

INTERNATIONAL HELLENIC UNIVERSITY

AN INSIGHT INTO SPORT TOURISM IN THE
GREEK SEAS: CURRENT SITUATION,
CHALLENGES AND POTENTIALS

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1. INTRODUCTION

Greece is selected as a popular destination from a vast number of tourists. According to Alexandris (Alexandris, 2018), in 2015 there were 23.6 million tourists reported, who contributed to the Greek economy with 14 billion euros approximately. This number grew up to 24.8 million in 2016 with a prediction pointing even higher in year 2017.

As time passes by, the tourists' profile and desires change. Since 1980, there has been a remarkable change in tourists' choices regarding their vacations, since they don't choose anymore to spend their holidays all day lying on sunbeds. They prefer to combine their stay with other activities like sport and tours to natural or historic areas, or with other forms of tourism like gastronomic and religious. There are two main reasons for that change: first, the fact that environmental conscience is considered a matter of significant importance and second, the working hours are less so there is more time for vacations. These facts illustrate the reason why sport tourism is a constantly evolving market.

Greece is a country with limitless coastline and a vast number of islands (1200-6000) depending on the definition (Marker, 2010). During the summer there are meltemia, which set the perfect conditions for water sports regarding air but the temperature as well. The weather, the location, the elements like gastronomy, culture, history and the services offered set Greece as an ideal destination for sea sport tourism. Keeping that in mind, it is crucial for Greece to keep up with the competition in order to gain its part in the industry. A requirement for this evolution of Greece is the identification of reality, challenges and potentials there are in the sea sport tourism.

This study's scope isn't to point out and provide the solutions for the involved parties. Its scope is to respond to the need for capturing the present circumstances and provide information, findings and some suggestions to everyone interested in the market. This dissertation consists of 10 chapters, each of equal importance in order to add to existing literature in the wider field of sports management, with a focus on the maritime element, whereby literature is scarce. Especially what regards our country, studies are almost non existable and there is lack of information and therefore theoretical framework in order to draw conclusions as to the potential of sea sport tourism in future. In the second chapter definitions of tourism are provided, sport tourism and a review of the existing literature on this subject. The third chapter refers to the economic, social and environmental impacts of sport tourism. International sport tourism and events are included in chapter four. The attempt to record the situation of sport tourism in Greece, the analysis of sea sport tourism and the Greek touristic product are reported in the fifth chapter. In the sixth chapter the methodology of the study is analyzed. The method used is qualitative, regarding both primary and secondary data

collection, through the use of in-depth semi-structured interviews, along with the use of a single case study analysis for the purpose of the current study and findings from the literature review that remains scarce in the current field. In the seventh chapter, data analysis is conducted and findings are reported. Following that, in the eighth chapter findings are analyzed and interpreted with regard to existing literature. The theoretical and managerial implications are reported in the ninth chapter. In the tenth chapter the study's limitations are mentioned, which occurred during the conduction of the current study and some future research directions are highlighted. The final conclusions of this study are in the last chapter, conclusions.

The findings of the conducted study were more or less expected, since they demonstrated how challenging it is for entrepreneurs to operate their businesses in a successful way in the particular sector. This was perhaps expected also due to the fact that this emerging field in the wider tourism industry remains unknown to the majority of tourists, especially in Greece and has only recently started being developed and becoming a trend. All of the respondents pointed out the huge obstacle of legislation, which makes their operation filled with stress and frustration. Defining legislation as the most important obstacle for the existence and future of the sea sport tourism, the focus of the study drew on ways that could perhaps aid to overcome it. To summarize, the present situation of sea sport tourism is captured in this thesis. Moreover, an approach to offer suggestions and ideas for the future is provided and discussed in the last chapter.

2. DEFINITIONS OF TOURISM

The current section provides definitions of tourism and depicts the Greek reality around different types of tourism in order to emphasize the particular subsector that this study examines, pertaining to sport tourism in the Greek seas.

2.1 Defining Tourism

Tourism is a constantly growing industry all around the world. According to the UNWTO Tourism Towards 2030 international tourist arrivals are expected to increase by 3.3% a year in the period 2010-2030. Conforming to the estimated rate of growth, international tourist arrivals are expected to be 1.4 billion and 1.8 billion by 2010 and 2030 respectively (UNWTO, 2017).

There are numerous definitions about tourism. The UNWTO defines that: *"tourism comprises the activities of persons travelling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes not related to the exercise of an activity remunerated from within the place visited"* (UNWTO, 2011). A more detailed definition says that: *tourism may be defined as the processes, activities and outcomes arising from the relationships and the interactions among tourists, tourism suppliers, host governments, host communities and surrounding environments that are involved in the attracting and hosting of visitors*. Despite of how many definitions exist, they all conclude to similar results: there is difference between tourism and travelling. There are some criteria in order to distinguish tourism and travelling. There has to be a travel from the residence area to a different one, a staying for at least one night and less than a year and finally the motive in travelling to a place for participation in local activities.

Tourism as it shows is an industry comprised by many different elements. There is the supply side where are: accommodation, transportation, food and drink suppliers, touristic shops, museums, retail shops and so many more. On the other side is the demand side where is the tourist looking for a trip, which may seem a smaller list than the supply side but there is the multifaceted personality of a human. The dreams, desires, needs, stereotypes and visions of every potential tourist. To sum up, tourism is a phenomenon that can be examined of many different scopes including economics, sociology and psychology.

2.2 Defining Sport Tourism

The broad concept of sport tourism is the travelling that is made in order to participate or watch a sport event. According to Gibson (1998) sport tourism is a recreational travel which motivates tourists to participate in sport activities, watch sport events or visit sport monuments and attractions. Neirotti(2003), based on that definition moves a little further and says that in sport tourism the individual is travelling away from home aiming to watch an event, participate in a recreational activity or visit a sport attraction. Nogawa et al.(1996) combine sport activities with the abidance in the specific place and say that sport tourism is the traveler's stay in a place for at least 24 hours, where a sport event takes place and the primary motive for that trip is the participation in this event. Standeven & De Knop(1999) define sport tourism in a broader way, saying that "sport tourism is all kinds of active and passive participation in physical activities, where someone participates either occasionally or in an organized form, for commercial or not reasons, by travelling away from home and his working environment".

2.3 Sport Tourism's Types

According to Hall (1992), sport tourism comprises by two attitudes: the travel to participate in an event or to watch it. Most of the researches agree that sport tourism is divided in active and passive tourism. Standeven and De Knop (1999) analyze sport tourists in:

- active, whose participation in activities is random or not, is the travel's primary motive or not and includes just one or more activities
- and passive, where tourists are divided in those who are devoted to one sport and those who happen to watch a sport event during their holidays.

Kurtzman and Zauhar(2005) cope sport tourism in a different perspective, as a core product and divide it in five categories:

- sport tourism events, where tourists participate or watch a sport event
- sport tourism attractions, including sport stadiums, museums or sport theme parks
- sport tourism resorts, referring to hotels and clubs with sport facilities and activities
- sport tourism tours, which are packages including accommodation, sport tours or seminars
- and sport tourism cruises, indicating sport activities happening on board or in another environment

Gibson (1998) defines sport tourism as a '*leisure-based travel that takes individuals temporarily outside of their home communities to participate in physical activities, to watch physical activities or to venerate attractions associated with physical activities*'. According to her theory, there are three types of sport tourism:

- **Active sport tourism** includes professional athletes and *amateurs* that travel to participate in an event and hobbyists that travel to a place in order to exercise their favorite activity. In the first case there is an organized event, with a set of rules and the competing element, while the second one is a more "free and unofficial" physical activity as a hobby and away from the individual's home.
- **Event sport tourism** is the category with spectators travelling to watch mega events like Olympic Games, World Championships, the Champion League's final or smaller scale events like colleges' championships and regional or schools' tournaments. In this type are spectators who travel to watch their favorite sport event, but also the family, friends and supporters of a competing athlete in this specific event.
- **Nostalgia sport tourism** covers the tourists who travel to visit famous sport museums, stadiums or hall of fames. Visiting the Ferrari World in Abu Dhabi, the Real Madrid's Santiago Bernabéu and the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame in Springfield,

MA are just some of many examples that work as the primary motive for tourists to travel.

