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Kaufmann, Rudi and Gronau, Werner and Sakkadas, Savvas

University of Nicosia, University of Applied Sciences Stralsund,
Cyprus University of Technology

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NICOSIA - CONCERTED RETAILING AND TOURISM STRATEGIES TO AWAKEN A NEGLECTED AND SLEEPING BEAUTY

Rudi Kaufmann
University of Nicosia

Werner Gronau
University of Applied Sciences Stralsund

Savvas Sakkadas
Cyprus University of Technology

Nicosia, the last divided European city, is only able to skim a small portion of the tourist purchasing power compared to the other tourism strongholds of the island and, at the same time, does not utilize the existing cultural potential in an efficient way. Therefore, this paper aims to contribute to the valorisation of the existing potential in a customer oriented manner. Concerted international (UN Nicosia Master Plan) and national (Strategic Plan 2010) strategies reflect the intended revival endeavours. For this new orientation to be successful the paper hypothesizes an effective interplay between tourism and retailing to happen and, for this reason, analyses the motives and satisfaction levels of tourists to Nicosia with regards to both, tourism and retailing offers. The paper focuses on the tourist segment with higher educational levels (and implicitly higher financial potential) as the communication objectives foresee to position the island mainly in the mind of this segment. The paper concludes, in line with recent developments with regard to tourist consumer profiles, that the concept of authenticity plays an increasing role when explaining the satisfaction levels of this specific segment and provides practical recommendations.

Keywords: *Retail, Tourism, Culture, Authenticity, Nicosia, Cyprus*

JEL Classification: *L83, M1, O1*

INTRODUCTION

Since the political independence of Cyprus in 1960, a nation-wide effort towards the development of a modern tourism destination was vigorously encouraged. The loss of the main tourism spots in Kyrenia and Famagusta, as a result of the Turkish intervention and occupation in 1974,



led to the establishment of new tourist areas. Typically, the development in the late 70's and the early 80's focussed on classical "Sun & Beach"-destinations. This led to a rapid development of an accommodation infrastructure during the 80's and early 90's. Responding to the decline in the 90s, the so-called Strategic Plan 2010 was developed. This plan, however, mainly focuses on making-up for the as-yet unrealised trends such as diversification and upgrading of the tourism product. Nevertheless, this new plan set new and very valuable trends for the introduction of new tourist offers aiming at new target groups, as, for instance, special interest tourism or cultural tourism. Especially, the role of the capital Nicosia is supposed to be redefined due to the less sun and beach oriented forms of tourism promoted in the strategic plan.

NICOSIA- STARTING INTO A NEW TOURISM ERA

Nicosia is mainly used as a destination for one-day trips from the sun and beach destinations in Larnaca, Limassol, Agia Napa and Paphos. However, the ongoing efforts of the United Nations in co-operation with local authorities in the form of the so called "Nicosia Master plan" for upgrading and rehabilitation of the historic centre, which has suffered through the warlike conditions and the disregard of the local stakeholders, represents a new potential within the historic centre. Entire streets of houses, as well as cultural landmarks such as the former Turkish bath, Churches and mosques have been restored in order to preserve the multicultural character of Nicosia. The central axis of the historic centre, Ledra Street was upgraded and transformed into a pedestrian zone with a multitude of retail shops. Furthermore, financial incentive schemes for renovating traditional architecture were put in place serving to improve the city's appearance and attraction. Similar efforts of the United Nations are primarily aimed at preserving the multi-cultural heritage of the island in order to stress the role of all ethnic groups and their role in the island's history. This approach is supposed to create awareness for the common culture of all groups on the island and therefore be the initial step towards a reconciliation of the ethnic groups and a possible solution to the Cyprus Problem. So far, however, the overall potential of those activities, for instance, for the upgrade of Cultural Heritage, the tourism industry and retailing, has barely been realized. Considering those facts, a detailed knowledge about the perception of the tourists with regards to the walled city of Nicosia and their spatial behaviour within the walled city was investigated. Therefore the study includes the following elements:

- Orientation: An analysis of the areas of main tourist attraction within the walled city.
- Interests: An analysis of the main activities and interests of the individual tourist
- Satisfaction: A customer satisfaction evaluation of the existing offers
- The influence of authenticity on the satisfaction level with the City as a whole, its cultural sites and shopping facilities (especially souvenirs).

