

THE DEVELOPMENT OF ENRICHED MIXTURES OF CULTURAL TOURISM, FOR THE RE- PROMOTION OF GREEK MATURE DESTINATIONS

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Like in many international destinations, so follows in Greece that the launching of various forms of cultural tourism has been for many decades one of the basic pillars of the dominating literature as regards the desired touristic development model in fully formed as well as developing destinations of Greece. However, the transition from a heliotropic to a cultural tourism doesn't seem to be such a feasible, in some cases at least, prospect. In general, the efforts were focused on the country's rich and scattered archeological as well as cultural stock, systematically setting aside the potential of forming a series of cultural products targeted towards a wider market of a "generic" cultural tourist which could strengthen the differentiation of the touristic offer and become an element of competitive advantage for the destinations.

The present article looks into the challenges and prospects which are created through the introduction of newer and more enriched forms of cultural tourism in order to reform and reinforce the provided touristic experience in fully developed Greek destinations, so as to achieve their re-promotion towards international markets.

Keywords: mature destination, cultural tourism, re-promotion, enriched forms of tourism.

INTRODUCTION

The paper focuses on those Greek coastal tourist destinations characterized as “mature”, by placing them into the broader context of the Mediterranean regions, which concluded a circle of tourist development based on the heliotropic model dominating the 1960-1980 period. At the end of the 1980’s, these destinations manifested the first signs of tourist stagnation, a phenomenon urging the scientific research to formulate the theory of developmental models of tourist development and to deal with the factors influencing this developmental course (Coccosis, Tsartas & Gkrimpa, 2011, Kontis 2009). Nowadays, the interest on an international and European level has shifted in the way in which destinations are handling the problem of touristic stagnation and the initiatives that they undertake in order to achieve their touristic regeneration (Garcia 2013). The successful examples prove the resilience of coastal areas, as well as the importance of applying enriched mixtures of cultural tourism (Hughes, 2002), for the re-promotion of the mature mass destinations.

This paper argues that cultural tourism is not associated with a small niche market (Lord, 1999), but it is an established trend and a mass tourism activity that can be operated either as a dominant or as additional tourist product (Jansen-Verbeke, 1996). In conclusion, the main issue in the case of Greek mature destinations not on the development of cultural tourism, but the effective management and promotion of tourist areas with cultural resources (Tsartas, Lagos & Stavrinoudis, 2008). This paper aims to introduce the case of Greece in this international discussion by outlining the main and sub-trends that appear in the current period.

The use of Culture to the revival of areas

The use of civilization as a progress tool or a catalyst for the renaissance initiative of the financially decaying regions is a phenomenon well established in bibliography (Butler 1980, Zukin

1988, Biancini & Parkinson 1993, Richards 1996, Butler 1998, Evans 2001, Evans & Shaw 2004, Sarantakou 2010).

1980s-1990s: Culture/Tourism as leverage for the economic revival of declining industrial areas and cities of Northern Europe

Since the '80s the resolution of cultural tourism is successfully adopted by traditionally industrial cities of Western Europe (Law 1993), i.e. Manchester, Glasgow, Liverpool, Bilbao, Lyon etc. In these cities, where traditional financial activities have declined, local authorities invest in the tourism/civilization dipole as a means for the rejuvenation, the reformation and the improvement of the cities' image, as well as an opportunity for the creation of new jobs.

1990s-2000s: Cultural revival of traditional coastal resorts in Britain for their repositioning in the tourist market

For the first generation seaside resorts¹ like the British Blackpool, Brighton, Bournemouth and Torquay, cultural renaissance was an obvious choice, because they traditionally offered a mix product (*cultural infrastructure and amusement by the sea*) (Agarwal 2001, 1997, 1999, Smith 2004, Evans & Shaw 2004).

