

Integrated Total Quality Tourism Management and Sustainable Development

Introduction

Tourism is a very important revenue and image contributor to the economy of developing countries, it promises progress with economical and social development.

Tourism was thought safe to the environment up until the late '60's. In the '70's, this opinion changed as deterioration of the natural and human environments was being noticed around the world with emerging social conflicts resulting from the overrunning of tourism capacity (Gordon 1954, Scott 1955, Meadows et al. 1972, Pearce 1976 and 1989, Wall and Wright 1997, Andronikou 1997).

The seriousness of the situation made it necessary for International Organizations (WTO, UN) dealing with the environment to intervene and take precautions to protect the environment on a global scale (eg. Agenda 21, 1992).

Natural resources supporting tourism must continue to remain available (through preservation/ replenishment) and their exploitation must be logical (e.g. Unsullied landscapes and beaches, clear seas) for Tourism development to continue its uninterrupted growth in harmony with the natural and human environments (based on the principles of their preservation).

Moreover, tourism, in order to continue to function, should be examined within a holistic approach, based on a representative spherical system that performs internal connections between all of tourism's sub-systems and features, an approach which will also have the added benefit to allow us to effectively evaluate any consequences resulting from tourism activities.

Tourism, by its nature is an agent of social change which must be studied, designed and organized in a more thorough way than today in order to yield the rewards of social profit.

These days it is common belief that the specialization of a tourist approach is the way to respond to the modern challenges while making continuous use of tourist resources. A proper commercial policy should help promote specialized markets (niche areas) which in the long run are believed will be the islets of tourist development and significant profit sources for tourist businesses.

This paper tries to combine the managerial vertical tourist approach of Integrated Total Quality Tourism Management "I.T.Q.T.Ã." which indicates the typology of all the tourism's agents together with the horizontal developing approach of the Completed Internal Development which indicates the citizens' activation of the region - destination. History has shown that this transition from the "tourism agents" (agencies, tourism companies, tour operators, hoteliers etc.) – the former - to "regional society of the tourism's destination" (farmers, cattle breeders, tradesmen etc.) cannot successfully be achieved directly by the later (without some intermediation). The formula which best expresses capacity and tolerance of a region and its citizens to endure the tourist "burden" is known as the carrying capacity.

This concept is justified to ensure a sustained quality and retain more human and welcoming environment to visitors. Within this framework, the article speaks at three levels: first, It addresses the descriptive explanation of "I.T.Q.T.Ã." as a familiar method, second it explains the intermediate meaning of its different manifestations and finally in third speaks of the "Internal Completed Regional Development" being a target meaning.

A characteristic case study of the regional initiative Leader in the mountainous region of "Plastira Lake" in the prefecture Karditsa in Greece study is included (which resulted from the intentional application of these theories) In the attempt to make the proposed theoretical approach more understandable.

Sustainable Tourism Approach to Contemporary Challenges

It is well known that the post-World War II development of international tourism was based on the model of organized tourism. This model was systematically promoted by many international Economical Organizations (eg. OECD, WTO, UN etc), and proved to be a strategy suitable mostly for the economical development of the developing countries/areas.

Mass tourism and package tours, mainly, supported this dominant development model of tourist development, started being phased out by the end of the '70's, as a result of the serious problems it caused (economical, social, environmental) in the tourist development of many countries / areas that hosted tourists (Cohen 1978:219-230, Mathieson and Wall (1982), Lagos: 1996:107-119).

A new model of tourism development slowly started to emerge as of the late '70's, it is mainly based on the specific forms of tourism which constitute the model of continuous tourism development, that respects the human and natural environments and serves the purposes of competitiveness and quality.

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Today we are facing a new era of international tourism characterized by supersegmentation of the market, requiring greater maneuverability in the tourist offers and the achievement of profit for tourism companies through the diagonal integration and the subsequent system economies, pursuing new markets of integrated values now, instead of the economies of scale which were still the rule until recently (Fayos Sola 1996:406).

In view of recent developments in the world tourism market, a new theoretical approach towards the continuous natural and economical design of tourist activity is required.

This calls for the mobilization of all the tourist agents in order to maintain a high environmental level with characteristics of quality, to rationally use all available resources, and to develop complete one-stop-shopping offerings through interventions in local, regional and at national levels with the business and political decision makers to establish the foundation for sustainable quality and sufficient capacity for continuous tourism consumption.

