

Greek island image branding and its peculiarities: Examining the island of Kythera

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Introduction

Constructing a small place brand seems to be a challenging objective. But what is place branding essentially? The answer is far from simple, since we must understand that it is something which goes beyond basic visuals and mere slogans or old-fashioned advertisement campaigns. Such approaches might work on a national level, but small place branding is not just marketing. Place branding involves more than placing an area on the map, as an eye-catching tourist destination. It is better to regard place branding as a form of intellectual property (Van Ham 2008). Lindsay (2000) goes one step further:

[Place branding is] the totality of the thoughts, feelings, associations and expectations that come to mind when a prospect or consumer is exposed to an entity's name, logo, products, services, events, or any design or symbol representing them.

Turning to other specialists for more on the subject we encounter Simon Anholt, a leading figure in the field, who seems to present a very clear technical-economic approach in his definitions whilst others, like Nadia Kaneva (2009), tend to take a much broader view incorporating the techno-economic category, along with political and cultural ones. Concisely, place branding is an image, logo, or an activity which works as a byline or a substitute for the specific place or area, externalising their connection with it. All views are interesting, but they do not address the scale factor of the whole subject, and especially the fiscal.

A simple economic examination leads us to the conclusion that the critical approaches which resituate these movements, in that of spectacularisation and commodification of place semiotics (Baur & Thiery, 2014), make the endeavour so huge that it needs the help of specialists, and consequently the need of cooperating with larger infrastructures. Small places lack the ability to launch ambitious projects but try to work within

their limited abilities. Yet as increasing interest in place brands attracts attention in many cross-section contexts, such as tourist resorts, world cities and agricultural regions (Anholt, 2007; Moilanen & Rainisten, 2009) it becomes a complex matter for small places becoming a destination with a name. The challenge to combine the involvement of numerous participants and the very act of integrating the specificities of different places making up the particular geographic entity is, sometimes, an unmanageable task (Allaire, 2002; Hanna & Rolley, 2008).

But there is another fact, as Efe Svenin (2011) points, which makes such projects problematic: “A place branding campaign is closely related to the image and identity of a given place. These campaigns might eventually change the very nature of the place” This transformation is not always considered, thus resulting in a successful place branding, but at the cost of the alteration of the places’ identity. In Greece we tend to take national branding for granted, especially since there has been a, rather successful, continuous campaign dating from the 1930s by the GNTO, and a few highly recognisable places, which are a brand of their own, such as Mykonos and Santorini. Hence, when we start talking about new small place branding we contemplate that all we need is a small-scale rebranding of national ones, or at least something along the lines already used for other places that is not always the case. The examination of a case study is always interesting, much more if the place has recently entered the tourist market, trying to form its own specific place branding. The whole process is intriguing, enabling us to study from scratch this emergence and to identify its peculiarity and thus, its strong and weak points. We shall try and examine our case study in a broader view since we believe it gives us the advantage of being able to point to the peculiarities of small places.

The island of Kythera

The island of Kythera (also known as Kythira, Cythera or Cerigo), a medium-sized Greek island of about 284 km², lies between the tip of the Peloponnese and western Crete, controlling the western passage between the Aegean and the Mediterranean. It contains elevated series of plateaus, broken by ravines and small fertile valleys. An all-year population of roughly 3.500 is scattered in no less than 32 major and minor villages. There are three operating ports Diakofti, Kapsali, and Agia Pelagia, of which the first is the main one. It also has a small, but modern and fully staffed airport. The island is nowadays part of the extended Attica region, in terms of government administration, but due to its position was forced to become

either part of the Cretan sphere of influence or the Laconian one, from Neolithic times. In the early 1200s, it was incorporated into the Ionian island Venetian political fabrication. Quite early in European cultural history its ancient association with Aphrodite enabled the island's name to become a fragment of the early Romantic movement.

