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Sdrali, Despina and Chazapi, Katerina

Harokopio University, Empirikio High School of Andros

November 2007

Online at <https://mpra.ub.uni-muenchen.de/6368/>  
MPRA Paper No. 6368, posted 19 Dec 2007 17:57 UTC

## CULTURAL TOURISM IN A GREEK INSULAR COMMUNITY: THE RESIDENTS' PERSPECTIVE

**Despina Sdrali**

*Harokopio University*

**Katerina Chazapi**

*Empirikio High School of Andros*

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*Cultural tourism constitutes an alternative strategy of sustainable local development for improving quality of life. The main objective of this type of tourism is to transform the regions, which are characterized by cultural resources, into ideal places for vacation, residence or business. In this study the residents' perceptions of cultural tourism were examined in a case study of a Greek island, Andros. It was found that the majority of the respondents were aware of the importance of cultural tourism and they argued that it could contribute to the island's local development. The findings also suggested that there is a strong relationship between the respondents' characteristics and their perceptions of the impacts of cultural tourism on the island's development.*

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**Keywords:** *alternative tourism, cultural tourism, cultural heritage, sustainable local development, Greece*

### INTRODUCTION

During the last twenty years an increasing emphasis has been placed on alternative tourism, the interest of which is focused on the protection of natural and cultural environment, in an effort to solve the problems of mass tourism (i.e. low wages, seasonal employment, environmental degradation). In the late 1980s and early 1990s, cultural tourism has gained an increasing attention, with a growing body of specific literature (Balcar and Pearce, 1996).

At present, an expanding range of concepts and definitions characterizes cultural tourism (i.e. Konsola, 1993; Silberberg, 1995; Balcar and Pearce, 1996; Stebbins, 1997; Thompson, 1998; Waitt, 2000; McHale, 2004), which is perceptibly differentiated from mass tourism and is not related to the common "sea and sun" destinations. The World Tourism Organisation (1985) has stated one of the most acceptable

definitions of cultural tourism, describing it as the peoples' movements for essentially cultural motivations, which include study tours, performing arts, cultural tours, travels to festivals, visits to historic sites and monuments, folklore and pilgrimages. According to Asplet and Cooper (2000), cultural tourism can also include local language, gastronomy, the technology of the past, clothing, leisure activities and educational programs.

Cultural tourism can contribute to the local economic regeneration and prosperity (Prentice and Andersen, 2003; Smith, 2004), since it is regarded as a tool for generating new employment opportunities for the host population. It encourages the opening of small and medium-sized family enterprises (Bachleitner and Zins, 1999), which offer unique and authentic local products. Moreover a large number of unskilled or semi-unskilled workers may be available locally during the whole period (Barnett, 2001). Due to cultural tourism local traditional jobs are maintained or revive (MacDonald and Jolliffe, 2003). Furthermore, this type of tourism mainly attracts wealthy tourists and, as a consequence, the local income increases (Strauss and Lord, 2001; Xie and Wall, 2002; Callegar, 2003; Howard and Pinder, 2003; Medina, 2003) as well as the community's tax revenue (Cabrini 2002).

Cultural tourism also encourages the development of a kind of infrastructure, which is friendly to the natural and cultural environment, and conduces to the high quality of services, such as medical services and police vigilance (Grünewald, 2002).

On an individual level, cultural tourism is regarded as a method for enhancing the residents' learning, awareness, appreciation, community pride, ethnic identity and tolerance of others (Bachleitner and Zins, 1999; Taylor, 2001; Burns and Sancho, 2003). It also fosters a cross-cultural communication that can promote understanding between the host and the guest.

Finally, as Smith (2004) argues, cultural tourism offers numerous possibilities for a region to make a name for itself and to re-establish its position. The region is therefore becoming more well-known and more attractive to a high proportion of repeated visitors.

## **THEORETICAL BACKGROUND**

Several researchers tried to explain the benefits of cultural tourism and the residents' perceptions of them. Among them, Ryan and Montgomery (1994), Korca (1996), Haralambopoulos and Pizam (1996),

Perdue et al. (1999) have concluded that certain socio-demographic variables, such as age and educational level, are important and must be taken into account.