To support this goal consideration must be given for tacking the “threshold” that tourism activity can sustain at any specific tourist destination, as well as the “critical cargoes” of tourist activity.

The acknowledgement of this “threshold” is an important factor of the tourism developmental procedure, because it bears an impact on the environment which can only be tolerated up to a certain point. Beyond this point, the environmental resources are starting to wear off and they stop being an attraction for tourists. The tourist policy of the specific tourist destination, which is based on these attractions should therefore change and suggest their replacement with other attractions, in order to continue an unimpeded and linear tourism development growth.

The “critical cargoes” that exist in the tourism activity are the five types of the carrying capacity (Pearce 1976, O’ Reilly 1986, Cooper et al. 1998), as follows:

- The physical carrying capacity: meaning the absolute number of the tourist “users” that a tourism destination can physically accommodate (Ricci 1976, Mathieson and Wall 1982). The physical carrying capacity is the one measured the most and is directly connected to the percentage of the field area of a tourist destination that is available for the creation of tourism facilities (eg hotel accommodation, parking spots, restaurants) in order to host tourists.
- The Biological carrying capacity: meaning the level of visitations that can be made to a tourism destination (natural or artificial environment), beyond which there will be unwanted ecological effects, either as a result of the

tourists being there or of the things they wish (eg visit of a prehistoric cave where carbon dioxide levels are monitored to protect the mural artwork).

- The Psychological carrying capacity: meaning the threshold of tourism activity beyond which the level of tourism satisfaction is reduced. Actually, it refers to the way tourists perceive or understand a tourism destination in relation to their personal wishes. Psychological capacity is a personal concept and can hardly be affected by the decisions made by the tourist agents and the programmers of tourism activities (eg waiting time at ski lift).
- The Social carrying capacity: meaning the level of tourism activity beyond which the visitors' satisfaction is reduced to non-acceptable levels as a consequence of the overfilling of the tourist destination, the social tolerance and the relation of non-cohabitation among the tourists and the habitants of the accommodating area (eg quality of the tourist population may have gone down and big spender tourists seeking less populous and less frequented areas may stop returning to the area). Social carrying capacity actually describes the social resistance of the accommodating society against the alien "element" it admits (eg extreme poverty when cruise boat tourists throw food away ignoring starving local population, hate and resentment make the tourists unwelcome).
- The Economic carrying capacity: meaning the extent to which tourism offers economic profits. This capacity expresses the limit that development of each area tolerates and extends to the point where the extreme social profit from a visitor's increase starts becoming less than the social cost (eg debated benefits of gambling tourism in some areas – few profit and many inhabitants grow poorer).

It is obvious that the carrying tourism capacity is complex and variant, and depended on a series of other factors that affect it. It is also difficult to define its limits and express it in terms of quality and quantity.

It is generally claimed that there is a tolerance level in nature and in society, beyond which any consequences resulting from the development of tourism activity are not either acceptable or tolerable.

WTO (1983) has defined relevant arithmetical standards of carrying capacity, which function as general instructions or directions (Inskeep 1991) used in the more general effort it makes in order to create a common framework of guidelines for the continuous tourist development.

Also, World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) (1995) has given guiding instructions for the continuous tourism development based on the Rio declaration for the environment and development (Cooper et al. 1998: 109).

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Finally, it is widely accepted that the development of a tourism destination depends on the “quality of the natural and human environment”. This is the reason why the preservation of its attraction elements

–natural, cultural and historical- is so important. This important observation leads to the conclusion that the continuous use of tourism resources, as well as the best possible and most effective uses of these requires a theoretical approach founded on the methodological framework of Integrated Total Quality Tourism Management, which, at a practical level, can bring the best possible result of tourism satisfaction for all people involved in the tourism equation, meaning both providers of the experience and services and users of the tourist experience.

The Concept of Integrated Total Quality Tourism Management

I.T.Q.T.Ä. is a holistic approach for tourism development, uniting the social, cultural, environmental and economical aspects of tourism development in a more complete way than other current existing approaches. It aims at the integrated tourist development and rational management of tourism resources and is the new approach of tourism development.

Within the framework of this approach, what is suggested is a cooperation between all the agents involved in the tourist network: the Local Development Organizations and the organization for the protection of the environment, which will mandate numerous changes in the attitude, the behavior and the management of the natural and human environment.

