the intentions of potential tourists minimising issues of inaccessibility and marginality which are in fact inhibiting factors (Nyaupane and Chhetri, 2009). Research in the Western mountainous inlands of the Spanish Eastern Pyrenees showed that conservation policies and cultural museums are mushrooming in the area in an attempt to leave from the marginal position they are in order to attract more visitors (Vaccaro and Beltran, 2007).

ALTERNATIVE MOUNTAIN TOURISM: THE THEORETICAL BACKGROUND OF THE RESEARCH

The team of the Network for European Communications and Transport Activities Research (NECTAR) claims that, in Western Europe leisure time activities will probably be equivalent to 40% of the oveland transport by 2020 (regarding the kilometres covered) and 60% of the air transport. The raising polymorphism of the way of life will have a reflection on the emergence of new types of special tourism markets which will cater for young people, couples with no kids, pensioners and conference participants. The raising demand of tourism will be more obvious to the South European population where the percentages of participation are relatively low. The free movement

within the European Union (E.E.) contributes to the rise of newly retired moving from North to South Europe due to the favourable climate (Masser, Sviden and Wegener, 1992: 43-44).

Nowadays, it is typical that standardised and mass tourist packages do not cater for tourists' needs. People realised the problems that could be created by the prevalent model of mass tourism and they were driven to search for alternative forms of tourism (ecotourism, rural tourism, cultural tourism, historic tourism). These forms respect the local community and its visitors and in the mean time, the cultural heritage and the environment. Their aim is to offer vacations to tourists that are interesting, yet educating, while beneficial for the local community and have as a result the viability of the tourist areas.

The success of rural tourism does not only depend on specific tourist services (hospitality, transport, dining, etc) but also on general factors which influence the experience rural tourists gain such as: advertising of the area before visiting it, reservations, the trip to the area, the first welcome, information for the area, accommodation and dining infrastructure, the sights to be visited, hospitality, issues of hygiene and safety, the natural environment, the farewell, the return journey but also the possibility of getting in touch and communicating with the community, keeping the memories alive (European Commission, 1999). Thus, the overall experience is significant for the tourist's satisfaction (Chatzigeorgiou, Christou, Kassianidis and Sigala, 2009: 146; Christou and Saveriades, 2010: 95).

In other words, the satisfaction that the rural visitor enjoys, while on sojourn at a rural tourism unit, is influenced not only from the accommodation but also from factors which are associated with the area as a whole and the stages before and after visiting it. A significant factor associated with the area is transportation which has a role to play in the development of tourism (Musa and Ndawayo, 2011: 303). The provision of information for visiting these areas is also significant for visitors to get informed about the area although relatively little research has been made (Dodd, 1999; Lytras et al., 2006; Vlachvei, Notta and Ananiadis, 2009).

In regard to Greece, the visitors in mountain regions in the provincial and underdeveloped areas of Greece visit the areas during their holidays; research in fact has shown that for many visitors these regions are their permanent holiday location (Soutsas, Tsantopoulos, Arabatzis and Christopoulou, 2006).

In Greece, policies in tourism showed priority for the development of already developed areas or world known areas of archaeological interest such as Epidaurus or Delphi- which are both World Heritage Sites-

because a region that has not been developed will be difficult to host visitors (Kavoura, 2001).

Nevertheless, rural tourism development in Greece, which is the main form of alternative tourism, until nowadays is imputed to a big extent by the uncontrollable implementation of European funding programmes and had as a consequence the creation of tourist infrastructure for rural tourism (mainly accommodation) of questionable quality (Iakovidou, Koutsou and Partalidou, 2009; Partalidou, 2002) and would contribute to its long-term maintenance.

Nowadays, the rural businesses in Greece have different functional forms: accommodation, shops, sales rooms of local products, centres of dining, amusement centres, alternative tourist offices, hosting of programmes of open-air activities and excursions of ecotourist and cultural interest, farms, businesses which produce products while they advertise and elevate the local and cultural heritage. They function on the basis of personal interest, or as a legal entity and they are of private or of cooperative initial (E.L.O.T, 2003).

