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IMPACT OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON
OVER-TOURISM IN SANTORINI

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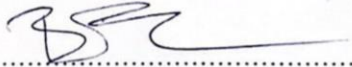
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I, the undersigned **Zsófia Butor** declare it, that the dissertation hereby submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Arts in Catering and Hotel Management at the Budapest Business School has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at this or any other institution. This thesis and the work presented in it are my own and have been generated by me as the result of my own original research; it is my work in design and in execution, and that all material contained therein has been duly acknowledged. I understand that my thesis may be made available to the public.

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Zsófia Butor

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I.   INTRODUCTION

Santorini is the island where the Greek dream comes true and the poster images come to life. The strong contrast of the dazzling white houses built on the edge of the black volcano is softened by cyclamen-coloured bougainvillea flowers and blue domes. It is literally like we have been dropped into a fairy tale. The southernmost member of the Cyclades archipelago is deservedly famous of its panoramic view, moreover the summer sunset from the cities of Oia and Fira is considered by many to be the most beautiful in the World. *(Appendix No. 1)* The Island has a unique characteristics, combining geographical, geomorphological and climatic features. During the vacation on the island we certainly do not have to have a headache because of the weather, the number of sunshine hours is 8 hours a day on an annual average. Perhaps these many overwhelming factors listed above, or the Greek culture, odd gastronomy, warm hospitality is why Santorini topped to the bucket list of many travel-goers. *(Appendix. No. 2)* The island of Santorini has seen an explosive growth in demand over the past decade, starting from a small Greek island to one of the World's most popular destinations. While the population of the 76km² territory Island is around 13,500 people, the number of international passengers multiply far this amount in each second day, in the peak season.

In my dissertation, after clarifying the basic concepts, I want to present the phenomenon, essence, benefits and, of course, harmful effects of over-tourism from mainly the side of Santorini. In fact, the topic would be very exhaustive in this way, even if it had been assigned in 2019, two years earlier. However, the global crisis that erupted at the end of 2019 and in Europe at the beginning of 2020 turned upside down the lives of all people, destroying dozens of economic sectors, especially by hitting the sudden pause button on the global tourism which was completely eliminated during the months of quarantine. For this reason, it is essential to write about Santorini's tourism during the pandemic and how it affected the situation on the Island, which was a textbook example of over-tourism due to the increase of unconscious demand in recent years. The aim of my dissertation was indeed to formulate a proposal on how to maintain the flow of guests after the epidemic subsides, so that living conditions can be ensured for other tourists and local residents at the same time.

I.1. Justification for choice of topic

In the past 23 years of my life I have had the opportunity to spend three wonderful holidays on the island of Santorini. I was lucky to fly to the Island with a charter flight in 1998, with a group trip booked at the Jorgos travel agency, long-long before the touristic wave. Exactly twenty years after, in 2018 when a record number of tourists visited Santorini, I also returned to the Island, but this time we arrived with the Blue Star high-speed ferry, after six hours of sea travel from the Greek capital. This time the whole picture was totally different, there were hundreds of tourists flocking through the iconic narrow white streets, swarms among dozens of local buses, swatches of people clinging on the vista points, rooftops of buildings to get the most breath-taking shot. Surely a very few can also say of themselves that in the midst of the corona-virus pandemic, in the summer of 2020, they were lucky enough to admire the environmental wonders of the Island, I can definitely say that the experience was radically different from the summer presented earlier. Last time we flew directly from Budapest with the Wizzair low-cost Hungarian airline company. The other side of the coin was rather more similar to the experience we had back in 1999 - at least based on photos, videos and the memories of my parents.

During our travels we stayed in various categories of accommodation, 23 years ago (1998) on the shallow side of the Island - especially recommended for families with young children like I was - where then there were mainly campsites and cheaper accommodation, by 2018, hotels of near, even top level luxury quality were built in these areas as well, I had the opportunity to stay here as well. In 2020, the pandemic caused decline in tourism also caused a drop in hotel prices, so this summer we were able to book accommodation in a luxury suite in a prominent area of the Island, at almost the same price as we had in 2018. Speaking between the "two of us", this was the highlight, indeed years before we were practically salivating over such hotels. During these travels we also received various catering service during these holidays, in 1998 we needed to provide the food for ourselves - as ingenious Hungarian travellers - we got the food from the nearby grocery store. In 2018, we received a substantial buffet breakfast, however during the previously mentioned dream-holiday a personal waiter served breakfast immediately on the terrace of our wonderful suite, the four-course meal were prepared by the chef according to our unique food tolerance and taste. In my opinion, the huge development of the quality of accommodation and catering service - that I have also experienced- mirrors the development of tourism on the island.

It is beyond question, how severe the tourist and economic damage was caused by the pandemic, however, if anything need to be highlighted, is the special experience that after many years it was possible again to spend quality time, speak with local people on an island, famous of its over-tourism. It is really interesting to think about the fact that during my lifetime, I actually followed the path of Santorini as this tiny Greek island became one of the most famous touristic destinations in the world. I personally experienced the burst of tourism on this Island, and the negative impact of over-tourism. I eye-witnessed the impact of pandemic which caused significant declining numbers in terms of tourism which has also been verified by local people from different fields of hospitality both operative and management level – such as restaurant owners, CEO of 5 star hotel, waiter and taxi driver-. Santorini Island is not only the tip of my heart, but also a defining part of my life, it is one of my most wonderful holiday experiences so it was no question to choose this as the topic of my dissertation. Quoting my mother's word: *"There are so many beautiful places in the world whilst life is too short to return to the same destination twice"* in spite of this, yet I think it is no coincidence that we have returned to Santorini three times.

I.2. Purpose

I got my bachelor degree in international management, hence I was also driven by a special professional curiosity to learn more in detail about the over-tourism phenomenon on the island and examine the impact of the corona-virus pandemic. During my dissertation I place great emphasis on the analysis of statistical data, economic numbers. My goal is to provide an economically interesting reading as well. On the topic of over-tourism there is a very extensive literature, the processing of these professional sources helped my analytical work, however, the COVID-19 pandemic is such a recent problem that still exists during the writing of my dissertation so there are only scientific assumptions available.

The purpose of this paper is to provide a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of over-tourism, and the reasons of its formation. The aim of the dissertation is to present the basic concepts of tourism in a comprehensible way, explained by processing the literature sources. This research attempts to provide a clear interpretation and evolution of over-tourism over the last two decades in the region of Santorini, Greece with its economic advantages and touristic setbacks, assessing the impacts of the global pandemic, COVID-19, regarding the Island. Along empirical research, I use set of indicators to define the explosive growth of tourism, and apply various statistical analysis methods for an even deeper examination of the subject. Nonetheless,

this paper intends to propose solutions, in terms of remedies, to a financially damaged country for a post-pandemic era, even though, the world will never be the same as it was in the past.

I.3. Thesis structure

I divided my dissertation into three pillars, in the first chapter I describe the theoretical background of the topic, the basic concepts and definitions. In the second chapter of my dissertation, along with empirical research, I analyse in detail the tourism, formation and development of the island of Santorini over the past nearly three decades. In this section, in addition to the statistical analyses, I also describe my professional knowledge gained during the in-depth interview. As the third part of my dissertation, I present the results of quantitative research, analyse the results with various statistical analysis methods, and formulate future forecasts based on them. In the last chapter of my dissertation, I summarize the results of my research work and detail the solution proposals I have developed.

II.   LITERATURE REVIEW

II.1. Basic concepts of tourism

The words of tourism and tourist are having an English origin, with roots all the way back to the English 'tour' word, which was first used in 1760 in written form. The English word 'tour' can be traced back to the Latin 'tornus' noun, which means a circle travel getting back to the starting point (Bárkányi, 2019, p 41). Today, we use many interpretations and definitions for tourism, I would like to highlight the concept approved by the United Nations World Tourism Organization *(following: UNWTO).*

"Tourism is a social, cultural and economic phenomenon which entails the movement of people to countries or places outside their usual environment for personal or business/professional purposes" (UNWTO.ORG, 2021).

We can organize trips into two groups: domestic and international tourism, the former is generated by national tourists and the latter by foreigners entering the country. Both groups are important for my dissertation, as tourism in neither country has developed in such a way that thousands of foreigners have flocked to the country. The sector of tourism provides a service aims to meet the needs of consumers. *"A need is a feeling of lack that triggers action to eliminate itself"* (Bárkányi, 2019, p 99). In the minds of consumers, first there is a need, then a demand, and finally, if there is an internal motivation, people start to act (Végné Faddi, 2006).

Among the concepts it is also important to mention the difference between a residential and non-residential. Residential is any person who resided within the territory of Greece for a year or who has arrived in the country with the intention to spend a minimum of 1 year.

Just like every other economic sector, the main goal of the travel industry is to have a huge profit, continuous growth - with little concern for upcoming impacts-. As in any other economic market, the relationship between supply and demand is driving this growth. On the demand side of the tourism there is: motivation, demographic composition of the society, leisure and disposable income; while the supply side is secured by the attractions, infra- and superstructure, transport, hygiene and safety (Garán, 2020).

II.1.1. Travel habits and trends

Along with economic and social development, people's travel habits and people's expectations of tourism have also changed. My generation grin or smile broadly when our parents or grandparents tell us how they travelled in the era of socialism. 40 years ago, it was only possible to travel outside the socialist countries with a tourist passport once in every three years, which was accompanied by a currency sheet registered every cash flow. (MTI, 2012) Those who had invitation passport could travel every single year, but for this document, it was necessary to have a welcome letter from a foreign relative or friend in which they accept that they cover all the spending during the stay. In addition, it was possible to travel with groups – the most famous Hungarian travel agency was the IBUSZ -. People could open a 'BC account" where they could receive currency from abroad, which they could then spend at later stage on their journey abroad. (MTI, 2012) Obviously, there were some exceptions such as artists, athletes, and other national delegates who could travel indefinitely.

In contrast nowadays, it is completely self-evident that every family travels at least once a year, domestically or abroad. Thinking through it, there have been so many changes that changed travel habits; borders opened, high-quality cameras, phone and internet use became common – within this the use of smartphones with many social networking sites-. According to pre-millennium theory (Cohen, 1972), there are four types of tourists: wanderer, explorer, individual mass tourist and organized mass tourist. While the wanderer and the explorer type are happy to step out of the environmental spot, blend into the local culture and boldly initiate a personal conversation with the locals, individual and organized mass tourist do not require this kind of intimacy, they are very happy to go after the crowd (Puczkó & Rátz , 2000). The theory also well supports that there have always been people who have followed a herd of spirits, so the development of mass tourism is not simultaneous with the advent of the internet. Although, thanks to the technological development, it became much easier to get information on the Internet, browse, shop or book the travel directly. The average number of households decreased, while free disposable income increased, society's purchasing power grew more and more, which then generated an explosion in the demand for tourism. People started looking for safe, comfortable and quality places, the desire for luxury increased. Travel became much more accessible and affordable for everyone, the demand for cheap tourism products strengthened, these kind of innovative businesses started to grow faster than anyone could ever imagine. Low-cost airlines started to offer their service at a much lower price as it was previously usual – people could fly for the price of a train ticket - Airbnb accommodation providers started to offer

their accommodation for a fraction of the hotel prices. Previous obstacles disappeared to the customers, as they were no longer regulated by national borders or the high costs of travel.

It was no longer need to recall holiday photos, you could take a perfect photo with a digital camera or smartphone, which could then be quickly send to others or uploaded to social media platforms. In 2004, today's largest social network in the world, Facebook *(initially: TheFacebook.com)* was launched, where people could spread any information or photos (later videos as well) to friends within only few seconds (Boyd, 2019). Nowadays, the list of contents posted on Facebook is led by travel experiences and holiday contents. According to the latest data of Statista, Facebook has now 2 740 000 000 users (Clement, 2020). It is so scary to think about how much shared content this means, -according to the latest data – *"350 million photos are uploaded every day, with 14.58 million photo uploads per hour, 243,000 photo uploads per minute, and 4,000 photo uploads per second"* (Salman, 2021). In 2010, Instagram, today's number one photo and video-sharing social media application - launched by an American young man, who was working at a travel recommendations start-up - has a huge marketing function nowadays. With the rollout of Instagram, social expectations have changed, it has become much more important to live the experience and share it with a most perfectly set-up photo. Companies and both individual users seen the marketing and economic opportunity on Instagram, company paid and self- advertised influencers was born. These social interfaces not only gave travellers the opportunity to share their favourite photos, but also to share their opinions and insights about accommodations and travel destinations.

As a result of social media, severe psychological change is also experienced among humans, by scrolling these pages by a visual stimulation people started to feel that they "only worth something" if they visit certain places. Due to a much faster lifestyle there was a significant increase in the demand for short-term "city visit" tourism of only few days, which can of course also be attributed to the better infrastructure connecting the countries. Instead of a quality, relaxing amusement, it became more important to get to as many places as possible, to visit as many "must visit" sights and to take as many "insta-positive[1]" images as possible within a short period of time. Destination took a back seat, while the rush of world travel, the pursuit of destinations and attractions came to the fore. The desire and expectation of travellers have intensified to such a high extent level that they took the lead over the supply side of tourism. The sector needed to transform in such a way to the meet immeasurable demand as flexibly, quickly and cheaply as possible.

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[1] *Insta-positive: content that attracts the attention of many people and generates a lot of likes and shares.*

Maslow's hierarchy of needs - proposed in the 1943 by Abraham Maslow - can be also found by examining the motivation of people (McLeod, 2020). Today's travel attitudes reflect the classical model of 1943, as in other disciplines, travel motivations at different levels can also be related to the theory. In the case of tourism motivations the 5-level pyramid of motivational model also prevails. In the following table *(Table 1)*, I summarized what motivations make "today's" people to project a journey:

Table 1- Basic motivation factors of traveller

Self-actualization	After appearances, the ultimate motivation of people is to acquire new knowledge, to visit sites never visited before, to escape from everyday problem, rest from fatigue of work and perhaps to enjoy in the sunbath.
Esteem	Self–esteem is also a very important factor, due to social media platforms people feel that their life is only valuable if they also choose some destination from their travel bucket list.
Love and belonging	To belong to the traveling community – people with same status- is like belonging to a separate small part of society. It is not only a satisfying feeling for ourselves, but we can also gain social recognition and authority from the external environment at the same time.
Safety needs	Sense of security is also very important after the basic needs, which includes the hotel's million, the current level of public safety in the city and health security, which is a key issue during a pandemic.
Psychological needs	Existence of basic needs, such as: air, water, provide food and shelter. In case of a hotel: suitable, comfortable and safety room, dining options.

Source: own editing, 2021 based on (Bárkányi, 2019, p 98)

Reading the above pages, it may seem that I blame the social media interface for the far too fast increase in tourism but it is important to point out that it affects a number of other ingredients that brought together the tourism to the next level. From an economic point of view, we can see that the demand generated by customers became endless on the market - and

marketing only reinforced these desires, persuading consumers to buy a product they do not need at all -. The unlimited increase in demand required unlimited development from the part of producers, also in order to meet the ever growing needs. However, as a result of the development, consumers still dominated the market, they had a significant surplus of power, especially when consumers get their smart devices in their hands, full of social media interfaces where thousands of people are watching their opinions about each holiday resort / restaurants... etc.

In order to understand why this is a serious problem in an economic market, we need to review the following basic economic thesis: there is an interaction of market demand and supply. If the demand for a product or a service increases, its supply and price also increase in parallel or in direct proportion. However, the increased price has a negative effect on demand, which ultimately leads to a decrease in supply again, so this process begins again. Yet, I consider important to emphasize that this marketing-generated economy is characterized by many other areas of production and service (fast-fashion, fast-food…etc.), in modern terms: 'consumer society' characterizes the demand side. We all know that the perfect market mentioned in microeconomics does not exist in practice, but the oversupply of recent years is in an unsustainable condition for long-term.

Tourism is a prosperous market area that became one of the fastest growing economic sectors, which had a significant impact not only on the Gross Domestic Product[2] *(following: GDP)* of national economies but also on the growth of the world economy.

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[2] *Gross domestic product: total monetary or market value of all the finished goods and services produced within a country's borders in a specific time period* (Fernando, 2020).

II.1.2. Effects of tourism

On the following pages I give an overview of the economic, social and natural effects of the tourism sector.

Economic effects

Tourism has a significant multiplier effect that *"refers to the proportional amount of increase, or decrease, in final income that results from an injection, or withdrawal, of spending"* (Ganti, 2020). This incentive effect also conduce to develop other economic sectors such as construction, agriculture, furniture industry (with the need of construction for new hotel complexes, catering units and for furnishing these facilities) overall, it develops the infrastructure as a whole. Tourism makes a significant contribution to job creation for both skilled and unskilled workers, in 2019, every 1 in 10 people worked in the tourism industry, which means approximately 330 million jobs all around the World (WTTC, 2019). For small and medium-sized businesses it provides an opportunity to generate high-measure revenue by contributing for the country's budget with significant major tax revenues. Tourism provides employment and income opportunities not only for quality workers but for those people who would have serious difficulty by integrating into other sectors. In total, in the last pre-pandemic year, 2019 the contribution for the world's GDP was around US$8.9 trillion, which was approximately 10% of the global GDP (WTTC, 2019).

Social and natural effects

In addition to the economic benefits, the development of tourism also has a number of social and cultural effects. In order to meet the aforementioned endless demand, the labour market requires as many and as high-quality professionals as possible, this helps to ensure the education level of the total population. Due to the spread of tourism, local handicrafts, unique sights, buildings and traditions are becoming more and more valuable (Bárkányi, 2019). Positive natural impacts should also be taken into account, such as the establishment and continuous maintenance of national parks, landscape protection areas, public areas.

