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# Marketing the National Marine Park Image in Greece

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to uncover the importance of the combination of the global promotion of the image of the Alonnisos National Marine Park through place marketing procedures. The main source used is a research program carried out by the Laboratory of Tourism Planning, Research and Policy from the Department of Planning and Regional Development, University of Thessaly. The goals of the program are the incorporation of the park into an international network of tourism promotion aimed at the strengthening and specialization of tourist attractions, as well as the development of the politics of dialogue between the relevant organisations and the local population.

## KEY WORDS

Alonnisos National Marine Park (NMP), Place marketing plan  
Strategic planning  
Global promotion

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## INTRODUCTION

The main aim of this paper is to contribute to the discussion and methodology of the image-promotion and marketing of National Marine Parks (NMPs) and Marine Protected Areas (MPAs). In order to satisfy this aim, the paper presents and analyses the elaboration and implementation of a Strategic Place Marketing Plan (SPMP) in the case of the NMP of Alonnisos (or Alonissos), one of the Northern Sporades Islands (the others being Skiathos and Skopelos), Greece. Growing concern for the conservation and the well-being of the environment over the past two decades has brought about a closer relationship between the environment and tourism (Davis et al. 1997; Jafari 1997; Reynolds and Braithwaite 1999; Kousis 2000). For many governments, tourism is regarded as a key tool for regional development, through the use of alternative forms of tourism, such as ecotourism and community-based tourism (Forstner 2004; Moscardo 2007), while these options are advocated as environmentally safe bases for economic development in many rural locations

(Kline 2001). According to Agenda 21 for Small Island Developing States, 'the ocean and coastal environment is of strategic importance and constitutes a valuable development resource' (UNCED 1993).

According to Rablapala (1992) and Orams (1996), the recent growth of nature-based tourism has been singled out as the most important contributor to tourism development. However, the existing work within tourism development studies, while engaged with broadly mapping out the issues arising from the growth of these tourism forms, is largely lacking in analysis and appreciation of the roles played by, and responsibilities towards, individual animals (Hughes 2001). The management of nature-based tourism in conjunction with wildlife conservation can be achieved by incorporating the knowledge and experiences gained from various disciplines in the social, natural and physical sciences as well as by incorporating the perceptions of the local community in the management of tourism (UNEP 2001; Briassoulis 2002).

Marine parks constitute 'one of the most popular and successful management regimes utilised both to protect resources and to facilitate recreational use of them'. The 1992 IV World Congress on National Parks and Protected Areas declared that tourism associated with protected areas 'must serve as a tool to advance protected areas' objectives for maintaining ecosystem integrity, biodiversity, public awareness, and the enhancement of the quality of life of local people' (Goodwin 2002). MPAs are most often established to promote the conservation of marine biodiversity, although they can also be used to benefit other interests, such as fisheries and recreation (Gubbay 2004). Particularly in the case of the protected areas in developing countries, tourism is one of the few permitted uses of these areas, which generate financial benefits, while alternative forms of tourism such as ecotourism and nature-based tourism have become the development solution for many protected areas' managers (Orams 1995; Goodwin 1996; Walpole et al. 2000).

Marine parks constitute a relatively recent phenomenon. The most characteristic example is the Great Barrier Reef in Queensland, Australia (Finlay et al. 1990/1998), which is the largest in the world – the second largest being the Galápagos Islands (Adès and Graham 2000). There are several other international examples: the Marine and National Marine Park Wilsons Promontory in Victoria, Australia (Wescott 1995), the Newcastle and the Indian Arm Marine Parks in Canada (Vassilopoulos, 1998), and the Marine Parks in the Seychelles archipelago (Mathieu et al. 2003).

All the aforementioned cases, and many more, while they attempt through concrete ways to manage leisure and commercial activities regarding the marine resources, using the principle of the protection of the environment, fall short in presenting a particular methodology or strategic plan emphasizing the marketing of particular characteristics of the marine parks, with concrete development objectives. In most cases, the activities of the marketing and support of the image of the marine parks constitute a part, generally, of the total management of the parks, without reference to the means, strategies, objectives and, most importantly, the target markets that each park addresses

through its image. Thus, the main research question that arises is the principal precondition for a NMP (as a protected area, a part of an alternative form of tourism and a distinctive characteristic) to contribute to a controlled tourist, and general, development of an area.

This question also has to be examined in the context of tourism in Greece. The first thing that is shown by a quantitative analysis is the attention to regional tourism inequalities as a guiding tool for the proposal of tourism policy measures. There is a need for new tourism development areas according to the strategy of endemic and continuous development (Lagos 2003). As far as islands are concerned, one such form of tourism is cultural tourism, which contributes to sustainability, i.e. a balanced development of local society, economy, culture, and the natural and built environment (Tsartas 2003). As far as small islands are concerned, tourism has important benefits, offering rare development opportunities and providing opportunities for other sectors of the economy through possible connections. However, these opportunities also manifest one particular weakness: local societies on small islands depend more and more on a narrow base of activities, structured around tourism, leading effectively to a "monoculture". There is a need for a radical shift in the goals and priorities of island societies that take a strategic perspective on tourism (Coccosis 2003). One element of such a shift can be the focus on distinctive characteristics that can be marketed in a strategic way.

