

CULTURAL TOURISM AS A DEVELOPMENT FACTOR OF THE GREEK COUNTRYSIDE: RESEARCH - SUGGESTIONS

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Abstract

This paper attempts the mapping of the places where cultural tourism appears and outlines the development potentials of cultural tourism. Questions are also raised about scientific issues and the relationship between tourism and culture. Some of the innumerable cultural resources are recorded that can guarantee rational and viable solutions of establishing cultural tourism in the Greek region. Regarding the scientific issues of this article, they offer exact knowledge of the "myths" and "reality" that means of the development prospects and potentials of the Greek countryside. At the same time, the causes that make the exploitation of the Greek cultural deposits difficult are detected and solutions are suggested with reference to the eradication of commercialization and the real exploitation of cultural tourism.

Key words: *cultural tourism, friends of culture, countryside, cultural resources, admissions, commercialization, suggestions.*

Introduction

Tourism is the most successful modern industry. It indicates a global character and is regarded as a local, national and international phenomenon that firstly appeared in the 1950s. Numerous studies, researches, books and articles have been written and published all over the world since then. Now, the goal is to approach this international phenomenon which is globally expanded in a geometric progression because it has been -justifiably or not - combined with modern conceptions that contribute to the economic and social development of people and countries (European Commission, 1997). Tourism industry or else recreation industry produces several appealing tourism packages with the aim of taking advantage of free time and utilizing it. These packages offer people, who pay them, different ways of enjoying life (Hoffmann, 1988). Psychology claims that tourism is really essential as it fights against stress. Moreover, according to technocrats, the tourism increases the productivity of employees as it helps them to regain their strength and return rejuvenated to their work. In particular, young people give priority to tourism and especially to vacations due to the fact that they have acknowledged their magnitude for their much desirable spiritual balance (Krippendorf, 1987).

The cohesion of the definition of the term cultural tourism in the district

The term "cultural tourism" is complex due to the fact that it can be defined in various ways and it has already been given a lot of definition. Many writers have tried to define this term (Cooper, 1994). For instance, according to the World Tourism Organization (WTO) every action that satisfies the human need and helps people to participate in a variety of activities in order to improve their cultural level and enrich their knowledge is called cultural tourism. Therefore, people

watch art performances, go sightseeing, take part in festivals and other cultural events, visit museums and sites, are informed about different manners and customs and they participate in religious events, too. The above approach of the term "culture" includes all activities that can be characterized as the constituents of "high" culture (Institute of Local Government, 2008). The products of "high" culture are all elements that indicate the integration of the working classes in the art and contribute to their education. The development of museums, exhibitions and other cultural events has promoted the cultural tourism. Besides, even the first tourism packages designed by the pioneer Thomas Cook had a cultural character (visits of sightseeings of worldwide culture, visits of exhibitions...). The distinction and the exploitation of cultural heritage and of the archaeological, historic, architectural monuments gave the visitor the opportunity to understand culture, the tradition and the way of life of the locals better (Coccosis et. al., 2011).

Based on the previous definition of cultural tourism it is worth mentioning that cultural tourism is a special form of tourism which is developing globally. In addition to the previous definition, cultural tourism includes visits to archaeological sites, museums, art galleries, attendances of concerts, theatres, operas and even taking part in seminars of linguistics, philosophy, philology, psychology, sociology and anthropology (Igoumenakis et. al., 1999).

Consequently, cultural tourism aims to satisfy modern cultural needs by offering "resources" of the local cultural environment to the visitors and it is based on an ideological context of sharing happiness. Tourism industry presents tourism cultural product as an area, as a picture, as sights and as points (Decleris et. al., 2005). Moreover, a cultural continuation as a part of the national environment is evident and it ensures the historic continuation of the Greek culture. Cultural tourism should play an important role so that this goal is finally achieved. On the other hand, experts study the issue of culture really carefully (Fennell D., 2001).

The definition of countryside

"Countryside" includes every area which is not a part of a city or a town (Tegopoulos and Fytrakis, 2004) whereas the "land of countryside" includes the out of the cities areas where activities of the primary sector and the services sector are developed. This particular definition correlates with "villages", rural areas and small towns. In other words, this definition is connected with communities, small towns and with everything that residents of a city might call "country or countryside" (Exarchos and Karagiannis, 2004). "Country" is identified with "countryside" where people's life is more humane (Babiniotis, 2006). Finally, the term "countryside" has a more precise semantic meaning than the definition of "district". The term of "district" indicates not only a geographical part of the so-called "national area" but also the different kinds of economic, social and cultural activities that take place in it and which influence the development of the district.

