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Passengers satisfaction from cruising. Case studies from Greece.

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ABSTRACT

Maritime tourism and especially cruising is one of the most dynamic forms of modern tourism. Cruise tourism is also a very significant sector of economic activity for coastal and insular Greece. Consequently tourist services on board cruise ships should be constantly evaluated.

This paper seeks to make an appraisal of the services provided on board two cruise ships by means of a primary survey consisting in distributing questionnaires to passengers while on cruise in the Aegean Sea and the Eastern Mediterranean during the tourist season 2009. The results of this survey showed that the level of tourist services on board was high in contrast with that offered in the home port of Piraeus, where it was ranked from fair to bad.

This survey reveals that the tourism system of cruising is not exclusively determined by the cruise ship and the ports of call but also by the level of services provided in the cruise home port. Thus the improvement in the quality of services offered to cruise passengers in the port of Piraeus is more than necessary. This coupled with the geographical and cultural advantages of Greece could make the port of Piraeus the major Mediterranean cruise home port.

KEY WORDS: Cruising, Greece, Piraeus port, Aegean Sea

1. Introduction

The coastal areas have attracted men since antiquity as they were the main field for their food-collecting activities such as fishing. In addition to being a survival field, the coastal areas were an important destination for leisure travel. Sea touring is not a phenomenon of the modern era. It is historically proved that since antiquity there had been ships used for leisure. The most known was 'Syracusia', designed by Archimedes and built around 240 BC by Archias of Corinth on the orders of Hieron II of Syracuse. The ship was luxurious. It had 30 rooms, a temple of Venus, a library with a reading room and a garden (Antonopoulos, 1963: 45). Moreover, Cleopatra of Egypt had a luxury yacht. It is said that the Ptolemys had about 800 luxury yachts (Athinaios, 1979: 12), which can be considered as the forerunners of the modern yachts and tourist vessels.

During the Roman era, the Roman citizens used to visit ancient Greek cities (e.g. Athens, Corinth, Rhodes) in groups for relaxation or in order to attend various events, religious celebrations, with specially chartered ships (Antonopoulos, 1963: 78). Rich merchants from around the globe used to sail to Corinth in Greece in order to conduct business transactions and spend their holidays. At the classical era there was a famous ancient saying: "Ou pantos plein es Korinthon", which translates as "Not everyone is able to go to Corinth", due to the expensive living standards that prevailed in the

city. Roman emperors and patricians, the rich land owners, used to sail with luxury passenger vessels of *Victoriae* and *Orariae* type. The sea tourings of the Roman general and consul Germanicus in the Adriatic and the Ionian Sea as well as that of the Emperor Nero, who toured Greece and attended the Pythian, the Isthmian, the Nemean and the Olympic Games, were the most known (Athineos, 1979: 13).

In the 15th century Venice organised in a systematic way the group sea touring in order to carry pilgrims to the Holy Land. The interest of Venice in sea touring was so big that special rules for safe navigation were set up. During this period tourist businesses were established. The headquarters were in Venice while there were branches in all the big cities of Europe. Their aim was to gather travellers-pilgrims and carry them to the Holy Land (Lane, 1934: 8). In the 17th century, touring acquired a new form which combined leisure, exposure to both the cultural legacy of classical antiquity and Renaissance and historical research, especially through the Grand Tour of wealthy young Englishmen (Simopoulos, 1972: 44). During this period, group sea touring was abandoned and replaced by the sea touring of individuals or small groups, especially in the region of the Mediterranean Sea.

