

Impact and Touristic Interest of Cultural Folklore Traditions in Tzia

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Abstract

Manners, customs, traditions and monuments are what keep a place's past alive, connecting it to the present and giving visitors an authentic, unique experience by bringing them into close contact with the cultural element of the destination, which they came for to admire. In Greece, this cultural element is abundant throughout its territory: from the northernmost to the southernmost tip, from the easternmost to the westernmost island. This paper focuses on the island of Kea/Tzia and its cultural and folklore traditions. Initially, some information about the island and its cultural wealth is consolidated and the most important folklore traditions and their origins are mentioned. Subsequently, the influence of these traditions on the island is broadly analyzed and finally the impact of these policies is presented through quantitative research conducted by questionnaires using statistical data.

Keywords: folk tradition, culture, intangible cultural heritage.

1. Introduction

The island of Kea or otherwise Tzia, belongs to the Prefecture of Cyclades and together with Kythnos and Makronissos form the Province of Kea. It is the closest island of the Cyclades to Attica since it is only an hour away from Lavrio by boat and is the sixth largest island of the Cyclades with the population of 2,455 inhabitants and a coastline that reaches 88 kilometers. In the sources it is also referred to as Hydrousa, because according to the legend, the climate on the island was cool and humid thanks to the variety of water sources that existed and the massive vegetation that it entailed. Thus, the Nymphs embodied the liquid element and lived in the forests near these sources of water. Nevertheless, due to the local dialect, the name Tzia has prevailed.

The island has a rich flora both on land and underwater since the biggest part of the island belongs to the Natura 2000 network. It hosts many species of rare plants as well as herbs, wild flowers, crops and the royal oak forests which are the only ones in the Cyclades. Its natural landscape is beautiful and suitable for hiking and also provides an ideal shelter for a variety of wild animals such as rodents, reptiles and birds. The island has gone through many conquests and leaderships that have left their mark, but the Greek element which is dominant, has eventually prevailed (Moiras, 2018).

2. Chronology

In the tourism industry, products are provided which, on the one hand, aim at sustainable tourism development using sustainability policies, and on the other hand, are offered as alternative ways of living the tourist experience. The development of alternative tourism and its forms, which are linked to special issues such as intangible forms of cultural heritage, environment, culture, nature, worship (Filini 1994), gastronomy is the foundation of tourism sustainability (Kokkosis & Chartas, 2001). Culture is the most valuable and important element of any host country, because it contributes to the development of tourism by providing resources such as monuments, archaeological sites, customs, arts, letters, human rights, landscapes of ecological interest, sport events. Through tourism and cultures, places become “attractions”, historical events become touristic “experiences”, and folklore traditions and customs are revived and organized in regular events with the aim of attracting the interest of the tourist. According to Karagiannis and Exarchos (2006), “The organization of events is a special category of resources and includes, among other things, a series of celebrations, which serve both tourists and businessmen. When they are held on a regular basis, they help to form the image of the destination, but they are useful only if they are going to attract a significant number of visitors, or if they are going to complement the activities of the visitors of the tourist destination.” The island of Gia has all those qualities necessary for the development of alternative tourism among them its traditional architecture (Klutsinioti & Faraklas, 1981) and its special hiking trails that currently number 12 routes (Blatsiou, 2010), as well as the famous antiquities and the spiritual life of the place (Y. P., 2014). The alternatives were particularly attractive for many activities offered by the island, such as the network of paths and the ancient city of Karthaia, the shipwrecks and diving (Psylla, 2008).

It has established itself as the preeminent agricultural and livestock-breeding island of the Cyclades, being known for its acorns, barley, wine, honey, meat and dairy products. Then the construction of the “Enamel and Metalwork” factory in 1927 expanded the island’s production. Since then, despite the fact that its population has shrunk, it remains an island with history and cultural heritage that strives for its economic and touristic upgrading (kea-tzia.gr). Gia is an island that one could say has lagged behind in the development of alternative forms of tourism (Valetas & Varthalitis, 1986), while the island has many natural resources that are capable of contributing to development, they remain unexploited but it doesn’t mean they don’t exist.

