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Journal On-Tourism & Sustainability (JOTS) is dedicated to supporting the rapidly expanding area of tourism development research. The primary focus is to advance critical thinking on tourism as a catalyst for sustainable development. It is a peer-reviewed journal aiming to publish original research from a multidisciplinary perspective. We welcome theoretical, conceptual, and empirical research that explores the relationship between tourism and development.

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TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AND PROMOTION IN ANOGIA THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES' PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract: This paper discusses findings concerning sustainable tourism development in the village of Anogia, Crete. The discussion focusses on local authorities' activities, plans and intentions in the development and promotion of niche tourism products. In so doing, the paper considers the initiatives undertaken by the Greek Ministry of Culture and Tourism in relation to the tourism promotion of Greece. In addition, the views of the Mayor and the Vice Mayor of Anogia are presented in a lengthy informal and semi-structured interview using an interview guide. The interview lasted approximately three-and-a-half to four hours. The interview took place at the Mayor's office in the Municipality of Anogia, Crete, Greece.

Keywords: Niche tourism, Development, Promotion, Local Authority, Anogia, Crete

Introduction

Local authorities occupy a complex, central role at the heart of the tourism industry, exercising an essential and crucial influence (Anderson, Bakir & Wickens, 2015) as a coordinating body for the strategic planning and developing a locality as a destination and by implication, promoting private sector products and services related to tourism. In 2010, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, with the cooperation of the Greek National Tourism Organization, decided to change the way Greece has been promoted internationally as a destination. It was decided that Greece should no longer be promoted as a "sun and sea" heaven. On the contrary it should be promoted as a destination where visitors could live 'unique moments' and authentic experiences through their encounters. It was at that point that "Experience Greece: a destination you can visit all year around and have incomparable experiences" was born as an idea (Greek Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 2011).

In the spring of 2010, in order to restore the perceived image of Greece as the 4s (sand, sea, sun and sex), "You in Greece" was conceived, which represented a collaboration of forces, a combination of inspired ideas and a deep conviction that everyone could tell their singular, authentic story about Greece. Used as an innovative communication platform, it aimed to enhance the image of Greece abroad, attracting people who showed a genuine interest and desire to help the promotion of the country's authentic features and through them, spreading the message of the real Greece (Greek Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 2011, 2014).

The aim was to share the views of international tourists, from different social and cultural backgrounds who were looking for unique experiences. They were viewed as the best 'vehicle' to promote the authenticity of Greece, highlighting its unexplored beauty, and spreading this message to the international community (Greek Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 2011). The first phase of this campaign began with the first "You in Greece" video. The "You in Athens" edition, gathered testimonials from 80 tourists in Athens in two days, talking about their experiences in Greece. Eight thousand and two hundred press kits were created. These were distributed to journalists, political leaders abroad, foreign embassies in Greece, European Union deputies and tour operators. Moreover, the internet and social media were additionally used to spread the message.

The second phase was conducted during the summer of 2011 throughout Greece. In this phase twelve new videos were created, and more than 350 people of various ethnicities spoke about their experiences in Greece. These videos were created taking into consideration different types of tourism (luxury, seaside, cultural) and the target country ("You in Greece" with Russians or Germans). In the English language there are several distinct categories such as "Youth in Greece", "Seaside in Greece", "Beauty in Greece", "Family in Greece" and "You in Thessaloniki". The press kits were available in three languages: Russian, German, and English.

The third and final phase took place during 2011 throughout Greece representing diverse social and cultural groups. Testimonials included visitors' experiences in gastronomy, winery, health and wellness, and other niche tourism products, such as, religious, spiritual, and rural products, eco-tourism, events and traditions, conference tourism, modern and Greek culture. The goal was to promote all tourism products and destinations by highlighting unknown corners of Greece and stimulating visits out of season (Greek Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 2011).

Following the "You in Greece" initiative, the latest online project of the Greek National Tourism Organization is my-greece.gr, which has been designed to function as a stand-alone site and be promoted through www.visitgreece.gr. The basis of this specific project is a user-friendly digital map (Google), on which visitors are invited to "upload" their favourite pictures and videos. The aim is for visitors to highlight the aspects of Greece that they love, its beauties and those traits that make the country special. The photographic and video material is accompanied by a small text (approximately twenty-five words), in which the users recommend their chosen destinations, while through a brief description of experiences the user explains what led him/her to make that choice.

According to the Greek National Tourism Organization one goal of 'my-greece.gr' was to motivate the Greeks themselves to promote their country abroad. This is the first time that Greeks are being asked to become the protagonists in the stories that are being narrated. This "word-of-mouth" tool was considered to be one of the most effective tools of advertising and promotion. Another goal was to utilize contemporary forms of communication along with the possibilities afforded by social media (YouTube, Facebook, Flickr) as well as the most mobile applications (Visit Greece, 2012). The marketing strategy adopted by the Greek Tourism Ministry and National Tourism Organization was informed and guided by the above initiatives aiming to promote Greece as a niche 'all season' tourism destination and increase the number of visitors.

However, such promotional destination planning should also consider the hosts' history and background and whether it is acceptable and desirable by the local stakeholders. Furthermore, the attitudes of the host population towards tourism development and its sustainability, as proposed by Saatsakis, Bakir & Wickens (2019), should guide the appropriateness of such development. It is imperative that local planning takes into consideration the perceptions, desires and wishes of both visitors and the host community (see also Gursoy and Rutherford, 2004). It is also crucial for local authorities to understand the potential benefits or costs that might occur with the expansion of niche tourism development. Such knowledge would inform necessary actions to minimize the potential negative impacts and at the same time optimize the benefits for the host community. An implication of this study is monitoring local stakeholders' perceptions and attitudes towards any potential development initiatives which they would support. This goal of monitoring the attitudes of the local stakeholders is to control unforeseen adverse consequences and minimize negative impacts of tourism.

Methodology

This paper presents and discusses findings derived from a qualitative based study aiming to understand tourism development and its sustainability in the village of Anogia, Crete. The research was undertaken during the summer of 2014. In this paper, the discussion revolved around the local authorities' perspectives of the development and promotion of sustainable niche tourism. It also examines the plans of the Greek Ministry of Culture and Tourism relating to the promotion of tourism in Greece, including Crete, and how they are understood and deployed by the Mayor and the Vice Mayor of Anogia, Crete. An interview guide was used for the lengthy informal and semi-structured interview which lasted approximately three-and-a-half to four hours. The Mayor, without hesitation, accepted the use of a tape recorder during the interview, demonstrating his interest in the results of this study. The welcoming Greek hospitality was on display during this interview, with food and local drinks, such as raki in a relaxed environment. The fieldwork shows the participants' eagerness to discuss their views regarding the current situation of the village. They were fully engaged with the questions, elaborating, and enriching their responses. All calls to the Mayor were put on hold at his request, a testament to his serious interest in the importance of this topic. Originating from the village of Anogia, the Mayor and the Vice Mayor demonstrated their deep knowledge of the history, geography, and cultural values of the village community.

In addition, an email interview was undertaken in the same period with a well-known Greek politician from the Ministry of Greek Tourism who was involved in various industry and education related activities. The politician also originated from the village of Anogia, and hence his interest in the study. His professional position at the time was an advisor to the Greek Government. Due to time constraints, this respondent was willing to send his thoughts and the responses to my questions concerning tourism development and promotion in Anogia through a lengthy email. In this email he attached a copy of a speech that he delivered on "Tourism as the driving force for the rural and stockbreeding development of the Cretan hinterland", for its relevance to study.

Mayor's Perspective

Community leadership is recognised as a key factor in the development of tourism in local communities because of their knowledge, position, and the roles they play (e.g., Aref al., 2010; Aref & Ma'rof, 2009; Moscardo, 2008). They influence policy, opinion and community action because of their roles and formal positions (Aref & Ma'rof, 2009)

During the interview with the Mayor, we discussed his plans, targets, and objectives for the development of tourism in Anogia. A priority for the Mayor is to bridge the wide gap between the high expectation of visitors who come to Anogia and the poor impressions they leave with; "100% when they come and 20% when they leave". As he commented: "it is very important to increase this percentage, and this concerns issues such as the villagers' attitudes, lack of facilities and amenities, and poor infrastructure". As he emphasized, a Municipality is doing well when its citizens are doing well, elaborating:

"the main source of income for Anogia (80%) comes through stockbreeding activities. There are another 20% of the residents who are engaged in other activities. Since stockbreeding is declining in terms of profits acquired, the objective is to create alternative sources of income for the villagers".

Recognising Anogia as a potential destination, he continued:

“We must respond to what the visitors expect and come to see. Our aim is to create a unique image of the village rather than offering the visitor a standardized, commercialized, touristic destination found elsewhere, for example in Spain. We want, when the visitors come to Anogia, that they understand why this village is still steep in traditions with strongly knit families and ties and ancient values; why locals always offer visitors treats in a kafeneio (‘treats’ are, a tradition in most villages in Crete and in Anogia are considered one important aspect of Anogian hospitality. When a stranger arrives in the village it is the tradition to give him/her food or drink without payment. We want even day-time tourists passing by to be able to experience this traditional life of our village”.

On the Tourist Map

The next question addressed to Mr Kefalogiannis regarded whether the Municipality of Anogia would consider joining forces with neighbourhood communities in order to achieve cooperation in the tourism development of the whole area of Mountainous Mylopotamos. The Mayor stated that:

“We have already done this with all the communities in the area of mountainous Psiloritis. Through the natural Geo Park, we are trying to provide the visitors with several alternatives. If they have, for example, an interest in caves, we suggest a cave route to them; visit Idaion Andron, the cave of Zoniana, the cave of Melidoni. We know that if a tourist visits Zoniana he will pass through Anogia as well as it is a destination point. In the same way when tourists visit Anogia we suggest that they visit the cave of Zoniana”.

Nevertheless, this cooperation between the communities of the area of Mountainous Mylopotamos is on an informal basis. As the Mayor pointed out

“The idea of joined forces exists; it has not been structured though for the visitors, meaning that we cannot supply the visitors with a map, for example, which will indicate a route for them to see all the caves or a nature path. There is no formal cooperation between the Municipalities, unfortunately this mentality has existed for many years”.

Issues of Economic Development

Issues of economic development were the following area discussed. The Mayor stated once again that in Anogia sources of income are rather limited: stockbreeding and small-scale agriculture. “We do not have any other means to produce income. We have created a rumour, a reputation, and the only way to collect from this reputation is through tourism”. In his view there is no other way. Regarding the benefits of tourism and whether these benefits spread broadly around the village, the Mayor acknowledged that “Anogia is a closed society”. In this context he explained “when the taverna owner is earning money, when the hotel owner is earning money, then many people around them earn money as well”. He presents a more specific view saying that:

“Presently tourism is concentrated in two or three parts of the village; our aim is to widen this situation. We have to consider that not all the parts of the village are ideal to receive tourism. For example, you have to move the animals outside your house if you want tourism. Traditionally, visitors usually gather in squares. How can you send a visitor to the square of the central road of Anogia for example, when you cannot guarantee his/her safety? How can you send visitors to local entrepreneurs who consider tourists as alien bodies and will treat them accordingly? There is no familiarity with the tourist. Mentalities have to change”.

It could be argued that the Mayor sees residents' mentalities as an obstacle to achieving tourism development. The Mayor's opinion regarding the taverna owners in Anogia was negative. "I have negative comments for the taverna owners …….".

Due to the fact that presently the only place visitors can sit is either a kafeneio or a taverna, he argued that "if 90% of the visitors sit in a kafeneio or a taverna and gain a negative image from this encounter, how can I balance this image". Clearly, it can be seen that the Mayor is framing his views on the challenges facing any further development of tourism in this mountainous traditional village, articulating the local's xenophobic concerns (Lazaridis & Wickens, 1999).

Tourism Means "Money" – Where the Magic Begins!

Another important issue that was discussed during this interview involved the target markets that most interested the Municipality. Which target markets were believed to be most appropriate for future tourism development in Anogia? The Mayor's perceptions were clear:

"I do not care for the tourist who will pass by, sit for a coffee and leave. I care mostly for the tourist who will walk around the village; he*[sic]* is the one who will most probably spend some money. Mostly I care for the tourist who will stay in the village because he*[sic]* is the one who will come in direct contact with the residents, he*[sic]* will socialize with them and that is the point where the magic begins".

There are, however, communication problems in this desired interaction between the visitor and the locals, with Mr. Kefalogiannis revealing that locals must confront the difficult issue of communication, which cannot be changed or amended easily. According to him, "for the international visitor, due to language constraints, it is difficult to understand the mentality of the locals; it is easier for the domestic visitor but even then, there are issues that can be improved". Further elaborating on the issue of 'tourism means money', the Mayor stated that "our aim is to have tourists throughout the year, during the summer and the winter season. During the winter we have many visitors from Crete and Greece".

The issue of seasonality was again raised in relation to international tourists who visit only during the summer season. The Mayor did not however suggest a specific strategy for addressing this issue. According to Wall and Yan (2003) the impacts of seasonality are more likely to become greater with the growth of mass tourism because the number of businesses and entrepreneurs depending on tourists increases. In the village of Anogia there is no growth of mass tourism, an unwelcome form of tourism expressed by residents, entrepreneurs, and local authorities, as articulated by the Mayor. Similar results were expressed by Andriotis (2002) in his study of twenty-eight public authority officials from the four major cities of the island (Heraklion, Rethymnon, Chania and Agios Nikolaos). His fieldwork showed that although the problem of seasonality is recognized, very few of the officials stated that seasonality was beyond their field of responsibility. Some had attempted to create mechanisms for cooperation with other bodies and a few mentioned that they were trying to eliminate seasonality through the promotion of alternative forms of tourism.

In addition, Mr. Kefalogiannis, the Mayor, stated that "to be practical though, only when Crete as a destination develops unique special interest packages, only then we will be able to seriously discuss tourism development in Anogia". The Mayor despairingly elaborated: "How can I support the development of the winter tourism product in Anogia and promote the village as a winter destination in the international tourism market when for example there are no charter flights to Crete during the winter". The Mayor added: "regarding the next five years, our focus will be mainly on domestic tourism. … For the development of winter tourism, we must create

activities such as snow amusement parks, horse riding, archery, mountainous camps. Winter tourists will not come here to gain an education; they will come for such holiday activities".

The Mayor stated that "apart from creating activities, a safe passage through the village must also be created and more importantly local businessmen must start to behave toward tourists in a proper manner". The issue of incorrect pricing (in his opinion) of products and services in Anogia is important. Mr. Kefalogiannis connected pricing with demand and competition, consistent with the views of Seaton and Bennett (1996) who suggested that demand sets the ceiling, costs set the floor and competition establishes where on the continuum the real price will drop. The Mayor concluded by pointing to the shark practices of certain entrepreneurs by providing the following example: "If a family with three children visits Anogia and needs 200 euros for a meal when they can pay 60 euros for a meal in another destination, maybe this family will visit Anogia once but they will not return". Such practices are likely to kill the buds of the aspired niche tourism products (Saatsakis et al., 2019). The proper business behaviour of local entrepreneurs remains an important issue. The Mayor's perceptions are consistent with Mykletun and Gyimothy (2010) who suggested that the contributions of entrepreneurs may not always be smooth and lead to linear development of a tourist destination. Furthermore, Russel and Faulkner (1999 and 2004) found different types of entrepreneurial manifestations during the evolution of a tourism destination and suggested that entrepreneurial activities vary from one stage to the next in the lifecycle of a tourism destination.