Except from these types of sport tourism there is another phenomenon that can be globally met, regarding tourists that choose to participate in physical activities after they arrive to their destination. In this case, the primary goal was the travel itself but during their staying they try, to learn about a sport or exercise it. This can happen because they see someone training, it was always in their "to do" list and it is a good opportunity for them, having free time to spend or being convinced and inspired by someone to give it a try. Nevertheless, it is a first contact with a physical activity or a new try on something from the past. In this category are included thousands of tourists all over the globe, but they are a different market of the sport tourists. Gammon and Robinson (1997) referred to this type as tourism sport, but it is ignored of the international scholar and it's not considered as sport tourism. They separated it in hard and soft definition of tourism sport:

- In hard definition are tourists that generally exercise; so, it may be a secondary motive, but they will do a sport during their holidays
- and in soft are tourists that try something just because a resort offers it; their participation is coincidental

2.4 Defining Sport Tourism in the sea

There is a gap in literature regarding the title of sport tourism in the sea. It is referred with different adjectives like marine, nautical, maritime or the simply water-based. Although there is not an official title the broad concept is: sport activities taking place in the sea. There are three categories of activities depending on the area of action. These categories are: 1) coastal, 2) yachting and 3) submarine (Chamber of Kefalonia & Ithaca, 2006). Coastal sport tourism includes activities made close to the shore, like swimming, surfing, kite-surfing etc. Yachting refers to sailing with a private or rented yacht, where in the case of rented it can be with or without renting a crew. The third category is more easily understanding as it usually refers to scuba-diving but in some cases, includes also the spear gun element.

2.5 Sport Tourist's Profile

All the aforementioned definitions are necessary to understand the context of tourism's forms, but it is equally important to decode the sport tourist's profile. As reported by Terzakis (2004), sport tourists are amateurs or professional athletes, who love to travel and watch sport events, they spend money for expensive equipment, have high standards for the offered services during their holidays and care about their physical condition and healthy diet.

According to (Alexandris, 2011), researches in USA showed that sport tourists are very attractive for tourism businesses as they are well paid, they are highly educated (1/3 has graduated from university and the 23% has master degrees), their age group is 18-44 years, they are willing to travel far away to find what they are looking for, they are repeaters as tourists and healthy living's lovers.

Additionally, as reported by (Goutzioupas, 2008) another research was conducted specialized on the Greek sport tourism based on taken sample of international sport trips' agents. The results showed that international tourists visiting Greece choose hotels which are eco-friendly (saving water, waste's management, organic gardens and products). Moreover, they have more than 30.000 € income, they travel in groups and their stay will last from 1 to 2 weeks. Finally, for every tourism package European tourists spend 1.300 € per person and the oversea tourists 2.000 € per person.

3. SPORT TOURISM IMPACTS

Sport tourism is one of the fastest growing market in the tourism industry and as years pass by, it is becoming a key issue for researchers regarding its impacts. Most of the times when impacts are set for discussion, the biggest part is covered by the economic effects that sport tourism has on the community. Apart of the economic, social and environmental impacts also get attention in the latest researches.

3.1 Economic Impacts

Tourism's economic impact is difficult to be exactly measured, as it consists of many different elements. Although, assumptions can be made at the end of the tourism season and of course projections for next season. The most researched area regarding tourism is the economic impact as it puts "oil in the engine" and supports financially the communities. Sport along with tourism have a crucial part of a region's income and sport tourism, as a combination of these elements has a serious economic impact. As a constantly growing market, every year there is more demand on tourism related businesses, so new working positions are created and investments are attracted. There is income from accommodation, transportation but also from supporting services like food/drink services, retail shops and entertainment services. Sport tourism except of the abovementioned tourism income, includes sport which is also a profitable industry. In sport tourism there is income from training or hosting sport events. Moreover, sport tourism supports the infrastructure and the development of the general

region. Finally, it helps the sustainability of all tourism businesses and extends the tourism season.

On the other hand, there are also negative economic impacts of sport tourism. Most of the times negative impacts can be spotted in hosting sport events. When there is no strategic planning in the beginning, by experts and with an already available budget it can do more harm than good. There must always be a plan designed, monitored and implemented by experts because otherwise the actual cost can be much bigger of the profit.

3.2 Social Impacts

There are social impacts to the local community as there is interrelation between the tourists and the residents. As sport tourism grows every year and sport experiences are provided even in long distances, different cultures are meeting and there is knowledge and acceptance of different cultures, customs and even religions. Sport tourism builds a feeling of pride to the locals, as the destination becomes famous globally. Communities, authorities and businesses learn to cooperate with each other, especially when they host sport events. Healthy way of life and exercising enter the daily life of locals and moreover they are asked to participate actively in the hosting events' procedure.

Negative aspects also exist in the social impacts of sport tourism. Due to the interrelation between different cultures there is a loss of the area's identity and absorption of foreign customs. There are many cases in sport tourism that violence appears due to crowded places or masses' movements. Aggressive behavior, alcohol, drugs and robberies happen in mega sport events where hooliganism is commonly met.

3.3 Environmental Impacts

Environment is a fact that must be always taken into consideration in tourism. The increase of sport tourism market creates demand in infrastructure and exploitation of natural settings. Ski slopes on mountains, water-sport schools on beaches, paths for bicycles and hiking in forests are the "light" changes in the environment. Nowadays the environment's protection except of crucial matter for earth's sustainability is also a tourism trend, having as a result more and more tourism businesses operating with viable methods. These methods are applied to infrastructure, operational needs and waste's management. Moreover, local communities are educated in an eco-friendly way of life and asked to take more action in the preservation of their "home".

As sport tourism is quite demanding in land areas, it is crucial every human intervention happen always with respect to the environment. In golf courses for example, fertilizers and pesticides are needed among with a big quantity of water. Keeping that in mind, careful research, plan and development of golf courses are matters of big significance. Moreover, ski slopes in many cases are made by removing trees or due to the planet's overheat, by using artificial snow rich in chemicals. Finally, litter are increasing dramatically in places hosting masses which makes essential the absolute restoration of the area following the crowd's departure.

4. INTERNATIONAL SPORT TOURISM AND EVENTS

4.1 International Sport Tourism

Sport tourism is a sector with a multi-billions worth all over the world and its able to offer income to many different businesses

Sport tourism is a tool which can create huge changes in a country's economy. New job vacancies, huge profit, extension of tourism season and impact on the socio-cultural behavior of the locals are results of a good strategy regarding sport tourism.

