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**Cross-border destination marketing and peace making:
Prerequisites and critical success factors**

Abstract

Cross-border collaboration has become more valuable particularly for destinations that have had long-standing disputes in political relations but now seek peace. They are often forced to collaborate and develop economic and political bridges, developing friendships in the way. Although the industry has several cases of such collaboration in practice, this has been a neglected subject in academic studies. Therefore, this study explores the opportunities and benefits from a Turkey-Greece destination marketing collaboration. It seeks to identify catalysts for success through a range of potential instruments, organizations, solutions that remove possible barriers that may hinder a successful implementation. It also identifies the advantages of successful cross-border destination marketing such as being close-proximity in terms of history, culture, attractions and location. The paper finally discusses the ways to strengthen the competitiveness of both destinations as neighboring countries. For instance, through their historical wealth and strategic location, both Greece and Turkey can obtain economic, social and political benefits from tourism that will also lead to peace making in the end. The study also provides implications for the practice and future research.

Keywords: cross-border collaboration, cross-border marketing, destination marketing, joint marketing, peace, Greece, Turkey.

Introduction

Destination marketing has been critical for tourism development over the years. Destinations are effectively clusters and networks that deliver tourism products and experiences (Costa, Costa, & Breda, 2006). Strategically, destination marketing must lead to the optimization of tourism impacts and the achievement of strategic objectives for all stakeholders (Buhalis, 2000). To achieve this, destinations need to reflect consumer preferences and to satisfy demand. Parallel to the developments in the world economy, there are differences in tourism movements. Before the 2000s, tourist groups, often consumed traditional tourism products and packages. They went on vacation once or twice a year and tended to consume almost all or half of the leave within the scope of a tour. Most package tours are dominated by a tendency to visit only one destination in one country for a period of one to two weeks.

However, technology and consumer behavior change how travelers experience destinations. The new millennium has been a reference point to how consumers in general have evolved in their consumption patterns. Influenced by the abundance of information through a range of technological solutions, consumers have choice and also a short interest span (Inversini & Buhalis, 2009). Like in many other industries, changing trends of tourism demand make tourism consumers more dynamic, irrational and experienced (Hwang & Fesenmaier, 2011; March & Woodside, 2005). Taking the advantage of developments in infrastructure (information technology, transport etc.) and superstructure (accommodation and dining facilities etc.) travelers take shorter, more frequent holidays.

Technological infrastructure facilitates the connectivity and potential tourists are able to search for information and make decisions instantly (Paraskevas, Katsogridakis, Law, & Buhalis, 2011). Many middle-class travelers make “once in a life time” trips, often visiting an entire country or even a continent during a trip. They are likely to switch from one destination to another or from one choice to another during their travel. They look for short experiences but with more destinations on a single trip, encompassing either short or long-distance (Decrop, 2006; Kozak & Baloglu, 2011). They effectively try to maximize the value they gain and optimize their experience in a short period of time.

The types of attraction and their strong identities determine destination positioning and competitiveness (Buhalis, 2000; Prayag & Hosany, 2014; Um & Crompton, 1990). This is influential on tourists’ decisions to travel short or long-haul and/or combine multiple destinations in a single trip. Cross-border neighboring destinations offer easy access and mobility for travelers whilst increasing the variety and value of travel (Blasco, Guia, & Prats, 2014). Short-distance trips are increasingly easier due to the close proximity and availability of transport networks. The combination of various destinations or tourist attractions may enhance the travel experience, even if the travel lasts only a short period.

There is a positive correlation between the physical distance and the average length of stay (Gronau, 1970). The longer the distance of travel becomes the more travelers extend the length of their stay to include different destinations or attractions. This enables them to better compensate the cost of long-distance travel and also the opportunity cost of longer time span (Alegre & Pou, 2006). For example, Asians arriving in Europe tend to visit various countries, whilst Europeans visiting Americas or Australia often visit different states or countries. In either case of short or long-distance travel, the combination of destinations always offers better value for money by an effective use of money and time. It also adds value for visitors who take the advantage of multiple destinations (Blasco & Guia, & Prats, 2014). Being sensitive about their physical and psychological conditions on a vacation, visitors also look for a symmetry between the destinations they plan to visit on a single trip.

The new millennium has also been another reference point to experience radical changes on the supply side of tourism. Destination authorities have felt under pressure to invest more resources in creating their own brand image and positions to maintain their competitiveness in the market (Kozak & Baloglu, 2011). Recent trends on both supply and demand sides of the tourism industry have forced destinations to seek ways of cross-border collaboration to better serve as a single package (Blasco, Guia, & Prats, 2014). This is a result of an increasing Asian population that would like to explore Western destinations. Travel facilitation through multi-country visa, such as Schengen, has made crossing borders easier and enjoyable. Cross-destination collaboration is more valuable, particularly for destinations that have had long-standing disputes in their political relations, but now seek peace (Cho, 2007; Farmaki, Antoniou, & Christou, 2019; Kim & Prideaux, 2003; 2006; Kim, Prideaux, & Prideaux, 2007). Although the industry has several cases of such collaboration in practice, this has been a neglected subject in academic studies. Tourism is a well-recognized catalyst for peace and development and several international organizations such as the UNWTO and WTTC have adopted similar initiatives.

In addition to facilitating travelers visiting multiple destinations, cross-border collaboration can facilitate a range of key business functions, including labor working across borders and procurement. Depending on geography and the location of infrastructure, crossing borders may be inevitable. For example, Barcelona airport and port are the gateway for Andorra, whilst Milano Malpensa airport is the gateway for Lugano and Italian speaking Switzerland.