Aphrodite, according to Hesiod's *Theogony* was born in the sea of Kythera and from there was spirited away to Cyprus, accompanied by her entourage.¹ Ancient historians always mentioned her island temple, which is yet to be found, as the oldest in Greece.² The Kythera Aphrodite was identified with the epithet *Urania*, translated as the Celestial, distinguishing her from her earthlier aspect of *Pandemos*, translated as Aphrodite for all the people or the Earthly One – her Cypriot epithet. The two were used, mostly in literature, to differentiate the more celestial love of body and soul from purely physical lust. Plato represented her as a daughter of the god Uranus, conceived and born without a mother. All these influenced Europeans in the Age of Enlightenment, hence creating a literary image for the island which incorporated the idea of the Isle of Celestial Love. This Age prepared the way for the Romantic one, and Kythera played its part. Botticelli painted Aphrodite's birth in the 15th century, drawing heavily on the literary. But as Europe entered the Age of Reason, philosophy started to rediscover the pleasures of island paradises and utopias. So, we have the creation of the paintings by Jean-Antoine Watteau, which are pivotal in the whole Romanticism movement and by which the idea of Utopian paradises starts to evolve in European philosophy. The "discovery" of Tahiti in 1766,

¹ "And so soon as he had cut off the members with flint and cast them from the land into the surging sea, [190] they were swept away over the main a long time: and a white foam spread around them from the immortal flesh, and in it there grew a maiden. First she drew near holy Cythera, and from there, afterwards, she came to sea-girt Cyprus, and came forth an awful and lovely goddess, and grass [195] grew up about her beneath her shapely feet. Her gods and men call Aphrodite, and the foam-born goddess and rich-crowned Cytherea, because she grew amid the foam, and Cytherea because she reached Cythera, and Cyprogenes because she was born in billowy Cyprus, [200] and Philommedes³ because she sprang from the members" Hesiod, *Theogony* 173-206 (<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/>)

² "Cythera lies opposite Boeae; to the promontory of Platanistus, the point where the island lies nearest to the mainland, it is a voyage of forty stades from a promontory on the mainland called Onugnathus. In Cythera is a port Scandeia on the coast, but the town Cythera is about ten stades inland from Scandeia. The sanctuary of Aphrodite *Urania* (the Heavenly) is most holy, and it is the most ancient of all the sanctuaries of Aphrodite among the Greeks. The goddess herself is represented by an armed image of wood" Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, 3.23.1. (<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/>)

by Frenchman Louis Antoine de Bougainville – who named it New Cythera, brings the ideal of paradises closer to a Europe which idolises these South Sea islands and elevates them to the same pedestal as Arcadia and other Utopias. Bougainville was not the original discoverer of the island but was the first to create the myth of its indigenous people, especially the women. It is fascinating that these paradises relate to only one thing: sex. The connection between sex and love was easy to make. Diderot in *Supplément au voyage de Bougainville*, written in 1773, furthers the idea of Tahiti as a sexual paradise. Pagan Love was a phantasy of the Age of Enlightenment and would have probably invented Tahiti had it not been discovered.

All these bring us close to the image used by the British Administration of the Ionian Islands (1820-1864), depicting Aphrodite in a shell. Influences from classical antiquity and Botticelli's painting have a fair share in this creation.



Figure 1: Ionian Arms during British rule (1820-1864)³

This association continued, and we have the philatelic centennial commemoration of the Ionian island integration, in 1964, which again shows the de facto image brand of the island. But this is nothing more than the actual reproduction of the former one, from a central authority and not by the island and its people. During the period between the two depictions we find a paper drafted during the political unrest before Greece joined the Allies in World War 1, when Kythera became an autonomous area. It shows

³ source: <http://eng.travelogues.gr/item.php?view=51178>

a peculiar image: The British coat of arms, but instead of an Aphrodite image in the middle, as one would expect, we have the photograph of Greek statesman and Prime Minister E. Venizelos. And to top all we have a two-headed eagle in the background of all.⁴ It is clearly a political not a cultural image and we believe that it was a wise choice to leave Aphrodite out of it. At the time, there was no unified municipality but several local ones, using images for the seals, with cultural connections. The municipality of Chora, the capital, used the head of Aphrodite, along with the dove, as portrayed on ancient coins. Other municipalities opted for other ones, i.e., the Milopotamos municipality adopted the Venus de Milo whereas the Livadi, which translates literally as a field, shows a female on a throne, possibly Ceres or Demetra, the Goddess of agriculture. Thus, we might expected modern Kythera to use Aphrodite as a brand image, cultivating their cultural background, either collectively or individually. But it seems that something went astray. And we should try and understand why this is.

