

# Tourism is Greece's Soft Power

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If asked, "What is Greek tourism?", most people will spontaneously recall memories of beaches, warm sun and the feeling of relaxation and freedom that you experience in Greece. Completely logically, they connect the country with summer.

**But Greek tourism is so much more than this classic image.**

It is one of the country's soft powers as it disseminates the values, the uniqueness and the experience of living in Greece. It produces a reputation, builds an image and ultimately makes a significant and ongoing contribution to our country's brand.

In the last decade, 245 million people from almost all corners of the world have visited Greece. They lived our way of life, were exposed to our culture, they visited archaeological sites and monuments of world importance and they tasted our cuisine. When they leave the country, they automatically form a huge group of ambassadors who share their experiences of our country and function as an important channel of communication with the international community.

Today, these 245 million people have ranked Greece 5th in the world of international tourism. This has been achieved both through the actual product offered by Greek tourism and through the country's comparative advantage which is the contact that visitors enjoy with those who live in Greece (1).

So Greek tourism is not a superficial



concept, a simple product. It is a concept that places people themselves at the centre of the experience as, in addition to the visitors, it is also of relevance to a very large and wide group of people who invest in,

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develop and are employed in Greek tourism. At a fundamental level, it is governed by the values and principles of Greek culture. It naturally emphasises the positive elements. It highlights the uniqueness of the country at all levels, and ultimately it gathers together all those elements that give it the strength and ability to contribute to shaping the country's image at a global level, and to also be an important vehicle

to promote and showcase Greece in the international arena.

However, in the near future as formed by the pandemic, Greek tourism is being called on to redefine its own existence, to place itself in a new reality with new circumstances, and to redesign its future.

A survey conducted by the members of the Greek Tourism Confederation (SETE) showed a strong need for coordinated promotion to highlight culture, to promote Greek cuisine which reflects the actual philosophy of life embraced by Greeks and to showcase the experiences that Greece offers (2).

**This is a multilevel process which gives rise to an important opportunity for Greece.**

The opportunity to build its image on new foundations and to promote the country's modern characteristics. Those of a country that understands what people are going through and is sending a message of empathy to the whole world, a country that listens to the deepest human needs and responds to them through sustainable development, a country that combines its strengths and can once again be an example through its dynamism, as it was of old, a country which displays quick reflexes and approaches this new reality through modern processes such as digital transformation, and a country which remains outward-looking and responds to global demands.

With knowledge, courage, self-confidence and an outward-looking mindset, and by putting its valuable experience of the past to good use and responding to the requirements of today, Greek tourism has the power to further strengthen the "brand Greece".

**1. Evaluation** of the brand "Greece" and comparison with the competition in Southern Europe based on the experience of tourists, INSETE, March 2019

**2. Results of MRB** research MRB "Η προβολή της Ελλάδας την επόμενη μέρα" (The promotion of Greece in the near future"), Greek Tourism Confederation (SETE) & MARKETING GREECE, December 2020. ■