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## Religious Tourism in Greece and regional development: The case of Samos Island

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## **Religious Tourism in Greece and regional development: The case of Samos Island**

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### ***Abstract***

Religious tourism and tourism in general helps in the development and intensification of social and cultural relations. The issue of religious tourism comes under the general and sustainable development of alternative tourism, special interest and respect for holy places. Religious tourism is an emerging form of tourism which aims to quality and sustainable development. It places special emphasis on preservation, revival and development of religious and historical monuments for the creation of tourist flows. The pilgrimage was and it will continue to be an important motivation movement of people and this often associated with religious and historical value of monasteries or churches, religious celebrations and various historical events. Religious tourism can be further strengthened internationally if the areas of the tourist destination dispose various tourist resources apart from religious monuments.

The religious and historical monuments are attractive tourist destinations internationally and in Greece. Samos is one of the richest islands in Greece as far as the religious and historical monuments are concerned and for this reason is one of the most suitable for the development of religious tourism. It disposes important religious attractions that are an integral part of the national heritage and attract tourists who may be part of propellant development of religious tourism. Samos for a long time has been distinguished for piety of its inhabitants and for its intense ecclesial life. This is testified by the many parish churches, its chapels, its private temples, and many of the monastic churches. Samos is distinguished for its very important and interesting cultural heritage with many Byzantine monuments, many remarkable archaeological finds, rich exhibits at museums, castles, monasteries, churches, et

al. Samos has important religious sites, monasteries and churches, which are part of the national heritage and attract tourists.

The main aim of this paper is to explore the prospects for the development of religious tourism of the island of Samos and to gauge its contribution to the regional development in Greece. Samos has the ability to develop religious tourism because the island has important religious and historical sites. In order to investigate the possibilities and prospects of development of religious tourism in Samos it was conducted a survey concerning the status quo and recording problems that hinder its development. For this purpose quantitative research was conducted by using a closed questionnaire and the method of stratified sampling. This investigation showed that Samos as a religious destination has not been developed enough, but it has many prospects of growth. It is required to provide a framework of tourism policy at local level, which will include a number of selected actions for the planning and management of religious tourism.

**Key – words:** Religious Tourism, Samos, Religious Monuments, Monasteries, Churches, Sanctuaries, development of tourism, regional development

**JELs:** L830, O180

## 1. Introduction

Religious trips and tours around the world note remarkable bloom reviving the pilgrimage activity bygone eras. Performing various devotional activities was from antiquity great motivation movement of people. Today, this movement to fulfill religious duties associated with a wide range of tourist activities that make up the religious tourism.

To define the religious journey, it is good to understand what religion is. Religion outlined by Richards, (2007), as a system of belief in a higher being with great faith and devotion. There is a universal belief in a superior being to all religions. According to Ketola, (2008), religion can be understood as a total of all views that include supernatural beliefs. (Ketola, 2008: 19, Richards, 2007: 216). The main religions are Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, Christianity, Sikhism, Taoism et. al. (Ketola, 2008: 22).

The religious journey is perhaps the oldest and most widespread type of journey in human history (Kaelber, 2006, Rinschede, 1992, Sharpley & Sundaram, 2005, Sigaux, 1996, Vukonić, 1996), which can go back to the beginnings of many religions (Casson, 1974, Tomasi, 2002, Westwood, 1997) and is still one of the most important forms of tourism in the world today in terms of volume and frequency of incidence (Timothy & Olsen, 2006).

Religious tourism is a special form, which expresses the desire of people to move from their place of residence in another place they consider sacred. Religious tourists seeking contact with the divine, to fulfill a vow or participating in some religious events. According to Rinschede (1992), Vukonic (2002) and Santos (2002), religious tourism is the form of tourism, in which the participants are initiated either partially or solely by religious reasons. Indeed believe that religious tourism is subclass of cultural tourism, highlighting the fact that the participants in organized pilgrimages often have an extra day to visit selected attractions (eg the pilgrims of Our Lady of Lourdes visit Andorra or Spanish Pyrenees or from Fatima visit the Atlantic coast or a neighboring town with cultural interest).

According to Conrad, 2004, the main feature of religious tourism is the fact that participants in these visits belong to all social and economic classes and on the basis of the age belong mainly in the third age. The religious nature of the visits, but also the great age of the participants is the key elements that determine the duration and the level of service offered on the trip. In the most important traditional religious festivals, especially those that have a high ethnographic or historical profile, the celebrations are often associated with a program of cosmic events that generates a large volume of tourism, both religious and non-religious nature (Conrad, 2004).

According to Santos (2003: 29), «religious tourism is the expression that has been used by tour operators and religious leaders to describe all situations that bring together religion and tourism, including and pilgrimages" (Santos, 2003: 29). The perspective development of religious tourism is a global universal effort. Movements for religious reasons enriched with secular elements have made the religious tourism benchmark in the field of special and alternative tourism, which gradually replaces the organized mass tourism.

Religious tourism can bring the exchange of cultural achievements and pave the brotherhood of peoples. Moreover, the peace which is preached purely Christian is established and guaranteed through this contact of tourists or pilgrims from other countries. It is therefore considered as an obligation of the State and the Church work together and come helpers so religious tourism and tourism in general, not confined only to financial move, but at the same time is a moral, cultural and intellectual movement and development (Rodosthenous, 2012: 218).

Religious tourism and tourism in general, by movement of people, helps develop and intensification of social and cultural relations. The theme of religious tourism falls under the general and sustainable tourism development of alternative tourism, special interests tourism and respect for sacred places. According to Smith (1992) tourism and pilgrimage are not at opposite ends. Religious tourism located between pilgrimage and tourism (Smith, 1992). According , to Ron (2009), tourism is a broader term and the pilgrimage is a sub-type of tourism and more especially of religious tourism (Ron, 2009).

Religious tourism includes other forms and activities of the journey which don't fall into the category of the pilgrimage. These activities include visits to Christian sites designated for art and architecture (e.g. Chartres Cathedral in France), Christian thematic areas (e.g. Nazareth Village in Israel), Christian conferences and meetings (often combined with various tourist activities), Christian dramatic presentations (e.g. passion performances and shows), Christian volunteer tourism (including volunteering in Christian areas and participation in humanitarian assistance programs) (Ron, 2009: 289).

According to Fleisher (2000), the economic benefits associated with religious tourism are greater than those associated with other segments, as pilgrims and other religious tourists are avid buyers of religious souvenirs. Moreover, religious tourism's development can enhance the maintenance and preservation of cultural heritage (Fleisher (2000). The benefits associated with the development of tourism, and even the religious tourism is not only economic. Tourism and even the religious tourism, also offers the opportunity to reduce prejudices, promote a change of mentality and can bridge cultural differences through contact with other cultures (Khamouna & Zeiger, 1995, Var, Ap & Van Doren, 1994).

Even though some say that religious tourism is transformed into booming tourist activity, the traditional role of religious tourism should remain the same and stored in order to promote spiritual healing and reverence. The excitement of winning in this area should be kept under control so that the product of religious tourism to remain true (Kasim, 2011: 441).

Based on the literature review it is obvious that the religious - pilgrimage tourism may be developed in areas that stand out for their particular cultural - historical and religious heritage. A unique Greek island Samos is renowned for devotion of its inhabitants and for its intense ecclesial life. This is testified by the numerous parish churches, its chapels, the chapels, private churches and holy monasteries. In order to investigate the possibilities and the prospects of development of religious tourism in Samos Prefecture, it was surveyed the current situation and inventory of the problems that hamper its development. Conducted a quantitative survey using structured questionnaire and used the method of stratified random sampling

## **2. The development of religious tourism in the international arena**

Today the religious journey, tourism and hospitality are a dynamic global industry of \$18 billion with 800 million travelers. Most people make religious trips mainly motivated by faith (Kar, 2009).

