

DECIPHERING THE STEPS OF PAUSANIAS: PERIEGESIS A NEW TOURISTIC PRODUCT IN THE PELOPONNESE PENINSULA, GREECE

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Abstract

Peloponnese is located in the southern part of Greece and separated from the rest of the country by the Corinth gulf. As both literature review and quantitative analysis have shown, cultural tourism is a form of qualitative tourism, that differentiates from the model of mass tourism, showing respect to cultural goods, helping local communities through the expansion of the touristic period and the sustainable development of each region. This is the profile of tourists visiting the Peloponnese, as well. This study aims to present a new touristic product, Periegesis¹. Starting by Pausanias' routes, this service will include trails of famous wanderers that have visited Greece.

The following research objectives were undertaken :

1 Available at <http://peripatos.net/>

- examine the prospects of cultural tourism and identify the sites that were included in the trails
- conduct SWOT, PESTEL, Stakeholders analysis of the Peloponnese as tourism destination
- present the Periegesis Product via the Marketing Mix (7P's).

Identification of the peninsula

Peloponnese is located in the southern part of Greece and separated from the rest of the country by the Corinth gulf. Is a peninsula of 8,278 square miles (21,439 square km). Is a well-known peninsula for ancient and medieval antiquities, museums, religious places, rich biodiversity and hotspots.

Peloponnese is also called Morias (plane tree leaf) due to its gulfs Corinth, Patras, Saronic, Messinia, Argolida and Laconia. This piece of land was inhabited from the Middle Paleolithic era (circa 100.000 years B.C.).

Many legends are connected too to the Peloponnese or the place where Paris of Troy eloped Helen and the Argonauts set sail in search of the Golden Fleece. Furthermore, one of Hercules's labours was to kill Lernean Hydra. This creature was based in Peloponnese as well. This story is clearly stated by Pausanias, our wanderer: *At the source of the Amymone grows a plane tree, beneath which, they say, the hydra (water-snake) grew. I am ready to believe that this beast was superior in size to other water-snakes, and that its poison had something in it so deadly that Heracles treated the points of his arrows with its gall. It had, however, in my opinion, one head, and not several. It was Peisander of Camirus who, in order that the beast might appear more frightful and his poetry might be more remarkable, represented the hydra with its many heads².*

In 1200 B.C. Dorian and Aetoli constructed the cities of Sparta, Corinth and Argos. In Olympia were taking place the Olympic Games every four years where athletes of all over the world came to participate. Mycenaeans continued the human presence in the peninsula and led it to be the centre of the Greek world. King Nestor's palace ruins in Pylos is the tangible proof of this achievement. Romans, Byzantian cities as Mystras castle in Sparta and Ottoman, Frankish and Venetian fortresses so the continuation of human existence in the area as well as the evolution of cultural and natural development of the region.

² Pausanias, Description of Greece, 2.37.4

This relationship among cultural and natural elements Periegesis wish to present. By creating a network of cultural routes based on famous wanderers that visited Greece at different times.

This touristic product can be offered in two ways (**customized or not**) as a way to enforce actions that their main purpose will be the **sustainable development** of Peloponnese peninsula and Greece with respect to the unique elements of natural and cultural interest.

Cultural tourism - Cultural Routes

Since the 20th century tourism followed the model of mass tourism. This model of tourism caused problems on a environmental, political and social level. The new trends of tourism are considering the needs of its traveler, going towards one of the first types of tourism, **Periegesis**.

Cultural tourism is a segment of tourism that attracts mainly people that when travelling are motivated by culture³ Those tourists are categorized in two segments:

The "pure" or "cultural tourists in the sense of the word", meaning that culture is the sole and main motivation for travelling and the broader segment of "add-on cultural tourists", where culture plays a considerable role concerning cultural activities during their trip and especially when deciding on the destination, but at the same time not being the main cause for travelling.

But what should be considered as well when we are talking about cultural routes is not only the satisfaction they offer to the differentiated tourists but the uniqueness they add to those landscapes, the respect they show to those sites and people's lives, local knowledge, skills, heritage and traditions.

This kind of cultural good, a Cultural Route, heritage sites are protected, preserved and maintained without losing their uniqueness as the local communities gain at the same time their sustainable development as new itineraries and job positions are created. Last but not least we should mention that cultural routes as a tourism product have some characteristics that should be taken into account when they are constructed.

By stating the different categories of cultural tourists and their characteristics there should be considered as well the development of the definition for Cultural Routes.

Cultural routes as meaning was discussed for couple of decades but since 1987 the Council of Europe's Cultural Routes Programme established the first definition (Dr. K. M. Khovanova - Rubicondo,p.1)⁴

³ National Trust's definition on cultural heritage tourism is : "travelling to experience the places and activities that authentically represent the stories and people of the past and present .It includes historic, natural and cultural resources".