The Joy of Anogia's Attractions

The Mayor demonstrated an in-depth knowledge of the available cultural, natural, and human resources that could be used for tourism development. He further showed willingness, as the local authority, to take initiative and create and structure new spots of interest in the village, which could enhance tourists' interest in visiting Anogia. Regarding the available attractions, the Mayor mentioned several including the Idaion Andron, the cave of the mythological God Zeus; the archaeological site of Zominthos; the natural environment. Mountain Psiloritis has been described as a natural geo-tourism park and listed by UNESCO because of its unique flora and geological importance. Furthermore, Nida's plateau, the various caves that exist in this area, even the observatory of Skinakas can be an interesting attraction for visitors. He pointed out that more places of interest could be developed inside the village, for instance, different thematic museums (e.g., "folklore, archaeological, the museum of the stockbreeder), creating mobility inside the village for the visitors.

From the Mayor's perspective, domestic tourists, especially those visiting during the winter, are an important market for Anogia. In his own words "…. it is imperative to create activities that correspond to the needs and desires of this specific target market". For him, an important objective is to develop activities that concern the mountain, underpinning the desire of many residents and entrepreneurs who stated that local authorities should "build a skiing resort" on the mountain Psiloritis. The Mayor's perceptions, however, are not consistent with the local stakeholders as he argued that "I am not talking about a skiing resort, although, this discussion regarding the construction of a resort commenced twenty-five years ago". He went on to argue that the assumption that:

"Potential skiers, instead of visiting Arahova (one of the best-known winter destinations in Greece), would visit Anogia... I do not agree with this argument and I do not consider this development to be viable…… the domestic tourists who decide to visit Arahova choose this specific destination because it is close to Athens".

He strongly believes that tourists who look for higher quality skiing resorts will visit destinations in the Alps. He went on to say:

"…let us assume that the island of Crete has 600,000 residents. I am wondering how many of them are skiers…. 1% or maybe less. We also must consider the fact that the domestic tourists, especially those from Crete, if they have the financial ability, will go somewhere else, they will not stay in Crete. … I believe it is unprofessional to build a skiing resort, a skating-rink of three or five kilometres, for a 1% clientele of domestic tourists".

In contrast, he claims that international tourists can achieve much better prices through the existing packages offered, "so why pay more to visit Anogia". He strongly feels that it is not rational to construct a product based on the false assumptions that after thirty years maybe it will contribute to tourism development in this area. A more viable tourism development entertained by the Mayor, however, is expressed:

"What I can do is a snow amusement park. I may have only 1% clientele for a skating-rink of five kilometres, but I have a bigger youth clientele for skating-rinks where they can learn how to ski. It will be like a snow playground, which would also attract families with children who will come to Anogia to stay for the weekend, meaning that they are going to sleep here, and they are going to eat here".

Negative perceptions in relation to co-operating with tour operators were also expressed by the Mayor, arguing that "tour operators mess with quality". Regarding the creation of this snow amusement park the Mayor pointed out that: "this is a project that I do not want to give to a tour operator or a travel agent to operate. I want a team of young people from the village to operate it and push it even further. Most important though, the whole society must embrace this effort to succeed.

Planning for Anogia as a Unique Destination

The Mayor commented that "the tourist who visits the village for one hour leaves disappointed, the one who stays more has a different story to tell". The issue is how to change this current situation. As a Municipality, he adds:

"…we must create a framework of substructures and infrastructures through which the day visitors, those who do not have much time to spend, when leaving the village, are aware of what this village stands for, what it represents. For example, why this village which tourists were informed was a traditional Cretan village, does not have any traditional characteristics, at least as far as the architectural part is concerned".

For him, the target of the Municipality should be to push forward specific characteristics, which are divided into explicit categories. More specifically, the Mayor further elaborated that first of all, the historical part, as this reflects the reason of the present lack of tradition in the architecture of the village and what this village has been through over the years. For him, it is important that the history of this village is stamped and displayed, in a way that the visitor will be able to apprehend it. The Mayor thought that further attractions must be created: "…which should highlight the environmental, mythological, historical and archaeological greatness of the area of Mountainous Mylopotamos where Anogia is situated". Like a museum that will have the potential to shelter and exhibit the traditional way of life of Anogians. This would constitute a place where visitors would able to comprehend the characteristics of this mountain that the locals call 'Psiloritis'. For him "the environmental and folklore elements, how the Anogians were living and were able to survive in this infertile area" are important. Furthermore, the

importance of promoting the local folklore, art and Anogia's customs and traditions (e.g., the traditional shoemaking, the so called, stivania, cheese making, weaving) were stressed by the Mayor. As he pointed out "we need to tell the visitor the story of how this village was surviving when the trade was through cheese and meat, wine and potatoes". One of his targets is for the visitor to have an authentic experience through a safe walk in the village and to be able to see the real life.

The Mayor also expressed his concerns about 'visitor's safety' during the summer: "it is dangerous to walk in the main road of the village". The Municipality's objective is to regenerate the central road of Anogia within ten years and not to allow any cars to pass through. For him "only then, tourists who attend the Yakintha festival in August, would visit the village of Anogia to have a drink or a meal in a taverna. Presently, visitors do not feel safe, "are not able to park, or walk in the streets, they cannot move around the village safely". The issue of traffic was also on the mind of the Mayor throughout our discussion, expressing his concerns over the completion of the road that leads from Heraklion to Anogia. His expectation following the completion of this main road is that it would connect Anogia with Heraklion and will definitely place Anogia on the tourist map.

Conclusion

The above analysis shows that local authorities should create opportunities for local stakeholders to participate in the planning and management of the tourism development. Residents' and local entrepreneurs' involvement and participation are important for the sustainable development of any tourism destination, including Anogia. As any type of tourism development would bring changes to this mountainous rural community it is the residents and entrepreneurs who will have a very clear understanding of how their community will adapt to those changes and will be able to identify the most appropriate form of tourism development. Additionally, it is the local stakeholders in Anogia who will be more affected by the development since they are expected to become a vital element of the whole experience. It is evident from the above analysis, that local authorities, as represented by the Mayor, support tourism development. Mass tourism of the "Hersonissos model" is rejected, as voiced by the Mayor of this traditional village. It was apparent that they do not want Anogia to metamorphose into a mass tourism destination. Alternative tourism, and more specifically rural tourism, is strongly viewed as the most appropriate form of development for their village, due to its geography and the existing natural and cultural resources. Fieldwork suggests that educational seminars and awareness campaigns should be promoted by the local authorities of this mountainous village in order to help both residents and entrepreneurs understand the tourism industry and fully comprehend its potential opportunities and perceived threats and how all these would affect the village of Anogia in the long-term. It is imperative for local authorities to be more effective in dissolving any conflicts that might arise and more important building consensus within the village regarding desired future tourism development.

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

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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.

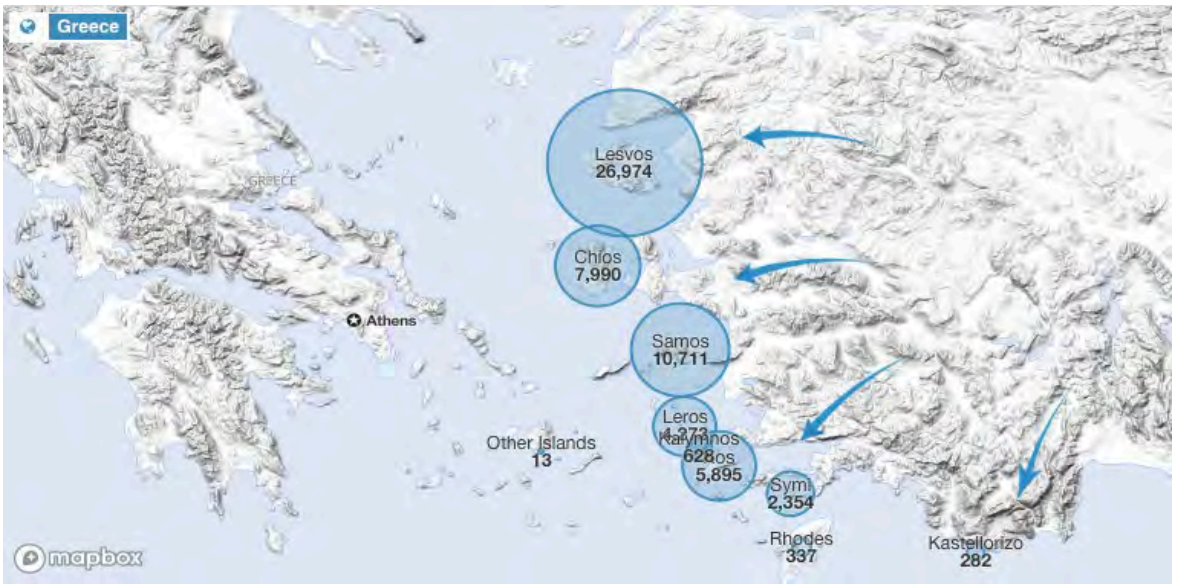


Figure 1: Current situation in the Greek islands January 2020. Source: UNHCR, 2020

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.

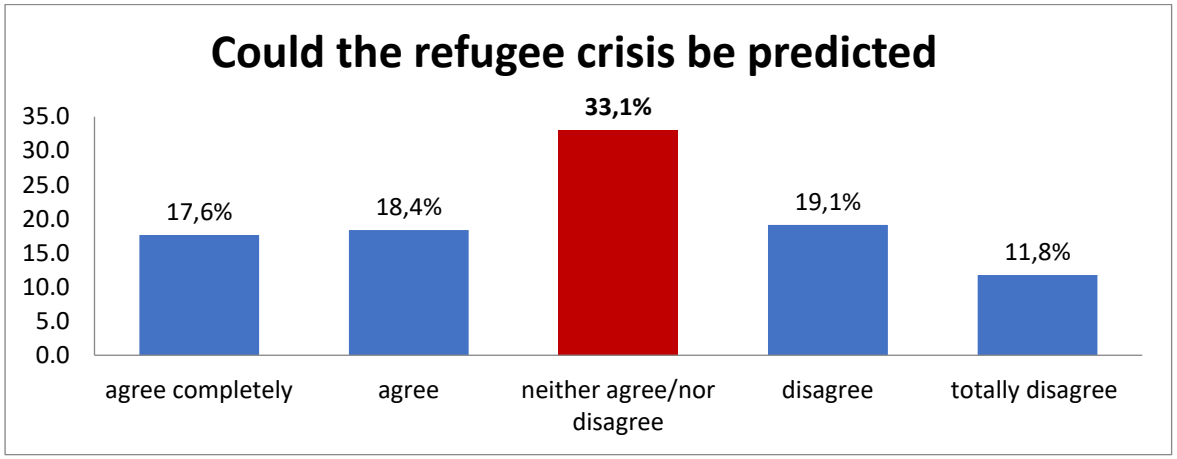
The collected data were statistically analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Data processing was done with the use of SPSS version 24.0.

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%.

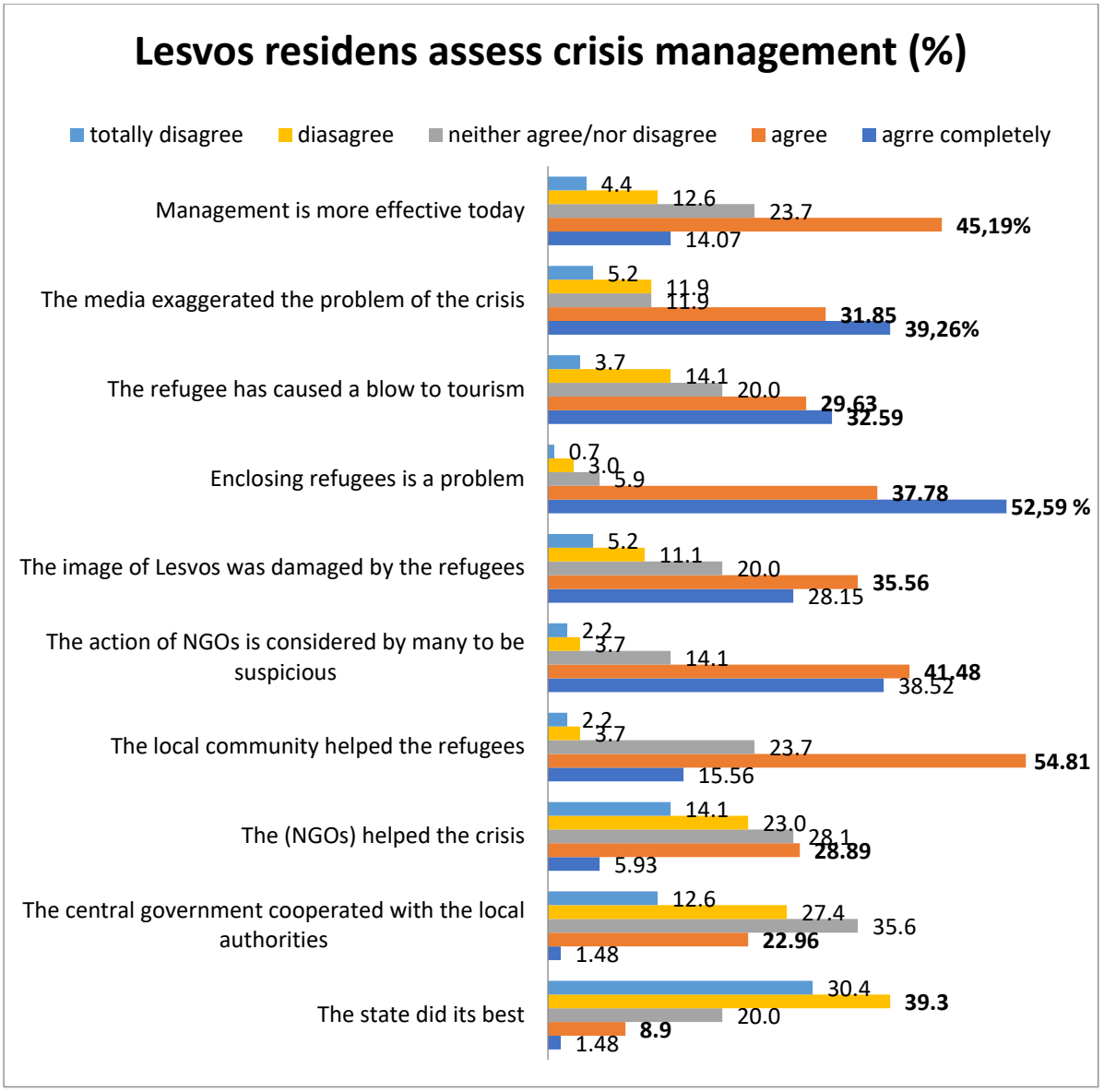


It is clear to the residents, with a percentage of 98.5%, that the state was not ready to face the refugee crisis and in the question of who was and continues to be responsible for managing the refugee crisis, the largest share of responsibility covers the Greek state with 81.5%, while the Municipality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

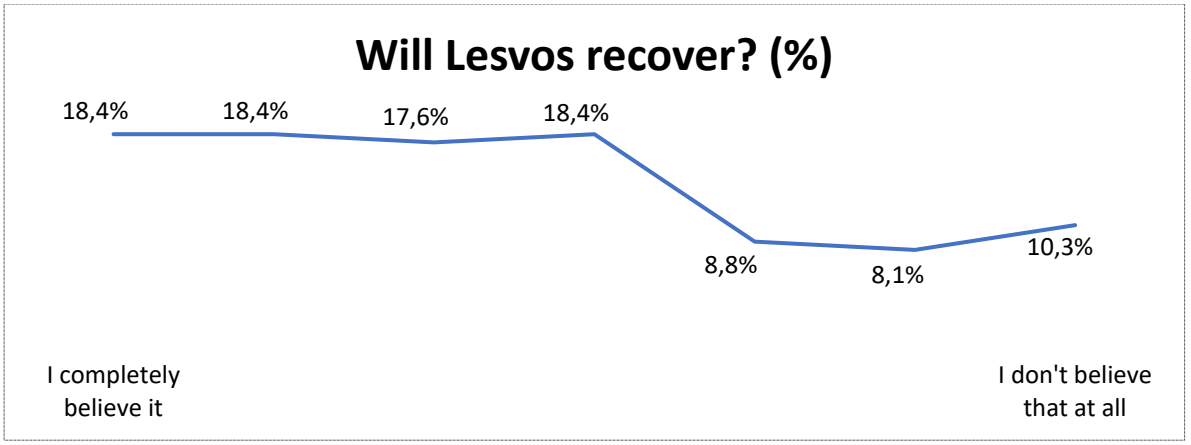


According to the above graph, the contribution of the local humanitarian community is 54.81%. On the contrary a percentage of 39.3% believe that τhe state did not respond to the crisis effectively. Finally, 45.19% agree that crisis management is more effective today. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) 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.

