

Clash of cultures in Greek traffic? What happens when a Southern European road safety culture is mixed with a Northern European road safety culture?

Abstract ID1016

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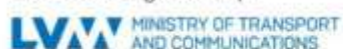


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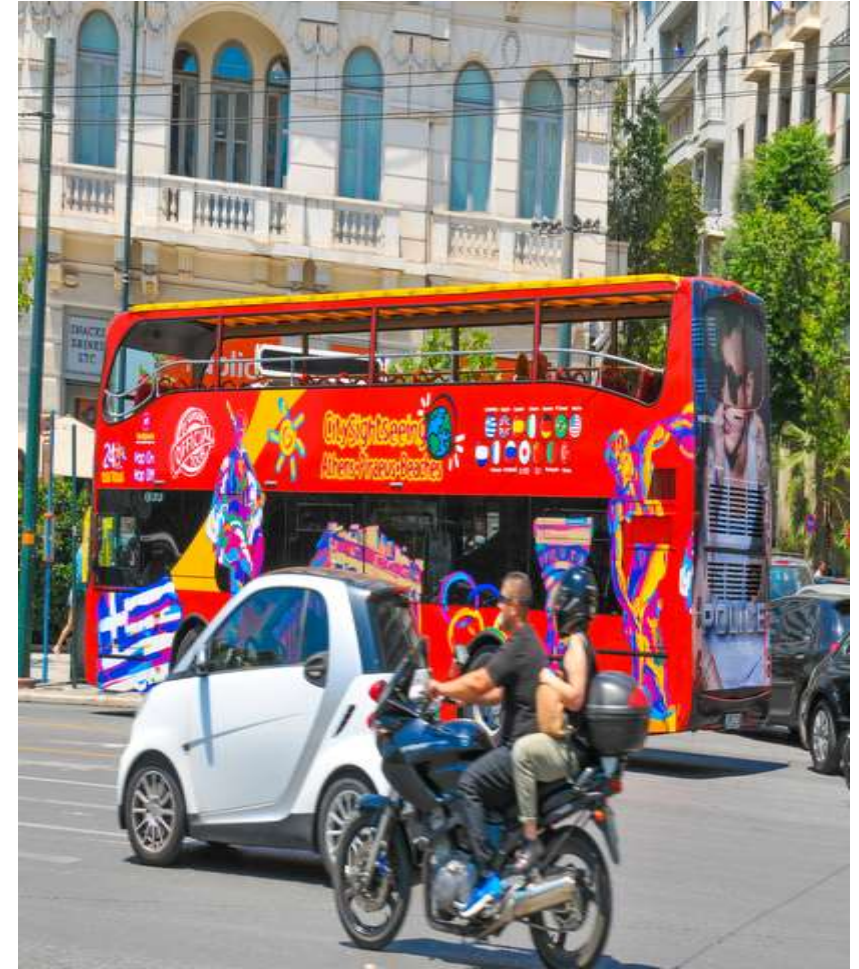
Background

- Tourism is the 2nd most important (after drowning) **cause of death** for international tourists.
- Tourists are at **greater risk** than local population although they may come from better performing in road safety countries than their destinations due to:
 - driving in **unfamiliar surroundings** causing disorientation, distraction and fatigue,
 - poor **knowledge** of the road network,
 - lack of **understanding** of local traffic rules & signs,
 - potential poorer road **infrastructure**, poorer police **enforcement** and riskier road user **behaviour** in destination countries



