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# Rebranding Syngrou: Changing the image of Syngrou Avenue, in Greece.

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## **ABSTRACT**

The evolution of cities during the 20<sup>th</sup> century decisively influenced by events that changed the way cities worked in the past. These rapid changes in the economy of cities, urban governance and mode of international urban network, intensified competition and highlighted the importance of image as a decisive factor for the development of cities and their inhabitants. In this context, place marketing emerged. Cities and regions use place marketing and place branding strategies in order to improve their image and attract investment, residents and visitors. Culture, in all of its manifestations, (cultural flagships projects, cultural clusters, cultural routes, special events and festivals) plays a significant role in place marketing and branding strategies.

This paper examines the case of Syngrou Avenue, in Athens – Greece, by developing a pilot place branding plan. The new cultural foundations of the National Museum of Contemporary Art (EMST) and the Stavros Niarchos Foundation Cultural Center (SNFCC), in conjunction with the existing cultural infrastructure around Syngrou and the plans for the redevelopment of the Faliron Bay, creating the need for a strategically planned image management in order to respond to these new conditions prevailing. The main purpose of the study was to investigate the image and identifying the characteristics that could compose the new competitive identity, the new «brand» of Syngrou. For the purpose of the study apart from the secondary literature review, a primary field research was also conducted. Survey findings were analyzed using the statistical SPSS software package.

**Key words:** Place branding, Syngroy Avenue, Image, Cultural Cluster, Field Survey.

**JEL Codes:** R58

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

In today's globalized world the strategic management of a place's image is a necessity. The image is an intangible capital that affects tourism, investments and any other aspect of economic, political and cultural life of the place itself and its inhabitants. Place marketing and place branding dominate in the efforts of places to manage and improve their image. In place marketing and branding strategies, culture holds a leading role. Cultural flagships projects, cultural clusters, cultural routes, special events and festivals predominate in urban development policies and in place marketing and branding strategies.

This paper examines the case of Syngrou avenue , in Athens – Greece. Syngrou Avenue is one of the major highways of the city of Athens which connects the center of Athens to the coastal front. In the recent past Syngrou had a bad reputation because of the presence of prostitutes – mainly transsexual- “working the streets”. The situation has started to change since 2004. Prostitution has not been eliminated, but, the avenue's profile has been upgraded.

The new cultural foundations of the National Museum of Contemporary Art (EMST) and the Stavros Niarchos Foundation Cultural Center (SNFCC), in conjunction with the existing cultural infrastructure (the Onassis Cultural Centre, the Acropolis Museum, the Planetarium, Panteion University etc.) and the plans for the redevelopment of the Faliron Bay, signify the creation of a strong nucleus of cultural venues and important landmarks around and along Syngrou Avenue. Cultural industries and cultural clustering is a common practice in urban policies. The cultural clustering in Syngrou was not the result of a central planning but the presence of so many important investments makes central planning necessary for their maximum utilization while at the same time, it raises important research questions.

Is there a need for a strategic management of Syngrou's image in order to meet the new standards that have been set? What is the current image of Syngrou? Is it possible to utilize place branding and culture in order to improve the image of Syngrou Avenue? Which particular characteristics could compose the new competitive identity, the new brand of Syngroy? In order to answer these questions and to address these issues apart from the secondary literature review, a primary quantitative field research was also conducted. Survey findings were analyzed using the statistical SPSS software package.

## **2. PLACE MARKETING AND PLACE BRANDING**

Place marketing in all its aspects, (place branding, destination marketing / branding, nation branding) has recently become increasingly popular worldwide, in political and academic circles (Deffner and Karachalis, 2012). Place marketing relates to the process of designing a place that meets the needs of the target markets it addresses. It can be deemed successful if both of these parameters are met: a)

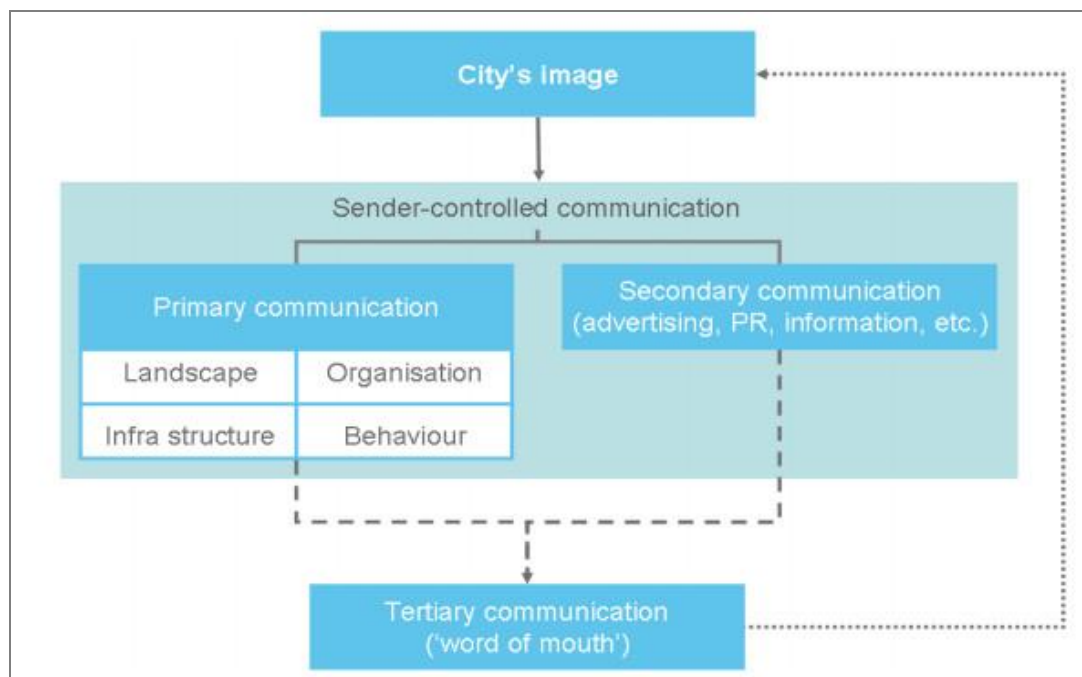
businesses and residents obtain satisfaction from the consumption of goods and services that the place provides and b) the expectations of target markets (investment, visitors etc.) are met to the extent that the goods and services provided by the site are those they wish to receive (Kotler, et al, 1999). In practice, place marketing is the strategic plan for positioning a place in the international market (Kalantidis, 2011).