2000s-2010s: The addition of cultural tourism becomes part of the re-promotion strategies for a number of Mediterranean destinations, where the goal is to enrich the tourist experience

In coastal Mediterranean destinations in Greece, Italy and Turkey the experience of the cultural tourism market has always existed. However, for many mature sunny Mediterranean destinations (Spain, Portugal and Malta), the use of civilization for their product's reconstruction is a relatively recent choice of the repositioning strategies in tourist market (Ashworth & Tunbridge 2003).

Basic conclusions drawn from the approaches and the current theories applied

A. Evolutions in the Concept of Heritage, Culture and Cultural Resource

Nowadays, the concepts of heritage, civilization and therefore cultural means are constantly reforming and discovered to match with the transforming motives and preferences of the consumers. In the frame of tourism consumption of our times, Gravari – Barbas (2014) recognizes the forming of a new heritage and civilization status quo, which is closely connected with tourism. The characteristics of this evolution are:

- Moderation of the division between “high” and “low” culture. Combination of entertainment and culture. Tourist industry has currently turned its attention to the creation of modern tourist products that are related with local gastronomy, traditional markets, local “way of living” and amusement (Smith 2004, Richards 2002).
- From national history, to local memories and to personal stories.
- From the theoretical-aesthetic approach to the environmental approach, where heritage is a man-made means that ought to be dealt according to the principles of sustainability.
- More “hands on” heritage and cultural practices. The new digital mediation tools encourage the development an individualized view of heritage and culture (Gravari-Barbas, 2014).
- Heritage, becomes a key element for the destination Branding (Ashworth 2009, Deffner & Metaxas 2006). The local actors are referring more and more to heritage in the construction of the “character” of their region.
- Everything may become a cultural touristic product, depending on the managers' abilities and on market rules.

B. Evolution: an ongoing and increasingly more demanding tourist administration/promotion that aims at the specialized cultural experience.

- Planning should ensure that the visitor's cultural experience is notable, rich in content and enjoyable (Bianchini 1999, Evans 2001).
- The focus of tourist and cultural marketing has shifted from the brain to the heart and recently to the spirit.

Administrators create experience and share common cultural values with tourists.

- Tourist segmentation may help to develop better strategies for every section of the cultural tourism market (McKercher, 2002).

C. Models of cultural tourism introduced in mature mass tourism destinations

In the relative bibliography (Ashworth & Tunbridge 2003, Evans & Shaw 2004, Ashworth 2008), three theoretical patterns have been defined, through which cultural activity is embodied to the tourist renaissance process. These theoretical models shift from maintaining the same market to the parallel development of different markets and finally to the radical repositioning in alternative markets. However, the survey of applied examples in a series of European mature destinations (Sarantakou 2010) indicates that their majority has followed two choices:

1. Parallel development of cultural and coastal tourism (the choice made by British destinations)

- Disadvantages: it demands a) significant investment in new products, b) the creation of networks between cultural and non-cultural tourism products and mostly a high level of managerial skills.
- Advantages: it ensures a better space and time allocation and it is more flexible against market shifts.
- It is chosen due to a) the existence of a good cultural background, b) the acknowledged weakness of a destination in being competitive as a traditional sun-lust tourism destination.

In Britain's example, destinations that followed this procedure were designed at the apex of the British Empire, an era that endowed them with remarkable architectural heritage and invested in new establishments, in order to develop rising markets (family tourism, cultural, educational, conventional tourism) and expand tourist period.

2. Cultural tourism as an addition that enriches the tourist experience in sun-lust destinations (the choice made by Spanish destinations)

In this pattern, cultural tourism is considered to be an “accretion” that will enrich tourist experience in a heliotropic destination and will give a local particularity to a general product.

- Advantages: it demands limited additional investment and capitalises existing resources and products.
- Disadvantages: it contributes to the spatial dispersion of tourism infrastructure and offers the lowest economic and social benefits.
- It is chosen due to the lack of a) cultural background (Lozato-Giotart 1985/1996), b) financing the introduction of a new cultural activity (Evans & Shaw 2004) or c) the adequate cooperation mechanisms among the competent bodies that would ensure a better incorporation of culture in touristic activity.