According to estimates by the World Tourism Organization, (UNWTO), 300 - 330 million tourists visit the most important religious monuments in the world every year. Approximately 600 million national and international religious trips made globally and of these 40% occur in Europe. These are particularly important trips, as not only contribute to the economic development of a place but also mutual understanding and respect between different cultures. The religious tourism is the fastest growing tourism product since 2007 (World Tourism Organization UNWTO, 2014).

The efforts from Greece, Cyprus, Russia, Georgia, Ukraine and Moldova Romanian are very important, endowed with unique natural beauties and monuments of inestimable value to gain one worthy of the name and history tourism infrastructure for sustainable development of these (Tsetsis, 2009). According to Wright, (2007), in recent years a significant increase is recorded in the realization of conferences with religious content. According to statistics of Organizers Religious Conference (Religious Conference Management Association) recorded an increase of 4.4 million participants in 1994 to 14.7 million in 2006 (Wright, 2007).

For Muslims the most important pilgrimage center is Mecca, the birthplace of the Prophet Muhammad, cradle of Islamic religion. Every Muslim, physically and financially capable is obliged to visit Mecca and worship the Kaaba, the "house of God" at least once in his life, resulting in millions of pilgrims from every corner of the planet to jostle each year in their sacred city. The pilgrimage to Mecca, the hajj, is one of the five pillars of Islamic faith (Timothy, Iverson, 2006, Raptis, 2011).

India is a giant circuit of religious destination. It seems to be thoroughly divided between temples and holy cities, mountains and rivers and other points linked to specific saints and deities of Hinduism. Each of these about 2.000 religious centers attracts large number worshipers from nearby or distant locations during their annual fairs. In the Hindu religion there is a strong and very old tradition of religious journeys, as a key pillar of the Hindu doctrine. In Hinduism the spiritual journey is considered purifying act that brings you closer

to God. The religious journey is a spiritual quest for Hindus, a driving force that unites man with the divinity, transforms the person and renews his life (Bhardwaj, 1973, Fowler, 1997, Raptis, 2011). In India, the largest pilgrimage center is the holy city of Benares / Varanasi, on the banks of the sacred river Ganges also. The city, which was founded by Shiva, the creator of the universe, considered by Hindus as "the land of holy light" and welcomes thousands of pilgrims every year. Similar importance is the pilgrimage of the Japanese with 88 Buddhist temples on the island Shikoku (Shikoku) (Moira, 2008).

According to the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) the most important Christian centers outside of Greece are presented in the following table:

**Table 1**  
**Most important Christian centers abroad**

<b>Pilgrimage</b>	<b>Country</b>
Vatican	Italy
Lady of Lourdes	France
Holy Land	Israel
Mecca	Saudi Arabia
Agia (Saint) Sophia	Turkey
Cappadocia	Asia Minor - Turkey

(Source: UNWTO, 2010)

Also, according to Simone-Charteris & Boyd, 2010, religious destinations that are the most internationally famous are presented in the following table:

**Table 2**  
**Famous international religious tourism destinations**

<b>Famous religious tourist destinations worldwide</b>
Vatican City (Italy)
Santiago de Compostela (Spain)
Lourdes (France)
Mount Athos (Greece)
Jerusalem (Israel)
Medjugorje (Bosnia – Herzegovina)
Haifa's Bahá'í Gardens (India)

(Source: Simone-Charteris & Boyd, 2010, edited by Poulaki)

A typical example of tourism development is Medjugorje. It is a town of Bosnia – Herzegovina which in a few years had an amazing economic growth, after a piece of information that was channeled through the Internet by a Franciscan monk, Slavko Barbaric, and according to which the Virgin Mary had appeared in June 1981 to six children of the village, giving, through them, messages of peace and love in the world (Tsetsis, 2009).

Furthermore, because the marketing and the growing general interest in cultural tourism (Robinson & Novelli, 2005, Timothy & Boyd, 2003), the religious monuments are in the phase of commercialization and "religious package» (Olsen, 2006). Therefore, pilgrimages and other religious trips are increasingly linked with other forms of tourism. Tourists visit religious places and for various other reasons such as their architectural and historical significance, which have no direct link with religion (Digance, 2003, Poria, Butler & Airey, 2003, Vukonić, 2002).

According to Din (1989: 559) is estimated that approximately two million are the Muslims visiting Mecca annually. As for the Catholics, estimated that 20-30 million pilgrims flocking to the Vatican for holidays. The other Christians continue to give special attention to travel to the Holy Places, a habit kept since the 4th century. For the Muslims the journey for pilgrimage is part of a larger journey in the footsteps "of God's way» (Din 1989: 559).

Roman Catholics are tolerant to the idea of religious tourism, as neither they accept nor reject, perhaps because the effect is powerful and has tremendous economic dimensions. The same tolerance is observed in the Orthodox Church, although the term religious tourism is considered inappropriate in strictly theological criteria (Moirá 2003). Jews visit during their religious trips to Israel a number of places mentioned in the Bible and associated with Jewish history as well as the graves of prominent biblical persons and important rabbis, according to the general order of the sacred text to honor the Jews their ancestors (Raptis 2011: 41-58).

In conclusion it is showed that the pilgrimage was and is an essential motive movement of people and this often associated with the religious and historical value of monasteries or churches, religious celebrations and historical events. The economic dimension of religious tourism and the opportunities it provides for the development of certain areas has drawn increasing attention of national tourism policies, many organizations and associations. Religious tourism can be further strengthened internationally, since tourism destination regions except religious monuments have and other tourist resources.

### **3. The development of Religious Tourism in Greece**

It is obvious that the religious tourism in Greece is growing robustly. The visits to monuments or places of religious significance are a regional economic activity given the spatial dispersion of these monuments. As throughout the western world, so in Greece the pilgrim is a specific objective of the tourism industry. It is estimated that only domestic tourists who visit religious sites exceed 300.000 annually. Centered the Cathedrals, large parishes in large cities and different religious organizations, visits are organized to religious sites, on the occasion of a religious holiday, event or ceremony, or not (Polyzos, 2010).

Greece has many religious monuments; many of them have unique historic, artistic and cultural value. These monuments are scattered throughout the country, covering all periods of Byzantine and modern history. Unique Byzantine relics found in monasteries and ecclesiastical museums. The Greek pilgrims visit many Byzantine and post-Byzantine churches and monasteries usually by organized tours, made either by a travel agency or through the various parishes. The basic criterion for organizing this kind of trips is religion and history. Believers visit those sites whose main motivation is the pilgrimage. But this fact does not preclude their interest in the history and architecture of various monuments.

It is important for each country to include in the list of UNESCO monuments and sites of natural and cultural heritage. This integration is both a commitment for a country that will protect the monument itself and will operate in the management and protection plans, but also ensures the assistance of the international community in this endeavor. Greece has included in the list only 17 posts, of which six are religious - cultural monuments, such as: Meteora, Mount Athos, early Christian and Byzantine monuments of Thessaloniki, the archaeological site of Mystras, the Monasteries of Daphni, Hosios Loukas, Nea Moni and the historic center

(Chora) with the Monastery of Saint John the Theologian and the Cave of the Apocalypse in Patmos (Moiras 2009: 159-163).

According to the World Tourism Organization (World Tourism Organization - UNWTO), the most visited pilgrimage sites in Greece are listed in Table 3.

