Possibilities of Developing Thematic Tourism Related with Digital Nomads in the Island of Crete, Greece

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ABSTRACT

The attraction of digital nomads is an important challenge for several tourism destinations worldwide. The island of Crete, Greece, is a popular tourist destination for summer holidays visited by mil. of tourists every year. The possibility of attracting digital nomads in Crete, which has many amenities and desirable features, has been investigated. Although several famous tourism destinations worldwide have developed appropriate policies to attract digital nomads, the island of Crete has not been active on this issue. The current research aims to examine Crete's strengths and advantages for attracting digital nomads to fulfill their expectations and desires. The island has developed many types of thematic tourism according to the preferences of different tourist segments, differentiating its tourism product, which is currently based on mass tourism. It also has all the characteristics favorable to digital nomads, indicating that the island can be an ideal place for them to visit, work, and enjoy. It has been found that the presence of digital nomads in Crete will have many social, economic, and environmental benefits on the island. The current work can be useful to local authorities and the tourism industry, who should develop the appropriate policies, incentives, and tools to attract the growing number of digital nomads in Crete.

Keywords: Crete, digital nomads, Greece, tourism.

I. INTRODUCTION

The tourism industry considers digital nomads a new, growing, and desirable group of travelers that several tourism destinations should attract. They are people who travel, work remotely using their laptops, and combine work and traveling with entertainment (Cook, 2020; Gretzel & Hardy, 2019; Reichenberger, 2018; Vagena, 2021). During and after the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of digital nomads has grown significantly. At the same time, several tourism destinations worldwide have developed specific programs and incentives to attract and host them since they have different characteristics from conventional tourists (Prabawa & Pertiwi, 2020; Zerva et al., 2023). Crete is a well-known and popular tourist destination for vacations worldwide (Andriotis & Vaughan, 2008; Matzarakis & Nastos, 2011). The island's specific natural, cultural, and other characteristics make it an ideal destination for digital nomads who can enjoy a holistic life in Crete. However, policies and incentives for attracting digital nomads in Crete are lacking.

The current work investigates the possibilities for developing thematic tourism related to digital nomads in Crete.

The structure of the text is as follows: After the literature review, the concept of digital nomads and the tourism industry of Crete are stated. Next, the development of thematic tourism in Crete, the possibilities of attracting digital nomads, and the benefits of developing thematic tourism related to digital nomads on the island are analyzed. The text ends with a discussion of the findings, the conclusions drawn, and the literature citations used. The current work could be useful to policymakers and the island's tourism industry, who should develop appropriate policies and measures to attract
digital nomads. It covers the lack of studies regarding developing new tourism products in Crete and Greece tailored to a new and growing group of potential visitors while having many innovative aspects.

2. Literature Review

The literature review is separated into three sections, including (a) digital nomads, (b) thematic tourism, and (c) tourism on the island of Crete, Greece.

2.1. Digital Nomads

Hannonen et al. (2023) have studied the development of digital nomadism in Gran Canaria, Spain. The authors examined the relationship between destination communities and digital nomadism in a popular EU tourism destination. They stated that the perspective of the tourism destination regarding digital nomads affects the new societal reality of digital nomadism.

Chevtaeva (2021) has examined the experience of digital nomads for co-working and co-living at a destination. The author has identified their preferences regarding co-working and co-living spaces. She stated that the most important advantage for digital nomads in a destination is the community sense that includes easy access to meeting other people and events.

Prabawa and Pertiwi (2020) have examined the digital nomad tourist motivation in Bali, Indonesia. The authors stated that Bali has many natural beauties and cultural activities attracting digital nomads. They also mentioned that digital nomads regard Bali as an inspiring destination with enjoyable activities and a supportive place to stay and work.

Vagena (2021) studied the relationship between digital nomads and the tourism industry. The author stated that digital nomads work independently from their laptops without always being in the same location. Long-distance work is a privilege if it is combined with traveling and pleasure. She also mentioned that digital nomads prefer places with high internet speeds, good quality of life, and low cost of living, while they are a new form of travel from the tourism industry.