For this reason, necessary and appropriate strategic alliances must be forged to face the common front of contemporary challenges and plan effectively for the future tourism socioeconomic reality, (Harrington-Lehehan 1998:63 - 71).

This way of facing the challenges is based on a bottom up approach and aims at the creation of three kinds of profit (Hoffmann 1995):

- Sociocultural enriching
- Environmentally sustainable
- Economically viable

The I.T.Q.T.M. approach suggests a continuous approach towards tourism, creating multiple profits for the agents involved in the tourist network. But, since tourism is not necessarily wished for or possible in all areas, every

community should examine what is possible, sustainable and wished for from a cultural, social, environmental and economical point of view for the development of tourism activity in that target area, against the guiding instructions recommended by the WTO (1993).

From the full range of powerful management tools available, just a few have been selected here by way of example (Hoffmann 1998):

- Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)
- Carrying Capacity Analysis (CCA)
- Life-Cycle Analysis (LCA)
- Environmental Audits (EA).

More specific:

The Environmental Impact Assessment technique is used for the estimation of environmental impact provoked by the operation of the company. The method was developed in the '60s as a tool for the measurement of the impact of nuclear power stations on the environment. This technique was later divided into two directions: A) the total effort of all negative environmental of the company and the presentation of a total result. B) the whole production chain and tries to study the specific points where the company provokes problems to the environment. (Life Cycle Assessment), whereas at the same time it tries to distribute responsibility to each sector separately (Sebastiani et al. 2001, Lareef Zubair 2001).

The Carrying Capacity Analysis of a region is defined as the capacity of the region in question to preserve a specific number of a species of the fauna or the flora. For enterprises, the carrying capacity is the number of enterprises that may be installed in an area, so that their operation does not provoke any problems to the natural environment (reduction of qualities of the environment).

The Life Cycle Analysis technique was presented for the first time in the '60s in the field of electric power. This technique enables the estimation of negative environmental effects provoked throughout the procedure from the delivery of raw materials to the disposition of the final product (from the cradle to the grave) (Jincheng et al. 2001, Olsen et al. 2001).

Environmental Auditing is the technique that enables the enterprise to assess the extent to which the environmental policy implemented presents the planned environmental performances. Moreover, the environmental control enables the observation of the extent to which the actions of the enterprise are in

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compliance with the existing legislation (Jon Plaut 1998, Ong- Koh and A.Y.C. 2001).

However, this does not imply the tools indicated here are considered the most efficient per se.

The decision of which tools should be selected each time depends on the more specific physical, economical and social conditions, as well as the development level of each tourism destination.

The Relation Between Sustainable Tourism Development And The Integrated Total Quality Tourism Management

By the term sustainable tourism development, in general, we mean the total of tourism interventions that ensure that the non-renewable natural resources of a tourism destination are preserved.

Many definitions and interpretations have been given to the concept of sustainable development, and many methodological approaches and function models have been suggested for the implementation of such concepts (Pearce et al. 1989, Morffat 1993).

The most characteristic definition given is the one used in the essay by the Brundtland committee which states that "Sustainable development is the development that satisfies the needs of the present without minimizing the ability of the future generations to satisfy their own" (WCED 1987:2-10).

Even though the sense of sustainability is very old, in our days this term has acquired a more general meaning to include the social, sociological, psychological and, particularly, the cultural aspects of the wearing out of the resources of "admission areas" (WTO 1995).

What is generally acceptable is that the examination and evaluation of the conditions of sustainable development requires the simultaneous consideration of the economic, social and ecological systems within a unified analysis framework.

The matter of quality is the key factor today in the formation of a tourist development strategy, due to the intense competitiveness among companies, at international and national levels, as well as the increasing sensitization of the tourist, enhanced by the mass media.

The new approach of sustainable development is based on the need for convergence of the environmental development policies and combines three individual pursuits (Lagos 1998).

- The efficiency of economy
- Social equity and justice
- Environmental conservation

The search for the relation between tourism and sustainable development follows three different approaches (Coccosis 1995:25).