**Table 3**  
**Monuments - Places of Pilgrimage in Greece**

<b>Monuments - Places of Pilgrimage in Greece</b>	
<b>Pilgrimage areas:</b> Mount Athos, Meteora	
<b>Places of worship:</b> St. John's Cave Apocalypse (Patmos), Holy Virgin (Tinos), Panagia Sumela (Veria)	
<b>Christian monuments of UNESCO:</b> Meteora, Mount Athos, Early Christian and Byzantine monuments of Thessaloniki (Temples St. Demetrios, Acheiropiitos, St. Sophia, Lady Copper, Holy Apostles, St. Nicholas Orfanos, St. Panteleimon Monastery Latomou), Mistras (Cathedral), Attica (Daphni, Hosios Loukas), <b>Nea Moni Monastery of Chios</b> , St. John of Patmos	
<b>Historical monasteries:</b> Arkadi, Rethymnon of Crete, Agia Lavra of Achaia, Saint Raphael of Mytilene, Kougi of Souli	
<b>Monasteries and temples of unique natural beauty:</b> Saint Achilles - Hermitages of Prespa, Monastery of the Holy Prodromos at Serres, Monasteries of Arcadia	

(Source: World Tourism Organization – UNWTO, 2013)

Today the most important monastic complex of Greece is Mount Athos, and is an important destination of pilgrims and religious tourists. Also, the unique rocks of Meteora, located between earth and sky, are integrated in the list of UNESCO as part of world natural and cultural heritage and attract many pilgrims. Favorite destination is the Virgin of Tinos for those who are interested in religion, art and history. This temple is directly connected with the history, economy and tourism of the island. Also other popular religious destinations are Saint Raphael in Mytilene, Meteora Kalambaka, Panagia Sumela, Monastery of St. John in Patmos, the Holy Trinity in Aegina, the Virgin Proussiotissa in Evritania, the monastery Paleokastritsa in Corfu, Saint Irene, the Agios Spyridon in Corfu, Agios Gerasimos in Kefalonia, Agios Dionysios in Zakynthos et. al.

The number and distribution of shrines per area in Greece are presented in Table 4. The more shrines are found in the prefectures of Attica, Dodecanese, Cyclades, Corinth and Samos. It is worth mentioning that the prefecture of Samos having 30 pilgrimages holds the 5th place among the 51 prefectures of Greece.

**Table 4**  
**Shrines of Greece per Prefecture**

<b>Number and distribution of shrines in Greece per Prefecture</b>					
<b>Prefecture</b>	<b>Total Shrines</b>	<b>Prefecture</b>	<b>Total Shrines</b>	<b>Prefecture</b>	<b>Total Shrines</b>
Aetoloakarnania	25	Thesprotia	11	Magnesia	25



Argolida	14	Thessaloniki	25	Messinia	20
Arkadia	33	Ioannina	17	Xanthi	4
Arta	17	Kavala	12	Pella	8
Attica	69	Karditsa	8	Pieria	6
Achaia	28	Kastoria	5	Preveza	5
Boeotia	26	Corfu	24	Rethymno	13
Grevena	2	Kefalonia	14	Rodopi	1
Drama	2	Kilkis	3	Samos	30
Dodecanese	67	Kozani	11	Serres	17
Evros	7	Corinth	43	Trikala	14
Evia	18	Cyclades	41	Fthiotida	19
Evrytania	8	Lakonia	16	Florina	5
Zakynthos	9	Larissa	19	Phocis	7
Ilia	29	Lassithi	10	Halkidiki	8
Imathia	13	Lesvos	14	Chania	11
Heraklion	27	Leykada	7	Chios	22

(Source: *Ελληνικός Οργανισμός Τουρισμού, 2010*)

It has been created a joint committee for the religious tourism from the relevant Ministry and the Church of Greece. In addition, an attempt is made to create an official pilgrimage map of Greece. In this direction moves the Program "Epifania" to promote religious tourism. One of the most important routes in Greece with religious interest is the "Footsteps of St. Paul". Paul, spread like no other Christianity and for this reason named Equal to the Apostles and "Apostle of the Nations." As part of his travels to spread Christianity, the Apostle Paul visited and Greece too, preaching the Gospel and teaching the work of Jesus. The journey of the Apostle Paul in Greece is a path that moves today not only the pious believer, but anyone who loves history. The "Path of Apostle Paul" passed by all places where taught the Apostle is an ideal combination of pilgrimage and tour some of the most beautiful parts of Greece. Stations of the course of the Apostle Paul in Greece was Samothrace, Kavala (Neapolis), Philippi, Amphipolis / Apollonia, Veria, Athens and Corinth.

In conclusion it is showed that religious tourism has much to offer in Greece and an important objective of the tourism policy of the country. In this particular contribute the geographical position of the country on the Mediterranean Sea, the climate and the cultural wealth of the country which is an attractive additional resource for every tourist activity. All the factors must join forces with the aim to highlight and promote specific strategic directions for improvement of religious tourism product and establish Greece as one of the top destinations worldwide, based of course on invaluable treasure of historical and cultural monuments.

#### **4. The religious - cultural elements that make up the religious tourism on the island of Samos**

The island of Samos is located in the east of Greece, near the coast of Asia Minor. The particular geographical position of the island favored the development and evolution into an important center of Ionian culture. The surviving monuments, scattered archaeological sites, finds and museum exhibits highlight the past of Samos. Indicate the existence of an ancient city with a strong presence and high level of culture. It was very well organized with walls, cobblestone streets, squares, houses, shops, villas with magnificent art mosaics, temples,

market, public buildings, laboratories, cemeteries, extensive and well organized sports facilities, spas, excellent water supply and sewerage network (Ptinis, 1992, Tsakos, 2003).

Samos is the birthplace of Pythagoras, and has a rich religious and cultural heritage. The island keeps alive the culture through customs and traditions that are even today part of everyday life. It also has important Byzantine monuments, archaeological finds and rich exhibits at museums, castles, monasteries, churches, et. al.

Many great personalities born in Samos or originate therefrom. Some of the Samians who excelled in science, politics, art or other areas are as shown in Table 5.

**Table 5**  
**Important personalities of Samos**

<b>Great Samians</b>
<b>Pythagoras of Samos.</b> Philosopher, mathematician, geometer and theorist of music.
<b>Aristarchus of Samos.</b> A leading astronomer and mathematician of antiquity, known as "Greek Copernicus".
<b>Epicurus of Samos.</b> Ancient Greek philosopher.
<b>Polycrates.</b> Samian Tyrannos, did many great works in Samos.
<b>Melissos of Samos.</b> Ancient philosopher.
<b>Roikos of Samos.</b> Great sculptor of the 6th century. BC.
<b>Kolaïos.</b> Ancient Samian who discovered by accident Gibraltar.
<b>Aischrion of Samos.</b> Poet and an agronomist.
<b>Agatharchos of Samos.</b> Famous ancient Greek painter.
<b>Asclepiades of Samos.</b> Great epigrammatist of the 3rd century BC. Ch.
<b>Conon of Samos.</b> Astronomer and mathematician.
<b>Lykourgos Logothetis.</b> Greek fighter of 1821 and politician.
<b>Themistocles Sophoulis.</b> Greek archaeologist and prominent politician.

(Source: Ptinis, 1992, edited by Poulaki)

### **Archaeological sites of Samos**

There are many and remarkable archaeological sites which adorn the island of Samos. Here are the most important, such as:

#### **• Ireon**

The main sanctuary of ancient Samos, Ireon, located in SE. coast. There is a simple stone altar and a temple-like simplistic construct that protects the statue of the goddess Hera. The main element of the cult is the wicker, ancient relic of tree worship (Tsakos, 2003).