Before we think it, tourism has only a glittering, say upsides, I also need to raise the downsides. In order to have a better consideration, I make a comparative analysis taking into account all the positive and negative effects *(Table 2).*

Table 2- Positive and negative impact of tourism

	POSITIVE	NEGATIVE
Economic	▪ income generating effect ▪ job creation ▪ conduce to balance of payments ▪ stimulating effect on the economy (investments, improvement of living conditions)	▪ rising prices and infrastructure costs ▪ leakage of income ▪ apartments deficit in the real estate market, property prices rises
Social	▪ quality of education is improving, the number of skilled labour is increasing ▪ the value of culture, local customs increases, gain international recognition	▪ reworking traditional customs at pleasure of tourists
Natural	▪ establishment and continuous maintenance of natural resources	▪ deterioration of water quality ▪ noise, air and light pollution ▪ waste management and processing problems ▪ landscape degradation

Source: own editing, 2021

II.2. Over-tourism phenomenon

The phrase - also included in the title of my dissertation- is a mosaic word of „over" and „tourism", which predicts that in a particular destination there is (far) too much tourism. This may sound too subjective, but the arithmetic boundary is variable in each destination, in general we say over-tourism occurs when everyday activities are also hampered by the presence of tourists (for instance: it turns difficult to walk on the streets, landscape got covered by people, and the wildlife is scared away). As I predicted, today's tourism is generated by marketing - not necessarily direct marketing, but individual recommendations from tourists or "candidate travel-consultant influencers" -. There are many contributing factors, but contents, beautiful photos and videos spreading like wildfire on the internet obviously increase people's desire to travel - even those who may not be able to afford it-. This intrinsic motivation typically drives

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people to desire to visit those travel destinations that they have seen on the internet - where celebrities, opinion leaders have been to - and this results a concentrated demand for some specific travel destination. Frankly, I am also very active on social media platforms – I extensively follow many travel-influencers – and I can say for sure that I would never have heard of some hidden gems - such as: Positano, Capri, Amalfi Coast - if they didn't start sharing their photos taken there. Although it may be economically incomprehensible why it is such a serious problem if the market of a destination is dominated by indefinitely growing demand, the presence of too many tourists often endangers the destination itself and in the long run, over-tourism is deteriorative not only for the locals, but also for the tourists who visit the destination for relaxation and quality time.

In the case of the islands, the arrival of too many tourists can be an even more serious problem, as there is no possibility to expand the area in their case, meanwhile big cities like Barcelona or even Budapest are able to place certain sights, sports events … etc. to the outskirts of the city, thereby dispersing the crowds of tourists. The island of Santorini - which I will examine in detail later - also faces additional geographical difficulties, as a result of which it is able to deal with even far less tourists. In the case of an island, the design of the infrastructure is also limited as there is much less space available.

II.3. Reason of formation of over-tourism

Visitation to travel destinations can be attributed to numerous factors, on the following pages, my goal is to present all the phenomena that can contribute to the over-tourism of an area, as comprehensively as possible. Firstly, I would like to highlight the paradigm shift which took place in the recent years, for which the main reason was the turnout of social media interfaces in addition to general social changes.

II.3.1. Low cost airlines – from the theoretical perspective

Discount airlines, also known as low-cost airlines, appeared in the United States as early as the 1970s, however they only began to become popular in Europe around the 2000s, can be said to have revolutionized the aviation. (Jászberényi & Munkácsy , 2018) The business goal of low cost airlines is to keep costs low while generating the highest possible utilization. (Jászberényi, 2003) Low-cost airlines are reducing their costs, as well as ticket prices, by

offering low-cost airlines less convenience to passengers. Typically, only economy class tickets are sold, furthermore there is no free catering service on board, most do not have a so-called seating order. In case of Wizzair, for example, if a passenger wants to sit next to a window, they have to pay extra for the seat. (Wizzair, 2015) Discounted airlines have much shorter turnaround times, which of course reduces airport costs, increases the amount of revenue generated from sales. Thanks to discounted airlines, flying is no longer a seemingly unattainable luxury activity, but a near-human desire, flying became easily available for a much wider target audience. It is also important to point out that discounted airlines operate direct flights in the short distance, with much more capacity, as opposed to classic flights flying from point A to point B on a weekly basis. (KPMG, 2005)

II.3.2. Impact of movies on destination choice

Nowadays, feature films also influence our travel decisions; especially because the film is an integral part of the culture, the cinema visit is a very popular leisure activity. In tourist decision-making, information is crucial, through movies, they can give viewers a very detailed overview of specific destinations. In the last decade, the popularity of cinema visits and the number of international trips has also increased dynamically (Sulyok, 2009), but watching movies also became much more accessible from our own home armchair. Demand-generating effect of film productions per destination can be very different, along a practical example, the number of visitors doubled in Kefalonia - a Greek destination- due to the famous movie, called "Captain Corelli's Mandolin", within three years. (MINTEL, 2005/03) In 2005, an American feature film was set with scenes set on the island of Santorini: "The Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants". (IMDB, 2005) Statistics of the film's impact on demand are not available, but it is certain that the popular cinema attracted the attention of the general public and draw it to a marvellous destination.

II.3.3. Airbnb syndrome – from the theoretical perspective

Over the past decade, the number of online booking interfaces and telephone applications have grown exponentially, people started to have far more accommodation options than ever before. On the supply side, there was a split between hotels - which typically use yield management strategies to optimize prices and demand to optimize revenue - and much more flexible accommodation options, such as Airbnb (Dogru, et al., 2019). Originally the basic

concept of Airbnb was to offer a cheaper accommodation to a completely different target audience, so only to complete the existing offer not to cause a direct competitor to the hotel industry. At the same time, the increase in the supply of accommodation naturally weakens the opportunities for seasonal pricing of hotels. Examining from the point of over tourism, it can be stated in all ways that the growth of web-based accommodation platforms compounded to the growth of influx. From its economic side, house sharing applications subject to public contributions, but they are not subject the same tax and regulatory constraints as hotels or private tenants in general, not to mention that - unlike hotels- Airbnb accommodations do not need to follow different safety rules and regulations. In Greece, the presence and spread of Airbnb generated particular problems in the hotel market some studies write about the formation of 'tourist ghettos', which caused a general public safety problem and thus frightened local residents. Most burning situation developed in the Greek capital – Athens and its suburban area - as well as in Crete.

The problem closely related to Airbnb is that a bunch of local real estate get transformed into accommodation and the available real estate get purchased by investors with higher capital instead of local residents. As the demand for real estate increases in the real estate market, this causes a natural increase in real estate prices as well. In the long run, the consequence is that locals can buy real estate at a very high price.

II.3.4. Cruise tourism – from the theoretical perspective

Additionally, it has also been proven that cruise tourism also contributes enormously to the overcrowding of cities within that, mostly the shore excursion for vessel's passengers (Lopes & Dredge, 2017). After the Second World War, only the upper elite had the opportunity to travel on cruise ships, but today we can buy it very cheap on a few days in the Mediterranean. The name of the Titanic – which was the largest passenger ocean liner of its time - is probably familiar to everyone, at that time the cruise ship capacity was only 3,500 people, but nowadays this is an average capacity of a regular Mediterranean vessel. Due to the technological development, the capacity of the ships also increased, so there were more and more rooms ready for sale. From 1990 onwards, there was a steady upward growth in evolution of cruise tourism, the registered number of operational Cruise Vessels tripled by the end of 2018. The commercial development of aviation allowed cruise tourism to evolve not only into a mere mode of tourism but as a floating resort, which - according to many advantages - produces a massive tourism for the 21st century.

Mobility is its biggest advantage, as ships are much more flexible comparing to other resorts (Rodrigue & Notteboom, 2013). The peculiarity of cruise ships is that they usually offer circuit cruises so passengers are taken to the port of departure while being moored in different cities and attractions. On cruise ships, the central attraction is the ship itself, and passengers are received and transported from one place to another at an all-inclusive price (participation fee including all services). In addition to the basic services (accommodation, dining, health care), a colourful entertainment complex, sports and wellness facilities, beauty salons, luxury shops are available for guests. Most shipping companies offer voyages for the passengers where they can explore the entire Mediterranean in just a few days, getting off at the almost direct foot of the biggest attractions. Bari, Venice, Rome, Athens, Barcelona and of course Santorini can be reached within one week on the voyages advertised by popular shipping companies such as MSC, Costa Crociera (Costa Cruises) or Norwegian Cruise Line. Cruise ship that turns in the Mediterranean Sea has an average capacity of 3,500 people, but the largest passenger ships in the world can also hold 6,500 people. Passengers have the opportunity to get off at each destination and admire the sights - both as part of a group organized trip and individually- but they can also stay on board. Various shore excursions are offered for sale on board, which is typically the responsibility of local coastal tourism providers. These excursions are mainly focused on the "must visit places" of the city, but in order to avoid the huge crowd, they provide excursions, distributing the passengers for secondary attractions. Along the cruise tourism we can also get acquainted with a new phenomenon: 'tourist hinterland' which is a geographical area available to be visited, in other words we can also say that this is the cruise regionalization (Gui & Russo, 2011). Overcrowding of a city is even endangered if the tourist quarter and the cruise regionalization coincide, so in addition to the tourists staying in the city, thousands of boat passengers also flood the streets. Between the ports we can distinguish black hole and gateway ports, the difference is the distance from the downtown.

As it is clearly visible on the figure below *(Figure 1)* black hole ports are characterized by their location in the city centre, surrounded by major attractions, so passengers are not interested in moving beyond this area. In contrast, gateway ports are located relatively far from

the city centre, so landing passengers have to travel a lot to admire the main attractions, in this case the tourist hinterland is expanded.

Figure 1- Cruise visitors' flows distribution within the tourist hinterland
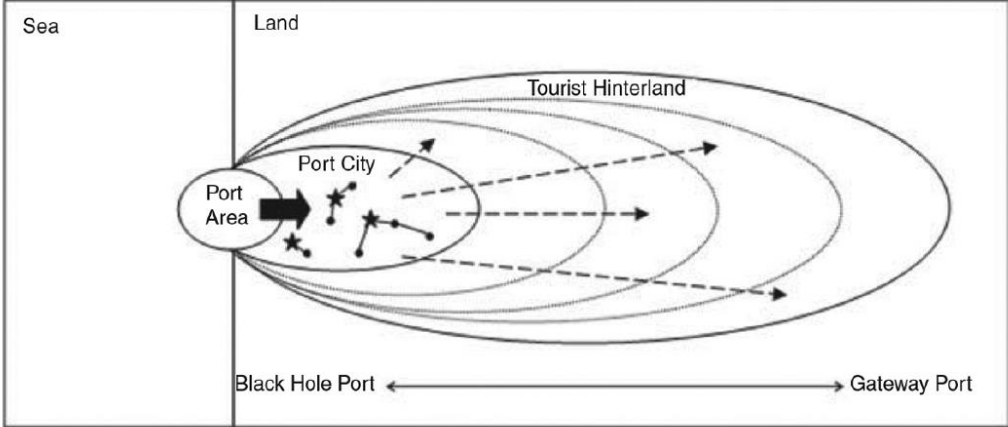
Intense congestion and overcrowding is even more frequent phenomenon in case of black hole ports, where the tourist hinterland is reduced to the port city area as all the main attractions are available within a few kilometres or walking distance. In the most striking cases where the tourist hinterland is small, tensions between locals and tourists are even more likely to develop, risk of damage to historical heritages and natural endowments is much higher.

Focusing on cruise tourism, we can define that the daily activities of local residents - as well as tourists vacationing on the island or in the city - are prevented by the time and geographical constraints of cruise visitors.

Finally, I think it's worth to mention that the ship's passengers spend a maximum of 5-6 hours in a certain port city, so the exploration time of all the attractions comfortably is much reduced, which also has a strong effect on the attitudes of tourists. In addition, it makes sense that passengers –who were shipping long hours to get to the port- want to see the most typical attractions during this short time interval and not 'secondary sightseeing sites'. The insane haste is only further supported by the fact that passengers must return to the ship by all means, before departure.

From an economic point of view, this massive influx generates a strong increase in demand for some special services, but in general these disembarking passengers have an insignificant will of spending. These passengers receive all-inclusive catering on the board of the ship so they typically do not eat in any catering units, the product they buy is drained in some souvenir items (post cards, magnets, bag, t-shirt, glasses, hat… etc.) these products make a minimal contribution to the city's tourism revenues.

II.4. Macroeconomic overview of Greece

In order to examine the market economy of Greece as widely as possible, it is recommended to perform a PESTEL analysis in which we take into account various factors that identifies the general conditions of a country. The acronym of PESTLE stands for: Political, Economic, Sociological, Technological, Legal and Environmental words first consists of the initial letters. This analysis helps to analyse the general conditions, and give us a clear picture of Greece's economy.

Political environment

Greece is a parliamentary republic, government is headed by the Prime Minister, who is currently Kyriakos Mitsotakis since July 8, 2019 (Hellenic Republic, 2021). Political power is largely in his hands, while the government exercises the executive power. Greece is the member of EU since 1 January 1981 and also joined to the Schengen area at 1 January 2000 (European Union, 2020).

The Greek political landscape can be said to be extremely unstable, over the past decades there were multiple administrative shocks in all areas of public administration. There is no better reflection of the instability in the government than a motion of censure that has been tabled against the government of Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras - who held the position of prime minister two times between January to August 2015 and September to July 2019 – (WIKI.PHANTIS.COM, 2019). Furthermore, the political disagreements in the country do constantly exist. Beyond instability, corruption in the political area causes very serious economic problems, as tax evasion means a significant loss from large amounts of tax revenue for the economy. Examining the health care system of Greece, it can be said that - just like other sectors - healthcare has been hit hard by the economic crisis. Since 2010, reorganisations have taken place, which has made today's healthcare system able to see patients properly. (Economou, 2010) During the pandemic years, Greece had a good position unlike other EU Mediterranean Member States, although it is also due to strict restrictive measures of the government introduced at an early stage of each wave of pandemic helped the country to avoid massive death toll. During the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic the daily cases were around 50 to 100, however the second wave was much severe, number of registered cases has exploded. According to the published data of Johns Hopkins University, the peak of the second wave is considered to be 18 November, when the number of cases exceeded 3,000 cases per day, during the autumn period, the number of deaths also increased linearly (Johns Hopkings

University, 2021). The third wave claimed even more lives, with an average of 3,000 new daily infections through the early days of April, 2021, despite the use of one of the EU's most stringent defence mechanism against the spread of the epidemic. During the spring lockdown, Greek residents could only leave their own homes with the permission of an SMS-based system. (GTP, 2021)

Economic environment

The global financial and economic crisis of 2007/8 plunged the country into a very deep recession, the debt crisis also caused a historically- never experienced - high unemployment rate that reached a peak at 28% in 2013 (THE WORLD BANK, 2020). Since 2015, the unemployment in the country has gradually declined. The ongoing pandemic is causing the economy to shrink, which could raise another upcoming recession in the country placing more and more people under considerable financial problems, but slightly less severe as it was before. The last measured unemployment rate of Greece was around 16.8%, which is not as high as it was during the years of debt crisis but still extremely high if we examine the other countries of European Union (*following: EU*). This rate is the highest rate in the EU, slightly ahead of Spain with its 16.26% unemployment rate (THE WORLD BANK, 2020). In order to understand the importance of this very high number, we need to know that the EU average is 7.5%.

The key pillar and the most important sector of the Greek economy is tourism, which has started to grow rapidly over the past decade. Greece is one of the most famous tourism destination in the EU, according to Eurostat data of 2018, Greece is the fifth most popular tourist destination on the continent with 102.6 million nights spent by non-residents (Eurostat, 2020). 2018 was a very successful year for the Greek tourism with all-time high inbound tourism, as record number of guests (more than 30 million traveller) came to the country to admire the country's natural endowments, get to know Greek culture and gastronomy (THE WORLD BANK, 2018). *(Figure 2)* From 2017 to 2018 the tourism growth increased by 9.7% (OECD LIBRARY, 2020). Tourism industry contributes greatly to the GDP and it provides job opportunities for a lot of people.

By number, in 2018 the total contribution of travel and tourism was around 36.9 billion euros (STATISTA.COM, 2021). In the same year the number of people directly and indirectly employed in the tourism sector was 381 819, which is around 10% of the total Greek population (STATISTA.COM, 2021).

Figure 2 - Number of international tourists in Greece
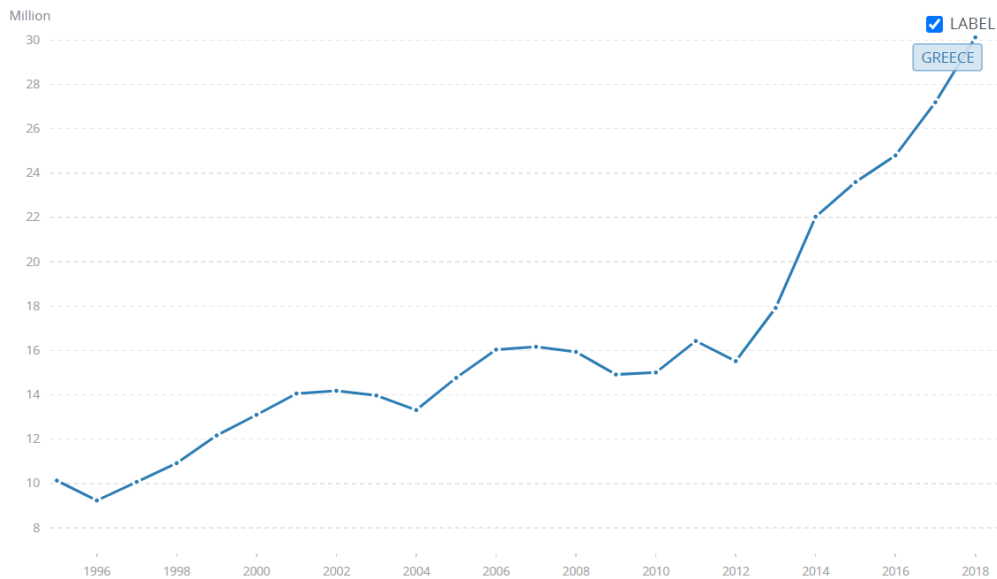
Tourism is greatly enhanced by the fact that the Greek infrastructure is very well developed – at least comparing to other Mediterranean countries -, citizens and tourists can rely on the same high level of digital connectivity as in any other European country. The country is networked with good quality motorways, tourists can travel to 21 airports (available for normal passenger traffic) from different parts of the World. The two busiest airports are located in the greater cities of the country, Athens and Thessaloniki, but due to the rapid demand growth of small Greek Islands, the airports of Santorini, Mykonos and Heraklion also receives more and more passengers. Ferry boats are also play a very important role as a means of transport connecting the mainland and the smaller islands.