The presentation and analysis of the methodology has been used to support and promote a very distinctive tourist and ecological destination, the NMP of the Northern Sporades Islands, in Greece. This methodology is based on the principles of the Strategic Planning Process and the implementation of a Place Marketing Plan for the Marine Park, but also for the wider area of the Northern Sporades Islands. Furthermore, the establishment of a satisfactory and sustainable level of competitiveness, and the embodiment of the park within the local social context, are also taking place.

The data that the research uses is based on the sub-program 'Ionnisos-Promotion of the Northern Sporades Marine Park and Incorporation into the Local Social Network' in the context of the EC Program 'Eastern Mediterranean-Mediterranean System of Routes in Natural and Cultural Parks' (INTERREG IIC/???), carried out by the Department of Planning and Regional Development, University of Thessaly, Volos, Greece. During the program, a variety of actions took place, including empirical research, interviews with local actors and decision-makers (local public authorities, private sector, development agencies, ecological organizations, etc.), while several studies and development projects concerning the whole area have been taken into consideration.

The next section focuses on wildlife tourism in the marine parks, while the third section presents and discusses three main processes related to the development of protected areas (including marine parks), the planning, management and marketing process. In section four, the project methodology is presented, while the fifth section analytically describes the area which formed the basis for the case study, with particular reference to the vision and the de-

velopment objectives, the distinctiveness of the NMP of Alonnisos, the identification of the target market, and the promotion methodology regarding the image of an NMP. In the sixth section, some proposals are developed, while in the last section, the paper arrives at some conclusions for the NMP and the wider area, as well as the process of image management and marketing related to marine parks.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Historically, wildlife refers only to certain game species (almost exclusively birds, mammals, and fish) that people hunt. Today, the term 'wildlife' includes all living forms, even those that are not used for sport (non-game species) [Sinha 2001]. Marine wildlife tourism is defined as 'any tourist activity with the primary purpose of watching, studying or enjoying marine wildlife' (Masters 1998). According to Zeppel and Muloin (2008), it includes wildlife-watching holidays; boat trips; guided walks; observation or study tour holidays; visits to nature reserves and visitor centres.

According to Reynolds and Braithwaite (2001), the experiencing of wildlife by tourists has become the business of wildlife tourism, while it is becoming an increasingly popular form of tourism, especially in developing countries (MacLellan 1999). Not only is the wildlife tourism industry growing, there are also a growing number of tourists wanting close experience of wildlife and related habitats (Reynolds and Braithwaite 2001; Rodger and Moore 2004). A number of studies focus on the attitudes of tourists, perceptions and experiences of marine and national parks and their goods and services. Orams (1995; 1998) measures positive changes in both tourists and the marine environment regarding effective management of marine tourism, by using a previous model of experiential education in whale-watching ecotourism programs in Hawaii. Markwell (2001) mediates the tourist-nature experience in Borneo Island. Davenport et al. (2003) investigate the relationship between desired experiences and support of management actions in Yellowstone Marine Park, US, while Gossling (2002) examines the human-environmental relations with tourism, with particular reference to Zanzibar, Tanzania. Tonge and Moore (2006), by using 'importance-performance' analysis, examine the quality of visitors' experiences in the hinterland of the Swan Estuary Marine Park in Western Australia, and they conclude that it is strongly related to the effective management process on the part of marine park managers.

Many specialized 'industries' related to wildlife tourism have been created. Davis et al. (2001), referring to the Ningaloo Marine Park in Australia, mention the 'whale shark experience', while Hughes (2001), with particular reference to the UK, examines the structural shifts in the provision of the 'dolphin experience'. Curtin (2003) and Hoyt (2005) examine the role of whale-watching as a form of sustainable tourism development, with particular reference to a case study in Kaikoura, New Zealand, and in the region of the Atlantic islands in general. More recently, Fabinyi (2008) has focused on a study of

diving and fishing activities, and the MPAs, in the Calamianes Islands of the Philippines. It is argued that, although the assumed harmonious relationship between marine conservation and diving tourism may work in theory, in practice different expectations of MPAs can create conflict. This conclusion indicates the problem of the representation of common vision and interests of social groups for the materialisation of a development objective. One of the most representative examples of successful management of MPAs and community involvement is the Puerto Morelos reef in Mexico (Rodriguez-Martinez, 2008). On the other hand, according to Orams (2002), there are many cases that illustrate the negative results of tourist-wildlife interaction: e.g. Burger and Gochfield 1993; Muir 1993.

In all the aforementioned cases, the main problem is the effective management of the operation of the MPAs and of their demand, while an important role is played by the relation that is developed between the environment and the tourists. The services of MPAs are presented as distinctive goods, but without any explicit or concrete reference to the strategic promotion of the image of the MPAs through marketing plans. In the section that follows, three basic components that are judged important in the effective support of the image of MPAs and marine parks as 'distinctive goods', will be analysed: planning, management and marketing.

## **MARINE PARKS: PLANNING, MANAGEMENT AND MARKETING**

The definition of planning must be based on its structure, and this mainly implies three parameters: 'the organized effort', 'the creation of alternative scenarios', and 'the achievement of concrete aims' (Davidoff and Reiner 1962; Wassenhoven 1984; Loukissas 2000). The crucial question is: what are the necessary requirements for the elaboration of an effective planning process? The answer lies in the concept of strategic planning, which has been identified as the process of achieving objectives in the long term, as well as the implementation of strategies based on various principles, e.g. the participation of public and private dynamics in the development of initiatives.

