

# **Ecotourism: An environmental concern or a new diversification of the mass tourism market, the case of Crete**

A Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

By

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## **Abstract**

Crete has experienced rapid tourism development since late 1960s when the growth in international tourism and broader socio economic changes disturbed past equilibrium patterns. Tourism has become a leading economic sector but also caused negative economic, environmental and sociocultural impacts, prompting tourism authorities to develop plans aimed at the achievement of sustainable development while continuing to promote tourism in the island.

A critical review of the literature shows that the concept of ecotourism is closely associated with other concepts, such as nature, ecology, protection, culture, small scale, alternative, and others. Whilst a variety of ecotourism typologies and development patterns have been produced by academics derived from the residents' perspectives, our knowledge is still limited because of the absence of the industry's perspectives; thus the meanings of ecotourism from those responsible for its development remains incomplete.

This study explores the industry's perspective of ecotourism and its development in Crete and discusses its impacts. To this end, qualitative interviews (20) were undertaken with local and regional authorities, hoteliers, tour operators, and managers of tourism related enterprises. Data was analysed using the 'comparative analysis' approach, where responses of interviews were checked to identify similarities and differences to allow main themes and categories to emerge.

The study's findings questioned the established argument of ecotourism as small scale, environmentally friendly, nature driven tourism activity. It produced some novel findings. The analysis suggests that eco-tourism in Crete is product driven, where the local industry perceives it as market extension, profit motivated economic activity that has little to do with nature. Hence, from the industry's perspective, ecotourism is spontaneous and adhoc development concerned more with satisfying increasing consumers' needs for seemingly authentic ecotourism products than with environmental issues. The analysis revealed that genuine nature driven ecotourism has yet to be demonstrated and practiced in Crete and that ecotourism is an entrepreneurial ploy, rebranding mass tourism to increase economic growth in a region ravaged by unemployment and stagnation.

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## **Author Declaration**

*Dedicating to my daughter Chrisa ... who's thought inspiring me during this period!*



# Chapter 1

## Introduction

### 1.1 Introduction

The term of ecotourism is surrounded by confusion, it has so many different interpretations however regardless of its numerous definitions, and it is an instigator of change. Change is wanted by most of the actors involved in ecotourism, many of whom would like to see an improvement in their current situation. Tourists want to escape from their daily life and wish to get special experiences that are existing in distinct places. Business persons wish to gain income and encourage tourists to visit the destination. Governments want to “develop” peripheral regions and to increase foreign exchange and tax revenues. Others profitable businesses may see the opportunity to sell different profitable activities involved with this form of tourism such as transportation, hiking boots, binoculars, diving equipment, renting bicycles, picking olives or other seasonal fruit and claiming to sell ecotourism experiences and memories. Local residents living in the area of potential ecotourism destinations may wish to improve life for themselves and their children and may see ecotourism as generating jobs, stimulating incomes, diversifying economies, and enhancing standards of living. Even the conservationists, who would like to see endangered ecosystems and species continued, search for change in order to ensure their sustenance: changes in resource allocation and utilization and changes in management regimes. Even though most of the players involved in ecotourism desire change, there is usually considerable disagreement concerning which changes are desirable, which changes benefit equally all the above players while, at the same time, protect the destination in the long term.

Current tourism concepts about stakeholders and their role in tourism development are built on the tourism management and public administration literatures. In general, there are four major tourism stakeholder perspectives: tourists, residents, entrepreneurs and government officials (Goeldner and Ritchie, 2003; Lee and Chang, 2008; Poria et al. 2006).

Locals’ perceptions of ecotourism development and its related impacts have been a subject of research for several decades (Andereck and Vogt, 2000; Ap, 1990, 1992; Bastias-Perez and Var, 1995; Farrell, 1979; Getz, 1983; Ko and Stewart, 2002; Lindberg and Johnson, 1997; Poria et al., 2006; Wickens, 1994, 2004a). A significant reason for this interest has been the increasing evidences that ecotourism for development can lead to potential negative outcomes at the local level (Lankford and Howard, 1994; Wickens, 1994, 2001). These studies have undoubtedly contributed valuable

information that can be used when ecotourism development is being considered. The outcome of many of these studies suggests that locals tend to perceive ecotourism with a positive attitude, mainly because they view tourism as an economic development tool (Lee and Chang, 2008; Vounatsou et al., 2005; Yoon et al., 2001).

The perceptions of locals and their levels of support for ecotourism development, however, tend to change as a destination changes stages in its life cycle. As suggested by Butler's (1980) cycle of evolution (with different stages of popularity), diminished resident support for tourism development becomes evident as destinations move to later stages of development. It is possible that traditional economic assessment tools may not be enough to assess stakeholders' perceptions and level of support (Theuns, 2002) since both positive and negative socio-cultural influences need to be taken into consideration in addition to economic and environmental factors (Jamison, 1999; Ko and Stewart, 2002; Wickens, 1994, 2001).

Generally, the perceptions and attitudes of locals towards tourism development and its potential impacts are said to be an important planning and policy consideration for successful sustainable tourism development and promotion (Anderson, Bakir and Wickens, 2014; Ap, 1992; Dowling, 2003; Wickens, 1994, 2001). In addition, as Dowling (2003p.205) contends "participation by host communities in tourism planning and development is vital for the process; therefore the importance of incorporating the perceptions of host communities when evaluating the effects of tourism development is crucial for planning purposes". Understanding locals' perceptions and attitudes towards ecotourism development is a vital factor for success, as the sustainability of any type of tourism development is directly connected with the active support of the local population (Reid et al., 2004; Vincent and Thompson, 2002).

There are several issues to consider regarding locals' perceptions of tourism development. For instance, an increased number of tourists could place a burden on a community both environmentally and socially. If residents are uncomfortable with increasing tourist numbers, their attitudes may change over time (Anderson, Bakir and Wickens, 2014; Doxey, 1976; Wickens, 1994). For instance, Doxey (1976) claimed that local tolerance thresholds and the hosts' resistance to increasing tourism development were based on a fear of losing community identity, and that these host communities went through a series of stages, not unlike a 'hierarchy'. Doxey's (1976) model describes the community's responses to the cumulative effect of tourism development on social interrelations in the host community. Doxey asserted that this phenomenon starts with 'euphoria' welcoming the potential economic and social benefits tourism may bring. This then moves to a state of 'apathy' as the early promises are not realised by all members, moving on to 'annoyance' with the inconveniences of the increased numbers of visitors, such as, limited parking spaces and crowding. According to Doxey's model, if the crowding increases, residents begin to show 'antagonism' towards the visitors,

which may ultimately be expressed through violence. In the final stage of 'resignation', many residents become resigned to the effects of tourism, possibly altering their behaviour or simply avoiding visitors. Doxey's (1976) model has remained one that is often referred to by community planners when considering the potential negative aspects of tourism. Furthermore, according to Teye et al. (2002), as a destination develops the various negative aspects of development, combined with locals' unmet expectations, could result in attitude changes, not only towards tourists but to the industry itself, where locals feel overwhelmed by tourists and there is a certain animosity. Such changes in attitude have been reported in many tourist destinations in Crete, for example, Hersonisos, Malia, Stalida, Agios Nikolaos, all mass tourism destinations in the northern part of the island of Crete.

The changing attitudes of the local populations can be considered as the limiting factor in carrying capacity, where carrying capacity is considered as the capacity of the destination to absorb tourism before the host population feels negative impacts. In other words capacity is formulated by how many tourists are wanted, rather than by how many can be attracted (O' Reilly, 1986). For the purposes of this research, ecotourism carrying capacity is defined as the number of visitors that the community can accommodate before any negative impacts occur, either to the physical environment or the psychological attitude and social acceptance of the host community.

There are various studies in the literature (Andereck et al., 2005; Avgeli and Papoutsaki, 2010; Ko and Stewart, 2002; Lacher and Nepal, 2010; Liu and Var, 1986; Vounatsou et al., 2005; Wearing, 2001; Woosnam et al., 2009) discussing the perceptions of locals regarding the impacts of tourism development (economic, socio-cultural and environmental). Pizam (1978) and Kavallinis and Pizam (1994), for instance, support the view that tourism entrepreneurs and residents do not differ in their perceptions regarding the negative impacts that could derive from tourism development. Years later, Andriotis (2005) also reported that there were not many differences between entrepreneurs and residents as far as their awareness of tourism impacts was concerned. Furthermore, despite potential negative impacts of tourism, communities overall tend to support tourism including ecotourism for development (Wall, 1997). In contrast, Byrd (1997) studied the same stakeholder groups and found that there were significant differences in their perceptions regarding tourism impacts, a view supported by Murphy (1983) who suggested that the views of entrepreneurs and locals authorities differed the most.

Local authorities, including planners, have been used as a sample unit in Crete, as they represent the perceptions and actions of those who are formally involved in making decisions regarding the future development, planning and promotion of alternative types of tourism including ecotourism. As Richards (1992:5) suggests "tourism is a diverse activity which impinges on many

areas of local authorities' responsibility". The expansion of tourism and the existing competition has changed the way destinations are managed (Croutch and Ritchie, 1999).

Community stakeholder's participation is recognized by Aref and Ma'rof (2009) and Moscardo (2008) as a key factor in the development of tourism in local communities. Tourism development in local communities cannot be successful without such participation (Aref et al., 2010; Fisher et al., 2005; Schultz, 2004). According to Von et al. (1992), Eyler et al. (1999), and Thompson et al. (2000), community stakeholders (e.g., planners, business leaders, hoteliers, and others) have the ability to speak for the community due to their knowledge and their roles in the community. For the purposes of this research, community stakeholders are defined as those who can influence policy, opinion and action on community because of their roles and formal positions (Aref et al., 2009).

From the above discussion of the key issues and challenges facing the ecotourism business, it is clear that it is vital to outline the importance of exploring and understanding the perceptions of stakeholders groups such as tourism entrepreneurs and government authorities that are involved in tourism development and promotion of ecotourism (Anderson, Bakir and Wickens, 2014; De Lopez, 2001; Markwick, 2000; Reid et al., 2004, Yuksel et al., 1999). This study presents and discusses research finding concerning the views, interests and perceptions of tourism entrepreneurs and local authorities in Crete with the aim of obtaining knowledge and insights which may shed new light on sustainable ecotourism development in this Greek island.

## **1.2 Aims and objectives**

Tourism is often perceived as being responsible for the adverse effects on the environment, communities and economies. However, tourism is anticipated to double during the next two decades with multiple consequences which call for an alternative approach at both strategic and professional levels in order to minimise tourism's negative impacts (Anderson, Bakir and Wickens, 2014; Budeanu, 2005). The tourism industry does not only provide a means of leisure to the tourist but offers support to the less developed economies in Europe, such as Greece. Many destinations, including Crete, depend on tourism income. Tourism businesses capture commercial opportunities in rebranding their tourism products and promoting them in an effort to reap additional benefits and generate more wealth (Aref and Redzuan, 2009). This wealth, however, comes at a price as tourism destinations have had to pay a heavy price regarding their physical and socio-cultural environments. Negative impacts particularly arise from uncontrolled and spontaneous development in coastal destinations, including, Crete. Concern of tourism development in Crete is one of its major challenges (Saatsakis and Papas, 2006).

As a major source of wealth and employment in Greece, tourism is seen as a national and regional development tool. The authorities recognised tourism's economic significance late 1970s and embraced it as a central part of Greece's economic strategy. The development of tourism is seen as a way of solving foreign exchange problems and generating employment. It was regarded as a panacea due to its socio-economic contribution to the fabric of the Greek society. A consequence of this development was a significant social change. A negative consequence was that traditional occupations such as agriculture, fishing have been deserted because local people viewed tourism as a more profitable option (Komilis, 1994; Wickens, 1994, 1999).

Due to rising concerns over the potential negative impacts of mass tourism, a great deal of attention has been directed at examining the future of tourism and its sustainability. In recent years, the pursuit of sustainable tourism (i.e. small-scale and alternative tourism) development has led to a renewed interest resulting in a plethora of writings on its negative consequences on the environment and communities (Anderson, Bakir and Wickens, 2014; Butler, 2017; Gursoy et al., 2010; Hunt et al., 2011; Northcote and Macbeth, 2006 ; Weaver, 2016).

Seen as an effective catalyst of socio-economic development and regeneration, tourism is promoted in destinations facing an economic decline. Crete is currently faced with difficult economic circumstances resulting from austerity measures imposed by EU following the international economic crisis of 2008. This was a major trigger for pursuing and developing further alternative tourism products, such as ecotourism in Crete. It is also the primary motive for undertaking a study on ecotourism, questioning the industry's optimistic portrayal of the economic benefits and the environmentally sustainable outcome of such a product. The limited knowledge on the industry's perspective in relation to ecotourism development and promotion in Crete was the driving force for undertaking this study. Exploring the concept of ecotourism and its development as perceived by enterprising hoteliers, managers, tour operators and tourism authorities in Crete, is its overall aim. Its purpose is to advance our knowledge and understanding of ecotourism in this destination. The study's objectives are as follows:

1. Undertaking a critical review of the ecotourism literature.
2. Exploring the concept of ecotourism and its development.
3. Determining ecotourism's perceived impacts and importance to Crete.

To this end, fieldwork in the form of semi-structured qualitative interviews is undertaken with the local and regional authorities, tour operators, hoteliers, and managers of small and medium tourism related enterprises.

### **1.3 The structure of the thesis**

Chapter 2 discusses the theoretical discourse concerning the understanding of the meanings of ecotourism, and it goes on to discuss ecotourism as a development and promotional tool. The literature reveals that ecotourism is a construct and many studies employ it interchangeably with other terms including responsible tourism, ethical tourism, green tourism, sustainable tourism, demonstrating the fuzziness of the concept and problematizes its comprehension and operationalisation. Chapter 3 discusses the study's research approach and techniques and reflects on the epistemological issues arising from fieldwork. Reflections on the research process and its development are highlighted throughout this chapter. Problems associated with the research approach are outlined and the limitations associated with semi structured interviews are reflected upon and discussed. The sampling strategy is outlined and the difficulties experienced in the field are also presented. The discussion in this chapter is reflective in nature and the study's limitations are highlighted. Chapter 4 presents and discusses tourism in Greece; the discussion provides statistical evidence of tourism development and is based on secondary sources. Chapter 5 continues with the theme of tourism development in Crete. This chapter outlines, explores and explains tourists' demand and motivation for visiting the Island of Crete. To date research shows that the majority of visitors arrive during the summer months of June, July and August, with virtually no visitors in the winter months. This mass tourism places strains on the community, infrastructure and the environment. Issues of carrying capacity, although very important, nonetheless, are not a deterrent in promoting ecotourism as an additional tourism product. Chapters 6 and 7 present and discuss the qualitative findings of this study derived from interviewing 21 respondents who are actively involved in tourism related services and tourism regional and local planning. Participants were from: tour operators, tour guides, hotel managing and marketing directors, and commercial directors, Heraklion Chamber of Commerce, Heraklion Prefecture, the Pancretan Association of Hotel Managers, Vice Mayor of Malevizi, Crete, Deputy Mayor (planning & Development), CEO, Destination Management Company, Appraiser of Tourism Development product, Crete Prefecture, tourism consultants. As such, this discussion is based on data derived from influential stakeholders who hold high positions in the tourism industry in Crete, for instance; Managing directors of large hotels, Mayor, Chairman of the Chamber of Commerce and marketing directors.

A key finding of this research is that respondents perceived ecotourism as a product for increasing the number of visitors to Crete rather than as an alternative and more responsible type of tourism. The fuzziness of the concept is evident from the responses received from the participant. More importantly, the respondents perceive it as a marketing ploy rather a genuine attempt to develop a more sustainable form of tourism.

Chapter 8, the Conclusion, is a reflection on the research journey from its inception to its conclusion. Like many other studies, this work does not make claim to generalisability and/or transferability of its findings as it is based on a limited number of respondents, but its findings are valid, illuminating the state of ecotourism in Crete. The research findings illustrate a picture of Crete as a mass tourism destination, and the recent advent of ecotourism is an illusion. Chapter 9 discusses the implications and makes recommendations of ecotourism development in the Island of Crete, Greece.

## Chapter 2

### Literature Review

#### 2.1 Introduction

Ecotourism captured 7% of the international market as estimated by the United Nations World Travel Organization (UNWTO) in 2007, International tourism arrivals are expanding at 6.5% annually and within this, ecotourism is growing at annual rate of 5%, representing the fastest growing segment in the tourism industry, with a prosperous future outlook, particularly in light of ever increasing demands by tourists for an ultimate nature experience (Das, 2011). It has also been used as an economic and cultural diversification tool most commonly applied in the developing destinations as a means to protect ecosystems, preserve local cultures, and spur economic development, and is often positioned as an alternative to mass tourism (Fennel, 2003; Weaver, 2001). It could also be applied in mass destinations like Crete as a technocratic solution for product diversification in a more sustainable way. The debate on sustainable tourism development usually focuses on small-scale Tourism practices, such as rural tourism or ecotourism, inappropriately referred to as 'alternative' tourism, judging by the problems they start to create. Mature destinations, such as Crete, are a classic example of inappropriate environmental practices and of disregard for the principles of sustainability. However, the restructuring processes in traditional destinations led to a more complex reality in which sustainability has become an unavoidable reference, both as a competitiveness factor and as a growing social demand (Andriotis, 2003a; Buhalis and Diamantis, 2001; Coccossis, 2001; Saatsakis, Bakir, and Wickens, 2012; Saatsakis and Papas, 2006; Spilanis and Vayanni, 2003; Terkenli, 2005; Tsartas, 2003;).

The rapid and uncontrolled increase of tourist arrivals has produced major negative impacts on the natural and built environment. In many cases, the phenomenon is so intense that, in combination with the low quality of services, it contributes to the continuous degradation of the tourist product and the reduction of profits for host communities and for the national economy. If this trend continues, the sustainability of the tourism industry, including ecotourism, is uncertain (Butler, 2017; Hunt et al., 2014; Mathieson and Wall, 1982; Weaver, 2016).

The emergence of new tourism destinations has increased the competition among existing mass tourism destinations catering for sun, sea and sand (3Ss). There has also been an increased differentiation of tourist demand and a trend to new forms of active, special interest tourism



(Maroudas and Tsartas, 1998), such as, ecotourism and cultural tourism. These forms of tourism are based on the unique characteristics and resources of each area (Lagos, 1999; Mantoglou et al., xxxx). In the last two decades the growth of environmental concern and policies has also encouraged the increase in environmentally friendly products and services. The terms ‘sustainability’ and ‘sustainable tourism’ are now widespread in the literature and in most development programmes, even though there is much confusion about their meaning and denotation (Butler, 2017, 1999b; Liu, 2003; Wall, 1997).

The last decade has witnessed a growing recognition of the importance of the sustainability imperative in tourism. The emerging view is that tourism can no longer be viewed as a commercial activity that has no significant impact on the natural and socio cultural environment in which it is situated. Instead tourism should be regarded as an extractive industrial activity to the extent that the tourism industry operates by appropriating environmental resources and transforming them for sale in consumer markets (Wight, 1993). Consequently, “neglect of conservation and quality of life issues threatens the very basis of local populations and the viable and sustainable tourism industry” (Wearing, 2001, p. 407).

The purpose of sustainable tourism development is to respond to the failures of past forms of tourism development (Buckley, 2012; Gladstone, Curley and Shokri, 2013; Inskip, 1991; Tang, 2015; Weaver, 1991; Wheeler 1991). Whether mass or alternative, all forms of tourism will cause some form of alteration of the environment, as tourism is inextricably linked to, and dependent on the use of resources of a destination (Butler, 1990; Mathieson and Wall, 1982). However, carefully managed ecotourism encourages an understanding of the impacts of tourism on the natural, cultural and human environments (Sharpley, 2006; Stronza, 2007; Wearing and Neil, 1999). In its most general sense, alternative tourism can be broadly defined as forms of tourism that set out to be consistent with natural, social and communities’ values and which allow both host and guests to enjoy positive and worthwhile interaction and shared experiences. From the above broad characteristics, we can begin to see ecotourism as a form of alternative tourism. “Ecotourism is responsible travel to natural areas which conserves the environment and sustains the wellbeing of the local people.” (Ecotourism Society, 1991). It is no minor task to account for all of the variables that must go into ecotourism for it to be successful. As Place (1998) points out, positive outcome is by no means assured and depends on how development is planned and implemented. The aim of this chapter is to identify the main differential characteristics of the ecotourism concept. It attempts to distinguish ecotourism from other forms of tourism, provide definitional frameworks of ecotourism, and explore the relation between ecotourism and sustainability.

## 2.2 Ecotourism and its main differential characteristics

Ecotourism has emerged as a fast growing segment in the world tourism industry as an alternative to mass tourism (Fennel, 2003, 2014; Weaver, 2001). As a result, various international organizations, such as, World Wildlife Fund (News 2004; Troëng and Drews 2004) and Conservation International (2004), and a range of academics and practitioners have viewed ecotourism as a way of conserving natural resources, and more specifically the wildlife (Tisdell and Wilson, 2002). It is seen almost as a panacea for the protection of nature by some authors (e.g., Burnie 1994; Gosling 1999; Gurung and De Coursey 1994; Place, 1991; Ruschmann 1992; Stiles and Clark 1989), whereas other authors argue that tourism of any kind is always a threat to protected areas (Cater 1994a & b; King and Stewart 1996; Wall 1997; Wheeler 1992), or that the revenues created by ecotourism are too small to support conservation on a larger scale (Durbin and Ratrimoarisaona, 1996), or that ecotourism and conservation can only be antagonistic (Boyle and Sampson, 1985; Isaacs, 2000). Ecotourism has been described as travel to natural areas which conserves the environment and improves the welfare of local people (Cater, 1994; Weaver, 1991). It focuses on the natural beauty, geology, flora and fauna of a particular area along with its indigenous cultures (Fennel, 2003, 2014; Weaver, 2001).

A review of the literature covering ecotourism suggests that one of the main macro reasons for the increasing demand for ecotourism is the environmental movement (Lee, 1997), what Fennell (2003; 2005; 2014) names 'environmentalism', that has taken place in the past three decades as a part of a broader response to the environmental, economic and socio-cultural impacts of mass tourism. Following this environmental movement there are concrete evidence to suggest that consumers have shifted away from mass tourism towards more environmental friendly experiences that are more individualistic and enriching (Boo, 1990, 1993; Ceballos-Lascurain, 1991a & b; Dowling, 1996; Holden, 2003; Hvenegaard, 1994; Kusler, 1991a & b; Lindberg and McKercher, 1997; Mihalic, 2000; Orams, 1995a; Sharpley, 2006). Several key factors have played an important role in the increase of environmental conscientiousness. First, Weaver (2001a) believes that a much wider part of the public has become aware of threatening environmental trends such as global warming, ozone depletion, pesticide contamination, overpopulation, the deforestation of the rainforests. Secondly, the media has shown extensive attention to these issues through their coverage. The efforts towards environmental protection have also been supported by themed publications such as the Brundtland report together with several governmental reports in conjunction with the eagerness to achieve sustainable development by any means, and the potential employment opportunities in natural areas. Thirdly, and as a result of the above, governments have firmly placed the environment on their international agenda by undertaking more environmental friendly initiatives.

In the late 1980s ecotourism was regarded as a small-scale niche product which was a specialized form of nature-based or adventure tourism (Lindberg and McKercher, 1997; Lindberg et al, 1998). This niche concept changed in the early 1990s, and ecotourism became a popular term in terms of its definitions, applications, and evaluation, stemming from the viewpoint that ecotourism was a 'politically correct form of mass tourism' (Lindberg and McKercher, 1997, p.66). However, since the concept first emerged, it has been seen as a saviour for the environment, but it has also been arguably viewed as a marketing ploy. In some cases, ecotourism means sustainable development of tourism. In others, the term is used as a method of increasing tourism traffic and economic impact (Cater, 1994; Ceballos-Lascurain, 1996; Kutay, 1989). Whatever the definition of ecotourism, there is little doubt that ecotourism has become a substantial source of revenue for the international tourism industry. In fact the relevance of ecotourism as an emerging market can be exemplified by the fact that in 2000 the United Nations declared that 2002 was to be the 'International Year of Ecotourism'. The main purpose of this event was to be 'the setting of a preliminary agenda and a set of recommendations for the development of ecotourism activities in the context of sustainable development' (UNEP and WTO, 2002b, p.1). While specific data on the exact share of ecotourism is difficult to identify due to the sometimes conflicting estimates of the market, ecotourism has become the fastest growing theme within the international tourism sector (International Ecotourism Society, 2008; WTO, 2006).

The grounds on which ecotourism operates are claimed to be alternative forms of tourism or special interest travel and the associated products generated from these segments (Dowling, 1995 a,b; Hall and Rudkin, 1993; Hummel, 1994; Hvenegaard, 1994; Fennel 2002, 2003, 2014; Lindberg and McKercher, 1999; Richins, 1999; Weaver, 1993, 2001). However excluding for a few enterprises (Buckley, 2010), the tourism industry focuses strongly on economic aspects, with attention to social and environmental aspects confined to legal compliance, political and marketing and public relations (Buckley 2009b; Hall, 2010; Lane, 2009; Weaver 2001, 2009).

A debate exists among researchers on whether the growth of ecotourism is driven by supply or by demand. While Sharpley (2006) considers growth of ecotourism is supply led, Perkins and Grace (2014) confirm that ecotourism can also be partially demand driven rather than only supply driven.

### **2.3 Ecotourism in the context of other forms of tourism**

One of the major critiques of ecotourism analysis is the overwhelming tendency for its advocates to equate it with other types of tourism and principles of environmental management. Many tourism writers have written about the challenges of defining terms within tourism (Hall, 2002). The term Ecotourism is surrounded by confusion (Bjork, 2000; Cater, 1994). Since its inception,

ecotourism has acquired a broad range of meanings that frustrate their utilization and create difficulties in distinguishing the notion of ecotourism from other types of tourism and principles of environmental management (Boyd and Butler, 1993; 1996 a & b; Dowling, 1995a & b; Hall and Rudkin, 1993; Hvenegaard, 1994; Hummel, 1994; Kusler, 1991a & b; Lindberg and McKercher, 1997; Richins, 1994; Weaver, 1993).

The major challenge of ecotourism today is not to present another 'better' definition, but how to translate the meaning of ecotourism into relevant and usable principles and criteria. However, there is a broad agreement that ecotourism is primarily related to nature with a secondary cultural component; it involves an appreciation of the natural environment and entails activities that are benign to the natural environment. Wight (1993) indicates that the environmental, economic and social aspects should be all given equal weight, recognizing their interdependence and integrated nature. Some argue that ecotourism is considered as an expression of sustainable tourism and in that way contributes to sustainable development and Sustainability. Sustainability is used as an umbrella term that describes a situation where all human activities are practised so that society and its members are able to reach their needs and wants, while preserving environmental and socio-cultural systems indefinitely (Australia Department of Tourism, 1994; Blamey, 1995a & b, 1997; Bjork, 2007; Boyd and Butler, 1993, 1996a & b; Buckley, 1994; Dowling, 1995a & b; Fennell, 2003; Forestry and Tasmania, 1994; Hvenegaard, 1994; Lindberg and McKercher, 1997; Richardson, 1993; Wallace and Pierce, 1996), see figure 2.2. Others argue that sustainability is originated in educational experiences (Blamey, 2001; Buckley, 1994), and involves active learning, which distinguishes this tourism type from other tourism experiences (Hvenegaard, 1994).

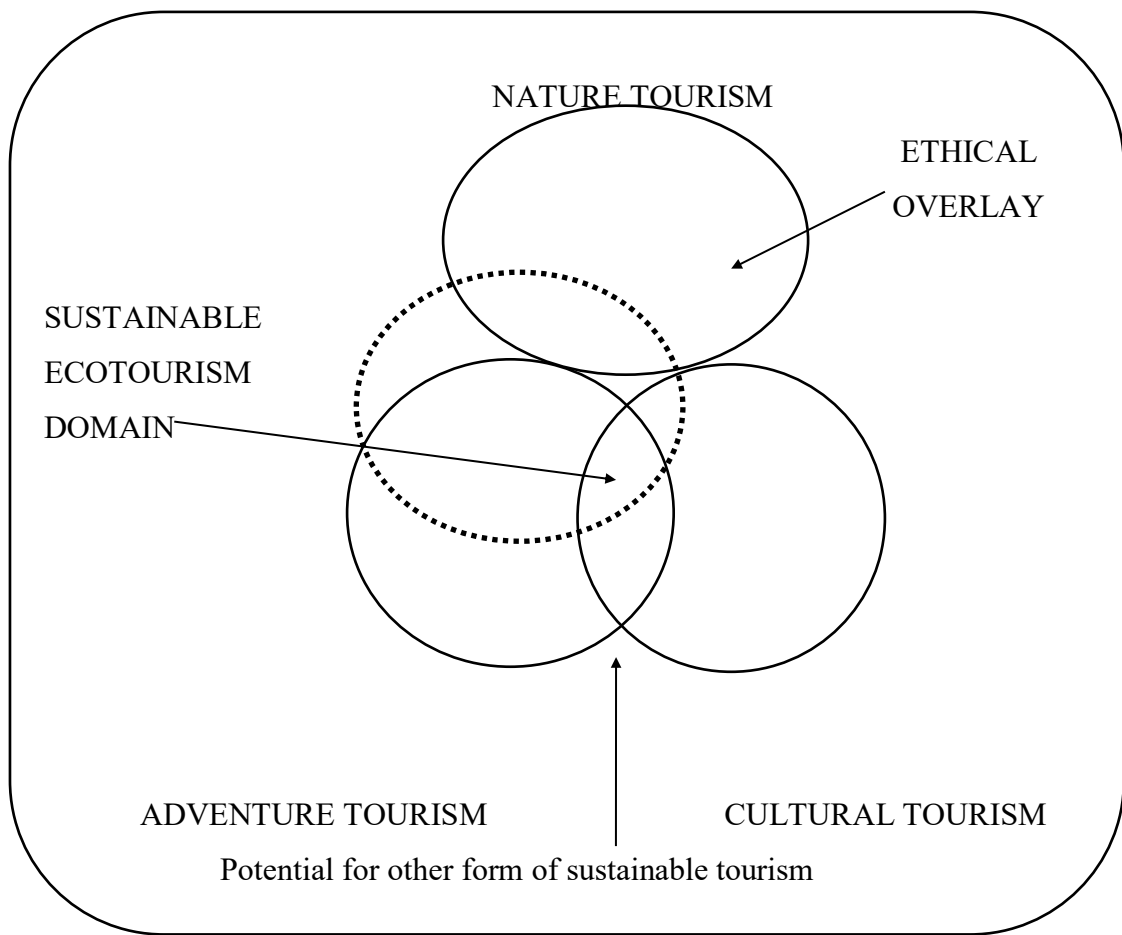
Ecotourism is thus regarded as natural based tourism and a sub-component of alternative tourism. The term, alternative, is frequently used as a synonym for integrated, adapted, controlled, responsible and a substitute for mass tourism (Boyd and Butler, 1993; 1996a & b; Cater, 1993, 1994; Weaver, 1993, 1998) or special interest tourism (Hall and Rudkin, 1993; Hall and Weiler, 1992), having similarities with adventure travel (Boyd and Butler, 1993, 1996a). Although at a later stage, Butler (1996, in Weaver, 1998, p.32) excluded from his model the relationship between adventure tourism and ecotourism as a result of criticism over the natural appreciation component (Wheeller, 1994). Where adventure tourism is a nature tourism which requires physical skills and endurance and containing a degree of risk (Ewert and Hollenhorst, 1991; Honey, 2008; Robinson, 1992), it is referred to as risk recreation. It involves self-initiated activities (i.e., rock climbing) and although these occur in the natural environment, they have both a harmful nature and an uncertain outcome (Robinson, 1992). As a result, adventure travel is proclaimed as a logical extension or component of ecotourism, only when the level of risk and physical challenge engaged in adventure activities is lowered (Ewert and Hollenhorst, 1991).

Nevertheless, the relationship between ecotourism and alternative tourism remains important, ironically over the similarities in terms of the natural environmental component of both concepts (Boyd and Butler, 1993, 1996 a & b; Cater, 1993, 1994; Weaver, 1998). (See figure 2.2).

Nature-based tourism is a form of tourism that relies on the natural environment for the basis of its experiences and can include almost any form of outdoor activity that involves a natural element (Ceballos-Lascurain, 1996). However, the environmental responsibilities of nature-based tourism extend no further than ensuring that the natural resource continues to be available. In contrast, ecotourism should foster a conservation ethic among the local community to distinguish it from nature based tourism (Page and Dowling, 2002; Weaver, 2001). Further, Newsome et al. (2002) argue that five interrelated components/characteristics must be present to make ecotourism distinct from other tourism types: the experience must be nature based, ecologically sustainable, environmentally educative, locally beneficial and (participant) satisfactory.

Alternatively, the specific interrelationships with natural-based tourism suggest that ecotourism is somewhat between two forms of tourism (Tisdell, 1994; 1996): natural-based tourism and tourism which is environmentally sensitive and non-natural-based tourism. Further, Wight (1993b) observed that ecotourism is situated between nature tourism, adventure tourism, and cultural tourism. However, she added an ethical perspective by suggesting that ecotourism appears only when the ethical principles are fulfilled (Wight, 1993b). Hence, although ecotourism is related with three forms of tourism, it is the ethical perspective which distinguishes it from these forms (see figure 2.1).

However, an examination of ecotourism from more critical perspective suggests that ecotourism, is *ideologically biased* because ecotourists often conform to certain codes of conduct; *elitist*, on the premise that ecotourism destination areas can become exclusive nature resorts where the indigenous population is often not included (Cater, 2006; Machlis and Bacci, 1992), and where few benefits went to local people or served to enhance protection of wildlands (Wells and Brandon, 1992); has *anti-democratic* tendencies expressed through an often stressed de-emphasis of cultural and indigenous populations through management decisions; and has questionable *sustainable nature* on the basis that ecotourism lacks repeat visits and the support of national political actors to ensure that the setting of ecotourism can afford the required protection for long term survival (Machlis and Bacci, 1992).



(Source: Wight, 1993b, p.61)

**Figure 2. 1 Sustainable ecotourism from an ethical perspective**

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Blamey (1995a & b, 1997) suggested that ecotourism could be treated as a sub-component of the natural-based market, based on sensitive and knowledgeable management practices adhering to ecologically sustainable development principles and as such representing an example for environmental management practices for other forms of tourism. This is in contrast to

On the other end of the spectrum, ‘conventional tourism’, or mass tourism, refers to modern, industrial tourism where large numbers of tourists are transported, accommodated and entertained inexpensively by large tour operators in pre-packaged and highly organised tour arrangements. Post (in Jaakson, 1997: 37) distinguishes the unique characteristics of ecotourism from those of mass tourism (see table 2.2).

**Table 2. 1 Experiential dimensions of ecotourism and mass tourism**

<b>Ecotourism</b>	<b>Mass tourism</b>
Experience is not contrived	Experience is contrived
Product is not commodified	Product is commodified
Emphasis on education and understanding	No emphasis on education and understanding
Unknown elements are strong in experience	More familiar elements in experience
Does not require constant entertainment	Requires constant entertainment
Intense interaction with the environment, including the cultural and natural elements	Superficial interaction with environment (natural or built)
Fragile environment	‘Hardened’ environment
Activities depended on natural and cultural environment	Activities depend on built environment
Intimate relationship with guide	Casual relationship with guide
Small group size for experience	Large group size for experience

(Source: Post in Jaakson, 1997, p.37)

## 2.4 Ecotourism defined

Ecotourism - visiting scenery, protected areas, wild plants, and wildlife - is currently one of the most popular and fast growing segments of the tourism industry, generating over \$20 billion in economic activity and representing 5% to 10% of the overall travel markets. The growth rates for ecotourism are estimated to vary between 10% to 30% annually compared to 4% for tourism overall (Duffy, 2006; Mehmetoglu, 2008; USTC, 1993; UNWTO, 2004).

Ecotourism is characterised by a fuzzy definition encompassing education, environmental awareness, cultural revitalisation rural development, and so on (Burns, 2005). However most definitions of ecotourism attribute a combination of the following principles: *empowerment* (Brandon, 1993; Scheyvens, 1999); *local participation* (Acott *et al.*, 1998; Khan, 1997; Ross and Wall, 1999); *education and environmental learning* (Kimmel, 1999; Orams, 1995); *ethics* (Fennell and Malloy, 1995; Kutay, 1989); *sustainability* (Blamey, 1997; Cole and Sinclair, 2002; Nelson, 1994); *conservation* (Goodwin, 1996; Western, 1993); *an interest in nature and nature-based*

*activities* (Diamantis, 1999); *the provision of long-term benefits for local residents* (Honey, 1999; Ziffer, 1989); and *environmental appreciation* (Ceballos-Lascurain, 1988; Wallace and Pierce, 1996).

Consequently, it is more feasible to treat ecotourism as a spectrum with a variety of products rather than attempting to define ecotourism from a specific stance or product (Wight, 1993a & b). More specifically, it is claimed that the spectrum includes both: *supply factors* (nature and resilience of resources, cultural or local community preferences, types of accommodation) and *demand factors* (types of activities and experiences; degree of interest in natural or cultural resources; degree of physical effort) (Wight, 1993b, p.57). It is also described as a complex and synergistic set of social, ecological, and economic dimensions that represent a common 'main idea' (Bjork, 2000; Donohoe and Needham, 2006; Weaver, 2005). This main idea is based on the view that ecotourism acts as both an economic and policy tool for achieving sustainable development (Fennell, 2003; Lai and Shafer, 2005; Williams, 2006). In addition, in terms of the environmental debate, ecotourism fits well with notions of 'sustainability-lite', where sustainable development can be achieved within existing political, economic and social structures and through the operation of the market (Beckerman, 1994). However, some writers argue that ecotourism is a part of sustainable development (Bjork, 2000; Fennell, 2003; Wight, 1993b); others see it as strongly involved in educational experiences (Blamey, 2001; Buckley, 1994), and some make the relation to the natural environment, distinguishing it from other tourism experiences, such as mass tourism (Hvenegaard, 1994).

Ecotourism was seen as a cure for the protection of nature and a solution to environmental conservation problems that affect the world (Mbaiwa, 2008). Furthermore, although ecotourism is claimed to be an alternative to mass tourism it sometimes appears to be the leading edge of main growth and development or a marketing trick disguising mass scaled nature tourism.

According to Courvisanos and Jain, (2006) ecotourism is just an intellectually attractive concept with little application and that it is often used as a marketing tactic to attract more customers, others (e.g., Fennell, 2008) attribute its limited application to the several variables involved in its definition. So what should ecotourism be? Further Scace (1993) points out that the term ecotourism has sometimes been used without clear recourse to criteria and actions that distinguish it from any other packaged tourism. However, there are a number of conceptual attempts defining the concept of ecotourism. More specifically, since its origin, the term ecotourism has been defined and explained in a variety of ways. A number of authors have explained ecotourism as a continuum. Laarman and Durst's (in Fennell 2003: 20) definition of ecotourism give a reference to continuums of hard and soft dimensions of nature tourism, based on the severity of the experience and also the level of interest in natural history. In the same way, Acott et al. (1998) describe ecotourism as a continuum ranging from shallow to deep ecotourism, based on the principles of environmentalism and sustainability. Additionally, Lindberg's (cited in Fennell 2003: 35) classification of tourists as hard core, dedicated,



mainstream, and casual can be viewed as a continuum using the variables of dedication and time. Another continuum can be seen in Honey's (1999) description referring to products which include the "pillars" or core dimensions of ecotourism as opposed to ecotourism 'lite' products which employ minor environmentally friendly, cost saving measures. The principle that ecotourism is a continuum or spectrum, has a number of implications for the implementation of the concept, including product development, marketing, operating, and accreditation. Many argue that the absence of a clear definition and the vagaries and ambiguities that surround the term make it almost meaningless (Weaver 2001). According to tour operator Kurt Kutay, "Ecotourism is now used indiscriminately to describe anything related to nature or unrelated to conventional tourism" (Honey 1999, p. 21). Others argue that there are different types of ecotourism: such as "hard" vs. "soft", "deep" vs. "shallow", or "active" versus "passive" ecotourism (Orams, 1995; Stem, Lassole, Lee, and Deshler, 2003).

The increase of ecotourism has also brought a deeper debate, with critics arguing that ecotourism is simply a variation within a neoliberal conservation agenda (Fletcher, 2014; Igoe and Brockington, 2007) that leads "biodiversity or nature to become commodities and natives to become labor" (West, Igoe, and Brockington, 2006, p. 257) in a global economic restructuring designed to facilitate the spread of free markets. Sceptics have taken on not only ecotourism specifically (e.g. Horton, 2009; Hunt, 2011; Kiss, 2004) but also more broadly integrated conservation and development projects (as in Terborgh, 1999; West and Carrier, 2004).

Furthermore, Stewart and Sekartjakrarini (1994) argue that the definitional structure of ecotourism is represented by two schools: (1) a descriptive school, which attests what ecotourists actually do (e.g. bird watching, photography); and (2) the normative school, which attests what ecotourists should do (e.g. adopt a value based approach). These authors also underline the supply-side of ecotourism, suggesting that as an industry it has to be concerned with the host community, the resource base, and tour operators; they add that because ecotourism involves a number of quite different social and ecological aspects, it is important to distinguish between these in clarifying the concept.

Ecotourism definitions have also been treated as container of paradigms based on polar extremes (Orams, 1995a): Low human responsibility – high Human responsibility; all tourism is ecotourism – ecotourism is impossible; and passive (seeking to minimise) – active (seeking contribution to protect) (Orams, 1995a). Orams (1995a) suggests that most of ecotourism definitions lie between the passive position and the active position towards the high responsibility pole on the continuum. He further argued that the required outcome is to move from the minimum passive position towards a higher or active pole of the continuum. The active pole mostly illustrates the actions of protecting the environment and the Behavioural intentions of ecotourists, whereas the

passive position focus solely on ecotourism development, not enhancing the antagonistic impacts or the ecotourists' need to be fulfilled. (Orams, 1995a).

Other attempts to analyse ecotourism have done so on the basis of dimensions of principles of Buckley (1994), who create a framework of ecotourism based on four main dimensions: ecotourism being nature based; Conservation supporting; sustainable managed; and environmentally educating. Further, Pedersen (1991) looked at ecotourism as fulfilling four main criteria: the protection of natural areas; the production of revenue; education; and local participation and involvement.

On the other hand, Wallace and Pierce (1996) provide a lengthier overview of the fundamental structure of ecotourism; they suggest that ecotourism:

- minimises impacts;
- increases awareness;
- contributes to conservation;
- allows local people to make their own decisions;
- directs economic benefits to local people; and
- Provides opportunities for local people to enjoy natural areas.

Following from the above, the following section reviews the different definitions of ecotourism. Early definitions reflected advertising and marketing perspective, with an emphasis on what ecotourists do or what they should do. The definition by Ceballos-Lascurain (1987, 1991a & b) of ecotourism incorporated two key elements - tourism to undisturbed areas and an emphasis on education: "Tourism that involves travelling to relatively undisturbed natural areas with the objective of admiring, studying, and enjoying the scenery and its wild plants and animals, as well as any cultural features found there" (Ceballos-Lascurain 1987:14; 1991a & b). He argues that a great difficulty for selecting a single definition is in the intrinsic nature of ecotourism, it being a complex, interdisciplinary and multi-sectoral phenomenon. It is also a new concept, which is still not fully understood. Additionally, in many cases, the concept of ecotourism is confused with the broader concept of sustainable tourism or with certain types of adventure tourism that have nothing to do with ecotourism. This causes much difficulty in proper communication when discussing these different concepts. He believed that the main components and issues that should be considered in defining ecotourism are: nature, local community, economics, conservation, and culture. And that ecotourism should be characterised by the following standards:

(1) Tourism activity is developed in a relatively undisturbed natural setting.

- (2) Negative impacts of tourism activity are minimised.
- (3) Tourism activity helps in preserving the natural and cultural environment.
- (4) It actively involves local communities in the process, providing benefits to them.
- (5) It contributes to sustainable development and is a profitable business.
- (6) Education/appreciation/interpretation component (of both natural and cultural heritage) must be present.

Furthermore during the First World Conservation Congress organised by IUCN in Montreal in October 1996, 'Ecotourism and Protected Area Conservation' another ecotourism definition has been adopted:

*Ecotourism is environmentally responsible travel and visitation to relatively undisturbed natural areas, in order to enjoy and appreciate nature (and any accompanying cultural features – both past and present) that promotes conservation, has low negative visitor impact, and provides for beneficially active socio-economic involvement of local populations. (Ceballos-Lascuráin, 1996).*

Ceballos-Lascurain's (1987) definition viewed ecotourism as a means of protecting areas through the generation of revenues, environmental education and the involvement of local people in both decisions regarding appropriate developments and associated benefits. He argued that ecotourism is a multi-dimensional philosophical concept, which is a part of eco-development and needs planning based on strict guidelines and regulations that will develop the sustainable operation (1991a & b, 1993a & b). He believed that the person who involves in ecotourism has the chance of immersing himself or herself in nature in such way that most people cannot enjoy in their regular urban life. This learning experience and knowledge of the natural environment together with its cultural aspects will convert them into somebody eagerly involved in conversation issues.

Distinguishing between mass tourists and ecotourists in relation to natural-based consumption, Ceballos-Lascurain believed that both groups are interested to visit natural areas but the mass tourist has a more passive role with nature, participating in activities which do not involve the true concern over nature or ecology such as water sports, jogging, and biking (Ceballos-Lascurain, 1991a & b). While ecotourists are attracted to a natural area and have a more active role through a non-consumptive use of wildlife and natural resources, through activities such as nature photography, botanical studies, and observing wildlife (Ceballos-Lascurain, 1991a, p.25, cited in Diamantis 1999, p.96). Critics suggest that this definition lacks foresight as it overlooks experiential opportunities (Fennell, 2001b). It focuses on what tourists do, rather than what they should do (implying missed opportunities) (Stewart and Sekartjakrarini, 1994). Furthermore, it ignores the responsibility of the ecotourism industry for environmental conservation (Wen and Tisdell, 1995), and does not address the economic impacts which this form of tourism can create: the resource degradation, visitor satisfaction, and positive impacts on wildlife. On the other hand, it has been proclaimed that it does

not ignore the local people who often live in such natural settings, who are both part of the environment and their culture enhances the visitors' interests (Figgis, 1993). Ceballos-Lascurain's definition was also viewed as being situated in the passive position towards the low responsibility pole (Orams, 1995a) mainly highlighting the characteristics of the destination such as the natural settings (Wall, 1994). Although Ceballos-Lascurain's definition is successful on capturing the essence on what ecotourism is, Shores (1992) believes that it concentrates almost exclusively on the motives of the Traveller and not on the impact that such travel has on the cultural and ecological environments of the destination.

Figgis (1993), Steele (1993) and Wheat (1994) express similar emphasis in their definitions. Figgis (1992, p. xx) defines ecotourism as 'travel to remote or natural areas to enhance understanding and appreciation of the natural environment and cultural heritage while avoiding damage or deterioration of the experience for the others'. Steele (1993, p. xx) defines it as 'an economic process where rare and beautiful ecosystems are marketed internationally to attract visitors'. Wheat (1994, p. xx) defines it as 'a niche market for environmentally aware tourists who are interested in observing nature'.

Some definitions reflect the belief that a close working relationship between the local community and the tourism industry provides the necessary mechanism to support conservation efforts. The definitions by Fennell and Eagles (1990), Ziffer (1989) and Norris (1994) all recognize the conservation and development role of ecotourism. Others consider ecotourism to be ecologically responsible tourism, while Valentine (1991) suggests that ecotourism should contribute to the protection of reserved natural areas. Young (1992) considers it to be 'tourism to natural areas that fosters environmental understanding, appreciation and conservation and sustains the culture and wellbeing of local communities'. Western (1993) defines ecotourism as 'responsible travel to natural areas which conserves the environment and improves the welfare of local people'. Most experts believe that ecotourism should achieve environmental conservation, reduce negative effects on the environment, and improve the resource base (Boo, 1990; Buckley, 1994; Wallace and Pierce, 1996). Definitions incorporating these aspects embrace, with varying degrees of explicitness, the concern for the economic and social welfare of indigenous peoples and recognize the importance of respecting the dignity and diversity of other cultures (Fennell and Eagles, 1990). Tisdell (1995b) interprets ecotourism as nature-based tourism taking care of the environment – 'environment' being interpreted in broad terms. This definition is very relevant especially for developing countries, where social, economic, cultural and political factors are often interwoven with the natural setting and cannot be separated. Other definitions have expressed concern for the environment by incorporating the idea of ecologically sustainable development. For example, according to Valentine (1991), ecotourism is 'nature-based tourism that is ecologically sustainable, based on relatively undisturbed natural areas,

is non-degrading, non-damaging, [and] provides a direct contribution to the continued protection and management regime'. According to the Ecotourism Association of Australia (1992), ecotourism is ecologically sustainable tourism that fosters environmental and cultural understanding, appreciation and conservation. Australia's ecotourism strategy adopted the definition 'ecotourism is nature-based tourism that involves education and interpretation of the natural environment and is managed to be ecologically sustainable'. This definition recognizes that the natural environment includes cultural components and that 'ecologically sustainable' involves an appropriate return to the local community and long term conservation of the resource (Commonwealth Department of Tourism, 1994). Wight (1993a) explains the close ties between ecotourism and sustainable development and how that relationship often means favouring supply (resource constraints and the needs of local communities) over demand. Ecologically sustainable development recognizes the intrinsic value of the natural resource by treating it as unique, and understands that damage to it is irreversible and that it must be preserved for future generations. These definitions reflect a resource-based as well as an ethics-based perspective, seeking to achieve a balance of benefits among resource owners, the local community and the visitors. Ecological sustainability is especially relevant for developing countries, where many of the world's ecotourism resources are located. The definition of Ziffer (1989), although dated, is very comprehensive and includes all the elements referred to above. Ziffer: (1989) acknowledges that ecotourism attempts to describe an activity to formulate a philosophy, while at the same time adopt a model of development, and it is this complex nature of the concept that prevents the adoption of a common definition (cited in Diamantis 1999, p.97). However ecotourism claimed to offer economic benefits through natural resources preservation, providing potential benefits for both conservation and development (Boo, 1990, 1992, 1993). More specifically Ziffer asserts that:

*"Ecotourism is a form of tourism inspired primarily by the natural history of an area, including its indigenous cultures. The ecotourist visits relatively undeveloped areas in the spirit of appreciation, participation and sensitivity. The ecotourists practices a no consumptive use of wildlife and natural resources and contributes to the visited area through labour or financial means aimed at directly benefiting the conservation of the site and the economic well-being of the local residents" ( Ziffer, 1989, p.6).*

Ziffer (1989) noted that the goal of ecotourism is to gain a percentage of the huge tourism market by attracting visitors to natural areas and to produce funds to support resource management and community economic development. In addition, she believed that if planning and decision-making do not involve local populations, then ecotourism will not succeed, and may even be detrimental to local communities. She also noted that ecotourism needs planning which balances economic, social and environmental goals. However, she drew the comparison between ecotourism and nature tourism. She claimed that nature tourism is tourism in natural areas with a focus on

experiences of nature based products and not ecologically sound, whereas ecotourism is a more ecologically sustainable tourism that contributes to the conservation of the site and the economic well-being of the locals.

Further, she argued that Ecotourism also implies a managed approach by the host country or region which commits itself to establishing and maintaining the sites with the participation of local residents, marketing them appropriately, enforcing regulations, and using the proceeds of the enterprise to fund the area's land management as well as community development.

The International Ecotourism Society (TIES) provided a simpler definition of ecotourism in 1990 as responsible travel to natural areas, which seeks to conserve the environment and sustain the wellbeing of the local communities (TIES, 2013). This definition by TIES is supported by the World Conservation Union's (IUCN) explanation of ecotourism, adopted from Ceballos-Lascuráin (1996), which describes ecotourism as environmentally responsible travel and visitation to natural areas, with the purpose of enjoying and appreciating nature and other cultural features, as well as promoting conservation, minimising visitor impact and providing for beneficially active socio-economic involvement of local people (Ceballos-Lascuráin, 1996).

Several other definitions recognize the importance of community development and the preservation of indigenous cultures (Fennell and Eagles, 1990). The above definitions reveal ecotourism as a concept whose parameters and terms of reference are still evolving. Although a clear chronological evolution cannot be established, the early definitions emphasized marketing, education and the tourism experience, but did not distinguish between nature-based tourism and ecotourism or emphasize nature conservation. In fact, many other terms, such as 'nature tourism', 'wilderness tourism', 'environmental tourism', 'green tourism', 'adventure travel', 'cultural tourism', 'ecological tourism' and 'sustainable tourism', were used synonymously with 'ecotourism' (Cater, 1993; Wight, 1993a). Later definitions embraced numerous elements, including conservation, cultural and community development, etc. The absence of a uniform definition can cause inconsistency in the industry and companies promoting ecotourism may have varying standards for conservation and development goals. There is now broad agreement that ecotourism (a) is primarily nature-based with cultural components as a secondary element; (b) involves the appreciation of the natural environment in its own right; and (c) entails activities that are benign to the natural environment. Wight (1993b) indicates that the environmental, economic and social arenas should all be given equal weight, recognizing their interdependence and integrated nature. There is, however, a justification for emphasizing the conservation objective, given the inherent uncertainties in environmental phenomena and the potentially irreversible nature of damage done to them. In this paper, a broad definition is adopted which includes economic, social and environmental conservation objectives.

Despite its many varying definitions, there is a general agreement that ecotourism is characterized by small scale development planned to:

- Attract tourists to natural environments that are unique and accessible.
- Use tourism to achieve improved nature conservation through education and changing attitudes at all levels.
- Produce employment and entrepreneurial opportunities for the host community.

The encouragement of active participation by the local population in the conservation and education dimensions of tourism development process is an essential element of ecotourism (Hall and Kinnaird, 1994). Development must start with the people first, as it is from this basis that the industry will develop, and their involvement will allow them to avoid many of the pitfalls already associated with conventional mass tourism.

Ecotourism then is not just an 'industry' or activity undertaken in the natural environment but an experience that an individual or group has that affects their attitudes, values and actions. It involves environmental education, fostering of attitudes and behaviour that is contributing to maintaining natural environments, and empowerment of host communities. Ecotourism can therefore be said to include three key objectives: sustainability, conservation and empowerment of host communities (Wearing and Neil, 2000). In contrast to more usual forms of tourism, ecotourism is unique in its eccentric focus along with education, personal growth and other intrinsic values underlying travel motivations. Intrinsic value refers to the value of an entity for its own sake, independent of its benefit to humans (Callicott, 1989; Devall, 1990; O'Neill, 1992; Rolston, 1989; Vilkkka, 1997). Vilkkka (1997, p.14) states: 'According to the distinction of intrinsic and instrumental valuation, nature has intrinsic value if it has value for its own sake and instrumental value if it has value for people'. Although the definition opposes intrinsic and instrumental values, this does not mean they are mutually exclusive, as a person can hold both value types simultaneously (Callicott, 1994; Gebhardt and Lindsey, 1995; Stern and Dietz, 1994). Vilkkka (1997) distinguished intrinsic value from existence value which is defined within the discipline of economics and therefore assumes an underlying benefit to humans. As a result ecotourism is associated with conservation of values and behaviours' and not just conservation of the natural environment but of the host communities' environment. Ecotourism is as much about education, the fostering of attitudes and behaviour that is conducive to maintaining natural and cultural environments, as it is about fostering a sustainable industry. (Wearing and Neil, 2000). For example a survey conducted in Lamington National Park in Queensland by Weaver found 83% of respondents felt their ecotourism experience made them "more environmentally conscientious" (Weaver, 2001, p. 104-106). According to the concept of "ethic transfer" of Epler Wood's which describes the changed consciousness that ecotourism can cause in the host community,

Hamilton states that ecotourism development transferred a conservation ethic to developing communities such as Belize, Costa Rica and Ecuador, “where a steady stream of ecotourists and scientists have transferred some of their knowledge and enthusiasm to local people” (Hamilton, no date). It is this educational component of ecotourism which contributes to the development of an environmental consciousness that Stewart-Harawira (2005) sees as a key factor in fostering eco-humanism and through it, a better alternative social order.

As the term ecotourism has evolved, definitions have become more precise, with stronger ties to principles of sustainable development (Blamey, 2001; Fennel 2014; Honey 2008). Ecotourism’s perceived potential as an effective tool for sustainable development is the main reason why developing countries are now embracing it and including it in their economic development and conservation strategies (Stem et al., 2003).

Recent research show that ‘sustainability’ remains central to the definition of ecotourism in the developed countries such as Canada (Donohoe and Needham, 2006) Although sustainable development has been key to the ecotourism discourse in developing countries, research (e.g., Gurung and Seeland, 2008) has shown that the interpretations of ecotourism have also been strongly linked to poverty reduction and local development. This is because ecotourism in developing countries largely occurs in protected areas (e.g., Asiedu, 2002; Cobbinah et al., 2015a; Stone and Wall, 2004), and results in changes in the use of protected area resources by, and livelihoods of local people (Cobbinah, Black and Thwaites, 2015b).

Despite the range of ecotourism definitions three major dimensions of the term are evident a natural and cultural component, an educational or learning component, and a requirement for sustainability. In addition most of them are placed between a passive and more active position, mostly explaining the characteristics of the destination and the trip. There are few definitions, which are based on the motivational characteristics of the consumers, and as such illustrate the lack of attention paid to the perspective attesting consumer-selected attributes and costs.

## **2.5 Ecotourism and sustainability**

The subject of sustainable development has received a widespread support from all the researchers examining this concept. The realization that environmental issues, such as acid rain and emission of greenhouse gases, have transnational consequences; reinforcing the need to better understand human/nature interactions (Kates and Clark, 1996). And it has been set as one of the mains policies in tourist developed areas, in an effort to both gain the economic benefits of tourist development but also manage local resources in such a way that cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity and life support systems are maintained (Stratigea and Katsoni, 2015).



The Manila Declaration requires tourism resources to be under the control of the countries (Edgell, 1990). However the popularization of sustainable development is attributable to the Brundtland Commission report, *Our Common Future*, where the need for integration and environmental issues was brought dramatically to the forefront of the development debate. The environment can not be protected when growth does not account for the costs of environmental destruction (WCED, 1987). Here, sustainable development was defined as ‘a development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs’ (WCED, 1987, p.43). The commission further emphasised that sustainable development it is ‘a process of change in which the exploitation of resources, the direction of investments, the orientation of technological development, and institutional change are made consistent with future as well as present needs’ (WCED, 1987, p.9). Consequently, the need to address and in some cases incorporate principles of “sustainability” or “sustainable tourism development” into tourism development policy and planning has gained widespread acceptance amongst policy makers and developers (Brundtland, 1991; Kidd, 1992; Mitlin, 1992). The end of this decade brought the first studies on sustainable development, sustainable tourism development and alternative forms of tourism. As a result the term sustainability became synonymous with the notion of balance and was adopted by the international organizations envisaging that a steady succession of doing the right thing would lead to sustained plateau that with wise management could be maintained in perpetuity. It was during this period that sustainable tourism products emerged such as ecotourism, placing this concept at the centre of the re-orientation of tourism. In the 1990s a growing proportion of the tourism research literature, has focused on environmental issues, reflecting the integration of tourism and the environment with the terms of sustainability, sustainable tourism development; and ecotourism was presented as a main issue in a vast number of studies. In 2002 two major events marked a milestone for the global sustainable development agenda and in particular for the tourism sector. First, the declaration of 2002, the ‘International Year of Ecotourism’ (IYE), confirmed that despite general acknowledgement of confusion in the definition of ecotourism (Buckley, 1994, 2003, 2004, 2008, 2012; Orams, 1995; Weaver, 2001; Welford & Ytterhus, 1998), its philosophy captivated tourism research and policy agenda in the 1990s. Second, 2002 was the year of the World Summit for Sustainable Development (WSSD) organised by the 10th Session of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (UN -CSD).

Ecotourism, sustainability, and development are topics with substantial and diverse evolution of meanings, frustrating their simple and unqualified utilization. Ecotourism is seen as a catalyst for encouraging ecologically sustainable development; but what does sustainable development mean? Harris and Leiper (1995) see sustainable development as a form of economic growth occurring within the context of sound environmental management. As such, the concept of sustainability implies

resource conservation which allows exploitation to support people at a given level of technology and lifestyle in perpetuity. Butler's (1991) model of tourism development proposes that when a destination starts to become popular commercial forces produce a range of events that usually increase the levels of visitors use, change the kind of the resource and alter the type of tourist experience until the resource loses its tourist attractiveness. It could thus be argued that tourism as a phenomenon is basically unsustainable, and unless steps are taken to interfere in this process the resources will avoidably become overused. Tourism can only become sustainable in its economic returns and in the survival of the resource on which it is based in the long run, if there is interference in the destination development process (Butler, 1998, 2017).

According to Steele (1995) the best way in interfering in the destination development cycle and control open access to "common" resources is to limit tourist's numbers, so holding tourism to an environmentally and economically sustainable level. Butler (1991) believes that this interference in limiting tourist's numbers is politically difficult in a free market situation. Grabowski (1994) also argues that the political scenarios that would make this aim possible are certainly rare, even though Burton (1994) and Sofield (1991) report on two specific situations where cooperation between central government and the host communities resulted in limiting tourist numbers. Butler advances three options for sustainable tourism: changing the tourist type, make harder the resources, and educating the people involved in the process; so that introducing controls to reduce impacts is more broadly accepted. He pointed to the wise use of resources with a long-term view as the basic philosophy from which sustainable development should be drawn. The principles and objectives of sustainable development, Wight (1992, 1996) suggests, are: maintaining essential ecological processes; preserving biological diversity; sustaining use of species and ecosystems, some of which support important industries; developing diverse opportunities for non-material use (spiritual, recreational, aesthetic) of natural resources; maintaining and improving quality of life; and developing a long-term sustainable economy.

Clearly, the objectives of sustainable tourism development are similar to those presented in the wide range of definitions of ecotourism. A look into the different definitions shows all too well that we are far away from an all-encompassing definition. However, there are few aspects that seem to be apparent and re-occurring in the STD aims, such as: a sense for the host community; conservation of natural, built and cultural heritage and resources; and the generation of revenue. Similar to ecotourism, everyone seems to agree that there is a need for sustainability, but what it actually entails remains somewhat vague (Wheeller, 1994), lending itself to varying interpretations (Sharpley, 2000,). Though ambiguous, the concept of sustainability is not a neutral one; nor can it be considered in isolation from the socio-political context in which it was born and where it operates. The ambiguity of the concept of sustainability in tourism lends itself to misuse by tourism

entrepreneurs; because it is a desirable characteristic of enterprises in the eyes of potential customers, the concept acquires promotional value. Like 'ecotourism', it can easily be adopted by entrepreneurs to advertise their tourism product, without any real steps being taken to apply it, even in the widest sense in which the concept is generally understood. Just as any trekking or nature tour in remote areas in developing countries, on foot or by vehicle, tends to be re-christened as 'ecotourism', so any tourist enterprise penetrating a new area, can be called 'sustainable' as a promotional trick (Cohen, 2002).