Defining the term Place Marketing has been challenging over the years owing to different schools of thought, but mainly to the different stages it has gone through. These phases have not been strictly determined through time and space. The evolution of place marketing was more a result of evolution, experience and greater understanding of the application of traditional marketing (Kavaratzis & Ashworth, 2008). The last stage of place marketing is being referred to as the stage of corporate identity (corporate brand). Place branding made its appearance in the 2000s and since then has gained in popularity in academic circles and in city planning practices.

Deffner and Karachalis (2012) consider place branding to be an attribution of spatial identity to a region or a city so as to get a notion of its characteristics and spatial specificity. According to Mommaas (2002) place branding "is a strategy through which cities acquire an image, a cultural significance which can ideally serve as a source of added symbolic and economic value" (Mommaas, 2002: 34). As places are not products Anholt (2008) prefers the term "competitive identity" rather than "brand".

A place's brand can be thought of as the representation of its identity, the construction of a favorable internal and external image (Govers and Go, 2009). Place branding is more than a logo and a slogan. Such superficial perspectives are deemed inefficient. Kavaratzis (2004) considers city branding as an integrated part of the communication context. Anything that constitutes a city, anything that happens there, sends messages about its image. Image can be promoted through three kinds of communication: the primary, secondary and tertiary. The primary kind of communication mainly consists of the outcome of city activities and is not directly aimed at communicating. There are also four types of activities concerning the image: a) the landscape, b) infrastructure, c) organization and d) city living. Secondary communication includes formal (intentional) communication organized by the city in the form of advertising, public relations, and tertiary communication is related to the reputation of the city as it has been formed and spread through informal networks (word-of-mouth) (figure 1).

**Figure 1: City Image structure**



In essence the term place branding entails the strategic plan to manage or change (rebrand) the image of a place. The image of a place is the set of beliefs, ideas and impressions that people have for it (Kotler et al, 1993). Place branding should be based on powerful yet simple ideas that reflect the unique properties and characteristics of the city.

When a city or a region decides upon the brand it wants to build, then they should try to make the image of services and all its messages consistent and coherent with the choice of brand (Kavaratzis, & Ashworth, 2005).

The implementation of marketing tools may be optimal for products or services, but it is not directly applicable to places and therefore requires adaptation (Karachalis, 2016). In place marketing and place branding there are different methodological approaches, such as the model of 4ps (Kotler, 1986), the model of 8ps (Morrison, 1996), the 4 R's model (Aitken and Campello, 2011) etc. Although there is no prevalent methodological standard, it is expected of a place branding project to be able to answer three basic questions (Needham et. al., 1999):

1) Where are we? (Strategic Analysis), 2) Where do we want to go? (Strategic Planning), 3) How shall we get there? (Implementation Strategies) and include some basic steps (Anholt, 2010, Govers and Go, 2009, Kalantidis, 2011 Kavaratzis, 2008):

- research
- identification and selection of target markets
- vision- goals-partners
- brand “extraction” (competitive identity)
- implementation strategies
- evaluation and repetition

### **3. PLACE MARKETING, PLACE BRANDING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT THROUGH CULTURE**

Culture plays a key role in place marketing and place branding strategies. Cultural heritage, tangible and intangible, and contemporary culture are fundamental to the identity of each city also serving as a comparative advantage (Karachalis, 2016). At the same time, images of cultural heritage, events and contemporary artistic production are the most popular contributions to the communication flow of the cities.

Cultural flagship-projects, , cultural clustering, cultural routes and special events, are the cornerstones of urban development strategies either as part of a place marketing and branding plan or not.

In order to be deemed flagship projects (flagship projects) they have to be innovative, large-scale projects (cultural centers, conference centers, heritage parks, etc.) that have an influential and instrumental role to play in urban regeneration by attracting additional investment (Smyth, 1994; Hubbard, 1995; Deffner and Labrianidis, 2005). Among the most impressive buildings designed by famous architects were Ronchamp church (Le Corbusier / 1954), the Guggenheim Museum in New York (Frank Lloyd Wright / 1959), the Opera House in Sydney (Jørn Utzon / 1973), the Centre Pompidou (Richard Rogers & Renzo Piano / 1977). This trend went on and still does in cities such as Bilbao - Guggenheim museum, Valencia - City of Arts and Sciences, Barcelona - Forum Cultures, Macba, Vienna - Mumok etc. Flagship projects built around culture and leisure are economic growth initiatives, based on arts and civilization (Grodach, 2010).

The flagships – projects were implemented in the development and testing of marketing strategies by creating new spectacular urban landscapes during the business- city period. (Smyth, 1994; Hubbard, 1995). Among these new urban landscapes emerging stand out as distinguished, business clusters (Potsdamer Platz in Berlin, Docklands in London, Hamburg in Hafen city) and cultural clusters (Prenzlauer Berg in Berlin, Museumsquartier in Vienna and District 798 in Peking). The concentration of cultural activities in central urban areas is in part due to the tendency of cities to invest in the cultural sector aiming for economic and social regeneration, so as to create synergies between culture, tourism and leisure activities.

