

**TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AND PROMOTION IN ANOGIA  
THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES' PERSPECTIVE**

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**Abstract:** This paper discusses findings concerning sustainable tourism development in the village of Anogia, Crete. The discussion focusses on local authorities' activities, plans and intentions in the development and promotion of niche tourism products. In so doing, the paper considers the initiatives undertaken by the Greek Ministry of Culture and Tourism in relation to the tourism promotion of Greece. In addition, the views of the Mayor and the Vice Mayor of Anogia are presented in a lengthy informal and semi-structured interview using an interview guide. The interview lasted approximately three-and-a-half to four hours. The interview took place at the Mayor's office in the Municipality of Anogia, Crete, Greece.

**Keywords:** Niche tourism, Development, Promotion, Local Authority, Anogia, Crete

### **Introduction**

Local authorities occupy a complex, central role at the heart of the tourism industry, exercising an essential and crucial influence (Anderson, Bakir & Wickens, 2015) as a coordinating body for the strategic planning and developing a locality as a destination and by implication, promoting private sector products and services related to tourism. In 2010, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, with the cooperation of the Greek National Tourism Organization, decided to change the way Greece has been promoted internationally as a destination. It was decided that Greece should no longer be promoted as a "sun and sea" heaven. On the contrary it should be promoted as a destination where visitors could live 'unique moments' and authentic experiences through their encounters. It was at that point that "Experience Greece: a destination you can visit all year around and have incomparable experiences" was born as an idea (Greek Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 2011).

In the spring of 2010, in order to restore the perceived image of Greece as the 4s (sand, sea, sun and sex), "You in Greece" was conceived, which represented a collaboration of forces, a combination of inspired ideas and a deep conviction that everyone could tell their singular, authentic story about Greece. Used as an innovative communication platform, it aimed to enhance the image of Greece abroad, attracting people who showed a genuine interest and desire to help the promotion of the country's authentic features and through them, spreading the message of the real Greece (Greek Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 2011, 2014).

The aim was to share the views of international tourists, from different social and cultural backgrounds who were looking for unique experiences. They were viewed as the best 'vehicle' to promote the authenticity of Greece, highlighting its unexplored beauty, and spreading this message to the international community (Greek Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 2011). The first phase of this campaign began with the first "You in Greece" video. The "You in Athens" edition, gathered testimonials from 80 tourists in Athens in two days, talking about their experiences in Greece. Eight thousand and two hundred press kits were created. These were distributed to journalists, political leaders abroad, foreign embassies in Greece, European Union deputies and tour operators. Moreover, the internet and social media were additionally used to spread the message.

The second phase was conducted during the summer of 2011 throughout Greece. In this phase twelve new videos were created, and more than 350 people of various ethnicities spoke about their experiences in Greece. These videos were created taking into consideration different types of tourism (luxury, seaside, cultural) and the target country (“You in Greece” with Russians or Germans). In the English language there are several distinct categories such as “Youth in Greece”, “Seaside in Greece”, “Beauty in Greece”, “Family in Greece” and “You in Thessaloniki”. The press kits were available in three languages: Russian, German, and English.

The third and final phase took place during 2011 throughout Greece representing diverse social and cultural groups. Testimonials included visitors’ experiences in gastronomy, winery, health and wellness, and other niche tourism products, such as, religious, spiritual, and rural products, eco-tourism, events and traditions, conference tourism, modern and Greek culture. The goal was to promote all tourism products and destinations by highlighting unknown corners of Greece and stimulating visits out of season (Greek Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 2011).

Following the “You in Greece” initiative, the latest online project of the Greek National Tourism Organization is [my-greece.gr](http://my-greece.gr), which has been designed to function as a stand-alone site and be promoted through [www.visitgreece.gr](http://www.visitgreece.gr). The basis of this specific project is a user-friendly digital map (Google), on which visitors are invited to “upload” their favourite pictures and videos. The aim is for visitors to highlight the aspects of Greece that they love, its beauties and those traits that make the country special. The photographic and video material is accompanied by a small text (approximately twenty-five words), in which the users recommend their chosen destinations, while through a brief description of experiences the user explains what led him/her to make that choice.

According to the Greek National Tourism Organization one goal of [my-greece.gr](http://my-greece.gr)’ was to motivate the Greeks themselves to promote their country abroad. This is the first time that Greeks are being asked to become the protagonists in the stories that are being narrated. This “word-of-mouth” tool was considered to be one of the most effective tools of advertising and promotion. Another goal was to utilize contemporary forms of communication along with the possibilities afforded by social media (YouTube, Facebook, Flickr) as well as the most mobile applications (Visit Greece, 2012). The marketing strategy adopted by the Greek Tourism Ministry and National Tourism Organization was informed and guided by the above initiatives aiming to promote Greece as a niche ‘all season’ tourism destination and increase the number of visitors.

