_____

TOURISM DESTINATION CRISIS MANAGEMENT: THE CASE STUDY OF LESVOS ISLAND, GREECE

Mary Constantoglou* & Michael Prinitis**
University of the Aegean, Chios, Greece* & Hellenic Open University, Patra, Greece**

Abstract: Tourism industry, one of the most dynamic industries worldwide is also one of the most vulnerable to crisis and disaster. This is mainly due to the fact that tourism is closely related and influenced by many external factors such as exchange rates, the political and economic environment, climate, and weather conditions. Tourism success is directly linked to the ability of the destination to offer tourists a safe and enjoyable stay. In a changing globalized world where crises are affecting people's lives, we are called not only to manage crises but also to manage every communication impact, making crisis management an integral part of effective Destination Management. Lesvos an island of the North Aegean Region in Greece is the case study area of this paper. The island has been through the economic crisis of 2009 and the refugee crisis of 2015. The purpose of this paper is to examine the perceptions of the island's local community, tourism stakeholder's, and tourists visiting the island, how effectively the refugee crisis was managed at the destination. In the first part of the paper literature review is being conducted for crises management in tourism destinations, the refugee crisis in Greece and in North Aegean Region and more particular in Lesvos island. Primary research was conducted, and 262 filled questionnaires were collected. The findings and the conclusion are useful for the tourism authorities of Lesvos and for island destinations of the Mediterranean with similar characteristics and challenges.

Keywords: Destination Management Organization, Crisis Management, Refugee crisis, Lesvos, Greece

Introduction

Tourism is one of the most economically important industries worldwide (WTO, 2019); at the same time is vulnerable to crises (Pforr & Hosie, 2008). Tourism industry has faced many crises and disasters since the beginning of the century including terrorist attacks, political instability, economic crisis and recession, natural disasters, and the latest refugee crisis in European destinations. Crisis can transform the reputation, desirability, and marketability of the most popular tourism destinations overnight (Beirman, 2003). Tourism destinations though are vulnerable to crises and a key success factor is their ability to attract tourists from many destinations (Young and Montgomery, 1997). Destination Management Organizations (DMOs) at a local or regional level are responsible for planning and marketing of tourism. Little attention has been given in the role they have to play in crisis management (Pennington-Gray, 2017).

Europe is passing through a maritime refugee crisis of historic proportions (UNHR, 2015). It seems that this crisis will be the continent's main challenge of the new decade with long-lasting implications for regional stability and cohesion. Greece has been the epicentre of the refugee crisis in Eastern Mediterranean since 2015. During this period, Greece has been at the epicentre of two overlapping "humanitarian crises" the economic crisis and the refugee crisis together Cabot (2019). Since 2011 the financial crisis and the extended austerity programs have affected the population of the country with the ability of the Greek state to meet the basic needs of the citizens to be limited. Since 2015 Greece has become one of the main gateways for immigrants and refugees seeking shelter in Europe. The North Aegean islands that are closer to the Turkish

coast like Lesvos, Chios and Samos and Kos are those that were mostly affected from refugee and migrants' arrivals. This situation has created major social, humanitarian, and economic impact on local communities (Tsartas et al, 2019). The island of Lesvos, a popular holiday destination, has been the main entry point for migrants to Europe in fall 2015 (Cederquist, 2019).

The aim of this paper is to explore the refugee crisis and give some insights on how destination management should response to refugees flows in island destinations and how resilience has to be built in these cases. In this framework the paper tries to study the impact of the refugee crises in the tourism industry of Lesvos through quantitative research in tourists visiting the island, the local population, and the stakeholders of the local tourism industry.

Tourism Destination Crisis Management an Overview

During the past 50 years tourism worldwide experienced continuously increasing growth rates, generated also by the technological advancements in transportation that included more destinations to the global tourism map due to improved accessibility. In regions of the world where tourism is the main economic activity any crisis will have a greater negative impact not only to the tourism industry itself but in many other sectors of the economy that are depended and closely related to tourism. This will have negative effects in people's lives not only directly involved in tourism but in the wider society as well creating turbulence and unemployment.

In 2019 tourism after ten years of continuous growth reached a 1.5 billion in arrivals performing better than UNWTO forecast. The relatively strong economy in a global level, a growing middle class in emerging economies, IT advances and innovation, new business models and affordable travelling has driven tourism export earnings to 1.7 trillion (WTO, 2019). According to WTTC (2019) the growth of the sector was 3,9%; faster than the global economy's growth of 3.2%. Although such positive benefits are widely evident, tourism development also generates a number of challenges (Sofield, 2003). Of particular relevance to destinations which are reliant on tourism revenues is the industry's inherent sensitivity to disasters and crises.

Given the sensitivity of the tourism industry there is an obvious need for strategies to cope with crises in tourism industry. According to Ritchie & Campiranon (2015), when crises or disasters do occur, tourism industries, tourists and the local community are greatly affected. Such events can divert the flow of tourism not only from the specific destination but also from neighbouring areas. The negative consequences of crises for the tourism and hospitality industry are often felt in destinations far away from where they have taken place by affecting greater geographical areas. As Aliperti et al point out (2019) losses to the tourism sector resulting from crises not only have an impact on the tourism industry itself but on entire economies, particularly in countries where large percentages of the GDP are either directly or indirectly connected to tourism.

A destination management organization (DMO) is "the leading organizational entity which may encompass the various authorities, stakeholders and professionals and facilitates partnerships towards a collective destination vision (WTO, 2019). DMO's play an essential role in the tourism industry (Blain, Levy & Ritchie, 2004). The traditional role of the DMO is to promote the destination and have a managerial role in the destination in order to manage the entire experience for visitors and residents (Speakman & Sharpley, 2012). The need of a strategic crisis management plan in tourism became apparent following the 9/11 terrorists' attacks, tsunamis, hurricanes, SARS etc. Thus, effective Destination Management require preparedness in order to tackle tourism crises effectively. As Mikulic et al (2018) point out as crises are increasing steadily in many peripheries of the world, there is a necessity of a more proactive

and holistic view of management in order to achieve the overall goal of tourism sustainability along with the sustainability of the wider economy in many destinations.

During the beginning of the 21st century, tourism industry worldwide has been exposed to numerous crises including terrorism, disease pandemics, political instability, earthquakes, tsunamis, hurricanes, cyclones, fires, and volcanic eruptions (Gurtner, 2016). The international media reports on terrorist attacks, political instability and disasters over the past twenty years have led to the destruction of the tourist product in many destinations around the world as cited to numerous case studies (Avraham & Ketter, 2008; Mansfeld & Pizam, 2006). The response to crises by policy makers has included crisis management plan with economic, physical and security aspects and image management like the development of press kits (Beirman, 2000; 2003; Sönmez, 1998). There are several studies published on attempts made from destination's re-branding (Ritchie, 2009; Tarlow, 2005) after they have experienced sudden crises yields and they mainly contain tips for marketers (Al-Hamarneh & Steiner, 2004; Sönmez, Apostolopoulos, & Tarlow, 1999; Taylor, 2006). The unprecedented rise in the number of crises affecting the tourism industry worldwide has brought forth the importance of resilience building (Prayag, 2018) in the tourism industry.

Drabek & Gee (2000) and Faulkner & Vikulov (2001) have studied disaster management techniques in order to propose models relevant to tourism. Further Faulkner (2001) has developed a "Tourism Disaster Management Framework" as a tool to manage significant tourism crisis. Following Faulkner's model Ritchie (2004) has presented a more holistic approach through a "Strategic Crises Management Framework" adding mechanisms of observation and feedback. Ritchie (2009) has extended his research including issues of destination vulnerability, pre-crisis resolution and the idea that crises sometimes are positive transformation agents. In order to improve destination crisis/disaster risk reduction, planning, and management capacity, there is a need to put emphasis on developing strategies which actively involve and integrate community stakeholders and available resources (UNISDR 2015).

