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Sustainable Forms of Tourism and their Prospects for the Development of Corfu

This article highlights the importance of the island of Corfu to change the tourism industry's current development model by reorientating toward more sustainable forms of tourism. This change will bring multiple benefits to the island, as the proposed forms of tourism suit its characteristics while meeting the necessary criteria and conditions of Spatial Planning and Sustainable development for tourism. The research method on which the paper is based is mainly bibliographic research, and the data gathered from the literature are based on secondary data.

Key Words: Corfu, Tourism Policy, Sustainable Development, Environment

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Introduction

Over time the Mediterranean region has developed a unique blend of tourism activities associated with sea, health, sports, nature, business, and culture, offering consistent employment (11% of total employment) and economic growth (11% of regional GDP). However, economic growth due to tourism development has often been at the detriment of environmental integrity and social equity. Sea- Sand- Sun (3S) dependency, weak governance and degradation of cultural heritage, environmental pollution, and resource depletion, contribution to climate change and climate vulnerability, political insecurity and social instability, economic and human capital leakage are some of the issues that threaten the long-term sustainability of the Mediterranean region and the tourism sector itself.

The main objective is to promote sustainable Mediterranean tourism in which visitors and hosts enjoy balanced, respectful, and fruitful relationships and value the unique Mediterranean environmental, human, and cultural heritage. In the Mediterranean, because the potential for tourism development is high, public policies and private actors have made tourism a mono- activity in many territories. This led to rapid economic development in those destinations and negative social and environmental impacts as discussed above.

Greece is well-positioned for dynamic development prospects for tourism because it has a vast reserve of tourist resources, including the beautiful natural environment, cultural heritage, sun, and seas. Additionally, its food, local customs, and the friendly to the tourists' attitude of the Greeks - manifested in the context of traditional hospitality - as a legacy from the " Xenious Zeus" (Karagiannis et al., 2006). Ionian Islands Region's geographical position is very important for the country, and it is a very attractive destination for both Greeks and foreign visitors. Additionally, the Regional Operational Program focuses on increasing its competitiveness as an internationally recognized tourist area, its rich natural and cultural resources, and the improvement of its cities' urban and architectural environment

(Lissandrou, 2017). According to the Hellenic Statistical Authority, the Ionian Islands Region is ranked second among regions of Greece with the smallest permanent population.

Specifically, it has 207,855 permanent residents, followed by the Region of the South Aegean, which has a population of 309,015 inhabitants (Delitheou, Michalaki, 2016). The largest percentage of the Ionian Islands Region employees is concentrated in the tertiary sector with 76,17%, which is higher than the percentage of Greece, which is 72,46% (Hellenic Statistical Authority (ELSTAT), 2011).

For decades, Corfu bases its development on the model of mass tourism. Therefore, there is an over-concentration of tourists-visitors in specific areas of the island at a specific period of the year. This tourism development model causes problems in waste management and a general deterioration of the environment. Corfu's development strategy should be oriented towards policies, which will support its economic development while at the same time, respecting the environment. For this reason, the tourist development of the island should be oriented towards sustainable forms of tourism.

The aim of the article is to highlight the development potential of Corfu as an alternative tourist destination. This paper can be used to assess Corfu's prospects, which should be taken into account in the transition to the provision of a tourist product, environmentally friendly and not detrimental to the island's economy.

To verify the impact of the research literature, this article emphasizes the importance of the tourism industry for the island of Corfu. The suggestions for the forms of tourism consider the area's category in the Special Framework for Spatial Planning and Sustainable Development for tourism (S.F.S.P.S.D) and the directions given in it. After his study, four (4) sustainable forms of tourism were selected, with one of them being named in the (S.F.S.P.S.D) for tourism. The other three are authors' selections based on Corfu's characteristics and under the limitation to meet the allowed prerequisites. The ultimate goal is

to attract investments in alternative forms of tourism in Corfu, followed by improving the environment. In this way, this paper will highlight the need to transition to an era that is not based on mass tourism and, therefore, to understand the importance of alternative tourism for the island of Corfu.

Internal Environment Analysis of Corfu - Structural Features and the Physiognomy of Corfu

Corfu is one of the northwest islands in Greece (Figure1). The permanent population of Corfu municipality is 102,071 inhabitants (Hellenic Statistical Authority, 2011), and according to the classification of the European islands, based on the number of inhabitants by ESPON (2013), it belongs to the category of the big islands.



