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Promoting Cross Border Tourism in Europe. The case of Greece – Turkey.

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Abstract

Greece has the particularity of being an external border of the European Union, bordering countries that do not belong to the Schengen treaty, such as Turkey. Greece belongs to the 4 most popular destinations for Turkish Travellers.

The case study showed that important factors for the development and promoting of cross-border tourism between Greece and Turkey, in addition to transportation facilities and access possibilities, are diplomatic relations and interstate agreements, fast service at the border, as well as the institutional and bureaucratic travel conditions, such as the easy granting of visas to Turkish travellers. This agreement allows Turks to visit the Greek islands for up to a week without having to apply for full access to the EU's passport-free travel zone.

Concluding, this study highlights the importance of good political relations on a bilateral level for the development of cross-border tourism, strategic marketing tools and cooperative efforts to fully exploit the potential of cross-border tourism. In addition, the article proposes the extension of visas to other Aegean islands, but also the creation of permanent structures, such as the Cross-Border Tourism Observatory to support the sustainable development and promotion of cross-border tourism initiatives.

Keywords: *Cross-Border tourism, Greece, Turkey, Greek Islands, Tourist-Visa*

Introduction

Evolving consumer behaviour has caused a shift away from conventional tourism patterns, with modern travellers exhibiting shorter vacations and a propensity for spontaneous multi-destination travel, which has brought into focus interest in cross-border tourism (Hwang & Fesenmaier, 2011). In response, destinations are compelled to adapt, offering personalized experiences that resonate with the modern traveller while maximizing the value proposition (Kozak & Baloglu, 2011).

Within this evolving landscape, cross-border tourism has emerged as a prominent phenomenon, transcending traditional borders and offering travellers a mosaic of diverse experiences (Blasco et al, 2014). Whether driven by geographic proximity or cultural curiosity, travellers are increasingly choosing multi-destination trips, emphasizing the interconnectedness of destinations and underscoring the imperative for cross-border cooperation in marketing and infrastructure development (Gronau, 1970; Blasco et al., 2014). Tourism can act as a viable strategy for cross-border regions to overcome borders that otherwise hinder socio-economic development and political cooperation (Prokolla, 2007; Timothy, 2001).

Planning processes are fundamental when tourism is used to achieve regional development. Stakeholder contact, governance processes could empower all stakeholders related to tourism and the positive and negative effects of tourism development to be balanced throughout the destination (Stoffelen & Vanneste, 2016). However, the absence of cross-border cooperation leads to increasing competition between neighbouring regions, duplication of efforts in marketing, infrastructure and regional innovation due to weak knowledge transfer (Ilbery & Saxena, 2011; Ioannides, Nielsen, & Billing, 2006).

Despite the growing importance of tourism, few studies have addressed the competitiveness of tourism destinations located at the border between two or more countries. According to Marcu (2016), borders are an essential element for the mobility of people located in different countries. In some parts of the world, these geographical areas become tourist destinations in the context of cross-border tourism. However, unlike other tourism typologies, there is greater economic inequality in cross-border tourism because each side lends its own characteristics to the evolution of tourism development (Chávez, 2000).

This paper aims to illustrate that in addition to marketing measures and tools for promoting cross-border tourism, important factors are administrative, political and regulatory measures. These factors are present in the case of cross-border tourism between Greece and Turkey.

Cross-border tourism in Europe and marketing

Several contemporary trends are driving the rise of cross-border travel (UNWTO, 2018), including improved travel facilities, streamlined visa procedures, dense transport networks and the simplification of flexible travel arrangements. In addition, evolving consumer preferences, such as the desire for varied experiences and the search for instant information through technological developments, further promote cross-border collaborations. The emergence of social media as a platform for sharing travel experiences has also fuelled the need for travellers to seek out diverse destinations to enrich their content.

Timothy Saarinen (2013) in the book, "Aspects of Tourism", writes that Belgium and Luxembourg were the European countries that first defined the idea of cross-border tourism. Characteristically, there is the concept of institutional cross-border hyper-mobilization and simple hyper-mobilization, two concepts that classify countries into those with increased rates of tourism and more frequent visitors, and into those with less traffic. Regarding institutional hyper-mobilization, one example is between Germany and the Czech Republic, while the simple one concerns tourism between Germany and Belgium (Saarinen, 2013).