A tour into the Greek cultural countryside

In Greece, there were 11.165 settlements fifty years ago. 1.091 settlements from those were mountainous with an elevation over than 800 m. Semi-mountainous settlements were about 5.545 with an elevation of 200-800 m and in the end the settlements in a plain were 4.980 in Greece. Owing to the shortage of the basic technical infrastructure and services the residents of these settlements were becoming fewer. Most of the young residents were forced to migrate and as a result the population of these settlements was declined, old and it was left... to the mercy of God! Another feature is also the degradation of pasturelands in the mountainous areas since these pasturelands are not quite fertile and no national expenditures can be given for land reclamation works (Stournaras, 2013). It is certain that most of these mountainous settlements have folk architecture monuments, monuments of traditional rural culture and folklore monuments to show.

These mountainous settlements should also be characterized as culturally, aesthetically and historically “preservable” due to the following reason. These monuments can be called as “monuments” of great specific historic and archaeological findings. These findings belong to various historical ages and periods and they were spotted in these settlements or even in a nearby area. However, these treasures of the Greek countryside or some of them have been damaged by people who participate in recreational activities that take place there. The consequences are, unfortunately, negative for the natural and anthropogenic environment as in the case of mount Parnassus. Nevertheless, Parnassus is not only historically but also culturally important and we should all bear that in mind. According to the tradition, this mountain was called after Parnassus, the son of Poseidon and the nymph Cleodora. Mount Parnassus has also been connected with myths such as the myth of Deucalion and Pyrrha who survived a terrible storm in a boat which ran aground on the peak of Parnassos and the Greek nation didn’t disappear. The pedestrian writer Pausanias also stresses the importance of the Corycian Cave at Delphi which was sacred to the deities of the woods, Pan and the nymphs. Another central feature of Delphi is the ancient path that leads to the sanctuary of Apollo. Delphi is “the bellybutton of the ancient world” according to a tradition. Delphi was already inhabited in the prehistoric times and obtained later especially in the classic times great historic importance due to the existence of “the Oracle”. In the famous Oracle of Delphi the god’s divination was given through the mouth of Pythia. Moreover, Delphi was well-known because of the renowned Amphictyonic institution which gave the signal for friendship, brotherhood and peaceful co-existence of peoples, as a fundamental goal of “the Delphic idea” (Iliopoulos et. al., 2008). Besides, there are the ruins of the ancient Lilaia walls near the village of Polydrosos and Zemenos which have been famous as a passing by village since antiquity as the pilgrims heading to the Oracle of Delphi used to stop there to rest (Papakonstantopoulos, 2004). Other remarkable areas of the Greek countryside can also be referred (since Greece is full of history and culture) which have a great culture to present: the old paths of Kea with the beautiful settlements that lead to the ancient Karthaia, the old mines of Serifos (with their alleys, their deserted houses, their rusty excavation and loading machines... remnants of the old times). Furthermore, the ancient paths of Amorgos (almost 800 m altitude) offer the visitor a picturesque view since the history of this island dates back to 3500BC as one of the first Greek civilizations (Kalogirou, 2003).

The mountainous paths of Pomak villages in Xanthi are also very essential for our cultural tourism. There you can admire the traditional constructions like the bridges, the watermills and the culture of Pomaks. These mountainous paths lead to Rodopi. According to the Greek mythology Rodopi was the daughter of the god Strymon. She and her brother Aimos were transformed into mountains by gods because they dared to call themselves “Hera” and “Zeus”. In this region you come across the beautiful and different stone bridges of the mountain range of Rodopi. These old bridges were parts of the mountainous roads and for this reason they were really important. They were constructed by experienced technicians and craftsmen, who traveled, organized in small groups, from Epirus and Macedonia to Thrace and Asia Minor (Panousis, 2004).

Moreover, Olympus, the highest Greek mountain, is very important for the cultural tourism. Olympus (Tsipiras, 1988) was the residence of the twelve ancient gods and the wind, the rain and the snow couldn’t destroy this residence. Only pure light could lighten it and there the ancient gods could enjoy their immortal lives. Other significant monuments of the Byzantine era are the two paleochristian churches in Dio, the monastery of Virgin Mary in Petra, the monastery of St. Dionysus in Maurologos, the monastery Canal in the ravine of Ziliana and the monastery of the Holy Trinity in Sparmos. Additionally, the Byzantine Castle of Platamonas is a remnant of the Frankish domination and it was built with an old construction material that was removed from the walls of the ancient city of Heraklion. Mount Olympus is of great historic importance. It is

undeniable that no other mountain in the world has such a historic identity. It is a part of the classic ancient times that has been taught and analyzed in depth (Goliomiti, 2001).