However, it is not hard to see the significant overlap between the key principles of ecotourism and sustainable development. The relationship between the two has become so intertwined, that they should no longer be thought of as separate ontological areas. Some mention of sustainability can be found in almost every single piece of literature on ecotourism whether it is economic, social, environmental, or all three combined. In Agenda 21 for the Travel and Tourism industry (1995), WTO elaborated the meaning of sustainable tourism thus: "Sustainable tourism development meets the needs of present tourists and host regions while protecting and enhancing opportunity for the future. It is envisaged as leading to management of all resources in such a way that economic, social, and aesthetic needs can be fulfilled while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity, and life support systems" (Sirakaya et al., 2001, p. 412). Ecotourism, in its purest form, is based on the same philosophy as sustainable development as well as sustainable tourism. It is important to think of sustainability not only as a goal for ecotourism but perhaps more importantly as the means for achieving that goal. In this context, a key consideration in ecotourism development is sustainability. Sustainability refers to the management strategy of meeting economic goals without sacrificing an equal or higher quality of life for future generations. Ecotourism has been recognized as a means for integrating conservation and development specifically and as a means to demonstrate sustainability in general (Carrier and Macleod, 2005; Fennell, 2003, 2014; Weaver, 2005). Consequently, Ecotourism could be described as:

*Responsible travelling to natural areas to experience the environmental and sociocultural resources through their sustainable use and generation of funds for their protection by utilising means as education of tourists and hosts, stimulation of the local economy, environmental friendly small scale developments and involvement of the local community in its development ( Saatsakis and Milonakis, 2006)*

In essence, ecotourism is defined by sustainability. However the world sustainability is also subject to debate. Since sustainability is so difficult to measure, it is more important to emphasize sustainability as the intention and not necessarily the outcome. The most important way to advance ecotourism is to adhere to the philosophy of sustainable development and to try to maximize the

probability of positive impacts while minimizing the negative impacts (Weaver, 1999). Ecotourism is thus viewed as an activity that involves more than one objective. It is suggested, within the context of sustainable tourism development, that economic and environmental goals can be 'mutually beneficial and interdependent' (Gardner, 1989, p.337), where addressing social impacts is also considered a necessary step to be taken 'before plan implementation' (Lawrence, 1994, p.263). It is well documented that sustainable development is based on the interrelationships between and integration of three major key factors: environmental protection, economic feasibility and social equity (Fokiali 1997; Kokkosis and Tsartas 2001; Komilis 2001; McIntyre et al., 1993; Spangenberg 2004; WCED 1987). Consequently, an ecotourism model can be considered as a strong interpretation of the sustainability concept and in this sense an ecotourism venture is expected to prioritize environmental issues over marketing opportunities. Thus, it is also maintained that ecotourism provides an effective model for testing the applicability of the ideas of sustainable development (Fennell, 2002; Wearing and Neil 1999; Wight 1993, cited in Komilis, 2001). Its successful implementation in an area shows the degree to which ecotourism manages to: (a) protect natural resources and biodiversity, (b) educate visitors and members of local communities, and (c) involve local residents in sustainability issues, generate income, finance environmental conservation and promote development of the local economy (Ross and Wall, 1999).

In general, ecotourism minimises environmental impacts from tourism by presenting environmentally friendly practices (such as water and energy saving) and implementing sustainable actions such as visitor number management, strict rules and regulations for land use, and specific spatial or time zoning (Fennell, 1999; Lim and McAleer, 2005). It also generates financial means that can be used to cover the maintenance and operating costs of conservation areas, through various tariffs, charges for admission and use of tourist attractions, voluntary contributions and donations. These actions boost the preservation of biodiversity and secure the long-term operation of ecosystems (Buckley, 2004; Burger, 2000; Hearne and Santos, 2005; Wearing and Neil, 1999). Further Environmental learning, which is an intrinsic part of the ecotourism experience, helps to reduce or prevent the negative consequences of a person's visit, although there are ecotourism destinations in which such claims fall a long way short of being realised (Glick, 1991; Kimmel, 1999).

The issues of sustainability within ecotourism, however, is generally associated with the direct and indirect costs and benefits of the impact of tourism on the natural environment, economy, and local communities from destination to destination (Blamey, 1995a & b, 1997; Weaver, 1998) (see table 2.3). These impacts are explored in the next section.

## **2.6 Impacts and characteristics**

This section presents an overview of the types of impact that may be associated with ecotourism as distinct from other forms of tourism. The impacts of tourism and ecotourism have been reviewed by a number of authors, including Mathieson and Wall (1982) and Boo (1990).

Impacts are usually assessed according to the sphere of activity affected; environmental, economic, social or cultural. The categories are not exclusive and achieving benefits in one area may involve costs in another. The success of ecotourism planning, development and management will be determined by the degree to which benefits outweigh costs.

A study of the impacts and long-term consequences of various types of tourism development can assist management in developing strategies to maximise the net benefits of ecotourism. Since the impacts of tourism are often cumulative, the impacts of ecotourism could be compounded by the entry of new operators, potentially resulting in crowding, and additional impacts on natural resources or displacement whereby operators respond by visiting alternative sites.

### **2.6.1 Environmental impacts**

Ecotourism is seen as a catalyst for encouraging ecologically sustainable resource management through conservation of the natural resources on a direct or indirect basis (Agardy, 1993; Australia Department of Tourism, 1994; Blamey, 1995a, 1997; Boo, 1990; 1991a & b; Buckley, 1994; Cater, 1993, 1994; Ceballos-Lascurain, 1987, 1996; Commonwealth of Australia, 1993, 1995; Dearden, 1995; 1992; Dowling, 1996; Karwacki and Boyd, 1995; Lindberg and McKercher, 1997; Laarman and Durst, 1993; Lindberg et al, 1998; McLaren, 1998; Li, 2004; Sano, 1997; Wild, 1994; Wood, 2002; Ziffer, 1989). Ecotourism provides an alternative to the exploitative use of environmental resources and plays an important role in enhancing the environment quality (Nyuapane and Poudel, 2011; Wunder, 2000).

According to Wall (1997) “Ecotourism is an opportunity to preserve ecosystems and biological diversity that would otherwise be lost.” (Wall, 1997, p. 484) Ecotourism can also be viewed as an important tool for achieving environmental conservation especially in areas where there is a weak presence of government and very little environmental regulation (Wunder, 2000). At the very least, to serve as a means of sustainable development, ecotourism must focus on protecting biodiversity and managing natural resources in a sustainable way. Although this represents a shift from the tendency of protecting the environment towards the improvement of the quality of resources (Wild, 1994, p.13), it is generally attained through the improvement of biodiversity. The term biodiversity or biological diversity was defined as “the variety of all life forms, the different plants, and micro-organisms, the genes they contain and the ecosystems of which they form a part”

(Commonwealth of Australia, 1995, p.11). In this case, biodiversity conservation is taking place at three different levels, that of genetic diversity, species diversity and ecosystem diversity (Commonwealth of Australia, 1993, 1995; Boo, 1990; 1991a, b; Ceballos-Lascurain, 1996). Certain cases around the globe illustrate attempts to benefit from certain aspects of biodiversity conservation. For example, in Australia, the protection of the ecosystem diversity assisted in the provision of water supply, nutrient cycling, and waste assimilation (Commonwealth of Australia, 1995, p.12). In Costa Rica, the conservation of the ecosystem offered positive incentives to deforestation programs (Karwacki and Boyd, 1995), as well as assisted in the preservation of marine resources in the Caribbean (Weaver, 1998; Karwacki and Boyd, 1995). In Central America, benefits included the stimulation of national pride, historical value through cultural and natural sites, and ecological benefits through watershed protection, and medicinal contributions from pharmaceutical products from tropical forests (Courrau, 1995, p.17).

According to Libosada (2009) ecotourism provides the tangible part of conservation as it has been helping save animals and fragile ecosystems. In the same respect Pitman (2011) believes that ecotourism is a successful conservation policy for its ability to conserve large mammals' diversity in Upper Amazonia through sustainable source of income to the inhabitants. Reimer and Walter (2013) articulate that the financial benefits from ecotourism come from park entrance fees, voluntary donations and environmental conservation charges, which are targeted directly at conservation. Nyuapane and Poudel (2011) have finely interwoven the difficulty of tourism and biodiversity conservation through their focus on Chitwan National Park, Nepal. They perceive that as people receive more economic benefits, they take more pride about their natural resources and tend to preserve these resources. Durham (2010) argue that Ecotourism respects the values of sustainable tourism. By minimizing the environmental impact and contributing to conservation either through direct effort like reforestation, habitat restoration, or through financial benefits. Additionally Badola and Hussain (2005) through their empirical study exposed that the mangrove forests in Bhitarkanika Conservation Area has helped villagers from natural disasters like super cyclone, flood etc. Local communities valued these functions of mangrove forests and so despite human-wildlife conflict, the attitudes of the local communities are not all together negative. They are also willing to participate in mangrove restoration and support conservation (Badola, Shibani, Hussain and Ainul, 2012). Development of forests through promotion of ecotourism in the reserve also helps in mitigating carbon which can reduce green-house gas emissions which is important (Badola, 2010). Zambrano et al. (2010) in an attempt to test of the efficiency of Lapa Rios Ecolodge of the Osa Peninsula of Costa Rica confirm that the lodge has made substantial contribution to conservation and local people.

While ecotourism-related practices enhance the symbiotic relationship, there are numerous cases showing certain damaging impacts (Ayala, 1995; Boo, 1990; Boyle and Samson, 1985;

Dimanche and Smith, 1996; Dowling, 1996; Figgis, 1994; Haysmith, 1995; Karwacki and Boyd, 1995; McLaren, 1998; Panos, 1995; Wade, 1994; Weaver, 1998; Wild, 1994). Here, Wall (1994) claims that ecotourists' visits to fragile landscapes, in conjunction with the timing of such visits, together with the potential of small group sizes increasing into mass tourism sizes are among the reasons for the appearance of such impacts. Mainly, the antagonistic impacts were also classified to occur either on a direct or indirect basis (Lindberg and McKercher, 1997; McKercher, 1998; Weaver, 1998;), or an 'on-site' and 'off-site' basis (Lindberg and McKercher, 1997) (see table 2.3). These concerns are taking place in such a manner that there are certain similarities between the environmental impacts of tourism and those of ecotourism (Figgis, 1994; Haysmith, 1995; Lindberg and McKercher, 1997; Weaver, 1998). Ecotourism should emphasize minimizing negative effects through its emphasis on low-impact construction, controlled visitor numbers, and care in interacting with local flora and fauna (Honey, 1999). A lack of commitment to conservation results in development beyond sustainable levels. Manuel Antonio National Park in Costa Rica exemplifies this problem. The park has been negatively affected by overcrowding, inadequate planning, and over-development of the adjacent community (Honey, 1999). Another problem in Manuel Antonio National Park has been improper waste disposal, which has caused many of its resident monkeys to become garbage feeders (Weaver, 1999). Several authors believe that ecotourism is a way to generate more revenues. The word 'ecotourism' is to bring more customers, and thereby generate more income. Many protected areas in developing countries is found to be poorly planned, with the infrastructure and management inadequate even unsuitable for ecotourism (Das, and Chatterjee, 2015).

Boyd and Butler suggested that the only positive issue concerning the environmental impacts of ecotourism is the small size of these impacts, on the basis that ecotourism is treated 'as being a less demanding form of tourism and tourist' (1993, p.30). However, they pointed out that the scale of the impact is in fact meaningless, as it only requires a small amount of ecological change to result in irreparable damage (Boyd and Butler, 1993, p.30). Generally, the impacts from ecotourism on nature are varied, as these also reflect visitors' activities and behaviour (Haysmith, 1995). Certain research showed that the response of wildlife appears to be dependent upon the particular behavior of visitors who have contact with wildlife (Haysmith, 1995; Kusler, 1991a & b). Cases have demonstrated differential impacts to plant and animal species with some species exhibiting high sensitivity (Kovacs and Innes, 1990) and others showing low sensitivity to visitor disturbance (Boyle and Samson, 1985). Antagonistic impacts were also noted in cases where certain animals or species that are more sensitive altered their behavior and activities to completely avoid contact with visitors, resulting in potential long-term existence (Haysmith, 1995). Wildlife feeding as a common feature within ecotourism also creates certain issues of concern (Figgis, 1994; Haysmith, 1995; Kovacs and

Innes, 1990). One is the welfare of the animal as tourists feed the animals unsuitable foods hence leading to nutritional problems (Figgis, 1994; Haysmith, 1995). The second issue concerns the degree of interaction with these species, as certain contact with animals will give visitors an impression that animals are there for human instant gratification, to be handled and ‘consumed’ (Figgis, 1994; Haysmith, 1995). This situation will then lead to the demands that other species also be made available and that the respect for wildlife’s rights irrespective of their utility value for humans will not be developed (Figgis, 1994). Meanwhile, the capacity of a setting to absorb visitor impacts influences the characteristics of the tour product and its environmental sustainability (McArthur and Gardner, 1995).

As an ecotourism setting focuses on areas with the least resilience in both the protected and non-protected environment, certain limitations arise in terms of mode of transportation, activities, and destinations, while potentially causing certain negative impacts (McArthur and Gardner, 1995; McLaren, 1998). Another issue of concern is the quality control of the ecotourism experience (Eagles, 1995; Weber, 1993). Certain cases in Africa, showed that visitors seem to be sensitive to issues such as condition of trails, ability of guides, information availability, and group sizes (Weber, 1993). In Rwanda for instance, the initial limit of six visitors per daily group was increased to eight people in order to increase the visitation patterns. As a result complaints about displacements from the guide, limited visibility, jostling occurring, all reveal that an expanded group size resulted in lower visitor appreciation (Weber, 1993).

In addition, one of the dangers of ecotourism is the excessive pressure it can add to environmentally sensitive areas. Ecotourism projects have a tendency to become overzealous and overcrowd natural areas with visitors, resulting in environmental degradation. “A major environmental cost is the possibility that local carrying capacities, difficult to gauge as they are because of their complexity, will be inadvertently exceeded in the long term by activity associated with ecotourism, especially in those cases where the sector is growing at a rapid rate” (Weaver, 1999, p. 21, 796). Local carrying capacities can be exceeded as a result of the negative impacts of ecotourism such as solid waste generation, pollution, habitat destruction, forest degradation, and trail erosion (Lindsey, 2003; Stem et al., 2003).

In general terms, ecotourism is facing the problems of classification, observation, monitoring and interpretation of its environmental impacts (Blamey, 1995a & b, 1997; Dimanche and Smith, 1996; Eagles, 1995; Lindberg et al., 1998; Lindberg and McKercher, 1997; McLaren, 1998; Sano, 1997; Weaver, 1998; Weber, 1993). One of the recent attempts to overcome this limitation was derived from the World Wildlife Fund’s (WWF) natural resource assessment, using a geographical information system (Sano, 1997). WWF has developed, in collaboration with other organizations an attempt for a global biodiversity assessment through the so-called representation approach, to identify



two hundred of the globe's most fragile marine and terrestrial ecosystems (Sano, 1997). As a result, this will assist the different actors to strategically place certain funding mechanisms for conserving these eco regions (Sano, 1997).

In addition to this attempt, the techniques of carrying capacity (Butler, 1996b; Collins, 1996; Inskip, 1991; O'Reilly, 1986; Williams, 1991, 1994), environmental control (Butler, 1996b), environmental impact assessment (Hunter, 1995a; Williams, 1994) and environmental auditing (Diamantis and Westlake, 1997; Goodall, 1992, 1994; Stabler and Goodall, 1993) simultaneously remain as controversial and important. Finally, the environmental impacts of ecotourism are appearing at an alarming rate more in terms of costs and less in terms of benefits to the environment, all an indication that certain limits to support conservation via significant economic growth and welfare should be found. "Finding a compromise between preservation and development is often challenging, and ecotourism can generate additional environmental problems for the very regions it was intended to protect" (Lindsey, 2003, p. 1). Ecotourism projects must be willing to place environmental conservation ahead of economic profit in many instances. The degradation of the natural environment will reduce visitor demand in the long run because the natural environment on which ecotourism depends will be less attractive and not as satisfying for ecologically based experiences (Wearing, 2001).

More specifically Isaacs (2000) see ecotourism as a wildlife conservation strategy which lacks to insure the long term protection of environmental resources. He believes that ecotourism is designed to attract customers. Ecotourism policies are designed to attract consumers' preferences for recreation. In this development, the prime consideration is the revenue generation and protection of environment has been kept aside. This is causing environmental degradation. Honey (2008) has therefore claimed in his book "Ecotourism and sustainable development—who owns paradise?" that "Much of what is marketed as ecotourism is simply conventional mass tourism wrapped in a thin veneer of green" (p. 51).

One of the main critique against ecotourism is the Increase in the number of tourists, which exceeds the carrying capacity of the place and leads to high erosion of natural resources for which tourists come (Drumm, 2008). Ecotourism is usually based on extensive use of resources often including overseas transportation with large CO<sub>2</sub> emissions (Buckley, 2004). The failure of management in parks is eroding the very natural capital that visitors travel to see.

Frequently ecotourism create severe trail erosion due to an increase number of tourist and vehicles on certain tracks in a fragile area. Kruger (2005) has mentioned problems like large scale habitat restoration in Malaysia, track erosion in Costa Rican National Park, and serious pollution by waste in the Himalaya in Nepal. Even the potential local benefits of ecotourism can lead to environmental damage to a protected area without careful planning and management that balance

ecological, social, and economic objectives (Das, and Chatterjee, 2015). In many articles, it is frequently presented that regular human presence inside the wild ecosystem may affect the growth of both flora and fauna (Das, and Chatterjee, 2015).

### **2.6.2 Economic impacts**

Tourism is one of the fastest growing tourism activities in the world and contributes overall to total gross domestic product by 9% (UNWTO, 2015). On the other hand ecotourism was growing at a rate three times higher than the global tourism activity and produced a turnover of more than 8.13 billion Euro (TIES, 2015). According to (UNWTO, 2012) ecotourism will grow rapidly over the next two decades and the global spending on ecotourism is expected to increase at a higher rate than the tourism industry as a whole. Which is more than 7% of the global tourism demand around 100 billion dollars yearly (Hulman et al., 2015). The globalization of economic market imperatives is the most powerful force in global decision-making. Some would suggest that the forces of globalized economic markets are what shaped ecotourism and have enabled ecotourism to prosper. Miller and Tangley (1991) stated, “Years ago, the travel agents who first dreamed up the idea of “ecotourism” were clearly looking for new markets, not ways to save the world” (Miller and Tangley, 1991, p. 153). Regardless of whether or not markets are the primary motivation for ecotourism, it is important to understand the important role that economics play in ecotourism. “Ecotourism developed as a way to commercialize the existence value of sensitive ecological regions, protecting forests and generating employment and income at the same time” (Roberts and Thanos, 2003, p. xxx).

Ecotourism can contribute to conservation and providing income for communities in and around protected areas by attracting visitors to the natural areas and using the revenues to fund conservation and fuel economic development (Cater 1993, 1994; Ceballos-Lascurain, 1996; Commonwealth of Australia, 1995; Das, and Chatterjee, 2015; Dearden, 1995; Lindberg and McKercher, 1997; Lindberg et al, 1998; Panos, 1995; McLaren, 1998; Steele, 1995; Weaver, 1998; Ziffer, 1989). It can contribute to economic development and conservation of protected areas by generating funds that can be used to sustainably manage protected areas, by providing local employment, and lastly creating a sense of community ownership (Jalani, 2012). In several parts of the world, ecotourism has contributed to the dual goal of poverty eradication and conservation of natural resources (Surendran and Sekhar, 2011). Promotion of ecotourism creates a large amount of employment opportunities for local people who remain involved in a range of activities related to tourism.

Ecotourism is being increasingly viewed as an important tool for supporting the inter-linkage between livelihood activities and conservation. It is recognized as a strategy to improve the

livelihoods of the people around protected areas. Ecotourism provides an alternative to the exploitative use of environmental resources (Nyuapane and Poudel, 2011). It is developed as a strategy to conserve biodiversity through providing financial benefits to the locals in and around the protected areas. Further, another critical issue in such efforts at a local level highlights the financial source for conservation through fees or based on the user-based principle (Barnes, 1996; Brandon 1996; Fillion et al., 1994; Tisdell, 1994, 1995; Wild, 1994). Although this issue concerns more the protected areas (Barnes, 1996; Brandon, 1996; Lindberg and McKercher, 1997; Tisdell, 1994, 1995), it was claimed that destinations which are dependent on high visitation patterns at local (specific national parks) and national levels, could revitalise economic revenue to support its entire park system (Brandon, 1996, p.7; Dominguez and Bustillo, 1995; Salvador, Clavero and Pitman, 2011). This has been demonstrated by ecotourists stating a willingness to pay more to support the conservation of the destination areas (Boo, 1990, 1991; Lindberg, 1991, Lindberg and Huber, 1993, Lindberg and McKercher, 1997; Lindberg et al, 1998; Simpson, 1995; Weaver, 1998). The principle of willingness-to-pay represents a measure of the economic value of the natural area to ecotourists, which has been used in a number of cases to increase public support and funding for such areas irrespective of its relevance to user fees (Lindberg and McKercher, 1997; Nyuapane and Poudel, 2011). In turn however, the ability to increase revenues depends on visitors' willingness to pay for an ecotourism experience (Lindberg and McKercher, 1997). Nevertheless, there are five main mechanisms to capture the revenue from these sites (Brandon, 1996; Lindberg and Huber, 1993): user fees; concessions; sales/royalties; taxation, and donations (Reimer and Walter, 2013).

For many indigenous communities, ecotourism is considered as a means leading to new sources of income and improvement in household condition (Saatsakis, Bakir and Wickens, 2012; Saatsakis and Papas, 2006; Stronza, 2007). Better access to tourists through properly organized ecotourism enables local people to augment their livelihood security through employment and small enterprise development (Ashley, 2002; Goodwin, 2002). Development of ecotourism will create jobs in tourism services such as restaurants, souvenir shops, and food. Eco-lodges, campsites, restaurants, transport, and guiding services also provide economic benefits directly to local people (Mustika, Birtles, Welters, and Marsh, 2012; Reimer and Walter, 2013). In some cases ecotourism has led to the development of production systems related to goods and services linked to tourism like local handicrafts, agriculture and services, stemming from the high level of consumption of these products by tourists. People changed their previous occupation fishing and timber wood to ecotourism activities as tourism brings higher income (Das and Chatterjee, 2015).

Another alternative is indirect collection where park entrance fees are paid by tourism operators who include the fees in their tour package price (Lindberg and Huber, 1993). The financial income which these mechanisms generate has been suggested as representing a source of conservation

in only a few countries, as in most of the cases the funds are not handed to the agencies which manage the parks but to the central treasury of the destination areas (Boo, 1990, 1991a, b; Brandon, 1996; Lindberg, 1991; Lindberg and Huber, 1993; Weaver, 1998, 2008).

There are numerous case-studies which revealed this failure of maintaining the financial sources to the parks (Brandon, 1996; Weaver, 1998, 2008), all of which suggest that a fee structure modification is necessary through the establishment of funds in special accounts for protected areas, or earmarking a certain percentage of parks fees for individual parks (Brandon, 1996, 1993; Das and Chatterjee, 2015; Dominguez and Bustillo, 1995; Lindberg and Huber). In turn, funds for protected areas can be used as counterpart funds to secure larger grants, only in circumstances where protected areas are able to have their own source of external funds mechanism (Boo, 1990, 1991a & b; Brandon, 1996; Dominguez and Bustillo, 1995; Lindberg, 1991; Weaver, 1998, 2008). In every case, a central point to fund generation concerns issues of regulation and its associated monitoring mechanism for such park accounts (Dominguez and Bustillo, 1995). Next, an increased practice concerns the economic rationale to evaluate its natural attraction stock, such as in the case of the game fees in Tanzania from which 12% is contributed by lions, 12% by leopards, 8% by zebras, and 2% by elephants (Roe et al, 1997, p.37). This technique is used to forecast certain incomes for the areas where the revenue should be re-generated towards the preservation of these sites (Brandon, 1996; Dominguez and Bustillo, 1995; Weaver, 1998). Hence, it appears that the so-called fair market pricing of wildland resources can serve as a way of justifying protected areas to governments (Brandon, 1996; Weaver, 1998, 2008, 2016).

In turn, such a public body could directly increase fees to secure more revenue and indirectly ensure the sustainable management of such natural stocks, in the form of maintenance of the biodiversity (Brandon, 1996; Weaver, 1998, 2008, 2016).

Although, this may represent one of the advantages of ecotourism, in that it enables natural areas to become self-financing, others have claimed that certain considerations should be given based on the following reasons (Tisdell, 1994): a) The social optimal limitations to charge fees which enhance the financial turnover of the protected areas; b) When the costs and difficulties of collecting fees are taken into consideration, it may not be economically worthwhile to impose charges for the use of protected areas; c) The economic value of a protected area cannot be assessed from the income perspective as there are both on-site earnings as well as off-site benefits; as a result income earned from on-site visits is liable to underestimate the economic value of the protected areas; and d) The concern is that if the emphasis is placed on the achievement of self-financing protected areas, the incorrect conclusion may be drawn whereby a protected area which cannot finance itself should not be protected from an economic perspective

Furthermore, in a study of a non-protected area, the region of the Caribbean, similar observations have emerged. Here, it was claimed that adequate and unequal sources of finance were not distributed in these regions (OAS and IIC, 1995). In fact, both the domestic development banking sector and commercial leading agencies indicated that requests for funding such tourism ventures have been few (OAS and IIC, 1995), all an indication of the low level of awareness of ecotourism possibilities and the lack of viable projects. This study concluded that certain reforms are necessary throughout the regions in order to facilitate financing for ecotourism related projects, in a form of co-ordination/joint ventures between the different actors, or the formation of a fixed body (OAS and IIC, 1995). In Russia, however, it was recommended that high local capital investment for ecotourism should be avoided (IRG, 1995). The reasoning behind this approach is based on the lack of ecotourism infrastructure availability, as well as knowledge of ecotourism; as such it was suggested that any investment funding must arise from international organizations or conservation community groups (IRG, 1995).

The overall results of the study pointed that ecotourism generates nearly \$465,000 of additional income to the local communities, with the employment effect generating an average of 8.4 full-time equivalent years of employment in the seven examined sites (IRG, 1995, p.2). In general terms, the employment generated by ecotourism development, represents one of the tangible benefits attributed to society (Lindberg and McKercher, 1997). The level of employment however, seems to be varied around the world as a result of differences among destination components, although there are claims that in certain rural areas even a small increase in employment greatly affected the local economic structure (Lindberg, 1991; Lindberg and McKercher, 1997; Lindberg et al, 1998; Weaver, 1998, 2008, 2016).

Other critics of the economic value of ecotourism suggest certain limitations as a result of both the product availability for consumption in the true wilderness settings, and the small size of the ecotours which do not generate enough revenue for the local economy (Boyd and Butler, 1993, 2015; Wall, 1994). In addition, problems have been encountered with the economic inefficiency of the open access sites of ecotourism in certain regions such as Thailand and Nepal, all raising issues of ownership and policy instruments (Steele, 1995). In turn, only by changing ownership structures, regulations, and economic instruments will this situation improve (Steele, 1995). There is also some criticism on investment in ecotourism, both from the private and social perspective, as only positive private returns can enhance the conservation benefits of ecotourism (Tisdell, 1995). In the case of private investment failure, there will be some indirect consequences of the area management in order to generate funds for the nature conservation purposes (Tisdell, 1995). In short, among the economic benefits of ecotourism there is a fear that the presence of an economic imperative suggests that growth is possible in the direction of mass tourism (Das, and Chatterjee, 2015; Dimanche and Smith, 1996;

Wall, 1994; Warren and Taylor, 1994). The economic impacts of ecotourism can be divided into two categories those which are in favour of ecotourism consider as a generator of income and improvement of household conditions. On the negative ones that emphasize problems that occur through ecotourism such as revenue leakages, inequitable distribution of income among the locals, compulsory displacement for the creation of national parks leading to large scale loss of land, homelessness, food insecurity, loss of lives, and increase in morbidity, restrictions in accessing sanctuary resulting in joblessness and damage to crop and livestock by (Das and Chatterjee, 2015).

### **2.6.3 Social and cultural impacts**

Ecotourism has many socio- economic and environmental benefits but international research shows that in reality it has had many positive and negative outcomes mainly stemming from its perception, development and planning approach (Donohoe and Needham, 2006). Ecotourism often shows certain direct and indirect socio-cultural benefits and costs at the sites and/or at the destination level (Saraffi, 2016). Commonly, it was suggested that the cultural impacts of ecotourism can be based on four criteria (Brandon, 1996, p.17-19): commodification; culture affecting social change; cultural knowledge; and cultural patrimony. Alternatively, Weaver (1998, p.27) refers to Sherman and Dixon's (1991) classification of the option and experience benefits of ecotourism from the clientele perspective. The option benefits refer to the individual's satisfaction of having just one option of visiting natural attractions, while the experience benefits refer to the individual's satisfaction of knowing that certain conservation efforts are occurring in the natural attractions.

Ecotourism through increase of standard of living of local people empowers them socio-political and raises respect for a different cultures and for human rights. It provides economic social, political and psychological benefits from formal and informal sector employment and business opportunities empower the community economically (Das and Chatterjee, 2015). In reviewing the socio-cultural impacts from the host community perspective, the promotion of socio-development is channelled through both protected and non-protected areas, and deals with the enhancement of community involvement (Brandon, 1996; Dominguez and Bustillo, 1995; Harvey and Hoare, 1995; McLaren, 1998; Weaver, 1998, 2008, 2016), or community-based conservation (Horwich et al., 1993). Community involvement is seen to highlight the ability of local communities to influence the outcome of the development process that has an impact upon local communities (Brandon, 1996; Larsen and Wearing, 1994; Weaver, 1998, 2008, 2016). Thus, the community managed ecotourism development process allows communities to decide what type of growth the community needs, and hence assist to manage the impacts (Brandon, 1996; Horwich et al., 1993; Larsen and Wearing, 1994; Weaver, 1998, 2008, 2016). "Many permanent residents living in or adjacent to potential ecotourism destinations may desire to improve life opportunities for themselves and their children and may see

ecotourism as generating jobs, stimulating incomes, diversifying economies, and enhancing standards of living” (Wall, 1997, p. 483).

In general terms, the involvement of local people could generate a sense of pride and a form of ownership, and simultaneously act as a buffer against certain sources of investment outside the local area (Boo, 1990; Boyd and Butler, 1993; Brandon, 1996; Harvey and Hoare, 1995; Larsen and Wearing, 1994; Weaver, 1998, 2008, 2016). It further creates opportunities for diversification through new forms of ecological enterprises, or the so-called ‘farming of exotic plants and animals’ (Karwacki and Boyd, 1995, p.227). Hence, the provision of local and regional benefits were claimed to involve a commitment from providers of ecotourism experiences, to equitably distribute benefits to the local community, even though in certain cases ecotourism enterprises may be based in other communities or involve national or multinational ownership (Australia Department of Tourism, 1994; Blamey, 1995a & b; Dowling, 1995a, b; Richins, 1994).

Ecotourism can potentially be very beneficial to local culture. According to Minca and Linda (2000), “if properly developed, tourism is capable of supporting a new awareness and new representations of the local culture that can be revitalized by the interest of the tourist” (p. 125). It can also increase awareness of the value of traditional crafts and cultural exchange in two different perspectives (Harvey and Hoare,; 1995Healy, 1994). Firstly, ecotourists’ post-trip attitudes may be different as a result of a better understanding enhanced by the destination’s conservation and cultural issues (Harvey and Hoare, 1995). These tourists may become active or volunteer in some conservation or cultural events in their own community (Australia Department of Tourism, 1994; Blamey, 1995a, 1997; Harvey and Hoare, 1995). Secondly, the host can benefit especially from the sale of tourism merchandise, as it can be involved with the ecotourism activities through cultural/sustainable product development, use of local materials, which in turn can be used as a tool for educating ecotourists about the resources and the local culture (Healy, 1994). In addition to these pros of ecotourism, Wallace (1992, p.7) suggests the role that ecotourism has as a model of sustainable community development, based on the claim that the link between conservation of resources and the sustainable development needs of local people is inseparable. Wallace maintains that ecotourism may be said to be truly ecological and ethical when it: a) Views natural areas both as ‘home to all of us’ in a global sense and ‘home to nearby residents; b) Entails a type of use that minimizes negative impacts to the environment and the local people; c) Contributes to the management of protected areas and to the relationships between local people and those managing protected areas; d) Directs economic and other benefits to local people and maximizes their participation in the decision process that determines the kind and amount of tourism that should occur; e) Promotes authentic two-way interactions between hosts and visitors as well as an interest in sustainable development in both the host and the home country; f) Supplements or complements

traditional practices without attempting to replace them and making the local economy more robust and less susceptible to rapid change; and g) Provides special opportunities for local people or nature tourism employees to also utilize natural areas and learn more about the natural and cultural attractions.

Another study in Osa Peninsula in Costa Rica where ecotourism is the dominant type of tourism and the main sector of the local economy a study was conducted based on 128 interviews with local residents of the Osa in and around Drake Bay and Puerto Jimenez, including 70 interviews with ecolodge employees and 58 with residents not working in tourism, in order to test a key hypothesis that ecotourism in the Osa represents a different, and better, form of economic activity than the existing extractive alternatives such as timber, gold mining, plantation agriculture, cattle, etc. Overall, the findings from this study demonstrate that ecotourism is a high-value economic activity in the Osa Peninsula. It is perceived as providing stable, better paying jobs, and more opportunity for advancement than other economic endeavours. Further, it is credited with helping to shift local attitudes toward positive perceptions of Corcovado National Park and the other protected areas. Although not evenly spread throughout the Peninsula, ecotourism's economic reach is wide, with most other types of businesses tying their well-being directly or indirectly to the health of the tourism sector (Hunt et al., 2015).

Contrary to all the positive sociocultural impacts of ecotourism many researchers do not consider ecotourism as a means for improving the social status of the entire and does not foster respect for local culture. Many ecotourism developments are found to be progressing without caring about socio cultural impact (Das, and Chatterjee, 2015). Although the development of ecotourism leads to socio cultural improvement of live, but when tourist activity results in crowding, crime, begging, displacement from traditional lands, or prostitution, then it also leads to social disempowerment. For example most of the protected areas in India do not have any kind of visitor orientation programs, According to Das, and Chatterjee, 2015 a number of problems with reference to India which questions efficiency of protected areas in conservation. Naming the cases of popular tiger reserves such as the Kanha, Ranthambhore and Corbett National Parks in India, the author finds that forest authorities have been unable to protest increase in tourists, for higher revenue generation. This has resulted in chasing tigers surrounded by jeeps and elephants for photo session, with significant impacts on wildlife behaviour and habitat (Banerjee, 2010). Another example of Puerto Bolivar, Ecuador, where the high numbers of tourists have caused cultural erosion, increase alcohol consumption and disease risk. This in turn poses threat to biodiversity as well as local culture (Das, and Chatterjee, 2015). In several other cases it is also illustrated that the bureaucratic nature of the forests does not allow locals to participate in the planning process (Banerjee, 2010). Tosun (2000) has gone further to explain the limitations to the participatory tourism development approach in the context of developing countries



in Asia and Latin America. The author argue the reasons under operational, structural and cultural limits to community participation in such countries. He has found that in countries such as India, Mexico, Thailand, and Turkey, a strong centralized public administrative system, unwillingness of the politicians to distribute power appears as operational difficulties to community participation.

In addition, advocates of ecotourism argue that the development of ecotourism have improved the status of women, did not mentioned the difficulties related with in. The practical side is far from reach in majority of cases. Though in few areas, employment opportunities are created, importance of women in the industry is often minimized considering them as the 'weaker' sex. In many cases, they are not involved in most of the activities for their lack of education and skill (Badola and Hussain, 2003). Even in the areas where they are involved, they fail to share the benefits equitably (Scheyvens, 2000). The author has found that in terms of formal employment, local women are often overlooked when ecotourism sites are developed. Giving the example of Mahenye, Zimbabwe, a joint venture agreement between the local Shangaan people and Zimbabwe Sun Ltd, which owns a chain of hotels in the country, he upholds that employment at the lodges has been heavily biased in favour of men. To sum up, it may be said that many articles have considered ecotourism as a means to empower local people socio-politically through improving their standard of living, fostering respect for different cultures, and enhancing human rights. It helps women to earn reasonably by emancipating themselves from the traditional patriarchal gender norms. Indirect incentives like improved infrastructures, health facilities, awareness and education from tourism development also help to develop positive attitudes toward conservation (Das and Chatterjee, 2015).

On the other hand, many authors have put emphasis also on the real practices of ecotourism. They have focused on crowding, crime, begging, and prostitution associated with the increase in the number of tourists in ecotourism spots. In many cases, as found, traditional mind set-up of the locals does not allow women community to rise above the notion of weaker sex. Such problems are more in developing countries owing to its mismanagement as well as bureaucratic nature of management. More numbers of tourists, as found in many articles, have caused cultural erosion, increase in alcohol consumption and disease risk, as mostly the tourists are found to be pleasant seekers more in the developing countries than in the developed ones. This in turn poses threat to biodiversity as well as to local culture (Das and Chatterjee, 2015).

Furthermore, the impacts of tourists on the society and culture of a host country is related to the type of tourism, the nature of the tourism activity and the economic and social structures of the host country (Achama, 1995; Blamey, 1995a & b; Boo, 1990, 1991a & b, 1992, 1993; Boyd and Butler, 1993; Brandon, 1996; Ceballos-Lascurain, 1996; Dowling, 1995a & b; Courrau, 1995; Karwacki and Boyd, 1995; Richins, 1994; Wallace 1992; Wight, 1993a & b; Larsen and Wearing, 1994; Wearing, 1993, 2001, 2013). In this context, the development of ecotourism sites has led to

local populations being removed from their land (Dearden and Harron, 1992; Harvey and Hoare, 1995; Swanson, 1992). Once ecotourism was established, the local community were unable to return to their territory, and as such were engaged in other activities such as agriculture (Achama, 1995; Boo, 1990; Boyd and Butler, 1993; Brandon, 1996; Courrau, 1995; Karwacki and Boyd, 1995; Larsen and Wearing, 1994, 2001, 2013). Others have also claimed that ecotourism is often found in areas where practices by the indigenous population have more often than not been sustainable and relatively environmentally benign (Swanson, 1992). Another social concern is that it can lead to the “commodification” of culture. When people and their cultures become marketable commodities, this can lead to the erosion of the culture and community cohesion (Stem et al., 2003). The dangers associated with bringing formerly isolated populations into contact with affluent foreigners can be quite high. Local populations may modify traditional cultures in the form of food, handicrafts, song, and dance in order to meet the different cultural standards and expectations of foreign tourists (Place, 1998). Local community members could possibly view their area as being developed exclusively for foreign interests (Wearing, 2001, 2013).

In other situations, such as in Northern Thailand, local residents may relocate to non-authentic village sites in order to cater/perform to the misperceptions of ecotourists (Dearden and Harron, 1992). Another social concern is that the goals of ecotourism which are often long term in nature are markedly different than the short term goals of local people such as stabilizing local agriculture, and assisting with the local building infrastructure (Wallace, 1992). On this point, Boyd and Butler (1993) claimed that an overall antagonism may be created towards the ecotourist, as a result both of his/her degraded attitudes towards the environment, or because ecotourism benefits bypass the indigenous population (see also, Ayala, 1995; Boo 1991 a & b, 1992, 1993; Wearing, 1993, 2001, 2013).

## **2.7 Ecotourists & Types of Ecotourists**

Since its inception, the Ecotourism term was adopted in order to describe the nature tourism phenomenon and is connected with activities related to nature, outdoor and cultural experiences (Wight, 1996a); while others emphasise that it relates experiencing change and doing something different (Weiler, 1993). One of the most widely accepted definitions of ecotourism was introduced by Ceballos-Lascurain in the 1980s (see also, Blamey, 2001; Boo, 1990).

*Traveling to relatively undisturbed or uncontaminated natural areas with the specific objective of studying, admiring, and enjoying the scenery and its wild plants and animals, as well as any existing cultural manifestations (both past and present) found in these areas.* (Ceballos-Lascurain, 1987, p.14)

Although this definition has been used as one of main ones, critics suggest that it lacks foresight and

overlooks experiential opportunities (Fennell, 2001b). It focuses on what tourists do, rather than what they should do (implying missed opportunities) (Stewart & Sekartjakrarini, 1994). For example, several authors advocate that ecotourism is an expression of sustainable development (Bjork, 2000; Fennell, 2003; Wight, 1993b). Others argue that it is strongly rooted in educational experiences (Blamey, 2001; Buckley, 1994), and some make the link to the natural environment, which distinguishes this tourism type from other tourism experiences, such as mass tourism (Hvenegaard, 1994). In fact, ecotourism is not a homogeneous phenomenon but instead, it has become accepted as a complex and synergistic collection of social, ecological and economic dimensions that reflect a common core idea (Bjork, 2000; Weaver, 2005, 2016).

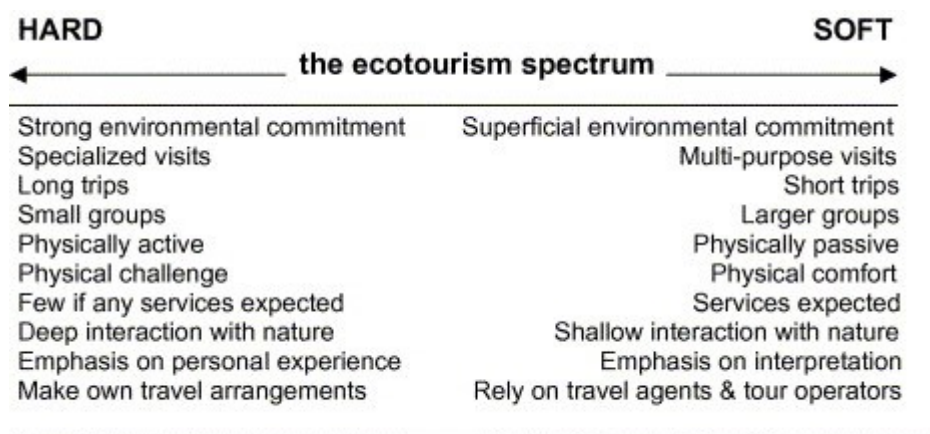
In the same respect, Ecotourists are mainly presented as those who select to travel to a destination that provides natural oriented experiences in a pristine natural environment with the intent to observe, experience and learn about nature (M.A. Rivera and R.Croes, 2010). Ecotourists place particular emphasis on the ecotourism activities with these consequences; more specifically, According to several authors (Eagles 1990, 1992; Fennell, 1990, 2003, 2005, 2014) ecotourists are referred to individuals visiting a natural setting. Others (e.g., Eagles, 1992; Palacio & McCool, 1997; Valentine, 1993; Wight, 1996a, b) challenged this assumption and argued that Ecotourists are individuals who spend a predetermined number of days engaged in environmentally based activities, have unique motives for visiting natural areas, etc. Eagles and Cascagnette (1995, p. 22) suggested, that they are individuals who “travel with the intent of observing, experiencing and learning about nature”. However many attempts have been made to define ecotourists (e.g. Ashton, 1991; Buckley, 1994, 2009; Ceballos-Lascurain, 1987; Ecotourism Association of Australia, 1996; Higham and Carr, 2003; Weaver, 2001, 2016). However, Research to identify ecotourists or segment ecotourists from other tourist types is difficult because their motivations overlap with those of other types of tourists, nor can ecotourists be solely defined by the products in which they express interest. (Ashton, 1991; Ballantine and Eagles, 1994; Blamey, 1995a, 1997; Blamey and Braithwaite, 1997; Dowling, 1995a & b; Honey, 2008; Lindberg and McKercher, 1997; McKercher, 1998; Reingold, 1993, Weiler and Richins, 1995).

In particular, research showed that little people are ‘primary-purpose’ ecotourists as they tend to focus a small or a large subset of their experience on other forms of tourism, such as festival, cultural, rural interest (Blamey, 1995a, b & c, 1997; Blamey and Braithwaite, 1997; Chapman, 1995; Pearce and Moscardo, 1994; TIA, 2002). Adopting a descriptive approach, Ballantine and Eagles (1994) found that ecotourists tend to be middle aged, have relatively high incomes and levels of education, and express an interest in learning about the environment. They also differ from mass tourists in terms of the benefits they seek from nature (Pratt, 1992; Squire, 1994; Zurick, 1995). Remarkably, little is known about the behaviour of ecotourists. According to Brandon (1993) and

Wallance (1993), the most important characteristic of ecotourism and through extension, the ecotourist, is the maintenance of the natural resource. Thus, behaviours such as volunteering with a conservation association, compliance with ecotourism principles, and consuming local products may be more telling of who is and is not a “true” ecotourist (Horwich, 1993). A variety of different approaches has been adopted in order to understand ecotourists more specifically:

According to Wilson and Laarman (1988) ecotourists are characterised in relation to the ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ dimensions they undertake in their activities based on the degree of specialised interest. This distinguishes between the “hard” and “soft” variants of ecotourism, a dichotomy that has been well recognized both theoretically (Laarman and Durst 1987; Lindberg 1991; Weaver 1998) and empirically (Chapman 1995; Palacio and McCool 1997; Weaver and Lawton 2002). Soft activity involves larger numbers of participants who make relatively short and physically comfortable visits to serviced sites in quality accommodation and use an established mode of transportation (Figure 1).

**Figure 2. 2 The ecotourism spectrum**



Adapted from Weaver (2002)

It is linked with a shallow commitment to environmental issues, and the pursuit of a shallow interaction with nature that is mediated through formal interpretation. Soft activity is dominant in US National Parks such as Grand Canyon and Great Smoky Mountains. In contrast, the hard ideal type engage smaller numbers who are more environmentally aware, visiting semi wilderness or wilderness destinations where few if any services are available. They involve relatively long and specialized trips that are physically and mentally challenging, involve the pursuit of a deeper interaction with the natural environment, and are arranged independently or through exclusive packages. Antarctica is often described as a hard destination (Spletstoeser, 1999; Stonehouse, 2001). This type of ecotourists includes professional scientists, such as geologists, and botanists, as opposed to soft or casual natural history ecotourists who combine nature-orientated travel with other tourism activities.

In a related vein, Blamey (1995a) used the same distinction from a different viewpoint. Ecotourists can be viewed as ranging from 'hard' to 'soft' depending upon the type of experience they seek. In particular, hard ecotourists are pushed by the need to involve in an ecotourist activities and spend a sufficient amount of time participating in such activities. On the other hand, soft ecotourists were viewed as those tourists who undertake one ecotourism activity for at least one day of their whole vacation. Blamey (1995a) also proposes another way of distinguishing hard-soft ecotourism, which is justified by the physical difficulty involved in the activity. Here, hard ecotourism refers to hard adventure-based recreation activities such as mountaineering and white-water kayaking, while soft ecotourism refers to soft adventure-based recreation activities such as commercial white water rafting (p. 17-18).

In contrast to the above, others distinguish four basic categories of ecotourists (Lindberg, 1991, p.3):

- *Hard-core*: tourists who include people seeking to learn about nature and actively participate in conservation activities;
- *Dedicated*: tourists who travel particularly to see natural areas and want to understand the local cultures;
- *Mainstream*: tourists who visit major protected areas, jungles, and rivers, mainly to experience something different; and
- *Casual* tourists for whom the nature experience is incidental.

Furthermore, Weaver (1998, p.16-17) attempts to differentiate ecotourists by the use of the terms 'passive' ecotourist and 'active' ecotourist, depending on the purpose of travel and the elements that this travel entails. He describes as passive ecotourists the ones who view ecotourism as one element of their trip, and active ecotourists the ones who would travel to destinations for the main purpose of ecotourism. He further suggest two different types of ecotourists, the stayover ecotourist who would be accommodated in an ecolodge-type of accommodation, and excursion ecotourists who would use other types of accommodation outside the ecotourism setting (Weaver, 1998).

With regard to the above comparisons of segmentation of ecotourists, a problem which occurs is that they are based on vague criteria which lack backup data such as socio-demographic, as well as precise information on the sample criteria and selection (Blamey, 1995a, 1997). However, other research studies, used certain segmentation criteria to describe the ecotourist, based on the group sizes and the means of travel during an ecotourism trip (ERM, 1995). Empirical research in Queensland in Australia identifies three types of ecotourists the: 'Self-reliant group' of ecotourists; 'small group' ecotourists; and 'popular group' ecotourists (ERM, 1995, p.13). The first type involves individual travellers or groups of less than ten who use non-motorized means of transport (i.e. walking), services are non-existent, visiting relatively remote areas. These ecotourists demonstrate *'unusual levels of*

*involvement that often require a high degree of challenge*' (ERM, 1995, p.13). Their activities were: bushwalking, bird watching, camping and canoeing. The second type is formed by these individuals or a group (less than fifteen) who use non-motorised and motorised forms of transport (i.e. car or small boat) to visit certain remote areas outside the tour boundaries. These types of ecotourists are from a range of age groups, and they are categorized by moderate to high levels of challenge and self-reliance. Their activities were: forest drives, specialized dive trips and guided motorized trips (ERM, 1995, p.13). The third type involves large numbers of tourists who visit different natural attractions; using a mechanised form of transport usually a significant level of services is required. These types of ecotourists are from a variety of age groups, and they acknowledge a low requirement for both self-reliance and the degree of challenge. Their activities were: boat trips, bus tours and viewing certain attractions. In relation to Queensland's categorization of ecotourists, a criticism which rises is that although they have a considerable educational and interpretative element, they do not take place on a natural setting and as a result there is not exclusively the subject of ecotourism (Dowling, 1995a & b).

Further Weiler and Richins (1995) identified the 'minimal' and 'extreme' kind of ecotourists. The minimal kind have little consciousness as regards to minimising environmental impacts, they are passive observers who search for a soft physical challenge. The extreme kind look for ways to protect the environment in terms of its biodiversity through an active and strong interaction, and they seek an intellectual and physical challenge. In addition, Wight (1996) referred to Boyd and Butler's categorization as ecotourists specialist and ecotourists generalist. Depending upon the time (duration) they engaged in an ecotourism activity, the specialists includes those ecotourists who engaged in an ecotourism activity for more than seven days whereas the generalists were those who were involved for less than 48 hours.

On the other hand, Mowforth (1993, p.2) suggested three types of ecotourists:

- The 'rough' or 'pioneering' ecotourists, this category entails young to middle aged persons who travel independently or in a small group and use local facilities;
- The 'smooth' or 'patronizing' ecotourists, are characterised by an interest in nature and safari tourism, are middle to older aged persons that travel in groups, and stay in luxury accommodation;
- The 'specialist' or 'oblivious' ecotourist, with mixed age group that cover all the categories, as do their interests in terms of accommodation and travelling, and they participate in a precise investigation or interest.

Similarly, Ashton's (1991, p.92-93) classification includes: 'casual visitor', 'long distance' and 'foreign ecotourist' and 'causal ecotourist'. The casual visitor is primarily concerned with the direct intention of participating in recreation. These ecotourists lack any particular interest in wildlife activities, and they are likely to relax at the wildlife location. This segment tends to directly affect the

economy of the destinations as well as requiring the greatest capital expenditure for services and infrastructure. The second type of Ashton's classifications, involves the regular international ecotourist who has a general interest in natural history and wildlife. The majority of them tend to be middle to older-aged females, with income at around £27,000 (\$50,000), and they travel with one companion. The causal ecotourists are having a specific interest in wildlife or habitat. These ecotourists have a particular interest in the prosperity of the ecosystem, and try to avoid contact with ecotourists outside their own tour group. Under the causal ecotourist, two main groups were identified (Ashton, 1991, p.93):

- 'Consumptive' causal ecotourist, with interests in activities such as hunting, fishing, plant collection and research; and
- "Non consumptive" causal ecotourist, with interests in activities such as wildlife viewing, birdwatching, and natural photography.

Kusler (1991a & b) classification includes:

- The 'do-it-yourself' independent tourists who are part of organised tours, including a scientific group. They travel to relative accessible locations and are associated with high degree of flexibility. Independent tourists represent all age groups, socio-economic classes and purpose of visit and may choose accommodation ranging from formal to informal, including campsites.
- The 'ecotourists on tours', who have a high degree of organisation and go on tours such as safaris in exotic and inaccessible areas, where they require only specialised transportation and accommodation. They are associated with older individuals or single women.
- The 'school/scientific' groups often endure rough conditions, including accommodation, and stays in an area for extend period. However, they frequently view ecotourism from a specific scientific and educational perspective, and as such they tend to be more sensitive to resources, thus the values and needs of the other ecotourists. Scientific groups represent all age groups, socio-economic classes and reason of visit.

Some of these tourist classifications are theoretical in nature, and some have been empirically tested. Most rely heavily on the researchers' observations and judgement of tourist activities or sites visited. The greatest limitation of all the identified types of ecotourists is that their general profiles of ecotourists are based on early attempts to categorize the ecotourist behaviour pattern.

Others believed that ecotourists are educated individuals who are aware of the need to promote biodiversity conservation and improve rural livelihoods in host destinations. Kruger (2005), Chi and Luzar (1998), Wearing and Neil (1999), Boo (1991) and Wight (1996) note that ecotourists are highly educated and earn higher incomes. This results in them having a higher willingness to spend money in the destination country. Others demonstrating that most ecotourists are not anthropologists,

botanists or even scientists and appear to be motivated by hedonic experiences rather than by environmental and social values (Chan, 2007; Sharpley, 2006; Rivera and Croes, 2010).

Wearing and Neil (1999) argue that psycho- graphic characteristics of ecotourists include the possession of an environmental ethic and a willingness not to degrade the resource. In this regard, there is a huge potential for ecotourism to raise not only revenues for conservation, but also awareness among people who often support conservation schemes after an ecotourism experience (Kruger, 2005; Wearing and Neil, 1999). Ecotourism was thus designed as a means to achieve conservation when considering the existence of environmentally friendly and educated visitors, revenue generation that is ploughed back to conservation, and environmentally friendly small-scale tourism infrastructure (Mbaiwa, 2008)

## **2.8 Profile of the ecotourists**

Ecotourism includes all the complexities involving the natural, cultural and human capital of the destination, including financial rewards to support the host community and to further environmental conservation of the destination (Honey, 1999, 2008). While not wanting to ignore the complexities of the ecotourism product and the associated industry, the focus of this study is the consumer – the ecotourist. In distinguishing between nature tourism and ecotourism, Buckley (2009) points out that, whereas nature-based tourists are passive participants, ecotourists are more active and who try to have a positive impact – whether financial, educational or developmental – on the destination. Ecotourists exhibit a higher level of interest and involvement in conservation than do other tourist types (Hvenegaard and Deardon, 1998). Although Diamantis (1998) and Yuan and Moisey (1992) point to the youthfulness of ecotourists; most research indicates that they tend to be older than the average tourist (Backman and Potts, 1993; Boo, 1990; Eagles and Cascagnette, 1995; Hvenegaard and Deardon, 1998; Wight, 1996). Fennell and Smale's (1992) data reveal that the ecotourist is, on average, 54 years old.

According to Page and Dowling (2002) studies in a context of different countries suggesting that Ecotourists tend to be older, better educated than the average tourist and with higher levels of disposable income than the averages tourists. For example Eagles & Cascagnette, (1995). Found in a Canadian ecotourists tend to be 45-64 years of age university degree and a higher income (Sharpley, 2006). Cleaver and Muller (2002) argue that the baby boomer generation now represent the market with most potential for ecotourism providers. In the same respect Fennel (1999, 2003, 2014) studies in Taiwan found that ecotourists tend to be in a younger, 25-35 age group. In addition, others studies suggest that a high need for mental and emotional stimulation, and for educational experiences, has been detected in ecotourists (Wood, 2001). Ecotourists travel more frequently than the average tourist



and enjoy longer pleasure travel trips, made possible, perhaps, by their typically above-average incomes (Fennell and Smale, 1992; Hvenegaard and Deardon 1998; Sharpley, 2006; Wight, 1996).

They also tend to pay a significant amounts of money for the travel experience (Eagles and Cascagnette, 1995) and most likely they are doing to satisfy their personal needs rather than for the sake of external tourism environment (Sharpley, 2006). Although the ecotourist is relates to travel in a group (Boo, 1990; Fennell and Smale, 1992), more recent data indicates that ecotourists are more likely to travel alone or as a couple and less likely to travel with a tour group or, as a family, with children (Wight, 1996). Of course, there is no 'typical' ecotourist. There is a spectrum of ecotourists, with varying degrees of interest in ecotourism and its relevance to travel. Swarbrooke and Horner (1999) segment ecotourists into 'shades of green', spanning those who are *not at all green*, *light green*, *dark green* (demonstrate green behaviour by boycotting hotels with bad environmental records) and *totally green* (do not take holidays away from home so as not damage the environment). Tourism Queensland (1999) outlined six elements of an ecotourist: (1) taking vacations in natural (rather than urban) locations; (2) clear understanding of the term 'ecotourism' and the extent to which it is considered to apply to vacations; (3) general attitudes towards nature and nature-based tourism; (4) reasons for choosing where to take a vacation, in particular the role of nature and learning about nature; (5) the extent of planning for the vacation and the sources used to do so; and (6) nature-based activities conducted while on vacation. Ecotourists are conceptually defined as: anyone travelling with the primary motivation of viewing, enjoying, and experiencing nature in a relatively undisturbed or uncontaminated natural area and undertaking at least one ecotourism experience during their trip (Blamey, 1995; Burger et al., 1995).

However there are different views in terms of the personal characteristics of ecotourists among researchers (see table 2.5). More specific their difference in sample sizes and countries of research, similarities do exist in terms of education characteristics of ecotourists as the most of them have a degree background (see table 2.5). All these studies are reflecting mainly three grounds of research settings, mainly in North America and Australia.

- Firstly, those who involve the general motivation evaluation;
  - Secondly, those who use a segmentation approach based on the division of heterogeneous groups of ecotourists; and
  - Thirdly, those who use other particular marketing tools, e.g. involvement. Tourism Attitude and
- Examples of the first category, based on motivation evaluation, is that of Canadian ecotourists (Ballantine and Eagles, 1994; Eagles, 1992a & b; Eagles and Cascagnette, 1995; Eagles et al., 1992; Eagles and Wind, 1994; Kretchman and Eagles, 1990; Williacy and Eagles, 1990).

Understanding travel motivation is critical to understanding tourist behaviour. Travel motivation, in the sense that Fennell (1990) describes the term, refers to experiences or benefits that

directly influence the choice of a type of trip or destination. Motivations tend to be transitory or changeable; the motivations that influence a person's decision for one trip may be very different from those motivations that shape the next trip decision. A related but distinct concept is that of 'attitude'. An attitude is a person's enduring evaluation of people, objects, and ideas (Aronson et al., 1999). Attitudes can influence which motives drive a person; they can also influence how a visitor may behave on-site. More specifically, the Canadian Tourism Attitude and Motivation study was administered by statistics Canada 1983 through a labour force survey. A total of 11,500 Canadians complete surveys concerning their attitudes and motivations towards travel; the survey had 89% participation rate. Currently, five different studies were carrying out which showed a distinct profile of the ecotourists in terms of their personal characteristics (Ballantine and Eagles, 1994; Eagles, 1992a; Eagles and Cascagnette, 1995; Kretchman and Eagles, 1990; Williacy and Eagles, 1990) (see table 2.5). Two different types of motivational domains were used: that of attraction and social motivations (Ballantine and Eagles, 1994; Eagles, 1992a & b). The previous type referred to statements involving the desired attractions of the area, while the last showed opinions about objectives and personal interaction with others (Ballantine and Eagles, 1994; Eagles, 1992a & b). These findings indicate that the attractiveness of the destination environment, assessed in terms of its natural and cultural properties has been the significant factor, followed by learning about nature, photography landscapes, tropical forests, lakes and streams, and being physically active (Ballantine and Eagles, 1994; Eagles, 1992a & b). Quite interestingly, all the motivations were related to both the educational and natural-based elements of ecotourism, without any reference made to the sustainability element. Thus the evidence would suggest overall to categorising ecotourists is not a simply task. Not only a number of profiles identified but the extent to which environmental values are a key deciding factor is unclear.

In addition, ecotourists demonstrated a tendency to certain activities which do not relate to being in natural areas, i.e. visits to rural and historic attractions (Eagles, 1992a & b). In terms of their motivations, ecotourists were intrinsically motivated by the medium of nature, thus enjoying nature, feeling close to it and learn about it. They also showed evidence of a desire for a change of their daily routine, and being adventurous. Much less important social motivations to ecotourists were that of being together with their family, do nothing, visiting friends and relatives (Eagles, 1992a & b).

In a related vein, regarding the profile of Canadian ecotourists Wight (1996, 1997) indicates that both males and females were equally interested in the overall of ecotourism experiences (see table 2.5). She distinguished between motivations related to nature, to outdoor activities, cultural activity and other types (HLA and ARA, 1994). These results indicated that the most significance natural associated motivations, were the enjoyment of the scenery and nature (45%), followed by wildlife watching (15%), and see the mountains (14%). She further indicates that in this research

ecotourists tended to select the natural-based rather than educational components. Where, the particular educational motivation, that of to study/learn nature/culture, was selected only by 10% of the sample (HLA and ARA, 1994:15). In terms of the accommodation preferences, the majority of the ecotourists preferred to stay in the lodge inn and tent, all indicating a mid-range budget level (HLA and ARA, 1994; Wight, 1996, 1997) (see table 2.5). Wight (1996, 1997) further indicated that ecotourists preference as regards accommodation (level, type) determined by their experience in the natural location, not vice versa (Wight, 1997, p.218). There is also a substantial overlap between accommodation demand and supply, all presenting that there is disequilibrium towards lack of supply (Wight, 1996, 1997). No motivations concerning conservation activities of the ecotourists were presented in all the cases, within this study (HLA and ARA, 1994; Wight, 1996, 1997). In the same vein Eagle's (1992a, b) evaluation, highlights that although ecotourists tended to be different from the general Canadian population, there was not enough evidence to determine that the exact attributes of their sustainable experiences.

Taking the second category three studies could be demonstrated all of which indicated a different background in terms of the socio-demographic criteria (Chapman, 1995; Pearce and Moscardo, 1994; Twyman and Robinson, 1997) (see table 2.5).

Firstly, Pearce and Moscardo's (1994, p.7-12) study identified three market segments among tourists visiting a Heritage Site:

- *The get away*, (66%): nature oriented group seeking to relax in the natural area, having an interest in the rainforest and wildlife. They are generally enthusiastic about rainforest visits;
- *The nature experience and appreciation group* (24%): having interest for education within the rainforest areas, watch and appreciate the wildlife, and the beauty of the rainforest. This group is less concerned about rest and relaxation, and getting away from crowds as the first group was. They are dedicated /specialised tourists to rainforests.
- *The novelty sun-seekers group* (10%): This group is inclined to appreciate the rainforest for its novelty value, and new experience which does not necessarily link with any important environmental or educational benefits. This is an incidental group of tourists.