Obviously the economic crisis caused a huge slump in the Greek GDP, but after several years of downturn, in 2017 the country's economy started to grow for the first time after a long period of time. The driving force of the economy is the tourism, but the downturn also plagued the tourism sector. Greece joined the Euro area in 2001, and started using euro as their national currency from February, 2002 after a one year long transitional period (EUROPA.EU, 2020). Although, Greece uses euro as a currency, its economic situation cannot be said to be stable, nor does the pandemic situation hold a very bright future to it.

Social environment

The current total population of the country is 10,396,622, based on the latest forecast (2019) census data (Worldometers, 2021). The capital city of Greece is Athens with 664 046 inhabitants, and the second biggest city is Thessaloniki with 354,290 inhabitants, in terms of their territory, the capital is much bigger with great urban areas (Worldpopulationreview, 2020)

The education of Greek society is getting better, as decades ago only a very small portion of the population received school education, nowadays 99.366% of the Greek population - which officially corresponds to primary education - is having primary school enrolment (THE WORLD BANK, 2018). The school system is very similar to the Hungarian system, divided into three main parts, the preschool, compulsory and upper secondary education parts. Children start primary school - a bit earlier - at their age of 6, and lower secondary (gymnasium) school at 12. Kids at their age of 15 start the lyceum (general, multilateral or technic-vocational) and finish at their age of 18 just like in other EU countries (Ministry of Press and Mass Media, 1999).

Greek families have always placed a high value on education, the number of students participating in international exchange programs is also extremely high. Contrary to the important emphasis on education, according to the Pisa survey the ability of Greek children is still below the OECD average -having only 457 points while the average is 487 points- (OECD, 2018). The main educational centre is located in the capital, Athens, and in Thessaloniki. Most graduates also find work in these cities. The country's largest medical institutions and health centres, offices are also located in these cities. In addition to the public sector, private sector banks, insurance companies and travel agencies have also settled in the capital, potential employees with a university degree are also moving to these bigger cities.

Tourism has developed greatly in recent decades, today 20% of revenues come from tourism-related services (Reményik & Szabó, 2019). The ranking leader sending countries in 2019 were Germany (~4 026 000 tourists) and England (~3 499 000), but it is also very popular among Hungarians (Statista Research Department, 2021).

Technological environment

Although only ten years ago there were still constant water and electricity supply difficulties not to mention garbage and sewage drainage problems on the islands visited by tourists, nowadays the infrastructure is well–developed – comparing to other Mediterranean countries-. There are plenty of cell towers to reliable power networks, nowadays, the country's telephone system is adequate and network is reachable from all areas. Citizens and tourists can easily travel to and from the country by airplane, train, ferry or using any highways.

Legal environment

Country's standard VAT is 24% which is very high even in international dimension, which puts Greece at a competitive disadvantage compared to other states. (PwC, 2020) The realized VAT deficit in the country is also high, as tax evasion and tax avoidance are unfortunately a common phenomenon. (PwC, 2020) During the pandemic situation, Greece introduced relief measures for enterprises, freelancers and personal businesses such as VAT tax relief from 24% to 6% on certain hygiene products. (KPMG, 2020)

Environmental factors

Greece has very favourable geographical location, having the longest coastline in Europe, 40% of its territory is archipelago (Reményik & Szabó, 2019). As the country is having Mediterranean climate, mild weather characterizes all four seasons. Winters are mostly rainy while the summer season is very hot and dry. The country can be visited by tourist throughout the whole year as there are only few weeks without glorious sunshine. Greece's greatest attraction is its unique environment - in addition to its historical heritage – therefore, Greece pays extraordinary attention to environmental conservation and protection. Although the most important sector of the country is tourism, they have to pay close attention to preserve the natural beauty of the country. The government is particularly committed to minimalize the air pollution, reduce the ozone layer damage and disposal of hazardous waste. Overall, this means that Greece actually stands within international expectations for environmental policy. On the other hand, I personally experienced what a tremendous amount of rubbish is lying on the streets in the capital city, so still there are some problems to be solved in the future. In a long run the country is also committed to reduce the carbon emission as these days in the technically more developed cities there are growing number of households that uses natural gas a new energy source.

Summary of the PESTLE analysis

The instability of the Greek economy, corruption, tax avoidance, still extremely high unemployment rate may cause headaches since the total of problems listed above could lead to serious recession in the future. Greece has a very powerful tourism industry which can generate revenue through the whole year and secure job opportunity for lots of people, however due to the coronavirus lockdown this industry is also facing very serious danger.

II.5. About Santorini

Santorini has one of the most unique geographical features in the world, as it is the only inhabited caldera in the whole planet, geomorphological features are also special, as due to the volcanic origin the colours of volcanic cliffs and rock are black, red, yellow and snow white. The actual form of Santorini is due to the earthquake and widespread volcanic eruption (*Minoan eruption*) in the 15th century BC, which veritably burst the previous much grander island (Handwerk, 2012). In 1956, again, due to a strong earthquake, a significant part of Kamari was destroyed, buildings ruined (Santoriniport, 2021). Santorini's landscape is familiar to most from marvellous postcards, with its white-painted walls, sky-blue domes, and cyclamen coloured bougainvillea flowers. Many don't know but the famous Greek symbol, the blue dome actually symbolizes heaven, perhaps this also explains why most people have Santorini at the top of their bucket list.

Santorini has now 14 villages spread out the Island, the most famous touristic destinations are located on the west side of the Island from where visitors can admire the most beautiful sunset in the World. On an average day, nearly 3,000 people rush to Oia to take the most beautiful, 'Instagrammable' photo of the sunset. *(Appendix No.4.)* However, the other side also has a great charm as only the eastern side of the Island has a direct, built beach. Fira *(also: Thira)* is the capital and commercial centre of Santorini. Santorini's characteristic focus is romance, unlike nearby Mykonos - which became a real party centre - the island is characterized by peace, tranquillity and harmony. The main purpose of tourists who choose Santorini as their touristic destination is peace and relaxation.

In addition to the picturesque sights, Santorini is also world famous for its wines. The unique taste-experience of the wines is due to the volcanic soil and in part to the fact that the vineyards are not infected, so they are able to sink their roots into the soil just like in ancient times (Kourakou-Dragona, 2016). Santorini's vineyards are the only own-rooted vineyards in all Europe, furthermore the characteristic volcanic soil is also very unique that has a strong stimulating effect on the growth of grapes.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

III.1. Data collection and analysis

The research is heavily based on phenomenological research approach with a grounded theory (over tourism), so I choose deductive research to create the hypotheses from literature models and test them in operational terms with numeric data, professional experiences and based on the opinions of a large number of statistical population. According to this approach, I formed the following hypotheses:

H1: I assume that cruise tourism is the largest representative element and mostly responsible for the over-tourism in Santorini.

The topic itself addresses a practical problem in the (too) quickly growing number of tourist in the Island therefore I collected both secondary and primary data - primarily from existing databases of local tourist office and international statistical institutes, -. I was also assisted by the National Council of the Hungarian Greeks and Hungarian Embassy of Greece.

III.3. Research approaches

My thesis with its interdisciplinary, aims to explore two main topics – over tourism in Santorini and the COVID-19 pandemic effect on the Island -. As the topic of my thesis is really up-to-date, there were no available researches done by others - or only for a small part of my topic like about the over tourism in Santorini -. Since no one - perhaps foreign Greece specific research professors- has dealt with this subject before me as a whole, I chose the method explanatory research which means I focused on explaining the topic from different aspects by exploring the topic of the hypotheses formulated at the beginning of my research as broadly as possible. During the preparation of the master thesis I planned to define research methods in the light of the stated goals. The hypotheses of my research work required both primary and secondary research, so beyond the examination of the available secondary data of Greece – within that, Santorini - it was also important to ask the opinion of the grand public, get acquainted with travel habits. In order to have a much deeper knowledge about the topic, I made a questionnaire survey and an in-depth interview with further travel-related professionals. These methods were the empirical sources of my dissertation.

III.4. Sampling of the quantitative research

As I mentioned before, to give external validation to my research, I made both primary and secondary research. Secondary research of my thesis is based on a quantitative research, thanks to which I can get familiar with the travel habits, and also a qualitative research. The primary consideration in the selection of the research methodology was that the obtained results and data should be quantifiable, the data collection should be performed on a representative sample, and the individual responses should be summarized. I planned to carry out the questionnaire survey electronically, for which I used the Google form questionnaire software. The questionnaire survey provides an opportunity to be relatively low budget – in my case absolutely free- but also quickly get easily aggregated, processed information that can be evaluated in terms of the topic under study. I made two questionnaire, one of the questionnaires could be completed in Hungarian, - which is my mother tongue – and the second questionnaire could be completed in English. I found it highly important to have bilingual answers because in this case, a lot more people can fill the questionnaire. However, I need to emphasize that in order to obtain an effective data collection, standardization is essential, so I made a standardized questionnaire – which means both Hungarian and English language speakers needed to answer the same questions. While compiling the questions, I paid close attention to form those type of questions that can support or refute the hypothesis. I also considered it important to have questions easily and quickly able to be completed electronically. The electronic system ensures that the respondents are not able to rephrase, modify or exchange questions while completing the questionnaire - I could also say that every responder have the same circumstances - and this is essential to summarize the obtained responses, compare and evaluate them. The applied questionnaire contained a total of 14 questions, 3 general and 11 tourism-specific questions. The questionnaire contained only closed questions, in order to facilitate the evaluation, but the responders could choose from single and multiple responses. *(Appendix No.6.).* I defined the time interval between 10 February, 2021 and 1 March, 2021.

Sampling is selecting the group from which actual data collection will be carried out in a research, sample is a subset of individuals from a larger population.

III.5. Sampling of the qualitative research

In addition to the questionnaire survey, I also planned to use an in-depth interview, which is characterized by the fact that the intimate atmosphere gives the opportunity to the interviewee to open up and talk honestly about their feelings, share the topic related experiences, thoughts and resolutions. I found the interviews highly important, as these professionals can impart that special knowledge that cannot be read in professional books either. During the selection of my interviewee, I carefully paid attention to examine the topic from different contexts, I conducted interviews with various Hungarian and Greek travel experts. Qualitative data consisted of structured interviews with experts from the tourism department.

I was honoured to have a long interview with, **Balázs Gyémánt** *(following: B. Gy.)* – professional world traveller, blogger and tour guide-. His life is all about travelling - *used to be before the pandemic-* all the way from an early age. *(Whole path of life: Appendix No.1B).*

I think myself to be very lucky to also have the chance to talk to **Vassilis Spanopoulos,** *(following: V. S.)* the General Manager of the five star luxury hotel, Remezzo Villas, which operates in the most prominent area of the Island, in Imerovigli. Remezzo is a boutique hotel with 13 units, established in 1983 as a family business ran by the Spanopoulos parents and still operates with this model under the management and ownership of Vassilis Spanopoulos.

I also had the opportunity to have a professional conversation with the **Sissy Drosou,** *(following: S. D.)* General Manager of the three-star Roula Villa, which operates on the opposite, shallow side of the Island in Perissa since 2001. The ancestors of Drosou family was running a small hotel with only 10 rooms for several years, since the 1970s, but keeping pace with the growth of tourism, the inheritor family members decided to build a larger, higher standard hotel to the inherited land.

Each of my in-depth interviewee representing a different field but both of them are considered to be experts in the subject. I thought the conversations enriched my study with interesting knowledge.

My goal was to ask travel experts from as diverse field as possible. The popular artists like **Anna Kodak** and **Olivér Zsilák** *(following: A.K. and O. Zs.)* are well known in Hungary, performing arts all over the world as they have dazzled the wide global audience in all parts of the planet in the last decade. The artist couple, so called "seafarers", having been employed to do entertaining service on board, were disembarked to Santorini for 2 years in a row, overall 17 times. I thought the experiences of Anna and Olivér might be really interesting in my

dissertation, as they have toured almost every part of the world where a cruise ship can dock, so they have a great basis for comparison.

IV.   RESEARCH ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Santorini is one of the most popular tourist destinations in the world, but before I take step by step the major tourist milestones of the Island, within the framework of historical overview, it is highly important to examine what factors facilitated Santorini to become so beloved.

IV.1. USP of Santorini

The island's unique selling products (USP) helped to become one of the most sought-after destinations in the world, as many say: it is a place we must see before we pass away. In the following figure *(Figure 3),* I summarized all the specialties that made Santorini a truly unique tourist destination. On the following pages, as part of a historical review I introduce the development of the tourism on the Island over the past two decades.

Figure 3- USP of Santorini

Unique geography
- volcanic elements, iconic black beaches
- huge sea-filled caldera, only inhabited in the world

Breathtaking sunset
- incredible panorama from any of the towns on the west side of the Island

Iconic architecture
- blue and white painted walls, gates, arches
- authentic greek architectural elements
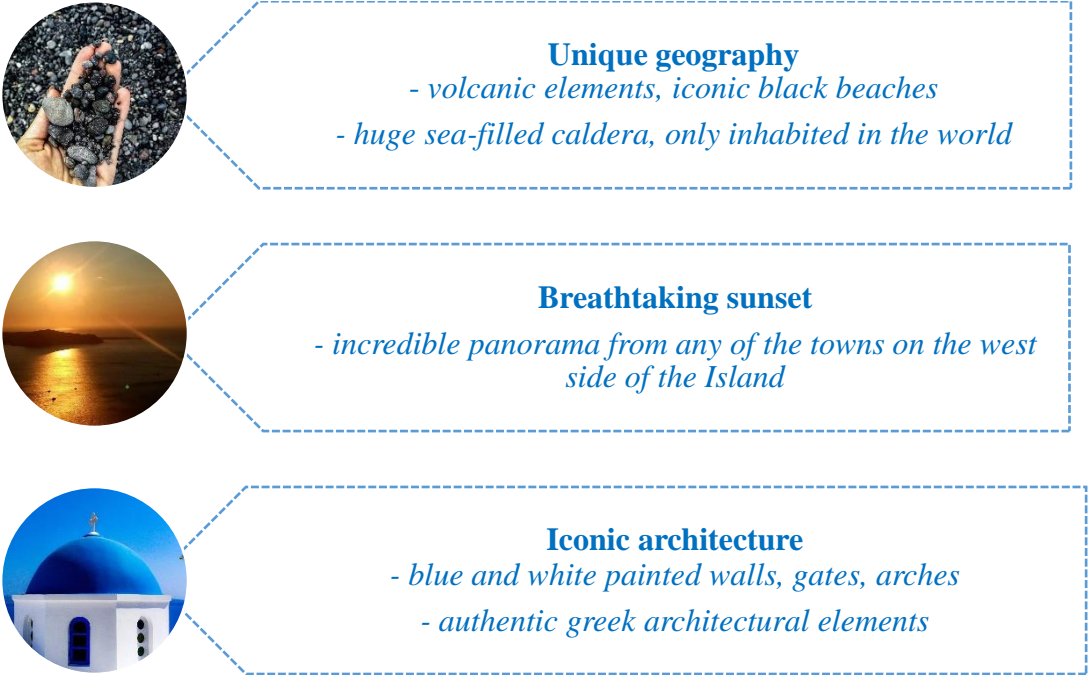
Source: own editing by using own photos, 2021

I asked **Balázs Gyémánt** -professional world traveller - which elements of Santorini do he think made the island world-famous. „*Santorini has unique geography with the caldera.*

The white houses and the blue sea and sky create great contrast that is photogenic. Greek food and culture is well-known everywhere. The weather is great, except for the windy months. You can take amazing photos and live in the cliché worlds that you saw on Instagram. Most likely, you will see something very similar to the filtered social media images. The legend of Santorini, the mythical parts of Atlantis and the lost world, the Greek gods all make it interesting. Everyone has learnt something about these in their lives and people like to see it for themselves too. Besides accommodation, meals in Santorini are much more affordable than it is in Mykonos. Hotels on the other hand are very expensive in high season. The island is also easily reachable with the international airport and domestic flights and ferries too."- he said.

"Santorini is like a postcard, guests disembarking from the ship can feel like a real fairy tale. The sights are minimal, so half a day is perfectly enough for guests to tour them and take photos. The sightseeing of Fira - Oia is often outrageous, as the guests are able to count the sights with one hand. Santorini is typically famous for its natural beauty, not the multitude of attractions." – said **Anna Kodak and Olivér Zsilák**, the world-traveller acrobat couple.

IV.2. Development of tourism in Santorini

Santorini has been a visited summer tourist destination since the late 1960s when residential people from Greek mainland started spending their summer holidays in the coastal Islands. Santorini with its unique black – volcanic beaches, crystal clear water and extremely high number of hours of sunshine throughout the whole year became a popular choice of holiday destination. The very first guesthouse of Santorini opened in Kamari – in 1956- where the guests were hosted by a devoted housewife who were welcoming tourist even in the middle of the night and also would cook for them if they felt hungry (Lichrou, et al., 2017). As the flourishing of tourism have started to begin on the Island, more and more young people - with a degree or higher education in tourism- returned from Athens with the aim of helping to start tourism in Santorini and the hope of better prospects. Tourism has brought serene prospects to the economically declining island, constructions and infrastructural developments have started, though at the beginning, there were no grand hotel chains, but warm-hearted, "blooded" local hosts, who welcomed the tourist in small renting rooms of their houses. The early stages of tourism was characterized by authenticity and amateur hospitality, where a close relationship developed between the host and the guests. The term 'amateur' is a positive indicator in this regard, as the travel experience might be perceived differently by that time than by the time of later intensified tourism. As Vassilis Spanopoulos told me, their establishment was the 5th hotel

to open in the village of Imerovigli in 1983. The season was even shorter at the time, it ran for about 4 months a year, between June and October.

