

Tourism Strategic and Marketing Planning and Cultural Cooperation Channels Between Greece and Turkey

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Abstract Governments and other strategic tourism principals play a key role in supporting and developing the tourism industry, as they have been confronted with a series of challenging issues including those related to infrastructure, partnerships, developing legislative and policy frameworks, destination marketing, and ensuring that tourism development supports broad economic, environmental, and socio-cultural imperatives. Turkey with its neighbouring country Greece, need to have integrated tourism plans and programmes in order to bring about synergy, strengthen networks among tour operators in both areas and to develop tourism planning. The paper argues that developing cooperation between Greece and Turkey, may lead to the use of the sources at maximum levels creating a wider range of tourism products and thus their members will be provided with significant capacity and responsibility to formulate a vision.

Keywords Turkey • Greece • Tourism • Cultural cooperation • Tourism channels

1 Introduction

Tourism is mainly a service (intangible, heterogeneous, perishable), with tangible physical elements (e.g., hotel buildings, transportation vehicles, etc.). A large number of scholars (Archer & Owen, 1971; Banskota, 2007; Lee & Chang, 2008; Rasul & Manandhar, 2009; Sinclair, 1998) argue that tourism can stimulate development in terms of income, employment, foreign exchange earnings and taxation, as well as have multiplier and spillover effects, as it consumes a wide variety of local goods and services and thereby distributes income widely. The different

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V. Katsoni, A. Stratigea (eds.), *Tourism and Culture in the Age of Innovation*,

Springer Proceedings in Business and Economics,

DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-27528-4_24

branches of the tourism industry (transport, accommodation, catering, food and beverage, excursions and recreational activities) can generate employment and income for diverse population groups (Rasul & Manandhar, 2009). It is a horizontal activity where interests are very diversified and sometimes evidently conflict (e.g., between Members States which can import or export tourism; or between large organisations and small/individual companies) and this activity very much depends on public authorities or on public and rare resources.

This paper argues that in order to improve the crucial contribution of tourism to both Greece and Turkey, it is clear that a general framework must be set up between tourism policy and the structural funds. More coherent action to develop tourism may benefit the regional and local authorities as well as the tourism industry. Partnerships, cultural cooperation and concentration can, among others, contribute to the development of specific regions and to the mutual benefit of both countries.

2 The Conceptual Framework of Tourism in Turkey and Greece

It is clear that tourism in Europe is concentrated around the Mediterranean, as the density of tourism capacity is generally greater in the southern coastal regions of the European Union. The Alpine regions also occupy a strong position (Eurostat, 2011: 224). In addition to the five countries represented in the top 20 EU regions (Italy, Spain, France, Austria and Germany), 10 more countries have NUTS 2 regions reporting more than 8 million overnight stays: Turkey, the United Kingdom, Croatia, Portugal, Greece, the Netherlands, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Sweden and Switzerland (Eurostat, 2011: 184). However, climatic conditions are not the only factors that explain this density; infrastructures are also more developed in the urbanised regions or in the regions that have a significant cultural heritage. The following trends in tourism will become more important and are all of relevance at the Greek and Turkish level (Eurostat, 2011: 187–189):

- Travel intensity is growing, along with the number of European holiday-makers.
- Tourists are increasingly taking more than one holiday a year.
- The number of older as well as young tourists is increasing substantially.
- Tourism will focus more on special interests.
- Flexibility and individualisation will be key words.
- More environmentally or culturally friendly activities are sought.
- The need for transport networks is increasing strongly along with the development of tourism without borders (i.e., air traffic growth, a very high level of car and bus traffic); therefore, the development of, among other aspects of transport, Trans-European Networks (TENs), intermodal transport systems, road traffic information, new cleaner cars and fuels are determining factors for a new policy for tourism.

Tourism in Turkey is growing, improving and diversifying through globalization. As it is mentioned in the Tourism Strategy of Turkey-2023, for the strategic regional planning for tourism development a tourism development scenario should be worked out in the first place and then the target groups should be defined accordingly. Tourism shall be used as a sound planning and implementation tool for efforts dedicated to elimination of regional inequalities, alleviation of poverty and development of employment opportunities (Tourism Strategy of Turkey-2023, 2007).

The changing nature of regional areas poses fundamental challenges for residents, business operators, community leaders and governments concerned with maintaining economically strong, environmentally sustainable and socially vibrant regional communities (Katsoni, 2011). Regional economies need to diversify through new and innovative approaches to enterprise development (Douglas, Douglas, & Derrett, 2001: 87). To ensure development of tourism activities at regional level is an objective that is attainable only when top priority regions and areas are determined according to the sector specific plans worked out by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism and also the macro policies evolved and institutionalised in national development schemes prepared by the State Planning Organization. Like in many countries, also in Turkey both the tourism industry and governments are interested in finding ways to optimise tourism's economic and social contribution in regional areas (Ahipaşaoğlu & Celtek, 2006: 106).