Gurtner (2016) suggests that successful tourism recovery as seen until today means the restoration of consumer confidence and rebounded arrival numbers. Hall et al (2018) have proposed five conditions in order tourism destinations to be resilient after crisis events: they have to be aware of the vulnerability of their resources and to prioritize development that benefits all the stakeholders of the system, they also have to adapt crisis management in their long-term strategies, they have to work in order to combat fragmentation in traditional governance models and finally to ensure that they are working in regional or local scale. Cakar (2018) has underlined the importance of incorporation of crisis management in strategic planning as this provides the detailed preparation of contingency plans, defined roles, and responsibilities between stakeholders. Aliperti et al. (2019) in their literature review of crises and disasters in tourism indicate that "inept management processes are able to drive to tourism-disaster" thus further studies should pay attention to the coordination of resources among different sectors to increase the capacity of the tourism industry to manage crisis using all available resources.

Tourism and the Refugee Crisis in Greece

According to UNHCR (2018), a total of 856,723 refugees and migrants arrived in Greece via Turkey in 2015, while in 2016 the arrivals were 173,450 while in 2017 were 29,718, in 2018 were 32,494 and 74,348 in 2019. Main reason for the reduction of the refugees flows in the years following 2016 was the EU-Turkey Repatriation Agreement signed on 8th March 2016. Since August 2019, the flows are growing significantly. As Trihas and Tsilimpokos (2018) point out the numbers of arrivals in Greece make impossible for the reception mechanisms to meet

needs and this is the reason why UNHCR (2015) has characterized the situation in Greece as a humanitarian crisis.
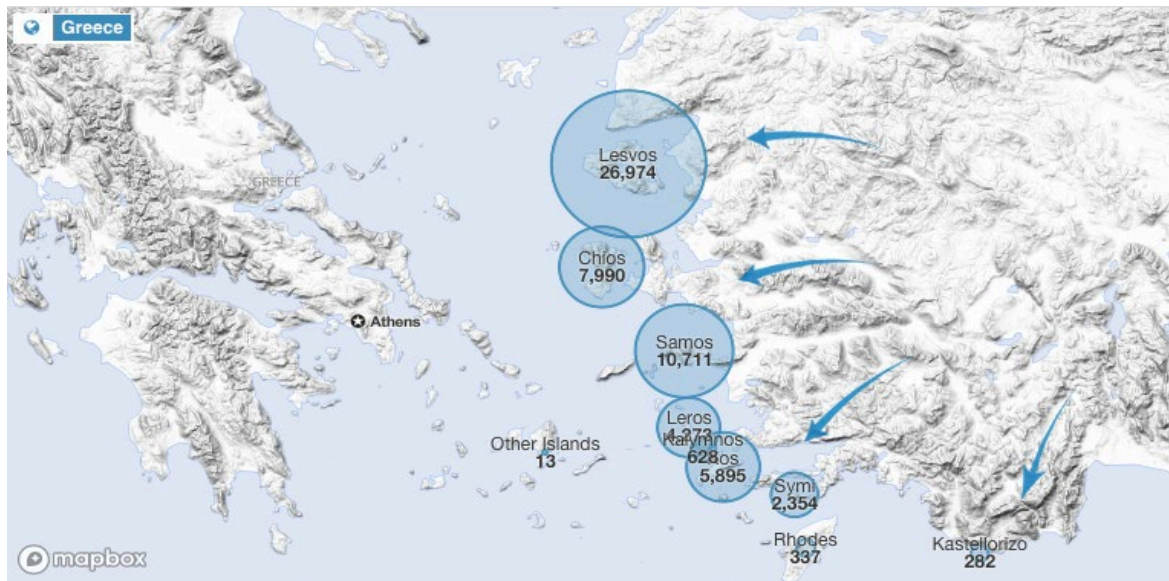

Figure 1: Current situation in the Greek islands January 2020. Source: UNHCR, 2020

The geopolitical instability in the Middle East together with the economic changes have become the potential causes of increasing flows of migrants and refuges in Western countries (Banulescu-Bogdan & Fratzke, 2015) and also to Italy and Greece (Ivanov and Stavrinoudis, 2018). According to UNHCR (1967), the refugees are people who escape their countries due to armed conflicts or persecutions while migrants (UNHCR, 2016a) choose to move mainly in order to improve their lives by seeking work and better living conditions. For simplicity reasons in this paper we shall refer to the 2015 "refugee crisis" since the discussion whether they are all refugees or illegal migrants goes beyond the scope of this paper. The refugee crisis has multiple negative effects in destinations areas and especially in the Northern Aegean islands (Lesvos, Chios, and Samos) as tourism destinations (Ivanov & Stavrinoudis, 2018; Trihas & Tsilimpokos, 2018), because of the declining numbers in tourism arrivals. When refugees settle in these islands, social dynamics may vary through time: in spite of any initial expression of humanitarianism, local communities may eventually become annoyed and aggressive, fearing the loss of jobs in the tourism sector and deriving income as Tsartas et al (2019) point out.

According to Papastergiou and Takou (2018), four years after the starting point of the refugee crisis in 2015, the data are quite different. The refugee stream of 2015 has radically changed the terms of the public debate on immigration and asylum issues not only in Greece but throughout Europe. While in 2014, the refugee population in Greece was a rather small percentage out of the foreigners residing in the country, today, although clearly a minority, numbering in the tens of thousands, they are particularly visible due to special conditions regarding their reception and residence, often creating an explosive climate in the local communities of the North Aegean islands, which is not particularly true inland (Trihas, & Tsilimpokos, 2018). Lesvos is one of the ten islands that constitute the North Aegean Region in Greece. With a total area of 1,636 km^2 and a coastline of 371 km is the third largest island of Greece. It is also located near to the Turkish coast as the distance is only 10km. The economy of the island is based on the agri-food production with olive oil and cheese to be the most known products. Tourism is a rising sector of the economy. The island has sustained its authenticity of the natural, build and cultural environment through the years.

Table 1: population size, arrivals, and refugees in Lesvos island.

Lesbos	Population size (2011) a	Number of tourists (2015) b	Number of refugees c	Number of tourists and refugees	Tourists/local residents ratio	Refugees/local residents ratio	Tourists and refugees/local residents' ratio	Refugees/tourists ratio
2015	86436	90201	506919	597120	1,04	6,91	6,91	5,62
2018	86436	67190	15034	82224	0,78	0,95	0,95	0,22

Sources: [a] Hellenic Statistical Authority (http://www.statistics.gr/en/home); [b] INSETE site : www.insete.gr ; [c] UNHCR site: http://data.unhcr.org/mediterranean/country.php

As depicted in **Table 1** Lesvos is the island most affected from this ongoing refugee crisis (Ivanov & Stavrinoudis, 2018; Trihas, & Tsilimpokos, 2018). During 2015 506,919 refugees have crossed the sea to reach the island on their way to the Greek mainland and further to Europe. Compared to the local population the refugees were almost seven times more (**Table 1**). This situation has changed in 2018 were the refugees that reached the island of Lesvos were almost equal in numbers to the local population. Within the period 2015 and 2016 tourism in the island has decreased by almost 50% according to tourist arrivals (**Table 2**).

Table 2: Arrivals in hotels, and number of foreign tourist arrivals by air from 2013 to 2018

Arrivals in hotels in Lesbos 2013-2018							
	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	change 2013-2018
Foreign tourists	62.041	76.251	90.201	53.358	65.531	67.190	8%
Domestic tourists	48.469	46.257	41.432	38.525	47.000	45.392	-6%
Number of foreign tourist arrivals by air							
	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	change 2013-2018
	54.395	75.139	75.475	31.480	43.715	62.834	16%

Sources: Hellenic Statistical Authority (http://www.statistics.gr/en/home); INSETE site: www.insete.gr

Lesvos as destination has to face a new era of crises because (a) of the increase of refugee flows since the summer 2019; (b) the consequences of Thomas Cook bankruptcy; (d) BREXIT; (e) the geopolitical instability between Greece and Turkey and finally; (f) the crises caused all over the world from Covid-19. All the above are creating an extremely complicated crisis in an island destination that is difficult to be predicted or managed.

Research Methodology - Population - Research Sample

Main purpose of this paper is to capture the perceptions of:

a. The local population
b. The entrepreneurs directly involved in tourism and
c. The tourists visiting the island

Regarding the way the refugee crisis was managed by the destination. Secondary purpose but also important was the perception about the image of the destination of the above groups. Data collection was done through structured questionnaires and therefore three different

questionnaires were designed in google forms. Questionnaires were designed after the literature review. To ensure the reliability and validity of the questionnaire of the residents and of the stakeholders, a pilot test was conducted with five residents and five stakeholders in order to examine the efficacy. Little modifications were then made based on their recommendations. The research survey was conducted during May 2019. The questions were closed-ended, while there were also a few open-ended questions to allow respondents to express what they think, to justify their answer and to develop their point of view.