- • **Roman Temple of Hera**
- • **Early Christian Basilica**
- • **Thermes**
- • **Roman settlement**
- • **Ancient city**

The ancient city is located on the SE edge of the island at the site of the Pythagorion which was named by the mathematician and philosopher Pythagoras. It is considered one of the greatest cities of antiquity. Both in this and in the area of Ireon, the oldest archaeological findings date back to the 4th millennium BC. (Ptinis, 1992, Tsakos, 2003).

The Great Temple of Hera is one of the three projects of the era of Polycrates especially admired by Herodotus. The foundations have extremely large dimensions (112, 20 x 55, 16 m.) that cause the admiration of visitors (Tsakos, 2003).

- **Tunnel of Eupalinos**

The Tunnel is known as the "eighth wonder" of antiquity. It is dug into the bowels of "Kastro" Mountain or the castle and was the water tower of the ancient city.

Herodotus calls it "double-edged trench." It is a tunnel of 1,036 meters. This begins from the north side of the mountain and ends in the south. It causes worldwide admiration because of the excellent construction - always depending on the technical means of the time (Tsakos, 2003).

- **Polykratea Walls**
- **Byzantine Castle**
- **Buildings with mosaic floor**

### **Museums of Samos**

Table 6 refers to the important Museums of Samos Island.

**Table 6**  
**Museums of Samos**

<b>Museums of Samos</b>
Archaeological Museum of Samos
Archaeological Museum of Pythagorion
Natural History Museum of the Aegean - Paleontological Museum of Mytilinioi
Folk Museum of the Cultural Foundation of Samos "Nikolaos Dimitriou"
Samos Wine Museum
Historical and Folklore Museum Karlovassi
Tanning Museum in Karlovassi
Tower of Lykourgos Logothetis (Museum and Tower) in Pythagorion
Municipal Art Gallery
Gallery in the Tower
Archaeological Museum of Kampos Ikaria
Ecclesiastical Art Museum of the Holy Metropolis of Samos, Ikarias and Korseon

(Source: Tsakos, 2003, edited by Poulaki)

### **Religious - Historical Monuments of Samos (churches and monasteries)**

Samos has remarkable religious sites, monasteries and churches, which form part of the national heritage and attract tourists who can be an element of promotional development of religious tourism. The island of Pythagoras is distinguished for piety and church life of its inhabitants. This is evidenced by the many parish churches, the monasteries, the churches, chapels and private temples. The richness of religious monuments, the myths which remain alive over the centuries and the numerous miracles that resound in the beautiful landscape of the region attract interest and make Samos the ideal destination for thousands of pilgrims. According to Papaioannou, (1997), the ecclesiastical history of Samos, as seen through the remains of religious monuments that have survived seem to respond to the overall picture that

we form about the island during the main phases of its history, from historical sources (Papaioannou, 1997).

Many areas in Samos with religious sites are an integral part of Greek national heritage and attract tourists. Indicatively, some of the most important churches of the island are presented in Table 7.

**Table 7**  
**Churches of Samos**

<b>Important Churches of Samos</b>
<b>1. Churches prior to colonization</b>
Panagia in River (Karlovassi) (11th or 12th cent.) Agios Nikolaos in River (Karlovassi) Agios Georgios Drakaion and Panagia “Distant Kallithea” Agios Georgios Faneromenos (Medium Karlovassi)
<b>1. Churches after the colonization</b>
<b>Basilicas with one aisle</b> Agios Charalampos of Kallithea Assumption (Petalouda) Agios Christodoulos of Ireon Agios Ioannis of Pnakas Vourlioton Agios Ioannis of Mytilinioi Agios Nikolaos of Ormos Kontakeika Agios Nikolaos of Mytilinioi
<b>Aisled Basilica with a dome</b> Agios Konstantinos in Pnakas Vourlioton Three Hierarches of Spatharaion Agia Triada of Vlamari Agios Konstantinos (Ano Agios Konstantinos) Assumption Vourlioton Panagia Vronta of Skoureika Holy Monastery of Agia Zoni Holy Monastery of Prophet Elias Holy Monastery Vrontiani
<b>Churches “Free Cross”</b> Agios Georgios in Kampos (Chora)
<b>Triconch Basilicas</b> Agia Triada (Kastania) Agia Pelagia of Paleochori Vourlioton Agia Matrona of Paleochori Vourlioton Agia Pelagia of the Bay Middle Karlovassi Zoodochos Pigi of Pagonda Agios Taxiarchis of Great Panagia Agia Pelagia in Potokaki Annunciation of Kallithea Assumption Kallithea (Distant) Agios Georgios Marathokampos
<b>Aisled Basilicas</b> Agios Ioannis the Theologian of Ireon Birth of Christ of Pagonda

Agios Athanasios Marathokampos Agios Ioannis the Theologian of Vourliotes
<b>Advanced two-aisled Basilicas</b> Annunciation of Pano Vathy Holy Archangels of Malagari Assumption of the Theotokos of Platanos Agios Ioannis of Pano Vathy Three Churches of Pano Vathy
<b>Basilicas (three aisles)</b> Agios Nikolaos of Paleo Karlovassi Agioi Athanasios and Cyril of Ydroussa
<b>Cross four-column Athonitikes</b> Holy Monastery of Great Panagia Holy Monastery of Zoodochos Pigi

(Source: Dimitriou, 1979, Petronotis, 1986, Papaioannou, 1997, edited by Poulaki)

In addition, particularly noteworthy are the following sacred monasteries of Samos, as shown in the following table:

**Table 8**  
**Holy Monasteries of Samos**

<b>Important Holy Monasteries of Samos</b>
Monastery of Vrontiani Monastery of Megali Panagia Monastery of Agios Ioannis the Baptist Monastery of Prophet Elias (Karlovassi) Monastery of Agia Zoni (Vlamari) Monastery of Agia Triada of Mitilinoi Monastery Zoodochos Pigi of Kotsika Monastery of Agios Ioannis the Theologian (Old Karlovassi) Monastery of Zoodochos Pigi (Kakoperatos) Monastery of Assumption of Mary (Marathokampos)

(Source: Dimitriou, 1979, Papaioannou, 1997, edited by Poulaki)

The speleologists have recorded 84 caves that dot the island. Many caves of Samos hide inside their small churches (table 9).

**Table 9**  
**Caves – Churches of Samos**

<b>Caves – Churches of Samos</b>
Panagia Spiliani
Panagia Sarantaskaliotissa
Agios Antonios in Karlovassi
Distant Panagia in Kerkis (1765)
Panagia Kakoperatiani Mount Kerkis (called "Kakoperatiani" by the poor state of the road)
Agios Isidoros (Kallithea village)

(Source: Stamatiadis, 1881, Papaioannou, 1997, edited by Poulaki)

### **Traditional villages and towns**

Especially, the traditional villages and towns of Samos are popular, including: Ano Vathy, Pythagorion, Ireon, Vourliotes, Karlovassi, Kastania, Kokkari, Leka, Manolates, Marathokampos, Mills, Pagondas, Spatharaioi, Chora, Mytilinioi, Pyrgos, Ampelos, Koumaradaioi.

