

**ПРЕДИЗВИКАТЕЛСТВА ПРЕД ТУРИСТИЧЕСКИЯ СЕКТОР
НА ГРЪЦКИТЕ ОСТРОВИ В РЕЗУЛТАТ НА БЕЖАНСКАТА
КРИЗА**

Руска Кръстева

**CHALLENGES FACED BY THE TOURISM SECTOR IN THE
GREEK ISLANDS AS A RESULT OF THE REFUGEE CRISIS**

Rouska Krasteva¹

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Abstract

The refugee and migrants crisis is a new challenge for the Greek islands that needs a good and adequate approach in order to minimize negative effects on the tourism industry, the local economy and community without violating human rights and freedoms. Crucial to maintaining the good image and identifying these islands known as tourist destinations, is the good coordination between the local communities, local authorities and those at regional, national and international level on marketing, economic and regional policy. The aim of the study is to examine the challenges faced by the tourism industry on the islands Lesvos and Chios as a result of the refugee and migrants crisis and as expected results can be shown the negative impact on the ecological, social and economic sphere on the islands and the need for management of the refugee crisis in the Greek islands and for specifically measures in order to reduce the unfavorable effects on tourism.

Keywords: *refugee crisis, migration crisis, Greek islands, impacts on tourism*

JEL Codes: *Z32*

1. Introduction

The International Organization for Migration (UNHCR, 2016) stated that in 2015, about one million refugees and migrants passed from Mediterranean Sea to Europe, and nearly 850,000 of them along the so-called Balkan route from Turkey to Greece, through the Aegean Sea, and more than 500,000 of these arriving on the island of Lesvos alone. The favorable location of the

¹ South-West University "Neofit Rilski", Blagoevgrad, Bulgaria

islands Lesbos and Chios located near the coast of Turkey became a bridge to Western Europe for large numbers of refugees. Today, a significant number of these groups of people remain still in the islands and with their presence they change the touristic image of the destinations. According to the results of the questionnaire “Local impact of refugee crisis on Greek tourism industry” from February 2016, among hoteliers in the summer resorts of the two island, there is a significant difference in percentage of reservations between January - February 2015 and January – February 2016 and the same about cancelations. As a whole, the refugee and migrant crisis contribute for an unfavorable tourism conjuncture on the Greek islands of the north Aegean Sea. Analyzing in details these results, it is arising the need for management of the refugee crisis in the Greek islands and for specifically measures in order to reduce the negative impacts on tourism.

2. Literature review

Threats and uncertainty have always been a part of human existence as Ostrowska (2014, p.75, 78) notes. Nowadays, in a global economy integrated by modern infrastructure and telecommunications, by high and good quality of education when communication, work procedures and quality of life seems to be better than a century ago, motivation is still according to Lebeau (Dougherty, Pfaltzgraff, 2004, p. 335) a key moment in the crisis behavior. Leaders are convinced that they need to act in so far as responding to interests and actions of other actors who are obstacle to the success of their policy. As a result, the leaders may be neglected or omitted information, which contains the reverse signs relative to the direction of action they have undertaken, in order to support their predetermined goals. Fair or not it happens, and today refugee or immigrants live in “camps” in the examined regions, that have become long-term neighborhoods, as the one in Jordan, Lebanon and the Palestinian territories of Gaza and the West Bank (Goldstein, Pevehouse, 2011, p. 436).

Dimitrov (2007, p. 2, 19) talks about that in unfavorable tourism conjuncture the supply structure is deteriorating, the manufacturing base cannot access the optimum, as well as the labor resources, the competition is increasing and the final financial results are worsen. In terms of demand, the picture of tourism conjuncture has strong relationship with the demographic trends and sociocultural changes. He also notes that in view of the fact that tourism is not a vital service, tourist behavior is highly vulnerable to psychological and social

influences, personal sensitivities and short-term reactions. If the image of a destination just in one link of the chain is bad then the all perception suffers.

Another researcher, Hein de Haas (2008, p. 3) notes among the main reasons why it is hard to make general explanations about the causes and the consequences of migration are the diversity and complexity of the phenomenon, as well as the difficulty of separating migration from other socio-economic and political processes. Describing the historical-structural theory he notes that “historical - structuralists postulate that economic and political power is unequally distributed among developed and underdeveloped countries, that people have unequal access to resources, and that capitalist expansion has the tendency to reinforce these inequalities. Instead of modernizing and gradually progressing towards economic development, underdeveloped countries are trapped by their disadvantaged position within the global geopolitical structure”.

