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Cultural entrepreneurship opportunities and new technologies regarding the Italian monuments of the island of Kos

Maniou Fotini ^{1,*}, Roudo Mitoula ², Laloumis Dimitrios ³ and Olga-Eleni Astaras ⁴

¹ Harokopion University of Athens, Greece.

² Sustainable Urban and Regional Development Harokopion University of Athens, Greece.

³ Department of Tourism Business, University of Western Attica, Athens, Greece.

⁴ Department of Regional Development, Ionian University, Corfu, Greece.

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Abstract

The period of the Italian Occupation was an important chapter in the traditions and cultural heritage of the Dodecanese, as it led to the development of a particular culture. The effects of this period are still felt today. This paper briefly studies Italian architecture in the Dodecanese and, specifically, in Kos during the Italian occupation (1912-1943). Reference is made to the main monuments/buildings of the period and their use then and now. The aim of this paper is to highlight the cultural heritage of the Italians on the island of Kos and to examine the possibilities of its exploitation in the context of cultural entrepreneurship.

Keywords: Cultural entrepreneurship; Dodecanese; Italian Architecture; Kos; Cultural Heritage

1. Introduction

The Dodecanese (actually 14) are a group of Greek islands in the Aegean Sea. They achieved their union with Greece in 1947, through the Treaty of Peace with Italy signed in Paris on the 10.02.47 (<https://www.sansimera.gr/articles/405>).

The capital of the Dodecanese is Rhodes, which is also considered their center, as starting from the city of Rhodes, one can visit all the islands (<http://www.rodosislandinfo.gr/dodecanese/index.html>). The Architectural Cultural Heritage of the Dodecanese consists of existing monuments, historical sites, sculptures, mosaics, reliefs, vases, Hellenistic sculptures of the era and statues of the Roman period (Giannopoulos, 2006). For all these there is the belief and the will to preserve them for future generations, in order to understand the history and the way of life of the people during the Italian occupation (Manola, 2024), (Laloumis, 1998).

During the occupation of the Dodecanese, the Italians proceeded to the planning and executing a great deal of construction works, making their presence and power evident, with most of the buildings located in Kos, Rhodes and Leros. Those buildings that have survived have been fully integrated into the cultural heritage of the island, often utilized for public use. (Kolonas, 2002).

A landmark event for the island of Kos was the great earthquake in 1933 that flattened a large part of the island, resulting in the Italians rebuilding much of Kos from scratch into a modern city. Presented are the buildings that were built during the Italian occupation and almost 90 years later still impress us with their architecture. (Koltsikoglou & alls, 2022) Cultural heritage in Kos can be a source of inspiration for entrepreneurs in tourism by creating a symbiotic relationship that transforms destinations into vibrant spaces of creativity for visitors.

* Corresponding author: Maniou Fotini

2. Historical data

The Dodecanese were first occupied by Italy in May 1912, during the Italo-Turkish war, when the Italians landed in Rhodes to stop arms supplies to Libya and force the Ottoman Empire to ask for peace. The islands were released from Ottoman rule and the Italians had initially stated that this occupation would be temporary. Over the years, the Italian occupation was consolidated in the Dodecanese and with the defeat of the Greeks in 1922 (The last battle of the Asia Minor Campaign - Defeat and retreat of the Greek forces - 30 Aug 1922 (armynow.gr) and the rise of Italian fascist power, the Dodecanese were now part of Italian territory. In 1923, the Italians established an Italian colony called Isole Italiane dell'Egeo ("Italian Aegean Islands"), meaning the Greek Dodecanese (Manola & alls 2023).

Italy systematically tried to suppress the Greek identity of the inhabitants, eg. by removing Greeks from local administration, handing over farmland to Italian settlers, introducing Italian elements in education, imposing the use of the Italian language, etc. The Greek governments during this time were constantly trying to stress to the international community the Greek origin of the Dodecanese and the rights of Greece over the islands. Many of the islanders, during the period 1917-1922, left as immigrants for America, Australia, Egypt and mainland Greece, where they founded associations, aiming to spread and promote their Greek origin (Kostopoulos, 2003) (Logothetis, 2004).

The Italian administration of the Dodecanese attempted to give the islands an Italian character and, thus, invested heavily in public buildings and in widening the road network. This gave the first boost to the tourism sector, as well as to the smooth functioning of government services. The monuments of the Italian Empire were restored and historic centers were reconstructed. A colonial architecture was implemented, sometimes a mixture of exotic eclecticism and sometimes adopting the principles of the modern movement. However, the particular style defined the period and left the architecture that followed unaffected in Dodecanese (THE ARCHITECTURE OF THE DODECANES – N A Y C R A T O U S A (wordpress.com) Greeks today recognise that thirty-one years of Italian rule left an important architectural heritage on the islands that has recently been greatly appreciated. (Manola, 2022a) (Orlandi, 2010).