These findings demonstrate the generalist, specialist, and incidental group, from which only the second group characterize the core ecotourism-orientated group (Pearce and Moscardo, 1994). This has been based on the degree of specialised interest. For example, the second group was more likely to undertake short walks for more than an hour (55%), compared to the first group (43%) or the third group (43%). Similarly, bushwalking was more likely to be undertaken by the second group (51%) rather than the first group (38%), while the third group did not show any interest. Also, attempt to relax (first: 55%; second: 49%; third: 56%), general sightseeing (first: 58%; second: 62%; third: 44%), and visiting scenic landmarks (second: 43%), all favoured the second group. In general, these

results show that ecotourists tend to be only a part of the generalist natural-based market, having an interest in nature oriented activities (Pearce and Moscardo, 1994). However, no-specific detailed questions were asked in terms of education and sustainability components of the ecotourism concept.

Secondly, Twyman and Robinson (1997) carry out two surveys in order to classify the ecotourists in Northern Ontario, Canada. However among the two surveys different personal characteristics were derived. The bulk of the examined group were males (see table 2.5). The first survey focused on the summer travellers, visitors to the area and residents, while the second focused on both American and Canadian members within recreational organisations. Their approach was based on identifying the forest-based activities, the preference within the forest settings/environment and the nature of the forest-based experience. Looking for example at the results of their second survey six segments were identified (Twyman and Robinson, 1997, p.37-44):

- *Enthusiasts* (24%): tend to have various activities in undisturbed areas, have an interest to learn thus a sense of adventure.
- *Adventurers* (12%): tend to involve in adventurous activities, and obtain satisfaction from reaching new challenges.
- *Naturalist* (14%): tend to be in the natural undisturbed areas and wilderness settings.
- *Escapists* (12%): tend to be individuals who want to escape from daily routine and not interact with people aside from their group.
- *Week-enders* (18%): They were likely to get away to relax from their daily routines. They participated in ecotourism trips with their families for a small period.
- *Urbanists* (20%): They were likely to enjoy tourist attractions and local and native cultures. They preferred to interact with others within the urban setting, with a low interest in any activities.

The findings point out that there are two main groups (38%) who were specialist ecotourists, the escapists and the naturalists. Even though there was a lack of statistical details in terms of the preferred activities, both groups were interested to have natural-based activities in a non-consumptive manner (bird watching, less motorised water activities). In terms of the setting, both groups tended to be in the natural and remote settings. In all cases, no emphasis was placed in terms of the educational and sustainability component of the concept.

Thirdly, results from research by Chapman (1995) on the forest ecotourists of New South Wales in Australia, based on broad selected criteria, indicated that participation in an undisturbed natural setting thus appreciation of the nature, jointly to rest and relax physically were more important variables than to learn about nature (Chapman, 1995). In particular, four main groups emerged (Chapman, 1995, p.71-74):

- Nature first! Or ecotourism as nature involvement (54%): were identified as the main group of ecotourists, in that they were equally interested in the environment as well as to explore and learn. They are not looking for self-fulfilment, or searching for danger and excitement, nor are they dependent on equipment for recreational enjoyment. They are both male and female with a mean age of 38.

- Nature and me or ecotourism as personal development (19%): involved in a different aspect of ecotourism, with a particular focus on introspection, involvement in spiritual growth and sharing challenges, excitement and skill development. Their average mean age is 32, and females are slightly in the majority (57%).

- Nature? - be laid back! Or laid-back ecotourists (19%): tend to be passive ecotourists, with their main focus on relaxation and then on the environmental appreciation elements. They are not seeking energetic involvement in the form of fitness, skill development or excitement. They are both male and females with a mean age of 37.

- Nature and excitement or ecotourism as a social activity (8%): tend to be passive not-independent ecotourists with their main focus on excitement. They showed a general interest to explore nature, but are less concerned about a more detailed learning experience or exploration. They are mainly females with a mean age of 27.

These results illustrate that the core group of ecotourists is almost half of their sample, which has been reflected in their association with an educational element. Unlike the last two examples, emphasis was given to two elements of the ecotourism components all suggesting that when more than one component is taken into consideration the core groups of ecotourists are often more than half of the examined samples. This is also evident in Pearce and Moscardo's, and Twyman and Robinson's research, revealing that in the ecotourism market, there is only a small sub-group (ranging from 14% to 54% of the sample sizes) which satisfy certain pre-determined criteria of ecotourism. In all the cases however, it also seems that there are distinct groups of ecotourists in terms of their presence in the setting in the form of generalist or specialist, or hard and soft.

Finally, the third category of research studies involves those who try to profile potential ecotourists in terms of their social values and involvement in ecotourism (Bottrill and Pearce 1995; Jamrozny et al, 1996; Blamey and Braithwaite, 1997). Although a number of studies have used personal values as a basis for market segmentation (see for example, Kamakura and Mazzon, 1991) and a few have applied values to the tourism sphere (Luk et al., 1993; Madrigal and Kahle, 1994; Pizam and Calantone, 1987), little interest has been shown in social values. Where personal values refer to the ideals one has about one's own private life, social values refer to the ideals one has about how the world, one's country and one's community should be. On the other hand involvement has been briefly indicated by Bottrill and Pearce's study (1995) which indirectly measured the ecotourist

perspective by mainly assessing the enterprises views or images about the motivational aspects of ecotourists, referring to the so-called ‘degree of involvement of the visitors and the nature of the activity’ (Bottrill and Pearce 1995, p.50).

Bottrill and Pearce’s evaluation was based on seven criteria: *leisure activity, thrill, relaxation, entertainment, physical activity, education, and participation*, in that the ventures should feature all the last three images in order to be regarded as ecotourism ventures from the participants perspective. Overall the research indicated that only 41% of the companies met all the three criteria. Although this study did not primarily focus on the involvement research tools, Bottrill and Pearce highlighted the potential connection between the degree of involvement and ecotourist activities.

In contrast, research was conducted which primarily focused on involvement; it measured ‘individuals’ responses, magazine readership, number of trips, and opinion leadership characteristics (Jamrozy et al, 1996, p.920). In the light of this research setting, Jamrozy et al. (1996) utilised the concept of involvement to measure opinion leadership in natural-based tourism. This research used certain techniques from the involvement literature, that of the Personal Involvement Inventory (PII) and Involvement Profile (IP) which reflect mainly the pot-pourri approaches of measuring the involvement contrast (see chapter 3). On the basis of this study, the majority of the respondents were tested on the PII to determine whether they belonged in the high involved group, in which natural-based tourism was perceived as valuable, beneficial, and an interesting form of travel. The majority of the respondents were potential natural-based tourists, who had taken some self-defined nature-based trips. In all the cases, the research concluded the potential impact of the concept of involvement on natural-based tourism which interestingly coincided with this study’s research skeleton. In sum, the current research approaches have profiled Australia and North America ecotourists, and as such they lack knowledge surrounding the behaviour of other types of ecotourists.

**Table 2. 2 General characteristics of ecotourists among selected studies**

<b>Studies</b>	<b>Characteristics</b>	
Ingram and Durst (1989) [USA]	Age: Gender: Other:	31-50 years (52%); Over 50 years of age (23%) <i>The majority were females</i> 68% were alone
Boo (1990) [Latin America]	Age: Gender: Other: Accommodation:	44 years of age Both males and females Traveling with groups No specific preferences
Reingold (1993) [Canada]	Age: Education: Gender:	Between 55-64 years of age 64.9% with a university degree <i>64% were females</i>

Weiler and Richins (1995) [Australia]	Gender: <i>Single females (69%)</i> Age: <i>Between 26-35 years</i> Education, Income: <i>High levels</i>
<hr/>	
<i>Total market 117 million</i>	
US Travel Data Center (1992) [USA]	Gender: <i>50% males and 50% females</i> Age: <i>18-34 (40%); 35-49 (30%); and 50+ (30%)</i> Education: <i>High school or less (42%) Some College (26%) College (32%)</i> Income: <i>Less than \$20K (18%) \$20K-\$30K: (20%) \$30K-40K (20%) \$40+ (42%)</i>
<hr/>	
Silverberg et al (1996) [USA]	Gender: <i>79.8% of males</i> Education: <i>54.5% degree holders</i> Income: <i>79.34% above \$30,000</i> Other: <i>72.54% travel with the family Hotel/motel (47%), campgrounds (24%) Three trips per year on average 5.7 days average length of stay</i>
<hr/>	
Eagles and Cascagnette (1995) Williacy and Eagles ( 1990) Eagles, (1992a, b) Kretchman and Eagles ( 1990) Eagles et al (1992) [Canada]	Age: <i>Between 49-54 years</i> Education: <i>Degree (over 60% on average)</i> Incomes: <i>High</i> Gender: <i>Females</i>
<hr/>	
Wight (1996, 1997) HLA and ARA (1994) [Canada]	Age: <i>Most between 25-54 years</i> Gender: <i>Both males and females</i> Education: <i>High educational levels</i> Accommodation: <i>Various but preferably cabin, lodge and tent, bed &amp; breakfast, hotel/motel, and ranch</i> Other: <i>45% pay \$1,500 per person on vacation 50% members of environmental groups</i>
<hr/>	
Pearce and Moscardo (1994) [Australia]	Gender: <i>56% were males</i> Age: <i>Average age of 42 years</i> Other: <i>More than 15 days (72 %) 55.1% obtain information from FR</i>
<hr/>	
<i>First survey</i>	
Twyman and Robinson (1997) [USA and Canada]	Gender: <i>53.6% were males</i> Status: <i>81.5% were married</i> Age: <i>30-49 years: 52.5%, 50+ years: 39.7%</i> Education: <i>University: 50.2%; Postgraduate: 16%</i> Incomes: <i>64.3% above \$40,000</i> Accommodation: <i>Motel (42.8%), Tent (16%)</i> Other: <i>17.6% members of environmental groups 10.9% members with outdoor group</i>
<hr/>	
<i>Second survey</i>	
	Gender: <i>64.2% were males</i> Status: <i>57.6% were married, 36.8% were single</i> Age: <i>30-49 years: 60.9%; 50+ years: 14.2%</i> Education: <i>University: 71.9%; Postgraduate: 5.7%</i>
<hr/>	

	Incomes:	69.2% above \$40,000
	Accommodation:	Tent (38.3%), Motel (31.6%)
	Other:	36.2% members of environmental groups 21.2% members with outdoor group
Chapman (1995) [Australia]	Gender:	52% were females
	Education:	Over 30% were degree holders
	Age:	30+ years of age (over 60%)
Jamrozy et al, (1996) [USA]	Gender:	Male natural-based tourists
	Age:	Middle to older aged
	Education:	Some university qualifications
	Incomes:	The majority above \$50,000
	Other:	Two or more trips per year Travel with families

## 2.9 Conclusion

Ecotourism is one of the most advocated concept in tourism literature, yet there remains considerable debate on what the meaning is, or what should be. Regardless of this lack of clarity there is a broad set of ecotourism principles that are clear and widely promoted, including environmental conservation and education, cultural preservation and economic benefits. A careful observation of ecotourism shows that the concept of ecotourism appears to be the solution to all tourism problems; economic development, environmental conservation, cultural preservation. Ecotourism mostly deals with leaving parts of natural environments and mainly focuses on socially responsible travel, personal growth and environmentally sustainability. It mainly involves travel to destinations where flora, fauna, and cultural heritage are the main attractions.

Although the principles of ecotourism highlight the importance of sustainable development and economic benefits in ecotourism implementation research findings in different destinations indicate that certain sustainable principles of ecotourism are missing in ecotourism development, owing to limited understanding of the concept amongst ecotourism related agencies. Thus while some authors (e.g., Courvisanos and Jain, 2006; Wheeler, 1993) strongly believe that ecotourism is just an intellectually attractive term with a little application and is often used as a marketing plot to attract more customers.

Tourism in a sensitive and fragile ecosystem may not come without causing negative impacts (Banerjee, 2010; Kumar, 2002; Sekhar, 2003). As such the idea of ecotourism is highly contentious and a contested topic ever since it has been implemented across different countries. Many researchers argued that in practice ecotourism simply neglects communities and local people. It is simply used as a 'buzzword' to attract customers. This leads to serious policy failures. It has been often reflected that the costs sustained for the creation of ecotourism spots tend to be felt most severely at local levels,



especially in the short term. Therefore, the net benefits from such conservation are low and occasionally negative for the members of local communities.

A large number of scholars also advocate that, in practice, ecotourism has often failed to deliver the expected benefits to indigenous communities due to a combination of factors like lack of mechanisms for a fair distribution of the economic benefits of ecotourism, land insecurity, little control of the locals over tourism and more invasion of tourists (Coria and Calfucura, 2012; Counsell, 2005). Social supporters argue that protected areas take away local rights of access to critical resources and, thus, negatively and unreasonably impact the social and economic welfare of neighboring communities. This negative human impact harms protected area's conservation objectives because protected areas cannot succeed without the support of local communities. The overall evidence on the outcomes of ecotourism in the world show diverse results. The advocates see in ecotourism the potential of improvement of the local communities through income generation, local empowerment, and increased number of species as a result of conservational policies. Critics, however, say that ecotourism perpetuates economic inequality and disempowers local people (Horton, 2009). Lack of access to land and natural resources, and alienating locals from planning process further aggravate the situation. In addition, although demand for ecotourism remains on the increase side, there is slight evidence to propose that ecotourists are also on the increase. More precisely, the nature of tourism consumption is such that environmental concern is likely to be subordinated to a variety of other values and, motivations and desired outcomes more specifically tourists may be demanding new different products such as ecotourism but the conventional reasons on participating in tourism are unlikely to have changed. In short there is a little distinction between the ecotourist and the mass tourist. This perhaps suggest that true ecotourism is unlikely to be achieved and that is a little more than a supply led market niche (Saatsakis, Bakir and Wickens, 2012; Sharpley, 2006).

The purpose of the present study is to advance knowledge of the complex approach of ecotourism. A critical review of the literature shows that the concept of ecotourism is closely associated with other concepts, such as; nature, ecology, protection, culture, small scale, alternative, and others. Whilst a variety of ecotourism typologies and development patterns have been produced by academics derived from the residents' perspectives, our knowledge is still limited because of the absence of the industry's perspectives; thus the meanings of ecotourism from those responsible for its development remains incomplete.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Methodology**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

The aim of this chapter is to discuss the key methodological components used to achieve the objectives of the study; it firstly defines the research problem and approach, then explores the two research paradigms, their methodological directions and their strengths and limitations. Then a conceptual framework is developed outlining the research plan for collecting and analysing data. The collection and analysis of the data are discussed, drawing conclusions and recommendations for practice and further research. Fieldwork and its development, together with the assessment of the study's credibility, dependability and authenticity, are discussed, and the study's methodological limitations are pointed out.

#### **3.2 The research problem and approach**

Tourism is often perceived as being responsible for the adverse effects on the environment, communities and economies. However, tourism is expected to double during the next two decades with multiple consequences which call for an alternative approach at both strategic and professional levels in order to minimise tourism's negative impacts (Budeanu, 2005, Anderson, Bakir and Wickens, 2016). The tourism industry does not only provide a means of leisure to the tourist but offers support to the less developed economies in Europe, such as Greece. Many destinations, including Crete, depend on tourism income. Tourism businesses capture commercial opportunities in rebranding their tourism products and promoting them in an effort to reap additional benefits and generate more wealth (Aref and Redzuan, 2009). This wealth, however, comes at a price as tourism destinations have had to pay a heavy price regarding their physical and socio-cultural environments. Negative impacts particularly arise from uncontrolled and spontaneous development in coastal destinations, including Crete. Concern of tourism development in Crete is one of its major challenges.

As a major source of wealth and employment in Greece, tourism is seen as a national and regional development tool. The authorities recognised tourism's economic significance late 1970s and embraced it as a central part of Greece's economic strategy. The development of tourism is seen as a way of solving foreign exchange problems and generating employment. It was regarded as a

panacea due to its socio-economic contribution to the fabric of the Greek society. A consequence of this development was a significant social change. A negative consequence was that traditional occupations such as agriculture, fishing have been deserted because local people viewed tourism as a more profitable option (Komilis, 1994; Wickens, 1994 and 1999).

Due to rising concerns over the potential negative impacts of mass tourism, a great deal of attention has been directed at examining the future of tourism and its sustainability. In recent years, the pursuit of sustainable tourism (i.e. small-scale and alternative tourism) development has led to a renewed interest resulting in a plethora of writings on its negative consequences on the environment and communities (Northcote and Macbeth, 2006; Gursoy et al, 2010; Briassoulis, 2003). Seen as an effective catalyst of socio-economic development and regeneration, tourism is promoted in destinations facing an economic decline. Crete is currently faced with difficult economic circumstances resulting from austerity measures imposed by EU following the international economic crisis of 2008. This was a major trigger for pursuing and developing further alternative tourism products, such as ecotourism in Crete. It is also the primary motive for undertaking a study on ecotourism, questioning the industry's optimistic portrayal of the economic benefits and the environmentally sustainable outcome of such a product. The limited knowledge on the industry's perspective in relation to ecotourism development and promotion in Crete was the driving force for undertaking this study. Exploring the concept of ecotourism and its development as perceived by enterprising hoteliers, managers, tour operators and tourism authorities in Crete is its overall aim. Its purpose is to advance our knowledge and understanding of ecotourism in this destination. The study's objectives are as follows:

1. Undertaking a critical review of the ecotourism literature.
2. Exploring the concept of ecotourism and its development.
3. Determining ecotourism's perceived impacts and importance to Crete.

To this end, fieldwork in the form of semi-structured qualitative interviews is undertaken with the local and regional authorities, hoteliers, and managers of small and medium tourism related enterprises.

### **3.3 Research Paradigms**

Because theories organize our observations and make sense of them, there is usually more than one way to make sense of things. According to Jennings (2001), the standpoint that a researcher considers the research topic from, the research design and the methods for data collection should be determined by the research paradigm. Each paradigm is described on its ontological basis (the view

of the real world); epistemological basis (the relationship between the researcher and the subject of the research); and the methodological basis (data collection and knowledge construction). Similarly, Morgan argues that in social science methodology four versions of the paradigm concept are untested within each other". He sees worldviews to underpin the researcher's assumptions about the nature of knowledge and reality; and epistemological stances to recapitulate assumptions about "what" can be known and "how"; which, in turn, create shared beliefs about research topics and methods in a specific research field; thus, the research questions asked and the methods used in researching key content in the field take the role of model examples ("paradigmatic examples") for researchers to use in the given fields. However, Denzin and Lincoln (2005) note that a paradigm encompasses an additional element: ethics (axiology), which asks: "how will I be as a moral person in the world?"

The research paradigm is implicitly reflected in the structure, implementation and reporting of the entire research process. The term paradigm comes from the Greek word *paradigma*, which is a compound word: *para* (beyond) *deigma* (sample). In Greek philosophy the etymology of *paradigma* signified a representation or copy, a patterned device for making comparisons, which much later in the 17th century came to mean a moral exemplar of reality and the *para* component indicated that a paradigm went beyond first-order reality to the second-order realm of cultural connotation which was empirically grounded and captured" (Dann, 1996, p. 472). Morgan (2007) discusses the multiple meanings and uses of the word *paradigm* in social sciences, he views paradigms as "systems of beliefs and practices that influence how researchers select both the questions they study and methods that they use to study them" (p. 49). In other words, "paradigms are shared belief systems that influence the kinds of knowledge researchers seek and how they interpret the evidence they collect (p. 50).

As a paradigm "has come to mean a set of overarching and interconnected assumptions about the nature of reality", these assumptions form the framework within which empirical enquiry takes place and provides two different perspectives about how data should be collected and analysed (Mayku and Morehouse, 1994). Social science literature is underpinned by various paradigms, for instance: positivism, constructivism, neo-positivism, critical theory, and participatory research (Dann, 1996; Morgan, 2007). Scholars identify several paradigm shifts in social science research from positivism which holds that there is a reality out there to be studied, captured, and understood through quantitative approaches to post-positivism which argues that reality can never be fully apprehended, only approximated; it emphasises metaphysical issues related to the nature of truth and reality and the belief systems and practices within a field, requiring qualitative approaches (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). There is also a shift to the perspective of a "pragmatic approach" (see table 3.1) with a combination of both quantitative and qualitative methods (Morgan, 2007).

**Table 3. 1 A Pragmatic Alternative to the Key Issues in Social Science Research Methodology**

	Qualitative approach	Quantitative approach	Pragmatic approach
Connection of theory and data	Induction	Deduction	Abduction
Relationship to research process	Subjectivity	Objectivity	Intersubjectivity
Inference from data	Context	Generality	Transferability

Source: Morgan (2007)

### 3.4 The positivist Paradigm

Positivism is a research paradigm widely used in the social sciences. Rudner (1996, p.10) defined it as "systematically related set of statements, including some law-like generalization which is empirically testable". The main idea of positivism is that the social world exists externally, and has to be measured through objective methods rather than through impressions, reflection or intuition (Easter by-Smith, 2002). Positivism has been defined by many authors through years. Kolakowski (1972), for example, argues that positivism entails a four point principle: first the law of phenomenalism, which states that there is only knowledge; all abstractions be they "matter" or "spirit" have to be rejected; second the law of nominalism – which states that words, generalizations, abstractions, etc. are linguistic phenomena and do not give new insight into the world; third the separation of evidences from values; and four the unity of the scientific method. According to Hirschheim, (1985), Positivist Science is define as an epistemology "which seeks to explain and predict what happens in the social world by searching for regularities and causal relationships between its constituent elements.

Positivism, is seen science as the way to get at truth, to comprehend the world well enough so that it might be predicted and controlled. The world and the universe are deterministic, they operate by laws of cause and effect that are discernible if we apply the unique approach of the scientific method. Thus, science is largely a mechanistic or mechanical affair in positivism. Deductive reasoning is used to postulate theories that can be tested. Based on the results of studies, we may learn that a theory does not fit the facts well and so the theory must be revised to better predict reality. The positivists believe in empiricism, the idea that observation and measurement are at the core of the scientific endeavour. The key approach of the scientific method is the experiment, the attempt to discern natural laws through direct manipulation and observation (Trochim, 2000).

Methodologically, the objectives of the research inquiry consist of measurement and analysis of the causal relationships between various variables across time and context under controlled conditions. The primary data collections techniques include experiments and surveys which are driven by natural laws. The research mode of inquiry is deductive based on testing prior theories. Positivists do not involve or interact with respondents and treat them independently. This notion ignores the importance and significance of respondents to reflect deeply on the problem situation under investigation more freely (Robson, 2002). Positivism is normally associated with quantitative methods (Punch, 1998), involving the collection of factual data by using closed or quantifiable types of questions and by applying mathematical models, graphs and statistical tables to achieve more reliable results.

The quantitative approach with its experimental and survey research tools is rooted in the traditional empirical research paradigm of the natural sciences and as such is labelled as an objective research practice (Burrell and Morgan, 1979). In contrast, the qualitative approach techniques such as case studies, participant observation and interviews has been associated with the phenomenological hermeneutic research paradigm and is labelled as a subjective research practice (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994; Wagner, 1997) (see table 3.2)

**Table 3. 2 Differences between qualitative and quantitative research**

<i>Elements</i>	<i>Differences</i>	
	<b>Qualitative Research</b>	<b>Quantitative Research</b>
Objective	To gain a qualitative understanding of the underlying reasons and motivations	To quantify the data and generalise the results from the sample to the population
Sample	Small number of non-representative cases	Large number of representative cases
Data collection	Unstructured	Structured
Data analysis	Non-statistical	Statistical
Outcome	Develop an initial understanding	Recommend a final course of action

Source: Malhotra, 199x

### 3.5 The interpretative Paradigm

According to Morgan (2007, p. 49) paradigm in social sciences refers to the "Systems of beliefs and practices that influence how researchers select both the questions they study and methods to study them". The interpretative paradigm "assumes a relativist ontology (there are multiple realities), a subjectivist epistemology (knower and subject create understandings), and naturalistic (in the natural world) set of methodological procedures" (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994, in Jennings, 2001, p. 13-14,). In view of that, this research asserts that:

- There are multiple explanations or realities to explain a phenomenon rather than one causal relationship or one theory - ontological basis.
- The research process should be subjective rather than objective - epistemological basis
- Uses qualitative methodology - methodological basis
- Data are collected from an insider's perspective rather than from an outsider's perspective - in-depth interviews
- Data are collected in the real world or natural setting

The interpretative approach includes a number of strands known as phenomenology, ethnography, symbolic interactionism and hermeneutics. However all the above known as of research methods of qualitative research. There are a range of definitions for qualitative research; Parker (1994) defines it as the interpretive study of a specified issue or a problem in which the researcher is central to the sense that is made". Qualitative methods cover a range of different styles applied to social research that are based on understanding of human behaviours and cultural norms. They concentrate on examining normally occurring situations so that a researcher can understand what 'real life' is like, (Brunt, 1997; Denscombe, 1998; Walle, 1997). Qualitative methods rely more on ideas and words rather than numerical data and statistical figures (Clark et al., 1998; Fitzpatrick et al., 1998). In other words, there is a reliance on the respondents to speak for themselves; rather than standing back and observe the phenomena the researcher involves actively in the entire research process, including the collection and the interpretation of the data. The qualitative research approach is therefore concerned with an examination of a phenomenon seeing through the eyes of those experiencing it. According to Bryman (1988), "there is a strong urge to get close to the subjects being investigated to be insider. For qualitative researchers it is only by getting close to their subject and becoming an insider that they can view the world as a participant in that setting". As Simpson notes, qualitative methods have an ability to access the "fine grain of local experience" and hence access the local voices that are often hardly audible above ... the glamour of methodological and theoretical discussions" of positivistic science (Walle,1997, p. 534).

Denzin and Lincoln 1994 identify a number of inherent strengths in qualitative research, these include the method's flexibility in acknowledgment of the issues raised by postmodernity, the increased ability of the approach to capture the individual human agency rather than merely the structural view, the capacity to identify the constraints within daily life, and its facility to gain Ernie knowledge through inductive techniques yielding rich /thick descriptions of the field context. As Thomson (1983, p. 302) notes, people including researchers are usually attached "very strongly to their view on how the world is and this commitment is partly maintained by denying the validity of other ways of seeing the world.... Though the world view which they are committed depends on their social context, they are unaware of this dependence. As far as they are concerned their world view is not some artificial construct, it is an accurate, factual account of how the world is". In this respect the use of qualitative methods ensures that the study is not prone to the weakness of the positivist method.

There are certain issues in utilising both quantitative and qualitative research practices (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994; Wagner, 1997). Firstly, that of external validity which deals with the relevance of the issues within the research setting and its ability to predict and interpret the research questions (Breakwell, 1995; Litwin, 1995). Secondly, that of reliability that deals with issues which are free from errors and are bonded with consistency so that its reputation can underline similar results (Litwin, 1995). Thirdly, that of precision which is associated with the sample accuracy (Shimp, 1994). In an effort to enhance the validity and reliability of these research practices, methodological pluralism has been suggested (Foxall, 1993, p.46). Regardless of such efforts there remains a general tendency for the empirical research to drive conceptual research (Wagner, 1997). Within the qualitative research however, the issue of external validity does not appear as the context and the themes under investigation are not purposefully separated (Wagner, 1997, p. 65). Qualitative research mainly deals with the so-called real life studies, and as such the 'meaningful units' of research measurement are analysed in a more comprehensive manner (Wagner, 1997). In all the cases, the choice between quantitative and qualitative research practices is dependent upon the capacity of either method to solve the chosen research problem (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994; Shimp, 1994; Wagner, 1997). In addition qualitative research have contribute significant in tourism research by providing a deeper understanding of the social, cultural and political connectivity's within and for tourism (Jennings, 2009; Phillimore and Goodson, 2004; Riley and Love, 2000). In the same respect, qualitative research, entrenched in the interpretive paradigm and also referred to as the 'soft sciences' (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005) has exposed the all-knowing and universalizing truths of 'orthodox' tourism research(ers) in the construction of tourism 'knowledge' (Ateljevic, Harris, Wilson, and Collins, 2005; Botterill, 2001; Tribe, 2007). Furthermore, Qualitative research has now become more popular in tourism studies. This is shown, in the rise of collegial networks promoting



qualitative/critical inquiry, for example, the Critical Approaches in Tourism and Hospitality within the Australasian CAUTHE association (Wilson, Harris, and Small, 2008) and the biennial, international Critical Tourism Studies conferences (Ateljevic, Pritchard, and Morgan, 2007). This encouragement of qualitative approaches is also evident in the greater number of tourism studies journals publishing papers utilizing these methodologies. For example, the *Hospitality and Society* journal highlights hospitality as mainly social phenomenon. In addition, the *Annals of Tourism Research* states that 60% of its papers entails a qualitative or interpretive design (Tribe and Xiao, 2011).

### **3.6 Methodological Justification**

The paradigm adopted for this research was mainly an interpretive one, which entails the "knowledge as created and negotiated between human beings" (Oliver, 2003, p. 122). A central premise of this research is exploring the concept of ecotourism and its development as perceived by enterprising hoteliers, managers, tour operators and tourism authorities in Crete, with their basis in positivist research "bear little relationship to the meanings, interpretations, and experiences of the communities and environments in destinations they are intended to serve" (Denzin, 2001). Such understanding suggests that these types of developments often fail to take into account the perspectives and attitudes of the communities and the realities of their environments. As such there is a need for research which understands and interprets the perspectives and experiences of the people who are subject to these policies and practices if the creation of solid and effective programs, policies, and practices is to occur (Denzin, 2001). The goal of the interpretive approach is understanding, rather than a limited concentration on method and simplistic explanation provided by "Brute" data. This research is concerned with exploring the concept of ecotourism and its development as perceived by enterprising hoteliers, managers, tour operators and tourism authorities in Crete. By interviewing a sample of the three main bodies involved in the development and marketing of ecotourism for the island of Crete, namely foreign tour operators; local and regional authorities, hoteliers. Managers of small and medium tourism related enterprises thus this research intends to identify differences between the needs, desires, and perceptions of each these bodies. These differences may be fundamental to identifying community action and reaction to ecotourism development in Crete.

The research methods must be designed to provide to the research goal (Hay, 2005). An interpretive paradigm was designated because it will allow the researcher to explore unknown dimensions of ecotourism particularly as it relates to Crete it will allow to comprehend peoples thoughts towards their surrounding in order to give them a better understanding of their behaviour (Weinstein and Foard, 2006). This research is not concerned with large scale macro processes. Rather

it seeks to discover the ecotourism concept and its possibilities of development in Crete. According to Pizam (1994) qualitative research is preferred for the researcher acquainting himself or herself with a problem where it is important to focus on the needs, desires, ideas, concepts and perceptions of the people involved in the tourism development, to uncover reasons, motives and impressions of tourist related issues. This study is not concerned with providing or verifying a hypothesis or measuring variables. Rather it is more concerned by exploring the concept of ecotourism and its development as perceived by enterprising hoteliers, managers, tour operators and tourism authorities in Crete and the study's objectives are 1. Undertaking a critical review of the ecotourism literature, 2. Exploring the concept of ecotourism and its development 3. Determine ecotourism perceived impacts.

Jennings (year) argues that qualitative approach is associated with the holistic-inductive paradigm, and emphasizes that research used qualitative methodology has the following attributes (p. 129):

- Inductive approach- establishes the nature of truth by being grounded in the real world- primary research
- Ontological view - the world is seen as consisting of multiple realities - multiple stakeholders
- Subjective epistemology - subjective relationship between the researcher and the participants.
- The researcher is viewed as an insider by the study participants - expert in the area
- Unstructured research design that responds to the field setting; hence, the research design emerges in the course of field work; study-specific design, grounded in the setting studied- case study I semi-structured interviews
- Emblematic themes arising during the course of study have interest for the researcher
- Non-random sampling method - carefully chosen case study: Scoring Tables
- Data are represented as textual units rather than numeric representations
- 'Narrative' representation of findings
- The research report reflects a 'slice of life' from the study setting and is specific to that study setting only - case study approach

### **3.7 Research design**

Pizam (1994) suggests that research design is nothing more than carefully developed and controlled plan which ensures the successful and smooth formation and implementation of a research investigation. It includes both secondary and primary research and this is discussed in the next section. The previous part of this chapter explored the theoretical background to the methodology of this

study. This part examines and justifies the specific research techniques and understandings of the research.

### **3.8 Secondary data in this study**

Secondary data research in the form of the literature has a unique but varied role and function in qualitative research (Jones et al., 2013). Literature is reviewed to set the background of the study, to assist in identifying the research problem, to produce the research aim as well as the formulation of the research method and design in this study. In addition the critical review of literature of the concept of ecotourism and its impacts and implications led to a number of research questions and theoretical schemes that provide the basis for initial questions of the semi structure interviews. Through the discussion chapters literature is also used to provide a discourse with the primary data, by comparing findings with those of others, to examine whether the research literature confirms or challenging's findings and to identify an original contribution (Jones et al., 2013). In addition the interpretative paradigm approach that used in this study suggest that is not possible to know from before what related concepts will arise from the primary data (Cobin and Straus, 2008).

### **3.9 Interviews**

Interview is a way of conversation between two or more people with the aim of obtaining information relevant to the research therefore it has a precise content and particular objectives (Paton, 2002; Veal, 2011). Interviewing reflects the theme of sociological sociability, as it is a tool commonly used to investigate certain interactions (Fontana and Frey, 1994; McCracken, 1988). Interviews can be conducted using different techniques in a structured or semi-structured approach (Easterby-Smith et al., 2002; Miles and Huberman, 1994; Patton, 1990; Rubin and Rubin, 1995). There are three types of qualitative interviews as discussed by Patton (1990): the informal conversational interview, the standardised open-ended interview, and the interview guide approach (see also Johnson and Christensen, 2004). The informal conversational interview type is the most spontaneous and loosely structured interview approach. In this method the interviewer discusses the area of interest in general terms, then builds on the topics that emerge during the discussion; there is no interview protocol prepared for the interview. The standardised open-ended interview (highly structured) type, whereby the interviewer enters the interview with a standardised interview guide similar to an interview guide used in the quantitative interviewing, except that open-ended items are common. This type of interviewing method is more highly structured than the interview guide approach, because the interviewer can vary slightly from the interview guide. A

disadvantage of this method is that it provides less flexibility in tailoring the interview to particular individuals and circumstances, and standardised wording of questions may constrain and limit the relevance of questions and answers. The interview guide approach (semi-structured) is less structured than the previous type because the interviewer enters into the session with a plan to explore a specific topic and to ask specific open-ended questions. The topics and questions are structured in an interview guide. However, the interviewer does not have to follow the themes or questions in the set order, and can change the wording and sequence of any question listed in the interview guide. Additionally the interviewer must try to keep the interview process on track and not allow the interviewee to go off on a topic that is not relevant to the study. The guide helps in making interviewing different groups systematic and comprehensive by deciding in advance the issues to be explored (Patton, 2002). A guide is essential in conducting interviews because it keeps the interviewer's interactions focused and specific to the topic while allowing individuals' reactions to emerge (Patton, 2002}. The interview guide approach is related to what is called the 'rapid approach' of analysis strategy (Krueger & Casey, 2000).

In this study semi structured interviews were applied with the purpose of obtaining information in order to explore the concept of ecotourism and its development as perceived by enterprising hoteliers, managers, tour operators and tourism authorities in Crete. A semi-structured approach typically encourages interviewees to talk while at the same time allows the researcher to ask supplementary questions and request interviewees to explain their answers (Saunders et al., 2012; Veal, 2011). Semi structured interviews are having a more flexible allocation of time within the interview time frame, and is preferred to gain a depth of understanding into participants' perceptions and thinking (Ansary et al., 2004; Morgan, 2002). This approach also allowed new issues and themes to emerge that I had not originally foreseen (Fife, 2005). Moreover, Easter by-Smith et al. (2002, p. 87) explained that open-ended semi-structured interviews are appropriate when "it is necessary to understand the constructs that the interviewee uses as a basis for her opinions and beliefs about a particular matter or situation", or when "one aim of the interview is to develop an understanding of the respondents 'world' so that the researcher might influence it, either independently, or collectively as in the case with action research". According to Patton (1990, p.196), is to allow the participants to reveal what is in their minds which cannot be observed, such as their "feelings, thoughts, and intentions ... behaviours that took place at some previous point of time ... the meanings they attach to what goes on in the world". Capitalising on the advantages offered by the this approach, the 'semi-structured interview guide', and time availability of participants, what is called the 'funnel' interview method (part of the semi-structured approach) was chosen as the most appropriate method for interviewing (Morgan, 1997). In this method each participant begins with a combination of a less structured approach that concentrates on a free discussion and then moves

to a more structured discussion of specific research issues or questions (Morgan, 1997; Patton, 2002). For this research, the interviews focused on a particular set of questions drawn from the interview guide based on various tourism literature, but were still open-ended to allow probing and not to predetermine the answers (Morgan, 1997; Patton, 2002; Robson, 2002). According to Bryman (2012) semi structured interviews are more flexible however this flexibility needs that the interviewee understands issues and events and identifies what is significant in explaining concepts, events and attitudes.

### **3.10 Interview guide**

The interview guide or instrument is a major device for increasing the reliability of qualitative research in general (Patton, 1990; Yin, 2003) and is one of the most important parts of the interview process (Greenbaum, 1998), because it provides an outline of the discussions to be held during the interviews. There are two types of format to be considered when developing the interview guide: topic guide versus questioning route (Krueger, 1994). The topic guide is a list of topics or issues that are to be addressed in the interview discussion. The list consists of words or phrases to remind the interviewer of the topics to be discussed (Krueger, 1994). The questioning route, however, is a sequence of questions in complete sentences (Krueger, 1994). I will adopt the topic guide approach for the development of the interview process. Topics and questions were developed according to the research problem and themes abstracted from the literature review. The topics reflected the factors representing the major constructs related to tourism development impacts, tourism resources and attractions development, destination competitive strategies and community participations, and the development of ecotourism.

#### **Interview Guide**

- What do you understand by the term eco-tourism?
- In your view, does ecotourism encourage sustainable development; could you please explain?
- To what extent does ecotourism appear in your promotional material? Please tell me where does it appear?
- What ecotourism services or activities do you provide; could you please explain? Do you have any ecotourism objectives?
- Why do you offer tourism services that are friendly to the environment; what are your reasons?
- Compared to other types of tourism, what do you think are the merits of ecotourism?
- To what extent is ecotourism a genuine tourism activity to preserve the environment?
- Is ecotourism an alternative form of tourism, could you please explain?

- Is ecotourism important for Crete? Why do you think it is?
- How do you describe the Cretan tourism market? To what extent is Crete suitable for ecotourism?
- What motivates you to operate in the tourism industry?
- Are you aware of any Government policies that encourage ecotourism in Crete? What more can be done?
- What is required to make tourism ecofriendly? To what extent do you think is ecotourism a responsible form of tourism?
- Do you think that ecotourism can help improve the social, cultural and physical environment; how does it do that?
- Do you think Crete is or can be an ecotourist destination? What do you think that ecotourists expect from visiting Crete?
- Is the involvement of the local community important in ecotourism? Do you involve the local community in your ecotourism decisions?
- Do you think ecotourism harms the environment? If you do, in what way?
- Do you offer ecotourism instead of, or in addition to, other types of tourism?
- Does ecotourism increase tourism demands (e.g., by offering ecotourism products); if so, would that protect the environment? Please explain.
- Have you seen official government documents or directions encouraging or requiring tourism businesses to follow an environmental way?
- What tourism services does your business offer?
- Background regarding: the nature of your tourism operations, how many years have you been in operations, how many employees do you have, and how many tourists you have per year.
- Would you consider your business an ecotourism business? Please explain?
- What are the environmental and social impacts of ecotourism in Crete?

### **3.11 Sampling**

In analysing data, Miles and Huberman (1994) identified at least three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. These stages would include certain analysis techniques (e.g. contact summary sheet, codes and coding, pattern coding). In this research, the data was coded according to the predetermined themes from the literature. New themes that emerged from the interviews were coded separately and then merged into a bigger theme (Easter by Smith et al., 2002). According to Bryman (2012) sampling involves the careful choice of units (e.g. people, organisations) with direct questions to reference being asked. The semi structured interviews used in this study was intended to capture the views of different tourism industry organisations and planners

(e.g., foreign tour operators, hoteliers, local and regional authorities, managers of small and medium tourism enterprises) on ecotourism concept and have an insight into their understanding of ecotourism development. The various techniques used in displaying data as postulated by various authors include the creation of tables and matrices of categories, cross-case synthesis, narrative text, quotation, and tabulating the frequency of different issues (Griggs, 1987; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Neuman, 2003; Patton, 2002; Yin, 2003).

It is not necessary to study a large number of respondents to gain an in-depth understanding of the topic under study (Gummesson, 1991). Furthermore, Patton (1990, p. 184) asserted that there are no specific rules for deciding the sample size in qualitative research, but the sample size depends on "what you want to find out, why you want to find it out, how the findings will be used, and what resources (including time) you have for the study". Similarly, Yin (2003) emphasised that there is no limited number of respondents but an adequate number to achieve literal and theoretical replication. Whilst literal replication means that each case study must predict similar results to previous or future investigated cases, theoretical replication predicts contrasting results but for anticipated reasons. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), information consideration and redundancy are the major criteria in determining the size of sample in purposeful sampling. Since the objective of conducting qualitative research for this study was to solicit elucidation and confirmation of the empirical quantitative results as mentioned earlier, I selected five different groups, foreign tour operators, hoteliers, local and regional authorities, managers of small and medium tourism enterprises, Groups' participants were selected on the merits of their position, influence over decision-making processes, experience, and involvement in the goal setting and strategy making of tourism planning and development in Crete. The data for this study, as mentioned above, were collected from different informants from foreign tour operators, hoteliers, local and regional authorities, managers of small and medium tourism enterprises. I considered participants' perceptions and opinions and decision-making power about tourism planning and development and competitiveness strategies as a selection tool. The interviews were concentrated in exploring the concept of ecotourism and its developments as perceived by the above groups in order to understand their perception of the concept of ecotourism and its development.

### **3.12 Interview data collection**

The literature research led to a number of research questions, which provided the guidance of the initial interview guide and questions. Semi-structured interviews were applied in the conversation with the participants and gave the researcher the freedom to elaborate questions and explore the topic

in depth further than the structured ones and achieve rich data, thus allow respondents to express their thoughts, awareness, and opinions regarding ecotourism concept.

The guide and preliminary questions were tested with a pilot interview in order to gain valuable feedback in terms of clarity and focus of the interview questions. In addition to checking the average length of the interview would take to complete and the ability to collect relevant and rich data. Thus to make sure that the questions were addressing the issues that needed to be explored. However it was not deemed necessary to make any changes in the interview guide (see Interview guide below). Therefore the data collected from the first interview was used in all the following interviews. A semi structured interview was the main means for gathering information. Twenty one interviews were conducted with foreign tour operators, hoteliers, local and regional authorities, managers of small and medium tourism enterprises. The interviews took place at the different places of the respondents. The interview objectives were clearly explained to each interviewee at the beginning of every interview. All interviews were digitally recorded and their length ranged from 40 minutes to approximately two hours as some interviewees were more responsive than others. Notes taken after each interview were read, checking for missing data and adding missing data. Interviews were then transcribed, reading carefully and checking the quality of the responses. Slightly differently worded tourism related questions were designed for different types of target groups, but they generally were about exploring the concept of ecotourism and its development.

**Table 3. 3 Participants' profile**

<b>Respondent</b>	<b>Business and position</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Date &amp; place of interview</b>	<b>Length of interview</b>	<b>Other observations</b>
R1	Product Manager of a tour operator	Male	Jan 2016	Around one hour	Informal semi structured interview
R2	Senior Sales Manager of a hotel	Male	Nov 2016	Around two hours	Informal semi structured interview
R3	Expert in tourism and a tour guide in Crete	Male	Oct 2015	Around two hours	Informal semi structured interview
R4	Commercial Director of a hotel chain, Greece	Male	Nov 2016	Around two hours	Informal semi structured interview
R5	Senior Manager Chamber of Commerce, Heraklion	Male	Nov 2016	Around two hours	Formal Semi structured interview in Heraklion Chamber of commerce



R6	Former official of a Cretan prefecture	Female	Nov 2016	Around one hour	Informal semi structured interview in her office.
R7	Managing Director of hotel chain	Male	Nov 2016	Around one hour	Informal semi structured interview
R8	Hotel Managing Director & Director of the regional hotel managers association	Male	Nov 2016	Around two hours	Informal semi structured interview
R9	Regional authority policy maker, Crete	Male	Nov 2016	Around one hour	Informal semi structured interview
R10	Local authority senior planner	Male	Nov 2016	Around one hour	Informal semi structured interview
R11	CEO, Destination Management Company	Male	June 2017	Around two hours	Informal semi structured
R12	Appraiser of tourism development product, Crete	Male	November 2016	Around two hours	Informal semi structured interview
R13	Product Manager of a European tour operator	Female	November 2015	Around one hour	Informal semi structured interview in World travel market in London
R14	Managing Director of tour operator	Male	November 2015	Around one hour	Informal semi structured interview in World travel market in London
R15	Product Manager of a European tour operator	Male	November 2015	Around one hour	Informal semi structured interview
R16	Consultant	Female	May 2017	Around two hours	Informal semi structured interview in Crete
R17	Professor of tourism and Industry consultant	Male	August 2017	Around two hours	Interview through skype
R18	Tourism Consultant for a European chain	Female	May 2017	Around two hours	Informal semi structured interview

R19	Commercial Director of a tour operator	Male	November 2015	Around one hour	Informal semi structured interview in World travel market in London
R20	Hotel Manager of sustainability	Male	November 2016	Around one hour	Informal semi structured in interview in Crete

### 3.13 Interview data Analysis

Data was analyzed by using thematic analysis. This involved reducing the data to produce initial themes which were then abstracted further to higher overarching themes; the latter were then linked to theoretical concepts and constructs. The process was guided by Ryan and Bernard's (2003) work on coding, and was similar to Alshaibani's (2015) and Bakir and Bakir's (2006a, 2006b) methods of how to analyze qualitative data. The ecological validity of the collected data and derived themes were checked by the first supervisor who was also present in some of these interviews. In developing themes from the data the 'comparative analysis' technique was used, where similarities and differences were searched for by comparing blocks of data. Reading line-by-line, the researcher understood what the statement in a block of data was about and how similar or different it was from other statements. It is acknowledged that the themes that were identified by the researcher are his subjective interpretation of the data, and that other researchers might produce different interpretations and themes, as there are many ways of producing themes (Dey, 1993; Elo et al., 2014). He described the techniques used, making theme development clear to the reader (Denzin, 1997; Hammersley, 1992; Jones et al. 2013; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Ryan & Bernard, 2003) and increasing the validity of the identified themes. The reliability and validity of the themes were further enhanced by showing the data and derived themes to, and obtaining agreement from, the researcher's colleagues (Bernard, 1994; Patton, 1990). Furthermore, the researcher feels that he identified appropriate themes as he had used a coding technique commonly adopted in the research community (Padgett, 2016; Ryan & Bernard, 2003). Following Alshaibani's (2015) procedure of identifying themes, the researcher formed an analytical table (Figure xx), where data from the interviews was placed in the first column. The data was then reduced, focusing on emerging complete ideas/initial themes (column 2). Using the constant comparison method (Glaser, 1978), these initial themes were compared looking for similarities and differences, and similar themes were put together (column 3), creating fewer and more overarching main themes. The main themes were then related to theoretical concepts and constructs; the discussion of these themes in relation to the literature, is shown in chapters 6 and 7.

The process of how data was coded into themes is illustrated the following examples; more themes and how they were developed from the interview data are shown in Figure xx.

The CEO of a destination management company (R11) stated: *“In my view, ecotourism is responsible traveling to natural areas in order to experience the nature and culture without causing negative impacts to the destination or to the inhabitants”*. This data was reduced to *“Ecotourism is responsible traveling to experience nature and culture”*. The main themes that were extracted from this reduced data is that ‘ecotourism is a natural product’ and ‘ecotourism is a cultural product’.

A hotel chain commercial director (R4) noted that ecotourism in Crete is promoted as an additional form of tourism: *“I would call it [ecotourism] an additional form of tourism. Alternative... it is difficult to say.... I think it is better to say that it is an additional form of tourism. I wouldn't call it alternative, because it would mean that it replaces something. But we don't want to replace anything. We want to add something. .... We offer ecotourism and other additional forms of tourism, for those who want to experience the real Greece”*. This data is reduced to: *“Ecotourism is offered as an additional form of tourism rather than an alternative to mass tourism”*. The themes extracted from this data are *“ecotourism is “a tourism promotional tool” and “market expanding tool”*; not an alternative to mass tourism.

This understanding of ecotourism is supported by the literature, as there is a widespread agreement among academics in the field that ecotourism is a type of tourism which aims at conserving the natural environment of the visited destination and the culture of the indigenous host community (e.g., Buckley, 1994, 2002, 2012; Tisdell & Wilson, 2002; Troëng & Drews, 2004).

There is acknowledgement on the part of tourism academic that ecotourism has certainly expanded the tourism market rather than acted as a more responsible alternative to the mass tourism market, and that in many cases it has been used as a market promotion tool to increase the tourism activities, particularly out season (e.g., Honey, 1999; Weaver, 2004, 2001).

**Table 3.4 Coding data for themes (Extract)**

<b>Respondent</b>	<b>Data</b>	<b>Reduced data</b>	<b>Main theme</b>
R11 (CEO of destination management company)	<i>In my view, ecotourism is responsible traveling to natural areas in order to experience the nature and culture without causing negative impacts to the destination or to the inhabitants</i>	Ecotourism is responsible traveling to, and experiencing nature and culture.	Ecotourism is a natural product Ecotourism is a cultural product
R7 (Managing director of a chain of hotels)	<i>Yes, of course. It is something different. Regular tourism is based on entertainment. Ecotourism is based on nature. As I see it, the main philosophy of ecotourism is the protection of the environment. So it is something extremely different. Ecotourism is</i>	Ecotourism is based on nature It is protecting environment	Ecotourism is a natural product Protecting and enjoying nature

	<i>based on different things than regular types of tourism. Of course there is entertainment but focusing on ecology.</i>	Enjoying place's ecology	
R4 (Commercial Director of a hotel chain)	<i>It's a Greek word, as you know..... It comes from ecology, so I understand it well..... it concerns the sustainability of tourism in this destination. What automatically comes to my mind is energy saving, respect of the environment and respect of people also, low energy consumption, waste separation and disposal. Mainly energy, electricity and water are the most important aspects of this type of tourism. ....Ecotourism is a type of tourism that respects the environment....by using responsibly the available natural resources, optimizing recycling methods and alternative forms of power, and ensures a perfect fit with the natural environment. .... I would call it an additional form of tourism. Alternative... it is difficult to say.... I think it is better to say that it is an additional form of tourism. I wouldn't call it alternative, because it would mean that it replaces something. But we don't want to replace anything. We want to add something. .... We offer ecotourism and other additional forms of tourism, for those who want to experience the real Greece. .... But I am impressed because in the past we used to promote this guesthouse only to Greeks, but now because of the internet we got reservations from all nationalities. Although they only stay 1 or 2 nights, there are a lot of people who go to this destination.</i>	It is sustainable tourism  Low energy and water consumption, waste recycling  Respecting environment Responsible use of available natural resources  Additional tourism type, not alternative type  Ecotourism is offered as an additional form of tourism	Ecotourism is a sustainable and natural product  It is a natural product  Ecotourism as a promotion tool to expand the market  Ecotourism is not an alternative form; it is an additional form
R3 (Expert in tourism, a tour guide in Crete)	<i>Ecotourism has to do with nature.....Being with animals, cultivating vegetables, helping to produce their dinner and so on.... When I hear ecotourism, I imagine mountains, gardens, trees, chickens, sheep..., everything that has to do with nature</i>	<i>Ecotourism is about visiting and being close to nature</i>	Natural product
R8 (Hotel Managing Director)	<i>(Ecotourism) is visit of guests to a location who are interested in seeing the natural beauty of the place.... Eco means natural. The beauty of the surroundings, the beauty of the environment. ... For me ecotourism is tourism in the original pure nature. .... because the natural beauty of the island covers all the expectations of everyone. You can see in a distance of 1 or 2 km snow and beach, trees and wilderness, cities and fields or canyons. In Crete you have everything.</i>	Visiting natural beauty of place Eco means natural  Expect seeing natural beauty	Natural product

	<p>..... Saving energy, prevention of pollution, natural (biological) production. The closer to nature, the closer to ecotourism. .... the foundation (of ecotourism) already exists and that is the natural beauty, the different images the island has to offer to the visitor, like sea, rivers snow, mountains, forests, ... On this island there is everything. .... for me the ideal would be to try to extend the season as much as we can, and try to develop and improve the level of ecotourists, the level of cruisers, the level of athletic, medical, religious tourism in order to combine the dead winter months.... the main reason behind this is to bring more customers in fewer months. This is why we work, profit. If you do business with no profit, then what are we doing?</p>	<p>Saving energy, prevention of pollution, natural production.</p> <p>Island offers visitors: sea, rivers snow, mountains, forests</p> <p>Expanding the season into winter</p> <p>Develop ecotourism and other type of tourism</p> <p>Expanding tourism</p>	<p>Conserving resources &amp; decreasing pollution Natural product</p> <p>Expanding seasonality</p> <p>Ecotourism is not an alternative to mass tourism</p> <p>Ecotourism as a promotional tool to expand market</p>
R9 (Regional authority policy maker)	<p>Ecotourism may have negative impacts... because it has to do with the intermediary. It has to do with who is going to help (the tourist) visit this place, the tour operator. The problem lies in organization. ... Ecotourism can have a negative impact if it's not operated properly. ... It could have even a worse impact than mass tourism. And there is also the flight, the cost of the flight, etc. ... Ecotourism is very important because as it does not deal with large accommodations. It is a specialized type of tourist product that helps promote the product of Crete. And I think that this helps and serves the sustainable development of an economy, of an area. .... It is a small scale development, specialized type of development, for which one uses milder and more modern means friendly to the environment, because this is extremely important nowadays, so that we do not alter the character, the wealth of an area. It's what we say that culture, environment and development should coexist without one replacing or changing the other ... .... No planning. In Greece we have developed mass tourism, which basically is a model different from what we would like. The citizen of the world who visits Greece, who often does not get to know that culture of the country, because all he is sold is recreation. We should change this, and the local</p>	<p>Ecotourism may have negative impacts for the natural environment</p> <p>Ecotourism is small scale sustainable development</p> <p>Environmentally friendly development Preserves the place's culture No planning in ecotourism Crete is a mass tourism destination</p> <p>Local authorities should play greater role</p>	<p>Natural product with negative impacts</p> <p>Small scale development</p> <p>Sustainable development Natural product &amp; cultural product</p> <p>Spontaneous development Need local authorities involvement</p>

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*authorities should play a great role in this.  
 ....So how can you invest in something  
 without planning?*

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R2 (Senior Sales Manager of a hotel)	<i>I have my doubts...because it still is a very small market. I think sustainable development in the tourism branch has to do with extent. Anything small... Sustainable development is a type of development done slowly but surely. Ecotourism still is very small-scale</i>	Ecotourism is a small scale development  Sustainable development	Small scale development  Sustainable development
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### 3.14 Credibility, dependability and transferability

The trustworthiness of a research inquiry is said to be established if its truth value, consistency and applicability are demonstrated (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). In quantitative research, these criteria are referred to as: validity, reliability and generalisability respectively. The corresponding criteria in qualitative research are: credibility, dependability and transferability (Guba and Lincoln, 1994).

#### 3.14.1 Credibility

In a qualitative research sample richness must be reached if the study is to be of value (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Sample richness helps to develop saturated themes and new theoretical explanation. Theoretical sampling was employed in this research, where data was collected from one respondent and then analyzed before interviewing the next respondent to collect more data. The researcher's sensitivity and immersion in the context of the study area, being an operator in the tourism industry for over 17 years, allowed him to obtain rich data. Through analyzing the data using the constant comparison procedure, he was also able to identify similarities and differences and categorize them into rich themes that linked to theory (Strauss, 1987).

The terms 'credibility' is normally used to evaluate the truth value of qualitative research (Guba and Lincoln, 2005). The credibility of qualitative research is about the understanding of the emerging interpretation, whose aspects are important in assessing the credibility of themes emerging from interpretive studies (Connelly and Clandinin, 1990; Maxwell, 1992). These authors noted that these aspects include: 'apparancy', 'verisimilitude', 'authenticity', 'plausibility' and 'adequacy'. The researcher consulted with his supervisors and obtained their agreement over the emerging research themes and whether these themes were plausible and made sense. Furthermore, he showed the emerged themes from the interviews to the planners and industry managers he interviewed, and they found them adequate and authentic. He was further assured that the research findings were credible by consulting widely with industry peers and presenting at international conferences. Importantly, the setting of the interviews were not contrived by the researcher's presence or actions as the interviewees

were industry peers and together with the researcher had good understanding of the culture of the place which dictated the researcher's actions and behavior through the interview process. As a result, the researcher feels that he had been transparent and produced an authentic account of what he was studying (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

In qualitative research, the limits on credibility depend on the type of data collection approach. In interviewing, for example, credibility is increased if the researcher remains alert to: reactive effects when present in the natural setting; biases and distortions from selective perceptions and interpretations; limitations on access; the dangers of going native; knowledge of the subjects and rapport; and idiosyncrasies (Miles and Hubberman, 1994). Being part of the culture of the place has advantages and disadvantages. On the one hand, the researcher was alert to reactive effects in the interview setting. Furthermore, collection of data from more than one source – i.e. managers, planners, tour operators, and others further increased the credibility of the research (Miles and Hubberman, 1994).

### **3.14.2 Dependability**

The reliability of the research is underlied by whether the process of the study is consistent, reasonably stable over time and across researchers and methods (Miles and Huberman, 1994). As the field setting of qualitative research is influenced by extraneous variables, these need to be recognized if the research is to be repeatable. However, this is problematic because systematic and standardized research techniques are not obtainable in the unstructured process of qualitative research. Thus reliability is not so easily assessed, because of the subjective nature of the research, requiring the researcher in each setting to adapt to the participants. As observations and measurements are usually made by the researcher alone, the methodology is context driven; structured measurement instruments such as interview schedules do not exist.

The issue of reliability extends beyond data collection and its instrument to the analytical procedures. Qualitative data is generally analyzed by 'constant comparison', a non-standardized process which relies on the ability and theoretical sensitivity of the researcher. This prompted Guba and Lincoln (2005) to use the term 'dependability' instead of 'reliability' in evaluating qualitative research. They posited that a research study may be considered as dependable if its process is auditable; they thus advised researchers to use 'auditability' as the criterion for rigor in judging the consistency of data and findings. A research study, according to these authors, is auditable if one can follow the decision trail used by the researcher in relation to the theoretical, methodological and analytical choices made in the study, and reach comparable conclusions using the researcher's data and context. The systematic and rigorous procedures which were adopted in the thematic analysis of

this study, as shown above and in the Methodology chapter, allow the research process to be audited, thus increasing the dependability of the research.

Specifying criteria for good qualitative research, according to Schwandt (1994), is not possible. Nevertheless, Miles and Huberman (1994) emphasised that qualitative researchers should provide good accounts of what happens in a specific situation, and should not consider their work unjudgeable. Furthermore, Howe & Eisenhart (1990) asserted that researchers should seek shared standards.

### **3.14.3 Transferability**

Transferability criterion is concerned with the desire of applying the findings to a larger population than the study sample. Guba and Lincoln (1994) stated that in qualitative research, transferability is a factor of similarity between the different contexts. They argued that the original context must be described adequately so that a judgement of transferability can be made. The aim is to ascertain whether the conclusions of a study have any larger significance, i.e., whether they are transferable to other contexts (Miles and Huberman, 1994). A qualitative study may thus be considered as transferrable if its findings fit into contexts outside the study situation and are seen as meaningful and applicable by these contexts' audiences in terms of their own experience.

In this study, the researcher did not intend to transfer the findings to other contexts; rather his primary intention was to gain an insight into the concept of ecotourism as perceived by the tourism industry and planners and the importance of its development in the island of Crete.

### **3.15 Limitations**

The representativeness of the research sample is one issue involved with research limitations. Despite all efforts taken none can guarantee that the findings from the sample are valid from the whole population from which it has been drawn this is related to subjective nature of interpretive paradigm, which follows to relativist ontology, subjective epistemology, and realistic set of methodological techniques that include qualitative methods (Jennings, 2001; Patton, 2002).

Low response rate is another limitation, which can occur; people very often find the interview not interesting and they do not respond to the questions with the importance needed. According to Ryan (1995), the length of the interview and the time taken to complete it might also cause decrement in coherence of response. In addition time pressures for the duration of the interview can occur when interviewing people during their peak summer season. Awareness of the subjectivity of the researcher is essential in the research process. It is very important that the findings of a research



are not the outcomes of the researchers beliefs and expectations (Cassel, 1994); researchers must be aware of prejudices and attempt to overcome them.

### **3.16 Reflexivity and the role of Researcher**

In qualitative research the researcher has to make conscious efforts to comprehend and reflect upon his or her active role in developing a study (Guba and Lincoln, 2008).

I have grown up in Crete, in Heraklion City, which is one of the major tourism destinations in Europe. From a young age, alongside being at school, I worked in my parents' tourism business, a small complex of apartments in Heraklion, and I had the opportunity to work in the tourism industry which helped me to develop my thinking and understanding of the tourism industry. In 1997, I left Greece and I went to Holland where I did my first study in international tourism management and consultancy and gained a theoretical background of tourism management. Afterwards, I studied for my Masters at Bournemouth University in Tourism Planning and Management; at the same time I worked for Chase Manhattan Bank, one of the leading investments Banks in the world. Upon the completion of my study, I returned to Crete and started to work as a part-time tourism consultant in the Ministry of Tourism Development in Crete. Afterwards, I worked in the local tourism industry in a travel agency, where my carrier started. Since then, I worked as an operation manager and managing director in different tourism companies in Crete and built a successful carrier and strong network in Greek tourism industry. In 2010, I founded my own tourism company, Atlas Travel services, where I represent 15 tour operators from different countries and approximately 70,000 tourists from all over the world each year. In total, I have been involved in the tourism sector more than 17 years in different managerial positions and had the opportunity to develop and manage the programme of a variety of different tour operators in Crete. As part of my job, I travelled to a large number of events, fairs and exhibitions all over the world, experiencing the complexity and diversity of tourism development and management at an international level. In addition, from 2001 to 2010 I worked as lecturer in different establishments (Nottingham Trent University, TEI of Heraklion) teaching a number of tourism and management subjects that gave me the opportunity to expand my knowledge in current and future developments of tourism and its management.