According to Alexandris (2011) and Goutzioupas (2006) these are few examples of countries with impressive results:

- USA: Sport tourism industry's worth is estimated around 45 billion dollars, as sport are promoted as a very competitive product and they aim mostly to the domestic and not to the inbound tourism.
- Germany: Every year there are posted 32 million sport holidays which are the 55% of the whole tourism.
- Netherlands: Sport tourism is 52% of all tourism trips, which is estimated around 7 million trips.
- Great Britain: Interest in participating to sport activities is very high in 20% of tourist packages and the 25% of the tourists' expenses were on packages with physical activities. Significant impact on sport tourism in UK made the London 2012 Olympic Games.
- Spain: Is the best example in Europe for the exploitation of hosting the Olympic Games, as they were determined to gain their place in the sport tourism market.
- Abu Dhabi: since 2013 is winning every year the award for the World's Leading Sport Tourism Destination by the World Travel Awards.
- France: Sport tourism is the 23% of tourism trips, which is 3.5 million trips. The 14% of tourism operators are specialized on active holidays

and the 21% of the brochures offer information about participating in sport activities.

- Europe: Winter sport are the 5% of tourism trips, water sports are the 1%, recreation on mountains is the 6% and the 10% is about outdoors activities. To sum up, the 26% of tourism trips is including participation in some form of physical activity.

4.2 International Sport Events

Organizing sport events is a big opportunity for a destination to become well known and attract visitors. Many countries are claiming the opportunity to host mega events like the Olympic Games or the World Football Championship, as these events bring attention to the country, thousands of visitors and huge profit. The direct profit for the mega event's hostess is shown right after the end of the event in cash, when the indirect will take more time as tourists will keep visiting the area but in all cases, it is much bigger (Chourdakis, 2013).

In many cases destinations increased their tourists' arrivals after hosting a sport event. This regeneration has two aspects: the actual visitors to the destination and the spectators through media. There is no doubt athletes, coaches / supporters and spectators offer direct income to the area and will come back if they leave satisfied, with pleasant memories. Nowadays though, in the internet era a sport event can bring more visitors with a live streaming and the event's broadcast. Videos or photos with landscape, entertainment and the area's natural beauty can reach every home and motivate people to pay a visit.

According to Alexandris, the International Olympic Committee requested a research to measure the outcome of the London 2012 Olympic Games broadcasting. The research was conducted by Sponsorship Intelligence and illustrates the international media's cover:

- There were 99.982 hours of television cover, which equals to 11 years broadcasting
- London's Games had 60% more broadcasting hours than Beijing in 2008 and double more of Athens in 2004
- The 47% of broadcasting was from channels with free transmission
- An average minute of the Game's broadcasting was watched by 102.5 million spectators
- An average spectator watched 7.5 hours
- The Olympic Games London 2012 were broadcasted to 2.4 billion people by more than 190 official channels on tv or through internet

These numbers show perfectly the dynamic of a mega event broadcasted globally. It creates huge potentials for a destination's brand and can lead to significant expansion in all tourism markets.

5. SPORT TOURISM IN GREECE

5.1 Introduction

The key milestone for sport tourism in Greece were the Olympic Games in 2004. Before that year, the general but also the sport-related infrastructure was lacking. The Athens international airport Eleftherios Venizelos, a subway and numerous sport facilities were developed to host the mega event. The big success of the Olympic Games 2004 put Greece in the map of sport tourism. Tourism businesses were motivated to offer sport services, international sport events were hosted due to the new, existing facilities and there was a lot of publicity regarding Greece.

Sport tourism in Greece is not acknowledged in the academic institutes. There are some courses in the universities, but not a specific diploma undergraduate or postgraduate. The interest regarding sport tourism is constantly increasing, papers and articles are published, few books are written but still there is not an established faculty on sport tourism.

An important effort for identifying the significance of sport tourism was the establishment of the Research Unit of Greece by the Higher Technological Educational Institute of Crete. The official name is Sport Tourism International Council- Research Unit of Greece (STIC-RUGR) and its main goal is the advancement of sport tourism as an expanding field for business and academic interests. The Research Unit of Greece is combined of 11 people, permitted of the Sport Tourism International Council and Prof. Dimitrios Terzakis is the Unit's supervisor. According to S.T.I.C the Unit's objectives can be summarized as following:

- Development of research programmes and studies in sport tourism
- Development of consulting projects
- Establishment and development of vocational qualification courses
- Involvement in sport tourism projects of public and private organizations, as well as of the European Community (STIC, 2018)

5.2 Greece as a Sport Tourism Destination

(Goutzioupas, 2008) has identified some facts that make Greece stand out and excels of the rest competition as a sport tourism destination. These facts are:

- The birthplace of the Olympic Games, as they were first established in Greece. They had significant meaning in ancient times as during the Games there was a truce between the participants and war was stopping. This may be the Greek tradition but is also history and that origin makes it genuinely authentic.
- The successful host of Olympic Games – Athens 2004 and other international sport events. The legacy of the Games, the updated and modern sport infrastructure and the promotion of Greece make the country recognizable and give fame, status and respect.
- The rich cultural and historic heritage offer quality to the tourism product. This heritage along with sport, create a unique mix for sport tourists.
- The landscape combined with climate, coastline and islands make Greece an ideal destination for every sport all year long.
- The membership in European Community makes the access easier to Europeans as they travel with their Identification paper (ID).
- The location of Greece as the cultural and geographical crossroad between East and West.

5.3 Tourism Product of Greece

A research for the tourism product of Greece was conducted by international agents for sport trips leading to some interesting results (Chourdakis, 2013). According to (Goutzioupas, 2008) the results showed that:

- Main destinations are:
Crete, Athens, Islands, Olympia
- Main sports are:
Sailing, windsurfing, running, extreme sport
- Main events are on:
Running (Athens Authentic Marathon) and sea sport (Aegean Regatta, International Championships on Windsurfing)
Milestones for mega events were the Olympic Games in 2004, the Champions League's final in 2007, the basketball's Final Four of Euroleague in 2007.

5.4 The Outcome of hosting The Olympic Games - Athens 2004

The biggest sport event that an area can host, are the Olympic Games. It's the best opportunity for marketing, profit and development a destination can exploit and gain its place on the sport tourism map (Chourdakis, 2013).

Some benefits that Greece had after hosting the Olympic Games are:

- Increase for tourism overnights in Athens (from 2004 to 2005 was 10%) and in Greece (from 2004 to 2005 was 5%)
- Increase for international recognizability of the brand "Greece"
- Increase internationally for the Greek status, as a safe and modern country
- Acquisition of expertise by the human resources working during the Games
- Satisfaction of the Games' visitors and spectators which reached to 90% according to researches. These visitors returned home satisfied and with the word of mouth method (WoM), their experience became known to more people. Visitors to the Olympic Games were stated as 500.000.
- Development of significant infrastructure projects (for the Olympic Games many sport facilities were improved, but more were made from basis in order to host this event.

In real numbers 32 facilities were used during the Games, when 17 of them were made especially for the event).

5.5 Sport Tourism in the Greek sea

Sport tourism in Greece is constantly growing as a market with lots of potentials, especially in the sea. Greek people are familiarized with outdoors activities, the sea and water in general as the country has more than 14.000 km of coastline and 3.000 islands. The location, the weather conditions and the Mediterranean cuisine make the Greek sea the best destination for sport tourism. In addition to these facts, for many years now in peoples' minds, Greece is the destination that offers sun, sea and sand.

All sea sports can be found in Greece on the islands, but also to the mainland. Sailing, windsurfing, kitesurfing, sea kayak, SUP, scuba-diving can be met on the islands of Paros, Naxos, Rhodes, Lefkada, Limnos, Samos, Crete, Corfu, Mykonos, Santorini etc. Except of the islands though, they can be also met to the mainland like to the regions of Attiki, Peloponnese and Central Macedonia.