3. Important Italian architectural monuments in Como

The evolution of Kos during the Italian occupation reflects a diverse influence of Italian culture in the area. The island then experienced a period of cultural and social changes, which still influence the local identity and heritage of the island. (Jones, and Pilat, 2020)

The Italian interventions began in 1927-28. Their aim was to show a historical Latin occupation of the island, as a natural continuation of the ancient Greek and the Roman era. It is worth noting, that they did not try to eliminate the Ottoman interventions, as they wanted the east-west bridge. The damage caused by the 1933 earthquake was great and the possibility of urban planning was given, which still exists today. It also paved the way for archaeological excavations and restoration.

All of the above gave a different image to the town of Kos, leaving a clear example of material cultural heritage that attracts tourist visits to this day. After the earthquake of 1933, the Italians rebuilt the town with modern road networks, installed palm trees and carried out excavations, where they discovered Hellenistic and Roman archaeological artifacts. Important exhibits of all eras are to be found in the Archaeological Museum of Kos (1 Archaeological Museum | Kos the official website (kos.gr). The building was built in 1935 and is a listed monument of the Italian occupation. In the modern city today one can find Hellenistic, Roman, Crusader, Ottoman, Italian and modern Greek influences.

- The Roman Odeon
- The Governor's Palace (Palazzo del Governo)
- Casa del fascio teatro - House of the Radiation
- Gelsomino Inn
- The Aegli building (egli-casa del fascio/teatro)
- The Castle of the Knights,
- Church of Agnus Dei:
- The Municipal Market, (Mercato delle erbe)
- Ancient Market and Port
- Asclepieion
- Town Hall
- General Hospital
- Archaeological Museum

4. Research methodology: quantitative

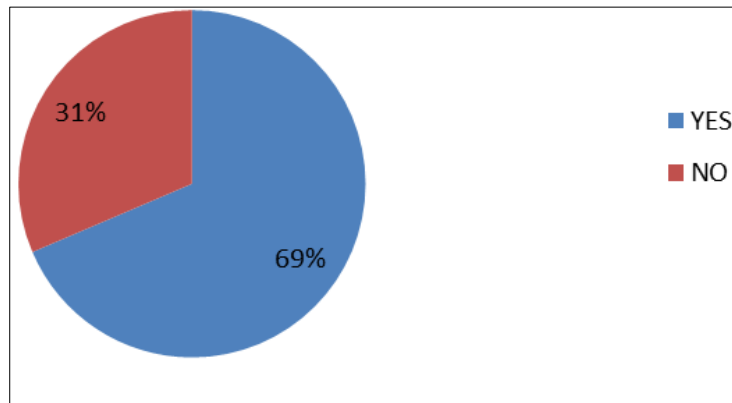


Figure 1 Have you visited the archaeological sites and monuments?

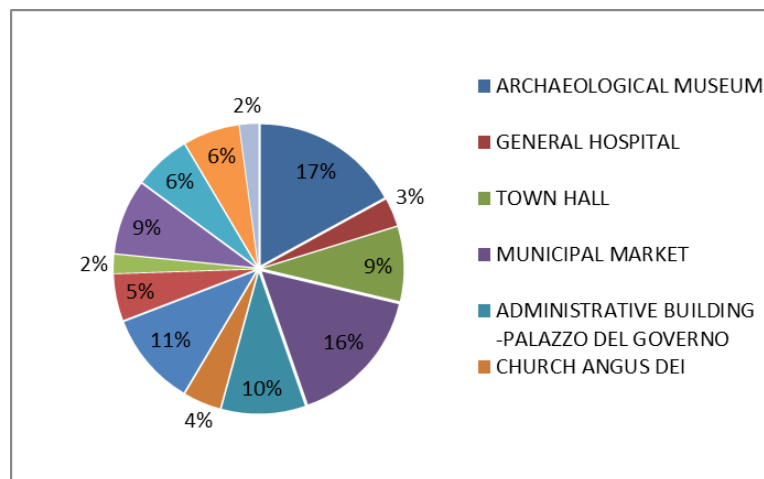


Figure 2 Which archaeological monuments did you visit?