In most cases, the abovementioned types of rural tourism businesses developed, copying mass tourism's type, without a special design and without the establishment of a framework which would determine the profile and the available services according to the philosophy of rural tourism. As a result, they did not manage to fulfil the expectations of the excursionists and to establish rural tourism as a distinctive standard of development in the countryside (Lawson and Manning, 2002).

The level of employment to these sectors, which survive due to the financing of the European Union, is constantly decreasing and will continue to decrease at an increasing rate, in relation to other areas, due to the adverse conditions of production in these mountainous areas (Borton, 1993). Furthermore, the objective that the European Union has set for employment in the primary sector of the 6-7% of the economically active population, puts into an extremely adverse position the mountainous district because such policy is in favour of the areas with the highest productivity. Therefore, the endogenous development of mountainous areas depends on the creation of new forms of employment which will, in turn, reinforce the local production.

Whereas the agricultural and open-air activities are in a position of territorial and social reconstruction and the passing from an agricultural area of one activity to a polymorphous and multi-functional district consists of an outlet, for the mountainous areas, it consists of a one way direction and a necessary condition of existence (Allaire, 1998).

The elements which attach importance to the special character of the tourist product of mountainous areas are determined by the specificities: of the mountainous areas' societies and their distinctiveness, of the natural and human made environment, of the tourist resources of the areas, which consist of the elements of the product's content, and, of the organisation of the activities in zones and their functional and organic connection as a whole, which, by creating the periphery, a touristically uniform zone, maximises the benefits which emerge from the development of the tourist resources and consists of the structural elements of the tourist product, or the model of organisation, interconnection and utilisation of the tourist resources to a complementary whole (Bitsani, Kalomenidis and Stavroulakis, 2007).

CHARACTERISTICS OF MOUNTAINOUS NAFPAKTIA

The area under study is mountainous at its biggest part and includes the prefectures of Apodotia, Pilini and Platanos. This area's borders are the Prefecture of Nafpaktos on the south, the Prefecture of Thermou on the west, the Prefecture of Evritania on the north and the Prefecture of Fokida on the east (T.E.I. Kalamatas, 2005a). The landscape of the area is mainly formed from the mountainous Sarantaina and West Vardousia to the dense and complex hydrographic network of Ano Evinos river.

It is a unique mountainous landscape, of an extremely distinctive natural beauty, even more distinctive of those of neighbour National Forests of Oitis and Parnassos. In regard to the most mountainous part of the Prefecture of Apodotia, it has also been characterised as a national forest and extends up to the dorp of Lefka, where an environmental centre of documentation and information has been created.

20% of the area is covered by wood, 10% is utilised for agricultural activities and the biggest part of the rest of the land are pastures. The bioclimatic conditions vary because of the geographical position, the rich mountainous area with the deep denes and the canyons of the hydrology of the Evinos' river basin, in particular, Evinos' river with its confluents Kotsalo and Poriari, Mornos' river, the reservoir lake of Evinos and the technical lake of Mornos. Animal husbandry has a privileged position in the productive activities of the population while the traditional type of the small family-run business prevails. There is a hot spring of Staxtis Bath in the municipality of Pilini, which demonstrates the existence of metals and minerals, without though, collateral development (Bitsani, Kavoura and Kalomenidis, 2009).

According to Greek Law 2539/97 and “I. Kapodistrias” programme (Greek Law 2539/1997), the prefectures of the area are consisted of 43 civic geographical departments, which are small and scattered in the area. The organisation of religious celebrations is the main activity which preserves many of the traditional elements of the area (T.E.I. Kalamatas, 2005b). The significance of events for rural development has been argued by researchers (Skoultzos and Tsartas, 2009: 293).

In conclusion, the following could be underlined for the area of mountainous Nafpaktia:

- It is characterised by a high percentage of people employed in the primary sector which results in the low production of a big part of labour.
- The character of the area, which is mainly mountainous, hinders the balance between the spatial development and that of the urban areas which unavoidably develop with high rates.
- The insufficiency and the absence of specific situations of social infrastructure results in the absence of the quality in the provision of services and, therefore, the low standard of living.