### **Religious festivals and fairs ("panigiria") of Samos**

Many festivals take place in Samos every year. During the joys and weddings, the Samians offer a special meal the "Festival" or "Kiskeki". This is one of the oldest traditions, with roots in Asia Minor, revived every year on the night of August 22 and is dedicated to the Virgin Mary. Within huge cauldrons, most experienced (mostly men) cook meat goat with wheat and onions throughout the night. The following day, on 23 August, the "Panigiri" is offered to all attendees. The same applies in the celebration of other Saints in various parts of the island (Varvounis, 1995). We report in the following table the most important celebrations of the island (table 10).

**Table 10**  
**Religious festivals and fairs ("panigiria") of Samos**

<b>Important religious holidays and festivals in Samos</b>
Agia Marina in Vourliotes (July 17)
Prophet Elias in Arvanites, Stavrinides, Karlovassi and Marathokampos (July 20)
Agia Paraskevi in Chora and in Marathokampos (July 26)
Agios Panteleimon in Kokkari, in Tourlaious, in Koumaradaioi and Kampos of Marathokampos (July 27)
Transfiguration of Jesus in Pythagorion and Koumeika (August 6)
Panagia in Platanos, in Pyrgos, in Chora, in Mytilinioi, in Kontakeika and in Kallithea (August 15)
Agia Zoni in Vlamari of Vathy (August 31)
Exaltation of the Holy Cross in Mavratzeoi (September 14)
Archangels in Spatharaioi and Neochori (November 8th)
Panagia Spiliani - Presentation of the Virgin in Pythagorion (November 21)
Agios Nicholas Pythagorion and Samos Town (December 6)
Agios Georgios Paleokastro and Mavratzeoi (April 23)
Agioi Constantine and Helen in Drakaioi (May 21)
All Saints in Marathokampos (June 3)

(Source: Dimitriou, 1983, Varvounis, 1995, edited by Poulaki)

In addition, worth mentioning are the festivals taking place on the island of Samos (table 11).

**Table 11**  
**Festivals of Samos**

<b>Festivals of Samos</b>
Manolis Kalomoiris" (annual July-September)
Cultural Events in Pythagorion "The Iraia"
Mediterranean Documentary Festival at the Cultural Foundation "N. Demetrius "
Cultural Week "Yiannis Ritsos", Faculty of Sciences, University of the Aegean in Karlovassi
"Karlovassia" (annual July-September)
Cultural August in Marathokampos

(Source: North Aegean Region, 2013, edited by Poulaki)

In conclusion, religious tourism has significant growth potential due to the existence of remarkable religious monuments. The development of religious tourism can significantly help the Greek tourist product. Samos has all the necessary conditions for the further development of religious tourism in combination, with special and alternative forms that will mark it on the tourist map as a distinct and quality destination. Religious tourism in Samos can be connected to other forms of tourism, such as cultural tourism, rural tourism, educational tourism, scientific tourism, mountain tourism, the travelogue tourism et. al.

## **5. Methodology of empirical research**

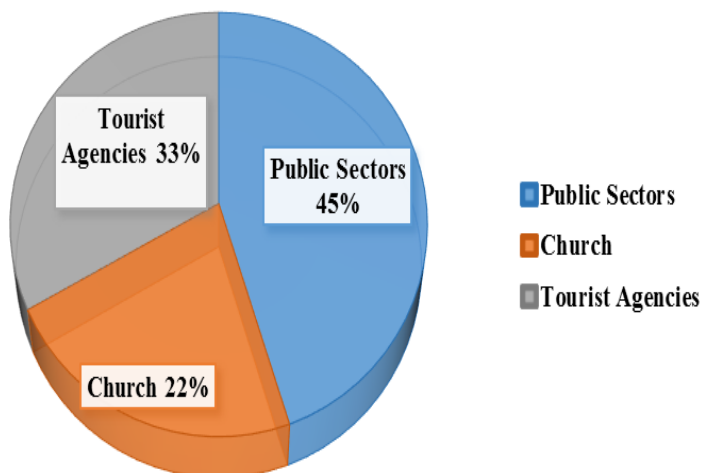
Survey was conducted in order to present and analyze the profile of the existing religious tourism demand on the island of Samos and highlight the growth prospects of Religious Tourism in the island. It is a quantitative research using a questionnaire, which was implemented in three stages.

The first stage includes the design of the questionnaire, emphasizing the training of questions in order to allow the use of quantitative analyzes. We used, mainly closed questions with strictly specified range of answers and questions scoring to the five-point scale according to the Likert's scale. The selection of the particular method mainly based on the considerable size of the survey sample. The second step comprises distributing of the questionnaire. The sampling method used was stratified random sample (stratified random sampling), to ensure the highest possible representativeness of the sample rate through the separation of the population to basic categories of workers to independent homogeneous subpopulations and random selection of individuals from them. The time frame, in which the empirical investigation was implemented, was in the period August 2014 - January 2015. Respondents were men and women aged 18 to 65 years, residents of Samos. The main goal was to gather a good number of questionnaires that would allow verification of research hypotheses. The third step comprises processing the data using the software SPSS 19.00 and the corresponding statistical analysis of the results obtained.

This research aims to capture the current state of Religious Tourism in Samos, listing possible problems hindering the development and labeling of perspectives and its development potential. Respondents were selected to participate in this survey are categorized as follows: Public Sector involved in tourism, Church and Tourist Agencies of Samos. 254 questionnaires were distributed, 211 of them were correctly and fully completed. The number of responses considered satisfactory, to ensure both the effectiveness of the statistical processing and exporting reliable scientific conclusions.

The characteristics of the statistical sample survey by category are as follows:

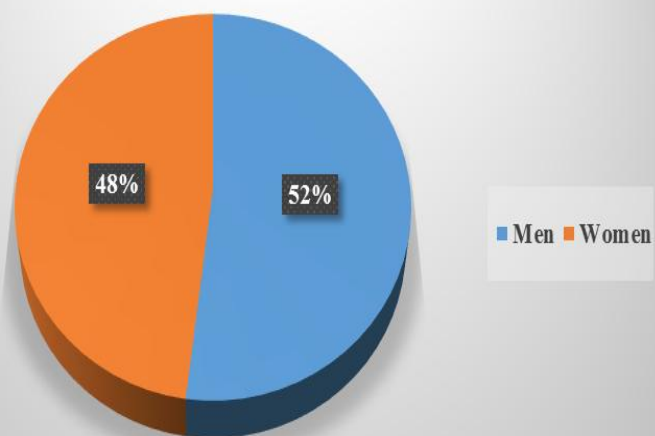
**CHART 1**  
**RESPONDENTS (SECTORS)**



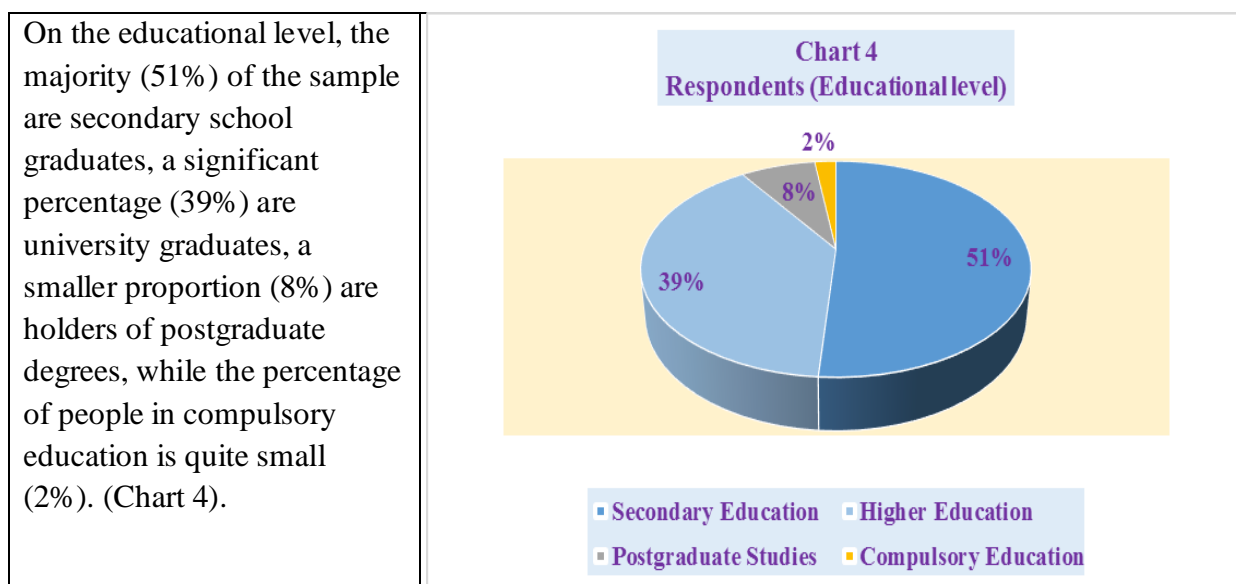
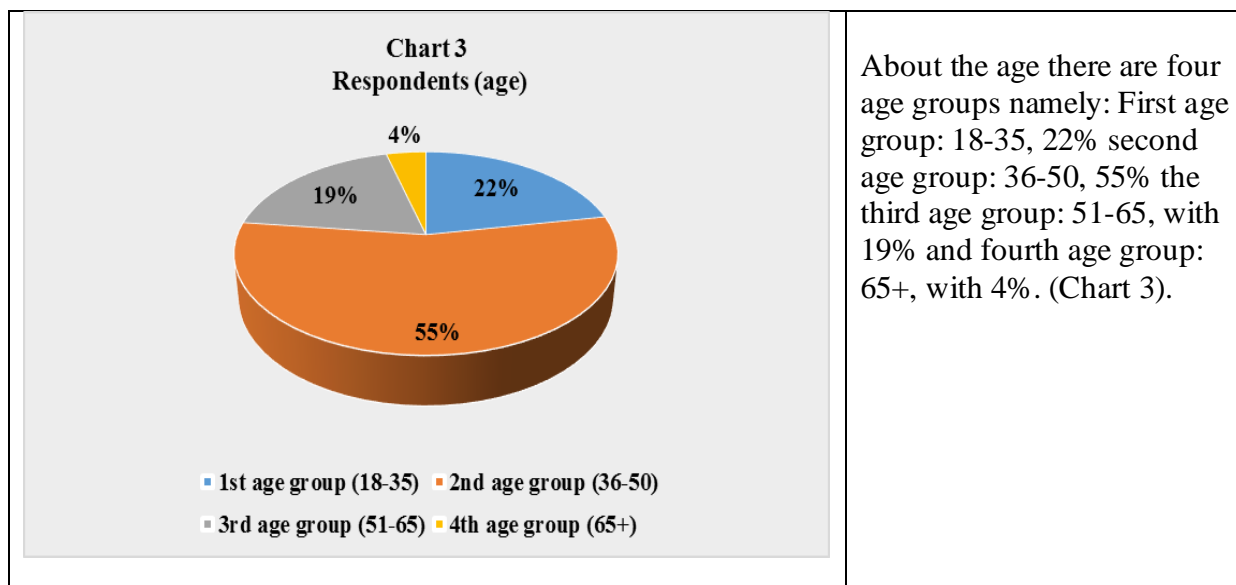
As for the team – sector to which respondents belong: the percentage of Public Sectors is 45% and applies to services that are directly related to tourism. The percentage of the Church is 22% and refers to the Holy Metropolis of Samos, Ikaria and Corseon and the priests of the churches and monasteries of Samos. And finally the percentage of Travel Agencies is 33%. (Chart 1).

Regarding gender 52% are men while the proportion of women is 48% of the sample. (Chart 2).

**Chart 2**  
**Respondents (sex)**







## 6. Results of empirical research

This research was undertaken in order to present the existing framework development of religious tourism on the island of Samos and explore both its growth prospects and the policy measures to be implemented.

A. The main results regarding the current development context of Religious Tourism in Samos are presented in the following table:

**Table 1**  
**Development of Religious Tourism on the island of Samos**

Do you believe that Religious Tourism has been developed in Samos?						
	At all	Little	Quite	Very	I don't know	Total
Public	30,5%	47,3%	15,7%	6,3%	0%	100%

Sector	(29)	(45)	(15)	(6)	(0)	(95)
Church	4,4% (2)	35% (16)	40% (18)	20% (9)	0% (0)	100% (45)
Tourist Agencies	18,3% (13)	50,7% (36)	11,26% (8)	15,4% (11)	4,2% (3)	100% (71)

In Table 1 we observe the percentages of the responses of respondents about the development of religious tourism in Samos. We note that 40% of the Church argues that religious tourism is quite developed, in contrast to the Public Entities and Travel Agencies who think it is little developed with respective rates of 47.3% and 50.7%.

**Table 2**  
**The Religious Monuments of Samos island according their visitation**

Religious Monuments of Samos	Frequency	Percentage
Panagia Spiliani (Pythagorion)	171	81 %
Monastery of Agios Ioannis the Baptist in Mavratzeoi	153	72,5 %
Church of Agios Giannakis (Byzantine in Vathy)	112	53 %
Church of the Transfiguration (Pythagorion)	67	31,7 %
Agios Nikolaos Anapliotis (Palaio Karlovassi)	59	27,9 %
Three Churhes in Ano Vathi	47	22,2 %
Panagia Sarantaskaliothissa	41	19,4 %

In Table 2 we observe the percentages regarding the visitation of religious monuments of Samos. In the first place is Panagia Spiliani in Pythagorion with 81%, in the latter the Monastery of Agios Ioannis the Baptist in Mavratzeoi with percentage 72.5% and in the third place is the Church of Agios Yiannakis in Vathy with 53%.

**Table 3**  
**Information about Religious Tourism on the island of Samos**

Dou you think that information about the Religious Tourism on Samos is satisfactory?						
	At all	Little	Quite	Very	I don't know	Total
Public Sector	11,6 % (11)	29,4 % (28)	36,8 % (35)	19 % (18)	0% (3)	100% (95)
Church	0 % (0)	13,3 % (6)	42,2 % (19)	37,7 % (17)	8,8 % (3)	100% (45)
Tourist Agencies	5,6 % (4)	30,9 % (22)	43,66 % (31)	16,9 % (12)	2,8 % (2)	100% (71)