The novel planning approach for tourism centers and development areas mainly adopts a flexible and strategic planning concept, which is built upon actions rather than strict land use decisions and targets. In these areas, the project sites are further divided into subzones, so that planning takes place and the investors are expected to set up individual projects of their own. According to Tourism Strategy of Turkey-2023 planning of tourism industry, especially tourism oriented physical planning should be supported by all available organizational models, alternative means of funding and a sound legal framework. In this context, an effective policy should (Tourism Strategy of Turkey-2023):

1. reroute all tourism investments toward reducing the imbalances of welfare and development imbalances throughout the country and treat them with an approach that safeguards, conserves and improves the natural, historical, cultural and social environment,
2. broaden the base of participation in social, cultural and artistic events and propagate the notion of development,
3. reveal and expose, primarily with scientific studies, the cultural and artistic values and heritage, and create a community awareness on these assets,
4. relating the tourism industry's development with market facts in order to help a healthy structuring and increased productivity,
5. respond to both the rehabilitation needs of the investment environment and the ever changing global trends and contemporary demands,
6. conserve and use natural resources in the most economically and ecologically sustainable way,

7. realize such organization and funding models that do not pose any financial burden on public and widen comprehensively organized and integrated projects at regional and local levels,
8. make use of tourism sources in a sense of conservation and balanced development, avoiding to exceed their carrying capacities,
9. develop an “area management” model that accounts for an understanding of tourism, which focuses on historical, cultural and artistic assets, namely assets-based tourism or destination based tourism development instead of a hotel or other mass accommodation facility based one, that responds fully the demands and expectations of the local public,
10. avoid any adverse affects on nature, culture and social structure, make sound contributions to economic growth with foreign exchange receipt and employment dimensions, organize the demand, create the grounds needed for further development of tourism industry and produce integrated, self-implementing projects,
11. not place the burden of social and technical infrastructure projects on public, but provide the sufficient grounds on which the funding needs of the same can be supplied jointly by users and beneficiaries, on a shared basis,
12. envisage development of tourism settlements that possess environment and organizational structuring at an acceptable level of quality,
13. present a fully total quality criteria compliant service in the fields of environment, transportation, accommodation, culture, history and arts, prevent irregular urban development and sprawl and restore readily deformed city and urban spots, and
14. finally solve infrastructure and environmental problem arising in regions where tourism movements get denser in close cooperation with local governments and contributions of infrastructure users.

To address these issues, governments in Turkey are focusing increased attention on regional development. Many regional communities have skilled labour, space and other physical resources needed for enterprise development. Decentralized, service-based industries such as tourism offer the potential to diversify regional economic activity in the face of the changing global economy (Douglas et al., 2001: 88).

In the planning of tourism development areas, by local governments it shall be essential to consult with companies engaged with developing and directing investments in the tourism industry, beholding valid and legitimate licenses issued by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. A flexible and strategic planning approach shall be developed and adopted, that equally addresses organizational modeling, funding alternatives and legal grounds. Physical plans shall be used for generation of strategic decisions relating not only to land use but also to all other aspects including physical environment, employment, social services and organization.

In order that Turkish strategic regional planning for tourism development to reach its objectives, it is important that public institutions and organizations, the business world and non-governmental organizations as well as the whole public

adopt the strategy and act harmoniously according to the common benefits. In order that this harmony can be realized at the highest level, it is being aimed to realize an efficient, transparent and accountable process at the level of political and administrative management, decision taking, programming, resource allocation, application, coordination and supervision. Within this framework the implementation of the strategy could be managed through a close co-operation of commercial and public organisations positioned in the tourism sector (Arikan, Kaya, & Kosan, 2011: 13–14).

3 Cultural Cooperation

Culture and tourism are two strongly interrelated notions, since modern tourist—better educated and cultured, with high demands—attempts to gratify new needs, among which is the acquaintance with new cultures, customs and traditions on places of interest. In parallel, the touristic exploitation of culture through its enhancement and promotion, contributes significantly to the development of each cultural destination. Therefore, in the recent years cultural tourism is one of the largest markets with rapid growth.

Timothy and Nyaupane (2009) mention that cultural-heritage tourism relies on living and built elements of culture and encompasses the use of the tangible and intangible past as a tourism resource. More precisely, cultural tourism is constituted of existing culture and folkways which are inherited from the past, other immaterial heritage elements, such as music, dance, language, religion, foodways and cuisine, artistic traditions, festivals as well as parts of the built cultural environment such as archeological ruins, museums, churches, mosques, castles, historic monuments and buildings. Subsequently, Timothy and Nyaupane highlight that people mostly visit cultural and heritage destinations in order to enhance their knowledge, satisfy their curiosity and feelings of nostalgia.