This pattern is a common choice for the product’s reconstructing strategy followed by Spanish destinations, which aims in increasing its attractiveness in a more demanding market of heliotropic tourism (Aguiló, Alegre & Sard 2005).

Focal points in introducing cultural tourism to European mature mass tourism destinations

Finally, it is useful to highlight the Focal points in introducing cultural tourism to European mature mass tourism destinations:

- Cultural tourism can be the basic “special interest” product of a specific market or a complementary touristic product in a wider market.
- Thematic and multithematic networking and “recreation” programs are important to cultural tourism competitiveness.
- The great number and breadth of cultural tourism’s classification in contemporary times is the result of serious investments aiming at the set-off and administration of various local cultural means. Italy’s coastal destinations, despite their important archaeological and cultural reserve, develop at the same time the agrarian culture in architecture, traditions of ways of living and gastronomy.

In Southend Britain, emphasis has been given in a widened “post-modern” definition of civilization that cover, except for heritage and art, football, thematic parks and amusement (Smith 2004).

- Experiential cultural tourism cannot be developed in homogenous and degraded environments. Within the boundaries of cultural renaissance, urban programming is asked to produce a sense of the region, the local identity and the common cultural subject (Ploger, 2000, pp. 64) while the proper pointing out of cultural and historical aspects plays a basic role towards this direction.
- Cultural marketing in mature destinations demands special skills because it aims at serving multiple goals: to reverse an established bad reputation, to form a distinctive and powerful local identity and to educate tourists. The consolidated fame that escorts the heliotropic destinations reduces the possibilities to open in new more demanding markets. In Southend’s case, a “Pride in Our Town” plan has been implemented aiming to encourage the local population’s participation in developing the town’s centre and establishing a positive internal identity (Smith 2004).
- Key elements in experiential cultural tourism -such as the cooperation of different bodies in tourism and culture synergy, local participation, education and training- constitute a challenge for mature tourist destinations (Bramwell & Sharman 1999, ICOMOS 1988).

Greek mature mass tourism destinations

The notion of the mature Greek destination, as approached in the current paper, mainly defines the coastal destinations growing under the developmental model of mass heliotropic tourism in the 1960-1990 period². Mature Greek destinations were led to stagnation because of the rising competition in the traditional market of heliotropic tourism, as formed by external factors. Their resilience is based on the preservation and augmentation of the market for Mediterranean tourism despite the turbulence and individual changes in the 1990-2000 period, as well as on the

preservation of the dominance of organized tourism and the important percentage of loyal visitors. Finally, their survival seems to largely depend on their ability to resolve a number of structural weaknesses resulting from the long-term adoption of this particular developmental model, but which are also the symptoms of a model in decline, which is financially non sustainable: stagnancy, inability to ensure environmental and financial viability, homogenous tourist product, negative image, professionals depending on tour operators (Sarantakou 2010).

Table 1: Basic characteristics of the Mediterranean and Greek mature destinations and their relation to their weaknesses

Characteristics		Weaknesses
1. Lack of planning		Excessive structuring - uncontrolled urbanization
		Pressure on the environment
		Deficiency of resources - pollution
		Aesthetic degradation
		Reduction in the quality of life
		Homogenous touristic product
		Touristic monoculture
2. Dependence on T.O.		Excessive dependence on specific markets
		Professionals without any sales and marketing skills
3. A dominance of small and very small tourist units		Lack of trained staff
		Out-of-fashion touristic product
		Old and low quality accommodation
4. Destinations' stage of maturity		Low quality services
	Negative image and publicity	

Source: Sarantakou (2010)

Culture resources as a dominant factor in the touristic image of Greece: The case of Tourist Advertising Posters