The strategy of cultural concentration (cultural clustering), first appeared in the 80's and since then it has constantly been evolving, occupying a dominant position in the development policy of urban centers. Cultural concentration is the spatial concentration of a large number of "cultural industries" (in the broad sense) in order to create an environment that would boost cultural production and creativity (Montgomery, 2003 • Mommaas, 2004).

Museum networks or clusters are thought of as a separate category of cultural concentrations (Gospodini, 2006). They are divided into two basic categories: a) District Museums (Vienna (MuseumQuarter), Berlin (Museuminsel), and b) Route Museums (Konsola , 2011).

## 2.1 Cultural Routes

These tours are structured around a central thematic core. They can be divided into local, regional, super-regional, national and international. According to their content they may be divided into thematic routes, historically focused on a specific period and mixed cultural routes that include 'elements of cultural and natural heritage, regardless of type and epoch "(Papageorgiou and Gkantouna, 2012). Essentially a cultural route is a branded tourist product, which is formed on the basis of a specific binding element, which varies by case.

Hence:

- It has a central theme / a retention element.
- It covers a predetermined space/ area.
- It acquires "tourist identity" by being branded

Cultural Routes are one of the main tools for the advancement, promotion and better insight of cultural resources of a place, both those related to the cultural heritage, as well as those relating to contemporary artistic production. At the same time they are a driving force for the development of a place - attracting visitors and investment and are often used to extend the tourist season (Chatzinikolaou et al, 2015).

As prerequisites for the success of a cultural route (Chatzinikolaou et al 2015) can be mentioned:

- Sights and related infrastructure: monuments, museums, touring venues and supporting accessible, properly maintained and easily accessible infrastructure, etc.
- Connection infrastructure of individual spots from the departure point to the end destination and navigation: roads, hiking trails, bike paths, public transport, walkways, paths through the settlements, accessible and properly maintained.
- Existence of a managerial institution, cooperation of the stakeholders participating in the route network.
- Powerful brand name.

Characteristic of the importance of cultural paths is the fact that international organizations such as the Council of Europe and UNESCO have taken the initiative to design and promote transnational cultural itineraries (eg Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe).

Museums Routes are a popular cultural route category which includes museums that are part of a route. The most well known example is the famous axis of ten museums on 5th Avenue in New York that has been called the Museum Mile. The name Museum Mile has been adopted by clusters of museums in London, Bonn, Milwaukee, Charleston (USA), Venice (Dorsoduro Museum Mile) and elsewhere.

## **4. EUROPEAN AND GREEK EXPERIENCE**

### ***4.1 Amsterdam***

In the early 2000s a new marketing strategy was chosen for Amsterdam which was based on an extensive research on partners, residents and visitors. The investigation showed that the established identity of Amsterdam was no longer desirable as it posed obstacles to further development and hindered the city's ambitions. The "I Amsterdam» (2004) was the brand name selected whereas pictures with which it was combined, forwarded less known city identities (e.g., the city-node, the research city, town events) in an attempt to soften the image of sex tourism and drugs with which the city had been identified for decades (Karachalis, 2016).

Urban design (Zuidas building project) but mainly culture and special events ("blockbuster" exhibitions in museums such as the Van Gogh and the Stedelijk, concerts, the annual celebration of the Queen's birthday, the Art Amsterdam, the Amsterdam Roots Festival, the Holland Festival, the Uitmarkt festival, the Gay Parade, the Sail, the football matches of Ajax, the planned cultural routes, the thematic years, of Water '(2005) and Rembrandt' (2006), the museum «Red Light Secrets» e.t.c.) occupied a central place in the marketing plan strategies. The effort to change the established image of Amsterdam is continuous and is accompanied by removal and mitigation policies, of both, coffee shops and the sex windows.

### ***4.2 Raval – Barcelona***

A typical example of branding a cultural district is the Raval in the city of Barcelona. The Raval district is located a few minutes away from the tourist destination Rambla. Despite being a residential area, it was traditionally known as the "red- light" district, the place for lawlessness and misconduct - especially for students and immigrants (Karachalis, 2010).

The construction of the emblematic building that houses the Museum of Contemporary Art (MACBA), the opening of the innovative Centro de Cultura Contemporania de Barcelona (CCCB) and the consequent concentration of galleries and shops pertaining to culture, along with the renovation and restoration of residencies in the region have brought about favorable conditions for Raval to become a "cultural district» (Miles, 2004). Particular emphasis was given to the promotion and branding of the region aiming to change its image and in 2007 a slogan was created which worked well: "Ravalajar", a made up word which signifies the spirit of the area. Together with cultural flagships - projects and branding, organizing events such as youth festivals and events for immigrants helped establish an improved image (Karachalis, 2010).

### ***4.3 The Greek Experience***



As far as Greek cities are concerned, the emergence of cultural activities concentration in particular areas were rather random and did not entail strategic actions, not even in retrospect (Gospodini 2009; Karachalis 2011). Areas around the center of Athens such as Psirri, Gazi, and Metaxourgeio can serve as examples. The organization of the 2004 Olympic Games was an opportune time to redesign the public space of the city and thus the city's image, but it seems that the chance was missed (Beriatos and Gospodini, 2006).

Some of the most successful examples of cultural flagships - projects are the conversion of the former gas factory in Gazi to a multiplex cultural hub "Technopolis" (2004) and the construction of the new Acropolis Museum (2009), which contributed greatly to reviving and improving the image of the regions Gazi and Koukaki respectively. Some remarkable efforts with regards to cultural routes are the cases of "The olive tree route" and the "Ancient theaters of Epirus route" (Diazoma).

