

Tourism and environment

Dr. Persa Fokiali¹

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Introduction

The purpose of this work is to present in a descriptive way the classical model of mass tourism development of a Mediterranean economy and its conflict with environment. Such a model can be met almost in any country of persistent conquest by vast numbers of visitors.

The model is presented in three short stories. These are: (a) the story of the four S's; (b) the story of four P's; and (c) the story of four R's.

The story of the 4 S's

(Or: supply of and demand for tourism)

Supply of tourist services

Once upon a time there were four S's, namely **Sea, Sun, Sand and Sex**. They met in a coastal area. They were combined at specific proportions and formed the successful recipe for mass tourism. All areas that provided these four magic natural ingredients, could safely qualify as potential indications for mass tourism.

Of course the four S's were necessary but not adequate to turn a potential destination into an actual one.

Sea, Sun, Sand and Sex needed to be supplemented by other factors of production, in order to provide tourist services at an acceptable level. These other factors are **Capital** (in the form of basic infrastructure) and **Labour** (in the form of specialized and non-specialized human resources).

In contrary to the four S's, Capital and Human Labour were not free factors, hence not all potential destinations were in a position to become actual producers of the tourist services. Until now some remain potential suppliers, retaining the possibility that in the future they may become strong competitors with the present destinations.

No one denies that a big number of countries meet the above qualifications. Among them are the countries of the Mediterranean basin, which is considered as the biggest tourist region in the world attracting almost 40% of international tourism².

¹ Dr Persa Fokiali is member of the Board of Directors of the International Center for Mediterranean Studies.

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² Enviplan, G. Tsekouras and Associates: Change of the model of mass tourism- New Kinds of Tourism, ETVA, Athens 1991

Demand for tourism

In economics, for each story of supply there is always a counter story of demand.

Demand for tourism has its origins in the Ancient World. Ancient writers talk about “Ξένιος Ζεύς”- the Olympian God of Hospitality. Deep in the centuries one can find travellers that move around- either as individuals or in groups- for religious, athletic or other specific purposes.

However one can talk about demand for mass tourism only after the Second World War.

The upgrading of living standards, high income, good working conditions, improved transport and communications are the main reasons for the recent development of the mass tourism. The phenomenon has appeared dynamically in the fifties, rose widely in the sixties and boomed during the seventies and the eighties.

The situation becomes explosive within time:

At an international level almost 500 m. travel around every year³. Europe has a big share in this figure. Almost 2/3 of tourists arrivals are directed to European Countries⁴.

Although Europe's population is not going to increase rapidly in the future, the prospect is that tourism in actual figures will continue to rise. Nevertheless the entrance in the tourist market of new destinations (such as the countries of North Africa) is expected to reduce the share of Europe in the International tourist market⁵.

Of course not all tourists have similar tastes. Different preferences form different models of tourism. However among the most popular holiday packages are those that promise acquaintance with the four S's- Sea, Sun, Sand and Sex- or at least with the combination of some of them. Such a preference leads 200 m. tourists to the Mediterranean coastal area while

³ Specifically: In 1990 the number of tourists was 430 m. The figure is expected to rise to 490-520 m. in the year 2000 and to 950 m. by the end of 2010.

See also

- H. Cocossis and A. Parpairis; Tourism and pollution of marine environment, International Ecological Forum Protection of the Mediterranean from Pollution Pireaus 29- 30/1/1993
- The Dorling Kindersley: ΑΤΛΑΣ ΤΟΥ ΚΟΣΜΟΥ 1995 εκδόσεις ΤΑ ΝΕΑ

⁴ It should be noted that the promotion of Europe's tourism is decreasing constantly. This was 70% in the seventies, 69% in the eighties, 64% in the nineties and is expected to be 53% in the year 2000. competition from countries outside Europe is a reason for this.

H. Cocossis and A. Parpairis Tourism and Pollution of Marine Environment, International Ecological Forum Protection of the Mediterranean from Pollution Pireaus 29- 30/1/1993.

⁵ It is evident from Table 2 and diagram 2- 5 that the share of Europe in the tourkish market: (a) it is the largest in the world and (b) it increases over time. Specifically Europe's tourist share changes from 71% in the seventies to 64% in the early nineties.

almost 150 m. of them are directed towards the south European Union (EU) countries⁶.

Competition for tourism and the role of EU

It is already stated that Northern Europe is the main source of coastal tourism and Southern Europe the main destination. It sounds that for the EU, tourism is to a great extent an internal affair.

Nevertheless the above analysis shows also that competition in tourism emerges at several levels.

For the EU's summer resorts (such as Spain, Portugal, Italy, Greece and the south of France) the levels of competition are shown below.

- They compete among themselves for coastal tourism.
- They are in strong competition with the countries of northern Africa and western Asia which started participating in a dynamic way in the game of tourism.
- They will probably face in the future competition with the countries of Black Sea and Balkan countries.
- They compete with coastal destinations far from the Mediterranean Sea, especially with the countries of Asia.
- They face competition from non-coastal countries that offer different models of tourism. Traditionally these are the Western European countries; however the Eastern European countries enter dynamically in the tourist market⁷.