For many years -and even before the Second World War- the TAP (Tourist Advertising Posters) were used as a dominant mean

and a tool of Greek National Tourism Organization (GNTO) who was the decisive stakeholder of the country's -and the tourism regions- promotional a marketing policy. It is very interesting that even from the 20's (when Greece was not a typical tourism destination) a number of famous Greek Artists (Painters, Photographers, Engravers) worked for the GNTO and produced a very interesting (promotionally and artistically wise) material of TAP. It is also interesting that throughout a period of 90 years (1920-2010) and despite the changes which occurred in Greece's offered resources as a Tourism Destination, Culture was the Dominant resource and promoted in different ways by the TAP.

So our aim is by using different examples of emblematic TAP to present this journey of culture as a message and a mediator - between the host country and its guests- but also to emphasize on the changes which occurred in the representation of culture, changes which were mainly related to the priorities of the Tourism Policy (Tsartas 2015, Coccosis, Tsartas & Gkrimpa, 2011). So in the first poster (1920-1940) we see a "pure" promotion of the Ancient Culture of Greece by the Parthenon³. In the two which follow and comprise the first efforts to promote the country as a Tourism Destination in the economically and politically difficult period just after the war we notice a different use of culture that of a picturesque build environment of the countryside (Andros island) and of the Athens Festival which together with the Epidaurus Festival were the two main organized efforts (they still are) to promote the country's -and not only- cultural activities (Theater, Music, Dance etc) to foreign tourists. The fourth example⁴ is also the promotion of the very rich in different types of handicraft or manmade (for decorative or utility use) products that the tourists constantly seek to buy as a traditional gift to take back home. The following two examples of the massive organized Tourism era (1970-1990) is the typical use of the build and physical environment of the Greek Islands as the classic promotional stereotype towards the tourists for which Greece meant one thing: vacation in the Greek islands. In the last two examples (Between 1990-2010) we witness the effort to a shift of the content of culture in the TAP towards the promotion of regional tourism destinations (Zante) and Special Tourism Products (Nautical Tourism). In the same period there are

many examples of the State's effort to promote a number of tourism destinations and special products that were developed in order to underline the shift towards a more sustainable tourism planning and policy.



Developing trends of cultural tourism in Greek mature destinations

A.Main developing trends: The development of gastronomic tourism as a complete cultural experience and the role of private sector initiative

A.I. Case study: Gastronomical tourism in Crete

Through a coordinated and long-term strategy that first began by private initiative and gradually embodied in tourist management of Peripheral Administration, gastronomical tourism has already become a basic element of tourist offering and Crete's image as a tourist destination.

Key features:

- Cretan nutrition is promoted as an integral part of the Cretan civilization connected to the local values.
- Through cultural routes and networks the tourist coastal zone is connected with the productive regions of the inner land.
- Local products are standardized and certified.
- Tourism is a pivot for enhancing and spreading local products.



A.II. Case study: Wine tourism in Santorini

Back in 1990, when the first open to visitors wine factory was founded in Santorini, traditional vineyards received great pressure in terms of reconstruction⁵. Private initiative for the development of wine tourism on the island continued and gradually became a common aim of a wider consensus of viniculturists, entrepreneurs that were related to tourism and local authorities.

Key features:

- Santorin's vineyard is unique due to the ecosystem and its history.
- Wine tourism is connected with luxury tourism.
- A whole network is established around wine, such as new and modernized wine factories, wine tourism routes, specialized restaurants etc.



B. Main developing trends: New national cultural products

B.I. Case study: Industrial heritage. The museum network of the Piraeus Bank Group Cultural Foundation

Industrial tradition's remnants were acknowledged as part of our architectural tradition rather recently (in the mid 80's)⁶. Gradually, the efforts to rescue and develop expanded from buildings to historic mechanical equipment and afterwards to human stories and local products. Industrial heritage thematic museums' network is an initiative of a member of the Private Sector called Piraeus Bank Group Cultural Foundation.