3. Cultural and folklore traditions of Tzia – Origin

The exchange of the pot. This custom concerns young people who were in love. When a young man wanted to express his interest in a girl, he used to sneak into her yard, “steal” a pot from her and place it in his own yard. So, the girl had to search every yard to find her pot and discover who the young man who loved her was (kea.gr).

Bride-stealing. Bride-stealing is a custom that used to happen when the parents didn't want the groom, or pretended not to want him just because they didn't want to give a dowry. If the couple was stolen, the father had the right not to give a dowry. One of the reasons why the groom stole the bride was because they were close cousins (first or second), either because the couple's parents were related to each other, or because they were spiritually related (Alexakis, 2011), therefore it was forbidden that they have a sexual relationship. There were also cases where the bridegroom and bride were first cousins, thus there was incest.

The making of the bed. According to the custom, the making of the bed took place on the Thursday preceding the Sunday when the wedding would take place. On that day, the bride alongside with her relatives and friends prepared the dowry, that is, they cleaned and ironed everything to be ready and made the bed with the grandmother's knitted blanket. Also, the relatives brought sharp handmade sheets and when the bed was ready, they threw rose petals and

coins on it to wish for good offspring, as well as a boy so that the couple would give birth to boys (kea.gr).

The Wedding. The wedding is an extremely important event and its celebration would last for 3 days back in the old days. As mentioned before, the ones who chose the groom for their girl were the parents, but if the girl wanted to marry a young man that the parents did not approve, then the couple was stolen and got married without the consent of their parents. The preparations for the wedding began a week before it took place and the invitation of the guests was done verbally and not by sending invitations. They also cleaned the place where the feast would take place and made sure there was plenty of wine and meat, while at the same time they prepared traditional bread and sweets for the guests (Grekas, 2005).

Weddings were held on Sunday, so on the Thursday before, the bride, her friends and other relatives would gather to make the bed. On the day of the wedding, the groom together with relatives, friends and the accompaniment of traditional instruments would start from his house and singing traditional songs would march towards the bride's home passing by the houses of their guests who then followed them. The best man held a tray of crowns surrounded by confetti. Arriving at the bride's home, everyone went to the church together and the villagers threw flowers and rose petals from the windows. The ceremony was followed by the wedding table where the bride opened the dance with the most important relatives from both families in front and then the guests. At midnight the couple would leave and the relatives would continue the feast, while the next morning they would wake the couple up with sweet songs and the sound of the tsambouna (topgamos.gr)

Halloween (Apokries). With the opening of the Triodion, preparations began for the Tziotic feasts, which as always were accompanied by the tsabouna and other traditional musical instruments, with traditional dances and Tziotic dishes such as sausages, kabama and loza. During the Halloween, various masquerade dances, games and performances are organized. At the end of the Halloween, the big Carnival parade is held with groups of disguised people, and also theatrical performances that satirize the local happenings. This event later develops into a festival where the municipality offers wine and souvlaki. Finally, on Tsiknopempti they make traditional rice pudding (kea.gr).

The celebration of Saint Charalambos. For the residents of Tzia, the celebration of their patron, Saint Charalambos, is a very big and significant event as according to tradition, Saint Charalambos has protected the island from epidemics, diseases and disasters (Kalopaidis, 2005-2022). On the eve of the holiday, a Vigil is held in honor of the Saint in the Church of Saint Charalambos and on that day his holy relic together with his icon are taken from there to the Holy Church of the Annunciation in Ioulida (the capital of the island) where the priest will officiate (ekklisiaonline.gr). After the ceremony and the baking, all those present are taken to the nearest shop where the Association's Vasilopita will be cut, as Tziotic pasteli and mastic are also offered. Later the feast begins with dances and traditional music. Finally, every year on the first Sunday following the feast of Saint Charalambos, a festival is organized in his honor (travelcyclades.gr).