- The sectional, in the concept of sustainable tourist development, where viability focuses on the preservation of tourist activity in the long run.
- The environmental, in the sense of ecologically sustainable tourism, (ecotourism), where viability focuses on the natural ecosystems.
- The sustainable, in the sense of an ecological sustainable development (tourism and sustainable development) in a more complicated outlook, where tourism is an activity and viability is defined having the whole system as its basis.

The targets of sustainable tourism development are (Eber 1992, Coccosis – Nijkamp 1995):

- the self-feeding tourism development
- the preserving of the non-renewable natural resources
- the safekeeping of the natural and human environment
- the safekeeping/reproduction of the cultural being
- the preserving of the sociological and psychological tissue
- the safekeeping of the natural-cultural individuality
- the upgrading of the local quality characters
- the non-alteration/alienation of the natural-human environment
- the non-alteration of the way of living of the permanent habitants
- the economical-social-cultural viability of the tourist destinations

The concept of sustainable tourist development includes basic principles that affect and characterize its course of action in every single development level (local, regional, national).

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Many writers have presented the principles of tourist sustainability (Beaumont et al 1993:19, Godfrey 1995:233-51).

What these writers have in common is the importance that they give to the preservation of natural resources, the minimization of destruction towards the environment, the reduction of pollution and the achievement of a balanced development in the host communities.

For the scientific research of the above mentioned targets methodologically, it is necessary to analyze the following three elements:

- the carrying capacity
- the limits of acceptable change (Sidaway 1995) and
- the use of environmental impact assessments (Hunter & Green 1995)

The analysis of the above elements is connected to the more specific analysis of the human, natural and cultural resources in combination with the sustainability of the tourist development.

More specifically:

With the term human resources we refer to an integrated system of local “values -skills -morals”, which defines the area’s identity. This system gives to the concept of sustainability the orientation, the direction, but also the dynamic and its prospect. The decision making of the tourist organizers should not ignore the human-centered character of tourism. The human resources, like local habits, customs and morals, ways of behavior, hospitality etc, have a central place in the whole system, and are immediately connected with the human will, which is neither measurable nor predictable (Papakonstantinidis 1997:318-323). So, the meaning of the carrying social capacity that connects sustainability with the tourism management can be significantly different from one place to the other, even if all the other factors remain stable. We don’t believe that the “assimilation models” can give convincing interpretations of the carrying social capacity, without the cooperation of the population of the “tourism admission area”. Under the same conditions, the “threshold” of tourism activity can be located at any point, depending on the specific “local value system”, without any access possibility from the tourist administration. The “non-cohabitant” relationship between host - tourist is bound to be infinitely flexible, relating to the human behavior, which depends on the occasional “local value system”.

We observe that the approach of the Integrated Total Quality Tourism Management proves a two-way “thin” relationship of punctuality and mutual respect between tourist and host. Any tendency to change this balance has an immediate negative impact on human resources.

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The local resources are not renewable. Any form of their alteration, expressed in terms of economy, psychology, biology, behavior, communication etc, causes irreparable damage.

The natural environment of an area is a non-renewable resource. The suggestion that this resource should not wear off is a central element of any strategic of sustainable local development. This element is connected with the carrying physical capacity of a tourist area and it is the most visible aspect of necessity and sustainability. Indeed, the uncontrolled tourism development during the decade of '70's has shown in the most convincing way that any intervention in the natural space cannot but bring about consequences on the ecosystems in a small or larger scale. Any physical space on this planet that has experienced a violent intervention in its natural environment for tourist purposes has paid an extremely heavy price, when examined at a macro-economical level. So, the central element of sustainability is proven to be the respect towards the natural space, the avoidance of disturbance of the ecosystems and the mild tourist intervention (Swarbrooke 1999:197-208).

The term "cultural resources" includes the total of human activities that give a quality characteristic that stays through time to the specific tourist area, either as history, either as customs and moral principles, either as house craft, hand craft or arts. It is about a system of local values, creation of tradition, and habit that gives the tourist destination a cultural identity and uniqueness.

The local culture is the intended goal of the strategy of sustainable tourism development. In the less developed countries/areas that are exclusively areas that visitors choose as destinations and are admitted, we can see a continuous cultural alteration of the local characteristics. In an effort to satisfy the increasing tourist demand and, consequently, the increase of profits, the local people passively accept the cultural alteration by adopting models that are foreign to their habits and their history. Such an overturning of the local social and economic system leads to the gradual loss of its cultural identity and uniqueness, which had caused the tourist demand in the first place. Our point here is that the local population, as a system of historical and geographical coincidences, facts, morals, customs etc, is a central element of sustainability, but also a reference point for the uniqueness that is necessary for the survival of this small tourist place, within an extremely competitive global tourist market.