2. Cruising

Cruising combines passengers' leisure on board with calls to one or more cosmopolitan ports, satisfying thus their need to get to know new places and come in contact with different cultures (Mylonopoulos, 2004: 108-111). Cruising is a purely leisure activity. The idea of cruising, that is travelling by ship for leisure and not for transport reasons, is attributed to Arthur Anderson, a sailor from the Shetland Isles, one of the founders of Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company, which became known in the shipping industry as P & O. In 1835 Anderson suggested a cruise departing from England to the Faroe Islands and the coasts of Spain so that passengers could enjoy the sun during the winter (Gibson, 2006:4). In 1844 P&O extended its cruises in the Mediterranean and over the next decades cruising also took place in other regions. In the 1860s the chartering and the management of ships for cruising was widespread (Boniface & Cooper 1996: 49). These cruises lasted long and the clientele was wealthy. Travelers had abundant time and money and travelled mainly for health reasons rather than for leisure. Cruising meant enjoying the trip rather than visiting the different ports of call (Mylonopoulos & Moira, 2005: 97).

The first cruise ships did not differ from passenger ships, regarding their construction and the provision of services. Due to seasonality and lack of customers, passenger ships often served as cruise ships. After the end of World War I the number of ships used in the cruise industry increased due to the change of the immigration policy of the United States. The US imposed strict limits to the immigrants' entry into the country (Georgantopoulos & Vlachos, 1997: 385). This resulted in the conversion of passenger ships to cruise ships so that the vessels remained active and the problem of seasonality was faced (Lundberg and Lundberg, 1993). In the 1930s there was an improvement in accommodations on board the leisure ships with the inclusion of individual baths. This was the case of the ship *Monarch of Bermuda* in 1933 (Starr, 1993: 176).

The new era for cruising started in the 1960s when the ship as a means of carrying passengers between the United States and Europe was replaced by airplane. In order to gain profit from passenger ships, ship owners converted them into cruise ships. However, there were problems as these ships did not have ventilation systems, open spaces and other amenities for tourists. For instance, there was no ventilation on board until the 1950s (Starr, 1993: 179). In the 1970s cruise ships started operating purely as a space of provision of tourist services in the Caribbean with clients from Northern America. Cruise ships were designed with open spaces and decks so that leisure and sport activities could take place on board (e.g. swimming pools, tennis) (Boniface & Cooper, 1996: 49). European companies, especially from Scandinavia, conducted cruise market surveys for the region of the Caribbean. In the early 1980s cruise ships were the focus of the tourism industry and new ships specially designed for cruises started to be built (Starr, 1993: 176). The 'aggressive' advertising campaigns but also some popular films and TV shows, such as the 'Love Boat', contributed to the success of this new trend and helped form a very attractive image for cruises (Wood, 2000: 349; Moira & Mylonopoulos, 2006: 31). This increase in demand for cruising encouraged the companies to build ships with bigger tonnage.

Holland America Line adopted the name 'ocean liners' for these ships (Maxtone-Graham 2000: 47). In this generation of cruise liners there is a tendency for an increase in the number of outside cabins.

In the 1990s megaships with a carrying capacity of about 2,000 passengers were built; for example, *Sovereign of the Seas* (1987) formerly operated by Royal Caribbean International, *Monarch of the Seas* (1991), *Majesty of the Seas* (1992). These cruise liners used to sail seven-day Caribbean itineraries. *Sovereign of the Seas*, which was called 'floating mall', marked the change in the philosophy of cruising, from simple leisure travel to 'a self-sufficient, full vacation experience' (Foster, 1994: 141-142). In this generation of huge cruise liners the prevailing feature was luxury and high quality hotel services, such as accommodations, food, leisure, day and night activities and tours in the ports of call. In the 1990s the cruise market was one of the fastest growing sectors of the economy (Dickinson & Vladimir 1997: 37). There was a particular increase in the demand for cruising in the United Kingdom and the rest of Europe and later in the Asia-Pacific region. The growing rate of cruising, with an annual increase of 8% since 1988, had almost doubled compared with the total tourism activity (Economist, 1998: 14). According to the data from CLIA, PSA and GP Wild, in the 1990s the Northern America covered the two thirds of the world demand for cruising. The European market ranked second while the rest of the world shared a very small percentage.