Pig Slaughter (Xoirofagia). Pig slaughter is a custom that nowadays can be a good opportunity for feasting, but in the old days, when the winter was heavy and the conditions difficult because the islands were remote and poor, they had to be self-sufficient. That is why hand-to-hand slaughter was a very significant event for the island. Usually relatives, friends and even neighbors used to gather for the feast, for mezes, wine and raki, but also to help slaughter the pigs, preserve the meat and prepare viands such as sausage, loza and the glina. On the covered porch of each house, which is also used as a kitchen, there is a large hook where the slaughtered pig is hung, in an area protected from rain and wind. The slaughter takes place early in the morning and the other procedures that follow continue until late at night. Both men and women take on a job: the men

butcher, skin and cut the meat, while the women boil the glina, stuff the sausages and sew the loza. Finally, the women prepare and serve various pork dishes (aglaiakremezi.com).

New Year's Eve. On New Year's Eve in Tzia, it is customary since the afternoon that the sound of the tsambouna and tubi reverberate throughout the island so that they welcome the new year with the traditional carols that the children sing from house to house – a deep-rooted custom that has been kept alive until today thanks to the Cultural Association of Gia (Stefa, 2012).

Festivals. Festivals are the best opportunity for a visitor to get to know the culture of a place and taste the authenticity of the culture. In Kea, the holidays and festivals are not only for gathering and having a good time, but the residents try to keep their traditions alive as unchanged as possible. Thus, at every religious celebration, anniversary or festival, one can enjoy food and local products, listen to traditional music and dance trots and balls. In general, every church always celebrates the feast of the saint to whom it is dedicated. The most important holidays for which festivals are held are the 15th of August in Ioulida. The celebration of Panagia on the 15th of August is also held every year in the patron saint of the island, Panagia Kastriani, where a great festival (kea.gr) of the Holy Spirit takes place 50 days before the Easter of Agios Anargyros on July 1st, Kea celebrates with two big festivals, one in Agios Anargyros in Vourkari and the other in Agios Anargyros in Makrinou, of the Transfiguration of the Sotiros on 6 August and of Agios Sozontos on 7 September (travelcyclades.gr).

The Festival of Fairy Tales. Since 2002, the Festival of Fairy Tales has been organized every year. Storytellers from all over the world spread out across the island – in alleys, beaches, museums, schools and churchyards – to tell tales, myths and folktales accompanied by music, bringing people together and helping to cement friendships and create a warm atmosphere among the participants (Rammou, 2014).

The Funeral. In Tzia, the custom is to offer pasteli at funerals. Alexakis (2011), during his stay in Tzia, describes the process as follows: “Four priests, women holding flowers, kisses and tears. [...] The cross was held by a boy, while on the right and left two girls held candles. [...] Fainted women, one was the daughter of the deceased. During the procession, the doors of houses and shops were closed. [...] In the cafe in the square they offered brandy and coffee and on a napkin a nut and pasteli.”

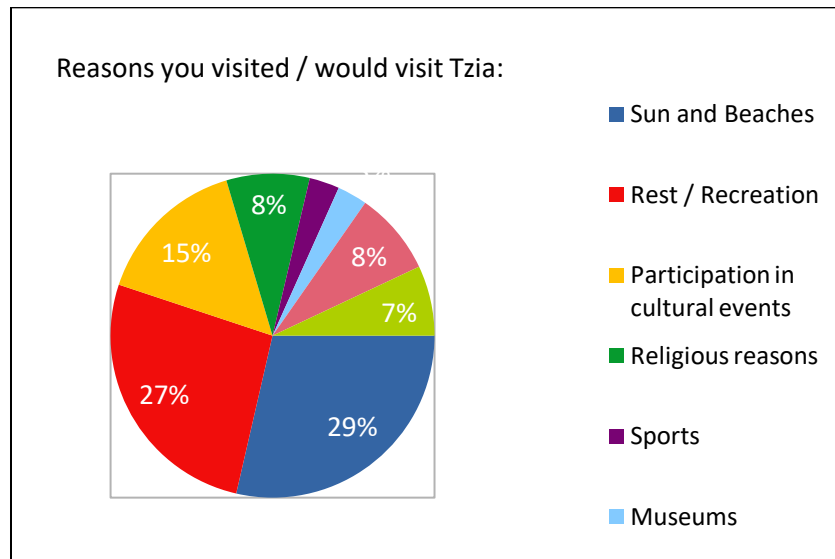
The Memorial. On the island, depending on the type of memorial, there is a different custom. That is, when the commemoration is annual, as a way of invitation they offer “Vrechto” the day before. Vrechto is bread dipped in wine and sprinkled with sugar and cinnamon, which is distributed on the street throughout the village. On the other hand, when there is a commemoration for the fortieth day or for the first year, according to custom, they spread a black cloth in the church and in the house of the mourner and offer kollyva (that is a mix of wheat, nut and pastry), brandy and coffee. Also, the residents have it as a tradition that those who are sad cannot make sweets so that Charos is not sweetened, and also until the age of forty, close relatives do not cut their hair or shave as a sign of mourning (Stefa, 2012).