E. Recovery

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.

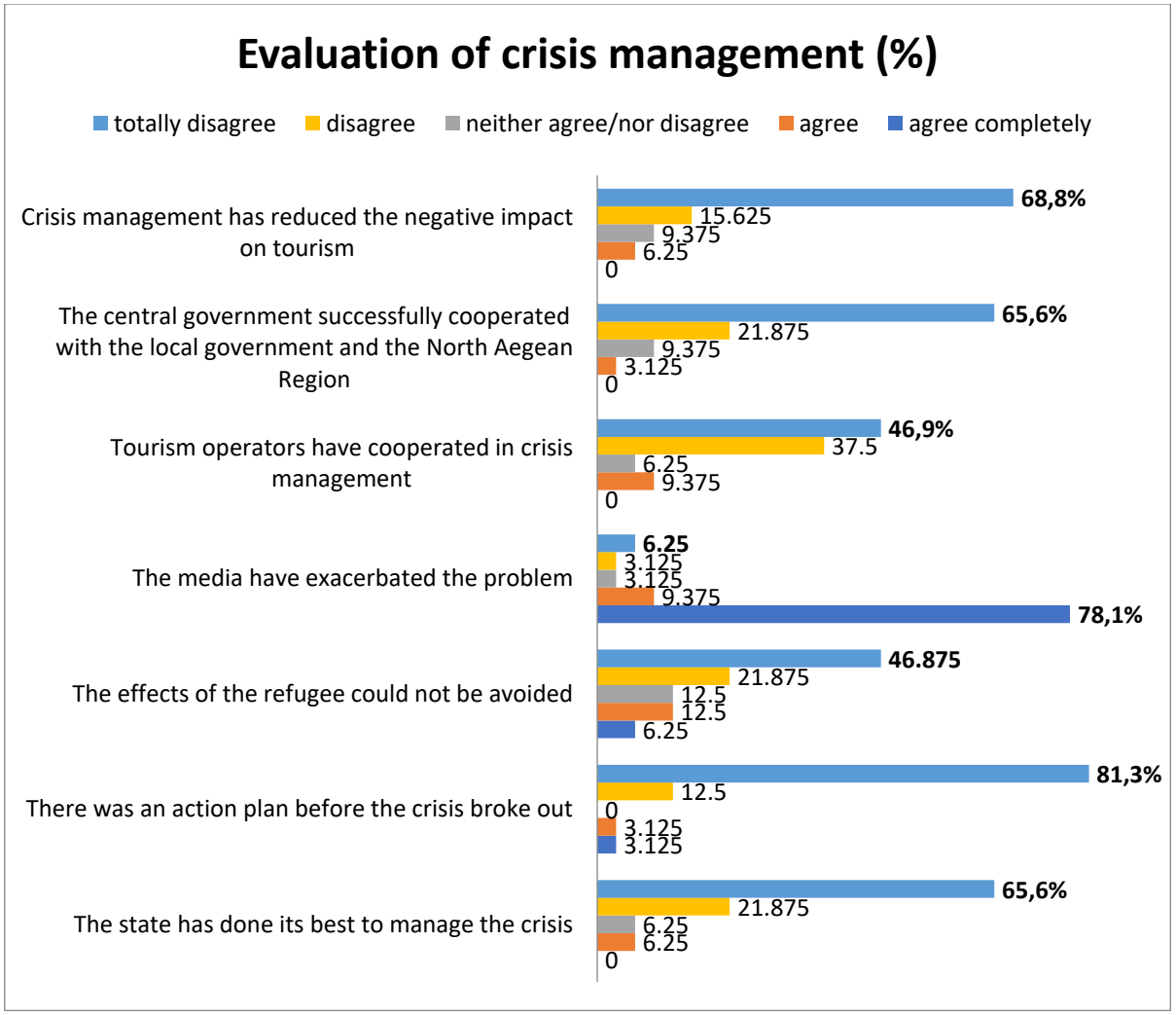


Results: Tourism entrepreneurs in Lesvos

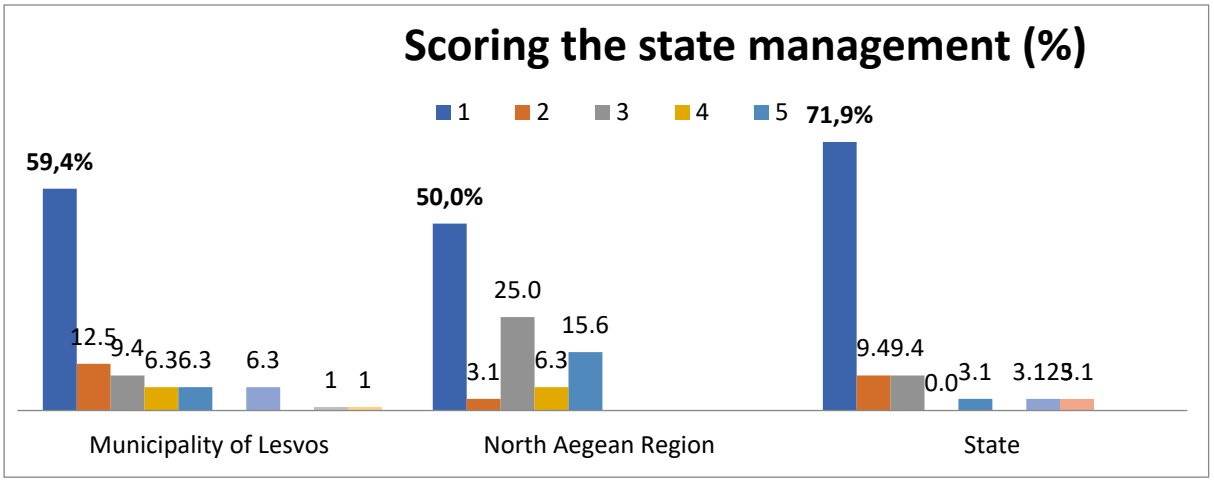
The questionnaire was answered mainly from hotel owners (68.8%), 15.6% from tourism agencies and 12.5% from rent rooms owners. Most of these enterprises are situated in Mytlene the capital city of the island, 19% are situated in Molyvos the most touristic area of the island, while the rest of the questionnaires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



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.

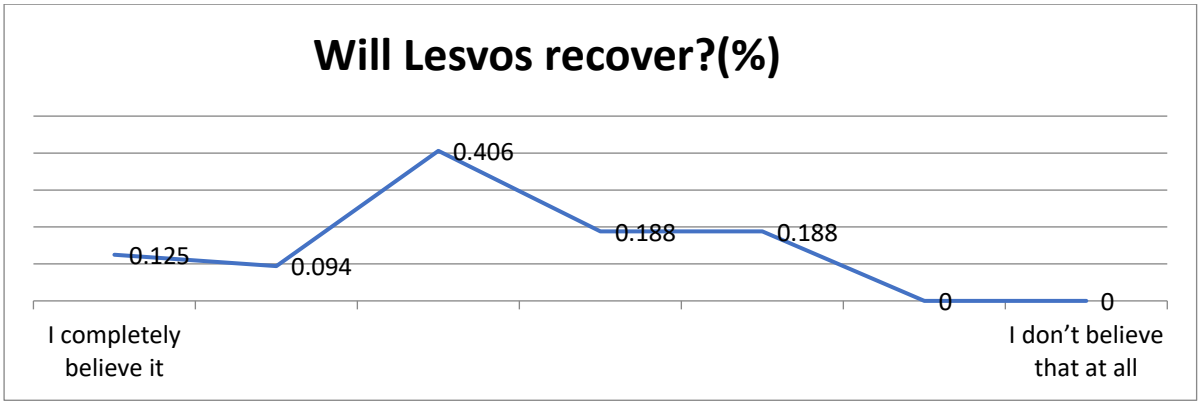


Concerning the mistakes made in managing the crisis, they pointed out the lack of cooperation, organization and planning, the lack of a concrete crisis management plan and a complete lack of information, resulting in a total chaos. In their view, the absence of a crisis management action plan, has led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

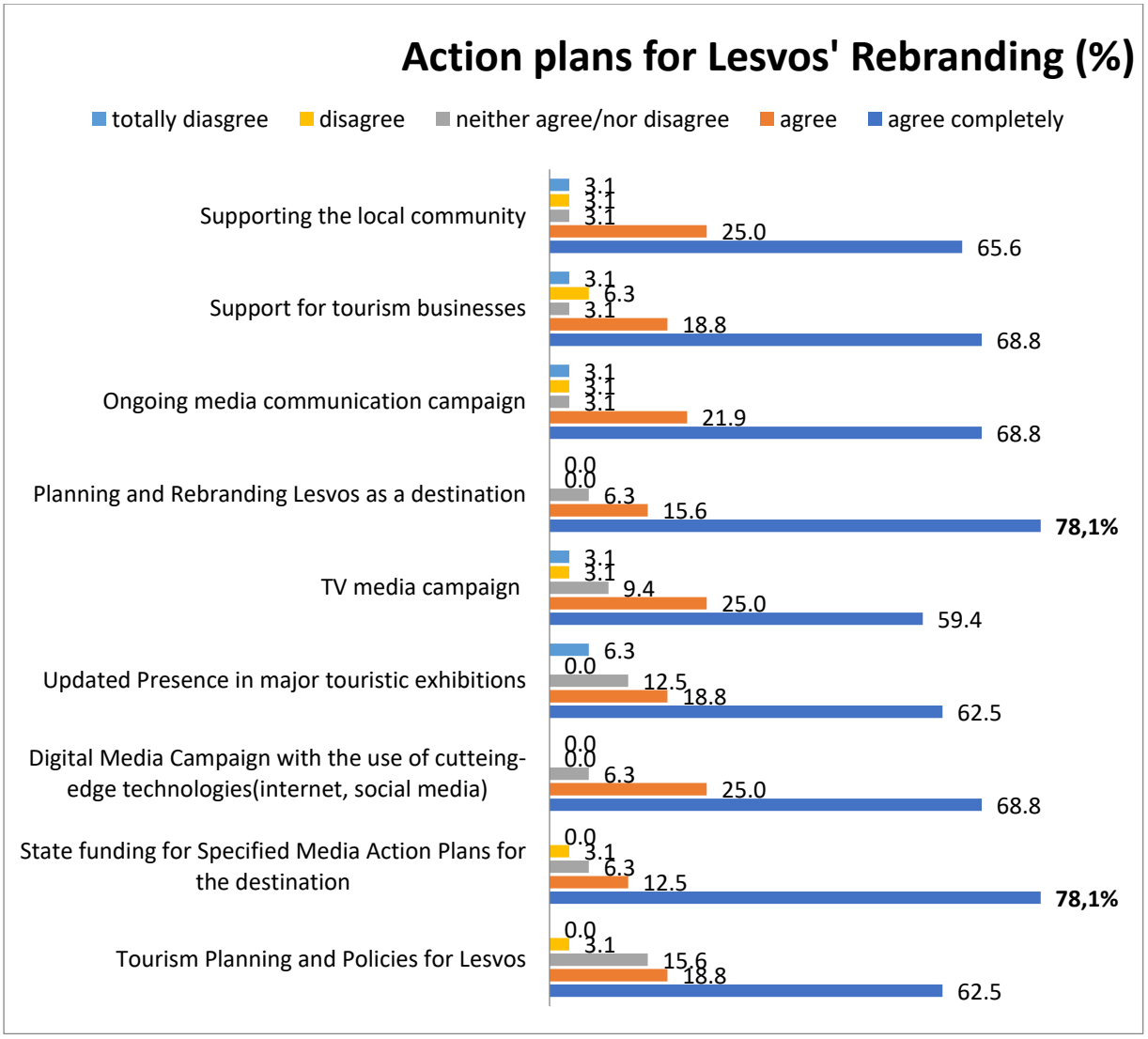
damage in the tourism product of Lesvos together with social instability to the local population. Any countervailing benefits did not mitigate the damage that had been done. They also believe that the local authorities due to the absence of a crisis management plan and a media kit lost the chance to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



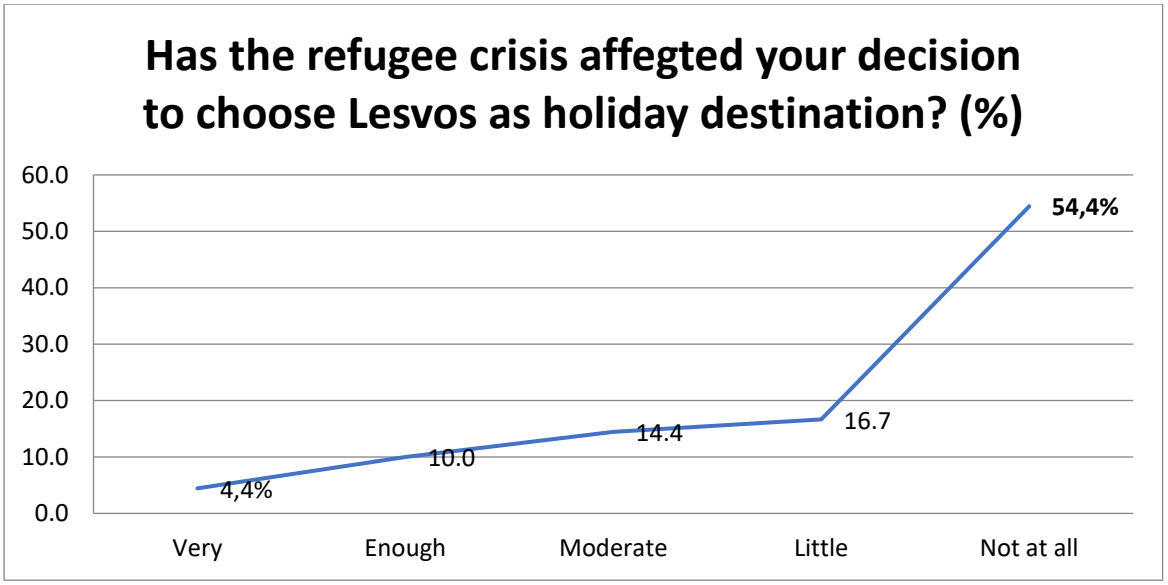
In addition, entrepreneurs were asked to evaluate actions that could potentially reverse the current negative image of the island. 78.1% fully agrees with the action of rebranding the tourist product of Lesvos and the adoption of special marketing plans for the destination.