In spite of the fact that Europe represents the main source of tourists' demand and supply, the EU delayed in the establishment of a specific legal framework for tourism. Thus, the Convention of Rome in 1957 ignored tourism entirely.

Since then there were some important policies about tourism. Indicatively we refer to:

- The report of Vandewiele in 1970 which proposes the establishment of a specific service tourism in the EU.
- The establishment of such a service in 1981. This action coincides with the entrance of Greece in the EU and the prospect of entrance of Spain and Portugal.
- The Single European Act, signed in 1987, which provided abolishment of several restrictions in favor of tourist development.
- The declaration of 1990 as the European Year of Tourism.
- Since 1992 the implementation of several projects promoting tourism either directly or indirectly.

⁶ In 1990, 186 m. tourists were directed towards Mediterranean countries and 147 m. towards Mediterranean EU countries.

The Dorling Kindersley: ΑΤΛΑΣ ΤΟΥ ΚΟΣΜΟΥ 1995, εκδόσεις ΤΑ ΝΕΑ.

⁷ It is worth examining in a comparative way the general social and economic situation in the countries that compete for tourism in the Mediterranean and near Mediterranean area. On this issue some basic indices are presented in Tables 3 and 4.

Although in the above acts and projects the Community's basic principles about tourism are expressed explicitly, the EU still lacks an integrated policy on this matter⁸.

The story of the four P's

(or: the effects of tourism on the economy and the environment)

Progress and prosperity: the positive effects

The four P's are the successors of mass tourism. Two of them are good and two are evil. Their names ? **Progress, prosperity, pressure on the environment and pollution.** Needless to say their story is the story of the impact of tourism on the economy and the environment.

Progress and prosperity are the positive economic effects of tourism. In those areas where tourists appear, tourism becomes the dynamic lever that pushes up all branches of local and national economies.

Specifically:

- Tourism is an important source of income contributing directly to the local, national and international GDP. It also affects GDP indirectly, by setting in operation the mechanism of the so called 'tourist expenditure multiplier'.
- It is one of the main sources of direct and indirect job creation absorbing a substantial proportion of the economically active population in the tourist developed countries.
- It is a major factor that creates redistribution of the local population within the tourist developed areas. It is also the reason for attracting permanent population from other areas.

It is worth presenting some figures in support of the view that tourism is the main reason of regional prosperity. Thus:

With respect to GDP:

Tourism contributes by 5,5% to the EU's GDP.

Its contribution to the GDP of some European countries is sustainably higher. Thus it represents 9,4% of the Spain's GDP, 9% of France's, 8,2% of Portugal's, 6,3% of Italy's and more than 8% of Greece's⁹. In some tourist developed regions (like Rhodes, Majorca, Tenerife, Cyprus etc.) the direct contribution of tourism to the local GDP can be higher than 35%. The total contribution of tourism to the local GDP can be higher than 35%. The total actual impact of tourism on GDP is even higher if one takes into account the indirect effects induced by the mechanism of tourist expenditure multiplier.

With respect to employment:

Employment in tourism is high. At an international level 127 m. are employed directly in tourism enterprises¹⁰. Employment in tourism represents almost 6%

⁸ K. Krantonelis; The Environmental Dimension of E.U. Initiatives for Tourism, Technical Chamber of Commerce, Effects of Tourism Development on the Environment, Athens, 1993.

⁹ K. Krantonelis; The Environmental Dimension of E.U. Initiatives for Tourism, Technical Chamber of Commerce, Effects of Tourism Development on the Environment, Athens, 1993.

¹⁰ The Dorling Kindersley: ΑΤΛΑΣ ΤΟΥ ΚΟΣΜΟΥ 1995, εκδόσεις ΤΑ ΝΕΑ

of total employment in the EU, 7% in France, 10% in Spain, 8% in Portugal and 7% in Greece¹¹.

In the dense tourist areas, tourism reduces unemployment to an almost zero level.

With respect to redistribution of population:

It is observed that in tourism developed areas there is strong positive relationship between population figures and figures of tourism. The appearance of tourism in some areas acts as a catalyst that alters the negative rates of demographic changes into positive ones. As an example the case of the Dodecanesian islands can be presented, where the occurrence of tourist development is related with an alteration of population trend from negative to positive¹².

Progress and prosperity at a regional level are the two direct effects that make tourism a useful tool in the hands of policy makers.

Pressures on the environment and pollution: the negative effects

Unfortunately, positive effects are not only ones. Tourism- especially in its mass form- creates threats for the environment and for the areas' sociocultural identity. The negative impact of tourism on the environment can be specified as:

- Coastal and water pollution, land base pollution and sound pollution
- Distortion of historical and cultural sites, traditional; settlements, landscapes and morphological typology of these areas;
- Degradation of traditional way of life and of the social environment.

Once the negative effects on environment make their appearance, the traditional holiday resort centers reach a mature phase in their life- cycle¹³. For the Mediterranean countries which depend heavily on tourism, the negative effects of tourism on environment can be catastrophic. Mediterranean nature and history are the basic comparative advantages that this area provides. They are both the factors that make supply of tourism competitive at an international level. And both of them are highly sensitive.