4. Impact and tourist interest

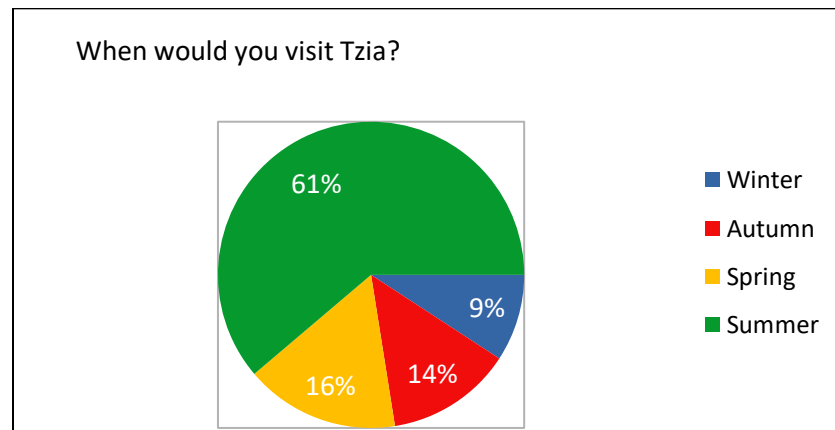
Based on methodology, below we list the results of a research conducted through a questionnaire, with the aim of studying the appeal of these folklore traditions to tourists. So, according to the research conducted to study the impact of cultural and folklore traditions in Tzia, the following was observed: of the 100 respondents, 58% were men while the remaining 42% were women. There was a wide variety of answers regarding the level of education as there were both young and older respondents with the majority however including high school graduates at only 42% and with the next largest amount being University graduates at 20%.

The next question concerned the status or otherwise the employment of the participants with most of them being employees at 48% and the next largest size including students at only 28% while smaller pieces of the pie are occupied by the unemployed (12%) and civil servants (13%) Moving on to the questions now about Tzia, most of the participants seem to have never been to Tzia. This percentage amounts to 62.2%, while the remaining 37.8% stated that they have visited the island.

In the question about the reasons for which they would visit or have visited Tzia, the majority showed an interest in the sun and the sea (28%), and the second largest percentage concerned rest and recreation (26%). Other reasons chosen were participation in cultural events chosen by 15.6% of respondents, which means that Tzia’s cultural traditions are somewhat more widely known. Other answers given were for religious reasons (8.3%), which is completely reasonable since this island is rich in churches, holy temples and religious activities, while others chose hiking which is also respected since Tzia is full of natural landscapes, forests and rare flora.



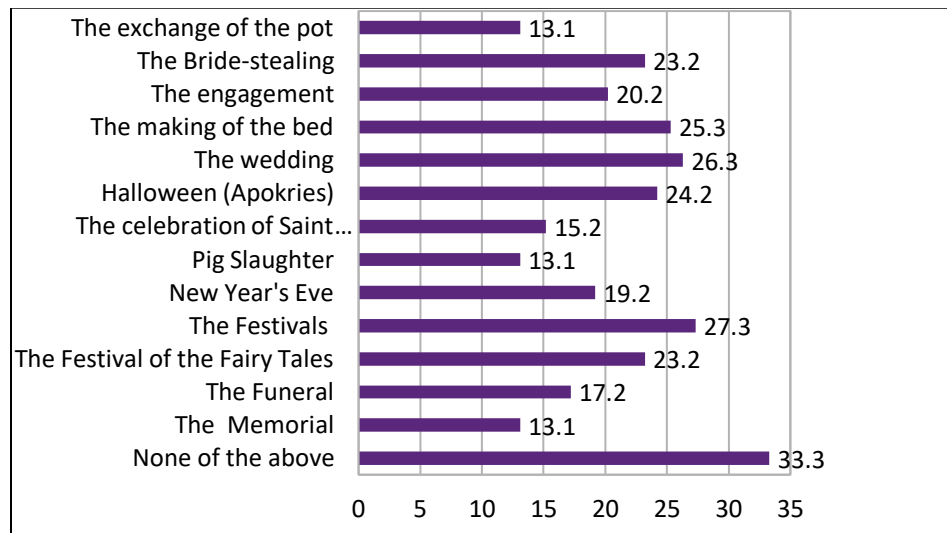
When asked when the participants would prefer to visit Tzia, most answered in summer (61.2%), followed by spring (16.3%), then autumn (13.3%) and finally, of course, winter (9.2%) as the conditions on the island during the winter are quite adverse.