In the case of marine parks, there are a great number of cases that follow particular strategic plans of action. For example, the Northeast Region Ocean Park Strategic Plan, (Pennsylvania US) serves to guide the region's coastal parks towards the implementation and achievement of the broad goals of the President's US Ocean Action Plan and the National Park Service Ocean. In addition, the Park Stewardship Action Plan enhances marine resource conservation through science, management and protection, restoration, education, and partnership (National Park Service 2007: 1), while the Macquarie Island Marine Park was established under the National Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act 1975 (NPWC Act) on 27 October, 1999. The Macquarie Island Marine Park is part of the National Representative System of Marine Protected Areas (NRSMPA). This Plan contains the general foundation of a performance-assessment system, including strategic objectives, management goals and man-

agement strategies. Furthermore, the Strategic Plan for the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area is in itself a model, and demonstrates the importance of the process. According to the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, the strategic plan extends over a 25-year period (1994-2019); it deals with the safeguarding of the area from immediate threats, addresses how resources should be managed, research undertaken and the interests of indigenous peoples safeguarded, and it also covers how the public should be informed about the area, its importance, and the ways in which they can safeguard its future. All these are stitched in what is called integrated planning (Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority 1994: preface).

Other examples of the implementation of strategic planning actions include the case of the Eastern Scotia Shelf Integrated Ocean Management Plan in Canada, that is a multi-year, strategic-level plan which provides long-term direction and commitment for integrated, ecosystem-based and adaptive management of all marine activities in, or affecting, the Eastern Scotia Shelf; the Wadden Sea Plan for nature co-operation between the Netherlands, Germany and Denmark (Stade Declaration 1997); and the Master Plan of MPAs in California (2008). In the case of marine parks, Jameson et al. (2002) propose the implementation of a 'business planning' approach, which is a combination of strategic and operational planning. This approach differs from traditional MPA planning in that it requires the existence of marketing, production, planning and financial tools, the identification of clear objectives surrounding 'what' the managers intend to achieve, 'who' they must engage with, and 'how' they will align their resources (Markides 1999; Jameson et al. 2002). On the contrary, the 'operational framework' focuses on the redefinition of a marketing plan in which the MPA managers describe the product and services that the MPA will provide and, more importantly, how the target users of the MPA will be identified and their needs and wants defined (Sheldon and Waterfield 1998; Jameson et al. 2002). All the above stages are essentially the steps of the strategic marketing plan process.

The term 'management' in the context of marine management is a nebulous term that often means different things to different people. Management intent and 'management actions' clearly depend upon the objectives of the area to be managed; a 'no-take' area or sanctuary is obviously managed differently from those parts of a multiple-use MPA, where the aim is resource utilization (Day 2002).

In the case of marine parks, the management process has several options. On the one hand, there is the designation of a 'no-take' MPA where no disturbance of marine life is permitted. On the other hand, there is no special protection or management of marine resources. Within these two extremes there are a variety of institutional arrangements. The most popular is the 'multi-use' MPA, which 'seeks to manage recreational and commercial use of the marine resources whilst protecting them from unacceptable damage'. The most popular mechanism is the establishment of a range of geographical zones (Salm 1985; Orams 1998: 80-81). Marine parks can serve many purposes, including



that of nature reserve where marine species, functions and features are preserved with minimum human interference. While public access may be limited in some more sensitive areas, marine parks can also provide settings for a variety of recreational activities. With careful zoning, marine parks can serve both conservation and tourism functions, whilst being environmentally, culturally and economically sustainable.

The main question is whether or not this interpretation may be the effective mechanism for managing nature-based tourism. Orams (1996) supports that the techniques which have traditionally been used to manage the recreational use of natural areas can be divided into three main categories: a) physical controls in the forms of barriers, paths and the location of facilities, which are used to influence visitor behavior, b) direct controls in the form of rules and regulations, including the banning of certain activities, setting speed limits, etc., and c) indirect mechanisms established in order to minimize inappropriate behavior on a voluntary basis through education, which are being increasingly utilized. Furthermore, he supports the view that interpretation, because it is actually an education-based strategy, if it is going to be effective, urgently needs more empirical evidence and further investigations into specific management techniques. Reynolds and Braithwaite (2001), present a conceptual model of the management of wildlife tourism in order to understand the significance of wildlife for human welfare, and also in order to identify the social and economic benefit derived from this use of wildlife resources. In more recent work, the significance of community participation in the management of the MPA has been promoted and implemented in several parts of the management process (Rodriguez-Martinez 2008),

Finally, writing about the effectiveness of the marine parks management process, Jones (2000) sets out the seven key steps in the evaluative process developed for the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area: identify management objectives, define key desired outcomes, identify performance indicators, undertake monitoring, periodically access results, report findings and recommendations and adjust management as necessary. However, the common point of several approaches is that the establishment of appropriate programs for evaluating management effectiveness requires major institutional re-orientation at policy level (Day et al. 2002), while the success of MPAs as a management tool will be greatest when communities collectively support the MPA and government agencies (or in some cases, nongovernmental organizations) provide the necessary financing, monitoring, enforcement and technical expertise needed to ensure that MPAs reach their management objectives (Jameson and Williams 2000; Jameson et al. 2002).

The significance of the marketing of immobile resources, such as landscapes, sights and cultures, represents a substantial economic advantage, especially for the economic development of tropical countries, because their immobility obviously makes it necessary for tourists to travel in order to consume them (Urry, 1990/2002; Gosling, 2002).