It has also mentioned that the dependency on tourism activities is a factor that explains the residents' attitudes toward tourism (Getz, 1994). The residents, who are occupied in tourism sector and are economically dependent on tourism, seem to have positive attitude toward cultural tourism. Then, Bachleitner and Zins (1999) studied the reactions of Austrian rural households toward cultural tourism during two different periods: in August 1994 (during the organisation of cultural local events) and in June 1995 (a year after the events). They found that the organisation of local cultural events acted as an instrument for improving the residents' quality of life, who finally ended up supporting cultural tourism. However, a year later the limited number of cultural activities made the residents negative toward cultural tourism. According to the research, the length of residence was also a factor, which could explain the residents' perceptions of cultural tourism, since the long-term residents tended to be negative toward it. This result was consistent with Brunt and Courtney's findings (1999).

Gilbert and Clark (1997) concluded that the residents of two different cultural areas in the United Kingdom saw cultural tourism as a means of preserving their cultural heritage and supporting the local income. However, the high rates of tourism development had negative effects on the residents' perceptions of cultural tourism. Similarly, Gursory et al. (2002) found that the residents in the southwest Virginia, USA, who lived in less developed tourist areas, were more positive toward cultural tourism.

The development of cultural heritage can bring to prominence regions that are tourist underdeveloped or isolated, such as islands (Burns and Sancho, 2003; Smith, 2004). Thus, Agenda 21 attributes importance to the cultural heritage with reference to small islands and small communities, having recognized that these environments have rich and diverse cultures (UNCED, [Http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/agenda21.htm](http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/agenda21.htm)).

Concerning Greece, it is a country with plenty of cultural resources in the mainland as well as on the islands. However, Greece was deprived of a cultural tourist policy until 1992. Since then, culture has constituted a factor of significant importance for the planning of the national tourist policy.

The aim of this study was to measure the residents' perceptions of cultural tourism on a Greek island, Andros, which is characterized by rich cultural resources. More specifically, the research questions were:

- Has cultural tourism contributed to the fields of economy, culture and community on the island?
- Can the sociodemographic and economic characteristics of the residents influence their perceptions of cultural tourism?

## THE STUDY AREA

Andros is situated in the northern part of the southern Aegean Sea and it has 41 kilometers length, 17 kilometers width and 111 kilometers perimeter. Its total land area is approximately 380 square kilometers of which only the 10% is cultivated.

The island's surface is a mountainous landscape with a lot of capes, while the plains are very limited. The climate of Andros is characterized by intense humidity, strong winds during the summer period and northern winds during winter.

Andros has 10,009 residents, while during the summer period the population can reach a number of 34,000 people. The active population is 3,567 people, of which 29% are occupied in the primary sector (mainly in stock farming), 27% in the second and 44% in the tertiary one (Statistical Bureau, 2001). The island's economic development is heavily based on tourism, trade and shipping. The unemployment rate is around 18%, while the country's unemployment rate is 10%.

Andros is a classic case of cultural tourism development due to its cultural heritage and infrastructure. Culture is evident in a great number of sites on the island, including antiquities, Byzantine and post-Byzantine monuments, castles, medieval towers, neoclassical buildings, monasteries and churches, monuments of pre-industrial technology, museums, exhibition centers and a library. The proportion of the museum visitors is around the 8% of the total number of visitors to the island. In 2005 the number of the visitors to museums on the island was around 45,000.

The rich cultural and architectural heritage of the island, in combination with its improving infrastructure and proximity to the Capital, has led to an increasing number of tourists on the island. Since the 1980s, Andros has experienced high rates of growth, providing a mass of services and facilities to support tourism, such as hotels, rooms to let, taverns, bars, cafes, craft stores etc. Nowadays, 31 hotels, 134 rooms to let, and 174 restaurants and café-bars can be found on the island. A proportion of these tourist-related businesses, which are the 50% of the total number of enterprises on the island, are owned by the local people and managed by their family members.

During the summer period the island is heavily dependent on visitors and it is one of the most popular trip destinations in Greece. In 1997 it was estimated that around 54,000 domestic and foreign tourists visited the island, of which the 69% were Greeks.

## **METHODOLOGY**

A questionnaire survey was conducted to collect primary data for this study (July-August 2005). The questionnaire gathered information about major sociodemographic and economic characteristics of 350 residents in Andros. Moreover, the study measured the residents' perceptions of cultural tourism, relating to the fields of economy, community and culture.

Three general limitations of the study can be identified. First, the survey was carried out during the tourist season (the months of July and August), which is a heavy populated period for the island, and this fact enabled permanent as well as temporary residents of the island to respond to the questionnaire. Second, all the participants were aged 18 and over. At last, only one adult from each household could respond to the questionnaire.