The characteristic of the area is the seasonality since the population rises dramatically in specific periods starting in April and ending in August, creating the prerequisites for the development of this advantage and taking over entrepreneurial initiatives (T.E.I. Kalamatas, 2005b).

An effort has been recently made for the development of the advantages of the area through various national and European programmes and initiatives, such as the European Initiative LEADER II and the European Initiative LEADER+. Within the framework of the abovementioned programmes, guest houses were created and various types of accommodation, infrastructure for kayak and rafting in the Evinos river and also footpaths. Agro tourism is well supported by the European Union’s initiative (Dritsaki, 2009: 149).

The Rion-Antirion hitch, which connects the two big districts in Greece, Peloponnesse and Sterea Ellada, where Nafpaktia is located, makes people’s transfer easier, but also there is direct access from Patras, the third biggest port in Greece. In addition, the expected construction of the Ionian Road “Ioannina-Antirion”, will offer opportunities for tourist development.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study is a survey. While Crapo and Chubb (1969) argue that the main disadvantage of this method is the low rate of answers, Shafer

Hamilton and Schmidt (1967) argue that the census with survey is generally more reliable for the gathering of information. The main disadvantage of this method has been dealt with the discussion of the research assistants with the respondents who asked them to return the questionnaires as soon as they filled them in.

The questionnaires were distributed during seven different periods (from 18/12/2005 to 20/08/2006) which corresponded to the periods of big celebrations such as the period of 13th–17th of August, which is a big religious celebration for Christian Orthodox, Christmas, Easter, the period of the Greek Carnival and the summer vacations. The research assistants were in hub road points (the entrances in the dorpes) and informed the visitors that they would collect the questionnaires in 20' to 30' minutes. Any other information was provided. In mountainous Nafpaktia's case, where there are not many visitors, the whole population of the visitors were asked; they were 500. When there was a family, only one member filled in the questionnaire.

The type of questions was decided to be close-ended because otherwise respondents would provide many irrelevant answers. The basic disadvantage of the questions of this type is that the main reason -the answer- may not be included in the question (Nuxall, Galloway and Smith, 1976). In order to deal with this disadvantage, we made an effort to provide relatively perfect answering categories and in specific questions, the category "other reasons" or "I do not know" was included so that the answer could be safeguarded. Crapo and Chubb (1969) refer to the issue that the use of open-ended questions depends on the type of the desired answers, for example, the open-ended questions give more perfect and without mistakes answers in the case of high school students and close-ended questions are more suitable for safeguarding of real information such as age, education, rent, etc. and guarantee points of view on issues people have clear ideas about. Nuxall, Galloway and Smith (1976) conclude that close-ended questions are used when a quick response is needed that can be easily sorted.

This survey's questionnaire includes questions mainly limited in an idea, for example "which is the main reason", or "how many days will you stay in mountainous Nafpaktia". The questions were brief and simple while leading questions and calculations were avoided. The sorting of the questions may influence the answers and Nuxall, Galloway and Smith (1976) suggest that the more simple and more useful questions to be inserted in the beginning and socioeconomic questions to be inserted in the end of the questionnaire. Attention was paid in the sorting of the questions of the specific survey and in the beginning the questions were short. The main questions were in the middle and not in the

end so that if the respondent had denied to answer the last questions, the gathering of important data would not be influenced.

The sample size was determined in order to guarantee that the estimation error for the ratios would not be above 0,05 at a confidence level 95%. Cochran (1977: 413) offers a good example for the estimation of the sample with the type: $\sigma_p = P \chi Q / n$ when the percentage of the sample P is normally distributed, ρ must be in the space ($\rho \pm 5$) except for one in 20 cases. Then, $n = 4P \chi Q / 25$ while P: ratio (in the specific case of this research of the returned questionnaires which were filled in) · Q: I -P

n: sample size

P : percentage % of the total population, ratio of the cases which hypothetically have the characteristic under study, σ_p : standard error.

