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Preserving traveller's memory in religious destinations

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Preserving memory from the visit of a tourist destination plays an important role in tourist activity. In pilgrimage in particular, and in religious tourism in general, the preservation of this memory constitutes a spiritual process associated with the sanctity of the place. Obviously, the degree of spirituality varies according to the traveller's personality and religious beliefs.

Following the return home, the religious memorabilia and 'souvenirs' play an important role in the 'confirmation' of the trip or the fulfilment of the vow, as well as in the preservation of the memory. At first one could claim that religious souvenirs serve or have similar functions and symbolisms as the usual souvenirs bought in a traditional tourist trip. However, in their case, the symbolisms as well as the uses are differentiated, since this type of souvenir carries special personal and social value and serves different functions. Frequently, apart from their liturgical or salvation character, they simply exhibit 'pseudo-religious' characteristics. In every case, the market of religious souvenirs is growing into a profitable commercial activity and its financial cost rates high in the amount of money spent at the tourist destination.

The above findings are based on a survey conducted via the use of structured questionnaire during the summer of 2017 among the visitors to the Church of Saint Dionysios in Zakynthos Island, Greece.

Key Words: Religious souvenirs, religious tourism, pilgrimage, St. Dionysios, Zakynthos

Introduction

Tourist destinations offer to the traveller memories that accompany them for a long time after returning to their place of residence. To enhancement the memory of this experience, but also to 'prove' it to third parties, (Gordon, 1986:136; Littrell *et al.*, 1994; Swanson, 2004) the traveller returns to their place of residence with souvenirs.^[1]

The word 'souvenir'^[2] is French and literally means 'to get back to myself' (Collins-Kreiner & Zins, 2011:18).

1. The word souvenir, used as it is in Greek, means everything that reminds us of past moments, memories (Μπαμπινιώτης, 1998:1624)
2. A lot of people make a distinction between souvenirs and mementos. They regard souvenir as commercial products, which are the subject of a commercial transaction, while mementos are not commercially traded but are kept by individuals because of their personal value and importance (Gordon, 1986:135).

It refers to objects that remind us of people, places and events. It revives the past and connects with it. According to researchers (Gordon, 1986:136; Stewart, 1993; Cohen, 2000; Love and Kohn, 2001) souvenirs allow the past to 'invade' the everyday life and make memories real (Love and Sheldon, 1998). Furthermore, Morgan and Pritchard (2005) consider that souvenirs allow the recreation of the tourist experience.

The kind of 'confirmation' provided by the souvenirs / mementos varies not just according to the experience of travel but also according to the personality of the traveller. It may be a simple postcard or a photo of the place, a small object, a hat, a t-shirt, an object that refers to the culture of the tourist destination, a jewel, etc. It may have several forms and represent different values for example a simple object, something special and original, it might be fancy, unique, expensive or cheap, etc.

Gordon (1986:140-144) classified the typology of tourist souvenirs, distinguishing them as:

- a) pictorial images, i.e. cards, photos, books, albums, etc.,
- b) pieces-of-rock, such as objects from the natural environment (shells, plants, stones, articles of hunting: animal nails, animal teeth etc.),
- c) symbolic shorthand which are most often manufactured rather than natural objects
- d) markers, meaning objects which themselves are not linked to a particular event or place, but engraved on them are words that locate them in place and time,
- e) local products such as local food, utensils and equipment for the preparation of food, drinks, local traditional clothes and local handicrafts.

Symbols of travel memory

Souvenirs are an important part of commercial transaction in tourist destinations (Morgan, Lugosi & Ritchie, 2010:202) and are considered by scholars as one of the most important parameter of the tourist trip (Law and Au, 2000). It has been noted that tourists often spend more money on souvenirs than on food, accommodation or other activities (Jansen-Verbeke, 1991; Timothy & Butler, 1995:31). Surveys have also shown that spending on purchases accounts for almost one-third of total tourist expenses (Littrell *et al.* 1994; Fairhurst, Costello, and Holmes, 2007). According to Timothy (2005), for many tourists shopping can even be an important motivation for making a trip or choosing a destination.

The industry of souvenirs in tourism is worth billions of dollars. Their price is much higher than similar objects in non-tourist sites. This happens because the tourist who buys an object correlates it with memories and the travel experiences. Therefore, it is not possible to put a price on a souvenir, as its value is related to the worth of the memory (Pine and Gilmore, 1999:57).