Rakhmadi (2021) has studied the role of digital nomads in supporting tourism in Bali, Indonesia. The author stated that digital nomads can be categorized into three groups: (a) Glampackers are tourists in the category of millennial nomads, (b) Luxpackers are tourists in the luxurious nomadic category, and (c) Flashpackers or digital nomads who stay temporarily in a place while they are working anywhere.

Putra and Agirachman (2016) have studied the perspective of digital nomads in working together in urban spaces. The authors stated that co-working spaces in cities can host digital nomads. They also mentioned that co-working spaces can assist creative tourism, simultaneously promoting slow tourism for digital nomads who work there.

Marathaki (2022) has studied the concept of digital nomads and their impact on the tourism industry. The author stated that public and local authorities should develop appropriate policies to increase the competitiveness of Athens, Greece, in attracting digital nomads compared to other tourism destinations.

A report regarding the impact of COVID-19 in promoting digital nomadism has been published by MBO Partners (2020). The report stated that digital nomads travel and explore while working, unlike regular remote workers who stay in one geographic area. It is also mentioned that digital nomads can finance their traveling and spend less time working to support themselves and more time enjoying their adventures.

For digital nomads, Cook (2020) has examined the boundaries between work and leisure. The author stated that digital nomadism is not always autonomous and free but is a way of living that requires a high level of discipline. He also mentioned that digital nomads working in co-working spaces should be disciplined, self-disciplined, efficient, and reliable.

Gretzel and Hardy (2019) have studied the lifestyle of digital nomads characterized by materiality and mobility. The authors stated that material things are important for digital nomads with a minimalistic and mobile lifestyle.

Reichenberger (2018) has studied the holistic freedom in work and leisure among digital nomads. The author stated that digital nomads aim to create a holistic lifestyle characterized by freedom where both areas of life are equally enjoyable. She also mentioned that they prefer their professional, spatial, and personal freedom, considering that it will create opportunities for personal self-development and learning.

Almeida and Belezas (2022) have examined the impact of digital nomads on peripheral territories’ tourism strategies. The authors stated that after the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of digital nomads has rapidly increased, and peripheral territories, highly dependent on tourism, could embrace and attract this emerging target group. They also mentioned that Madeira Island, Portugal, has developed a “digital nomad village,” attracting many remote workers. Gran Canaria, Spain, has also
created a “nomad city,” while the capital, Las Palmas, has 19 co-working spaces and is a popular destination for remote workers (Digital Nomads, n.d.).

Fyall et al. (2012) have reviewed the theoretical approaches related to the collaboration of tourism destinations. The authors stated three dimensions of collaboration, including (a) organic collaboration, (b) mediated intra-destination collaboration, and (c) mediated intra- and inter-destination collaboration.

Thompson (2019) has examined the constant travel of digital nomads. The author interviewed 38 digital nomads regarding their work, traveling, and leisure. He stated that digital nomads combine their passion for travel with remote work, while some use co-living spaces to select friends and romantic relationships.

Mourato et al. (2023) have studied the social responsibility of digital nomads regarding their self-efficacy and innovation. The authors stated that tourism enterprises should consider their social responsibility to attract digital nomads, considering that they are solo travelers who value the sense of community in a place.

Orel (2019) has studied the co-working environment and digital nomadism. The author stated that digital nomads comprise a modern workforce with vague travel, work, and leisure boundaries. He also mentioned that digital nomadism consists of a new type of creative tourism where individuals are involved in the creative life of a destination, interacting with the local communities by exchanging skills and ideas frequently using local co-working spaces.

Greg and Lena (2012) have studied creative tourism, which is growing rapidly. The authors stated that creative tourism is related to the exchange of ideas and skills between the visitors and the local community in a synergistic way.

