Research Article

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Political disputes and consequences on tourism

Abstract: The aim of the paper is to identify the stance of tourism industry practitioners in the Republic of Cyprus in the case of reunification. Since 1974 and the Turkish invasion, one third of the island's territory has remained under an illegal occupation. Discussing Cyprus' political problem and the potential of reunification in relation to the tourism industry is a new concept in nature. The tourism industry will be the vehicle for further economic development. So, it is imperative to understand the opinions of tourism stakeholders and decision makers who will potentially be involved in the development of tourism in the reunited island. In order to identify the consequences of the status quo on the Republic, the views of 26 powerful elite people, both in the public and private sectors of the country, were collected through a qualitative data inquiry using semi-structured interviews. The results of the study suggest that the inability to come up with a viable solution has many negative consequences on the tourism industry of the island. The results of the study suggest that a possible reunification will render Cyprus as an innovative tourism destination.

Keywords: Tourism industry; Cyprus; Political disputes; Interviews

1 Introduction

Tourism development in any destination can suffer due to political unrests with political disputes or conflicts that involve a plethora of problems. Many academics have interrelated peace and tourism as the cornerstone on which the initial success of any place is set (Clementes

and Georgiou 1998, Hall 1994, Altinay 2000, Altinay et al 2002, Agapiou-Josephides 2003, Altinay and Bowen 2006, Scott 2012, Neumayer and Plümper 2016, Bowen et al. 2016, Buda 2016). Any political turbulence in a destination has an immediate effect on tourism (Neumayer 2004, Buda 2016). Interesting examples in the context of tourism and political instability are the cases of Northern Ireland and the former Yugoslavia that suffered from civil wars. In 1998, Northern Ireland signed an agreement towards the settlement of the political unrest known as the 'Good Friday Agreement', which transformed the image of the country as a tourism destination (Archick 2015). Undoubtedly, the political stability had a positive effect on the tourism industry of the country and tourism was set as a priority and a vehicle for economic development and viability (House of Commons, Northern Ireland Affairs Committee, 2007). The same is applicable to Croatia and Slovenia, countries of the former Yugoslavia, which suffered from a four-year war (1991–1994) and managed to recover and become important tourism destinations for not only the Baltic Region but also worldwide (Milekic 2015, Naef and Ploner 2016). Other examples are the cases of Turkey and the countries in the Middle East such as the Syrian conflict, Israel and Palestinian conflict and in Africa such as Egypt, Libya and Tunisia, which dramatically affected the tourism industry (Neumayer and Plümper 2016).

The case of Cyprus is another example of political disputes hindering the opportunities for pertinent tourism development (Sonmez and Apostolopoulos 2000). The island constitutes an interesting case for research due to the two phases of the Turkish Invasion in July and August 1974 and the occupation of one third of the island's territory after a coup d'état by the Greek military junta against the President of the Republic (Figure 1). The political situation on the island sketched and redirected the tourism development (Altinay 2000, Altinay et al 2002, Alipour and Kilic 2005, Altinay and Bowen 2006, Lockhart 1993, Witt 1991), because the most well-developed resorts namely Famagusta and Kerynia are under Turkish Occupation (Clements 1998, Clements and Georgiou 1998, Office of the Law Commissionaire 2001, Saveriades 2001, Liasidou 2015). The current situation is characterised by an even development of the occupied area and the area

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of island under the official government, which makes the situation complex.

This paper attempts to sketch the future situation on the island with an emphasis on the political problem and to assess the impact on the tourism industry, in the case of a potential reunification. The opinions and stance of key stakeholders in the tourism industry from the Republic of Cyprus are taken into consideration to shed light on the future potential of tourism in the case of reunification. The literature review provides an overview of the island and discusses the possible future outcomes of reuniting Cyprus on tourism. This is followed by the methodology, which describes the methods used to fulfil the aim of this study. The next section includes the findings and discussion. This section is broken down into two parts, the first regarding the current political situation and its impact on tourism, while the second presents the future of reunification and the possible outcomes for the island's tourism.