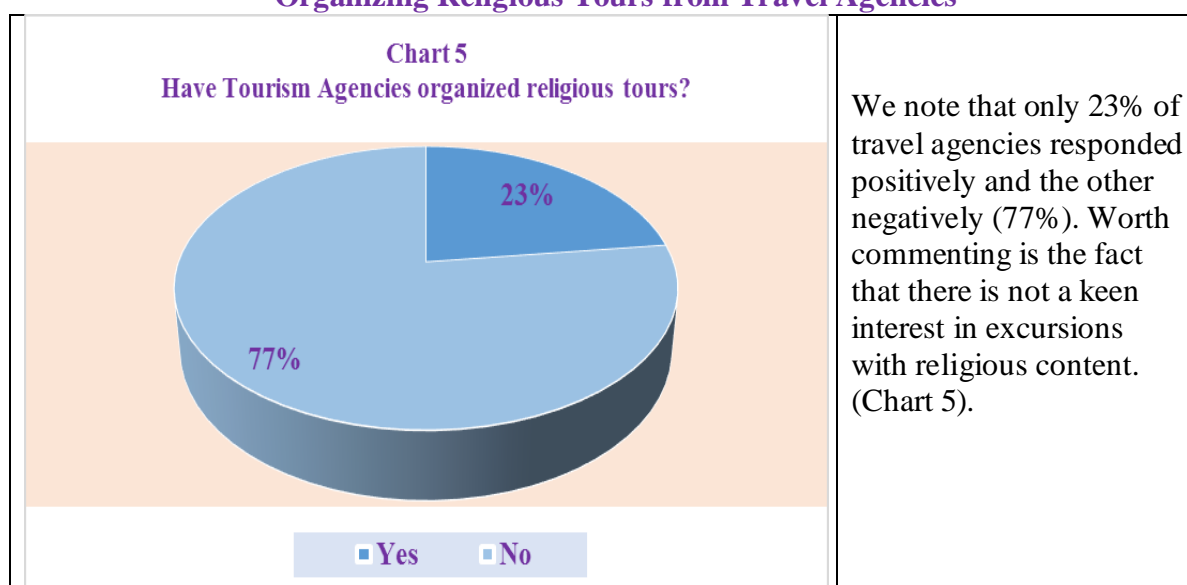
Table 3 shows the percentages of the responses of respondents on adequate information for Religious Tourism in Samos. It is observed that all three institutions agree on the "quite" satisfactory information regarding the Religious Tourism and we have respectively the following percentages: 36.8% for the Public Sectors, 42.2% for the Church and 43.66% for Tourist Agencies.

**Table 4**  
**Basic Information Sources**

Information Sources	Frequency	Percentage
Internet and Media	143	67,7 %
Friends and acquaintances	117	55,4 %
Tourist brochures	102	48,3 %
Parishes	84	39 %
Tourism exhibitions	49	23,2 %

According the Table 4, the respondents answered that the main source of information is Internet and the media (67.7%). Then they mentioned their friends and acquaintances (55.4%). The third position holding tourist brochures (48.3%) and followed by parishes (39%), finally the tourism exhibitions (23.2%).

**Graph 5**  
**Organizing Religious Tours from Travel Agencies**



In conclusion, we note that religious tourism has been developed a little compared with the great development that could present this special form of tourism on the island Samos, taking into account the comparative advantages. There are many interesting religious monuments of the island bringing together a sufficient number of visitors. This affects the determining role of the internet and mass media as well as friends and acquaintances to the promotion of Samos as a religious tourist destination. In organizing religious tours, operators, public and private should engage more seriously and responsibly with this issue and attract tourists-pilgrims on the island.

**B.** The main results regarding the factors that hinder the development of Religious Tourism in Samos are presented in the following table:

**Table 5**  
**The main factors that hinder the development of religious tourism in the island of Samos**

Factors – obstacles of Religious Tourism in the island of Samos	Frequency	Percentage
Insufficient tourist promotion of Samos	137	65 %

Incomplete tourist facilities	119	56,3 %
Lack of cooperation between actors	108	51,1 %
Deficiencies in services	89	42,1 %
Problems in transport	56	26,5 %

The factors - obstacles to development of religious tourism in Samos are presented in Table 5. Inadequate touristic promotion of the island gathers 65%, weak tourism infrastructure has a percentage of 56.3%, the absence of cooperation between factors 51, 1% percentage points 1% and finally the shortage of services show a percentage of 42.1%.

**Table 6**  
**Tourist promotion of Samos island**

Is tourist promotion of Samos island satisfactory?			
	Yes	No	Total
Public Sector	31,5% (30)	68,4% (65)	100% (95)
Church	35,5% (16)	64,4% (29)	100% (45)
Tourist Agencies	18,3% (13)	81,7% (58)	100% (71)

Table 6 shows the percentages of the responses of respondents regarding the degree of adequacy of the tourism promotion of the island. It is observed that the majority agrees that the island is not sufficiently mapped and this shows the percentages gathered particularly 68.4% by Public Sector, 64.4% by the Church and 81.7% and of Travel Agencies.

**Table 7**  
**Incomplete tourist infrastructure on the island of Samos**

Do you believe that there are deficiencies in tourist infrastructure on the island of Samos?			
	Yes	No	Total
Public Sector	54,7 % (52)	45,2 % (43)	100% (95)
Church	62,2 % (28)	39,9 % (17)	100% (45)
Tourist Agencies	81,7 % (58)	18,3 % (13)	100% (71)

Table 7 notes the answers percentages of respondents regarding the inadequate tourism infrastructure in Samos. We note that the majority of respondents states that there are deficiencies in tourist infrastructure. Specifically, we have the following rates: 54.7% for Public Sector, 62.2% for the Church and 81.7% for Travel Agencies.

**Table 8**  
**Cooperation of Samos' sectors involved with tourism**

Do you believe that there is cooperation of Samos' sectors involved with tourism?			
	Yes	No	Total
Public Sector	12,6 % (12)	87,3 % (83)	100% (95)
Church	20 % (9)	80 % (36)	100% (45)
Tourist Agencies	8,4 % (6)	91,5 % (65)	100% (71)

Table 8 shows the percentages of the responses of respondents regarding the coordination of agencies related with tourism. It is worth noting that the percentages mentioned in the

answer "no" breaks down as follows: 87.3% for Public Sector, 80% for the Church and 91.5% for Travel Agencies. Notably, that rates over 80% which confirms the great lack of coordination between the participants in the survey.

In conclusion, about the growth factors-barriers of Religious Tourism on Samos, it is realized the essential role played by weak visibility of religious - historical monuments of the island and efforts should be made in this area. Also, weak tourism infrastructure and lack of cooperation between institutions in conjunction with the shortcomings in the services inhibit the development of Religious Tourism on Samos.

C. The main results regarding the outlook and policy measures for the development of religious tourism in Samos are presented in the following tables:

**Table 9**  
**Prospects Development of Religious Tourism on the island of Samos**

<b>Do you think there are prospects for the development of religious tourism on the island of Samos?</b>						
	<b>At all</b>	<b>Little</b>	<b>Quite</b>	<b>Very</b>	<b>I don't know</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Public Sector</b>	1,05% (1)	11,5% (11)	40% (38)	47,3% (45)	0% (0)	100% (95)
<b>Church</b>	0% (0)	17,8% (8)	33,3% (15)	48,8% (22)	0% (0)	100% (45)
<b>Tourist Agencies</b>	5,6% (4)	14,08% (10)	49,2% (35)	30,9% (22)	0% (0)	100% (71)

Table 9 notes percentages of the responses of respondents regarding the growth prospects of Religious Tourism on Samos. Both Public Sector and the Church support the view that there are many prospects of Religious Tourism in the island with respective rates of 47.3% and 48.8%. While the Travel Agencies believe that Samos has several prospects for this growth rate with 49.2%.

**Table 10**  
**Policy measures of Public Sector to develop religious tourism on the island of Samos**

<b>Policy measures of Public Sector to develop religious tourism on the island of Samos</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Sectors Cooperation	185	87,6%
Creation of tourism infrastructure	172	81,5%
Participation in programs (on Religious Tourism)	146	69,1%
Creating Special Religious Tourism travel packages	123	58,2%
Exploitation and maintenance of monuments	111	52,6%
Cost reduction measures for travel and accommodation	95	45%

Table 10 notes the percentages of the responses of respondents regarding the growth prospects of Religious Tourism in Samos. Emphasis is given to the following measures, such as: cooperation between all factors, creation of tourist infrastructure and participation in

projects related to tourism, creation of special travel packages, exploitation, and maintenance of monuments and cost reduction measures for travel and residence.