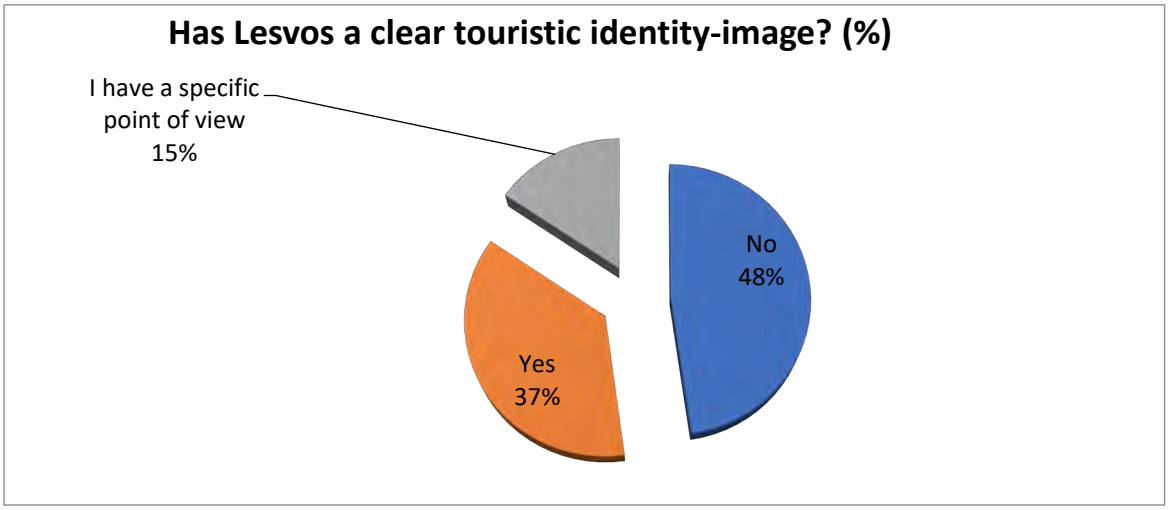
Results: Tourists

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%).

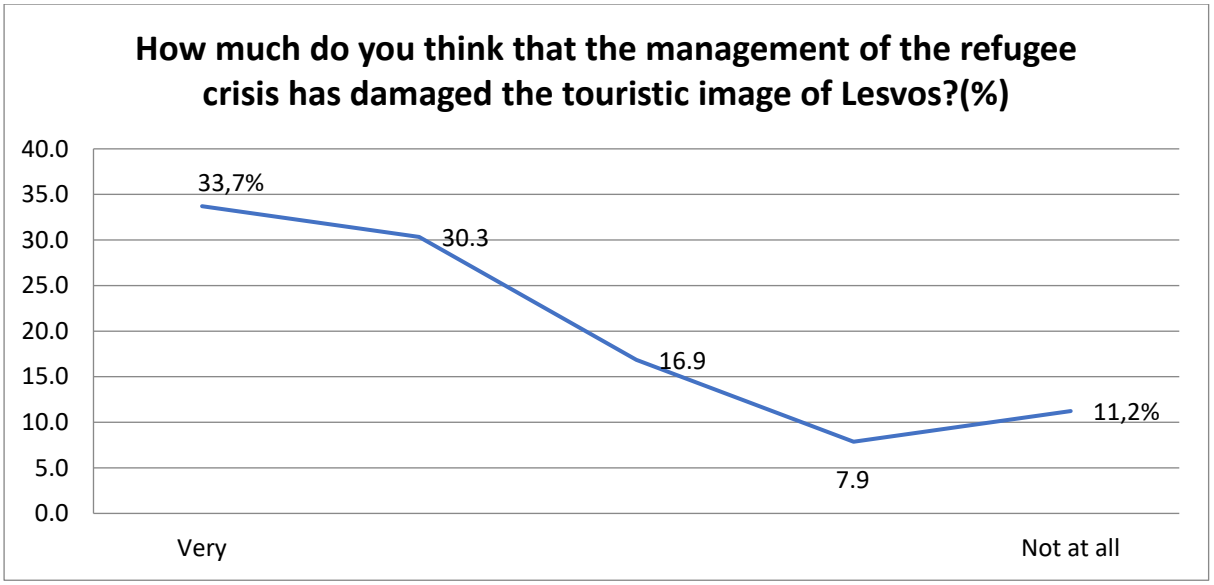
Most of the tourists who visited Lesvos were aware of the refugee crisis in 96.6%, while 51.8% of them seemed to have no influence on their decision to choose Lesvos for their vacations. Most of them (71.3%) were repeaters as they had visited the island before more than once.



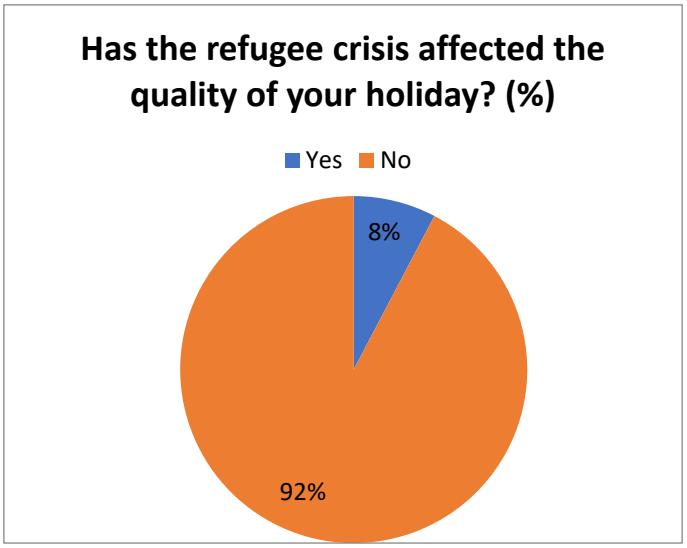
In the next section on image management, on the question of whether Lesvos has a clear touristic identity, 48% consider it not.



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.



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.



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.

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COVID-19: TOURISM AT CROSSROADS! WHERE NEXT?

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Abstract: An unprecedented catastrophe has struck the world in the form of 'Novel Coronavirus', i.e. 'COVID-19', bringing life across countries to a sudden standstill. The pandemic has overwhelmed the tourism industry, creating a multitude of immediate problems like mass unemployment in the labour-intensive tourism industry, business survival questions for the 'direct' and 'indirect' tourism sectors and issues of customer retention. The paper discusses the impact of COVID-19 on travel and tourism and addresses impending concerns of the industry post COVID-19. Now that the reality of this unprecedented catastrophe is staring in the face of an industry at cross roads, it seems apparent that in view of an indefinite long lasting pandemic and its related safety concerns, it will be inevitable for future tourism to choose an entirely new direction. With the contagious disease that has brought to the fore the necessity of 'distancing', the paper also sheds lights on the evolution and challenges of a new norm in tourism post COVID, viz. 'Physical Distancing Tourism'.

Keywords: Tourism, COVID-19, Physical Distancing Tourism

Introduction

Tourism industry is highly vulnerable to crisis situations. Crises are inevitable, 'episodic events that disrupt the tourism and hospitality industry on a regular basis' (McKercher and Hui, 2004:101). Any crisis comes as a 'shock' for the tourism industry (Prideaux, 2004). History has shown time and again that crisis arising out of natural disasters, terrorism, economic downturns and health threats have had an instant adverse impact on tourism (McKercher and Chon, 2004; Pforr and Hosie, 2008; Sönmez, 1998; Sönmez, Apostolopoulos and Tarlow, 1999; Sönmez, and Graefe, 1998; Ritchie, 2008). Early this year a deadly infectious virus i.e. 'Novel Coronavirus', called as 'COVID-19' originated in China and spread like wildfire, taking one country after the other in its throes. In January, COVID-19 was declared by the World Health Organization (WHO) as a 'Global Emergency of International Concern'. Within months the spread of the disease has transformed into a 'pandemic' creating a worldwide health crisis. The omnipresent and omnipotent, invisible lethal virus that is showing no signs of abating, has brought the world to a grinding halt. Countries shaken worldwide are trying to deal with this unexpected crisis. However, in the absence of any vaccination yet, there is looming uncertainty of when things would be brought under control and when a resumption of normal life would become possible. The only way to curtail the transmission of virus as advocated by the WHO, is to, 'Stay Home' and 'Stay Safe' so that the individual can prevent getting infected by the virus and can also guard from unknowingly transmitting the virus to others. City 'shutdowns' and 'lockdowns' have been the universal preventive measure adopted across the globe to keep people from venturing outside. 'Tourism' known to be a highly vulnerable industry, has suffered a direct impact of this crisis. As highlighted by the Secretary General of United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), tourism is among the 'hardest hit' of all economic sectors (UNWTO, 2020). 'Tourists' are considered as a major force spreading contagious diseases across borders. Therefore 'international travel' is often held responsible for serious public health consequences (Richter, 2003) raising heightened concern for cross border travel during times of health emergency (Hollingsworth, Ferguson, and Anderson, 2007; McKercher and Chon, 2004). To remain safe from 'importing' the virus through tourists, most countries have closed their borders to all international travel. In wake of such stringent measures all leisure travel for

tourism stands suspended, casting an indefinite dark shadow over the tourism industry. The outbreak of COVID-19 has created an unexpected survival challenge for the global tourism industry. Regardless, the 'never say die', resilient industry, is gearing up to carve out an entirely new path for recovery that will be shaped by the current crisis. The paper discusses the nature of concerns arising for tourism industry on account of the impact of COVID-19 and also sheds light on a possibly changed and new future tourism scenario.

Impact of COVID and Concerns for Tourism Industry

Research documents that the effect of pandemics is critical for tourism (Cayhanto et al., 2016; Grais, Ellis, and Glass, 2003; Kuo, et al., 2008; Pine and McKercher, 2004; Reisinger and Mavondo, 2005). Pandemics can completely paralyse the tourism industry in terms of halting both 'demand' and 'supply', and this is evident in the current crisis. While tourists have stopped travelling, the tourism supply operations have been grounded resulting in a severe adverse impact on the industry. Consequently, several challenges and concerns have arisen for the industry, as discussed below.

Mass Unemployment

Tourism industry is a major employment provider, providing jobs to more than 330 million people around the world. Business operations crashing on account of the pandemic have resulted in huge layoffs of workforce both in the 'direct' and 'indirect' tourism sectors. For temporary employees, in an industry already known for its 'seasonality', job cuts due to COVID-19 have rendered millions unemployed. Besides, tourism industry is dominated by the 'private sector enterprises' that do not offer job security and this is a major concern for the employees. In the 'management pyramid hierarchy' of employment in tourism, the larger workforce comprises the 'middle' and 'lower' level management of 'semi-skilled' and 'unskilled' workforce, that has taken the direct brunt of unemployment. All industry sectors like transport, accommodation, travel agency business and food and beverage, along with a wide spectrum of 'supporting industries' have been caught unaware and are finding themselves struggling for survival in the absence of business. The severity of the crisis can be gauged from the fact that a successful airline like British Airways has announced '12000 job cuts' and even Qatar Airways has warned of 'substantial job losses'. Taking note of the rising unemployment concerns, the UNWTO Crisis Committee has strongly appealed to countries to save jobs. However, with no income, tourism businesses are finding it impossible to retain employees. Even once things start returning to normalcy, it will be difficult to get back the old workforce, or else make new recruitments from the scratch, which could prove to be a costly and time consuming process for businesses that cannot afford to lose time and are eagerly waiting to be back on track. With no future timeline in sight of businesses resuming operations, and of tourists returning, the unemployment concern in tourism continues to grow.

Industry Survival

Tourism Industry is not a 'Stand Alone' industry. It is a composite of a large number of varied supplementary supporting industries, government and non-government departments and organizations. The 'primary' sector in tourism comprises transport, accommodation, travel facilitation, sightseeing, and shopping and entertainments sector. It is supported by feeding 'secondary' industries like, agriculture, horticulture, manufacturing, floriculture, information, and technology, among many others. The outbreak of COVID-19 has resulted in sudden closure of 'all sectors' (primary and secondary) in wake of lockdowns for safety reasons. Due to travel restrictions, all demand for travel too is at a standstill for an indefinite period of time. Therefore 'all' businesses have gone defunct. For tourism, 'dependent', upon several other industries,

there is the anxiety, that it may not possible to restart and get back to smooth functioning unless and until the 'whole supply chain' (of primary and secondary enterprises) resumes proper operations. The tourism chain cannot hold firm with any weak or broken link.

The role of small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) is highly crucial in tourism. The industry is dominated by SMEs. Bourletidis and Triantafyllopoulos (2014) are of the view that SMEs tend to suffer 'disproportionately' in times of crisis. The situation is apparent during the present pandemic. Most of the SME businesses are 'indebted' under heavy burdens of loans, the repayment of which is possible only if business keeps running. Financial concerns have created another 'survival crisis', especially for SMEs. Businesses are crying out to governments and lending institutions to provide some respite in terms of interest waivers on loans, tax break considerations and financial aid packages. The collapse of 'Virgin Australia' is a classic example of financial crisis affecting the industry. There is anxiety amongst service providers 'if and how' businesses will survive and overcome the financial crunch. Even once the industry is ready to welcome tourists, quick business 'recovery' may not be possible, as most tourists may remain apprehensive about travel for some time, perceiving continuing risks (Lepp and Gibson, 2008; Reisinger and Mavondo, 2005; Roehl and Fesenmaier, 1992). Safety concerns will be detrimental to all their future travel decisions. The industry will need to make a concerted effort to allay the fear of tourists. Hence, to reassure the market and regain its confidence to resume travel, remains a significant challenges post COVID-19.