The sustainable tourism development, especially at the local level, is achieved through the creation of local monopolistic conditions, which lead to the estimation that local culture is a distinctive feature that attracts tourists and should remain unharmed and preserved.

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The selective reference to the most important local tourism resources indicates the importance of the moral obligation of the local participation in the designing of a qualitative and differentiated tourist product. And this is because the local people themselves are exclusively responsible for the management of the local resources. However, this management must be carried out in a way that ensures this differentiation or the continuous competitive presence of the place in the international and global tourist market, through the creation of small monopolies based on the continuous and accurate preservation and promotion of the distinctive tourist resources.

Moreover, the fact that tourism markets are becoming perpendicular calls for the spatial differentiation of the tourist services that are being offered as a "counterbalance" measure for this tendency.

These two opposite sides of interests that are actually present, the "Management of the Tourist Product" and the "Cultural Local Society", are joined together through the realization of the concept of carrying capacity and especially the social carrying capacity.

Consequently, within this relationship, the satisfaction of the visitor has a two-way correlation with the quality of life of the people of the area that accommodates the visitor.

So, sustainable tourism development comes to be a strategy of an integrated local development, of active and sensitized habitants-citizens that work at the destination area, giving emphasis on the quality criteria of "decent hospitality", local morals and cultural uniqueness, away from the rules of the market and "blind individual profit" (Papakonstantinidis 1998:213).

This indication introduces a new meditation that leads to an alternative strategic approach, through the consequent theories that have been methodologically adopted in this essay.

The social carrying capacity that defines the levels of the cohabitation in the relationship between the tourists and the habitants of the accommodating area, gives the sustainable tourism development a different meaning for a visitor's respectful attitude towards a place and its customs. In addition, it specifies that tourism is nothing more than a local initiative within a group of local initiatives that are strategically combined within a horizontal pattern of endemic development, where the emphasis is given to the quality characteristics.

In this way, from the social carrying capacity, we gradually and methodically move on to the endemic integrated local development, which is the alternative strategic approach that joins together the tourism administration with the sustainable tourism development and reconciles the tourist- visitor with the

habitant-host of the place that accommodates them, in a mutual and two-way relationship (Papakonstantinidis 2000:58).

This is an important contribution of double importance, because the idea developed, is in contradiction with anterior ideas. Both sides of tourism management and sustainable tourism development are taken into consideration and analyzed through the horizontal dimension that joins them with the tourist markets becoming perpendicular.

Strategically, the concept of active participation in the decision making process, concerning tourist administration, is more powerful than any other considered previously. This new approach is integrated and endemic and ensures that the small tourism admission place is now seriously taken into consideration by the tourism administration, during the process of the designing of the integrated quality of tourism.

Integrated refers to the idea that it is a well-defined and well-organized local system covering both the overall and the local and strategically inter-united actions of all fields of tourism.

Endemic refers to the procedures and reasoning of an interior local work through the approach of the proposed bottom up methodology.

Now, both these concepts have a positive contribution to the definition of the acceptable limits of the relationship of cohabitation and facilitate the smooth adjustment of the social carrying capacity.

The I.T.Q.M.T. needs an organized and functional local system to assist in the admission of tourists (WTO:1998).

The integrated endemic local system needs the cooperation and support of the tourist administration, to accomplish the maximum possible differentiation of the quality tourist services package being offered.

Thus, the approach of I.T.Q.M.T. presented in this paper defines the relationship between the tourism management and the integrated local growth of the admission area. This gives a whole new dimension to the sustainable tourism development.

When the targets of sustainable tourism development area leading to the completed endemic integrated local area and the admission/destination are well defined, the complete integrated quality tourism administration reaches these aims to the maximum possible extent. It supports sustainable development, contributes to its quality upgrading, respects the local individuality and the cultural identity, conciliates the social carrying capacity with local development, indicates the necessity of a two-way relationship

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between tourist- host, takes seriously into consideration the local suggestions and contributes to the idea of a more general tourism development.