In line with the above arguments, the study objectives include: 1) identify potential instruments/organizations taking place in a cross-border collaborative destination marketing between Greece and Turkey; 2) discuss the possible benefits/advantages for both parts in order to be successful for marketing in international tourism; 3) suggest solutions for any possible barriers that may hinder a successful implementation of cross-border collaborative destination marketing; and 4) investigate the underlining effects of cross-border collaboration over peace making processes and how peace making processes may initiate the implementation of cross-border collaboration in tourism.

Literature review

The coverage of this study is extensive, addressing the significance of various subjects in a conceptual and methodological design. The existing literature contains limited empirical attempts to underline the instruments, opportunities and challenges of cross-border collaborative destination marketing. Traditional marketing is about promoting products and services but promoting services across borders in different countries and administrative entities have been neglected. In fact, most cross-border destinations compete with each other. The link of tourism with peace making process in the context of neighborhood countries has also been under-researched. Therefore, this study aims to bring different subjects together, such as destination marketing, cross-border collaboration, peace-making process, and actors in cross-border collaboration. Bringing methods and best practice together can help to accomplish the above-stated objectives by approaching the issue from a broader perspective.

Cross-border destination marketing

Departing from the conceptual background in basic marketing theories, there are two approaches that are closely linked with their conceptualization for destination products: complementary and substitute products (Kotler, Bowen, Makens, & Baloglu, 2017). The former category considers that each destination has distinct types of products that can potentially complement each other to attract visitors with varying holiday interests or motivations. Athens is more culture-oriented and Rhodes offers more nature and seaside leisure, but these two destinations can take place in the agenda of visitors who would like to visit Greece. The substitute category offers products with similar characteristics. One destination can be replaced with another in visitors' choice sets. There may be no much difference for sun-seeking visitors between visiting Rhodes or Kos once the vacation is taken in the summer.

Regardless of their varying characteristics in nature, destinations with either product categories can be involved in cross-border collaborative marketing programs. There are several trends that propel more cross border-travels, namely (UNWTO, 2018):

- Travel facilitation enable more tourists to cross-borders,
- Visa and cross-border formalities facilitation,
- Transportation networks and flexible transport arrangements,
- Shorter and more frequent active travel,
- Quest for more varied experiences,
- Availability of information through technology,
- Collaboration between cross-border partners and development of ecosystems,
- Last minute availability and special offers,
- Increase of long-haul travels,
- Increase of middle-class travel with “once in a life time” destinations,
- Need of travelers to feed social media with as much content as possible.

As the cross-border visitation has been facilitated, there have been more cases of such collaborations. Geography and positioning towards attractions play a critical role. This is more evident in famous waterfall regions around the world, where visitors move between two countries to see the spectacular views from more angles. For example, Iguazu Falls can be reached from two main towns, Puerto Iguazú in Argentina and Foz do Iguazu in Brazil. Similarly, Victoria Falls are part of two national parks, Mosi-oa-Tunya National Park in Zambia and Victoria Falls National Park in Zimbabwe. Special interest tourism is also propelling cross-border tourism for skiing, diving or golfing to increase the variety of experiences.

Promoting multiple destinations to long haul markets is also increasing. Examples include US-Canada, Argentina-Chile, and Hong Kong-China. As many destinations try to attract the Chinese Market, for example, the European Travel Commissions (ETC) promotes European member countries in China: Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Monaco, Montenegro, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Spain, Switzerland to Chinese visitors and trade. At the city level, bringing various destinations together and selling them as a single itinerary at one price has increased collaboration. For example, partnerships between Vienna-Budapest and Amsterdam-Brussels attract network competitiveness. The "London-Paris Partnership" initiative launched between the mayors, contributes to developing the partnerships between London and Paris to attract long-distance travelers visiting Europe. Most examples usually represent North America and Europe. Most European countries take the advantage of close proximity to sell destinations across borders. They are reachable via short term travelling, on varying types of vehicles, such as driving, coaches, trains, ships/ferries, and flights, even bicycles. This was greatly facilitated by the Tourist Schengen Visa, that permits third-country nationals who enter into the Schengen Area for a maximum of 90 days, within a 6-month period, under the purpose of traveling or visiting Europe for pleasure to move freely. In other regions and in particular in Asian and/or Middle-east countries, geographical and political barriers may hinder the establishment of similar collaborations.

However, the consideration of cross-border collaborative destination marketing is still an emerging subject both in theory and practice. The literature includes a limited number of cases that can be presented as examples of cross-border destination marketing from a geographical perspective. The majority of such studies are biased towards taking the issue from the inter-destination perspective in the same destination (e.g. D'Angella & Go, 2009; Wang, Hutchinson, Okumus, & Naipaul, 2013; Żemła, 2014), emergence of governance in cross-border destinations (e.g. Blasco, Guia & Prats, 2014), development of management and marketing strategies (Lovelock & Boyd, 2006; Tosun, Timothy, Parpairis & MacDonald, 2005), and development of umbrella brands for multiple destinations (Semone & Kozak, 2012). Still, the investigation of similar collaborations among destinations in two or more countries is under-represented in the literature. The possible association with peace making processes from an inter-nation perspective is also neglected (e.g. Farmaki, Antoniou, & Christou, 2019).

Opportunities and challenges of cross-border destination marketing

The establishment of an effective cross-border destination marketing initiative is likely to provide both sides a list of opportunities. First, both parts can gain competitive advantage by being more innovative in developing products and marketing strategies than their counterparts elsewhere in the world (Tosun, Timothy, Parpairis, & MacDonald, 2005; Weidenfeld, 2013). Second, through their compounded positioning and branding strategies (Semone & Kozak,

2012; Zenker & Jacobsen, 2015), from the economic perspective, the influx of new visitors and the exchange of visitors internally between the destinations may contribute to increasing the annual volume of arrivals and tourism income in each destination. Third, from the management perspective, both parts can benchmark themselves to learn about new practices from each other (Kozak, 2004). Fourth, they can increase customer experience and provide a bigger variety of attractions and activities. Finally, from the sociological point of view, both nations can come closer to better understand each other's values, either by exchanging practices on the industry side or visiting each other on the cultural side.