2 The island of Cyprus: an overview

Cyprus is situated at the crossroads of three continents – Europe, Asia, and Africa – in the Eastern Mediterranean (Figure 1). The country has an area of 9,251 sq. km with a history that dates back 9,000 years. More specifically, the island '...is a living proof of its age-long function as [a] bridge between [the] civilizations of Southeast Europe and the Middle East' (Press Information Office 2000:5).

The first signs of civilisation date back to 6,000 BC and the Neolithic era. The Hellenisation of the island began in 1,200 BC with the foundation of the Greek kingdoms and the adoption of the Greek Language. The main hallmarks of the island's history are the passage and occupation of the island by many ethnicities (Mavris 2001).

In 1960, the island was granted independence by the United Kingdom and declared an independent state. The total population is approximately 840,800 of whom 85% are Greek, 12% Turkish, 1% belong to small ethnic minorities such as Armenians, Maronites and Latins, while the remaining 3% is made up of other residents and workers (Press Information Office 2014). The official languages are Greek, which is widely spoken by majority of the population, and Turkish (Press Information Office 2014). Since 1 May 2004, the Republic of Cyprus has been a full member of the European Union (Press Information Office 2004) and consequently, it has become part of a wider spectrum of geographical borders. More specifically, the Union promotes freedom in the movement of goods, people and capital. In particular, for Cyprus, the entrance into the European Union was viewed as the way to end the political instability and the division of the island (Frangos 2004a, Agapiou-Jeosiphides 2003).

The capital Nicosia (Lefkosia) is situated in the middle of the island, and is considered to be an important business hub for the Eastern Mediterranean. The second town in terms of population and size is Limassol (Lemesos), which is the largest port in the Mediterranean for transit trades (Limassol Municipality 2006). The main

Figure 1: Map of the Republic of Cyprus
(Source: PIO 2008)

reason for Limassol's rapid development was the Turkish invasion of July 1974 and the occupation of the islands' territory (Press Information Office 2001), including two well developed cities, Famagusta (Ammochostos), which was the major port, business centre and tourist resort of the island, and Kyrenia, a tourist resort (Sharpley 2007). After the Turkish invasion, the city of Famagusta closed and passed under the control of the United Nations (UN) without any development since then (Hooper and Venema 2014). The government had vital issues to give priority that emanated from the catastrophic consequences of the invasion. Political stability was the main concern as along with the rehabilitation of immense physical destructions. Additionally, of uttermost priority was the re-location and settlement of 200,000 residents who were violently forced to abandon their properties and move to the southern part of the island.

At present, the political situation is stable, with a UN buffer zone, widely known as the 'Green Line', signalling the division (Hadjipavlou 2007, James 2011). However, in 2003, after 29 years of separation, some entry-points in the buffer zone opened, and residents got the opportunity to cross to the occupied territory of the island (Mintel 2004, Hadjipavlou 2007, James 2011). The April 26, 2004 was the most serious attempt to reunify the island following the proposal of a solution by the United Nations General Secretary, Kofi Annan (BBC News 2004, Altinay and Bowen 2006). The Annan plan was rejected in the referendum that took place in both communities (BBC News 2004, Fischer 2017). Majority of the Greek Cypriots voted against the proposal, feeling unsafe because of a stipulation of the plan that Turkish military troops should be present on the island. The Turkish Cypriots' results were positive. There have been recent attempts for reunification between the current President of the Republic Nicos Anastasiades and the Turkish Cypriot leader Mustafa Akinci. According to Foster (2015):

> Senior politicians and diplomats say [that] Cyprus has [the] best chance in decades of reaching peace deal following [the] Turkish invasion of 1974.