Later, even though the total of the cruise passengers all over the world were 10.7 million in 2001 (Peisley, 2002), cruising was harshly affected by the terrorist attacks of 9/11 in the USA. The demand for cruising changed and it was limited to the US and Canada territorial waters (homeland cruising). Flying cruising was also restrained as the Americans preferred to drive to the home cruise port rather than fly. In 2007 about 9.57 million Americans went on a cruise. According to CLIA (2008), cruisers have above-average annual household income of 93,000 USD, average 46 years old, have a high level of educational attainment and consider cruising as a good way to sample destinations that they may wish to visit again on a land-based vacation.

In Europe there was an increase in cruising in the 2000s. 225,586 jobs were generated in Europe thanks to the cruise industry while the European ports had 21.7 million cruise passengers in 2008. At the end of 2008 there were 42 cruise companies in Europe with a fleet of 129 ships and a carrying capacity of 116,000 passengers (G.P.Wild, 2009:1). During this decade the demand for cruising more than doubled compared with the previous decade, i.e. it increased from 5.7 million to 14.4 million passengers. Over the same period the number of the Europeans who had been on a cruise all over the world more than quadrupled, i.e. from 1.7 million in 1998 it reached 4.4 million in 2008 (G.P.Wild, 2009: 3-4). The Europeans made 27% of the total cruise passengers compared with 22% ten years before. The most popular country for cruising in Europe was Italy, which had more than five million passengers in its ports and particularly in Naples, Civitavecchia and Venice in 2008. Greece came second in terms of number of passengers in Europe. The Greek ports of Piraeus, Santorini, Rhodes and Mykonos had 4.3 million cruise passengers (G.P.Wild, 2009: 5-7). Spain ranked third with 3.6 million cruise passengers (with the inclusion of the Canary islands).

3. Sociological approach

Modern cruise ships offer passengers sea, sun, leisure and services, which differentiate from the simple maritime transport on board a passenger ship (Mylonopoulos, 2004: 108). For many tourists the motives to go on a cruise are various such as security, social status, the friendly atmosphere but also the services provided (Cartwright & Baird, 1999). The dominant feature in cruising is the hotel function of the ship. Cruise ships offer services similar to those provided by hotels with qualified staff as in modern hotel units (e.g. hotel manager). What differs a cruise ship from a hotel is that due to its ability to sail it can move to different geographical regions so that it can any time meet the demand for accommodation. It is easily accessible and functions as 'home far from home' while at the same time it carries passengers to different ports of call/destinations (Gibson, 2006: 2).

Today there is a tendency for more and more ships of a big tonnage to be built with services that go beyond the conventional hotel function. The aim is to cover all the services provided by a luxury hotel-tourist complex (e.g. spas, golf courses, art rooms, theatres, business centres, cinemas). Modern cruise ships have become 'floating resorts'; for instance, *Queen Mary 2* built in 2004, has a tonnage of

150,000 gross tonnage and carries 3,090 passengers and 1,253 crew, *Independence of the Seas* and *Freedom of the Seas*, with a tonnage of 160,000, carries 3,634 passengers and 1,360 crew, *Genesis*, built in 2009, with a tonnage of 220,000, carries 6,400 passengers, *Oasis of the Seas*, with 220,000 gross tonnage and carries 5,400 passengers (Spencer-Brown, 2008).

The armchair adventurers (Foster, 1988:227) and the cruise ship as a floating seniors house which were the features of the cruise industry over the past decades have turned into “action cruising” and the cruise ship has turned into a multifunction space, marking the cruise industry in the early 21st century. Cruise lines have introduced innovative onboard amenities and facilities, including surfing pools, bowling alleys, rock-climbing walls, multiroom villas, multiple themed restaurants and expansive spas, health and fitness facilities. The question often asked in the past “how am I going to spend my time on board all day?” was replaced by the question “where shall I find some time for some rest?” (Starr, 1993: 185).