## **5. SYNGROU AVENUE**

Syngrou Avenue is one of the major highways of the city of Athens. It is a modern high profile freeway that has up to four lanes in each direction, along with auxiliary side streets, with many interchanges and ten underpasses. Syngrou Avenue connects the center of Athens to the coastal front, traversing four major municipalities (the municipalities of Athens, Kallithea, Nea Smyrni and Palaio.Faliro). The majority of buildings host businesses, predominantly car dealerships, rental and insurance companies and shipping enterprises. The health sector is also present with clinics and hospitals. There are hotels, conference centers and banks as well.

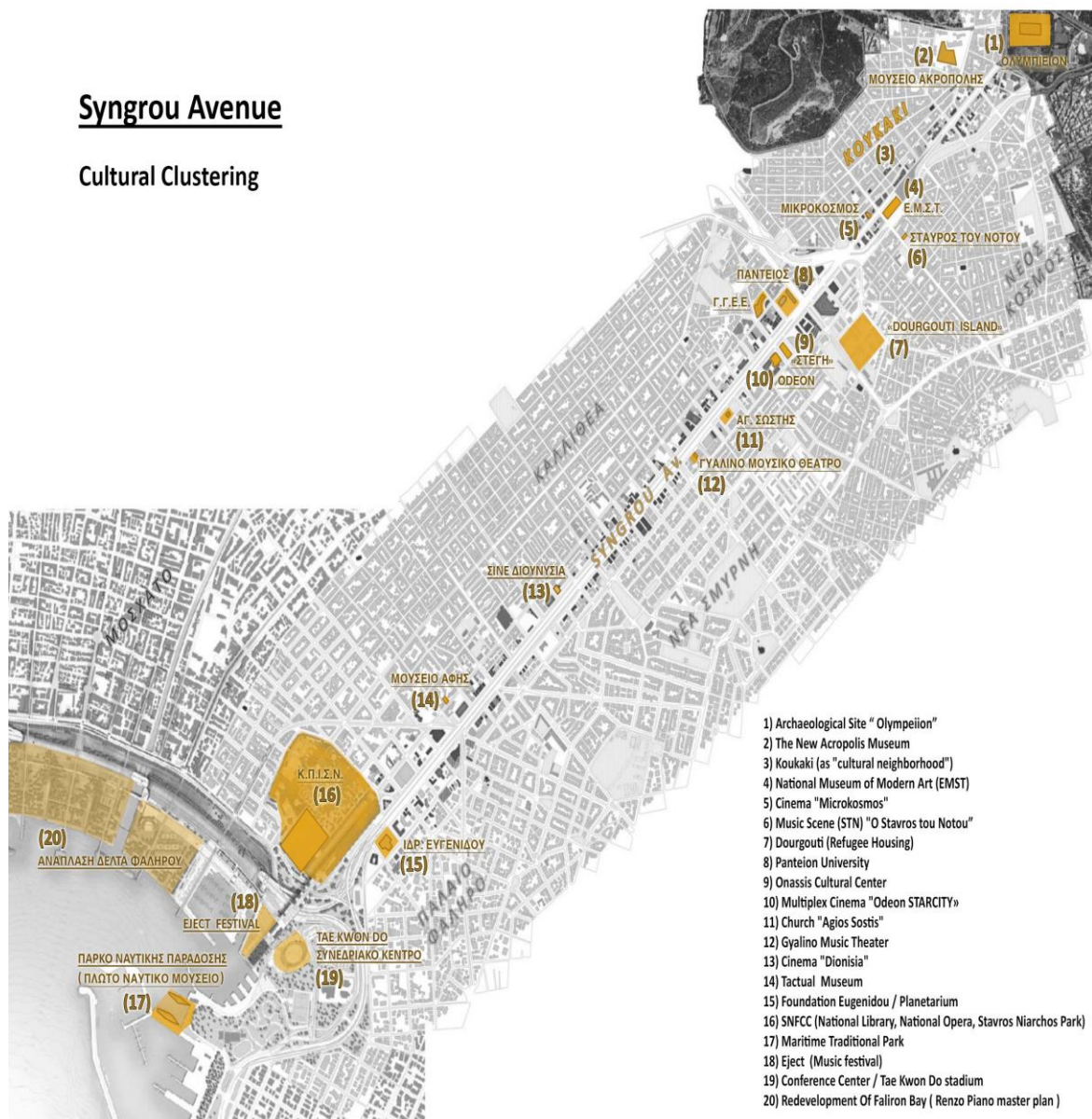
With regards to the architecture and the aesthetic image of the avenue, Syngrou is the address of several high profile buildings with intense architectural interest. Of course there are also several buildings which seem to be outdated and no longer consistent with the image of Syngrou as a central avenue in a modern European capital. Also, in recent years the recession has taken its toll on Syngrou, which now has a lot of empty, abandoned buildings along both sides.

In the recent past, - from the 1970's and especially the 1980's - Syngrou was notorious because of the presence of prostitutes – mainly transsexual- "working the streets". Syngrou by night gradually became a hyperlocal attraction, a large theme park of sex with strip-clubs, sex shops, day use hotels and brothels.. Its singular nightlife outweighed any other use of the avenue which was then thought of as a synonym to "the gutter" (Vogiatzaki, 2014). This bad reputation of Syngrou prevented and it's established as a business center.

The situation has been normalized recently. Syngrou has begun to lose its "allure" after the Athens Olympic Games in 2004. The decline became obvious during the recession, which changed the haunts of prostitution. In Syngrou Avenue transsexuals have declined significantly as most have relocated to another avenue (Kavalas). Prostitution has not been eliminated, but, the avenue's profile has been upgraded.