The concept of quality is approached by different points of view and it usually refers to certain characteristics of the tourist product which define or affect the possibility and ability to contribute to the fulfillment of the needs, wishes and expectations of the tourist clientele.

Finally, the analysis of human, natural and cultural resources in relation to the carrying capacity, the limits of acceptable change and the use of environmental impact assessments, leads to the conclusion that the local societies, when they confront the social and economic reality being shaped, cannot help but participate in the sustainable design of the tourist product. The reasoning is that sustainability indicates that the non-renewable resources must not end (Friedmann-Weaver 1979:187, 211-232). On the contrary, they have the moral – at least – obligation to differentiate the content of their tourist product in a way of quality, in order for it to be competitive within the framework of the continuously broadened and global International tourism market.

The observation of the determining factors of quality in tourism from a methodological point of view feature certain internal difficulties when issues are analyzed and evaluated. These difficulties are in the demarcation between quantitative and qualitative factors due to peculiarities intrinsic to the tourist sector which result from the mostly intangible character of the products that are difficult to measure where production and consumption tend to coincide.

Case Study:

Plastira Lake, Country Of Karditsa, Thessalia, Greece

West of the Thessalic plain, in the middle of a tableland known as the Pindos mountain range we find at altitude 1200m above sea level the Plastira (or Tavropos) Lake. This “lake” was formed when a dam was built in 1929, uniting two natural peaks, collecting the waters flowing from many rivers, which used to be flowing and disappearing into a land cavity.

Up until the middle of '80s, the wider area of the Plastira Lake was an abandoned area. Its population was aged, with an average age of 70 years or older. The active working segment of the local population (ranging from 15- 45 years old) migrated away to nearby big urban centers, looking for better working conditions and quality of life. Consequently there were no children born there, resulting in systematic school closings. 88% of the population dealt only with agriculture and cattle- raising. The average agricultural income was only 15% of the Average Community Rate. The land was inaccessible, without passages (roads) and without any prospects for the development of the facilities. The

tourist agencies included the "Lake" in their plans, only as a "place to visit and take photographs of". Tourist buses stopped at a much lower point, and only those who had the strength and the power to go climbing on a rough area, reached the "Lake" in order to take photographs and return. By the lake were only one or two food dispensing businesses (tavernas, coffee shops), scattered, not connected, partially operating and barely surviving.

In the mid '80s, agents of the Local Government Organization and social agents with great influence on the population of the wider area, founded an anonymous company, named "Karditsa Developmental AN.KA.SA". This company was immediately activated in order to revive the beautiful vicinity of the "Plastira Lake".

With their own resources (human and financial) they carried out an "integrated case study" of the area, gathering all the scattered local actions into one "unified strategic scheme", so that one man's actions would multiply the other's effect.

The first attempts of this scheme gave the total effort an unusual dynamic, which, quite fast, gathered around it all the tradesmen, hotel managers, restaurant owners, tourist agencies, as well as small industries, home handicrafts, etc.

The inclusion of the programs that AN.KA.SA carried out in the European Programs, and particularly in the LEADER Initiative (1994), created all those requirements which were necessary for an even greater intervention in the efforts to develop the place, around the Lake.

Gradually, they created the conditions to bring back young people to the area, not only to deal with agriculture, but also to participate in actions related to agricultural tourism, within the framework of a phenomenon, intensely Mediterranean, called "agricultural multi-employment". The Plastira Lake was advertised in Europe and today it can accommodate conventional tourism, educational tourism, sports tourism, social tourism, naturalist tourism, climbing tourism and trekking. Schools opened again to educate Children, the demographic "pyramid" was restored, while the European Union characterized this area and the general effort to develop it as a "pilot project, demonstration project".

At the same time, AN.KA.SA moved along in collaboration with the tourist agencies, the state local agents (local shops of the National Tourism Organization), the hotel managers and the restaurant owners of the area (that is the "tourism management") to a pioneer action: the "Quality Treaty" of the tourist services that were offered in the vicinity of the lake.

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It is the first time that a combination of the total tourist management and "integrated endogenous tourist development" is recorded: a decision taken in common by the 'tourist management' and the 'local society' to preserve their natural and human resources and maintain them at a high level, created the "Quality Treaty", with one and only target:

To express their will to offer "Quality", even if in the short run, they would have a small financial profit, which would probably be ensured by the "quantity" and "massive tourism". Aiming at the preservation of the "carrying capacity"- that is, how much the area of the Lake can endure in terms of loads of People-Actions- at high levels, the local community, expressed by the Local Action Group of AN.KA.SA, literally cooperated with the "tourist management" in order to reach a consensus solution accepted by for the "quality" of the tourist services, a solution approach that is simultaneously "holistic and integrated".