LITERATURE REVIEW

The paper refers to the ongoing debate on the merger of leisure, retail consumption and culture previously perceived “to be separate and distinct realms” (Goulding, 2000, p. 835). It investigates the satisfaction levels of tourists to Nicosia regarding various elements of the tourism value chain embracing a range of retail services as shopping (especially souvenirs), gastronomy and the experience of cultural heritage sites. In its total sum, these factors constitute a destination’s attractiveness “thereby also affecting tourists’ judgments regarding quality and satisfaction levels with the vacation experience” (Weiermair, 2000, p. 398). Based on the Hong Kong case, Shuk-Ching et al (2008) refer to and confirm the findings of authors who acknowledge retail’s contribution to a destination’s attractiveness (Yuksel, 2004; Lehto et al, 2004), to the destination’s success due to high levels of shopping (Turner and Reisinger, 2001; Dodds and Butler, 2010), to the tourists’ satisfaction with service standards (Kozak and Rimmington, 2000) as well as to the tourists’ inclination to re-visit the sites (Kozak and Rimmington, 2000). Interestingly, Yuksel (2004, in Shuk-Ching et al, 2008, pp. 351/352) actually regard shopping as an “underlying motivation and incentive for people to travel”.

Profiles of tourists

Explaining tourist behavior Plog (1974) in his psychographic research studies refers to four typologies: psychocentrics, near-psychocentrics, near-allocentrics, and allocentrics. Other relevant, more general typologies of tourist behavior refer to ethnic, cultural, historic, environmental and recreational aspects (Smith, 1989). In their studies on the cultural tourist, Ashworth and Turnbridge (1990) identified two types of cultural tourists: the intentional who is attracted by the variety of

heritage sites in a particular destination; and the incidental whose primary motivation is not culture. Similarly, Richards (1996) distinguished between the specific cultural tourist, a habitual consumer of culture, and the general cultural tourist who is only an occasional consumer. Wickens (2002) points to the difference among each category to be determined by the motivation at the moment of choosing a holiday, the type of activity, and the prevailing perception of destination.

A social trend toward authenticity

One of the first who raised the issue of authenticity was MacCannel (1973) and authors such as Taylor (2001) and Wang (2000) who stated that almost anything in today's market is associated with the notion of authenticity. According to Wang (2000) authenticity is a modern phenomenon and value resulting from the experience of in-authenticity. Goulding (2000b, p. 836) confirms this view by stating that the desire for authentic experience is the "modern embodiment of the religious pilgrim, but since postmodern society is essentially inauthentic, those who seek it must look elsewhere". A form of achieving this is the experience of the past. Referring to Laenen (1989) Goulding (2000b, p. 836) reasons increased heritage interest with "the moral, social and identity crisis experienced over the past decades". In the same vein, Cohen (2004) argues that the tourists' concern for authenticity depends on a person's degree of alienation from modernity. Authenticity is regarded to be central to the phenomenon of heritage tourism (Boyd, 2002). McKercher/Du Cross (2002) and Boyd (2002) stated that the degree of authenticity of the built environment often serves as the basis for cultural heritage tourism. Cultural heritage assets are being altered, renovated, protected or even rebuilt as part of the conserve.

Visitor Experience

According to Smith, (2003) and Schooten, (1995) one of the key words relating to heritage interpretation is experience with possibly all senses. Moreover, Handler (1986, p.2) holds that "the search for the authentic cultural experience is based on the unspoiled, pristine, genuine, untouched and traditional". Heritage interpretation, in order to enhance the visitor's sense of a place and place identity, should be planned and designed with that outcome in mind (Uzell, 1996; Shin, 2009). Screven (1986) and Shackley (1999) suggest that the visitor needs to feel well oriented to enjoy the experience, and locate the visitor in terms of time

and space. Lack of information and interpretation may result in disorientation and confusion. Wang (2000) and Swarbrooke (1994) refer to a situation where cultural sites, to be experienced as authentic, must be marked for visitors, whereas the very process of marking these sites as authentic denies them the chance of being truly authentic.