Place marketing represents a widely used approach in defining objectives and setting policies for promoting local development, starting with the strategic analysis of the place together with the vision and the mission statements. Place marketing supporters identify local economic development and place competitiveness as goals, attributing the concept of “good” to an island, especially when the talk is about tourism destinations, knowing, at the same time, that place image promotion constitutes something more complicated and multi-dimensional compared to the promotion of a typical product (Deffner and Metaxas 2006).

As mentioned above, the identification of a strategic marketing plan is proposed as an effective process in order that the managers of MPAs not only satisfy the development objectives effectively, but also satisfy the needs and perceptions of the potential consumers (Sheldon and Waterfield 1998; Jameson et al. 2002).

Although in most cases the distinctive characteristics, the advantages of each region and the orientation to the attraction of potential target markets are explicit, what is not explicit and programmed is the way in which the image of each region is strategically strengthened and supported. The use of the Internet is the main vehicle for the promotion of the distinctiveness of each park and the Australian parks have the most organized sites. In the present research, the lack of organised marketing plans for the image of marine parks is counterbalanced by the analytical presentation of the case of the NMP of Alonnisos, Northern Sporades Islands, Greece.

## METHODOLOGY

Two main methods of analysis, SWOT and PEST, which refer to the audit/diagnosis of the internal and external situation at the micro- and macro-economic level, were used. The emphasis was on five main steps of strategic planning: a) the location of and focus on strategic actions in specific and primary issues, b) the estimation and evaluation of the level of difficulty for each separate phase, c) the evaluation of the advantages and disadvantages of each phase, d) the planning and adoption of the appropriate alternative action scenarios and the identification of predictable benefits, and e) development actions based on the selected strategies and the implementation of the feedback process.

The Strategic Place Marketing Plan for the NMP refers to two levels of analysis: a) the area of Northern Sporades (vision, distinctive characteristics, action plans, promotional strategies and tactics, alternative scenarios, feedback process), and b) the NMP as a single unit. An important point was to present the NMP as a ‘distinctive good’ and not as a ‘good with distinctive characteristics’. The vision of the NMP is identified as: ‘international awareness and support of its role, its significance and its distinctiveness as one of the most important ecosystems with development horizons at the local, regional, national and also international level’.

The principal aim is the construction of an attractive and competitive character (Jussila and Segerstahl 1996; Meler and Ruzic 1999; King et al. 2000) of the NMP area for the potential target markets. In addition, in line with the concept that sustainable economic development has to deal with environmental development (Hardy and Lloyd 1994), the basic rule of analysis refers to the protection of the environment and the development of soft types of activities that are friendly to the environment, since the natural beauty and distinctive characteristics of the NMP are both its competitive and its comparative advantages. The aim of competitiveness has two dimensions: a) the level of attractiveness and competitiveness for the whole area of the Northern Sporades, and b) the level of attractiveness and competitiveness for the NMP itself. The environment should constitute an ally of local development, from the moment an objective and effective management exist. Due to the distinctiveness of the wider area, and more specifically of the area of the NMP, and in order to elaborate a promotional strategic package, the focus is on this distinctiveness and uniqueness through the proposition of different forms of soft tourist development that are friendly to the environment, provide innovative character for the area, and incorporate prospects of sustainable development.

## DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The fact that Alonnisos (Figure 1) is a small island with a small population does not mean that the dynamics of development are limited. The main direction of the development strategy for Alonnisos and the Northern Sporades is the development of tourist activities with the parallel implementation of a policy of environmental protection. The NMP of Alonnisos, Northern Sporades, was the first designated as a Marine Park in Greece, and is currently the largest MPA in Europe (approximately 2,260 Km<sup>2</sup>).



Figure 1. Northern Sporades and the Boundary of the National Marine Park

Efforts to protect this area began in the early 1970s. On August 31st, 1986, the Prefecture of Magnesia signed the first resolution to protect the monk seal and their unique habitats. In 1988, this was followed by legislation introduced by a Common Ministerial Decision, which covered a two-year period and was renewed in 1990. In May 1992, the area was declared a National Park by Presidential Decree. Finally, in June 2003, this legislation was replaced by a Common Ministerial Decision (Ministers for the Environment, Agriculture, Merchant Marine, and Development) which detailed the management framework for the area and established the Management Body responsible for the preparation and implementation of the management plan for the marine park.

The NMP of Alonnisos, Northern Sporades, includes both land and sea areas, and it comprises a vigorous ecosystem with great biological diversity, interesting geological structures and important cultural elements (archaeological, historical, etc.). The park is subject to specific legislation, which aims to protect and conserve rare habitats and threatened species, as well as the cultural and heritage values and the development of the area, by the sustainable use of its natural resources.

The basic philosophy of the organization of the park is its division into two main protection zones (A and B). Zone A has more rigorous protection with stricter measures in force in some of its areas, because of the urgent need to protect the unique characteristics of the plant and animal life that is found there. In zone A, hunting is forbidden and specific restrictions are placed on professional fishing (coastal and middle fishing vessels). In areas to which the public have access, the following activities are allowed: swimming, observation of the sea bed (snorkelling), amateur photography, filming, visit to cultural monuments and anchoring. There are specific restrictions on amateur fishing and free camping, and the lighting of fires is not permitted. Zone B is open to visitors and there are no specific restrictions, with the exception of free camping and the lighting of fires, and in some areas there are boat speed limits. Swimming and walking are amongst the simplest and most interesting ways of coming into contact with the natural environment. There are specific restrictions on amateur fishing in addition to the rules laid down in the Fisheries Code. Specific restrictions are also placed on professional fishing (middle fishing vessels). The geographic isolation of the area, its morphology, the limited degree of human interference and the excellent condition of the natural environment, all serve to make the land and sea areas of the Marine Park an ideal habitat for many threatened species of plants and animals.