The metro railway system, the tram, some new high quality buildings and the Onassis Cultural Center (2010) have improved the image of Syngrou significantly. The opening of the National Museum of Modern Art and Stavros Niarchos Foundation Cultural Center, the redevelopment of Faliron Bay and the alteration of the tae kwon do stadium to a conference center (in conjunction with the existing infrastructure aforementioned) show promise for the transformation of Syngrou’s image away from the notoriety of the past to a modern hub of culture and entrepreneurship. The major points of cultural interest in and around Syngrou Avenue can be shown in figure 2

**Figure 2.** Syngrou avenue – Map of Cultural Clustering



## 6. METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK OF RESEARCH

Syngrou was selected as a case study because it combines some very interesting features: a) It is the main road connecting the center of Athens with the sea front, both being the main points of tourist attraction. b) Pertains to four major municipalities of Athens (Athens, Kallithea, Nea Smyrni, Paleo Faliro). c) It is about to be the address of very important investment, projects categorized as cultural flagships- projects (SNFCC, EMST) which have the potential to become landmarks with international allure, while other very important projects are expected to begin in the area, such as the reconstruction of Faliron Bay (in Renzo Piano;s plans) and the modification of the tae kwon do stadium to a large conference center. These projects combined with the existing cultural infrastructure (the Onassis Cultural Centre, the Acropolis' Museum, the Planetarium, Panteion University, the archaeological site of Olympian Zeus etc.), build a core of strong cultural congress and important landmarks along and around Syngrou avenue, d) It has been notorious as a red-light district.

The main purpose of this research is: a) To inquire after Syngrou's image, b) To inquire after Syngrou's identity, c) To identify which specific features/characteristics could compose a new competitive identity, a new «brand» for Syngrou.

The methodology used includes primary quantitative field research using questionnaires and secondary research based on scientific literature review. The secondary research presents the concepts and processes of marketing and place branding, urban development strategies concerning culture and refers to examples from the international and Greek paradigm that are similar to the case of Syngrou avenue. At this point, it is appropriate to underline that quantitative research attempts to explain phenomena with the collection of numerical data which are analyzed using mathematical methods, especially statistics. The main goal, therefore, of quantitative research is to monitor pre-empirical assumptions by examining the relationship of different variables (Creswell, 2014).

Moreover, the ability to collect data from large numbers of people on a specific topic, the chance to compare the findings, the ability to quantify and analyze statistically the data are some of the reasons why the questionnaire is the basic tool of quantitative research in social sciences (Kyriazi, 2002). For the researcher to reach sound scientific results, he /she has two key issues to address: first the collection of a representative sample and secondly the construction of the appropriate questionnaire. A representative sample is necessary in quantitative research to ensure valid results and enable the researcher to generalize the findings.

These techniques were implemented so as to study the views of the residents of Athens on reshaping the image of Syngrou effectively .Most of the research took place, from the 15<sup>th</sup> of July to the end of August and followed the method of simple random sampling with the use of a standardized questionnaire. The questionnaire should reflect the specific issues that are under investigation, to produce responses in relation to them and ensure the valid and impartial conduct of the respondent

(Filiias, 2003). Thus, the questionnaire for this research was designed to efficiently collect the data while abiding to the guidelines of research ethics.

Specifically, the first part consists of closed questions, as coded responses in advance, facilitate the quantification of the data (demographic, social, economic characteristics of the respondents). The rating scale is the seven grade Likert formula with 1 designating the minimum and 7 the maximum. It was chosen in order to collect a greater number of results. The alternative options to the initial Likert scale are five (Likert, 1932), but Likert himself notes that the number of alternatives can be determined at the discretion of the investigator (Clason, 1994). Finally, because our research is quality-oriented too, it was important to include an open question and one where the respondent would freely submit his/ her own comments, ideas etc. Open questions have several advantages since the respondent can express his views in his own way, using his own conceptual categories and not those imposed by a strictly structured questionnaire (Kyriazi, 2002).

The questionnaire consists of ten questions. For the purpose of its construction we reviewed questionnaires used in similar surveys. The questions used are similar to the corresponding questions used in the Strategic Marketing Plan of the Municipality of Larissa, the Volos marketing plan (Lambi, 2016) and the Heraklion marketing plan (Chalkiadaki, 2013).

After the preparation of the questionnaire, we held a brief pilot study where we identified ambiguities and misinterpretations of questions and then made the appropriate changes. We collected 350 questionnaires using the method of personal interview, sending via email and social media. Specifically, 238 questionnaires were collected in person and 112 online.

After concluding the collection of the questionnaires, the data were processed and analyzed using the SPSS statistical package application. In detail, we implemented a basic statistical analysis using percentages, averages and standard deviations, Chi Square analysis and Cross tabulations, independent T-test and ANOVA to determine whether the respondents answers presented any demographic differentiation. The survey results are presented in following Chapter 6.

## **7. RESEARCH**

### ***Demographics***

Table 1 shows the demographic characteristics of the sample according to gender, occupation, education level, income, years of residency and the respondents' address.

**Table 1: Demographics of the sample**

<b><u>Gender</u></b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Male	175	50,0
Female	175	50,0
<b><u>Age Range</u></b>		
18-25	71	20,3
26-40	115	32,9
41-55	114	32,6
56-65	35	10,0
Over από 66	15	4,3
<b><u>Vocation</u></b>		
Working in the public sector	75	21,4
Working in the private sector	132	37,7
Free Lancer	57	16,3
Pensioner	31	8,9
Student	36	10,3
Unemployed	18	5,1
Rentier	1	0,3
<b><u>Educational attainment</u></b>		
Primary education	9	2,6
Secondary education	84	24,0
Bachelor's degree	186	53,1
Master's degree	65	18,6
Doctorate degree	6	1,7
<b><u>Income</u></b>		
<1000€	120	34,3
1001-1500 €	68	19,4
1501-2000€	27	7,7
2001-2500€	8	2,3
>2501€	12	3,4
<b><u>Years of residency in the city</u></b>		
Resident citizen	209	59,7
1-5 years	17	4,9
6-10 years	30	8,6
>11 years	93	26,6
<b><u>Place of residence</u></b>		
Center of Athens	74	21,1
Piraeus- Piraeus environs	85	24,3
Central and western suburbs	61	17,4
Northern and eastern suburbs	55	15,7
Central and southern suburbs	75	21,4
<b>Total</b>	<b>350</b>	<b>100</b>

### *Visit factors / Way of transport*

The main reason for visiting Syngrou was for fun and entertainment (33.4%), followed by professional reasons by 23, 8%, cultural events (12.3%) and visits to hospitals and medical centers with 7.7%. The most common way of transport of respondents to Syngrou, was by using a private car by 63.4%, the Metro Railway System by 20.3%, 10.6% by Bus and / or by Trolley and 1.4% used the Tram.