Through my personal and professional life I have always had an investigative attitude and an innate drive to expand my knowledge and experience. This attitude and drive also informs this research and have developed my passion about the Ecotourism Concept and its development in Crete. Based on the above experience and involvement at the managerial level of the tourism industry of Crete I have made several observations about the tourism industry in Crete, which have also influenced the direction of my research. Tourism has become one of the biggest industries in Greece

and Crete, but at the same time, one of the most destructive human activities in terms of environmental degradation. However, although tourism is heavily dependent on the unspoiled environment, it nevertheless, impacts negatively the visited destinations. Hence, there is a need to find more sustainable solutions for tourism development in all aspects; environmental, cultural and economic. This is also the case for Crete, where mass tourism has a heavy impact in all the above aspects and hence the current cry for more sustainable forms of alternative forms of tourism development, such as, ecotourism. However, the question arises over whether ecotourism is a genuine activity and a more sustainable form of tourism, or whether it is just a marketing ploy in order to rebrand mass tourism and to increase economic growth. In reality all kinds of tourism, including ecotourism are responsible for a wide range of negative impacts on the natural and cultural environment. In other words, ecotourism is not a panacea for environmental conservation, nor it can create only positive economic benefits. In fact unless ecotourism is carefully planned, developed, managed and constantly monitored it might even produce the opposite results. These are the themes which my research has investigated over a period of several years. These are further discussed throughout this thesis.

### **3.17 Ethical Considerations**

The primary intention of research ethics is to protect individual participants and organizations from harm, danger or any negative consequences from research activities (Emory and Caper, 1991). Ethical considerations in research require appropriate treatment of the respondents, and should address all key ethical issues related to the research process, such as anonymity, privacy, deception, accuracy and confidentiality (Christians, 2000; Emory and Cooper, 1991; Miles and Huberman, 1994; Neuman, 2003; Zikmund, 2003). In addition ethical considerations relay to the level to which research can sustain "integrity and legitimacy in society and protecting practitioners and participants in its practice" (May, 2011, p. 47). Orb et al. (2000, p. 95) argue that "ethical codes and guidelines for research projects do not have all of the ethical issues that may arise during research even though, they suggest, that well recognized ethical principles can ease the inherent difficulties in qualitative research.

### **3.18 Conclusion**

This study is based on extensive review of the literature and on semi structured interviews with foreign tour operators, hoteliers, regional and local authorities and managers of small and medium enterprises. The research methodology adopted of semi structured interviews and the examination of literature about the topic produced a rich and comprehensive data and obtained

insight into the research problem. A qualitative process was developed and issues associated with it were discussed, and the validity and reliability of the data collection instrument were considered and explained. Sample selection, data collection method and data analysis methods were identified and justified. Finally, ethical considerations related to data collection methods were explained. In the following analytical chapters, the collected data were analysed and interpreted in relation to the research problem and the theoretical concepts that underlied the research.

## Chapter 4

### Tourism in Greece

#### 4.1 Introduction

The chapter sets the scene and provides background information on tourism in Greece. The central theme surrounds the growth of the industry and its economic impact in terms of employment opportunities, income generation, and investment in infrastructure, improvement of living standards, local trade and commerce. It goes on to discuss the Government's current policy to diversify the tourism product as a result of the negative impacts on the physical and social environments of tourism development in many coastal destinations including Crete. General concern of tourism development is a huge challenge for the Greek authorities.

#### 4.2 Tourism Development: Challenges

Tourism is arguably responsible for the negative consequences on nature, societies, cultures and economies. Desired for its economic benefits, tourism is anticipated to double during the next twenty years and the multiple consequences of such rapid growth call for a preventative approach at strategic and professional levels in order to minimise negative impacts (Anderson, Bakir and Wickens, 2016, Budeanu, 2005).

The tourism industry does not only provide a means of leisure to the tourist but offers support to the less developed and developing economies. Many destinations, including Greece, depend on tourism for income. "The entrepreneurs, communities and states find immense commercial opportunities in tourism and have made intense efforts to reap the benefits. The net result is the generation of wealth" (Aref and Redzuan, 2009, p.209). Nevertheless, this wealth comes at a price. Many tourism destinations have had to pay a heavy price with regard to their physical and socio-cultural environments as a result of tourism development. Negative impacts arose from uncontrolled and spontaneous development in Greece and in particular in many coastal destinations including Crete. As Chaudhary et al. (2007) point out the concern of destinations such as Greece is how to confront the challenges posed by tourism development.

As tourism is considered a generator of wealth and employment, it has been perceived as a crucial national or regional development tool. The Greek authorities appreciated the economic significance of tourism in the late 1970s and engaged it as a dominant constituent of their economic

strategy. The development of tourism in Greece was regarded as a way of solving foreign exchange problems as well as a means of generating employment. Tourism development was a blessing for the Greek authorities due to its substantial contribution to the economic and social development of the Greek society. A consequence of this development was a significant social change. Many traditional occupations such as agriculture, fishing have been deserted because local people viewed tourism as a more profitable option (Komilis, 1994; Wickens, 1994 and 1999).

Tourism in Greece is a significant economic activity which contributes 43% of the service balance total receipts. Greece received 24, 2 million tourist arrivals in 2014 increased by 21% compared to 2013, with main markets Germany, France and UK. Tourist revenues in 2014 reached to 13.4 million Euros increased 10% compared to 2013. However the average expenditure per capita reduced decreased by 9% compared to 2013 (Bank of Greece, 2014; Kasimati, 2016). Tourism contributes close to 17.3 % of the Greek GDP (Gross Domestic Product) – directly and indirectly – and accounts for about 19.4 of the total employment of the country (Bank of Greece, 2014; Kasimati, 2016).

The problem is that rates of growth have slowed since the decades of the 1970s and 1980s and Greece as a tourism destination has become both mature and saturated. Mature in the sense that prices are rapidly converging with European levels so that the country is losing its competitive advantage as an inexpensive destination. Saturated, as the majority of tourists arrive in a 90-day period between mid-June and mid-September crowding venues and straining infrastructure. Some 70% of all tourists come on pre-packaged tours with charter airline companies. They spend an average of 12 days in the country, often in hotels filled with their own countrymen. Other destinations in the area – Turkey, Egypt, the Dalmatian coast – offer similar products at cheaper prices (Invest in Greece, 2012).

There is a general agreement in Greece, by all parties involved (authorities, entrepreneurs), that there must be diversification of product promoting alternative products such as eco-tourism in order to spread the tourism arrivals throughout the year and to offer a multitude of new venues, products and services such as homestays. All the participants in the sector agree that the development of facilities for conferences, city breaks, golf, yachting, skiing, spa, eco-tourism and generally alternative forms of tourism is needed (Patris Newspaper, 2008a and 2008b; Invest in Greece, 2012).

According to the Institute of Tourism Researches and Predictions, the tourism industry has been affected by the economic crisis as, with the exception of Turkey and Croatia, in all the competitive destinations to Greece the arrivals of foreign tourists decreased during the period of January to October 2008. This decrease is almost the same for Greece and Spain (-1.4 and -1.3 accordingly) whereas the percentages for Italy and Cyprus are slightly lower, -1.0 and -0.6. Furthermore, the Institute of Tourism Researches and Predictions states that the negative performance of the most well – known tourism destinations in Greece (Crete, Dodecanese and Ionian Islands)

presents a particularly worrying phenomenon (See Appendix 17, page 364). The worst performance in these regions was recorded in the Dodecanese (-2%) followed by the Ionian Islands (-1.4%) and Crete (-0.4%). On the other hand, positive results in relation to tourist arrivals were recorded in Kefalonia (+15.1%), Mykonos (+3.8%) and Chios (+22.6%) (Institute of Tourism Researches and Predictions, 2012). Presents the number of international tourist arrivals in Greece and competitive countries for 2011, as well as the percentage change between 2010 and 2011. We can observe that amongst these five well known destinations Greece is ranked in third position (16 million arrivals), with Spain in first position (57 million) and Turkey in second position (29 million arrivals) (Association of Greek Tourism Enterprises, 2012).

Tourism is clearly not only one of the most important industries for Greece's economy but can also bring benefits in terms of environmental protection and socio-cultural conservation. Due to its beneficial aspects tourism has been strongly encouraged in Greece and is expected to continue growing. At the same time, there is an increasing recognition that extensive tourism development has potentially damaging effects on nature, and cultures. Therefore, concerns in relation to responsible tourism practices in Greece should have an equal focus on correcting past mistakes and on preventing future ones from occurring. A clear preventative approach should thus be embedded into current tourism policies and strategies at all levels if tourism is to help Greece make progress towards sustainability (Budeanu, 2005).

#### **4.3 The Greek Government's Role in Promoting Tourism**

Tourism in Greece is promoted by the Greek Ministry of Tourism, which in 2012 was renamed the Greek Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, Culture and Sports. The Greek National Tourism Organization also plays a significant role in the management and promotion of Greek Tourism. In 2006 the Greek Ministry of Tourism invested more than 38 million euro in promoting the tourism industry. In addition, the Greek Governments intend to promote winter tourism, which can potentially further increase international arrivals (Greek Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, Culture and Sports, 2012). It should be noted, however, that no specific actions have been undertaken in order to achieve this specific target.

The new logo of the Greek National Tourism Organization consists of nine circles symbolizing the nine types of tourism which should be promoted in order to combat the tourism sector's seasonality. The logo's slogan is "Greece: the true experience" (Greek National Tourism Organization, 2012), indicating that the promotional campaign is directed towards experience seekers and not towards mass tourism (See Appendices 10, 11, 12 and 13, pages 360 and 361). However, the advertisements displayed in the National Tourism Organization's Website still focus on the triptych

of sea, sun and sand (See Appendix 14, page 362). Nevertheless, the promotional campaign during recent years is undergoing a significant change as city-breaks and conference tourism are promoted, together with rural, village, cultural (See Appendix 15, page 362) and wellness tourism (Greek National Tourism Organization, 2012).

According to the World Tourism Organisation Greece ranked 15<sup>th</sup> in international arrivals and 19<sup>th</sup> in revenues and it captures 3.3 % of the European and 1.4% of the worldwide tourism market (Kasimati, 2016). Greek government recognized the importance of tourism as a major contributor to the Greek economy therefore a variety of legislative initiatives were embraced, during 2010-2013, including the: Acknowledgement of thermal springs and the licensing of thalassotherapy (seawater therapy) and therapeutic centres, the Establishment of the GNTO's Special Service for Promoting and Licensing Tourism Enterprises, a "one stop-shop" for tourism enterprises, the Simplification of the licensing procedure for tourism enterprises. And Introduction of a new form of combined tourism business, which includes four-star or five-star hotel accommodation, special tourism infrastructure (e.g. conference centres, golf courses, spas). In addition they established the Liberalization of the tourist guide profession, they simplify the procedures of tourism business on their operations, and they encouraging the development of Cruise and marine tourism through new legislative actions (OECD, 2014).

Although the legislative actions above which aimed at developing tourism, Perhaps one of the major obstacle in developing and promoting a competitive tourism industry in Greece has been the inconsistent and unreasonable political intervention. Unfortunately, as Buhalis (2001) points out, tourism has extensively been utilised as a political vehicle, where each government uses it to satisfy its political needs and friends. This can be experienced in all levels of recruitment in the public sector institutions, as a change of government or minister results in immense changes in personnel resulting in policy changes throughout the Greek National Tourism Organization. Political allies of each government use political pressure and intensive lobbying in order to achieve amendments to regulations, incentive policies and the business environment. Therefore the short-term profitability and commercial interests of the friends and political allies of each government often overrule the long-term promotional strategy and set an improper example for the entire industry (Buhalis, 2001).

#### **4.4 Conclusion**

Tourism development in Greece has been regarded as an effective and viable regional development strategy, which has the potential to boost economic growth, bring economic benefits to areas with limited options for alternative economic development, as well as create quality job

opportunities, infrastructural development and overall community welfare (Andriotis, 2002, Kousis, 1984).

Tourism development in Greece was not without problems. The local tourism industry faced two major problems; seasonality and dependence on tour operators. Although the importance of seasonality in tourism is widely acknowledged, it has been argued that the phenomenon is, at the same time, one of the least understood (Higham and Hinch, 2002) and the tourism industry in Greece struggles with seasonality issues. Furthermore, the variation of tourist arrivals in Greece limits employment opportunities and return on investment to the summer season, which is less than six months a year, and strictly limits peak turnovers and occupancy rates mainly to July, August and September (Drakatos, 1987; Donatos and Zairis, 1991; Tsitouras, 1998).

Apart from seasonality and dependence on tour operators, the tourism industry faces more problems such as environmental degradation resulting from over development and inadequate tourism planning and coordination of tourism activities. Greece is viewed as a mass tourism destination. Charter flights traditionally start in early April. This means that there is constant shrinkage of the tourism season, a fact that severely impacts the local economy. In the same respect, although that tourism arrivals have increased by 21% from 2013 to 2014 the average expenditure per capita decreased by 9% compared to 2013 (Bank of Greece, 2014; Kasimati, 2016).

Clearly from the above discussion, there is a total lack of strategic vision and tourism enterprises are regularly treated as an addition to proprietors' domestic environment (Buhalis, 2001). Tourism entrepreneurs recruit family members and relatives as personnel and suppliers even though more appropriate alternatives can be found in the marketplace. As a result, the management and promotion of small and medium-size enterprises, which dominate the Greek tourism market, project the proprietor's family life-style and decision-making processes onto an enterprise.

Promotion is considered a weakness for most tourism entrepreneurs in Greece, as they are often completely uninformed of the techniques available and thus follow a product oriented rather than a consumer orientated approach. Therefore, uncoordinated, isolated, trouble-shooting promotional activities are occasionally undertaken, rather than a consistent and well-planned promotional campaign (Buhalis, 2001). Inability to finance and execute advertising campaigns and other promotional techniques reduces their visibility in their markets (Buhalis, 2001). These weaknesses, in combination with the fact that many entrepreneurs are unfamiliar with information technology (IT), add to the problems in promoting themselves effectively. Consequently, both small and medium-sized Greek tourism enterprises suffer from over-dependence on the tourism distribution channels to promote and distribute their product (Buhalis, 2001). In addition several studies prove that small tourism business managed by the owners without having the knowhow of management and marketing skills (Buhalis and Cooper, 1998; Dahles, 1999; Morrison, 1996). According to McKercher



and Robbins (1998:177) “small businesses will not be successful simply because the owner/operator is good at the core activity...small businesses need to be much more sophisticated in the way they are managed” and promoted. In the same respect Dahles (1999) notices that owners of small tourism business lack of vital skills and knowledge in order to run successfully and promote a business.

Evidence from different studies demonstrate that small businessmen do not recognise that promoting a destination is a difficult task since there are several participants, all with different aims, plans and expectations (Buhalis, 2000b; Chacko, 1997; Faulkner, 1997; Fyall et al. 2002; Ritchie and Ritchie, 2002). Okumus et al. (2007) support the view that the only aim of entrepreneurs in promoting their ecotourism products is to increase the number of visitors and not to facilitate sustainable tourism development (Okumus et al., 2007). Providing the necessary training in marketing and management skills and educating businesspersons in relation to service requirements and how the tourism industry operates presents a huge challenge (Briedenhann and Wickens, 2004).

## **Chapter 5**

### **Ecotourism in Crete**

#### **5.1 Introduction to the chapter**

This chapter explores the current situation of tourism in Crete by presenting a brief history of development of tourism in the island, describing the importance of tourism by presenting Arrivals Demand, and its main markets from abroad, while also providing the local authorities role in ecotourism promotion. In conclusion it closes with a discussion over the negative impacts of mass tourism on Crete and suggestion for a more sustainable form of tourism such as ecotourism.

#### **5.2 Brief History**

Crete has a long tradition in tourism and hospitality mainly due to its history and ancient civilization (Briassoulis and Der Straaten, 1993). It is the largest island of Greece located to the southern end of Europe with an area of 8356 square km, and the fifth largest island in the Mediterranean. It is predominantly mountainous, three-fifths of its area lying 200m above sea level. A mountain range extends from east to west with peaks above 2000m. The island has 1,624 native plant species of which around 8.6 percent are endemic and the fauna amount up to 1,000 species (Anagnostopoulou et al., 1996 GNTTO, 2016). The recorded caves on the island number 3,500 and there are 100 gorges (Anagnostopoulou et al., 1997; GNTTO, 2016). Crete has many historical monuments of perfect architecture from all periods, from the Minoan civilization (2600 BC-1150 BC) to the religious Byzantium. The island is divided into four administrative departments (prefectures) Chania, Rethymno, Heraklion and lasithi. It is renowned for its fabulous natural beauty, diversity of landscape, 1040 km-long coastline, mild climate and numerous cultural resources (Minoan palaces and other archaeological and historical monuments and sites) that constitute its principal tourist resources. With these rich cultural and environmental resources, the expansion of the Cretan tourism industry was inevitable.

In the late 1970s 1980s Crete has experienced a dramatic increase in tourism flows, facilitated by the competitive destinations of the island, the availability of natural, cultural and environmental resources, the existing airport infrastructure on the major towns (Heraklion, Channia) and the lower

cost of leaving in comparison with most of Europe. As a result, tourism is now the largest economic activity of the island. (Briassouli, 2003; GNTO, 2016; Hellenic Tourist Business Association, 2013; Greek Tourism 2016, 2014; Maroudas, Silignaki, Stavrinoudis, & Theofanides, 2013).

Crete has expanded its tourism industry to a greater degree than any other region of Greece (Anastasakos and Lykos, 1997; HNTO, 2004; Region of Crete, 2014; Region of Crete, 1995). Tourism is a vital contributor to Crete's regional economy producing 30 % of Gross Regional Product and it is estimated that approximately 40% of the local population is directly or indirectly involved in tourism activities (Greek National Tourism Organization 2016). In 2016 more than 3,6 million tourists visited Crete and approximately more than 13,4 million overnights stays were recorded and the island has more than 250,500 thousand beds (Greek National Tourism Organization, 2016). As a consequence, tourism can be considered as the island's largest industry and its largest employer (Andriotis, 2002a; 2003a; Andriotis and Vaughan, 2004; Saatsakis and Papas 2006; Saatsakis, I & Bakir, A., & Wickens, E. 2012).

With its strong marketing focus on mass tourism, Crete has attracted more tourists than it has inhabitants in recent years. Tourism product is an amalgam of natural, cultural and heritage attractions as well as a wide variety of services offered by its tourism enterprises (Greek National Tourism Organization 2016). Some 53 registered and protected monuments and archaeological sites, many museums and about 100 characteristics traditional settlements offer a unique blend of attractions. Cretan tourism has not been dominated by one particular nationality (Buhalis, 2000a; Leontidou, 1998). In 2016, the majority of tourists travelling to Crete were from northern European countries, especially Germany and Great Britain, followed by Russia, Denmark, Sweden, and French (Hellenic Tourist Business Association, 2016).

A plethora of SMTEs (Small Medium Tourism Enterprises) provide the entire variety of tourism amenities as a total of 3000 official accommodation establishments from all the categories with a total capacity of 300.547 thousand beds in 2016 which host 3.600.00 tourists. In addition Crete offers an oversupply of accommodation establishments of all types. The majority of tourist accommodation establishments offered in Crete are of the highest standards. A Class hotel represent (27%), followed by middle-class hotels C Class (22%) and B Class (20%) accommodation units which account for almost equal shares. Self-catering accommodation or furnished apartments of all categories represent a significant share of 21% of total tourist accommodation supply in Crete, Crete's share in deluxe hotels is still low (10%). Greek and foreign entrepreneurs erected luxurious tourist complexes and now control significant proportions of the tourist accommodation and services. The behaviour of local tourism-related capital has become more variegated. In terms of number of firms, family-based businesses dominate but some of them have been transformed into corporate-based

businesses that have extended their operations beyond the island. Several others have succumbed to globalization and competition and have transferred their management to foreign multinationals. It is unofficially estimated that foreign tour operators control 70% of the available tourist beds through various arrangements. Unregistered tourist accommodation has increased considerably. Diverse recreation facilities, such as golf courses, marinas, ports, water parks and miscellaneous tourist services are now available.

### **5.3 International Markets**

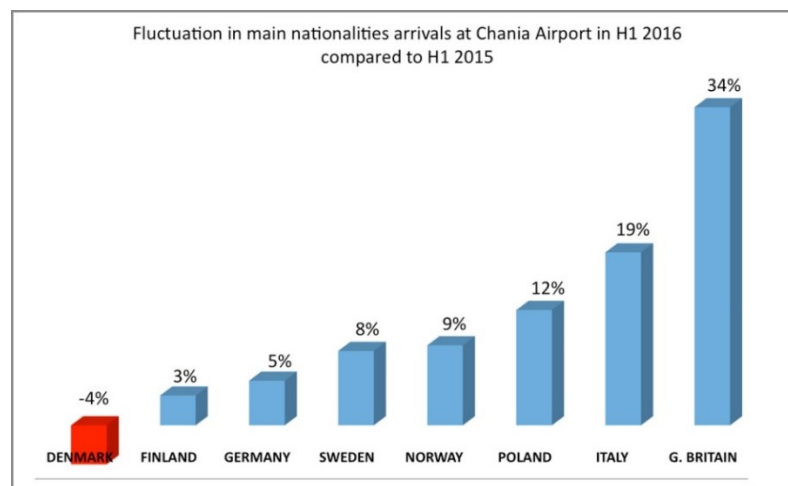
Crete as an island has an accessibility disadvantage when compared to mainland regions. Crete is accessible both by sea and air, however approximately 90 % of tourism to the island uses charter flights. This is related to the fact that Crete relies on mass tourism, which account for 80% of total tourist arrivals. A typical tourist package for Crete consists of air fares, tourist accommodation on a breakfast or half-board or full board basis, a number of optional tours to archaeological sites and museums and often private car arrangements for 1 - 2 weeks for 1 - 6 different destinations on the island. Crete has two international airports operating in Heraklion and Chania, and a smaller one in Sitia for domestic flights. Direct schedule flights to the island from abroad are limited. From May to November there are charter flights from many European countries. It is estimated that during the summer months, air traffic is so high that Heraklion airport has approximately 120 plane arrivals per day (Gnto 2015). Recently much work has taken place to improve facilities and services at airports. The airport of Chania, after the completion of an improvement and expansion project, is a well-run airport that can handle an increasing number of flights. As far as Heraklion Airport is concerned, the second airport of the country relative to the number of passengers (RITTS, 1999), and despite completion of a major project for expansion and a face-lift of the surrounding area, its present provision is not appropriate for the needs of the large number of tourists during the summer.

After air transport, shipping plays an important role in the transportation of tourists to the island, mostly domestic. Crete has five ports in Heraklion, Souda, Rethymnon, Agios Nikolaos and Sitia. There are sea connections with mainland Greece, quite a few of the Greek islands and Mediterranean countries. Although there are many problems regarding services provision, operation and appearance of the ports, projects are under way for their solution, e.g. enlargement and construction of two docks in Heraklion harbour and improvement of the foundation of Souda harbour. Many parts of the island's road network are neglected, a fact that has sometimes made travelling difficult. Although some work has been completed, further work has been undertaken to improve the main road axes, e.g. construction of bridges in the areas of Gournes, Chersonisos, and Malia and the resurfacing of roads in Rethymno. These works focus on the northern national high way. The southern

part of the island lags behind development because of access difficulties, mainly due to the bad road network connections and the mountains. An exception is the Prefecture of Lassithi where road construction is under way. Tele communications are problematic in many tourist areas of the island during the summer peak season. In addition, areas of the island have severe electric power shortages and insufficient quantities of water. As a result, the local population and entrepreneurs sometimes have to buy water from water-wagons. As Clark *et al.* (1995) highlight, if the number of tourists continues to increase in the urban zone of Chania, additional water will need to be imported to meet the increasing demand, making water supply more expensive for consumers. On the other hand, there are places without any biological system to purify the liquid sewage that is thrown into the sea without treatment. Fortunately, projects for the construction of various dams and water barriers, the use of softer forms of energy, the provision of better water supply, sewage system and biological treatment plants have been undertaken through European Union funding (Region of Crete, 1995). For instance, the EU (1999) estimated that by the summer of 1999 no more untreated sewage would be discharged into the sea along the heavily populated coastal strip of northern Crete. The results are encouraging since the number of ‘blue flags’ awarded to the island has increased from five in 1991 to 76 in 2002 (WWF, 2002). Moreover, there are facilities for special interest holidays including diving, cycling, horse riding and golf.

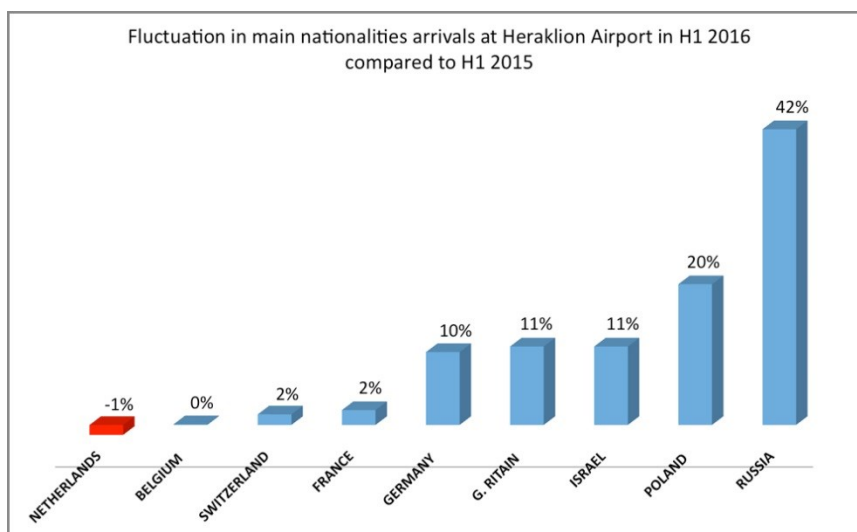
#### 5.4 Arrivals

In a very short period of time tourism grew enormously. During January-June 2016 air arrivals in the two main airports of Crete have recorded a continuous increase. More specifically 369,000 arrivals were recorded in Chania airport, a significant increase of 8.4% compared to the respective prior-year period. All major nationalities participated in this increase except Danes, who reduced their arrivals by 4%, as seen in the table below:



**Figure 5. 1 Fluctuation in main nationalities arrivals at Chania Airport in H1 2016 compares to H1 2015**

At Heraklion airport, where 65% of arrivals consists of German, British, French and Russians, there is also a significant increase in total foreign arrivals by 11% with Russians leading by 42%.



**Figure 5. 2 Fluctuation in main nationalities arrivals at Heraklion Airport in H1 2016 compares to H1 2015**

During the first half of 2016, Crete achieved a 10.3% rise in arrivals of foreign tourists (Tourism Confederation (SETE) 2016). The 43.846 cruise passenger arrivals at the port of Souda Bay that represent an 80% increase compared to last year's H1 are also encouraging. Cruise ship arrivals at Heraklion port also rose by 34% during the first half of the year 2016, compared with the corresponding period last year, reaching 98.675 passengers.

Furthermore Crete is considered as a family resort, with a 42% of total tourist arrivals representing families with children, 38% couples and 20% singles. Two out of three vacation as a family with or without children. Families without children differ in terms of their stay, since a large proportion prefers rooms/studios and spend more than average, per person. Instead, families, even though they appear with big incomes, prefer all-inclusive hotels and as a result spend less.

The average length of stay on Crete has decreased from 2 weeks to 1 week. The tourist season lasts from March to November with July and August being the peak months. According to a survey conducted by the Heraklion Technological Institute from May 2014 to August 2016, the average expenditure breakdown of foreign tourist arrivals was 42% for transport and accommodation, 24% for shopping, 17% for food, 12% local transportation and 5% services. EU member countries are the largest tourism source markets for Crete. The largest share of the total number of arrivals in both airports Heraklion and Chania airport by country of origin is attributed to Germany (33%), followed by United Kingdom (15%), the Netherlands (8%), France (6%) and Sweden (6%) and Switzerland (5%) and Austria (5%). The pattern in Chania airport appears to be quite different. The majority of arrivals are generated from two major Scandinavian countries i.e. Sweden (24%) and Denmark (19%)

followed by Germany (15%), United Kingdom (10%), Finland (7%), Austria (5%) and the Netherlands (4%).

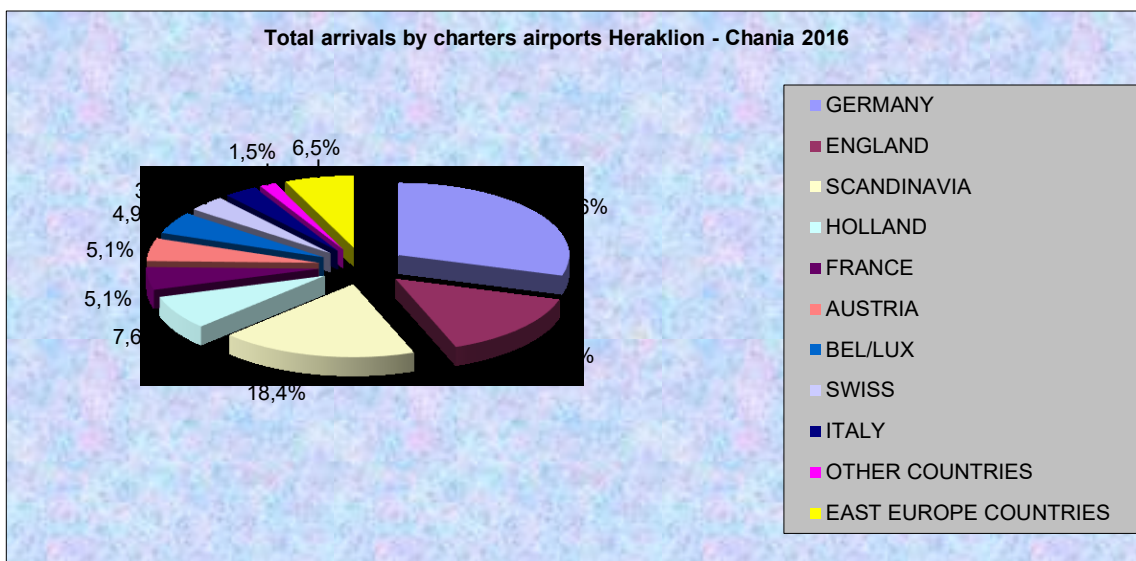


Figure 5. 3 Total arrivals by charters airports Heraklion - Chania 2016

## 5.5 Demand

Tourism started to increase only after 1960. Due mainly to the distance of the island from western European countries (before the introduction of rapid air travel), and the low level of infrastructure of the island. It was only after the 1960s that the creation of basic infrastructure, the Cretan natural beauty, the good weather, culture, heritage and tradition, as well as the maturity of competitive island destinations in the Mediterranean, contributed to the development of tourism in Crete.

In 2016, the number of total arrivals by charter flights in Crete reach 3.6 million. Crete has also recorded the largest increase in hotel bed nights of all Greek regions. In 1980, the number of nights spent by foreign tourists was 4.9 million, 16.7% of the national total, although 19 years later, the number had increased 147% to 12.25 million, 27% of the national total. Crete still represent 55.4% of the total hotel accommodation of the country and almost 71.24% of total foreign overnight stays. The average length of international tourists' stay is estimated to be approximately 9.5 days. As far as bed nights of domestic tourists are concerned, they increased 73% from 1980 to 1999 and represent only 6% of the national total. It is certain that tourist arrivals have not been evenly distributed across the island but the Prefecture of Heraklion was the main beneficiary of tourist spending. In 1999, the Prefecture of Heraklion recorded nearly half of the total bed nights spent in Crete. Based on 2015 data, it is shown that almost half of Crete's overnights (52%) were recorded in the Prefecture of Heraklion. The latter is attributed to the size of the Prefecture and to the higher number of hotel

establishments located in its surroundings. Tourist demand in the Prefectures of Rethymnon and Chania accounts for 28% each while the respective share in the Prefecture of Lassithi is 20%.

Crete faces a high seasonality problem, stemming from the fact that during the high summer season, tourist facilities are utilised to capacity, while during the low season they are under-utilised and during the winter are almost unused (Vaughan *et al.*, 2000). In 2000, approximately 85% of tourist arrivals by charter flights on the island were recorded between May to September (Figure 2), and as a consequence the occupancy rates of the hotel establishments in these five months are over 75%, although during the winter occupancy rates fall to less than 20%. As Drakatos (1987) stated, seasonal concentration has considerable implications for the competitiveness of the island's tourism industry, as well as for the cost of the tourist product. Never the less, tourist arrivals in Crete show a lower seasonal concentration compared to other Greek islands (Andriotis, 2000, 2001). As Donatos and Zairis (1991) found, the Cretan tourism season lasts from April to October, whereas for most Greek islands it lasts from May to September.

## **5.6 Domestic Markets**

Overnights of Greek tourists in Crete account for only 10% of total overnights on the island, while in Greece as a whole, 1 out of 4 tourist is Greek. In addition, Greek tourists account for 6.5% of total overnights in Crete. These prove that Crete relies predominantly on foreign tourism and that there is ground for achieving a larger share in the domestic market.

Nevertheless, when considering the trend in the number of overnights of domestic tourism in Crete during the period 1992-96, it is noted that there has been a continuous growth, with the exception of 1994 when there was a small decrease of 12%. During this period, the increase rates of domestic tourism in Rethymno and Chania have been dramatic, at 79% and 48% respectively. In 1996, the number of overnights of Greek visitors to Crete increased by 11, 8% compared with an average increase of 2, 3% for total Greece. This represented a record rate when also compared with other Greek tourist destinations. It is noted that this increase was attributed to Rethymno, Chania and Lassithi, that recorded the highest growth rates of 41.6%, 28% and 27% respectively in 1996 compared to 1995. On the other hand, in 1996 the number of Greek overnights in Heraklion fell by -5%, despite the fact that the majority of Greek overnights (45%) were recorded in this area, followed by Chania with a share of 30% in domestic tourism.



## **5.7 Local Authorities Role in Ecotourism Promotion**

Local authorities “occupy a complex, central role at the heart of the tourism industry” (Bacon and Pelley, 1993, p. A5), in promoting destinations including Crete. Vaughan et al. (1999, p.118) suggest that there are three different roles of local authorities in the tourism industry: “by being the key coordinating body for the strategic planning of the local tourism industry; by owning, operating and promoting their own tourism resources and infrastructure; and by promoting their local area as a destination and by implication, the private sector tourism products and services”.

Local authorities have crucial roles in reducing the potential negative impacts and increasing the positive contribution of tourism and consumption activity for local sustainable development in rural/mountainous regions (Richins, 2000). Many of their decisions impact the future of their community and it is a challenge to establish which tourism development scenarios or directions are most important and suitable for the community (Richins, 2000).

Andriotis (2002c) in his research reported that most of the efforts of local authorities tend to concentrate on promotional activities and programmes, focusing on how the island of Crete can improve its ability to attract more international and domestic visitors. It could be argued that this represents a lack of innovation in the strategies applied by the local authorities regarding tourism development and promotion on the island of Crete.

When implementing promotional strategies the assistance of local authorities is crucial. For example, promoting festivals as a tourist attraction usually means local authority assistance. Tourism promotion is a crucial activity requiring an integrated approach and a private-public sector partnership. “With the increasing attention given to communication in tourism planning, the involvement of collaboration between the public and private sectors is a central concern of tourism management to enhance the destination’s attractiveness” (Cevirgen and Kesgin, 2007, p.311) even in natural areas. Thus, the contribution of various stakeholders including residents, entrepreneurs and local authorities in this collaboration is said to be a requirement for a successful tourism development and promotion of rural/mountainous village destinations.

## **5.8 Conclusion**

Crete, the largest Greek island, has experienced rapid tourism development since the mid- to late-1960s. Known as a Sun, Sea, and Sand destination with a Mediterranean climate, diverse natural resources and plenty historical and archaeological sites relies upon mass tourism. Tourism has become a leading economic sector. Despite the rapid development of tourism increasingly researchers become more critical about its real contribution to the prosperity of indigenous people as well as to the sustainability of local resources that threaten the island’s sustainability. Britton (1982) observes

that the international tourist industry, because of the commercial power held by foreign enterprises, imposes on peripheral destinations a development mode, which reinforces dependency on, and vulnerability to develop countries. This is particularly true for small island economies like Crete, where despite the increase of tourism arrivals, in absolute terms is relatively poor. Heavy competition is faced from Turkey, being cheaper and with better tourism product.

This situation proves that all destinations are channelled within that commercial apparatus controlled by large-scale foreign and national enterprises that dominate the industry. The greatest commercial gains therefore go to foreign and local elite interests. The majority of locals can only participate in tourism through wage labour employment or small petty retail and artisan enterprises. Their income generating potential is severely limited. As a result, great dependence levels emerge, while the control over the tourism development and operation processes shifts from the people that are most affected (host community), to the tourism generating regions (Hall, 1994). This also the case in Crete, tour operators play a crucial role for the island's tourism industry because they determine tourists' choice through advertising and promotion and due to the trend toward inclusive tour packages organised exclusively in origin countries. As a result, there is an increasing dominance of tour operators, reflecting high external influence on the island's tourism industry. To this end, Horwarth (1994), 85% of tourists to Crete were organised through tour operators, 6% were individual tourists and 3% conference participants GNT0, 2015.

Furthermore, tourism in Crete has resulted in various social and environmental strains, such as environmental degradation, cultural pollution, commercialization of human relations, and negative demonstration effects (Andriotis, 2001, 2002b; Andriotis & Vaughan, 2003). Despite the positive and negative outcomes derived from tourism expansion on the island, community opinions have been neglected in tourism development and planning (Andriotis, 2002b; Andriotis & Vaughan, 2003). Crete, despite its popularity as a tourism destination has reached a stage where both its potential and competitiveness have become questionable. Rapid price increases mean that the country is no longer perceived by mass market clients as cheap in relation to comparable destinations in the Mediterranean, but much of the islands infrastructure, builded in response to demand for cheap accommodation, does not meet the needs of a market less sensitive to price and more concerned with quality and value for money (Saatsakis and Papas 2006; Saatsakis, I & Bakir, A., & Wickens, E. 2010, 2012). GNT0, 2015. Tourism development often takes place without any master plan of the area, respect for the landscape and environment, analysis of the of whether is demand and what the demand is after , and regard to what is happening in the same situations.

In addition shortage of specialised personnel and inadequate training procedures mean that human resources management is a major weakness of the tourism industry. Often both entrepreneurs

and employees lack professionalism and have difficulties in dealing with external organisations or in maintaining standards of service. The labour turnover, due to the seasonality reduces the availability of qualified and experienced personnel and makes the tourism product variable (Briassoulis & Der Straaten, 1993). Moreover lack of comprehensive research and failure to initiate the carrying capacity limits of zoning systems contribute to the anarchic development of tourism as well as to the expansion of the negative impacts on Crete's society and environment. A number of negative socio cultural tourism impacts are reported due to the rapid tourism development. Tourism introduces criminal activity, through visitors' misbehaviour, such as hooliganism and nudity, which often offend the host population who have no option but to tolerate it. Furthermore the commercialisation of history cultural traditions and human relations is also evident (Briassoulis & Der Straaten, 1993). In addition coastal pollution, water shortages, sewage treatment, waste disposal traffic congestion, noise pollution, and overbuilding are some of the impacts already experienced in a number of resorts. From the above mentioned, Crete has to adopt a policy which will improve and diversify its tourism product in order to have ecologically and culturally sustainable tourism industry that will be internationally competitive and domestically viable (Saatsakis and Milonakis, 2006).

## Chapter 6

### Analysis and Discussion of Findings: A Cretan perspective of Ecotourism

#### 6.1 Introduction

Crete with its distinct way of life, culture and nature/wildlife is increasingly sought after by ecotourists seeking authentic and unspoilt destinations. The island has been associated with ancient civilisation, traditional life, rural landscape, warm hospitality and healthy way of life, as well as its unique flora and fauna (George et al., 2009). Trips organised by the Cretan tourist industry to rural areas, and their attractions of scattered ancient and religious sites are sought by both international and domestic visitors. Tourist activities, such as; cheese making; olive, oil, raki and wine tasting are often undertaken by international visitors. Other attractions, include organised or personalised trips to the Samaritan Gorge (e.g. hiking, cycling, walking, trekking, and bird watching). The importance of ecotourism and its sustainability in Crete with its many quaint villages and lush nature is the main theme of this chapter. It proceeds with a clear understanding of the meaning of ecotourism from the local perspective, focusing voices from the tourist industry, including; tour operators, hoteliers, travel agents, and local and regional authorities.

As is shown from the previous chapter, Crete is the largest island in Greece and understandably caters for tourists with diverse interests and motives for visiting the island. In so doing, it offers hospitality to mainly European tourists, but also tourists from all around the world. Crete has both developed tourist areas with resort hotels in Heraklion, Rethymnon and Chania, and also quite rural accommodation in small hotels (homestays) for those tourists in search of alternative experiences associated with ecotourism, nature and adventure.

It is said that ecotourism appeared at the right moment, catering as it does for the needs of tired city-dwellers who seek closer contact with nature (Holden, 2003). At the same time, it allows these people to live long-forgotten experiences at a more tranquil pace than they are used to (Sharpley, 2001). Furthermore, ecotourism has a special appeal to tourists seeking adventure in distinct cultural, historic settings, and wildlife (Edgell and Harbaugh, 1993; Papastavrou, 2003).

As an alternative type of tourism development, ecotourism relates to activities managed by local people and based on the strengths of the natural and human environment (Soteriades, 1998). According to Askeli (2005), ecotourism is the parallel development of activities that aim at the economic and social improvement of local communities, through the support of environmentally

friendly small-scale offers of tourism services, local rural production, production and sale of traditional products. However, product development and satisfying the ecotourist implies difficult management dilemmas including the search for new tourist products in an authentic environment. (Curtin and Wilkes, 2005).

Ecotourism in Crete depends on a wide range of publicly and privately owned natural and cultural resources and associated infrastructure, as well as the provision of accommodation and related goods and services which, if not properly regulated and managed, can threaten the quality of the natural environment and local social structures and cultures, dependant on the types and scale of development and the number of tourists attracted to the area (Garrod et al., 2006; Holden, 2005; MacDonald and Jolliffe, 2003). As a result, issues of sustainability are receiving increased attention also in the context of ecotourism (Butler, 1999; Garrod et al., 2006; Hardy et al., 2002).

Ecotourism is often perceived to strive to preserve the environment. At the same time it tries to promote services of local businesses and jobs whilst resisting the development of further mass modern resorts (Sun, 1997). Sharpley (2001) argues that ecotourism contributes to the economic growth of local communities and facilitates the production of traditional products that would otherwise vanish. It helps to preserve crafts that otherwise would perish and preserves human memory through the revival of customs and traditional festivities (George et al., 2009; Getz, 1997; Roberts and Hall, 2001; Sharpley, 2001; Tsartas, 1989).

It is argued that the future of ecotourism is dependent upon its integration with other local economic sectors and development targets as well as the inclusion of the local community in determining the type and scale of ecotourism in a specific local area to ensure its compatibility with local needs and acceptability to local stakeholders (Briedenhann and Wickens, 2004; Butler and Clark, 1992; Hall and Jenkins, 1998;).

As the literature review demonstrated, the term ecotourism has been a major challenge to theorists and scholars who continue to debate its meaning (Bryden, 1994; Halfacree, 1994; Mormont, 1987). Fieldwork aimed to shed some light on the notions of ecotourism from the local perspective clearly projects a number of views and interpretations of this notion. Respondents' comments reflect the state of the current literature of what ecotourism is and is not.

## **6.2 Ecotourism as a Natural Product**

Ecotourism Society (1991) views ecotourism as responsible travel to natural areas which does not damage the environment or the well-being of the local people (see also: Boo, 1991; Cater, 1994; Wicht, 1994). Such a view of ecotourism is widely echoed by the respondents. One CEO of a destination management company (Respondent 11) stated that: *"In my view, ecotourism is responsible*

*traveling to natural areas in order to experience the nature and culture without causing negative impacts to the destination or to the inhabitants”*. The managing director of a chain of hotels (R7) added: *“Yes, of course. It is something different. Regular tourism is based on entertainment. Ecotourism is based on nature. As I see it, the main philosophy of ecotourism is the protection of the environment. So it is something extremely different. Ecotourism is based on different things than regular types of tourism. Of course there is entertainment but focusing on ecology.”*

A commercial director of a hotel chain in Heraklion (R4) was philosophical about the notion of ecotourism:

*It’s a Greek word, as you know.... It comes from ecology, so I understand it well... it concerns the sustainability of tourism in this destination. What automatically comes to my mind is energy saving, respect of the environment and respect of people also, low energy consumption, waste separation and disposal. Mainly energy, electricity and water are the most important aspects of this type of tourism. ....Ecotourism is a type of tourism that respects the environment...by using responsibly the available natural resources, optimizing recycling methods and alternative forms of power, and ensures a perfect fit with the natural environment.*

This is also how a tour guide (R3) answered my question: what do you understand by the term ecotourism? *“Ecotourism has to do with nature.....Being with animals, cultivating vegetables, helping to produce their dinner and so on....”*. A managing director of a hotel (R8) further elaborated:

*(Ecotourism) is visit of guests to a location who are interested in seeing the natural beauty of the place.... Eco means natural. The beauty of the surroundings, the beauty of the environment. ... For me ecotourism is tourism in the original pure nature. .... because the natural beauty of the island covers all the expectations of everyone. You can see in a distance of 1 or 2 km snow and beach, trees and wilderness, cities and fields or canyons. In Crete you have everything. .... Saving energy, prevention of pollution, natural (biological) production. The closer to nature, the closer to ecotourism. .... the foundation (of ecotourism) already exists and that is the natural beauty, the different images the island has to offer to the visitor, like sea, rivers snow, mountains, forests, ... On this island there is everything.*

The literature review shows that the tourism industry operates by appropriating environmental resources, and suggests that the tourism industry cannot be sustainable and viable if it disregards conservation and quality of life issues that threatens the local populations (Wearing, 2001). More specifically, ecotourism is viewed as a way of conserving nature and the wildlife (e.g., Tisdell and Wilson, 2002; News, 2004; Troëng and Drews, 2004). When I asked a guide respondent, do you mean that anything that has to do with nature is ecotourism, his response was: *“When I hear ecotourism, I imagine mountains, gardens, trees, chickens, sheep..., everything that has to do with nature”* (R3). Many respondents shared the view that ecotourism is a responsible form of tourism, small scale developments concerned with visiting natural areas, creating awareness about the importance of protection of the natural environment in the island of Crete, and contributing to conservation. Nevertheless, positive outcome is by no means assured and depends on how development is planned and implemented. As one respondent (R9) put it: *“Ecotourism may have negative impacts... because it has to do with the intermediary. It has to do with who is going to help (the tourist) visit this place, the tour operator. The problem lies in organisation. ... Ecotourism can have a negative impact if it’s not operated properly. ... It could have even a worse impact than mass tourism. And there is also the flight, the cost of the flight, etc.”*

The majority of the study’s respondents consider ecotourism to be a part of natural tourism, which has several other similar interpretations (i.e. naturally orientated, nature tourism). There is a broad agreement that ecotourism is primarily related to nature with a secondary cultural component which does not feature prominently in the interviews I had with the respondents. It involves an appreciation of the natural environment and entails activities that are benign to it. This research finding contrasts with the prevailing view found in past studies that ecotourism does include environmental, economic and social aspects in equal weight, which recognizes their interdependence and integrated nature.

The study’s findings recognise that this form of development fosters a conservation of the local natural environment. As we saw in the literature, ecotourism is distinct from other tourism types, where the experience is nature based, ecologically sustainable, environmentally educative, and locally beneficial (e.g., Newsome et al. (2002).

Ecotourism’s aim is to minimise environmental impacts from tourism by presenting environmentally friendly practices, such as: water and energy saving, visitor number management, and strict rules for land use (Fennell 1999; Lim and McAleer 2005). Accordingly, behaviours such as: volunteering associated with conservation, compliance with ecotourism principles, and consuming

local products are seen as defining characteristics of true ecotourists. This view is also supported by respondents, for example, a hotel senior sales manager of a hotel (R2) commented:

There is energy needed in order to transfer items. So we use local products by 90% to supply the hotel. In another sense, energy-wise, we use large field of solar panels in order to heat water in the hotel, and we are very well successful in that, we use materials to clean guests' rooms that are friendly to the environment, we use natural products in the kitchen in order to clean the equipment. For instance, on the grill we use lemons, products that have natural acidity. There are different ways. We have programmes of plantation and guests are involved in this and they enjoy it very much. We have a field, we call it our bio-garden, and we do plantation of trees. We do that not only in our area, but also in other areas in coordination with the municipality.

The managing director of a hotel (R7) reinforced this view: *“There are many things we need to do. The most important thing is energy. We have to produce energy via renewable sources. This is one of the main reasons why regular tourism harms the environment. The way it operates is not friendly to the environment. Also the way we construct the building and all the infra-structure should follow eco-friendly standards. In addition, protect nature more and cultivate more so that the products we use are natural. The two main factors are renewable energy sources and the use of eco-friendly utilities.”* Ecotourism as green tourism segments ecotourists into ‘shades of green’, spanning those who are not at all green, light green, dark green and totally green (Swarbrooke and Horner, 1999). Furthermore, green tourism maybe harmful to the environment. For example, adventure tourism or risk recreation (e.g. rock climbing) occur in the natural environment, they have both a harmful nature and an uncertain outcome. These sentiments are shared by the study’s respondents, as the senior sales manager of a hotel (R2) explained:

Yes, because green can mean nature tourism, ecotourism... Everything belongs to ecotourism ...We are green-oriented, we are ecological. ...we do activities and actions, we take precautions not to harm the environment and urge the customer, the guest, to enjoy nature. ..We have a green team at the hotel, which involves the customers as well. First of all we educate our guests and this is fantastic. We have great attendance, both children and grown-ups. For instance, we had about 70 people doing a bike ride this summer, on the national day of



transportation, trying to pass the message that we can use bicycles instead of cars, and the area around Creta Maris, the nature of Hersonissos. So we do have a significant interest from the guests. ...they find the interest in the hotel with the programmes that we have, like plantation, bike rides... I think it is a priority to make it more friendly and I think by making it more environmentally friendly and promoting the natural resources, it is a natural thing that tourism will increase. Because the number one reason why tourists visit a destination is nature. If it is not a beautiful place they will not visit the destination. People come for the beach and the sun.

This finding supports other studies which suggest that consumers have shifted away from mass tourism towards environmental friendly experiences (e.g., Lindberg and McKercher, 1997). A managing director of tour operator (R14) elaborated:

Ecotourism or natural tourism is a combination of respect to the local habitants, but also educating your clients about eco-tourism, nature based elements, and to respect the environment ... Holiday where the essence of it is about enjoying and learning from the natural environment of the destination. The essence of the trip has to be learning about plants, water, animals, agricultural issues etc. and also contributing to the maintenance of the environment, not just visiting a natural destination..... Ecotourists expect ...to visit a tourism destination such as Crete, ...natural environment in its original state, not manipulated, small scale natural eco trips based on the element of the sea.

The CEO of the destination management company (R11) expanded on the term natural tourism: *“Ecotourism is responsible traveling to natural areas in order to experience the nature and culture without causing negative impacts to the destination or to the inhabitants and supports the well-being of local communities ... This distinguishes it from nature tourism, which involves visiting natural attractions but without any explicit objective of achieving environmental...protection.... Ecotourism emerged within this context as a form of alternative tourism that put the emphasis on natural attractions as opposed to cultural attractions”*. A consultant on sustainability in tourism (R18) added: *“Ecotourism and activities related to nature, especially in protected areas, were very successful by*

*the early 1990s. The main activities in these areas are bird-watching, canoeing, kayak, climbing, mountain bike and trekking*". This view is further echoed by respondent R13, where he saw ecotourism as *"a caring form of tourism, with ecotourists caring about nature and respect the environment"*. However, respondent R14 disputed the view that Crete can be considered as ecotourism destination:

Crete is not the first destination that comes into my mind. I think about Costa Rica, destinations that are known for their nature, habitat and animals. When you think about Crete you think about sun and fun, not about eco elements. Thus it is not perceived as an eco-destination and there is a lot to be done to be considered as eco-destination and be credible... The focus on the existing habitat. It is eco-friendly if you do not try to change things. If we try to make a place tourist friendly then it is not eco-friendly anymore, because we interfere with the nature. If you respect the local habitat and take into account all environmental issues then it is eco-friendly.

This understanding is also shared by an academic and consultant (R17): *"Well ecotourism is related to tourism activity that focus on more natural and more exotic places.... the important thing is that it should be a nature related tourism, natural parks conservation .... Since ecotourism is related to tourism at exotic and natural environments and intend to support conservations efforts and maybe observe wildlife. Crete has some of these assets to offer to visitors ..., has wildlife some of this are rare wildlife"*.

### **6.3 Ecotourism as a Cultural Product**

The analysis suggests that the cultural dimension of ecotourism was not clearly understood by the study's respondents and therefore, was under-reported. The majority associate eco-tourism with the natural, physical environment with little awareness or knowledge of culture as part of the ecotourism product. This is in contrast to the literature, as will be shown below in this section. For instance, one respondent (R3) perceived ecotourism as: *"a cultural product ... without causing negative impacts to the destination or to the inhabitants and supports the well being of local communities."* Similarly, another hotelier told me that *"ecotourism has to do with nature and culture"*. As he elaborated: *"ecotourism involves culture, because there are different ways of producing your dinner when you are in India than when you are in Crete or when you are in Canada. So culture plays*

*a very important role*". The following response from a regional authority policy maker (R9) demonstrates a vague and unclear understanding of ecotourism as a cultural product:

Our Municipality has taking the initiative to start reconstructing the Minoan path, aiming at an alternative type of tourism, ecotourism. According to the myth every nine years King Minoas used to follow a path to go to Ideon Andron, the birthplace of Zeus. It was his pilgrimage and there he was given instructions by his father, Zeus. As the local authority, we are reconstructing it so that we can revive this and create a very beautiful natural path for tourists to go hiking in a beautiful environment following the myth and be able to communicate this to others as well. And there are several other paths in the area too. ... [Ecotourism] is responsible traveling to natural areas in order to experience the nature and culture without causing negative impacts to the destination or to the inhabitants and supports the well being of local communities.

A hotel Managing director (R8) bypassing the cultural dimension of ecotourism told me: "*Crete is and can be an ecotourism destination. .... Improvements need to be made in facilities, in organisation and in standards but the foundation already exists and that is the natural beauty, the different images the island has to offer to the visitor, like sea, rivers snow, mountains, forests, culture... On this island there is everything. .... Some of the tourists will also talk about the ancient monuments and about the culture of the island*". Similarly, the regional authority policy maker (R9), talking about ecotourism and ecotourists expectations, stated: "*I think ecotourists expect, when they visit Crete, to see the civilisation and the culture that derive from the history, the tradition and the special features of the area, its habits, its nutrition. Cretan cuisine is a major feature of Crete*". A local authority planner (R10) also had similar understanding of ecotourism: "*I also believe that those people who are interested in ecotourism know very well what they want from a place they visit. It is beyond entertainment that you can get through the mass tourism. It is something more, which has not been evolved to the extent it should. But surely these visitors, who want this kind of tourism, are explorers. .... One lives in the area and sees the culture, can make a walk in the nature and can see very local herbs of Crete, Mediterranean, etc., and combining paths that have to do with mythology*". A sustainable tourism consultant (R18) expressed his concerns about ecotourism: "*....it also leads to negative environmental and social impacts such as: resource consumption, pollution and wastes generation, disruption or destruction of local cultures, use of drugs and prostitution.*"

Many academics highlight the need for local community involvement in planning and managing ecotourism, particularly in the context of developing countries, others mentioned that highlights the fact that many ecotourism projects have adopted the generation of economic benefits for the local community as one of their major aims. In the past, however, local community participation in the decision making process of tourism development has often been lacking. Local communities have tended to be viewed simply as the beneficiaries of tourism development, rather than as essential partners in the process of achieving such development. This is also the case in Crete.

The data clearly shows that there is a plurality of views about the meaning of ecotourism which contributes to the elusiveness of what ecotourism is and is not. However, as the data shows, there was a consensus amongst respondents that ecotourism development allows local people to make their own decisions, contributing to tourist satisfaction and can be used as a promotional tool. This plurality of views is also echoed in the literature; the literature also shows that term ecotourism is surrounded by confusion as it has acquired a broad range of meanings that undermine its operationalisation as it cannot be clearly distinguished from other types of tourism and environmental management principles (Boyd and Butler, 1996; Hall and Rudkin, 1993; Hvenegaard, 1994; Hummel, 1994; Lindberg and McKercher, 1997; Richins, 1994; Weaver, 1993).

#### **6.4 Ecotourism: An Alternative Product**

As seen in the literature review, the term alternative tourism is used as a substitute for mass tourism, indicating integrated, adapted, controlled and responsible form tourism, and (e.g., Weaver, 1998); it is also referred to as special interest tourism (Hall and Rudkin, 1993). It is argued that ecotourism experience must be nature based, ecologically sustainable, environmentally educative, locally beneficial and satisfactory (Newsome et al., 2002). As such, ecotourism is thought of as a form of alternative development, emphasizing a bottom-up approach that engages local stakeholders and is based on local physical, economic, social, and cultural resources (Weaver, 2005). It integrates principles of sustainability that are designed to make best possible use of resources whilst at the same time protecting and enhancing them (Saarinen, 2006). However, ecotourism is a multi-faceted activity that takes different shapes in different parts of the world (Papastavrou, 2003). The widespread appeal of ecotourism rests on the usual and everyday happenings of a local community. The conceptual definition embraces notions of local identity, personal contact, closeness to nature and access to the heritage and residents of the area (Askeli, 2005).

Ecotourism is regarded as an industrial activity using environmental resources, production and operating techniques. As a result, the ecotourism industry has no principal differences when compared with other industries (Garrod and Fyall, 1998). There is a close mutual relationship between

ecotourism and nature (Budeanu, 2005). Ecotourism has an inevitable effect on the environment of the destinations in which it takes place. Environmental resources are regarded as the most important pull factor of ecotourist movements and an indispensable asset to the ecotourism industry, contributing to the desirability and attractiveness of an ecotourism destination such as Crete.

Labels used to describe alternative tourism appeared in the 1980s. These include alternative tourism, ecotourism, soft tourism, rural tourism, sustainable tourism, nature tourism, terms which have become of familiar usage. Despite their vagueness and ambiguous meaning, there is an implicit assumption within their wording that these types of tourism are more environmentally sustainable than the mass tourism that preceded them (Holden, 2003).

Although alternative tourism is a concept hard to define, it appears to have derived from the reactions to mass tourism and is proposed as an alternative. For this reason, mass tourism is characterized as 'hard', whereas alternative tourism is characterized as 'soft' (Aydin and Boz, 2006). The literature emphasizes the fact that many characteristics of mass tourism are opposite to the characteristics of alternative tourism; the most important difference being that alternative types of tourism are more effective in a smaller scale.

Comparisons should, however, not be made only between alternative and mass tourism, but also between alternative tourism and no tourism. Alternative tourism has been criticized as being elitist because touristic activities concentrate – at least in some cases – on wealthy and highly educated groups (Spilanis and Vagianni, 2009). On the other hand, Krippendorf (1987) argues that the guiding principle of alternative tourists is to put as much distance as possible between themselves and mass tourism. They try to avoid the beaten track, they want to go to places where nobody has set foot before them. They want to do things which will bring them a sense of adventure and they are interested in establishing more contact with the local population (Krippendorf, 1987). Recent studies support Krippendorf's view (e.g. Wickens, 2002; Farsari, 2009; Spilanis and Vagianni, 2009).

Alternative tourism has, however, been accused of being the worst form of tourism because it spreads tourism to areas that are not yet spoiled by tourism (Varvaresos, 2009). Butler (1998) and Holden (2003) for instance, question the positive image of small-scale tourism developments, arguing that they frequently have limited means to reduce the unavoidable impacts on sensitive natural areas where they are often located. In addition, the danger of promoting tourism in fragile areas under the flag of alternative tourism including ecotourism without proper controls and regulation may be no different than that of mass tourism (Cater, 1993). There are general doubts about whether the development and promotion of alternative tourism can substantially reduce the negative effects associated with tourism. Instead there is a good reason to suspect that alternative tourism spreads

tourism and at the same time environmental, social and cultural problems to new and fragile areas (Jarviluoma, 1992).

For the purposes of this research, which was undertaken in Crete, mass tourism development is defined as facilities and attractions designed to host large numbers of tourists. This type of tourism is more commercialized and does not offer many opportunities for contact and understanding between hosts and tourists (Gursoy et al., 2010). Conversely, alternative tourism development is defined as development that is less commercialized and consistent with the natural, social and community values of a host community; alternative tourism development tends to provide opportunities for contact and relationships between the host population and the tourists (Wearing and Neil, 1999; Farsari, 2009). Because alternative tourism development tends to include facilities and attractions designed for a smaller number of tourists, those facilities and attractions tend to have a less negative impact on the natural and social environment and tend to collaborate with other sectors (such as agriculture, local crafts) of the local economy (Newsome et al, 2002).

The growth in ecotourism demand is also felt in Crete as one product manager of a tour operator (R1) pointed out:

Crete is a very big island. The tourism on Crete is growing in all directions, but recently it is going more to the activity and alternative holidays, like scuba diving, mountain bike, walking, bird-watching. Yes, I think there is room for environmental-friendly tourism in Crete.

A senior hotel sale manager (R2) reiterated this view: *“It is meant for an alternative type of tourists who have a special interest in nature.”* Another response from a tour guide (R3) expanded: *“Of course it is an alternative form of tourism. There are many types of tourism, dental tourism, cultural tourism. Ecotourism is something new, not many people know about it. But it is for sure an alternative form of tourism”*. A senior manager in the chamber of commerce (R5) concurred with this view: *“Ecotourism is not necessarily an alternative form of tourism, but it can be. I mean it depends on how you promote and how you sell the product....whatever contradicts the idea of mass tourism can be described as alternative. Of course there are many definitions but this is the main definition. .... It is not enough to say that you are an alternative tourism provider. You have to actually provide things that are not custom. Each time you have to reinvent, to innovate, so yes; actually ecotourism is not something that is there. It is created on demand. This is my opinion. This is the way we should treat it”*. Similarly, the regional authority policy maker (R9) told me:

It is an activity that has been developing mostly alternatively; it provides services of alternative tourism. Each such area highlights and promotes specific features that characterise it. .... As I said before there are small eco units in the

area. I have come into contact with ecotourists. Arolithos and Arodamos are such units. We do have a few such units, however, we do not have the network to promote them and this type of tourist product in general. For example, we have the Almyros Bird Observatory and other such establishments... Let me repeat, however, that we are currently seeing things moving forward. Like the Bird Observatory we mentioned before or other small businesses involved with local products, where one can stay at a place, follow the production procedures, get to know the culture, learn about the exceptional herbs of Crete, etc., and follow trails that have to do with our history.