Greg (2015) has studied the new global nomads. The author stated that global nomads try to integrate themselves with the local communities. He also mentioned that digital nomads utilize the existing digital and logistic infrastructure to maintain a fluid, individualized lifestyle.

Zerva et al. (2023) investigated digital nomad tourism. The authors stated that the COVID-19 pandemic harmed international tourism mobility while it has started a discussion on transforming the crisis into an opportunity for redesigning tourism. They also mentioned that digital nomadism represents an increasing tendency worldwide while various tourism destinations have refocused their marketing strategy, presenting themselves as “digital nomad-friendly destinations”.

Chevtava and Denizci-Guillet (2021) have studied the lifestyles of digital nomads. The authors stated that digital nomadism has assisted the development of new services and products in several tourism destinations, including the creation of co-working spaces. They also mentioned that digital nomads should be understood as a new tourist segment from the hospitality industry, which should invest in creating co-working spaces that satisfy their needs.

2.2. Thematic Tourism

Shalbafian et al. (2020) have investigated the development of thematic tourism in rural areas of Meyami County, Iran. The authors stated that Meyami County has several villages surrounded by green areas and enclosed by deserts situated on the Silk Road. The rural nature of the county, its religious monuments, and the local gastronomy can support the development of thematic tourism in this territory.

Djurasevic (2014) has studied the inclusion of thematic tourism in the business of modern tour operators. The author highlighted the interest of modern tourists in various forms of thematic tourism. She mentioned that tour operators should design thematic programs tailor-made to the specific preferences of several tourist groups willing to have a non-conventional tourism experience.

Cervinka et al. (2014) studied thematic tourism in the Czech Republic. The authors compared mass and thematic tourism in the country. They mentioned that the Czech Republic has many cultural and historical monuments that can support the development of thematic tourism.

Nagy (2012) has studied the development of thematic tourism routes related to cultural tourism. The author stated that many tourists are willing to include heritage and cultural routes in their traveling. She also mentioned that the development of cultural tourism, like other types of thematic tourism, requires small-scale innovations that support the development of new touristic products.

Martins et al. (2017) have studied the development of thematic tourism, focusing on wine tourism in Portugal’s Douro Valley, which produces excellent quality wine. The authors developed a theoretical model using ICT technologies, allowing tourists to achieve a multisensory virtual wine experience without visiting the vineyards and the wine cellars.

Valeria and Malaescu (2016) investigated the relationship between the characteristics of communities with cultural monuments and the successful development of cultural tourism in them. The authors stated that the psycho-social features of communities involved in tourism activities affect their
cultural tourism development. They mentioned that the characteristics of communities having cultural monuments affect the successful development of cultural tourism in them.

Widawski and Oleśniewicz (2019) studied thematic tourism regarding the case of “land flowing with milk and honey” in southwestern Poland. The authors assessed a thematic tourism route using three indices: (a) the product regionality index, (b) the thematic tourism trail index, and (c) the stay attractiveness index. They stated that the role of the local community is significant, while the surrounding natural environment and the organizational activities are also important.

A new segment in the tourism industry, the digital nomads, has been presented by WYSE (2018). It is stated that digital nomads are new types of visitors in tourism destinations consuming goods and services. It is also mentioned that the main drivers of digital nomadism are cheap travel, freelance work, and the rise of the collaborative or sharing economy.

The Canary Islands, Spain, is a popular tourism destination worldwide. Local authorities have initiated a campaign targeting remote workers, presenting the advantages and attractions of these islands as an ideal destination for digital nomads (Government of the Canary Islands, 2020).

The regional government of Madeira islands, Portugal, has started a project to attract digital nomads to Madeira and Porto Santo islands, (Digital nomads Madeira islands). The campaign aims to prepare, promote, and create a unique community with digital nomads worldwide. These islands have excellent climate conditions, unique natural beauties, and cultural activities that fulfill the visitors’ expectations.