For the first questionnaire to the local population the method of snowball sampling was used. As Atkinson and Flint (2001) point out "snowball sampling is a technique for finding research subjects". Lately response rates to academic surveys are decreasing (Baruch and Holtom, 2008). Thus, the method of snowball sampling was considered to be relevant from the authors in order to increase the response rate of this research. The first part examines the respondent's profile and more precisely their demographic data. The second part examines their empathy by questioning the feelings of the residents according to the refugee crisis, how this affected their lives, the local economy and tourism in particular, social cohesion and finally if they feel that Lesvos has a clear brand name. In the third section they were asked about their opinion on the preparedness of the local, regional, and national government to cope with the crisis or if they could predict it and be prepared in advance. The fourth part was about post-crisis recovery and they were asked on issues about the management of the crisis by the government, the role of the NGO's and the media. Finally, in the fifth part they were questioned about the image of the island today and their feelings about recovery and resilience of the destination. Questionnaire to the local population was distributed via e-mail to the potential participants from the social surroundings of the researchers. Subsequently, the recipients were asked to forward the questionnaire to other potential participants. 135 useable questionnaires were collected from a total of 465 emails send (29.03% response rate).

The second questionnaire was distributed to the local tourism stakeholders. The questionnaire had four parts. In the first part the respondent profile was examined. In the second part the focus was on pre-crisis preparedness. The third section tried to find answers on management during the crisis and finally in the fourth part the basic question was post-crisis recovery and the re-branding of the destination. According to the official data collected from the Hellenic Chamber of Hotels in Lesvos during 2019 there are 105 hotels, 29 tourism agencies and 29 rent a car business. The questionnaire was designed in google forms and was send by email to all of the above business. In total 35 filled questionnaires were collected (response rate 21.86%).

The third questionnaire was the one for the tourists; it was also designed in google forms and with the use of a QR code. The survey took place at the "Odysseas Elytis" airport of Mytilene. The passengers older than 18 years were randomly approached as they were waiting to depart from the island; they were informed of the nature of the survey and asked to complete the questionnaire in their smartphone even after they were landed in their home destination. 300 passengers were approached, and 92 usable questionnaires were collected (30.67% response rate). The questionnaire had four parts. In the first part the tourist's profile was examined. While in the second part the basic question to be answered was how they have chosen the island as their destination. In the third part the researchers tried to examine their empathy, their knowledge on the refugee crisis and their feelings. The basic question here to be examined is how this crisis affected their decision to visit the island or if the crisis has affected the quality of their experience at the destination. Finally, the fourth part was designed in order to examine their perceptions on the image of the destination and their satisfaction.
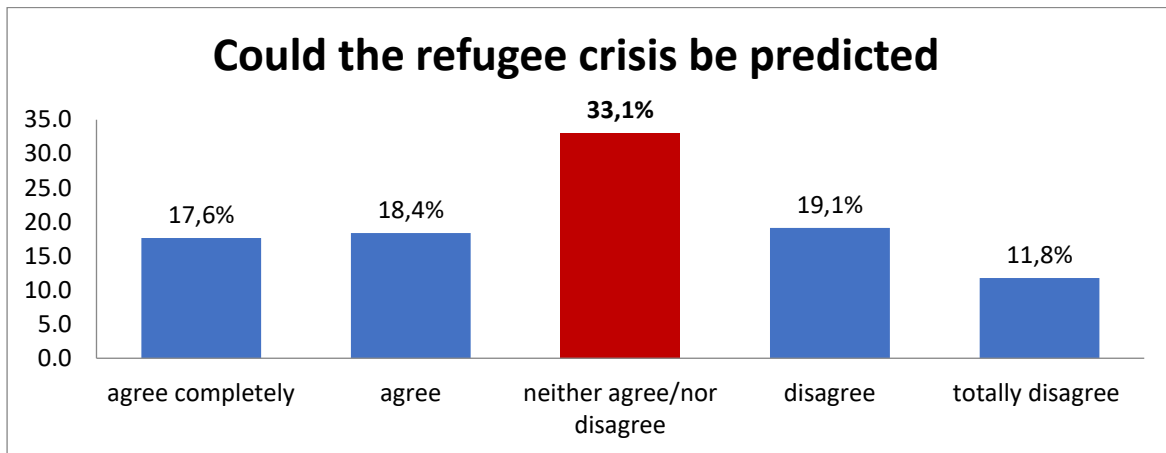
The collected data were statistically analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Data processing was done with the use of SPSS version 24.0.

Results: Residents of Lesvos island

Out of the 135 residents of the island, 56% were women and 44% were men. 33.3% were in the age group between 45 to 54 years old. According to their educational profile in a percentage of 54.8% holds a university degree and a 28.1% hold also an MSc. Most of them (52.6%) are employed in the public sector and 16.3% are self-employed.

A. Pre-crisis preparedness

In the attempt to capture the opinion of the residents, whether the refugee crisis could have been predicted, 33.3% are sceptic and they do not agree or disagree, while totally agree the 17.8%.

Could the refugee crisis be predicted

| agree completely | agree | neither agree/nor disagree | disagree | totally disagree |
| 17,6% | 18,4% | 33,1% | 19,1% | 11,8% |

It is clear to the residents, with a percentage of 98.5%, that the state was not ready to face the refugee crisis and in the question of who was and continues to be responsible for managing the refugee crisis, the largest share of responsibility covers the Greek state with 81.5%, while the Municipality of Lesvos and the North Aegean Regional Government, has responsibility 18.5%.

Whether there was a crisis management plan in Lesvos a 48.9% of the residents do not believe it at all, while 28.9% is close to that view. The existence of a crisis management plan and coordination center is needed in 76.3% according to the perception of the residents.

B. Crisis Management

The citizens of Lesvos were asked to assess the views on the crisis management regarding the effectiveness of the existent crisis management.

Lesvos residens assess crisis management (%)

Legend: ■ totally disagree ■ diasagree ■ neither agree/nor disagree ■ agree ■ agrre completely

Management is more effective today
- totally disagree: 4.4
- diasagree: 12.6
- neither agree/nor disagree: 23.7
- agree: **45,19%**
- agrre completely: 14.07

The media exaggerated the problem of the crisis
- totally disagree: 5.2
- diasagree: 11.9
- neither agree/nor disagree: 11.9
- agree: **31.85**
- agrre completely: **39,26%**

The refugee has caused a blow to tourism
- totally disagree: 3.7
- diasagree: 14.1
- neither agree/nor disagree: 20.0
- agree: **29.63**
- agrre completely: 32.59

Enclosing refugees is a problem
- totally disagree: 0.7
- diasagree: 3.0
- neither agree/nor disagree: 5.9
- agree: **37.78**
- agrre completely: **52,59 %**

The image of Lesvos was damaged by the refugees
- totally disagree: 5.2
- diasagree: 11.1
- neither agree/nor disagree: 20.0
- agree: **35.56**
- agrre completely: 28.15

The action of NGOs is considered by many to be suspicious
- totally disagree: 2.2
- diasagree: 3.7
- neither agree/nor disagree: 14.1
- agree: **41.48**
- agrre completely: 38.52

The local community helped the refugees
- totally disagree: 2.2
- diasagree: 3.7
- neither agree/nor disagree: 23.7
- agree: **54.81**
- agrre completely: 15.56

The (NGOs) helped the crisis
- totally disagree: 14.1
- diasagree: 23.0
- neither agree/nor disagree: 28.1
- agree: **28.89**
- agrre completely: 5.93

The central government cooperated with the local authorities
- totally disagree: 12.6
- diasagree: 27.4
- neither agree/nor disagree: 35.6
- agree: **22.96**
- agrre completely: 1.48