Crapo and Chubb (1969) used the absolute error and with the hypothesis of the best possible variable of the population estimated the sample as follows:

$$0,05 > 1,96 \text{ or } n = P(I-P) (1,96/0,05)(1,96/0,05)$$

$P(I-P)n$

where: 0,05 : Absolute Error P : ratio (of the returned questionnaires which were filled in)

n: sample size

1,96 : (t) Confidence Level, $t = 1,96$ when the confidence level is 95%. Adjusting the abovementioned types in our study, when the ratio (P) is between 30 and 60 then $P \times Q$ or $P \chi (I-P)$ will be 2100 (30x70) and the maximal 2500 (50x50), when $P = 50$ and n must be > 385 , which is

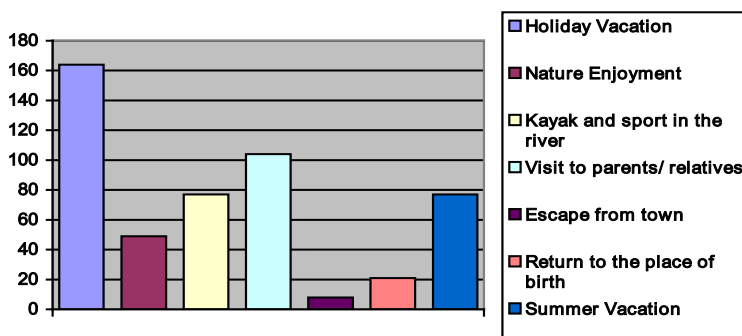
$$n > \frac{p(I-P)}{(1,96/0,05)^2} \text{ or } n > \frac{0,50}{(1-0,50)\chi} 1538 \text{ or } n > 385$$

The process of data used the statistical package S.P.S.S., version 12. and initially started with certain checks and specifically with the validity and reliability check, while the descriptive statistical analysis of basic variables of the research followed. In regard to the remaining units/questions of the questionnaire, validity and reliability depends on research where proportional measurements and checks have taken place. Further analysis of data research concerned inductive statistical methods and primarily the use of statistical methods, necessary for the description, generalisation and interpretation of the conclusions of our sample. More specifically, the technique of Categorical Principal Component Analysis was used.

ANALYSIS OF THE RESULTS

The results of the research for each of the abovementioned periods (Christmas, Easter summer months) do not present many fluctuations and thus, they will be presented as a whole. Demographic characteristics of the sample are as follows: 56,2% is consisted of men and 43,8% are women, a percentage of 30,2% belongs to the age category 31–45, 27% in the age category of 46–64, while in the age category 18–30 age belongs the 23% of the respondents and 19,8% are above 65 years old. In regard to their educational level, 35,2% of the respondents are graduates of secondary education, 23,6% are University graduates while 26,4% are graduates of primary education. The percentage of illiteral is relatively high, 14,8%, which is explained from the analysis of the questionnaires, since they all belong to the older age category 65–99 and the reason of visiting the area is the return to their place of birth. This allows us to conclude that they are immigrants of the war period who left from mountainous Nafpaktia in order to make ends meet, a hypothesis which was also confirmed during the conversation of the respondents with the research assistants who were gathering the questionnaires.

Figure 1 Reasons for visiting mountainous Nafpaktia

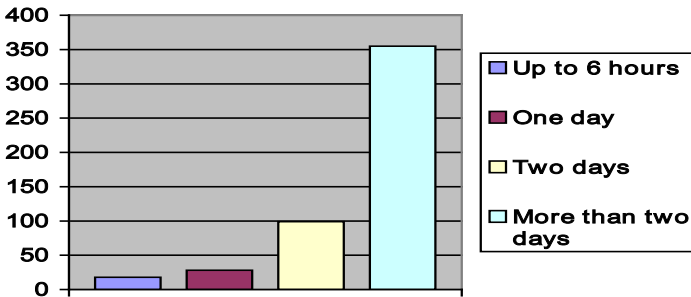


100% of the sample lives in other cities permanently, mainly in big urban centres, while the majority of the sample, 93,4%, visited the area because of the fact that their family is from mountainous Nafpaktia and they either have a family house there or they visit relatives. The percentage of the visitors of alternative tourism is 15,4%.

70% of the sample answered to the question “number of visits in the area”, that they have visited mountainous Nafpaktia many times while

30% of the sample visited the area for the first time. In regard to the duration of stay, 71% of the sample, stays more than two days, a percentage that confirms the answer to the question about the reasons for visiting mountainous Nafpaktia, where 70% answered “the return in the place of their ancestors’ or of their place of birth” (as Figures 1 and 2 show).