“Religious Tourism” is considered one of the most important forms of heritage tourism in the developing world today. In general, pilgrimage has many forms but the main core of this tendency is the desire of believers to pray, to become closer to God, become healed, and receive forgiveness for sins. In many religions such as Islam, Christianity, Buddhism and Hinduism this form of travel is required or encouraged. The peaceful coexist of Christians and Muslims is another reason that makes Greece an ideal tourism destination for Turkish travelers and Turkey for Greek travelers, since they feel more welcome and familiar. Furthermore, the fact that an important segment of the Muslim population in Greece knows the Turkish language makes Greece as a destination more attractive. The organization process of a potential trip as well as the stay are conducted more easily, overcoming to some extent the language barriers which could be derived in other destinations. Turkish travelers appreciate the quality of their vacations while staying in Greece, since the sense of pure hospitality and tradition’s authenticity create a more intimate atmosphere.

“Diaspora Tourism” is referred as another significant form of heritage tourism. Travelers are people from various backgrounds who are interested to search and learn about their roots, to visit their homelands, in other words to learn something more about themselves. Historical facts play an important role between the two nations. In particular, based on treaty of Lausanne in 1923, a population exchange was conducted between Greece and Turkey. Hence, nowadays thousands of Turkish travelers visit different places of origin of their ancestors in the mountainous areas of Thrace, and Greek travelers visit Izmir and Istanbul mainly. The significance of the diaspora phenomenon which is an integral part of both cultures and concluding that Greece and Turkey can be benefited within the promotion of this part of their cultural heritage.

Timothy and Nyapane continue, by referring **“Living Culture”** as an additional prominent form of heritage tourism. Cultural features such as agricultural landscapes, arts and handicrafts, villages, languages musical tradition, local festivals, spiritual and religious practices, and other of the cultural landscape constitute what we perceive as living culture. Within this tourism context, Greece constitutes one of the classic tourism destinations of the Mediterranean, by combining unique natural diversity and exceptional cultural heritage. The last years it is observed the need to develop alternative forms of tourism, especially the cultural tourism, where Greece has an indisputable advantage.

Furthermore, **“Culinary Heritage”**, cuisine and foodways play a vital role as a part of the living culture of each destination, attracting masses of cultural travelers. Cultural features such as gastronomy, entertainment and generally the Greek way of life could be considered as pull factors for the Turkish travelers. The Turkish travelers show a great interest to try the local gastronomy as well as to experience the way of entertainment (e.g., nightlife) which is different to some extent with their own.

The last crucial form of heritage tourism is the **“Built Heritage”**, encompassing archeological cities and ancient monuments. Both forms contribute significantly as important cultural resources. The recent decades many magnificent, ancient cities have become world-class destinations in Asia, Latin America and Europe, being nowadays remarkable international gateways and centers of tourism commerce. On the other hand, archeological sites and ancient monuments are important components of culture in destinations where material culture was one of the major parts of the tangible past. There are great potentials of tourism development in Greece, focusing on the Turkish traveler’s market, because of the short distance between both countries. It is observed an increasing flow of Turkish travelers which visit Thessaloniki, the hometown of Turkey’s founder Kemal Atatürk.

Turkish outbound tourism appears to have a great dynamic, following to some extent the financial growth of the economy the last decade. This trend has a direct impact on traveler’s profile in terms of the preferences, the decision making process as well as the vacation expenses. Greece, Bulgaria, Netherlands, Germany, Italy and Spain are considered some of the most popular tourism destinations according to recent statistical data. According to the research of the Greek embassy (2014: 11) in Ankara, Turkish travelers’ profile has changed because of a positive alteration of

the living standard in a wide part of the population. Important indicators such as the constant strengthen of the middle class, the educational level improvement, the increasing usage of the internet, the urbanization phenomenon as well as the overall economic development demonstrate the growth of the Turkish society in various aspects. This multidimensional evolvement has influenced the tourism preferences as well, by changing the typical Turkish traveler who was mainly interested in domestic vacations. An increasing trend has appeared of travelers who are willing to explore new destinations abroad.

The most popular destinations for Turkish travelers in 2012, mainly in the summer period, were: Greece, Syria, Bulgaria, Netherlands, Germany, Italy, Spain and Ukraine. Among these countries, Greece is considered as a prominent tourism destination, due its location (easy accessibility) and more attractive prices the last years. According to the statistical measures in 2012 the majority of the tourism packages from Turkey (85.450) were booked for Greece (Greek Embassy, 2014: 12).

Generally, the GNT0 research highlighted the prominent role of Greece as tourism destination for the Turkish outbound tourism, by analyzing different significant factors such as demographic data, preferences and geographical dispersion of travelers (GNT0, 2014). One fact could be considered as quite important, history and culture are the primary reasons for Turkish travelers in order to choose Greece and for Greek travelers to choose Turkey for their vacations. Highlighting the remaining stereotypes and prejudices which are based on the common recent history and manifested occasionally, mainly from the press in both sides. As a result, the induced suspicion delays the target of a broader tourism development, although during the last decade the relation between the two countries in on the right track. Barriers which are related to visa process for the Turkish travelers still remain.