The director of the regional hotel managers association (R8), himself a hotelier, expressed similar views:

Alternative means that I visit a place not because of the sun and the sea and the relaxing target, but .....want to visit a place to see the beauty of the nature, to see the place itself, to visit the mountains, to visit the caves, the beaches, to care about the plants and trees and flowers, the animals. Not only to be interested in having fun but also in the environment.... all kinds of alternative tourism are important for our island because an ecotourist will not visit only during the summer, but also in the winter, when they can visit other, alternative sides of tourism to see different things, such as how we collect olives, how we produce the olive oil, how we make wine, how cultivate the fruits and vegetables that we export all over Europe. They will care about the life in the mountains, about the life in villages, about the lives of the inhabitants. They show different interests and do different activities in the area that in the summer is covered by tourists who are here only for the sea, sun, sex and clubbing, all-inclusive services.

An appraiser of tourism development product (R12) also concurred: *“Ecotourism emerged within this context as a form of alternative tourism that put the emphasis on natural attractions as opposed to cultural attractions. Although sustainable nature-based tourism had already been practiced for many decades within national parks and other protected areas, the application of the ecotourism label placed this form of tourism in an ideological niche that gained its identity from its conscious opposition to mass tourism.”*

These and other local industry views accord with the literature, describing ecotourism as natural-based tourism and a sub-component of alternative tourism or special interest travel (Lindberg and McKercher, 1997; Weaver, 1998). However, other respondents did not exactly see ecotourism as an alternative form of tourism; for example, a former official of a Cretan prefecture (R6) stated: *“No, I wouldn’t call it an alternative form of tourism. I think in a way it goes through every other type of tourism, so I would say that there is a connection between ecotourism and other types of tourism. If we face it as a separate type of tourism, there is nothing to gain. There are types of tourism, like fishing tourism, for example. Imagine it with no respect for the environment! Or any other type, like hiking, religious tourism”*. The senior hotel sales manager (R2) added: *“Ecotourism can be part of mass tourism, but it is a different category. It is ...mass tourism with a different face, Yes. It just hasn’t developed as much because there is no profit interest for travel agents to organise bicycle excursions, let’s say, in comparison with bus or car excursions. They do not make so much money”*.

## **6.5 Ecotourism and sustainability**

Ecotourism is considered as an expression of sustainable tourism, contributing to sustainable development and Sustainability of a destination. Sustainability is often used to describe human activities that satisfy their needs while preserving the natural environment (Bjork, 2007; Fennell, 2003). Not surprisingly, the understanding of ecotourism as sustainable form of tourism featured in responses obtained from this study’s respondents. As the product manager of tour operator (R1) put it: *“We do everything to make sure that all suppliers are acting eco-friendly.... We try to urge them to use less power for heating water, to minimize the water usage in the accommodation and we pay a lot of attention to the cleaning means and the change of linen and towels per week. We don’t demand from them to have a standard mode of changing linen and towels but only on clients’ request. This is an eco-policy we follow”*. Respondent (R2) also reinforced this view, emphasising the need to preserve the uniqueness of the island of Crete: *“.... but since we have realised that the natural resources in Crete are unique and they need to be protected, in combination with the ecotourism that we already have in this part, yes, it does encourage sustainable tourism in many different aspects”*.

The CEO of a destination management company (R11), on the other hand, disputed the sustainability claim of ecotourism. On the contrary, he projected a view which considers ecotourism as more damaging to the environment than mass tourism:

On the other hand, the use of the terms ecotourism and sustainable tourism on the part of some persons displays an inadequate understanding of both terms for, clearly, not all forms of ecotourism are sustainable and not all sustainable



tourism need be to natural areas. In fact, one might wonder if the average ecotourist is more demanding environmentally than the mass tourist who may not need to visit endangered species in remote locations, and whose needs and wastes can be more readily planned for and managed in large numbers incorporating economies of scale .... ecotourism as travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and sustains the well-being of local people ... distinguishes it from nature tourism, which involves visiting natural attractions but without any explicit objective of achieving environmental or social protection. ... Only a small number practice other type of cultural and environmental activities, such as visiting museums and archaeological sites or the natural assets of the island such as Samaria gorge and the palm forest of Vai.

The senior sales manager of a hotel (R2) expressed a similar view on the meaning of this term:

Ecotourism is a part of tourism concerning people with special interests, concerning the protection of the environment as well as enjoying the environment. So it does apply to hotels like ours...that are friendly to the environment, it does apply to methods of transportation that are friendly to the environment. It has mainly interest guests that like enjoy nature. ... Sustainable development is about ....infrastructure for the community, development in the physical aspect of the land, of the resources we use energy-wise. Development is not only for the physical aspect but also for the people. They are developed by having new ideas and interest to protect the environment and at the same time enjoy the environment.

Furthermore, the commercial director of a hotel chain (R4) argued that ecotourism is not an alternative to mass tourism rather it is an additional service as it will bring more visitors: *“Ecotourism encourages sustainable development; definitely. It does encourage sustainable development a great deal. .... I would say that we do know what we have to do in order to be able to live better in the coming years. .... So, as such, is it sustainable, is it good for the environment? Ecotourism in addition to the activity, on top of what there is and not instead of... It is an addition, because it will bring more people, but also it will affect the existing tourism activities, showing people what kind of holidays they can have, different to the sea and sun. So it makes people think more”*. Respondent R5 expressed somehow a different view: *“...it is about sustainable tourism and tourism that has to do with keeping the*

*ecosystem intact. So it's non-invasional tourism. .... Does ecotourism encourage sustainable development; yes, of course; actually, it is the meaning of sustainable development. ... It is about sustaining the environment and the local communities as they were and let them develop in a way that they fulfill certain conditions of keeping them intact and alive for the future".* The view of ecotourism as a form of sustainable development is also supported by the following statement expressed by the former official of one of the Cretan prefectures (R6): *"Ecotourism ... does encourage sustainable development. It changes our mentality and the way of everyday living .... So if ecotourism becomes a way of life, a practice, we understand that we have reached the optimum result. Then development would be done with respect to man, to the environment. To me there is no development without these elements. It would be destructive. It could provide profit but it would be destructive"*.

Other respondents expressed similar views, for example, the hotel managing director and director of the regional hotel managers association (R8) put it: *"Ecotourism encourages sustainable development, yes. ...Development of areas that will increase the purity and the unchangeable surroundings of these. To protect the area from pollution, from poisoning of the soil, the water, the plants, the animals. And also to save energy, that is to protect the area from sources that would destroy it trying to produce energy"*. Also, the local authority senior planner elaborated (R10): *"Sustainable development, specific form of development where they use softer and more modern, friendly to the environment principle, it is important because we live in the age that we need to apply it and not do big interventions, in order to prevent the alteration of a character, a region and a wealth that exists. It's what we say, keep up the culture and the environment together with development without being replaced or altered. Yes, reducing the negative characteristics. That is ecological growth"*.

An interesting and contrasting view of ecotourism as sustainable development is expressed by the CEO of a destination management company (R11):

Sustainable development is a political slogan rather than an analytical tool. Sustainability has become a catch-phrase, has attracted widespread interest and support and also, criticism. Sustainable comes from the verb to sustain in the context of tourism it means to maintain its viability for a long term period of time. The crucial question is who defines what sustainable development is? How is to be achieved? And who have ownership of its representation and meaning? For me sustainable development means something different with someone else, hence this questions therefore apply also to ecotourism. .... Since ecotourism

depends on protected areas, and ecotourism helps to sustain the conventional mass-tourism industry, it follows that protected areas are also important for conventional mass tourism. However, that support is indirect and therefore best mediated through the specialized ecotourism sector.

Fieldwork shows that ecotourism or nature tourism is perceived as part of sustainable tourism, as several other respondents. For instance, the product manager of tour operator (R1) observed: “*Yes. Ecotourism is the type of tourism that does its best to cause the minimum harm to the environment. And therefore it helps the local life the best way possible, I think*”. Furthermore, when respondents were asked if ecotourism helps and encourages sustainable tourism, some respondents stated: “*It helps, of course it does. But in my opinion, only a little*” (R3). Moreover, when they were asked, to what extent is ecotourism a genuine tourism activity to preserve the environment? Some answered: “*It is genuine because it tries to make you think that whatever you do, even when you need to relax and not care about anything, you should still show respect. This way of thinking about the environment is very important*” (Former official of a Cretan prefecture, R6).

Others respondents rephrased ecotourism as ‘nature tourism that promotes conservation and sustainable development’, introducing the element of pro-active conservation and economic development. For example, a tourism academic and consultant (R17) elaborated: “*Ecotourism is a form of tourism, it relates to tourism development and tourism activity that follows some principles of ecological protection or ecological interest, it is part of the wider idea of sustainable tourism... Ecotourism is part of sustainable tourism and it does encourage development in a sustainable way because development in principle of sustainability focuses on a broader spectrum of perspectives looking at social economical financial environmental political aspects or impacts of development*”. Also, the consultant of sustainability in Tourism (R18) stated: “*Sustainable development for business means ‘adopting business strategies and activities that meet the needs of the enterprise and its stakeholders today while protecting, sustaining, and enhancing the human and natural resources that will be needed in the future’. .... We consider as sustainable any form of tourism that, in a given area, alters the conventional tourist product so that it is a more economically profitable and/ or a more environmentally friendly product*”.

It should be noted that ecotourism is mainly understood from the environmental perspective, as fieldwork shows that social impacts were not always considered by respondents; this is amply illustrated by respondent, R17:

Well two main reasons I can think right now why environmentally friendly services are been offered. Basically because of both demand and supply interest and because there is a wider understanding of the impacts the negative impacts that tourism can have at destinations, environmentally, culturally, socially at destinations, by environment you mean I guess the physically environment in this question so I related more to the physical environment basically because of increasing interest from markets so consumers basically in terms of engaging in tourism activity travel and tourism activities that do not harm the environment using resources of destinations rather sustainable way responsible way. ...Furthermore, as the following respondent. ....ecotourism is seen as a form of tourism that meets the consumers' need for ecotourism products. ...and protects ecosystems in very sensitive areas, which could be forest, national parks, could be flora, fauna animals and so on, ... so that interest from the markets, from consumers is important because the products that we develop on destinations have to obviously satisfy those needs and those interests of consumers... at the same time there is a supply side interest to maintaining or sustaining or not harming the environment..... so the idea of ecotourism or developing ecotourism activities would also mean to use the resources of the destination in a responsible way, in the way we don't harm the environment and to allow future generations to use the resources to obviously also create tourism experience and activities.

## **6.6 Ecotourism as a promotional tool**

Although ecotourism is perceived as an alternative to mass tourism and hence more sustainable product, it is argued that it is often being used as a marketing tool, the leading edge of tourism growth and development in destinations such as Crete. As such, many social thinkers point out that the term ecotourism has sometimes been used without clear recourse to criteria and actions that distinguish it from any other packaged tourism offer. The fieldwork from Crete also supports this argument.

The commercial director of a chain of hotels (R4) challenged the truncated use of the term “alternative” tourism as a description of ecotourism. This respondent saw ecotourism as an additional offering from the tourism industry rather than alternative one to mass tourism: *“I would call it an additional form of tourism. Alternative...it is difficult to say.... I think it is better to say that it is an additional form of tourism. I wouldn't call it alternative, because it would mean that it replaces*

*something. But we don't want to replace anything. We want to add something. ....we offer ecotourism and alternative additional forms of tourism, for those who want to experience the real Greece... But I am impressed because in the past we used to promote this guesthouse only to Greeks, but now because of the internet we got reservations from all nationalities. Although they only stay one or two nights, there are a lot of people who go to this destination”.*

The growth of tourism in the island, rebranded as ecotourism (i.e., changing the product's label to a seemingly more nature friendly and authentic one), is observed by many respondents; this view is presented in the following statement by a hotel sales manager (R2): *“It is a fact and it is actually growing year by year.... More hotels and professionals in the industry, from the travel agencies, from the transportation companies and the municipality ...focus on promoting ecotourism since the island of Crete has resources, magnificent resources of nature. So yes it is growing year by year and the methods we do apply they do have the interest to protect the environment”.* To reinforce the use of ecotourism as a promotional tool, one hotelier directed me to the official promotional website of Crete: *“Captivating, mysterious and achingly beautiful; these are only a few words that could be used to describe the former home of King Minos, the birthplace of Zeus and the land where Zorba the Greek once danced his way into the hearts of readers everywhere... providing thousands of possibilities linked to ecotourism and alternative tourism.”*<sup>1</sup> Another hotel manager (R20) told me:

Speaking specifically for my beach resort.... we started our philosophy in 2012. The philosophy is GREEN CRETAN and there are different methods we do apply in order to be on the green side, the eco side of tourism...one of the programmes is Green Miles, means that we use local products. In other words we do not import products from different countries and in that sense we do protect the environment by not transferring material so there is no waste of energy, by boat or by plane.....energy is needed in order to import, transfer products. So we do use 90% of local products for our hotel. ....we also use large filter of solar panels in order to heat water in the hotel and have succeeded in that. We do use chemicals to clean the guest rooms that are friendly to the environment. We do use natural products in the kitchen in order to clean the equipment; for instance on the grill we use lemons, products that have natural acidity. Different ways, we do have programmes of plantations and the guests

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.ecotourism-greece.com/tourism/destinations/Crete> (accessed 29-01-2017)

are involved in this and they do enjoy it very much. We have a field we call our Bio Garden and we do plantation of trees not only in our area but also other areas we do in coordination with the municipality; different activities....and this is used as a promotional material to inform our guests.

Ecotourism has been used as an online and offline promotional tool and marketing activities by the local tourism businesses. This is evidenced by the response of one hotel sales manager (R2):

We are certified with the 'Green Key'. This is an award that we got. We mention our green philosophy and that we take actions that are friendly to the environment in the hotel description, we refer to our interest as a hotel, and that of our guests, in the surrounding area, we have our own "green" sign and we mention it on our title, to show that we are a green-oriented hotel. It's the same offline, in our brochure... we do that we are a green-oriented hotel and it's part of our philosophy....brochures, publications, magazines, newspapers....different publications... we emphasise the eco-friendly part of our business....we present it as green, In our activities and actions, we take precautions not to harm the environment and urge the customer, the guest, to enjoy nature that Crete offers.

Similarly, another respondent, the former official of a Cretan prefecture (R6) emphasised the importance of using ecotourism in the promotional material of his business. Furthermore, when I asked respondents if promoting ecotourism helps gain more customers, the response was unanimous; for instance, the managing director of a hotel chain (R7) responded: *"We go by green because it sells....we try to involve the customers as well. For instance, we try to pass the message that we can use bicycles instead of cars in the area....So we do have a significant interest from the guests. If they are not very familiar with green tourism, we encourage them to engage in activities like bird watching, bike rides..."*.

On the subject of ecotourism services and activities provided to tourists it was found that golf was a very popular activity amongst visitors to Crete and sells well. It is interesting, however, to note that sports activities are perceived as eco-friendly products, even though they may be perceived by others as harmful to the environment; the regional authority policy maker (R9) put it:

We have very nice activities like golf..... this sport is a well-known sport and it is a green sport. We also have watersports that are not motorised, so people can enjoy canoe, kayak or the sea bicycle, kite surfing. So we do emphasize on watersports that don't have motor, which don't disturb the environment and provide safety for our guests. Cleaning of the beach and collecting and observing the bottom of the sea in a safe manner. That brings our guests closer to nature and we do it to get them at the same time not to litter on the beach, not to spoil the beach and enjoy the nature of it....all these activities I have mentioned to you sell well and promote Crete as an ecotourism destination.

Fieldwork clearly shows that ecotourism has been developed as an additional product to expand the market of tourism in Crete. However, the commercial director of a hotel chain (R4) felt Greece has benefited very little from the promotional efforts of ecotourism: *“So it is another tourism product. Still Greece has taken no real benefit out of this ecotourism to use it and develop more. Because we see that private companies do things but the public sector is behind.”*

Is ecotourism development in Crete a truly a sustainable practice? Has it fostered community empowerment, local income generation, and linkages with existing communities, while promoting environmental sustainability? Respondents thought otherwise, for instance, an appraiser of tourism development product (R12) observed: *“In my opinion, and I have been working in this industry for many years,.... in academic papers, this may seem to be the case, when one looks under the surface and studies the evidence, it does not appear as if ecotourism in Crete has achieved those goals. Moreover, it does not seem that the deployment of ecotourism in its current form will be sustainable in Crete”*. A tour guide (R3) responded: *“I think that every single business has the obligation to protect the environment. Now, I don't think it is right to do it only to attract clients. You must do both. Really protect the environment and use it as a marketing tool. That's the best thing”*. The tourism academic and consultant (R17) answered:

Ecotourism as I said appears in promotional materials of destinations and tourism boards however, it also appears on promotional or marketing materials of tour operators and destination management companies not just destination management organisations or tourism boards.....but destination management companies like Kuony, Thomas Cook and others that they claim to be as specialist in specific destinations and try to promote their interest to support ecosystems at destinations.....so in a way you can argue that it is a sales tool

because it reflects its increasing social interest in minimising negative impacts of tourism activities in destinations and communities. It is a promotional tool....part of the wider interest of organisations on corporate social responsibility and environmental responsibility but also to increase their business and profits.

Other respondents contributed: “*We use online and offline marketing activities in order to promote ecotourism.... I hope that your paper will also refer to our material, so different publications*” (R2); “*...in reality ecotourism has been used by the tourism industry to promote a clean and green image, which is occasionally deserved but, more often, is little more than a marketing trick*” (R12); and “*I have seen different materials in the local market advertising natural tourism, but in reality this is a way to attract more new customers and is not something to do with respecting the natural resources.....without having the knowledge or caring about the core principles of the concept of ecotourism or the implementation of the concept. The main aim is the generation of income. Until now, the exploitation of natural resources has led to contrasting developmental outcomes in Crete*” (R11).

Most definitions of ecotourism suggest that the two types of tourism (i.e., ecotourism and mass tourism) are separated by virtue of the natural, pristine or pure locations in which ecotourism must occur. The example of Crete or other tourism destinations illustrates that overlaps between ecotourism and mass tourism are not only possible, but also vital in cases where ecotourism companies must draw on the tourist markets and channels of mass tourism in order to survive financially.

Crete’s dependency on mass tourism was highlighted by the response from a tourism consultant (R16): “*Crete has remarkable natural, cultural, and historical resources; however, it is totally dependent on mass tourism ... the island today attracts, almost entirely, package tourists looking for the 4Ss. According to research that present it in local tourism magazine the three main activities of visitors to Crete were swimming/sunbathing (87.6% of the total), dining outside the accommodation establishment (75.9%), and shopping (66.1%). The majority of tourists visiting Crete prefer to stay at their hotels for sunbathing or walking in the vicinity of their hotels for dining, drinking, and relaxing*”.

When I asked respondents does ecotourism exist? And what ecotourism is? Respondents strongly believed that ecotourism is a ‘marketing ploy’ of dealing with a perceived new profitable



niche market to attract more customers in a saturated destination as Crete. The analysis of data suggests increasing exploitation of natural resources in the island. The case of Samaria gorge in Crete, a UNESCO protected area, is an example of such an exploitation. There are hundreds of visitors every day during the summer, walking and littering for seven hours in the gorge, often having no previous information about the duration of the visit and the hot weather conditions. This activity destroys the natural environment, while at the same time the tourists themselves cannot enjoy their excursion. However, fieldwork shows that there are some really responsible eco-travel specialists who believe in protecting the natural environment of these sacred places. For, instance, they compensate for CO2 omissions offering 'green seats' tours which are more expensive but they also recognise the environmental impacts of their activities. Although it is generally accepted by respondents that the image of Crete is mass tourism, 90% sun and 10% culture; very few respondents really believe that Crete can be an ecotourism destination. This is reiterated by the consultant of sustainability in Tourism (R18):

As a mass tourism destination based on sun, sea and sand with remarkable natural, cultural, and historical resources depended, almost entirely in package tourists. The majority of tourists visiting Crete prefer to stay at their hotels dining, drinking, and relaxing. Only a small number practice other type of cultural and environmental activities, such as visiting museums and archaeological sites or the natural assets of the island such as Samaria gorge and the palm forest of Vai. Crete is known as a mass destination and is very difficult to change the image towards and alternative form as ecotourism the only possibility of development of ecotourism is the south part of the island where it is underdeveloped.

The rationale behind this thinking was to extend the season as respondent R2 explains:

So I think that seasonality can be larger. Second, I think that there should be more promotion for agrotourism in villages. I think that we can have specific hotels closer to well-recognized nature locations in Crete, we can have specific excursion programmes for bicycles or hiking etc. Like in the west part of Crete, Balos, Gramvousa, Falassarna, Sfakia, Aradena, Samaria Gorge. These are already 7 different places. In my opinion, 3 or 4 days a tourist can visit most of them .....the east part of Crete, where we have Vai palm forest, for example.

...For example harvesting of olives, it is an activity that we locals do for 2-3 months each year. And we enjoy it a lot because besides the financial aspect, we earn money from it, we get close to the environment.

Fieldwork shows that it is a market that can help increase the number of ecotourism 'guests' and raise awareness of environmental issues and concerns. Created on demand, the industry needs to have the right supply in order to bring these 'customers' as a new market; "... and every time it should be different. Every time it should be genuine. Every time it has to be productive and innovative. Otherwise it can pretend to be ecotourism, in reality being something usual..... I mean you can say that something is ecotourist but if you pass from there thousands of tourists within one month's period... then it isn't any more" (R5). Similarly, an academic consultant and adviser in tourism development (R17) said that "*ecotourism appears at destination websites so tourism boards that are interesting in promoting destinations and local activities and local areas and development of tourism increasingly focus on environmental interest*".

## **6.7 Ecotourism: Small scale development**

When I asked respondents does ecotourism encourage small scale development which is sustainable for tourism in Crete? Some expressed their doubts; for instance respondent R2 stated: "*I have my doubts...because it still is a very small market. I think sustainable development in the tourism branch has to do with extent. Anything small... Sustainable development is a type of development done slowly but surely. Ecotourism still is very small-scale*". A contrasting statement was given by the regional authority policy maker (R9): "*Ecotourism is very important because as it does not deal with large accommodations. It is a specialised type of tourist product that helps promote the product of Crete. And I think that this helps and serves the sustainable development of an economy, of an area. .... It is a small scale development, specialised type of development, for which one uses milder and more modern means friendly to the environment, because this is extremely important nowadays, so that we do not alter the character, the wealth of an area. It's what we say that culture, environment and development should coexist without one replacing or changing the other*".

Furthermore, the study's respondents saw ecotourism as small scale developments; this is, for instance, demonstrated by the local authority planner's (R10) observation: "*I guess it [ecotourism] has to do, and I know, with small family businesses that operate in areas not primarily and strictly and purely tourist areas ... It encourage small scale development because, as I said, it is not strictly large units, it will definitely help the local economy. They are specialized forms of the tourist product*

*in each case to help the local product*". Such a view is also aired by the CEO of a destination management company (R11): "*Ecotourism contributes to conservation, small scale development, local participation benefits from the development, allows local people to make their own decision, contributes to sustainable development and sustainability, education, tourist satisfaction and the minimising of the tourism impact*". Fieldwork clearly shows that ecotourism is associated with small family businesses that operate mainly in areas that are not for mass tourism. The literature shows that mass tourism is large-scale, externally controlled, with high leakage, and concentrated in high density tourist traps; whereas, ecotourism is considered as small-scale, locally controlled, conducive to the formation of linkages with other sectors of the local economy, and dispersed within low-density local neighborhoods. The study's respondents concur with the view that ecotourism should be small scale and locally controlled to benefit the local economy. As the tour guide (R3) expressed it in a reflective statement: "*Ecotourism still is very small-scale. ... It's like comparing a large ship with a small boat. Ecotourism is a small boat. Large ships are bad for the environment, yes. But I don't know what will happen if maybe one day this small boat becomes a large ship. Is it going to be also bad for the environment then? .... Originally ecotourism is a very nice idea. To protect the environment and to offer people an original way of life, so to say. I don't see any ecotourism in a 1000-bed hotel, for example. I see ecotourism up on a hill. Run by a small businessman with his family, with his children taking care of their guests like they are in their house*".

Another respondent, hotel commercial director (R4), reflecting on the concept of ecotourism, told me: "*Crete is a very big destination, a big island. You don't even have the feeling that you live on an island. But we have a lot of places, where we could focus on ecotourism. We cannot talk about Crete but, for instance, we can talk about village destinations for ecotourism, on the mountains or near the beach. I mean smaller areas, not massive. So it can be an ecotourism destination but not as a whole, in some parts*". Hotel managing director (R8) added: "*...for me, individual guests who come here and are eco-friendly, visit small places, small villages on the island, treating flowers, taking photos of them, studying them, studying the landscape, the climate and respecting what they see.....But this is not the majority*". Most respondents reported that ecotourism is small scale, it respects the environment, educate visitors to be more conscious of environmental issues. A product manager of a tour operator (R15) illustrates this view of ecotourists: "*Ecotourists do not seek big resorts .... They look for small accommodation with positive policy for the environment, such as linen change on request rather than daily. They want to get to know the locals and be far away from mass tourists*". Similarly, the sustainable tourism consultant (R18) stated: "*ecotourism relies, on the small-scale tourism, involvement of the locals, preservation of natural and*

*cultural environment but can it be implemented*". In agreement, the regional authority policy maker (R9) pointed out: "... involvement of the local community in ecotourism decisions is important. ... Yes, the local community is the ultimate collaborator. This does not mean that this is easy, because we are talking about small-scale businesses, as I said before, so it is necessary to share these efforts".

However, respondents also felt that local government should support ecotourism businesses in order to survive, as the commercial director of a hotel chain (R4) told me: "*some small hotel businesses and accommodations can focus on this; but it has to be promoted and supported by government policy and by the prefecture as well*". Another respondent, the regional authority appraiser of tourism development (R12), questioned the viability of small scale development relying on ecotourism: "*On the other hand, ecotourism relies, on the small-scale tourism, involvement of the locals, preservation of natural and cultural environment but can it be implemented? Can Crete survive economically with small-scale tourism? Could the development of ecotourism provide the same number of jobs as the current tourism industry does*"?

Clearly, the analysis of data shows that ecotourism is small scale development; it creates awareness of the importance of protecting the cultural and natural environment, contributes to conservation and local participation, education, tourist satisfaction and the minimising of the tourism impact. Fieldwork thus supports other studies that ecotourism is a fuzzy concept which is seen to encompass: education, environmental awareness, cultural revitalisation, rural and small scale development, and so on (Burns, 2005). It is underpinned by the principles of: *local participation and empowerment* (Acott *et al.*, 1998; Ross & Wall, 1999; Scheyvens, 1999); *education and environmental learning* (Kimmel, 1999; Orams, 1995); *ethics* (Fennell & Malloy, 1995; Kutay, 1989); *sustainability and conservation* (Blamey, 1997; Cole & Sinclair, 2002; Goodwin, 1996); *an interest in nature* (Diamantis, 1999); and *environmental appreciation* (Wallace & Pierce, 1996).

## Chapter 7

### **Analysis and Discussion of Findings: Ecotourism and Its Importance to Crete**

#### **7.1 Introduction**

The analysis chapter presented and examined research undertaken in Crete. This chapter critically discusses and reflects on the key findings of the study. Ecotourism is perceived predominantly as a natural product to be consumed by visitors or ecotourists, as the study participants call them. The majority of the industry respondents did not identify the cultural dimension of this tourism product, much emphasised in the literature. Nevertheless, participants felt that ecotourism development should be small scale, and should be sold as an additional product in the Cretan market. This empirical finding contrasts with the interpretation of ecotourism as an alternative product, common in the literature. Furthermore, ecotourism is perceived as a vehicle for development in Crete and as an important set of economic activities to enhance local economy in the island.

Viewed as a source of new employment, additional revenues and tax receipts, as well as, foreign exchange that benefits the local and regional infrastructure that will, in turn, attract other industries. The study clearly indicates that ecotourism is a valuable and growing sector of the overall tourism market, representing a significant source of income to local economies in Crete, encouraging small-scale accommodation and recreation properties which are considered to be more favourable to environmental conservation. Small and medium-sized businesses are perceived to be of benefit to tourism development. Fieldwork shows that in terms of employment creation, respondents suggested this is a good reason for this form of tourism to be developed because it provides opportunities for meaningful encounters with locals. Very few respondents suggested that there is an educational element to the ecotourism activity, especially for visitors from urban centres. Ecotourism is themed according to the activities undertaken by ecotourists, such as cooking or bee-keeping schools organized in rural areas (Getz and Carlsen, 2005; Long and Lane, 2000).

The fragmented nature of the ecotourism tourism product, which arises in part from smallness in scale, contributes to promotional costs and collaborative networking among producers, and between them and other stakeholders, is recommended in order to increase market recognition (Caalders, 2000; Friel, 1999a; Fyall & Garrod, 2005; Soteriades and Wickens, 2012). Respondents were also aware that collaborative and family oriented ventures are essential to the creation of businesses and products, and necessary to source external support and attract visitors. Sharing of

knowledge will allow businesses to have a capability to adapt to a quickly changing external environment (Cooper, 2006). Furthermore, effective promotional activities are required to attract visitors from external markets interested in ecotourism products for the sustainability of marginal communities where demand is limited or non-existent (Clarke, 1999; Fyall and Garrod, 2005).

In the minds of respondents, there is no doubt that ecotourism has the potential to generate additional economic benefits to local communities, but they are also aware that it adds to significant environmental damages and entails negative social and cultural impacts in many destinations, as the study also shows (Anderson, Bakir and Wickens, 2016; Gursoy et al., 2002). Due to rising concerns over the potential negative impacts of tourism, this research demonstrates the need to have dedicated attention to examining both positive and negative ecotourism impacts as perceived by the industry and the authorities (Saarinen, 2006).

Clearly this study sheds doubt over the claim that ecotourism is a sustainable form of tourism, an assumption held widely by academics and global multilateral organizations such as the United Nations. This assumption can be traced back to the 1992 Rio Earth Summit which declared the premise for sustainable tourism development and expressed concerns and challenges faced by the industry. Matters pertaining to sustainable tourism are officially addressed through the Production and Consumption Unit of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), whose Tourist Program is mandated by the UN Commission on Sustainable Development to facilitate the implementation of Agenda 21 within the tourism sector, primarily through local governments (United Nations Environment Programme, 2002 and 2003). Moreover, this assumption, contested by the study's respondents, is also held by the European Commission. At a regional level, European multilateral institutions have been especially proactive in formally promoting sustainable tourism since the Rio Earth Summit. The European Commission has identified sustainable tourism as one of five priority areas in the Fifth Community Programme for Environment and Sustainable Development. Its environmental policy section has developed a European Charter for sustainable tourism in protected areas, such as those found in Crete and were identified by this study's respondents. Clearly, respondents did not see ecotourism or any other form of tourism as a panacea for developing a more responsible or sustainable development, as the literature claims.

Although people recognise the need to sustain tourism products, such as ecotourism, the study's respondents do not seem to be aware of the importance and rationale for sustainable tourism in the island of Crete, preferring instead simply to rebrand mass tourism as ecotourism. It should be noted here that a number of respondents, during my conversations with them, though it is a good idea pointing and listing the benefits of having a more sustainable tourism development in the island of Crete. This is also reflected in the current Government's policy of quantity versus quality, and hence it could be argued that ecotourism is a form of a ploy. Although theoreticians claim that ecotourism

encourages sustainability which considers the impacts on the natural, cultural and human environments; in reality, as the study's shows, the picture is much more complex and fuzzy.

Furthermore, the literature suggests that ecotourism encourages productive use of lands which are seen as marginal for agriculture, enabling large tracts to remain covered in natural vegetation. Past studies have also argued that ecotourism is environmentally more sustainable form tourism because it directs attention to the importance of natural and cultural resources to a community's economic and social well-being and can help to preserve them. Moreover, it is also claimed that ecotourism development, appropriately planned, monitors, assesses and manages the impacts of tourism, develops reliable methods of environmental accountability, and counters any negative effect (Swarbrooke, 1999). In theory, ecotourism embraces principles of sustainability by paying attention to environmental carrying capacity, social responsibility and the integration of tourism with the local people wishes (Gursoy et al., 2010; Johnson, 2002; Northcote and Macbeth, 2006). In other words, ecotourism does not only protect the natural environment but it is also assumed to sustain livelihoods and ways of life for local communities. Sustainability is, of course, an essential concern for all kind of tourism (Garrod, 2003) and was the rationale for undertaking research into this area from the industry's perspective. Guided by the assumption that the pursuit of sustainable ecotourism development might benefit the environment and communities in Greece, including the islands, which is a testimony of its importance. The findings from Crete in this context was very surprising as it appears to be like opening a Pandora's Box! This finding is also supported by Anderson, Bakir and Wickens (2014).

Studies of ecotourism emphasize the environmental, social and economic elements of this economic activity, which is economically viable but does not destroy the resources on which the future of tourism will depend, notably the physical environment and the social fabric of the host community. It is perceived as a positive force that intends to reduce the tensions and frictions created by the complex interactions between the tourism system, involving working for the longer viability and quality of both natural and human resources (Bramwell and Lane, 1993). It should be noted that this study shows the ambiguity of the concept of ecotourism. Fieldwork presented in chapter 5 clearly shows that the term and its many variations is confusing and poorly understood.

In the past, local community participation in the process of tourism development has often been lacking as communities have tended to be assumed simply as beneficiaries of tourism development, rather than as essential partners in the process of achieving sustainable tourism development (Garrod, 2003). Additionally, a further assumption was that measures should be carefully introduced to enable indigenous people to take advantage of the opportunities brought by ecotourism if the objective is to achieve sustainable development (Tosun, 2002). Without adoption and implementation of such

measures the industry might lose host communities' support in a gradual manner that may in turn threaten the sustainability of future tourism development and promotion (Tosun, 2002).

However, research from Crete shows that, in theory, the success of sustainable ecotourism development requires cautious management of existing resources. This premise is perceived by the respondents to be imperative, so that economic, social and environmental needs can be fulfilled, while preserving community integrity, ecology, and biological diversity and life support systems. The objective of further development, from the industry's perspective, is to retain the economic advantages of tourism in Crete while minimising the industry's undesirable impacts on the natural environment. It was also felt, especially by the authorities, that ecotourism development cannot be sustained unless local initiatives, communities, and environment are seriously considered. This signifies the importance of stakeholders' participation in the development and management of tourism, so they will all be beneficiaries and not victims of tourism development (Anderson, Bakir and Wickens, 2014). As these authors argue, the success and sustainability of ecotourism development depends on the acceptability of ecotourists and ecotourism-related programmes, offerings and activities by local communities.

Ecotourism has long been considered an effective catalyst of socioeconomic development and regeneration, widely promoted and relied upon as a means of addressing social and economic challenges facing peripheral natural areas, primarily those associated with the decline of traditional agrarian industries. As previously mentioned, the notion of the natural environment is generally perceptually constructed as a contrast to the notion of urban. Arguably, ecotourists perceive that local communities, with their unique social structures and cultures, are in contrast to those of urban communities and are moreover resistant to the throes of modernization and globalization (George et al., 2009; Papastavrou, 2003; Spilanis and Vagianni, 2009). However, in ecotourism development this perception is considered a key factor. The retention of older ways of life and thinking is important in retaining the authentic character of the place to be consumed by eco-tourists. Combined with the scenic values and recreation opportunities of the countryside that attracts ecotourists from urban areas. This argument is also supported by some of the study's respondents.

Ecotourism has enjoyed substantial encouragement and support and in some cases gained direct financial assistance from both the public and private sectors. Such intervention and support is not surprising since, over the last three decades, many islands' economies in Greece have suffered a severe downturn, with falling employment and income levels in traditional agrarian industries contributing to a vicious circle of economic decline and socioeconomic problems. As a result, ecotourism has been embraced not only as a potential means of reversing this decline but also, given the intimate relationship between the socioeconomic health of natural areas in general and the prosperity of the agricultural community in particular, ecotourism together with other forms of



tourism has become an integral element of tourism development policy. This increasing dependence on and support for ecotourism is based upon a number of perceived benefits it potentially provides to Crete. Generally, ecotourism is seen as a valuable and growing sector of the overall tourism market, representing a significant source of income for the local economies. Furthermore, the development of ecotourism offers potential solutions to many of the problems facing Crete, such as economic growth; diversification and stabilization through employment creation of both new ecotourism related and existing businesses, trades and crafts; and opportunities for income growth. Furthermore, developing and organizing ecotourism may require a significant investment either beyond the means of the business owner or greater than justified by potential returns. In such cases, government subsidies would be required to maintain the benefits of diversification into tourism (Briedenhann and Wickens, 2004; Stavrinoudis and Parthenis, 2009; Venetsanopoulou, 2006).

It is worthy to note that small tourism enterprises normally do not possess the skills or the resources for effective marketing, a prerequisite to success. As Briedenhann and Wickens (2004) suggest, theoretical arguments support the view that tourism should not be considered as the economic saviour of marginal areas, but it should be a part of a wider economic diversification strategy through which tourism may accomplish its promise to provide an additional income to local economies and become the vehicle for the development and support of regional economic sectors. Nonetheless like any other economic development, ecotourism requires several components in order to be successful. These include attractions (the natural and manmade features both within and neighbouring to a community); promotion (the marketing of the area and its tourism attractions to potential visitors); tourism infrastructures (access facilities, water and power services, recreation facilities); services (lodging, restaurants, a variety of retail businesses that will take care of ecotourists' needs); and hospitality (how tourists are treated by both community residents and employees in tourism businesses and attractions). However, the study found that austerity, less economic growth in Crete and in many generating destinations of Europe are equally as important as the above factors, stated in the literature.

The above components and a community's assets are clearly important, only the widespread participation and contribution of local stakeholders can ensure a broad-based foundation for successful ecotourism development, but also the health of the Cretan economy and that of the generating destination, as the study shows. It should be noted that the notion that ecotourism represents a panacea to the problems facing tourism destinations, such as Crete, that it is a magic wand that will speed up economic progress must be treated with caution.

Furthermore, lengthy discussion with tourism planners of Crete and from personal experience of working in the industry over twenty years, suggest that the uncontrolled 'ecotourism' development creates even bigger negative impacts than mass tourism. One of the more fundamental issues

surrounding ecotourism is the lack of standards regarding its practice. Presently in Crete there are few national laws and regulations that dictate who can rightfully engage in ecotourism and how it must be carried out. Similarly, there are no licensing procedures. Therefore, any tourism outfit can claim to conduct ecotourism even if it has little to no experience in that kind of tourism. Such unrestricted practice of ecotourism by inexperienced tour operators has inevitably resulted in types of ecotourism that do not adhere to its basic principles of environmental sustainability and local income generation.

## **7.2 Major issues and challenges**

Tourism planners are in consensus that global competition and industry concentration increase the challenges for destinations such as Crete and small communities. Therefore, it is considered imperative for destinations to achieve their strategic objectives through stakeholders' support, matching the appropriate demand with supply by using the entire range of promotional tools to communicate with visitors. Effective promotion for ecotourism destinations draws on the contributions of stakeholders, including entrepreneurs and local authorities and offers the best prospect of achieving long-term sustainable development.

The literature suggests that innovative promotional techniques and the use of new technologies will be the only way to manage the sustainable development and promotion of ecotourism in destinations such as Crete (Soteriades and Wickens, 2012). It is claimed that effective promotion contributes to sustainability by identifying the changing needs and wants of local stakeholders over time. Destination promotion facilitates the achievement of tourism policy, which should be coordinated with the regional development of a destination. Promotion of destinations should guide the optimization and maximization of benefits for the area. As the ecotourism promotion is market driven, it is thus suggested that local stakeholders' needs and wants should be identified and matched with those of providers. This could only be possible through appropriate product development and promotion (Anderson, Bakir and Wickens, 2014).

Promoting ecotourism destinations essentially implies the development of communication channels with consumers of its products and experiences, increasing awareness and persuading potential tourists to purchase products and/or services. Destination promotion requires a coordinated campaign and message concerning all local stakeholders and suppliers.

Previously, ecotourism products in a destination have been promoted and sold in the marketplace in bits and pieces by various individual suppliers. This can be attributed to a significant extent to the fragmented nature of tourism destinations, which are represented by stakeholders with varied business goals and in charge of different components of the total tourism offering. However,

if destination promotion is done individually and independently by a range of stakeholders it is not helpful to developing a holistic representation of the destination and cannot facilitate the achievement of sustainable tourism development, a finding from this study supports this argument. This certainly raises questions and major challenges of the sustainability of this tourism product, known by the respondents as ecotourism. Drawing upon evidence from the study in Crete, a number of promotional issues are raised concerning activities such as day-trips to experience nature, cycling, bird watching, hiking should be carefully coordinated and promoted in order to achieve a more successful sustainable ecotourism development in Crete.

Nevertheless, promotion in general is not a prescription for the successful ecotourism development of a destination, as it is imperative to ensure the promotional objectives are optimally adapted to the Cretan environment. As the tourism industry continues to grow, destinations including Crete, face serious and difficult choices about their future. Changing tourism demand for ecotourism products and the new challenges which arise from advances in technology are indeed recognised by planners and local authorities of Crete as critical issues for the development of ecotourism.

Fieldwork shows that ecotourism is not always understood as a polar opposite to notion of mass tourism. In the wider sense, ecotourism is recognized as a form of tourism associated with various types of nature and cultural activities. As one respondent (R11) puts it: “...*visiting a working farm in a quaint village for the purpose of enjoyment, education or even involvement in activities such as cheese-making*”. This finding supports past research that shows ecotourism is born from two different demands. The first is expressed as demand for unspoiled landscapes found in nature environments, such as those found in Crete and expressed in the above respondents’ narratives. The second push for the development of small scale tourism ventures derived from the supply side, since it is seen as a contrasting activity to mass tourism businesses.

### **7.2.1 Seasonality Issues**

Seasonal demand variations represent a vital challenge discussed also in the academic literature on ecotourism. This is also a concern to policy making and tourism management of ecotourism in Crete. Seasonality is understood as a temporal imbalance in the phenomenon of tourism and is often expressed in terms of dimensions of such elements including numbers of visitors, expenditure of visitors, traffic and other forms of transportation, employment and admission to attractions (Allock, 1994; Butler, 1994). It is suggested that the major aspect of seasonality involves the concentration of tourist flows in relatively short periods of the year. The annual peaking of tourism movement during a few hectic months is likely to result in imbalance within the tourism industry and

is seen as a burden on the physical and social resources of destinations including Crete, an important contributor to the problem of carrying capacity.

The impacts of seasonality are likely to become bigger with the growth of mass tourism in Crete and this is of a major concern to the policy makers and managers. Seasonality is an important factor limiting performance regarding tourism development in the island. The majority of tourists to Crete expect summer fun, according to the statistical evidence provided by the National tourism board and presented in earlier in chapter 4. It is also frequently featured by the study's respondents and personally experienced; the hotel managing director (R8) observed: *“For me the ideal would be to try to extend the season as much as we can, and try to develop and improve the level of ecotourists, the level of cruisers, the level of athletic, medical, religious tourism in order to combine the dead winter months.... the main reason behind this is to bring more customers in fewer months. This is why we work, profit. If you do business with no profit, then what are we doing?”* Statistics on Crete tourism clearly shows the high seasonality problem during the high summer period. Several studies comment that tourist facilities are used to capacity in Greece, while during the low season they are under-used, and during the winter they are almost unused. The dependency on mass tourism and the foreign tour operators, seasonality, and on the low budget tourism is evident in several Greek islands including Crete. The seasonality for tourism is distributed over summer months of June, July, August and September. However, Respondent R2 argues for extending the season: *“Because it is very easy from the centre of Heraklion, which is the major city in Crete, to visit places of natural interest. So it should be marketed off-season and in my personal view it should. “By extending the season and specifying on a market, we have growth. So I think seasonality can be extended. For example harvesting of olives, it is an activity that we locals do for 2-3 months each year. And we enjoy it a lot because besides the financial aspect, we earn money from it, we get close to the environment”*.

The study's respondents agree with this proposal: *“There is space for improvement. First of all, the seasonality. Right now so many millions of euros are slipping away, all the investments people have made here.....that's one of the biggest problems. There are some really nice things you can do here in the winter, but we do not utilise them”* (R3). For the study's respondents, in an ideal world, encouraging international tourists to visit Crete out of season and in so doing it will extend the season as much as possible.

### **7.2.2 Ecotourism Business in Crete: Spontaneous Development**

The literature shows that tourism has long been considered an effective catalyst of a destination's socio-economic development and regeneration and has been widely promoted and relied upon as a means of addressing the social and economic challenges that peripheral areas are facing,

primarily those related to the decline of traditional agrarian industries, which is the case in many communities in Crete.

Furthermore, although tourism development is considered by many authors (Davis and Morais, 2004; Wickens, 2009) to generate new jobs, enhance community infrastructure and assist in revitalizing the economies in marginal areas. Other authors argue that tourism as a development option has come under increasing criticism, mainly due to the claimed paucity of revenues, the inequality of benefit distribution, and the perceived social costs to the local communities. Nevertheless, tourism remains the preferred development option for communities, desperately seeking the economic benefits of tourism development and minimizing their perceptions of the potential negative impacts. This issue is also recognised by the study's respondents, as one hotel chain managing director (R7) pointed out:

In the last 15 years the government has been providing subsidies to investors to focus on hotels or business that have to do with ecology in general. But we need a plan for this to be applied efficiently. Generally, the government gives such subsidies... There are many things we need to do. The most important thing is energy. We have to produce energy via renewable sources. This is one of the main reasons why regular tourism harms the environment. The way it operates is not friendly to the environment. Also the way we construct the building and all the infra-structure should follow eco-friendly standards. In addition, protect nature more and cultivate more so that the products we use are natural. The two main factors are renewable energy sources and the use of eco-friendly utilities.

The regional authority policy maker (R9) went on to say that tourism was developed with no planning by the state, and the drivers for this development were small businesses and entrepreneurs: *“No planning. In Greece we have developed mass tourism, which basically is a model different from what we would like. The citizen of the world who visits Greece, who often does not get to know that culture of the country, because all he is sold is recreation. We should change this, and the local authorities should play a great role in this”. ....So how can you invest in something without planning?”*

However, it should be noted that participants' conceptualisation of ecotourism equals beach and sun. *“...we have the beach of Ammoudara and also the plateau at Krousonas, for example, where we can develop totally different types of tourism. Another example is Creta Maris in Hersonissos, a large scale hotel unit that provides strictly Cretan eco-products in all F&B departments of the hotel. So why should we be able to achieve both?”* (R9). *“Whether it's a cruise, a beach resort or an adventure on the other side of the world, we offer a fantastic range of unique holiday experiences.”* (R18).

Clearly, this demonstrates the point that is highlighted throughout chapters 5 and 6, that ecotourism is misunderstood by the study's respondents; both the industry and planners. This misunderstanding might have contributed to the lack of planning; a concern which is echoed by most respondents: There is no planning, so how can you invest in something without planning?

### **7.2.3 Concluding points**

The literature demonstrates positive views and attitudes from local stakeholders regarding economic and socio-cultural impacts of tourism. As far as environmental impacts are concerned however, it reveals some conflicting findings. Studies indicate that in general communities seem to have positive attitudes towards ecotourism (Andereck et al., 2005). Nevertheless, the above discussion reveals doubts and concerns regarding the planning and development of ecotourism in Crete, and the potential negative environmental impacts. Nonetheless, ecotourism is considered to be an additional and preferred tourism product by planners and the industry. On the other hand, the development of both tourism and ecotourism can result in 'dependency', which takes many forms, where a subservient periphery can be created by tourism between the centre and the periphery (Lepp, 2008). This subservience was often demonstrated by respondents who named Germany, Holland and Israel as the dominant partners in this business relationship.

Nevertheless, the changes experienced in this destination might be the result of globalization and advanced technologies, causing intense commodification of the Cretan community. Aspects of local life, such as encouraging tourists to participate in activities, including picking olives, planting trees, watching wild life, originally conceived as natural and social constructs in community way of life, are now transformed into commodities for exchange with consuming tourists for profit (George et al., 2009). This notion of natural and social uniqueness, expressed by respondents about Crete, in attracting tourists is what underlies the rationale for development of ecotourism.

## Chapter 8

### Conclusion

This study aimed at exploring and understanding the industry's perspective of the notion of ecotourism and its development in Crete. Past studies (e.g., Croutch and Ritchie, 1999) have influenced the rationale for undertaking a study on tourism businesses and local authorities, including planners to gain insights into the perceptions and decisions of those people regarding the development, planning and promotion of alternative types of tourism including ecotourism. This is because tourism is a diverse activity which affects many areas of local authorities' responsibility (Anderson, Bakir and Wickens, 2014; Richards, 1992), as well as the fact that the expansion of tourism and the existing competition has changed the way destinations are managed and presented. To this end, the following objectives were undertaken and researched over a period of many years. It should be noted that the researcher's experience of 17 years in the tourism industry as business owner, tour operations director, local and regional authority planner, and visiting academic to local higher education institution, has also influence the direction of this study. Thus, the study, by its very nature is socially constructed by an experienced researcher, and hence subjective in nature. Nevertheless, every attempt has been made to minimise bias, a limitation commonly associated with qualitative research (Alshaibani, 2015; Bakir, 1997; Wickens, 1999).

The study's objectives were as follows:

1. *Undertaking a critical review of the ecotourism literature.*
2. *Exploring the concept of ecotourism and its development.*
3. *Determining ecotourism's perceived impacts and importance to Crete.*

In order to fulfil these objectives, a theoretical discourse concerning the understanding of the meanings of ecotourism was discussed in chapter 2. In this literature review chapter, the thematic discussion of the meaning of ecotourism showed its association with concepts such as nature, ecology, small scale development, friendly, sustainability, alternative, and wilderness. Whilst there is a variety of definitions and typologies that have been developed surrounding the phenomenon of ecotourism and the proliferation of studies from the academic perspective and case studies allowing the residents'

voices to be heard on the impact of tourism, our knowledge of this type of tourism is limited due to the absence of the industry's perspectives. This is based on the premise that an understanding of the meanings of ecotourism from those responsible for its development is incomplete. Chapter 2 went on to discuss interpretations of ecotourism as a development and promotional tool found in past studies. The literature concluded that ecotourism is a construct and many studies employ it interchangeably with other terms including responsible tourism, ethical tourism, green tourism, sustainable tourism, demonstrating the fuzziness of the concept and problematizes its comprehension and operationalisation.

The methodology in chapter 3 presented a discussion of the study's research approach and techniques and made an attempt to reflect on the epistemological issues arising from fieldwork. It argued that in order to understand the industry's perspective, a qualitative approach was most appropriate. Using an interview guide in a semi-structured approach allowed the study's participants to express their own views and opinions of what was their understanding of ecotourism and how it had developed in Crete and its perceived impacts. Reflections on the research process and its development were highlighted throughout this chapter. Problems associated with the research approach were outlined and the limitations concerning semi structured interviews were reflected upon and discussed. The sampling strategy was outlined and the difficulties experienced in the field were also presented. The discussion in this chapter was reflective in nature, highlighting the study's limitations. Chapter 4 presented and discussed the state of tourism and its development in Greece based on statistical evidence derived from secondary sources. The theme of tourism development and (ecotourism) in Crete continued in chapter 5. This chapter focussed on exploring and explaining tourists' demand and motivation for visiting the Island of Crete. Past research clearly showed that the majority of visitors arrive during the summer months of June, July and August, with virtually no visitors in the winter months. This mass tourism phenomenon is said to place strains on the community, infrastructure and the environment. The theme of carrying capacity was discussed, and was found that, though very important, nonetheless it was not a deterrent in the promotional efforts of ecotourism as an additional tourism product. A discussion based on rich qualitative findings of this study, derived from interviewing 21 respondents actively involved in tourism related services and tourism regional and local planning, was carried out in chapters 6 and 7. Participants were from: tour operators, tour guides, hotel managing and marketing directors, and commercial directors, Heraklion Chamber of Commerce, Heraklion Prefecture, the Pancretan Association of Hotel Managers, Vice Mayor of Malevizi, Crete, Deputy Mayor (planning & Development), CEO, Destination Management Company, Appraiser of Tourism Development product, Crete Prefecture, tourism consultants. As such, this discussion is based on data derived from influential stakeholders who hold high positions



in the tourism industry in Crete, for instance; Managing directors of large hotels, Mayor, Chairman of the Chamber of Commerce and marketing directors.

The study's findings questioned the well-established argument of ecotourism as a small scale, environmentally friendly, nature driven tourism activity. It produced some novel findings derived from interpreting data collected from those who were responsible in planning, organising and offering ecotourism related activities. The analysis suggested that eco-tourism in Crete is product driven, where the local industry perceived it as market extension, profit motivated economic activity, and where the concern with preserving nature was desirable but of secondary interest. Hence, from the industry's perspective, ecotourism is spontaneous and adhoc development. From this perspective, the current product driven ecotourism in Crete was concerned more with satisfying increasing consumers' needs for seemingly authentic ecotourism activities lasting for one day, such as cycling, bird watching, hiking, rather than with environmental issues. The analysis revealed that genuine nature driven ecotourism has yet to be demonstrated and practiced in Crete. In other words, it could be argued that ecotourism was an entrepreneurial ploy to increase economic growth in a region ravaged by austerity, poverty, unemployment and stagnation. For the industry respondents, more tourism equalled more profit, more employment, enhanced living standards. It should be noted that fieldwork was undertaken during the period of Greek austerity. Ironically, awareness was also shown by a small number of entrepreneurs of the need for environmental protection and for small-scale tourism development, while at the same time subscribing to the need for expanding the tourism market in common with the rest of the industry. As a result, ecotourism in Crete could be seen as a ploy to label or rebrand mass tourism as ecotourism. It is thus apparent that economic dependency and the entrepreneurial spirit drive the ecotourism market segment in Crete in an age of continuing austerity and EU bailouts. As we saw in chapters 5 and 6, over the last ten years or so, Greece, including Crete, has experienced a major deficit with its economy in perpetual recession with rocketing unemployment, depressed salaries, wages and inflated prices, suggesting limited scope of any financial improvement for the local communities. It is not surprising therefore to find Cretan entrepreneurs embarking on any opportunity in order to expand the market demand for perceived ecotourism products. Fieldwork clearly supported the theoretical argument of economic dependency. Cretan tourism is dependent on foreign investment, international tour operators from Germany, Israel, Russia, amongst others.

As a manager of my travel and tourism company in Crete, I have experienced the reluctance of some international tour operators to make prompt and full payments; an example is a tour operator from Israel who refused to pay hotel bills and any other expenses incurred by groups of Israeli tourists staying in Crete. From my experience and this study's findings, this paradigm case is not uncommon in the current tourism climate in Crete. It clearly illustrates the exploitative nature of the tourism

industry's dependency. This finding supports the theoretical argument put forward by several dependency theorists (e.g. Britton, 1982) who drew similar conclusions by examining the political economy of international tourism, concluding that entrepreneurial and commercial power, as well as immense resources of the core countries (e.g. Israel, Germany) allow them to embezzle most of the profit made in the peripheral countries, such as Crete. Furthermore, the study disputed findings from previous studies on tourism that suggested that dependency can be avoided by developing alternatives to the large-scale developments (Brohman, 1996; Brown, 1998; Honey, 1999; Mbaiwa, 2005), such as ecotourism. The claim made by Lepp (2008) and others that these alternatives facilitated local investment opportunities were not born by the findings of this study. The study's finding did not show that ecotourism empowered local people or reduced leakage by keeping more tourism revenue in local hands and concentrating on local development.

The irony is that ecotourism development was perceived by the study's participants as an important set of economic activities that have the potential to enhance the economies of the Cretan regions through new employment opportunities, revenues and enhancement of destination's infrastructure. This perceived imagined reality was not reflected in the study's findings that showed that ecotourism in Crete was no more than an extension of the mass tourism market in a depressed economic climate. This seemingly alternative development strategy for the economic regeneration of several regions in Crete has been widely accepted as a positive economic step, it has also impacted negatively on the local community and the natural environment. Most importantly, it was apparent from the participants' interviews that any type of future tourism development was also highly dependent on local stakeholders' support and goodwill, as well as the promotional activities undertaken by national and regional authorities.

There were a number of original and insightful findings concerning the state of tourism development and its alternative products, including ecotourism in Crete. One of the key findings of this research, which was somehow surprising, was that respondents perceived ecotourism as a product for increasing the number of visitors to Crete rather than as an alternative and more responsible type of tourism. A second major finding concerns the fuzziness surrounding the concept of ecotourism and its ambiguity was well demonstrated in the lengthy qualitative statements representing in the responses received from the study's participants. Another key finding was that the study's respondents perceived ecotourism merely as a marketing ploy rather than a genuine attempt to develop a more sustainable form of tourism in the island of Crete.

In this concluding chapter, an attempt was made to reflect on this research journey from its inception to its completion. Like many other studies, this work does not make claim to generalisability and/or transferability of its findings as it is based on a small number of, albeit influential, respondents representing the industry's perspective. The study's limitations are acknowledged and made

transparent in the above discussion and throughout this thesis. However, to borrow a phrase from Wickens' (1994) the study's findings are 'valid until further notice', illuminating the state of ecotourism in Crete. The research findings illustrate a picture of Crete as a mass tourism destination, and the recent advent of ecotourism is no more than an illusion.

A larger sample of respondents representing, in addition, other stakeholder groups, such as communities' views, opinions and experiences of further development of tourism and the promises made by small scale development of ecotourism, should shed further light on this economic activity and its impacts. In particular, residents' experiences and domestic visitors who take residence in the summer months should be sought and could make a valuable contribution to our knowledge and understanding of ecotourism. This ecotourism perspective can also be enhanced by investigating international tourists/ecotourists' views, interests and motives to visit Crete.

## **Chapter 9**

### **Implications and Recommendations**

#### **9.1 Introduction**

This chapter discusses the implications and makes recommendations of ecotourism development in the Island of Crete, Greece. As this thesis has shown, the Cretan community recognizes the importance of a successful tourism industry for the destination's development and its well-being. This is supported with evidence from research of several years in Crete and from personal experience working in the tourism industry. It is also reinforced by the researcher's experience as a director of a regional authority in Crete working on tourism policy for the industry's sustainable development. This trend in the Cretan policy was influenced by the popularity and claimed success of ecotourism in other destinations, such as, Costa Rica and Australia. It is also based on values which reflect the protection of the scenic beauty of the island of Crete, its traditional way of life and culture. The government policy, as we saw in Chapter 4 was to alleviate the detrimental impacts of tourism by diversifying and introducing alternative types of tourism which they perceived as measures to preserve and protect the traditional way of life, scenic beauty, recreational resources and the Cretan food.

In what follows, this discussion chapter highlights the measures that may need to be taken by all stakeholders involved in the tourism industry based on prominent writers in the field (e.g., Buckley, 2009, 2012; Fennell, 2014; Hunter, 2007; Mason, 2015; Wearing & Neil, 2009) and recommended by the UN Sustainable Development Goals for 2030 (2018). The ecotourism market appears to be expanding at a faster rate than that for tourism generally which itself is experiencing rapid growth. Factors have been identified which stimulate the growth of ecotourism. Even though ecotourism expands rapidly, there are many threats to its sustainability and expansion. Ecotourism depends on natural environments (both living and non-living) and the local cultures closely connected with them. The sustainability of an ecotourism development depends on the extent to which it is compatible with the conservation of its resource- base, its social acceptability and its political feasibility.

#### **9.2 Managing ecotourism development**

As shown throughout the thesis, many factors must be taken into account in managing ecotourism so

that it will be sustainable; difficulties were also highlighted in the management and promotion of ecotourism in Crete. The need to suggest recommendations and policy implications for ongoing planning and development of a more sustainable form of tourism in Crete is evident throughout the thesis. The future of ecotourism development in Crete is dependent on the successful implementation of the following recommendations derived from the study's findings and inspired by past research (e.g., Buckley, 2012; Fennell, 2014; Mason, 2015) and UN Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform for Greece (2018).

1. Involving local people in the development and planning process
2. Education, training, awareness raising
3. Small-scale development
4. Controlled growth and conservation of resources and use of certification
5. Elimination of the seasonality pattern and dependency on tour operators
6. Protecting the natural and cultural environments
7. Managing the relationship between biodiversity conservation and ecotourism development
8. Successful marketing through research
9. Managing funding

### **9.2.1 Involving local people in the development and planning process**

The involvement of the local people in the development process is a necessity for sustainability. A destination may have the necessary conditions for expansion of the industry but they will not be sufficient without local community's acceptability. The locals' acceptance of tourism development is considered important for Crete's long-term success of tourism, since if tourists are greeted with hostility their numbers will decline (Ritchie, 1988; Lankford and Howard, 1994; Wickens, 2002). As these scholars argue, if people feel they have access to the tourism development process and their concerns are being considered, they will support the development. Anderson, Bakir and Wickens (2015) from their work on tourism development in Conamara, Ireland, found that there was a need for locals' participation in tourism decision-making and a strong leadership to ensure a sustainable eco-tourism development. As this study shows, eco-tourism is accepted by the industry and the locals as necessary for regional development; however, there was evidence of only limited involvement of the local population in decision-making. Therefore, as Anderson et al., (2015) argued, concerted efforts should be made to ensure that the wants of the locals for their community and its future development are taken into account. Through greater community involvement, it is more likely that the local population can gain more benefits, adverse socio-cultural impacts can be minimized and the quality of services provided to tourists can be improved.

A systematic analysis of local opinions and perceptions can play a vital role in tourism policy formulation. Only through a continuous discussion with the local community concerning tourism costs and benefits, the desired future strategies of tourism development programs are likely to succeed. All community members have to be assured that they will not be disadvantaged as a result of tourism development and that through collaboration and co-ordination, benefits will be enhanced for all and distributed more equally (Anderson et al., 2015). The involvement of the locals should be encouraged from the very beginning, by promoting public dialogue and by enabling them to participate in the processes of decision-making and profit-sharing (Diamantis, 2004). This is only possible when ecotourism development planning takes into consideration the views, perceptions and preferences of the local inhabitants (Anderson et al., 2015).

In contrast, when local people are not included in ecotourism development projects, these projects are very likely to either fail completely or not succeed, undermining its desired sustainability (McCool & Moisey, 2001). Indeed, several studies indicate that when people do not receive sufficient benefits from ecotourism, they are prone to develop a negative attitude towards ecotourism development and oppose to the goals of environmental conservation that are closely linked to ecotourism (Lawton, 2001). This might occur for example when indigenous people, whose survival depends heavily upon the use of natural resources, perceive tourism as a threat that deprives them of their livelihood, as it competes with them over land and resources.

### **9.2.2 Education, training, awareness raising**

Ongoing education and training on sustainable tourism is essential in its development. The provision of educational programs helps to address the issues of sufficient capacity. The importance of training and education appears to be a common thread that links the literature on ecotourism and local development (Fennell, 1999). Locals deserve to know about the impacts of tourism developments in their destination. Both local communities and tourists need to be educated about overtourism and its impacts. Developers should provide information on how to inspire community members to develop educational programs for tourists as well (Mason, 2008).