However, such promotional destination planning should also consider the hosts’ history and background and whether it is acceptable and desirable by the local stakeholders. Furthermore, the attitudes of the host population towards tourism development and its sustainability, as proposed by Saatsakis, Bakir & Wickens (2019), should guide the appropriateness of such development. It is imperative that local planning takes into consideration the perceptions, desires and wishes of both visitors and the host community (see also Gursoy and Rutherford, 2004). It is also crucial for local authorities to understand the potential benefits or costs that might occur with the expansion of niche tourism development. Such knowledge would inform necessary actions to minimize the potential negative impacts and at the same time optimize the benefits for the host community. An implication of this study is monitoring local stakeholders’ perceptions and attitudes towards any potential development initiatives which they would support. This goal of monitoring the attitudes of the local stakeholders is to control unforeseen adverse consequences and minimize negative impacts of tourism.

## **Methodology**

This paper presents and discusses findings derived from a qualitative based study aiming to understand tourism development and its sustainability in the village of Anogia, Crete. The research was undertaken during the summer of 2014. In this paper, the discussion revolved around the local authorities' perspectives of the development and promotion of sustainable niche tourism. It also examines the plans of the Greek Ministry of Culture and Tourism relating to the promotion of tourism in Greece, including Crete, and how they are understood and deployed by the Mayor and the Vice Mayor of Anogia, Crete. An interview guide was used for the lengthy informal and semi-structured interview which lasted approximately three-and-a-half to four hours. The Mayor, without hesitation, accepted the use of a tape recorder during the interview, demonstrating his interest in the results of this study. The welcoming Greek hospitality was on display during this interview, with food and local drinks, such as raki in a relaxed environment. The fieldwork shows the participants' eagerness to discuss their views regarding the current situation of the village. They were fully engaged with the questions, elaborating, and enriching their responses. All calls to the Mayor were put on hold at his request, a testament to his serious interest in the importance of this topic. Originating from the village of Anogia, the Mayor and the Vice Mayor demonstrated their deep knowledge of the history, geography, and cultural values of the village community.

In addition, an email interview was undertaken in the same period with a well-known Greek politician from the Ministry of Greek Tourism who was involved in various industry and education related activities. The politician also originated from the village of Anogia, and hence his interest in the study. His professional position at the time was an advisor to the Greek Government. Due to time constraints, this respondent was willing to send his thoughts and the responses to my questions concerning tourism development and promotion in Anogia through a lengthy email. In this email he attached a copy of a speech that he delivered on "Tourism as the driving force for the rural and stockbreeding development of the Cretan hinterland", for its relevance to study.

### **Mayor's Perspective**

Community leadership is recognised as a key factor in the development of tourism in local communities because of their knowledge, position, and the roles they play (e.g., Aref al., 2010; Aref & Ma'rof, 2009; Moscardo, 2008). They influence policy, opinion and community action because of their roles and formal positions (Aref & Ma'rof, 2009)

During the interview with the Mayor, we discussed his plans, targets, and objectives for the development of tourism in Anogia. A priority for the Mayor is to bridge the wide gap between the high expectation of visitors who come to Anogia and the poor impressions they leave with; "100% when they come and 20% when they leave". As he commented: "it is very important to increase this percentage, and this concerns issues such as the villagers' attitudes, lack of facilities and amenities, and poor infrastructure". As he emphasized, a Municipality is doing well when its citizens are doing well, elaborating:

"the main source of income for Anogia (80%) comes through stockbreeding activities. There are another 20% of the residents who are engaged in other activities. Since stockbreeding is declining in terms of profits acquired, the objective is to create alternative sources of income for the villagers".

Recognising Anogia as a potential destination, he continued:

“We must respond to what the visitors expect and come to see. Our aim is to create a unique image of the village rather than offering the visitor a standardized, commercialized, touristic destination found elsewhere, for example in Spain. We want, when the visitors come to Anogia, that they understand why this village is still steep in traditions with strongly knit families and ties and ancient values; why locals always offer visitors treats in a kafeneio (‘treats’ are, a tradition in most villages in Crete and in Anogia are considered one important aspect of Anogian hospitality. When a stranger arrives in the village it is the tradition to give him/her food or drink without payment. We want even day-time tourists passing by to be able to experience this traditional life of our village”.