Most European countries take advantage of proximity to promote destinations in a cross-border context. These destinations are accessible via short-term travel, with various types of vehicles, such as private vehicles, commercial buses, trains, ships, airplanes, and even bicycles. Nevertheless, the examination of cross-border tourism marketing is still an emerging topic in both theory and practice.

The literature includes a limited number of cases that can be presented as examples of cross-border tourism marketing. Most of these studies adopt a rather static approach to cross-border that results in highlighting a single destination (e.g. D'Angella & Go, 2009; Wang et al, 2013; Żemła, 2014). Of course, there is currently literature that deals with the emergence of a framework of synergies for the purpose of the commercial promotion of cross-border destinations (e.g. Blasco et al, 2014), the development of management and marketing strategies (Lovelock & Boyd, 2006; Tosun et al, 2005), but also the creation of cross-border brands that cover multiple destinations (Semone & Kozak, 2012). However, it remains patchy and ad hoc. Finally, the potential association of cross-border tourism marketing with transnational trust- and peace-building processes remains under-studied (e.g. Farmaki et al, 2019).

A better understanding of cross-border marketing practices can offer the states involved as well as stockholders, such as tourism policy makers, tourism businesses and local communities, several benefits. First, stakeholders can gain a comparative advantage, as cross-border tourism marketing opens avenues for the development of dynamics and synergies that cannot be compared with traditional processes of promoting the tourism product in a single destination and country (Tosun et al, 2005; Weidenfeld, 2013). Secondly, through the complex strategies of promotion and creation of a cross-border tourism brand name (Zenker & Björn, 2015), those involved can reasonably expect an increase in the annual volume of arrivals and, possibly, tourism income, as already at the core of their communication strategy there is the dynamics of cross-border mobility and the interconnection of multiple tourist destinations that exceeds the classical static approach to tourism, which is also declining (Kozak & Buhalis, 2019). Third, from the management side, both parties can complement each other by creating good practices and testing innovative solutions, finally rediscovering their comparative advantages, in a cooperative rather than competitive context (Kozak, 2004).

The challenge of balancing various interests in a cross-border tourism marketing initiative should also be highlighted. Heterogeneity in bureaucratic customs and the general structure of public administration, different leadership and entrepreneurship patterns, and the diverse origins of the tourism industry can act as a brake on the development of cross-border tourism marketing on a collaborative basis (Blasco et al., 2014; Lovelock & Boyd, 2006). Moreover, if, due to political instability in the bilateral context, the relations of the two countries cooperating to promote a common cross-border tourism product break down, it is highly uncertain that a common commercial strategy will be able to be maintained only by the private stakeholders involved in said effort, while the fate of cross-border e-marketing networks is also, in such a case, rather uncertain (Hartman, 2006; Sofield, 2006). Furthermore, it should be emphasized that cross-border destinations belong to different administrative entities and may have different objectives and strategies. Sometimes they may already be following tourism marketing practices that are designed to foster competition rather than cooperation.

Related is the question of the participation of the local community, which can be more easily influenced by historical feelings of hostility, cultural differences or even short-sighted economic competition than the tourism professionals who participate in the effort and realize the practical benefits (Hadinejad et al, 2019). Finally, the lack of financial sources or their unequal distribution between participating states or destinations

can pose an additional obstacle to such initiatives. Therefore, the cross-border marketing of tourist destinations requires not only solid theoretical and business foundations, but also commitment at the level of tourism policies.

An important reason is the political stability of Europe, and the countries maintain close relations with each other. This stability and cooperation facilitate cross-border travel and tourism. Also, policies have been formulated to promote cross-border tourism, such as the Schengen Agreement, which allows the free movement of people across borders. In summary, the existence and growth of European cross-border tourism can be attributed to favorable geographical, cultural, political and economic conditions that facilitate easy and comfortable cross-border movement (European Council, 2023).