The collected data were analysed using descriptive statistics for calculating the means and standard deviations of continuous variables and the frequencies and percentages of categorical variables. The correlation between the residents' characteristics and the contribution of cultural tourism to the island's development was studied using multiple linear regression analysis.

The empirical regression model was defined as follows:

$$Y_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \dots + \beta_{14} X_{14} + \varepsilon_i$$

$Y_i$  : Dependent variable

$\beta_0, \beta_1, \beta_2 \dots \beta_{14}$  : Regression model parameters

$X_1, X_2 \dots X_{14}$  : Independent variables

$\varepsilon_i$  : Error term

The dependent variable was measured with the following statement: "Due to cultural tourism, Andros is characterized by a rapid development" and it was based on the residents' responses to a 5-point scale: by no means, little, moderate, much, very much. The independent variables included the respondents' sex, age, occupation, birthplace, place of permanent residence, length of residence, benefits from the tourism industry, the contribution of tourism to investment, the image of the area,

culture exploitation, sea transportation and the reasons why the respondents chose the island for their residence (Table 1).

**Table 1.** List of variables

Variable	Type	Description
Development	Categorical	Due to cultural tourism, Andros is characterized by a rapid development (1=by no means, 2=little, 3=moderate, 4=much, 5=very much)
Sex	Binary	1 if respondent is male; 0 otherwise
Age	Continuous	Years of age
Occupation	Binary	1 if respondent is employed; 0 otherwise
Birthplace	Binary	1 if Andros is the birthplace of respondent; 0 otherwise
Permanent	Binary	1 if respondent is permanent resident in Andros; 0 otherwise
Years	Continuous	Length of residence in Andros (years)
Benefit	Binary	1 if respondent is economically dependent on tourism in a personal or family level; 0 otherwise
Seatransport	Categorical	Cultural tourism impact on sea transportation (1=by no means, 2=little, 3=moderate, 4=much, 5=very much)
Investment	Categorical	Cultural tourism impact on investments (1=by no means, 2=little, 3=moderate, 4=much, 5=very much)
Image	Categorical	Cultural tourism impact on the image of the area (1=by no means, 2=little, 3=moderate, 4=much, 5=very much)
Exploitation	Categorical	Cultural tourism impact on culture exploitation (1=by no means, 2=little, 3=moderate, 4=much, 5=very much)
Awaycities	Binary	1 if respondent chose the island for being away from cities; 0 otherwise
Calm	Binary	1 if respondent chose to stay on the island for calm; 0 otherwise
Bringchild	Binary	1 if respondent chose the island for children's upbringing; 0 otherwise

## FINDINGS

### Sociodemographic and economic characteristics of the sample

According to the data analysis, the majority of the respondents (52%) were men. Most of the individuals were married (63%) and the average number of children per respondent was two. The respondents, on average,

were 41.4 years old, had attended high school (38%) and were employed mainly in the private sector (33%) or their personal business (25%).

**Table 2.** Sociodemographic and economic characteristics of the respondents

Characteristics		Respondents (n=350)
		%
Gender	Men	52
	Women	48
Marital Status	Married	63
	Unmarried	37
Education	Primary school	3
	Junior high school	10
	High school	38
	Undergraduate studies	7
	University	23
	Postgraduate studies	4
	Other	15
Occupation	Employee in the civil sector	9
	Employee in the private sector	33
	Entrepreneur	25
	Sailor	5
	Constructional worker	2
	Technician	1
	Housewife	10
	Non employed	15
Monthly family income (€)	<1,000	14
	1,001-2,000	36
	2,001-3,000	21
	3,001-4,000	12
	4,001-5,000	6
	>5,001	10
Economically dependency on tourism	Yes	41
	No	59
Type of residence	Permanent	87
	Non permanent	13

Thirty six percent of the sample had a monthly family income ranged from €1,000 to €2,000, income particularly poor, since most of the respondents were economically dependent on tourism (41%) in a personal or family level, which is characterized by seasonality. Eighty seven percent of the sample was permanent residents who had lived on the island an average of 25 years. Escape from urban centers, employment opportunities and the fact that the island is regarded as an appropriate



place for the children's upbringing leded mainly the respondents to choose Andros for their area of residence.

The most important sociodemographic and economic characteristics of the sample are presented in Table 2.