With respect to the natural environment:

Mediterranean is a close base with water circulating at a low speed and with a high rate of evaporation. Its coastal zone consists of small bays in which unique eco- systems are developed. These are small in size but rich in variety of species¹⁴. The area is characterized by beautiful landscapes.

¹¹ K. Dagli; Interrelations between Tourism and Environment Technical Chamber of Commerce, Effects of Tourism Development on the Environment, Athens, 1993, p.8.

¹² P.Fokiali; Tourist Development: the case of the Dodecanese, Τουρισμός και Οικονομία, 1986.

¹³ Commission of the European Community: Directorate General XXIII; The flow of Tourism inside and outside the European Community; Part I, Main findings, doc., 1993, p.32

¹⁴ P.Golfi, K.Dagli, D.Kavadias, K.Krantonelis, P.Paschali: Coastal regions and tourist development, technical chamber of commerce, effects of tourism development on the environment, Athens, 1993, p.8

With respect to the socio- cultural environment:

Each Mediterranean country has its own character, its own long tradition and its unique civilization. The area is rich in historic sites, archeological monuments and traditional settlements. These play the role of tourist attractions representing the area's fragile cultural wealth.

The prospect of growth of mass tourism is a real threat for the Mediterranean nature and heritage.

Direct land coverage in the coast (which today covers 4,000 km²) will increase, solid waste and sewage discharges will rise, the fragile natural sites will suffer rapid degradation- even disappearance- and historic monuments will deteriorate¹⁵.

The friendly and relaxing atmosphere that attracts tourism is in danger. Tourism is expected to destroy what tourists come to see.

The role of the EU and the negative effects

Despite the importance of the environment, EU delayed in establishing a policy for it. The Convention of Rome ignored environment and it is only after 1970 that direct reference to the environment is made. However, since then, with respect to this issue, a great progress has been made in the legal and institutional framework of the EU. The most important EU actions on this subject are reported below:

- The Report of Vandewiele in 1970 in which protection of natural and cultural environment is declared explicitly as an essential issue on this development of tourism.
- The adoption between 1973- 1992 of four action plans and of a several directives and protocols for environment issues such as quality of water, water and air pollution, sound pollution, protection from chemical substances etc.
- Several actions about protection of the archeological inheritance.
- Several projects promoting natural and cultural environment¹⁶.

The need for an integrated policy about the environment is expressed in many international declarations and action plans. Among them one should mention (a) the Convention of Barcelona in 1978 and its Protocols about environment which were signed by 20 Mediterranean countries¹⁷, (b) declarations of the Conference of Rio in 1992 and (c) UNEP's Mediterranean Action Plan¹⁸.

¹⁵ UNEP, Mediterranean Action Plan, the Blue Plan, Executive Summary and Suggestions for Action, Sophia- Antipolis France 1987, p.46- 47.

¹⁶ See footnote no. 4.

¹⁷ UNEP, MAP The state of the Marine and Coastal Environment in the Mediterranean Region, UNEP, Athens 1996.

¹⁸ Technical Chamber on Tourism and Environment in Island Regions, Heracleon 17- 19/ 3/ 1995 Proceedings, p.14

The Story of the four R's (or: the concept of sustainable development)

In the mass tourism destinations, the threat from the environmental effects is so high that pessimists forecast the end of tourism in the nearby future. Is it going to be so?

In the ancient Greek theater, when the performance was getting near the end a god was appearing in the scene on a machine to give a purifying solution. It was the well known "Deux ex Machina".

In the story of tourism and environment the Deux ex Machina holds in his hands four commandments. He shows them to the people who wait in anxiety by the coast and gives orders to them:

"Restrict, restore, rehabilitate, reorganise".

The solution to the conflict between tourist development and environment should be reached in these four R's.

- Restriction is related with controlling consumption of natural resources so as to avoid over- exploitation. It also stands for managing flows of tourism and for controlling quantity of tourism on the basis of each area's carrying capacity¹⁹.
- Restoration is the key word for upgrading the fragile cultural inheritance.
- Rehabilitation is the action that should be undertaken in saturated areas where signals of tiredness from mass tourism are present.
- Finally Reorganization (in the sense of product differentiation) in the production of tourist services is necessary. New kinds of tourist supply should be designed and promoted. Tourism from countries outside the Mediterranean should be substituted by inter- Mediterranean movements. Mass tourism should be substituted by thematic models such as cultural, ecological, conference and sports tourism.

The above commands are the basic tools for sustainability, a concept not yet well defined but certainly well accepted, declaring that the only viable solution for tourism is its development in harmonization with environment.

The Deux ex Machina finishes with his commands and disappears. Restrictions, restoration, rehabilitation and reorganization seem to be the key tools. The ecologically conscious people still remain rather skeptic:

- Is sustainable development the solution to the conflict between tourism and environment?
- How realistic is to apply such a model?

Everyone understands that difficulties.

However it seems that policy makers are bound to undertake action along these lines. Possibly this is the only visible hope if they want our story of development and environment to continue for ever and ever...

¹⁹ See footnote no. 10.