Barbados, an island in the Eastern Caribbean, has experienced the arrival of digital nomads due to the COVID-19 pandemic (Simpson & Tennebaum, 2023). An accelerator lab for these islands created by the United Nations Development Program has been supporting for 12 months the digital nomads who are willing to move and work remotely in these islands as long-term visitors. Many local accommodations have adapted to the arrival of remote workers, introducing “workstations” and facilitating their working conditions.

Nizioł and Życzyński (2020) have studied the increase in the competitiveness of tourism destinations by developing thematic tourism focusing on the Podkarpackie region, Poland. The authors mentioned the development in 2013 of a culinary trail in Poland, which networked 39 gastronomic facilities. They also stated that numerous thematic routes have been developed in many tourism destinations, increasing their competitiveness.

Ciopi (2010) examined the historical, cultural, and wine tourism in Prahova, Romania. The author stated that developing thematic routes for tourists enriches the tourist product in several territories. She also mentioned that creating thematic trails in Prahova, Romania, like Wine Road and Fruit Road, increases the territory’s attractiveness to tourists.

2.3. Tourism in the Island of Crete, Greece

Vourdoubas (2020) has investigated the carbon intensity of the tourism industry in Crete. The author stated that the carbon intensity of the tourism industry in Crete is in the same range as that of other tourism destinations. He also mentioned that the carbon emissions from international flights to Crete have a high share in the total tourism-related carbon emissions.

Vourdoubas (2023a) has examined the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the tourism industry in Crete. The author stated that tourist arrivals in Crete have significantly decreased by 74.98% in 2020 compared to 2019. He also mentioned that tourism arrivals have recovered in 2022, reaching 4.98% in 2019.

Matzarakis and Nastos (2011) have studied the tourism potential in Crete, Greece. The authors have analyzed various climatological parameters and thermal comfort, including air temperature, humidity, cloud cover, wind speed, and solar radiation. They mentioned that the natural tourism potential is high, and an extension of the tourism period is possible in Crete.

Andriotis and Vaughan (2008) have studied tourism policy in Crete. The authors stated that matching the reality of tourism development and the residents’ perception of it is very important for the tourism industry. They also mentioned that tourism policy should consider both the reality of tourism and the perception of the residents about it.

Vourdoubas (2023b) has studied the nexus between climate change and the tourism industry in Crete. The author stated that climate change and the tourism industry are interlinked and interconnected. He also mentioned that climate change alters several environmental parameters in tourism destinations while natural hazards due to climate change can destroy the infrastructure in tourism destinations.

Mavridoglou et al. (2020) have studied the carrying capacity of tourism on the island of Crete. The authors stated that Crete is a popular global tourism destination with an attractive environment that can support the development of polymorphic tourism, including health tourism.

Poulaki et al. (2023) have studied the strengths and opportunities of Greece as an ideal destination for digital nomads. The authors have analyzed the content of the official Greek website for digital nomads, presenting the attractiveness of the country and the presence of co-working spaces in
Athens. They stated that Greece should invest in attracting and hosting digital nomads, exploiting its advantages not only in metropolitan areas but also in regional territories through media and social networks, and investing in the necessary infrastructure, like co-working spaces, facilitating their work.

The government has created an official website in Greece to attract digital nomads (https://workfromgreece.gr/). The website presents the advantages and strengths of the country regarding remote work, accommodation, and leisure for digital nomads.

3. Digital Nomads

During the COVID-19 pandemic and the restrictions imposed on transportation, many people started to work remotely from their residential buildings. This was facilitated by the progress in ICT technologies, which allowed remote work in many cases. Many people moved away from their home places, combining traveling and remote work (Zerva et al., 2023). They are called digital nomads who work independently from their laptops without always being in the same location. Long-distance work is considered a privilege if combined with traveling and pleasure (Vagena, 2021). Digital nomads combine traveling, work, and pleasure, enjoying a holistic life. They prefer professional, spatial, and personal freedom (Reichenberger, 2018). They are disciplined and self-disciplined, while their life is characterized by materiality and mobility (Gretzel & Hardy, 2019). Some work and live independently, while others work in co-working and co-living spaces to select friends and have romantic relations (Thompson, 2019). Frequently, they integrate into local societies, exchanging ideas and skills with the locals (Greg, 2015).