The development of the cruise industry has made cruising affordable to a range of social classes. There is no longer a standard profile for cruisers. From the rich and the famous to the family next door, all the strata of society can enjoy cruising nowadays. There is no longer the standard image that cruising is closely linked with the third age. It is a fact that in the past only the wealthy people and old people had the privilege to go on a cruise as they were the only ones who could afford it. Cruises at that time lasted for long, so a myth was created around them, which was maintained for many years through cinema and television. Cruises started becoming affordable to social classes with an average annual household income as short cruises were offered and customers could choose either fly-cruise or easy cruise. In addition to this, the carrying capacity of cruise ships increased. This resulted in the reduction of the median age of cruisers as almost half of the passengers are below 45 years old while one third of them are below 35 years old (Lundberg and Lundberg, 1993). The huge success of James Cameron’s film “Titanic” in 1997, starring Leonardo DiCaprio, contributed enormously to the increase in cruise bookings by young people (Major, 1998). According to CLIA data in August 2004, 34% of cruisers were between 35 and 54 years old. Only one out of four (25%) was a pensioner. Furthermore, three out of four cruisers were married (76%) while 16% of cruisers were accompanied by their children, below 18 years old.

Families are actually one of the target groups of cruise planners. By offering so many activities for children (e.g. table tennis, treasure hunting, bingo, Internet cafes), cruise ships are becoming the ideal places for the children’s leisure and entertainment (Starr, 1993: 185). According to CLIA, one million children participated in cruises in 2003. Actually one of the rapidly growing segments of cruising concerns extended families. Modern cruise programmes combine services and amenities addressed to each of the members of a family, i.e. children, parents, grandparents. So there are activities specially tailored for adults, teenagers, seniors but also activities which encourage the participation of all members of the family at the same time.

A whole grid of professional activities has been developed in order to support the cruise industry. Travel agents have a very important position in this industry as 74% of cruise passengers book cruise vacations through travel agents (CLIA, 2008:29). These travel agencies, scattered all over the world, specialize in selling cruise vacation packages, promote and advertise this tourist product in international special brochures and catalogues by paying very high fees.

4. Case studies

For coastal and insular Greece cruising is an important form of tourism activity. For this reason, maritime tourist services should be constantly evaluated so that their quality improves. To this end, a primary survey was carried out in the tourist season 2009. In Greece cruising mainly takes place in the Aegean Sea, Piraeus being the home port. Two cruises were selected for this survey, which differed in terms of duration, destinations and cruise lines. However, Piraeus was the home port for both of them. The first one was a three-day cruise, which called at islands in the Aegean and which was organized by a Cypriot cruise line, while the second one was a seven-day cruise, calling at ports in the Eastern Mediterranean and which was organized by a Greek shipping company. The first cruise took place in mid July 2009 with *Aquamarine* of Louis Cruises and was called ‘Jaunt in the Aegean Sea’. The itinerary was Piraeus-Mykonos-Rhodes-Patmos-Kusadasi/Ephesus (Turkey)-Piraeus. The second

cruise was organized by ANEK Lines in late October 2009 with *Eleftherios Venizelos*. The itinerary was Piraeus-Alanya (Turkey)- Tartous (Syria)- Beirut (Lebanon)- Limassol (Cyprus)- Haifa (Israel)- Alexandria (Egypt)-Piraeus.

MAP 1. Itinerary Piraeus-Mykonos-Rhodes-Patmos-Kusadasi/Ephesus (Turkey)-Piraeus

MAP 2. Itinerary Piraeus-Alanya (Turkey)- Tartous (Syria)- Beirut (Lebanon)- Limassol (Cyprus)- Haifa (Israel)- Alexandria (Egypt)-Piraeus.