Marketing tools for cross-border tourism

Based on the principles of marketing theory, there are two different approaches closely intertwined with the conceptualisation of products of cross-border tourism: on the one hand, focusing on complementary products and, on the other, giving precedence to substitute products (Kotler et al, 2017). Marketing a cross-border destination differs compared to other inland tourism destinations in several factors and constraints that depend on administrative borders or other economic, social or institutional barriers. Consequently, the integrated management of a cross-border tourism destination is required as an optimal strategy. This approach to marketing requires various mutual coordination, legal, administrative and institutional adaptations of the various stakeholders involved in the planning, development and implementation of marketing activities. The number of stakeholders involved in the development of a cross-border tourism destination and its products depends at least on the geographical and institutional scope (Timothy & Saarinen, 2013). Global partnerships in cross-border destinations are less likely and in tourism they are mainly presented as part of global (hotel) chains. For this reason, the study of cross-border tourism marketing strategies is necessarily regionalized, focusing e.g. on regions of the world, such as the European Union (Žvanut & Vodeb, 2023).

Successful marketing strategies for cross-border projects aimed at greater market competitiveness, innovative approaches are vital, which include key elements of the so-called 7ps (product, price, place, promotion, people, process and physical evidence). An expanded 7ps marketing strategy also considers people, process and physical elements. Woyo and Slabbert (2019) see the process as a great challenge, as cross-border destinations often have different institutional structures, policies and marketing strategies.

The creation of **integrated tourism products** is vital for the development of cross-border tourism. Studies on the promotion of cultural tourism through cooperation in the cross-border region highlight the need for projects that achieve better cooperation and coordination among tourism stakeholders. By developing common tourism strategies and products, such as thematic routes spanning several countries, regions can increase their attractiveness to tourists seeking integrated cultural and natural experiences (Rădulescu & Pop, 2017).

The use of **digital technology** is a key factor in promoting cross-border tourism. The creation of digital platforms and smart applications can significantly improve the visitor experience, providing easy access to information, improving navigation on tourist routes and offering interactive content that enriches the tourist experience. Such technological innovations not only make it easier for tourists to explore cross-border areas, but also enable the preservation and digital presentation of cultural and natural heritage (Rădulescu & Pop, 2017).

An effective marketing tool that can be used in cross-border tourism is **digital advertising**, through targeted social media campaigns. By leveraging platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and WeChat, destinations can reach a global audience and tailor their messages to specific demographics, interests and geographic locations (UNWTO, 2018). In addition, through data analysis, destinations can improve their marketing strategies, monitor campaign performance and measure return on investment, allowing for continuous optimization and adaptation to changing market trends (Woyo & Slabbert, 2019).

Another valuable marketing tool for cross-border tourism is **influencer marketing**. Influencer marketing involves working with people who have a significant audience and influence on social media platforms or other digital channels. By partnering with relevant influencers who align with the destination's brand and target audience, destinations can leverage their reach and credibility to effectively promote cross-border tourism (Kilipiri et al, 2023).

Cross-border cooperation in the form of **partnerships and networks between tourism operators** should also be an important element. These networks can facilitate the exchange of best practices, joint marketing

initiatives and the development of cross-border tourism products. By working together, regions can overcome common challenges such as language barriers, cultural differences and logistics issues, making the cross-border region more accessible and attractive to tourists (Dunets et al, 2019). In this context, the proposals for cross-border cooperation between Greece and Bulgaria are included, proposing the creation of permanent structures, such as an Observatory of Cross-border Tourism and an Action Group (Interreg Greece-Bulgaria, 2020). The **Cross-Border Tourism Observatory** could act as a central hub for the collection, analysis and dissemination of data and knowledge related to tourism trends, visitor demographics and market preferences in cross-border destinations. In addition, the Action Group will play a critical role in facilitating cooperation and coordination between the various stakeholders involved in cross-border tourism development. Consisting of representatives from the public sector, the private sector and the research community, the Action Group will act as a platform to share knowledge, best practices and resources.

The Case of cross-border tourism between Greece and Turkey

The outbound tourism in Turkey has shown an increasing trend since 2000. In 2006, 4,379 million trips abroad were recorded, in 2010 the international trips increased to 6,888 million and in 2015 they reached 9,257 million, while in 2023 a total of 11,167 million Turkish travellers travelled outbound. Average tourist expenditure per capita of outbound travellers from Turkey ranged between 456\$ and 915\$, in the period from 2003 to 2023, while in 2023 the average tourist expenditure was 639\$ (Statista, TurkStat, 2024). Turks travel abroad mainly to border destinations such as Iraq, Bulgaria, Georgia, Greece and Azerbaijan. These five countries account for about 50 percent of trips abroad. Greece is consistently a popular destination for Turkish travellers, and in fourth place in terms of preference for Turkish travellers, according to 2023 data.