According to Goldstein and Pevehouse (2011, p. 436) “refugees are both a result of international conflict and a source of conflict”. Ekberg (1999, p. 412) notes that “immigration may affect the income conditions of the native population in many ways”. There may be effects on the markets, on employment opportunities for natives and on economic growth.

The World Bank (2013) has studied the impact of the Syrian conflict in the economic and social life in Lebanon and had found that the conflict and the open border policy are pronounced in the services trade sector and in particular to the large tourism sector - “with the number of international visitors having steadily declined since 2010”.

3. Methodological framework

In this paper the researcher works on a case study examining the challenges faced by the tourism industry on the islands Lesbos and Chios as a result of the refugee and migrant’s crisis. Like a result of these observations the researcher tries to make some generalizations on the topic. This is inductive approach. At the same time the research is based in some theories (deductive approach. Finally the methodology used is a combination of inductive and deductive approach. The instrument of the inductive approach is the questionnaire. The research was conducted by the author from February to March 2016. The questionnaire was distributed to hoteliers in the summer resorts of the two islands – on island Lesbos and island Chios, which are two of the islands through which pass a great number of refugees and immigrants in

order to continue their road to the other countries of Europe. According to data taken from the Hellenic Chamber of Hotels the total number of registered hotels in the examined islands is approximately 178. The sample size of the research in this period of time is 168 hotels (one to five stars), an appropriate size for this research, taking into account the table for determining minimum returned sample size for given population size (Bartlett, Kotrlik & Higgins, 2001).

4. Analysis and evaluation of results

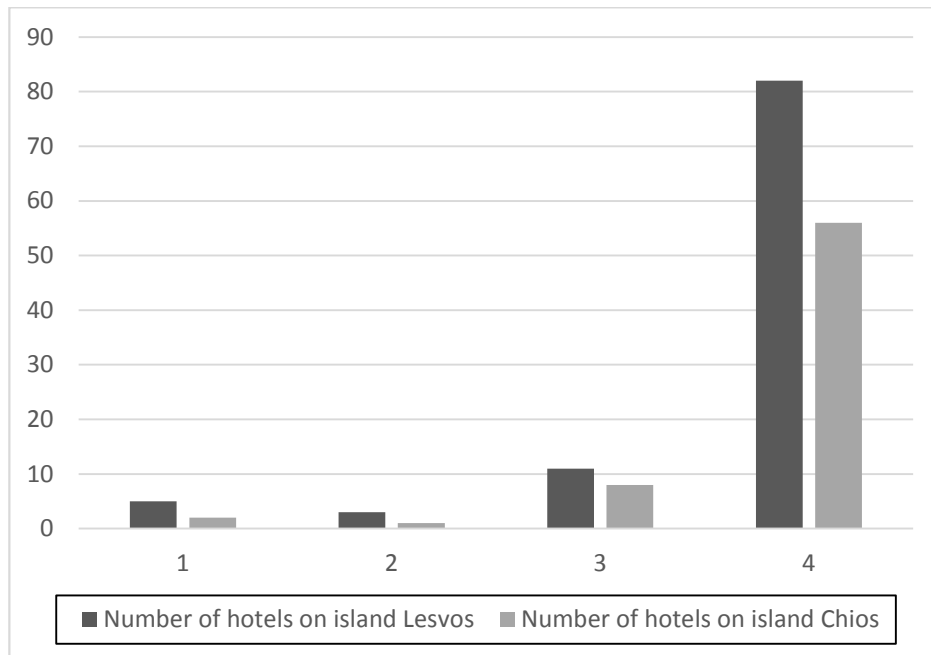
To the question “In your opinion which will be the impact of refugee and migrants crisis on the local economy of the Greek islands?” about 80% of the interviewed hoteliers on island Lesvos and island Chios share the pessimistic opinion that the income of enterprises as a whole in the business sector will decrease. As about the income of tourism enterprises specifically, one 10, 89 % of the hoteliers in island Lesvos and one 11,94% of them in island Chios think that they will decrease. Interesting are the results of these almost 12% that answer “Only the impact of tourism enterprises will increase” or “The income of enterprises in general will increase”, noting that they will achieve this with the stays and shopping of the refugees and immigrants themselves, as well as with the NGO’s and reporters and photographers from all over the world that have interest, doing their work to visit and stay on the islands.