The aim of the official government of Cyprus is to explore possible solutions towards a reunification of the Republic of Cyprus. This will bring many opportunities for the economic development of the country. The next section will discuss the possible impact of reunification, with particular emphasis on the tourism industry.

The division of the island, the failure to reach an agreement on unification, and the ongoing issue of the 'Cyprus Dispute Problem' have inevitably had an impact on the tourism industry (Frangos 2004, Scott 2012). The situation in the occupied part of the island is that it is still under embargo and any direct trade exchange with other countries is forbidden. The only official and recognised government in Cyprus is that of the southern part of the island territory, while the territory under Turkish occupation has unilaterally proclaimed itself as being the 'Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus' and it is only recognised by Turkey (Papatheodorou and Busuttil 2003, Ioannides 1992, Ioannides and Apostolopoulos 1999). The status of the occupied part as a non-internationally recognised entity has hindered the development of tourism, since there are no direct flights, and any connections have to be made via Turkey (Frangos 2004). The economy is highly reliant on Turkey and for that reason, a tourism policy is non-existent (Alipour and Kilic 2005, Altinay and Bowen 2006). Direct international flights from 'Ercan', an airport in the occupied part of Cyprus, are forbidden and the only air connection is with Turkey (Altinay 2000, Ayres 2000, Bowes 2004).

The island's economy is heavily dependent on the tourism industry (Andronicou 1986); thus, after the Turkish invasion, the government of Cyprus had to reconsider the tourism trajectory in terms of planning and development (Ayres 1998, 2000, Sharpley 2000, 2001, 2003, 2004, 2007). The official governmental tourism body is the Cyprus Tourism Organisation (CTO) and it was founded in 1969 (Office of the Law Commissionaire 2005). The CTO's duties are the development and promotion of tourism in the Republic of Cyprus. Additionally, the CTO is a full member of the World Tourism Organization since 1975 as the only officially recognised body for tourism in Cyprus.

Prior to partition, the main players in tourism were the Greek Cypriots who were the main owners of hotels, restaurants and travel agencies (McMahon 1999). The government was subsidising and offering tax exemptions for any involvement in the tourism industry in order to encourage the locals to invest in the business. An interesting example was the case of the construction of the Golden Sands complex in Famagusta, owned by Lords Properties, with a 1,000 bed capacity (Lockhart 1997). After the invasion, the development was spread into the Famagusta district free area, Ayia Napa, Protaras, Limassol and Paphos. Before 1974, Cypriot international flights were facilitated via the International Airport in the capital city of Nicosia (Ioannides and Apostolopoulos 1999), which was abandoned and is stranded in time since then in the UN buffer zone. Over the last year, the tourism arrivals reached 3 million tourists mainly from Europe in the area controlled by the Republic (Cyprus Statistical Service 2015).

Undoubtedly, a future viable political solution to the island's problem would contribute further to the emergence of more opportunities in terms of economic and financial investments and an increase in tourism arrivals (Ayres 2003, Altinay 2002, Altinay and Bowen 2006, Liasidou 2004, Robson 2004). Furthermore, the economic gap (Ayres 2003, Webster and Dallen 2006) or asymmetry (Papatheodorou and Busuttil 2003) of the southern and northern parts of Cyprus would close in terms of economic development (Ayres 2003). In particular, after the consequences of the financial crisis and the bailout from the EU of the Republic in 2013, there is an intent needed to recover the tourism industry and provide more opportunities in a reunited island (Foster 2015). Thus, the future of a reunited island will be for the benefit of the tourism industry because opportunities will emerge and overcome the fact that the existing situation is negative for the country (Liasidou 2015a). The next part of the study describes the methodology used to attain the objective of the study. This is followed by the analysis of the primary data and the opinions of the 26 participants.