Figure 1: Corfu map

Source: <http://www.tauchenkorfu.com/id43.html>

Based on the Hellenic Statistical Authority data (2011), the number of employees is 35,594. 6.67% of workers are employed in the primary sector, 13.08% in the secondary, and 80.25% are employed in the tertiary sector. According to the General Framework of Spatial Planning and Sustainable Development in Corfu, the polar development model is followed, and this is a second national development pole (Papadaskalopoulos, 2008). It is also an international and interregional gateway through its port.

Accessibility to the Island

Access to Corfu can be made by air through the International Airport of "Ioannis Kapodistrias," located in the south of Corfu and only a few minutes away by car. Flights to and from this point connect the island with domestic and international airports. The total number of passengers increased at 9.8% (31,084,489 passengers) handled at airports during seven months of 2017, compared to the corresponding time period of 2016 28,301,561 passengers). As statistics (Civil Aviation Authority, 2017) show, these specific seven months moved 2.8 million passengers more than 2016.

During the entire 2018 season, there was an increase of 366 thousand seats at the scheduled airport seats from abroad to "Ioannis Kapodistrias" airport of Corfu. This corresponds to an increase of 23.7% compared to last year according to reservations data on the 31st of May 2018, gathered by Sete Intelligence of the Hellenic Slot Coordination Authority. Especially in the month of July, 32 million seats were added to Corfu, increasing 18.7%, compared to 2017. It must be noted that until May 2018, 241,152 people had arrived at Corfu via air flights, i.e., 185,191 more than the same period of 2017 with a percentage increase of 30,2%. Finally, according to scheduled airplane seats until October 2018, the increase was estimated to be more than 22.4% compared to 2017! In absolute terms, +62 thousand seats were added to Corfu (+ 18.7%). There is also a frequent ferry connection

between Corfu and mainland Greece via Igoumenitsa, an interregional connection with Paxos, but many routes (Konsolas et al., 2016).

Corfu's hotel infrastructure

According to data provided by the Hellenic Chamber of Hotels (2019) Municipality of Corfu has a total of 404 hotel units, with the highest percentage of them (43.32%) being rated with two (2) stars (175 units), followed by those of the three (3) stars with 24.77% (Table 1).

Table 1: Percentage of Hotels allocation at the Municipality of Corfu

	5*****	4*****	3***	2**	1*	Total
Units	6.19%	13.37%	24.75%	43.32%	12.38%	100%
Rooms	22.11%	25.99%	24.54%	23.22%	4.14%	100%
Beds	23.23%	25.78%	24.42%	22.48%	4.09%	100%

Source: Developed by the authors based on the Hellenic Chamber of Hotels (2019)

Rooms available by the hotel units of the island are 24,691, and they have 48,139 beds. The category that has the most rooms and the most beds is the four (4) stars (6,418 rooms – 12,409 beds) (Table 2).

Table 2: Hotels at Municipality of Corfu

	5*****	4*****	3***	2**	1*	Total
Units	25	54	100	175	50	404
Rooms	5,459	6,418	6,059	5,733	1,022	24,691
Beds	11,181	12,409	11,755	10,823	1,971	48,139

Source: Developed by the authors based on the Hellenic Chamber of Hotels (2019)

Regarding campsites, there are nine (9) units employing a total of 1,969 employees. Most are in the category of two (2) stars and occupy the largest number of employees (Table 3). However, it is worth noting that a camping unit has 508 people as a workforce.

Table 3: Campsites Municipality of Corfu

	5*****	4*****	3****	2**	1*	Total
Units	0	1	1	7	0	9
Persons	0	101	83	478	0	664

Source: Developed by the authors based on the Hellenic Chamber of Hotels (2019)

Corfu: Sustainable alternative forms of tourism

Corfu has a significant music culture. It must be noted that it hosts 18 Philharmonic Societies, which, with their contribution, have made the island well known both in Greece and abroad. Corfu's influences both from the East and the West are impressively mapped into its cultural heritage (Karagianni 2017). The Corfu's Old Town, the pride of every Corfiot citizen, today represents a unique set of high aesthetic value, while its recent inclusion in the UNESCO World Heritage List has harmonized the city with its monumental character and glorious past. Besides, it is known that Corfu's Old Town has been since 1993a unique –in such size- Greek-historical city, which remains unchanged from time until today.