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) of Businesses

CSR has been an extremely important issue over the last few decades to ensure accountability of businesses towards society (Font and Lynes, 2018; Garay and Font, 2013). Similarly, the 'Triple Bottom Line' (TBL) approach advocates that businesses need to be responsible for the '3 Ps', i.e. 'People', 'Planet' and 'Profit' (Elkington, 1998, 2004). However, till date the primary focus of both the approaches has been 'Environment' i.e. 'Planet'. The concern for 'People' or society has always been side-lined. The attack of COVID on planet earth and its ripple effect on 'Lives and Livelihoods' is now pointing in the direction of importance of 'people' (Carroll, 1999; Freeman, 2001), in several ways, e.g. responsibility of businesses towards their 'employees', responsibility towards 'consumers', and responsibility to the 'society'. However, some degree of responsibility of businesses towards 'social welfare', has been visible during this crisis. E.g. in the absence of customers, several commercial airlines have switched over to 'cargo operations', transporting medical facilities and equipment around the globe; accommodation units have opened their doors turning into 'quarantine areas'; and the food and beverage sector has been actively supplying 'food packets' to the needy and homeless. Of other voluntary social welfare gestures shown by business houses, a striking example is of ExCel centre in London, which offered its premises for establishing the 'Nightingale Hospital' for treatment of COVID patients. In this catastrophe the tourism industry has taken a direct hit, affecting millions of employees, communities, and consumers in terms of 'people', leaving 'all' in the lurch. Unprepared for a catastrophe of this magnitude, majority of paralyzed businesses have shown 'little' or 'no' social accountability during this crisis. Therefore, strengthening business accountability laws (CSR) for future is a critical issue which will be detrimental for 'credibility' of businesses in future.

Force Majeure

'*Force Majeure'* is a French term used to describe a situation that is 'unforeseeable', 'unavoidable' and 'impossible' to overcome (Baker McKenzie, 2020). It can be an 'unexpected' human created catastrophe, or an 'Act of God', beyond human control, which 'forces cancellation of contracts' between parties. COVID-19 is an ideal example of how *Force Majeure*

has struck the tourism industry. The sudden suspension of all industry operations has led to huge unavoidable cancellations in tourism and its composite sectors. Businesses are clueless of how to deal with upset customers claiming refunds. The travel insurance companies too have never come across such a global travel halt, whereby they are liable to adjust large scale insurance claims. On one hand is the sudden loss of business and income, a major financial crunch, and on the other hand, is the threat of losing consumer market. Hence, it is a tricky situation that needs to be handled tactfully. To avoid refunds some airlines are now offering vouchers to customers for future rescheduled travel within a year. However, consumers who are not planning to travel in the foreseeable future have created a dilemma for businesses that cannot decide whether to 'refund' the customers or 'lose them' and their trust for good. Besides, a complex *Force Majeure* situation like this is likely to deter cautious tourists from making way ahead advance bookings in future. This may lead to a continuous uncertainty about business security and may necessitate framing specific crisis management strategies (Faulkner, 2001; Laws and Prideaux, 2005; Martens, Feldesz and Merten, 2016; Ritchie, 2004; Santana, 2004; Sausmarez, 2007) that can help survive *Force Majeure*.

Considering the impact of the unprecedented COVID-19 crisis on tourism and its related concerns, now tourism industry seems to be lost at crossroads. It is difficult to gauge 'when' and 'how' things will be back to business and what path the industry should be treading next. Nevertheless, it is certain that this pandemic is showing the tourism industry a direction towards reshaping itself for future, with 'health and safety' concerns at the core.

Rethinking Tourism – Where Next?

The Novel Coronavirus has proved to be a highly transferrable disease, the spread of which needs close monitoring. Attributing 'human contact' as the reason for its fast spread, countries decided on strict lockdowns and shutting complete cities, requiring people to 'stay put' or 'stay home', as the only solution to contain the spread. To discourage people from travelling, all transport operations were grounded. Such a step, though highly disastrous for tourism, had to be universally accepted in the interest of 'saving lives'. Amidst a global shutdown and continuing uncertainty of when the virus will be completely wiped off the face of the earth, the future of tourism now stands in limbo. No one can predict 'when' tourists will be ready to travel again. Research documents that post disaster the travel decisions of tourists tend to be governed by their risk perceptions (Kozak, Crotts, and Law, 2007; Law, 2006; Rittichainuwat and Chakraborty, 2009; Sharifpour, Walters, and Ritchie, 2014). As there is no guaranteed end of the virus in sight, the WHO and countries are beginning to accept that 'we will have to learn to live with the virus'. This suggests that post COVID the risks of travel will remain indefinitely lasting and it will not be easy for businesses to reassure tourists any time soon and motivate them to start travelling. The assessment of the present situation indicates that all future travel and tourism will require a drastically changed scenario. Introduction of 'stringent travel rules' (e.g. immunity certificates, necessary vaccination, mandatory masking, physical distancing, changed visa rules, etc.) will be on the top of agenda of countries worldwide, in order to minimize health risks and to guard against any future transmission or recurrence of the disease. The framing and enforcement of a new 'code of ethics' (for tourist, residents and businesses) might become indispensable to ensure 'responsible behaviour' and accountability of businesses, local communities and tourists.

Mulling 'Physical Distancing Tourism' - A Challenge Ahead

Coronavirus spreads through respiratory droplets, invariably when an infected person coughs or sneezes. Hence the best way to keep safe is to 'keep distance' from people. Early in the year, the WHO started using the terminology 'Social Distancing'. Within a few months the term has

gained immense weightage in global vocabulary. However recently, it was pointed out by experts, social psychologists, and sociologists that the usage of the term 'social distancing' is not correct as it implies getting socially and emotionally disconnected with others (loved ones, friends and society). Hence, the term has recently been deliberated upon by experts and the WHO has decided to replace 'social distancing', with a more agreeable term i.e. 'Physical Distancing' (Kaur, 2020). 'Physical Distancing' implies maintaining safe 'geographical distance' from one another. While WHO recommends a safe distance of 'three feet' i.e. one meter, a distance of 'two meters' is suggested by other experts, to avoid transmission of the virus. Thus, physical isolation all the time from others in terms of a 'safe distance' has emerged as a new norm in society and will carry on in the foreseeable future, until the complete end of the invisible COVID enemy is not confirmed. The 'Physical Distancing' norm has already percolated in all aspects of our lives, dealings, and business operations as a 'requirement'. Keeping this in view, the tourism industry too is mulling over the emergence of perhaps a new future concept in travel and tourism viz. 'Physical Distancing Tourism'. However, the idea of this 'new norm' and 'new form' of tourism, has started raising eyebrows, with businesses voicing ample concerns for its possibility, implementation, and viability. In case, 'Physical Distancing Tourism', does evolve, it will come with several challenges, some of which are highlighted in the ensuing discussion.

Physical Distancing - Safety and Stringent Accessibility Rules

The fear of the virus being omnipresent and lingering on for an indefinite period will necessitate changing of travel rules and regulations, making them 'stricter' for health and safety concerns. To limit mass tourism in the interest of distancing for safety, accessibility rules may become stringent for visas, insurance, and vaccination. It is already under consideration by several countries to introduce a 'COVID-19 immunity certificate' as an essential requirement for travel. Several countries are also planning on mandatory '14 days quarantine' for all incoming traffic. However, tourists may not welcome this move, as they would not want to land at their destination and first be quarantined for 14 days before venturing out. In this view, stricter rules may discourage tourists to travel, or even force them to change their destination choice in favour of countries that allow easy access. This may result in certain countries losing out on tourist markets and thereby suffering economic losses. It has been noted during the pandemic that some of the top ranking popular tourism destination countries (in terms of international tourist arrivals) have taken the top ranks of COVID affected countries as well, i.e. Spain, Italy, France, Germany, U.K and U.S.A. Affected seriously by the virus, if these countries consider re-opening with stringent restrictions post COVID, they might witness a steep decline in arrivals. The statistics may completely alter their rankings and popularity, consequently affecting the economy of nations, particularly threatening the ones that are highly dependent on tourism. Hence stringent rules, though the need of the hour, can become a problem for tourism.

Physical Distancing - Challenging the Ethos of Tourism

Since ages, tourism has been about 'learning about people and cultures' around the world. The very ethos of tourism is 'socio cultural interaction'. The 'authentic experience' of tourism is only gained through 'one-to-one', 'in person', interaction between tourists and hosts, and interaction amongst tourists from different backgrounds. Ironically, if physical distancing becomes the new norm, it will not allow mingling of people. Rather, it will only encourage the withdrawal of tourists into their cocoons of individual 'environment bubble'. To strictly keep the tourists and local communities physically distanced from one another and to even force tourists travelling together to keep at bay from one another, will pose an immense challenge regarding enforcing distancing. The implementation of physical distancing will be highly questionable, particularly in Socio-cultural Event based tourism, Homestay and Airbnb tourism, all of which thrive upon

providing an ‘authentic experience’ through interaction. Therefore, practicing a tourism that isolates one from the other, could end up destroying the very 'ethos' of tourism, i.e. socio-cultural interaction.

Physical Distancing- Service Industry Concerns

Physical Distancing as a necessity will pose significant challenges for service providers in terms of ‘limiting customers’ to ‘mind the gap’. The transport industry has been the first to flag the contentious issue. No transport considers it financially viable to operate its fleet with vacant seats to ensure distancing. Several airlines are finding it ‘illogical’ and absurd to be forced to distance passenger by leaving seats ‘vacant’ and selling much lower than capacity. In response, airlines e.g. Ryan Air and Spice Jet have already threatened to ground their operations and many others may follow suit. It is also being speculated that airfares might increase by 50% if middle seats are required to be left vacant. Such an increase in airfares will inevitably result in a heavy burden on the pockets of the tourists who may choose 'not to travel at all'. Same is the case with restaurant operators who are unwilling to leave tables free for the purpose of ‘spacing out’ and ‘limiting’ number of customers. The accommodation industry too cannot figure out how it can make any changes to its supply in case physical distancing becomes mandatory. Hence, the whole service industry has been compelled to ponder over working out the tough logistics and financial implications of a future ‘Physical Distancing Tourism’.

Physical Distancing - Selective Tourism

Physical distancing might necessitate businesses to narrow down from mass tourism to ‘Selective Tourist Markets’. In case airline operations take a long time to resume, or else, airlines ground their operations, then ‘long-haul’ tourism might not be possible. However, for land locked countries or those sharing physical borders, ‘short-haul’ traffic from neighbouring markets accessible by surface transport may become the new focused ‘selective market’. Besides, businesses may now be necessitated to cater to selective ‘educated and responsible’ tourist segments alone, who understand and respect distancing for health safety reasons and obey the mandatory do’s and don’ts. For the travel agency businesses, selectivity would imply taking a tough call about deciding on ‘tourism destinations’ and ‘tourist markets’ to deal with. Several top destinations like Spain, France, Italy, UK, USA have been severely affected by Coronavirus and it is likely that ‘Outbound’ businesses may shy away from these countries due to reluctance of tourists to visit the same. On the other hand, ‘Inbound’ travel companies may now think twice with regard to dealing with the lucrative market of China (the origin of the virus), a market that cannot be ignored as it is the highest revenue generator, but has now become stigmatized, generating global Xenophobia. Therefore, in view of health and safety, what to do, or not to do, in terms of business selectivity will become a major cause of worry for the industry.

Physical Distancing - Shift from ‘Group Inclusive Travel’ (GIT) to ‘Free Independent Travel’ (FIT)

Physical distancing is difficult to achieve when tourism businesses are dealing with group tours, or families travelling together. If physical distancing is to be the new norm, then the industry might need to rethink shifting from organizing large group inclusive tours (GIT) to tours for smaller groups, families, or free independent tourists (FIT). Dealing with smaller groups could facilitate more control and monitoring of tourists and could be the best way to ensure security of ‘minimal interaction’ with strangers. However, distancing will be difficult to manage for family groups or couples who may not be willing for the same. All though a good measure to

ensure safety, a shift from GIT to FIT, may also not be financially viable for travel companies that deal with large group / *en masse* travel.

Physical Distancing - Decongestion and Visitor Management

Tourism hubs around the world are largely concentrated in metropolitan 'urban areas' that are usually overcrowded and polluted. If physical distancing is to be enforced in future, there will be a need to move away from tourism concentrations and disperse the tourist traffic to the 'outskirts' or peripheral areas/attractions. Hence 'decongestion' of core destinations (to enable distancing) will have to be planned by tourism planning and destination management organizations (DMOs). Such re-planning could become economically favourable for rural or lesser developed areas where new forms of tourism could be encouraged in the form of Handicraft tourism, Creative tourism, Horticulture tourism and Farm tourism, among others. All such forms can cater to smaller groups of tourists in clean, safe, and pristine environments that can ensure an enriched quality of experience. Besides, decongestion, 'visitor management' too will need to be strictly adopted at all tourist attractions to control number of tourists that can be permitted keeping a safe distance from one another. Though highly desirable for safety, both these measures are bound to raise concerns of management planning and revenue loss. On account of COVID it is apparent that the idea and reality of physical distancing has already started gaining increasing importance in our lives and is becoming a crucial requirement. Distancing will be become indispensable in travel and tourism phenomenon as well. If 'Physical Distancing Tourism' becomes a necessity, it will demand radical changes in the industry and ignite serious debates about implementation issues.

Conclusion

Time and again tourism has faced various kinds of disasters. However, repeatedly the industry has bounced back swiftly and proved its strong resilience. While localized disasters do not have a serious effect on global travel, the spread of any contagious diseases across the globe is bound to have disastrous implications for tourism industry. This is evident from the way the outbreak of COVID-19 has created an unprecedented health safety crisis around the globe. The tourism industry has taken the direct hit of the pandemic, consequently coming to an instant standstill. The industry is now overwhelmed with multiple challenges that stand tall barricading its future. Examining the nature of challenges and the dilemmas created for travel and tourism, the study concludes that this pandemic should be seen as an 'eye opener' for businesses to gear up and devise firm response strategies to be better prepared for crisis situations. In addition, catastrophes have often necessitated businesses to drastically change their future course and introduce new operations. This pandemic too, is leading to a path of introduction of drastic changes in travel and tourism revolving around the need of 'physical distancing', which has become imperative for safety. Henceforth, the tourism industry would need to adopt a more flexible approach to 'adapt to' changing unpredictable scenarios, and even proactively initiate innovate steps 'to change' the shape of things to come.

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HOTELIERS' SOURCES OF BARGAINING POWER WITH BRITISH TOUR OPERATORS: A BARBADOS CASE STUDY

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Abstract: This discussion explores, from a Caribbean perspective, the nature of the relationships and the sources of bargaining power between British tour operators and Barbados hoteliers. The paper aims to illuminate sources of power asymmetries that exist within the tourism/hospitality context and, in turn, assists Barbados hoteliers with improving their bargaining power status with British tour operators. Contractual agreements between hotels and tour operators can work unfavourably for hotels and resorts of the Caribbean since it restricts their profitability, performance, competitiveness, and long-term financial sustainability as tour operators demand lower net rates. The paper addresses two research questions: (1) What leverage tool (s) could be used by Barbadian hoteliers to neutralize the power of British tour operators in the negotiations process? (2) How could a dialogical (Poon, 1994) environment be created to facilitate real cooperation between the two stakeholders? An eclectic qualitative approach to information gathering involving mystery shopping, personal professional experience, literature reviews and elite interviews with hotel managers who are members of the Barbados Hotel and Tourism Association was undertaken. The results suggest that a penta hexa model of stakeholder collaboration is necessary in order for Barbadian hotels to become more competitive and less dependent on British tour operators.