3 Research methodology

A qualitative research strategy was adopted as the most appropriate approach for an exploratory study of this type. It seems necessary to conceptualise, understand the type of investigation as well as the research design as a framework, and guide for the completion of the study through the analysis of the data (Churchill 1995). The type of investigation is exploratory in nature, as its purpose is to 'find out what is happening, to seek new insights, to ask questions as well as to assess phenomena in a new light' (Robson 1993:42). Furthermore, exploratory research involves a situation where there is a dearth of information available, and research is undertaken for the understanding of the specific purpose of investigation (Sekaran 2003).

This is a small-scale study, and for that reason, a non-probability and purposive sample is used in the interviews (Creswell 1998). According to Robson (1993:140), non-probability samples in small-scale surveys 'are usually less complicated to set up and are acceptable when there is no intention or need to make statistical generalization to any population beyond the sample surveyed'. In this research, as long as there is no intention to generalise but rather to gather the views and opinions of experts, a non-probability sample seems to be ideal. As far as the purposive sample is concerned, it is used because the issue under investigation is not familiar to a wide spectrum of people, but it is 'confined to specific type of people who can provide the desired information either because they are the only ones who have it, or conform to some criteria set by the researcher' (Sekaran 2003:277). The same view is proposed by Robson (1993) and highlights the fact that purposive sampling can better satisfy the prerequisites of the study.

Robson (1993) states that particular attention needs to be given to the selection of the sample in planning a survey. In attempting to bear this in mind, the sample is chosen in such a way so as to represent the official point of view; thus, the sample consists of 26 interviewees (Tables 2 and 3). The interviewees are an amalgam from distinct arenas highly involved in tourism, hotels, airlines and tour operation sectors of Cyprus, both private and public organisations. In particular, the sample includes two politicians (Members of the Parliamentary Committee for Tourism – one of them is the president) who participated in the decision making for the tourism policy and the budget available for tourism development. Additionally, participants are also from the CTO, responsible for the drafting of the tourism policy. The interview sample includes the director of the Civil Aviation Authority of Cyprus and officers responsible for aviation matters and representing the country in international organisations. It is important to access and ask the opinion of managers of private airlines, tour operators' managers, hotel association representatives and hotel managers who participate in the Cyprus Hotel Manager Association. The participants are people who have positions in the tourism industry in the area controlled by the official government of the Republic of Cyprus. The opinions and views of the selected cohort of people that constitute the sample of the study are of those who are the key players and the main decision makers of the tourism industry in Cyprus.

The type of interviews for this research was based on a combination of the aforementioned procedures, which is the formation of semi-structured interview. According to Bell (2008:74), 'the interviewer has considerable flexibility over a range and order of questions within a loosely defined framework'. For this research, the most appropriate way to conduct the interview was the formation of semi-structured interviews. The questions were designed based on an open format in order to give the opportunity to the interviewee as well as to the interviewer to have a certain degree of flexibility concerning the context and the depth of the conversation (Sekaran, 2003). In particular, the interview protocol was divided into two sections in a semi-structured format as follows: a) Current political situation and impact on tourism and b) Future reunification of the island and impact on tourism. These two

themes were used for analysis, which is presented in part 3 of the paper.

The interviews took place between the years 2015 and 2016. In order to classify the interviews, it seems more appropriate to divide the respondents based on the type of organisation they worked in, that is, private or public sector. As illustrated in Tables 1 and 2, the respondents are from the public sector and 15 from the private sector. All interviews were tape recorded and transcribed for the purpose of analysis. The analysis was based on a coding system using NVIVO qualitative research software with the development of different themes as 'tree nodes' (Bazeley 2007). The 'tree nodes' are best described as thematic analysis; thus, the following topics/themes were developed: a) Current political situation and impact on tourism, b) Future reunification and tourism: rendering Cyprus as a novel tourism destination.

Ethical considerations are an important priority and should be rigorously adhered to as a hallmark of the current 'epoch' of research. The term ethics can be thought of in terms of '...treating people with respect' (Graham et al. 2006). In this respect, the researcher must have sole responsibility for maintaining and following ethical considerations in order to protect, not only the identity of the participants, but also their stance in society. The next part presents and discusses the findings of the research.