In promoting sustainable tourism development, communities and tourists should be continually educated and trained about tourism and how to protect the environment (Anderson et al., 2015). Authorities should have on-going educational workshops and training for the communities, tourists and public employees. Developing and adopting positive attitudes towards tourists, the local community will more likely to achieve a competitive advantage for Crete's tourism industry. However, local attitudes regarding further development of the industry can change over time, for instance, overtourism affecting negatively mainland Greece and more recently many Greek islands

(e.g. Santorini and Crete). Therefore, support of tourism development, sustainable or otherwise, diminishes ((Anderson et al., 2015; Wickens, 1994). Therefore, attempts should be made through education, awareness raising and improvement of the social welfare, to ensure that the support for tourism will continue in the long- term. Issues to be addressed should include the economic benefits of tourism for the island and the incentives that tourism provides for the conservation of cultural and natural resources that may not be supported by the local community. The ways to achieve this are through educational programs, public meetings, workshops and advertising campaigns in the mass and social media, schools and various community organizations.

The study's findings concerning the state of tourism development and its alternative products including ecotourism show evidence of insufficient understanding of the concept of ecotourism and its impacts and was surrounded by fuzziness. Consequently, it is crucial to view ecotourism in its true dimensions, so as neither to exaggerate its potential benefits nor to underestimate its potential risks. After all, the development of ecotourism, like all other forms of tourism, also requires careful planning and constant monitoring in order to lead to the desirable results (Anderson et al., 2015).

### **9.2.3 Small-scale development**

Ecotourism is considered as a form of sustainable tourism, through the promotion of environmental conservation, community development and profit-making for the local tourism industry. Nevertheless, this is not necessarily the case, because although the net effect of ecotourism might in the end be positive for the natural environment, local communities, the tourism industry as well as the consumers, the actual process of developing ecotourism is not free from negative impacts (Anderson et al., 2015; Sirakaya et al., 1999). Small-scale ecotourism, on the other hand, is thought to be able to minimize or even avoid most negative effects, provided that it is carefully planned and managed in all the phases of its development (Anderson et al., 2015). Still, one cannot neglect the fact that even if a destination is adequately managed, some major problems will remain (Gössling, 1999). In reality, all kinds of tourism, including ecotourism, are responsible for a wide range of detrimental effects on the natural environment, which is especially alarming when protected areas or other vulnerable ecosystems are involved (Buckley, 2004).

The concentration of tourists on the north side of Crete has some obvious advantages because infrastructural investments in this part of the island confines tourism problems, permits greater use of existing infrastructure and creates economies of scale. In the existing developed resorts and urban areas of the island no new accommodation is required, as existing establishments already possess a supply well in excess of demand. As a result, any growth in the supply of accommodation may further

reduce the occupancy rates and may have detrimental effects on the already saturated environment. Therefore, for existing resorts the focus of tourism policy should be on the best use of existing establishments, rather than building new ones.

Entrepreneurs should be encouraged by the Greek Government through various incentives to improve the standards of the tourist services, upgrade amenities and construct a range of facilities that will bring distinct benefits to the areas. The review of past incentives given by Development Laws and the opinions of some respondents suggested that the public sector has neglected small enterprises. Therefore, future investments should not only be directed to large enterprises but also to smaller ones, as long as they contribute to the enhancement of the tourism product. In order to increase benefits from tourism through higher participation of local investors in development, create employment opportunities for locals and reduce leakages from future developments, more small-scale tourist facilities and tourism centers should be developed, in the underdeveloped southern and inland areas of the island.

Local owners of small businesses can contribute significantly to economic growth because they supply smaller markets (such as niche tourism products), demand relatively small amounts of capital, use local resources and materials and do not require costly and urban infrastructure. Therefore, small-scale developments in Crete may appear in the form of tourist villages, incorporating small traditional hotels, restaurants, shops and various recreational, leisure and sport facilities, owned by local entrepreneurs under a shareholder scheme.

#### **9.2.4 Controlled growth and conservation of resources and use of certification**

Ecotourism should not be considered as equal to sustainable tourism, but rather as one of its components (Dawson, 2001). Ecotourism, in other words, is not a panacea for environmental conservation, nor can it, on its own, lift local communities from poverty. In fact, unless ecotourism is well planned and constantly monitored, it might even achieve the opposite results, namely placing even heavier pressure on the environment and exacerbating local inhabitants' poverty. In contrast, if ecotourism is perceived as part of a general strategy for sustainable development, then it truly has the potential to contribute to the protection of natural environment and promote the socio-economic well-being of host communities (Muller, 2000). However, Crete has many areas of ecological and environmental sensitivity or natural beauty that are its major attractions. Since the attractiveness of these areas depends upon their ecological balance, it is of the utmost importance to ensure environmental conservation by special legislation. Although, all tourists have an impact on a destination, alternative tourists are considered as low-impact (Anderson et al., 2015). Therefore, in these areas, alternative forms of tourism, such as eco-tourism, trekking and bird watching should be



promoted. No building or any other types of development that destroy the unspoiled environment should be allowed. Sensitivity of local communities towards the preservation of the natural resources should be ensured through public information campaigns and the introduction of environmental courses into the curricula of schools. A series of car parks, trails, guided walks and signs should be provided to encourage environmentally-friendly activities with control and regulation of visitor viewing and activities. Likewise, more incentives for environmental conservation, such as biological cleaning, water and marine parks, green areas should be supported by EU funding.

Any type of growth based on archaeological and cultural richness should be adjusted to their architectural, cultural and historical identity. Tourism should be developed and operated so as to promote conservation of archaeological sites and historic places, and revitalization of the desirable aspects of traditional cultural patterns and arts, all of which represent the historic and cultural heritage of Crete. Priority should be given to their preservation and regulations should be applied to this end. Conversion of traditional or listed buildings into hotels or for any other type of touristic use, e.g. restaurants, museums, cultural centers and traditional workshops, could be allowed under the condition that preservation will be ensured. Since archaeological and historical sites are major attractions for tourists, admission fees can cover the cost of investments for their enhancement and preservation.

As a result the development process needs to use specific socio-cultural and environmental control measures in order to ensure that no problems will result from future development. There should be an environmental plan which will be the prerequisite for the achievement of the sustainable development of the island. This plan should consider the saturated areas and each area's carrying capacity limits, as well as the consequences if these limits are exceeded. Although, much hope has been placed in the possibility of using the concept of carrying capacity to manage ecotourism. However, it is not a straightforward operational concept. Its application usually requires some valuations to be made and often these are unavoidably subjective. Nevertheless, carrying capacity constraints are sometimes imposed. Once a carrying capacity is determined, it is necessary to adopt measures such as the imposition of entry fees or allocation of permits to ensure that it is not exceeded. Additionally, there is a strong relation between certification and ecotourism and since the first is seen as a significant tool for setting standards for the second (Honey & Stewart, 2002). Font and Bendell (2002), define certification as "the process by which third-party assessment is undertaken, written assurance is given that the product, process, service or management system conforms to the standard" (cited in Sallows & Font, 2004, p. 92-93). Honey and Stewart (2002) also describe certification as "the procedure that audits and gives written assurance that a facility, product, process, service or management system meets specific standards. It awards a logo or seal to those that meet or exceed

baseline criteria or standards that are prescribed by the program” (p. 4-5). Certification has come about to answer the call for regulation in order to ensure that products being promoted were ecotourism compliant, in terms of their adherence to the concept as defined. Certification is advocated as a means to distinguish genuine ecotourism products from ‘green washed’ products, which are labelled as ecotourism but do not meet required standards (Medina, 2005). Buckley (2002) states that an eco-label should incorporate four elements: (i) global brand recognition, including monitoring and information on the implications of the label; (ii) detailed criteria for the different products and services; (iii) each label should include at least two levels of attainment; and (iv) the labels should be transparent with an educational remit for tourists (Buckley, 2002). Certification indicates high quality and environmentally and socially conscious products (Haaland & Aas, 2010). This should also be the case for ecotourism in Crete where the local government in cooperation with the tourism business and the host population must develop quality certifications assuring that products and services fulfil the high standards required by ecotourism principles.

Through the past few years, certification schemes have become very popular because of their advantages for both the tourism industry and consumers. On the one hand, the tourism industry can minimize governmental control by increasing self-regulation, while, on the other hand, consumers are provided with useful information concerning certified tourism products and services (Issaverdis, 2001). As such, certification has attracted significant attention both within the academic community and the tourism industry and has generated general optimism with regard to its potential to help achieve sustainable development in the tourism sector (Fennel, 2002). In particular, certification is believed to have the potential to decrease the adverse environmental and social impacts of tourism, by making the tourism industry assume its responsibilities and by providing marketing benefits to companies that meet specific standards (Font et al., 2003). However, one of the most important limiting factors for the widespread success of certification programs is their relatively poor uptake by the tourism industry worldwide, as is the case in Crete (Synergy, 2000 for WWF-UK). Nevertheless, certification is strongly recommended for the whole ecotourism industry in Crete, including; hoteliers, tour operators, craft businesses, taverns, and others.

### **9.2.5 Elimination of the seasonality pattern and dependency on tour operators**

Seasonality is perceived as a problem in the island’s tourism industry. Given the importance of the tourism industry to: the island’s economy, the profitability of enterprises, employment and income creation; efforts should be made to extend the tourism season. Attention should be given not only to existing development plans but also to their implementation since past evidence shows that although

many plans have been designed for the development of tourism in the island, most of them have not been implemented (Komilis, 1987).

Cultural and alternative forms of tourism should also be promoted. The island of Crete has rich environmental and cultural resources, and along with the good weather (limited rainy days every year), these resources can help extend the tourism season. For example, trekking holidays in the numerous forest trails of the island could extend the tourism season and reduce the seasonality pattern of the sun-seeking type of tourists. Furthermore, as seasonality depends on the availability of tourist attractions and services, these attractions and services should be created or made available off-season; making attractions and services available outside the main summer season. A significant opportunity for out-of- season tourism could be achieved in the largest cities of the island, where 'multi-season' attractions could be promoted through the organization of cultural activities related to local communities. However, increased marketing activities are required from the authorities, such as promotional campaigns for off-peak seasons, lower off-peak prices, and business and sporting events.

A major problem identified in this study was the control of the tourism industry by foreign tour operators. To address and eventually eliminate this problem, Greece has to establish regular charter flights from the major tourist generating countries and directly sell tourist packages to these tourists. This helps reduce the leakage of money to foreign airlines and, to some extent, diminish the monopolistic powers of the large international tour operators.

### **9.2.6 Protecting the natural and cultural environments**

Like many forms of tourism, ecotourism has been criticized for its negative impacts on the natural and cultural environments (Lawrence *et al.*, 1997). Although many authors claim that ecotourism is a positive force, on the assumption that it is less environmentally invasive than mass tourism (Buckley, 2004), others are critical of the concept (Carrier & MacLeod, 2005). The main points of contention surrounding this type of tourism relate to: its sustainability claim, degradation of the environment which it is trying to maintain, and the tangible benefits to local communities (Cater, 2006). Also disputed are the problems surrounding certification and how some ecotourism labels are promoting weak products (Buckley, 2008), as elaborated in point 4 above. Careful guidelines for planning and management of ecotourism in Crete should be provided in order to ensure that it is appropriately and effectively developed, and that it offers the local communities increased opportunities and benefits. Prior to the commencement with any ecotourism development, its main features and characteristics should be recognized by local communities, governments and businesses so that the claimed benefits of this development in terms of conserving the natural and cultural

environment are achievable and not overstated. Alongside small scale development and certification (explained above), ecotourism development planning should particularly incorporate the following features (see Anderson et al., 2015):

- Promotion of the natural and cultural environment among local population, concerned stakeholders and tourist groups
- Making the commitment to support environmental protection and conservation of resources a primary concern
- Focusing on interactive exchange of knowledge and experience between hosts and guests; and
- Providing high quality service to ensure tourists' satisfaction.

The above features should also be incorporated in the policy and planning of ecotourism development in Crete.

### **9.2.7 Managing the relationship between biodiversity conservation and ecotourism development**

Eco-labeling often prompts business to use green technologies that can reduce pollution and help the environment (Amacher, Koskela & Ollikainen, 2004). Ecotourism development can help in retaining as much as possible of what remains of wild nature through a sensible combination of sustainable use, conservation and compensation for local people wherever necessary (Balmford et al., 2002). Lack of clear conceptualization of ecotourism creates major problems. For example, the Samaria gorge in Crete, a UNESCO protected area, receives hundreds of visitors every day during the summer, walking and littering for seven hours in the gorge, often having no previous information about the duration of the visit and the hot weather conditions. This activity destroys the natural environment, while at the same time the tourists themselves cannot enjoy their excursion.

Lack of the possession of related resources including finance and management skill as well as knowledge to get involved in ecotourism development are also some of the major barriers resulting in withdrawal of community support (Lai & Nepal, 2006). Successful ecotourism policy should be introduced in a progressive way with proper planning and accompanied by a general educational pilot program related to sustainable use of natural and cultural resources (Gulinck et al., 2001). Integrating conservation with the development needs of the people is more likely to result in a successful ecotourism policy (Safafsky, 2011). Proper management of the ecotourism sites is one of the major key factors of their success. The dynamics of the three major stakeholders: (a) resources, (b) community, and (c) tourists are most important for the success of ecotourism and thus they should be managed properly. To protect resources and meet the conservation strategies, the administrative body

must restrict the scope of recreational use (Robinson, Torvik, & Verdier, 2006). Strategies like carrying capacity, regulatory practices for the vehicles, and code of conduct for the tourists should be introduced so as to minimize the negative effect of rising number of eco-tourists (Tsaour, Lin, & Lin, 2006). The notion of criteria and indicators (C&I) for sustainable forest management (SFM) is another technique that can be used to assess the activities and suggest some guidelines towards better management of natural resources (Dutta, Guha, & Chattopadhyay, 2010). Involvement of the local community (as explained above) in the entire process is another key element of success in such conservational policies, because sustainable management of protected areas ultimately depends on the co-operation and support of the local people (Owinio, Jillo, & Kenana, 2012; Tomićević, Margaret, & Milovanovi, 2010; Tsaour et al., 2006; Karanth, Kramer, Qian, & Christensen, 2008; Ghate, 2013). Public compensation and community co-management should be introduced to solve the conflicts between community economic development and biodiversity conservation (Chen et al., 2005). More awareness campaigns for both the locals and the tourists will also help in the conservation policies (Isaacs, 2000; Tsaour et al., 2006). Thus all the related agencies - governments, local authorities, visitors, local community, and the developers as well as tour operators have to be sensitive to the environment and local traditions and follow a set of guidelines for the successful development of ecotourism. In addition, non-governmental organizations and scientific institutions must play a key role in the development of ecotourism (Khanna, 2002). Reynolds and Braithwaite (2001) argue that a wide range of management techniques like differential tax system and educating both visitors and operators will go a long way in achieving sustainability. Long term initiatives to integrate conservation, education, and research and capacity building will help locals to know more about their biodiversity and why they should protect it (Şekercioğlu, 2012). A variety of environmental indicators should be used to reflect the trends in the environment and monitor progress made in achieving environmental policy targets.

### **9.2.8 Successful marketing through research**

Research findings show that a number of visitors to Crete are interested in ecotourism activities. Local tourism operators offer day trips to the designated protected areas; however, they are not aware of the impacts of such activities. Local tour operators need to be better informed and their activities should reflect the values of those tourists who demand authentic ecotourism experiences. This study makes the following recommendations to the local industry: Local educational institutions should develop and run educational and knowledge transfer programs for the local ecotourism entrepreneurs. For instance, through workshops or tailored courses which clearly explain the complexity of reconciling the demand of ecotourists with the need of protecting the environment, both the natural and cultural

environment. Local academic experts should be able to furnish the industry with the knowledge and experience of the detrimental impacts of unchecked tourism activities. The programs should focus particularly on the interpretation of what is ecotourism, its environmental management, planning and designing ecotourism activities. Furthermore, findings derived from the commissioning of marketing research on ecotourists' perceptions, preferences, values and motivation should guide the design of ecotourism products and go a long way to protect the designated areas.

However, this ecotourism study in Crete recognizes its limitations in that it has not considered ecotourism in Crete from the visitors' perspectives, it is important to make the recommendation of conducting research on what visitors to Crete would like to experience, the type of accommodation they would like for their stay, their motivations and perceptions and knowledge of the natural and cultural specificities of the Cretan island. Such findings would certainly assist the promotion and sustainable development of genuine ecotourism products.

### **9.2.9 Managing Funding**

In the past, funding was almost exclusively managed by government. Such funding often runs into deficit. Also, the objectives of tourism policy are subject to change with different political administrations. Greece not being an exception, depends largely on governmental support in terms of funding, assessment and recognition. This thesis recommends the establishment of a non-profit organization that is responsible for overseeing the protection and conservation of the designated zones. The work of this organization should ultimately benefit the local community by effectively managing additional funding generated by tourism activities, such as, purchasing local handicraft and food, including; olives, honey, oregano, feta cheese. This organization will be funded by support from local government and Europe. Furthermore, existing European funding should support training, environmental education, and providing guidance to new ecotourism businesses.

## **9.3 Concluding Reflections**

In many cases, erroneous past practices regarding tourism development are still currently implemented. The rapid and intense tourism development that happened in Crete over the past years was often without a concrete plan of public infrastructure and was not conducted by proper planning and management policies. The lack of planning and management, together with the ineffectiveness of the enforcement mechanisms have generated a series of problems in the Greek tourism sector. In

particular, transportation, telecommunication systems, police and health services, water supply and sewage systems are inefficient and unable to support tourism demand during the summer months, when tourism concentration reaches its peak. In recognizing the increasing tourism demand, the authorities have planned the development of a new airport in Crete in Kasteli area in order to replace the old one that cannot cope with the peak tourist arrivals. Although, this airport was promised many years ago by five different governments, it is still not developed, being postponed with different pretexts and detrimental consequences for Cretan tourism.

The lack of a steady governmental strategy regarding tourism development is one of the main obstacles in the process of developing a competitive tourism product in Greece and Crete. This is mostly due to the fact that tourism has been often used in the past, and unfortunately in the present, by various governments as a way for accomplishing their goals and as political pressure. The lack of political commitment has led to the adoption of highly variable tourism measures and regulations that changed together with the political leadership, resulting in general confusion and incompetence of tourism policies. In this way, tourism policies adopted in Greece for political interests, lobbying and short-term profitability, largely drove the haphazard development in the past decades and failed to establish a long-term vision for sustainable tourism development. In addition, the mass tourism development in Crete create a growing pressure for building new constructions that are intended for use as hotels, restaurants and other tourism facilities that often ignore the existing land-use and urban planning regulations and tend to expand in an anarchic way, thus creating a mixed and overcrowded built environment.

Moreover, the dependency on mass tourism development produced extensive degradation of the natural and cultural environment, aggravated by the high seasonality of the tourism demand as well as the spatial overconcentration in certain areas. For example, the north side of Crete is overdeveloped while the south side is completely underdeveloped with tremendous negative effects on the local economy. Currently, the Cretan tourism industry has shied away from undertaking voluntary initiatives, and the improvement of its environmental performance still relies heavily on governmental control. For example, many hotels tend to implement some kind of environmental-friendly practices, such as, the use of energy-saving light bulbs or appliances, because of their direct financial payoff. Likewise, the use of water-saving devices has increased significantly in the accommodation sector in Greece. Nevertheless, the number of hotels that have put in place an integrated strategy for improving their environmental performance as a whole is still very limited, with the exception of few large hotel chains.

One of the major obstacles of Cretan tourism is perhaps that it has become completely dependent on the “sea, sand and sun” model that Greece has been associated with in the past years (Wickens, 1994, 2002). This has led to a very limited diversification of the experience that is offered to tourists and,

hence, to a loss of its appeal, especially within the context of international tourism market that tends to become more diversified and competitive. In other words, the strong competition that is developed among different regions of Greece that are offering the same or similar type of product, as well as, the competition from other countries providing a very similar product (such as, Turkey and other Mediterranean countries) is largely responsible for the decrease of Greece's popularity as an international tourism destination (at the time of writing). For these reasons, the potential and competitiveness of the Greek tourism industry in the future is highly doubtful if it continues on the same path of development.

The above-mentioned problems have produced an extremely strong criticism of the current policy of tourism development that was followed in Greece for decades, not only by tourism experts but also by the Greek public. The most important points of this criticism referred to the inadequacy of the Greek government to set limits and control of the growth of mass tourism and to deal with problems that this type of tourism produces, thus with the failure to develop alternative forms of tourism, such as, ecotourism. This growing criticism has stressed the need to implement more diversified and sustainable patterns of tourism development in Greece. Moreover, new tourism products other than mass tourism are gradually being integrated in official tourism planning. This, nevertheless, does not imply that the focus has is expected, in the near future, to be entirely shifted away from the development of mass tourism, since tourism is still one of the major sources of revenue for the Greek economy. The pressure for tourism development in the conventional sense continues to be high, hence the crucial point is to view ecotourism in its true dimensions not to exaggerate its potential benefits or to underestimate its potential risks. Consequently, the development of ecotourism like all other forms of tourism requires careful planning and continuous monitoring in order to achieve the right outcomes.



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## Appendices

### Appendix 1 Interview Transcripts (Extract)

#### R1 Product Manager of a tour operator

- We offer package holidays to Greece generally, painting holidays, sailing holidays, mountain bike, walking etc. I have been in business 10 years; I've been the Product Manager for 10 years.... Sunvil been in operation as a business, 40 years. 49 employees work in my business.... We have almost 20,000 – 25,000 tourists per year.
- Yes, we consider our business an ecotourism business. We do everything to make sure that all suppliers are acting eco-friendly. We try to urge them to use less power for heating water, to minimise the water usage in the accommodation and we pay a lot of attention to the cleaning means and the change of linen and towels per week. We don't demand from them to have a standard mode of changing linen and towels but only on clients' request. This is an eco-policy we follow.
- What were the main reasons to influence your decision to enter the tourism industry?  
I like travelling, I like to meet and socialise with happy people. People on their holiday are usually and generally happy people. And this is the main reason.
- To run a successful nature-based tourism operation, first of all you have to believe in that and make sure that your staff believe in that too. That's the main thing, I think. .... First of all you need your staff to believe in that. Apart from that, you have to convince people that you are working with suppliers that do the right thing and maintain the environment, because when people use stuff or travel them mainly harm the environment. ...only a small percentage of tourism operations is eco-friendly.
- The tourism market in Crete in terms of size ...Crete is a very big island. Tourism in Crete is growing in all directions, but recently it is going more to the activity and alternative holidays, like scuba diving, mountain bike, walking, bird-watching. .... I think there is room for environmental-friendly tourism in Crete.
- Yes, we have specific environmental objectives or policies. All the accommodations we collaborate with have to have some standards. Apply AEI, for example, to have solar heating water only or to have labels everywhere to have economy-saving lamps and bulbs in the accommodation. As I said before, we urge the owners and we recommend to our clients to ask for a new towel or new linen and not use the standard mode in the accommodation.
- We create environmental benefits from our tourism operation. We do believe in them and definitely all our accommodation suppliers. We encourage the suppliers to recycle, first of all. ...and we encourage both clients and suppliers to the minimal usage of water and we suggest to clients that the linen and towels are changed only upon request, and not at the standard mode. This is one of these policies we are using for...
- Yes, of course, there any environmental determinants from our tourism operations. All the travelling means, like aircrafts, coaches etc., are environmental determinants. You cannot avoid this.
- What make tourism eco-friendly and a responsible form of travel are policies like recycling, saving water, minimising the use of chemicals for cleaning, encouraging suppliers to use motors in coaches, boats etc. Yes, I do think that this is a responsible form of travelling... compared to mass tourism... Absolutely, absolutely..... Yes. Ecotourism is the type of tourism that does its best to cause the minimum harm to the environment.... and therefore it helps the local life the best way possible, I think...  
Ecotourism is the kind of tourism that causes the minimum damage to the environment. .... The form of tourism that has less harmful effects on the environment.
- Ecotourists visiting Crete expect to see that on the island that eco-friendly policies are implemented, like recycling, like saving fresh water, like protecting the wildlife in, you know, the mountains, etc.

.... our clients, Sunvil clients, are aware about all these .... They care about all these things when they visit the destination of Crete.

Yes. They do, they do. ...and it is made very clear in our brochures and in our websites that we have eco-friendly policies, as much as we can.....this is why people also choose Sunvil in general, due to the fact that Sunvil somehow respects the environment. I think so. Yes, I think so.

## **R2 Senior Sales Manager of a hotel**

- Ecotourism is a part of tourism concerning people with a special interest in the protection of the environment, as well as in enjoying the environment. So it does apply to hotels like ours...that are friendly to the environment, it does apply to methods of transportation that are friendly to the environment. It has mainly interest guests that like enjoy nature. Ecotourism exists in Greece that is a fact. And it is actually growing year by year. More hotels and professionals in the industry, from travel agencies, transportation companies, to the municipality focus on promoting ecotourism, even more so because the island of Crete has resources, magnificent resources, of nature. So yes, it is growing year by year, and the methods we apply have the interest of protecting the environment.... Specifically for Creta Maris Beach Resort, we started a new philosophy in 2012. The philosophy is Green-Cretan and there are different methods that we apply in order to be on the green side, on the eco side of tourism. I can mention that one of the programmes is “Green miles”, meaning that we use local products. In other words we do not import products from different countries. In that sense, we do protect the environment by not transferring materials, so there is no waste of energy by boats or by plane. There is energy needed in order to transfer items. So we use local products by 90% to supply the hotel. In another sense, energy-wise, we use large field of solar panels in order to heat water in the hotel, and we are very well successful in that, we use materials to clean guests’ rooms that are friendly to the environment, we use natural products in the kitchen in order to clean the equipment. For instance, on the grill we use lemons, products that have natural acidity. There are different ways. We have programmes of plantation and guests are involved in this and they enjoy it very much. We have a field, we call it our bio-garden, and we do plantation of trees. We do that not only in our area, but also in other areas in coordination with the municipality. We do different activities. I just remember these few.
- Ecotourism encourages sustainable development, definitely. It is a part of a market that helps develop tourism and not only tourism, but also the local community. And we will see in the upcoming years that it will be stronger and stronger. It’s more popular in other European countries than Greece, but since we have realised that the natural resources in Crete are unique and they need to be protected, in combination with the ecotourism that we already have in this part, yes, it does encourage sustainable tourism in many different aspects. The examples I just mentioned before, are part of this development.
- Sustainable development means infrastructure for the community, development in the physical aspect of the land, of the resources we use energy-wise. Development is not only for the physical aspect but also for the people. They are developed by having new ideas and interest to protect the environment and at the same time enjoy the environment.
- Ecotourism appears in our promotional material. We use online and offline marketing activities in order to promote ecotourism, online meaning on different channels of the internet, either through our own website....We have programmes at the hotel. We do plantation, we do... We are certified with the Green Key. This is an award that we got. We mention our green philosophy and that we take actions that are friendly to the environment in the hotel description, we refer to our interest as a hotel, and that of our guests, in the surrounding area, we have our own “green” sign and we mention it on our title, to show that we are a green-oriented hotel. It’s the same offline, in our brochure we do that we are a green-oriented hotel and its part of our philosophy. ....we also present our promotional material regarding ecotourism via brochures, publications, magazines, newspapers. I hope that your paper will also refer to our material, so different publications... This summer there was a two-page article in a Greek newspaper, I think it was “Eleftherotipia”, and “Epsilon” magazine.

I think we have made a publication in Conde Nast Traveller magazine, other tourism magazines, where we mention our philosophy, and we emphasise the eco-friendly part of our philosophy. .... Green, we go by green. ... I think green tourism is the same with ecotourism... Similar. .... Yes, because green can mean nature tourism, ecotourism... Everything belongs to ecotourism. .... We are green-oriented, we are ecological.... I don't think there are major differences. The major part is that we do activities and actions, we take precautions not to harm the environment and urge the customer, the guest, to enjoy nature. Creta Maris offers... We have a green team at the hotel, which involves the customers as well. First of all we educate our guests and this is fantastic. We have great attendance, both children and grown-ups. For instance, we had about 70 people doing a bike ride this summer, on the national day of transportation, trying to pass the message that we can use bicycles instead of cars, and the area around Creta Maris, the nature of Hersonissos. So we do have a significant interest from the guests. If they are not very familiar with ecotourism or green tourism, as we say, they find the interest in the hotel with the programmes that we have, like plantation, bike rides...

- We provide ecotourism activities such as golf, could be considered. Creta Maris Beach Resort is very close, very near to the Crete Golf Club, it's also related. So, we have very nice activities like this sport, it's a well-known sport and it's a green sport. We also have watersports at the hotel that are not motorised, so people can enjoy canoe, kayak or the sea bicycle, kite surfing. So we do emphasize on watersports that don't have motor, which don't disturb the environment and provide safety for our guests. Cleaning of the beach and collecting and observing the bottom of the sea in a safe manner. That brings our guests them closer to nature and we do it to get them at the same time not to litter on the beach, not to spoil the beach and enjoy the nature of it. At Creta Maris we have over 100 different types of trees, and we have a team that goes around and shows our guests all these kinds of trees. From orange trees to local trees.
- Do we have ecotourism objectives? We keep statistics but I'm not aware if we have set goals for them. We do keep statistics though. Of how many people we have, what activities are more favourite to our guests. Certain goals and objectives we have not set. That is just about the guests' activities. About energy saving, of course. We try to increase nature resources by 10% every year.... and reduce waste, and the chemicals that we use.
- We offer tourism services that are friendly to the environment. We love the environment and we'd like to respect it. Creta Maris is located in one of the most beautiful locations in Crete, it has a unique golden beach and it is our obligation to respect the environment and also respect the guests that come to Greece and visit the Creta Maris in Crete. From our point of view, respecting the environment means respecting their time. And what they see every year.  
... But of course Creta Maris's main concern, like all the other businesses, is profit. To operate as a hotel or as a company.... Every year. We are not opportunists. We need to protect the environment in order to ensure that the clientele will find the interest in nature to visit Crete again and again. I remember a conversation that I had with a repeater client, who had visited the hotel about 20 times, and I asked them when is their preferred period, and they did specifically mention "I like to come to the hotel at the beginning or end of the season, when the grass is beautiful, green and the flowers are beautiful". They enjoy the environment very much.
- We are gaining more customers by offering tourism services friendly to the environment, definitely, yes, of course. It's like having a building and you don't take care of it. We need to take care of the environment. When you have beautiful gardens and you have the opportunity to indicate to guests different kinds of plantation and the nature that surrounds the hotel, or the wider area, the destination they come to, it gains you more...

There is also another market for that demands protection of the environment. Yes, a new market for you. ...and also we need to keep, maintain the existing market. If the beach at Creta Maris is not clean, and if the water they see is not clean, we're going to lose... Everybody cares about the environment, in order to have a clean environment. ... Even mass tourists... of course. Of course they do! The beach is the number one reason for them to come and visit and spend their vacation..... Yes.

So, everybody cares about the environment. They might not be so involved but everybody cares about the environment. All of them.

- Ecotourism, I think it does influence the economy. The local economy. ... Money circulates.... For example, green miles. We do not import products. We protect the environment by green miles. So we use products from the local market. We support the local economy. At the same time, guests have the opportunity to taste the products of Crete. So that makes the experience more true, genuine about Crete, and they can experience the products of Cretan nature. So that also makes it “eco”. In other ways, specifically for Crete, since we have such a beautiful nature, I think it would attract more and more clientele. So that part of tourism will increase in the upcoming years. It’s already significant, but it will increase. In your position, you should know best the type of excursions tourists prefer, and that a number of tourists like to visit individually to see the nature. Like fly & drive programmes, tourists rent a car and go to different beaches every day, visit villages and ... I need to think about it more in order to specify the benefits. But the more I think of it, the stronger it builds in me. I believe in it.
- Yes, we try to get them the local community involved. Furthermore, the decision makers and the representatives of the society are the electors. So, young people give their vote to the persons who care about the environment. Especially in Rethymnon, where I vote, for young people of 19-35 years of age, it’s the number one factor. Any actions we take or request to take need to be friendly to the environment. For instance, we put pressure on the municipality and it now provides bicycles to tourists free of charge. And this is starting also here in Heraklion. Also small businesses do that. We care about waste management. I’ve seen people recycling. I don’t know what happens to waste after that, but people do recycle. I know that young people do recycle and advise older people to do the same. Young people ask older people in villages to show them paths on the mountains or through villages and organise excursions and visits, so that tourists can enjoy nature, see the genuine aspect of the locals and of the island, and also so that they can later circulate that information. Technology-wise, we do not use cars so much as before. We use these small mopeds. It’s more economical..... We try to protect the environment. Eco-services are part of the general services. General services need to be adapted to the eco-services.... we want to change the face of tourism ....from being harmful to being eco-friendly. So our philosophy is not to add tourism but to replace tourism.... change it to eco-friendly. .... It is part of life. It is becoming a lifestyle. And I am quite positive about it from the people I am involved with. .... We don’t drink whiskey, we do not order whiskey. We order Cretan wine and try to use local products. Not that we do not enjoy drinks from abroad....I think it is a priority to make it more environmentally friendly. And I think that by doing so and by promoting our w resources, tourism will be increased. Because the number one reason a tourist visits a destination is nature. If it’s a not beautiful place and safe, they will not visit the destination. People come for the beach, the sun, and the climate.... it may look just like mass tourism but tourists do not visit Italy, because Italy does not have clean beaches....They visit Crete that has beautiful beaches. .... I think that ecotourism respects the environment. ... So there is no harmful effect...., because people are cautious and they have a sense of responsibility, as I mentioned before. ...and if the area they visit is protected, we can advise them and tell people how to behave when they visit this area, it will not be harmed.
- I have seen Government policy documents in relation to sustainable tourism, I have seen propaganda... I am not sure of what actually takes place, what really happens. .... to my knowledge, there are programmes subsidised by the EU .... But I ask for more. ...I think we could have done a lot more. ... I think ecotourism a genuine tourism activity to preserve the environment, it is self-evident because guests, ecotourists, are 100% interested in the environment, they protect the environment and they will help us protect the environment. .... Ecotourism ...is quality tourism. I would define it as quality tourism; that covers it because it respects the environment, the local economy as well.
- I do not see differences in ecotourists compared to another type of tourists. No, it is the same tourism. It is the same person. It is the same person who will go hiking in Colorado and who will also visit the Greek islands and Crete in the summertime, and they will go kayaking or canoeing. What I mean is

that a part of mass tourists, individually, are interested in the environment. They may not have such a strong opinion about the environment and it may not be their priority, but it's the reason why they visit beautiful places like Crete. Let me ask you this: do you think someone would visit a destination if nature wasn't beautiful, beaches are dirty? ...the ecotourist is another type of tourist who respects the environment. According to what you said.

Yes, but they do not have such a strong opinion about it. They may not do the activities to the extent that... Yes, I think a part of mass tourists is eco-friendly, ecotourists. The activities they are involved in may differ. A more "hard-core" ecotourist will do more activities or will stay in more personalised hotels or in a big resort where they will do specific activities. But the reason behind their trip is that they want to visit a destination with beautiful nature. We've seen this for many years in the German & Dutch markets, for instance. They care a lot about the environment, they do some sort of waste management... ecotourism can be part of mass tourism, but it is a different category. It just hasn't developed as much because there is no profit interest for travel agents to organise bicycle excursions, let's say, in comparison with bus or car excursions. They do not make so much money.

- Ecotourism is important for Crete, definitely, because the major tourist aspect of Crete is its nature. It has so much to offer in this sense. An ecotourist is an ambassador of Crete, so it is free marketing for Crete, word of mouth. It's the best force of marketing. So ecotourists who appreciate Crete's nature will become our ambassadors.... We just discussed that ecotourism is a different form of mass tourism, a part of mass tourism. Yes, because they use the same resources. Tourists come with the same programmes, and if you compare for example Crete with another destination, like Spain or Turkey, both mass tourism destinations .... Crete's nature cannot be copied. Just like Turkey's or Spain's nature cannot be copied. ...the beauties of the island. Balos beach for instance, there is no such place elsewhere.... tourists discuss the unique experience they have from Crete's nature with their colleagues, their travel agents....they respect the environment very much. .... They visit Balos by the available means of transportation, yes, by bus or by boat. They will go hiking to Aradena or Samaria Gorge. Some people would ask for a means of transportation within the gorge. But no, Samaria Gorge might be the number one excursion in Crete at the moment... I think it is about 100.000 tourists a year. This shows that ecotourism is a part of mass tourism.... Summertime, the Cretan tourism market is summertime. It is not enough. It should be all year-round. Today it is January 14<sup>th</sup>. .... I need to make a point, it is 20 degrees Celsius, 20 degrees, come on, and summertime tourism is not enough! The Cretan tourism market in the summertime is a lot of fun! ... The Cretan tourism market in general has not changed for many years. What we offer hasn't changed, and actually, ten years ago it was much better because we didn't have so many cars, we didn't have impersonalised hotels... But if it hasn't changed... Creta Maris has a character..., Cretan and Aegean. ... It is one of the busiest hotels consistently since 1975. Because it has a character. ... The Cretan market has not changed... No. It has no individuality, no character .... Like other mass markets ...all hotels are copy-paste.... like other mass markets, for instance Turkey, Spain... I think that Turkey is in a better situation.
- Crete is suitable for ecotourism and ecotourism can be developed on Crete, more and more, of course.... First of all I think that seasonality for ecotourism should exclude the high season, June, July, August, September; even city hotels. That is not a problem. That is because it is very easy from the centre of Heraklion, which is the major city, to visit places of natural interest. So it can be off-season. By extending the season and specifying on a market, we have growth. Correct? So I think that seasonality can be larger. Second, I think that there should be more promotion for agrotourism in villages. I think that we can have specific hotels closer to well-recognized nature locations in Crete, we can have specific excursion programmes for bicycles or hiking etc. Like in the west part of Crete, Balos, Gramvousa, Falassarna, Sfakia, Aradena, Samaria Gorge. These are already 7 different places. In 3 or 4 days a tourist can visit most of them. Or in the east part of Crete, where we have Vai palm forest for example. So it can be either location in the summertime or seasonally and tourists can also be involved in other activities off-season. For example harvesting of olives, it is an activity that we locals do for 2-3 months each year. And we enjoy it a lot because besides the financial aspect, we earn money from it, we get close to the environment.



- I am motivated to be involved in the tourism industry because I enjoy personal contact very much. There are different aspects. I am involved in the operation of the hotel, I enjoy interacting with the guests, knowing different cultures, meeting people from different countries. I enjoy the opportunity I am given to provide them with a unique experience, offering them information about the island and the destination they have chosen. I like working together with other people, from colleagues in the hotel to associates like travel agents, getting into negotiations and closing deals and executing them. I also like travelling a lot! I observe the market and changes in people's interests so that I can adapt and develop myself through that.
- I am not aware of any government policies that encourage ecotourism in Crete, just some propaganda but nothing else. The EU have encouraged investments for the protection of the environment but nothing significant. .... Besides recycling bins, and I am not even sure about the outcome or where this waste ends up, because we do not have a recycling factory in Crete... So I don't even know where all this waste we try to recycle goes. I know that London exports its waste. I know that in the US there are recycling factories. I don't know if Athens even has a recycling factory... I think Government could subsidise or assist by covering the unsold seats on an airplane in order to help EU companies decrease flight costs, so that we can get more people to the island. Through mass tourism we can have an increase of ecotourism. Specifically for ecotourism they can launch campaigns promoting Crete's nature. They can provide free-of-charge transportation to certain locations to pull people closer to nature so that they can appreciate it. What is required is to make tourism eco-friendly...yes, to make the mass tourism we already have eco-friendly. I can give an example. If I had a license to open a factory to recycle paper, glass, plastic on Crete, I would collect the waste from all the hotels. Not just recyclable waste, all the waste. Like used oil. ... What is required to make tourism eco-friendly is infrastructure, services, a campaign about nature, companies focused on recycling like the example I gave before. It's a combination of things, cheaper flights.
- As I said earlier, an ecotourist can be an excellent ambassador of Crete's nature and that involves the society. Ecotourists visit Crete for its nature, they spend money, which is good for the local economy, which is based by 60-70% on that. Tourists share with us ideas and knowledge that they get from other destinations, that we might not be aware of... Yes, ecotourism is meant for an alternative type of tourists who have a special interest in nature. It can improve the social and physical environment. ... Yes, in the sense that if tourists have a specific interest in seeing how olives are harvested, that means that we will focus on that part of business as well, which is strong already on Crete. Or like the vineyards that present an increase each year. In the past ten years there has been a significant growth of Greek wine and the vineyards. So visits to such places are of high interest and there is an additional income from these activities. Moreover, this supports mass tourism.... Crete is an ecotourist destination. ...ecotourist expects when visiting Crete, good service, fair price, nicely preserved nature, friendly people...
- Our business offers accommodation only. We have been in operation since 1994-5. Where I currently work there are 500 employees and in my personal business, our family business, it is about 10. We have approximately 30.000 tourists per year. ... I consider my business an ecotourism business, partially; ...up to an extent, yes.
- I think the involvement of the local community in ecotourism decisions is important ... And you do yourself involve them? ... The decisions makers and the representatives of the society of the community are the persons we elect, so young people do give their vote to persons who do care about the environment. Strongly in Rethymno, where I vote, the young people, people my age 19- 37 it is number one factor. So any actions we do take and ask for in needs to be friendly towards the environment. For instance, the municipal provides to the tourists bicycles free of charge and it has also started in Heraklion. Also small businesses do that. Society, we do care about waste management. So I have seen recycling. People try to recycle, I do not know what happens to the waste after that, but people do recycle, we recycle. There is an involvement, we, the young advice my mother many times to recycle. We try to organize on a different aspect, we try to organize and ask elderly people in the villages to tell us about paths in the mountains or tell us about other villages and in that sense we try to visit the villages for two reasons one to enjoy the nature, two to see the local as they are, the

genuine aspect. Genuine Crete, true Cretan. Also too circulate that information. In a different sense technology wise, cars and transportation. We do not use cars so much like before. From economy aspect, to protect the environment to use this small mopeds, it is more economic so it does not... ..we try to protect the eco-services apart from the general services, and the general services need to be adapted to the eco-services. So we want to change the face of tourism, to be eco-friendly, to be Green... to replace tourism to eco-friendly.... this is spreading, we don't drink Scotch, and we do not order whisky at the bars. We order. This campaign around Green Miles, either Cretan wine, we enjoy a drink from abroad but not every day. We try to use our local products. ... I think it is a priority to make it friendlier and I think by making it more environmentally friendly and promoting the natural resources, it is a natural thing that tourism will increase. Because the number one reason why tourists visit a destination is nature. If it is not a beautiful place they will not visit the destination. People come for the beach and the sun. ... I think eco-tourism respects the environment. There is not harm because people are cautious, they have the sense of responsibility that we have mentioned. And if the areas are protect and can advise and educate people, how to behave and visit this area it will not be harmed.

- Regarding the question about government policy, I have not seen documents, I have seen propagandas. I mentioned to what actually takes place, what really happens. To my knowledge there are programs subsidiary by the EU and they did take place but I asked for more... I think we could have done a lot more that what we already have. For example if you go to the tax office or any other public sector office you will see tons of paper; they do not use their computers, they do not save files.

### **R3 Expert in tourism and a tour guide in Crete**

- Ecotourism has to do with nature. Being with animals, cultivating vegetables, helping to produce their dinner and so on...When I hear ecotourism I imagine mountains, gardens, trees, chickens, sheep... everything that has to do with nature

Ecotourism has also to do also with culture, of course, because there are different ways of producing your dinner when you are in India than when you are in Crete or when you are in Canada. So culture plays a very important role.... Does ecotourism encourage sustainable development? Development yes, sustainable... I have my doubts...because it still is a very small market. ... Sustainable development in the tourism branch has to do with extent, anything small... I don't know! ... Sustainable development is a type of development done slowly but surely. Ecotourism still is very small-scale. ... It is a matter of making a small business survive. ...in Crete, ecotourism helps, it encourages sustainable tourism. It helps, of course it does but in my opinion, only a little.

- Ecotourism does not appear in our promotional material, not really.... I do not think that my customers ecotourists. No, they are the classic type of tourists, who come to Crete for a week to enjoy the see and sun ... package holiday tourist. ...

The protection of the environment is a matter for everybody, not only in the context of ecotourism. ... In our hotel we do a lot to protect the environment. By us I mean the management and the staff, not the clients. I could offer some ecotourism activities, if I wanted. There is this possibility.

for the protection of the environment ... where to start... we do recycling, we recycle all our waste, we heat water using solar panels, we use waste water to water the gardens... We inform all our guests about all these actions when they arrive to the hotel. This type of information helps bring more clients; yes, but you have to be more organized, be certified with the ISO 14000, for example. ... For me personally, protecting the environment is very important. I do it at home, that's why I do it where I work too.

I think that every single business has the obligation to protect the environment. Now, I don't think it is right to do it only to attract clients. You must do both. Really protect the environment and use it as a marketing tool. That's the best thing.

- The benefits of ecotourism are that it's a cheaper investment. Another benefit is that you do something outside big cities, so you create jobs and that's good. There are quite a few benefits. ... The actual protection of the environment, the fact that you let your visitors know about local traditions. These benefits are also provided by mass tourism but mass tourism is located in certain areas.
- Ecotourism ...the core issue is original, it is sincere but it depends who will take over. What is in the head of this businessman who will take this opportunity? Originally ecotourism is a very nice idea. To protect the environment and to offer people an original way of life, so to say. I don't see any ecotourism in a 1000-bed hotel, for example. I see ecotourism up on a hill. Run by a small businessman with his family, with his children taking care of their guests like they are in their house. ... .. Of course, ecotourism is an alternative form of tourism. There are many types of tourism, dental tourism, and cultural tourism. Ecotourism is something new, not many people know about it. But it is for sure and alternative form of tourism....  
Compared with mass tourism, are there differences. It is like comparing a large ship with a small boat. Ecotourism is a small boat. Large ships are bad for the environment, yes, but I don't know what will happen if maybe one day this small boat becomes a large ship. Is it going to be also bad for the environment then?
- Ecotourism is important for Crete because it has the opportunity to grow and help the island more. It is important, and there are quite a few businesses here involving ecotourism, which do not only attract people outside Greece, but also the locals. ...it is important, of course, mainly for the economy of Crete. Right now we need to improve... For the environment, here in Crete we are still in a good condition, not too much pollution.
- Honestly, there is space for improvement in the Cretan tourism market. First of all, seasonality. Right now so many millions of euros are slipping away, all the investments people have made here, and that's the biggest problem. There are some really nice things you can do here in the winter, but we do not utilise them. ... The current market situation in Crete is not very bad. It brings some money to the economy of Greece, it keeps people employed. Crete is very well-known all around Europe and the rest of the world. I have attended many tourism fairs in the past years and people are interested in visiting Crete. Everybody in Europe, for example, wants to go to Crete at least once. But I said before, there is the possibility to grow.
- Crete is the most suitable place for ecotourism in the world. .... I was reading an article in the New York Times, yesterday. It was called the place on earth where people forget to die. There was a story about a guy who immigrated to the States and at the age of 62, he got cancer and the doctors gave him 9 months of life, if he didn't do anything about it. So, he decided not to do any therapy but to return to Greece, to his island and to make a long story short he now is 104 years old. He drinks one glass of wine every day, he has his own grapes outside his house, he has his animals, his chickens and he is happy.
- What motivated me to operate in the tourism industry? Women! No. It's a very nice job to do because you get to know new people every day. Managing a hotel is like managing a little villa, you know! You have to care about the people, to offer them what to eat, to offer them a bed to sleep in, to entertain them. It is a very interesting job to do. I like it.
- In terms of government policies that encourage ecotourism in Crete, in the past couple of years there were some programmes from the state that offered you financial assistance to develop something like this; now I am not so sure. ... The government has a lot to do here. Crete has a lot of problems; for example, the quality of the streets, the airport, and the port. Just these three things are enough.
- It is not possible to make tourism eco-friendly! Because tourism means travelling, travelling means either ship or plane. Ships and planes are destroying nature, so... Tourism means moving from one part of the earth to another. Maybe where you will spend your 2 weeks or 10 days, you will be eco-friendly, but to go over there and return...
- Can ecotourism help improve the social and physical environment of Crete? Of course. First of all it will help us maintain them because they start dying, but also to improve them. Yes, absolutely. ... Nowadays, most of the people don't follow tradition. And we expect to go somewhere once a year to remember how we used to be as children or how our parents grew up. So when there is the possibility

to go somewhere and see this, it will help maintain these traditions. Otherwise they will die. For example, there is an eco-farm near my village. The owner told me that 60 years ago in the Lassithi Plateau there were 40.000 cattle. Now there is nothing. So he raised a few animals there and he also includes them in his menus because this is something that has died on Crete. 50 years ago, in the Lassithi Plateau there were 13.000 windmills. Now there are... how many? 50? So, eco-tourism would be a good tool to maintain these things.

- Crete is and could be an ecotourism destination; absolutely, there is no better! It already is but there is still room for more. ... An ecotourist would expect to see the local flora and fauna, how people used to live here up until 50 years ago, to enjoy living in the nature but with a nice warm climate, not having to wear 3 jackets... I think an ecotourist would like to know local traditions like music, singing and dancing as well, and be a part of a process of making things, like baking bread, cooking etc. .... I have met ecotourists, yes; they are not different. They are like any other tourist. I was at the Travel Fair in Vienna and I was at the stand of Crete. I was talking to every single individual and each wanted a different thing. I met people who have caravan vacation and they were complaining about the expensive ferry tickets to Crete, I met people who wanted to go to Hersonisson in July to party, people who wanted to come to Crete in October, and all of them were normal people. They could be your neighbours. They are no different from regular tourists, perhaps the average age of regular tourists is a bit higher but other than that, no differences.
- I think that right now Greece has 25% unemployment. So, many of these unemployed people could start something concerning ecotourism, and that would drop the unemployment rate in Greece. Because not many people care about this anymore, here in Greece. I hope I'm wrong, but my experience has shown me this. ... Unfortunately, the involvement of the local community is always important. I say unfortunately, because I don't want to be strict, but all our politicians are useless, and unfortunately there is always the need for the local community to do something about any kind of development; and because they are useless and lazy, things are even more difficult. ... If I want to make something with ecotourism, I would rather not involve them, no, but I know that I have to go through them as well.
- Ecotourism helps the environment. ... But we don't offer ecotourism products... Offering ecotourism products, trying to get more customers, for example, cannot protect the environment. ... I don't believe it is possible to do this in a big hotel, as I said before. I don't see any form of ecotourism in a big hotel.
- I have seen official government documents encouraging or requiring tourism businesses to follow the environmental way, yes. ... There are things to do in order to be more environmentally friendly at the moment, and if you make these changes, the state will participate financially... For example, there is a programme right now, which offers you financial support once you change certain things in your hotel to make it more environmentally friendly.
- Our business, hotel, offers accommodation, food and drink. I have been in operation for 13 years, we have 40 employees, and we have approximately 4,500 tourists per year. We do not consider our business an ecotourism business; not really.

#### **R4 Commercial Director of a hotel chain, Greece**

- Ecotourism is a Greek word, as we know. It comes from ecology, so I understand that it concerns the sustainability of tourism. What automatically comes to my mind is energy saving, respect of the environment and respect of people also, low energy consumption, waste separation and disposal. Mainly energy, electricity and water are the most important aspects. .... It does encourage sustainable development a great deal.  
...sustainable development is .... I would say that we do know what we have to do in order to be able to live better in the coming years. .... So, ecotourism is very important. When we speak about ecotourism it's not that we bring like millions of people that will visit us for our ecotourist services. It's what we do in order to attract them because of our policy of protecting the environment, our

environment. So it's for ourselves and this is what we communicate to our potential clients and we tell them "ok, visit us because we do this, this and that, and this is something that is important for our environment, our country, earth. This is also better for you because our area is healthier than other areas that don't pay attention, they throw their waste on the street, they don't recycle, and they don't take care of the environment.

- I wouldn't say ecotourism is a new market. It is a market that can help increase and, let's say, get more guests who are aware about environmental issues. It is not just about clients who nowadays only focus on the price, price-oriented clients. Of course, this is due to the general crisis, so most people focus on the price.
- I must tell you that it was 14 years ago that we started focusing on ecotourism, our ecological policy. We were the first company in Europe that installed solar panels for the water. We cooperated with a company in Israel, because they have great knowledge and we installed them in all 3 hotels of the company at the time, here in Crete. This way we save 85% for heating water in our hotels, because we do it through the sun. Another example is that we recycle, everything. By everything I mean the basic materials for sure, paper, plastic and glass, but also the used oil we use in the kitchen and we give it to an associate, who buys it to make soap. So this is also another example. These things ... appear in our brochures, we have a general brochure for all our hotels, we call it "Yearbook" and all these are mentioned in a special section of it. And I must tell you that we also do a lot of things about ecology. It is now the second time that we got from the World Travel Awards the Europe's Leading Ecological Certification for our policy to use this material.
- We do not provide ecotourism, we do not offer any kind of excursions or similar, but what we do is once a week we organise a tour for our guests inside our hotel. We explain to them the facilities, what we do as a company for the environment but also what we do for the society. ... In a way we educate our clients ... because many of the clients do not know what we do, so when they book our hotels they do for different reasons. So we have to show them that we do more things and this is achieved through the info tour and the info channel that has been running in the hotel for some years now to provide this information.
- Yes, we have ecotourism objectives as a company. The first is to continue what we are doing. We consider ourselves a leader in the market, in the tourism field especially for Greece, because we are serious about what we do. When we save energy, when we replace lamps, when we change the filters in the flushes... we are very serious about all this. We do not do it just for marketing purposes, but we do it because we believe it and because we also save money out of this. So it's for our benefit not just to show off, and also our CEO and the Vice President of our company believe in this and their way of life also expresses this philosophy. This philosophy comes from their homes, to the hotel, to our clients and to the hotel staff. Because what we do is educate our hotel personnel. They continue the education, and the use of these tools also in their homes. So it is a circle. What we do doesn't just remain within the walls of the company. So this also involves the people who work with us. And these people affect their families and what we see is that family plays the major role, not just the company. Because in the company we are very limited. If, for instance, we have 1700 employees in our company at least these people educate and affect 3 or 4 times more people directly in their families. And these families affect other families. So this is a network that is working without having in mind that it is actually affecting so many people.
- We offer tourism services that are friendly to the environment for many reasons. The first is that we do it because we believe it. The second is that we save money and the third that we use this for marketing purposes. .... When we present our company, when we make the info tours, when we make our sales calls, the seminars, part of these presentations concern the environmental policy of our company. So of course we offer beautiful hotels, with rooms, facilities, food, education, entertainment plus ecological sensitivity.
- ...the benefits of ecotourism compared to other types of tourism: First of all, ecotourism does not cost money. You don't have to invest a lot of money in ecotourism so it's the opposite. You do less and get more out of this. Second, it improves the company's image. Third, it is good for ourselves, we improve our own selves by doing this. .... Of course ecotourism is very important for Crete because

if everybody does this, the whole destination will get a real benefit from the improvement of the island's image. Because if only one company is doing or some companies, 1, 2 or 3% of the total is doing this, it's not enough. So if more people are convinced to follow this, I guess this will change the image of the destination. Of course I am no expert but in my opinion we have no heavy industry in Greece, especially in Crete. This means that the pollution that we have is limited, it is "eye" pollution, and it is "cover" pollution. You see that we are not as well organised as a society, but can you imagine what kind of pollution there is in the air or in the ground in Germany or Russia or other countries with heavy industry? Here what we have is nothing. If we take care of the small things like paper, glass and plastic, then we're all done with pollution. The earth is still pure here, there is no damage in the atmosphere.

...ecotourism can help in this, yes, and it is easy to educate because if people are more educated, people who are coming for ecotourism and people involved in ecotourism, then it is very easy for us to be much better.

- ...ecotourism preserve the environment, yes, it is true. I might also say that we have been listening about ecotourism and ecology for a lot of years. And sometimes people think that because of the crisis we have nowadays this is a secondary thing. So our obligation is now limited because of the crisis and something less ok "we don't have enough food to eat, should we concern ourselves about ecology or ecotourism? This is a luxury in our days." But it's no luxury, it's a way of living. And this even helps us save money. So it's a part of a philosophy. If you believe in this philosophy, yes, you can be better. If you don't, it is very difficult. And children play a major role in this. I see a good reaction from the children and from schools, because a lot of children go back to their homes and say "mommy, daddy, we have to recycle". Because many families here don't recycle at all or don't recycle correctly. For instance, we see blue recycling bins containing regular garbage too. The factory has to do the separation of materials. Or even when there are only recyclable materials in them, they are not placed individually but within garbage bags, which is wrong.

- For Crete, I do not think that ecotourism development is ...a true activity ... Not yet. It is beginning to be but it isn't yet. Because the education of ecology in general has been delayed in Greece, so I would say we are still at the first steps. What we do now in the public sector it is behind compared to other countries. What we do in the private sector is in a good position. And I say that because we separate glass, plastic and paper in our hotel and when we give it to our outside associate, he actually mixes it all up again. And I really want to know what happens then. It's a very strange thing. For instance, I must tell you we could not recycle for 4 to 6 months because the factory wasn't working or it was on strike. So during the season, I think from August onwards we could not recycle at all. We have to take a lot of steps still.

.... ecotourism ... is definitely an addition to the economy, because it adds to and develops the market of tourism. ...it is an additional form of tourism ...you say ecotourism, you say religious tourism, thalassotherapy tourism... So it is another form of tourism. Still Greece has taken no real benefit out of this ecotourism to use it and develop more. Because we see that private companies do things but the public sector is behind. So if some kind of balance comes about, there will be a real benefit too. I would call ecotourism an additional form of tourism. Alternative... it is difficult to say, but we consider it alternative. I think it is better to say that it is an additional form of tourism. I wouldn't call it alternative, because it would mean that it replaces something. But we don't want to replace anything. We want to add something. ....

It is an addition, because it will bring more people, but also it will affect the existing tourism activities, showing people what kind of holidays they can have, different to the sea and sun. So it makes people think more.... So it has a long-term beneficial effect .... It's a lifetime effect, not just for 2-3 years.

...

Ecotourism is important for Crete ... and we have to focus more in ecotourism, because we have Crete. And Crete has a lot to show and it is easy to create holiday packages that will show tourists the real life of Cretans. So let's move from mass tourism and from the north coast and focus more on the mountains, more on the real life of Cretans or the real life of the Minoans and go back some hundred years ago and see how people lived, because they used to lead a simpler life, which was "ecological".

So if we go back, we find our roots and find what we should do in the future and also in our days. But we have to go back.

- ...the Cretan tourism market is mostly massive because in the past 2 or 3 years we have had our downs, let's say, and it hasn't increased.... The result was that we focused on mass tourism, together with some other destinations like Antalya, Majorca. Although Majorca is a good example because they have taken some serious steps in previous years, because they have finished the first stages and passed what we would call "children diseases". But Greek tourism will have to focus more on quality and, if we prove our infrastructure, our airports and the roads, then step by step we can go further. Right now only some parts of Crete offer high-quality services, the rest are for massive tourism focusing also on all-inclusive holidays, which is not so positive for a destination.
- Crete is suitable for ecotourism, yes, this will take time, and it's not easy. I would be very happy if in the next ten years we could say that we brought 2% of people, who would travel for ecotourism. Because right now the figures are much lower. Maybe right now there are people who come to a lot of hotels because they see that part of their policy also concerns the environment. But this is different from ecotourism. When we talk about ecotourism, it means that the people come for holidays but stay in Crete and experience its ecological side, let's say, and the nature of Crete. They don't go to big resorts with thousands of tourists with all-inclusive programmes. They make different excursions to villages and different parts of the island that would make them feel nice doing things that other tourists don't do or experience. So, back to our roots, back to old customs of Cretans, learning our history. This also concerns ecotourism. Tourists don't just get into a plane and fly to a destination and then they ask "where are we"?
- Crete has the opportunity to develop ecotourism... It is suitable but this cannot be done only by the private sector. Because, ok, maybe some small hotel businesses and accommodations can focus on this; but it has to be promoted and supported by government policy and by the prefecture as well. So all this should work together. Otherwise it will be a waste of time or what we would call individual movements that cannot change the image of the island.
- What motivated me to operate in the tourism industry...? In the very early years, when I was in the 3<sup>rd</sup> class of gymnasium, I decided to be involved in tourism. So I didn't actually happen to be in this business, I came into it years ago. There was no tradition in tourism in my family, however, when I decided to be involved with it and specifically with the hotel business, the most important thing was the contact with other people. So the daily contact with other people and the advantage of changing images and clients almost every day is the most important thing. Because you learn from different nationalities and different people, you create friends, you prove yourself because you deal with so many nationalities, and for me it is not important just to make a living. For me going to work means to feel good and to like it. That was the reason I started my career in tourism. After so many years I see that it was the correct choice and I don't regret it. If I had to choose again in the future, I would choose tourism again, because I like having to do with people. And you know what I've been saying to my employees for many years and I still repeat it? You are very lucky because our work has to do with the holidays of other people. This means that everybody is in a positive mood, everyone's smiling. The majority of people come with a positive state of mind, so it is easier for us to keep them happy and to make them even happier. And you also know the benefit of the result of hotels is that we have the opportunity, the time to correct things if they go wrong, because the average tourist stays 6, 7, 8, 10 days. In city hotels it is completely different, because here they stay longer and they spend their holidays. I tell my staff that our job is very easy. Imagine working in a hospital and each of the clients walking in, because they are clients, had at least one problem. We should deal with them with patience. Because in hospitals we have rooms, we have check-in, we have check-out, we have a restaurant, and we have a reception... It's the same, in terms of operation there are many similarities. So don't tell me that working in a hotel is difficult. Go work in a hospital and then come and tell me if it is easy or not.
- I am not aware of any government policies that encourage ecotourism in Crete.

To be honest I don't have any specific idea. Once I saw some of the brochures but today the Prefecture is creating and mentioning some things about ecotourism but except this, no, I don't know. Maybe there is but I don't know it.

- To make tourism eco-friendly, as I mentioned before, there are some easy things that we can do, some easy steps we need to take. First of all we should respect ourselves. If we do that, then the steps become much easier. If we follow a specific and easy procedure that is applied in a lot of countries and in a lot of companies, starting from saving energy, water and recycling and using, for instance, recycled materials. And also something I forgot before, the cleaning materials. These should be biodegradable. ....

We need to educate more people and ourselves. It is not a seminar we do once and it's done. It's a continuing procedure, a continuous education that should be a part of our lives, our daily activities. Then we will do it without thinking. That is the only way. This will become a "must" in our lives, leaving us no alternative.

- I think ecotourism is a responsible form of tourism. Absolutely, because even the clients that come for ecotourism, all those who work in ecotourism are responsible people. So, yes, it is. .... I think ecotourism can help improve the environment, absolutely. If ecotourism is developed, more education for ecology will come to the people that are around tourism and among the tourists who come for this reason, so they will be involved automatically. The physical environment will be improved through the policies we will follow and develop by operating ecotourism. So, yes. As for the cultural environment, it will certainly be improved because ecotourism will be part of our daily activity. This affects mostly marketing because if we do things and we need to inform our clients, our staff, our future clients, our citizens, and this will be transferred into society. So culture will be improved but it has to do with the information. So part of the budget should go also to this marketing campaign.