Many digital nomads travel and stay in places with low living costs while being paid well. Having a minimalistic style of life, they often save money and pay for their traveling. Digital nomads are solo travelers, and their number is growing fast worldwide. The tourism industry in many destinations has identified them as a new dynamic tourism segment with different characteristics than the conventional tourism segments. Several tourism destinations have started recognizing digital nomads as attractive visitors who should be challenged and incentivized to visit them (Canary Islands, Spain; Madeira Islands, Portugal; Barbados Island, Caribbean). The characteristics of Bali, Indonesia, which are favorable to digital nomads, are presented in Table I. In contrast, the advantages and disadvantages perceived by digital nomads regarding co-working and co-living spaces in several destinations are presented in Table II.

| TABLE I: Characteristics of Bali, Indonesia, Which are Favorable to Digital Nomads (Rakhmadi, 2021) |
|---|---|
| 1. | Possibility of co-working |
| 2. | Good weather |
| 3. | Easy access |
| 4. | Good internet access |
| 5. | Many attractions for tourists |
| 6. | Beautiful natural sites |
| 7. | Cultural activities and friendly local community |
| 8. | Several amenities |
| 9. | Security of the destination |
| 10. | Support of tourism industry by the local authorities |

| TABLE II: Advantages and Disadvantages Perceived by Digital Nomads Regarding Co-Working and Co-Living Spaces in Several Destinations (Chevtaeva, 2021) |
|---|---|
| Advantages | Disadvantages |
| Community sense | Limited availability of co-living |
| Pleasant work environment | Party sense |
| Business advice & place to learn from others | Experience compared to a similar quality accommodation |
| Convenience | Segregation from the local community |
| Helpful in local trips | Lack of privacy |
4. THE TOURISM INDUSTRY IN CRETE

The tourism industry in Crete is well-developed and consists of the most important sector in the island’s economy, contributing more than 50% of the regional GDP. The island is a well-known and popular international tourism destination due to its specific characteristics, mild climate, and unique natural beauty, which attract visitors (Matzarakis & Nastos, 2011). The duration of the tourism period in Crete is seven months, starting in the beginning of April and ending in late October. However, many efforts have been made to extend the period throughout the year. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the tourism industry on the island, like in other tourism destinations, collapsed. However, the tourist arrivals in 2022 slightly exceeded those in 2019, indicating the rapid recovery of local tourism, while the arrivals in 2023 were also higher than in the previous year (Vourdoubas, 2023a). The rapid growth of tourism arrivals has increased concern and skepticism that the island’s carrying capacity will be overcome, resulting in environmental degradation (Mavridoglou et al., 2020). Climate change will also affect the local tourism industry, requiring mitigation and adaptation measures and policies. The characteristics of Crete and its tourism industry are presented in Table III.

5. THE DEVELOPMENT OF THEMATIC TOURISM IN CRETE

The main type of tourism that has dominated Crete so far is “mass tourism” based on the “sun and the sea”. Additionally, various types of thematic tourism have been developed on the island based on Crete’s rich history and culture and its unique natural beauty. These include agrotourism, religious tourism, health tourism, wellness tourism, cruise tourism, mountainous tourism, archaeological tourism, nature-based tourism, diving tourism, scientific tourism related to conferences, cultural tourism, and so on (Cervinka et al., 2014; Martins et al., 2017; Nagy, 2012; Nizioł & Zyczyński, 2020). Several thematic routes have been developed for tourists by the local tour operators, depending on the visitors’ specific preferences. These include visits to traditional villages, old monasteries, antiquities, gorges, and so on. Additional thematic routes related to wine tourism, sustainable energy tourism, and culinary tourism have been examined in Crete, which might enrich the island’s tourism product in the coming years. It is well accepted that the development of thematic tourism differentiates the touristic product of Crete, attracting more segments of tourists with specific preferences. It also increases the competitiveness of the local tourism industry as a popular international tourism destination. It is foreseen that in the future, the island’s tourism product will be further differentiated according to the preferences of more segments of the global tourism market. Several types of thematic tourism developed in Crete are presented in Table IV.