The island's projection

The island's administration, ever since becoming part of the Greek state, switched from a few municipalities to a great number of smaller ones and then to a single entity. This last change occurred in 1997. In 1999 the municipality decided to adopt a medallion which would signify its image projection, like all municipalities do. The design, proposed by a committee of Kytherian scholars, drew inspiration from local ancient coinage on its obverse side while on its reverse, depicted the outline of the island engulfing a series of smaller images: the Chora Castle, the Katouni stone bridge and the monastery of the Madonna of the Myrtles (Panagia Myrtidiotissa). The interesting fact is that on the municipality's webpage, the medallion always shows the reverse side and not the obverse, or both, as one might expect. We have also witnessed the same choice of image in many tourist exhibitions. The connection with Aphrodite seems to have been severed. And this is the official version.

⁴ The Byzantine two-headed eagle is still used by the Greek Orthodox Church, as a reminder of its continuation of the Eastern Roman Empire. The eagle depicted is similar but not the same. At the same time, we must take into account that the *Megali Idea* (Great Idea), the policy of Greece becoming the successor of the Eastern Roman Empire's land and Greek populations outside the Greek state, was a major political factor of Greece's political arena, during that era.



Figure 2: Kythera Municipality medallion⁵.

The municipality's page is sadly behind times as it is not multilingual but fortunately, it directs visitors to other ones which are. These individually operated webpages do not utilise any Aphrodite image, except when they refer to her birth. Almost all, with two exceptions, utilise two things: either the island's outline depiction or the name itself as “visual” text, in its many forms (Kythera, Kithira, Kythira or Cerigo, etc.). Of the few exceptions is Kythera.gr, which uses a simplified San Marco lion motif – an item used in the early state flag of the Septinsular Republic (1800-1814) and the by-line: “one island, one world”.⁶ The other one is the Kithira.eu website which utilises the bust of Botticelli's Aphrodite and the Castle of Chora. In terms of the image depiction of the island we should point out the GNTTO poster of the late 1960's which codified the island's brand picture, and which had already been established by local photographers, through its usage on postcards.

⁵ source: <http://www.kythera-family.net/en/history/documents/the-medal-of-the-municipality-of-kythera-reverse> and <http://www.kythera-family.net/en/history/documents/the-medal-of-the-municipality-of-kythera-obverse>

⁶ This is an indirect reference to a local proverb: “*Un mondo fa un mondo, e il Cerigo un altro mondo*”, which translates as: “All the world is one world and Cerigo is another world”. The usage of the San Marco lion is a clear play at the detail that Kythera is part of the Ionian Islands, but due its peculiar connection with Attica most Greek people do not clearly associate it with those islands.

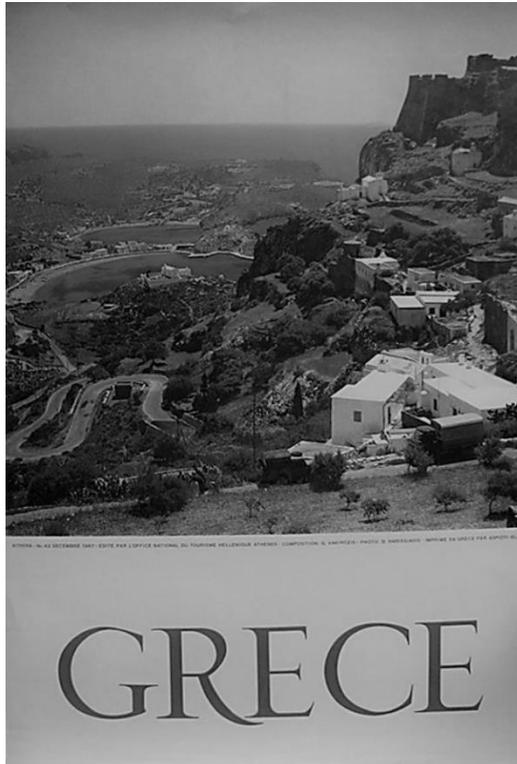


Figure 3: Greek National Tourist Organisation's poster of Kythera (Dec. 1968)⁷

But where is the branding in the case of Kythera? Postcards utilised the Castle of Chora as early as the second decade of the 20th century, following a tradition of traveller's book images, depicting the said Castle and very few other areas of interest. The, quite well-known, GNTTO poster was influenced by the work of local photographers and showed the Chora Castle with part of the medieval inner city and the adjoining port of Kapsali with the connecting winding road, photographed from the area called Belvedere, for obvious reasons. This image was so representational that many tourists sought it as soon as they disembarked. It remains the most emblematic photographic depiction of the island. Other sights follow but this is the one everybody refers to, when talking about the island. It is a brand of its own.