Culture map of Greece



Cultural environment

Cultural tourism is one of the old and well-known forms of tourism. The first travelers were in small groups and they wanted to learn and discover new things in places of archaeological, historical and intellectual interest. The cultural tourism is a great advantage of Greece in relation to other countries which are also based on tourism.

In Greece there are 235 museums available (whose admissions are shown in the tables 1 & 2). In particular, in 2005 the visitors of the museums were 2.692.128, in 2006 the visitors were 2.795.465, in 2007 the visitors were 2.452.964, in 2008 the visitors were 1.994.864, in 2009 the visitors were 5.970.999 and finally in 2010 the visitors were 5.547.053. Furthermore, there are 322 recorded archaeological sites whose admission can be seen in the table 3 (year: 2005 – visitors: 6.893.546, year: 2006 – visitors: 7.516.665, year: 2007 – visitors: 7.262.471, year: 2008 – visitors: 6.217.302, year: 2009 – visitors: 5.970.999, year: 2010 – visitors: 5.547.053). There are also 911 monuments which fulfill specific requirements from a historic, artistic, scientific, aesthetic, national and anthropologic point of and this is the reason why they are of great importance globally. These monuments are subjected to the Unesco Convention according to which all monuments are

protected from damage and destruction in order to be bequeathed to the future generations (Maganari, 2009).

It's certain that in Greece there are a lot of different cultures and routes. However, there aren't many admissions to museums in South Greece. Thus, a cultural program is going to be developed which will link places and it will be based on the Greek mythology with the aim of increasing the admissions to museums. A museum of travelling and migration is also going to open soon along the train journeys from Corinth to Kalamata. This action will definitely increase the admissions to the museums in these specific places. These cities will be related with certain cultural events as anniversaries, human actions..., too. (ECD, 2009).

Fig. 1 Admissions to museums per month in 2006. Source: Maganari Stamatia, (2009).
 Special forms of tourism – Infrastructures – Politics. The case of Greece and the competitors.
 Research Institute for Tourism, Athens, pg. 72

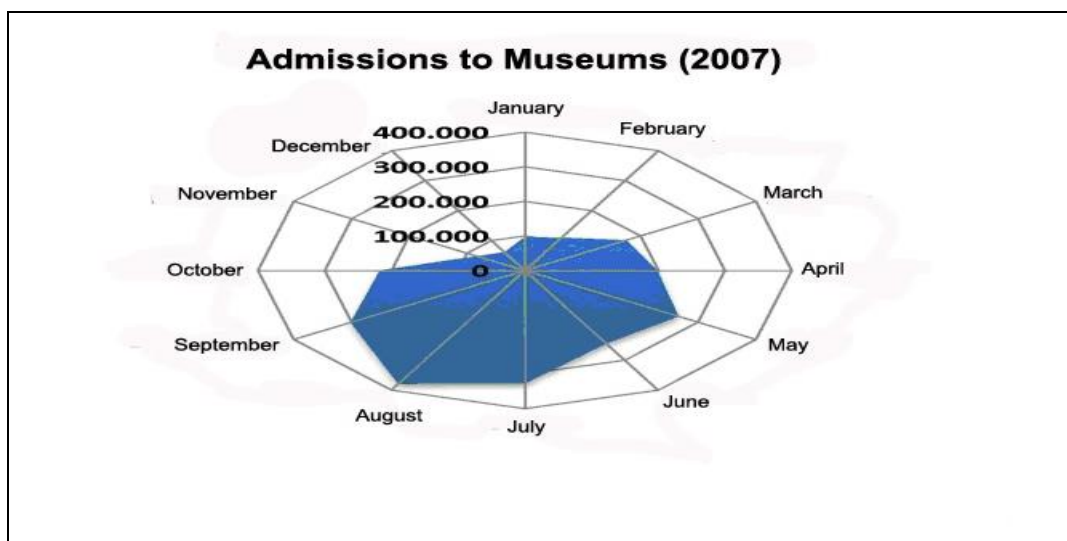


Fig. 2 Admissions to museums per month from 2005 - 2011. Source: SETE, Greek Tourism: Facts & Figures, 2012