This is followed by the question of which of the aforementioned cultural traditions are known to the respondents. The majority (33.3%) answered “None of the above” while the most well-known seems to be the festivals (27.3%).

Which of the following cultural traditions of Tzia do you know?

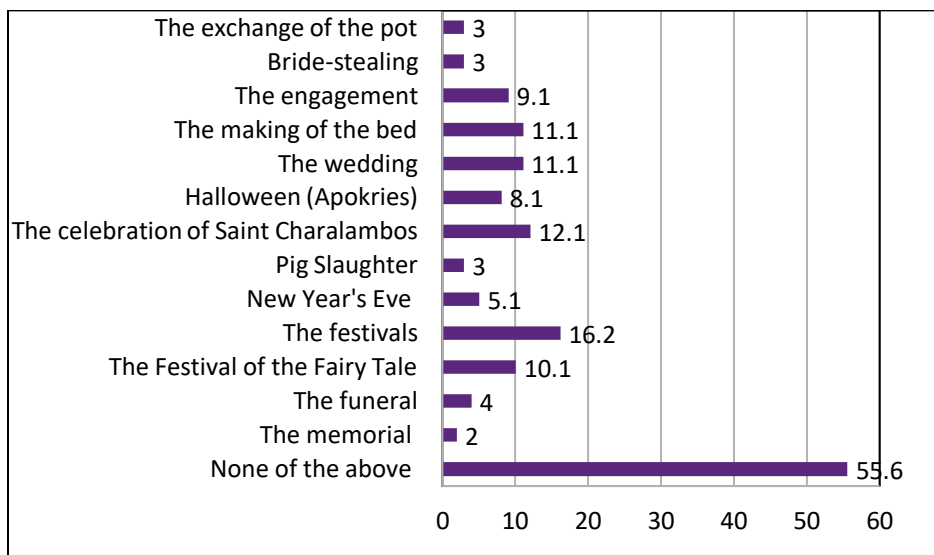
99 answers:



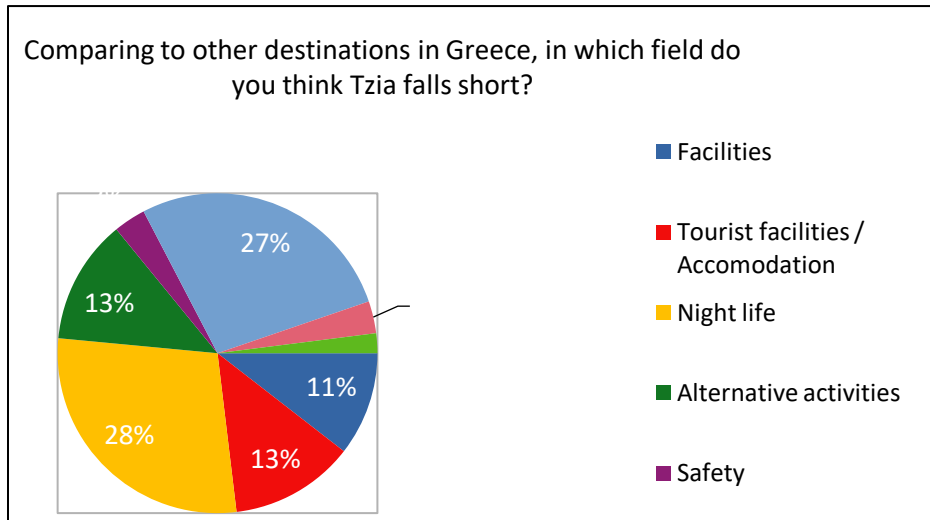
In the question “in which of these (events) have you participated” the percentages were very small as 55.6% have not participated in any, only 16.2% in festivals and 12.1% in the celebration of Agios Charalambos.