⁷ source: photograph acquired from physical object [poster] in Chora Municipal building, by councilwoman, Mrs. I. Veneris – Travasaros

As we can clearly see, the island's connection to Aphrodite is not on a visual level, with a few exceptions. Another fascinating fact is that most immigrant Kytherian communities, with only one exception, do not use the Aphrodite connection visually. At this point we should consider how immigrants were the workhorse of the island's economy up until the 1990's, as they are quite numerous.⁸ The exception which utilises Aphrodite's image is the Kytherian Association of Australia (Sydney) displaying the typical Aphrodite-in-a-shell image, as used by the centennial stamp, making it post 1964. All other ones use images which are either significant historically, as the San Marco lion of the Kytherian Brotherhood of Baltimore U.S.A., or spiritually, as the Madonna of the Myrtles of the Kytherian Society of California, or culturally, such as the *Sempreviva* flower – an iconic flower associated with the island – of the Kytherian Association of Queensland Australia and the lark on the olive branch of the Kytherian Association of New York.⁹ The emphasis on the most modern of them strives toward the simplistically minimal, whilst the older ones rely more heavily on images with all kinds of symbolic associations. We can say that these images are quite diverse and could be used as secondary place brand images. But as Briciu (2013) asks: “[Do t]he regions benefit more if they have a clear and simple image or is it preferable that they have a rich one, complex or even contradictory?” We can dismiss all these as cultural expressions directed towards themselves, the in-group, rather than a projection to the out-group. This hesitation in externalising is understandable for a small place which considered, until quite recently, tourism more of a burden than a blessing.

⁸ Kytherian immigrants are everywhere. In Australia, the major post WW2 immigrant destination, there are more than 30.000 people of first, second and third generation. The USA claims only about 10.000, while interior immigrants in the Athens area are no less than 15.000. All of them contributed actively to the island's economy and they still do, but nowadays the inflow is significantly smaller. Their impact on a cultural level is very strong and, since immigrants were usually very introversive and conservative, this had its impact on the island's policies.

⁹ The *sempreviva* flower is a local variation of the *Helichrysum*, quite possibly the *orientale* version. It grows only in hard-to-reach areas. The name is possibly a misspelling of the Italian word combination *semper + vivere* meaning eternal life. The locals have been gathering and using the flower as a traditional island image item, and thus has become popular with the tourists (See: http://floracytherea.blogspot.gr/2011/05/blog-post_03.html). The lark is traditionally linked to the locals. In the local dialect, lark is *τρούλιτας* and has long been used as a mocking term used in local literature as a synonym for Kytherians.

Usage of Botticelli's image

We have been able to pinpoint at least three cases in which part of the Botticelli painting has been used by local webpages belonging to two individual hotels and a group of holdings. The first hotel is situated in Kapsali Kythera (in the southern port), while the second is in Hagia Pelagia (in one of the northern ports). The holdings one is from a newcomer which controls several properties around the island. Its logo is more modernistic and minimal than the others and was probably a specific order for a graphics design office. In all cases the usage is minimal and discreet, almost to the point of being lost in the actual photographs. They all have this low-key trait. The feeling is that they're almost embarrassed having to use the image. There is no loud proclamation of the Aphrodite connection. And they do not cling to any ancient images. They utilise a very well-known renaissance image, as if trying to cling to the romantic aura projected by it. On the other hand, we do not encounter any depictions or samples by Watteau, which were the actual romantic and ethereal ones. Botticelli's image is more widespread and recognisable while Watteau's images look better as pictures and posters hanging on a wall rather than utilised for any other reason, since they can be considered very rich visually and do not convey a simple, clear and straightforward message. Watteau's imagery is too ornamental to use in a narrative. Botticelli's, on the other hand, is a safe bet, but the municipality and the locals seem to hesitate using this trump card in any form of their image projections.