### Residents' perceptions of cultural tourism

In recent years a rapid tourism growth has been taking place on Andros due to cultural tourism. In fact, the local cultural heritage is believed to attract tourists to the island and, therefore, the locals regarded it as an important (44%) or even extremely important factor (42%) for the island's tourism growth. Besides, the majority of the respondents (99%) were agreeable to the conservation and exploitation of the island's cultural resources as a means of promoting tourism growth. However, the results suggested that there is a major disappointment (71%) with the infrastructure related to hotels of the island.

The respondents were asked to express their opinion about the impacts of cultural tourism regarding the fields of economy, culture and community. In general, the mean responses indicate that cultural tourism has improved moderately the development of the island and the islanders' quality of life (Table 3).

**Table 3.** Residents' perceptions of the impacts of cultural tourism on the following issues\*

Variables	Mean**	Standard Deviation
Employment opportunities	3.1	1.12
Image of area	3.4	0.88
Increasing number of local cultural events	2.8	0.96
Greater knowledge of culture	2.9	0.87
Culture exploitation	2.8	0.86
Local development with quick rates	2.7	0.93

\*To what extent cultural tourism has contributed to the following issues?

\*\*Scale: 1=by no means, 2=little, 3=moderate, 4=much, 5=very much

More specifically, the respondents claimed that cultural tourism has generated new employment opportunities, mainly for young adults and women, thus providing a solution to tourism seasonality (mean=3.1).

The respondents also felt that cultural tourism has positively contributed to the image of the island (mean=3.4). Cultural tourism has rendered Andros to a more famous trip destination and more attractive to visitors and inhabitants alike, due to a lot of sites on the island and its favourable climate.

As to the rest of the variables (i.e. increasing number of local cultural events, greater cultural knowledge, culture exploitation and local development with quick rates), their mean may well indicate that the residents believed that the current level of cultural tourism has not influenced them to a great extent. More specifically, the islanders supported that cultural tourism has contributed to the increasing number of local events to a moderate extent (mean= 2.8), since local events (such as food festivals) are organised on the island during the summer period only. Furthermore, local authorities do not support enough the organisation of the cultural events on the island during the whole period.

In an effort to encourage cultural tourism, specific support measures have been taken, including the restoration of churches and monasteries and the re-establishment of traditional paths, windmills and watermills. However, the protection of archaeological monuments is still one of the most serious problems on the island and therefore the respondents argue that cultural tourism has moderately contributed to the culture exploitation (mean= 2.8).

According to the above, cultural tourism has contributed to the quick development of the island to a moderate extent (mean= 2.7).

### **Residents' characteristics and the contribution of cultural tourism to the local development**

The correlation between the residents' characteristics and the contribution of cultural tourism to the island's development was studied using multiple linear regression analysis. The results of regression analysis are presented in Table 4.

Only the 9% of the residents believed that cultural tourism has not contributed to the rapid tourism growth on the island, while the 29% of them believed that cultural tourism has contributed to the island's development little and the 45% to a moderate extent. At last, 16% of the sample supported that cultural tourism has contributed to the island's local development to a great extent.

Conversely to other studies, in the present study the demographic characteristics of the sample, such as sex and occupation, did not seem to influence the residents' perceptions of the contribution of cultural tourism to the island's local development.

On the other hand, the residents' perceptions of the contribution of cultural tourism to the island's development were influenced by age. The older residents had positive perceptions about the impacts of cultural tourism on the island's development.

**Table 4.** Residents' characteristics and the contribution of cultural tourism to the local development

Variables	Coefficient	t-ratio
Constant	-1.413***	-2.982
Sex	-0.033	-0.418
Age	0.006*	2.005
Occupation	-0.116	-1.221
Birthplace	0.277***	2.790
Permanent	0.486***	3.256
Years	-0.010***	-3.352
Benefit	0.151*	1.864
Seatransport	0.213***	4.806
Investment	0.098**	2.268
Image	0.296***	6.124
Exploitation	0.317***	6.285
Awaycities	-0.078	-0.840
Calm	-0.039	-0.417
Bringchild	-0.047	-0.549
Adjusted R-squared statistic	0.425	
F-statistic	19.402	

\*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

Furthermore, the respondents for whom Andros was their place of origin had more positive perceptions about the impacts of cultural tourism on the island's development, suggesting that cultural tourism could promote the rapid local development of the island to a great extent.