The challenge to commit various interests on a cross-border marketing initiative should also be emphasized. First, the dissimilarity in the culture of management, the capacity of leadership and entrepreneurship and the historical background of the industry and nations may be a main obstacle (Blasco, Guia, & Prats, 2014; Lovelock & Boyd, 2006). Second, the lack of commitment that appears as a result of the unstable political relations may hinder the implementation of professional organizational structures and cross-border e-marketing networks (Hartman, 2006; Sofield, 2006). Third, as cross-border destinations belong to different administrative entities, they have different targets and budgets, set up to compete rather than collaborate. Fourth, managing resident attitudes and engaging locals from both destinations is challenging (Hadinejad et al., 2019). Finally, as in many ways, the lack of financial sources or their unequal distribution between the member states or destinations may exist as an additional impediment to such initiatives. Therefore, cross-border tourism destination marketing requires vision and leadership across different organizations and an appetite for cooperation.

Cross-border destination marketing and peace-making process

Tourists arriving in one region may benefit by travelling to other neighboring regions or countries. There are cost advantages in cross border cooperation, when countries share the cost of promotion to the region, instead of being solely responsible for marketing expenses. Total cost can be shared across a number of countries. Another advantage is the creation and consolidation of peace processes between two neighboring regions. Building economic activities and bringing partners from both sides together to co-create tourism experiences eventually creates common economic interests and eventually trust and friendship. The income generated by tourism movements between borders can be a catalyst for permanent peace solutions, as both parties realize the benefits and the risks involved. Such an understanding can change the attitude and behavior of local people and businesses over time when the feeling of sharing from the same pool becomes stronger.

To date, a number of empirical studies have highlighted the role of tourism development in peace making process (e.g. Cho, 2007; Farmaki, Antoniou, & Christou, 2019; Kim & Prideaux, 2006). This may result in two ways: The first is more from an internal perspective and social-oriented. The interaction of local people with visitors may enable them to understand each other's lifestyles and values. Eventually that removes the side effects of any possible stereotypes and brings them to a mutual understanding and common communication platforms. Visitors can be both from those nations who are in a peaceful or even in hostile relationships. The second represents a more external perspective and is more economic-oriented. Nations may feel the need to sustain a peaceful platform in their countries as well as with their neighbors to benefit from the economic consequences of tourism services. The establishment of cross-border collaborative destination marketing may offer various benefits for the nations on either side.

It is not unusual for different neighboring regions and countries to experience disputes and perhaps conflicts. This may have ended up in war or long-term mistrust and animosity. Cross-border tourism can enforce the process of peace making and encourage people to create friendly attitudes towards each other (Farmaki, Antoniou, & Christou, 2019; Kim & Prideaux, 2006; Kim, Prideaux, & Prideaux, 2007). Such an outcome not only contributes to peace-making process among the nations but also will stimulate positive side effects, by keeping the attention of foreign visitors with a multiplier effect of creating a strong brand image value. This is because tourism grows easily in a peaceful and friendly environment (Jafari, 1989; Kim & Predaux, 2003). In contrast, any political or social disputes or uncertainties are the source of degrading the value of tourism services (Chen, Lai, Petrick, & Lin, 2016) or any animosity is likely to create a negative image towards a particular destination (Correia Loureiro & Jesus, 2019).

Brief historical relationship between Greece and Turkey

The historical relationship between Greece and Turkey goes back to before the periods of the Roman Empire. Istanbul was colonized by the Greeks in the 7th century BC. Constantinople (modern-day Istanbul) was founded as the capital city and the most powerful economic, cultural, and religious force of the Byzantine Empire in 330 AD by Emperor Constantine the Great, after whom it was named, until finally falling in 1453 AD to the Ottoman Empire. Greece gained its independence from the Ottoman Empire in 1832, but the conflicts continued for another century. The two nations faced each other at four different wars: the Greco-Turkish War (1897), the first Balkan War (1912–13), the First World War (1914–18), and the Greco-Turkish War (1919–22). When the final war ended in 1922, a number of people exchanged their places from one country to the other, as part of The Treaty of Lausanne that was officially countersigned in 1923 between the two governments. The two countries also faced the Cyprus conflict in 1974. There are still political tensions and occasional threats exchanged, mainly generated for internal political benefits or as a result of international geopolitical games played by the big powers so they can sell the military equipment.

Despite the long-standing political disputes and the loss of million inhabitants over the last two centuries, the social and economic relationships among the nations and entrepreneurs on both parts have always been positive. When Turks and Greek meet they often have years of propaganda and mistrust to overcome. However, people from both nations recognize almost instantly, and to their amazement, that they have common heritage and enjoy each other's hospitality and company. Common words used (e.g. *musakka*, *cacik*, *doner kebab* etc) break the ice immediately. Similar food and social interactions as well as the strong hospitality traditions towards strangers bring them closely together, frequently over food and drink. At the time of natural disasters, the two countries tend to come close and offer humanitarian aid. This was particularly the case following the successive earthquakes that hit both countries in the summer of 1999 and led to an improvement in Greco-Turkish relations, when volunteer rescue teams from both countries were deployed to help the neighbor. More recently, however, the migration crisis saw more than a million migrants crossing the EU borders from Turkey. Migrants travelled from the Turkish Anatolian coast to the nearby Greek islands in the Aegean Sea putting more pressure on border protection and creating friction about the incoming migrants.