Tourists-locals interaction in traffic

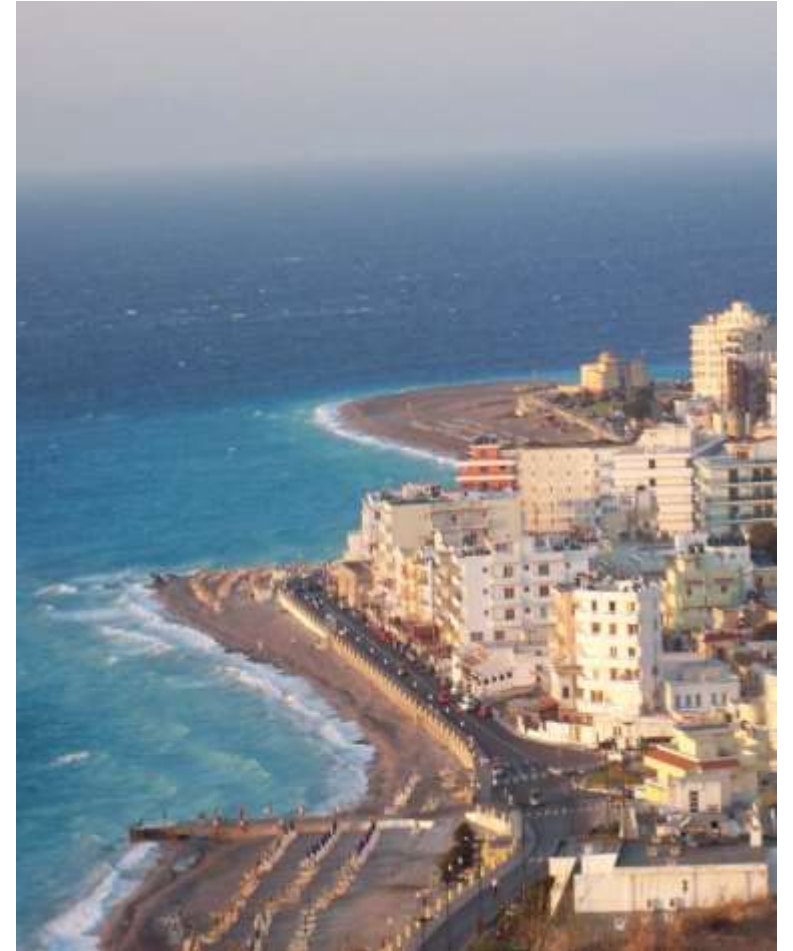
- Greece receives high proportions of northern European **tourist** drivers every year.
- When foreign tourists and local drivers from different road safety cultures (RSCs) **interact** in traffic, misunderstandings, frustration and conflicts could arise, as a consequence of different behaviours and expectations.
- International tourists driving in a foreign country may **adapt** their behaviours to the local setting.
- If the proportion of tourist drivers reaches a **critical mass** in an area, it is rather the locals who adapt to the foreign drivers.
- This could lead to the development of a more **northern European RSC** in touristic areas in Greece.



Aims of the study

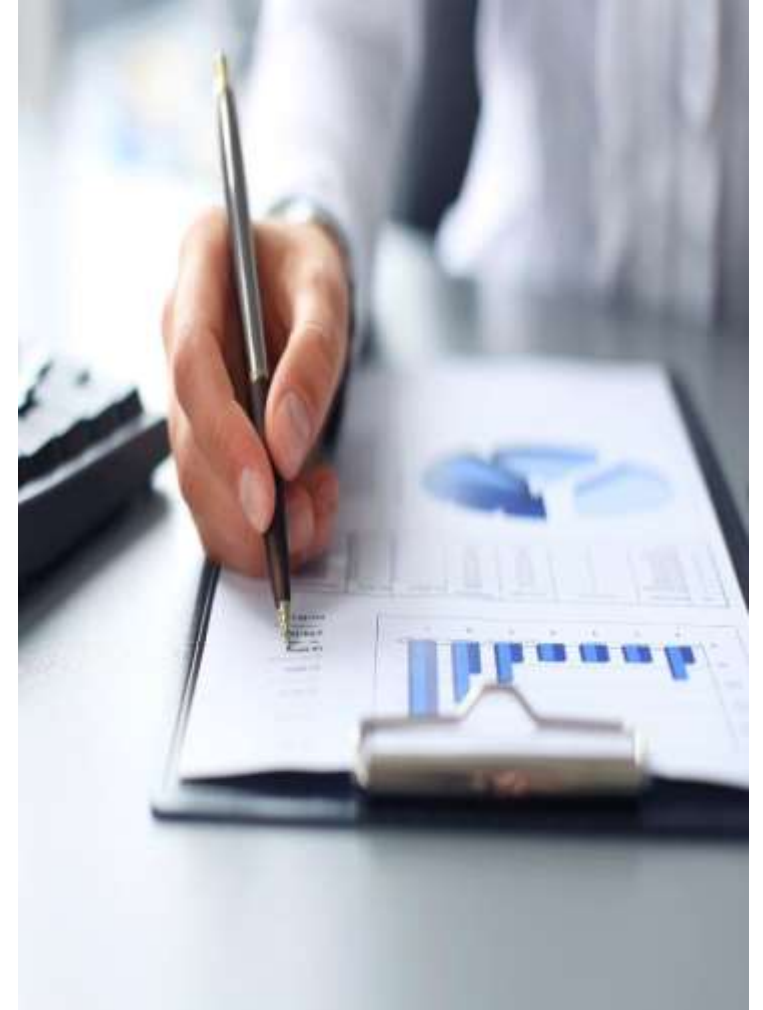
- 1) To what extent do road safety cultures between international tourists and locals **differ** on the Greek island of Rhodes?
- 2) **Who is influenced by whom:** Do the locals adapt their behaviour to the tourists, or is it the other way around?
- 3) What are the (potential) **safety outcomes** of these processes?