5.6 International Events in the Greek seas

The outcome of hosting the Olympic Games Athens 2004 has already been analyzed. Apart of mega events, smaller scale sport events can attract

tourists and make the destination broadly known. Three indicative examples of international sport events hosted in Greece, are analyzed below:

- 1) Aegean Regatta: The international sailing race Aegean Regatta is organized for the last 17 years in Greece. It started for two main reasons: First, to give the opportunity to sailors to visit islands that are not easily accessible and second, to regenerate financially these communities and help them attract their potential visitors. The participants were stabilized between 70-90 boats, but some years reached up to 100. This number of boats means that around 1.200 sailors are visiting the islands during the regatta. Every year there is a different route, combining some of the beautiful Aegean's islands. In 2017 it started from Patmos, passed from Astypalaia and Nisiros islands and finished in Rhodes. 76 boats participated in this race, with 14 of them being from foreign countries (Aegean Regatta, 2018).
- 2) International Aegean Sailing Rally: In 1964 the Hellenic Offshore Racing Club organized for the first time the International Aegean Sailing Rally. This sailing competition includes three or four offshore races, with total length 350-500 nautical miles. The starting point is the front area of Battleship Averof in Paleon Faliron bay and then follow some stopovers to Greek islands. It started as a racing event but due to the beauty of the islands, the international participation and the contribution of Greek navy became an important marine event (Aegean Rally, 2018).
- 3) World Rowing Coastal Championship: In 2014, Thessaloniki hosted the World Rowing Coastal Championship from 17 to 19 of October. During these dates, a research was conducted which tried to measure the direct income of the visitors during the Championship. According to the results, athletes and visitors stayed on average for 4.5 days. They spent approximately 291 € per person during their stay and the direct income of this sport event, for the city of Thessaloniki was 291.000 €. In more details, the average expenses per person were: 130 € for accommodation (4 nights), 110 € for food and entertainment, 44 € for shopping and 7 € for museums (Alexandris, 2017).

Sport tourism is a subject of significance for academics, entrepreneurs and governments as all the above mentioned evidence confirms. There are scholars providing data for definitions, impacts and the importance of sport tourism as an industry, but still there are no focused studies on sea sport tourism and especially in the Greek context. This study is aiming to cover this lack of knowledge on the subject by capturing this market's reality, faced challenges and potentials for evolvement.

6. METHODOLOGY

6.1 Purpose of the Study

The significance of sport tourism as a sector and an economic activity has already been mentioned. Greece is still lacking in gaining its part in this tourism market globally, despite the fact it provides an extremely popular destination. It is reported that sport tourism is a constantly developing market and the last three decades many scholars tried to analyze the phenomenon and distinguish the different elements.

Greece is a country with thousand miles of coastline and islands and famous for its sun and sea. The specific market of sport tourism that takes action in the sea, is a big opportunity for the Greek tourism. In this direction, there are no papers and scholars specialized on the sea sport tourism. This phenomenon is met also in the international literature. Identifying this gap in research regarding an existing market in Greece, is the reason that led to the conduction of this paper.

To sum up, the purpose of this study is to spell out the ongoing reality of sea sport tourism in Greece, the challenges and problems it currently faces and the potential actions that can assist in making the country notorious for this form of sport tourism.

In a more detailed form the key research purpose can be illustrated as: What is the current situation for sport tourism in the Greek sea? What problems is it dealing with? What can be done so that Greece can become competitive in the sea sport tourism market?

These are the key research questions that will be attempted to be answered in the current study.

6.2 Research Approach

In order to clarify the reality of sea sport tourism in Greece and identify challenges and opportunities, qualitative methods were used. The in-depth semi-structured interviews and a single case study analysis were preferred as the most suitable research designs in order to capture primary data collection and were considered the best combination to draw the image of sport tourism in the Greek sea. According to Yin (2002) "Case is a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between a phenomenon and a context are not clear and the researcher has little control over the phenomenon and context". Keeping that in mind, a case study is the process during which this phenomenon is examined and leads to formulation of the "why" and "how" questions about the investigated phenomenon. The single case method was chosen in this methodology,

because it allows the research to examine in depth an example of practicing, identifies the reasons it is considered a good example by pointing them out which finally leads in their easier analysis. The single case study analysis is presented in the data analysis section and findings obtained from it, mainly in the form of best practices that could be followed in the future are next presented in the section of findings' discussion.

The three main questions consisting the interviews were:

- 1) Is sport tourism fully developed in Greece? If not, what can be done to compete with famous international sport tourism destinations?
- 2) Are the government/ regional authorities able to help businesses related to sea sport tourism? If they can, in which ways?
- 3) In your opinion, what is going to be the future for sea sport tourism in Greece?

To answer these questions three categories of interviewees were formed: academics, entrepreneurs and representatives of local authorities. The entrepreneurs were chosen in order to find out what are they coping with in their daily involvement with a sea sport tourism's business. On the other hand, the representatives of prefectures and municipalities were chosen as policy makers and as on-set state employees. Finally, academics were chosen to fill in the existing gap regarding sea sport tourism in Greece and also acted as important individuals during the pilot testing phase in order to provide us with their knowledge and expertise in the field and make suggestions about the content of the questionnaire. Confidentiality was ensured during the approach to all respondents to whom it was explicitly stated that their insight would be used exclusively for the purpose of the current study. In addition, all respondents were thoroughly informed about the purpose of the current study and gave their consent to the researcher to use their insight to draw conclusions. A list with the respondents, along with their job title can be found below:

- **Dr. Aleksandris Kostas**, PhD in Sport Management and Deputy Professor in Department of Physical Education of Aristotle University of Thessaloniki
- **Georgoudakis Giorgos**, owner of company "Paros kite" in Paros island
- **Goutzioupas Giorgos**, Sport Consultant at actiontoursrentals.com, asksports.gr and yogahotels.gr
- **Kaparos Petros**, owner of "A bit of salt" in Paros island
- **Kristallis Rick**, co-owner of "Surf Club Keros" in Limnos island
- **Moustakalis Stelios**, instructor on SUP and kitesurfing
- **Mpakirtzis Thomas**, owner of "Surf Club Sto Nero" in Volvi
- **Nalbandoglou Simos**, sailing coach and owner of Active Sport Club Watersports in Aggelochori

- **Pashalidis Dimitris**, assistant of Mrs. Papavasileiou Marieta the Deputy Mayor of Tourism in South Aegean region
- **Pengas Spiros**, Deputy Mayor of Tourism & International Relations of Thessaloniki's Municipality
- **Politaki Aggeliki**, Head-Chief of Tourism Department in North Aegean region
- **Stratos Christos**, owner of "Milos Beach Bar" in Lefkada island
- **Tzimas Achilleas**, sailing-windsurfing-kitesurfing coach in Rhodes Windsurfing Academy
- **Zoidou Maria**, Head-Chief of Sport & Tourism Department in Cyclades islands

The interviews were set in the period between 15/12/2017-20/1/2018. The time span was small, which is another reason why qualitative methods were preferred over a quantitative questionnaire. The received answers were 14, which constitutes a small sample, however it was considered sufficient provided the particular context and sector under investigation and the expertise that all respondents have. Despite the few answers, the sample is considered quite representative due to the respondents' job nature and their in-depth view of sea sport tourism. Representatives of two prefectures, Crete and Ionian islands although they were positive to participate in the research, their answers weren't received in the estimated time span. The findings didn't come as a surprise, but neither were expected. Entrepreneurs face a real challenge to succeed and keep operating and as one of them stated: *"You have to be either crazy or a fool to start this kind of business in Greece"*.