Corfu attracts tourists all 12 months per year due to its advantageous natural and cultural attractions. Natural beauty, high spiritual tradition, music tradition, literature, history are the pillars of its advantages. The picture is completed with the scattered gorgeous villages, the important archaeological sites, the unique culture, the customs, the hospitality, and the religious events. These events are held in honor of Saint Spyridonas and Easter. The composition of all these and their combination cover all kinds of alternative tourism, enabling the visitor to choose, combine, and enchant from Corfu.

Cultural and Religious Tourism

Corfu is a tourist destination with a remarkable culture (Hidioglou, 2004). For that reason, it can easily attract a quality tourist as it has a strong cultural and cultural heritage (Economou & Zekidis, 2013). Achillio (Figure 2A) is one of Corfu's most important sights,

located in the village of Gastouri, built in 1890 at the expense of empress Elizabeth of Austria. Its name was taken from Achilles, who was the empress's favorite hero. Pontikonissi is one of Corfu's most popular and well-known attractions. In Corfu town, at the edge of Spianada, there is the Old Fortress. The New Fortress of Corfu (Figure 2B) was built to protect the city, which the Old Fort could no longer afford. The view of the Old City (Figure 2C) is unique from the fortress, and someone can see even the mountains of Mainland Greece (Municipality of Corfu, 2020).

Liston (Figure 2D) is Corfu's most well-known pedestrian area. According to the most prevalent version, its name was taken from the "on the list" because there was a book by the Corfiot nobles, who were the only ones who could enjoy their walk there because they were "on the list." Unique interest has the Spianada Square, the largest square in Greece (Municipality of Corfu, 2020).



Figure 2: Tourist Attractions of Corfu

Source: Created by the authors with photos from the Municipality of Corfu (2020).

The church of Agios (Saint) Spiridon is characterized by its Venetian architecture. It is an outlying church that was completed in 1589. Its bell tower is the highest point of the city, and it can be seen by the "kantounia" of the Old Town.

The Museum of Asian Art is housed in the palaces of Archangels Michael and St. George, located on the northern side of Spianada. It was created to host exhibits of Chinese and Japanese culture. Today its permanent exhibitions include collections of Chinese and Japanese art, art collections of Southeast Asia and Central Asia. It also hosts, for a certain period of time, events and educational programs for pupils to promote Asian culture and art (Museum of Asian Art of Corfu, 2020).

The Gallery of Corfu has a permanent collection of paintings in the eastern wing of the palaces of the Archangels Michael and St. George. Part of the collection of engraving is exhibited in the Historical Building of the Ionian Parliament. There, visitors are allowed to take a historical look at the evolution of painting and engraving in Corfu. The Gallery also has a section of periodical exhibitions. An important part of cultural tourism is the tourist's contact with the customs and traditions of Corfu and the participation in traditional festivals and local festivals.

This form of tourism protects the cultural heritage, while at the same time, it shows and highlights it. Cultural tourism development in Corfu can be enhanced by informing visitors about its cultural attractions and destinations. The Historical Department of the Ionian University can also collaborate with similar departments of the Universities of the European Union to exchange students for the dissemination of its culture. Corfu can be considered a suitable destination for conducting organized excursions of several days, where the visit of the monuments can be combined with the teaching of the Ionian Corfiot History.

Marine Tourism

Marine tourism is defined as any tourist activity in the marine environment (seas and coasts) of a country. That is the whole range of tourist activities, recreative, sportive, or sea tours with yachts or cruises (Igoumenakis, 1999). Corfu has a wide variety of beaches with particular natural beauty and crystal clear waters. Some of them are located in the northeastern part of the island. They are Kassiopi Kanoni Beach, Sidari Beach, Love canal, Acharavi Beach, Ipsos Beach, Kalami Beach, Agios Spiridonas Beach, Agios Stefanos Beach, Benitses. Simultaneously, in the southwest, there is the beach of Glyfada, Aghios Gordios beach, Agios Georgios Pagon beach, Liapades beach, Paleokastritsa beach, Issos beach, Kavos Beach, and Agios Georgios beach of Argyrades.