The state did its best
- totally disagree: 30.4
- diasagree: **39.3**
- neither agree/nor disagree: 20.0
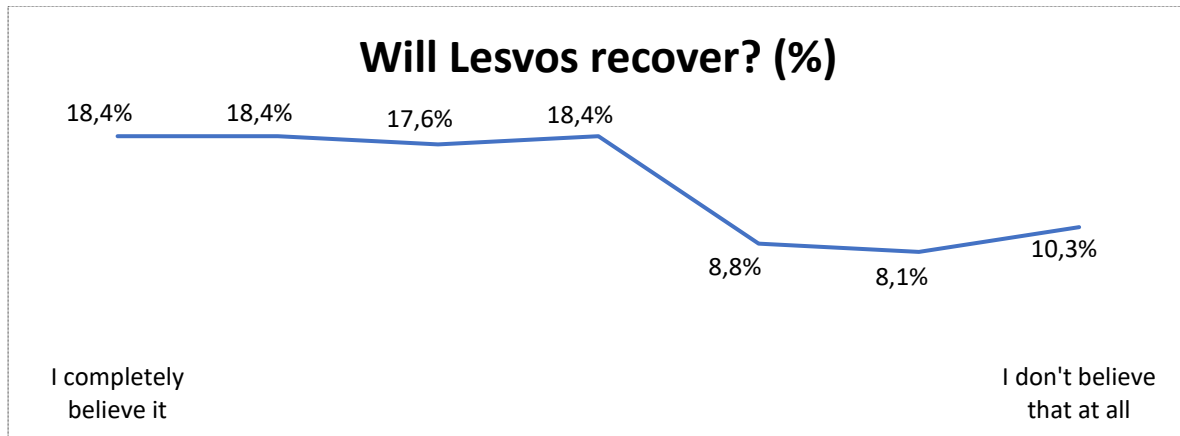- agree: **8.9**
- agrre completely: 1.48

According to the above graph, the contribution of the local humanitarian community is 54.81%. On the contrary a percentage of 39.3% believe that τhe state did not respond to the crisis effectively. Finally, 45.19% agree that crisis management is more effective today. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have helped manage the crisis with a rate of 28.89%, while a further 41.48% agree that many NGOs do not have a clear role or identity. A 35.56% of the population believes that the image of the island as a tourist destination was affected by the refugee crisis. The enclosure of refugees on the island due to EU-Turkey agreement creates a bigger problem for a 52.59% of the inhabitants. Residents in a percentage of 45.19% agree that the media have exaggerated the problem.

Regarding the mistakes made in the management of the refugee crisis, 70% of the respondents focused on the lack of preparedness, organization, and coordination of services, together with delays in decision making process. They also focus on the lack of infrastructure and human resources to work effectively in this humanitarian crisis while they have also cauterized the action of some NGO's, which act in the absence of state control. Many believe that the media exaggerated the reality. Citizens also believe that their lives changed dramatically along with the image of the island.

The possibility that the island will recover from the refugee crisis is shared by a large proportion of the population who believe that Lesvos will be able to recover.

Will Lesvos recover? (%)

18,4%   18,4%   17,6%   18,4%

8,8%   8,1%   10,3%

I completely believe it   I don't believe that at all
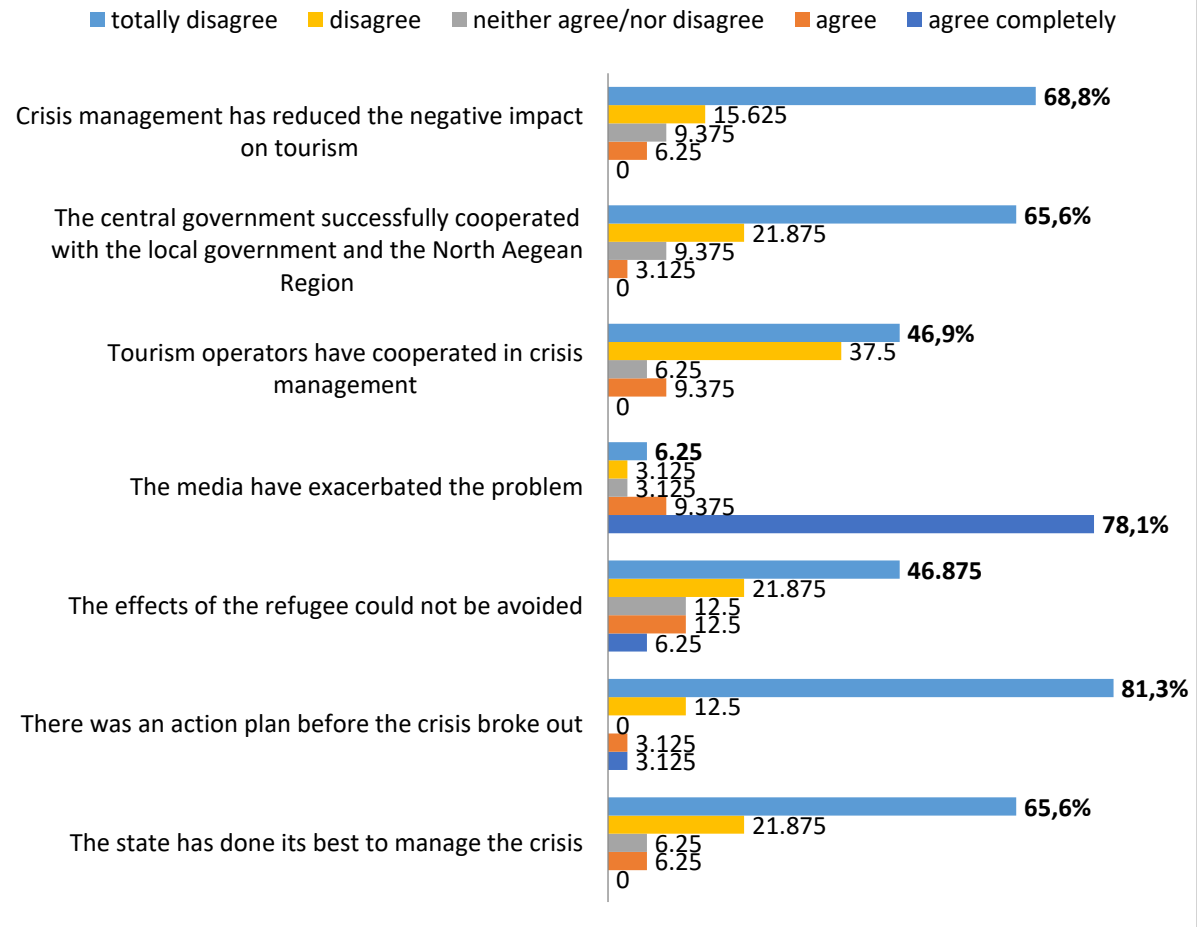
Results: Tourism entrepreneurs in Lesvos

The questionnaire was answered mainly from hotel owners (68.8%), 15.6% from tourism agencies and 12.5% from rent rooms owners. Most of these enterprises are situated in Mytlene the capital city of the island, 19% are situated in Molyvos the most touristic area of the island, while the rest of the questionnaires are answered from enterprises working on the rest of the island.

Most of the entrepreneurs (62,5%) working on tourism believe that Lesvos as a destination has no clear brand name even before the refugee crisis. The majority (71.9%) believe that the refugee crisis has affected tourism because of the decrease of arrivals and overnight stays while they also feel insecurity about the future (68.8%). They also point out a climate of disinvestment and the loss of the competitive advantage of the island in a percentage of 59.4% and 43.8% respectively.
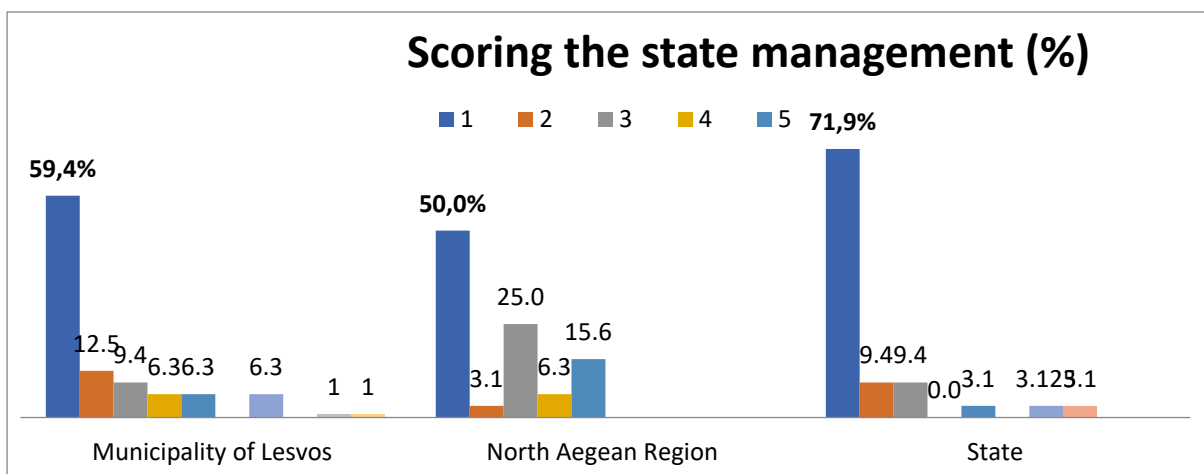
C. Crisis Management

Entrepreneurs were asked to evaluate crisis management. The absence of a crisis management plan and the weakness of the state were evident as well as the negative role of the media in their answers.