A further emphasis of research has been the motives of buying souvenirs, such as buying them as gifts (Kim and Littrell 2001; Gordon 1986), or as signs (Gordon 1986) or as reminders (Littrell *et al.* 1994; Swanson 2004). Further noteworthy areas of investigation are the special meanings and functions of souvenirs. Thus, after returning from a trip, souvenirs function as images and symbolic reminders of the destination, as symbols in reminding one of a moment, as memories

of the local environment or as artefacts from a special culture. At the same time, buying a souvenir satisfies the tourist's desire for innovation, authenticity (Littrell, Anderson & Brown, 1993), as a sign of social status or even for creating a sense of 'jealousy' in others (Pine & Gilmore, 1999). More generally, when souvenirs are offered as gifts they determine relationships, strengthen links with family and friends, point out social differences, support the difference of validity and prestige, in addition to showing love, friendship and affection (Mauss, 1979:12).

Religious Souvenirs

A special category of souvenirs is religious souvenirs. Modern religious souvenirs are rooted in the early Christian pilgrimages to the Holy Land, Rome and Constantinople (Houlihan, 2000; Teague, 2000; Tythacott, 2000; Shackley, 2006). The pilgrims of those eras sought and brought back to their homeland, as souvenirs / mementos of the pilgrimage, relics of saints and other sacred objects such as icons, amulets, prayer books, etc. Undoubtedly, the first religious souvenirs / mementos came from the natural environment of sacred places, for example, pieces of wood, pieces of stone from church walls and statues, shells, etc. Over the years, however, religious souvenirs began to be manufactured for purchase by the pilgrims; this activity was extremely profitable and it reduced the demolition and the theft of objects from the sacred places (Evans, 1998).

It is highlighted, that this transition from mementos, which were taken from the authentic surroundings of the sacred space, to the souvenir, has led to the commercialisation of memory. Sumption, (1975: 259-260) considers that pilgrims purchasing souvenirs during the Middle Ages constitutes the 'archetype' of similar events in modern tourism. There are various reports of cases where these 'early' tourists behaved just like their modern successors. They carved graffiti on the walls as proof of their presence - nobles carved their coat of arms on the Holy Tomb as they pretended to be praying and bought dreadful or fancy souvenirs and coral prayer books that were sold by the holy places.

One of the most famous 'religious memorabilia-symbols' is the shell that is the emblem of pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela. This symbol was originally a shell that was collected from the natural environment, but later it was made of metal. Crosses, small flags, etc. were also used as souvenir symbols.

Depending on the economic background of the pilgrim, souvenir symbols were made of various metals (gold, silver, tin, copper, etc.). The activity of manufacturing and selling religious memorabilia has been very profitable. Because of the pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela, during the 12th century there were more than 100 souvenir shops for pilgrims (Sigal, 1989:89-92, In Pusztai, 2004:63). Production was then reduced as this activity was taxed.

In religious tourism and pilgrimage, the 'souvenir' associated with the religious monument or, more generally, with the religious site, gives the owner special importance. Especially for the pilgrim, this 'souvenir' has greater importance, as it also evidences the fulfilment of a vow, the accomplishment of the pilgrimage. Religious souvenirs initially seem to have similar functions / symbolism as the souvenirs of the traditional tourist trip. In reality, however, symbolisms and uses are differentiated; souvenirs of pilgrimage are charged with both personal and social significance and have different functions.

Moufahim (2013) has identified three particular types of gift-souvenirs purchased by pilgrims in Mecca: ordinary liturgical gifts, supplication gifts that invite 'prayer' counter-gifts, and soteriological gifts in the form of hassanat that are given to ensure other-worldly salvation.

By giving souvenirs, pilgrims uphold the importance of individuality (as consumers and as believers), while also fulfilling what they believe is their special responsibility to bolster collective faith, particularly amongst networks of friends and family. Crucial in this endeavour is how pilgrims negotiate the fluid line between commodity and religious object. Sometimes they imbue these commercial objects with divine presence, thereby creating powerful tools for asserting 'soft' authority at home. At other times, they present religious souvenirs as commodities, downplaying their spiritual value in order to circumvent rejection (Kaell, 2012).