Key features:

- The network includes so far: “*The Silk Museum*” in Sufli, “*The Open Air Water-Power Museum*” in Dimitsana, “*The Museum of Industrial Olive-Oil Production*” in Lesvos, “*The Rooftile and Brickworks Museum*” in Volos, “*Museum of Marble Crafts*” in Tinos, “*The Museum of the Olive and Greek Olive Oil*” in Sparta and “*The Environment Museum*” in Stymphalia.
- Thematic museums accept more than 100,000 visitors per annum and at the same time occupy members of the local communities as employees.
- Through Museums, Piraeus Bank Group Cultural Foundation creates vivid cores of civilization in the Greek suburban regions.



B.II. Case study: Connection of coastal areas with the mainland in the framework of sustainable tourism projects of the Municipality of Hersonissos

Ecotourism and cultural footpaths are enhanced, as a tourist product, especially in the 2000's through an integrated intervention program elaborated by GNTO's (Greek National Tourism Organization) technical services. Initiatives and means for this kind of interventions and creation of infrastructure are gradually transferred to Peripheral and Local Administration.

Key features:

- Footpaths connect coastal tourist zone with the less developed inner land of the destinations.
- Municipalities aim at the general tourist by creating special promotion and briefing programs.



B.III. Case study: Modern applications to inform and re-enact in order to enrich the tourist experience. Digitalization of Hermoupolis' Architectural heritage

In the era of diffused information, Digital Cultural Tourism enriches the visitor's experience in terms of cultural sightseeings, museums and architectural monuments. Nowadays, a significant increase of similar applies has been recorded in Greece and the mostly characteristic example is Hermoupolis Digital Heritage Management System.

Key feature:

- In 2015, Hermoupolis Digital Heritage Management System (HER.M.E.S.) was awarded by Euronostra as an example for the diffusion of digitization's importance in accumulating and preserving information relevant to Europe's architectural heritage.



C. Partial developing trends: New national cultural products: cultural landscape, agricultural landscape, local initiatives

C.I. Case study: The environmental – cultural park of Paros

Environmental and Cultural Park of Paros is a contemporary example of environmental protection, cultural exchanges and promotion of sustainable tourism in island complexes such as the Aegean.

Key features:

- Ecological-cultural park in Paros is an initiative of local non-governmental authorities
- It combines ecotourism and cultural tracks, amusement and shows organization

D. Partial developing trends: Experiential approach, voluntarism and participation

D.I. Case study: The Festival “Routes in Marpissa”, Poros

Key features:

- Routes in Marpissa are an experiential, cultural festival organized by volunteers and take place every August in Marpissa, Paros.
- The central idea is to create routes and points of interest in the traditional settlement, around themes of architecture, folklore, music, art and environment.

- The participation and interaction of residents, visitors and volunteers work together in a unique, creative result, so everyone can have an active role in the events.
- It is designed on the characteristics and scale of the village, showing with respect to the hospitable character of this place.

SWOT analysis for exploring the possibilities to develop cultural tourism in mature Greek destinations

Strengths:

- The characteristics of cultural supply in mature Greek destinations (diversity, dispersion).
- Gradual expansion of the notion of cultural resource: local gastronomy, cultural landscape, industrial heritage.
- Materialising a number of important cultural infrastructure works in mature destinations.
- Gradual activation of private sector initiatives.

Weaknesses:

- Delays and shortcomings in the development of complete touristic products and services for the cultural experience.
- Resource dispersion at a regional level which did not create new national cultural products. Incoherence of innovative efforts.
- Lack of institutional inclusion of the cultural product in the processes of tourism development.
- Preservation of a blurry image of the relation between tourism-culture.
- Local culture is unnoticeable in the dominant touristic image.
- Inactivity of local authorities-difficulty in adapting to a development model with different structural characteristics.
- Lack of cooperation practices in matters of culture and tourism management at a local level.
- The difficulty of local authorities to lead the development practices for cultural tourism. The challenge of the new NSRF.
- Delays – at a level of state and regional planning for the realisation of complete projects on the revival of mature tourist destinations.