- Crete could be an ecotourism destination, in some small parts, because Crete is a very big destination, a big island. You don't even have the feeling that you live on an island. But we have a lot of places, where we could focus on ecotourism. We cannot talk about Crete but, for instance, we can talk about village destinations for ecotourism, on the mountains or near the beach. I mean smaller areas, not massive. So it can be an ecotourism destination but not as a whole, in some parts....

- ...ecotourists ...visiting Crete ...want to experience the real life of the Cretans, to know the tradition, because we are renowned about our tradition, customs and history. They want to avoid everyday routine, which is not so good and as I said before, go back to the roots and do things that our ancestors did. So they want to experience more the past than the present.

- I have met... I have met with some small groups coming to our hotels, mostly Germans, who are repeaters. One group came with bicycles and they even brought their own bicycles with them, and the other group was pensioners. They come twice a year, once to harvest olives and once to harvest grapes. These people are completely different from other tourists, because they are not interested in luxury. Although they are wealthy, they are very simple. They are people who respect each other and respect also our hotel staff. They are very quiet people, they follow specific rules. Their activities within a week's time are pre-scheduled. They spend less time inside the hotel and more time outside. So they go on excursions, they visit other places on Crete but they don't spend much time on the beach or in bars, but they leave early in the morning and they come back late in the afternoon. So all day they are all around Crete and not inside the hotel.

- We need to become more aware of ecotourism...Actually, we need to be educated more, because of the crisis we are currently facing. We are not focused on ecotourism, but mainly mass tourism. So the main activity is massive tourism. So if we want to make an addition, we have to go back and think more clearly. But this opportunity has to be given by the government or the prefecture or even from the education system. We should not have expectations from the private sector, because the private sector can follow. But the direction should be given by somebody else. Then the private sector will follow and will invest. This is what we expect.

- ...the involvement of the local community is very important. Not so much in large cities, but towns and villages, where we see that the new generation sometimes destroys the customs or the good habits we used to have in the past. This is why the community play a major role in this.



We involve the local community in our decisions, yes ....we have a collaboration with the town of Hersonissos and Malia and the greater area. Even the recycling is done in collaboration with them or even the blue flag that concerns the quality of the beach and the water is part of the system that is controlled by the Municipality. We have a direct co-operation otherwise it cannot work out.

- No, we do not offer ecotourism in our hotels in Crete. But we offer it in our hotel in the Peloponnese. It's in the birthplace of the owner of our company, the village Ambeliona, in the centre of the Peloponnese and it is called Epoches (seasons). It consists of 22 stone houses and over there we offer ecotourism and alternative additional forms of tourism, for those who want to experience the real Greece. But I am impressed because in the past we used to promote this guesthouse only to Greeks, but now because of the internet we got reservations from all nationalities. Although they only stay 1 or 2 nights, there are a lot of people who go to this destination. But as I said before, not in our big hotels. ...Demand for ecotourism is influenced but not for very big hotels. It is for smaller complexes that live out of this, ecotourism and alternative activities I mean.
- In relation to official government directions encouraging or requiring tourism businesses to follow the environmental way... to my knowledge, sometimes I saw some things in the past 10 years, but I'm not aware of a certain policy is promoting or encouraging ecotourism.
- Our business offers accommodation only; it is Hotel & Thalasso & Conference. We have you been in operation since 1988. We have in Aldemar 1700 employees, and we receive 100,000 tourists.
- Would I consider our business an ecotourism business? Part of it, yes, but because of the nature of the size of our hotels. There is only one property that is actually focusing on this, the guesthouse in the Peloponnese. In the other properties we do a lot of things but we don't focus on ecotourism.

### **R5 Senior Manager of the Heraklion Chamber of Commerce**

- There are several meanings of the term ecotourism but usually it's about sustainable tourism and tourism that has to do with keeping the eco system intact. So it's non-invasion tourism. This is something as a common understanding.
- There are prospects regarding the development of ecotourism on Crete, yes, of course. There would be a lot of benefits if ecotourism could develop on the island, because basically it retains the structures the way they were before mass tourism entered the island. ... Actually, is the meaning of sustainable development?
- I believe sustainable developments are that small structures that can retain the habits and the abilities that the system has are very crucial for sustaining the whole system. So it is very important to have small structures that are manageable by the locals and developed in a way that they should understand it and keep the environment they live in as it was before. So it is non-destructive tourism in my opinion. This is the way I understand it. .... There are a few examples in Chania, as I understand. Like Milia and another thing in the cave, there's an ecotourism system there also. I don't remember the names. ...and also there are some other attempts but maybe they are not aware of it, that they are actually ecotourism systems. ... I think they preserve the environment, they protect the local culture...
- Ecotourism appears in our promotional material, I mean as the Chamber of Commerce, well, we use it in several projects, the European projects to Iran and usually it is in the basis of the design of a new project. But in terms of promotion when it comes to the locals we don't present it a lot because we don't deal a lot with this kind of things. The Chamber of Commerce has little to do with tourism promotional on the island. .... If we have any enterprises that promote the idea, yes, in this sense we promote it also. But we do not to do anything special about that. ... We do specific activities... Actually we do ... we are running some projects that have to do with it. ... Yes, we have some leaflets over there. It's a tour leaflet, which is actually about developing sustainable tourism structures and promoting the potential of local values.
- The types of development that we create ... always depends on the framework of European projects. It's about passing and nature, and activating the locals to participate in agro-tourism systems and this kind of stuff.

- The merits of ecotourism, compared to other types of tourism, I think it is what we said before. It is about sustaining the environment and the local communities as they were and let them develop in a way that they fulfil certain conditions of keeping them intact and alive for the future. .... I mean mass tourism also is a means of tourism so you cannot disregard it or throw it away. It has a certain proportion in the market and has to be there. But just by putting some norms it will also become sustainable, so that it would be there next year and the year after.
- I do not think that ecotourism is always a genuine tourism activity, well, not always. There are sometimes that some people say that they have ecotourism establishments but they actually don't. So it depends. You have to judge every time what is ecotourism or not. Some people are using the term ecotourism just to have more customers; they do that several times. ...and they just have repeated customers, I mean they repeat the same thing without any genuine process, so it is not ecotourism any more.
- Ecotourism is not necessarily an alternative form of tourism but it can be. I mean it depends on how you promote and how you sell the product. ... Whatever contradicts the idea of mass tourism can be described as alternative. Of course there are many definitions but this is the main definition.
- I think, ecotourism always depends on how you operate it. It's not enough to say that you are an alternative tourism provider. You have to actually provide things that are not custom. Each time you have to reinvent, to innovate, so yes, actually ecotourism is not something that is there. It is created on demand. This is my opinion. This is the way we should treat it.... Because it is created on demand, you need to have the right supply in order to bring these customers as a new market. .... and every time it should be different. Every time it should be genuine. Every time it has to be productive and innovative. Otherwise it can pretend to be ecotourism, in reality being something usual. ... One can ask whether, Milia retreat in Chania is a genuine ecotourism product. Well this is what I discussed before. I mean you can say that something is ecotourist but if you pass from there thousands of tourists within one month's period then it isn't any more.
- Ecotourism is both important and could be important for Crete. ... Again it depends on how we use this power, how we offer this service. ... And right now I don't think that we not only communicate, but also use this possibility.
- In my opinion, yes, it's a necessity for Crete to develop ecotourism. This is also a way to keep the traditions and customs and put some blood in the veins of traditionally; so yes. ... It is a necessity as a different form but also to constantly renovate your product, to be always innovative. So, yes, it's a necessity.
- The Cretan tourism market, there are several different things there. It's a living community, a competitive community and the prices are very antagonistic and antagonism is very high. Unfortunately, the quality year by year goes down, so it's not an easy situation but there is also some insight. It seems that things may go better in the future. ....Well, right now the market is mainly mass tourism. But I don't think that this could be also the situation in the future, because if you see the way that people book their holidays, they use the internet, there is some variety of ways and means of booking so I think it could change in the future.
- Well, I think Crete is suitable for ecotourism because there are a lot of unknown places all over the island. And also there are a lot of people who are very friendly and who have the accommodation idea in use for more than 4,000 years. So it's very familiar for locals to accommodate people. You can always create a village to an accommodation place with no cost. It's intuitive. So I think there are a lot of ways to unveil the power of the island using this form of tourism. Actually, this is the most suitable form of tourism because you also have a variety. It's not only snow or only sea. You can find everything, a lot of different things on the island. ...and, yes, ecotourism can differentiate the tourism product of Crete; yes, it can and it should.
- I think there are some trials on the agro-tourism law directives, but I'm not very aware of that so... I think there are some government policies but I don't know.
- Well, what is required to make tourism eco-friendly, I think is mostly the attitude of the people who deal with the tourism product. It's about culture and attitude. This is the way. I mean if you think that you should get a lot of money from one tourist, you should not go to this kind of tourism. But if you

think that you can go with an honest approach, then you have ecotourism. This system is a point of people's relations.

... Ecotourism respects the client more; you cannot treat the tourists as a product in ecotourism systems. ... And it's also, how can I say it... interactive. The tourist also affects the tourist operator. So the tourist operator has to learn also from the tourist.

- Of course ecotourism is a responsible form of tourism. You can define the responsibility in tourism with things like ecotourism. Because to act there you have to be responsible. ... ecotourism can help improve the social and physical environment on Crete, yes, I've already said that because it puts blood in the veins of the system. It's something very important because you don't just bring tourists and get them around. In a very efficient way, in a very rational way you promote the tourist product.
- I mean everybody can be an ecotourist. I have met responsible people so yes, I've met ecotourists in this sense. .... They differ from other tourists, well, that's one word. They respect the people who accommodate them, the place they are accommodated in, the carrying capacity of the destinations etc. So this is about it. 'They may get involved in nature, yes, but not necessarily. It has to do with the interest of people. Some people are interested in nature, some in history, some in the culture, some in the living conditions, some in the food.
- There is a need for us to become more aware of ecotourism, yes. ... I think there are several promotional things to be done, but it's about culture. It has to be education, some responsible measures for that.

...the involvement of local community is also important is for ecotourism, always, yes, because it's about the interactivity we said before. So they have to be responsible.

Ecotourism can harm the environment, well, yes. If you misuse the tool, you can always do damage. But I cannot think of something else. When you have a knife, you know that you can either use it to cut or harm someone. A tool is always a tool.

Yes. Of course, ecotourism in general can be just a strategy... to create demand. People can misuse the tool just to bring innovation to the destination or people that differentiate themselves from the rest. So yes, it can be easily misused.

- There are some government initiatives regarding ecotourism and some projects from time to time. But I don't see any responsible attitude on the government's side, especially nowadays, about this type of tourism. For instance, I remember 5 years ago, the first thing the newly elected government did was to invite the 2 largest tour operators in Europe to make contact. So in this way you can see we are following the wrong path. .... As the Chamber of Commerce, from time to time there is some communication but I can't say that we play this role, not usually. We are not enough on that. And also we have to notice that our members are not the hotels so... It's only small hotels so we only have a small part of this people. But of course there are a lot of other enterprises that working because of tourism so in this sense everything on the island is more or less involved.

#### **R6 Former official of a Cretan prefecture**

- ...being discussed, makes people interested in ecotourism. So we are talking about tourism with respect to the environment, which at the same time utilises the comparative advantages of each location. But any actions taken do not change the location in question. For me there is something else of great importance. Not only the actions taken by the people building a unit had they called an ecotourist unit, but also the behaviour of the tourists themselves who will experience all these actions. It should be one that shows that they too have been influenced by them. This is very important. To me ecotourism should not only be an experience for the tourists but also for our everyday lives. ...it could change the mentality of the people, not only the tourists,  
Yes. And I think that this directive, if I can use this phrase, should be given by the hoteliers themselves and all those involved in tourism, and they should show that they are not only interested in profit but that they respect what they are using to make profit, that is the environment, any type of environment, because they wish to maintain it for future generations.

- In my view, ecotourism encourages sustainable development, certainly, because it changes people's mentality. It does encourage sustainable development. It changes our mentality and the way of everyday living for each citizen. So if ecotourism becomes a way of life, a practice, we understand that we have reached the optimum result. Then development would be done with respect to man, to the environment. To me there is no development without these elements. It would be destructive. It could provide profit but it would be destructive.
- While I served in the Prefecture, ecotourism was mentioned in promotional material. ... Yes, all the prefecture promotional material were ecotourism oriented, and all the actions taken but all 4 prefectures of the island were characterised by it. In addition to our actions for tourism, any other actions taken regarding development also followed this reasoning, which resulted from all the meetings we had with the authorities who were responsible for either tourism or development, or even agriculture on Crete. ...  
There certainly was an influence by all this and I should mention that the tourists were actually looking for this kind of actions. They liked the fact that there were such actions during their holidays and free time, they wanted it.  
.... All these actions have a strong impact and I think that they are necessary, even though they delay progress in terms of tourism or other, but if we do not move forward with this concept, things will be very difficult tomorrow or even for future generations. And when we say that we respect the environment so that we can deliver it to the next generations in a better condition than we received it, we understand that we should actually apply it in effect, at any cost be it political, personal or financial when we are talking about businesses.
- Compared to other types of tourism, the merits of ecotourism are more because it actually guides people as to how they should act in their everyday lives. I mean that it communicates to them through experience knowledge to change their one behaviour. So the spreading of this concept in the areas people live would be a great benefit.  
Ecotourism has disadvantages ... Nothing is perfect, and especially when it comes to development there are always disadvantages. However, I believe that ecotourism has the least disadvantages with the top one perhaps being the cost that for some people may be a major issue. .... We need people to understand that it may cost a little more but the long-term benefit will be multiple for them but also for the location and the country in general.
- Ecotourism is genuine because it tries to make you think that whatever you do, even when you need to relax and not care about anything, you should still show respect. This way of thinking about the environment is very important.  
... I wouldn't call ecotourism an alternative form of tourism. I think in a way it goes through every other type of tourism, so I would say that there is a connection between ecotourism and other types of tourism. If we face it as a separate type of tourism, there is nothing to gain. There are types of tourism, like fishing tourism, for example. Imagine it with no respect for the environment! Or any other type, like hiking, religious tourism...  
.... through ecotourism we can influence the already existing types of tourism.  
Certainly. And improve them as well. The provided services can be much better, but there should ....  
The connection of other types of tourism with ecotourism.
- If we don't make ecotourism our first priority, on top of other types of tourism, we will be facing a big problem in the next years. Not just us here but also many other areas. And perhaps if we take a look at other areas that are, let's say, glutted in the Mediterranean, which have not been paying any such attention, we will see the problems they are facing. At some point, people, tourists, will turn their backs on them because they will find something new, which will be better and will show signs of respect, therefore the development that has occurred with respect for everything and they will prefer it. ... We need to develop a strategy with ecotourism. It is of major importance for me, and I think we can do it and make a difference.
- Tourism in Crete is our heavy industry. It is the No1 field for its development together with agriculture. These 2 can be connected through ecotourism. Because local products and tourism are related and can be further connected. I think that all those involved in tourism have realised, especially

in certain locations that the situation is stagnant and we need to take a step forward. So if both the state and the local government in collaboration with all the authorities involved in tourism, hoteliers, employees in tourism etc, take such steps in their mentality and in the operation, we will overcome any problems. And any reactions there may be by people who might think that this process will bring a lot of cost but few gains will subside when the results begin to show. People nowadays want quality. They pay and they want quality service. .... There is room for ecotourism development in the current situation in Crete. Because the current infrastructure is stagnant ... We need to have a masterplan. The programme that the 4 prefectures of the island were running with the World Tourism Organisation and the plan that we had formed has exactly these features.

Government actions I'm aware of are those I mentioned before, taken by the 4 prefectures of Crete together with the World Tourism Organisation. Also other areas in the Mediterranean participated in this, I think some parts of Portugal. We were the second location in Greece to take part. It is a very difficult process because it takes a lot of work on the local government's side, however, the 4 prefects were determined to take this step at any cost, because it was necessary for Crete. We had realised what the big problem there was and we needed to adjust the already existing significant infrastructure, its strategic position, its beaches etc., to turn to ecotourism, so that we could have high-quality services, a high-quality product. ... So we began by registering the infrastructure in Crete... in every single location. What changes needed to be made for this adjustment, in order to comply with the standards of being a destination of excellence. This was our goal.

- To make tourism eco-friendly, first of all maintain our friendly attitude towards the citizen-tourist so that he can trust us in every way, and at the same time take actions that are oriented toward what is mentioned in the Pact that we have signed with the World Tourism Organisation.
  - Yes, ecotourism can help improve the social, cultural development of Crete. Ecology was an actual practice for older generations, they lived by it. The fact that we go back to our roots is attractive to young people, because it revives customs and behaviours their grandparents used to have. So it helps tradition and it helps us go back, in a different way because means have changed and life has changed. But we can infuse the modern with the old and this is a great achievement.
- In regard to the physical development, it is the major issue. If we do not respect the environment, and this is something that society has come to realise and education has contributed a great deal in this, is like turning against a great ally. So I believe that eco-tourism contributes to a good environment, 100% yes.
- Yes, Crete could be an ecotourist destination, every single part of it, from the beaches to its mainland. The nature would contribute to the development of ecotourism significantly. Of course, we need open-minded businessmen who could utilise it because every single corner of the island can be utilised in this direction.
  - I expect ecotourists to be conscious people who know what they want, who know exactly how they want to spend the 7 or 15 days of their holidays and I expect to gain from them. Of course I will give, but I also expect to gain from them, even by their attitude and general behaviour in terms of ecology. I don't expect someone who simply calls himself an ecotourist. I expect to see the traits of someone who can truly say he is an ecotourist. ...Respect for man and respect for himself, as well as to know what he wants. Someone who cannot be fooled when someone sells him ecotourist services that are not actually ecotourist. ...This is significant for the destination because they actually know that they are in Crete. I go to Crete to get a very specific thing as an ecotourist. And this is why Crete needs to develop its comparative advantages in this direction.
  - There would be a major contribution and the community should definitely be involved, because entrepreneurs cannot do it on their own. There needs to be a collaboration at a local level for this project to be successful.
  - Yes, there are government programmes, but they should be developed faster so that they can be effective. For a lot of years we have seen that there is the rationale for green development, for ecotourism and all that, but the actual putting it into practice should not be obstructed by the state. I think that the crisis has taught us certain things and I hope that future programmes will not present any delays, so that we can have immediate results.

## R7 Managing Director of hotel chain

- Ecotourism is a different type of regular tourism as we know it. It is something more specific that has to do with nature, the way we treat nature. It's related to the environment in general. ... It relates to culture ... because ecology is also a part of our culture. So yes, it is related to the way we think in general.
- Sustainable development is something that needs a lot of things. I think one of these is also ecotourism. I think sustainable development is something that has to do with the nature and the way we think about nature and such things. Sustainable development has to do in general with nature and the way we treat it.
- Ecotourism, and ecology in general, involve all the businesses and the way we operate and it is something like a fashion these days. So once we promote our services, the first thing we think about promoting is ecology. We do this to get more customers. Yes. As I said, it's a part of our culture but also a fashion. So it's something that is more attractive to the clients. ... The strategy is not only to bring more customers... It also helps us in the way we operate generally.
- In our business we provide some eco-hotels, as we say, that have to do with that culture. They are located in the nature, far from the sea, in the mountains and have to do only with ecology. For example, one part of ecotourism is agro tourism, which has to do with the land, the agriculture. We provide some hotels that are involved in this, as a tourism activity.  
The main objective is to make the customer understand the way we treat the nature, the way we grow products in the nature and things like that. This is the main objective of agro tourism. But generally ecotourism is something wider; this is just one part of it.  
As I said before, the main reason, let's be realistic, is that ecology is more attractive to the customers. We didn't use so much eco-ways in the past because this wasn't so known to the people. But now it is part of their culture. So the main reason is that because people have ecology in their culture, we offer them ecotourist services. Yes, the main reason is to gain customers, and gaining a different market that we didn't have in the past. And now this market is growing year by year.
- ...the merits of ecotourism. First of all, the most important thing is that it is friendly to the environment. The regular types of tourism we know are not so friendly to the environment. Regular tourism harms the environment; it destroys many parts of the eco-system. So this is the main benefit of ecotourism. Secondly, it helps us to integrate the green way in our culture. Because via tourism, ecology becomes a part of everyday life and this is very important, because we know about the environmental problems we have been facing in the past years. .... So, if you compare ecotourism to other types of tourism, it is more sustainable, of course. It is the main part of sustainable development. ... There are parts of ecotourism that don't always help nature or sustainable development for that matter, because it all depends on the way in which we operate ecotourism.
- Generally I would say that ecotourism is an activity to preserve the environment. It seems it does that. But because ecotourism is part of the business, it all depends on the way in which we operate. Do we actually protect the environment? If we do it the wrong way, then it's not original.
- Of course, ecotourism is an alternative form of tourism, yes. It is something different. Regular tourism is based on entertainment. Ecotourism is based on nature. As I see it, the main philosophy of ecotourism is the protection of the environment. So it is something extremely different. Ecotourism is based on different things than regular types of tourism. Of course there is entertainment but without focusing on ecology.
- ...and it is important, yes, not only for Crete but for the entire world. Crete is a place where in the past years we didn't care so much about nature. So, in the last 10-15 years we realised the problems we have caused to the environment. This way we saw what we should stop what we used to do that harmed the environment and our lives in general, not only in terms of nature but also of infrastructure, like construction. So yes, ecotourism is very important because it will make ecology part of our culture. In this way we will enhance the ecotourist product.

- What motivated me to be involved in the tourism industry! Tourism is a very dynamic part of the market with huge changes and it makes you try to understand the market all the time. It is not static; we don't find a way of operation and follow it for 20 years. It is dynamic, you need to keep up with the market all the time and that keeps your mind in the business. Otherwise it's boring. And this is not part of my character, so I chose tourism.
- I am aware of government policies that encourage ecotourism in Crete, yes, of course. In the last 15 years the government has been providing subsidies to investors to focus on hotels or business that have to do with ecology in general. But we need a plan for this to be applied efficiently. Generally, the government gives such subsidies..... There are many things we need to do. The most important thing is energy. We have to produce energy via renewable sources. This is one of the main reasons why regular tourism harms the environment. The way it operates is not friendly to the environment. Also the way we construct the building and all the infra-structure should follow eco-friendly standards. In addition, protect nature more and cultivate more so that the products we use are natural. The two main factors are renewable energy sources and the use of eco-friendly utilities.
- The main feature of tourism is entertainment, as I said before. So with ecotourism you follow eco-ways to be entertained. By entertainment I mean having fun and being happy. With ecotourism you do that with a focus on the protection of the environment. .... I think that the main philosophy of ecotourism is to change our way of thinking about the environment. I don't think that it is more responsible for the environment but I think it is a way of making us integrate this into our culture. ...and ecotourism has Impacts on our lives, on our way of thinking, on our way of operating. It creates a new way of your general thinking. .... I think that for now it has positive impacts. But everything has negative impacts. As I said before, it depends on the way we operate. If we don't act in the proper way, even in the context of ecotourism, we may even stop development. And that would be because of ecotourism. .... I think negativity may lie in the businessman's way of thinking. Because he may think that by focusing only on the environment, he will gain more money. But this way he would stop development around him, new infra-structure etc.; by only focusing on the environment. You see, that doesn't always contribute to the development. Yes, nature is very important but we also have to focus on the development and the infra-structures that will help it.
- I think Crete can be an ecotourism destination, yes, of course it can be. I don't think it is. At the moment mass tourism is the major product. We've not focused so much on ecotourism till now. But I think that in the future Crete could be a major ecotourism destination. ...
- Eco-tourists visiting Crete expect to experience a different kind of nature, perhaps a strange kind of nature because Crete has to offer many different things nature-wise. Crete has many different kinds of animals, plants, landscapes. We provide something different in contrast with other destinations. ... Yes, I have met ecotourists. You realise that they are ecotourists by the way they think. When they eat something, the way they treat each other. They are very different. They do stand out because here in Crete unfortunately we don't have many ecotourists. They are older and well-educated. We cannot discriminate between wealthy or not. ... Anything that has to do with ecology has to be part of our lives. I don't believe you should have ecology 100% on your mind but it is very important. Ecotourism is one of the ways we can become more aware. In most cases of ecotourists something happened in their lives to have made them be friendly to the environment, and their way of thinking nature-oriented. Most ecotourists I've met are like that.
- Yes, I think the involvement of the local community in ecotourism decisions is important, a part of it certainly is important. ...yes, we involve the local community in our business ecotourism decisions, of course, we do.
- I do not think ecotourism harms the environment, I think it tries to be positive for the environment. I am not sure if it harms it. If ecotourism is developed in a large scale ... yes, of course it would. It would also harm the development, which is also very important. There must be a combination of ecotourism and regular tourism in our lives. ... We cannot really change the whole tourism structure but have a combination of the two, we do not have to change the whole tourism section in order to have ecotourism.



- Our business offer accommodation, we have 42 properties; ... hotels, apartments and eco-properties. We operate as a consulting company to accommodations, we provide sales, operations and promotion services. I have been in business approximately eight years, and I have three employees here. We have approximately 40,000 visitors per year.
- I do not consider my business an ecotourism business. It partly deals with ecotourism but it is not an ecotourism business. Here we have the wrong idea about what ecotourism is and this is why this type of tourism has not been developed. Once the government provides a subsidy for the building of an ecotourism accommodation, most of the investors thought that if they built a hotel in the mountains that would be it. They didn't realise that ecotourism is not the building, it's the way you operate, the services you offer to your customers and the way you treat them. So at the end of the day, we only built new villas in the mountains. .... what they currently do in these accommodations is that they take their guests to the land that they have in the property where they grow some products, they also have some animals, like chickens, etc., and their guests are involved in taking care of the land, of the animals, in making bread etc. This is something like ecotourism. It's agro tourism, a part of ecotourism. ....I think that what we are trying to do is combine things, because the product of ecotourism here is not strong enough to make a business viable. So we have to address it partially. Once it is a strong part of the market, we can focus on it. But at the moment we need to be viable so we need to treat it like this.

### **R8 Managing Director of a hotel & Director of the regional hotel managers association**

- I am a hotel manager in some hotels and I am the vice president of the Hotel Managers Club of Crete.
- I understand ecotourism as visit of guests to a location who are interested in seeing the natural beauty of the place. ... Eco means natural. The beauty of the surroundings, the beauty of the environment. Are we also talking about new systems of protection of the environment? ... For me ecotourism is tourism in the original pure nature.
- Ecotourism encourages sustainable development, yes. ... Development of areas that will increase the purity and the unchangeable surroundings of these. To protect the area from pollution, from poisoning of the soil, the water, the plants, the animals. And also to save energy, that is to protect the area from sources that would destroy it trying to produce energy. ... An example of sustainable development; lately we have the solarium systems, wind energy, solar energy.
- The businesses that I represent ... are not hotels specialised in ecotourism so we don't promote this. We are based on mass tourism for summer holidays at the beach. ... You can say that Asterias belongs in the field of ecotourism, because we have already created a biological agricultural area of vegetables and groceries that we are using in the hotel at .... We have replaced electricity bulbs with eco-bulbs, we are using solar heating systems of electricity.
- We promote all these things on the website of the hotel and we mention it in the description of the hotel.... I would say that it would bring us a better level of customers. People of a higher level. ... Customers in Europe and in the world, who have recently begun showing interest in ecotourism.
- The reasons we offer eco-friendly services... First of all, we all should have started a long ago to care about our environment, where we are living in order to have a better, healthier and safer environment and planet. This is very important because many people round the world are starting to think like this. The idea is approaching more guests, and don't forget that for all of is the target is the profit. Businesses care about profit, period. If people did not care about ecology, nobody would show any interest in ecotourism.  
We could have double beds but because of the land as it is now, because of the landscape, we don't have the ability to build hotels everywhere. We are not Majorca. The majority of our tourists want summer fun vacations. For me the ideal would be to keep them and try to extend the season as much as we can, and try to develop and improve the level of ecotourists, the level of cruisers, the level of athletic, medical, religious tourism in order to combine the "dead" winter months, when there's no sea fun, with other alternative tourist groups that would bring the island life, business and profit. ....



This is why we work, profit. Nobody works for glory, today. Everybody loves glory but we don't live of glory. If you do business with no profit, then what are you doing? So profit is the main concern of businesses, yes. The second is that we should all try to protect our area, our environment, our planet.

- Compared to other types of tourism, in ecotourism I think the level of the clients is better.... nothing else. And that they care more about nature and the area, so they take tours around the places they visit and they are not the kind of tourists who stay in the hotel, around the pool all day, eating and drinking and getting sun. They are interested and care about the area, about visiting the area, about travelling around to see the island and go back home to promote it.
- Is ecotourism an alternative form of tourism? Yes. Alternative means that I visit a place not because of the sun and the sea and the relaxing target, but I want to visit a place to see the beauty of the nature, to see the place itself, to visit the mountains, to visit the caves, the beaches, to care about the plants and trees and flowers, the animals. Not only to be interested in having fun but also in the environment.

....

Compared to mass tourism, eco-tourists respect the environment more. If you visit Hersonissos in the summertime and see all the tourists who are there for fun, they cover the area with cans, bottles, leftovers or whatever and they don't care at all that they pollute the environment. Ecotourists don't behave like this. They care and show respect.

- Ecotourism is important for Crete... all kinds of alternative tourism are important for our island because an ecotourist will not visit only during the summer, but also in the winter, when he can visit other, alternative sides of tourism to see different things, such as how we collect olives, how we produce the olive oil, how we make wine, how cultivate the fruits and vegetables that we export all over Europe. They will care about the life in the mountains, about the life in villages, about the lives of the inhabitants. They show different interests and do different activities in the area that in the summer is covered by tourists who are here only for the sea, sun, sex and clubbing, all-inclusive services.
- ... The Cretan tourism market, I think until recently was based on mass tourism of summer holidays lovers-guests. People who come to enjoy the sea and sun, get a nice suntan they can show to the others when they go back home. Some of them will also talk about the ancient monuments and about the culture of the island. This is changing. Yes, in the last years it has been changing because we started increasing the ecotourism, agrotourism, medical tourism, religious tourism the groups of people who like to visit monasteries, caves, canyons. I believe that Crete suitable for ecotourism, 100%. ... Ecotourism is important and can be developed on Crete, of course, because the natural beauty of the island covers all the expectations of everyone. You can see in a distance of 1 or 2 km snow and beach, trees and wilderness, cities and fields or canyons. In Crete you have everything.
- No motivation, I found myself in the tourism industry by coincidence. I really wanted to become a gymnastics teacher. I got in the hotel management school by coincidence and since I got there, I decided to do it as best as I could. And I've been doing this for 28 years. And the last 17 I am managing hotels. ... I enjoy it, yes. Now that I know the business, I know it's a very hard job, very stressing job, but it's very pleasant because there is no routine. Every day you meet new people, you open up your horizons, you travel all around the world because of your job and you extend your knowledge, your ideas, and your experiences. So now that I know the job, besides all its difficulties, if I had to choose again, I would choose the same job. I enjoy my job, I love it.
- I am aware of government policies that encourage ecotourism in Crete. ... Some have started lately. Under the pressure of the circumstances of the last years, that people care more and more about ecotourism, they have also started to care and study and plan the ecotourism development. What is required to make tourism eco-friendly is ... saving energy, prevention of pollution, natural (biological) production. The closer to nature, the closer to ecotourism.
- I think ecotourism is a responsible form of tourism, of course it is. Responsible tourism is every form of tourism that whatever is involves does not harm the place of visit, in which tourists bring back with them only images of enjoyment and happiness.
- Can you give an example of ecotourism as a responsible form of tourism on Crete?

Some years ago, there were some tourists but they were not real ecotourists. They were trash tourists who did not have money to pay for a hotel and they were pretending to be hippies and eco tourists, taking over the palm forest of Vai, the caves of Matala and the Chrissi Island in the south of Crete. They didn't not have any money so they were pretending to be eco-friendly, living under the stars next to the beach under the trees and they were leaving all their garbage in the area and they destroyed the most beautiful areas we had in Crete with their garbage. Thank God the state realised what happened and started moving them away, cleaning and protecting these beautiful areas. ... I have actually experienced genuine ecotourism...individual guests who come here and they are eco-friendly, visit small places, small villages on the island, treating flowers, taking photos of them, studying them, studying the landscape, the climate and respecting what they see. But this is not the majority.

- I believe that ecotourism can improve the cultural and physical environment. .... and it does it exactly by transferring to their land of origin the experiences and the icons from the place they have visited, creating the need to other people to visit this place too. This way the number of visitors of that place increases, which brings money, gives profit, elevates living standards. At the same time, the permanent inhabitants of that place understand that the eco-friendly policy is bringing more visitors to the destination, so we have to care about the destination so that these people continue to come. So it is a circle: I care about the destination I offer you and you go back and advertise it and more people visit it. So it's both profitable and improves the way of life.
- Crete is or can be an ecotourism destination, yes, as I said before. It already is an ecotourism destination. Improvements need to be made in facilities, in organisation and in standards but the foundation already exists and that is the natural beauty, the different images the island has to offer to the visitor, like sea, rivers snow, mountains, forests, culture... On this island there is everything.
- I have met ecotourists, many times. They are more serious, they are more quiet, they read more, they are middle-aged, they visit the island mostly in the beginning or the end of the season, because the weather is cooler and it's easier for them to travel around the countryside, hiking etc. Older ages even, who like to walk because the doctor told them it is good for their heart. People who like bicycles, mountain bikes, hiking, in groups or individually. ....  
...we need to be more aware of ecotourism, of course. First of all we have to sit down and think seriously how to improve what we have to offer, then we can produce leaflets and videos and other promotional material to push it all over the world to show people this is a place they should visit.
- We do not involve the local community in the decisions we make; no, in the decisions concerning the hotel, no. In the decisions concerning the promotion of the hotel, yes. Because outside the hotel we have no right to touch anything. We cannot put garbage bins, change bulbs, create parks or put benches or playgrounds, etc. ... On many occasions our club has made plans and proposals which we have sent to the mayors of the areas where we are located, to let them know what we think should be done. In the last 2 or 3 years we are pleased to see that they have started making changes and planning things. Actually, they have put me on the committee of Heraklion that will start planning and caring for the environment, and for the promotion of the island everywhere as an eco-friendly destination that is worth to visit, not only for the sun and the sea but for so much more.... Now is the time to make them believe in the value of ecotourism, medical tourism, diving tourism of whatever other alternative tourist activities, so that they start developing and promoting. When we are on the way, then we will show them how to change.
- We discussed that before. ...Ecotourism does not harm the environment if it is controlled and respectful. I've always believed that law is good if we make it true. If the law says don't cut trees and some stupid person cuts them to use them for fire and he is not punished, the next one will cut the whole forest down. If we say don't litter on the beach, and everyone does and nobody is punished, after some time all the beaches will be full of garbage. So it is within oneself to respect the law and the place he lives in.
- We have to find a balance between profit and protection of the environment. It is in our hands to make tourists respect the place they visit. If you go to Singapore it is full of tourists but you don't see anyone

throwing a chewing gum in the street. That's because they know that behind them is a policeman with a 150 dollars penalty. Simple things. ...we need to set controls and procedures, yes.

- I think that in the last 3 years the government ...has started with procedures to protect the environment, with their promotion. Before it was very rare.
- Our business offers accommodation, food, drinks, fun in the hotel. We don't offer transportation or flights, etc. We have been in operation 34 years, we have approximately 300 employees and receive per year about 15.000 people or more
- As I said, we do not consider our business an ecotourism business, except Asterias, so partly. I do not think that in the future I may do something concerning ecotourism ... it is not my style.
- Yes, the ecotourism market in Crete can grow, can provide profit but I would care so much to work with this style of tourism only because it is not my style as a person. I don't get enthusiastic so much with this type of tourism. ... Of course there is a big difference between mass tourism and ecotourism. ... As I said before mass tourism is all about fun, relaxation, drinking, eating, having sex and swimming. Only 5% of mass tourists ... go visit a village. ... They only care about sunbeds, umbrellas, food, animation, drinking, dancing, and sex.
- We don't have the ability to say we can change the destination of Crete and make it only ecotourist. We will fail, because the majority of tourism here is mass tourism. We cannot change this. Because business is based on profit. If you increase ecotourists and if you determine this destination as an eco-friendly destination only, without fun, without dancing, nightclubs or pubs, we will lose 90% of our guests. We will increase ecotourists from 10% to 20% and we will stay with that.
- In the last years tour operators tended to sell packages with more eco-friendly services... Yes, because this is the trend in Europe now and people say I would like to go somewhere to protect my surrounding. There is the mood to be eco-friendly but if you ask them to be eco-friendly they are not. They smoke and they throw their cigarettes down, they drink and they throw the bottles down. ... So, in reality it doesn't really exist; it's just a trend..., it's just a phase.

### **R9 Regional authority policy maker, Crete**

- As far as I know, ecotourism has to do with small family businesses that operate mainly in areas that are not strictly or purely of tourist nature. It is an activity that has been developing mostly alternatively; it provides services of alternative tourism. Each such area highlights and promotes specific features that characterise it.  
By the Greek origin of the word I understand that it is a type of tourist services offered within a specific area. It has to do not only with accommodation but also with other services, such as the production of various products, whatever is made inside a home. Groups of people who enjoy their vacation and learn how to make things like bread, how to cook etc.
- Ecotourism is very important because as I said it does not deal with large accommodations. It certainly helps the local economy and the sustainable development. It is a specialised type of tourist product that in any case helps promote the product of Crete. And I think that this helps and serves the sustainable development of an economy, of an area. ...  
I see sustainable development as... a specialised, let's say, type of development, for which one uses milder and more modern means friendly to the environment, because this is extremely important nowadays, so that we do not alter the character, the wealth of an area. It's what we say that culture, environment and development should coexist without one replacing or changing the other.  
...without having negative impacts. We could call it ecological development.
- Does ecotourism appear in our promotional material? There is nothing organised, only partly. There is some promotion of agrotourism, presenting mainly the mountains of Malevizi, because the lowlands have mainly mass tourism. But as municipality we participate in certain organisations, such as AKOM Development Center, that actually are tools of the municipality that promote, develop and assist this type of businesses; mainly agrotourism but also ecotourism businesses. Therefore, through these development companies the local authorities do reinforcing and promotional work. They utilise

European programs addressed to this type of tourism and basically offer the support that these small businesses require. Another example like AKOM is ANK-GR.

- I think it is self-evident that tourist services should be friendly to the environment? If so, why. Our country and the entire world in this situation that has been formed in the last years with the pollution of the environment really obliges us to have this type of tourism. That is, the development of the tourist product needs to be friendlier to the environment. I think that the entire world now seeks such initiatives, and this is where we actually have to turn to, because we can't have a tourist product without absolute respect for the environment. This was not the case in the past, but the path so far and our experience have shown that this was a tragic mistake, and if we are to offer something to our visitors, that is our nature, the environment and the features of each location. When these are not there, there is no reason for them to visit us. There is no point in visiting a place, staying only in a hotel getting high-quality services but not being able to go out.
- ...the merits of ecotourism ... I think that you don't need a large investment so it is more obtainable for the average entrepreneur to take something like this up. Also through ecotourism it is easier to get to know the culture and the tradition of a certain location than through mass tourism. ... I think that one of the greatest benefits is liberty of transportation, liberty in general. Tourists can decide for themselves where to go, how to go there, even what they eat, how it is cooked, without having to consume standardised food, which is very important. But the major benefit is that tourists can get a pure picture of the culture of the area they visit, they find out about the products of the area and everyday life. This is knowledge one cannot get from a hotel that mainly offers international cuisine and no tradition.

I also believe that the people who are interested in ecotourism are more troubled and conscious about what they want from their visit to a certain destination. It is something beyond the recreation that you can get from mass tourism, which unfortunately has not developed as much as it should have. But I am sure that the people who are interested in this type of tourism, the ecotourists, know what they want. And they are also explorers.

- As I said before there are small eco units in the area. I have come into contact with ecotourists. Arolithos and Arodamos are such units. We do have a few such units, however, we do not have the network to promote them and this type of tourist product in general. For example, we have the Almyros Bird Observatory and other such establishments...
- To what extent is ecotourism a genuine tourism activity to preserve the environment?  
Not only do I believe that ecotourism is genuine, but I believe that it is a combination of things like visit, exploration, education, knowledge. We could say that it is a genuine form of tourism, but unfortunately it is in its starting point in our area, but also throughout the country. However, we should point out that there have been significant interventions in the matter in the past years, yet not in the desired degree.
- Is ecotourism important for Crete? Of course it is, not only for Crete but for the entire country. It is what's missing from Greece. I mean the alternative types of tourism, different products, because tourism is constantly evolving. Unfortunately, in Greece we have maintained a model that used to work 30 years ago and we haven't made any progress. Despite the fact that the country has tremendous infrastructure, ecotourism was not developed. Let me repeat, however, that we are currently seeing things moving forward. Like the Bird Observatory we mentioned before or other small businesses involved with local products, where one can stay at a place, follow the production procedures, get to know the culture, learn about the exceptional herbs of Crete, etc. and follow trails that have to do with our history. Our Municipality has taken the initiative to start reconstructing the Minoan path, aiming at an alternative type of tourism, ecotourism. According to the myth every 9 years King Minoas used to follow a path to go to Ideon Andron, the birthplace of Zeus. It was his pilgrimage and there he was given instructions by his father, Zeus. As the local authority, we are reconstructing it so that we can revive this and create a very beautiful natural path for tourists to go hiking in a beautiful environment following the myth and be able to communicate this to others as well. And there are several other paths in the area too.

- My thoughts on the tourism market on Crete. ... There is significant infrastructure on Crete that can accommodate many different types of tourists, however, they are not so much developed. There is a lack in certain parts of infrastructure, which should be covered, in terms of the obligations of the state. As far as the private sector and hotel units are concerned, they are at a very high level, probably the best in the country. They have the capacity to present a lot, but this infrastructure needs to be integrated into a greater strategy for tourism by the state. There is a lot of potential but regrettably up until now there has been no such strategy. There are opportunities because the island has the infrastructure, in the private sector as I just mentioned, despite the lack on the state's side.

For example, we should have a bigger and better airport. Or certain tourist areas, like Ammoudara. In the '80s and '90s the area was touristically developed with no real planning by the state. Mainly with small businesses despite the fact that the area had begun developing in the '70s with 2 large hotel units with great perspective! This perspective was unfortunately lost in the process. No planning.

In Greece we have developed mass tourism, which basically is a model different from what we would like. The citizen of the world who visits Greece, who often does not get to know that culture of the country, because all he is sold is recreation. We should change this, and the local authorities should play a great role in this. Sometimes, these tourists do not know exactly where they are. Crete was the birthplace of Western civilisation and we have forgotten this. People who come are not aware of this. These are the results of mass tourism. Furthermore, mass tourists don't bring much profit because they have been standardised by the tour operators.

Last summer I visited China, Beijing and Shanghai. I realised that the programme and everything there was organised and executed in co-ordination with the Chinese Tourism Organisation. So, there is no strategy in Greece.... The difference is that Beijing is a heavily polluted city, I visited it too, 4 years ago. You cannot even breathe. This is not the case in Greece, and especially on Crete. We have no heavy industry, like other places in the world. ... Exactly because China was facing this problem, but it is a giant who is awakening and understands the potential of tourism promotion. So I will surprise you and tell you that what you experience in Beijing 4 years ago no longer exists! In the last 4 years, they have developed the planting of trees inside the city. And this is the difference between us. They constantly keep up to date with everything. Right now Beijing is one of the cleanest cities in the world, and their goal is constant change. They want to become the first or second tourism destination in the world within the next 15 years. We were lucky to have with us someone who knew the country and its culture very well, and this is yet another example; who introduces you to the place you visit. So also people involved in tourism should evolve in Greece, be it a waiter or a guide. This human potential should be of a high standard. ... Majorca used to face large problems with tourism, just like Ammoudara and other areas in Greece. They had to tear down a lot and rebuild a lot but they fixed it.

Exactly.

- I am not aware of any government policies that encourage ecotourism in Crete. ... I don't think that there is anything organised or concrete. There is some activity only through the development centres of the municipalities and through European programmes, but not as high as it should.
- Most certainly, ecotourism can improve the social, cultural and physical environment because not only do you promote certain features of the area, you also maintain and evolve them for yourself too.
- I believe Crete can be an ecotourism destination too. Together with mass tourism. Crete has a lot to offer, and in very small areas it can accommodate both types of tourists. Its landscape and morphology helps in this.

... When ecotourists visit Crete they expect to see... The civilisation and the culture that derive from the history, the tradition and the special features of the area, its habits, its nutrition. Cretan cuisine is a major feature of Crete.

- Ecotourists are they different from other tourists. ... They are a specific type of tourists who selects this kind of tourism not only because he wants to enjoy the sea and sun, but also everything the place he visits has to offer. He is of higher educational level, a seeker, a thinker, not necessarily wealthy but definitely cultivated. In the past they used to be older but nowadays also younger people are drawn to this type of tourism. Young people are better educated in our days and given all the environmental

problems the entire world is facing, they are more sensitive in these issues and are much more close to ecotourism.

- I believe the involvement of the local community in ecotourism decisions is important ... Yes, the local community is the ultimate collaborator. This does not mean that this is easy, because we are talking about small-scale businesses, as I said before, so it is necessary to share these efforts.
- Ecotourism may have negative impacts... because it has to do with the intermediary. It has to do with who is going to help him visit this place, the tour operator. The problem lies in organisation. ... Ecotourism can have a negative impact if it's not operated properly. ... It could have even a worse impact than mass tourism. And there is also the flight, the cost of the flight, etc.
- ... Crete as a destination ... we are trying to get more tourists. On the other hand, we try to develop alternative forms of tourism like ecotourism. I do not see a conflict between this and the protection of the environment, not necessarily. When there are limits, one form doesn't replace or is against the other. Legislation plays a major role. For example, no tourist zones have been determined in our municipality. There is no planning. So how can you invest in something without planning? However, I have to insist that in Crete we can have both, because we have the beach of Ammoudara and also the plateau at Krousonas, for example, where we can develop totally different types of tourism. Another example is Creta Maris in Hersonissos, a large scale hotel unit that provides strictly Cretan products in all F&B departments of the hotel. So why should we be able to achieve both?

### **R10 Local authority senior planner**

- The term ecotourism, I guess it has to do and I know, with small family businesses that operate in areas not primarily and strictly and purely tourist. Areas ... It is an activity which develop in alternative formats and provide more ... and provide service that has to do with ... alternative tourism as I said. Alternative form of tourism in which each region reveals certain things and shows and offers that characterize this region.
- House... the ... That tourism is in a particular place. Can offer beyond accommodation and other forms of media that have to do with preparing various products ... that happens in a house. The same thing is, groups of people can enjoy their holidays and be able to prepare some situations such as preparing pastries, to see how to make the bread, gastronomy, etc. That's how I understand it.
- Does eco-tourism encourage sustainable development? It is very important because as I said is not strictly large units, it will definitely help the local economy and sustainable development. They are specialized forms of the tourist product in each case to help the local product ... and I think that it helps serve the sustainable development of an economy of an area, region. ... Sustainable development, ... specific form of development where they use softer and more modern, friendly to the environment principle, it is important because we live in the age that we need to apply it and not do big interventions, in order to prevent the alteration of a character, a region and a wealth that exists. It's what we say, keep up the culture and the environment together with development without being replaced or altered. Yes, reducing the negative characteristics. That is ecological growth.
- There's no such thing as promotional material. But as to say there's no such thing organized. There is little to do agrotourism which is a small piece of ecotourism, a tiny bit, small and on the mountain localities in the midland sites. Municipality Malevizi has more mass tourism.
- I think tourism services should be friendly to the environment; I think this is obvious. The country, the whole world, and this evolving situation created in recent years by environmental contamination, oblige the creation of such forms of tourism, because with the development of the main tourist product it should also be friendly to the environment. People think, and I have to point out, are now looking for such initiatives because there can never be a tourist product if there is not an absolute respect for the environment. Something that has not been done before, but the trip and our experience shows that this is a tragic mistake, and if you should give the visitor something, it should be more of the nature, the environment and the specific characteristics of each region. When these do not exist, there is no

reason to visit us because we are not in favour of reason to visit at a place that people stay in a hotel that will provide specific services only, and where these services have to do with the high quality and not come out of it (the hotel).

- The merits of ecotourism over mass tourism and other forms of tourism is that ...for ecotourism you do not need big capital and it is more accessible to the average citizen to deal with it, either to participate. And it also gives him the ability to easily learn a culture and tradition of a region compared to mass tourism. ...The biggest of all is freedom of the customer. To decide on his own, and even regarding the food he will cook for himself, that he will eat, where will he buy this products to cook, how to peddle his standard food, so for me this is a tremendously important piece. The biggest benefit is getting to know the real region he will visit and acquaintance with the products which cannot be met through a massive hotel which offers only international cuisines and has no traditional cuisine. ... So coming into contact with more culture, life and the everyday life of the country that he visits. I also believe that those people who are interested in ecotourism are more puzzled and know very well what they want from a place they visit. It is beyond entertainment that you can get through the mass tourism. It is something more, which has not been evolved to the extent it should. But surely these visitors, who want this kind of tourism, are explorers. ...

I have come in contact with ecotourists. ... Arolithos is this type of place ... and Arolithos and Arothamos. There are many things that exist. Unfortunately there is no network that I told you to promote this form of tourism product.

- Not only do I believe that ecotourism is a real form of tourism... But it is a combination of visiting exploring and educating. You can say it is a true form but as you say it is still in its early stages especially in our region and all across the country, I believe. Although last year we said that Greece has made substantial and significant contributions, but not yet to the extent that we would like. ...

In my view ecotourism is a different form of tourism; sure. ...different from mass tourism. In order to succeed efforts should be done by state and local governments to get the logic to build the numbers of visitors ... as I said it is a different class of people, dealing with ecotourism that want ecotourism from that actually exists.

- Ecotourism is important for Crete and for Greece. It is what is missing in the country, alternative forms of tourism, different things, because surely the word tourism is something constantly evolving but which we unfortunately in our country have stayed in a model that worked 30 years ago and there has been no improvement over it. Although there is huge infrastructure in the host country, in this piece we had tourism but I repeat that now they are beginning to develop these things. Such as the bird observatory, there are companies, small units dealing with local products. One lives in the area and sees the culture, can make a walk in the nature and can see very local herbs of Crete, Mediterranean, etc. and combining paths that have to do with mythology. I must say e.g. that we as a municipality we have taken the initiative to create the Minoan path that has to do, and there strive for, in alternative tourism, has to do with the famous mythology ... which supports the myth that ride ... every nine years King Minos walked a path and went to Andros Ideas in Psiloritis, the birthplace of Zeus. Where he made worship and took instructions from the father of Zeus. We made this path to re-experience it ... and through an extraordinary journey of outstanding natural beauty ... the visitor walks, and combines myth. And therefore can spread this. We also have various other paths.

- There is a significant infrastructure in Crete where they actually welcome many types of tourism but unfortunately we have not developed tremendously. There is some lack in some infrastructure that must be covered, it has to do with the infrastructure of the state. The private infrastructure, hotels, units is a very high level. I think that is among the best in the country... They have the opportunity to show many things, but we must also be intensified infrastructure on an overall strategy that the state will have on tourism and on this, then there are prospects. Unfortunately until now there has been no unified strategy. It is an opportunity because the island has infrastructure but infrastructure to do more through private initiative and has significant shortcomings. We could have e.g. a bigger and better airport. ...

- Greece has thrived in the model of mass tourism ... different from what we wanted. The citizen of the world who come to Greece many times ... does not come in contact with the culture of the country



because of what they are sold is just recreation. And we have to do and turn and the government should play a role ...

- No, I am not aware of any Government policies that encourage eco-tourism in Crete. It is difficult to learn about tourism. Specifically organized there is nothing. Through the development companies of municipalities and programs of the European Union there is some movement but not to the extent it should.
- I believe Crete can be an ecotourist destination. This can be done along with other forms of tourism. Crete has the ability to offer you a lot, it has these characteristics e.g. the City has elements Malevizi while it has characteristics of mass tourism in a very little mileage it can accommodate such forms, because it has such a conducive environment. ... Ecotourists come to see culture; that is why they come. From the history to the tradition and the peculiarities of each region, the habits, the local diet. The eating habits and how it is associated with more good prospects that a kitchen gives you. ... The ecotourist is a conscious tourist who chooses this format rather than just wanting to enjoy the sun and sea but wants to experience all the joys and know the place he is visiting. This is the first motive. I think this is a person better educated, with search concerns. Not necessarily financially. Until the age of fifty. But young people, because young people are more educated and have all the modern problems of environment and nature. Younger people are more sensitive and closer to what we are talking about.
- The involvement of the local community in eco-tourism is important. Yes, I believe it. It is very important, because without it we are talking about businesses, activities that have to do mainly with small type units so it is essential to this effort..... Local communities.
- Ecotourism can harm the environment, yes, because the part of freedom of the choice tourists make to come here. The question is, who will arrange for them to come, will the agent help the person who will come? Will he provide services so he can easily find the information he wants and how will he spend his time here, because this is the problem of the organizational part. There are many questions... if you can find flights to come ... to find taxi, his destination.
- There is no contradiction between trying develop Crete as an ecotourist destination and to develop tourism in general, as mass tourism; I think not necessarily. When there are bounds and knowledge about each, its limits and how. I think that one does not replace the other and that the one does not exclude the other. ... Legislation. The biggest mistake this time is that they have not set yet, nor in our Municipality, the tourist areas. When you do not have the law of the state guaranteed that you can invest in the form, there is no respect, and there is anarchy.
- I insist that Crete has the ability to exist (in both types) without the one negating the other, you can grow both forms because it has such a structure and such a recommendation that it can be done. For example there is Candia Maris in Amoudara that can function as mass tourism, basically all Amoudara and there is Livadi Krousonas where already it has developed other forms of tourism that have no relation to the other (mass).

### **R11 CEO - Destination Management Company**

- Ecotourism is responsible traveling to natural areas in order to experience the nature and culture without causing negative impacts to the destination or to the inhabitants and supports the wellbeing of local communities, creating awareness about the importance of protection of cultural and natural environment, contributes to conservation, small scale development, local participation benefits in the development allows local people to make their own decision, contributes to sustainable development and sustainability, education, tourist satisfaction and the minimizing of the tourism impact. The term of ecotourism is surrounded by confusion, it has so many different interpretations however regardless its numerous definitions is an instigator of change, Change is wanted by most of the actors involved in ecotourism, many of whom would like to see an improvement in the current situation. Tourists want to escape from their daily life and wish to get special experiences that are existing in distinct places. Ecotourism involves low impact activities, such as, visiting a working farm



in a quaint village for the purpose of enjoyment, education or even involvement in activities such as cheese-making. Business persons wish to gain income and encourage tourists to visit the destination before it is late! Governments want to “develop” peripheral regions and to increase foreign exchange and tax revenues. Others profitable business interests may see the opportunity to sell different profitable activities involve with this form of tourism such as transportation, hiking boots, binoculars, diving equipment, experiences, and memories. Local residents living in the area of potential ecotourism destinations may wish to improve their lives for themselves and their children and may see ecotourism as generating jobs, stimulating incomes, diversifying economies, and enhancing standards of living. Even the conservationists, who would like to see endangered ecosystems and species continued, search for change in order to ensure their sustenance: changes in resource allocation and utilization and changes in management regimes. Even though most of the players involved in ecotourism desire change, there is usually considerable disagreement concerning which changes are desirable, which changes are benefit equally all the above players involved and the other hand protect the destination in long term.

- Development is a slippery term. It means different things to different people and these meanings have changed over time. Sustainable development is a political slogan rather than an analytical tool. Sustainability has become a catch-phrase, has attracted widespread interest and support and also, criticism from its Critics. Sustainable comes from the verb to sustain in the context of tourism it means to maintain its viability for a long term period of time. The crucial question is who defines what sustainable development is? How is to be achieved? And who have ownership of its representation and meaning? For me sustainable development means something different with someone else, hence this questions therefore apply also to ecotourism. ....However, more positively, there are examples where transportation companies, hotels, and restaurants have taken steps to recycle and reduce the consumption of energy, thus reducing costs, increasing profits, and taking small steps in the direction of sustainability On the other hand, the compatible use of the terms ecotourism and sustainable tourism on the part of some persons displays an inadequate understanding of both terms for, clearly, not all forms of ecotourism are sustainable and not all sustainable tourism need be to natural areas . In fact, one might wonder if the average eco tourist is more demanding environmentally than the mass tourist who may not need to visit endangered species in remote locations, and whose needs and wastes can be more readily planned for and managed in large numbers incorporating economies of scale.
- Ecotourism does not appear in our promotional material but I have seen different materials in the local market advertising natural tourism, but in reality this is a way to attract more new customers and is not something to do with respect the natural resources! Without having the knowledge or caring about the core principles of the concept of ecotourism or the implementation of the concept. The main aim is the generation of income. Until now, the exploitation of natural resources has led to vary results in the Crete
- In my business I represent different tour operators from foreign countries and dealing with mass tourists. I am not providing any ecotourism activities but just excursions to mass tourists. Actually I don't believe that are existing any ecotourism activities which are really respecting the principles of the concept of ecotourism without having in mind the business profit. The main interest of a business is the generation of income.
- We are not offering services that are friendly to environment, we are offering a variety of excursions which include cultural and natural tours but I can tell that these are not made with a main focus on the protection of cultural and natural environment but for the attraction of more customers.
- Ecotourism as a concept provides local benefits environmentally, culturally and economically one of the main and vital themes of ecotourism is community participation and education local participation generally involves empowering local residents to determine their own goals for development and consulting with the locals to determine their hopes and concerns for tourism. Incorporating the educational aspect to ecotourism is also important, as educating the public through ecotourism presents an opportunity to increase awareness and consequently protection of cultural heritage, as well as promotion of sustainable resource use of natural and cultural resources. The important factors

in all the above principles are if they can be implemented in reality in a destination as Crete and secondly if they exist in a destination that has succeeded in achieving these principles.

- Ecotourism means different things to different people. The International Ecotourism Society defines ecotourism as 'Travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and sustains the well-being of local people'. This distinguishes it from nature tourism, which involves visiting natural attractions but without any explicit objective of achieving environmental or social protection. Others rephrased it as 'nature tourism that promotes conservation and sustainable development', introducing the element of pro-active conservation and economic development. Another explanation expanded the definition to include not only financial benefits for conservation and for local people, but also support for human rights and democratic movements. From an environmental perspective, self-described ecotourism operators cover a wide range, from those that simply practice some cost-saving or environmental measures (e.g. water recycling or renewable energy), to those that actively invest in protecting natural areas or threatened species. Most ecotourism operations also claim to benefit local communities, either through employment or by contributing to community projects, and others implies going beyond this to involving communities actively. This has been interpreted as anything from regular consultations, to ensuring that at least some community members participate in tourism-related economic activities, to partial or full community ownership of whole ecotourism enterprises. Ecotourism can generate support for conservation among communities as long as they see some benefit, and if it does not threaten or interfere with their main sources of livelihood. Unfortunately, effective conservation often involves some sacrifice. The ecotourism industry consists of mainly private sector businesses that provide goods and services to ecotourists. Such as conventional hotels, cruise lines and travel agencies that incidentally serve ecotourists and/or provide ecotourism products, the main aim of this business is the generation of income.
- In order to solve or at least reduce the problems of mass tourism, the policy proposed here is the application of new forms of tourism. However, these forms are not always economically and environmentally sustainable. While most of them have been applied in the mainland, they cannot be applied successfully in Crete as easily due to their unique characteristics (geographical, demographic, economic etc.). However, in spite of the significant contribution of tourism to the local economy, foreign capital (private and EU) now plays an important role in the island's development. Foreign control of tourist flows, accommodation and services has increased the imbalanced distribution of tourism benefits and the loss of self-reliance. This is more serious in areas where tourism is the only viable development alternative such as Crete. This influence has meant that tourism development in Crete depends significantly on non-local resources and influences. This weakens self-reliance and local control of development, and there is high leakage of money out of the local economy seriously reducing the industry's potential for generating net financial advantages for, and growth of, the local economy.
- What motivated me to operate in the tourism industry is ...the dynamic of this industry and the fact that you are dealing with people.
- Natura 2000 and Agenda 21, plans have been designed in co-operation with the local authorities and businesses aiming at increasing awareness in tourists and locals, and inducing the local population, especially the young people, to remain in mountain areas through promotion of alternative living opportunities, such as eco-tourism, mountain tourism and agro-tourism (Agenda 21, ). In Crete, the European Union finances various projects. Under the LEADER program attempts are being made in Psiloritis (a Cretan mountainous area) to associate tourism with traditional farming activities through agro-tourism promotion (EU, 2000). On the same lines, the EU's Social Development Programme for the period 2000-2006 for Crete. Although these funds will not be given directly to tourism, planned projects will have a positive effect on hinterland areas' tourism development. However, reality has shown that although the availability of EU funding clearly acts as a catalyst for change and contributes to the enhancement of the island's tourist product, the lack of a strategic master plan, bad management and inadequate co-ordination of regional and national programmers with relevant EU ones, have resulted in various shortfalls for the implementation of EU projects. Therefore the important is not just the programs but the implementation of them from people who understand the

tourism industry and have deep knowledge of the current situation of tourism in Crete. In papers many programs were developed in reality nothing has changed from the dependency on mass tourism and the foreign tour operators, seasonality, and on the low budget tourism.

- Ecotourism strengthens the mass tourism product through diversification, by offering a chance for visitors to take a break from the beach or shopping to observe and learn about natural attractions. The strong influence of ecotourism on mass tourism is illustrated by a 2009 random survey of 2000 inbound tourists to Crete, which revealed that 60 percent were motivated to visit that country primarily because of the opportunity to view interesting natural places such as Samaria gorge elafonisi, etc. If not for these natural places opportunities, it's likely that those tourists would probably travel to cheaper and more accessible 3S destinations such as Malta, Spain. Since ecotourism depends on protected areas, and ecotourism helps to sustain the conventional mass-tourism industry, it follows that protected areas are also important for conventional mass tourism. However, that support is indirect and therefore best mediated through the specialized ecotourism sector.
- In addition to the ecological and biophysical problems related to ecotourism, there are other, economic and socio-cultural problems. For example, while ecotourism can be attributed with generating some economic development at a local level, quite often, it has resulted in disruption of local economic activities. Not only does ecotourism disrupt the local economic activity, often times, the economic benefits of ecotourism in a particular area do not accrue to the local community. In those cases, the income is repatriated to some international tour operator. In a similar fashion, high levels of visitation by foreign tourists have led to disturbance of local cultural practices and lifestyles. Essentially, many communities that were previously isolated have had to adapt to the constant presence of strangers in their backyard. While the exact nature of the effects of ecotourism on cultural and lifestyle practices are yet to be determined and quantified.
- The question is, does ecotourism exist? And what ecotourism is? Is it a marketing ploy of dealing with a new profitable niche market? In order to attract more customers in a saturated destination as Crete. The exploitation of natural resources has led to vary in results in the islands. A very well-known paradigm is the gorge of Samaria in Crete, which is a protected area, according to the UNESCO's monument list. There are hundreds of visitors every day during the summer, walking and littering for seven hours in the gorge, often having no previous information about the duration of the visit and the hot weather conditions. This activity destroys the natural environment, while at the same time the tourists themselves cannot enjoy their excursion.
- Many academics highlight the need for local community involvement in planning and managing ecotourism, particularly in the context of developing countries, others mentioned that highlights the fact that many ecotourism projects have adopted the generation of economic benefits for the local community as one of their major aims. In the past, however, local community participation in the decision making process of tourism development has often been lacking. Local communities have tended to be viewed simply as the beneficiaries of tourism development, rather than as essential partners in the process of achieving such development. This is also the case in Crete.
- The uncontrolled ecotourism development created even bigger negative impacts than mass tourism, one of the more fundamental issues surrounding ecotourism is the lack of standards regarding its practice. Presently in Crete there are few national laws and regulations that dictate who can rightfully engage in ecotourism and how it must be carried out. Similarly, there are no licensing procedures. Therefore, any tourism outfit can claim to conduct ecotourism even if it has little to no experience in that kind of tourism. Such unrestricted practice of ecotourism by inexperienced tour operators has inevitably resulted in types of ecotourism that do not adhere to its basic principles of environmental sustainability and local income generation.