4 Research findings and discussion

This part of the study will analyse and discuss the main findings of the primary research. As mentioned in the methodology section, two themes were developed based on the responses of the interviewees. The two themes are presented and analysed below.

4.1 Current political situation and impact on tourism

The first part of the discussion with the 26 elite interviewees concentrated on the current situation with the political problem remaining unsolved. A representative argument that depicts the current situation given below:

> Without having realised it, we ended up with a competitor within our own country. We do not have the right to live and acquire our properties and we see foreigners come and visit our land...

> [Public Interviewee V]

Another interviewee stated that:

> The main tour operators from Europe have scheduled visits to the occupied territory as part of their holiday deal...this is a major economic and political problem, which unfortunately has been neglected.

Table 1: Elite Interviews – Public Sector (Source: Author)

Interviewees	Type
Public Interviewee I	Destination – Director
Public Interviewee II	Destination – Officer – Tourism Policy
Public Interviewee III	Destination – Officer – Tourism Policy
Public Interviewee IV	Destination – Politician – Member of the Parliament
Public Interviewee V	Destination – Politician Member of the Parliament
Public Interviewee VI	Destination, Hotel, Tour Operators – Policy
Public Interviewee VII	Destination, Hotel, Tour Operators – Policy
Public Interviewee VIII	Aviation – Civil Aviation Authority – Director
Public Interviewee IX	Aviation – Civil Aviation Authority – Officer
Public Interviewee X	Aviation – Civil Aviation Authority – Officer
Public Interviewee XI	Aviation Policy – Civil Aviation Authority – Director

Table 2: Elite Interviews –Private Sector (Source: Author)

Interviewees	Type
Private Interviewee I	Hotel Representative – Director
Private Interviewee II	Hotel – Manager
Private Interviewee III	Hotel – Manager
Private Interviewee IV	Destination/Hotels – Manager
Private Interviewee V	Tour Operators – Manager
Private Interviewee VI	Destination – Manager
Private Interviewee VII	Tour Operators representative – Manager
Private Interviewee VIII	Destination – Manager
Private Interviewee IX	Destination – Manager
Private Interviewee X	Airlines/ Airports – Manager
Private Interviewee XI	Airports – Director
Private Interviewee XII	Airlines – Manager
Private Interviewee XIII	Airlines – Manager
Private Interviewee XIV	Airlines – Manager
Private Interviewee XV	Airports – Director

[Private Interviewee II]

The illegal visitation to the occupied part via Turkey depicts the situation that the official government of Cyprus has to deal with. The immaculate natural beauty and pristine environment of the occupied part has been widely publicised by the Turkish Cypriot state, with illegal adverts in all the glossy travel magazines and weekend papers and supplements in the UK and Europe. These moves have major political, as well as tourism-related implications that need to be further discussed and explored. It was not the purpose of this piece of research to touch upon these issues, but nevertheless, it is necessary to acknowledge the multiple impacts that the unresolved Cyprus problem still brings to bear on the recognised Greek Cypriot state, in both political and economic (tourism-related) terms.

The Turkish Cypriot occupied area sells itself as a (relatively) untouched destination, the more pristine part of Cyprus that has not been damaged by the ravages of mass tourism like the territory controlled by the Republic, partly because of the immensely slow pace of its development in all aspects of the socio-economic sphere. The underdeveloped character of the occupied part can be partly attributed to the embargo imposed on it by the international community that hitherto has been reluctant to recognise the 'pseudo-state'. Advertising an occupied territory as a novel and untouched destination is a provocative and cynical political move, but it is also a very clever one. This is because it touches on all the things the UK and neo travellers want (exclusivity, pristineness, sensitivity to the environment, underdevelopment, less crowding and noise, yet lower cost) and keys into liberal sympathies for sustainable development.