Keywords: Crisis management, distribution channels, tour operators, tourism marketing, tourism management

Introduction

Caribbean islands encounter several challenges in attracting tourists. Due to a lack of topographical and other natural, financial, and human resources, there is a heavy dependency on tourism, which has precipitated a reliance on foreign capital and transnational enterprise (Reid & Reid, 1994). Among these transnationals are the large independent and integrated British tour operators. Tour operators have grown into large 'power houses', allowing them to control price, product, and tourism flows that influence tourism demand to the Caribbean (Pattulo, 2006). This power allows the tour operators to exert pressure on accommodation providers, particularly small medium tourism enterprises (SMTEs) in peripheral destinations, during negotiation processes for contractual room allocation. Contractual agreements usually work unfavourably for hotels and resorts of the Caribbean since it restricts their profitability, performance, competitiveness, and long-term financial sustainability as tour operators demand lower net rates.

The power of British tour operators has been studied by various researchers (Bastakis, Buhalis & Butler, 2004; Buhalis, 2000; Gartner & Bachri, 1994; Stuart, Pearce & Weaver, 2005) in relation to other regions with similar characteristics; but, there is still a lack of research that explicitly examines the antecedents of bargaining power of buyers (tour operators) and suppliers (hoteliers) experiencing asymmetric bargaining power in relation to the Caribbean region. This paper reports the results of a mystery shopping investigation into the practices of British tour operators in their relations with Barbados hoteliers. The themes uncovered in the mystery shopping investigation were further explored by semi-structured interviews and

conversations with hoteliers who manage Small Medium Sized Tourism Enterprises of 10-100 rooms on the island. Past and present industry officials were also interviewed. The objective of this paper is to uncover strategies that would lead to a sustainable partnership between British tour operators and Barbadian hoteliers *in lieu* of the current relationship based on power. On that basis, this paper is going to address two research questions: first, what leverage tools could be used by Barbadian hoteliers to balance out the power of British tour operators; and, secondly, how could a dialogical (Poon, 1994) environment be created to facilitate real cooperation between the two stakeholders?

Literature Review

Barbados is located at the southern end of the archipelago that makes up the islands of the eastern Caribbean. Since the island's independence in 1966, the economy of Barbados has been transformed from a low-income economy dependent upon sugar production into an upper-middle-income economy based on tourism and the offshore sector. In 2010, the United Nations Development Index declared Barbados as a developed country based on its excellent quality of life and high standard living. With an estimated population of 287,375 individuals in 2020, Barbados traditionally promotes itself as an upmarket tourist destination with a 'snob appeal' that demands a premium price. Its comparative advantage is derived from the 3-Ss of Sea, Sun and Sand but the island's distinctiveness is enhanced by an array of attractions including several historical sites, cultural activities, beautiful beaches, friendly citizens and special events. Due to historical and geo-political ties, the United Kingdom (UK) is responsible for over thirty-six percent (36%) of all visitors to Barbados (IMF, 2018). Around twenty-six (26%) of all arrivals are from the United States with the remainder from Brazil, Canada, Germany, Italy, the Caribbean region, and the rest of the world (Barbados Hotel and Tourism Association, 2018). Barbados is one of the most visited destinations of the Caribbean (Séraphin, Gowreesunkar, Roselé-Chim, Duplan & Korstanje, 2018), but the primary concern for Barbados' hoteliers is yield management where the markets are becoming more competitive and visitors are choosing destinations mainly by price (Reid & Reid, 1994).

Role and Functions of Tour Operators

As in other peripheral areas tour operators have become major players in the inward flow of tourists to the island of Barbados, controlling air transport and the flow of visitors to the various accommodation establishments (Bastakis, Buhalis & Butler, 2004; Buhalis, 2000; Gartner and Bachri, 1994; Stuart, Pearce & Weaver, 2005). Tour operators negotiate with airlines, accommodation and ground transportation providers and attractions for services to be contracted at net rates. These rates are significantly lower than the rates published by the supplier to the public. In the Caribbean hotel industry, net rates can represent discounts of twenty to sixty percent (20-60%) off the published rack rates. The tour operator will bundle together the various components of the travel experience, add their surcharges to the net rates and market and sell these at one price to the travel consumer. However, there are several role conflicts between hotels and tour operators that have been reported in the literature. Buhalis (2000) Bastakis *et al* (2004) noted that the major source of conflicts between hotels and tour operators was the over controlling practices of tour operators and their contentious bargaining for lower hotel rates. Lee, Guillet & Law (2008) noted that the underlying theoretical explanation for imbalance in bargaining power is due to information asymmetries. When agents (tour operators) have more information that the principles (hotels) principles are likely to have difficulties with their agents. The dependence of Barbados on tour operators is derived from the fact that European consumers regard tour operators as experts on long-haul travel. The greater the distance between the visitors' point of origin and the destination the more important and influential the intermediary is to the prospective tourist's

vacation choices (Gartner & Bachri, 1994). These dynamics, as well as the lack of business and market information, make Barbados hotels depend almost exclusively on tour operators for their business out of the UK (Bastakis, Buhalis & Butler, 2004).

Competition, Concentration and Saturation

The tour operator operates in a very capitalistic and liberalized economic system and thus seeks to solidify its market position through oligopolistic control of transportation companies (charter airlines) retailers (travel agencies) and hotels. Integration has influenced the strategic growth and advantageous market positioning of several companies facilitated by monopoly, and market domination (Dale, 2000; Inkson & Minnaert, 2012; Klemm & Parkinson, 2001; Mohammad & Ammar, 2015). Tour operators compete against other operators that feature and sell the same undifferentiated products to the same market segments (Inkson & Minnaert, 2012). Inkson & Minnaert (2012) note that the elasticity of demand of tourism products means that the ability to compete is dependent on the operator's ability to beat their competitors on price. As tour, operators are increasingly forced to lower their prices to maintain their market share the hotel becomes the first port of call for lower accommodation rates. Problems occur in the relationships between hotels and tour operators when one partner focusses on achieving their own goals at the expense of the partner at the other end of the supply chain (Mohammad & Ammar, 2015). It is at this point when power issues, exploitation of market position and over-controlling tactics dominate these relationships. The uncontested, oligopolistic position of the tour operator enables them to use various tactics to exert pressure on hotels. These may involve covert coercion, intimidation, manipulation and hoteliers' ignorance of market trends and dependency on them (Buhalis, 2000).

Methodology

Information Gathering

In August 2009, AB Boutique Hotel in Barbados conducted a mystery shopper's investigation into how UK tour operators' call center agents were representing the hotel to potential customers. A mystery shopper's investigation is a form of covert participant observation. A shopper's investigation is common in the services and retail sector to investigate the quality of services and the relationships of personnel with clients. Mystery shopping investigations involve an investigator posing as a customer who may call anonymously (mystery calling), visit (mystery shopping) or email (mystery mailing) the company under investigation. Mystery shopping is widely used in the services sector to investigate, review, or assess service performance (Douglas, 2015). For this investigation, the shoppers were mystery callers (Van der Wiele, Hesselink, & Van Iwaarden, 2005). At the time of the shoppers' investigation this researcher was an employee of AB Boutique Hotel. Consequently, the researcher was not able to publish this work due to it being a corporate document and the need to be confidential. To discuss the document before may have compromised many people's jobs and trust. However, over the passage of time and since embarking on an academic career, the researcher was able to use the knowledge gained from this experience to inform further research including this paper. The researcher also wanted to determine if the issues identified in the mystery shopping investigation still hold ten (10) years later.

The mystery shopping investigation highlighted some shocking revelations and identified themes and issues that prompted an intense literature review and semi-structured elite interviews and conversations with a purposive sample of ten (10) Barbados hoteliers in 2017/18. The hoteliers were selected from the membership directory of the Barbados Hotel

and Tourism Association (B.H.T.A.) and care was taken to include participants who were general managers, reservation agents, marketing managers or owners of other similar boutique hotels on the island who had contact with British tour operators. Elite interviewing is a technique, which is increasingly being used in the hospitality, tourism, and event industries (Hede & Kellett, 2008). Interviews took place at the participants' offices and sometimes over lunch or dinner at the respective hotels in Barbados. The average length of an interview was one (1) to two (2) hours. Participants were chosen based on their special knowledge, expertise, and experiences in the hospitality industry. Due to the sensitive and controversial nature of this research care had to be taken to protect the identity of the informants as they are all still working in the sector and did not want to be linked to this research. As a result, the participants' age, length of service, job role, the name of organisation they represent, and social and political affiliations cannot be detailed in this paper. Each participant was asked to review their narratives for accuracy but also to ensure that their publication did not compromise their jobs and to establish ecological validity (Wickens, 1999).

Results:

Misquoting Travel Demand Statistics/Creating Illusions of Poor Demand

Tour operators use a variety of techniques and tricks to drive hotel rates down. Tour operators will negotiate for an allotment of rooms, which, if not sold, is released back to the hotel for general sale without any cancellation penalty being imposed. Contractual arrangements would generally include a release period ranging from two (2) weeks to forty-eight (48) hours prior to arrival. When demand and occupancies are low tour operators might complain to hotels that their property "is not selling" with the intention of compelling hoteliers to grant further discounted net rates. Hoteliers reported that tour operators would withhold early bookings by taking advantage of the latest release option in their contracts to increase their bargaining power for less expensive room rates. When the hotel offers the cheaper rates, the tour operator may then release the previously held bookings to the hotel to create in the mind of the hotelier the illusion that it is the additional discounts that precipitated the newly reported bookings; but the tour operator would have been holding the bookings for some time without reporting them to the hotel.

Although there are variations, a release period of two weeks prior to arrival is common; however, during periods of low demand release dates can be as close as 48 hours prior to arrival. This can be problematic, as it does not give the hotel in the remote Caribbean region enough time to dispose of unused stock. Hotels on islands do not benefit from last minute 'walk-ins' like hotels in large metropolitan cities. Unlike tangible goods, hotel rooms are perishable and any rooms that are not utilised will result in lost revenue for the hotel. Unoccupied rooms do not generate any revenue for hoteliers and cannot be reflected in the inventory for future use (Dong & Ling, 2015). Any inability of the tour operators to sell out their allotment means that the hotel will attempt to attract last minute customers, which results in even further discounting. The revenue manager may risk overbooking the hotel to combat any unused rooms by tour operators. In cases of overbookings, some guests may have to be relocated to other hotels at the destination. This revenue manager recalled a severe case of overbooking at a west coast resort in the middle of a winter season. They claimed:

"We had to call people and tell them not to leave their countries because we could not find any alternative accommodation on the island".

The inability to adequately manage room inventory due to the unpredictability of tour operator demand means that hotels run the risk of selling too many rooms at too low a price. Tour

operators impose severe penalties on hotels if their clients are 'bumped.' During the high season, hotels may displace high-paying transient guests to accommodate tour operator clients to avoid penalties (Kimes & Lord, 1994) which will incur further losses.

Investments in capital ventures

The shoppers' reported that although they asked the tour operator agents to book AB Boutique Hotel the agents frequently re-directed them to other properties in Barbados and sometimes to other destinations in the Caribbean, particularly St Lucia. This is known as 'directional selling'. 'Directional selling' or 'switched selling' is the attempted sale by a vertically integrated tour operator of the vacation packages of one of its vertically integrated partners. The practice has been criticized on the basis that it gives customers limited choices and is anti-competitive. (Hudson, Snaith, Miller & Hudson, 2001). Koutoulas (2006), noted that TUI, one of the largest integrated operators in the UK and Europe, had a policy of selling TUI hotels first and other properties after. Investments into hotels at the destination by tour operators is common as it gives tour operators more power to prescribe room rates and to offer cheaper holidays. During the semi-structured interviews, it was revealed that a loan from a large British tour operator to a local hotel in exchange for preferential rates resulted in the hotel entering financial difficulty when the tour operator could not sell out its exclusive allotment of rooms. Picazo & Moreno-Gill (2018) warned that when negotiating trade agreements with tour operators, hoteliers should be aware that tour operator ownership or partnership of any kind results in a negative impact on the final price.

The mystery shoppers reported that they were frequently told that AB Boutique Hotel had no availability when, in fact, the property was wide open. Previous studies on other similar regions report that tour operators would mislead customers by repulsing them from using certain properties by citing unfounded issues or problems or by telling them that the hotel is full or 'unavailable' (Buhalis, 2000). Buhalis (2000) explains that operators are keen to fill allocations in certain hotels first, particularly hotels for destinations that offer greater profit margins through last minute deals or the ones that they own. Tour operators can manipulate the competition among the various hotels and destinations within the same competitive set as they control the airlift capacity and price (Papatheodorou, 2006). The oligopolistic position of the tour operators enables them to influence tourism development and demand due to their pricing policies, image manipulation, volume planning, promotional activities, and contracting practices (Carey and Gountas, 1997). These dynamics put hotels who depend on tour operator channels in a very vulnerable position. The relationship between many small hotels and tour operators is anything but a partnership but can be one of domination and subjugation.

Mystery shoppers reported that they were frequently told that Barbados was *unromantic*, had *too many children* or had *too much traffic* to persuade them to travel to St. Lucia. In cases where a potential visitor may call the hotel directly to make an independent booking, hoteliers faced punitive or punishment strategies from the tour operator if they took the booking. Interviewees noted that if the tour operator became aware, they might pull the hotel from the brochures. Other hoteliers reported having to pay the tour operator commission even though the customer booked directly. A reservations manager reported that the tour operator would expect you to refuse any attempts by customers to book direct and expects the hotel to refer the customer back to them.

Hoteliers noted that they would frequently receive calls from customers claiming that the tour operator price of the holiday was as much as fifty percent (50%) more than what they would pay if they booked direct. Some hoteliers noted, however, that because the tour

operators control about seventy percent (70%) of the airlift and airline seats coming into the island, the customer frequently had no choice but to book with the tour operator. In small hotels any rooms that go unsold substantially increases the unit cost of the operation while reducing the occupancy and revenue levels. From my professional experience: "You must make a judgement call. If the customer is a known repeat customer of a tour operator it is probably best to send them back to the tour operator otherwise, you should take the booking". Another marketing manager informed that they were mandated by company directors to increase the level of direct bookings to their resort. They noted: "I would take the risk and make the booking". Direct bookings are important due to the lower transaction cost incurred by the hotel. Direct customers are also more likely to pay up-front and in advance for their holidays. With no intermediary involved, commission expenses are eliminated enabling better yield management. Although the relationship between hotels and tour operators can be considered a partnership, the fact is that both parties are also competing against each other for the same customers. This can lead to vertical conflict and to one channel member perceiving the other to be engaged in behaviour that prevents or impedes it from achieving its goals. This can lead to the tour operator retaliating by refusing to continue selling the hotel's products (Tan & Dwyer, 2014).