A challenge is to succeed cooperation between the local stakeholders and tourism entrepreneurs in order to create quality tourism packages according to the demand of the Turkish and Greek travelers. Within this cooperation, the creation of a complete tourism package seems necessary, including the right mix of options such as restaurants, shops, bars as well as leisure activities and definitely a group of cultural attractions. Families and schools (e.g., educational excursions) would be a good starting point.

Conforming to the above mentioned facts, the following recommendations have been drawn for further actions (Tsengelidis, 2015: 78–82): It is suggested an implementation of a constant process for gathering and analyzing information about the current trends and best practices in cultural tourism as well as the special needs and preferences of the Turkish and Greek travelers. In this case, a deeper involvement of regional and local education institutions is needed. Projects on a periodic basis would contribute significantly, by communicating to the local stakeholders which are the current trends and innovative tactics in order to set reliably the strategic priorities of both countries. In parallel, a regular dialogue among the local stakeholders that is based in facts concerning the needs and preferences of the Turkish and Greek travelers has a vital role. The collection of qualitative and

quantitative data (e.g., visitation rates, special needs, complaints) could be beneficial on this direction.

Various campaigns should be developed both domestically and in foreign markets, by emphasizing on the unique characteristics and attractive elements of both countries. Within this process, the extensive use of social media, as one of the main marketing tools, is highly recommended, in order to be achieved a strong promotion of the brand awareness as well as deeper penetration in the Turkish and Greek inbound and outbound market.

4 Conclusion

Crouch and Ritchie (1999: 139) state that the shift taking place in the global tourism paradigm “demands greater *cooperation* and *collaboration* at the local and regional levels to ensure a quality tourism product that can *compete* effectively at the global level” and this implies that a sense of cohesiveness in the understanding of a country’s mission and goals in regard to tourism is needed at all levels of government.

The need for regional tourism cooperation and integration between and among neighbouring countries in order to make better use of their complementarities and competitiveness has arisen for several reasons (Madawela, 2003; Rasul & Manandhar, 2009; Ohmae, 1995). Firstly, economic globalization and liberalization have been driving the world economy, breaking national barriers, integrating national economies into the global economy and stimulating regional cooperation. Secondly, tourism is scale sensitive and as the scale increases, the cost decreases. Cooperation among geographically proximate countries can help to exploit economies of scale in the supply of tourist goods and services, thereby enhancing competitiveness by reducing costs and enhancing efficiency (Porter, 1998; Sinclair, 1998). Collaboration can also bring synergistic gains to neighbouring countries from sharing resources, risks and commonalities and complementarities by capitalizing on ‘collaborative advantages’ rather than on individual ‘competitive advantages’ (Ohmae, 1995). Cooperation can also help in cross-border marketing and the creation of a tourism cluster spanning different countries (Hjalager, 2007; Jackson, 2006).

Thirdly, intra-regional tourism has been pushed by the growing regional tourism market (Rasul & Manandhar, 2009). In developing countries, the tourism market has been growing due to economic growth and the growing middle class. Tourism is a ‘luxury good’ and demand for it increases at a higher rate than income increases due to the positive income elasticity of demand (Shaw & Williams, 1998). In order to realize the potential of the regional market for tourism, it is important for regional countries to co-operate and collaborate with a view to promoting the region as a whole and to facilitate the intra-regional movement of regional and international tourists (Rasul & Manandhar, 2009). Recent trends have shown that

neighboring countries are establishing cost-effective regional joint marketing and promotional programmes and pooling financial and human resources (Thein, 2005).

The coastal regions around the Mediterranean basin have a wide variety of demographic and economic characteristics. Indeed, the structure of the population, the labour market, jobs, tourism facilities or the possibility of leaving or arriving by boat vary considerably from one coastal region to another. Accordingly, the demographic pressure exerted by the inhabitants of these regions will not have the same intensity from region to region. These regions are attractive places to live for their inhabitants and tourists, prime business areas for sectors with links to the sea and obligatory points of transit for goods and passengers transported by sea. It is therefore not surprising that these regions constitute a major focal point and are very much involved in the introduction and follow-up of an integrated tourism policy at local, national European and international levels. Turkey with its neighbouring country Greece, need to have integrated tourism plans and programmes in order to bring about synergy, strengthen networks among tour operators in both areas and to develop tourism planning. The cooperation and coordination among the stakeholders of both countries is imperative towards the future. It is recommended the conduction of tourism workshops and congresses, aiming to define and propose methods for efficient cooperation and communication at local level.

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