Evaluation of crisis management (%)

Legend: ■ totally disagree ■ disagree ■ neither agree/nor disagree ■ agree ■ agree completely

Crisis management has reduced the negative impact on tourism
- totally disagree: **68,8%**
- disagree: 15.625
- neither agree/nor disagree: 9.375
- agree: 6.25
- agree completely: 0

The central government successfully cooperated with the local government and the North Aegean Region
- totally disagree: **65,6%**
- disagree: 21.875
- neither agree/nor disagree: 9.375
- agree: 3.125
- agree completely: 0

Tourism operators have cooperated in crisis management
- totally disagree: **46,9%**
- disagree: 37.5
- neither agree/nor disagree: 6.25
- agree: 9.375
- agree completely: 0

The media have exacerbated the problem
- totally disagree: **6.25**
- disagree: 3.125
- neither agree/nor disagree: 3.125
- agree: 9.375
- agree completely: **78,1%**

The effects of the refugee could not be avoided
- totally disagree: **46.875**
- disagree: 21.875
- neither agree/nor disagree: 12.5
- agree: 12.5
- agree completely: 6.25

There was an action plan before the crisis broke out
- totally disagree: **81,3%**
- disagree: 12.5
- neither agree/nor disagree: 0
- agree: 3.125
- agree completely: 3.125

The state has done its best to manage the crisis
- totally disagree: **65,6%**
- disagree: 21.875
- neither agree/nor disagree: 6.25
- agree: 6.25
- agree completely: 0

In the question "who was responsible for managing the crisis", entrepreneurs rated the state, the municipality of Lesvos and the North Aegean Regional Government, with 71.9%, 59.4% and 50% respectively, as illustrated in the diagram below.

Scoring the state management (%)

Legend: ■ 1 ■ 2 ■ 3 ■ 4 ■ 5

Municipality of Lesvos
- 1: **59,4%**
- 2: 12.5
- 3: 9.4
- 4: 6.3
- 5: 6.3
- (extra): 6.3, 1, 1

North Aegean Region
- 1: **50,0%**
- 2: 3.1
- 3: 25.0
- 4: 6.3
- 5: 15.6

State
- 1: **71,9%**
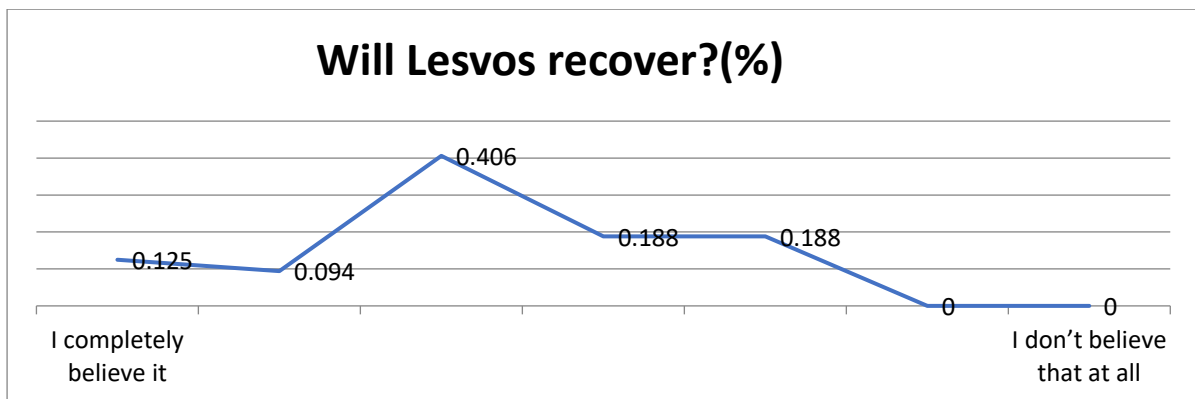- 2: 9.4
- 3: 9.4
- 4: 0.0
- 5: 3.1
- (extra): 3.125, 3.1

Concerning the mistakes made in managing the crisis, they pointed out the lack of cooperation, organization and planning, the lack of a concrete crisis management plan and a complete lack of information, resulting in a total chaos. In their view, the absence of a crisis management action plan, has led to policies that have trapped refugees on the island and caused a severe

damage in the tourism product of Lesvos together with social instability to the local population. Any countervailing benefits did not mitigate the damage that had been done. They also believe that the local authorities due to the absence of a crisis management plan and a media kit lost the chance to communicate the authenticity of Lesvos as an authentic destination of pure hospitality.
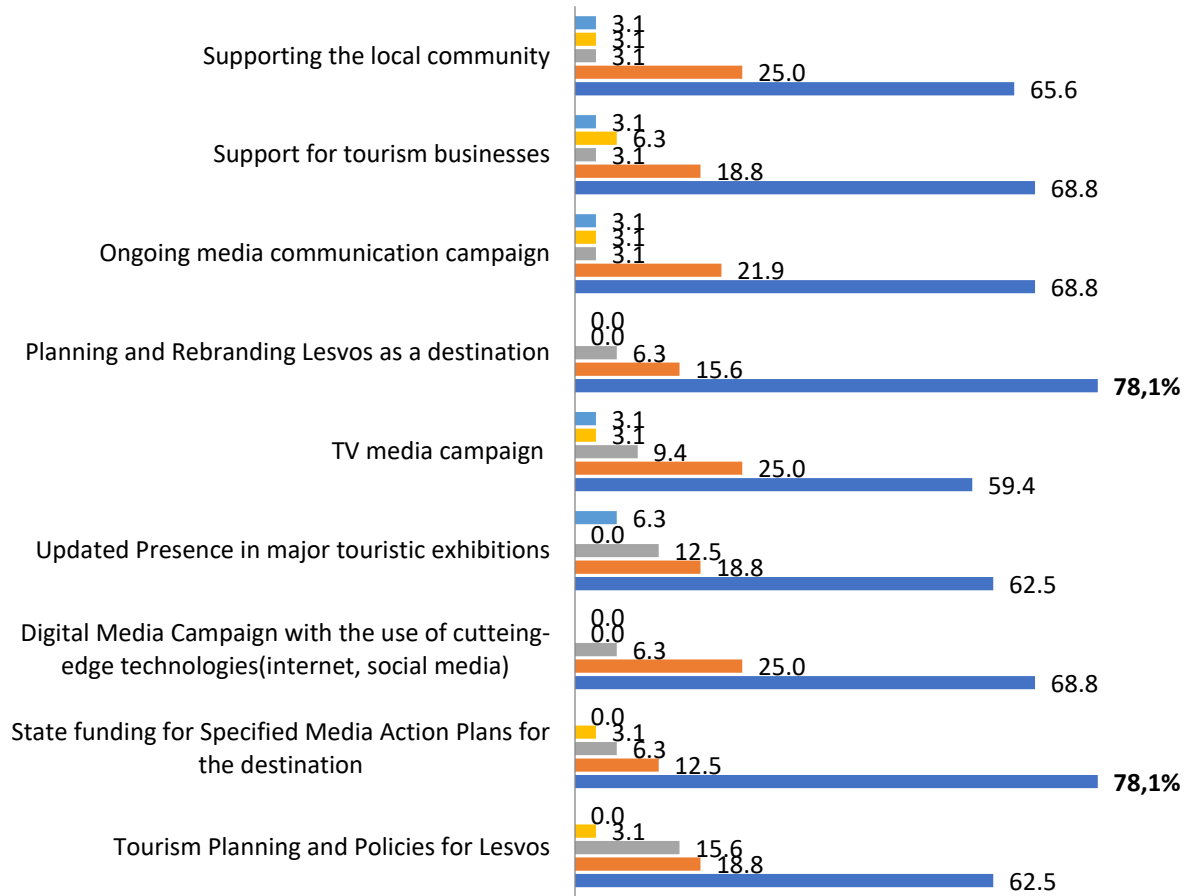
D. Recover

In the question if the island can recover from the refugee crisis, 41% of the respondents believe that this will be possible in the near future.