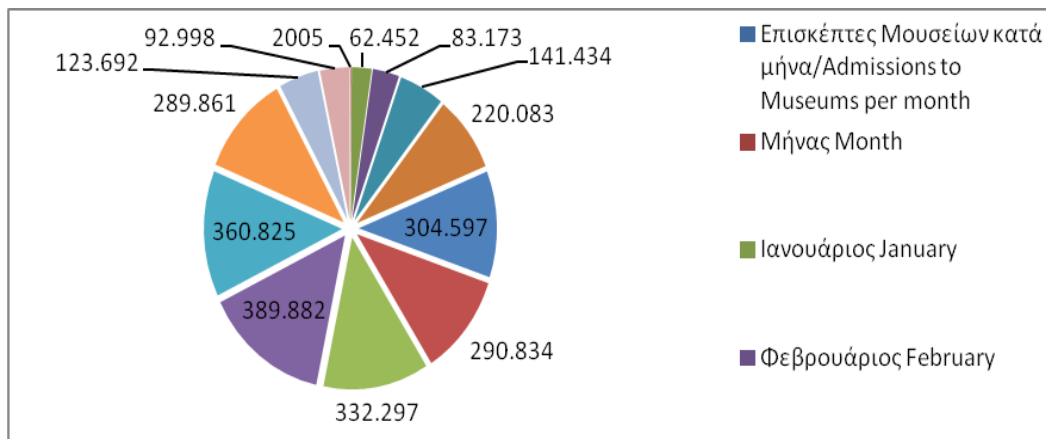
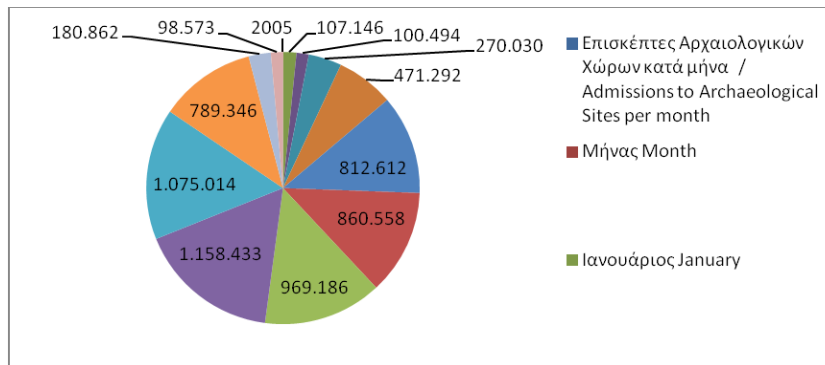


Fig. 3 Admissions to archaeological sites per month from 2005 - 2011. Source: SETE, Greek Tourism: Facts & Figures, 2012



The monuments of the Greek countryside were the greatest attractions for many years of the Greek tourism industry. Nevertheless, these tourist places, which aren't located in towns or cities, didn't present a lot of admissions due to the lack of a serious and a long-term national tourism policy, the inefficient actions of Public Administration and the absence of protection of the folklore and cultural heritage. These places, however, present unchangeable natural beauties, a wild nature, various characteristics (language, clothing, habits and customs, architecture, folklore...) of old cultures and monuments (natural and historic) of all times.

The regions of the Greek countryside can be small or big, of different historic importance, with a declining population and finally with or without obsolete cultural elements. These regions are: The mountainous regions of Epirus, Macedonia, Thessaly and Thrace. There you can admire "group of villages" with stone constructions and buildings of great cultural character. Some of these villages were also the fatherland of great national benefactors and heroes such as Vlachochoria, Metsovo, Zagoria, Syrrapso, Kallarites, Tzoumerkochoria, Katsanochoria, Vlasti (Blatsi) in Kozani (Exarchos, 2001). The Pomak villages of Rodopi and the mountainrange Pindos belong to these regional units, too. There you can see how the nature and the human constructions can be harmonious monuments such as the villages of Evritania, the villages of Kravarites...

Cultural Tourism - Folk tourism

Cultural tourism contributes to the maintenance and rejuvenation of traditional art, creates tourism demand and because of this demand we can observe some changes in the traditional arts. Thus, traditional arts aim at covering the existing tourism demand and so, a folk process of the production of imitations is developed. By observing the positive side of cultural tourism, we can support that local artists, musicians, folk artists and performers can make a profit. In addition, other forms of tourism can be maintained and promoted which they could have disappeared. In that sense, there is a great help of maintenance of the folk tourism due to the cultural tourism.