Tourist profiles as to authenticity

Cohen (1988) asserted that the degree of authenticity sought depends on the consumer profile. Referring to tourist profiles he defines existential tourists, who abandon modern life in search of the other: They will be the most concerned with authenticity, as are experimental tourists. In addition, experimental tourists also seek to participate in the authentic life of others; hence, they still follow strict criteria for evaluating authenticity. Recreational tourists, he argues, have less strict criteria and are willing to accept something as real for the sake of experience.

Shopping and Consuming cultural heritage

For the last three decades an increasing popularity of the past can be witnessed that directly involves marketing, selling and consumption of various products, services and experiences (Chronis, 2005). What is actually appreciated in the consumption of the past depends on a variety of factors, including cultural background (Weiermair, 2000; Kayat, 2010), prior knowledge, nostalgia proneness (Goulding, 1999), and personal involvement (Goulding, 2000a).

According to Reville and Dodd (2003) the most important single element in shopping is authenticity of heritage merchandise. However, there is a risk of consumer ambivalence that can be partly attributed to the absence of definite standards to evaluate and authenticate the purchase (Chhabra, 2005). In the context of a retail shop, what is presumed to be authentic is based on the interpretation of the displays by the viewer (McIntosh and Prentice, 1999).

Shopping souvenirs has been identified as an important factor of tourists' behavior (Ross and Iso-Ahola, 1990). This view is confirmed by Kent et al (1983, in Shuk-Ching et al, 2008) holding that buying memorable things is an essential part of every tourist trip. Purchased souvenirs might have a bearing on the spiritual and behavioral repertoire of a person as they help the tourist remember a certain time and experience (Gordon, 1986; Littrell, 1990).

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

The research objectives were to investigate the motives and the level of satisfaction of the tourists to Nicosia with the 'tourism package' (various elements of the tourism value chain). A main research objective was to investigate the influence of authenticity on the satisfaction level of tourists with the different elements of the tourism package (the city as a whole, cultural sites and shopping (especially tourism shopping)). As to socio-demographic factors, the study focussed on a differentiation of the sample members as to educational levels. It was hypothesized that both, cultural sites and retailing (shopping) constituted equal motives for visiting the walled city of Nicosia. Furthermore, it was hypothesized that authenticity has a stronger influence for sample members with higher levels of education (university education) compared to sample members of lower levels of education.

The research method was a quantitative survey using a standardized questionnaire as the research technique. There were two parallel surveys using an identical questionnaire, one including all hotels within the walled city - the question within a period of two weeks resulting in 64 usable questionnaires and one survey within the context of highly structured face to face interviews. This survey took place on two weekdays mid of September 2006 from 10-18 o'clock to avoid a big number of locals in the area. The 248 usable questionnaires were distributed by German students from the University of Trier, Department of Tourism, based on convenience sampling also considering spatial varieties. Therefore, 6 different locations within the walled city were used to conduct the interviews. The choice of the locations was on the one hand based on the main tourist areas; on the other hand it was supposed to provide an overview on the frequency of tourists within certain areas of the walled city.

FINDINGS - PRELIMINARY RESULTS OF THE STUDY

The present article will concentrate only on several aspects of the overall study and represents only the first preliminary findings; it will focus especially on the opportunity to utilise the rehabilitated areas within the walled city for tourism purposes in order to decentralise tourism activities and, at the same time, upgrade the tourism product by including additional retail attractions.