### **On the Tourist Map**

The next question addressed to Mr Kefalogiannis regarded whether the Municipality of Anogia would consider joining forces with neighbourhood communities in order to achieve cooperation in the tourism development of the whole area of Mountainous Mylopotamos. The Mayor stated that:

“We have already done this with all the communities in the area of mountainous Psiloritis. Through the natural Geo Park, we are trying to provide the visitors with several alternatives. If they have, for example, an interest in caves, we suggest a cave route to them; visit Idaion Andron, the cave of Zoniana, the cave of Melidoni. We know that if a tourist visits Zoniana he will pass through Anogia as well as it is a destination point. In the same way when tourists visit Anogia we suggest that they visit the cave of Zoniana”.

Nevertheless, this cooperation between the communities of the area of Mountainous Mylopotamos is on an informal basis. As the Mayor pointed out

“The idea of joined forces exists; it has not been structured though for the visitors, meaning that we cannot supply the visitors with a map, for example, which will indicate a route for them to see all the caves or a nature path. There is no formal cooperation between the Municipalities, unfortunately this mentality has existed for many years”.

### **Issues of Economic Development**

Issues of economic development were the following area discussed. The Mayor stated once again that in Anogia sources of income are rather limited: stockbreeding and small-scale agriculture. “We do not have any other means to produce income. We have created a rumour, a reputation, and the only way to collect from this reputation is through tourism”. In his view there is no other way. Regarding the benefits of tourism and whether these benefits spread broadly around the village, the Mayor acknowledged that “Anogia is a closed society”. In this context he explained “when the taverna owner is earning money, when the hotel owner is earning money, then many people around them earn money as well”. He presents a more specific view saying that:

“Presently tourism is concentrated in two or three parts of the village; our aim is to widen this situation. We have to consider that not all the parts of the village are ideal to receive tourism. For example, you have to move the animals outside your house if you want tourism. Traditionally, visitors usually gather in squares. How can you send a visitor to the square of the central road of Anogia for example, when you cannot guarantee his/her safety? How can you send visitors to local entrepreneurs who consider tourists as alien bodies and will treat them accordingly? There is no familiarity with the tourist. Mentalities have to change”.

It could be argued that the Mayor sees residents' mentalities as an obstacle to achieving tourism development. The Mayor's opinion regarding the taverna owners in Anogia was negative. "I have negative comments for the taverna owners .....".

Due to the fact that presently the only place visitors can sit is either a kafeneio or a taverna, he argued that "if 90% of the visitors sit in a kafeneio or a taverna and gain a negative image from this encounter, how can I balance this image". Clearly, it can be seen that the Mayor is framing his views on the challenges facing any further development of tourism in this mountainous traditional village, articulating the local's xenophobic concerns (Lazaridis & Wickens, 1999).

### **Tourism Means "Money" – Where the Magic Begins!**

Another important issue that was discussed during this interview involved the target markets that most interested the Municipality. Which target markets were believed to be most appropriate for future tourism development in Anogia? The Mayor's perceptions were clear:

"I do not care for the tourist who will pass by, sit for a coffee and leave. I care mostly for the tourist who will walk around the village; he/[sic] is the one who will most probably spend some money. Mostly I care for the tourist who will stay in the village because he/[sic] is the one who will come in direct contact with the residents, he/[sic] will socialize with them and that is the point where the magic begins".

There are, however, communication problems in this desired interaction between the visitor and the locals, with Mr. Kefalogiannis revealing that locals must confront the difficult issue of communication, which cannot be changed or amended easily. According to him, "for the international visitor, due to language constraints, it is difficult to understand the mentality of the locals; it is easier for the domestic visitor but even then, there are issues that can be improved". Further elaborating on the issue of 'tourism means money', the Mayor stated that "our aim is to have tourists throughout the year, during the summer and the winter season. During the winter we have many visitors from Crete and Greece".

The issue of seasonality was again raised in relation to international tourists who visit only during the summer season. The Mayor did not however suggest a specific strategy for addressing this issue. According to Wall and Yan (2003) the impacts of seasonality are more likely to become greater with the growth of mass tourism because the number of businesses and entrepreneurs depending on tourists increases. In the village of Anogia there is no growth of mass tourism, an unwelcome form of tourism expressed by residents, entrepreneurs, and local authorities, as articulated by the Mayor. Similar results were expressed by Andriotis (2002) in his study of twenty-eight public authority officials from the four major cities of the island (Heraklion, Rethymnon, Chania and Agios Nikolaos). His fieldwork showed that although the problem of seasonality is recognized, very few of the officials stated that seasonality was beyond their field of responsibility. Some had attempted to create mechanisms for cooperation with other bodies and a few mentioned that they were trying to eliminate seasonality through the promotion of alternative forms of tourism.