Opportunities:

- New general tourism markets (Russian, Chinese) giving the opportunity to expand the touristic period.
- The increase of organised foreign tourists supplies cultural consumption and networking.
- Upgrading tourism (due to the economic crisis) in the political agenda at a state and local level.
- The New NSRF focuses on capitalizing the existing cultural infrastructure and the improvement of the touristic experience by financing networking actions, tourism synergies etc.

Threats:

- The economic crisis may deprive of the necessary resources for the maintenance and the operation of cultural infrastructure.
- Lack of the necessary know-how and the adequate coordination and networking of local public and private bodies may lead to ineffective initiatives that may degrade and/ or ruin primary cultural resources.

Conclusions

The research in the mature Greek destinations confirmed that the direction of cultural regeneration does not constitute in action a basic or clear choice of reconstruction of the local product, despite the important cultural dynamics of most. The SWOT analysis application, aiming at delving into the development possibilities of cultural tourism, shed light to peak points for sustainable cultural consumption.

- Cultural revival does not constitute a basic or clear choice for the reconstruction of the local product in reality, despite the important cultural dynamics in most areas.
- “Experiential tourism” remains more of a wishful thinking put in strategic texts rather than being an applied practice.
- Products related more to everyday culture and the environmental approach of heritage have an increased dynamics.

- a. Gastronomical tourism and wine tourism which connect, as complex cultural products, to the local products and to the agricultural landscape.
 - b. Cultural environmental routes and open thematic parks which use the cultural landscape as their main resource.
- In some cases of dynamic mature destinations, cultural elements have been included in the dominant touristic image (Crete – Gastronomy, Santorini – wine tourism).
 - Local administrators and the engagement for a touristic prospect play an important role to the success of some cases.
 - At any case, the managers of mature destinations owe to resolve the weaknesses in peak points for sustainable cultural consumption, which are due to a large extent to the long-term implementation of a touristic model with completely different structural characteristics: the lack of networking on a super local and local level, the lack of experience in cultural management and in local level cooperation and an imperceptible tourist image.

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Endnotes

- ¹ The first coastal seaside resorts of massive tourism in Europe were created in the industrial North. The development of tourism of these regions lasted from the '30s till the '60s, when the fall began, since the market shifted to the developing – at that time – Mediterranean destinations.
- ² Sarantakou (2010) making a comparative analysis of 10 developed Greek tourist areas acknowledged that mature Greek destinations, after having been completed, enter, through qualitative and quantitative change, into three discernible stages: in the stabilization stage of tourist development lie destinations which, although dynamic, present a stabilization in the rhythm of augmentation of beds (Mykonos), a decrease in tourism income because of the introduction of tourists with lower incomes and a large percentage of repetitive tourists (Aghios Nicolaos, Kassandra, Skiathos). At the stage of stagnancy or even decline are destinations with zero augmentation of beds or with a cease in the function of hotel units (Benitses, Aegina, Kamena Vourla). These are characterized by a decrease in demand, due to the decrease/loss of traditional tourism markets, the turn towards weekend tourism and the pre-urbanization (in cases of contiguity with urban centers). Finally, destinations at a post-stagnancy stage following a period of qualitative changes in the local tourism market, tend to mark a recovery (Loutraki, Nafplio, Delphi)
- ³ A photography by the famous photographer Nelly
- ⁴ That of the painter Kantzourakis
- ⁵ The vineyards year by year were contracted -from the early twentieth century who was 45,000 acres, to 14,000 in 1997. From then until the present day its extent appears to have been stabilized at about 13,000 acres (Sarantakou and Vagianou 2014).
- ⁶ The first interventions to exploit oil-factories' and soap-making factories' shells in Lesvos in the mid '80s are considered to be pioneers for their time.

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