## **DISTINCTIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE NMP**

The NMP is identified as a 'distinctive good' and not a 'good with distinctive characteristics'. But this particular character of the park does not mean that the park also has a competitive character. The research identified five main categories of characteristics (Table 1) of the NMP as a 'distinctive good': the NMP's character, its geographical position, the island of Alonnisos, the natural environment, the Mediterranean seal, 'Monachus-Monachus'.

*Table 1. The Characteristics of the Northern Sporades National Marine Park as a 'Distinctive Good'*

<i>Category of Characteristics</i>	<i>Explanation</i>	<i>Level of importance</i>	<i>Dimension of importance</i>	<i>Potential area of tourism development</i>
1 NMP character – uniqueness	The first Marine Park which was institutionally established in Greece	Very high	Local, Regional, National, International	
2 Geographical position	Effective communication with surrounding places/areas	High	Local, Regional, National, International	All the potential target markets, in relation to visiting the park
3 Alonnisos Island	It belongs to the protected area of the park (Zone B'). The only residential area of underwater the park	High	Local, Regional, National, International	Development of alternative forms of tourism, e.g. ecotourism, religious tourism, agrotourism
4 Mediterranean seal 'Monachus-Monachus'	The main reason for the establishment of the NMP	Very high	Local, Regional, National, International	Visits of specific scientific and research areas
5 Natural environment	Excellent natural habitat (almost 300 types of fish and avi fauna, and reptile species)	Very high	Local, Regional, National, International	Visits of specific scientific and research areas

*Source:* Loukissas et al., 2002.

The NMP is highly important, not only at local or regional level, but also at national and international level. Furthermore, the level of the NMP's competitiveness as a 'distinctive good' can be identified through the existence and operation of some basic factors. We've already characterized the NMP as a 'particular destination'. The international experience tends to present a model-framework of factors that lead to the effective implementation of a marketing plan. The main aim of the existence and operation of those factors concerns customer service and customer satisfaction (Cooper et al. 1998; Buhalis 2000). Table 2 presents these factors in the light of a strategic place marketing plan.

The main conclusion is that all development axes require a strategic planning process. The strategic plan process has to do with some particular functions, as presented in Figure 2. In the case of the NMP, particular attention should be given to the establishment of 'know-how', which is related to the planning, controlling and performance processes. It is clear that the NMP managers and authorities have to understand the distinctiveness and uniqueness of the NMP and have to plan the most appropriate actions for its development.

The identification of the NMP's target markets constitutes the axis along which the strategic marketing plan for the NMP will be scheduled. Furthermore, the segmentation procedure of the potential target markets has been acknowl-

Table 2. Strategic Place Marketing Plan of the Northern Sporades National Marine Park

Factors	Axes
1 National Marine Park distinctiveness	Natural environment – development of action plans, based on the uniqueness of the park, so that the whole area becomes acknowledged as an 'International Ecological Centre'
2 Accessibility – current situation – restrictions and interdictions	Effective accessibility in the protected area – the current arrangements concerning the NMP area (especially in Zone A), require tourism development in the surrounding areas of the park through alternative forms of tourism, in order to satisfy the potential tourism markets
3 International promotion / networks / co-operations	Strategic planning of specific action plans. The main aim is the global promotion of the park through the co-operation of local and regional authorities with foreign countries or cities on intraregional and interregional levels
4 Implementation of specialised penetration strategies into specific target markets in co-operation with travel agencies, in order to increase the attraction to potential target markets	The main requirement is the 'know-how' for the elaboration, evaluation and choice of the appropriate alternative strategies, tactics and scenarios in order to develop and implement an effective Place Marketing Plan
5 Social infrastructures	Particular orientation to customer service and customer satisfaction (needs and predictions)
6 Additional support by using scientific and research services - effective access to information	Tourism market research in order to define tourism trends. Planning and development of alternative forms of tourism. Exchange of experiences with other centres and cities that have developed effectively similar actions
7 Effective managerial authority in order to achieve the international promotion, competitiveness and sustainable development of the park	High level of ability in organised sectors such as: strategic planning, programming, management and control, evaluation of information, implementation of strategic actions, evaluation of human resources, effectiveness and efficiency
8 Feedback	Three levels: a) analysis and evaluation of the historic background of the area, b) analysis of the current situation, c) strategic planning for future development actions

Source: Loukissas et al. 2002.

edged by the international literature (Mykletun et al. 2001; Carmichael 2002; Chen 2003) as one of the most important and useful techniques for the development of tourism and culture. The most crucial point that characterizes the segmentation process concerns the methodology that is used in order to effectively segment the potential target markets. One major question relates to the level of importance for the potential target markets. Is it possible for all target markets to have the same interest in the NMP? At this point the 'commercial character' of this research should not be forgotten. Several studies examine the character of the direct consumption of destination images, referring to ur-