Table 1. Leading outbound destinations visited by residents of Turkey 2019-2023

	2019	2021	2022	2023	% of 2023
Iraq		452.69	1041.68	1908.84	17,1%
Bulgaria	1083.15	402.74	854.48	1449.97	13,0%
Georgia	1007.95	275.1	762.75	916.42	8,2%
Greece	789.32	86.82	585.17	890.44	8,0%
Azerbaijan	275.49	144.04	292.24	339.61	3,0%
Totally	9.908	2.759	7.344	11.167	100%

The arrivals of tourists from Turkey to Greece, for the period 2005 – 2009, were very limited and did not exceed 124 thousand. Since 2010 the incoming traffic from Turkey recorded a rapid increase, except the year 2016, where a significant decrease of -22.8% was recorded. The reason for this decline was a coup attempt on the evening of 15 July 2016 in Turkey. Although the coup ended very quickly, the subsequent side effects at the political and military level were many, a fact that was also reflected in the decrease of trips abroad. Travellers from outside Turkey in 2016 decreased by 13% compared to the previous year. This political destabilization had the greatest impact on tourism to Greece, which recorded a 22.8% decrease in Turkish travellers, which shows that political factors greatly affect cross-border tourism.

Detailed data on arrivals of Turkish travellers in Greece by quarter are presented in table 2. According to the data of the Bank of Greece, after 2016 and until 2019, travellers from Turkey gradually increased and amounted to 1.092 million, representing a rate of 3.5% to the total tourist arrivals in Greece. The followed years 2020 and 2021 were affected by the Covid pandemic, while in 2023 the tourist flows to Greece normalized and the arrivals from Turkey amounted 890.4 thousand, representing 2.7% of traveller arrivals at the borders of Greece.

Table 2. Arrivals of Turkish travellers to Greece, by quarter (2005-2022) in thousands

Year	2005	2012	2016	2017	2018	2019	2021	2022	AVG per Q
Q1	17	73	92	117	157	139	20	55	12%
Q2	31	168	199	221	210	241	29	144	23%
Q3	63	225	467	443	387	494	68	199	43%
Q4	13	136	127	190	177	218	79	142	22%
Arrivals	124	602	885	971	931	1092	196	540	100%

According to the data in table 2 according SETE intelligence (2018, 2022), the arrivals from Turkey per quarter do not show strong seasonality. As expected, the third quarter (July, August, September) gathers the highest percentage of arrivals with an average of 43% and the second quarter with 23% and the fourth quarter with an average of 22%. On the contrary, the arrivals of all travellers in Greece in the third quarter exceed 55% and in the last quarter are up to 15%. It is concluded that Cross-border tourism does not have such strong seasonal effects and cross-border tourists from Turkey travel throughout the year, showing an increase in the summer months.

Table 3 shows the average duration of stay by Turkish travellers in Greece, which amounts to an average of 4.1 days. At the same period the average stay of European travellers in Greece is twice as long, with an average of 8.6 days. The data shows that Cross-border Turkish travellers to Greece have a much shorter stay than other Europeans tourists. This is a common phenomenon in cross-border travel, where the duration of stay is very short (SETE intelligence, 2018 and 2022).

Table 3. Overnight stays by Turkish travellers in Greece, by quarter (2005-2022) in thousands

Year	2005	2012	2016	2017	2018	2019	2021	2022
Q1	93	308	324	326	371	422	93	246
Q2	131	658	887	666	698	1011	176	660
Q3	291	1185	1851	1764	1417	1930	385	919
Q4	60	477	388	496	638	704	386	469
Overnight stays	575	2628	3450	3252	3124	4067	1040	2294
Average nights by Turks	4,6	4,4	3,9	3,3	3,4	3,7	5,3	4,2
Average nights by European	11.4	10.1	8.0	7.9	7.5	7.2	8.9	7.9

Receipts per tourist from Turkey, after 2016 amounts to an average of 346.75 euros and are lower than the average expenditure of Europeans tourist which is 546.15€. However, due to the shorter stay of Turkish tourists in Greece, the average daily expenditure of Turkish travellers after 2016, according to the Bank of Greece (2024a) amounts to 87.8 euros, while the average daily expenditure of Europeans (of the EU-27 countries) was on average 69,3€ or 21% lower (see Table 4 and 5).