Similarly, the permanent residents were more positive toward the contribution of cultural tourism to the local insular development, while the temporary residents were more critical about it. In fact, the latter were concerned about the potential changes in the area's landscape caused by tourism growth while the former favoured cultural tourism contribution to the island's development. The permanent residents are able to have a more thorough opinion about the effects of tourism and cultural tourism specifically, since they stay on the island throughout the year and not during the summer only. The temporary residents see Andros as a place for calm and relaxation, and they do not therefore want anything that could disturb their calm.

In accordance with Bachleitner and Zins (1999) and Brunt and Courtney (1999), the length of permanent residence was supposed to influence the residents' perceptions of cultural tourism. The longer people lived on the island, the more negative they were in terms of the contribution of cultural tourism to the local development. These people are not aware of the importance of cultural tourism and are circumspect toward any field of development.

The dependency on tourism activities influenced also the residents' perceptions of cultural tourism. Those who had an involvement with the tourism related industry were more favoured cultural tourism contribution to the island's development.

Andros, as a peripheral and isolated region, faces multiple development constraints, such as less developed transport links with the mainland. The residents' perceptions of the cultural tourism impacts on the proximity to the island influenced their perceptions of the contribution of cultural tourism to the local development.

The residents' perceptions of cultural tourism were also influenced significantly by the investments of local authorities. The more the residents believed that local authorities were interested in the tourism development of the island, the more they argued that cultural tourism could contribute to the insular development. In general, the respondents were disappointed with the activities of local authorities in terms of the tourism development on the island. The residents believed that local authorities are not concerned about the training of the locals on the tourism sector, do not promote the image of the island to a great extent and do not support alternative types of tourism.

Moreover, the residents' perceptions of the contribution of cultural tourism to the greater local development were influenced significantly by the impacts of cultural tourism on the image of the island. The more the respondents believed that cultural tourism could make Andros more famous, the more positive they were toward the contribution of cultural tourism to the island's development. The promotion of the image of an area is an important factor, since in this way the residents' reciprocity, community pride and ethnic identity are strengthened.

Furthermore, the residents' attitudes toward the contribution of cultural tourism to the island's development were influenced by the exploitation of cultural resources. The exploitation of the island's cultural resources was related to the positive perceptions of the contribution of cultural tourism to the local development, making thus the residents friendlier toward cultural tourism.

Conversely, the reasons why the respondents chose the island for their residence did not seem to influence the respondents' perceptions of the contribution of cultural tourism to the island's local development.

## CONCLUSIONS

Cultural tourism brings benefits to the host communities and provides an important motive for them to care for and maintain their heritage and cultural practices. It is an alternative tourism strategy with economic, social, cultural, educational and ecological dimensions, aiming at the sustainable local development.

Based on a sample of 350 residents on a Greek island, this study tried to measure the residents' perceptions of cultural tourism.

The results indicated that the majority of the respondents were aware of the importance of cultural tourism and they argued that cultural tourism contributes to the local development but not to a great extent. The findings also suggested that there is a strong relationship between the respondents' characteristics and their perceptions of the impacts of cultural tourism on the island's development. In particular, the elderly residents, those who were permanent, had a business relation with tourism and for whom Andros was their place of origin represented the group within the insular population that believed that due to cultural tourism Andros is characterized by a rapid development, regardless of their sex and occupation. Furthermore, the residents' positive perceptions of the impacts of cultural tourism on the image of the island, culture exploitation, investments and sea transportation have led them to a positive attitude toward cultural tourism.

However, a more detailed study of the residents' background in terms of their own travel experiences and their participation in the events of the island may prove to be a significant factor in explaining their attitude toward cultural tourism.

The involvement and co-operation of local and indigenous community representatives, tourism operators, property owners and policy makers is necessary in order to achieve a sustainable tourism industry and enhance the protection of heritage resources for future generations. The population's active participation in the arts, the increasing opportunities for artists, the preservation and promotion of cultural resources and other alternative types of tourism, such as agrotourism, religious tourism etc., are some of the practices for supporting cultural tourism on the island.

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*SUBMITTED: MARCH 2007*

*REVISION SUBMITTED: JUNE 2007*

*ACCEPTED: JULY 2007*

*REFEREED ANONYMOUSLY*

**Despina Sdrali** (dsdrali@hua.gr) is a Lecturer at Harokopio University, Department of Home Economics and Ecology, 70 El. Venizelou Str., 176 71, Kallithea, Athens, Greece.

**Katerina Chazapi** is a teacher of Home Economics at the Empirikio High School of Andros, Hora Androu, 845 00, Andros, Greece.