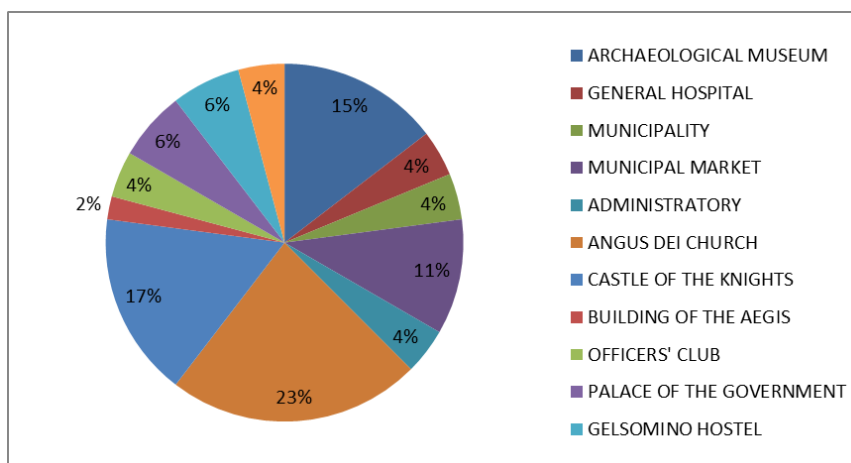


Figure 3 Which Monuments impressed you the most?

The survey was conducted with questionnaires distributed with google forms in Kos, to which 200 people responded. The responses as shown in the graphs are as follows:

The respondents, in terms of gender were 51% female while 49% were male, in terms of age 52% were 40 to 45 and, educational level 62% were university level and had visited the island in the last 5 years mainly for tourism(77%).

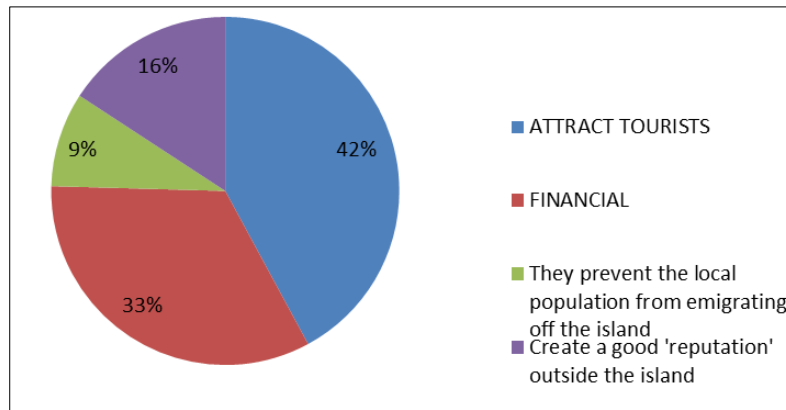


Figure 4 How do they contribute to the development of local society?

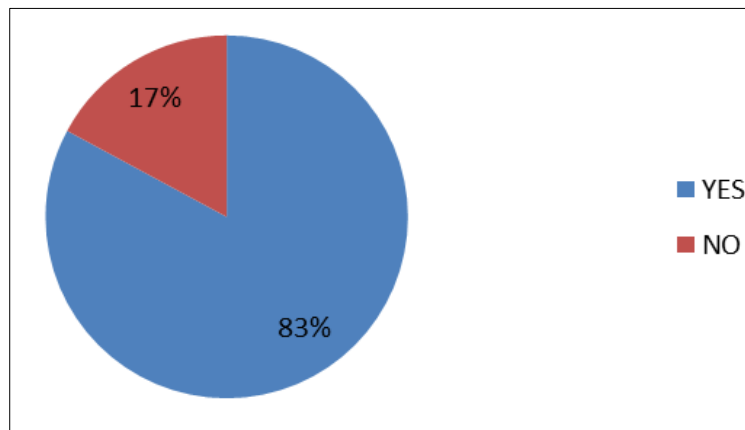


Figure 5 Would you suggest visiting the Italian archaeological sites?

5. Innovative technologies and local economic development

Business activities that could improve the local economy are the integration of innovative technologies in the cultural tourism of the island. Virtual reality (VR), augmented reality (AR) and other digital tools have revolutionized the way cultural heritage is presented and experienced by tourists. VR and AR technologies can provide virtual tours that allow visitors to explore heritage sites from a distance. Entrepreneurs of Kos can develop VR applications that recreate historical environments, providing users with an immersive time travel experience (Baldacchino, & al. 2008). This application on the one hand is aimed at a wider audience; on the other hand serves as a valuable educational tool especially for those who may not be able to physically visit sites of interest. In addition AR applications can enhance experiences by combining digital information in the physical environment. For example, tourists exploring the Parthenon can use AR-enabled devices to see a reconstructed view of the temple. In this way, entrepreneurs who have a focus on combining technology and cultural heritage are, among other things, helping to democratize access to cultural knowledge. (Manola, 2024) Baiocco & alls, 2023). Tourism entrepreneurship must prioritize sustainable community development and give priority to the active participation of the residents of Kos, as well as to the planning, management and benefits of tourism activities. Unlike conventional models of tourism, which may marginalize or exploit local communities, sustainable development seeks to empower residents economically and socially. (Mitoula, Astara, 2012) It is very important that cultural entrepreneurship in tourism has the potential to positively impact the economy of local