The result of this persistence on "quality" was spectacular: multiplied numbers of visitors, prolongation of the tourist period, from 70 to 200 days a year, a dramatic increase of the residents' income, which today is approximately 95% of the Average Community Rate, the return of people within the productive ages from urban centers, increase of employment rate by 20% at least, development of new actions, related to tourism (organized handicrafts, small industries, museums, Botanic Gardens, canoeing, horse breeding, cultural events), elevation of the area to European and international level, creation of Associations Bank, the signing of "Quality Treaties" for new activities, elevation of the endogenous powers of the place, advertisement - publicity of the Greek agricultural tourism and absorption capacity of the European funds at a percentage of 110 - 150% (Annual Reports of AN.KA.SA for the years 1989 - 1999).

Concluding Remarks

The rapid increase of tourism brings about risks together with the new opportunities. This situation is made more complex with the increasing number of the participants, the wearing out of natural resources. These factors require immediate involvement and development of strategic solutions. These appear in the form of "strategic alliances" and "nets" among the places involved, in order to prove and adopt a "common stand" as far as tourist administration is concerned. This "common stand" becomes imperatively essential, especially in the "fragile tourism admission areas". Indeed, the natural, architectural and cultural individuality of the areas becomes a condition for their survival within the highly competitive international tourism environment.

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So, "sustainable tourism development" is considered to be an important priority of the tourist administration, beyond the creation of income profit and the development of professional opportunities, but also in the preservation of non-renewable resources, and respect of the natural and cultural surroundings of the host area.

Integrated Total Quality Tourism Management has been suggested as a new holistic approach for tourist development and administration.

This approach is based on strategies, methodologies and tools that aim at the preservation and improvement of the natural and built environment that allow for the sustainable social and economic development.

The recognition of local individuality, as well as the upgrading of the importance of the local societies that are agents hosts of tourist flow at the destination places, proves the necessity for the sensitization on behalf of the Administration to accept the local society in equal terms as well as of the habitants of the local society themselves to accept the equal part they have in the production of "Total Quality Administration" through the "standards" of decency, differentiation, promotion and protection of the natural resources.

This scheme will result through the endemic integrated tourism development within the frame of a strategic design to the improvement of the quality of the tourism product and related tourism circuit services.

This paper makes an effort to rationalize the Integrated Total Tourism Quality through active participation of the local action in the process of decision making as a major contribution, taking into consideration the natural, social and cultural particularities of the host area, through respect, common perception and bringing together all the assessments from all the parties involved. The tool of the suggested strategic approach is the alternative thought that adopts the mentality of harmony and correlation between Integrated Tourism Management and Integrated Endemic Local Development of the host area.

Integrated Endemic Local Development of an area, founded on the methodological bottom up approach calls for the concept of sensitization of the local people and the administration. Sensitization on the one hand of the local people in order to have a more active participation in the decision making process regarding tourism, and, on the other hand, of the "Administration" in order to accept the general point of view of the local people and take it into consideration when making the general tourist design. Thus, this paper, proposes a more equal cooperation between "Area" - "Administration", aiming at discovering the approaches that are in harmony with the basic conception of the I.T.Q.T.M. with an immediate implementation in the small local communities, places, tourist destinations.

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With the above purpose in mind, the suggested alternative thinking is expected to smooth the friction points in manners and customs and cultural identities between on the one hand, all aspects of the integrated tourism quality and, on the other hand, the sustainable tourism development with its financial targets.

Finally, as it arose from the study of the Plastira Lake, tourism is a financial and social activity, which when it is well leveraged within a supportive tourism policy leads to the realization of a balanced regional development and brings about an improvement in the financial and social outlook and increase in profits.

Therefore, it is essential for the appropriate policy framework to be further specialized and for the proposed theoretical base to be complemented by the proposed methodological approach which creates the appropriate presuppositions for the activation of an internal dynamic in regional actions in accordance with the quality which motivates the procedure of development of the host areas.

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