⁴ Khovanova- Rubicondo, K.,M. , Cultural Routes as a source for new kind of tourism development: Evidence from the Council

The second definition was found in 1993, after the Pilgrim's Route to Santiago de Compostela was added to the World Heritage list. Then experts identified that the issue of "cultural routes" should be discussed in more depth.

The definition of Nasiou, P.M., Kalli, Th. is considered to describe better our opinion towards cultural routes. *A Cultural route is essentially equivalent with networks, which integrate disjointed and isolated cultural resources between them. Within these paths they will exist archaeological sites, museums of all kinds, fortifications, churches and monasteries, the acquaintance with which necessarily refers to a type of tourism, both quantitatively and qualitatively different from the model of mass tourism.*

In Peloponnese there are three types of Tourism that can be developed in Greece: Cultural Tourism, Agro-tourism and Medical Tourism (Theofanides and Karagianopoulou Maroudas et al., 2013). Periegesis is a cultural tourism service.

Market Analysis

The Market Analysis that follows clearly states the in Greece and in the Peloponnese peninsula Periegesis will offer a unique experience to its travelers.

Based on surveys of the Greek Tourism Confederation (SETE), the total inbound tourism to Greece's main airports in 2013-2014 amounts to 27,215,959. Indeed since 2013 (12.637.433) the number of incoming tourists raised considerably in 2014 (14.578.526) by 15%. Additionally, incoming tourist traffic from the beginning of the year until the month of May in the country's main airports is estimated at 1,519,481 (SETE, 2015).

The image of the incoming tourism in Greece in recent years complement elements of Greek Statistical Society.

In 2013, incoming tourists increased by 15.5% compared to 2012. In particular, the countries of origin of foreign tourists with the greatest preference in Greece were: Germany (12.7%), Britain (10.3%), Russia (7.5%), France (6.4%) and Italy (5.4%). Additionally, tourist source countries from other continents are: the USA (2.6%), Canada (1%) and east Turkey (4.6%). The total inbound tourism reached 2013 17,919,580. As regards the method of entry, first option is by plane, followed by the selection drive. (ELSTAT, 2014)

of Europe's programme, Progress in Cultural Heritage Preservation (EUROMED 2012), [Online] Available from <http://www.cut.ac.cy/euromed2012proceedings/shortPapers/83.pdf> [Accessed 09/09/2015]

The following year inbound tourism increased by 23%, reaching 22,041,083, while the main countries of tourists origin remain Germany (11.2%), Britain (9.5%), France (6.6%) and Russia (5.7%). Also, the list appears with tourists from Bulgaria 7%, Turkey and the US have increased by 17.5% and 26.9% respectively. Preferred input methods remain in Greece by air and road. (ELSTAT, 2015)

For the first period of 2015, from January to March, the incoming tourist traffic has increased significantly compared to the corresponding period in 2014, reaching the figure of 45.6%. Differences found in the tourists' countries of origin with the most arrivals: Bulgaria (24,9%), FYROM (11,3%), Albania (6.5%), Germany (6.4%) and the UK (5.8%). (ELSTAT, July 2015)

Also, based on the Tourism Research and Forecasting Institute survey in 2013 the average stay of foreign tourists in Greece ranges from 9.6 nights in 2008 to 8.9 nights in 2013. The same survey shows the competitiveness of Greece in tourism sector worldwide. In 2013, our country has ranked 3rd in the world for the quality of tourist infrastructure and 25th for the rich cultural resources (Institute for Tourism Research and Forecasts, 2013).

Domestic tourism than inbound clearly smaller in number and profit. As the purchasing power of Greeks is limited due to economic instability, quite a few people who choose to buy premium services of tourism, either abroad or in Greece. Furthermore, although 56% of people going on holiday every year, and 95.5% of them remain in Greece and 56.9% used a private car, not the appropriate target group. The reasons, according to the Eurostat statistics are:

- 62,2% travel only during July and August
- 16,9% of them choose to stay overnight in accommodation
- 81,9% avoids intermediaries (tour operators, etc.), while 14.5% say they go on holiday without any programming

In a survey conducted by marketing firm destinations Toposophy (Toposophy, 2014) regarding the preferences of inbound tourists shows the following trends:

- in relation to mainland Greece island destinations and northern Greece attract more people,
- great potential of Russian tourists,
- Germans, English and French are more likely to choose to visit again Greece for pleasure,
- growing interest of tourists to Greece from countries outside the EU, from Turkey, China, Japan, Argentina, USA, Canada and Australia