Table 4. Expenditure by Turkish travellers in Greece, by quarter (2005-2022) in €

Year	2005	2012	2016	2017	2018	2019	2021	2022
Q1 (millions)	12	28	35	35	46	38	7	20
Q2 (millions)	13	58	73	69	68	29	12	60
Q3 (millions)	32	84	148	163	129	145	27	98
Q4 (millions)	7	57	41	54	61	64	36	47
Receipts (millions)	64	227	297	321	304	276	82	225
Receipts per day	111,3	86,4	86,1	98,7	97,3	67,9	78,8	98,1
Receipts per tourist	516,1	377,1	335,6	330,6	326,5	252,7	418,4	416,7

Table 5. Receipts per Tourist and per day from EU-27 travellers in Greece (2005-2022)

Year	2005	2012	2016	2017	2018	2019	2021	2022
Receipts per Tourist	729.5	653.2	499.5	501.1	491.6	524.5	671.5	588.7
Receipts per day	64.2	65.0	62.7	63.7	65.5	73.3	75.82	74.7

Finally, the arrivals of Turkish travellers, by geographical Region in Greece, after 2016 were analysed, based on Bank of Greece (2024b) data, and the results are presented in table 6.

Table 6. Arrivals of Turkish travellers in Greece (2016-2022) by Region, in thousands.

Year	2016	%	2017	%	2018	%	2019	%
East Macedonia and Thrace	359,8	41%	448,6	46%	429,5	46%	523,4	48%
Attika	150,6	17%	133,4	14%	177,2	19%	164,5	15%
North Aegean	143,4	16%	139,2	14%	113,4	12%	118,6	11%
Other Regions	231,3	26%	249,8	26%	210,9	23%	285,5	26%
Turkish travellers	885	100%	971	100%	931	100%	1092	100%

Regarding the data of the year 2019, i.e. the year before the Covid pandemic, which are more representative of the picture of travel traffic, the largest number of arrivals from Turkey are recorded at the northern land borders, in the Region of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace. At the borders of this Region, 48% of arrivals are recorded and the average length of stay of travellers in this Region was only 2.4 days and the average expenditure per capita 71.7 euros. A significant percentage of arrivals is recorded in the Attica Region (Athens) with a rate of 15%. The average length of stay is 5.1 days and 80.8€ the average expenditure. The North Aegean Region records 11% of arrivals and the average length of stay is 3.7 days and the average per capita expenditure is only 51.4€. The rest of 26.1% of arrivals is shared among the other Regions and the South Aegean (Bank of Greece, 2024c, Bank of Greece, 2024d).

Table 7. Receipts per Turkish travellers and duration of stay in the Regions of Greece

Year	2016		2019		2023	
	Duration in days	AVG Spend	Duration in days	AVG Spend	Duration in days	AVG Spend
East Macedonia and Thrace	2.6	87.5 €	2.4	71.7 €	2.3	77.7 €
Attika	3.9	90.8 €	5.1	80.8 €	5.0	110.5 €
North Aegean	3.8	58.6 €	3.7	55.4 €	8.4	27.1 €

Greece and Turkey are separated and connected by the Aegean Sea and the mutual recognition of economic interdependence is evident as each country recognizes the benefits of cross-border tourism flows. Greek visitors are drawn to Turkish destinations such as Istanbul and cost line cities, mainly for cultural and religion reasons or for shopping boosted by the cost advantage. On the other site, Turkish tourists visit the Greek islands or Athens, contributing significantly to the Greek economy. This symbiotic relationship highlights the potential of cross-border tourism to act as a catalyst for economic stability and growth.