Table 1. Impact of refugee and migrant crisis on the local economy of the Greek islands

	Number of hotels on island Lesvos	% of interviewed hoteliers on island Lesvos	Number of hotels on island Chios	% of interviewed hoteliers on island Chios
1. Only the income of tourism enterprises will increase	5	4,95	2	2,98
2. The income of enterprises in general will increase	3	2,97	1	1,49
3. Only the income of tourism enterprises will decrease	11	10,89	8	11,94
4 The income of enterprises in general will decrease	82	81,1	56	83,58

Source: Author’s research

Figure1. Impact of refugee and migrant crisis on local economy of the Greek islands



Source: Author's research

As regards the impact of refugee and migrants crisis on the local social-demographic physiognomy of the Greek islands some 24, 78% of the hoteliers of island Lesvos and some 25,3% of them of island Chios answered that the permanent residents will remain stable. A great number also notes that population in the settlements of the island will increase – respectively 22,78% on island Lesvos and 19,41% on island Chios. And also that the number of the permanent population in the settlements of the island will decrease - respectively 19,8% on island Lesvos and 22,3% on island Chios. But in general, there is not a clear position and the opinions of the respondents about the effects of the refugee and migration crisis on the social-demographic physiognomy of the islands seems to be dissociated. A possible hypothesis for these results is that local community knows about the European Union's policy on this item and is waiting for the resolving of the problem, before to take serious decisions.

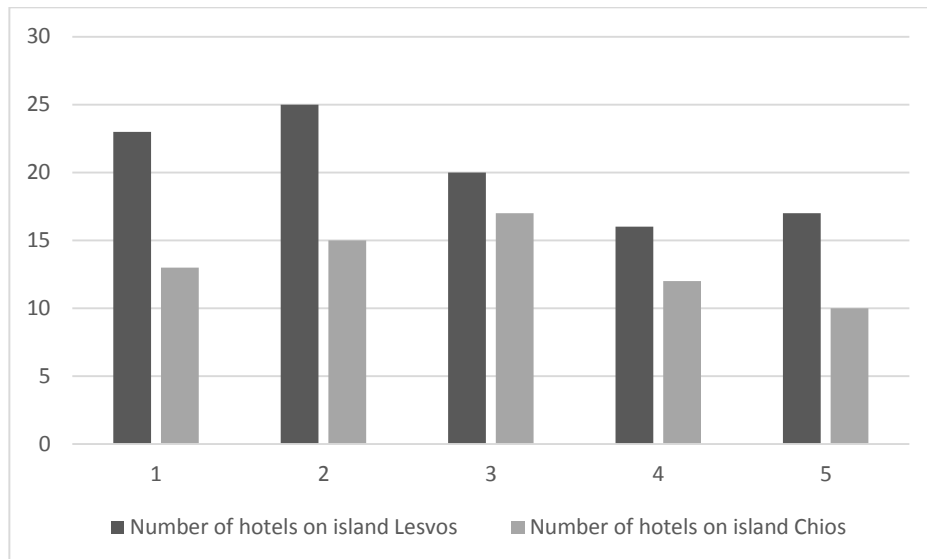
Table 2. Impact of refugee and migrant crisis on the social-demographic physiognomy of the Greek islands

	Number of hotels on island Lesvos	% of interviewed hoteliers on island Lesvos	Number of hotels on island Chios	% of interviewed hoteliers on island Chios
1.The permanent population in the settlements of the island will increase	23	22,78%	13	19,41%
2. The number of the permanent population in the settlements of the island will remain stable	25	24,78%	17	25,3%
3. The number of the permanent population in the settlements of the island will decrease	20	19,8%	15	22,3%
4.Young people will stay and work in their hometown	16	15,8%	12	17,9%
5.None of the above	17	16,8%	10	14,9%

Source: Author's research

Generally the analysis in table and figure 2 shows that hoteliers from both island Lesvos and island Chios declare that there will be negative effects on the natural environment and the infrastructure of the islands, as a result of the great number of arrivals and long stay in terms of time of migrants and refugees – some 83,1% from the respondents on island Lesvos and some 82% of them on island Chios. The expectations about sponsoring infrastructure projects both from the state on the one hand and from the local municipalities on the other, remains low to insignificant – from 1,98% the lowest to 4,95% the highest. Almost 10% is the percentage of hoteliers that believe that the situation will remain unchangeable and there will be no consequences on infrastructure and the natural environment of the areas as a result of the presence of refugees and immigrants.