In any case, the market of religious souvenirs is an important economic activity. Professionals in places of pilgrimage or cultural-religious interest generally have recognised and have capitalised the interest of pilgrims and religious tourists in the purchase of religious souvenirs. Thus, in modern times, religious sites are flooded by outlets selling souvenirs that are connected with the religious places. These vary from prayer books, crosses, icons, biblical symbols and rosaries, to

garments, handkerchiefs and other items depicting the holy place, a saint, etc. These objects may have ritual characteristics and can be used such as (i.e. crosses, icons, prayers etc.) or simply illustrate religious features (biblical symbols, wax figures, etc.). Furthermore, objects are also sold which depict or symbolize the holy place or holy person, which have no ritual significance (Moípa, 2009:80).

A archetypal example is the shell-symbol of the Santiago de Compostela pilgrimage that is also sold as precious jewellery in various forms, e.g. earrings, pendants, rings, in different variations and prices (Photo 1.). In fact, because of this phenomenon, namely the use for commercial purposes of various items that often have no spiritual relationship with religious symbols (e.g. t-shirts, hats, ceramics, decorative items, handkerchiefs, etc.), it could be important to consider 'commercialisation' of religion (Moípa, 2009: 80). Furthermore, the lack of liturgical-soteriological elements allows the designation of these objects as 'pseudo-religious' memorabilia (Photos 2 and 3).

In the commercial area of preserving memories, there are also companies selling books, cards, prints, CDs and DVDs that are related to the religious place. The traveller to the religious site, tourist or pilgrim, often seeks information (whether this is related to events associate with the site, e.g. the appearance of the Virgin Mary or the realisation of a miracle, etc.) related to the cultural value of the site. The production of these, involves many professionals, such as publishers, typographers, graphic designers, etc. (Moípa, 2009: 80).

Photo 1. Jewelry showcase in Santiago de Compostela



Source: Polyxeni Moira, personal archive

Photos 2 and 3. Pseudo-religious memorabilia from the pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela and the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople



Source: Polyxeni Moira, personal archive

Although, no targeted surveys have yet been carried out to find the type, the purpose, and the money spent on souvenirs, especially during a pilgrimage or a religious tourism trip, questions have been raised as part of a more general survey of religious tourism. Thus, a survey carried out from October 20th 2013 to January 22nd 2014 in Zakynthos, for the development of religious tourism and pilgrimage, revealed that the majority of visitors (93.4%) did shopping, during their

stay on the island of Zakynthos. This shopping was: *local products* (87.2%), *souvenirs* (59.7%), *religious souvenirs* (27.4%), *clothing and footwear* (28.1%), and other items such as *jewellery* (14.0%). (Moirira, Parasxi & Mylonopoulos, 2015; Μοίρα & Παράσχη, 2015:47).

The research

In order to identify the motives of pilgrims or religious tourists for the purchase of souvenirs, the kind of souvenirs they buy, the amount spent on their purchase and the place where the purchases took place, research was carried out at the pilgrimage of Saint Dionysios on the island of Zakynthos.^[3]

Zakynthos is located in the Ionian Islands (Greece) and is the eleventh largest island in the country. It is also the southernmost and the third island in size (410 km²) and population (42,000 inhabitants) of the Ionian Sea (Μοίρα, 2005: 250). Saint Dionysios is the patron saint of Zakynthos. He was declared 'Saint' by the Ecumenical Patriarchate in 1703 AC, but he was honoured as a saint much earlier on the island. Relics of the saint were transferred to the island on August 24, 1717 AC to protect them from pirates and stored at a Church in the village of Kallitero. In 1764 AC the relics of St Dionysios were deposited permanently in the Monastery, which was built by the monks of Strofades. The church of St Dionysios in Zakynthos city was constructed in 1925 in a place where there was an older church, which was destroyed by earthquakes. The bell tower of the church is of unique architectural interest and it is over 40 meters high. The relics of St Dionysios are kept in a carved silver larnax in the church. Saint Dionysios is celebrated twice a year and processions take place; the first is on August 24th, celebrating the transport of the Sacred Relic from the Holy Monastery of Strofades to Zakynthos. The second is on December 17th, honouring the Dormition of St. Dionysios. The duration of both celebrations is three days (23-26 August, 16-19 December). These days, pilgrims from all over the world arrive to Zakynthos for worship (Κονόμος, 1989; Προβατάκης, 1993; Κονόμος, 2005:67-68).