The Municipality and the mayor

The municipality is quite active in promoting the island as a tourist destination, as it is becoming the only way to survive.¹⁰ In an interview, published in a local newspaper (April 2017), Mayor Efstratios Charchalakis was interviewed about tourism. He replied that the municipality ought to know right from the beginning what it is focusing upon, and the participation in thematic tourist exhibitions and events should have this

¹⁰ The main income of the island, at least until the early 1980s, was the inflow of immigrant monies, especially from Australia. We know that in 1979 the immigrant money coming in the island marked it as the island with the largest foreign commercial inflow in Greece.

focused view. He was also quoted as saying that for the past couple of years the municipality has stated its specific goals on tourism: a gradual expansion of the tourist season, quality and not quantity based. The expansion should keep in mind the island's infrastructures, as a sudden boom in numbers could be damaging. He went on to remind the fact that 2016 was a record year, with a total of almost 80.000 arrivals (May-October). The municipality is adopting new policies, such as brochures in twelve languages, a specialised leaflet just for the beaches, high definition and quality videos, usage of social media, and is taking a special interest in the Central European market, which seems to have a special connection with the island. The airline connection with northern Greece also has given new potential visitors another way of reaching the island. The Kytherian town of Karavas and its namesake in Cyprus became fraternised towns, giving an angle of connectivity with Cyprus. He concluded that making impossible wishes and aiming at the moon will not benefit anyone, much more the tourist inflow of the island, and called tourism professionals to become more active instead of waiting for everything to happen on its own, by following the municipality's participation parties at exhibitions.

In a municipality bulletin, just after the destructive fire which destroyed a considerable part of the island (4-7/8/2017), the mayor pointed out that statistics of June-July 2017 showed how although the island lacked a direct connection to Piraeus, which consequently might cause a decrease in visitation numbers, the numbers were quite optimistic. For the month of July in 2014, 2015 and 2016 with only two ships, one of which was the direct Piraeus line, the average visitation numbers were about 19.000 per month. In 2017, with only the Peloponnese connection, the numbers exceeded past the average, as the visitors numbered 19.765. But an article (October 2017) of a local newspaper claimed that the absence of the Piraeus connection resulted in a -12.3% decrease of visitation, comparing the months of June 2016 and 2017, while for the month of July the decrease between 2016 and 2017 was -9.1%.

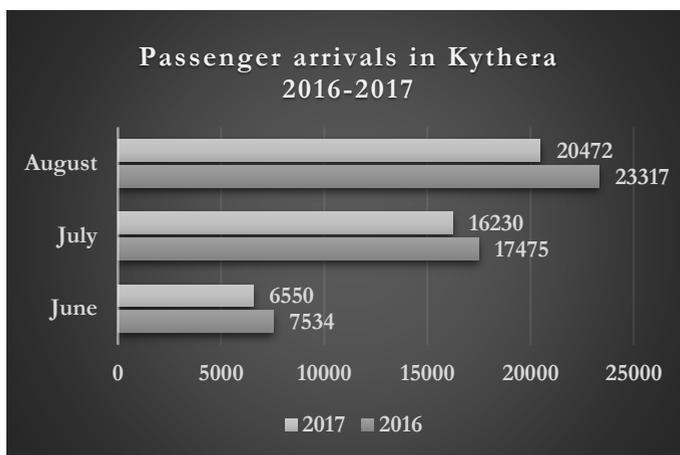


Table 1: Passenger arrivals in Kythera Island during the peak summer season¹¹

All things mentioned by the mayor can be justified in light of what Anholt (2009) tells us about the art of good branding:

Branding teaches the importance of having a set of firm beliefs and values, a clarity of purpose which unfailingly drives ones' decisions; In other words, integrity. Branding, at its best is a technique for achieving integrity, and reaping the reputational benefits of integrity.

We approached the Tourist committee, to find out the island's tourist priorities and agendas. Their work has been quite exemplary, since its formation in 2004, as it has influenced a lot of municipal decisions on the island's projected image. What was illuminating, for us and also for the spokesperson, was the realisation that the island projects its image in textual form and not purely visual, as in photographic. The island's name had and has been, its best asset to project. The few photographs that accompany the name are, usually, making the whole business of island branding easier to identify. The municipality's Tourist Board has been using four major generic ones for the island's promotion: Flowers and sea views, Beaches without any specific references, Fields of yellow flowers (a typical spring view) and the Chora Castle. All these reveal that the island's brand image is still quite undecided. There are many images but apart from one they are not as strong as they ought to be. This is quite understandable since both the

¹¹ Source: newspaper Kythiraika, Issue 328, October 2017

municipality and the Tourist committee are newcomers in the game of branding. They are afraid of enriching the island's projected image and prefer the type of signpost branding: simple, which translates as direct in its message. But we must understand that this is something akin to baby steps. We can be sure that in less than a decade the externalisation of the island's image will be richer, since the tourist economy will help develop a mentality oriented towards the external, and consequently, it will need to be visualised in a different way than it is today.