Depending on the financial and economic strength of currency, many people cross borders to visit the other country, mainly during religious breaks and summer holidays. In the 1980s and 1990s Greeks had a stronger economic power and were able to visit Turkish destinations frequently for shopping and recreation. Following the strengthening of the Turkish economy in the early 2010s and the weakening of the Greek economy, many Turkish travelers crossed

the borders especially after 2010. Cultural heritage, gastronomy and shopping are main attractions for both nations. Many local governments, particularly on the Aegean coast in Turkey, have expanded their collaborative works with those on Greek islands, by brainstorming on possible ways of developing the boundaries of their commercial interactions and maintaining the continuity of their cultural proximity. Initiatives by local mayors, cultural groups and universities from both sides aimed to develop social, cultural, and economic bridges. Business relationships are often followed by friendship and trust towards living in peace and harmony.

Unlike other EU nationalities, the Greek passport holders do not need a visa for Turkey. However, Greece is a member state of the European Union and a part of the Schengen Treaty. Therefore, most visitors outside the EU require a Schengen visa to visit Greece. Turkish citizens do need a visa to visit Greece (except holders of diplomatic, service and special green passports). A visit facilitation program has been applied since 2012, enabling tourists making short visits to certain Aegean Greek islands to be issued a visa at the border entry points. Turkish citizens can arrive on the islands of the Eastern Aegean (Lesvos, Chios, Samos, Kos, Rhodes, Symi, Kastelorizo), without having to apply at an embassy or a consulate and they are offered a temporary visa at the port. This allows Turkish citizens and those legally in Turkey to travel to the Greek islands for a week. The program is critical for the economy of the islands and the facilitation of the cross-border destination marketing.

The entrepreneurs operating in the tourism and hospitality industry on both sides have also visited each other to identify possible ways of collaboration in attracting inbound and outbound tourism demand. Such collaboration has been successful in attracting tourists from one country to another. However, there is insufficient cross-border crossing for tourists from other tourist-generating target markets, such as the Americas, Europe and Asia. Most cross-border traffic is dominated by the relatively small flow of day trip foreign visitors, who cross the sea from Greece to Turkey or vice versa on day trips and also the cruise travelers who are on a cruise itinerary. There is already a small number of tour operators that offer Turkey and Greece combined tours and travel packages, providing unique cultural experiences, including specialized relic and cultural tours. Magnificent Travel and Antelope Travel are examples of specialist tour operators that organize cross-border holidays.

There is a great potential to help both short and long-distance travelers discover both Greece and Turkey, as complementary tourism products to be catered. This can easily be achieved by promoting both countries as single destinations that offer similar/identical products such as the history, culture, nature and food. In December 2018, the mayor of Edirne, a province near Turkey's border with Greece and Bulgaria, has come under fire for congratulating the New Year of tourists with multilingual posters in which the city's name was written in Greek as Adrianoupolis. Posters celebrating the New Year in Turkish, Greek and Bulgarian languages were hung all over the walls and windows of the stores in Turkey's northwestern province of Edirne, which has been attracting more tourists from the neighboring countries in the last six months.

The scope of this paper relies on how cross-border marketing can be applied between two neighboring countries, such as Greece and Turkey. Each country has similar characteristics in many aspects of international tourism. Both countries entered the international tourism market in the 1980s, depending on the history-seaside-culture trio of key attractions (Buhalis, 1999, 2001). Visitors from Northern Countries, such Germany, UK, Scandinavia and Russia are the key markets and are also very similar. Both countries are primarily sold as seaside summer destinations and therefore suffer from seasonality and the control of tour operators (Buhalis, 2000b, Bastakis, Buhalis, & Butler, 2004).

This may be a way to address the difficulties faced by the two countries in the tourism industry in recent years. As a result of the recession in the foreign markets and the drift of the national economy to the crisis, Greece has suffered the serious loss of income in domestic tourism and the ability of Greeks to travel. However, Greek tourism experienced an increase of inbound tourism by 25 percent in the years 2015–2017 with consecutive historical records and in international arrivals, revenue and all tourism figures. In 2017, it broke the barrier of 30 million tourists including cruises, six more million than three years ago, and in 2018 it exceeded 33 million international visitors and income of €16bn, a new all-time record (Ifandis, 2018).

Stagnation in foreign markets have adversely affected the tourism industry in Turkey and led to loss of income. Turkey's tourism industry has also suffered recently due to domestic instability, a failed coup attempt, terrorist attacks, proximity to war zones and an unstable relationship with Russia. Foreign visitor numbers have declined year-on-year for 20 consecutive months since August 2015. In 2016, only 25 million people visited the country, 30 percent less than in 2014. The devaluation of the Turkish Lira and the recovery of stability brought back a target for 40 million international visitors and US\$32 billion in 2018 and a very promising 2019.

Both countries generate more than 10% of their GDP on tourism. Coastal areas in particular depend on tourism for their livelihood. The products and experiences are compatible and often exchangeable. The devaluation of the Turkish currency and the significantly lower labor cost of the country offers a competitive advantage. Infrastructure, safety and variety of experience are competitive advantages of Greece. Both countries focus their efforts to attract over long-haul markets such as American and Chinese visitors. There is great scope for collaboration and cross-border marketing to promote the two destination as a multiple center holiday.

Methodology

There has been limited amount of empirical investigation exploring the consequences and challenges of cross-border destination marketing in international tourism. This exploratory study has been designed to employ the rules of qualitative research methods, namely conducting interviews. By collecting the views of key stakeholders, the paper can assess the appetite for cross-border tourism marketing. The literature suggests that qualitative research can better identify the full range of issues, views or attitudes (Veal, 2006). The list of questions was structured more in the context of the cultural and geographical proximity between two countries. It aimed to explore how cross-border tourism marketing may bring advantages or challenges for the promotion of both countries in international tourism.