### *Syngrou's Image*

#### **What comes first to mind when you hear "Syngrou" ? (Single choice)**

The most popular responses in this question were: Transsexuals (21.47%), Prostitution (13.80%), Nightlife (8.90) Nightlife, Strip clubs 6.13% and Street prostitution (6.13%). Question 3 was an open question.

#### **Please select from the words-concepts that follow those five that you feel more identified with the sound of "Syngrou" word. Then rank these 5 choices in order of priority from 1 to 5. (1 = largest identification)**

In this question participants were asked to select and rank (from 1 to 5) five factors mostly associated with the image of Syngrou from a list of 23 factors. The greatest factor association is the factor "Street Prostitution, Transsexuals, Prostitution" followed by "Infamous nightclubs, Strip clubs, Brothels" and "Panteion University for Political and Social Sciences". The fourth most popular factor that was associated with Syngrou was "central road connecting downtown Athens to the sea front" and in the fifth and last place the 'metro railway station Syngrou –Fix". The factor "Street Prostitution, Transsexuals, Prostitution" which ranked first in the list was selected by 181 participants as the factor with the greatest association to the image of Syngrou (see table 6.2) and in total within the five most prominent factors for 279 participants (79.71% of participants).

**Table 2:** Frequency Table and rates for the variables " Street Prostitution Transsexuals, Prostitution"

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid No answer	71	20,3	20,3	20,3
Greatest association	181	51,7	51,7	72,0
Some association	45	12,9	12,9	84,9
Association	20	5,7	5,7	90,6
Less association	14	4,0	4,0	94,6
Least association	19	5,4	5,4	100,0
Total	350	100,0	100,0	

***Associations concerning the image of Syngrou (answers by demographic).***

Independent T-test analysis was used to investigate whether the associating the image of Syngrou with factor 'Street Prostitution' - Transsexuals - Prostitution "presented any degree of differentiation by gender. As seen in Table 3 the answers of the men did not differ from those of women with  $F(349) = 2,560$ ,  $p = ,111$ . This means that both men and women associate Syngrou Avenue with Prostitution and Transsexuals.

**Table 3.:** Association of the agent “Street Prostitution' - Transsexuals – Prostitution” to Syngrou: answers depending on gender (T-test)

<b>Gender</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Median</b>	<b>Standard deviation</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
Male	175	3,4629	1,96742	2,560	,111
Female	175	3,3486	2,09781		

At the same time, ANOVA analysis was used to investigate whether the associating the image of Syngrou with the factor: “Street Prostitution' - Transsexuals - Prostitution "presented a degree of differentiation according to the age of respondents. In this case the responses differed statistically significantly with  $F(349) = 4,242$ ,  $p = ,002$  (see Table 4) It is characteristic that people 26-40 years old associated Syngrou more closely with transvestites and transsexuals and prostitution than those who are 18-25 years old, 56-65 years old and over 66 years old.

**Table 4:** Associating the factor 'Street Prostitution' - Transsexuals - Prostitution" to Syngrou - responses by age (ANOVA)

<b>AGE</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Median</b>	<b>Standard deviation</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
18-25	71	3,1690	2,07699	4,242	,002
26-40	115	3,8957	1,83233		
41-55	114	3,4035	2,02951		
56-65	35	2,8286	2,07911		
Over 66	15	2,1333	2,32584		
Total	350	3,4057	2,03155		

***Question 5: Are you aware of the impending opening of the National Museum of Modern Art and the Stavros Niarchos Foundation Cultural Center along Syngrou?***

This question aimed to examine whether the participants were aware of the imminent operation of two new cultural institutions in Syngrou Avenue (EMST) and (SNFCC). According to the responses, 46.6% of respondents were aware of the impending operation of both institutions, 26.9% were aware only of the SNFCC, 4.3% solely of the EMST, while 22.3% were not informed for any of the two institutions.

Chi Square Analysis and Cross tabulations were implemented to determine whether demographics differentiate the participants' awareness on institutions such as the National Museum of Modern Art and the Stavros Niarchos Foundation Culture Center. The analysis showed that answers are not differentiated by gender with  $F(349) = 4,025, p = 0.259$ .

Also, Chi Square analysis was used to investigate whether responses differ according to age. In this case we observed a degree of modulation with  $F(349) = 33,289, p = ,001$ . In particular, and as shown in Table 8.8 and Figure 4.8, citizens who belonged to the age group 41-55 years old and 56-65 years old were better informed about the impending operation of cultural institutions (EMST and SNFCC) than participants who were 18 to 25 years old, indicating the age groups we could focus an information campaign on.

***Question 6: The Stavros Niarchos Foundation Culture Center and the National Museum of Modern Art are added to the existing cultural facilities located in and around Syngrou (Onassis Cultural Center, Planetarium, Acropolis Museum, Temple of Zeus, etc.) thusly creating a powerful cultural cluster with significant landmarks. Do you think that this new situation of the avenue is made known widely to Athens' residents?***

Although the majority of the participants were informed about the operation of these two cultural institutions, more than 70% of the participants believe that the new situation emerging in Syngrou, that is, the gathering of cultural venues has not been promoted sufficiently (34% answered "No" and 39.4% "Probably not"). On the other hand, 20.6% of respondents believe that Syngrou's visibility is adequate, while 6% answered "do not know / no answer" (Figure 8.12).