The big tourist boom started in the 1990s, the Island has been captured by international tourists. Santorini was an easily accessible Island from the mainland by ferry, but as massive tourism grew, so did the Thira Airport. As crowd demand flooded the Island, strictly business-oriented aspects came to the fore, agriculture was abandoned in favour of tourism, the previously loved hosts' attitude needed to change. Hundreds of guest houses were built in areas previously used for cultivation (mainly: tomato, courgette, grapes). Vassilis Spanopoulos highlighted that today, Imerovigli counts more than 180 properties, including hotels and vacation rentals, with a season that runs for 7 full months from April until November.

As the years passed the Greek economy went through many difficulties, along with some short downturn followed by positive growth in the market. More and more foreign direct investment (FDI) came into the sector, large international entrepreneurs took over the management of Santorini's tourism, from the hands of small Greek families. Attendance is demonstrating a regular seasonality pattern, but this is not because there would be no place to visit on the Island during the shoulder months, rather because the lack of the direct flights during the off-season. During the winter months most of the major source countries stop – or greatly limit- their flights. In terms of the profile of Santorini, it is that type of touristic seaside destination that many people only seek in the summer months – may some sophisticated traveller come during the spring/autumn months for the historical part of the Island-.

The large-scale, rapid growth of tourism over the past two decades has been seen on the small Greek island, on the following pages within the framework of historical time travel, I monitor how tourism developed in Santorini based on touristic indicators, published statistics by the Hellenic Statistical Authority (ELSTAT). Notwithstanding, I find it important to note that the statistical office does not distinguish between tourist and tourist, so in some figures even cruise ship passengers, backpackers are equivalently counted as resort guests – even it is ultimate that their will of spending is dissimilar. In some cases the statistics only group incoming guests by type of accommodation where they stay during their travel.

I divide the time interval into three basic parts and explain the rise or fall of tourism in parallel with economic events. Whereas the island has been welcoming tourists since the 1900s, it would be very difficult to present the 'introduction' part supported by data series, although there are available quantifiable data about the 'growth' period. This section is going to be presented as the first basic part, namely, from 2003 to 2011. The second part is starting from 2012, which was a major difficult year for the Greek tourism industry and obviously the Greek

economy as a whole. The third part is starting from 2013 until 2019 - beginning of 2020-, when the pandemic exposed globally. During these pages I often draw economic parallels for the easier monitoring of tourism and for the sake of transparency and interpretation.

IV.2.1. Early ages of the international tourism (1997-2008)

In the early stages of international tourism, tourism was still in its infancy, every Santorini residential – regardless of education – tried to benefit from the guests in some form, some sold ice-cold Coca Cola along the way, some opened a stamp and postcard stall, and many stood as personal guides. (Lichrou, O'Malley, & Patterson, 2016-2017) My interviewee, **Vassilis Spanopoulo** said that his family's dream was to develop *"a hub where international tourists connect with the Island through their establishment."* Based on their vision, the guesthouse's main aim was to promote the *"natural beauty, culture and heritage of Santorini". (V. S.)*

In the early 2000s, guests were still buyers of amateur family businesses, where tourists continued to be treated as real 'guests' rather than clients or customers. They often provided free services and direct warm hospitality, from today's point of view it may sound like an amateur hospitality. However, the hosts' attitude also changed radically as a result of the incredibly fast growth in demand.

As I formulated at the very beginning of my dissertation, when we first visited the island with my family in 1998, the landscape of the island was completely different, there was a much smaller built-up area than today, and luxury private villas were obviously not existing. The standard of hospitality was rudimentary and amateurish, but at the same time extremely authentic. The car rental was a huge innovation on the island, but the quality of the cars and the road network was much poorer.

As I said, Roula Villa was working with 10 small rooms only, with no extra facilities until 2001, Sissy Drosou described the change in demand over the past three decades as follows *"We needed to remove everything and build a new complex of more modern rooms and a pool in the middle. Roula Villa is on a constant change year to year in order to improve the quality of services and hospitality we offer to our guests."*

As shown in the figure below *(Figure 4)* the number of guests arriving to Santorini has greatly increased since the millennium.

Figure 4- Number of arrivals, 2003-2008

Time series analysis
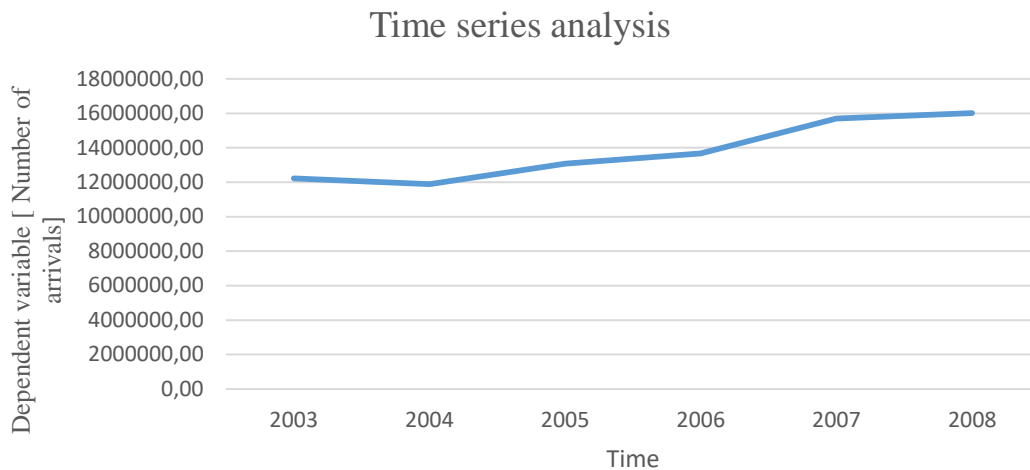
Source: Own editing, 2021 based on adjusted database by Hellenic Statistic Authority, 2003-2008

IV.2.2. Close to state bankruptcy (2008-2012)

The world economic crisis of 2008-2009 plagued Greece into a debt spiral for many years, the period after the global economic crisis was characterized by financial uncertainty. The country suffered a huge budget deficit, a historic decline in GDP, and rising unemployment. The debt crisis was echoed by Greek hotel performances as well as in 2009, the regional average occupation percentage was only 59.3 %. (STR, 2019)

The € 120 billion in-depth loan from Eurozone countries and International Monetary Fund itself, has brought the Greek economy back from the brink of bankruptcy, bringing enough stability to the tourism sector as well. Nevertheless, during the uncertain economic situation, the pace of investments slowed down, the number of room opening and closures lessened. *(Figure 5)* Even in the most frequented holiday destinations of Greece, just like in Santorini there are still abandoned constructions, interrupted at that time.

Figure 5- Evaluation of hotel supply by star ratings 2008-2012 in Santorini
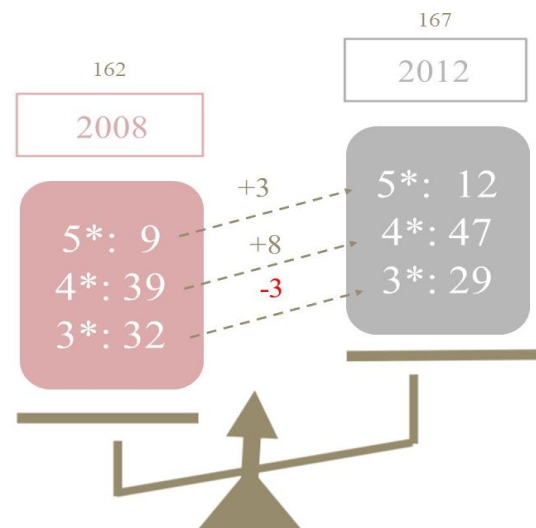
Source: own editing based on Hellenic Chamber of Hotels et al HVS analysis, 2014

32

2010s showed an outstanding flow of tourists, more and more international travellers came to admire different areas of Greece, on the following density map, *(Figure 6)* we can examine the value of different visitor flows within each regional unit and municipalities of the country. As it is shown on the density map, the most sought-after area by tourists was the Administrative Region of Crete and Attica, in 2012. On the regional map, the tourist significance of the Cyclades archipelago is not outstanding, yet it can be said that the flow of tourists started to grow. The so called amateur hospitality on the Island soon developed into quality tourism that was able to satisfy all the needs of international guests with higher financial power.

**Figure 6- Arrivals at hotels and similar establishments
by Regional Unit and Municipality, in 2012**
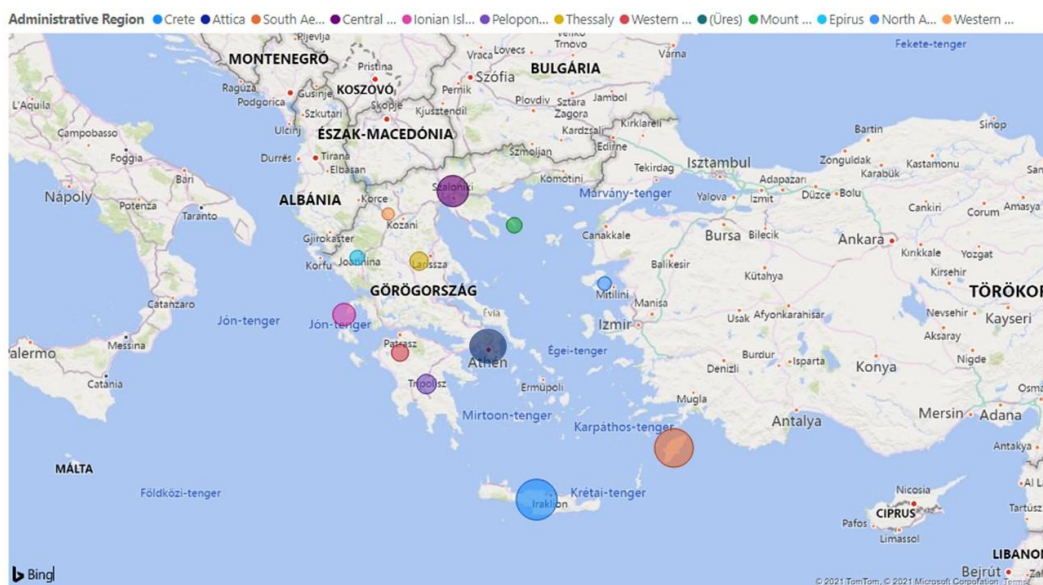
Source: own editing, 2021 based on database of Hellenic Statistic Authority, 2012
Explanation: The administrative division of Greece is in line with Kallikratis Plan, number of arrivals data are excluding tourist campsites

Balázs Gyémánt, the Hungarian touristic expert just visited Santorini for the first time in 2012, looking back to the Island's tourism that time, he already used the term "massive tourism" and he has also added that there were huge crowds rolling down the hill.

IV.2.3. Growth period of the tourism (2013-2019)

Following the nadir of 17 million of arrival annually, the period between 2013 and 2019 was characterized by the continuous breaking of records. The following graph (*Graph 1*) shows that after the strong decline of 2012, the tourism started to grow rapidly. The year of 2014 was even much stronger as tourist started to 'trust' in the economy of Greece, the economy

previously dubbed unstable has been stabilized mainly due to the economic action that the Greek government announced in 2015 capital controls, meaning a limit of the government extended to the amount of money that people can withdraw from banks (BBC, 2015). This amount of money was set at €60, so it meant each individual was allowed to take out maximally this much money from the bank every day.

After this economic control, the international tourist arrival increased from the total of 14 million into 16.94 million (by 21%). The previously unseen tourist crowd spent a total of 68 million of nights on Santorini. Until 2018, there was a steady smaller to larger scale growth. On the Graph 1, the continuous positive growth is clearly visible, namely an Annual Growth Rate of 33 % starting from 2012 to 2018. By the end of 2019, Santorini reached a point of complete saturation.

Graph 1- Arrivals and nights spent in different accommodations, 2010-2018
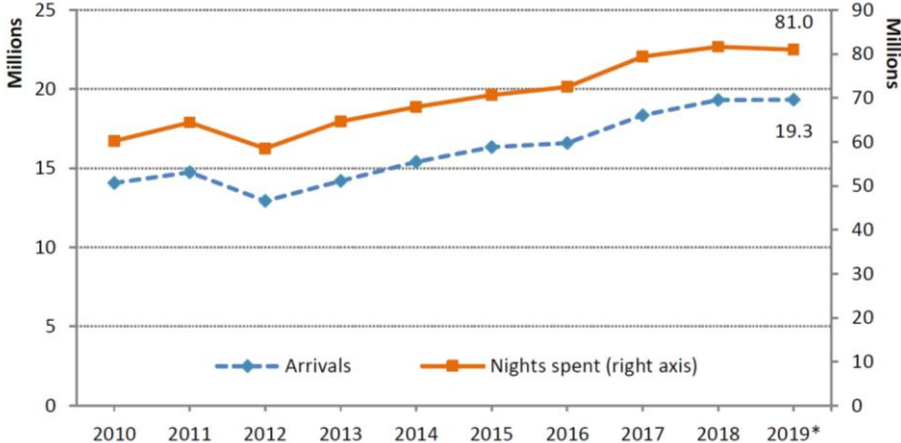
Explanation: based on number of registered tourists within a 9-month period of January to September;
*provision for the year of 2019
Source: Hellenic Statistical Authority, 2019

This ever-increasing interest was extremely favourable on the one hand, as tourism helped the start-up of the economy and on the other hand it was ominous. We may wonder, in the case of a small island - where the accurate total population is 13,725 and the territory is 76.19 km² - how many tourists are still optional. As an analysis we can use various economic indicators, first of all, the ratio of local residents to tourists' in Santorini in 2018. This year was an outstandingly successful year from the aspect of guests arriving to Santorini.

Local:tourist ratio in Santorini

$$\frac{19,000,000*}{13,725**} = 1384.3$$

Explanation: **number of arrivals in 2018; **number of inhabitants in 2018*

This indicator shows us that each local people got 1384.3 people in 2018, so the total local:tourist ratio in this case was 100:138433,5. This ratio is astonishingly high, however, I find it important to mention the two errors contained in this statistic:

- Among the number of arrivals, cruise passengers disembarking from the vessels are also counted, though they do not stay at the Island for a full day. On the other hand, they strongly contribute to the density of the island.
- Although the statistics do not mark this, in my opinion foreign guest workers who travel to the island from another country and do seasonal work in a hotel / restaurant are also included in the number of arrivals.

On the following graph we can see the local:tourist ratio in Santorini

Figure 7- Local:tourist ratio in Santorini in 2018
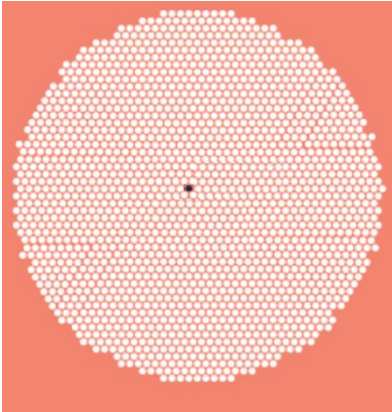
Explanation: black ● symbolise 1 local and the white ○ symbolise 1 tourist
Source: own editing based on Electronic System for Travel Authorization, 2021

This ratio is particularly high because we are examining an island, to be exact a prime resort destination, where mostly only those live who supply and serve tourists. My motivation was to create this tourist density map, which perfectly illustrate how amazing the influx of tourists is. I think this figure is a good illustration of how much the existence of tourists affects the lives of local residents.

We can also examine the total number of overnight stays per relevant tourist are in km^2, as Santorini is considered to be a prime resort destinations, I assume that the whole territory of the Island is a relevant tourist area.

The total number of arrivals during the year 2018 was 19,305,087, but in the most popular month – August- there were 3,700,000 visitors on the Island. The population density in August, 2018 was:

$$\frac{3,700,000}{76,19} = 48,562.8/km2$$

For obvious reasons, this is not an ongoing condition, but thousands of tourists disembarking from cruises cannot be deducted in this case, as tourists spread the bigger cities *(exactly: Fira, Imerovigli, Oia and Firostefani)* in the same way, thus increasing the density of the cities and the general crowd on the Island.

Under the examined period naturally, the summer months were more popular, when up to five times as many guests arrive to the Island as during the winter period. In the most sought-after month – August – almost 3 700 000 people arrived from all around the world.

Graph 2- Number of arriving tourist in 2018 by months
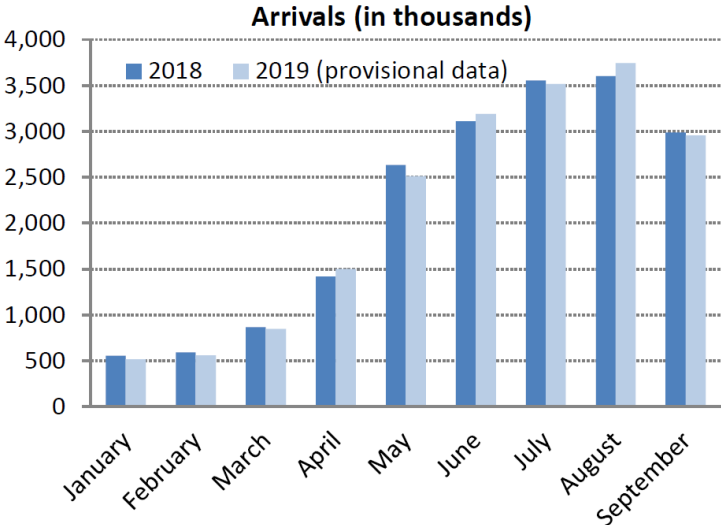
Source: Hellenic Statistical Authority, 2019

For an even more specific analysis, we distinguish between guests staying in hotels and similar accommodations and tourist campsites. In 2018 - from January to September – a total of 19,305,087 people stayed in the Island, whereby 14,491,538 people were non-residential (14,243,916 tourist stayed in hotel and other similar accommodation and only 247,622 tourist stayed at tourist campsites). In the same year, the number of residents were 4,813,549 based on the data of Hellenic Statistical Authority. From these numbers we can conclude that tourists are much more willing to stay in hotels, alike the number of local residents is tithe of the tourists.