Figure 2 Number of visits



In regard to the activities they had during their stay, 77,8% of the sample, were busy hiking, 29,4% went climbing, 25,4% had lunch in the country, 50,2% observed and enjoyed being in the nature, 38,4% took photographs while a percentage of 42,6% of the sample visited archaeological and religious sites. At this point, it should be stated, that the abovementioned activities took place not exclusively but complementarily one to the other, according to the respondents. Nevertheless, 39,8% of the sample were exclusively busy with alternative tourism (kayak-rafting), (Figure 3).

Of those visitors who did hiking, 16,6% answered that they reached the top of the mountains, 12,8% went to the alpine centre while 13,4% of the mountaineers returned before reaching the alpine centre. The biggest, though, percentage of the climbers, 18,2%, visited the environmental center of Lefka (Figure 4). In regard to the flow of visitors in the footpaths, the overwhelming majority answered that the visitors were so few to such a degree that they hardly noticed them and only 4 respondents or 0,8%, answered that there were many visitors. In regard to the protection of nature, visitors seem to be sensitive enough and the answer to the question “whether they know what procedures exist for the area which has been characterised a national forest”, only 16,4% answered that they do not know.

Figure 3 Development of activities

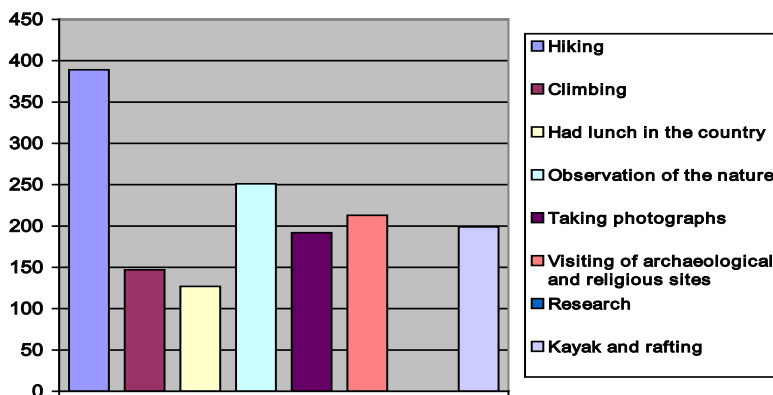
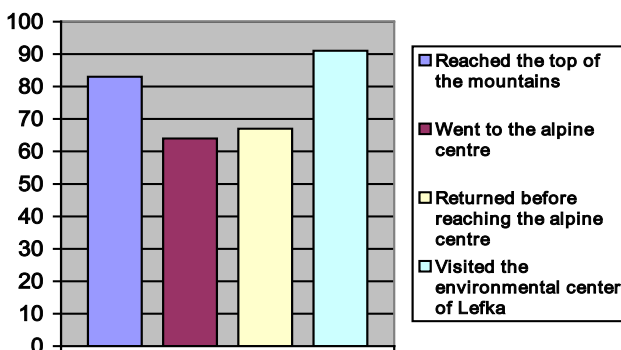