The survey was carried out between August and September 2017, in the quarter of the Church of Saint Dionysios, with questions asked to the visitor-tourists of the site. The work was carried out using a simple random sampling method and by distributing a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of eighteen (18) closed type questions. 150 questionnaires were distributed, of which 115 (76.7%) were answered.

3. Zakynthos is located in the Ionian Islands (Greece) and is the eleventh largest island in the country. It is also the southernmost and the third in size (410 km²) and population (42,000 inhabitants) island of the Ionian Sea (Μοίρα, 2005:250). Saint Dionysios is the patron saint of Zakynthos. The relics of St Dionysios are kept in a carved silver larnax in the church. Saint Dionysios is celebrated twice a year and processions take place on August 24th and December 17th.

Table 1. Nationality

Nationality	Frequency	Percent
Greece	45	39.1
Russia	1	0.9
Romania	8	7.0
Serbia	8	7.0
Italy	13	11.3
Great Britain	16	13.9
other	24	20.9
Total	115	100.0

From the 115 people who participated in the research, 43 were men (37.4%) and 72 were women (62.6%). Regarding the age of the visitors, most of them (38.3%) were in the 31-40 years old age group, followed by age groups of 41-51 years old (20.0%) and 18 to 30 years old (17.4%). As to the country of origin of the respondents, the highest percentage (39.1%) were Greeks, followed by visitors-tourists from Great Britain (13.9%) and Italy (11.3%).

Regarding the level of education of the respondents, 61.7% (71 persons) were university level educated, 34.8% (40 persons) had finished high school and 3.5% (4 persons) had received basic education (primary school). 35.7% of the respondents (41 persons) declared themselves to be private employees, 14.8% (17 persons) were freelancers, 14.8% (17 persons) civil servants, and 8.7% (10 persons) were pensioners.

Then the respondents were asked to declare their religion if they so wished. From the 115 participants, only 3 persons (2.6%) declined, while 112 persons (97.4%) responded positively. From these, 67.8% (78 persons) declared as Christian Orthodox, 14.8% (17 persons) Catholics, 12.2% (14 persons) Protestants, 0.9% Buddhist and 1.7% atheists.

Regarding the reason for the visit, 67 (58.3%) of the 115 said they visited the temple of Saint Dionysios for the pilgrimage. At the same time 63 persons (31.3%) confirmed that they wanted to learn about this religious site and 42 visitors (36.5%) stated that they wanted to see the temple as cultural monument. There were also 31 persons (26.9%) who stated that they visited the temple due to curiosity.

As expected, if the personal religious beliefs are taken into consideration (affinity analysis), it is revealed that

Table 2. Employment

Employment	Frequency	Percent
Civil servant	17	14.8
Private employee	41	35.7
Freelancer	17	14.8
Businessman	9	7.8
Worker/Farmer	3	2.6
Student	3	2.6
Unemployed	2	1.7
Houshold	9	7.8
Retired	10	8.7
Other	4	3.5
Total	115	100.0

only Orthodox Christians (67 individuals) admitted that the purpose of the visit was pilgrimage, while for another 14 visitors (also Orthodox Christians) the motivation was a vow fulfilment.

When asked whether the motivation of the visit was acquaintance with the religious monument, a positive answer was given by 49 Orthodox Christians, 11 Catholics, two Protestants, and one person who declared Atheist.

Finally, in the question of whether the motivation of the visit was to know the temple as a cultural monument; positive responses were given by 16 Orthodox, 15 Catholics and 8 Protestants, proving the significance of the temple as an important religious and cultural monument for visitors regardless their religion.

It is worth mentioning that the Holy Temple of Saint Dionysios offers free to the pilgrims, amulets, sanctification and holy oil from the church. These gifts

Table 3. Religion

Religion	Frequency	Percent
Not answerable	3	2.6
Christian Orthodox	78	67.8
Christian Catholic	17	14.8
Protestant	14	12.2
Buddist	1	.9
Atheist	2	1.7
Total	115	100.0

Table 4. Motives

Motives	Frequency	Percent
Pilgrimage	67	58,3
Vow	14	12,2
Learning about the religious site	63	31,3
See the temple as cultural monument	42	36,5
curiosity	31	26,9
other	1	0,9

are characterised as 'liturgical' memorabilia. During the survey, visitors were asked whether they accepted some of these 'liturgical' memorabilia. The responses showed that 41 visitors (35.7%) said they received free amulets, 8 persons (7.0%) sanctification, and 16 visitors accepted holy oil (13.9%). Furthermore, affinity analysis showed that 100.0% of these responses, as was expected, concerned Orthodox Christians.