85.4 % of people staying in the Island (and spent at least one overnight at any of available accommodations) were non-residential, while 14.6 % resided in Greece for at least a year, or has arrived in Greece with the intention to reside in the country for at least 1 year. A small difference is observed when passengers who have not spent a single night in a single hospitality unit are also included, which means that a significant amount of tourist arrive only for few hours and return to their point of origin before the night.

Along with the consumer society, the demand of travellers also changed, a much greater demand for exclusive, luxury, private trips, boutique villas appeared so the supply also needed to change in the same direction as the new demand. The hotel market in Santorini began to open for high-spending international tourists, it rather started positioning itself as an iconic, most characteristic proposal, wedding and honeymoon destination, instead of family holiday target.

Unfortunately there is no data is available on how much money an average Island visitor spend, but projected across Greece, we know that guests spent an average of €66 in 2016, but Americans and Swiss guests are much more 'generous', they spend around €87-85 each day (PwC, 2018). By examining the tourist expenditure per stay, we can notice that the bulk (45.3%) of the expenditure goes to accommodation and food, this is followed by the cost of air/sea/road transport, commerce and entertainment is at the end of the list (PwC, 2018).

According to research on the whole of Greece, an average tourist spends €533 on accommodation and meals during their holiday, in the case of Santorini, these numbers are certainly even higher, as I have already predicted, prices on the island are unrealistically high, especially on the western part of the island.

Santorini's market is divided into two main parts:

1) small ultra-luxury hotels and villa complexes with balcony view to the Caldera (west of the Island)
2) family and group orientated hotels with the possibility of swimming in the sea (east of the Island)

Typically, the more expensive accommodation is located on the west side of the island, while on the east side there are pleasant hotels for lower-spending travellers (Papadimitriou & Phoca, 2014). The following diagram *(Graph 3)* shows an even more detailed picture of the quality of accommodation that tourists typically stayed at.

Graph 3- Number of establishment in regional unit of Thira in 2018
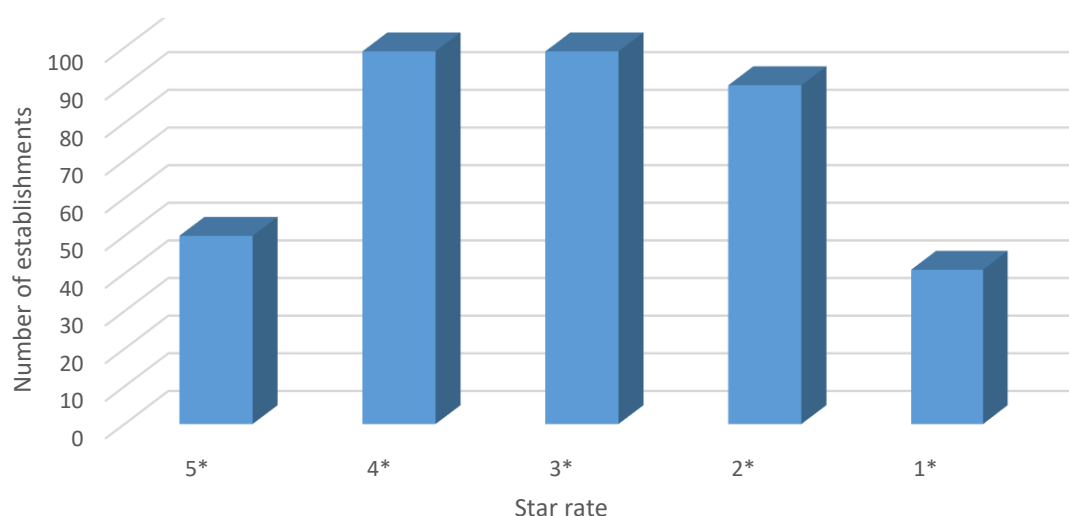
Source: own editing based on numbers of Hellenic Statistical Authority, 2019

In the regional unit of Thira the total number of establishments is 379, most of these accommodation is rated 4 *, but we can see there are almost the same amount of 3*, although the popularity of 5 * hotels is growing significantly. In order to get a more accurate picture of how much an accommodation night cost during this period, I present our own reservation, which was booked in the town of Kamari on the east side of the island. Hotel Hermes is a 4 star – family run- boutique hotel, a few hundred meters near the black beach.

Table 3- Case study of a 3* hotel price in 2018

Name of the hotel	Date of stay	Price per night
Hermes Hotel Kamari ****	27 August 2018 - 1 September 2018	€ 220/per room (4 people)

Source: own editing based on own booking details, 2018

The average length of stay in Cyclades in around 4 nights according to the date of Hellenic Statistics Authority. In this case for a 4-night holiday, only the cost of accommodation is € 220 for each person, we can count on at least another 30 euros for a daily meal, which is almost above the average (€66) spend in Greece. Based on these data, we can conclude that prices are very high on the Island. From 2018 to 2019 there was a slight increase as one year earlier the average booking cost for a twin room was even higher, €589/night (Skopis, 2019). Accommodation prices of the Cyclades were extremely high in Europe, ahead of even Ibiza and Sardines.

I clearly remember, when I was looking for accommodation (in 2018) on the Booking, the luxurious boutique hotels on the west side cost up to €1400/ night.

After accommodation and food, the second largest expenditure is the transportation, which is in our case is possible in two ways: by airplane or by a cruise ship. On the following pages I also present in detail the traffic data of the two modes of travel.

Air traffic to Santorini

The Island's air traffic is concentrated to one single airport – Santorini National Airport- all international and domestic aircrafts, including commercial and charter flights land here. In the case of Santorini, aviation step to the forefront as the capital is several hours away by ferry from the capital, visitors are willing to pay more for a much faster and more comfortable journey.

Santorini is often compared to the island of Mykonos, which -with its similar geographical location and architectural style- is very similar to Santorini. These two islands are the main touristic destinations of Cyclades, their airport make 90% of the total airport arrivals in this area (Papadimitriou & Phoca, 2014). This comparison is also used on the following graph, which illustrates how the air traffic of the islands developed since the early 2000s. 2012 was a salient year, this significant growth was around 24%.

Graph 4- International tourist arrival in Santorini and Mykonos
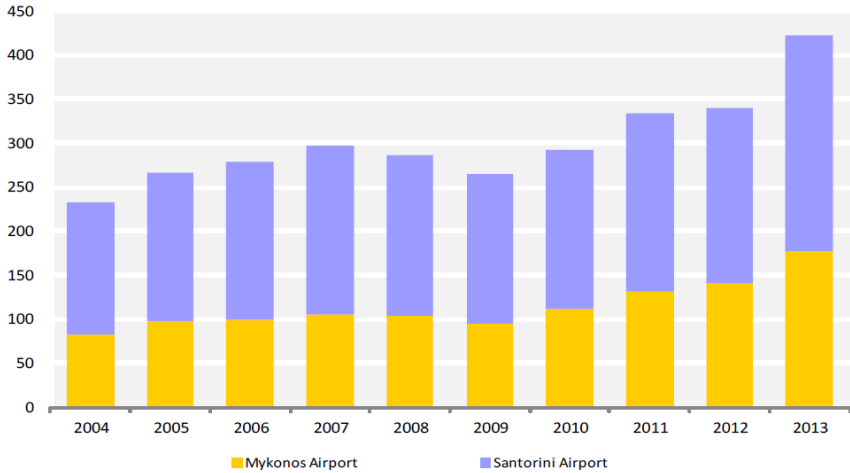
Source: Hellenic Statistical Authority, HVS Analysis, 2014

For both islands, the airport operates at reduced capacity, while in peak period it receives not only passengers from commercial airlines but also guests of charter flights from other major cities.

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As I formulated earlier in the literature review, in many cities, the cause of over-tourism is the massive cruise tourism as well as the popularity of Airbnb accommodations. In the case of Santorini, the first phenomenon is significant. On the following pages, I will deal with cruise tourism in more detail.

Cruise tourism in Santorini

Significant proportion of tourists arrive to Santorini Island by disembarking from any of cruise ships. The two ports – Skala and Athinios – of Santorini have experienced unprecedented traffic in recent years. Based on public figures of the Hellenic Port Association, in 2015 Santorini was the most busiest port of Greece, thus ahead of the capital - Athens - as well with more than 600 cruise ships bringing a total of 790,000 people to the iconic Island (Marcus, 2016).

In 2019, 1.2 million people arrived to the Island by cruises and ferries, hence Santorini was the 8th busiest port in the World (Avoid-crowds.com, 2020). In the peak season - between May and October – monthly average of 180 000 cruise passengers disembarked to the Island (Avoid-crowds.com, 2020). On the following table, it is clear that the ports of Santorini are almost equally busy on any day of the peak season, with an average of 10,000 passengers arriving.

Table 4 - Busiest days of 2019 based on maritime traffic

Date in 2019	Number of passengers
1. 16th June	15,341 passenger
2. 10th June	13,615 passenger
3. 2nd September	13,454 passenger
4. 14th July	12,126 passenger

Source: (Avoid-crowds.com, 2020)

According to their location, Athinios Port is located in the southwestern part of the Island, whereas Old Port Skala is located right at the foot of the capital, Fira. The main harbour is Athinios, which operates for passenger ferries and cargos so all the ferries arriving to Santorini dock here. Although Athinios is the largest port on the Island, it is not suitable for accommodating vessels, so they berth in the caldera right at the foot of capital, passengers of large cruises are getting transported ashore by smaller boats (tenders) to the Old Port Skala (in sea-term: a tender method[3]). On a really crowded summer day, up to 4-5 cruise ships dock in

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[3] The vessel anchors at the sea and passengers are transported ashore by means of smaller so-called tenders.

the caldera at a time, and dozens of smaller boats (tenders) depart in the direction of the Old Port. I asked my interviewee - **Anna Kodak and Olivér Zsilák -** *who were working on cruise ships for the past several years as an acrobat couple* - about her experiences, how they liked to disembark from a cruise ship near Santorini's Old port scale.

A.K.: *"The tender stipulation itself lasted on average more than 15 minutes, so many smaller ships cruised up and down between the 4 ocean liners and the shore. After that, all passengers lined up for the nearly 1-hour queue that led to the cable car. (For cruise passengers and the crew, the price of the cable car is a bit lower.)"* Anna also added that based on her own experience, there are only a few passenger who climb the cliff and walks up the stairs, almost everyone is trying to wait their turn for the cable car.

8. Figure -Cruise visitors' flows distribution within Santorini

The excessive maritime traffic necessarily has a negative effect on the Island's tourism in many ways, especially if we also examine the concentration of tourists within the Island. On the following figure *(Figure 6)* – based on the theoretical knowledge - I tried to depict the cruise visitors' flow distribution within the Island. As it is clearly visible, Skala cruise port –which is by far the most crowded port of all - functions as a Black Hole port - known from a theoretical basis- so it is located within walking distance of the city centre. The centre of the Island is located 260 meters above sea level, on the top of the cliff. Passengers disembarking to the Old Skala Port have three options, they can either use the cable car, ride a donkey *(more specially: mule),* or hike up 580 steps right next to the donkeys. Tourists can choose to pay €5 for the cable car that will rip them off right in to the heart of Fira in just a few minutes, or ride a donkey for €8, or maybe hike the cliff - which is minimum 45 minutes, based on

Source: own editing, 2021

my self-experience-. I would point out that, as Anna Kodak said, passengers on cruise ships
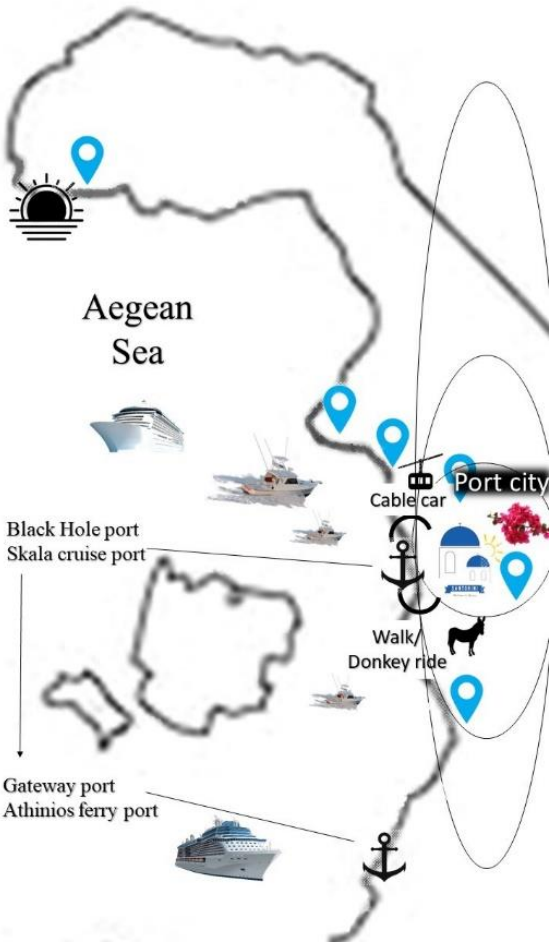
travel at a discount on the cable car, which constantly transports (not concentrating) the thousands of people who arrive to the port one morning. This is especially advantageous on the one hand, as they do not overswarm the city at the same time, on the other hand it is inconvenient, as guests have to stand for up to 1 hour full in the sun.

As it can be seen from the graphics I made, the area of tourist hinterland in Santorini is extremely small, the cable car puts passengers right into the heart of Fira - the capital built directly to the top of the volcano- thus passengers are not forces upon disperse. Most of Santorini's attractions are just a few minutes' walk away, and the streets of the centre are extremely narrow *(Appendix No.3.)* The main points I marked, Fira, Firostefani, Imerovigli and the furthest point Oia. Along the hiking trail built between the cities, there are plenty of luxury souvenir shops, jewellery shops, lavish designer boutiques and restaurants. Prices due to immeasurable demand are of course extremely high.

As it is visible on an average day, the Island is constantly filled with passengers disembarking from cruises. The arrival time of the first cruise is 7 am, and the last one's departure time is 10 pm. In the following figure (*Figure 7*), I show the arrivals of the vessels on 22th of August, when a total of 5 cruises arrived to Old Port Skala. As can be seen, around lunch time, nearly 15,000 passengers swarmed Santorini's roads.

Figure 9 - Maritime traffic by examining an average summer day

Number of cruise passenger disembarking
(22th August, 2018)
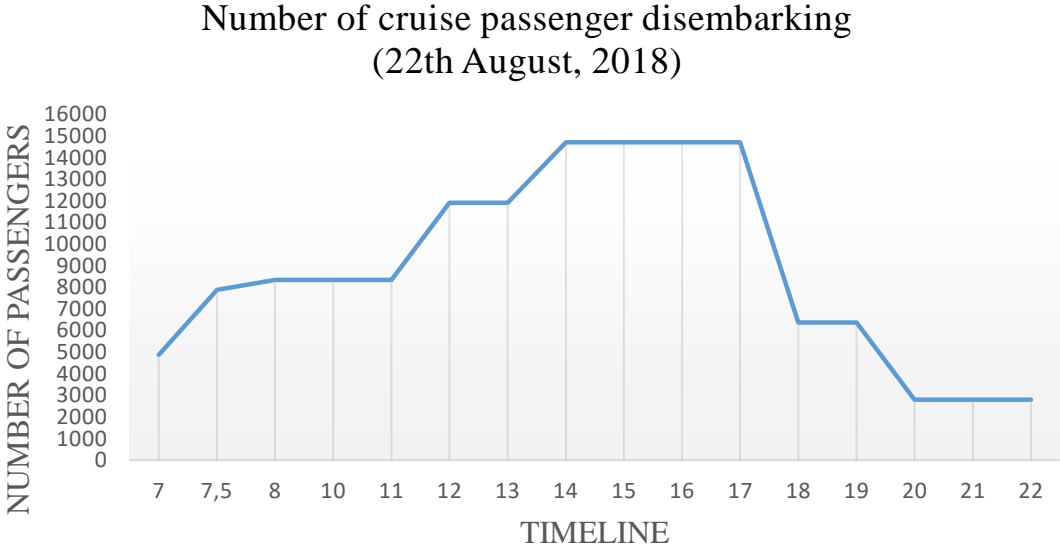
Source: own editing based on data of Santorini Cruise Ship Timetable, 2018

Although the biggest problem is that this time perfectly covers the excursion time of the guests staying on the Island. I personally experienced that during this period the roads become

impassable, the souvenir shops become full to bursting, crowd idly standing by is especially disturbing.

The shining light in case of the Greek economy was the tourism, but during the really 'successful' years, there were a growing concern that the Santorini can no longer cope with this huge amount of tourists. Despite there were several infrastructure improvements – new terminal at the Thira Airport, expansion of the Athinios port, new road between Oia and the airport- local residents are slowly beginning to realize that less may be more. The Island actually become its own victim, in a technical term: it is called touristic cannibalism. The destination no longer require further marketing, advertisement and was even forced to impose restrictions in the number of tourists.

IV.2.4. Pandemic period (2020-)

Empty streets, lonely airports, restaurants without tourists, just like a ghost towns in American movies. It was a heart-breaking and scary at the same time to watch how the spread of a SARS-CoV-2 virus sized of only 60-140 nanometres commanded to stop the lives of 7,674 trillion people (Cuffari, 2021). The year of 2020 can also be said to be the real black year of global tourism. The coronavirus pandemic severely affected the economies of all countries, it gave pause to the previously non-stop spinning sector as tourism in all countries essentially ceased to exist. However, I think the case of Greece really stands out, because, as I wrote in the macroeconomic review, a significant part of the Greek economy and GDP is provided by tourism – or rather it would provide-. Residents may find themselves really lucky, as the Island was a virus-free bubble where not a single case has been registered on the island of Santorini during the spring lockdown, so it gave them enough confidence to open carefully for the summer period.