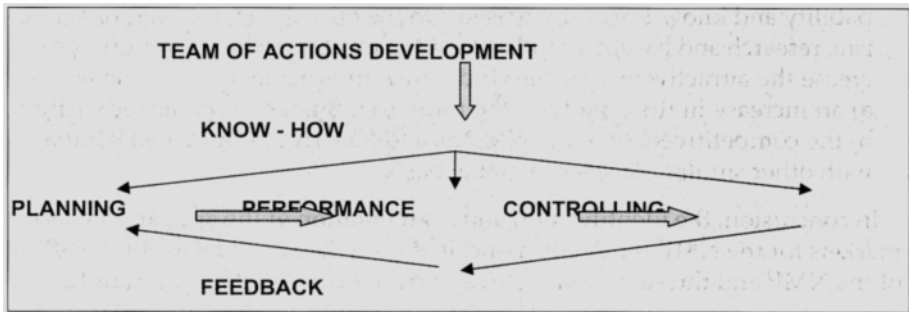


Figure 2. Functions / Phases of the Strategic Plan Process

ban or cultural tourism (Richards 1996; Bramwell 1998; Jansson 2003). Thus, in order to achieve the expected levels of tourism development, it is important to 'promote' and 'sell' the 'distinctive good NMP', assessing its 'purchase' from the target markets that the NMP is seeking to address. Consequently, it is necessary to approach those target markets that have not only the required levels of purchasing capacity, but also the conscience that makes them want to actually buy what is on offer. There are five main criteria that characterize a target market as 'interesting and profitable': a) the particularity of the target market, b) the size of the target market, c) the accessibility into the target market's internal environment, d) the homogeneity in its internal environment, e) the non-homogeneity with other target-markets.

The identification of the most appropriate target markets and segmentation criteria are directly associated with the marketing methodology of the NMP as a total tourist package or, as it is better called, the 'development package'. The dimensions of this promotion are:

- *Local-regional*: The potential target markets concern the internal environment of the NMP and the Northern Sporades area (local authorities, enterprises, residents, the NMP's regime, organizations, etc.). The major issue is the identification of the acceptance and awareness of the management of the common development of NMP,
- *National*: The identification of the target markets, on a national basis, has as a main axis the 'distinctiveness of the area/NMP: 'distinctive good'. It is crucial that those target markets which can contribute to the effective development of the NMP and the Northern Sporades area should be selected and approached. NMP is a 'distinctive good' and is acknowledged as such at an international level. The development and sustainability of the NMP constitutes a national issue, related to Greek tourism and cultural development, as is the case for other areas of competitive advantage.
- *International*: This dimension has a double character. On the one hand, according to research, potential target markets require the evaluation and adaptation of sustainable development forms on a global basis. Partnerships are supported and fortified, experiences are exchanged and the degree of ca-

pability and know-how is increased. On the other hand, international tourism, research and leisure, are all offered to those target markets in order to increase the attractiveness of the study area, thus achieving two main goals: a) an increase in the quality of the tourism influx and specialized visiting, b) the competitiveness of the NMP as a 'distinctive good' when compared with other similar places on a global basis.

In conclusion, the identification and segmentation of the appropriate target markets for the NMP is directly associated with the effectiveness of the SPMP of the NMP and the surrounding area of the Northern Sporades islands.

## MARKETING METHODOLOGY

The proposed marketing methodology corresponds to five basic characteristics of the global promotion of the NMP: the uniqueness of the park and its distinctiveness as a 'good', the acknowledgement locally and regionally of the additional ecological and environmental value of the park, the tourist value of the park for the area of the Sporades Islands, the importance of the park for the region of Thessaly and for Greece, the contribution of the park to the international development of 'know-how', since the United Nations Organization designated the park as a 'pilot program' for all the other areas/countries that have seals in their waters.

The marketing methodology is based on the philosophy of a 'project', in order to satisfy the following four interdependent levels of analysis: strategic planning, effectiveness-sustainability, competitiveness, local and regional development. Strategic planning constitutes the basis for the achievement of the predictable level of effectiveness and sustainability, so that the Sporades area becomes competitive. The final level relates to the outcome of the project, something that has a positive effect on the whole area at both local and regional level.

According to the 'project' process, the proposed methodology includes the following parameters:

- identification of the time limit of the whole project,
- time limit of each phase,
- alternative action plans (strategies) and alternative scenarios (tactics),
- selection of means for the development of actions,
- control and evaluation of each phase, identification of the role of the partners in the implementation of methodology,
- feedback process,
- total economic budget for the implementation of the promotion methodology, and secondary economic budget for each phase.

The method used in the research in order to set up a particular time limit for the promotion methodology is based on 'Critical Path Analysis' (Nokes et al. 2003). This particular project should have lasted three years (from 1/09/2003 till 30/09/2006). The first phase comprised the implementation of the pilot method-



ology program (1 year), and the second phase, the implementation of the final methodology program (2 years). The first phase was divided into five steps: evaluation of the international and Greek experience (similar promotion actions and tourism trends) and collection of primary and secondary data (market research) [2 months], identification of Strategic Development Plans [2 months], identification of pilot Strategic Development Plans and alternative scenarios [1 month], implementation of methodology [5 months], total evaluation [1 month]. Table 3 presents some main strategies related to the tactics and the goals that the study has proposed in the case of the NMP as a 'distinctive good'.

The second phase concerns the final implementation of the promotion methodology, and is divided into the same steps as the first phase. It is crucial to point out the following additional points: selection of strategies and tactics for each target market (specific to those which concern only the NMP and those which concern the Sporades area), identification of the structure of actions, evaluation and control of each step, implementation of the feedback process on the proposed actions, distinction between primary and secondary development goals (focus on the ten most important ones). Some of these actions and their steps, based on the promotion methodology, are presented in Table 4.