Using Stories and Scenarios that Play on Hoteliers' Sensitivities/ Fabricating Stories of Negative Customer Dissatisfaction

The semi-structured interviews revealed that tour operators would sometimes ask hotels to honour rates that they claimed were erroneously misquoted to customers, to force the hotels to accept bookings below the contracted rate. This hotelier claimed:

"Generally, conflicts are resolved quite easily as we are willing to work together with operators to ensure the client is not disadvantaged. One of the challenges you find is where the operator may have quoted a lesser rate in error. In instances like this we may go 50/50 with the operator in covering the difference".

Another informant advised that rather than refuse the booking the hotel would barter with the tour operator for more visibility in the brochure in exchange for accepting the lower rate. They noted:

"This is not a one-off occurrence ….it is happening quite regularly, and it is very aggravating. I would be inclined to refuse the booking but then the tour operator would go to the marketing manager who would accept the booking claiming that it is good for relations".

Many hoteliers place high value on these relationships as partnerships where the tour operators does the marketing and make the bookings so that they could focus on their core operational function as service providers.

Employing Intimidation or Scare Tactics

Tour operators would often misquote travel statistics, employ intimidation tactics, or play hotels against each other at the destination to compel them to give further rate reductions. Claiming that a hotel of a higher category at the destination has quoted a lower rate is a frequently used tactic to create the illusion of fake competition between hotels at the destination. During the seasonal downturn, the tour operator may use fallacious travel demand statistics or exaggerate the impacts of negative political events to justify the further lowering of room rates. One informant revealed that during re-contracting operators would ask for as much as a further fifty percent (50%) off the already existing contracted room rates.

The consequences of such heavy discounting were a change in the demographics of the guests that are staying on tour operator packages and a concomitant increase in complaints. They noted that:

*"*All the guest do now is complain about little things trying to get refunds or things free. You can see a change in the type of guests as a lower market person to the type of person that used to stay with us*".*

The tour operators frequently sent their own staff to act as 'reps' at the destination. Hoteliers agreed that reps would sometimes incite guests into complaining by using the trust that guests place in dealing with people of their own ethnicity (King, Dwyer, & Prideaux 2006). Tour operators may negotiate for 'run-of-the-house' rooms which drives the rate down further but gives the hotelier the flexibility to assign rooms of a lower classification so that the premium rooms can be reserved for sale to customers who pay premium prices. However, this informant noted that hotel guests would complain about the 'run-of-the-house' room, the services, or facilities to make a case for an upgrade to an ocean view room without paying the surcharge. A south coast hotelier noted that*:* "It appears that complaining is now the thing to do while on holiday to get the vacation for as little as possible. Complaining about food poisoning is a recurring complaint"*.* Tour representatives will try to negotiate a settlement in favor of the customer. From professional experience: "it's easier to give the refund or upgrade because you don't want to enter into a dispute with the tour operator. This may result in them pulling you from the brochure and they will deduct it from the payment anyway". It is difficult for hotels to fight back under such circumstances since the tour operator contract transfers the liabilities for poor service to the hotel.

Misrepresentation of Hotel Star Ratings

Tour operators would misrepresent the star rating of the hotels by overstating its star classification. When guests arrive, if the services and facilities are not to their expectation, this may lead to complaints and compensation being paid. This informant noted: "We were a 4-start hotel, but a tour operator sold us as a 5-star". Ordinarily, a hotel of a higher classification would attract a higher price thereby increasing tour operator profits. As stated by the informant*: "*When you sell a 4-star hotel as a 5-star the expectation of service and facilities are high". This hotel refunded millions of pounds over time to customers who were disappointed when they arrived because they were misled or not properly informed about the hotel by the tour operator. Tour operators have a strong influence on the nature of the information communicated to the clients before and during the holiday, which influences the consumption patterns and expectations of the visitor. Tour operators typically classify hotels and resorts to meet their own brand specification; but this often presents a distorted, image of the resort. Image distortion and limited information creates unrealistic expectations of the tourism product, which can lead to dissatisfaction and complaints.

Withholding or Delaying Payments

Tour operators would withhold payment until the last minute sometimes leaving hotels in serious overdrafts and scrambling for cash to pay local suppliers and staff. The visitor pays the tour operator in advance for their holidays but, the large tour operators require a thirty to forty-five (30-45) days credit facility. Buhalis (2000) notes that tour operators typically earn as much as twenty-five percent (25%) of their revenue from interest on clients' money as it sits in their bank in the metropole. Frequently, the failure of tour operators to pay on time has resulted in Barbados hotels applying for additional overdraft facilities to meet financial obligations and in turn paying interest on these loans or overdrafts.

Funding Additional Promotional Campaigns

Normally a brochure contribution is negotiated in the initial phases of rate negotiations. In addition to the initial brochure contribution, tour operators would often ask hotels to fund further additional campaigns usually midway in the contract cycle. These campaigns would be designed to communicate additional discounts or travel incentives to customers. Participants reported that tour operators would attempt to renegotiate their contracts by asking for additional discounts plus a monetary contribution of a specified amount towards the campaign cost. Desperation and FOMO (fear of missing out) may prompt the hotelier to participate in the campaign. However, a disadvantage for the hotel is that such arrangements are risky and based on trust. The hotel manager would not be able to see how the extra money is spent. Any additional business derived from the additional campaigns may not necessarily accrue to the hotel and if it does, it may be difficult to demarcate it from other business.

Not Passing Extra Discounts onto Customers

Another frequent complaint from hoteliers is that extra discounts given to tour operators to stimulate business were not always passed onto customers. Hoteliers complained that these discounts would still be deducted from the operator's final payment to the hotel thereby increasing the tour operators' profit margins. Such is the level of distrust that one hotelier noted that they have adopted the practice of copying-in the customer on any correspondence to tour operators concerning the level of refund that they will be receiving for their complaints.

Butler (1980) warns that the price sensitive, mass packaged, standardized, and institutionalized travel market will lead to the gradual decay of the destinations' facilities, its appeal, and a decline in earnings per visitor. Travelers will then seek out newer and un-spoilt destinations as the tour operator shifts the tourists flow to newer and fresher destinations with more appealing and newer facilities. Clearly Barbados' travel trade model of destination marketing directed at the travel trade cannot meet the country's future growth requirements in terms of foreign exchange, jobs, tax revenues, skills and knowledge transfer, increased productivity, or competitiveness. In addition, with so many hotels being all inclusive immediate action is needed to address this situation. **Table 1** below summarizes the findings from the literature and interviews into four (4) conceptual themes.

Table 1: Tactics used by British tour operators to reduce hotel rates in Barbados

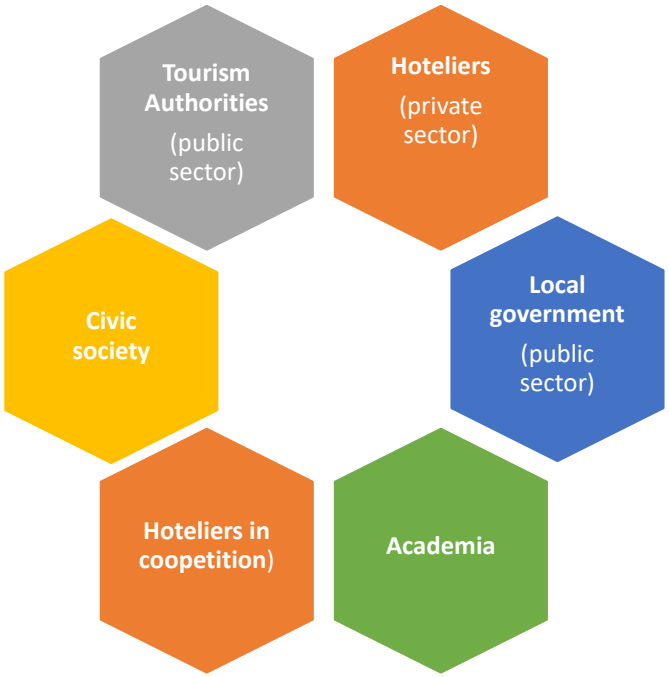
• **Unethical practices (deception)**	• Misquoting travel demand statistics/Creating illusions of poor demand • Withholding advanced bookings to create illusions of poor demand • Creating stories and scenarios that play on hoteliers' sensitivities • Reporting in advance bookings only after receiving lower rates • Withholding payment/Late payment • Fabricating stories of customer dissatisfaction • Inciting customers to complain once at the destination • Not passing on discounts to travelers but deducting additional discounts from hotel invoices to maximize profits • Closing out hotels in operating systems • Misrepresenting hotel start ratings • Overinflating the cost of the vacation
• **Intimidation/Over controlling tactics**	• Intimidating contractual tactics • Playing hotels against the other at the destination • Threatening to remove hotels from brochures • Redirecting visitors to other properties or islands/destinations • Withholding payment or late payment
• **Negotiation**	• Negotiating brochure contribution in initial contracts • Asking hotels to fund additional marketing campaigns • Negotiating for run-of-the-house rates • Negotiating/Renegotiating advantageous cut-off periods • Re-negotiation of rates midway into contractual period.
• **Strategic Alliances**	• Vertical and horizontal alliances • Capital investments and loans into hotels at the destination in return for preferential rates • Representation services at the destination through local companies/own representatives • Market domination through oligopolistic structures

Recommendations

Collaboration in the tourism industry

In the tourism industry there is a trend toward collaboration among stakeholders (Gayle & Goodrich, 2015). Calzada (2018) suggested a penta-hexa model, encompassing a collaboration between private entrepreneurs, the public sector, academia, and civic society. Della Corte & Aria (2016) suggest that coopetition is an avenue for gaining competitive advantage in the services sector. The **hexa** (**figure 1**) model is applied below through the identification of steps that can be taken by the private and public sectors, academic institutions and civic society to balance out the power between Barbados hoteliers and tour operators and make the destination more competitive.

Figure 1: Penta-hexa



The Private Sector - Strategies for Small Hotels (Entrepreneurs)

The Covid-19 outbreak and the collapse of Thomas Cook is testament that the tour operator business model continues to be outdated and unsustainable for Barbados tourism. One of the major lessons learned and one that this researcher has been preaching for several years is that hotels must diversified distribution channels. Long gone are the days when eating and drinking with tour operators and travel agents at lavish lunches and dinners is a guarantee of business. Hoteliers need to be more strategic and build direct business. Hotels should re-assess their strategic position by identifying the unique, tangible, and intangible features and attributes, which would enable them to differentiate their product to attract and satisfy niche markets and formulate co-operation schemes at the destination (Buhalis, 2000). The primary focus of hotels should be to reduce their dependency on mass-market all-inclusive tour traffic. Several initiatives and actions could be implemented. These include:

- Attract independent travelers by adding value to the resort experience. Value added components such as early check-in, late checkout, free dinners, free parking, and retail discounts could replace monetary reductions. Focus on creating an amazing destination and resort experience instead of discounting through diagonal integration with partners and competitors to encourage direct bookings (Poon, 1994; Tan & Dwyer, 2017).
- Ensure that hotel websites and other communication channels communicate the different ways and different channels through which hotel bookings could be made with links to all distribution gateways.
- Train reservation staff to upsell hotel features and services to potential direct customers.
- Cooperate with third-party websites such as Lastminute, Orbitz, Expedia, and e-Long to reach a broader customer base and to distribute dynamic packages with special features that are not available through package tour operators. The above websites allow the customers greater control in the selection of their vacation choices (Dong & Ling, 2015).
- Develop a destination referral program which would allow members of the diaspora and visitors to refer the destination to friends, family, or colleagues in exchange for points or cash that can go towards paying for future visits if the bookings are direct.
- Barbados hotels should explore ways to maximize their incomes and lower their average operating costs through internal growth. Managers must consider ways in which additional business units or capacity could be establish that would not incur additional cost but would increase revenue and a cash flow at the destination level.

  These could include:

1. Converting unused space into additional restaurant capacity or conference facilities.
2. Rent out unused space to concessionaires.
3. Establishing a tour desk that could earn commissions (usually causes conflict with tour operators).
4. Offer business services to business clients for a small charge.
5. Sell branded hotel souvenirs and other merchandising

Private Sector Coopetition Action Points – Entrepreneurs (Hoteliers)

Clusters of hotels can form cooperative schemes. Cooperative schemes can make economic sense if it increases profits and reduces cost (Shankar, 2017. Several initiatives can be implemented:

- Share the cost of setting up independent distribution channels and central reservations systems.
- Commission or conduct research, share the cost and share, and manage information.
- Achieve bulk purchasing through economies of scale.
- Share the cost of specialized management and technical expertise
- Engage in joint marketing efforts to cut marketing cost (Reid & Reid, 1994).
- Engage in collective bargaining with tour operators. Enforce the tour operators' contract. Share the cost of legal representation in the tourism originating countries.
- Hire confident, competent, experienced, and skilled negotiators.

Public Sector – Tourism Authorities

Barbados tourism authorities need to penetrate new tourist markets and encourage new airlines to fly to Barbados. Currently tourism marketing efforts are limited to North America and the UK tourism generating regions. Barbados must market the country in other destinations that would promote the inflow of more persons into the country. Promotional efforts must be directed towards offering, specialized and special interest products. Research has highlighted that niche or luxury tour operators tend to be more concerned about service quality and value for money rather than price unlike the mass tour operators (Sealy, 2018).

Academic Institutions

The challenges of managing conflict within the distribution channel has implications for the education and training of tourism personnel. Traditionally marketing managers in small hotels in Barbados tend to perform administrative functions, which is counter-productive to their role. It is evident that globalization and technological change require a much higher skilled and confident workforce. The industry needs professionals who can bring expertise that would give a competitive advantage to the hotel sector. It is imperative that educational institutions make research skills the cornerstone of their qualifications. It is vital that marketing managers are able to conduct research to identify new and emerging markets that can be pursued by tourism businesses. Managers must be digitally literate and technologically savvy to reach customers independently rather than depending on tour operators (Tan & Dwyer, 2014). Hospitality related curricula must move away from vocational education and instead mold graduates who are critical thinkers, problem solvers and innovators. Internships and placements outside the Caribbean will assist in broadening the horizons of future hospitality leaders and exposing them to different practices and realms of thinking.

Public Sector – Local Government

When a country's natural resources are packaged and sold by foreign enterprises a substantial portion of the profits and value-added is captured by the metropole and therefore does not accrued to the destination country. The role of governmental policy is critical in making the destination and its local tourism businesses more competitive. Government should encourage and facilitate policies to strengthen the competitive position of the local tourism business sector.

These should include:

- Diversifying the economy so that it is less dependent on mass tourism.
- Create an enabling environment for small tourism business to grow with access to funding and other financial incentives.
- Encouraging local entrepreneurship by providing small businesses with education and training opportunities.

Civic Society

Public consultation should be part of the decision-making process for tourism (Wilson, 1996). Tourism planners need to involve the local community in all aspects of tourism development. The tourism authorities need to implement an effective local communications campaign aimed at raising the level of awareness of tourism development projects and to ensure that tourists have the best experience possible. Community tourism through home stays and home visits should be encouraged and is considered one of the most effective ways to ensure a better spread of tourism benefits.