Figure 4 About climbing

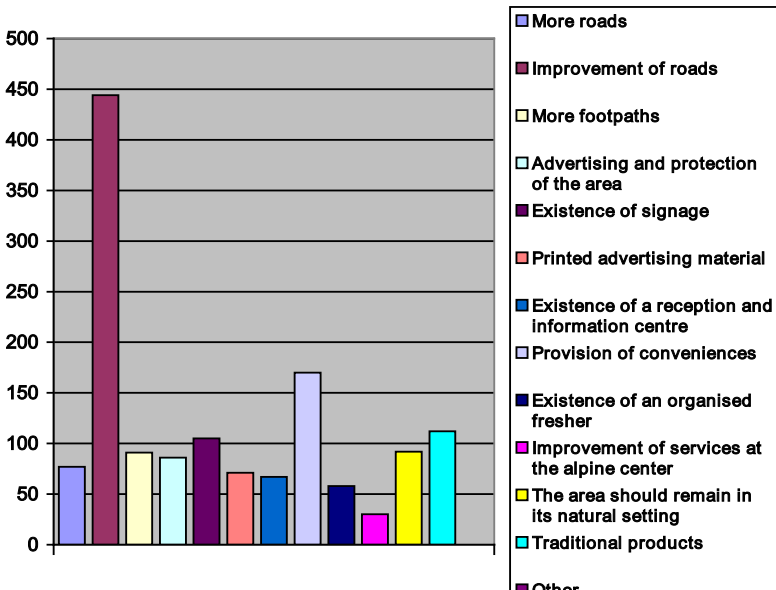


In regard to the question “what would make your visit more pleasant”, the answers focused on the existence of infrastructure and the provision of services. In particular, 88,8% of the sample believes that the improvement of the existent roads would make the visit more pleasant, 15,4% would want more roads and 18,2% more footpaths. 34% of the visitors would like the provision of conveniences (such as water, telephone, first aid *etc*), while 24,2% of the visitors focused on the possibility of buying traditional products. 46,9% who visited the alpine centre would prefer to have better services there.

11,6% of the respondents would like the existence of an organised fresher, while 18,4% answered they would prefer the area to remain in its natural setting.

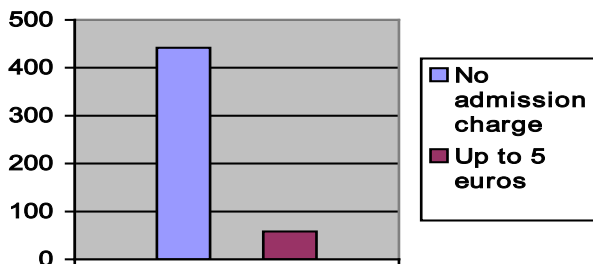
In addition, 21% consider the existence of signage and information to be important, while 17,2% would prefer the presence of personnel for informing the visitors about the area and for advertising its good spots while, at the same time, protecting the area, 14,2% would want printed advertising material which would inform the visitors about the area and 13,4% would prefer the existence and function of a reception and information centre. Therefore, 65,8% of the respondents consider very important the provision of information and the advertising of the area which would make their visit more pleasant (Figure 5).

Figure 5 Factors for attracting visitors for a pleasant stay



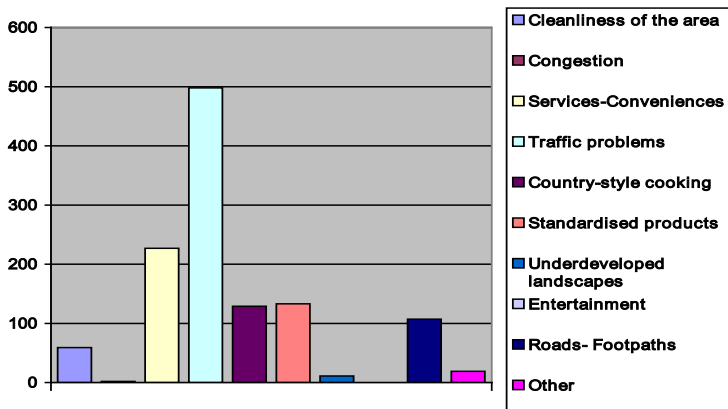
Nevertheless, in regard to the question of whether visitors are willing to pay a certain amount of money as an admission charge, 88,4% of the respondents answered that they do not want to pay anything while 11,6% of the respondents would pay up to 5 euros (Figure 6).

Figure 6 Willingness to pay an admission charge



The answers to the question “which were the problems you dealt with during your stay” are directly related to the answers they gave to the question “what would make your visit more pleasant”. Thus, the factors which could contribute to the development and the elevation of visiting the area of mountainous Nafpaktia are confirmed in an objective way. More specifically, 99,6% of the respondents considers infrastructure to be the dominant problem, 55,% the absence of services and conveniences, 25,8% the absence of country-style cooking and 26,6% the presence of standardised products as one can see in Figure 7.