Will Lesvos recover?(%)

0.406

0.188   0.188

0.125
0.094

0   0

I completely   I don't believe
believe it   that at all

In addition, entrepreneurs were asked to evaluate actions that could potentially reverse the current negative image of the island. 78.1% fully agrees with the action of rebranding the tourist product of Lesvos and the adoption of special marketing plans for the destination.

# Action plans for Lesvos' Rebranding (%)

■ totally diasgree ■ disagree ■ neither agree/nor disagree ■ agree ■ agree completely

Supporting the local community
- 3.1
- 3.1
- 3.1
- 25.0
- 65.6

Support for tourism businesses
- 3.1
- 6.3
- 3.1
- 18.8
- 68.8

Ongoing media communication campaign
- 3.1
- 3.1
- 3.1
- 21.9
- 68.8

Planning and Rebranding Lesvos as a destination
- 0.0
- 0.0
- 6.3
- 15.6
- **78,1%**

TV media campaign
- 3.1
- 3.1
- 9.4
- 25.0
- 59.4

Updated Presence in major touristic exhibitions
- 6.3
- 0.0
- 12.5
- 18.8
- 62.5

Digital Media Campaign with the use of cutteing-edge technologies(internet, social media)
- 0.0
- 0.0
- 6.3
- 25.0
- 68.8

State funding for Specified Media Action Plans for the destination
- 0.0
- 3.1
- 6.3
- 12.5
- **78,1%**

Tourism Planning and Policies for Lesvos
- 0.0
- 3.1
- 15.6
- 18.8
- 62.5

Results: Tourists

The questionnaire was answered from almost equally from men and women (50.6% and 49.4% respectively) visited the destination during May 2018. The majority of the tourists were British (29%), Dutch (22%), Germans (14%), Belgians, Austrians, Norwegians, and Americans. The majority (more than 50%) holds a bachelor's degree and their income exceeds 30,000euro (49.4%).
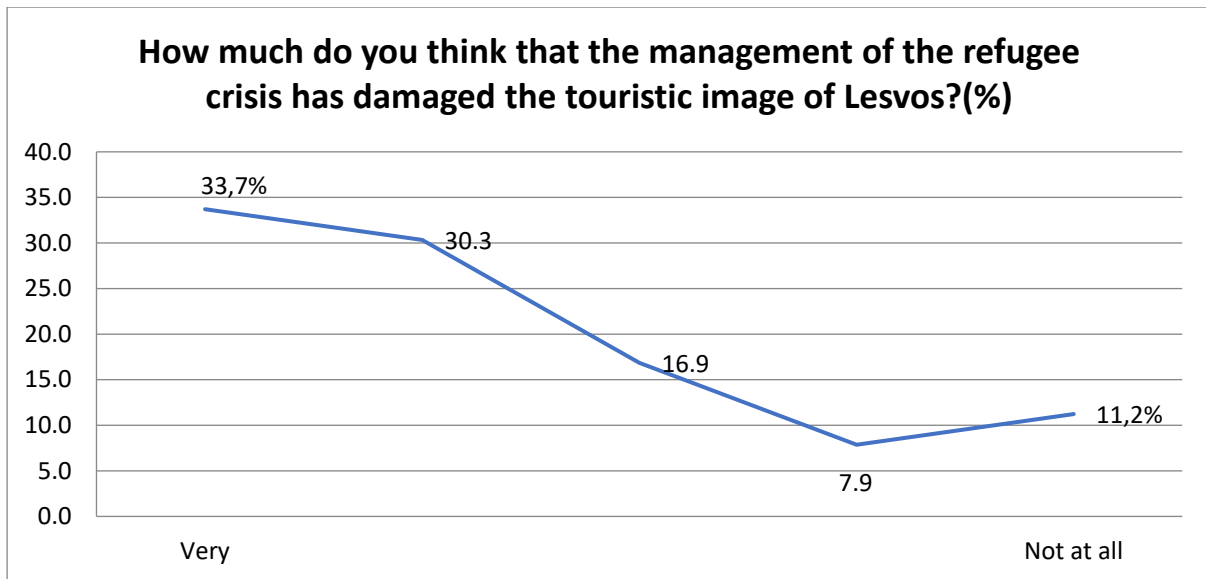
Most of the tourists who visited Lesvos were aware of the refugee crisis in 96.6%, while 51.8% of them seemed to have no influence on their decision to choose Lesvos for their vacations. Most of them (71.3%) were repeaters as they had visited the island before more than once.

Has the refugee crisis affegted your decision to choose Lesvos as holiday destination? (%)
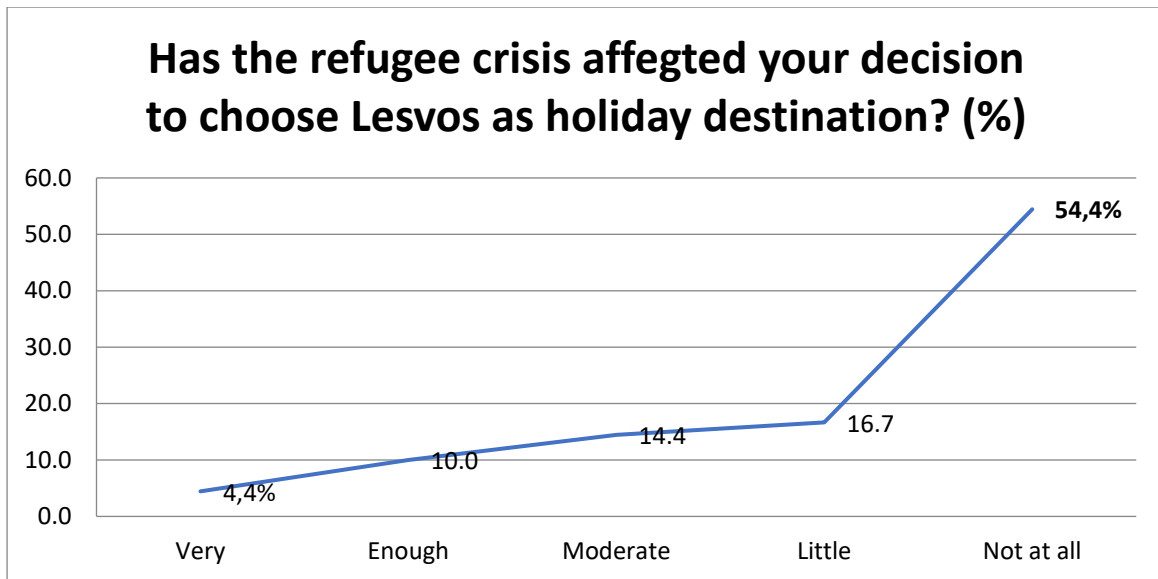
 In the next section on image management, on the question of whether Lesvos has a clear touristic identity, 48% consider it not.

Has Lesvos a clear touristic identity-image? (%)
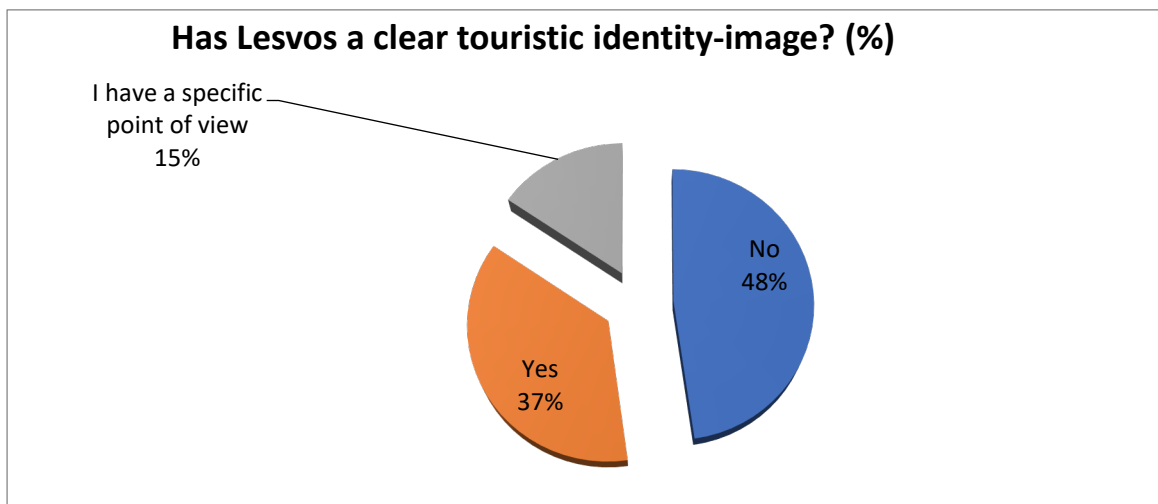
When asked if the management of the refugee crisis damaged the tourist image of the island, 33,7% believe that the image of the island was negatively affected.