The Greek government opened its borders to international traffic from 1 July after several months of severe lockdown (Mourby, 2020). Certainly, the guests already suspected that a fraction of the previous demand would come - the cruise ships, for example, did not operate at all in the summer of 2020 - but it was a substance of very high concern that 90% of the Island's revenue was generated by the influx of guests, most of residential made their living out of their guests.

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It is not a big surprise, that Santorini's tourism that strongly relied on the continuous growth since the last two decades also felt the effect of COVID-19 pandemic forcefully. As tourism machine was forced to stop, the number of visitors plunged. This dramatic plummet is visible on the following graph *(Graph 5).* In terms of tourist numbers, in the most successful year, 2019 the number of arriving guests were around 23 million, whereas in 2020 this number was only around 6 million.

Graph 5- Arrivals and nights spent in Santorini 2018-2020
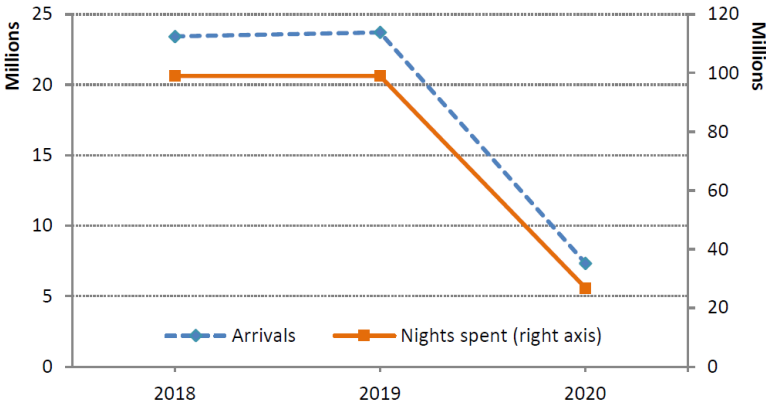
Source: Hellenic Statistical Authority, 2020

The drastic decline was, of course, also due to the fact that guests were able to arrive to the Island only from July, as well as the fact that the usual habit of traveling was significantly reduced. From July to September the number of arrival tourist was about 30% of the same period last year – which is from a global aspect not that bad- although it is notable that this year the number of residential travelling to Santorini increased (the number of international tourists in July was -79.3%).

Graph 6- Composition of tourist in 2019 and 2020
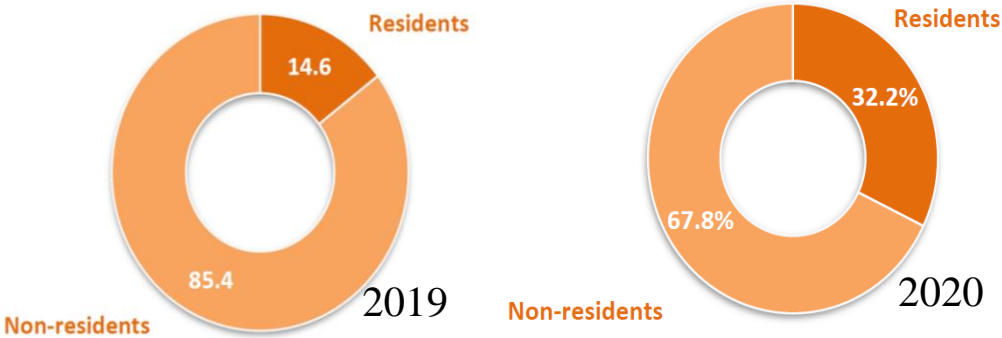
Source: Hellenic Statistical Authority, 2020

International traffic was constantly leaking back to the island, as on July 1 only 3 planes arrived but by the end of the month, an average of 45 arrived. The 'loser' of the

coronavirus was the capital, Athens, whose occupancy fell by 30%, in contrast, the South Aegean Region experienced strong growth comparing to other Greek areas (Paravantes, 2020). Although the previous record years were far below the black year of 2020, it can still be said that the islands of the Cyclades won the trust of inbound and outbound tourists.

Balázs Gyémánt – professional world-traveller – also spent a few days in Santorini during the pandemic period, I asked him about his experiences: *"I would have never gone to Santorini if there was no COVID-19. If I go on a personal trip, I do not want to be in mass tourism spots. I do that for a living when guiding, I need different things when I am on my own holidays. My motivation was that it will be empty and it is time to explore places that are usually full of people. I was right, there were few people and it was a great vacation. It was also easily accessible. We travelled to Athens and took a plane to Mykonos and a ferry to Paros and then to Santorini for 3 days. The direct flight was also helping in the decision by Wizzair. I did not want to connect during the pandemic in another country. Prices were affordable. The sunsets, the walks were all quaint. No masses, no tour groups, no cruise ship passengers for the day. Beach beds were available and busy restaurants were easy to make bookings at. And on top, I have a friend who owns an amazing Airbnb flat there that was available. So besides, the destination, the price and accessibility were also important factors in making the decision."*- he answered.

In my opinion, Santorini was in a really fortunate position, as hotels specializing in mostly private luxury suits, hotels already used privacy model few years before the pandemic. Any hotel of Santorini could be a great destination for travellers who wanted to feel safe while keeping the social distance. Most of Santorini's suites have private entrance, dedicated pool or Jacuzzi which is sanitized daily. Breakfast could be easily served in a well-functioning way directly to the terrace, so guests did not need to contact with each other (Mourby, 2020). I believe that the pleasant sea-air and the high number of hours of sunshine also boosted guests' confidence, as it was already confirmed by the WTO that the high vitamin D level have a beneficial effect in defeating the virus.

Just as every coin, a pandemic, has two sides, on the one hand the negative economic impact is indisputable on the other hand the guests' quality of life during their holiday was significantly better. The once-bustling Island showed a completely different picture during the pandemic, in recent years it was strongly suffering from the consequences of too many tourists, but this year there were no thousands of people rolling down the narrow streets in vast crowd, it was no need to wait long minutes at the highlighted photo spots just to take a picture. The breath-taking landscape and historical buildings were not tucked by the clinging people.

IV.3. Chance to rethink- post pandemic tourism

In the midst of a coronavirus epidemic, pondering how the world will change - including the tourism industry – is simply like groping in the dark, there are further positive scenarios which say that as soon as people getting derestricted the demand for travel will immediately explode, but there are also negative scenarios that years of sweaty work can only bring back the pre-pandemic results. According to some experts, a pandemic could mean the end of over-tourism - although I would refute that- . Anyway, these predictions are so different that this cannot be determined from current data, but many cities - so did Santorini- also recognized that COVID-19 is a perfect opportunity to rethink tourism and life on the Island. Quoting the words of the mayor of Santorini (Antonis Siglas):

"We need to resist our habits and eventually change them. Not by force, but by our own free will that will prove beneficial," (Sigalas, 2020)

The mayor of Santorini pointed out in his speech that if everything remains by 2050 there would be more plastic in the seas than fish, he said that this is a task that should raise people's awareness and change their everyday life immediately. This campaign is so unique that Santorini can be the first island in the Cyclades where plastic garbage is reduced to 0 (Krinis, 2020).

B. Gy.: *"I saw the ads for plastic-free Santorini. Running power with sustainable energy is a great option, also having e-cars instead of gasoline. Having less plastic around the ocean is always great. But big factories need this mentality too"* – he said. Balázs composed that this is a great initiative, but the factories should also join this campaign, since they are the ones who produce and sell their products in plastic, not the individuals. He also added that if cruise ships would change to renewable energy and use electric power when docking and not fuel, it will be beneficial to the destinations also.

Under the months-long, very strict restrictions, number of mitigation attempts are set, which they would love to implement together with their returning guests in the future. Other over-tourism destinations (such as: Amsterdam and Venice) already decided to impose additional taxes and restrictions after the pandemic thus alleviating the saturation *(for instance:*

Amsterdam would tax only the ocean and river cruise passengers with €9/person) (GreekReporter.com, 2019).

I asked Anna Kodak and Balázs Gyémánt if they thought it would be a solution to ban all the cruise ships from Santorini.

A.K*.: "In my opinion this is not a good solution, it is hard to believe but the passengers spend a surprisingly high amount of money when visiting a city. Most of them are high-income tourists who sit in restaurants, shop in luxury boutiques, souvenir shops, bringing significant revenue to the island."*

B.Gy.: *"Absolutely not. Cruise ships will inhale life to these islands after COVID-19. They bring a lot of people who spend a lot of money on the island. And the cruise ships also pay for mooring. Look, if someone does not like the over-tourism side of Santorini due to cruises, they will visit other smaller islands where there are no cruise ships. And then, they will go for a day trip to Santorini by ferry, which is basically the same thing."*

However, they both agreed that the number of ships in the port could be limited, thus reducing the crowd effect. We also agreed that the complete disappearance of cruise ships would mean a huge loss of revenue for the Island, locals would earn less so they would try to raise the prices - to the impairing of other tourists-.

The pandemic provided an opportunity for the constantly moving tourist machinery to stop for a moment and gave chance to redesign the future. Tourism is a driving force in the Greek economy and was therefore particularly stringent to apply measures that effectively slow down the spread of virus in the country. Greece was the first European country to announce that it opens its borders to international passenger traffic in the spring of 2021, in order to revive the tourism sector, despite the serious global situation of the third wave. (Schengenvisainfo, 2021) Furthermore, Greece was among the first countries to announce that they will accept any type of vaccination certificate or digital COVID-protection document. *(According to the current news of 26th April, 2021)* The ongoing efforts of the Greek government to restore the tourism mirrors the importance of this sector. In my opinion, the strict restart plan is exactly what needs to be after a pandemic.

IV.4. Comparative analysis

The two opposite sides, west and east sides of the Island have different geographical features. Starting from the volcanic origin of the Island, on the west side, the hotels are set in a

rock, high above sea level, while on the west side, establishments are directly built on the coast. The western side of the island is characterized by luxury private villas, the eastern side is characterized by family apartments. The target group of cities located in different areas also differs greatly from each other, in the western areas, due to the high price level, typically wealthy travellers stay, while the western area is much more "budget-friendly". Due to the geographical location of the western, more frequented area, it is especially recommended for active adults, as there is a significant difference in level between the streets, even walking requires continuous stair climbing.

As a part of my qualitative research, I had the chance to conduct professional interviews with two general managers of establishments operating on both the western side and the eastern side. On the following pages, I describe the knowledge gained during the professional discussion around different fields, in a comparative way.

Investments in the light of changes in the attitudes of tourists

Both General Manager highlighted that they need to improve continuously over the past decade, as far as equipment is concerned, the owner of Remezzo Suites said that from the 1990s it started to be urgent - due to the hotel's luxurious environment - to install air-condition units into all rooms and to build swimming pool. Since the 2000s, the construction of build in-room hydro-massage bathtubs was also demanded, just like the change into bigger sized beds - from full size to king size - and to prove complimentary bathroom amenities for the guests. *"The 2010s required even higher levels of services, e.g. rooms with outdoor hot tubs, increase of housekeeping service, from once a day to twice a day (day and turndown service) and a porter luggage service."(V. S.)*

The swimming pool as well as high speed internet service also became key in the eastern part of the Island. *"A few years back we had internet only in the public areas around the pool and the reception. Now strong internet Wifi needs to cover the whole building." (S. D.)*

In recent years, tourists started to demand even higher quality services, the travel experience began to be determined by the quality of services. In order to satisfy the changing demand, Remezzo Suites held various trainings for the staff, *"in accordance with government guidelines and a hotel hygiene certification by Forbes Travel Guide".* (Forbes Travelguide, 2021)

The General Manager of Roula Villa focused on practising the world-famous, gracious Greek hospitality. *"We strongly believe that our guests need to feel at home and to make sure*

they feel happy and comfortable. The only way to do that is to be close to them and we make sure we meet everyone personally." She also added that another key factor is to create an open environment where a guest is free to ask, not leave with a bad taste in the mouth. *"If you can anticipate needs and you do your best, people will always appreciate it." (S. D.)*

Hotel performances through the past decades

For both hotels, 2018 was the most profitable year, the exceptionally high value was necessitated by two factors: on the one hand the setup of high number of direct flights, on the other hand they were able to extend the hotel booking window from 6 months to 9 months. *"This resulted in better operational and sales planning." (V.S.)*

The two hotels also agreed that for both, bookings for 2020 fell sharply, each hotel suffered by 70% loss in occupancy, but this year they are both hoping to reduce it to 35-50%.

Possible options for managing over-tourism

The General Managers of each hotel agreed that the pre-epidemic over-tourism was an unsustainable situation, they also formulated various solutions. Based on **Vassilis Spanopoulos'** opinion: **"*there is a huge need to better control with a certain cap for the number of passengers that visit every week, rather than banning, this is the only solution in order to keep the island sustainable." (V. S.)*

The General Manager of the Roula Villa, emphasized that even at the peak season, it is possible to find many hotels or rooms available. In her opinion, there are not many tourists on the island as a whole, the real problem is that people only visit specific places, for example they make a pilgrimage to reach Oia before the sunset. *"The island has many "treasure spots" and as locals, we should help our guests discover those. During the pandemic, I set myself the goal of exploring several new places on the Island in order give alternatives and to find smaller businesses with good services for my future guests."(S. D.)*

V. RESULTS

V.1. Results of the quantitative research

General statistical data

The sample size of the questionnaire was 332, of which 23.3% (n=84) were male and 74.7% (n=248) female. The age of the respondents shows a heterogeneous distribution, 40.4% between 41-64, 22.3% between 26-40, 22% between 19-25, 14.8% over 65, and 0.6% under 18. The majority of respondents- 72.6%- live in the capital, 20.5% in cities and only 6.9% in villages. Their willingness to spend also shows a significant distribution, 48.8% (n = 162) spend between HUF 100-200 thousand on an average holiday, while 27.7% spend between HUF 200-500 thousand, 20.2% less than HUF 100 thousand and 3.3% up to HUF 500 thousand in usual. Responders typically travel by car (61.2%) or plane (58.7%) to their summer destination, with train and boat highly underperforming.

Travel attitudes in 2021

The purpose of the questionnaire was to find out if people generally plan any vacation for the summer of 2021, based on the answers I found out that 74.4% plan to leave this year (2021), while only 25.6% say they would rather stay home. Many of them, 61.6% already *(first quarter of 2021)* know where they want to go, 38.4% are unsure. By the summer of 2021, respondents would typically (50.2%) plan a beach vacation, 37.2% a domestic city visit, and 33.5% a nature trip *(Appendix No.2).* I also extracted from the answers that most (63%) would be very happy to travel even to a popular destination, only 37% would stay away from crowded places. In 2021, the most important (52.4%) holiday aspect was cleanliness, 50.9% predictable warm weather, and 40.7% clean air. *(Appendix No.3)*

Questions related to Santorini

77.1% of respondents (n = 256) would like to travel to Santorini, 22.9% (n = 76) would not. Those who answered 'no', typically referred to overcrowding, costs, or the pandemic in general. According to respondents, Santorini's biggest attraction is the picturesque landscape (75.2%), unique construction (26.7%), warm hospitality (19.6%) *(Appendix No.4).* Most respondents (49.7%) would travel to the Island by scheduled flight, while 38.8% would travel by charter flight, 11.5% even by direct ferry from Athens. A heterogeneous distribution can also be observed regarding to catering services, 39.9% would require half board, 22.8% only breakfast, 20.9% full board, while 16.4% would solve the meal themselves *(Appendix No.5).*

Statistical correlations

A, Association relationship

I first conducted a Pearson χ^2 *(chi squared)* distribution test in order to determine whether there is a statistically significant difference between the expected frequencies and the observed frequencies (two quality variables). The two examined variables were: respondents' place of residence and the type of travelling device to choose to travel to Santorini. Based on statistical analysis: $\chi^2(1) = 6,654466$, $p < .001$, where Cramer index (T) is 0.10, and the Cuprov index (C) is 0.06 thus, there is a weak relationship between residence and the type of travel to Santorini.

Table 5- Pearson - chi squared distribution test

	Charter flight	Direct ferry from Athens	Schedule airlines	Total
Capital city	0,030176	0,069727	0,000699	
Village	2,31231	0,736917	0,866661	
City	1,373885	0,93985	0,324242	
Total				χ^2=6,654466

Source: own research 2021, (n=331)

B, Standard deviation

The standard deviation analysis characterize the relationship between a qualitative criterion and a quantitative criterion. The two examined variables were: respondents' age and their willing to spend during their travel in HUF. Based on statistical analysis, where $\sigma_k^2=0,0069$ and σ^2 is 0,9422, the relationship between the age and the preferred catering service is weak. The age influences the preferred catering unit by 0.74%.

Table 6 - Standard deviation

σk2	0,0069
σ2	0,9422
H2	0,0074 =0.74%
H	0,0859

Source: own research 2021, (n=331)

C, Correlation/regression model

Correlation indicates the magnitude and direction of a linear relationship between two arbitrary values, which was the age and the willing to spend in my examination. Based on the statistical

analysis, where $r^2 = 0.0029$ *(determination coefficient)* and the r=0.0539 *(Pearson's correlation coefficient),* the relationship follows a negative linear trend line, thus, the relationship between the two variables is inversely proportional. R>0, so for the higher values of x are paired with higher values of y. *(Figure 8).* The tightness of the measures can also said to be very weak, as the correlation coefficient (r=0.0539) is below 0.5. The equation of the calculation: y = -0.041x + 2.284, where a=2.284 and b=-0.041.