Both countries are well-established and well-experienced in international tourism. Therefore, interviews were conducted with a selected list of tourism authorities operating on the Aegean coast of Turkey and Greek islands. These purposively selected sample included heads of hotel, tourism and travel associations, chambers of commerce and also representatives of local governments (mayors and vice-mayors) with a close collaboration with each other. The selected destinations in Turkey included Marmaris, Bodrum, Foca and Çeşme as well as Chios, Kos and Rhodes in Greece. A list of questions was asked while interviewing the responsible parties of the tourism industry in Greece and Turkey:

1. Do you have familiarity with any collaborative destination marketing cases between Greece and Turkey? If so, please explain briefly. If not, do you think if such a

collaboration works? in what context? This question is expected to contribute to find answers for the research objective 1.

2. What do you think about the advantages/disadvantages of collaboration and the influence of any possible barriers in disabling such a collaboration? This question is associated with the research objective 2.
3. What would be your recommendations for the industry, public authorities, local people and tourists to initiate such a collaboration? Such recommendations are expected to be of help for the research objective 3.
4. What do you think about the role of peace between two nations in maintaining a stable tourism industry in the region? Give examples about how the tourism industry was positively or negatively affected in each country for each case of having peaceful relationships and disputes between the two nations. This question relates to finding answers for research objective 4.

The collection of data on the Turkish side was completed through conducting open-ended interviews with the tourism authorities such as travel agencies and hoteliers in Marmaris, Bodrum, Foca and Cesme, all are based in Turkey and a travel agent in Athens, Greece. The interviewing procedure was completed in two ways: First, researchers visited interviewees in their own working/living environment to collect data. **Second, an online open-ended interview form was set with those who were not in close proximity with the researchers.** All interviews were completed in August and September of 2017 and recorded to benefit for inclusion as direct quotations or as a support for statements where possible in the study. The assessment of data was qualitative driven, by using content analysis to identify the main arguments. The second wave of data collection was related to the theme of a panel on cross-border tourism marketing between Greece and Turkey. The panel debate was arranged by the authors and chaired by the leading author of this paper on 15 April 2018. The panellists included the members of tourism associations and local governments based in Chios (Greece) and Izmir (Turkey): The vice-mayor of Chios, the president of chamber of commerce in Chios, the association of family hotels in Chios, the mayor of Foca, the vice-president of the Aegean tourism and hoteliers' association, and the president of the Aegean tourism and hoteliers' association (see Table 1). **Representing the response from both interviewees and panel members, direct quotations were used to substantiate these arguments where possible in the text.**

Table 1. List of interviewees

No	Association	Country
1	Association of Turkish Travel Agencies, Marmaris	Turkey
2	Association of Turkish Travel Agencies, Bodrum	Turkey
3	Association of Aegean Tourism Facilities, Izmir	Turkey
4	Association of Hoteliers, Cesme	Turkey
5	Local press representative, Marmaris	Turkey
6	Mayor of Foca, Izmir	Turkey
7	Hotelier, Foca	Turkey
8	Association of Aegean Tourism Businesses	Turkey
9	Vice-mayor of Chios	Greece
10	Chamber of Commerce, Chios	Greece
11	Association of Family Hotels, Chios	Greece
12	Travel agent, Athens	Greece

Positive impacts of cross-border collaborations

The assessment of the preliminary findings indicates both opportunities and challenges that can enable/disable the establishment of an efficient way of cross-border destination marketing. When talking to interviewees it is evident that there have been several initiatives to establish collaboration. Over the years, there have been several attempts in the agenda initiated by public and private organisations (municipalities, tourism associations, trade unions, SKAL etc) to establish a bilateral collaboration between Turkey and Greece in the Aegean context. Although the process theoretically has been successful, by organising visits to each part, it is difficult to keep the continuity in a practical manner due to the lack of motivations and long-term commitment on both parts. All interviewees agreed that both Turkey and Greece have had a long-term established relationship, originating from their similar historical background and trade, based on the geographical proximity of the two countries. This relationship offers similar culture, lifestyle and economic mechanisms that all can be part of a complementary product in the tourism industry. For instance, many bars in Bodrum accommodate Greek songs, accompanied with Greek dance. Many Greeks were studying Turkish to serve guests arriving in the early 2010s.

A key prerequisite of the relationship was trust in sharing common goals and benefits. Interviewees expressed their commitment to good neighbourhood relationships through communication and friendship. This could help establishing collaboration and commitment to peace and stability in the two communities. Politics and political support were identified as a key to sustainable relationships. Respondents from both sides implied that politicians have often acted against the interest of partnership and collaboration for internal political propaganda reasons. However, respondents often expressed their pride in friendship and collaboration that can be built further to develop the competitiveness of destinations as a network and enjoy joint success. Once trust and political support are established interviewees suggested that coordinated marketing should ensure that a comprehensive and seamless experience is offered in the market. The director of a Greek tour operator states that:

We really need to co-operate for joint branding and co-creation of experiences. Only if we develop a combined product will be able to access the market in a coherent way and support combined sales of dual products. To achieve that we need to have compatible and complementary products and services and to maintain consistency in our offering through combined Itineraries. That needs to be based on collaboration and co-creation of experience between service providers of both sides and also with travellers. Distribution Channels were signalled as critical in selling platforms and dynamic packaging through digital technology. [Interviewee 12]

Accessibility and transportation Infrastructures and Networks were also identified as critical for offering a seamless combined service. Providing distribution platforms that can offer information and flexible delivery of service would be linking all stakeholders towards facilitating sales. One interviewee emphasized the fact that the only well-established collaboration is formed through the ferry services, which cross the Aegean daily. This is very limited, with one service in the morning and one more in the afternoon, mainly in the summer season. There is a movement of visitors from one country to another, either on a daily basis or lasting for a couple of days. The Greeks usually visit popular tourist resorts on the coastline of Turkey, mostly for shopping at local markets, as this seems to be relatively cheaper. The volume of Turkish tourists visiting the Greek islands has boomed in recent years, making an immense contribution to the restoration of the Greek economy during the recent economic crisis. However, this was not sustained when Turkey faced financial problems and a devaluation of the Turkish Lira.