Additional Observations and Remarks

The impact of the COVID-19 global pandemic has resulted in a shutdown of the tourism industry in Barbados, with several hotels now closed. Unfortunately, at the time of writing the full impact of this business disruption and the financial implications are unclear. With most tour operators in financial trouble due to the pandemic the likely result for Barbados hotels is an escalating tour operator accounts receivable debt crisis. It may be challenging to recoup this money due to the fact that the tour operators will also have their own financial concerns to address. It is likely that many tour operators will ask the hotels for extended credit facilities.

Furthermore, these hotels may be at the mercy of tour operators for their recovery which will exacerbate the financial situation for many of them. Tour operators are likely to require substantial discounts from hotels to relaunch themselves into the tourists' market and to prop up their own financial losses. However, previous work has shown that these discounts are not always passed onto customers (Sealy, 2014; Sealy, 2018).

Barbados and other Caribbean hotels may find themselves having to recover from the financial losses incurred from the 'lockdown' caused by Covid-19 and then further financial losses incurred from heavy discounting given to the distribution channels. A significant portion of these hotels are all-inclusive and therefore do not generate any cash flow at the local level since all vacation components including room, food & beverage and tours are paid for in advance to the tour operator, creating a zero-dollar tourism economy. This situation is compounded by the fact that Thomas Cook's bankruptcy left many hotels out of pocket (Taylor, 2020). One hotel in Barbados depended on Thomas Cook for as much as 60% of their winter business. The Covid-19 pandemic has bought home the reality that the relationship between Barbados hotels and tour operators is unsustainable and in serious need of reform. Hotels must evaluate their contracts with the distribution channels, suppliers, and all aspects of the supply chain to ensure that the terms and conditions do not put them at a disadvantage when disaster strikes like Covid-19.

Conclusion

The reason why the penta hexa model has not been applied to the tourism and hospitality sector of Barbados could be explained by the fact that tour operators are not ready to put an end to their dominant position over Barbadian hoteliers because their current position ensures a high level of income for them. Carlisle, Kunc, Jones & Tiffin (2013) argued that the penta-hexa model is the result of a shared vision. At this point in time it is not seemingly possible to establish a working relationship between the hotels and tour operators due to conflicts of interests. However, Barbados can strengthen its competitiveness through local stakeholder collaborative initiatives, which would place them in a stronger position when negotiating rates with tour operators as hotels will not be dependent on them. This could bring new prosperity and a new sense of sustainability to the island state which was once declared a developed country based on the United Nations Development Index in 2010.

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LOCAL STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT AND COMMUNITY- BASED RURAL TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN NORTH CENTRAL COASTAL VIETNAM

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Abstract: Community-based rural tourism development has drawn interests among researchers, practitioners, governments and stakeholder as it has been widely promoted as a powerful force of change in the economy restructuring and a supporting alternative for local economy in response to increasing agriculture values in Viet Nam rural areas. Data for this study were obtained through a survey at 104 local households that has the collaboration and involvement of the related inter-organizational stakeholders in community-based rural tourism implementation in Nghe An and Quang Binh provinces in North Central Coastal Vietnam. This study found that the local community has a major role in implementing the program, among those various entities of stakeholders, especially the local government role can be utilized in tourism research as a source of empirical reference and policy implications.

Keywords: Community-based rural tourism, community participation, local stakeholders, North Central Coastal Vietnam

Introduction

Tourism has been placed among the largest industries in the world so far and has the potential to contribute to rural development which is well recognized, particularly by job creating, including employment for rural women and marginalized groups, creating better opportunities for local people to gain larger and more balanced benefits from tourism development taking place in their localities (Tosun, 2000). The development of rural tourism, in particular community based rural tourism, according to Powell, Green, Holladay (2018) take into account rural environmental, social, and cultural sustainability and has been promoted as a supporting alternative and adding agriculture values for the local economy. In recent years, socio-economic disparities between rural and urban areas have attracted significant concern from the Government of Vietnam, which developed a community-based rural tourism as one of the attempts to overcome this problem. There is a widespread recognition of the need to diversify the tourism product and develop alternative forms of tourism in rural tourism development in North Central Coastal Vietnam (Nguyen, 2018).

The urge for research and the main focus of this research is on how the collaboration and involvement of the related local governance and inter-organizational stakeholders, initiated by the local community which plays a major role in implementing the tourism development, among those various entities of stakeholders in the light of government support. Research questions have been debated on questions regarding community participation for community-based rural development such as “how much participation/ involvement of community or level of community participation at certain destination can have in the rural tourism development process? Is there a way that this situation can be rectified so that the needs and power of citizens and residents in a rural tourism community can be satisfied and every-day life not diminished? What types of local governance collaboration and support that local community are getting from tourism development activities in improving livelihoods and poverty reduction, too. These questions seem to be a research gap and need to be further and insightfully addressed in research on rural tourism development in North Central Coastal Vietnam’s rural areas. So, the paper findings from empirical approach can be utilized in tourism research as a source of

theoretical reference and public policy implications of community-based rural tourism development, which will be addressed below.

Literature Review

Rural community-based tourism is a form of tourism that is taking place in the economically marginalized rural communities and prioritizes on the environmental issue, social, and cultural sustainability, which supervised and owned by and for the community (Potjana, 2003). It takes the rural space as the basis and regards the unique rural production activities, folk customs, forms of life, countryside, rural housing and rural culture as objects, and develops them into products, such as sightseeing, tours, entertainment, leisure, vacations shopping etc. (Xiao; X.Y, 2001). In this case, one of the important things to know is the community-based rural tourism has a mission to raise awareness among tourists and enable them to learn about local people's daily life. This tourism development model supposed to begin with public awareness, to build more beneficial tourism for local communities, such as the needs, initiatives, and opportunities.

In particular, Community-based rural tourism (CBRT) should be managed and owned by the community with funding and assistance from stakeholders, government agencies or NGOs, for the community, with the purpose of enabling visitors to increase their awareness and learn about the community and the local way of life (Kamarudin et al., 2014; Aref, 2011; Suansri, 2003 in Dunn, 2007:14). Thus, the main outcome of CBRT is the improvement of livelihood of the community via tourism activities, whilst preserving natural environment, maintaining cultural authenticity sustainably and ensuring local ownership. Community participation which is a bottom-up approach by which communities are actively involved in rural tourism projects to solve their own problems, has been touted by various stakeholders like the local governors as a potent approach to sustainable tourism development since it ensures greater conservation of natural, rural and cultural resources, empowers host communities and improves their socio-economic well-being. As such, neither a function of government alone, nor a single powerful rural tourism organisation can develop a successful tourism destination; instead, it is recognised that in tourism destination planning, decision-making and management, stakeholders must collaborate and participate (Bornhorst, Brent & Sheehan, 2010).

Within a tourism destination research, where stakeholders have different interests in the development of an area, stakeholder collaboration is obvious. As balancing the power in decision-making processes is difficult, collaboration is necessary to build a partnership approach among stakeholders involved in the planning process. Key successes of partnership efforts are identification, legitimation, and recognition of all potential stakeholders and inclusion of key stakeholder groups involved in the planning process. Stakeholders can include: the government (national, regional and local); government departments with links to tourism; international, national, regional and local tourism organisations; tourism developers and entrepreneurs, tourism industry operators; non-tourism business practitioners, and the community including local community group, indigenous people's groups and local residents (Saito & Ruhanen, 2017). The local community has been involved in the planning, development, and management of the tourism destination areas (Pawson, D'Arcy & Richardson, 2017).

Scholars have discussed this issue in terms of collaborative governance that is based on the common understanding of stakeholders in rural community-based tourism development. This concept offers an opportunity to solve common problems that cannot be solved by single actors. Here, the community can collaborate with other stakeholders like the local governors who have the impacts on rural local tourism development and have power in terms of networking, and skills needed for developing the rural tourism and local community. In this collaboration,

stakeholders can share knowledge and, information as well as issues related to their common goals and are expected to address all real needs and issues of the tourism development. Furthermore, collaborative governance can avoid conflicts among the stakeholders (McGlashan & Williams, 2003).

Methodology and Research Results

The quantitative approach was conducted to explore and describe the involvement of stakeholders of local citizens in participating developing community-based rural tourism (CBRT), especially the local communities involved in the light collaboration with local governance. In particular, the survey was conducted with local households who are participating the tourism activities at rural areas in Quang Binh and Nghe An in North Central Coastal Vietnam (**Table 1**). The key question addressed centered on understanding how local communities participate in tourism industry and any barriers influencing their participation in the sector as a growth development strategy and a poverty reduction in the local tourism activities (**Table 2**). As discussed by literature review~~s~~ in earlier section, the participation of local stakeholders and local governance collaboration is important since many tourism activities have various impacts (direct and indirect) on the local community wellbeing. Furthermore, local tourism activities also received support and established relationships with the government, especially agencies bodies directly related to tourism development activities from central to local levels and which might affect their local householders within tourism development process and implementation (**Table 2**).

Table 1: Demographic profile of respondents

Variable	Number of respondents (N=104)	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	45	43.27
Female	59	56.73
Age	0	0.00
21-30 years	9	10.47
31-40 years	32	37.21
41-50 years	23	26.74
50 years above	22	25.58
Monthly income (million VND)		
<2	9	9.47
2-4	19	20.00
4-5	30	31.58
5-6	14	14.74
6-10	15	15.79
>10	8	8.42

Table 1 illustrates the demographic profile of respondents. There were 59 female respondents (56.73 percent), and 45 male respondents (43.27 percent) in this study; hence making a total of 104 respondents. In terms of age, a majority of the respondents (62 percent) were from the middle-age from 31- 40 (37 percent) and 41-50 (26.7 percent) while the younger age group (21-30 years of age) made up 10.47 percent of the respondents. With respect to the income levels, the highest percentage was 31.5 0% for those earning a monthly income between 4-5 million VND, whereas the smallest percentage was those with a monthly income of more than 10 million VND with only 8.42 percent.

The greater engagement of local community and stakeholders in the decision-making process is a critical element for tourism to become sustainable (Graci and Dodds, 2010). The survey also explored the likelihood of respondents to be included in participation and implementation process and the result was presented in **Table 2**.

Table 2: Local participation in rural community-based tourism development and implementation

Statement	N	Strongly disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean	SD
Willing to participate in local meetings on rural tourism development	104	2.9	2.9	37.5	56.7	4.45	.811
Willing to link with neighboring villages to develop rural community tourism	104	2.9	3.8	35.6	57.7	4.45	.822
Willing to help neighbors participate in rural community tourism development	104	2.9	5.8	40.4	51.0	4.36	.836
Willing to call and persuade other people to participate in activities of local rural community tourism	104	2.9	3.8	47.1	45.2	4.30	.836
Regularly keep good contacts with local authorities and tourism businesses	104	1.9	3.8	49.0	43.3	4.29	.799
Regularly participate in meeting with local officials in organizing and developing tourism	104	10.6	11.5	45.2	30.8	4.16	.935
Be informed and consulted about developing plan of local tourism	104	3.8	9.6	49.0	35.6	4.09	.929
Being consulted by local officials how to do tourism business	104	10.6	11.5	45.2	30.8	3.80	1.20

Factors and barriers hindering within participating and implementing in tourism activities are very important in this research as this helps to identify if there were any specific needs and, maybe, levels of participation and tolerance regarding certain aspects of local tourism activities, which might affect their lives when tourism activities are developed in their rural life (Table 2). A majority of respondents felt that the likelihood of their being included in local meetings on rural tourism development process is positive (57%). However, 49% regularly keep good contacts with local authorities and tourism businesses.

The study revealed that 45.2% of the total respondents agreed that they have been involved actively in the implementation and uses of the tourism attractions and enjoy the benefits and willing to call and persuade other people to participate in activities of local rural community tourism. Moreover, the study observed that 49.0 percent was informed and consulted about developing plan of local tourism of the total respondents participated by giving consultation to tourism attractions.

On the other based on practical reflections, the study revealed that they had involved actively in the areas of implementation and operationalization of the tourism attractions found in the case study area. It was also found that 51% of the total respondents had participated in

coordination towards tourism attraction and willing to link with neighbouring villages to develop rural community tourism. In general, the area of implementation and operationalization of tourism attractions has a great implication in improvement of the livelihood of the rural householders since it provides jobs and hence generate incomes for their participation.

Table 3: Local governance collaboration

Statement	N	Of no interest	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean	SD
Local government and community counsellors are friendly	104	3.8	2.9	16.3	49.0	27.9	3.93	.958
Comments by locals in tourism development are acknowledged in making decision and implementation	104	11.5	2.9	13.5	44.2	27.9	3.85	1.12
Policies clearly state the benefits of households participating in tourism	104	9.6	1.9	17.3	49.0	22.1	3.70	1.13
Supported by the government when participating in tourism organization	104	13.5	1.9	12.5	43.3	28.8	3.69	1.30
Provide, update policies supported when participating in tourism	104	11.5	4.8	14.4	43.3	26.0	3.65	1.25

The greater engagement and collaboration of local community and local governance is a critical element for rural tourism to become sustainable (Graci and Dodds, 2010). The survey also explored that respondents agreed that they are interested in policies clearly state the benefits of households participating in tourism that enable them to understand and have been involved actively in the tourism industry simply if they were deeply educated and aware of rural tourism development in the area. It is a major concern hindering community participation in tourism sector when only 27.9 percent of respondents shared that local government and community counsellors are friendly enough and comments by locals in tourism development should be acknowledged in making decision and implementation (27.9 percent). Local government may opt to ensure that local communities' involvement and participation in the tourism sector in the rural areas through tourism education, training, and awareness creation programmers (Powell, Green, Holladay, Krafte, Duda, Nguyen & Das, 2018). This will help to build trust in planning process, decision-making process, coordination and control, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of tourism activities

Discussions and Conclusion

This study has shown that the underpinning empirical work of local governance collaboration can have significant effect on the local communities to participate in tourism activities for improving livelihoods and community-based rural tourism. This underlines the point out the significant and reliable explanation relevant to both the local people's participation in tourism industry and its sustainability of the local people. It is quite evident from the research findings that main factors hindering ineffective community participation in tourism activities or the inadequate local communities' participation in tourism activities results from both the lack of

relevant interaction amongst the local communities and local management of tourism activities, and knowledge, inadequate experience in tourism business. All in all it has been revealed that local governance collaboration with local community participation is instrumentally a tool to empower local people so that they can actively influence the process of planning, decision-making that affect their improved livelihoods and tourism development in rural areas.

Tourism policy and legislations need to be reviewed and amended in order to create more conducive enabling environment that encourages and empowers community participation in tourism sector at grassroots level and be able to execute the stipulated functions. This will assist local people to enhance their participation, getting more jobs and improve livelihoods opportunities for their well- being and therefore contribute to national efforts in poverty alleviation in in North Central Coastal Vietnam. It is crucial for tourism development and must be integrated into the favourable development policy and Act.

In conclusion, it can be asserted local communities must be actively involved in each stage of tourism planning and development in the light of local governance collaboration and support in order to ensure that all their tourism activities and products benefit the residents. This will represent a significant step forwards in ensuring more adequate community participates in the community-based rural tourism in rural areas in general and in North central in particular to enhance community involvement in tourism sector.

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