How much do you think that the management of the refugee crisis has damaged the touristic image of Lesvos?(%)

33,7%

30.3

16.9

7.9

11,2%

Very

Not at all

In the dilemma of whether the image they created from their stay in Lesvos is better than the one they had before traveling, 34.5% strongly agree and 29.85% agree. In the question whether the quality of their vacation was affected by the refugee crisis, 92% seems to be unaffected.

Has the refugee crisis affected the quality of your holiday? (%)

■ Yes ■ No

8%

92%
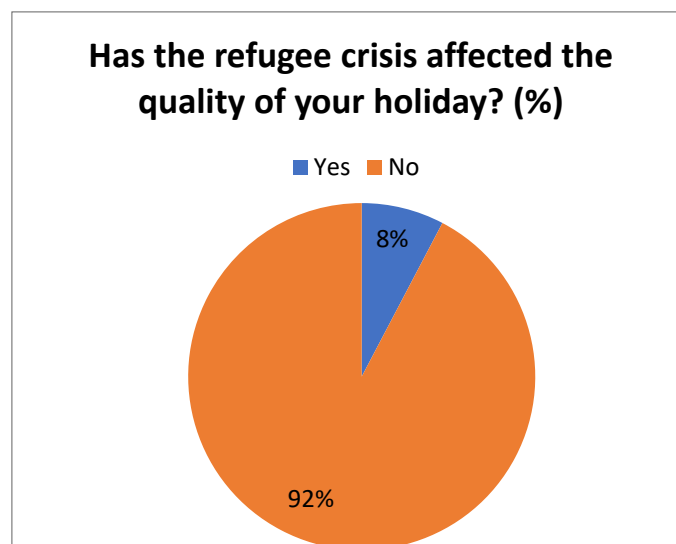
A percentage of 62.1% are fully satisfied from their vacations in Lesvos, and a 79.3% will recommend Lesvos to their friends as a tourist destination.

Conclusions and Discussion for Further Research

During the 21st century, the era of knowledge and information, political, economic and cultural crises are causing a climate of insecurity and fear to the global population. The weaknesses of the traditional crisis management systems can be overcome by adopting specific principles and strategic models. According to Heath (1998) there are the Principles needed for effective crisis management a) the principle of responsibility, b) the principle of coordination and c) the readiness principle. The first one refers to all processes, directly and indirectly related to the areas of authority and responsibility of crisis managers, before, during and after the crisis. The principle of coordination deals with processes directly and indirectly related to the coordination of the necessary activities, which take place before, during and after the crisis. Finally, the

Readiness Principle, refers to the effectiveness of security and crisis management systems at all levels from the highest to the lowest level and of any organization. The acceptance and application of the principles by all stakeholders opens up a dynamic field for management, security, communication. and judgment in the organizational system of organizations or businesses.

In our attempt to decode the results of our research, we have attempted, to quote and to compare the views of the research sample. In the field of empathy, both the islanders and the tourists who visited Lesvos, when listening to the word "refugee", overwhelming feelings noted like compassion, sadness, and anxiety. The feeling of insecurity exists in both groups with the same intensity, but without being dominant. In terms of impact, and to what extent the refugee crisis has affected their daily lives, the islanders feel that their lives are affected in a way they cannot predict or manage. As far as the negative impact of the crisis is concerned, tourism, investments and safety dominate, while social cohesion and everyday routine follow. However, it should be noted that citizens residing in areas around refugee camps (e.g., Moria) do not share the same view. In addition, tourists said that the quality of their holidays was not affected by the refugee crisis whatsoever. It is indicative, though that almost all tourists were aware of the refugee crisis, but this fact did not affect their decision to choose Lesvos as a tourist destination. We must also take into consideration that most of them were repeaters, evidence that probably have contributed positively to their decision to visit Lesvos. In contrast to the above-mentioned groups, hoteliers and other businesses related to tourism said they suffered severe revenue declines, loss of competitive advantage, diminished investment interest and reflected their anxiety and uncertainty about the future, believing that the long-term effects on the island's tourism economy would be getting worse and worse, thus expressing their pessimism. It is worth noting, however, that tourism businessmen believe that some businesses may have benefited from the presence of refugees on the island, but both groups of residents and businessmen believe that the refugee crisis is not the only cause of the problems in the local economy, since the tourist brand of Lesvos has never been strong and clear.

Concerning the touristic identity of Lesvos there is a coincidence of opinions among all three research groups that agree that Lesvos does not have a clear brand name. On the other hand, tourists have spotted some tourist identity for Lesvos more than the other groups, which needs further research as they focus primarily on natural environment, relaxation, and well-being. Residents who attribute some touristic identity to Lesvos find it mainly in the forms of religious, gastronomic, and alternative forms of tourism. The same view is shared by the businessmen, who attribute to the island the character of an authentic destination, with astonishing fauna and flora, characteristics that are unfairly dealt with due to the refugee's problem.

In the field of island's image today and to the question of who is to blame for the negative image of the island, the predominant views of the inhabitants mainly refer to the lack of a crisis management plan, the lack of clearly defined tourism policy and vision, as well as the failure of the state to react appropriately and on time. Interesting enough, is a coincidence of opinion, between tourists and businessmen, that the image of Lesvos today is better than the image that tourists had already formed for the island before travelling. Also, while tourists strongly believe that the decision to choose Lesvos for their holidays was not affected by the refugee crisis, the question of whether the crisis management damaged the touristic image to a large extent, the answer is affirmative. What the businessmen believe that perhaps will change the whole image, is to adopt certain actions like rebranding of the destination and a very well-organized communication campaign. They strongly believe that there is an urgent necessity of creating a Destination Management Organization that will lead the planning process and bring together all the relevant stakeholders.

In the area of crisis management, most of the population considers that the state was not prepared properly to deal with the refugee crisis, and they are responsible for the mismanagement. All believe that the existence of a crisis management plan is crucial, and this is a lesson learned from those last five years. Residents believe that the contribution of the local community to the crisis management as opposed to the state, was substantial, whereas only today the state seems to manage the refugee more effectively. The trapping of refugees on the island poses a bigger problem, with the media overreacting to the situation. The same views are shared by the tourism businessmen, although it appears that the tour operators have cooperated in the crisis management. The state machine was extremely slow in terms of efficiency.

In a joint question to residents and entrepreneurs alike about the mistakes made, the answers range from the lack of planning, organization, cooperation, coordination, determination, infrastructure and human resources, to the overstating of MMs, uncontrolled NGO action, short term over long-term tourism development. Citizens living near the camps are experiencing continuous insecurity and anxiety, due to delinquency and lawlessness in the area, that makes their daily lives difficult. The surrounding natural environment close to the camps has been severely degraded, and some have even spoken of severe hygienic problems due to overcrowded camps and the lack of appropriate infrastructure like wastewater management plants etc. They also state that the EU policies on migration do not meet the needs of the current situation and they also point out the necessity of specific policies for the islands as places with limited or scarce sources and capabilities of hosting refugee populations.

In the field of recovery, citizens of the island are moderately optimistic, but with a positive sign, while businessmen are somewhere in the middle of a possible recovery of the island. The views expressed by the islanders on how to return to "normal" were many and varied. Most of them converge on a more humane society that respects the citizens of the world through a better management of refugee flows and a fairer way of sharing of responsibilities and burdens. The relocation of the refugees from the island, the reduction of their number was also strongly expressed. The reversal of the negative climate according to the island's businessmen focuses on the immediate relocation of the refugees from the island, better border control, closing hot spots, and finally, rebranding the island's touristic identity. During the economic crisis, Greece has been called upon to manage not only a refugee crisis but also a deeply humanitarian one. A crisis that has made Greece walk on a tight rope and try to balance between its human face and its racist voices.