In this context, Niles (1998:9) argues that Turkey and Greece have an interest to cooperate and upgrade the tourism infrastructure in cooperation, at the national level in the form of joint investments in projects that serve both Greece and Turkey. The dialogue points in the direction of aspiration for joint packages and itineraries that respond to different tourist interests, from cultural heritage to gastronomy, thus maximizing the value of the cross-border tourism product (Kozak & Buhalis, 2019). For example, gastronomy specialists can come together to present an authentic dining experience in each place and create a gastronomy route. Wine and wineries can also be used to connect visitors' experiences and emotions (Leri & Theodoridis, 2019).

Tosun et al (2005), studying the case of cooperation between Greece and neighbouring Turkey, found that cooperative tourism marketing strategies can lead to more efficient and effective marketing, but also ensure a stable and safe environment for visitors. Their study showed that significant challenges are the creation of a common tourist. organization, the adequacy of financial resources and the participation of businesses and non-governmental organizations from both sides of the border. Also, a comprehensive distribution and technology platform and the full spectrum of social media is required for the cross-border tourism destination. Showcasing inventory and routes in both countries and creating online experiences should be complemented by a comprehensive digital strategy (Buhalis & Kozak, 2019).

Express Visa for Turkish Cross-border Travellers

As a result of diplomatic efforts to ease long-standing tensions between the two countries, on March 31, 2024, the entry visa (visa express) of seven days granted to Turkish visitors. The measure applies from 31 March to the Aegean islands of Lesbos, Chios, Samos, Kos and Rhodes and from 30 April it also applies to the islands of Limnos, Leros, Symi, Kalymnos and Kastellorizo. The limited-access visa allows Turks to visit the Greek islands for up to a week, throughout the year, without having to apply for full access to the EU's passport-free travel zone, also known as the Schengen area. The islands in the visa program all lie near the Turkish coastline. Granted at participating Greek ports, the new visa cost €60 per traveller and will include a passport check and fingerprint recording. Greek officials have made it clear that visitors to the islands will not be permitted to travel onto other EU member states without the correct documents. Turkey has long sought more relaxed travel rules for its citizens visiting the EU in exchange for its cooperation with member states, including efforts to curb illegal immigration.

Starting the Visa-Express granting measure, the arrivals to these islands by Turkish visitors increased spectacularly. For example, in the first ten days of April 2024, 3,800 Turkish travellers visited Lesbos, whereas a year ago it was only 390. The same period the number of Turks visiting Chios increased from 2,716 to 4,993 travellers. 5,726 Turkish tourists traveled to Rhodes during the Ramadan holiday, up from 2,320 a year before. The island of Samos welcomed 2,851 Turkish tourist (last year was just only 299) and the island of Kos received 3,300 visitors, as of 2,400 the previous year. As officials from the Association of Turkish Travel Agencies (TÜRSAB) report, the interest of Turkish tourists in the Greek islands is likely to continue during the summer season. They add that due to inflation, holidays in Turkey have become more expensive, unlike the Greek islands which have become more affordable for Turkish holidaymakers (AegeanNews, 2024).

Analysing the statistics of arrivals to the ten islands in the first five months of 2024, in comparison with the figures of 2019, (the record year of arrivals in Greece, before the covid pandemic), noticed that in the first half of 2024 the increase reached 48.7 %, which is due to the possibility of gaining the express visa of 7 days in Greece.

Table: Arrivals of Turkish Travellers in the North Aegean Region

Arrivals in the North Aegean Region in year 2019	181,400
Arrivals in the 1 st half of 2019	30,300
Arrivals in the first 5 months 2024	45,050
Lesbos (15.301) Chios (20.095) Samos (9.654)	(+48.7%)

In some islands the growth was remarkable. For example, in Lesbos the increase in number of visitors in comparison to the first 5 months of 2023 was 88.9%. It is typical that the tourist businesses on the above islands opened much earlier this year, expecting tourists from Turkey. To serve the increased traffic, officials have opened new visa terminals for Turkish visitors, however the large increase in arrivals, combined with the large number of visa applications at the points of entry created problems, because a function of the consular authorities is transferred to the customs offices of the island's entry.