Regarding the secondary data collection, many papers were studied along with the existing literature. Among these papers, there was a research conducted which led to the 10 year-length strategic plan of a Greek prefecture. For this research a questionnaire was distributed aiming at identifying the current situation of the prefecture, the challenges faced and the actions that should be taken. In this questionnaire were partly based the in-depth interviews for this sea sport tourism paper. The actual content of the two researches may be different, but the general concept is the same. In both cases the purpose was to clarify the present circumstances and identify the faced problems and the potential solutions. In the research for the strategic plan the questions were asking for the existing equipment and infrastructure in the prefecture building, the identified needs in software, the faced problems and the possibility for extra assistance needed by the staff. These questions were taken and adapted in order to fit in the sea sport tourism area, as the mindset and goals of the two papers were the same (Institute for prefecture's development, Pantio University, 2011).

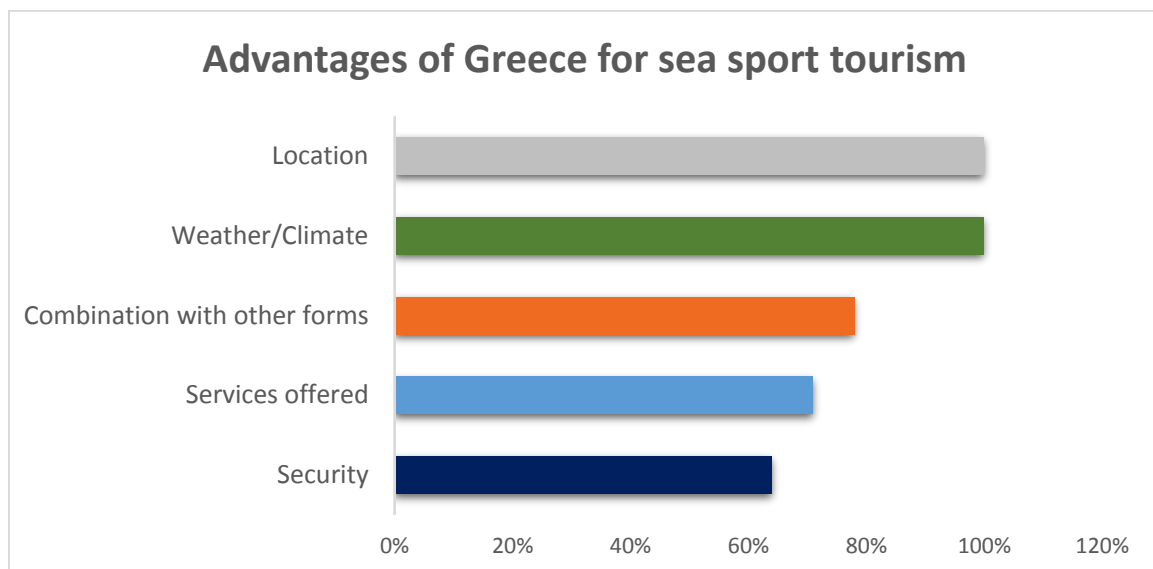
After the conduction of the questionnaire, the latter was distributed to academics and entrepreneurs to be validated. The feedback was positive for all aspects length, content and focus on the key research goal. The pilot testing of the questionnaire was considered successful and was used to the interviews. As also mentioned above, the academics and entrepreneurs that were reached for the pilot testing, were exempted from the in-depth interview procedure. The findings of this research are analyzed in the next section.

7. DATA ANALYSIS

This section includes the questions and provided answers of the interviews, as well as the findings' analysis that occurred from the research. All questions are reported and combined with the statistical analysis according to the answers. In the next sub-section, and after the analysis of the in-depth interviews, the single case study's analysis follows.

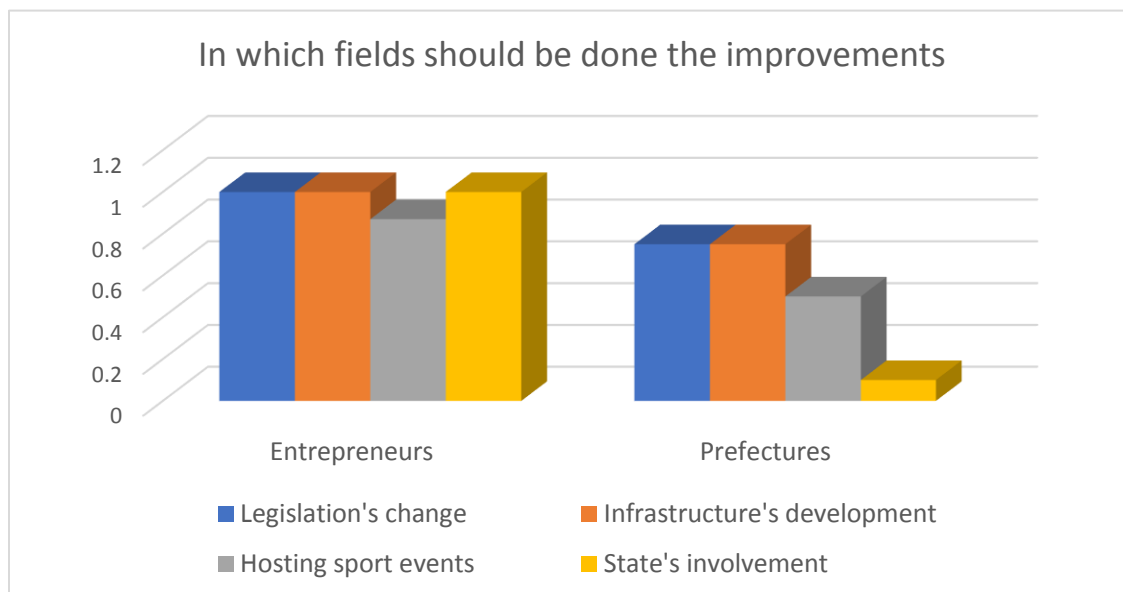
The questionnaire was structured at a gradual procedure from the general topic to the specific. The opening questions were about Sport Tourism, the following were regarding the Sea Sport Tourism and the problems it currently faces and the final one was about future and potential of Sea Sport Tourism (see appendix).

Why did you decide to involve in sea sport tourism? In this question, there were two parts in the answers. Firstly, it was the literate answer on why they decided to involve in sea sport tourism and second were few answers emerged on why Greece is a unique destination for this type of tourism. In the second part, the respondents were 100% agreed in two answers about location and weather conditions in Greece as it is showed in the figure below.



What are the criteria to report someone as a sport tourist? In this question all the respondents agreed that in order to call someone a sport tourist there is one requirement; the primary motive for travel is the sport itself. Based on the sport, the sport tourist will choose the destination that the physical activity will occur.