Many beaches provide the possibility to visitors, apart from swimming, to enjoy water sports and extreme sports because they have the necessary facilities and the proper equipment. Some of them are water skiing, water cycling, parasailing, jet-skiing, Canoe Kayak, surfing and windsurfing, aqua scooter, and sea bike (jet ski of one or two seats, sea bike) (Venetsanopoulou, 2006). On the other hand, if the tourist wants to relax, Corfu has beaches that are not very crowded so he will have the ability to enjoy the sea and the environment. Marine tourism in the form of cruise and private yachting is high-level tourism, and it is not such a new invention. The cruise combines passenger entertainment on the cruise ship to visit several cosmopolitan harbors to get to know new places and interact with cultures (Venetsanopoulou, 2006).

Travel agencies organize cruises, and they offer, in specially modified ships, plenty of services such as accommodation, food, and recreation. Corfu is an ideal destination for cruises because it has a large harbor. Moreover, it can participate as a destination both in cruises on the Greek islands and countries of the Adriatic. Additionally, Corfu may attract both domestic and foreign tourists, as this year, it hosts the International Sailing Week of the Ionian Games, an event organized for the 31st time. Apart from the contestants and organizers, the show of the Games can act as a magnet for increasing arrivals to the island, as they will have background landscapes on the island.

However, marine tourism specializing in the provision of services for water sports has the potential for further development. The demand for these services needs to be increased, highlighting the existing facilities, the beautiful seas, and Corfu's particular landscapes. It must be noted that Marine Tourism in Corfu cannot be developed without the contribution of other forms of environmentally-friendly tourism, which will act complementary, helping it.

Golf Tourism

Golf is considered a game of aristocracy even more than tennis because it requires much time, and on-the-other-hand both the equipment for the game and the shaping of the spaces being carried out are quite costly. Greece has the necessary characteristics where there are eight 18-hole golf courses and a 9-hole golf course. There is an 18-hole private golf course at Corfu, owned by the Corfu Golf Club, which meets international standards and has sufficient infrastructure (Venetsanopoulou, 2006). According to the Special Framework for Spatial Planning and Sustainable Development for tourism (2009), Corfu is an eligible area for golf tourism development. The development of golf tourism in Corfu will attract high-income tourists throughout the year. This is because golfers are looking for sites where they can combine their holidays with golf's pleasure (Millington & Wilson, 2016).

Golf fans claim that these grounds protect the environment from arson and constitute a habitat (Venetsanopoulou, 2006). Also, golf courses require large amounts of water to maintain. Corfu is well suited for the construction of golf courses as, according to the National Meteorological Service, its climate is characterized by strong humidity throughout the year, and the many rainfalls on the island can help preserve them. In every case, Special Framework for Spatial Planning and Sustainable Development for tourism (2009) imposes that appropriate measures for environmental management should be taken. Measures that will ensure the protection of the environment and in particular water resources, from risks of depletion and pollution.

A new network of golf courts should be created to develop "Golf touristic destinations." (Ladias, 2013). That way, Corfu will be able to attract more golfers. By creating a network of selected areas in Greece, the Corfu Golf Club will be advertised and will attract additional players. It is also important to have a clear political encouragement for private investments to build and maintain golf sports infrastructure. By providing motives, it will be possible to build another stadium near the existing one. Placing more than one

stadium in an area causes combined growth, as it creates more interest in the potential visitor when he or she has more opportunities to experience different sports in an area.

Conference Tourism

Conference Tourism is defined as every kind of organized event, such as conferences or meetings with a large or small number of participants, and at any level, local, regional, national, or international. Because conference tourism is of limited time duration, usually lasting between two and four days, it can easily be packaged with another form of tourism, such as city tourism or educational tourism (Ntertsa, 2019). Conference tourism in Corfu is mainly widespread at the national level. There are special conference centers with soundproofed and light-proofed rooms, and they are equipped with the appropriate technical support (Venetsanopoulou, 2006).

The contribution of the Reading Company of Corfu to the conference tourism of the island is important as the company organizes exhibitions, lectures, scientific conferences, and seminars. Even on its premises, it offers to host events, scientific conferences, and exhibitions by other institutions. It is the oldest spiritual institution of modern Greece. Its importance is unique and maintains contacts with Greek and foreign Universities, such as the University of Pisa, the Leuven Archaeological School, and the Ionian University. Ionian University actively contributes to conferences and speeches. Musical concerts are organized due to the Department of Music Studies. Conference tourism has potential for further development as it does not have the necessary marketing to provide expanded information both in Greece and abroad about the activities taking place in Corfu.

