

Human thermal comfort antithesis in the context of the Mediterranean tourism potential

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Weather and climate information are determinative factors in the decision of a touristic destination. The evaluation of the thermal, aesthetical and physical components of the climate is considered an issue of high importance in order to assess the climatic tourism potential. Mediterranean is an endowed region with respect to its temperate climate and impressive landscapes over the coastal environment and numerous islands. However, the harmony of the natural beauty is interrupted by extreme weather phenomena, such as heat and cold waves, heavy rains and stormy conditions. Thus, it is very important to know the seasonal behavior of the climate for touristic activities and recreation. Towards this objective we evaluated the antithesis in the human thermal perception as well as the sultriness, stormy, foggy, sunny and rainy days recorded in specific Greek touristic destinations against respective competitive Mediterranean resorts.

Daily meteorological parameters, such as air temperature, relative humidity, wind speed, cloudiness and precipitation, were acquired from the most well-known touristic sites over the Mediterranean for the period 1970 to present. These variables were used on one hand to estimate the human thermal burden, by means of the thermal index of Physiologically Equivalent temperature (PET) and on the other hand to interpret the physical and aesthetic components of the tourism potential, by utilizing specific thresholds of the initial and derived variables in order to quantify in a simple and friendly way the environmental footprint on desired touristic destinations.

The findings of this research shed light on the climate information for tourism in Greece against Mediterranean destinations. Greek resorts, especially in the Aegean Islands appear to be more ideal with respect to thermal comfort against resorts at the western and central Mediterranean, where the heat stress within the summer season seems to be an intolerable pressure on humans. This could be attributed to the beneficial impact of the Etesians winds established in the summer months over the Aegean Sea and the development of the sea breeze over the numerous island complexes. Further, the sunny days and clear skies at the Greek resorts along with the harmony of the landscape promote the best of the aesthetical facet of the climate.