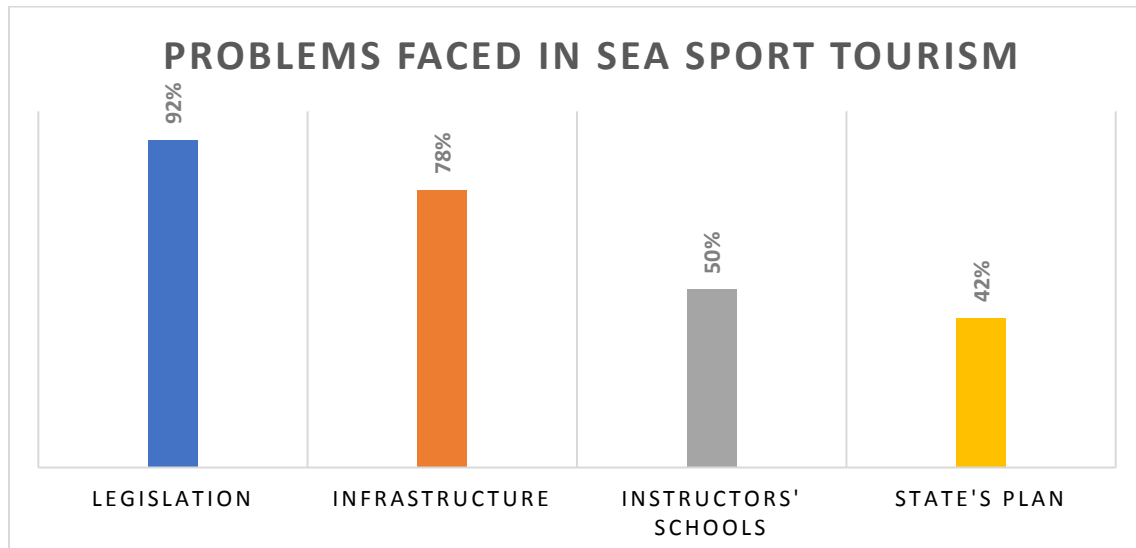
Do you believe that Greece's sea sport tourism is fully developed at this point or there is place for improvements? 100% of the respondents answered that sea sport tourism in Greece is underdeveloped and there are many things that should be done to make the country competitive in this market. The potential solutions which were provided for the development of sea sport tourism are illustrated bellow.



Entrepreneurs and prefectures' representatives answered slightly different in three of the four solutions, when in the fourth they almost disagreed. Academics' answers are not shown in the graph as their suggestions agreed 100%.

The question that the respondents disagreed was: *In your opinion, is it possible for sea sport tourism existing in Greece all year long?* Only the 28% answered that it can be possible, when the rest gave few answers on why Greek sea sport tourism can't exist the whole year. These few answers are analyzed in the findings' discussion section and the next subsection regards the presentation and analysis of the single case study that was selected.

The question that was more analyzed and reported as the most important by the 71% of the respondents is the: *Are you facing any problems in your occupation with sport tourism? If yes, which are these problems?* The answer in the first part was yes and in the second part few answers emerged which are showed to the graph below.



The question that answers agreed again was regarding the financial crisis in Greece. More specifically: *Do you believe that the Greek financial crisis affected the sea sport tourism? If yes, which are these impacts?* 100% of the respondents answered again yes and provided few impacts of the crisis.

Which are your target markets, and which are the international trends regarding sea sport tourism? Repeatedly interviewees showed some patterns in their answers, as they agreed in both parts of the question.

The abovementioned questions stated the higher accordance between the interviewees. Another question that the answers were mingled was: *What actions do you use in order to become well-known and attract sport tourists?* The answers to this question were:

- Social Media
- Internet
- Newspapers/Magazines
- Exhibitions
- Word of mouth

All the respondents gave same answers, but in a different ranking. Some of them use more the social media, other the advertise on Google and some prefer participating to exhibitions. All of them though, cope with high significance the word of mouth method, as there is no better advertising than the satisfied customers sharing their experiences.

7.1 Surf Club Keros – A Case Study

An indicative example of good practice in sea sport tourism for Greece, is the Surf Club Keros. It was in 2007 when three young people finished their studies and decided to make their living of their hobby. Their studies were on law, marketing and digital trade but their passion for water sports turned them into entrepreneurs. A year later, in 2008 the Surf Club Keros was established and got ready to gain its part in the sea sport market. It started as a business for renting equipment for the water sports surfing, windsurfing and kite surfing and worked mostly with domestic tourism. Few years later the financial crisis hit Greece and they decided to expand in other markets, as it was a one-way to survive. They targeted and gained customers from central and northern Europe, like the German-spoken countries, Scandinavia and the Balkans. They didn't expand only in terms of targeted markets though, as they added more services offered by their business. They identified the need for a broader business, so they added accommodation and restaurant amenities. They are accessible for families and disable people, with the necessary infrastructure and the kids club service. In more details, nowadays the Surf Club Keros offers:

- ✓ equipment for rent on sports surfing, windsurfing and kitesurfing
- ✓ a small catamaran for rent
- ✓ eco-friendly accommodation in luxury or mini safari tents and in studios
- ✓ kids club services
- ✓ spa services
- ✓ restaurant and café
- ✓ extra activities like SUP, yoga sessions, mountain & trail bikes, snorkeling
- ✓ instructors' courses from the International Kiteboarding Organization
- ✓ transfer from and to the Surf Club
- ✓ **all** the above for people with disabilities

Their key to success is extroversion. They used at some point all possible methods to attract customers alone or combined:

- Social entourage
- Social Media
- Google ads

- Articles in magazines
- Exhibitions
- Word of mouth

The result to all this effort is this Surf Club getting bigger every year, adding more amenities but keeping quality throughout their operations and services. They identified the needs, invested on offering a full package to their customers and distinguished from the competition. They attracted tourists in Limnos, an island not so famous internationally, and found ways to make their business sustainable (Surf Club Keros, 2018). In more details, the practices that made them a good example are:

- ✓ Identification of the needs
- ✓ Adjustment to the demands
- ✓ Respect and protect the environment
- ✓ Combination of different tourism types
- ✓ Innovation

These practices will be analyzed in the next section, along with the findings of the in-depth interviews.

8. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The research's data analysis that is mentioned in the last section, designated the current condition in sea sport tourism. The findings lightened up every dimension that needs to be taken into consideration in order to understand the present and formulate the future of sport tourism in the Greek seas.

Greece, in order to become better and competitive in sea sport tourism market, must firstly identify the problems the entrepreneurs face and the inefficiencies that occur in this type of tourism. Next, it should create a strategic plan supported by all the stakeholders and implement it as a team. The first step though, is the identification of the problems. As mentioned, respondents pointed out the challenges and obstacles they deal with and these are analyzed below.

Legislation: The first fact that the respondents mentioned as a problem is the renting procedure for the seashore. Every business that is located and operates by the sea needs the permission of the government as well as a license confirming their right to operate. The procedure has two parts; first the ministries make a shared announcement in the government's newspaper which reports the beaches that can be rented. Then, the responsible municipalities and prefectures make an auction where the interested

entrepreneurs place a bid for their preferable beach. The negative facts in this procedure are:

1. The date of the auction as it is very late, in many cases even in late June. The touristic season starts the latest in May, so it must be organized much earlier. Otherwise they drive businessmen in two options either start late their operation or start without authorization. Both options though, harm government and entrepreneurs as the first won't collect the expected taxes and the second risk their existence if they found working with no permission.
2. The lifetime of the license as even after the abovementioned procedure, the duration of the license is just for one year. As the entrepreneurs pointed out, under these circumstances no one serious businessman will come to invest for one year. The duration along with the auction's date cause stress and frustration to entrepreneurs and discourage any potential investors. This lifetime though doesn't apply to big accommodation units, as in this case the seashore's rent is for some years.
3. The bureaucracy of the process which applies to all procedures in Greece. The different kind of papers that are needed, making entrepreneurs going from one office to another and even changing from year to year which bureau is responsible for the licensing are facts that bother the owners of seaside businesses.

Infrastructure: A big lack for sea sport tourism is the infrastructure. With more than 14000 km coastline and thousands of islands it is frustrating that there are only 32 marines operating. This shortage is important for tourism in general, but for sea sport tourism is crucial and in some cases prohibitive. The lack includes also the infrastructure in public beaches, like toilettes, umbrellas and functional roads.