Which of them have you participated in?

99 answers:



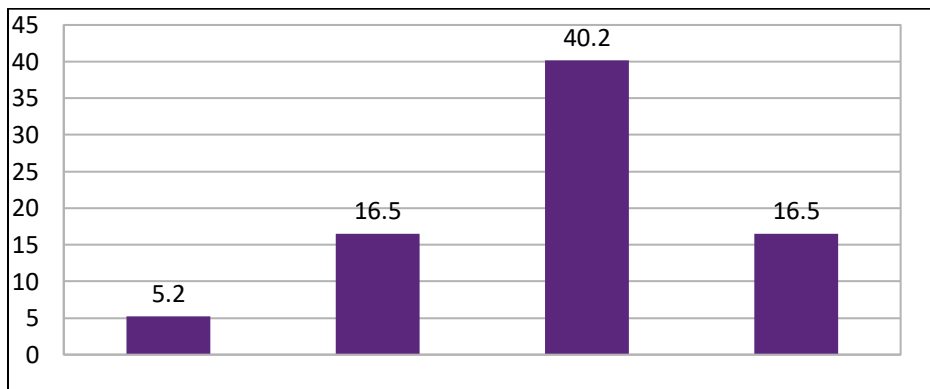
Continuing, participants were asked what they thought Tzia was falling short compared to other destinations. Some answered hypothetically, others from experience. 27.4% believe that it lags behind in visibility and promotion, while 28.8% in nightlife.



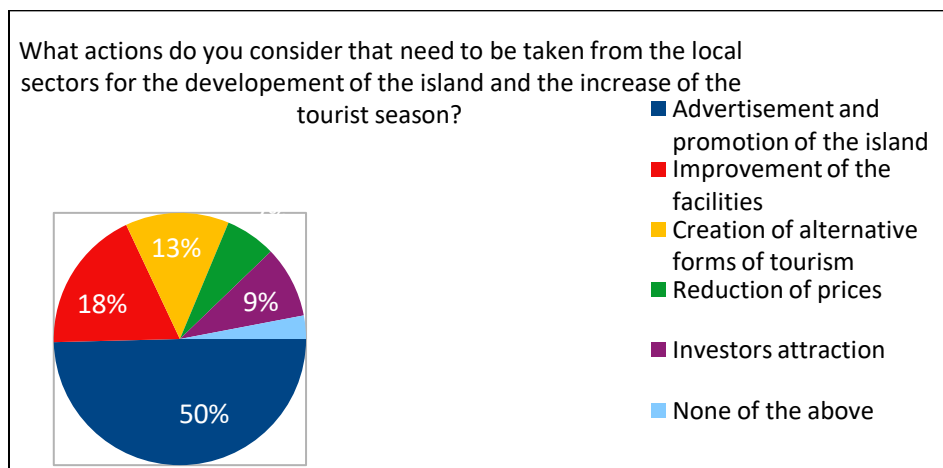
The penultimate question concerns the extent to which it is believed that the above services or infrastructure should be improved. The results were as follows:

In what grade do you believe that improvement in the cultural facilities and services is required?

97 answers:



Finally, advertising and promotion turned out to be the main action that local agencies must take for the development of tourism on the island (46.9%).



5. Conclusion

Tzia organizes festivals and events, has several tourist infrastructures and a long history behind it, with customs that are passed down from generation to generation and are preserved to this day. It is an island with natural beauty, suitable for walking and hiking, with cultural wealth worth getting to know (Y. P., 2002).

These reasons are enough for the island to gain the popularity it deserves since it is not known to most tourists, whether local or foreign, and especially the younger generation. For this reason, both the improvement of its infrastructure as well as promotion and advertising, always with respect to culture, are tools that can significantly contribute to tourism development and therefore the well-being of the island.

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