

Development of ethnic tourism in Greece

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Abstract

Ethnic tourism entails full immersion into culture of a certain country or nation. Personal contact with locals, participation in their traditional activities, tasting of national cuisine and studying the centuries-old traditions – these are the main steps to experience cultural diversity and feel like a member of another ethnic group. For Greece, one of the most popular summer holiday destinations, tourism is a key industry in terms of economic growth. Ethnic tourism, however, is not considered to be very popular due to the fact the dominant trend of all Mediterranean countries has always been the seaside tourism. This work is an attempt to explain why it is crucial for Greece to develop and promote ethnic tourism.

Keywords: ethnic tourism, Greece, COVID-19

1 Introduction

Nowadays, when the tourism market is extremely saturated, it is crucial for every destination's development to design a specific action plan and development directions. Development of ethnic tourism is one of the ways how to promote destination. In 1977, Smith was the first one who came with the term ethnic tourism as 'marketed to the public in terms of the 'quaint' customs of indigenous and often exotic peoples' (Yang, 2011) [9]. Ethno-tourism is a specialized type of the tourism, what can be defined as "any excursion which focuses on the works of humans rather than nature, and attempts to give the tourist an understanding of the lifestyles of local people" (Bolnick, 2003) [2]. It is a combination of different touristic activities in terms of understanding ethnic and cultural spheres. Different sub-types of the ethno-tourism can be distinguished - ethno-educational tourism, religious tourism, anthropological tourism, etc. (Aleksandrowa, Aigina, 2014) [1].

When we speak about worldwide tourism and hospitality industry of the 21st century we cannot ignore the COVID-19 pandemic. Businesses in many industries were negatively affected by it: severe profit losses, forced retrenchments and functional termination, – tourism and hospitality industry, unfortunately, has suffered the most.

Figure 1 [4] clearly illustrates a sharp decrease in the total number of tourists coming to Greece in 2020.

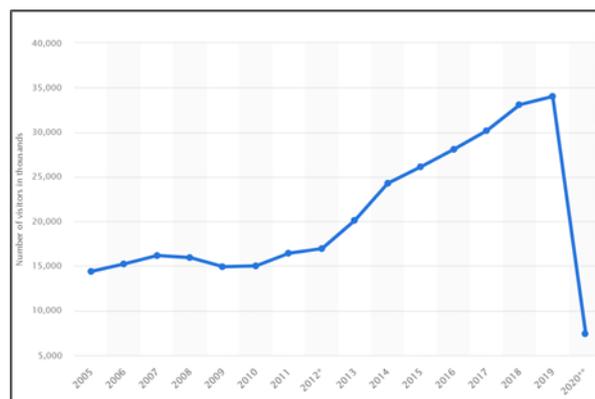


Figure 1 Number of international visitors in Greece from 2005 to 2020

Comparing to the previous year, when there were approximately 34 million foreign tourists, number of inbound trips in 2020 has decreased by 5 times ($\approx 80\%$). Surely, tourism and hospitality industry of Greece suffered great losses. Although the current situation is gradually stabilizing, Greek market still needs recovery.

Despite the fact that the COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant negative impact on the global tourism industry, authors of the OECD paper called "Managing Tourism Development for Sustainable and Inclusive Recovery" nevertheless state that this time can be used to rethink the tourism and achieve more sustainable goals. Still, it is clear that pandemic hit the global tourism with restrictions, and quick recovery is unlikely (OECD, 2021) [5].

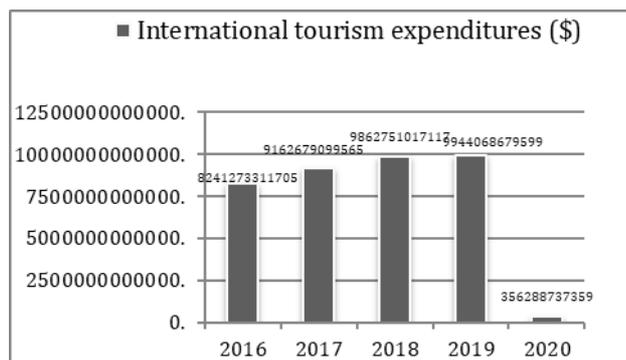


Figure 2 International tourism expenditure (\$)

Statistical data of the World Bank, reflected in Figure 2 [7], shows that total international tourism expenditure in year 2020 decreased by 96,4% in compare with 2019 as pre-pandemic period. The World Tourism Organization, in its World Tourism Barometer report in December 2020, stated that loss of about billion arrivals in 2020 resulted in a loss of about 1.1\$ trillion in international tourism receipts (UNWTO, 2020) [8].

Overview

This work discusses the following issues:

- Impact of COVID-19 on tourism and hospitality industry in Greece;
- Statistics on inbound tourism;
- Development of Greek ethnic tourism

Decision

In order to recover tourism and hospitality industry in Greece, new opportunities for tourists should be offered.

References

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Development of ethnic tourism can be a good investment of the Government of Greece for many reasons.

Firstly, such type of tourism will attract people interested in history, culture and life of Greeks.

Secondly, ethnic tourism is safe enough in terms of accommodation during post-pandemic time: tourists will be staying not at the crowded cities but in secluded rural area.

Thirdly, the Government of Greece will support local farmers, suppliers and other service providers that can receive visitors, provide them with accommodation, catering and entertainment related to local culture and ethnicity, and thus contribute to economic prosperity.

In addition, ethnic tourism is directly connected to sustainable tourism – concept that covers social-cultural, environmental and economic issues of the country.

Conclusion

Ethnic tourism is a type of tourism, the main purpose of which is to experience culture of the visited country. It includes various activities: from personal contact with local people to participation in century-old customs. Ethnic tourism is an advantageous solution for Greece. By creating a new, non-standard product in the market of the Mediterranean country, the Government will be able to attract tourists interested not only in beach vacation. In this way, historical heritage and cultural practices will be preserved.

Moreover, as it is unlikely to expect a quick recovery after the COVID-19 pandemic, country should develop new directions in order to support tourism and speed up the recovery process.

So, ethnic tourism is a great opportunity for Greece to develop tourism and hospitality industry.