Conclusions and Suggestions

Tourism cooperation is vital to promote economic growth, global cooperation and security concerns between border countries. At the same time, it draws attention to the key features of strategic management, including research, specialised teams, infrastructure, transport, communication and information networks. Understanding the different aspects of cross-border travel helps destinations develop plans for sustainable tourism development. However, the characteristics and opportunities of marketing strategies in cross-border

destinations should be considered considering the individual characteristics and conditions of individual cross-border destinations.

Most European countries take advantage of proximity to promote destinations in a cross-border context. These destinations are accessible through short-term travel, with various types of vehicles, such as private vehicles, commercial buses, trains, ships, airplanes, and even bicycles. Nevertheless, the examination of cross-border tourism marketing is still an emerging topic in both theory and practice.

Analysing the cross-border tourism between Greece and Turkey, the following conclusions shall be recorded:

1. Greece is a very popular destination for Turks, in the northern borders, Athens, and in the Greek islands in the Aegean.
2. The arrivals of tourists from Turkey do not show strong seasonality in arrivals, like the rest of the tourists who arrive mainly for summer holidays in Greece. A large percentage of arrivals from Turkey are recorded in addition to the third and fourth quarters, but also in the second quarter of the year.
3. The total expenditure per Turkish tourist may be low, but the average expenditure per day of stay is higher than the average of European tourists, due to the shorter stay of Turkish visitors in Greece.
4. Political conflicts have a direct impact on cross-border tourism between Greece and Turkey. Even political problems in Turkey (as in the case of the 2016 coup attempt) lead to a decrease in cross-border tourism between Greece and Turkey.
5. Cooperation at the diplomatic level and the adoption of administrative measures that help the arrival and stay of Turks in Greece, such as the recent measure of granting express visas, led to a significant increase of arrivals in cross-border tourism.
6. Increased tourist traffic creates management and service problems for travellers at the border, resulting in delays in border entry
7. An increase in cross-border tourism is beneficial to both bordering countries and mutual recognition of economic interdependence exists as each country recognizes the benefits of cross-border tourism flows. This symbiotic relationship highlights the potential of cross-border tourism to act as a catalyst for economic stability and growth.

Turkey and Greece have an interest in cooperating and upgrading tourism infrastructures in cooperation, at the national level in the form of joint investments in projects that serve both Greece and Turkey, but also the creation of joint tourist packages and itineraries. Cooperation can be at the business level, as well as at the government level in institutional, regulatory and infrastructure matters. For example, the improvement of transportation connections, such as the coordination of air flights (Buhalis & Kozak, 2019), but also an integrated distribution and technology platform and the whole range of social media for the cross-border tourist destination are practices for the development of cross-border tourism (Buhalis & Kozak, 2019).

The marketing of a cross-border destination differs compared to other tourist destinations because it depends on the procedures and conditions of border crossing or other economic, social, institutional or even security barriers. Various tools are proposed in the literature as means of promoting cross-border tourism, such as the creation of integrated tourism products, the use of digital technology and especially the creation of digital platforms and smart applications. Also, digital advertising especially on social media and influencer marketing has been added in recent years.

However, the main means of promoting cross-border tourism, as we observe in the case of Greece and Turkey, is good diplomatic relations and the implementation of administrative measures to facilitate cross-border tourism, such as the ease of granting a visa for a tourist stay, a measure that should be applied to other Aegean islands, but also to the northern land border between Greece and Turkey, in the Region of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace. At the same time, measures should be taken to facilitate entry at the border stations.

In the case of cross-border tourism between Greece and Turkey, in addition the creation of a Cross-Border Tourism Observatory and the creation of a Working Group to support the sustainable development and promotion of cross-border tourism initiatives are structures that can strengthen and improve cross-border tourism between Greece and Turkey. These structures will serve as central hubs for data collection, analysis and knowledge sharing, facilitating cooperation between stakeholders and promoting the attractiveness and competitiveness of cross-border destinations.

In conclusion, as other researchers argue, cross-border tourism brings many advantages both to the countries involved and to the tourists themselves. Greece, with its rich cultural heritage and natural beauty, benefits greatly from cross-border tourism. It helps stimulate the economy, promotes cultural exchange, strengthens infrastructure, encourages sustainability, preserves historic sites and strengthens social connections. By

embracing cross-border tourism, Greece and other European countries can further unlock the potential of this booming industry and continue to reap its countless benefits (Chatzigiannaki, 2015).

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