Instructor's schools: Another negative aspect is the combination of legislation and education. In Greece there are no authorized schools for specialized instructors on surfing and kite surfing. Windsurfing, as a part of Sailing Federation has instructors who graduated from Physical Education's faculties in Greek universities. These graduates though are not for sure familiarized with windsurfing, as it is possible they involved only with sailing. On the other hand, the Greek state doesn't recognize the European private schools for these sports, which actually means that entrepreneurs have no option to teach these sports. There is a grey zone for this matter as the entrepreneurs teach these sports by being licensed from European schools and the authorities don't give them fines as they can't do otherwise. Entrepreneurs point out that is dangerous to rent equipment for these sports without showing the right and safe way to act. To sum up, the entrepreneurs that teach those sports aren't legal according to the Greek state but at the same time it is not clear they are illegal.

State's plan: The state's presence applies in every aspect. A strategic plan for the promotion of Greece as a sea sport tourism destination is only one of them. Apart of the efforts in promoting Greece and attract tourists, there is another phenomenon. Many of our neighbor countries are facing problems with either war, terrorism or politic instability. Egypt, Tunisia and Turkey were famous destination for sea sport tourism, but they are lagging behind due to the already mentioned problems. As respondents reported Greece is failing to attract all these tourists that are looking for new destinations for their active holidays with many of them ending up to Spain, Canaries and Cyprus. The state standing by the side of entrepreneurs may be obvious for some, but in Greece is not. Instead of making policies helping businesses and potential investments, obstacles occur. All the aforementioned existing problems are in the state's favor to be solved directly. Infrastructure, legislation and instructor's schools can only be solved either by the government itself or with cooperation with private businesses. Finally, the only reason that the state's plan was reported statistically forth by the respondents is the fact that they are completely disappointed by the authorities and decided to fight on their own.

Economic crisis: The current condition for Greek economy is not considered as a problem as it became reality. The respondents stated that economic crisis affected the domestic tourism, as Greeks can't afford to go on vacation and if they go it is for less days and closer to home. As a solution to that and in order to survive, entrepreneurs turned to inbound tourism and mostly in Europe. The aspect of economic crisis that hurt entrepreneurship is the high taxation. Businesses that operated for years were forced to close and the remained are struggling to find the money needed for taxes. Additionally, if they pay their high taxes the profit is getting smaller every year taking into consideration that they live from this income.

Migration: Migration is a major phenomenon these last years in Greece. As a consequence to the location of the country and the war in its neighbors like Syria, Libya etc. Greece is constantly accepting boats with immigrants. This is a delicate matter, as they are leaving their homes for a better life away from bombs and terrorism but on the other hand Greece is not able to host all this people. It is not a phenomenon met allover Greece, but islands of East Aegean deal with lots of refugees that are trapped there with no recourse. This phenomenon affected tourism in these areas, but according to entrepreneurs on these islands, sport tourists are not so much influenced of facts like migration. They are focused and passionate with their sport and usually more sensitive on matters relative to surviving and health way of living.

On the other hand, are the elements that make Greece ideal for sea sport tourism. Thanks to the fact that Greece is the birthplace of the Olympic Games, which also hosted successfully in 2004, it is considered a good choice for all sport lovers. Respondents stated what facts make Greece unique and ideal destination for sea sport tourism. These facts are:

- The conditions of weather, air, temperature, climate
- The location of Greece in general, but also the beaches and seas particularly
- The services offered in accommodation, tourism related businesses
- The combination with other forms of tourism like gastronomic, historic, religious
- The existing security in destinations

Greece has Mediterranean climate with mild and rainy winter and hot and sunny summer. During the summer and starting on May, meltemi a wind coming from north or north-east occurs in the Aegean Sea. This wind is crucial for the air-related sports as it makes ideal conditions for these sports and unique experience for the tourists. Moreover, meltemi is responsible for the water's temperature as it keeps it relatively low by mixing the surface. Temperature during summer can get up to 38 °C but mostly in the mainland and not in the islands (Climates to travel, 2018). Greece is a physical crossroad between three continents Europe, Africa, Asia and connects East with West. This location makes the country easily accessible and with unique landscape. It has mountainous areas, fertile plains, lakes and rivers and an endless coastline. The islands are different from each other and in many cases, an island offers a variety on landscape. Moreover, the beaches are disparate as they have sand, pebbles or rocks and can either be shallow or very deep. These facts make them ideal for all types of sport tourists, in terms of experience as there are beaches for professionals and amateurs.

Regarding accommodation, the boost occurred before the Olympic Games. In 2008 there were in total 9.385 accommodation units and more specifically, 230 hotels of 5*, 1.102 of 4* and 2.058 of 3*. This fact illustrates the services offered to tourists for their stay. All the other necessary services are also with high standards as Greece is famous for its gastronomy and its entertainment. These services attract tourists in other forms of tourism and their combination with sport tourism offer a one of a kind package. Natural beauty, religious places and historic monuments attract tourists every year and are also an alternative in case of bad weather.

What makes a strategic plan successful in attracting tourists, is the clear image of the market and the international trends. All respondents agreed on the countries that offer a huge potential market and added some extra countries based on the location of every island. More specifically, the targeted countries and usual customers for sea sport tourism in Greece are:

- Germany
- Netherlands
- Poland
- Austria
- France
- United Kingdom
- Sweden
- Norway

These are the classic tourists, with some additions for few islands mostly related to their location. For example, Ionian islands have Italians, the islands of East Aegean have Turkish and island of Limnos has lots of Bulgarians as it is easily accessible for them.

The general trend the respondents agreed on, is the tourists' desire for experienced tourism. For some years now, they don't look anymore to lie on the beach all day and have some drinks to the local bars. This has as result alternative forms of tourism becoming a trend separately or combined. Regarding the sports, the international trends are two: the SUP and the hydro foil. Stand Up Paddling became broadly known the last decade approximately but existed for centuries in Africa before west world discover it. The World Paddle Association was established in 2010 and few years later championships were established. The main reason that led to its expansion was that it worked as an alternative when the weather conditions weren't good for practicing other sports. It succeeded as it is easily carried, is more exciting than sea kayak, it is cheap and simply practiced from everybody. Hydrofoil exists for centuries as it was used for years in boats with passengers. Nowadays it is a foil that can be adapted in all boards and make it fly and move over the water's surface. This fact makes the sport extreme, with more adrenaline and enjoying watching.

The only answer that interviewees disagreed, was regarding the time span that sea sport tourism can occur in the year and is exactly why it was asked. The answers that were reported to support the opinion that sea sport tourism has maximum 6 months lifetime were: the unpredictable weather conditions during winter and autumn and the water's temperature during these seasons. Europeans are looking forward to their vacations and it won't be satisfying if it starts raining and make everything soaked and muddy. Moreover, the water's temperature in Aegean is approximately 15 °C during autumn and winter (Climates to travel, 2018). These facts don't make Greece prohibitive as a destination, but it can be easier chosen from professionals than amateurs that want to come for their holidays.

8.1 Case Study Analysis- Surf Club Keros

The single case study is the best way to investigate a phenomenon in its natural context as it is already mentioned. Surf Club Keros was chosen for its

actions that arise it to a good example of practicing (Zafiropoulos, 2017). These actions are:

Identification of the needs: For the past years Surf Club Keros was adding new services offered, which were gladly accepted from its customers. It may started as a simple surf club, but two years after its establishment it expanded with accommodation units. Knowing the lack of hotels or available rooms in the close area, the owners decided to expand as their customers asked to stay as close to the club as possible. Surf Club Keros states as accessible to everybody, including people with disabilities and families. In the first case, they offer all of their services adjusted for people with disabilities with all the necessary facilities and infrastructure when in the case of families, they added a kids' club which keeps the infants busy and safe while their parents enjoy their sports.