***Question 7: Do you think that the new situation created in Syngrou, calls for a redefinition of its image so that it corresponds to its current status?***

Similarly to the answers of the previous question, over 90% of respondents believe that the new circumstances in Syngrou requires the redefinition of its image, by inviting stakeholders to take the necessary actions for its visibility.

***Question 8: Please rate on a scale from 1 to 7 which of the following factors are in your opinion the biggest advantages /disadvantages of Syngrou.***

In this question participants rate 18 factors related to Syngrou using a scale up to 7, with one corresponding to the "major drawback 'and 7 to the' maximum advantage." Table 5 summarizes the responses of respondents indicating the minimum value, maximum value, the mean and standard deviation of each factor.

As shown below, the biggest drawbacks of Syngrou in order of importance is the prostitution, the night clubs and brothels, the unfriendly environment for pedestrians, the lack of green areas and parks, the lack of security and the difficulty in finding parking. Moreover, the factor "aesthetics and architecture of the buildings", was rated negatively.



On the other hand, the most important advantages of avenue Syngrou- still in order of significance-are: the Panteion University, the strategic position in the urban tissue, the health facilities located along the road, the hospitality infrastructure, its connectivity with public transport, the operation of cultural institutions that add a special character to the route and finally the increased number of companies hosted along Syngrou avenue making it a business center for Athens.

**Table 5:** Advantages and Disadvantages of Syngrou (evaluating factors)

<b>Factor</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Lowest rate</b>	<b>Highest rate</b>	<b>Median</b>	<b>Standard deviation</b>
1. Street prostitution - Transsexuals – Prostitution	350	1,00	7,00	<b>1,6343</b>	1,18393
2. Nightclubs, Strip clubs – Brothels	350	1,00	7,00	<b>2,3686</b>	1,41771
3. Pedestrian friendly	350	1,00	7,00	<b>2,3914</b>	1,42166
4. Green areas- Parks	350	1,00	7,00	<b>2,7314</b>	1,66779
5. Safety	350	1,00	7,00	<b>2,7943</b>	1,40322
6. Parking	350	1,00	7,00	<b>3,0086</b>	1,48244
7. Underpasses	350	1,00	7,00	<b>3,1429</b>	1,58869
8. Aesthetics and architecture	350	1,00	7,00	<b>3,8171</b>	1,61680
9. Commercial market, shops	350	1,00	7,00	<b>4,1971</b>	1,52665
10. Traffic flow– Traffic jam	350	1,00	7,00	<b>4,5486</b>	1,51466
11. Fun, Nightlife	350	1,00	7,00	<b>4,6286</b>	1,43205
12 Entrepreneurship, Syngrou as a business hub	350	1,00	7,00	<b>4,8257</b>	1,41661
13 Cultural character and infrastructure	349	1,00	7,00	<b>5,1691</b>	1,50957
14 Transport– Public transportation	350	1,00	7,00	<b>5,2057</b>	1,37225
15.Hotels	350	1,00	7,00	<b>5,2914</b>	1,24651
16. Health facilities	350	1,00	7,00	<b>5,4657</b>	1,38047
17.Position in the city	350	1,00	7,00	<b>5,5400</b>	1,32741
18.Panteion University	350	1,00	7,00	<b>5,9657</b>	1,21073

(7= highest rate, 1= lowest rate)

**Question 9: Which of the following characteristics of Syngrou’s identity should be emphasized in your opinion in order to improve its image of Syngrou for both residents and tourists? (3 choices)**

As shown below in table 7, in order of significance, the characteristics of the identity of Syngrou we should focus on in order to increase the visibility of the avenue and enhance its image. In the first place we can see the cultural allure of the street and the cultural infrastructure, followed by the strategic location of Syngrou in the urban tissue and in finally the idea that it is representative of Athens in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

**Table 7:** The 7 pillars that on which we can work to promote the image of Syngrou Avenue

	N	Lowest area	Highest rate	Total	Median	Standard Mediation
1. Cultural allure and cultural infrastructure	349	,00	3,00	603,00	1,7278	1,33384
2. Position in the urban tissue	350	,00	3,00	367,00	1,0486	1,18995
3. Symbolizes Athens in the 21 <sup>st</sup> century	350	,00	3,00	224,00	,6400	1,00235
4. Entrepreneurship and innovation	350	,00	3,00	164,00	,4686	,89114
5. Neighborhoods around Syngrou	350	,00	3,00	154,00	,4400	,80157
6. Panteion University of Political and Social Sciences	350	,00	3,00	135,00	,3857	,82046
7. Health facilities	350	,00	3,00	108,00	,3086	,71951

**Question 10:** Please indicate in the box below any suggestions, comments and reviews you may have.

A total of 60 participants answered question 10. Most comments and suggestions had to do with an increase in green areas and parks and renovating the buildings' facades in order to upgrade aesthetics. Participants also asked for more security and safety especially when crossing the underpasses, and stated the need for the avenue to become more pedestrian friendly and improve accessibility and connectivity via public transportation to the cultural sites.

The results of the survey show the need for a rebranding strategy in order to change the negative image of Syngrou, with basic vehicle: culture and cultural concentration generated.

## 7. Vision and strategies

### Vision

The vision for Syngrou is to forgo its notoriety and be turned into a new cultural and entrepreneurial avenue showcasing present – day Athens, and thusly contribute to the economic, cultural and tourist

growth of the city and its surrounding municipalities. The vision is to establish a hyperlocal Syngrou as an attraction for culture and entrepreneurship of international stature.