Spatial Orientation of tourists within the walled city

When analyzing the spatial allocation of tourists within the old city-centre the dominating role of the very small tourist zone, so called “Laiki Gitonia”, becomes obvious; 75% of all interviewees visited the area; in this area also the majority of souvenir-shops is to be found. Other attractions are visited in general in a decreasing frequency depending on their distance from this tourist area. The second visible concentration of tourists is to be found along so called “Ledras Street”, the pedestrian zone of Nicosia and therefore the area with highest amount of retail-shops. In general a strong spatial concentration of tourists within the touristic area and the pedestrian zone, has to be stated.

Reasons for visiting Nicosia

Appendix 1 reflects that the City itself and the Cultural Sites are the most important reasons to visit the City. Souvenirs, Shopping or Gastronomy were perceived as less important. This figure implies that Retailing activities of tourists might happen as a consequence or side-effect of pre-dominant cultural motives, consequently, rejecting hypothesis 1.

Satisfaction levels

Appendix 2 implies areas for further improvement (especially referring to tourists with a higher educational level) as to the quality of souvenirs, the value for money relationship, onsite information, aesthetic image of the city, role of traditional food and authenticity.

The role of authenticity on the satisfaction level regarding the City itself, its cultural sights and souvenirs

As to the overall attractiveness of the city, authenticity expressed in preservation of cultural heritage plays a very significant role especially amongst higher educated people (see Table 1). Other, however far less influential relevant predictors refer to their specific interest, and cleanliness. For tourists with a lower educational level the predictor ‘aesthetic image of the town’ explains the satisfaction level to a much higher extent than the second predictor relating to authenticity (Appendix 3).

Table 1 Role of Authenticity on overall satisfaction with the City itself (high educational level)

Model Summary (all factors)

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.744(a)	.554	.545	.431
2	.842(b)	.709	.698	.351
3	.872(c)	.760	.745	.323

a Predictors: (Constant), Preservation/ of local character

b Predictors: (Constant), Preservation/ of local character, Value/interest

c Predictors: (Constant), Preservation/ of local character, Value/interest, Cleanliness

The role of authenticity on the satisfaction level regarding the Cultural Sites

Again, for the influence of authenticity on the satisfaction level regarding cultural sights tourists to be differentiated by their educational level. Higher educated people care a lot for preservation and to a smaller extent for on on-sight-information (Appendix 4) while low educated people focus mainly on their specific interest related to the site and the existing facilities (Appendix 5).

Role of Authenticity on overall satisfaction level as to Souvenirs

Authenticity is after value for the money and customer service the third significant dimension explaining the overall experience in case of higher educated people. Just authenticity on its own has moderate explanatory power (Appendix 6). The only significant factor influencing the overall experience in case of lower educated people is the variety of products (Appendix 7a). Authenticity plays only a very small role for explaining the overall satisfaction level of lower educated people 9 (Appendix 7b). As authenticity explains the satisfaction levels of the higher education segment with the various tourism package elements and plays only a very minor role for the segment with lower educational levels hypothesis 2 is confirmed.

CONCLUSIONS

The findings show that tourist frequent major shopping areas but are not very satisfied (especially not the higher the educational level). Regarding the segment with an higher educational level Yuksel's (2004) statement that shopping is an underlying motive to travel does not apply. Vice versa, it might be argued that for this segment the motive and interest for shopping might be derived from the interest for cultural or heritage sites. Tourists with a higher educational level might be regarded as intentional (habitual) cultural tourists compared to those with lower educational level which might be perceived as incidental (occasional) cultural tourists. This implies to differentiate marketing strategies and tactics as to these different segments. The aspect of authenticity explains the satisfaction level of the segment with a higher educational level with all elements of the tourism package under investigation. Marketing strategies and tactics focusing on the segment with higher educational levels are suggested to entail:

- Co-operation with the international tourism supply chain as to appropriately consulting this segment on the location of choice
- Planning and organizing interactive events with an emphasis on experience
- Concentrating on culture/heritage/authenticity aspects in advertising and, especially, positioning strategies to create a favorable perception of the destination. Some of the currently aired spots in international TV positioning Cyprus as the 'all year round island' or 'sun & beach island' do not seem to be consistent with the preferred values of this segment.
- The quality of souvenirs should be upgraded.
- Products should have a better value for money relationship.
- Onsite information should be improved.
- Care should be taken for the aesthetic image, traditional food and authenticity.