About making purchases during their stay on the island, 97.4% (112 visitor-tourists) said that they had purchased and in particular 65.2% (75 visitor-tourists) bought religious souvenirs, 55.7% (64 persons) bought local products, 32.2% (37 visitor-tourists) bought clothing/ footwear, while 76.5% (88 visitor-tourists) bought various kind of souvenirs.

From the 75 visitor-tourists who said they bought religious souvenirs, the majority, 69.3% (52 persons) bought icons, 57 visitor-tourists (76.0%) bought crosses, rosaries and other related religious souvenirs, 13 persons (17.3%) bought souvenirs with pseudo-religious characteristics, 10 visitor-tourists (8.7%) purchased jewellery with symbols of pilgrimage, and 7 people (6.1%) bought guides, books or CDs / DVDs related to the pilgrimage.

The total cost of shopping varied, with 26 visitor-tourists (23.2%) spending up to 50 euros, 49 persons (42.6%) spending from 51 to 100 euros, 33 persons / (29.5%) spending 101 to 300 euros, and 4 visitor-tourists (3.6%) spending more than 300 euros.

According the reasons for the purchase of religious souvenirs, 45 visitor-tourists (39.1%) stated that they bought the item(s) as a souvenir of their visit to the temple, 37 visitor-tourists (32.2%) as a souvenir of the pilgrimage, 38 (33.0%) said they bought the item as an amulet, 34 visitor-tourists (29.6%) said they bought it in order to offer a gift to relatives, 17 (14.8%) said they

had bought it to offer it to their friends and 13 (11.3%) said they had bought the religious souvenirs for the iconostasis of their house (altarpiece).

Conclusion

It is obvious that souvenirs are an important parameter of travel activity in a religious site or a holy place. Remarkable evidence emerged from this research, that visitors in significant numbers (65.2%), whether pilgrims or cultural-religious tourists, are buying religious souvenirs. Most of these purchases are crosses, rosaries and other religious souvenirs (76.0%), icons (69.3%), and other 'pseudo-religious' souvenirs (17.3%) which are related to the pilgrimage. Parts of the purchases are jewellery related to the monument/pilgrimage but also books, guides and CDs/DVDs. The purchases are for the visitors themselves, as they are purchased as a souvenir of their visit to the temple (32.2%), as a souvenir of the pilgrimage (33.0%) as an amulet (29.6%), or simply for their liturgical character, for example for their iconostasis in their house/altarpiece (11.3%). Many times though, they are purchased to be offered to third party, e.g. as a gift for relatives (29.6%) and friends (14.8%).

Is worth mentioning, the amount of money the visitors have spent on the above religious items. 81.0% of the visitors spent 50 euros on purchases, and 17.0% spent from 51-100 euros, leading to the conclusion that the market of religious souvenirs is a significant proportion of total travel costs.

Discussion

The market for religious memorabilia forms a significant part of the wider market of souvenirs. This part of the souvenir market seems to have a large growth potential, since a significant part of the souvenirs bought are offered as a gift to relatives and friends. In addition, it is important to note that these souvenirs are not solely of purely religious-worship or liturgical character. Instead, they extend to various types of products (e.g. food, durable consumer goods, clothing) in which a holy symbol or icon/photo of the monument or pilgrimage is incorporated and they are thus converted into pseudo-religious souvenirs. The amount of money spent on these souvenirs is an important resource both for the monument management body (state, church, etc.) and for the professionals at the place of destination, who need to conduct a systematic study of the pilgrims' and religious tourists' consumer behaviour in order to adapt their products to their needs or to 'create' needs.

Further research is needed on important monuments of religious and cultural heritage as well as pilgrimages, in order to determine/delimit the religious souvenirs market from the merchants' point of view as well, and to evaluate the economic benefit for the religious sites and the national economy in general.

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