Table 3. Strategies, Tactics and Goals in NMP Case as a 'Distinctive Good'

Strategies	Tactics - Steps	Goals
1 <sup>st</sup> <i>Penetration</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Identification of a new profitable target market</li> <li>● Identification of the process method</li> <li>● Selection of the means and the action team</li> <li>● Positioning</li> <li>● Collection of data concerning reactions and impressions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Development, promotion and support of NMP image to a new target market</li> </ul>
2 <sup>nd</sup> <i>Competitive</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Frontal attack and promotion of the area's competitive advantage-Competitive pricing policy</li> <li>● Ensuring of the appropriate budgets concerning the support of marketing and promotional actions and support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Domination amongst the competition of the mentality among potential buyers that 'we are the specialists'</li> </ul>
3 <sup>rd</sup> <i>Diversification</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Penetration into existing target markets, promoting something new, different and innovative (i.e. alternative forms of tourism)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Covering new customers' needs and demands</li> <li>● Reinforcement and support of the uniqueness</li> </ul>
4 <sup>th</sup> <i>Corporate Marketing</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Selection of partnership actors in internal and external environment of NMP</li> <li>● Actors approach</li> <li>● Creation of benefits and advantages derived from these partnerships</li> <li>● Delegation process and identification of rules among the participants.</li> <li>● Decision making analysis procedure</li> <li>● Feedback procedure and control evaluation</li> <li>● Definition of common vision and goals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Partnerships support among the local actors in order to increase the development of the area</li> <li>● Support of the areas' competitiveness</li> <li>● Incorporation of the study area in the Social Web through active, strategically-planned actions</li> </ul>

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Table 4. Actions and Steps Based on the Proposed Promotion Methodology of the NMP.

Actions	Steps
1 <i>Creation of Tourism Promotional Package</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Creation of a 'Scientific-Researching' package</li> <li>● Creation of an 'Environmental-Ecological' package</li> <li>● Creation of an 'Alternative forms of tourism' package</li> <li>● Creation of a total promotional package of NMP as a 'distinctive good'</li> </ul>
2 <i>Target Markets Definition and Strategies Development</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Target markets identification at local and regional level</li> <li>● Target markets identification at national level</li> <li>● Promotional strategies per target market</li> <li>● Planning the appropriate tactics per target market</li> <li>● Creation of alternative scenarios</li> </ul>
3 <i>International Promotion of Nmp</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Target markets identification at international level</li> <li>● Promotional strategies per target market</li> <li>● Planning the appropriate tactics per target market</li> <li>● Creation of alternative scenarios</li> </ul>
4 <i>Distribution Channels- Linkages</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Planning the distribution process and the linkages between local and regional levels</li> <li>● Planning the distribution process and the linkages on international level</li> </ul>
5 <i>Promotion &amp; Advertising Strategic Plan</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Planning and producing printed material in four (4) different languages (English, German, French and Italian)</li> <li>● Distribution of this printed material to internal and external mediators</li> <li>● Planning and producing tapes, CDs, videos and documentaries</li> <li>● Planning advertising spots</li> <li>● Using media for NMP promotion</li> <li>● Setting up promotional stands</li> <li>● Planning and implementation of 'Information and Promotion Centres' in selected areas in and out of the studying area</li> <li>● Creation of a website</li> </ul>
6 <i>Public Relations' Package</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Developing contacts and partnerships with research centres, academic institutions and universities in Greece and abroad</li> <li>● Planning participations in conferences and exhibitions in Greece and abroad</li> <li>● Participating in research programmes</li> <li>● Using the NMP elements for research and academic activities (articles and scientific papers, etc)</li> </ul>
7 <i>Controlling and Evaluation of Each Step and All the Actions</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Evaluation of each action separately and correlation of the actions with the anticipated results as a whole.</li> <li>● Using alternative scenarios wherever necessary</li> </ul>

Table 5 presents some proposed 'packages' of tourism and specialised visiting concerning the NMP. The planning process of those packages should take into account the whole area of the Northern Sporades Islands, with the main axis being the NMP.

Planning a variety of events in order to achieve a high level of leisure, to meet the distinctiveness of the NMP, to offer high quality information and services to the target markets

Table 5. NMP's Tourism and Specialized 'Packages'

	<i>Proposed Packages</i>	<i>Examples</i>	<i>Planning Axis</i>
1	<i>Programming based on special interests</i>	Guided tour – informing inside the NMP- monasteries – archaeological sites	Special interests - organizing and programming
2	<i>Tourism package based on duration of holidays</i>	Week, three-day or weekend packages	Total tourism package with particular actions based on the specific needs and distinctive characteristics of the potential target market
3	<i>Escorted tours package</i>	Guided tour – informing inside the NMP- monasteries – archaeological sites with specialist escorts (guides, researchers, etc.)	Total quality planning re the offered services– high level of information – customer service and customer satisfaction as priorities
4	<i>Convention / meeting packages</i>	Particular package based on a convention or a meeting subject. Programming of supported actions such as: tour of traditional settlements, see traditional crafts, hiking along designated paths.	Organization and programming based on the length of stay, and also the relaxation, rest and recreation of the participants
5	<i>Events package</i>	Environmental events – cultural- presentation of the local skills – presentation of alternative forms of tourism – events with historical interest and issues	Planning a variety of events in order to achieve a high level of leisure, to meet the distinctiveness of the NMP, to offer high quality information and services to the target markets

Source: Morrison, 1996/2001 (elaboration by authors)

## LOCAL ACTORS IN THE MANAGEMENT PROCESS OF THE NMP

As the procedures of target market identification and segmentation have been scheduled and implemented, the research has focused its analysis on the role and contribution of local authorities with regard to the development of the NMP and the support of its global image. One crucial point which emerges is the development of partnerships between the local authorities of the three Sporades islands. We mentioned previously that the case of the NMP is a national issue and that the selection and approach of target markets concerns the development and sustainability not only of the NMP in isolation, but also of the Northern Sporades area as a whole.