The images used

Apart from the Tourist Board's images, the Kytherian websites have been using a few images, creating thus a second front of the island's place branding. But as some images become iconic, not using them can be considered wrong branding practice. In the case of Kythera, there are certain ones which have a close association with the island, as a destination brand. There is no national image of Kythera, and even the one used by the Greek National Tourist Organisation is not specified as a place brand but as part of the national projected image, since it uses the country's name in French under it: Grèce. It is the most recognisable and has circulated to such an extent that even people who have never been to the island can refer to it, but only as a name -not always geographically. The image had been used in very early postcards, dating to the second decade of the 20th century, thus forming the backbone of the place brand. But it was the GNTO poster of 1968 which supported this single image as pivotal. This we still consider to be an asset, especially with Greek tourists.

The second most identifiable image, nowadays, is the Kaladi beach, on the eastern part of the island. It is not an organised beach and didn't become popular until the mid-1990s, when it became accessible by land. There are other images that have been used and continue to be used but these two are the major ones. The others go through phases, as they supplement the major two. In all cases, all have acquired a certain dynamic, just not as much as the two main ones used nowadays. These are, the Foniassa waterfall of Milopotamos, used as the second island image until a few years; the Diakofti shipwreck, which came to fame due to its usage in the opening titles of a popular Greek TV soap opera; the "Porte de l' Amour" in Chora, a small and decorated house entrance next to the old city arched gateway which French cruise photographers made popular in the 1990s; finally, the emerging icon of the Hytra sea cave, situated in a small islet just off the port of Kapsali becoming popular lately due to sea cruises organised by a local.

Last, but not least, is that of the monastery of the Madonna of the Myrtles (Panagia Mirtidiotissa) which, beyond being the “unofficial” religious patron of the island, has also been the focal point of religious tourism, something that is also on the rise. All these images have their own dynamic and peculiarities, and have been utilised, either alone or all together, in many cases. After all, images must be such as to register on the radar of indifferent or ignorant audiences. They seem to be, in total, oriented towards an internal type of tourism, which is welcomed since putting the island on the Greek map has been something quite difficult, due to the island’s introversion. But the struggle for reaching external tourism is in motion. The fact that the municipality has invested time and effort to participate in many central European tourist exhibitions is the evidence of trying to capitalise on the Romantic image of the island. And it is not a bold step, since the increasing numbers of tourists from these areas are becoming more frequent.

The Cyprus connection

We can briefly compare Kythera with Cyprus, the other birthplace of the goddess Aphrodite. Here, the Aphrodite image has been utilised unto many levels. Of course, we should point out that we are talking in a broad and general sense since the two are quite dissimilar: Cyprus is a nation while Kythera is a small place, part of a nation. Cyprus has an important national image and it is the Goddess Aphrodite. It was introduced by the British and adopted by the independent state. The stamps are an indication of this and are quite widely known, as they incorporate not only the image of this local statue but that of Botticelli. Another national usage is the Cypriot Tourism Organisation’s utilisation of the Aphrodite image for creating a place brand associated with her. The images used are elegant, modern, minimalistic, and concentrate on the three essential items Cyprus offers: the sea, the sun and Aphrodite – the goddess of love and everything that implies.¹² The Cyprus logo is also evident but seems to be a by-line of the images the Cyprus Tourist Organisation is trying to promote. The simplicity of the image projects a very specific message, as something so vague that it can reach all audiences. But in the times of diversity and opening of new specialised tourist markets, this should not rest in the trivial and overused messages. The fact is that many countries are selling precisely, the image of the sea

¹² See <http://joannides.blogspot.gr/2014/04/why-rebranding-country-of-cyprus-is.html>.

and sun. The difference is in the way this can be rebranded. Cypriots may have started using the image of Aphrodite after the Kytherians, but they have been using it continuously, and as such they have made it an iconic brand, associated with their island.¹³ This is Aphrodite's land, the place where she's alive. But the locals, having been exposed to the place brand have utilised it accordingly in many local products, such as the Cypriot delight box covers of the Geroskipou delights (loukoumi), since the area has been linked to the ancient holy groves of Aphrodite, as experts claim it derives from "holy grove" (ιερός κήπος = γερόσκηπος). Thus, the image of the Goddess was adopted quite early in the 20th century for their local and traditional produce.