In addition, Mr. Kefalogiannis, the Mayor, stated that "to be practical though, only when Crete as a destination develops unique special interest packages, only then we will be able to seriously discuss tourism development in Anogia". The Mayor despairingly elaborated: "How can I support the development of the winter tourism product in Anogia and promote the village as a winter destination in the international tourism market when for example there are no charter flights to Crete during the winter". The Mayor added: "regarding the next five years, our focus will be mainly on domestic tourism. ... For the development of winter tourism, we must create

activities such as snow amusement parks, horse riding, archery, mountainous camps. Winter tourists will not come here to gain an education; they will come for such holiday activities”.

The Mayor stated that “apart from creating activities, a safe passage through the village must also be created and more importantly local businessmen must start to behave toward tourists in a proper manner”. The issue of incorrect pricing (in his opinion) of products and services in Anogia is important. Mr. Kefalogiannis connected pricing with demand and competition, consistent with the views of Seaton and Bennett (1996) who suggested that demand sets the ceiling, costs set the floor and competition establishes where on the continuum the real price will drop. The Mayor concluded by pointing to the shark practices of certain entrepreneurs by providing the following example: “If a family with three children visits Anogia and needs 200 euros for a meal when they can pay 60 euros for a meal in another destination, maybe this family will visit Anogia once but they will not return”. Such practices are likely to kill the buds of the aspired niche tourism products (Saatsakis et al., 2019). The proper business behaviour of local entrepreneurs remains an important issue. The Mayor’s perceptions are consistent with Mykletun and Gyimothy (2010) who suggested that the contributions of entrepreneurs may not always be smooth and lead to linear development of a tourist destination. Furthermore, Russel and Faulkner (1999 and 2004) found different types of entrepreneurial manifestations during the evolution of a tourism destination and suggested that entrepreneurial activities vary from one stage to the next in the lifecycle of a tourism destination.

### **The Joy of Anogia’s Attractions**

The Mayor demonstrated an in-depth knowledge of the available cultural, natural, and human resources that could be used for tourism development. He further showed willingness, as the local authority, to take initiative and create and structure new spots of interest in the village, which could enhance tourists’ interest in visiting Anogia. Regarding the available attractions, the Mayor mentioned several including the Idaion Andron, the cave of the mythological God Zeus; the archaeological site of Zominthos; the natural environment. Mountain Psiloritis has been described as a natural geo-tourism park and listed by UNESCO because of its unique flora and geological importance. Furthermore, Nida’s plateau, the various caves that exist in this area, even the observatory of Skinakas can be an interesting attraction for visitors. He pointed out that more places of interest could be developed inside the village, for instance, different thematic museums (e.g., “folklore, archaeological, the museum of the stockbreeder), creating mobility inside the village for the visitors.

From the Mayor’s perspective, domestic tourists, especially those visiting during the winter, are an important market for Anogia. In his own words “... it is imperative to create activities that correspond to the needs and desires of this specific target market”. For him, an important objective is to develop activities that concern the mountain, underpinning the desire of many residents and entrepreneurs who stated that local authorities should “build a skiing resort” on the mountain Psiloritis. The Mayor’s perceptions, however, are not consistent with the local stakeholders as he argued that “I am not talking about a skiing resort, although, this discussion regarding the construction of a resort commenced twenty-five years ago”. He went on to argue that the assumption that:

“Potential skiers, instead of visiting Arahova (one of the best-known winter destinations in Greece), would visit Anogia... I do not agree with this argument and I do not consider this development to be viable..... the domestic tourists who decide to visit Arahova choose this specific destination because it is close to Athens”.

He strongly believes that tourists who look for higher quality skiing resorts will visit destinations in the Alps. He went on to say:

“...let us assume that the island of Crete has 600,000 residents. I am wondering how many of them are skiers.... 1% or maybe less. We also must consider the fact that the domestic tourists, especially those from Crete, if they have the financial ability, will go somewhere else, they will not stay in Crete. ... I believe it is unprofessional to build a skiing resort, a skating-rink of three or five kilometres, for a 1% clientele of domestic tourists”.