Figure 2. Impact of refugee and migrant crisis on the social-demographic physiognomy of the Greek islands



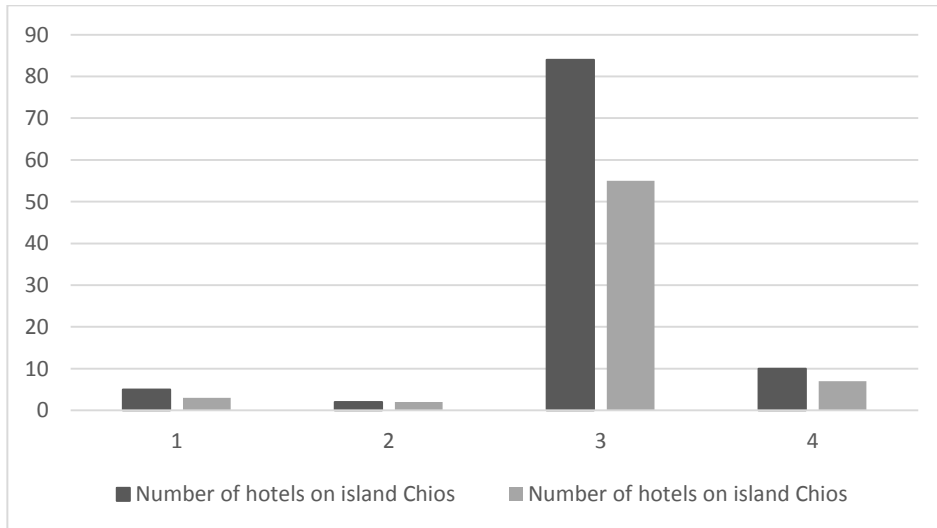
Source: Author's research

Table 3. Impact of refugee and migrant crisis on the regional policy and the natural environment of the Greek islands

	Number of hotels on island Lesvos	% of interviewed hoteliers on island Lesvos	Number of hotels on island Chios	% of interviewed hoteliers on island Chios
1. More infrastructure projects will be sponsored by the State	5	4,95%	3	4,47%
2. More infrastructure projects will be sponsored by the local municipalities	2	1,98%	2	2,98%
3. There will be negative effects on the natural environment and the infrastructure of the island	84	83,1%	55	82%
4. The situation will remain as it is	10	9,9%	7	10,44%

Source: Author's research

Figure3. Impact of refugee and migrant crisis on the regional policy and the natural environment of the Greek islands



Source: Author's research

Image 1. Life jackets from refugees and migrants from a small hill on Lesbos



Source: Lesbos: s Greek island in limbo over tourism refugees- and its future, <https://www.theguardian.com/travel/2016/mar/24/lesbos-greek-island-in-limbo-tourism-refugee-crisis-future>

Image 2. Refugees prepare to sleep at the port in the town of Chios



Source: Inside the incredible school teaching refugee children on the Greek island of Chios, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/refugee-school-chios-greece-lessons-in-life-for-the-migrant-children-a7229916.html>

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

Finally, the survey results indicate that:

- I. The income of enterprises in general in the Greek islands Lesvos and Chios according to the respondents will decrease, as a result of the refugee and migrants crisis
- II. There is not a clear position and the opinions of the respondents about the effects of the refugee and migration crisis on the social-demographic physiognomy of the islands seems to be dissociated.
- III. There will be negative effects on the natural environment and the infrastructure of the islands, as a result of the great number of arrivals and long stay in terms of time of migrants and refugees in the island Lesvos and Chios.

Of course these results couldn't be generalized as a theory yet, because of the local character of the research.

Intercultural communication and dialogue between communicators play a huge role (Kiryakova-Dineva & Kitkova, 2016, p. 595) for the appearance of a

bridge between the local residents - entrepreneurs on the tourism sector or not, and the refugees and migrants. In order to face the above challenges, people should try to find a common language through the traditions and life style and to defeat prejudices, as the authorities try to make the proper agreements for the solution of the problem.

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