The Kytherians, on the other hand, seem to use either the island's name or the island's outline on traditional local products, but seem to avoid any reference to the image of Aphrodite. In a few isolated cases, they try to evoke the ancientness of the Goddess, by using her Middle Eastern name, Astarte, instead of the Greek one.¹⁴ However, it seems like a contradiction to the by-line of the municipality's webpage: "Welcome to the island of Celestial Aphrodite". We might be tempted to explain this absence in light that they, unconsciously, avoid a comparison and any confrontation with Cyprus and their natural, at this point of development, reluctance.

The management of Kythera place branding

Let us now examine whether Kythera place branding can be studied on a theoretical basis. We shall employ the help of the five place branding principles, which were addressed in the placebrandobserver.com editorial (Kaefer, 2017) and were stated as being the following five traits: Distinctiveness, Authenticity, Memorable, Co-Creation and Place Making. Is Kythera municipality using them, in their struggle for place branding?

¹³ *ibid*. The Ionian Coat of Arms was designed by the British administration as early as 1820 whilst Cyprus came under British control in 1878. It seems that the images used by the British made many locals skeptical, as to their use and acceptance. Thus, they were part of their history, but they did not embrace them strongly.

¹⁴ Our opinion is that the Goddess has been transformed into the Madonna of the Myrtles, since the myrtle was one of Aphrodite's sacred plants. The local icon is quite strange, being a Black Madonna. If not for the gold cover which makes it easy to understand what it is, the icon would be just a black piece of wood. The absence of the image is attributed to its being old, and to not having been made by a human hand. Nowadays, only pious and devoted Christians may glimpse at her real image, as a boon by the Madonna herself.

We can safely deduce that the municipality's usage of Kythera as a name-for-a-place, with the by-line of being the island of Celestial Aphrodite, falls within the parameters of making the island distinctive. Authenticity is trickier, as it can encompass many things which could be considered quite similar to those of other places. The municipality has opted for a multilevel approach on this: Unspoiled, picturesque, unique blending of images, an island at the crossroads of history and culture, are just some of the approaches being used. The images used, and the by-line slogans construct a narrative in which *authenticity* can be considered as their summary. The island's ability to project authenticity although tourism is a reality, especially in the last decade. It still maintains an authentic atmosphere and such an approach, both official and on an individual basis, of specialised tourist target groups and not mass tourism ones is happening. The image approach to memorability is always a safe one, when trying to form a place brand. The municipality' usage of the three generic and one pivotal image is, we think, quite successful. In the field of Co-creation there seems to be a lack, since as we saw from the mayor's interview and have witnessed ourselves, there is still much to be done in the collaboration of the private sector. As we pointed out repeatedly the island was not tourist oriented. Tourism happened when the immigrant checks inflow stopped. Place making is something which has been approached effectively, as the visitation numbers can testify. In fact, the numbers of tourist visitation for 2016-17 show an overall success story in the municipality's efforts, even under harsh conditions which could change the island's tourist image from positive to negative. The shortage of cooperation in the field of co-creation is compensated by the other four points and thus we can safely attest the municipality's distinction. When that problem is addressed successfully we can expect an inflow in visitation numbers. But as this is the private sector's responsibility, the municipality can do nothing more than try and make them understand that tourist exploitation is not the way to make a sound and sustainable business, as it affects more than just themselves.

Place branding: communication or policies?

Anholt (2008) points out there are new ideas about the fact that place branding is now considered to be about policies and not just communication. These new ideas are the backbone of competitive identity, which sounds very much like a synonym for marketing. He codifies it as such:

Substance must be coupled with strategy and frequent symbolic actions if it is to result in an enhanced reputation... Strategy, basically put, is simply knowing where a place or nation is and where it stands today, both in real life and in external and internal perception. Substance has to do with the effective execution of any strategy, in any new form: political, economic, legal, social, cultural and educational. Symbolic actions are a particular species of substance that happen to have an intrinsic communicative power.