In contrast, he claims that international tourists can achieve much better prices through the existing packages offered, “so why pay more to visit Anogia”. He strongly feels that it is not rational to construct a product based on the false assumptions that after thirty years maybe it will contribute to tourism development in this area. A more viable tourism development entertained by the Mayor, however, is expressed:

“What I can do is a snow amusement park. I may have only 1% clientele for a skating-rink of five kilometres, but I have a bigger youth clientele for skating-rinks where they can learn how to ski. It will be like a snow playground, which would also attract families with children who will come to Anogia to stay for the weekend, meaning that they are going to sleep here, and they are going to eat here”.

Negative perceptions in relation to co-operating with tour operators were also expressed by the Mayor, arguing that “tour operators mess with quality”. Regarding the creation of this snow amusement park the Mayor pointed out that: “this is a project that I do not want to give to a tour operator or a travel agent to operate. I want a team of young people from the village to operate it and push it even further. Most important though, the whole society must embrace this effort to succeed.

### **Planning for Anogia as a Unique Destination**

The Mayor commented that “the tourist who visits the village for one hour leaves disappointed, the one who stays more has a different story to tell”. The issue is how to change this current situation. As a Municipality, he adds:

“...we must create a framework of substructures and infrastructures through which the day visitors, those who do not have much time to spend, when leaving the village, are aware of what this village stands for, what it represents. For example, why this village which tourists were informed was a traditional Cretan village, does not have any traditional characteristics, at least as far as the architectural part is concerned”.

For him, the target of the Municipality should be to push forward specific characteristics, which are divided into explicit categories. More specifically, the Mayor further elaborated that first of all, the historical part, as this reflects the reason of the present lack of tradition in the architecture of the village and what this village has been through over the years. For him, it is important that the history of this village is stamped and displayed, in a way that the visitor will be able to apprehend it. The Mayor thought that further attractions must be created: “...which should highlight the environmental, mythological, historical and archaeological greatness of the area of Mountainous Mylopotamos where Anogia is situated”. Like a museum that will have the potential to shelter and exhibit the traditional way of life of Anogians. This would constitute a place where visitors would be able to comprehend the characteristics of this mountain that the locals call ‘Psiloritis’. For him “the environmental and folklore elements, how the Anogians were living and were able to survive in this infertile area” are important. Furthermore, the

importance of promoting the local folklore, art and Anogia's customs and traditions (e.g., the traditional shoemaking, the so called, stivania, cheese making, weaving) were stressed by the Mayor. As he pointed out "we need to tell the visitor the story of how this village was surviving when the trade was through cheese and meat, wine and potatoes". One of his targets is for the visitor to have an authentic experience through a safe walk in the village and to be able to see the real life.

The Mayor also expressed his concerns about 'visitor's safety' during the summer: "it is dangerous to walk in the main road of the village". The Municipality's objective is to regenerate the central road of Anogia within ten years and not to allow any cars to pass through. For him "only then, tourists who attend the Yakintha festival in August, would visit the village of Anogia to have a drink or a meal in a taverna. Presently, visitors do not feel safe, "are not able to park, or walk in the streets, they cannot move around the village safely". The issue of traffic was also on the mind of the Mayor throughout our discussion, expressing his concerns over the completion of the road that leads from Heraklion to Anogia. His expectation following the completion of this main road is that it would connect Anogia with Heraklion and will definitely place Anogia on the tourist map.

## **Conclusion**

The above analysis shows that local authorities should create opportunities for local stakeholders to participate in the planning and management of the tourism development. Residents' and local entrepreneurs' involvement and participation are important for the sustainable development of any tourism destination, including Anogia. As any type of tourism development would bring changes to this mountainous rural community it is the residents and entrepreneurs who will have a very clear understanding of how their community will adapt to those changes and will be able to identify the most appropriate form of tourism development. Additionally, it is the local stakeholders in Anogia who will be more affected by the development since they are expected to become a vital element of the whole experience. It is evident from the above analysis, that local authorities, as represented by the Mayor, support tourism development. Mass tourism of the "Hersonissos model" is rejected, as voiced by the Mayor of this traditional village. It was apparent that they do not want Anogia to metamorphose into a mass tourism destination. Alternative tourism, and more specifically rural tourism, is strongly viewed as the most appropriate form of development for their village, due to its geography and the existing natural and cultural resources. Fieldwork suggests that educational seminars and awareness campaigns should be promoted by the local authorities of this mountainous village in order to help both residents and entrepreneurs understand the tourism industry and fully comprehend its potential opportunities and perceived threats and how all these would affect the village of Anogia in the long-term. It is imperative for local authorities to be more effective in dissolving any conflicts that might arise and more important building consensus within the village regarding desired future tourism development.

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