On the contrary, the negative side is that cultural tourism, which once was a ritual or a tradition, leads to a sell-off. Consequently, we have the disappearance of the cultural value and the respect of the locals towards their own arts, religion and traditions (Chuck et. al., 2011). Unfortunately, cultural tourism reinforces the art of mass production. It is therefore true that cultural tourism causes a great demand for "souvenirs" which boosts the creation of imitations and so, it reduces the quality of folk culture.

Cultural resources

Cultural resources cover a large spectrum of characteristics in the Greek countryside. They include elements of the way of life in the past and the present, mentalities and social characteristics. They also contain elements of the local history (e.g. ancient monuments and ruins, castles, fortresses and historic houses) which are based on historic events and on historic items (e.g. museums, regions of historic heritage). They are also based on constructions (buildings, houses), historical cities and towns. Cultural resources comprise religious prejudices and beliefs, national elements, way of lives of a specific culture, significant facts and locations where important social events took place. (See Table 4)

TABLE 1 Cultural resources of tourism

CULTURAL RESOURCES		
RELIGIOUS RESOURCES	HERITAGE	OTHER RESOURCES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Temples Christian Muslim Buddhism Synagogue • Chapels • Tombs • Altars • Shrines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Castles • Fortresses • Historic buildings • Historic houses • Birthplaces of historic persons • Historic locations • Farmhouses • Mansions • Villages • Cities • Folk traditions • Museums Archaeological National Folk Modern art • Natural Museums • Technological museums • Archaeological sites • Ruins of old times • Preservable buildings • Places where fights happened • Ancient roads • Ancient paths 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National festivities • Culture of locals Dance Clothing Language Dialect Food Drinks Music Art Work Industry Home handicraft Pieces of handicraft • Archaeological sites • Places of residence of famous people • Places of filming Films Series • Local folk traditions

Source of Table 4: Karagiannis St., (2008). Didactic notes for the University of Central Greece, Levadia, pg. 146

Cultural commercialization

The commercialization of the local cultural events takes place because of the foreign tourists or to be more precise from the travel agencies and not so much because of the locals. The commercialization of the local culture is not necessarily harmful for the local society-community. The depictions of the traditional way of life can be proven useful as they satisfy the tourists' desire (friends of culture) to see how the locals live without invading their private life.

People who commercialize cultural tourism try to exploit unexploited cultural data because of the tourism development. They try to form tourism packages and to attract large groups of tourists. Unfortunately, a lot of times it is not about the exploitation of cultural tradition and heritage but about its profiteer exploitation. Today, as in the past, we can often see damaged archaeological and religious sites or even monuments.

Therefore, there is an attempt to protect the monuments by providing technological support and by putting emphasis on the temperature, the underground, the creation of approach places for visitors, the prohibition of taking photos with flashlight... This is also a serious attempt to maintain and show off the cultural heritage and encourage local authorities to take creational and cultural initiatives (Mitoula, 2006).

Another significant consequence of the commercialization is the linguistic changes. Cultural tourism causes these changes by altering the data of a local society. The presence of the first tourists foreboded the development which inevitably leads to the alteration of the language of the local society (dialects often change) due to the loans from foreign languages. In that way, dialect is not spoken by young people and a few years after it disappears. This issue is becoming more intense as young people who live in developing regions use a very restricted vocabulary of their mother tongue and they continually borrow foreign words in order to communicate with the foreign tourists.

Cultural tourism has some impact on regions that are known because of their virgin nature, too. It can be stated that today the surroundings and the environment are most of the times chaotic since you see them and you cannot even recall them. A lot of natural resources have already been destroyed (e.g. historic sites, natural and anthropogenic monuments, natural landscapes) before they have even been recorded and financially exploited. It is also noticeable that many places of cultural heritage don't even exist since the development of big cities had a negative effect on the maintenance and the preservation of the local historic and cultural elements. The demographic problem in Greece also deteriorated.

On the other hand, foreign tourists are combined with some cultural advantages, too. A positive effect is, for instance, the transmission of cultural and educational elements of a foreign culture. Thus, local people can broaden their cultural and intellectual horizons and develop their own culture. There are, nevertheless, some opponents who support that the alteration of a society's habits and way of life can contribute to the alteration of social institutions. The only sure thing is that tourism brings people of different regions and countries together. It also supports the diffusion of cultures and intellectual goods (Polyzos, 2011).