Table 7 - Correlation analysis

	Age	*Willing to spend*
Age	1	
Willing to spend	-0,0538	1

Source: own research 2021, (n=331)

V.2. Results of the qualitative research

During my qualitative research, I learned some really interesting things from travel specialists and based on their experiences, I proposed several solutions for the future. It was particularly interesting that in many cases the experts supported what was highlighted in the tourism literature, such as the impact of influencers and world-travellers on tourism. As Balázs said, "*calling someone an influencer is not a positive term nowadays. There are way too many "influencers" in social media. I do not like being called an influencer, but on the other hand, I influence people in their travel decisions and choices. Not only in a positive way, but if someone does not like the type of travel that I do, they influence themselves through me to do something totally different. I prefer the term: key opinion leader (KOL) or content creator or blogger.*"- he declared. Influencers nowadays on social media ignite the interest for travelling, they inspire someone to feel something similar that they portray in their images. They create stunning images mostly of themselves and they also create jealousy as many will never have the chance to do what the influencers do. *"I prefer to explore and find unique stories and places and create content about them. It's more of a journalism lead way than advertising."* – he added. On the other hand, I do believe all the users who has followers (even if it's not a really big follower base) have impact on other people, just as the Maslow's pyramid supports people want to belong to a social stratum and therefore are also willing to travel to feel like they have the same existence as their fellow human beings. In my opinion, influencers' activity could also be used

for the right purpose, such as drawing attention to sustainable travel. *"Of course, an influencer can show new areas of a city that are upcoming and visit places that are new and not have money for advertising. Sometimes, going off the beaten track is much less than what we think. We don't have to climb mountain peaks or go deep in the jungle, but going off the beaten track can be a mental challenge. Someone is visiting a museum that he has not had interest in before or trying an experience which for them is off their beaten track. By showing travel content of not too well-known places to our followers, they may get a spark in their eyes and consider visiting those places."* - Balázs Gyémánt complemented my thought.

I feel especially fortunate to have had the opportunity to talk about my dissertation topic with local hotel general managers, with decades of professional experience. Both experts assured that the needs of tourists have changed in the recent decades. They require much more equipment, a luxurious environment and even more excellent service. It was also argued that pre-epidemic over-tourism was an unsustainable phenomenon, but there was no consensus on the need to reduce the number of passengers on arriving ships. According to Vassilis Spanopoulos, the only possible solution would be to set a quota by the local government, but according to Sissy Drosou, it would be enough to bring treasure spots into to the fore.

V.4. Conclusion

During the preparation of my dissertation I made primary and secondary research, I assessed the phenomenon of over-tourism on the world-famous Greek island, Santorini. After describing the background of the theory, I formulated a hypothesis: *I assume that cruise tourism is the largest representative element and mostly responsible for the mass tourism in Santorini.* I also conducted my empirical research in such a way that this statement can be substantiated or refuted.

Santorini is a small island, where the accurate total population is 13,725 and the territory is 76.19 km². In the most successful year, in 2018 the total number of arrivals was 19,000,000 people, which means each local people got 1384,3 people. Furthermore, the arrival of guests, for obvious reasons, showed an unequal distribution as in the peak month, in August almost 3 700 000 people arrived from all around the world. Hellenic Port Association, in 2015 Santorini was the most busiest port of Greece, thus ahead of the capital - Athens - as well with more than 600 cruise ships bringing a total of 790,000 people to the iconic Island. The distribution of guests within the island is also uneven, as thousands of tourists disembarking

from cruises spread only in the most famous area *(exactly: Fira, Imerovigli, Oia and Firostefani),* thus increasing the density of the cities and the general crowd on the western part of the Island.

According to my study, the biggest problem is that an average of 15,000 daily cruise ship passengers disembark directly below the city centre of Fira, in the black hole port, thus reducing the tourist hinterland. It is also a problem that most ships dock around noon, so passengers overswarm the city just in the early afternoon, just like hotel guests. From an economic point of view, the damage is not compensated either, as the hotel guests spend more on transportation, accommodation, foods and further other expenses. However, above the minimum cost of passengers (on souvenirs and brunch) shipping companies pay a significant amount to the local municipality and to local small businesses for the tender-boat transport.

The 2020 pandemic the operation of cruise ships was banned for a short time, when means that last year no cruise ships could dock on the Island, which was economically unfavourable but socially excellent. The beautiful roads became walkable again, the picturesque landscape became fully enjoyable and photographable.

Based on the results of my research, I accept the statement that cruise tourism is the largest representative element and mostly responsible for the mass tourism in Santorini.

VI. CONCLUSION

During my dissertation, I presented the literature background of the phenomenon of over-tourism, I described step by step the formation and development of tourism in Santorini. Over the past 3 decades, the tiny, iconic Greek island has undergone an explosive development and at the same time gained world famous recognition, the destination became one of the most popular content on social media interfaces. As my interviewee, Balázs Gyémánt – the world-traveller said: *"The pretty photos of colourful silk dresses on the church tops, with the blue sea and sky behind became a cliché."* (B. Gy.)

The mass tourism represents a dilemma and a serious problem, both socially and environmentally. Cruise tourism harms Santorini's ecosystem and lifestyle due to the masses of people that roam on the Island for a limited amount of time. However, the total ban of cruise tourism is not a solution either, as 90% of the island is living out of tourists. In the future, a solution that benefits local residents and tourists is definitely needed.

V.3. Recommendations to the Thira Municipality

I believe that as the rollout of Covid-19 vaccines is now well underway for the population across Europe, the next key priority will be to re-gain the full confidence of the people. This is a really difficult task, as the population of the world has been staying in lockdown for more than 1 year. Although, there were two behaviours of the population, the first is the group of people who tried not to even notice the existence of the virus, and there were those who spied the news in fear, went shopping with rubber gloves, and completely disinfected the products of shopping. As people's behaviour differed during the virus, their attitudes to travel will also differ as soon as the borders reopen. I could say that there will be those who "wait until it's completely safe" and those who want to "escape to wherever" after a one year of sitting at home. However, in many cases, the psychic decision is overridden by the financial situation of the people, which also worth considering. From this aspect, we can also experience two types of people: those who unluckily lost their job – rate of unemployment globally grew - , and those who significantly increased their savings by spending less during lockdown.

Relying on the Island's popularity before 2019 and based on the date of 2020, I honestly believe that island of Santorini will be less affected in the post-pandemic period. Moreover, this obvious decline in tourism can be well exploited to try to normalize tourism on

the Island. On the following figure *(Figure 11)* I assumed all the future challenges of the Island that requires a solution. The first one is the most urgent, as I outlined on the previous pages of my thesis, there are rapidly growing number of visitors, though the locals and hosts cannot keep up pace with the unwavering demand. Beyond that, the tourists do not benefit from this high demand either, since - as I have shown in detail- excessive demand hugely raises prices, makes roads hard to drive through and takes away the beauty of the landscape. Overall, guest got a hardly enjoyable vacation that cost an arm and leg.

Figure 10 - Challenges of Santorini's tourism

High demand during peak period

Overutilization of the capacities

High plastic footprint

Trapped zombie hotels and areas

Source: own editing, 2021

Santorini was known about its unstoppable flow of inbound and outbound tourism. Nevertheless, unfortunately the geographical location of the Island does not allow to welcome so many (or even more) guests with a sufficient quality of life. Certainly, it is obvious that the Island will be chosen as a holiday destination by lots of visitors in the future in accordance with the special conditions, therefore it would be worthwhile to start the sustainable tourism.

I formulated two suggestions to solve the problems:

Post-pandemic plan A,

The fastest and most difficult decision would be if Santorini would introduce a restriction on the number of guests in order to mitigate the tourist density. From an economic point of view, passengers disembarking from the ship are the ones who have insignificant will of sending, on the other hand the cruise companies pay a high amount of tax (port charges) for the municipality. I do not consider a total ban on mooring the cruise ships to be a good idea - especially as in post-pandemic times, ship passengers can inhale life - but the number of guests should be reduced in any case. The island of Santorini had previously raised the idea that the limitation of the number of passengers disembarking could be a solution to the overcrowding of the Island, the municipality would limit the number of passengers to 50%, ~8000 passengers/day.

Post-pandemic plan B,

Secondly, I would suggest to pay more attention to the nearby islands, develop the infrastructure (install direct flight or ferry from the capital) so that the tourist crowd is better dispersed. It takes a long time for unknown areas to become famous, although the Internet can significantly shorten this time. With the marketing communication opportunities, it would be worthwhile to start promoting these unknown but beautiful areas, off the beaten track. I believe, travel bloggers and Instagram influencers can also raise awareness for these precious gemstones and awaken the desire in the traveling public to visit these islands as well.

Figure 11 - Proposed plan- B

It is very surprising to me that the other side of the caldera, Thirasia, is almost completely under-developed, indeed many nearby islands such as: Anafi, Sikinos, Ios, Folegandros … etc. *(Figure 12)* Obviously this plan would take much more time, but in a long run this initiative would also help the surrounding islands economically.
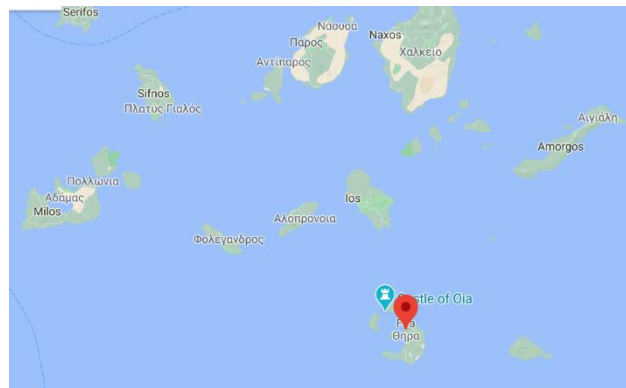
Source: own editing, 2021

Post-pandemic plan C,

In the end, I tried to come up with a solution that would help to spread the tourist crowd on the island, but would not require a large decrease in the number of ships. In my opinion, this is the best solution from several aspects including touristic, social and economic as well – I believe that the financial revenue generated by vessels cannot be a negligible factor-.

As I detailed earlier, the biggest problem is that the passengers getting off the cruises arrive concentrated right into the centre of Fira, but not so far from capital, there is also a mooring option under Oia, but there is no cable car here yet. In my opinion, the expansion of the infrastructure would allow the same number of passenger to disembark from the ships (so the revenue from the mooring would not change) yet the crowd would spread out. On the following figure I illustrate *(Figure 13).*

As shown in the figure, I would allow the **Figure 12 - Proposed solution- C** vessels arriving to the Island to be moored in two different ports, the same conditions would be provided for both ports (stairway is already provided, only the cable car needs to be built), so the tourist hinterland area would be divided into two separate parts. Both ports are at the foot of the two major 'sights' so neither would be at a disadvantage position. It is also advantageous for small boat companies working at two different points to get a job opportunity, not to mention the new cable car operators. I believe that this investment would pay off in a relatively short time and more viable conditions would be provided for tourists and residents as well.

Source: own editing, 2021

Overall, I consider my research to be successful, I was able to examine the topic of my choice as widely as possible. I think myself to be particularly lucky to be able to conduct professional interviews with experts from different fields, on a topic that is especially very kind to me. Holidays in Santorini, considered to be one of the most pleasant and important milestones of my life, hence I sincerely hope that the wonderful island can recover from the economic crisis caused by the coronavirus pandemic as soon as possible and once guests leak back gradually to the Island, it can find a suitable solution for over-tourism as well.

APPENDIX
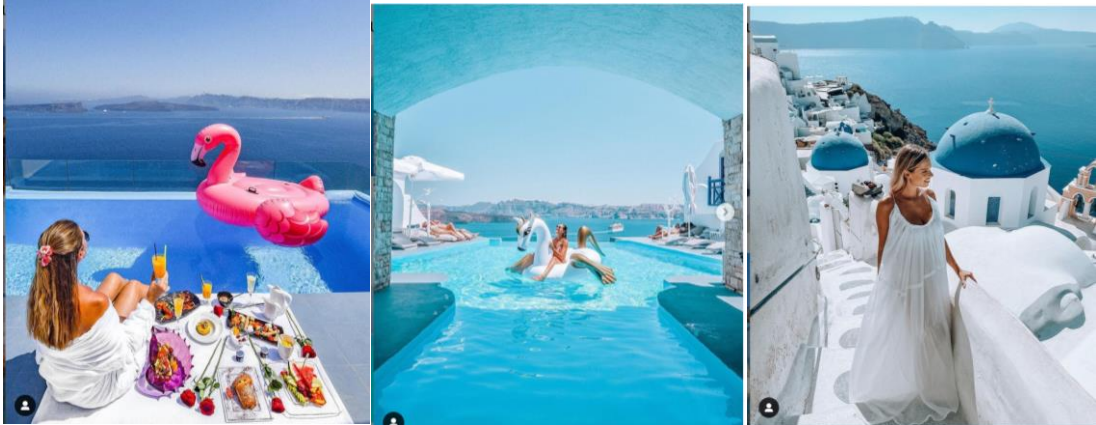
Appendix No. 1- Santorini sunset

Appendix No. 2- Santorini architecture

Appendix No. 3 – Crowds rolling down Santorini's narrow roads

Appendix No. 4. – "Insta-positive" shots of Santorini

Appendix No. 5- Location of Remezzo Suites and Roula Villa on the Island

Roula Villa – Perissa, Santorini   Remezzo Suites- Imerovigli, Santorini

Appendix No. 6 – Questionnaire questions

Your gender?
- o Female
- o Male

Your age?
- o -18
- o 19-25
- o 26-40
- o 41-64
- o 65-

Place of your residence?
- o Capital city
- o City
- o Village

On average, how much are you willing to spend for a 5 day long vacation?
- o -100 000 HUF
- o 100-200 000 HUF
- o 200-500 0000 HUF
- o 500 000 HUF-

How do you usually travel to the holiday destination?
- o Airplane
- o Cruise
- o Train
- o Car

Do you manage to travel in the summer of 2021?
- o Yes
- o No

Is there a destination you have already set for yourself?
- o Yes
- o No

What kind of destination would you looking for in 2021?
- o Domestric city trip
- o City trip abroad
- o Excursion in nature
- o Beach vacation
- o Themed vacation

- o Wellness relaxation
- o I do not travel

Would you travel to a famous holiday destination this year?
- o Yes
- o No

What aspect are important for your 2021 summer holiday?
- o Family-friendly
- o Gastronomy
- o Predicatble wam weather
- o Few tourists
- o Cleanliness
- o Clean air
- o Private sphere
- o Entertainment options
- o None of there are important

Would you love to travel to Santorini this summer? If your answer is NO, please explain why!
- o Yes
- o No

Why would you choose Santorini as a holiday destination?
- o Lots of friends have already been there
- o Many influencers posted photo from here
- o Unique architecture
- o The beauty of the landscape
- o Warm hospitality
- o Luxurious environment
- o I would not choose

How would you travel to Santorini?
- o Charter flight
- o Scheduled airplane
- o Direct ferry from Athens

Which dining option would you choose?
- o Bed and breakfast
- o Half-board catering
- o All-inclusive catering
- o I would arrange all meals for myself

Appendix No.7

What aspects are important for your 2021 summer holiday?

None of there are important	14
Entertainment options	92
Private sphere	82
Clean air	135
Cleanliness	174
Few tourists	112
Predicatble wam weather	169
Gastronomy	93
Family-friendly	119
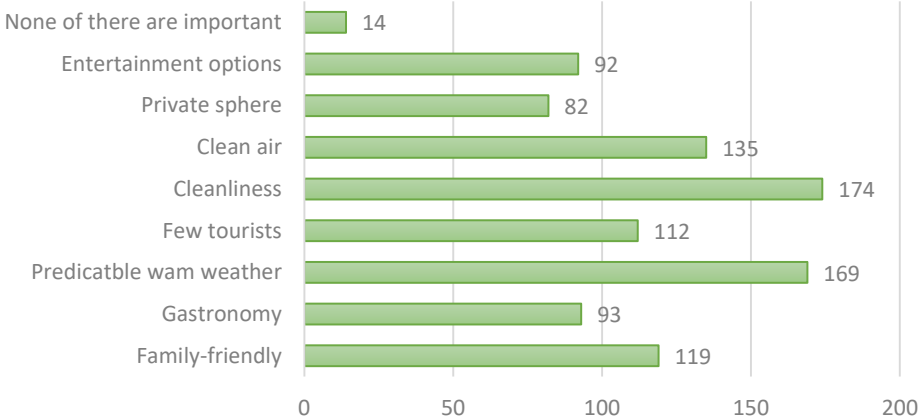
Source: own research, 2021 (n=332)

Appendix No.8

What kind of destination would you looking for in 2021?

Domestric city trip	City trip abroad	Excursion in nature	Beach vacation	Themed vacation	Wellness relaxation	I do not travel
123	93	111	166	11	83	27

Source: own research, 2021 (n=332)

Appendix No. 9

Which catering option would you choose?

Category	Value
Bed and breakfast	71
Half-board catering	124
All-inclusive catering	65
I would arrange all meals for myself	51

Source: own research, 2021 (n=332)

Appendix No. 10

Why would you choose Santorini as a holiday destination?

Category	Value
I would not choose	46
Luxurious environment	62
Warm hospitality	64
The beauty of the landscape	245
Unique architecture	87
Many influencers posted photo from here	7
Lots of friends have already been there	46

Source: own research, 2021 (n=332)

Appendix No. 11 – Qualitative research

Questions for the general manager of Remezzo Villas:

1. First of all, thank you very much for having me, as a start please introduce yourself and Remezzo Villas. (such as: is it a family-business or once it started as a family business … etc.).

My name is Vassilis Spanopoulos owner of Remezzo, a boutique hotel with 13 units in Imerovigli, Santorini. Our hotel was established in 1983 as a family business ran by my parents and still operates with this model under my management and ownership until today.

2. Recalling these 35 years, how did the island's tourism start and how did your business?

Our establishment was the 5th hotel to open in the village of Imerovigli in 1983 at a time that the island's season ran for about 4 months a year, between June and October.

Today, Imerovigli counts more than 180 properties, hotels and vacation rentals, with a season that runs for 7 full months from April until November.

3. What was your motivation to open a hotel? (why not restaurant or café?)

Our family's vision was to create a guest house that would promote the beauty, culture and heritage of Santorini. A hub where travellers from all over the world would connect with the island through our establishment, local knowledge and enthusiasm about Santorini.

4. Did you choose this location with a direct purpose?

The location was selected due to the natural beauty of the area and vantage position of the property that is overlooking the island's caldera and infinite Greek blue horizon. The particular neighbourhood where our hotel is located was at the time relatively remote as there were no other establishments nearby, a quiet sanctuary where you could easily connect with the surrounding beauty of Santorini.