Limitations of these preliminary study findings refer to a lack of differentiation as to other socio-demographic factors of the sample, profiles of authenticity seekers, specifically culturally based perceptions of both, visitors and suppliers, and product categories (i.e. fashion).

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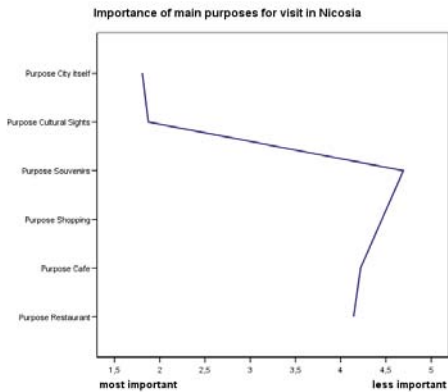
Rudi Kaufmann (kaufmann.r@unic.ac.cy) is an Associate Professor at the University of Nicosia, School of Business, 46 Makedonitissas Avenue, P.O. Box 24005, 1700 Nicosia/Cyprus.

Werner Gronau (werner.gronau@fh-stralsund.de), Leisure and Tourism Management, School of Business Studies, University of Applied Sciences Stralsund, Zur Schwedenschanze 15,18435 Stralsund/Germany.

Savvas Sakkadas (Savvas.sakkadas@cut.ac.cy), Department of Hotel and Tourism Management, Cyprus University of Technology, 31 Archbishop Kyprianos, Limassol Savings, Co-operative Bank Building, 3036, Lemessos.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Tourist motives



Appendix 2 Satisfaction shopping in general (Range: 1 (very good) – 5 unattractive)

Aspect	worst rated variable (for each category)	overall	high edu.
Shopping	Value for the money	2.76	2.91
Souvenirs	Quality of souvenirs	2.92	3.14
Sights	Onsite information	2.68	2.89
Restaurants	Role of traditional food	2.46	2.53
Bars	Restrooms	2.41	2.24
City	Aesthetic image of the city	2.49	2.64
Overall	Authenticity	2.35	2.42

Appendix 3 Role of Authenticity on overall satisfaction with the City itself (lower educational level)

Model Summary (all factors)

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.694(a)	.481	.478	.499
2	.749(b)	.561	.556	.460

a Predictors: (Constant), Aesthetic image

b Predictors: (Constant), Aesthetic image, Preservation/ of local character

Role of Authenticity (Preservation) on the overall satisfaction level as to cultural sights

Appendix 4 Role of Authenticity on overall satisfaction with Cultural Sites (higher educational level)

Model Summary (all factors)

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.774(a)	.600	.593	.439
2	.821(b)	.675	.664	.400

a Predictors: (Constant), Preservation/Renovation

b Predictors: (Constant), Preservation/Renovation, Onsite information

Appendix 5 Role of Authenticity on overall satisfaction with Cultural Sites (lower educational level)

Model Summary (all factors)

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.752(a)	.566	.545	.352
2	.811(b)	.657	.623	.321

a Predictors: (Constant), Value/interest

b Predictors: (Constant), Value/interest, Facilities

Appendix 6 Role of Authenticity on overall satisfaction with Souvenirs (higher educational level)

Model Summary (all factors)

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.605(a)	.366	.340	.518
2	.725(b)	.526	.485	.457
3	.781(c)	.609	.556	.425

- a Predictors: (Constant), Value for money
- b Predictors: (Constant), Value for money, Customer service
- c Predictors: (Constant), Value for money, Customer service, Authenticity of products

Appendix 7 Role of Authenticity on overall satisfaction with Souvenirs (lower educational level)

Appendix 7a Model Summary (all factors entered)

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.739(a)	.546	.495	.550

- a Predictors: (Constant), Variety of products

Appendix 7b Model Summary (only authenticity)

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.417(a)	.174	.119	.618

- a Predictors: (Constant), Authenticity of products