Several other problems related to ecotourism are the by-products of inadequate funding, poor management, natural resources and insufficient monitoring and evaluation of programs of their protection. For example, while significant investment has been made in protecting natural places such as VAI, ELAFONISI, MONI PREVELI, SAMARIA GORGE, in reality, problems such as trail deterioration, habitat disruption, pollution, and litter are occur.

Over-visitation is yet another factor that compounds the problem. A very well-known paradigm is the gorge of Samaria in Crete, which is a protected area, according to the UNESCO's monument list. There are hundreds of visitors every day during the summer, walking and littering for seven hours in the gorge, often having no previous information about the duration of the visit and the hot weather conditions. This activity destroys the natural environment, while at the same time the tourists themselves cannot enjoy their excursion. Is this an ecotourism activity? Thereby alleviating the pressure on other more fragile environments, the fact is that even the ecotourism designated environments are also fragile. That reality is precisely one of the reasons so many people converge upon such areas; they cannot experience such unadulterated nature in their own countries. What has happened, then, is that areas that are already strained are becoming more strained by the presence of humans. Clearly, there is an issue of carrying capacity in these places. How many more visits will these places be able to sustain before trail deterioration, litter, pollution, and habitat disruption become even more problematic?

In order to solve or at least reduce the problems of mass tourism, the policy proposed here is the application of new forms of tourism. However, these forms are not always economically and environmentally sustainable. While most of them have been applied successfully in the mainland, they cannot be applied successfully in the islands as easily due to their unique characteristics (geographical, demographic, economic, etc.).

### **R12 Appraiser of Tourism Development product, Crete**

- Mass tourism was believed to be large-scale, externally controlled, high leakage, and concentrated in high-density tourist strips, alternative tourism was supposed to be small-scale, locally controlled, conducive to the formation of linkages with other sectors of the local economy, and dispersed within low-density local neighborhoods. Where mass tourism was considered to be inherently unsustainable, alternative tourism was thought to be inherently sustainable. Ecotourism emerged within this context as a form of alternative tourism that put the emphasis on natural attractions as opposed to cultural attractions. Although sustainable nature-based tourism had already been practiced for many decades within national parks and other protected areas, the application of the ecotourism label placed this form of tourism in an ideological niche that gained its identity from its conscious opposition to mass tourism. Alternative or ecotourism in part grew out of a reaction to the negative impacts and accompanying damage of mass tourism. Ecotourism is recognized such attributes as limited-scale, low-impact, community-based and raised-awareness or education and is frequently presented as the antithesis of mass tourism. Ecotourism as a synonym for integrated, adapted, controlled, endogenous, responsible, authentic, equitable tourism. The use of ecotourism refer to a polarized opposite of and substitute for mass tourism the relationship between ecotourism and mass tourism remains uncharted terrain within tourism. However Most definitions of ecotourism suggest that the two types of tourism are separated by virtue of the natural, pristine, or pure locations in which ecotourism must occur, the example of Crete or other tourism destinations illustrates that overlaps between ecotourism and mass tourism are not only possible, but also vital in cases where ecotourism companies must draw on the tourist markets and channels of mass tourism in order to survive financially.
- The last decades Crete has experienced a rapid increase in tourism. Currently tourism is the largest economic activity close to 3.6 million tourists. Crete has remarkable natural, cultural, and historical resources however is totally depended on mass tourism, the island today attracts, almost entirely, package tourists looking for the 4Ss. According to research that present it in local tourism magazine the three main activities of visitors to Crete were swimming/sunbathing (87.6% of the total), dining outside the accommodation establishment (75.9%), and shopping (66.1%), with fourth priority activity the visitation of cultural sites (62.1%). The majority of tourists visiting Crete prefer to stay at their hotels for sunbathing or walk in the vicinity of their hotels for dining, drinking, and relaxing. Only a small number practice other type of cultural and environmental activities, such as visiting

museums and archaeological sites or the natural assets of the island such as Samaria gorge and the palm forest of Vai. Based to statistics Crete has a high seasonality problem, slowing from the fact that, during the high summer period, tourist facilities are used to capacity, while during the low season they are under-used, and during the winter they are almost unused. Although that tourism in numbers is increased rapidly the revenues per capital are decreased meaning that the benefits from tourism are reduced. Additionally in 2016 all of all the surrounded tourist competitors of Greece, Crete faced problems of wars terrorist attacks, etc. (Turkey, Egypt, Tunisia,) in reality Crete did not gain any increase in absolutely numbers from all this situation which actually shows a lack of strategy towards tourism development. Also, Crete is known as a mass destination and is very difficult to change the image towards and alternative form as ecotourism the only possibility of development of ecotourism is the south part of the island where it is underdeveloped.

- Is ecotourism development in Crete truly a sustainable practice? Has it fostered community empowerment, local income generation, and linkages with existing communities, while promoting environmental sustainability? While on academic papers, this may seem to be the case, when one looks under the surface and studies the evidence, it does not appear as if ecotourism in Crete or in an another destination in Greece has achieved those goals. Moreover, it does not seem that the deployment of ecotourism in its current form will be sustainable in Crete. So what measures should the government take to ensure that ecotourism is a more positive force in Crete and that it fulfils its original principles that of, promoting and protecting the environment into the future as a means of generating economic development?
- There are many ways to interpret tourism in relation to sustainable development, economic sustainability, ecologically, viability of tourism. Ecotourism may thus be sustainable in the local level in the sense that it puts a minimum threat to the local ecosystems through the conversion of lands, collection of species, etc., but in may in most cases not be sustainable from a global point of view. In reality ecotourism have been used by the tourism industry to promote a clean and green image, which is occasionally deserved but, more often, is little more than a marketing trick.
- On the other hand ecotourism relies, on the small-scale tourism, involvement of the locals, and preservation of natural and cultural environment but can it be implemented? Can Crete survive economically? With small-scale tourism? Could the development of ecotourism provide the same number of jobs as the current tourism industry does? I believe that all the principles of ecotourism can help Crete to healthier development but could never reach the current generation of income from mass tourism.

### **R13 Product Manager of a European tour operator**

- The nature of our tourism operation is flight holidays and package tours, I have been in operations over 5 years. Our business offers packages including flight, transfer accommodation and excursions at the destination that clients buy on the spot. We have 50 employees, and approximately 100,000 tourists per year.
- I would not consider our business an ecotourism business. No, it is more a mass tourism product.
- The main reasons for being in the tourism industry is to offer people nice holidays and because I enjoy working with people.
- What is necessary for running a successful nature based tourism operations is people with passion about nature and good knowledge of the places. The rest is all the same with the other types of tourism.
- Crete is a good and interesting destination, with a lot of variety to offer. The image is now a problem but the potential is all there. The market is not growing, not right now. Probably, there is room for more tour operators who are selling an environmentally friendly tourism products. We have no specific environmental objectives or policies, no, I don't think so. ... Our company has the green seats on our flights.

- No, it is not in the nature of our business, so we do not try to persuade our clients to be more environmentally friendly and to protect the environment. We do not create any environmental benefits from your tourism operations.
- Environmental detriments from our tourism operations including air pollution, big masses go to destinations and then the charm is lost. The most important thing for us is to sell tourist packages.
- The factors that would make tourism eco-friendly and responsible form of travel include a program that compensates for pollution and selection of hotels based on eco-friendliness.
- I think ecotourism might stimulate attention that can help improve the social cultural and physical environment of Crete.
- I do not believe in ecotourism in general.
- Ecotourism can be described as tourism and people who care about nature and respect the environment, also during their holidays.
- When they visit a tourism destination such as Crete, ecotourists expect another nature / environment than what they can see in Holland.

#### **R14 Managing Director of tour operator**

- We are long-haul specialists. The company has been in operation for 105 years. In Holland 25 years. 100 employees work in your business. Our business offers individual and group holidays; we have approximately 60,000 tourists a year.
- Not everything is ecotourism in our business, but we have some ecotourist programs and we do support some eco-tourism initiatives.
- ...the main reasons for being in the tourism industry is because tourism is a service industry which is something I like with inspiring products. It is a positive industry that makes people happy. It has international character. It is also a challenging industry because it is constantly developing, in terms of destinations, concepts, distribution, business models, our clients, social media, it is a dynamic industry.
- To run a successful nature based tourism operations, you need strong local agents and an authentic culture of the business. If clients think it is not authentic they will punish you but if it is they will buy. ...I think there are different types of operators in this area. There are some really authentic and use some specialists who believe in nature/eco-tourism, by for example offering green seats, they compensate for CO2 emissions, but there are also those who think this is a marketing ploy.
- Natural tourism is a combination of respect to the local inhabitants, but also educating your clients about eco-tourism, nature based elements, and to respect the environment.
- The image of Crete is mass tourism, 90% sun and 10% culture. .... And yes, there room for more tour operators who are selling an environmentally friendly tourism product. There is no one doing it right now, so from the marketing perspective there is place. ... Crete is not the first destination that comes to my mind. I think about Costa Rica, destinations that are known for their nature, habitat and animals. When you think about Crete you think about sun and fun, not about eco elements. Thus it is not perceived as an eco-destination and there is a lot to be done to be considered as eco-destination and be credible.
- We have quite a big corporate responsibility in our company, with a whole department in Switzerland working on these programs. It is a combination of supporting local tourism initiatives. We develop work programs and physically work on nature based programs and compensate for the negative elements of tourism. We support all kinds of eco-tourism initiatives. Our company has the biggest program in this field.
- Yes, through the corporate responsibility program. We do not want to exploit the destination, we want to acquire experience at the destination but we also want to protect it. We do not use eco-tourism as a marketing tool.



- Of course, there are always environmental detriments when you put people in a destination, but we are not mass tourism, we bring small groups to destinations, so I do not think we destroy them but there are negative impacts from our guests (flights, cars etc.).
- What makes tourism eco-friendly and a responsible form of travel is the focus on the existing habitat. It is eco-friendly if you do not try to change things. If we try to make a place tourist friendly then it is not eco-friendly anymore, because we interfere with the nature. If you respect the local habitat and take into account all environmental issues then it is eco-friendly. If it is done properly it is a responsible form of tourism, otherwise it can also be very negative. I don't believe in mass eco-tourism. Eco-tourism is small scale; it respects the environment and educates clients to be more conscious about what can happen. For example, I went to Tanzania and became more conscious about nature than I was before and it is so much easier to see how important the environment is.
- Crete is a difficult case, because if you talk about image, saying to a friend that you are going to Crete for eco-tourism they will think it is the wrong choice because people go to Crete for drinking and the sun. On the other hand, if you say you will go to Costa Rica people will think it is great. It is very difficult to change the image and I think if people try to change it will not work. There have to be small initiatives from the right operators.
- I describe ecotourism as holiday where the essence of it is about enjoying and learning from the natural environment of the destination. The essence of the trip has to be learning about plants, water, animals, agricultural issues, etc., and also contributing to the maintenance of the environment, not just visiting a natural destination.
- I think what ecotourists expect when they visit a tourism destination such as Crete, is natural environment in its original state, not manipulated, small scale natural eco trips based on the element of the sea.
- I think eco tourists exist, yes. ... I think there is a big trend of people who are authentic ecotourists, a growing group. People are more and more conscious about the fact that they are responsible about this planet.

### **R15 Product Manager of a European tour operator**

- The nature of our tourism operation is package holidays, we have been 10 years in operations. The company has 500-600 employees; around 10 for the destination of Crete. We have approximately 700,000 tourists per year; approximately 7000-8000 in Crete.
- No, we would not consider our business an ecotourism business. Sometimes we think about eco/sustainable tourism but finally no, we are not.
- The main reasons for being in the tourism industry is meeting people and getting to know their culture.
- For running a successful nature-based tourism operations, it is necessary to have a company policy, which should not be just profit. Also, the feelings for the environment and the importance of sustainability, but that costs money.
- The economic situation in Crete is very difficult at the moment. The market is not growing, it is going down. We will see how this will develop in the first 2-3 months.
- Of course there is room for more tour operators who are selling an environmentally friendly tourism product; it is a niche market and there are not many tour operators. Yes, there is also room for expansion of eco-tourism. ... Anyway, eco-tourism and sustainability in general are becoming popular, a fashion trend.
- As for our environmental objectives or policies, we are working with the green life but it is not known yet.
- We respect the environment but at the end profit is what counts.
- In terms of environmental detriments from our tourism operations: youngsters going to Chersonissos cause many damages. Cars damage the environment and we rent so many cars per year. These are small examples of how we create environmental problems.

- Factors that make tourism eco-friendly and a responsible form of travel, environmental awareness is the main one. Yes, ecotourism is a responsible form of travel.
- I think ecotourism exists in reality, yes in a way, but sometimes it is not fair to give this name.
- I do not think the main reason for developing eco-tourism is profit, because it is a niche and there are many clients who are aware of environmental issues and are willing to spend more money for their holidays.
- I would describe ecotourism in this way: No damage to the environment, respect for the local people and no pollution.
- Ecotourists expect when they visit a tourism destination such as Crete, not big resorts, small accommodation with positive policy for the environment, such as linen change on request rather than daily... They want to get to know the locals and be far away from mass tourists.
- I think ecotourists really exist, yes and they want to cause as little damage to the environment as possible.

### **R16 Consultant**

- A tourism set up that respect the environment, not only from a geophysics perspective but also from a sociocultural one. This could be achieved by using responsibly the available natural resources, optimizing recycling methods and alternative forms of power, respect the local aesthetics, the local community and traditions to ensure a perfect fit with the overall environment.
- Yes, because by definition sustainability requires the "subject" to be sustained meaning to have a stable ongoing existence and, if possible, progress. Eco-tourism requires leaving the least environmental footprint which will ensure adequate future resources and therefore, sustainability.
- Why do you offer tourism services that are friendly to the environment; what are your reasons? Because it would be rather egoistic for humans to associate indulgence, leisure and well-being with irresponsible exploitation of the local environment. On top, surpassing the limit of resources available will damage the eco-system harmony and, unavoidably, destroy the tourist product our island is offering. This will create a negative domino effect to all tourism businesses and the local communities. If we want to preserve the local jewel that Crete is, and want to offer high end tourism experiences to our customers for many year to come, we can do it only by respecting the environment. We know that nature call be really merciless if mistreated.
- Nowadays there are plenty forms of tourism and there is a specialization of each type according to the needs of the targeted tourists. You have from ecotourism to religious tourism, cultural tourism, even sex or war tourism. We can only compare Ecotourism to those types with some relevance such Agro-tourism, Nature-tourism, Adventure tourism and other similar types. My view, is that Ecotourism is the basic type which includes all the others. All other types cannot be defined if the eco-caring notion is not there. You can say that Ecotourism is the Demi-glance sauce (which is the base of sauces) and all other types are variations you can create by using that base such as mushroom sauce, pepper sauce, etc.
- There is no such thing as "No Impact" to the environment when an activity is taking place. The objective of Eco-tourism is to keep this impact close to zero and preserve the environment to the greater extend. So if the decision is to exploit a destination for tourism needs, it better be done with preserving the environment being on top of the list. And Eco-tourism is all about that.
- I do not believe it is a form of tourism. It more like a mindset of what all form of tourism should consider and include. For example, Agrotourism is a form of tourism because tourist are actually looking forwards to experience the everyday life at an agricultural site with activities, etc. Within this type, they expect the whole experience to be eco-friendly and that is where the Eco mindset falls in.
- Crete is a blessed island with a rich natural diversity. Tourism in Crete relies a lot on providing an authentic experience from all perspectives. With its numerous traditional small villages, the combination of sea and mountain, the unlimited miles of unexploited beaches, the authenticity of the local people, and of course the Cretan worldwide famous food tradition with genuine fresh products,



Crete is what one could say, paradise on earth. Uncontrolled tourism exploitation can threaten this image and in some areas is already visible. As the tourism product offered is constantly changing trying to be more attractive to tourists, Eco tourism development is now more important than ever, to make sure Crete will preserve its unique identity and not become just another destination providing "factory like" services without any differentiation from other destinations around the world.

- It requires all parties involved to be eco-sensitive and understand the importance of respecting the environment. The government that needs not only to create the legal eco-framework under all tourism activities should operate, but also to follow up and audit regularly to assure that these activities are compliant. The entrepreneurs to respect the law and consult eco-experts before and after any investment. The local community to be able to provide the support needed to run eco-friendly businesses (e.g. waste management). Continuous education of tourists to behave with respect to the local environment and local community.

- It is all connected to each other. Regarding the physical environment we cannot talk about "improvement" because, as explained before, there is no such thing as "No impact" when interfering with the environment. Nature is perfect as is and mankind cannot play god to "improve" it. What eco-tourism does it to securing that the impact from any activity is as low as possible? By doing so, you also do respect the local community and how it is organized throughout the years, and there is also the possibility to educate and trigger locals to behave themselves more eco-friendly (e.g. using less harmful processes in agricultural activities and produce organic products, restoring public buildings and houses by keeping the local aesthetics, using alternative means of powers such as solar panels, etc).

- Yes because as explained in Q13, there is a chain connecting all parties to make eco-tourism work. The local community must be able to provide all the support needed for an eco-tourism activity to be successful. The local authorities must provide the appropriate means and infrastructure (Consult future and existing investors on the local characteristics and particularities that need to be considered, provide modern waste management processes to minimize and recycle waste, and audit investments to assure they operate under the legal framework set).

### **R17 Professor of Tourism and Industry Consultant (by Skype)**

- Ecotourism is form of tourism it relates to tourism development and tourism activity that follows some principles of ecological protection or ecological interest it is part of the wider idea of sustainable tourism.
- Ecotourism is part of sustainable tourism and it does encourage therefore development in sustainable way because development in principle of sustainability focusing on a broader spectrum of perspectives of development, looking at social economical financial environmental political aspects or impacts of development. Therefore ecotourism touches upon environmental interests of sustainable development.
- As you know I don't have my own promotional material I don't have my own organisation but as an adviser or specialist in tourism development. I would say that ecotourism appears at destination websites so tourism boards that are interesting in promoting destinations and local activities and local areas and development of tourism increasingly focus on environmental interest. Ecotourism if you take it from the perspective of the eco system of the destination of course it includes environmental but also social aspects and I guess that is part of question one also partly Is adding one dimension in question one that I answer before. Now Ecotourism as I said it appears in promotional materials of destinations and tourism boards however it also appears on promotional or marketing materials of tour operators and destination management companies not just destination management organisations or tourism boards but destination management companies like crony, Thomas Cook and others that the claimed to be as specialist in specific destinations and try to promote their interest to support ecosystems at destinations, so in a way you can argue that is a sales tool because it reflects its increasing social interest in minimising negative impacts of tourism activities to destinations and

communities which are part of the ecosystem and the society and is also part of the wider interest of organisations on corporate social responsibility and environmental responsibility as well is part of responsible business in a way.

- Well as a consultant or advisor in tourism development my relevance my interest in ecotourism services relate to developing marketing plans for destinations or tourism organisations developing development plans and initiatives that support destinations and tourism development and focusing on ecotourism and environmental social aspects of tourism activity. The objectives that relate to ecotourism on those services are to mostly first of all to create awareness through including ecotourism ecological and environmental issues in the early stages of the planning and development of tourism destinations or marketing destinations if you want so it's an intrinsic part of the services provided by consultants and advisors like myself.
- I offer tourism services that are friendly to the environment, well Two main reasons I can think right now why environmentally friendly services are been offered. Basically because of both demand and supply interest and because there is a wider understanding of the impacts the negative impacts that tourism can have at destinations, environmentally, culturally, socially at destinations, by environment you mean I guess the physically environment in this question so I related more to the physical environment basically because of increasing interest from markets so consumers basically in terms of engaging in tourism activity travel and tourism activities that do not harm the environment using resources of destinations rather sustainable way responsible way and there is an increasing interest globally now for voluntary tourism for a number of years but now is becoming a bit more popular as an activity particularly at young generations so people will go to destinations and follow environmental projects or protect ecosystems in very sensitive areas could be forest national parks could be flora, fauna animals and so on, so that interest from the markets from consumers is important because the products that we develop on destinations have to obviously satisfy those needs and those interest of consumers at the same time there is a supply side interest to maintaining or sustaining or not harming the environment so the idea of ecotourism or developing ecotourism activities would also mean to use the resources of the destination on the responsible way in the way we don't harm the environment and to allow future generations to use the resources to obviously also create tourism experience and activities. An example of that could be that they are some paths of the mountain of Crete that been used for hiking for example therefore if we are not careful those paths could be damaged by tourism walking and using those paths so it has to be a very responsible way of how where tourists will walk to these paths without damaging the environment.
- Well by comparison to other types of tourism I am not sure what other types of tourism you mean I suppose you mean irresponsible tourism not sustainable tourism and mass tourism has been accused of doing that and I guess that when you compare ecotourism with mass tourism which is a rapidly type focusing on visitor numbers rather than a balance between impacts of the environment, the visitors the residence of the destination but also the industry, so the merits of ecotourism are that we are focusing on more controlled development of areas and places to host visitors and an ecotourism approach will pay an interest to the environment on local community on the local business as well as a visitor of course to have a high level of visitor satisfaction and there are examples where good products not necessarily satisfy the visitors because of the excessive visitors numbers and a typical example is Venice. Other merits of ecotourism is that interest between the relevant stakeholders may not be easy to achieve but is still a good thing to aim for because it means that planners destination planners and tourism developers constantly strive for an improvement in the rewards and returns of the vary stakeholders and that means stakeholders balance may not be achieved with accuracy but they are tendency to improved constantly improve.
- Well ecotourism is an approach to tourism development and of course as such it involves specific activities in planning, in developing in implementing in promoting in using evaluating destinations and tourism activities at destinations therefore the principles of ecotourism approach to all these elements actually aim to preserve the environment now whether this actually can be achieved as 100% is questionable but what do we mean by is a such thing as preserve the environment, the environment is life is contently evolving the earth itself if we left the planet right now and we left it on its own

- it would make cycles and would create live destroy live and of course are discussions about raising temperatures around the world on ice melting and things like that but we can improve the environment but the environment is a live thing and it involves and changing by nature and we can maybe influence those cycles by ecotourism and preservation is a very relative term because it means Ecotourism means different things to different people now ecotourism is a way to preserve the environment while trying to use the resources of a destination on an economically sensible way so what that means we have a destination that has specific resources we decide that this resources have the capacity to create wealth and improve quality of life of the local people by providing jobs by providing employment opportunities for entrepreneurship and therefore if we use those resources by default we will change the environment now how we do that can have less negative impacts if we take an ecotourism approach so therefore I believe that ecotourism is genuine tourism activity to preserve the environment if of course is conducted in the appropriate way and although is not utopic that we can achieve we have a preserve environment is towards the right direction the right move for a destination.
- Well ecotourism is related to tourism activity that focus on more natural and more exotic places that I is at list as was developed initially as an idea and the intention has been to support conservation and observe wildlife now this could be regarded as an alternative form of tourism and the reason of that is there is a different types of tourism they are rural tourism city tourism urban tourism so ecotourism is a different form of tourism in that sense so it is an alternative form of tourism but the important thing is that it should be a nature related tourism, natural parks conservation, etc.
  - Since ecotourism is related to tourism at exotic and natural environments and intend to support conservations efforts and maybe observe wildlife Crete has some of these assets to offers to visitors Crete has national environments, has wildlife some of this are rare wildlife. Exotic I don't know I don't see Crete exotic but from people around the world Crete is exotic some parts of Crete look exotic so how we have to define these terms what is exotic what is maybe different can be vary depending with who you are asking , so I guess what Crete can offer you need to ask tour potential visitors to see if that is the case, a German visitor will defined it different we a visitor from china but china is huge it could have rural urban area completely set of environment as Crete but at the same time we are talking about natural environment here but we as consumers we understand the natural environment and how we classify them as exotic or not exotic so Crete could be an exotic destination for some visitors therefore Crete could offer ecotourism since it has possible exotic natural environment and there is wildlife is maybe under the threat of distinction or maybe is unique on the island so for those reasons I believe Crete could be an ecotourism destination.
  - Well attached up on the previous question ... but let me read some of this point because the Cretan tourism product is relevant to ecotourism and can be relevant to ecotourism but not for all markets so depending on who is your customer they may define what is exotic what is different what is unique what is of interest them and in what ways and that's one point and the second point is the Cretan tourism product is actually suitable for ecotourism activities because They are areas in the island that are relative in danger in terms of the population of the plants, the population of animals so one and some of these animals and plants are unique therefore can present an interest to travellers or visitors in such type of tourism so they call themselves ecotourists.
  - Well this a very interested question because we can talk about this a whole day but is a very long answer. I don't know where to start but the fact that tourism is about people that tourism is about creating pleasant experiences and people travel around the world for various reasons and that is for leisure or business and is always is something that to learn there is always opportunities for development personally and live long learning and love learning and that way I am doing this job is bringing ...to each other to understand each other or societies to improve and I find that fascinating.
  - To be honest I am not sure if specific government policies to encourage ecotourism on Crete, I believe that they are initiatives from the European union and must be from Greece maybe at the local regional level I am not sure at the government level whenever something is so engaging to encourage development of ecotourism on Crete but I believe that the local authorities in Crete regional development agencies and so on they are actually taking an ecotourism approach to development on Crete and try to find opportunities to preserve the national environments of Crete. What more can be

done the collaboration is very important when it comes to the development of ecotourism local regional and national and international collaboration is very important for ecotourism for example I have noticed EUROVELLO which is an initiative from Europe to create cycling routes for all Europe there is a big network for cycling routes in whole Europe goes to every country Greece has this cycle routes as well but the stop at Peloponnese's so Crete which is approximately 300 km wide does not has a cycling route that crossing the island and that actually is a loss for Crete because along with routes of cyclist Europe is providing funding initiatives develop those routes in terms of mapping them but also to creating an economy around those routes next to cycling routes could be a tourism related shops selling local products organizing events accommodation providers and so on so there is a big opportunity of Crete to focus on a similar activity and develop cycling tourism on Crete despite the fact that they are mountains all over the islands they are actually mountains very attractive for road cyclist who embrace the challenge of going uphill and downhill and Crete with its perfect weather conditions can be a fantastic cycling destination to develop as an example of ecotourism on Crete.

- Well I do believe that ecotourism is a responsible form of tourism because it relates to our responsibility preserve environments and act in responsible way towards society towards wider environments flora and fauna animals and son on so yes ecotourism Is a responsible form of tourism. What is required to make tourism eco-friendly the first think as I said before is partnerships very important and more sustainable approach in planning developing implementing those plans and evaluating the tourism activity so that involves collaboration between stakeholders and that only can be done by engaging every stakeholder involving stakeholder in every face of the planning stage of tourism development even at the evaluation stage how we monitor tourism development has to be decided with the stakeholders in mind who will use that information we collect from the performance management performance monitoring and will react and act at this information as well.
- I believe that ecotourism focuses more on the physical environment particularly on natural and exotic environment or environments that are under conservation or environments that are in danger by environments we don't mean just plants rocks earth we mean probably animals as well and that it could relates to humans as well because human tribes and human activity human societies are also part of physical environment in that sense it could be regardless as a physical environment or strongly attached to the physical environment so you can't separate these elements easily of social cultural physical environment and since you cannot separate those you cannot separate all these social cultural physical with the economic environment as well so is a very strong interlining between ecotourism and all these environments and each one these types of environment are being affected by ecotourism so each can improve the other there is definitely a strong relation between all of them and that is basically because that's how the world works you cannot separate one element from another you can separate natural areas with manmade areas so its depend how you define natural again how you define exotic for example exotic probably relates to nature but what about manmade exotic places some of the resorts natural resources are affected by human activity as well.
- ...ecotourists will expect to see an exotic natural place location environment and as I said before how they define what exotic means and what natural means is very important so they expect to see their definition of exotic natural environment now whether Crete can offer that or not is who you asking Crete has to make sure that it invites the appropriate visitors not necessary the numbers but the quality of the visitor and matching the product with the visitor characteristics are very important to achieve ecotourism on Crete.
- Ecotourism is not a single stakeholder responsibility the development of ecotourism activities both of demand and supply involves various stakeholders on of the key stakeholder is the local community since every development initiative needs to focus on key returns to the people who live and work in the area whether that is employment creation whether that is improvement of quality of life for the local people so ecotourism should definitely involves the local community that's because you cannot separate place from destinations so the idea of place with the idea of destination are strongly interlinking and one affect the other and place as the area to live and work and destination as an area to visit and enjoy or visit and do business like business tourism they are strongly interconnected and

that means that the local community is key stakeholder in any type of tourism activity well that is ecotourism or any other tourism activity.

- Ecotourism is an activity who uses local resources natural recourses but the activities of ecotourism ideally and by the definition is to preserve and conserve local environments therefore I don't think that ecotourism harms the environment I think that ecotourism by a definition should be develop in a way to improve the environment or to works towards improving the environment and that's way it should be very carefully designed and very carefully implemented and constantly monitored in terms of the impacts of the activities.
- Well if we relate this to my involvement in planning and development and in the context of Crete, tourism should be aligned with other types of tourism ecotourism should be offer on specific areas of Crete and should be aligned with strategies to develop other destinations whether those destinations are mass tourism destinations areas so sub destinations on Crete whether this are related to other types of tourism cultural tourism, business tourism, and others but ecotourism has to focus on specific locations and areas on Crete so as an island would need to develop a diverse product that includes ecotourism, business tourism, cultural heritage tourism, domestic international tourism and so on so it's about carefully management the land and the spaces and resources on Crete.
- First of all I think that we need to be clear about what ecotourism products mean. Ecotourism product experiences of visitors in exotic natural places and we define exotic earlier so by default we are talking about specific locations on Crete; not all the island but specific locations and the developments on such experiences ecotourism experiences in those areas that needs conservation that or of natural beauty and so on the need to be protected the development of tourism on those areas needs to be aligned and coordinated with the development of other areas of Crete who do not offer ecotourism so ecotourism is a specific type of tourism that visitors has specific characteristics and would be directed directly to ecotourism destinations on Crete. Now those products are very clear and distinct products and they are completely different to mass tourism so if the aim is to increase tourism demands well it's not always about increasing tourism demand is about make sure to have the right demand with the right supply and the products you offer so in terms of the product of ecotourism of Crete and those natural places that needs to be conserved we need to attract the right nature of visitors and number of visitors and managing them very well, So that we minimise the impacts to the environment. Now protection of the environment with ecotourism experiences could relate to volunteer activities or activities generally of tourists that visit for example a location and clean the location from pollution it could be a beach on Crete it could be a forest it could be a mountain area and help preserve particular plants by creating plantation so they are ways to protect the environment while you develop ecotourism product now development does not always mean to increase visitors numbers development often means to improve quality for all stakeholders for the key ones visitors and the local communities so for the key stakeholders to improve the quality it means that we have more happy visitors more satisfied visitors so their visitor profile of ecotourism needs to match the right ecotourism experiences so that we need to make sure that happens. And for the others stakeholders for the local communities and local business we need to make sure that they there is a business feasible and viable and is develop on the right values with the right mission and vision of the organisation and clear corporate responsibility and environmental responsibility and ethics of the business. In that sense is not about volume its but about quality and therefore we can talk about developing ecotourism but not necessary in terms of numbers but also in terms of quality and think about the issue of carrying capacity which is critical one especially in natural environments that ecotourism focus in on.
- They are some guidelines from national and regional level of the governments encouraging different forms of tourism however they are many different stakeholders involve on this and having different interests for development of ecotourism. Local business private sector focusing mostly on profit that's the nature of their business and therefore they cannot lead the indicatives for ecotourism development because they focus on profit on the other hand public sector needs to take a lead in that developments however the results are still very poor in developing ecotourism activities.
- Well my services focus on advising and consulting organisations on issues of development, so looking what development is about. ... In order to solve or at least reduce the problems of mass tourism, the

policy proposed here is the application of new forms of tourism. However, these forms are not always economically and environmentally sustainable. While most of them have been applied successfully in the mainland, they cannot be applied successfully in the islands as easily due to their unique characteristics (geographical, demographic, economic, etc.).

### **R18 European sustainability consultant & hotel manager**

- Intense competition forces companies to cluster and cooperate in supply chains for enhancing agility, flexibility and performance. Increasing tourists' concerns on environmental issues also force companies to adopt sustainable supply chain management strategies. Sustainability includes the achievement of community wide good socio-economic, cultural and environmental long-term impacts, while supply chain management covers all aspects of a product's life such as raw materials, processing, manufacturing, distribution, retailing, customer use and final product disposal. Now ecotourism is a Responsible traveling to natural areas in order to experience the nature and culture without causing negative impacts to the destination or to the inhabitants and supports the well-being of local communities, creating awareness about the importance of protection of cultural and natural environment, contributes to conservation, small scale development, and local participation, education, tourist satisfaction and the minimising of the tourism impact.
- We want sustainable development to be a priority for everyone here. That means building it into our everyday business. We are proud to be thought of as industry leaders in sustainable development, and we're proud of the awards we've won that show our commitment. We want to involve our people as much as possible in sustainability initiatives that will have a positive and lasting impact on the environment and in the communities where we operate – both at home and in our many destinations. There are many opportunities to get involved in environmental and community work - we organise sustainability awareness-raising events right across the Group. For example, people in many of our destinations supported the Travel Foundation's 'Make Holidays Greener' month in Jul and as part of that, we helped organise a high-profile beach clean-up in Zante, attended by the British Ambassador to Greece. Our people also support a range of community volunteering initiatives worldwide, whether it's TUI India taking part in local school projects in Delhi or A&D Sector colleagues improving the infrastructure of a school in the Dominican Republic. TUI UK & Ireland's overseas volunteering scheme matches volunteers' skills with sustainable tourism projects in our key destinations and recent projects include keeping Cyprus' beaches clean, customer research in Majorca on sustainable excursions, and protecting turtles in Mexico.
- Responsible tourism can be a powerful force for good boosting economies, creating employment and enhancing cultural understanding. Through our core business, Better Holidays, Better World 2020 (BHBW) strategy and the work of TUI Care Foundation, we want to find innovative ways to create thriving destination communities along with unique and memorable holidays. In 2015, the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a helpful 'big picture' way to view our impact and the contributions we make to a better world. In 2016, we reviewed our activities against the goals and plan to use them as a benchmark in the future to assess our initiatives. Sustainable tourism is specifically mentioned in three of the goals on decent work and economic growth, on sustainable consumption and production, and on life below water. They were an important factor in the development of the TUI Care Foundation our primary platform for funding initiatives—and will inform our strategy going forwards.
- Travel and tourism accounts for 9% of global GDP and 6% of global exports. The industry will continue to be one of the world's fastest growing sectors, with emerging economies in particular seen as engines of such growth (from 47% market share in 2012 and expected to reach 57% by 2030\*). Tourism today is responsible for 1 in 11 jobs globally\* but also for 5% of global carbon dioxide emissions\*\*. From a sustainable development perspective this poses a challenge – the growth of an industry highly dependent on fossil fuels and biodiversity in a world of finite natural resources. Our businesses have been facing up to this challenge for over a decade. For TUI Travel, responding to

these issues means bringing sustainability centre stage, to build on the efficiency and resilience of our business and the services it provides. Our Sustainable Holidays Plan is a major step forward in our journey towards providing special travel experiences whilst minimising environmental impact, respecting the culture and people in destinations and bringing real economic benefit to local communities.

- Eco-friendly travel is already very popular among many European holidaymakers – however, sustainable tourism also entails major challenges. This is the result of a global survey carried out by TUI Group. The representative survey among more than 3,000 respondents examined people's attitude to sustainable travel in Germany, the UK, France, Sweden, Belgium and the Netherlands. They were people who had travelled in the past two years, not necessarily with TUI. It has shown that as many as one in ten European holidaymakers (eleven per cent) book eco- friendly hotels. German and French tourists show an above-average tendency to book sustainable accommodation, with 17 per cent of all German respondents and 18 per cent of all French TUI customers' preferring eco-friendly hotels. No fewer than six per cent of Swedish and five per cent of Dutch customers follow this trend. In the UK and Belgium, nine per cent of customers prefer sustainable holidays.

"The survey shows that sustainable travel is in vogue among holidaymakers. This trend relates both to ecological and social sustainability. Sustainability factors that are becoming increasingly popular in the tourism sector include environmental protection, biodiversity, and better social standards for the local population in the destination. Two thirds of the respondents surveyed say that tour operators are responsible for offering sustainable holidays and should provide better information. This confirms TUI's sustainability strategy, aimed at delivering 10 million greener and fairer holidays per year from 2020. The results of the survey should encourage the entire tourism sector to drive joint sustainability standards further ahead, based, among other factors, on sustainability certification for hotels such as the schemes recognised by the Global Sustainable Tourism Council.

The survey has also identified current obstacles to greater sustainability in tourism. More than half of all respondents (55 per cent) criticise a lack of information and choice. Moreover, a large majority of 66 per cent of respondents believe that responsibility for sustainable travel primarily lies with the travel companies rather than themselves. In the customers' view, tour operators should attach particular importance to offering fresh local or regional food products at hotels – and avoiding waste. However, the survey findings have shown that sustainability has already found its way into the minds of holidaymakers. 84 per cent of respondents, for instance, consider it important to ensure that every individual contributes towards reducing the CO2 footprint of their trip. 68 per cent indicate they are prepared to make lifestyle trade- offs in order to benefit the environment in their everyday lives. The main motives shaping people's fundamental attitudes to sustainability are environmental protection and animal welfare.

Compared with other nationalities, French, German and Belgian tourists show a particularly strong commitment to sustainability. Based on a broad range of questions related to sustainable behaviour such as recycling or energy saving, the survey has established a Sustainability Index measuring the commitment to sustainable behaviour. Three levels of engagement – low (e.g. trying to avoid food waste or save energy), medium (e.g. invest in energy-efficient appliances or prefer fair trade products when shopping), high (e.g. have installed solar panels, regularly donate money to environmental charities or book sustainable holidays). At 48 per cent, French respondents rank ahead of German and Belgian tourists with 41 per cent each in the high engagement group (UK: 32 per cent, Sweden: 38 per cent, The Netherlands: 33 per cent).

In 2015, TUI Group launched its sustainability strategy "Better Holidays, Better World 2015-2020". It will be anchored at all levels of the Company by 2020. One of its goals is to deliver ten million greener and fairer holidays per year. TUI will also operate Europe's most carbon-efficient airlines and reduce the carbon intensity of its business operations by 10% by 2020. In addition, the annual volume of investments in charity projects will be increased to ten million euros per year by 2020 with the support of TUI Care Foundation.

- We want our holidays to benefit local livelihoods and protect the environment, and in doing so maintain the quality, viability and desirability of our products for years to come. We're working with

stakeholders in destinations around the world to make this a reality. TUI Travel has a global supply chain, and our suppliers are the driving force for improving our sustainability performance in our destinations. Each of them plays a significant role in managing our impacts on the local community, economy and environment. We are committed to influencing more hotels to achieve credible sustainability certifications, so as to be assured that our suppliers are making continual sustainability improvements. This not only improves our sustainability performance, but also benefits our suppliers. Depending on the region, energy costs account for between 5% and 15% of a hotel's turnover (blueContec, 2012), so reducing energy use can have a significant impact on the bottom line. We're already helping many of our hotels by training them on eco-efficiencies, which ultimately delivers better value for money for our customers. Engaging in sustainability can help hotels differentiate their product, meet growing customer demand, and protect their destinations. There is also evidence that our most sustainably-managed hotels are those which are delivering higher quality and customer satisfaction

- Tourism is much more than a sun, sea and sand. For many people in the world it is the key to a more secure and prosperous life. But tourism also brings challenges for man and nature. We as TUI we want to strengthen the positives that tourism brings and find solutions to the challenges, in line with the 'Lead the Way' pillar of our TUI Better Holidays Better World 2020 strategy. Ecotourism as a concept provides local benefits environmentally, culturally and economically one of the main and vital themes of ecotourism is community participation and education local participation generally involves empowering local residents to determine their own goals for development and consulting with the locals to determine their hopes and concerns for tourism. Incorporating the educational aspect to ecotourism is also important, as educating the public through ecotourism presents an opportunity to increase awareness and consequently protection of cultural heritage, as well as promotion of sustainable resource use of natural and cultural resources.
- The term ecotourism is used quite widely, but so loosely as to be almost meaningless to the individual consumer. The International Ecotourism Society defines ecotourism as 'Travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and sustains the well-being of local people'. This distinguishes it from nature tourism, which involves visiting natural attractions but without any explicit objective of achieving environmental or social protection. Others rephrased it as 'nature tourism that promotes conservation and sustainable development', introducing the element of pro-active conservation and economic development. Sustainable development for business means 'adopting business strategies and activities that meet the needs of the enterprise and its stakeholders today while protecting, sustaining, and enhancing the human and natural resources that will be needed in the future'. The sustainability policy of TUI is based on the long-term planning projections for a fair, open, partnership-based and responsible configuration and harmonisation process for tourism development in the sense of economic yield, environmental compatibility and social cohesion. The organisation's policy, culture and commitment to sustainable are demonstrated in the groups' numerous sustainable practices spanning all stages.

In order TUI to enforce use and monitoring of performance sustainability standards, TUI gives preference to the ISO 14001, because this is the globally valid, recognised and established standard. Being a global service company, ISO is beneficial not only for TUI's suppliers and subsidiaries (which are globally dispersed), but also for its global customers as, ISO guarantees direct international comparability and benchmarking. In addition, numerous TUI subsidiaries have also established their own environmental codes of practice, policies or corporate guidelines focusing on the following three areas: being a responsible business (internal sustainable management); being a good neighbour (external network sustainable management and collaboration, e.g. local communities, staff, tourists, authorities); and protect holiday destinations (destination sustainable management). This wide range of initiatives is incorporated within a Group-wide framework by TUI's voluntary commitment, while there is also great cooperation amongst TUI's subsidiaries for jointly developing environmental programmes and schemes. For example, the in-house "EcoResort" quality label was co-created between TUI Hotels & Resorts and TUI's Group Corporate Environmental Management. TUI's commitment to enable foster and support environmental information sharing and dialogue within its



corporation is illustrated via the establishment of TUI Environmental Network (TEN!) that promotes in-depth stakeholder dialogue. TEN was formed because effective environmental protection is only possible when everyone is pulling in the same direction. TEN extends beyond the organisation's borders and integrates staff and company departments of all hierarchy levels with international affiliates, contractual and external partners, authorities, policy makers and associations with the aim to promote networking, dialogue and cooperation.

- Achieving product and service sustainability nowadays has become an indispensable requirement of demand and tourism is not an exception. Mass tourism was believed to be large-scale, externally controlled, high leakage, and concentrated in high-density tourist strips, alternative tourism was supposed to be small-scale, locally controlled, conducive to the formation of linkages with other sectors of the local economy, and dispersed within low-density local neighbourhoods. Where mass tourism was considered to be inherently unsustainable, alternative tourism was thought to be inherently sustainable. Ecotourism emerged within this context as a form of alternative tourism that put the emphasis on natural attractions as opposed to cultural attractions. Ecotourism is recognized such attributes as limited-scale, low-impact, community-based and raised-awareness or education and is frequently presented as the antithesis of mass tourism. Ecotourism as a synonym for integrated, adapted, controlled, endogenous, responsible, authentic, equitable tourism. The use of ecotourism refer to a polarised opposite of and substitute for mass tourism the relationship between ecotourism and mass tourism remains uncharted terrain within tourism.
- TUI recognises that sustainability is a multi-stakeholder issue requiring internal monitoring and control but also an intensive external dialogue, close cooperation, a great deal of government lobbying, and persuasion of contractual partners such as hoteliers, agencies and environmental protection organisations. This is more serious in areas where tourism is the only viable development alternative such as Crete. This influence has meant that tourism development in Crete depends significantly on non-local resources and influences. This weakens self-reliance and local control of development, and there is high leakage of money out of the local economy seriously reducing the industry's potential for generating net financial advantages for, and growth of, the local economy. On the other hand ecotourism relies, on the small-scale tourism, involvement of the locals, and preservation of natural and cultural environment but can it be implemented.
- As a mass tourism destination based on Sun Sea and sand with remarkable natural, cultural, and historical resources depended, almost entirely in package tourists. The majority of tourists visiting Crete prefer to stay at their hotels for sunbathing or walk in the vicinity of their hotels for dining, drinking, and relaxing. Only a small number practice other type of cultural and environmental activities, such as visiting museums and archaeological sites or the natural assets of the island such as Samaria gorge and the palm forest of Vai. Crete is known as a mass destination and is very difficult to change the image towards and alternative form as ecotourism the only possibility of development of ecotourism is the south part of the island where it is underdeveloped.
- What motivate me to operate in tourism is that it is a dynamic industry with great challenges in Comparison with others.
- I am not aware about specific government policies in Greece but global ones such as Green Globe was the first and still the only attempt at a single ecolabel scheme applicable to all forms of tourism worldwide (Green Globe 21 2000). It is a membership-based scheme and was initiated by the World Travel and Tourism Council. Technical entry criteria were relatively lax, the scheme was heavily promoted, and industry sign-up was high. In its initial form, however, Green Globe was perceived by government, consumer, and environmental organizations as lacking in technical detail and audit. In particular, the World Tourism Organization, the multilateral government counterpart of the WTTC, did not provide particularly enthusiastic endorsement; and some specialist ecotourism groups criticized it quite severely.

Green Globe is currently attempting to advance to the next evolutionary step: to gain acceptance from consumers, governments, and environmental groups without losing its existing acceptance by industry. With this aim in mind it has been reconstituted as Green Globe 21, a separate private organization distinct from the WTTC. Its new promotional literature recognizes joint responsibilities

to companies, consumers, and host communities. Green Globe 21 uses straightforward accreditation criteria based on continuous improvement in environmental performance relating to operational aspects such as energy consumption, waste minimization, and more. Customization to ecosystems and tourism activities is expected to be achieved through guidelines and manuals which are adjunct to, rather than formally incorporated in the accreditation criteria; and which need not necessarily be produced by Green Globe 21 itself. Unlike most ecolabel schemes, it does not intend to adopt any baseline threshold criteria for accreditation. This is a significant weakness for consumers and regulators.

- As a leading travel company, we recognise that the environment, communities and cultures within which we operate are vital to the success of our business.
- Although, tourism contributes to employment and economic development, it also leads to negative environmental and social impacts such as: resource consumption, pollution and wastes generation, disruption or destruction of local cultures, use of drugs and prostitution. Sustainable tourism, ecotourism is a crucial aspect, while their implementation is heavily influenced by tour operators, because they can: (a) greatly influence the volume and direction of tourism flows; (b) integrate and affect attitudes and practices of numerous tourism suppliers and stakeholders; and (c) lead to widespread benefits due to their large size. Therefore Tour operators need to understand our role and responsibility for tourism sustainability, because of the severe impacts assigned to our core business (mass tourism), i.e. the assembly of standardised low-cost tourism packages appealing to tourists' masses travelling to specific well-known geographical areas.
- There has also been an increased differentiation of tourist demand and a trend to new forms of active, special interest tourism. These forms of tourism (such as ecotourism, and nature tourism) are based on the unique characteristics and resources of each area such as Crete. In the last two decades the growth of environmental concern and policies has also encouraged the increase in environmentally friendly products and services. The terms 'ecotourism' and are now prevalent in in most development programmes, even though there is much confusion about their meaning and denotation. Crete is heavily depending in mass tourism however changing the conventional tourism model is not an easy task because it is based on strong market mechanisms. However, it is not impossible, especially if we consider the recent changes in tourist preferences for vacations, the environmental awareness of consumers, and the development of environmentally friendly technologies. We consider as sustainable any form of tourism that, in a given area, alters the conventional tourist product so that it is a more economically profitable and/ or a more environmentally friendly product. The evaluation of tourism activity can be based on two criteria: first, the tourist performance per capita, which relates to the added value and the employment created per tourist, as well as the consumption of water and energy and the production of wastes per capita; and, secondly, the scale of the activity compared to the carrying capacity of the host area in Crete.
- Yes involving the local community is crucial, beautiful bio diverse and unique destinations are the heart of our holidays, and we believe that our industry plays a crucial role in protecting and preserving them. Tourism can be a real force for good, from generating the transfer of wealth to promoting cultural understanding and tolerance. But we know that travel and tourism can also have unintended negative consequences. Water, for example, is likely to become increasingly scarce in the coming decades and waste management is a challenge in many destinations. We rely on thriving communities to welcome our customers in destinations. That means it's important that the benefits of tourism reach the local community, in the form of jobs and educational opportunities and human rights are protected along our value chain. One of our key areas of focus is the hotel the largest component of the holiday experience. Our expectation of hotels that work with us is that they will commit to social and environmental good practice. This expectation is based not only on our commitment to sustainable tourism, but also on good business sense. Reducing the consumption of energy and water saves money for hoteliers, and TUI customer surveys indicate that our most sustainably-managed hotels deliver higher quality and customer satisfaction. We believe that sustainability can enhance the holiday experience for our customers. However Local communities have tended to be viewed simply as the beneficiaries of tourism development, rather than as essential partners in the process of achieving

such development. We don't really involve the local community in the initial stage of the development but we work in partnership with communities, governments and other organisations to enhance the sustainable management of destinations and demonstrate the positive impact that tourism can have. Our partners include the Global Sustainable Tourism Council, the Dutch Association of Travel Agents & Tour Operators, Detacher Raise Verb and, the UK's travel industry association ABTA, German development agency GIZ, and the Travel Foundation.

- Conventional tourism has helped to halt previous economic problems and population losses through the creation of new jobs, which to an extent balanced the loss of jobs in agriculture and manufacturing, and through increases in the domestic product and income. The fact that many people are occupied in the tourism sector led to population growth and to a reduction of the out-migration rate that had been very high in Greece over previous decades. Economic growth is positively related to the intensity and the duration of tourism development in Crete. On the other hand, there have been many changes that negatively affect the sustainability of Crete. The most important negative impacts are related to: (1) the inability to invest the profits coming from tourism activity in order to increase the physical capital and the local production capacity; (2) the reduction in quality and quantity of natural and cultural capital; and (3) the relatively low educational level of employees (human capital). The main reasons for the emergence of economic problems are the low added value per tourist (mainly due to the oligopolistic tourist market, the low tourist expenditure, the high level of competition among destinations offering the same product (3S), and the instability of demand due to external factors), the leakage of income from the local economy and the transfer of surplus value from the area to origin. Environmental problems have also appeared because of the construction of large-scale infrastructure, the urbanisation and congestion resulting from increased tourist numbers, the exteriorisation of the operational costs of hotels, and increases in energy and water consumption and in the production of solid wastes. Even though tourism's negative impacts in insular environments have been identified several times, either in the scientific literature or at a political level, the actions taken to promote the greening of tourism activity in Crete have been limited.

Ecotourism and activities related to nature, especially in protected areas, were very successful by the early 1990s. The main activities in these areas are bird-watching, canoeing, kayak, climbing, mountain bike and trekking (WWF Hellas, 2000). Until now, the exploitation of natural resources has led to varying results in the islands. A very well-known paradigm is the gorge of Samaria in Crete, which is a protected area, according to the UNESCO's monument list. There are hundreds of visitors every day during the summer, walking and littering for seven hours in the gorge, often having no previous information about the duration of the visit and the hot weather conditions. This activity destroys the natural environment, while at the same time the tourists themselves cannot enjoy their excursion. In order to solve or at least reduce the problems of mass tourism, the policy proposed here is the application of new forms of tourism. However, these forms are not always economically and environmentally sustainable.

- TUI is the world's leading tourism business – and leaders have to take responsibility. Our society increasingly expects respected brands and companies like TUI to demonstrate leadership for a sustainable future. TUI has been recognized as a leader in sustainable tourism. We have worked hard to insert environmental and social considerations into business operations, because we believe it is vital to our company's future. We believe a clear focus on sustainability differentiates us from the competition and generates value. Sustainability delivers a range of benefits: cost efficiencies, quality improvements and the enhanced engagement of our stakeholders, including customers, colleagues, suppliers and destination governments. It future-proofs our business and the global industry. Our vision: to create exceptional travel experiences. As we do it, we will keep our environmental footprint to a minimum, respect cultures and people, and promote economic development in our host countries.
- TUI Travel PLC is one of the world's leading international leisure travel groups operating in approximately 180 countries worldwide. It serves more than 30 million customers in over 31 source markets. Headquartered in the UK, the Group employs approximately 53,000 people and operates a pan-European airline consisting of 145 aircraft. The Group is organised and managed through four business Sectors: Mainstream, Specialist & Activity, Accommodation & Destinations and Emerging

Markets. In the financial year ended 30 September 2011, TUI Travel reported revenues of £14.7bn and an underlying operating profit of £471m. TUI Travel is listed on the London Stock Exchange as a member of the FTSE 250 and FTSE4Good Indices. Every year, TUI Group takes millions of people on holiday. Whether it's a cruise, a beach resort or an adventure on the other side of the world, we offer a fantastic range of unique holiday experiences.

### **R19 Commercial Director of a tour operator**

- Our business focuses on package holidays, we have two total different products one is for winter Holidays and one for summer to Mediterranean destinations by charter and coach. I have been five years in this company. We employ 80 people and have approximately 120,000 tourists per year. We offer package holidays: accommodation, flight and tours.
- No, I would you consider our business an ecotourism business, although we are aware of the importance of the environment.
- The main reasons for my decision to enter the tourism industry? Difficult question! Is one of the nicest industries to involve with? Is a happy moment of the year and you deal with enthusiastic people because they choose their holidays?
- To run a successful nature based tourism operations, one has to be honest and have authentic product and the quality of the product come out on how you handle the product and not how you promoted it, it should be inside your company to be successful.
- There is always possibility to grow for a destination the problem in Greece is the lack of big Hotels and there is a quite some middle and lower class accommodations and not enough money to improve the quality therefore is difficult to increase. There is a space to grow especially in Crete where tourism is located only in one part of the island. The question is how big is the market for that? How big is the market for ecotourism?
- We are following the regulations on NHVR (Dutch Government Organization) we are having tests every year and we are doing everything correct but if you looking it more closely I don't think there is really any environmental objectives or policies we have especially in the summer time we don't do anything like that.
- No, it is not a part of our company to offer ecotourism, we are focusing on package holidays.
- Difficult question, when people travel it always has a detrimental effect on environment no matter how you travel.
- Many ways to make tourism eco-friendly, many small things that we should do in order to care for the environment, for example, the transport you use, coaches that are creating less pollution.
- I think that ecotourism can help improve the social cultural and physical environment of Crete, but I don't think that is ecotourism itself but just the awareness from everyone. I mean when you look at countries like Greece it is quite normal to use the sun energy but if you compared it with Holland, nobody is using it because it is too expensive, ... different way of approaching it. Everything that has to do with the protection of the environment at the moment still involves spending more money, and a lot of people just do not have that money
- I think it is difficult to describe ecotourism in one sentence: Travel to the destination but be aware of the effects on the environment.
- When ecotourists visit a tourism destination such as Crete, they have high expectations. I think they expect something real.
- Yes, I think eco-tourists exists. ... I believe in 25 years it will be totally different. The new generation is more aware of what is happening in the environment, they are more aware of the effects.

### **R20 Hotel Manager of sustainability** (Recorded but not transcribed)

### **R21 Local authority planner** (Recorded but not transcribed).

## Appendix 2 Coding for themes (Extract)

Respondent	Data	Reducing data	subcategory	Category (Theme)
R11 (CEO of Destination Management Company)	<i>In my view, ecotourism is responsible traveling to natural areas in order to experience the nature and culture without causing negative impacts to the destination or to the inhabitants</i>	Ecotourism is responsible traveling to, and experiencing nature and culture.	<i>Experiencing, not damaging nature</i>  <i>Experiencing culture</i>	Ecotourism is a natural product  It is a cultural product
R7 (Managing director of a chain of hotels)	<i>Yes, of course. It is something different. Regular tourism is based on entertainment. Ecotourism is based on nature. As I see it, the main philosophy of ecotourism is the protection of the environment. So it is something extremely different. Ecotourism is based on different things than regular types of tourism. Of course there is entertainment but focusing on ecology.</i>	Ecotourism is based on nature  It is protecting environment  Enjoying place's ecology	<i>Ecotourism based on nature</i>  <i>Protecting ecological environment</i>	Ecotourism is a natural product
R4 (Hotel commercial director)	<i>It's a Greek word, as you know..... It comes from ecology, so I understand it well.... it concerns the sustainability of tourism in this destination. What automatically comes to my mind is energy saving, respect of the environment and respect of people also, low energy consumption, waste separation and disposal. Mainly energy, electricity and water are the most important aspects of this type of tourism. ....Ecotourism is a type of tourism that respects the environment....by using responsibly the available natural resources, optimizing recycling methods and alternative forms of power, and ensures a perfect fit with the natural environment. ..... I would call it an additional form of tourism. Alternative... it is difficult to say.... I think it is better to say that it is an additional form of tourism. I wouldn't call it alternative, because it would mean that it replaces something. But we don't want to replace anything. We want to add something. .... We offer ecotourism and alternative additional forms of tourism, for those who want to experience the real Greece. ....</i>	It is sustainable tourism  Low energy and water consumption, waste recycling  Respecting environment and people  Responsible use of available natural resources  Additional tourism type, not alternative type  Ecotourism is offered as an additional form of tourism	Sustainable tourism  Preserving & protecting Environment  Protecting nature and indigenous culture  Expanding the tourism market	Ecotourism is a sustainable and natural product  It is also a cultural product  Ecotourism as promotion tool

	<p><i>But I am impressed because in the past we used to promote this guesthouse only to Greeks, but now because of the internet we got reservations from all nationalities. Although they only stay 1 or 2 nights, there are a lot of people who go to this destination.</i></p>			
R3 (Expert in tourism, a guide in Crete)	<p><i>Ecotourism has to do with nature.....Being with animals, cultivating vegetables, helping to produce their dinner and so on.... When I hear ecotourism, I imagine mountains, gardens, trees, chickens, sheep..., everything that has to do with nature</i></p>	<p><i>Ecotourism is about visiting and being close to nature</i></p>	Visiting nature	Natural product
R8 (Hotel Managing Director)	<p><i>(Ecotourism) is visit of guests to a location who are interested in seeing the natural beauty of the place.... Eco means natural. The beauty of the surroundings, the beauty of the environment. ... For me ecotourism is tourism in the original pure nature. .... because the natural beauty of the island covers all the expectations of everyone. You can see in a distance of 1 or 2 km snow and beach, trees and wilderness, cities and fields or canyons. In Crete you have everything. .... Saving energy, prevention of pollution, natural (biological) production. The closer to nature, the closer to ecotourism. .... the foundation (of ecotourism) already exists and that is the natural beauty, the different images the island has to offer to the visitor, like sea, rivers snow, mountains, forests, ... On this island there is everything. .... for me the ideal would be to try to extend the season as much as we can, and try to develop and improve the level of ecotourists, the level of cruisers, the level of athletic, medical, religious tourism in order to combine the dead winter months.... the main reason behind this is to bring more customers in fewer months. This is why we work, profit. If you do business with no profit, then what are we doing?</i></p>	<p>Visiting natural beauty of place Eco means natural</p> <p>Expect seeing natural beauty</p> <p>Saving energy, prevention of pollution, natural production.</p> <p>Island offers visitors: sea, rivers snow, mountains, forests</p> <p>Extending the season into winter</p> <p>Develop ecotourism and other type of tourism</p> <p>Expanding tourism</p>	<p>Visiting nature</p> <p>Preserving nature</p> <p>Consuming natural beauty</p> <p>Effect of seasonality</p> <p>Developing ecotourism as an additional type</p> <p>Promoting ecotourism as an additional form of tourism</p>	<p>Natural product</p> <p>Seasonality issues</p> <p>Ecotourism is not an alternative to mass tourism</p> <p>Ecotourism as a promotional tool</p>

<p>R9 (senior regional authority official)</p>	<p>Ecotourism may have negative impacts... because it has to do with the intermediary. It has to do with who is going to help (the tourist) visit this place, the tour operator. The problem lies in organisation. ... Ecotourism can have a negative impact if it's not operated properly. ... It could have even a worse impact than mass tourism. And there is also the flight, the cost of the flight, etc ... Ecotourism is very important because as it does not deal with large accommodations. It is a specialised type of tourist product that helps promote the product of Crete. And I think that this helps and serves the sustainable development of an economy, of an area. .... It is a small scale development, specialised type of development, for which one uses milder and more modern means friendly to the environment, because this is extremely important nowadays, so that we do not alter the character, the wealth of an area. It's what we say that culture, environment and development should coexist without one replacing or changing the other ... .... No planning. In Greece we have developed mass tourism, which basically is a model different from what we would like. The citizen of the world who visits Greece, who often does not get to know that culture of the country, because all he is sold is recreation. We should change this, and the local authorities should play a great role in this. ....So how can you invest in something without planning?</p>	<p>Ecotourism may have negative impacts for the natural environment</p> <p>Ecotourism is small scale sustainable development</p> <p>Small scale, environmentally friendly development</p> <p>There is no planning in developing ecotourism</p> <p>Crete is a mass tourism destination</p> <p>Local authorities should play greater role</p>	<p>It may impact nature negatively</p> <p>Ecotourism is a haphazard development</p>	<p>Natural product</p> <p>Small scale development</p> <p>Sustainable development</p> <p>Natural product</p> <p>Spontaneous development.</p>
<p>R2 (Senior Sales Manager)</p>	<p>I have my doubts...because it still is a very small market. I think sustainable development in the tourism branch has to do with extent. Anything small... Sustainable development is a type of development done slowly but surely. Ecotourism still is very small-scale</p>	<p>Ecotourism is a small scale development</p> <p>Sustainable development</p>		<p>Small scale development</p> <p>Sustainable development</p>