Study conducted within the research project "**Safety culture in private and professional transport: examining its influence on behaviours and implications for interventions**", undertaken by the Institute of Transport Economics of Norway (TOI) and the National Technical University of Athens (NTUA).



Quantitative survey

- Greek **car** drivers (N=286) and **motorcycle** (MC) riders (N=193) recruited in **Rhodes** and in **Athens** (to provide a group representing Greek destinations with a less visible influence of tourists in traffic).
- Norwegian car drivers (N=461) and motorcycle riders (N=102) recruited in **Oslo** (to provide a group to represent international tourists in Rhodes).
- **Survey** questions on:
 - road user behaviours, e.g. aggressive driving, DUI, speeding, use of seat belt/helmet etc
 - background variables e.g. age, driver experience, gender, km driven in the last 2 years, driving/riding frequency etc
 - national RSC i.e. road user behaviours that respondents expect from other drivers in their own country
 - the driving of foreign tourists in Rhodes and the impact on MC riders driving during the touristic season.



Qualitative interviews

- 15 native Greek car and MC drivers in Athens and 15 in Rhodes.
- 6 native Norwegian car drivers in Oslo.
- **Semi - structured interview guide** consisting of questions on:
 - road user behaviours, e.g. aggressive driving behaviour, DUI, speeding, use of seat belt/helmet etc
 - the role of traffic police and state intervention,
 - the role of the driving environment and the factors within it influencing driving behavior,
 - the role and influence of tourists on driving behavior.



Survey sample characteristics

Groups	Number	Proportion	Males	<26	26-35	36-45	46-55	56+
MC Rhodes	74	7%	91%	20%	41%	28%	10%	1%
Car Rhodes	87	11%	62%	9%	21%	46%	21%	3%
MC Athens	119	8%	82%	10%	24%	25%	25%	15%
Car Athens	199	19%	65%	3%	24%	23%	32%	19%
MC Oslo	102	44%	59%	2%	10%	19%	39%	30%
Car Oslo	461	10%	97%	7%	27%	25%	17%	24%

- The share of males is higher for the motorcycle riders, especially in Rhodes and in Oslo.
- Respondents from Oslo generally are older than the respondents from Athens.
- The youngest respondents are from Rhodes.

RSC of local vs international drivers in Rhodes

- **National RSC as violations/aggression:**

“When Driving in my Country, I Expect the Following Behaviour from Other Drivers”:

- 1) “To sound their horn to indicate their annoyance to another road user”,
- 2) “To become angered by a certain type of driver and indicate their hostility by whatever means they can”,
- 3) “To overtake a slow driver on the inside”,
- 4) “To drive when they suspect they might be over the legal BAC limit”,
- 5) “To drive without using a seatbelt”,
- 6) “To disregard the speed limit on a motor way road”
- 7) “To disregard the speed limit on a residential road”.

- **National RSC as compliance/politeness:**

- 1) “That they are polite to other road users”
- 2) That they respect and follow traffic rules.