Adjustment to the demands: The adjustments in their facilities regarding people with disabilities are already mentioned, but these are not the only case. When economic crisis hit Greece, the owners decided that they need to target new markets in order to survive. They turned to European countries and confirmed their decision in the best way, as they brought tourists in an island which was unknown as a destination for sea sport tourism. Moreover, they tried all methods for promotional reasons from time to time. As the time passed by and the internet flourished, they turned from the more "traditional" ways to social media, without though leaving completely the old-fashioned advertisement's methods.

Respect to the environment: Surf Club Keros is located in a Natura protected area, which demands extra care of the surrounding area. The accommodation units they added are safari tents which proves the respect they show to their hosting environment. With a quick search throughout their website's Policy & Rules section, instructions about litter management, respect to the surrounding area and the other guests can be easily found.

Combination with other tourism's forms: The significance for tourism's forms combined with each other and offered as a whole package to tourists, has been already mentioned. Surf Club Keros offers to its customers many choices of extra activities in a weekly program. These activities are optional and attended by anyone that wants to add something different to his vacations. These activities include: snorkeling, running, mountain & trail biking or yoga sessions.

Innovation: Surf Club Keros was established in a beach which was unknown, on an island that wasn't famous as a tourism destination. This decision illustrates the risk they took and how innovative they are. The fact of accessibility to everybody, it may be usual abroad but unfortunately in Greece is not that common. Innovation in some cases, may be offering services that are obvious for other countries. In any case, they changed completely the

area, but also the image in people's minds and Limnos island is considered nowadays, a destination for alternative tourism and especially for sea sport tourism.

All the aforementioned actions of Surf Club Keros were pointed out as good practices from the respondents and the literature review. The combination of these practices, along with constant quality throughout operations and be passionate with what they do is their example of a sustainable and successful business.

To summarize, what was interesting in the findings of this research, was the fact that entrepreneurs and local authorities agreed on their answers. It is important to know the present conditions and be able to identify the challenges for sea sport tourism, as that is the only way to find solutions and make it evolve. Capturing the present situation though is only the first step, as these findings must be used to overcome the obstacles and set the framework for the future evolution of sea sport tourism in Greece. Keeping that in mind, some recommendations are stated in the next section.

9. THEORETICAL AND MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

In Greece sport tourism started to attract attention in the mid-2000 having as a result a gap in the relevant literature. Few books were published, some papers were conducted, and articles were written in newspapers and magazines. The existing literature though is on sport tourism in general, trying to understand the market and the current situation in Greece. This research is among the first on sea sport tourism, illustrating the perspective of the entrepreneurs and the policy makers. These are considered as the most eligible in making all necessary changes, improve the present situation and lead Greece in gaining its part in the international sea sport tourism.

The dimension that was reported as the most important was the legislation, which applies to general entrepreneurship and all Greek territory. All parties that were interviewed for the scope of this research, pointed out as the biggest obstacle the existing legislation on licensing sea sport related businesses. This aspect is considered of highly significance, from theoretical and practical view as it is able to change completely the game's rules. To sum up, legislation is the dimension that academics should study and write about.

On the other hand, entrepreneurs still have the hardest part in this discussion. Apart of legislation, that may or may not change they still have their businesses that need to keep them running. Keeping that in mind, they have to keep quality through their operations. Additionally, they need to:

- adjust when it is required,

- stay close to tourists to listen their desires and needs,
- use technology and internet for operational and promotional reasons,
- cooperate with other direct or indirect related in sea sport businesses
- and keep trying to find solutions with the government

Employees in prefectures and municipalities are the representatives of the state and the policy makers. On that direction, they need to put pressure on changing legislation and let sea sport tourism regenerate their areas. Moreover, they need to discuss with entrepreneurs and find ways to work in the middle till the legislation sets the new rules. They need to work on the infrastructure which is underdeveloped in the biggest part of the Greek territory. Another way to help entrepreneurs is support them in organizing and hosting sport events, something they already do at this point.

Cooperation between all parties is a requirement for a successful plan. Entrepreneurs can offer their knowledge and local authorities can put on the table their power as state's representatives, with all of them keeping in mind that a potential success will affect all involved parties.

10. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Every research faces some obstacles during its conduction, so this study isn't an exception. The main limitations that affected this research regarding the data collection are two: the small sample size and the short time span for the methodology. Due to the short period for research, qualitative interview was the best choice and for the sample there was an effort on cover the dimensions that affect more the sea sport tourism. The major limitation though, on conducting this paper, was the absence of literature on this area. Being among the first researchers on an unfamiliar subject, with restricted existing scholars is a real challenge. Moreover, as a study with a particular context the possibility to include general information and researches is pointless.

In case of future research, another aspect that should be identified are the sport tourists that visit Greece. Why do they choose this destination, what are their criteria, what challenges do they face and what information can they contribute to the researcher? As a constantly evolving market, the findings of this paper should be measured again as the conditions may have changed completely. Finally, there should be a biggest sample including all the prefectures and all the entrepreneurs who would like to contribute.

11. CONCLUSIONS

To summarize, sport tourism is about experience, success, win, loss, passion, devotion, healthy way of living and making unforgettable memories. It constitutes a huge market with educated tourists, who know what they are looking for, demand high quality in services, don't mind spending more money for their passion and pleasure or covering miles to find the perfect destination, travel a lot so they have seen and experienced almost everything, have full lives and search for something different in every trip. All these elements make them quite demanding and challenging for any destination which wants to gain its part in the sea sport tourism.

Internationally, all matters related to sport tourism are attracting more and more attention of academics, entrepreneurs and investors. They have realized that operating only with the old-fashioned mass tourism belongs to the past and anyone that wants to survive or even be a leader, has to adjust in the new era and the sport tourism future.

In Greece, sport tourism has been recognized as a subject of significance in the last 15 years and mostly after the Olympic Games Athens 2004. These last years the related ministries, municipalities and prefectures seem more interested in hosting sport events, organizing a full package for tourists and looking for the necessary knowledge from sport experts. They try to support entrepreneurs when it is asked, mostly during a sport event hosted in their area and moreover participate in tourism exhibitions to promote their area in sport tourism in general, but also for sea sport tourism.

This study contributes to knowledge in sea sport tourism, an unexplored subject in Greece. This constitutes the main reason why anyone interested in sea sport tourism should study this research. The indicative sample of involved entrepreneurs with sea sport tourism and the prefecture's representatives are the two parties that set the rules and the framework in which everybody operates. This fact is the reason why they were chosen for the interview's sample in first place, as they play a crucial role in present and future of sea sport tourism. The findings of the research showed both parties' willing to cooperate and succeed in sea sport tourism market. Future will show if this willing was enough.

12. APPENDIX

1. Why did you decide to involve in sea sport tourism?
2. What are the criteria to report someone as a sport tourist?
3. Do you believe that Greece's sea sport tourism is fully developed at this point or there is place for improvements?
4. In your opinion, is it possible for sea sport tourism existing in Greece all year long?
5. Are you facing any problems in your occupation with sport tourism? If yes, which are these problems?
6. Do you believe that the Greek financial crisis affected the sea sport tourism? If yes, which are these impacts?
7. Which are your target markets, and which are the international trends regarding sea sport tourism?
8. What actions do you use in order to become well-known and attract sport tourists?
9. In your opinion, what do you think is going to be the sea sport tourism's future in Greece?

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