Another issue of concern regarding the Turkish occupation, which is directly related to the tourism industry, is the destruction of historical and religious monuments. Unfortunately, the reality in terms of the situation is very far from the advertisements. A respondent poignantly argues that:

> The claim that they have maintained and preserved the natural landscape, they have at the same time destroyed the vast majority of the archaeological and religious monuments of the island in a politically astute move to annihilate any vestiges of the Greek identity of the island, dating from 9000 years ago.

[Public Interviewee I]

The above discussion made clear that the current situation on the island with the political dispute has many negative implications for the Republic of Cyprus. The participants by consensus argued that the present situation has negative social and economic effects on the tourism industry and the Republic of Cyprus. The participants mentioned this as being the result of the political problem in Cyprus that remains unsolved and the subsequent inability of the Republic to take control over the occupied part of the island, which impacts hugely on the tourism industry and consequently on the economy. The above replies were based on the case of a solution that will consider the demands of the Greek Cypriots who set the removal of any Turkish troops from the island as a priority. In addition, the respondents mentioned that a solution should take into consideration the case of the settlers from Turkey (Loizos 2008, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Cyprus 2015), which is also a major problem for the Turkish Cypriots. In particular, Barkey and Gordon (2001:92) in their article 'Cyprus: The predictable crisis' mentioned that:

> 'the exodus of many of the most talented Turkish Cypriots has accelerated, and according to the best estimates, nearly half of the Northern Cyprus' population in made up of [the] mainland settlers'

The next part will consider the second theme of the analysis, by presenting the future implications on the tourism industry of a possible reunification of the island.

4.2 Future reunification of the island and tourism: rendering Cyprus as a novel tourism destination

The main part of the interview discussion was regarding the potential implications of a unified Cyprus on the tourism industry. The results of the study, as it has been pointed out by the interviewees, suggest that a viable solution of the Cyprus problem would instantly render Cyprus a novel destination, as the island would regain half of its occupied territory, which for almost thirty-five years has been under the jurisdiction of the Turkish troops and the Turkish Cypriot 'pseudo-state'. All the interviewees were positive and mentioned it as a case of a viable solution that will make them feel secure. In accordance to Public Interviewee VI, who puts forward that:

> A solution will affect positively in the sense that a unified airline industry and tourism industry will emerge, and this will create new agreements and of course a stronger strategic plan on tourism that will include the whole island.

[Public Interviewee VI]

In the event of a solution, the Turkish Cypriot airlines will acquire an identity, under the umbrella of the fully recognised Republic of Cyprus (Private Interviewee XIV). Thus, they would be allowed to participate in international organisations such as IATA as well as to operate direct flights all over the world.

Another respondent poignantly stated that:

> I think at the end of the day, we can provide an enhanced product for the holiday makers. So personally, I think that only positive things can come to the economy of the island and the tourism industry in general as a result of the reunification of the island.

[Public Interviewee VII]

A possible solution will not only reunify the island, but will also reinvent Cyprus as a novel destination, bringing together the vibrant character of the free part with the developing and relatively untouched natural landscape of the occupied part. In addition, a solution will herald both the reinstatement of human rights on the island and the reinstatement of consumer rights to enjoy a unified and novel destination, without 'green lines' and illegal border-crossing checking regimes. It remains to be seen whether a solution will be feasible in the foreseeable future, along with the extent to which such a solution will be utilised in effective and efficient ways in alignment with the current international tourism and airline trends.

A solution would undoubtedly have a positive effect on the economy, and consequently, on the tourism industry. Unification would attract returning and new tourists, since the island would be considered a novel place. Cypriot airlines would regain the privilege to fly to, and over, Turkey (Papatheodorou and Busuttil 2003). Consequently, the impact would be an expansion of operations that would generate increased demand and revenue (Papatheodorou and Busuttil 2003). Furthermore, the reopening of the Nicosia International Airport would contribute positively in establishing Cyprus as a regional hub. This was supported by Ayres (2003:10) who mentioned that the '...removal of the Ercan embargo and the opening up of the whole island to visitors should make Cyprus as a whole even more appealing to tourists than at present'. The following quote represents the view of the majority of the respondents:

> In view of a viable solution, Cyprus will emerge as a place for foreign investments with many positive impacts of development, especially in the relatively undeveloped and unspoiled occupied part. This will provide a framework for the repositioning of the thus enriched tourism product of Cyprus, giving it a new dimension as a novel destination.