It is proposed to set up congress tourism offices in Corfu and the rest of Greece, to promote, advertise, and inform about the events and conferences. Therefore, on the one hand, tourists will be attracted to Corfu, who will wish to take part or watch the events and

congresses and on the other hand, scientists and artists of the island will be able to learn to introduce new ideas and knowledge. However, further development of conference tourism will be achieved by making additional investments, which are expected for decades, by making greater use of technology, which through social networks can attract today's demanding clientele seeking specialized and personalized tourist services (Sitziri, 2018). By attracting conference tourism activities to Corfu, the local economy and the tourism industry are boosted, as tourists spend money on services such as housing, food, and entertainment during their stay on the island. In addition to developing these activities, new jobs are created, either directly or indirectly related to the conference product, thus boosting the local community.

Instead of conclusion

Since 2001, with the amendment of the 1975 Constitution, the obligation to protect the environment has been established in our country. In particular, Article 24 states: "Protection of the natural and cultural environment is an obligation of the State and the right of everyone (Delitheou, 2007). To preserve it, the State is obligated to take special preventive or repressive measures within the framework of the principle of sustainability, "which is directly related to the environment (Karagiannis & Delitheou, 2016). For decades, Corfu has tied its growth to the implementation of the standards of mass tourism. Overcrowding of tourists in some regions of the island, mainly during the summer months, has created problems such as lack of necessary infrastructure, problems with waste management, and degradation of the environment's quality.

The goal is to implement an environmentally friendly development policy without lowering Corfu's economic revenues. This can be achieved through sustainable tourism development, including planning, which aims to create and strengthen the balance between

society, the economy, and the environment (Delitheou, Podimatas & Michalaki, 2018).

Therefore, it is imperative to engage in a dialogue at a political, social, and academic level to prevent the marine environment's degradation that is severely hit by mass tourism. However, Maritime Spatial Planning has not received the necessary importance as a simple consultation has been carried out in a draft law of the Ministry of Energy, Environment and Climate Change (Kyvelou, 2017).

The sustainable tourism development model in Corfu should be based on alternative forms of tourism and innovative and healthy investments. The Special Framework for Spatial Planning and Sustainable Development for Tourism provides directions that should guide Corfu's tourism development, but institutions and measures should be promoted to support such a development policy (Delitheou, 2018). To change the tourist development model, helpers should be the Ionian Islands Region, the Municipality of Corfu, residents, entrepreneurs, tour operators, and tourists. Therefore, it is necessary to change both the supply of the tourist product and the demand for it.

Particular emphasis should be placed on the transition to a blue economy by promoting sustainable consumer and production patterns. As Corfu has a rich coastline, the tourism industry's activities, which concern economic activities around the sea, should be conducted while protecting and guaranteeing the quality of its waters. The implementation of the effective and sustainable use of the island's coastal services and resources can also take place with the participation of the Municipality or the Region in Mediterranean programs such as the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development 2016-2025. Sustainable and green growth is essential for the development of Corfu and the emergence of its potential as a tourist destination while limiting the waste of natural resources and minimizing its impact on the natural environment

Corfu should promote its alternative tourism based on one of its forms or combine the development of more of these forms to cover a wider range of its tourist potential. In order to select the form of tourism development to be followed, first, it is necessary to identify and scientifically analyze the tourist development of Corfu so far and to assess the benefits and assess the impact of its application on the economic, environmental and social level, which are the three equal and balanced axes, promoted by the European Union's development strategies (Delitheou, 2007). Also, the island's potential for further developing the tourism sector should be taken into account. In this way, there will be the necessary planning that will shape the tourism development plan based on the sustainable development of Corfu (Kokkosis & Tsartas, 2001).

Additionally, Corfu should use marketing as a tool to tackle its competitors. Through advertising fairs, participation in exhibitions using public relations (Kokkosis & Tsartas, 2001), and ensuring the tour operators' cooperation since it is directly dependent on them, it should show its special characteristics that differentiate it from the other tourist destinations shaping its new advertising image. First of all, because they live in it and, secondly, indirectly boost their regions' core economic activity. Reinforcing tourism protects their income, their fellow citizens and highlights their island, contributing to local development (Delitheou & Michalaki, 2016). Ultimately, it should attract high-educated, environmentally-friendly, and higher-income tourists to increase Corfu's revenue by contributing to its economic growth.

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