- Answer alternatives ranged from 1 (none-very few) to 5 (almost all/all).



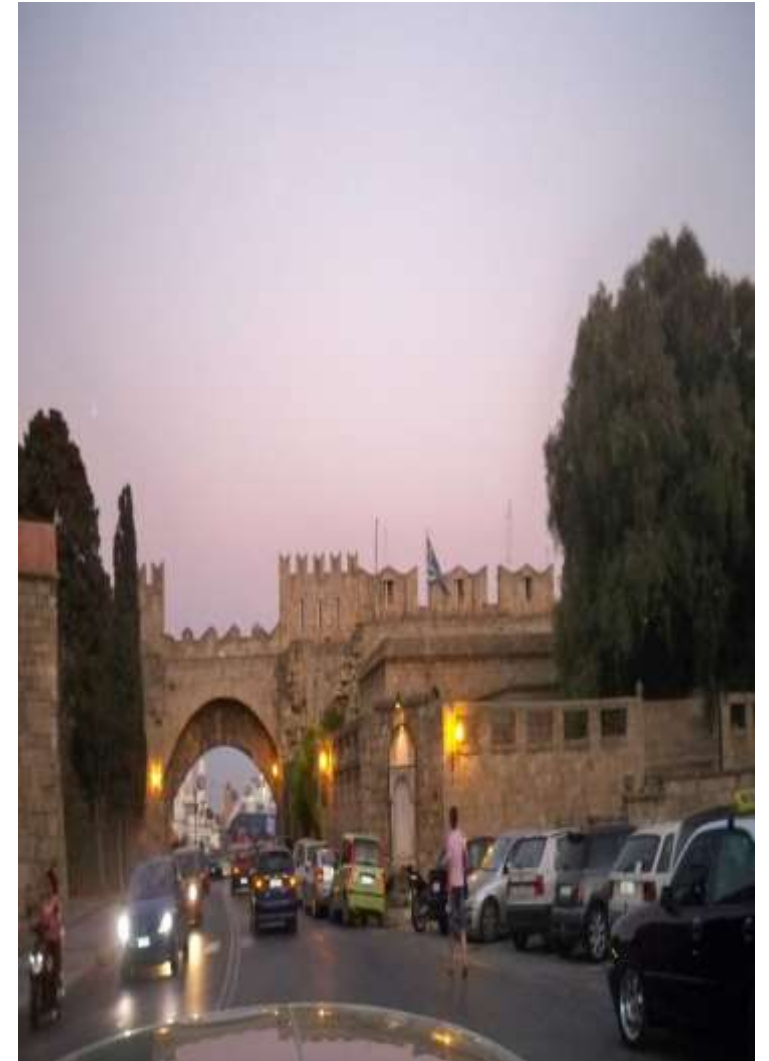
RSC of local vs international drivers in Rhodes

- Drivers/riders in Rhodes expect a **higher level of violations/aggression** from other drivers/riders and **less compliance/politeness**, compared with drivers/riders from Athens and Oslo.
- Results are in accordance with the qualitative interview data, indicating:
 - that Greek drivers generally expected more violations from other drivers in their country than drivers from Oslo
 - that interviewees reported many similarities, but also more negative road safety behaviours in Rhodes than in Athens in some respects. This was e.g. related to “road entitlement” and tourists.



Who is influenced by whom?

- Riders/drivers in Rhodes expect more road safety violations from other rider/drivers than rider/drivers in Athens. Thus, it seems that the northern European tourists have **not contributed** to a more northern European RSC in Rhodes.
- **Driving of foreign tourists in Rhodes and the impact on MC riders driving during the touristic season:**
 - “In your experience, do car drivers/MC riders who are foreign tourists drive differently than car drivers from Rhodes?”
 - “In your experience, do MC riders who are foreign tourists drive differently than MC riders from Rhodes?”
 - “In your experience, do car drivers/ MC riders from Rhodes drive differently in the tourist season than the rest of the year?”
 - “Do you ride your motorbike differently in the tourist season than the rest of the year?”



Who is influenced by whom?