**Table 11**  
**Church policy measures for the development of religious tourism on the island of Samos**

<b>Church policy measures for the development of religious tourism on the island of Samos</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Creation of a sector suitable for the development of Religious Tourism	172	81,5 %
Construction of related website to view religious sites of Samos island	116	54,9 %
Promotion of religious monuments of Samos island through specific productions in Greece and abroad	113	53,5 %
Cooperation with the Holy Metropolis of other islands (which have achieved growth of Religious Tourism)	88	41,7 %
Organizing religious meetings and events	73	34,5 %
Create the infrastructure for hosting of pilgrims	64	30,3 %
Enhancement of Libraries and Museums of the Monasteries and Churches of Samos	53	25,1 %

Table 11 provides aggregated percentages of the responses of the respondents about the development of religious tourism policy measures on Samos. Specific mention is about establishing institution for Religious Tourism, the construction of a site for the promotion of religious monuments of the island and promote the island through specific productions.

**Table 12**  
**Creation of a sector suitable for the development of Religious Tourism**

<b>Do you consider necessary the creation of a sector for the development of Religious Tourism in Samos?</b>				
	<b>Little</b>	<b>Quite</b>	<b>Very</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Public Sector</b>	1,05 % (10)	49,4 % (47)	40 (38)	100% (95)
<b>Church</b>	8,8% (4)	55,5% (25)	35,5% (16)	100% (45)
<b>Tourist Agencies</b>	9,8% (7)	54,9% (39)	35,2% (25)	100% (71)

Table 12 shows the percentages of the responses of respondents regarding the establishment of a body to develop religious tourism in Samos. The establishment of a body to develop religious tourism on the island is considered "fairly" necessary. In particular we have the following rates: 49.4% for Public Sector, 55.5% for the Church and 54.9% for Tourist Agencies.

**Table 13**  
**Construction of related website to view religious sites of Samos**

<b>Do you consider it necessary to construct relevant web page to display religious monuments of Samos island?</b>				
	<b>Little</b>	<b>Quite</b>	<b>Very</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Public Sector</b>	14,7% (14)	25,2% (24)	60% (57)	100% (95)
<b>Church</b>	20% (9)	37,7% (17)	42,2% (19)	100% (45)

Travel Agencies	30,9% (22)	25,3% (18)	43,6% (31)	100% (71)
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Table 13 notes the percentages of the responses of respondents regarding the construction of a site for the promotion of religious monuments of the island. All three bodies argue that web development is required to make known the religious-historical monuments of Samos and the rates are: 60% for Public Sector, 42.2% for the Church and 31% for Travel Agencies.

**Table 14**  
**Promotion of religious monuments of Samos through specific productions in Greece and abroad**

<b>Do you think the religious monuments of Samos should be promoted through specific productions in Greece and abroad?</b>				
	<b>Little</b>	<b>Quite</b>	<b>Very</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Public Sector</b>	11,5 % (11)	37,9 % (36)	50,5 % (48)	100% (95)
<b>Church</b>	13,3 % (6)	42,2 % (19)	44,4 % (20)	100% (45)
<b>Travel Agencies</b>	11.2 % (8)	35,2 % (25)	53,5 % (38)	100% (71)

Table 14 shows the percentage of views that have direct relevance to the promotion via specific productions in Greece and abroad. All factors are in agreement that we need to highlight the religious monuments of the island through specific productions. In particular 50.5% of the Public Sector, 44.4% of the Church and 53.5% of Travel Agencies.

In conclusion, the respondents believe that there are many prospects supporting the development prospects of Religious Tourism in the island. About the policy measures to be implemented, Public Sector supports the development of religious tourism in Samos and particularly emphasizes the cooperation of all stakeholders, creating tourism infrastructure and participation in related programs. Church requires the establishment of a carrier suitable for the development of Religious Tourism, construction of related website with pilgrimage tours on the island and the view of the monuments through specific productions.

## **7. Conclusions and policy measures for the development of religious tourism on the island of Samos**

As you know, religious tourism has greatly developed in recent years worldwide. Its economic dimension as well as development opportunities provided has occupied most states. Undoubtedly, Greece is an attractive tourist destination as it offers ideal climatic conditions combined with the cultural and religious wealth. The Religious Tourism is an integral part of Greek tourism and closely intertwined with both the protection of local culture, and the protection of the natural and human environment.

The case study of this research concluded that the Religious Tourism has grown a little compared to the ideal development could present this special form of tourism on the island of Samos. This is based on unsatisfactory situation of religious monuments of the island, in particular religious value and excellent natural beauties. Pilgrims can experience the unique natural beauty of Samos, the individual religious - historical monuments combined with local hospitality.



Samos has comparative advantages and highlighting them would be able to become a religious destination. The religious monuments which have parallel and historical interest attract most tourists. The development of religious tourism on the island of Samos can be combined with the components of cultural tourism such as: archaeological sites and archaeological monuments - museums, folklore - ethnographic data, historical libraries, customs, festivals, traditional festivals, artistic events, architectural monuments, surviving natural and artificial beauty monuments (e.g. caves) et. al. In particular, everything that is valuable historical, cultural, aesthetic and anthropological is able to display and utilize alongside the religious tourism.

It is obvious the determining role of the internet and friends to the promotion of Samos as a religious tourist destination. Confirms the role of social networks (social media) in tourism and the new dynamics of e-Word of Mouth. The e-Word of Mouth is comments, photos and videos to create a consumer-visitor for a destination. Indeed, the presence of Greece in the social networks is quite dynamic.

As to the factors that are obstacles to the development of Religious Tourism in Samos first place held by lack of general tourism promotion of the island. Noteworthy, too, is both incomplete appropriate infrastructure and little cooperation between all actors that have direct relevance to tourism development. Regarding prospects and policy measures for the development of Religious Tourism in Samos is necessary to prepare a clear common direction for all with planned and coordinated actions by all factors. We note the establishment of an entity qualified for this development and the promotion of religious monuments of Samos to the construction of a relevant site and specific productions in Greece and abroad. The wealth of Samos in religious and historical monuments is very large, so it is worth to be used after proper and targeted visibility both at home and abroad. At the same time, it is necessary to outline the traditional cultural and religious elements of the island but also while promoting religious tourism throughout the country. Religious tourism can be combined with the cultural. Also, respondents agreed that it is basic to coordinate the actions of all stakeholders and that these efforts should be targeted and based on new technologies, with a view to promotion of Samos as a religious destination.

Certainly, tourism to be sustainable needs to have a planned long-term approach by all involved entities. That is, to be a strategic plan for tourism development. The coordinated management of all these components which make a destination refers to the lures, infrastructure and services supporting act offering a pleasant stay. It is necessary to create a suitable environment to welcome tourists and offer them quality experience, gaining the best impressions.

Clearly, there is not tourist planning and strategic direction of tourism development at the local, regional or national level. The Religious Tourism can offer many benefits to the place of reception, the island of Samos, and provide significant incentives and means, that local bodies, public and private, to care for and maintain their heritage and traditions of the island. It can be build on cultural - religious heritage and generate financial resources, after offering the appropriate education and training to those involved with tourism development. Also, religious tourism may become an important growth factor, when is managed effectively. For all the above is required production of a diversified and high quality religious tourism product, and create the conditions that will make Samos recognizable religious tourist destination. It is necessary to establish a framework of tourism policy at local level, which



will include a number of selected actions for the planning and management of religious tourism to highlight the general cultural value of religious monuments of Samos.

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