Interviewees observed an increasing number of incoming tourists, mainly from Northern Europe to both countries, who were involved in daily or longer trip sea crossing by ferries. The existence of both local and foreign tourists crossing the border is not a consequence of a well-established and organised collaborative marketing efforts. It is mainly due to the efforts of the small boat/ferry companies, that promote these services to travellers who visits the ports. They also have collaborations with incoming travel agencies and tour operators to offer these services to groups. If these services are to develop and grow, the authorities on both parts need to invest more efforts to come up with a more effective program that will offer advantages on a continuous basis and a sustainable cross border tourism marketing plan.

Interviewees clearly articulated the need for organisational cooperation that incorporates Political support from tourism boards end tourism and hospitality associations and chamber of commerce. Facilitation of cross-border tourism marketing collaboration through Visa and formalities can improve crossing easiness and provide access from both sides. Planning and coordination of resources would be critical for the sustainability of these initiatives. Both Greek and Turkish organisations recognised the need for leadership. One of the operators suggested:

Strong Leadership is critical for strong collaborations to generate mutual benefits. Once trust is built some strong leaders need to come out and bring the industry together towards common goals. We need to educate all stakeholders through collaboration and perhaps exchanges to understand each other's culture. Working patterns as well as systems and processes. For this to work partners within the ecosystem need to exchange staff and engage on how to they can appreciate the needs of each other. [Interviewee 10]

Education and seminars between the members of both communities through job and role exchanges can support them to realize the mutual economic benefits and the impacts on Return on Investment and Equity of their efforts. Tangible examples in cross-border collaborations can provide case studies to be demonstrated. Exchanges can also improve sociocultural benefits through a range of festivals, events, conferences, student exchanges and culture and art manifestations.

Due to the proximity, both in geography and culture, there has been increasing volume of visitor flows from one country to another over the last few decades. The Greek visitors feel happy to travel to Turkish resorts such as Bodrum or Cesme and Izmir on a daily tour, mainly for shopping. The response of Turkish people has recently been more influential on contributing to the Greek economy. The strength of the Turkish Economy in the 2010–2017 period, in combination with the Greek economic crisis and many special offers on the Greek islands, coupled with the Visa facilitation programme, meant that many Turkish people visited the Greek islands or mainland in the last few years. Direct flights between Greece and Turkey has also facilitated crossing the Aegean Sea. This is due to the fact that Greece has become a relatively cheaper destination for Turkish visitors.

When the Turkish Lira was strong, Turkish people were well-motivated to visit Greece as an alternative destination, because the cost of taking a domestic vacation in their home country seems to be more expensive. When they arrived, they were pleasantly surprised by the friendly hospitality and the variety of the Greek tourism product and made good friends with their hosts. One interviewee underlined that “*many Turks visit the Greek islands and this supports the restoration of Greek economy*” [Interviewee 1]. In the past few years the Turkish tourism has been in a crisis and needed a similar support from their Greek counterparts. This might be a good evidence to be a part of cross-border collaboration in destination marketing

to generate visitors from the neighbourhood country perspective. However, the economic crisis in Greece as well as the strength of the Turkish Lira until the summer 2018 has restricted the Greece to Turkey tourism flows.

Interviewees emphasised that both countries need each other. Therefore, the interviewees underlined the fact that there is already a desire to collaborate further. The availability of transportation networks and similarity of culture and lifestyle can support more effective collaboration. As suggested by one representative, the combination of both an EU member and non-EU member can form a nice package of tours for those coming from other countries. For example, travelling to Turkey and then visiting Greece or vice versa, without a Schengen visa, may be an attractive prospect for long-haul travellers that may like to avoid that formality. The director of a Greek tour operator states that:

Being a tour operator with offices in Turkey and Greece we spend a budget to create common packages between Turkey and Greece, which we expect to sell abroad to foreign tour operators or tour agencies that would like to have the opportunity to offer a two-country tour package to its customers. [Interviewee 12]

As China emerges as a rapidly growing tourist market recently, both the Greek and Turkish tourism authorities aim to attract inbound tourism demand by forming tourism experiences and package for this market. The quotation by the tourism association in Rhodes is another promising evidence to follow an open-door policy for collaborative marketing: “*we are an island and have no border with another land. As a result, we are open to all who bring us tourists from elsewhere*” [Interviewee 10]. A joint collaborative marketing initiative may therefore potentially bring advantages by attracting tourists from other countries, as an international market as well as from Turkey as an internal market for such a partnership. However, non-EU membership of Turkey can be a disadvantage in sustaining a long-term collaboration, as people mainly from EU countries need an extra procedure – that is to obtain visa.

From the pessimist point of view, the past witnessed several cases of initiatives to encourage collaboration between the two countries. For instance, the mayor of Marmaris paid a visit to its counterpart in Rhodes but it failed to produce any outcomes in the long term. The Association of Turkish Travel Agencies based in Marmaris arranged a visit to Rhodes accompanied with its local members but there has been no long-term effect. Short term benefits, political volatility and a culture of containing economic advantage are to blame according to interviewees. One interviewee blamed that “*the industry has a more individualist personality that disables the industry to produce affective alternative solutions that will have a long-lasting sustained positive outcome*” [Interviewee 1]. One more critic blamed the monopoly of transportation between the Greek islands and their partner destinations in Turkey. The ferry service is available only two times a day (one in the morning and one in the afternoon) and operated by a single company. The increasing flow of visitors may force the system to establish new companies as well as more ferry services at least in the summer season. As such, a new ferry service is now set from İzmir to Athens.