4.1. The survey

The survey was conducted by means of a structured questionnaire distributed to cruise passengers. In the first cruise 62 questionnaires were distributed of which 43 were filled in (69.4%). In the second cruise 90 questionnaires were distributed of which 74 were filled in (82.2%). From a total of 117 answered questionnaires, seven of them had to be discarded because they had not been properly completed. Thus there was a final sample of 110 answered questionnaires for further processing.

4.2. Passengers' profile

As for the respondents' nationality, 58 people (53%) were Greek, 31 people (28%) were European Union nationals and 21 people (19%) (21 άτομα) came from third countries. With regard to the respondents' sex, 63 were female (57%) and 47 were male (43%). As for the respondents' age, the age brackets were the following: 27 people fell into the 51-60 years old bracket (25%), 25 people fell into the 31-40 years old bracket (23%), 24 people fell into the 41-50 years old bracket (22%), 16 people were over 61 years old (14%), 13 people were 26-30 years old (12%) while just 5 people were 18-25 years old (4%). The majority of the respondents were married (42%), 18% were divorced, 14% were widowers and 26% singles. 91% (62 people) of the respondents had one to two children, 6% (4 people) had three to four children and 3% (2 people) had over four children. The children actually expressed themselves in favour of the choice of the cruise by their parents. Even teenagers had preferred to travel with their family.

As far as the respondents' educational attainment is concerned, the majority of the respondents (50 people i.e. 45%) were college graduates, 40% had completed secondary education, 12% had pursued postgraduate studies while only 3% had completed primary education. As for the respondents' job profile, 25% were private employees, 19% were civil servants, 18% were pensioners, 15% were tradesmen, 13% were businessmen, 6% said they had another occupation and 4% were students. Regarding the respondents' revenue status, 33% had an average annual household income of €20,001-30,000, 27% had €30,001-40,000 and 16% had over €40,000.

4.3. Satisfaction from the cruise

The majority of the respondents (70 people i.e. 64%) answered that they were on a cruise for the first time while 36% (40 people) answered that they had already had a cruising experience. From the second group, 64% of them (26 people) had been on a cruise once or twice before, 28% (11 people) three to four times, while 8% (3 people) more than four times. As for the assessment of the components of the cruise (price, security, relaxation, interest), 41% of the respondents thought that the price was moderate, 52% found the cruise secure, 28% of them assessed the cruise as relaxing and 38% thought it had been an interesting experience. Moreover, only 15% found it expensive and 18% less expensive, 2% found it a bit dangerous, 6% found cruising tiring and only 5% thought it was an uninteresting vacation category (Table 1).

TABLE 1. Assessment of the components of the cruise (price, security, relaxation, interest)

PRICE	FREQUENCY	%	SECURITY	FREQUENCY	%	RELAXATION	FREQUENCY	%	INTERESTING EXPERIENCE	FREQUENCY	%
Cheap	12	11	Dangerous	0	0	Tiring	7	6	Uninteresting	6	5
Somewhat cheap	17	15	Somewhat dangerous	2	2	Somewhat tiring	10	9	Somewhat uninteresting	11	10
Neither cheap nor expensive	45	41	Neither dangerous nor safe	13	12	Neither tiring nor relaxing	28	26	Neither uninteresting nor interesting	25	23
Somewhat expensive	19	18	Somewhat safe	37	34	Somewhat relaxing	34	31	Somewhat interesting	26	24
Expensive	17	15	Safe	58	52	Relaxing	31	28	Interesting	42	38

The participants were also asked how they had been informed about the cruise. 30% (32 people) replied through a travel agent, 27% (30 people) from advertising, 22% (24 people) from the internet, 15% (17 people) from friends and relatives while 6% had another source of information.

TABLE 2. Source of Information about the cruise

SOURCE OF INFORMATION	FREQUENCY	%
Advertisement	30	27
Internet	24	22
Friends and Relatives	17	15
Tourist Agent	32	30
Other source of information	7	6
TOTAL	110	100

When asked about the motives to go on a cruise, the majority (45.3%) replied that they wanted to visit new places, 41% answered that they did it in order to relax and 37.6% replied for leisure.