6. POSSIBILITIES OF ATTRACTING DIGITAL NOMADS IN CRETE

The island of Crete could be a preferable destination for digital nomads. It has all the characteristics that are favorable to them, according to studies implemented in Bali, Indonesia (Rakhmadi, 2021). A mild climate, abundant sunshine, and thousands of sandy and challenging beaches characterize it. Digital nomads can travel, by airplane or by ship, easily to Crete, work remotely using the excellent ICT infrastructure of the island, and enjoy the entire year. They can live independently or co-live with others in several places in the four main cities of Crete or the countryside in the beautiful villages.
TABLE IV: TYPES OF THEMATIC TOURISM DEVELOPED IN CRETE

|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|---------------------|------------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|

TABLE V: ADVANTAGES OF THE ISLAND OF CRETE, GREECE FOR ATTRACTING DIGITAL NOMADS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Good weather and mild climate all over the year</th>
<th>2. Digital nomads can work and live independently, or they can co-work in specific spaces</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3. Easy access to Crete by airplane or by boat</td>
<td>4. Good internet access with high-speed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. The island has many beautiful natural sites</td>
<td>6. There are many natural and cultural attractions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. The Cretan cuisine and gastronomy are famous all over the world</td>
<td>8. There are numerous cultural activities in Crete all over the year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. The criminality on the island is low, and the visitors feel safe</td>
<td>10. The well-known Universities in Crete can assist digital nomads with technology issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. The local authorities support tourism, which is the most important sector of the island’s economy</td>
<td>12. The local residents are friendly to visitors who can easily integrate in the local communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. The cost of living in Crete is relatively low compared with other developed countries</td>
<td>14. Digital nomads originating from EU countries do not require a visa. If they originated from other countries, they can apply for a provisional “digital nomad visa,” allowing them to stay and work for one year or for a “digital nomad residence permit” if they want to stay more</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: workfromgreece.gr.

Dispersed along the island. They can also work independently from their residential buildings or co-working spaces, which should be created soon in Crete. The island has a rich social and cultural life, and digital nomads can enjoy a holistic life all year, integrating themselves with the local communities and achieving mutual benefits. They can visit numerous beautiful and unique natural sites and cultural monuments dispersed along Crete, which are attractive all year. They can also taste the famous, delicious, and healthy Cretan cuisine. The criminality rate in Crete is very low, while its infrastructure is very good, serving millions of visitors every year. The advantages of Crete for attracting digital nomads are presented in Table V.