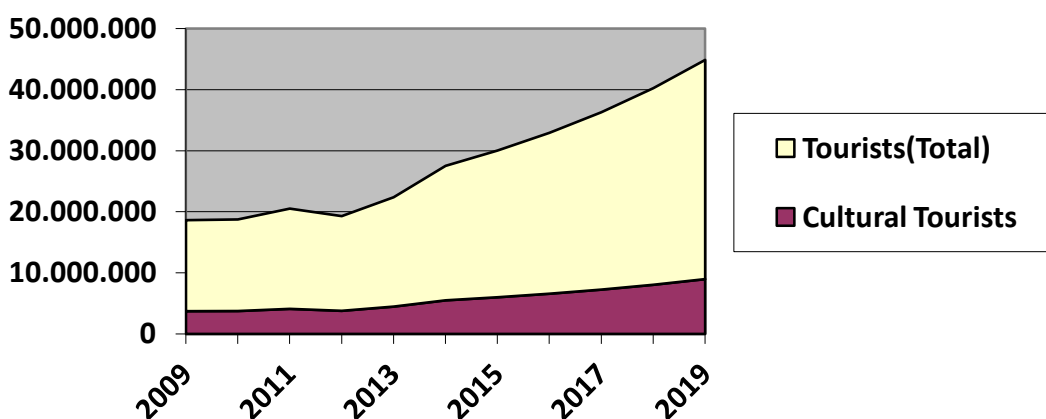
- particular preference of tourists to Thessaloniki from Russia, Turkey, Israel, Romania and Serbia.

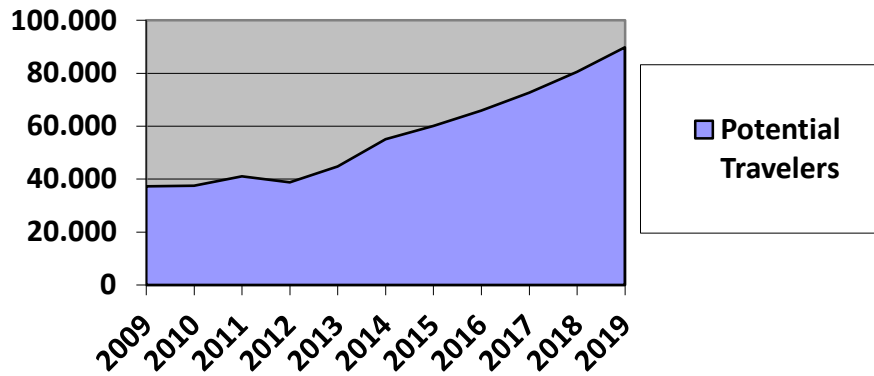
Greece has great advantages in natural wealth level, cultural heritage and tourism infrastructure to support different forms of tourism. The culture and tradition of a country at the heart of the tourist product. The history and cultural heritage of Greece contribute to a strong brand globally and diversify from other destinations.

The investigation by Mintel International Group Limited in 2010 (Mintel, 2010) on cultural tourism shows that 1 in 4 Europeans in the travel destination selection criteria, includes places great base and cultural heritage. The kind of traveler who chooses on the basis of cultural heritage looks authentic, cultural experience. Indeed, part of the global economic and political situation of the cultural heritage and the intangible nature of giving more value to a tourist destination, making him more attractive.

Taking for granted the values of visitors from abroad to Greece from 2009 to 2014 and having calculated the percentage change between the years, we are able to calculate the potential annual price change over the next 5 years.

Between 2009-2014 upward trend, with the exception of change 2012-2011, which is negative by 5.54%, but overall observed during average increase of 8.6%. To find the rate of change of visitors for the coming years, we apply the formula Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) in the prices of previous years and the result is equal to 6.4%. Based on our results, the possible change of visitors to Greece from abroad in the coming years is as follows:





Niche market - Periegesis

Taking under consideration the previous market analysis and by using several methodological tools as SWOT, PESTEL and Stakeholders analyses for the Peloponnese as tourist destination this study concluded that our tourists belong to the following age groups (Generation X, Millennials) and Baby Boomers). They might have families, but they do not travel with their children, they are distinguished professionally, with high educational level, with middle and high income level and they are usually experienced and frequent travelers. Furthermore, those tourists are mainly from Germany, Italy, Denmark, France, Belgium, G. Britain, Russia, USA, China and Turkey. Last but not least our travelers are mainly cultural tourists, empty nesters or explorers. 1% (60,000 of tourists) 25% of tourists in total.

Via the marketing mix Periegesis service is constructed to offer personalized premium services, combining heritage, tradition, natural beauty and personal exploration experience of authentic Greece, it is possible and viable. A 10 days trail for cultural tourists, medical tourists and luxury tourists based on the steps of the wanderer Pausanias in the Peloponnese peninsula with natural, cultural sites and extra activities that will be offered in 2 different packages (for individuals and groups) will be soon published⁵.

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⁵ Available at <http://peripatos.net/>

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