The statements given by both Turkish and Greek counterparts on the panel debate were very elaborate. Both parties have noted the fact that both nations have a similar history and culture. Working across borders can strengthen the combination of joint tourism marketing activities and the production of package tours for those visitors from abroad to visit both countries on a single tour by staying overnight for a few days in each part. This will be more attractive to long-haul travellers as well as Northern Europeans that may like to spend one week on each destination. To achieve that a cooperation culture is required, where neither Greece nor Turkey

can be regarded as competing destinations against each other. The two countries should be promoted on the fact that they are offering complementary products such as culture, nature and services towards diverse experiences. As a result, the panellists agreed that each country can built the future of tourism on the success of working collaboratively, other than spending their energy by acting on their own and competing with each other.

One more consensus was on the inter-relationship nature of peace and tourism. While the former leads to better outcomes in the latter, a joint collaboration in tourism can also help to sustain the peace between the two nations. By building business and economic relations, people from both sides of the Aegean come meet and exchange views. Building trust and economic ties can enable the two nations to appreciate each other, build friendships and collaborations, establishing peace processes. Interviewees suggest that the development of the tourism bridges can further develop understanding and compassion between citizens from both countries:

Undoubtedly, tourism is a phenomenon which is based on peace and stability. For Greece good relations with Turkey means a lot in the field of tourism and for Turkey good relations with Greece can strengthen Turkey's profile as a country with a European vision that will make Turkey attractive to European travelers. Both countries combining their historical wealth and their strategic location can have great benefits from tourism. [Interviewee 9]

Prerequisites and critical success factors

Interviewees explained that there is a number of prerequisites for establishing the Turkey-Greece cross-border tourism marketing collaboration. Table 2 summarises the strategic prerequisites and bridges for cross-border destination marketing. They explained that previous attempts have never reached their potential as many of these prerequisites required were not secured. As Greece and Turkey are divided and connected through the Aegean Sea regular and well communicated transportation links are critical for establishing the cross-border tourism marketing. Interviewees explained that reliable ferry and tourism boat services as well as air connections, that keep their timetable, provide a reliable service and are bookable online can facilitate the development of such services. Interviewees suggest that the current services are highly localised and offer irregular services. The availability of information and online booking is problematic as often the only way to find out the timetables or book a ticket is to turn at the port.

Table 2 Strategic prerequisites and bridges for cross-border destination marketing

TRUST
Good relationships/Communication/Friendship/Collaboration Commitment/Peace/Stability
POLITICS
Political Support/Pride in collaboration/Network Competitiveness/Joined Success
PRODUCT
Compatibility/Complementarity/Consistency/Collaboration/Co-creation/Combined Itineraries
MARKETING
Seamless Experience/Branding/Co-operation/Cocreation/Market Access/Combined sales efforts
DISTRIBUTION
Distribution Channels/Digital/Technology/Selling platforms/Dynamic Packaging
ACCESSIBILITY
Transportation/Infrastructures/Networks/Distribution/Information/Links/Flexibility
ORGANISATIONAL COOPERATION

Political support/Tourism Boards/Associations/Leadership/Mutual Benefits
FACILITATION Visa/Formalities/Crossing Easiness/Access
PLANNING Coordination/Resources/Sustainability/
EDUCATION Education/Exchange/Educational Tours/
ECONOMIC BENEFITS Mutual Benefits/Return on Investment/Equity
SOCIO-CULTURAL BENEFITS Festivals/Events/Conferences/Student exchanges/Culture/Art

Source: Authors' own elaboration based on the data collected through interviews.

In addition, a regular airlift from major markets is also required to bring travellers to the cross-border destinations. As one of the interviewees suggested, most leisure travellers arrive on tour operator return flights. Therefore, they will have to come back to the first destination to fly back home. To support dual centre holidays in an efficient way, travellers should be able to move forward from a different airport than the one they have arrived. Therefore, scheduled and non-frills airlines need to coordinate their flights to allow A–B and C–A itineraries. The possibility of flying into one destination (e.g. Rhodes, Greece) and depart from another (e.g. Izmir Turkey) at comparable prices to those who fly in and out from the same airport, can also facilitate cross border marketing. An entire business ecosystem should then be developed across both destinations to ensure that bridges can be developed to facilitate cross border tourism marketing and management.

Secondly, collaboration between all stakeholders should ensure that seamless tourism experiences can be co-created. Interviewees explained that *“to develop comprehensive tourism experiences, close collaboration should be ensured from both sides”* [Interviewee 8]. Depending on the theme of the experience, professionals from both the Turkish and the Greek sides should come together and collaborate towards developing combined itineraries. The 6Cs of cross border marketing should be Compatibility and Complementarity of product, Consistency of engagement, Collaboration towards Co-creation of experiences through Combined itineraries. Gastronomy experts, for example, can get together to showcase authentic food experience in each place and create a gastronomy route. Wine and wineries can also be used to link visitor experiences and emotions (Leri & Theodoridis, 2019). Historians can develop itineraries to explain the cultural heritage and explore milestones in history. A wide range of other themes can be developed, with sports such as biking, scuba diving, swimming, golfing taking advantage of resources in both countries. One interviewee said that *“in fact, bringing people together with similar interests and passions can also support better understanding and collaboration, reinforcing peaceful co-existence between the nations”* [Interviewee 6].

Third, a cross-border organisational cooperation is required as different tourism boards and regional governments are responsible for tourism. These organisations have budgets and mechanisms for developing and delivering tourism marketing campaigns around the world. One interviewee suggested that it is very difficult for these organisations to overcome their natural predisposition to compete, rather than cooperate. It takes political leadership to understand the need for cooperation and modernise approaches. One of the interviewees joking suggested that politicians *“will be hopeless in leading such transformation”* [Interviewee 3] as they often use aggressive language to highlight that they achieve better than the neighbour. Interviewees suggested that the leading private sector organisations, such as the Association of Greek Tourism Enterprises (AGTE-SETE) and the Union of Chambers

and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey (TOBB) are much better positioned to develop bilateral collaborations and bridges through their members as these initiatives will be based on mutual benefits. In addition, companies that already work on the Greek–Turkish markets, such as *Yunanistan.com*, as well as existing tour operators specialising in cross border travel, such as Magnificent Travel and Antelope Travel, should also be consulted and supported to develop further activity. One more commented instrument can relate to the development of new shared companies with Greek and Turkish capital and the construction of business plans based on collaborative projects. The instruments already exist but they require a more efficient implementation of practices to facilitate the processes.