This approach is very much techno-economic, but we can see clearly how we can utilise it to judge any small place branding. We did try and apply it in our case study. The results were not definite but optimistic. The strategy, according to the mayor's interview, is twofold: the Central European tourist market and the quality-over-quantity approach. It is a sound strategy and the participation of the municipality in many major and minor European and domestic tourist exhibitions shows that the statements have a solid basis behind them. The substance of the strategy is nothing unique: secluded, unspoiled, and untouched seem to be the keywords trying to build the island's narrative, thus giving substance to the strategy. They are overused, misused and mundane nowadays but as the island is a newcomer in the field, they sound like a safe play. We believe that these are baby steps and will be followed by a better and more unique narrative. It will take time as all this is, still, touch-and-go for projecting the island's place brand image. Last of all, we should focus on symbolic actions. They might be any kind of action, but they are important as they are both a component of the place's narrative and, simultaneously the means of telling it. For example, the municipality's fraternisation of the Karavas village with its namesake in Cyprus is a highly symbolic action. Another is the establishment of the annual festival named Voyage in Kythera in 2015. It utilises the idea of the voyage to a Utopia as its header, in order to give its action a Romantic substance. The usage of both traditional forms of entertainment, as the local feasts (panigiri), along with new concepts, such as Kythera participating in the European Music Day, show that the municipality has grasped the essentials for an effective place and destination branding. It remains to be seen whether the dynamics of such a strategy can survive two major obstacles: the severe cuts in the municipality's funding and the chance of any change in the leadership, in other words, both political issues which may impose an austerity clause in the whole process.

Conclusion

Both Cyprus and Kythera have used their ancient connection to Aphrodite to boost their tourist image as a place brand, but also to promote their local products. Kythera has chosen not to overplay theirs and instead use the island's name as a brand, in all its forms. It seems that Kytherians still cling to their old social identity, which makes them more introverted. Unlike other islands in Greece, Kythera did not need tourism to survive since they had the immigrant financial inflow; consequently, they never really considered externalising their island's image as a brand. And since they have not yet become entangled with tourism, they still identify themselves as an in-group: We and the rest of the world. Their social identity may be traced to the basic idea which Tajfel and Turner (1979) proposed.

So not having a clear idea about how to project their small place brand they are making small, hesitant, steps. They have not convinced themselves yet of such a need. The island's geographical outline image is prominent as a brand by many, including the municipality. The iconic photographs are ever-present, but only as a lead-in, when wanting to introduce certain aspects of the island. The minimal iconic, almost bordering the aniconic, is the majority. Kytherian branding is also influenced by its cultural heritage and its long tradition with the hidden.¹⁵ We may say that the islanders have never liked the idea of externalising their connection with the Goddess. The island in itself is more important. Simplicity is the best choice in the case of a small, underdeveloped area, Greek island, from a tourism point of view. The "sea, sun and ..." triptych cannot and should not be utilised, as a lot of other tourist destinations have used it to the point that it has become mundane. The romantic connection of the "Voyage à Cythère" is so strong that even nowadays, the name evokes some form of warm feelings to many people. The pastoral images of Watteau's paintings cannot be found anywhere, but the island unconsciously exploits the connections with mythology and Romanticism. They are helping promote the destination

¹⁵ Isidore of Charax, a Greco-Roman geographer of the 1st century B.C. and A.D., is the first recorded person to talk about the island's etymology, claiming that the island was named after the Goddess and not the other way around. He also talks about the etymology of the island's name deriving from the verb *κεύθω*, which means to hide, and he further states that it is a metaphor for the hidden love or that those making love on the island who discover the hidden love, passion, or pathos. Even if this is a theory, heavily influenced by the Neoplatonic beliefs of the era, we should take it into account. But in the end, we can attribute this introversion to nothing more than the plain fact that the locals are still afraid of the outsider. It is a society trying to come to terms with the emergence of the tourist invasion.

brand not the place, per se. This agrees with Anholt's (2009) assumption that branding is seen as processes of reduction, even simplification.

Our belief is that the clear and simple usage of the island's name, Kythera, is more than enough, for an emerging tourist destination, being unpretentious and projecting a clear message. So, we come have to the conclusion that the textual projection of the island has the dynamics, supported with a few selected images, to be a usable place brand, for the time being. The Images are there but do not need to define the textual place brand. They still need the combination, in order to enable the process of identification. But the project of promoting the image of the island as a place brand has not yet reached the point of moving from the process of reduction to the uniqueness of enrichment and projection of an integrated and culturally mature island? Enhanced images will certainly follow. And they will not necessarily need the textual as a starting point. They will become destination and place brands on their own. And if the Municipality of Kythera adopts more of an online presence and policy, the time of the independent Images will soon come.

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