- Tourists are a **multifaceted** group;
 - 42-45% of MC riders in Rhodes reported that tourist drivers/riders drive slower than local drivers
 - 45-46% answered that tourist drivers/riders drive similarly to local drivers and
 - 1/10 that tourists drive faster.
- About 60% of the drivers/riders in Rhodes assert that they **do not adapt** their behaviours to tourist drivers/riders, while 1/3 reports that they adapt their behaviour by slowing down.



Safety outcomes

- “Do you think that the car drivers who are foreign tourists drive differently than the car drivers from Rhodes in other ways? (e.g. more aggressively, or more politely)”
- The most frequently answers were:
 - *“More careless/poorer drivers/more dangerous”*
 - *“Unfamiliar with roads/dangerous/slower”*
 - *“Different mentality/culture”*
 - *“Irresponsible/with maps/absent minded/slower”*
 - *“They bring with them their own driving culture which is not the same with ours”*
 - *“They assume that we drive as they drive”*



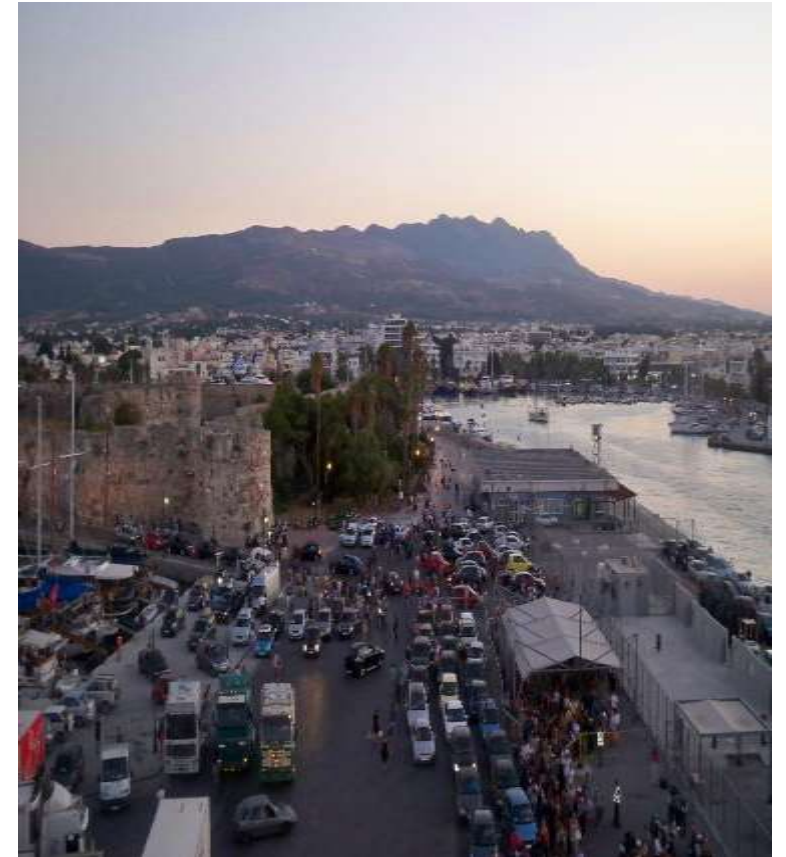
Conclusions

- The **higher accident risk** of international tourists is due to the fact that they face several risk factors at the same time, exactly because they are foreign (i.e. unfamiliarity with the road environment, driving behaviours and RSC of the local drivers).
- RSC of the tourists is also foreign to the local drivers/riders. This leads to **frustration, misunderstanding, conflicts** and potentially also accidents among local drivers and tourists.
- Some tourists and some locals **adapt** their behaviours to the other group, but these adaptations can be both positive and negative for road safety.



Conclusions

- Differences in national RSC, in combination with other factors make it more challenging for tourists to drive in their destinations, increases the mental load, and it can lead to **disorientation, distraction** and **fatigue**.
- In this setting, the positive safety culture of the northern European drivers/riders is “**insufficient**” to make them safe in a foreign country.
- Tourists through the eyes of locals:
“are more polite, but cause more accidents”.



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