Conclusions

Cultural tourism is not only "an alternative form of tourism" that has to do with businesses which provide tourists with hospitality or which sell souvenirs. However, there is no doubt that these are basic structures which are demanded for the development of cultural tourism.

In addition, cultural tourism product must also be affordable to tourists and it must connect tourists with the local environment, the architecture, the heritage and the locals. This means that people from the countryside are mainly responsible for the formation and development of cultural

tourism and so, the locals must urge the friends of cultures, and not only them, to find their region by making their cultural endowments known.

Even the proponents of peace have stated that tourism can contribute to the understanding of different cultures and societies (Page, 2006). In the last quarter of the last century the protection of the cultural heritage was one of the basic goals of the planning of territorial borders and the expanding policy according to the principle of viability (Beriatos, 2003). Of course, the last form of development either through increasing pressures for development or through the abandonment of traditional ways and practices of management threatens the Greek countryside (YPEXODE, 1995).

What is needed, however, is that every cultural action should take place with respect towards whatever remained from the Greek culture. Every cultural action should also see the tourists as a friend and not try to exploit them financially. Cultural tourism is certainly a developing form of tourism but all people in charge should pay attention in order for cultural tourism not to be commercialized.

“Cultural action” is organized within this cultural and social framework. Many experts support the increasing commercialization of cultural units and museums. Some others comment on “the clients” of the museums who pay money to enter or to buy something from the museum shop. Therefore, there is a plausible question whether every cultural activity is really an attempt to maintain or save a museum.

Suggestions

After considering the above analysis, it can be concluded that the planning and implementation of a national policy are demanded. This national policy should have as a goal to support the life in the countryside and support and present its treasures. Furthermore the national tourism policy should be reviewed so that a rational land-planning development of the countryside will follow. This will be defined by terms and processes which ensure the viable cultural development and control the urban planning and the planning of small towns and communities. At the same time, zones should be instituted in order for the cultural units to be protected.

Greece insisted and should keep on insisting on its uniqueness. This attitude is the basic component of the increasing cultural difference that is typical of Greece during the last years (Bonatou, 2012).

The most significant attractions of Greece for tourists are the classical and historical monuments. The Greek culture has different ways of expression when is about villages, markets, festivities and when it is about hospitality (Hudman and Jackson, 1994). The perception that tourists will always unintentionally influence the culture of the land they visit is too simple. Local communities had better protect their culture and not see tourists as a behavior model (Holden, 2008).

The research of the potential of cultural tourism development should define the main cultural activities of the region and the potential of incorporation of cultural tourism in the general development of the Greek countryside, the access of the city centers to the countryside and especially in the settlements where there are and they will be developed: caves, antiquities, traditional settlements, interesting landscapes, historical, cultural and religious treasures. These are an invaluable national unit and that’s why their conservation, protection and development should be among the basic goals of the Greek tourism policy.

The planning of the expanding policy based on cultural tourism ought to be rational so that the Greek cultural heritage can be utilized but with respect and with modern protection methods in order that the result will not be the out of control development of mass tourism (Altour program, 1994). In this way, cultural tourism contributes to the development of protection services of the

Greek culture which will inform the locals about their culture. Moreover, the raised money can be given for the conservation-preservation of the cultural monuments.

The preservation and presentation of the Greek culture can ensure not only the survival of the population left in small towns and villages but the survival of mountainous settlements and semi-mountainous districts of the Greek countryside, as well. These measures can have as a result: the elevation of the culture, the harmonization of the traditional element with the surroundings, the protection and elevation of "cultural units". The inhabitants of places where there are "cultural treasures" had better support and be interested in these "treasures". People in the countryside have the responsibility to support the conservation and elevation of cultural heritage so that their region can be turned to advantage (Boyd, 2002). Part of this elevation of cultural heritage can be regarded the protection of the region and its historical monuments, the creation of natural history museums, special provisions regarding the protection of the treasures).

To conclude, by considering cultural tourism as a tourism development factor it should be referred that careful actions ought to be done to ensure respect towards cultural tourism. All the countries, which have important cultural heritage to show, focus on the conservation of the monuments because these attract tourists all year round (Lozato and Giolart, 1996).

In order that this form of tourism can become a reality, discussions are not enough. We should bear the following in mind: cooperation of all relevant services, national strategy and cooperation with the private sector. Finally, our respect to the cultural deposits and the intellectual and cultural heritage should be substantial.

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