Each of the three islands has its own identity, particular characteristics and special interests. Maybe the scenario of the common development actions seems a little unrealistic, and difficult to achieve, but international experience shows many cases of areas and places where strategies and plans that were adapted ended up being ineffective, both locally and regionally, with no profits for the place or the region in the long term.

These strategies are referred to in international literature as 'waste strategies' (Cheshire and Gordon 1998) and are characterized by the absence of strategic planning, the absence of research and evaluation regarding the potential target markets, a programming absence related to the anticipated profits for the

research area, the absence of a development vision, the absence of knowledge and know-how when it comes to implementing strategic procedures for place marketing. Consequently, the proposed promotion methodology should focus not on how to solve a particular problem at a particular moment, but on how the solving of this problem would positively influence the local and the regional area (mainly the NMP) in the long term.

In order to achieve the global promotion of the NMP according to the basic principles of strategic planning so that the whole Northern Sporades area becomes more attractive and competitive, the research focused on the role of local authorities and their contribution to development actions in the internal and the external environment of the park. The most important prerequisite for these actions to become effective, successful and sustainable is for them to take place in a participative and co-operative marketing process (Morrison 1996/ 1999).

The main steps are as follows: acceptance of the proposed SPMP, common vision and development of goals for the Northern Sporades area, participation in the process of decision analysis, management of financial resources, adoption and development of innovative actions, programming and common organization based on a particular time limit, planning of common strategies that refer to human resource development, investments in research projects (market research), evaluation of global trends, co-operation at national and international level. This same process is the one that is proposed for the NMP area, since the development of the NMP concerns more than just the local Sporades area.

## PROPOSALS

The proposals refer to three main sectors: a) National Marine Park global promotion and support, b) Local economic development and competitiveness, and c) Sustainable tourism development.

As far as the National Marine Park global promotion and support is concerned the following three proposals are made: a) establishment of a specialized administrative organization (co-operation between public, private and voluntary sector, local authorities, and external advisors, e.g. University of Thessaly), which would be responsible for the elaboration, implementation and control of the SPMP of the park, b) identification of the image of the NMP as 'International Development Centre of Alternative Forms of Tourism', and c) planning development actions (with a particular time limit) based on the concepts of: culture- history-environment-national marine park -leisure-people.

As far as the local economic development and competitiveness is concerned the following four proposals are made: a) strategic planning of sustainable actions providing benefits to the local communities, b) support of tourism production activities with innovative character, c) investments in local human resource capital by supporting and promoting training and specialized educational programs, and d) reappraisal of economic development actions

or incentives that have been developed at least in the last three years, in order to evaluate their usefulness in future.

Finally, as far as the sustainable tourism development) is concerned the following seven proposals are made: a) strategic planning of a package of alternative forms of tourism, b) identification of target markets, c) strategic planning of the global promotion of the NMP, d) development of the distribution channels of the NMP (at the national and international level), e) strategic advertising axis (taking advantage of the local distinctive characteristics), f) public relations package (participation in international exhibitions, conferences, cooperation with cultural and environmental organizations, R/D centers, Universities, travel agencies, etc.), and g) feedback process.

## CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Using the processes of planning, management and marketing, the paper provided a methodological tool for the effective image promotion and support of NMPs. The paper adopted the approaches that propose the necessity of multi-level management performance, since the protected areas and national parks are 'distinctive environments', and the relationships between nature, the local communities and tourists are highly sensitive. However, the paper argued that the efficient promotion and support of this distinctiveness needs strategic thought and a particular place marketing plan. Returning to the main question posed in the introduction, this constitutes the principal precondition for a NMP to contribute to a controlled tourist, and general, development of an area.

The planning and the performance of a marketing plan were identified not as a part of a general strategic plan but as components in their own right. The additional value of this paper is that it provided a strategic methodological tool for relevant destinations with particular interest and distinctive characteristics, such as the NMP. More specifically, the paper proposed an alternative approach to local development, through the planning and implementation of a SPMP.

The Northern Sporades NMP constitutes, in essence, a 'distinctive good'. The main issue that is raised is the necessity for strategic planning, so that this ecosystem becomes a global 'distinctive destination'. Its additional value for (not only) local development is huge. Local authorities should become more flexible in their implementation of innovative actions in order to support and to promote the image of the park on an international level. Alternative forms of tourism should be developed in the wider area, since the Sporades Islands constitute one of the most appropriate destinations in Greece for this type of activity.

The first priority is the management and protection of the natural environment. The natural beauty, both of the NMP and Northern Sporades, constitutes a strong competitive and comparative advantage, not only for the local community, economy and culture, but also for Greece. The necessity for the

NMP to become embodied in the local social context is acknowledged, and is something that requires, initially, strong local development as well as a high level of competitiveness. Finally, it is necessary for the Northern Sporades Islands to be considered as a 'distinctive good and destination'. The role and the contribution of local authorities constitute the basis for the success and sustainability of the park, of endogenous partnerships and of development actions.

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