Figure 7 Problems of the area



43,4% of the respondents considers the main problem to be the absence of entertainment, 11,8% the cleanness of the area and 21,4%

dealt with the problem of bad road infrastructure and the absence of footpaths. On the contrary, 2,2% of the respondents dealt with a problem of underdeveloped landscapes and only 2 respondents (0,4%) answered that they dealt with a problem due to the congestion and the presence of too many people. Finally, 19 of the respondents (3,8%) mentioned that they dealt with other, general problems. Research for another provincial area in northern eastern Greece has shown that the main problems that visitors face in the region relate to the lack of parking areas and cleanliness (Soutsas, Tsantopoulos, Arabatzis and Christopoulou, 2006).

IMPLICATIONS FOR MANAGEMENT: ACCESSIBILITY AND INFRASTRUCTURE PRIOR TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF AN ADVERTISING COMMUNICATION PROGRAMME

The exponential growth of tourism industry brings about consequences which many times have a negative impact in the economic, social and natural environment of tourist areas while at a macro level may diminish the same procedure of tourism *per se*. Informed, socially and environmentally responsible tourists who seek alternative types of vacations and adopting alternative behaviours, have the opportunity to minimise these consequences, to contribute to the viability of the tourist areas and to encourage the local agents towards the design and implementation of decisions of sustainable tourism development.

The small village with single crop farming and local economy, the small shopping centre of the area, the close or distant semi-urban centre, the big urban centre with which the economy of mountainous areas is associated in a variety of ways, consist of elements of an aggregate productive whole which was disorganised with the transformations in the development of the centre with negative consequences in the economic and social life for the mountainous and the peripheral zone of the system. The results of the research illustrate that the area under study has opportunities to develop in the tourist sector.

According to the analysis of the results of research the following basic findings arise: the visitors' profile of the area is mainly consisted of people who are associated in many ways with the area, visiting the place of birth or the neighbouring area while there were not any visitors from other countries. This is also explained by the absence of infrastructure and little advertising of the area at national and international level. Can we then speak for a niche market on its own as literature argues for mountain regions' characteristics? (Nyaupane and Chhetri, 2009). The vast majority of the respondents referred to the problems in relation to the road

network, the transportation, but also the absence of traditional products, which, according to the respondents, consist of the determining factors of raising the visiting in mountainous Nafpaktia. Local products are significant for success in rural tourism business (Sotiriades, Tyrogala and Varvaressos, 2009: 50). Furthermore, the inexistence of forms of entertainment and organised activities of alternative tourism are inhibiting factors of visiting the area, which negatively influences the development of domestic and external tourism.

An advertising communication programme and the absence of informative promotional material which would advertise the area is found to be of inferior importance comparing to issues of accessibility and infrastructure. The local agents need to focus their attention on the design of a mild tourist development of the area, with a parallel appropriate communication design of advertising and promoting the area nationally and internationally. There is not only necessity for the creation of infrastructure but also the organisation and implementation of an advertising communication programme which would promote such infrastructure, the activities and the uniqueness of the area.

The state may contribute to the development of these areas with the agents in charge of its management and the financial reinforcement for the areas' development, which will go hand in hand with the advertising of such infrastructure and amenities. Market studies with regard to the attitudes of people towards tourism and the tendency of their tourist interests are also useful to be initiated and repeated so that evaluation programmes can occur on the presentation of the areas and the identification of tourists' points of view (Kavoura, 2007; Rakic and Chambers, 2008); such a market study was carried out by the Greek National Tourism Organisation (GNTO) in 1998 at national and international level but only for the first time since 1951 when GNTO was founded (European Committee GNTO, 1998).

Mountain areas may be elevated to poles of tourist development, a mild form of development which will use the environmental, cultural and historic advantages (O.E.C.D., 1994), development without exclusions for any citizen so that each and every citizen will enjoy the benefits. Therefore, the derivative benefits, from tourist actions in the mountainous areas will equally pervade the local community and the social web to safeguard the well being and the quality of life in these areas while many job vacancies can be created which will contribute to reduce the decrease of the population regarding younger ages. This is the vision for sustainable development and management for a balanced relation between nature and man. Sustainable development presented for Nafpaktia, Greece

can consist of a typical recourse for the mountainous disadvantaged areas of the Mediterranean.

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