5. How was your hotel affected by the global economic crisis, how much did previous occupancy decrease on average?

Our hotel managed to sustain its high occupancy rates during the last global economic crisis between 2007 and 2009. That was due to the strong foundation and reputation that our hotel has gained throughout its three-decade operation.

It should be mentioned that the Greek economic crisis that followed immediately after combined with the relevant negative international publicity of Greece had a much bigger impact to our establishment, island and generally Greece as a destination.

During the peak of the Greece economic crisis between 2012 and 2015 our hotel managed to sustain its high occupancy rates however suffered up to 30% losses to its gross and net revenue due to the crisis impact. The decrease of our average daily rates in order to sustain occupancy and the significant increase to taxation due to the crisis austerity measures were two of the key parameters that affected us.

6. How did your family personally experience the huge flow of international tourists during the last decades?

Santorini has seen four major boosts to its development as a tourist destination. Each one in the midst of the previous decades (mid 80s, mid 90s etc.).

Each one brought a significant change to the local culture and lifestyle and an exponential growth the island's economy.

Our family's business and personal perspective has also changed accordingly.

Despite the exponential growth of the island's economy, the last boost has affected our business negatively. The increased competition that has been created combined with the disruptions of the last decade's economic and COVID crises has made our business's future sustainability questionable.

On a personal level, Santorini has been transformed to an island that nowadays has so little in common with the island that we once fell in love with.

7. What changes did the hotel need in order to keep up with the attack of international tourists? (such as: opening more rooms, building a swimming pool, to hire more professional staff?)

Our hotel has been constantly following the international hospitality trends.

The major changes that our hotel has adopted during its operation are as follow:

1990's
1. Installation of A/C units to all rooms
2. Swimming Pool

2000's
3. Bigger beds, from full size to queen and king size
4. In-room hydro-massage bathtubs
5. Complimentary Bathroom Amenities

2010's
6. Rooms with outdoor hot tubs
7. Increase of housekeeping service, from once a day to twice a day (day and turndown service)
8. Porter luggage service

8. During the last decades how tourists' expectations changed? Do you think that since the existence of social media people have a stronger desire for luxury?

Amenities that were once considered a luxury for the average hotel guest are nowadays prerequisite. A comfortable and clean room, knowledgeable and responsive hotel staff, personalized service, tech savvy hotel solutions such as easy online reservation processes – digital check-in check-out - digital communication applications – digital menu ordering, free perks such as complimentary bathroom amenities and free internet connections are major expectations by today's hotel guests.

I also experienced that you pay a great attention on the luxurious (fine dining) gastronomy also including by helping special food allergies and intolerances.

9. Do you think this is a key of a success nowadays?

Our mission is to give our guests the opportunity to experience Santorini and our hospitality through all five senses: sound, touch, sight, smell and taste. When it comes to taste, we believe that a hotel should promote local gastronomy as the best way to connect its guests with the local culture, whether this is provided in a luxurious or casual fashion.

We believe that a hotel should be approachable by all ethnic, dietary and health food groups and therefore hotel staff must have a detailed knowledge of the food options that are offered.

10. How was your hotel affected by the pandemic, how much did previous occupancy decrease on average?

Our hotel had to redesign create operational protocols to better cater our guests needs and improve their experience during their stay in a much unknown environment of operation.

Our practices included staff training in accordance with government guidelines and a hotel hygiene certification by Forbes https://www.forbestravelguide.com/health-security-verified

Our hotel suffered a 70% loss in occupancy during 2020 and we are hoping to reduce it to 35% in 2021.

11. Which year was the most successful year for Remezzo Villas and why do you think it was due to?
Our most successful year was 2018 as we succeeded to extend our hotel's booking window 6 to 9 months prior to the desired booking dates. This resulted in better operational and sales planning.

12. What is your opinion about the effects of cruise-ships? Do you think that the Island should ban the mooring of cruise ships in the post-pandemic period?
Cruise tourism has a negative impact to Santorini's ecosystem and lifestyle due to the masses of people that roam on the island for a limited amount of time. A better control with a certain cap for the number of passengers that visit every week, rather than banning, is a one way solution in order to keep the island sustainable.

Questions for the general manager of Roula Villas:

1, First of all, thank you very much for having me, as a start, please introduce yourself and Roula Villa. (such as: is it a family-business or once it started as a family business … etc.).

Hello! My name is Sissy Drosou. General manager of Roula villa. Roula villa is a family business since the beginning.

2, Recalling these last 10-20-30 years, how did the island's tourism start and how did your business?

Tourism in Santorini was increased gradually, late 70s was the slow beginning and year per year was more and more. Roula villa as it is now started 2001.

3, What was your motivation to open a hotel? (why not restaurant or café?) Roula Villa is located just a short walk from Perissa Beach which may have been a great advantage in earlier periods as well.

Our parents started their small business of 10 rooms in the beginning, where worked nicely for several years and then decided to build Roula villa at the same land that inherited by their parents.

4, Did you choose this location with a direct purpose?

Lucky enough to inherit.

5, How was your hotel affected by the global economic crisis, how much did previous occupancy decrease on average?

Roula villa was affected by the global economic crisis as the whole island did.

6, How did your family personally experience the huge flow of international tourists during the last decades?

My family loves meeting new people. Have absolutely no problem with the amount of people on the island, on the contrary they love it.

7, What changes did the hotel need in order to keep up with the attack of international tourists? (such as: opening more rooms, building a swimming pool, to hire more professional staff?)

As mentioned previously Roula vila was a complete change from the initial building of only 10 room. They had to remove everything and build a new complex of more modern rooms and a pool in the middle. Roula villa is on a constant change year per year in order to improve the quality of services and hospitality we offer to our guests.

8, During the last decades how tourists' expectations changed? Do you think that since the existence of social media people have a stronger desire for luxury?

Internet is a must Now. A few years back we had internet only in the public areas around the pool and the reception. Now strong internet Wifi covers the whole building.

9, Do you think that the close relationship between service providers and guests is the key of success nowadays?

Yes! We strongly believe that our guests need to feel at home and to make sure they feel happy and comfortable. The only way to do that is to be close to them and we make sure we meet everyone personally. Another key factor is to create an environment where guest can ask for something they need and not leave with a complain. If you can anticipate needs and you do your best, people always appreciate it.

10, How was your hotel affected by the pandemic, how much did previous occupancy decrease on average?

For the year 2020 was 1/3 of normal occupancy only. For 2021 we expect 50 % of the normal occupancy.

11, Which year was the most successful year for Roula Villas and why do you think it was due to?

2017-2019. Good Flight connections.

12, What is your opinion about the effects of cruise-ships? Do you think that the Island should ban the mooring of cruise ships in the post-pandemic period? **Not at all.**

13, In your opinion, how could Santorini normalize the number of tourists in order to have more liveable conditions for both locals and tourists even in a peak-season?

I think in reality Santorini is not really overcrowded as if you look online at the peak season, you will always find so many rooms or hotels available. The only problem is that people visit only a few specific places for sunset etc. The island has many "treasure spots" and as locals we should help our guests discover those.

+1: If you could change anything in the past what would you have changed?

Exactly what mentioned at the previous question, I would like to have paid more attention on exploring places on the island and propose to my guests those that are not so crowded. Give alternatives and find smaller businesses with good services for my guests. We now do that

Questions for the Balázs Gyémánt,

Questions for Balázs Gyémánt, who is a Hungarian professional world-traveller, blogger, tour guide. Balázs is also one of those influencers who shares beautiful pictures on social media surfaces about different holiday venues. I also noticed him on the internet, and I can honestly say that since I started following him on Instagram, I wonder how many gorgeous places he can visit as a world-traveller.

1, First of all, thank you very much for having me, as a start please introduce yourself and your profession, which is honestly… a dream job.

My life is all about travelling, well it used to be before the pandemic. My mother works at a travel agency, so I started travelling early with my parents. This travel bug kept on going and I went to a tourism focused high school in Budapest. I also studied abroad in England, Germany, Spain and the USA and I loved the international atmosphere and the different cultures. I got my tour guiding license in Hungary after high school and also did the New York City sightseeing guide exam. When I spent a summer in New York City during university as an intern at the Hungarian National Tourist Office, I started making a blog. This was pre-facebook times and I did not want to write all my friends and family e-mails. So I put all my stores and photos on a private blog. This is how my blogging started in 2007. I was also working for television productions as a creative editor in Hungary while guiding tours in Budapest and around the world. I wrote articles in travel trade publications and lifestyle magazines.

In 2012, I won the Worlds Second Best Job (A világ második legjobb állása). This was a marketing campaign by Tensi Holiday travel agency and the chosen winner had to travel around the world and blog about their experiences. I was selected and went on many trips for a year and created video blogs and articles about cruising, the Caribbean,

Disneyland Paris, Lappland Finnland, Mauritius, Provence, etc. Years have passed and I decided to create my own independent travel blog: Travels of Balazs (Balázs utazik). Since then, I've been blogging and travelling and also tour guiding people around the world. Mostly in the USA and on cruise ships in the Caribbean, Alaska, Asia and Australia. I also guide American tourists in Budapest.

I studied international communication and advertising, wrote my thesis about country branding. I also studied tourism management MBA in Vienna.

That is why, I simply call my job title: Professional World Traveller. Everything I do, is somehow related to travel.

2, Do you claim to be an influencer? Do you agree that travel bloggers, vloggers have a huge impact on desires of the society (at least on the direct followers)?

Calling someone an influencer is not a positive term nowadays. There are way too many "influencers" in social media. I do not like being called an influencer, but on the other hand, I influence people in their travel decisions and choices. Not only in a positive way, but if someone does not like the type of travel that I do, they influence themselves through me to do something totally different. I prefer the term: key opinion leader (KOL) or content creator or blogger.

Influencers nowadays on social media ignite the interest for travelling, they inspire someone to feel something similar that they portray in their images. They create stunning images mostly of themselves and they also create jealousy as many will never have the chance to do what the influencers do. It is a hard job if someone wants to make a living out of it. But I believe that creating amazing photos of destinations is more of an advertising thing. Influencers use their own brand, persona and team to sell something. Usually, they get something in return.

My wish is not to be famous, but to be one of the most reliable sources of travel related topics. I do not want to tell untrue things just because I get paid for it. I prefer to explore and find unique stories and places and create content about them. It's more of a journalism lead way than advertising. And yes of course, travel bloggers and vloggers have an impact on people. That is why, everyone who has followers (not just influencers or bloggers) need to have good morals as they are are giving examples that people follow. But, I think we should all lead lifes that can be followed by others.

3, Do you intentionally want to draw followers' attention to smaller deserted places?

It's not something I intentionally do. Because I'm a tour guide, I usually show the most important places in the world to my guests. That icons. And because I have seen them many times, I have a personal desire to explore and find new places, hidden spots. I do not want to be the 1000th person to blog about the Statue of Liberty, but I want to find something that has not been found before. As this is impossible, I try to focus on unique, small, out of the ordinary things too that I personally find exciting. And yes, I sometimes create content about them. But sometimes, I keep those places to myself.

4, What do you think the mission of internet travel-leaders is?

Their mission? I don't know…Probably to make money, travel the world and get paid for it. My mission is to show how colourful and diverse our world is. I want to show places, cultures and ideas to people who have no chance of travelling due to personal or financial causes.

5, How can an influencer 'cleverly' direct people off the beaten track?

Sustainability and awareness have become important in tourism. I think, if influencers keep updating themselves about new trends in global tourism and how to keep the planet safe for future generations, this idea needs to be taken into consideration. No swimming with dolphins, riding elephants, but supporting local businesses, etc. An influencer can show new areas of a city that are upcoming and visit places that are new and not have money for advertising.

Sometimes, going off the beaten track is much less than what we think. We don't have to climb mountain peaks or go deep in the jungle, but going off the beaten track can be a mental challenge. Someone is visiting a museum

that he has not had interest in before or trying an experience which for them is off their beaten track. The same museum or experience can be mainstream for many too.

By showing travel content of not too well-known places to our followers, they may get a spark in their eyes and consider visiting those places.

6, Why didn't you travel to such a famous destination earlier?

I have been in Santorini before many years ago. In 2012, I was there as a blogger on a cruise ship. I spent a day there and although I enjoyed it, it was a typical example of a mass tourism site. Huge crowds, but I did not care as my job back than was to show what someone will experience on a cruise ship. And it gave a valid picture of that.

On the other hand, I would have never gone to Santorini if there was no covid. If I go on a personal trip, I do not want to be in mass tourism spots. I do that for a living when guiding, I need different things when Im on my own holidays.

I think Santorini and many other places were overexposed in social media. The pretty photos of colourful silk dresses on the church tops and with the blue sea and sky behind became a cliché. I found those pictures great, but a cliché that I did not want to recreate.

7, What was your motivation of travel? Why did you choose Santorini in the midst of a pandemic?

My motivation was that it will be empty and its time to explore places that are usually full of people. I was right, there were few people and it was a great vacation. It was also easily accessible. We travelled to Athens and took a plane to Mykonos and a ferry to Paros and then to Santorini for 3 days. The direct flight was also helping in the decision by Wizzair. I did not want to connect during the pandemic in another country. Prices were affordable. And on top, I have a friend who owns an amazing Airbnb there that was available. So besides, the destination, the price and accessibility were also important factors in making the decision.

8, How was your experience? *(such as: positive surprise, negative disappointment)* **Was there anything you missed?**

It was great. Very few people. The Airbnb was amazing that is usually booked fully in advance. The sunsets, the walks were all quaint. No masses, no tour groups, no cruise ship passengers for the day. Beach beds were available and busy restaurants were easy to make bookings at.

I wish we spent more than just 3 nights there.

9, Based on your personal experiences, why do you think Santorini is so popular as a holiday destination?

Santorini has unique geography with the caldera. The white houses and the blue sea and sky create great contrast that is photogenic. Greek food is great, Greek culture is well-known everywhere. The weather is great, except for the windy months. You can take amazing photos and live in the cliché worlds that you saw on Instagram. Most likely, you will see something very similar to the filtered social media images.

The legend of Santorini, the mythical parts of Atlantis and the lost world, the Greek gods all make it interesting. Everyone has learnt something about these in their lives and people like to see it for themselves too.

Besides accommodation in Santorini, Greece is affordable too. The meals are normal-priced and not soo expensive as in Mykonos. Hotels on the other hand are very expensive in high season.

 The island is also easily reachable with the international airport and domestic flights and ferries too.

10, Based on your personal travel experiences how did you find the value for money in Santorini comparing to other destinations?

Accommodation is expensive, even during a pandemic. You pay for the limited numbers of beds a higher price. It is more luxurious than a budget destination. Restaurants are normal -priced, but this again is very subjective. You can get similarly fresh seafood for much less on other islands, but then you are not facing the caldera during your

meal. Santorini being an island, also makes it a bit more expensive for daily life. Things need to be taken their by air or ship. That is more pricy. I am willing to pay the high prices if I feel that its more exclusive. During the pandemic, it was optimal with less people. During normal season, I would not pay a premium price for the mass tourism vibe.

11, Do you prefer Airbnb or a hotel accommodations for your trips? *(Why did you choose an Airbnb in case of Santorini).*

I prefer hotels normally. And although I like unique hotels, I often prefer chain hotels. It is not the most optimal for a travel blogger, but I hate having bad experiences during my travel. I want to make sure that where I stay is clean and comfortable. I do not want to risk renting a cheaper place and paying twice. I enjoy the services a great hotel can give.

When on holidays with friends, I prefer airbnbs. We are more free to do what we want and have larges spaces and more privacy.

I chose the Airbnb in Santorini because it is owned and run by a friend of mine. He comes from the hotel industry and created professional airbnbn experiences. He had asked me to try his place for a long time, but I did not want to go to Santorini. This was a great opportunity now for a great price with amazing hotel-like services. The package included transfers and breakfast too. Not typical with airbnbs. I also visited his new project (Santorini Sky) which is far from the main spots and I really want to visit those new villas soon.

12, What is your opinion about the effects of cruise-ships? Do you think that the Island should ban the mooring of cruise ships in the post-pandemic period?

Absolutely not. Cruise ships will inhale life to these islands after covid. They bring a lot of people who spend a lot of money on the island. And the cruise ships also pay for mooring.

Look, if someone does not like the overtourism side of Santorini due to cruises, they will visit other smaller islands where there are no cruise ships. And then, they will go for a day trip to Santorini by ferry, which is basically the same thing.

The number of cruise ships can however be limited. Some ships can go to other smaller islands and this way, Santorini and the other popular big islands will be less crowded. That could also help smaller islands economically.

And yes, cruise ships are problematic because of over tourism. But banning them is not a good way. If there are no cruises, locals will earn less, prices will go up. And yes, the visitors who spend the nights on the island will be happier too.

Those who spend a week in Santorini can spend their days on the beach or by the pool and not explore the streets of the towns while cruises are there. Cruise guests will leave before sunset.

13, In your opinion, how could Santorini normalize the number of tourists in order to have more liveable conditions for both locals and tourists even in a peak-season?

I don't know.

If they drive prices higher, less people will go and Santorini will become more like Mykonos. It is not really a democratic process. If they introduce visas for certain countries, there will be less people. Or if the Greeks try to show what other amazing islands they have, that could drive competition and people will choose a different place to discover.

14, Based on your travel experiences, do you think this is a good initiative? Will there be any positive consequences for the region in the long run?

Yes of course. I saw the ads for plastic-free Santorini. Running power with sustainable energy is a great option. Having e-cars instead of gasoline. There is a Greek island that wants to be fully ecological in a few years.

Having less plastic around the ocean is always great. But big factories need this mentality too. They are the ones that produce more damage and not the individuals. Same for cruise ships, if they change to renewable energy and use electric power when docking and not fuel, it will be beneficial to the destinations also.

+1: Is there any souvenir that you take home from every place you visit around the World?

I get a fridge magnet from every new place I visit. My fridge is like a piece of art with hundreds of colourful magnets. I also buy snacks and food from destinations.

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