[Private Interviewee III]

In case of reunification, both the airline and the tourism industries will be impacted positively. The policy of tourism will change to include the whole territory, by regaining the Famagusta closed territory for rebuilding and renovation, something that will render the island a novel tourism destination. The following statement is indicative:

> ...tourism will increase, as there will be increased hotel room capacity. There will be new potentially profitable routes to Istanbul/Ankara, which will require additional aircraft[s] and staff...

[Private Interviewee X]

In addition, the airline industry will expand with the inclusion of airlines of Turkish Cypriot origin, coupled with the introduction of more international airlines that will seize the opportunity to diversify their destination network. In particular, a respondent adroitly presents the situation below:

> Prior to the invasion of 1974, we had services to Ankara and Istanbul, now we are prohibited from overlying Turkey because Turkey does not recognise the state of Cyprus and that acts as a considerable wrong to our operation, particularly to Moscow, [as] we have 50 minutes greater duration because we go round about.

[Public Interviewee IX]

An important issue is the inclusion and maintenance of the archaeological sites in the area controlled by Turkey, with the majority being destroyed (Anagnostopoulou 2000). A participant mentioned:

> Cyprus will regain a new identity with the important archaeological and religious sites. Any excavation to [sic] the archaeological sites in the northern part is prohibited. After a political solution, this will be priority and Cyprus will become an attractive destination for findings from both European and International heritage organisations.

[Public Interviewee III]

The above issues are very important and need to be discussed against the backdrop of the political synergies and negotiations that are currently taking place in order to challenge the political status quo and achieve a viable solution of the Cyprus problem. The results of the study are revealing and positive in terms of the stance of the main stakeholders involved in the tourism industry of the Republic in the event of reunification of the island and the impact on tourism. The benefits are multifaceted in all

layers of the tourism sector and Cyprus will emerge as a new tourism destination without 'Green lines'.

5 Concluding remarks

This research was aimed to identify the views and opinions of 26 elite stakeholders from a wider context of the tourism industry in relation to the political situation in Cyprus and the potential of future reunification of the island on tourism. The above discussion reveals that a viable solution would be beneficial for the tourism industry through the inauguration of new remits of development and investments. The continuation of status quo creates a situation of uncertainty and conflict in terms of developing tourism on the island, which hinders many potential benefits for both Greek and Turkish Cypriots. There are forthcoming opportunities for further development, and this will reposition the tourism industry on the world map. Regardless of the type of solution, the main issue is to ensure that there will be fruitful cooperation between the two sides to work together for the benefit of the country.

Additionally, as mentioned in the earlier sections, the existing situation with an unsolved solution establishes the island as a turbulent destination. The main problem that has been created is the inability of the Cypriot government to propose a unified plan for tourism in the complete territory of Cyprus. This has a negative impact on the image of the country, with the creation of divergent development in the same geographical area. A solution seems imperative for the benefit of the tourism industry, so that the island can be promoted as a unified destination that matches the current needs and demands of the contemporary consumer. A unified island will have many managerial implications, with a boost in investments that will provide diversified employment opportunities for the locals.

This study can be expanded with further research and the involvement of more people from the tourism industry. More specifically, Turkish Cypriot stakeholders can be included in the sample to understand their views and opinions on the same topic. Additionally, another issue that has not been analysed in this study and is recommended as a future topic is the identification of the major problems and challenges in the case of reunification of the island for tourism planning and development.

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