7. BENEFITS FROM THE DEVELOPMENT OF THEMATIC TOURISM RELATED TO DIGITAL NOMADS IN CRETE

Developing a new tourism segment related to digital nomads in Crete will benefit the local tourism industry. Digital nomads are often well-educated people who are willing to stay for a longer period in places like Crete. During their stay, they want to enjoy themselves by spending money on several activities in the local societies. Frequently, they stay longer than conventional tourists, including the winter months, when very few visitors remain on the island. The development of thematic tourism related to digital nomads differentiates the touristic product of the island, which is currently dominated by “sea and sun tourism,” increasing the competitiveness of Crete as an international tourism destination. It also increases the presence of long-staying travelers in Crete during the winter months, which are not attractive for vacations by conventional tourists. Integrating digital nomads with the local societies on the island could result in exchanging ideas and skills with the residents (Chevtaeva & Denizci-Guillet, 2021; Orel, 2019). It is widely accepted that the increase of digital nomadism, accelerated during the COVID-19 pandemic, will continue for several reasons, including advances in ICT technology.
In contrast, digital nomads comprise an attractive segment of the global tourism market desirable in many tourism destinations. Developing an attractive environment for digital nomads in Crete requires the creation of co-working spaces, which are lacking in the island’s large cities. The multiple benefits of increasing the number of digital nomads in Crete are social, economic, and environmental. The benefits from the development of thematic tourism related to digital nomads in Crete are presented in Table VI.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benefit</th>
<th>Categorization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Increase in the number of visitors in Crete and the income of the local tourism industry</td>
<td>Economic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Integration of digital nomads in the local societies exchanging skills and ideas</td>
<td>Social</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Development of new services and products in Crete tailored-made to digital nomads, including co-living and co-working spaces</td>
<td>Economic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Digital nomads can remain in Crete during the winter months without increasing tourism on the island</td>
<td>Environmental</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Differentiation of the tourism products on the island</td>
<td>Economic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Increase in the competitiveness of the local tourism industry</td>
<td>Economic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Digital nomads can reside both in urban and rural places in Crete</td>
<td>Social</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8. DISCUSSION

The island of Crete is a popular tourist destination worldwide and a preferred place for summer vacations, accepting millions of visitors annually. Although mass tourism based on the “sea and sun” is the leading tourism product on the island, several types of thematic tourism have been developed so far. The current changes in the working conditions during and after the COVID-19 pandemic, the development of the sharing economy, and the advances in ICT technologies have inspired many people to work remotely, traveling, working, and enjoying. The mild climate and the rich natural and cultural attractions of Crete make the island an ideal destination for digital nomads. Several tourism destinations, including islands in the Caribbean, Canary Islands, Madeira Islands, etc., have developed appropriate policies and incentives to attract and host digital nomads, whom the tourism industry considers a new and valuable segment of the global tourism market. The regional authorities and the tourism industry in Crete have not been motivated to attract digital nomads so far. However, the experience in other well-known tourist destinations indicates that Crete, having all the required natural and cultural assets, should try to attract and host the growing number of digital nomads. Since co-working spaces do not currently exist in Crete, the local authorities and the tourism industry should develop them, at least in the island’s main cities. Our work does not indicate the policies and incentives that should be developed to increase the island’s attractiveness to people who want to be independent, traveling, working remotely, and enjoying a nomadic life. Future research should be focused on the investigation of the policies that have been developed in other popular global tourism destinations in order to attract digital nomads and examine the possibilities of creating appropriate policies in Crete.

9. CONCLUSIONS

The island of Crete, Greece, is a preferred tourist destination for summer vacations for millions of tourists. The number of digital nomads is growing rapidly because they prefer to be independent and willing to work remotely, travel, and enjoy different places. During the last few years, several popular tourist destinations have developed appropriate policies to attract and host this group of travelers. Their visit and staying in a place have many benefits in tourism destinations. The possibilities of developing thematic tourism related to digital nomads on the island of Crete, Greece, have been investigated. Our findings indicate that the well-developed tourism industry in Crete has all the advantages and strengths to attract the new tourism segment. It has excellent infrastructure, a famous brand name as a tourism destination, many unique natural beauties and cultural monuments, famous cuisine, enjoyable life, friendly local communities hosting visitors, and so on. At the same time, many types of thematic tourism have been developed on the island, covering the preferences of different target groups of visitors. Therefore, Crete has all the prerequisites, and the desirable features that digital nomads are willing to have in a tourism destination. However, the local authorities and the tourism industry have not developed the policies, incentives, and infrastructure necessary to attract and host digital nomads. Our work could be useful to policymakers who should design and implement appropriate policies and measures to attract this new and growing tourism segment, enriching the thematic tourism in Crete and increasing the competitiveness of the local tourism industry.
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