55% of the respondents thought that the ports of call was a very important factor for choosing the specific cruise and 43% of them replied that they had chosen it because of the scheduled local excursions. 60% of the respondents replied that the duration of the cruise was also a significant factor on their decision-making and 58% of them replied that the price had also been a very crucial factor for their choice. Furthermore, 42% replied that the existence of leisure activities on board had influenced their decision-making on choosing the specific cruise while 46% answered that the facilities and extra amenities offered had also played a crucial role on their choice. What is surprising is the fact that 39% of the respondents did not consider the reliability of the cruise line as a quite important factor on their decision-making, while 35% of them thought that the cruise ship itself had not influenced at all their

choice. In addition to this, 78% of the respondents (86 people) considered the existence of sights at the ports of call as a significant reason for their choice.

TABLE 3. Important factor for choosing the specific cruise

	SHIP		EXISTENCE OF LEISURE ACTIVITIES		FACILITIES AND EXTRA AMENITIES		SCHEDULED LOCAL EXCURSIONS	
	FREQUENCY	%	FREQUENCY	%	FREQUENCY	%	FREQUENCY	%
Not at all important	39	35	2	2	17	15	0	0
Not quite important	23	21	10	9	13	12	6	5
Important	20	18	46	42	51	46	26	24
Quite important	17	16	30	27	15	14	31	28
Very important	11	10	22	20	14	13	47	43

	PRICE		DURATION OF THE CRUISE		PORTS OF CALL		RELIABILITY OF THE CRUISE LINE	
	FREQUENCY	%	FREQUENCY	%	FREQUENCY	%	FREQUENCY	%
Not at all important	4	4	2	2	0	0	7	6
Not quite important	2	2	10	9	4	4	43	39
Important	19	17	23	21	8	7	22	20
Quite important	64	58	66	6	37	34	21	19
Very important	21	19	9	8	61	55	17	16

82% of the respondents said that they were satisfied from the variety offered in the specific cruise programme, while 18% of them had not been satisfied. However, the latter were asked what they would like most during their cruise but only a few cruise passengers gave an answer. The few answers concerned the children, other islands which are not established tourist destinations, other destination combinations, more thematic cruises with a continuous change of themes for catering different interests such as food and wine sampling and sport activities. The overwhelming majority of the respondents (96%) considered the good climate conditions at the ports of call as an important factor for the success of the cruise. It should be noted that during the cruise in the Eastern Mediterranean the weather was particularly changeable.

92% of the respondents said they had been satisfied from the cruise overall. As for the rating of each part of the cruise ship, 46% found the cabins very good while 35% of them rated them as average. 68% found the quality of the restaurants very good and 69% thought that the quality and the organization of the local guided tours was also very good. In addition to this, 38% rated the quality of the bars as average while 37% found it was very good. 49% of the participants rated the pools as average and 51% found the quality of the gift shop on board also average. As for the quality of the services provided in the home port of Piraeus, 39% of the respondents rated the existing infrastructure as average and 38% of them rated it as bad. Moreover, 36% of the participants rated the services of the personnel in the port average. In the first survey, 39% of the respondents rated the services offered in the port of Piraeus from average to poor while in the second survey the respective percentage was 28%. When asked whether the specific cruise had met their expectations, the vast majority of the respondents (84%), replied positively and said that that they would repeat the cruise. 62% of them answered that they would choose the same cruise line.