communities.(Achim & als, 2021). Businesses that revolve around cultural heritage create employment opportunities, stimulate local economies and encourage a sense of pride among local residents. (Economou & Mitoula, 2018). The interaction between cultural heritage, tourism entrepreneurship and sustainable development is a dynamic and multifaceted relationship with huge potential for mutual enrichment. Entrepreneurial initiatives contribute significantly to the conservation, presentation and economic sustainability of cultural heritage. Conservation efforts, including restoration projects and the promotion of intangible cultural assets, ensure that a community's identity is preserved (Maniou, 2024a). Entrepreneurs play a central role in presenting cultural heritage through museums, guided tours and innovative technologies, making the history prevalent and attractive to tourists. In addition, entrepreneurship in cultural tourism empowers local communities economically by creating job opportunities, supporting local businesses and fostering a sense of pride (Mitoula, 2014). Community involvement in entrepreneurial ventures is essential for the sustainability and authenticity of cultural tourism initiatives (Maniou, 2024b). However, over-tourism, cultural sensitivity and the ethical factors involved, are challenges that need to be addressed to ensure that business activities make a positive contribution to both cultural heritage and the communities involved. The symbiotic relationship between cultural heritage and tourism entrepreneurship highlights the dynamic interaction between tradition and innovation, past and present. By connecting this relationship responsibly, entrepreneurs can play a role (Markwick, 2018) (Li & als, 2022). Finally we have to underline the important role of Ai, Robotics and Games in the education procedure in order to support sensitive social groups, to foster their personal growth, as well as their participation in the economic procedures and local development [28-35]

6. Proposals for cultural entrepreneurship in Kos

In Kos, an event of international interest called "Hippocratia" is of international interest and contributes to the development of tourism. This event takes place in two periods, winter and summer. The summer season starts in June and ends in October. All the cultural institutions and associations of the island participate in the events, which take place in various venues. The highlight is the re-enactment of Hippocrates' oath, which takes place in the sacred Asclepieion. All the cultural institutions and associations of the island participate in the events and they take place in various places. The highlight is the re-enactment of the Hippocratic Oath at the sacred Asclepieion. The creation of cultural routes, theme parks, the organization of cultural events, and the establishment of educational programs can encourage, in addition and outside the summer season, the immersion of visitors in the rich Italian heritage of Kos, while promoting the preservation and promotion of these Italian architectural and cultural treasures. (Papaioannou & Al's, 2024) Manola, 2022c), (Manola, 2022b) Tourism development based on Italian cultural heritage is not only an economic opportunity, but also a bridge that connects the present with the past, creating an alternative and enriching way of experience for visitors (Maniou, 2023). Also the Roman Odeon, with its impressive architecture, gives the visitor the opportunity to visit the exhibition space with different exhibitions from time to time and a variety of events, mainly of cultural interest, organized by local and municipal institutions. Guided tours led by experienced local or trained guides provide another way of interpreting the cultural heritage. These tours can provide information on the historical context, architectural significance and particular cultural features associated with heritage sites. In addition, operators can leverage technology to enhance these experiences by incorporating audio guides, virtual reality (VR) or augmented reality (AR) to provide immersive narrative Nur & als, 2022) (Baiocco & als 2023 (Alisa, & Ridho, 2020).

7. Conclusions

Italian culture has a strong influence on the culture of the Dodecanese today, since the period of Italian rule formed a diverse cultural background. These influences are evident in many areas, and the tourism industry exploits these cultural elements in various ways. The cultural business has great potential for growth through cultural itineraries, festivals, visits to archaeological sites, monuments, and museums that showcase the outstanding architecture, art, and historical events of the period. The contemporary exploitation of Italian architectural heritage poses challenges that require careful consideration and sustainable approaches. By promoting community involvement, implementing responsible tourism practices, and advocating for conservation, the Dodecanese can continue to benefit from their rich Italian architectural heritage while ensuring that future generations can appreciate and learn from this unique cultural mosaic. As travelers seek more meaningful and authentic experiences, the fusion of cultural richness and inventive approaches ensures that tourism becomes a powerful vehicle for both exploration and cultural stewardship.

Compliance with ethical standards

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Disclosure of conflict of interest

The Authors proclaim no conflict of interest.

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