References

Al-Hamarneh, A., & Steiner, C. (2004). Islamic tourism: rethinking the strategies of tourism development in the Arab World after September 11, 2011. *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, 24(1), 175-186.

Aliperti, G., Frey M., Garschagen, M., Hagenlocherb, M.,Sandholzb, S. (2019). Tourism, crisis, disaster: an interdisciplinary approach. Annals of Tourism Research, 79, 1-5.

Atkinson, R. and Flint, J. (2001), "*Accessing hidden and hard-to-reach populations: snowball research strategies*", *Social Research Update*, Vol. 33, pp. 1-5.

Avraham, E., & Ketter, E. (2008). *Media strategies for marketing places in crisis: Improving the image of cities, countries, and tourist destinations*. Routledge.

Banulescu-Bogdan, N., & Fratzke, S. (2015). Europe's migration crisis in context: Why now and what next? *The Online Journal of the Migration Policy Institute*. Migration Information Source. Retrieved from https://goo.gl/e74kVm

Baruch, Y., & Holtom, B. C. (2008). Survey response rate levels and trends in organizational research. Human Relations, 61(8), 1139-1170.

Beirman D., (2003). *Restoring Tourism Destinations in Crisis: A Strategic Marketing Approach*. Allen &Unwin. Crows Nest. Australia.

Beirman, D. (2000). Destination marketing: the marketing of Israel in Australia and the south-west Pacific. *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, 6(2), 145e153.

Beirman, D. (2003). *Restoring tourism destinations in crisis*. Cambridge, UK: CABI.

Blain C., Levy E.S., Ritchie J. R. B., (2005). Destination Branding: Insights and Practices from Destination Management Organizations. *Journal of Travel Research*. 43:4. 328-338

Cabot H., (2019) The European Refugee Crisis and Humanitarian Citizenship in Greece, *Ethnos*, 84:5, 747-771

Cakar K., (2018). Critical success factors for tourist destination governance in times of crisis: a case study of Antalya, Turkey, *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*. 35:6, 786-802.

Cederquist A., (2019) Civil society between void and action – the case of refugee support on Lesvos, *Local Environment*, 24:6, 509-524

Drabek, T., & Gee, C. (2000). *Emergency management principles and applications for tourism, hospitality, and travel management*. Washington DC: FEMA.

Faulkner, B. (2001). Towards a framework for tourism disaster management. *Tourism Management*, 22(2), 135–147.

Faulkner, B., & Vikulov, S. (2001). Katherine, washed out one day, back on track the next: A post mortem of a tourism disaster. *Tourism Management*, 22, 331–344.

Gurtner Y., (2016). Returning to paradise: Investigating issues of tourism crisis and disaster recovery on the island of Bali. *Journal of hospitality and tourism management*. 28. 11-19.

Hall, C., Prayag, G., & Amore, A. (2018). Tourism and resilience: Individual, organisational and destination perspectives. Bristol, UK: Channel View Publications.

Heath R. (1998). Crisis management for managers and executives. Pearson Education.

INSETE INTELLIGENCE, (2019), «"The prospects of inbound tourism in Greece in 2019» http://www.insete.gr/Portals/0/meletes-INSETE/01/2019_Outlook-2019.pdf

Ivanov, S., & Stavrinoudis, T. A. (2018). Impacts of the refugee crisis on the hotel industry: Evidence from four Greek islands. *Tourism Management*, 67, 214–223. doi:10.1016/j.tourman.2018.02.004

Mansfeld, Y., & Pizam, A. (2006). *Tourism, security, and safety: From theory to practice*. Burlington, MA: Elsevier Butterworth-Heinemann.

Mikulić J., Sprčić Milos D., Holiček H., Prebežac D., (2018). Strategic crisis management in tourism: An application of integrated risk management principles to the Croatian tourism industry. *Journal of destination marketing and management*. 7. 36-38

Papastergiou V. & Takou E. (2018), "*Myths and Migration in Greece*", Rosa Luxemburg Foundation, Greece

Pennington-Gray, L. (2017). Reflections to move forward: Where Destination Crisis Management Research Needs to Go, *Tourism Management Perspectives*. 25(2018) 136-139.

Pforr C. & Hosie J.P., (2008). Crisis Management in Tourism, *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, 23:2-4, 249-264

Prayag G. (2018). Symbolic relationship or not? Understanding resilience and crisis management in tourism. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 25, 133-135.

Ritchie W. B. & Campiranon K. (2015), «*Tourism Crisis and disaster management in The Asia-Pacific*», UK: CABI Publishing

Ritchie, B. W. (2004). Chaos, crises and disasters: A strategic approach to crisis management in the tourism industry. *Tourism Management*, 25, 669–683.

Ritchie, B. W. (2009). *Crisis and Disaster Management for Tourism*. United Kingdom: Channel View Publications.

Sofield, T, (2003). *Empowerment for Sustainable Tourism Development*, Elsevier Science Ltd, Oxford, UK

Sonmez, S. F. (1998). Tourism, terrorism, and political instability. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 25(2), 416e456.

Sonmez, S. F., Apostolopoulos, Y., & Tarlow, P. (1999). Tourism in crisis: managing the effects of terrorism. *Journal of Travel Research*, 38(1), 13-18.

Speakman M., Sharpley R., (2012). A chaos theory perspective on destination crisis management: Evidence from Mexico. *Journal of destination marketing and management*. 1:1-2. 67-77

Tarlow, P. (2005). Terrorism and tourism. *e-Review of Tourism Research*, 3(5).

Taylor, P. A. (2006). Getting them to forgive and forget: cognitive based marketing responses to terrorist acts. *International Journal of Tourism Research*, 8, 171e183.

Trihas N., Tsilimpokos K., (2018). Refeugee crisis and volunteer tourism in Lesvos, Greece. *Journal on tourism and sustainability*. 2:1. 42-56

Tsartas P., Kyriakaki A., Stavrinoudis T., Despotaki G., Doumi M., Sarantakou E. & Tsilimpokos K., (2019). Refugees and tourism: a case study from the islands of Chios and Lesvos, Greece, Current Issues in Tourism https://doi.org/10.1080/13683500.2011.630457

UNHCR. (1967). Convention and protocol relating to the status of refugees. Geneva: UNHCR.

UN Refugee Agency. (2016a). UNHCR viewpoint: 'Refugee' or 'migrant' e which is right?. Retrieved on 23 March, 2020 from http://www.unhcr.org/news/latest/ 2016/7/55df0e556/unhcr-viewpoint-refugee-migrant-right.html.

UNHCR – The UN Refugee Agency (2018) Refugees & Migrants Sea Arrivals in Europe.

UNHR. (2015). The sea route to Europe: The Mediterranean passage in the age of refugees. Retrieved from https://goo.gl/8URK97

UNISDR United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction. (2015). Sendai framework for disaster risk reduction (online) http://www.unisdr.org/we/inform/publications/43291 Accessed 12 December 2019.

World Tourism Organization. (2009). Tourism and migration: Exploring the relationship between two global phenomena. World Tourism Organization.

WTO (2019). UNWTO Guidelines for Institutional Strengthening of Destination Management Organizations (DMOs) – Preparing DMOs for new challenges. Retrieved from https://www.e-unwto.org/doi/pdf/10.18111/9789284420841

WTO, (2019), International Tourism Highlights. 2019 Edition. Retrieved from https://www.e-unwto.org/doi/book/10.18111/9789284421152

WTTC, (2019). Travel & Tourism. Economic impact 2019. World

Young B.W. & Montgomery J.R., (1997). Crisis Management and Its Impact on Destination Marketing, *Journal of Convention & Exhibition Management*, 1:1, 3-18.

Contributors: *Dr Constantoglou Mary, University of the Aegean, Department of Economic and Tourism Management, Chios, Greece & Michael Prinitis Hellenic Open University, Tourism Business Administration MSc, Patra, Greece*

Corresponding Author: *Dr Mary Constantoglou. Email:* mkon@env.aegean.gr