TABLE 4. Satisfaction rating from each part of the cruise ship

	CABINS		RESTAURANDS		BARS		SWIMMING POOL		GIFT SHOP	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Very Bad	2	2	2	2	2	2	3	3	3	3
Bad	6	5	0	0	13	12	13	12	8	7
Neither bad nor good	38	35	17	16	42	38	54	49	56	51
Good	51	46	75	68	41	37	26	23	37	34
Very good	13	12	16	14	12	11	14	13	6	5

	PERSONEL		LOCAL EXCURSIONS		INFRASTRUCTURE		PORT PERSONNEL		SERVICES IN THE PORT	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Very Bad	1	1	6	5	12	11	11	10	22	20
Bad	6	5	4	4	42	38	26	24	43	39
Neither bad nor good	16	15	9	8	43	39	40	36	31	28
Good	54	49	76	69	11	10	29	26	12	11
Very good	33	30	15	14	2	2	4	4	2	2

4.4. Survey findings

This survey showed that men and women alike go on cruise. Their age is usually over 30 years old, the 50-60 age bracket being the majority of cruisers as this is the traditional age group who chooses to go on cruise. However, this survey revealed a new tendency in the market, that of the increased demand for cruising by younger ages. Cruising is usually chosen by college and university graduates or individuals who have completed at least secondary education. This is expected as cruising is a particular form of leisure which is not the conventional type of vacation usually chosen by individuals with lower educational attainment. Cruise passengers have no specific job profile. Cruising is chosen by all professional categories even though the majority of cruisers are private sector employees and civil servants. Retired people are also an important part of cruisers (CLIA 2008: 19). As for the marital status of the respondents, they are usually married (42%) and the majority of them usually have one to two children. Families are also a big category of cruisers, which is also shown by other surveys (CLIA, 2008: 20). Cruise lines often offer a discounted price in their cruise programmes for families with children as the younger children can share the cabin with their parents. This is an essential motive for parents to buy the specific cruise programme.

Cruising is not a usual vacation category so for most passengers who participated in the survey this was their first cruise. For cruisers the tourism product is neither cheap nor expensive. In contrast with the past when cruising was considered a luxury product, this impression has now changed. This is probably due to the fact that the cruise lines promote and advertise cruising as an affordable choice. There are still some people who keep considering cruising as quite or very expensive but this is not the overall cruisers' opinion on cruising. As far as security is concerned, cruising is considered a safe vacation category. In addition to this, it is regarded as a relaxing vacation category by most cruisers. The fact that you can visit different places while staying on board, without carrying luggage and that everything is ready for consumption and you do not have to look for it, is something appreciated by the respondents. Moreover, cruising is considered by the respondents to be more or less very interesting. As it is a new experience involving a continuous change of locations and situations, it is natural that it draws cruisers' interest.

Summarizing the image that the respondents have about cruising, it could be said that cruising is considered as a safe, relaxing, interesting experience, which is neither cheap nor expensive. As far as the evaluation of the port of Piraeus is concerned, the infrastructure was ranked from average to bad, the personnel of the port was ranked as average while the services provided in the port were ranked as bad. The problems identified in the port of Piraeus were also confirmed by the interviews with the travel agents. So we see that the negative points of the port are perceivable not only by the professionals of the industry but also from tourists. In particular the lack of adequate infrastructure and services in the port of Piraeus is a problem which should be remedied if we really want the development of cruise tourism in Greece. The fact that services of the port personnel were ranked as average is also alarming. So on the one hand, the State has to improve the services offered in the port and on the other hand, the upgrading of the skills of the personnel employed in the port is an obligation for everyone in the service industry.

5. Conclusion

The sociological and spatiotemporal features of cruising have changed nowadays. Cruising has become an important component of maritime tourism, which attracts many passengers with a high and average annual household income. Taking this into consideration, the cruise industry is seeking for a clientele within younger age groups and within various social classes. It changes the product on offer so that it meets the needs and preferences of various social, economic and age groups. Cruising in Greece could thrive due to its ideal climate conditions, its great number of islands and cultural assets. Nevertheless, despite the rich natural and cultural heritage, there is inadequate infrastructure in the home port of Piraeus coupled with the poor quality of services. Thus the improvement of the infrastructure by the appropriate state authorities is required which will allow Piraeus to become the main cruise home port in the Mediterranean.

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