Cross–border marketing needs to be bold and differentiated to local marketing of each place. Branding and signalling need to demonstrate the benefits of the combined experience and show case how value will be co–created. The characteristics of image of different types of destinations in the cross-border marketing needs to be assessed in detail (Stylidis & Cherifi, 2018). Naturally each partner will push towards demonstrating the benefits of their own destination. However, compromises and innovations should bring forward a unique combined proposition, that does not compete with the existing destinations, but rather offers a dynamic product and experience proposition that is based on the synergies of the combined offering.

Finally, a comprehensive distribution and technological platform and the entire range of social media are required for cross–border tourism destination. As one of the interviewees suggested *“unless you have digital presence you cannot sell anything these days. Selling destinations across two countries internationally will require a lot of explaining and organising”* [Interviewee 12]. Demonstrating the inventories and itineraries across the two countries and creating experiences online will need to be supplemented by a comprehensive digital strategy. A comprehensive Social Media suite as well as User Generated Content should be used extensively to generate interest and manage the experience whilst traveling. A range of technologies, such as smartphones, sensors and beacons, as well as software and applications, virtual reality, augmented reality, artificial intelligence, big data, internet of things (IoT), cloud computing can be used to support interoperability and interconnectivity between the two destinations (Koo, Mendes-Filho, & Buhalis, 2019) Smart tourism destinations methods can be used to develop the competitiveness of the network of destinations and their ecosystems (Boes, Buhalis, & Inversini, 2016, Femenia-Serra, Perles-Ribes, & Ivars-Baidal, 2019).

Facilitation through organising visa formalities and making border crossing easy and effortless through flexible and painless access is critical for the success of cross border marketing. Like any other destination, tourism planning through the coordination of resources and sustainability are also critical to long term success. A number of interviewees on both sides emphasised the need for education, not only through the formal University and technical education routes but also through exchanges of staff and students and educational tours. This will not only support understanding the synergies between each other’s products but also develop trust and collaborations. Naturally, the economic impacts achieved and the mutual benefits through a better Return on Investment and Equity are the natural fuel to this cross-border marketing. Socio-cultural benefits also emerge through bringing communities together and enabling activities, festivals. Conferences and other events are to be co-created.

Conclusion and implications

The current trends on both supply and demand sides of the tourism industry force destinations to seek ways of collaboration or integration to better serve their guests. Selling cross–border destinations as a single package, mainly for long–distance travelers, can increase the variety

of experiences created and strengthen the competitiveness of destinations. Such collaboration has become more valuable particularly for destinations that have had long-standing disputes in their political relations but seek peace for the future. Apart from Greece and Turkey, North and South Korea, North Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, and several other destinations are good examples. Although there are several cases of such collaboration in practice globally, this has been a neglected subject in academic studies. Therefore, this study seeks to identify the potential opportunities, enablers and disablers to develop cross border tourism marketing.

As a result of all these similarities in terms of geographical, historical and cultural characteristics, the cooperation between Greece and Turkey is actually easy to implement provided that economic and political leadership is applied. Collaborative cross-border destination marketing will enable to promote the region as a two-place destination. Storytelling and experience co-creation can be based on cultural heritage history, gastronomy and other cultural and artistic characteristics.

This will ensure that both countries can occupy a stronger place in international tourism, attract more visitors, co-create more diverse experiences, and gain more benefits. According to the assessment of the preliminary results there are great opportunities. The local authorities such as local governments, tourism associations and chambers of commerce can be the reference points to take a responsible role in such initiative. Both parts should take the advantage of easy transport networks that are mainly dependent on sea lines. As emphasized by the interviewees, both nations need each other in the exchange of both economic and cultural benefits. Such a collaboration may also contribute to strengthen the degree of peace, not only between the tourism entrepreneurs, but also between the two nations (Farmaki, Antoniou, & Christou, 2019). However, there is still a gap in understanding the ways on how to position such an initiative under tourism marketing campaigns.

In addition to attracting both international visitors and domestic visitors from one country to another, cross-border marketing practices can help to contribute to the local economies of both nations. For instance, the study findings confirm that visitors with a shorter length of stay are more likely to spend per person per day than those with longer stays (e.g. Alegre, Cladera, & Sard, 2011; Marrocu, Paci, & Zara, 2015). Once the whole package can be divided into smaller parts that each can be spent in either of Turkish or Greek destinations, both countries can obtain more income per person and stimulate multiplier effects across a wider network of instruments and local residents. In order to achieve such a cooperation, it is necessary to address the supporting factors as well as the reasons for the preventive factors and to present solution-based suggestions. Local governments and trade associations appear to be open for years but require further leadership and commitment. They would like to maintain a close cooperation not only for the sake of economic benefits but also for achieving close collaboration between the two nations.

As to the limitations, this study has a few numbers of remarks to be noted. First, the concluding remarks are only based on the data obtained from stakeholders or local authorities in both countries. Thus, future research may consider the inclusion of local residents' opinions to represent a wider spectrum of related parts in a tourism destination. **Second, there is still a room to increase the number of participants from both countries such as policymakers, local authorities or service providers to make sure about the richness of data and representation of varying actors in the industry.** Finally, the additional methods such as content or discourse analysis can be introduced to better understand the context of relations from the political, economic or social perspectives by looking at the statements delivered by the leaders of two countries and legislations, decrees or agreements signed by two parts.

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