Specific objectives/goals serving the vision:

- Improvement of Syngrou's aesthetics so as it exudes the image of present-day, modern Athens
- Making Syngrou more pedestrian friendly
- Reconstruction of the underpasses: in order to improve the safety and aesthetics of the underpasses we propose their transformation to little art shops, or small culture venues as is common abroad.
- Procurement of new cultural enterprises to strengthen Syngrou's image as a cultural hub.
- Attracting new businesses and investments to strengthen Syngrou's business appeal and contribute to the local economic development.
- Attracting youth entrepreneurship, innovative enterprises (start-ups) and new technology enterprises to enhance the image of Syngrou as innovation point of attraction that will add to local economic development: for example co-operation with The Egg, incentives to attract more hubs like that.
- Attract visitors through the development of new alternative forms of tourism for the promotion of the international allure of Syngrou and establishing the area as a tourist interest.

## **Competitive Identity**

In order to develop a strong competitive identity (brand), we need to identify which set of characteristics in the city / region can form the basis for creating positive perceptions of the region to different audiences (Metaxas 2005, Dinnie, 2011). This process requires the participation of several partners to select which specific characteristics will add to the brand and it requires imagination, impartiality and inspiration (Dinnie, 2011).

The characteristics chosen by the research participants in response to question 9 of the questionnaire was the cultural allure of the region and the cultural infrastructure, followed the strategic location of Syngrou in the urban tissue and finally that it symbolizes Athens in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The new brand of Syngrou Avenue that will be selected will have to contribute to realizing the vision and each of the individual goals, ie the "repositioning" of Syngrou as a hyperlocal and international culture and entrepreneurship hub, a symbol of modern Athens.

The cultural allure of Syngrou, its emergence as a hub of entrepreneurship and innovation, its future promotion as the face of present-day Athens and its position in the urban tissue as a main conjunctive road of Athens with the town waterfront (the two main points of tourist interest) are the characteristics that we will use to create the new competitive identity for Syngrou, while ensuring the visibility and

utilizing other important advantages as they have emerged from the survey: Panteion University, health infrastructure, hotel complexes and neighborhoods of Syngrou.

### **Implementation Strategies**

The research revealed the dominant role of culture in the effort to change the image of Syngrou. In the case of Syngrou the increase of cultural institutions in the area aims to change its negative image and turn it to a hyper local meeting point of culture and entrepreneurship that contributes to the cultural, economic and tourist development.

The strategy we propose for the promotion and enhancement of the cultural clustering created in Syngrou is cultural route. Routes are one of the most important tools for the promotion of the cultural resources of a region. In the case of Syngrou the main cultural infrastructures that can support the creation of a cultural route path are: the Temple of Olympian Zeus, the Acropolis Museum, EMST, Onassis Cultural Center (OCC), the Planetarium, the SNFCC Park and the Museum of Maritime Tradition.

For the "placement" of Syngrou as a Cultural Route is indispensable a rudimentary cooperation between these cultural foundations and the choice of an appropriate connection of the cultural spots with each other specific points. In order to connect the venues with each other we are proposing the creation of a cycling path because of the distance between cultural sites and the fact that Syngrou is extremely unfriendly to pedestrians.

The bicycle brings significant advantages and serves multiple objectives that contribute immensely in order to make the vision come true. In addition, we propose also, the creation of a special bus line that connects all these spots as the cycling does not appeal to everyone.

### **Creation of a brand name and logo**

A prerequisite for the success of a cultural route is also the establishment of a strong brand name. The proposed brand name and logo in case of Syngrou is shown in Figure 3

**Figure 3.** Syngrou Logo



The brandname Museum Mile has been adopted by museum routes in New York, Milwaukee, Charleston (USA), London, Venice and Bonn. The Museum Mile as a term has been associated in the minds of tourists with the concentration of museums and cultural industries around an axis. This is

very important for the “positioning” of Syngrou, since Syngrou is "unknown" to the general tourist population.

The brand name helps the visitor understand "to what it pertains." The orange line indicates the bicycle lane and signifies that the path "Syngrou mile" is accessible by bicycle. With the combination culture-business we signify the characteristics of the avenue. The word innovation can be showcased by the presence of The Egg (a start up incubator) and other innovative firms which have their headquarters on Syngrou and Panteion University as a research center (the on route spots can be showcased by graphics representing their buildings, in a way that reflects the modern image of Syngrou we want to promote).

## **8. CONCLUSIONS**

The main purpose of this paper was to investigate the image and identifying characteristics that would compose the new competitive identity, the new «brand» Syngrou. The secondary research conducted in the first part of this research showed that both, place branding and culture, are effective tools for enhancing and changing the image of places. In order to explore the image (and identity) of Syngrou avenue we decided to conduct a primary field research using a questionnaire. In order to process the questionnaires we used the SPSS statistical program.

The results showed that the image of Syngrou is identified with transsexuals and prostitution. The findings of this research revealed the need for a rebranding strategy to change the negative image with the help of culture and the infrastructure formed in Syngrou.

The proposed strategy for the promotion and enhancement of the cultural clustering created in Syngrou, is cultural route. For the connection of the individual route points we suggest the creation of a cycling path and the complimentary establishment of a special bus line.

As a brand name, which will support the establishment of Syngrou as a Cultural Route we suggest the logo "Syngrou mile" which refers to the corresponding trails connecting museums and cultural sites in other cities abroad. The creation of a cycle path has significant advantages and serves multiple objectives contributing decisively to actualize the vision of Syngrou.

The vision for Syngrou is to leave behind the image of the "unsafe, notorious streets" and turned into a new venue, for culture and entrepreneurship, an avenue showcasing the contemporary face of Athens that contributes to the economic, cultural and tourist development of the city and the surrounding municipalities. The vision is to establish a hyper local Syngrou, a venue for culture and entrepreneurship, of international stature, a symbol of modern Athens.

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