ISLANDS AND DESTINATION IMAGE: THE CASE OF IOS

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This study was conducted to identify the image of Ios as a tourist destination as perceived by the visitors, in order to contribute to the formation of an effective marketing plan. The strengths and weaknesses of the image of Ios were measured and presented, accompanied with a number of recommendations. The findings revealed that Ios has a very strong destination image as a party island, with the majority of the visitors being international young students coming to enjoy the relaxing atmosphere and the party mood of the island. As a result, Ios needs to strengthen its image compared to other islands or destinations which offer the same product, by promoting its competitive advantages, such as; the nightlife, the relatively low prices, the relaxing atmosphere and the friendliness of the locals.

Keywords: *Destination image, Islands, Ios.*

INTRODUCTION

'Islands have become one of the most attractive destinations for tourists' (Lockhart, 1997, p.3). But what makes islands so attractive? According to Conlin and Baum (1995) the physical and climatic characteristics of islands, combined with the less tangible elements of 'island-ness' such as insularity, distance and tradition, create a particular allure to ever-increasing numbers of tourists. Baum argues that islands, whether tropical or cold-water provide an opportunity to escape (Baum, 1997). Nevertheless, islands commonly face a number of structural handicaps arising from their isolated and peripheral location (Manologlou et al, 2004), and their smallness in terms of population and area

(Ioannides et al., 2001; Connell, 1988; Royle, 1989, 1997). In the literature emphasis tends to be on islands of a particular size, whereas, smaller islands have received less attention (Wong, 1997; Briguglio et al, 1996). According to Treloar and Hall (2005, p.165 as cited in Cooper and Hall, 2005):

'The islands of the Pacific…often conjure up the image of swaying tropical palm trees, white sand beaches, warm crystal-clear waters. This stereotypical image of 'paradise' has been consistently portrayed for more than two hundred years'.

Similarly, the Mediterranean islands have also created an image of 'sea, sun and sand destinations'. According to Ioannides et al. (2001, p.11) 'the coastal orientation of tourism development on many Mediterranean islands has reinforced their images as mass tourist destinations catering to sun-seeking package holidaymakers'. But are there perhaps other characteristics too that could form the destination image of islands differentiating one from another?

The purpose of this paper is to attempt to form the most suitable destination image for a small Greek island, Ios. Ios is an island of 1,800 residents and belongs to the Cyclades, attracting approximately 150.000 visitors per season, even though it is not a mass tourism destination; most tourists travel individually, or in small groups of friends. The main reason for not developing mass tourism is the absence of an airport on the island. Loukissas in his study (1982) characterised Ios as having a small island community with high tourist density. In recent years Ios has become an extremely popular destination for young people from all over the world, who come to Ios to enjoy the beautiful beaches and the frenzied nightlife.

DESTINATION IMAGE

The concept of destination image has been identified as a critical subject in the tourism literature (Chon 1990; Echtner and Ritchie, 1991; Gallarza et al., 2002; Buhalis, 2000; Gartner, 1996; Laws et al, 2002). Many authors tried to define the term 'destination image' in the past (Crompton, 1979; Hunt, 1975; Lawson and Baud, 1977; Dichter, 1985; Echtner and Ritchie, 1991; Milman and Pizam, 1995), however, Echtner and Ritchie (1991) note that many of the definitions used in previous studies are quite vague. Along with Bignon et al (1998) image has many definitions depending on the researcher. Crompton, for instance (1979) defines it as 'the sum of beliefs, ideas and impressions that a person has of a destination', while Hunt (1975) as 'perceptions held by potential tourists about an area'. Furthermore, Milman and Pizam (1995, p.21)

describe destination image as 'the visual or mental impression of a place or a product experienced by the general public'. Echtner and Ritchie (1991) propose that 'image is not only the individual traits or qualities but also the total impression an entity makes on the minds of others'.

In general, the term 'image' refers to a compilation of beliefs, and impressions based on information processing from a variety of sources over time, resulting in an internal accepted mental construct (Assael, 1992; Crompton, 1979; Gartner, 1993). The majority of the scholars describe destination image as a total of impressions, beliefs, prejudices, ideas, expectations, and feelings accumulated towards a place over time.

Why is it important to measure 'destination image'?

Images are of paramount importance because they transpose representation of an area into the potential tourist's mind and give him a pre-taste of the destination (Hunt, 1975). As the decision maker acts upon his image, beliefs, and perceptions of the destination, rather than his objective reality of it (Hunt, 1975) tourist destination images become important because they influence both the decision-making behaviour of potential tourists (Mayo, 1973; Crompton, 1979) and the levels of satisfaction regarding the tourist experience (Chon, 1992; Stabler, 1988; Echtner and Ritchie, 1993). Destination image is therefore important for organising a successful marketing strategy. According to Selby and Morgan (1996, p.288) 'understanding the differing images that visitors and non-visitors have of a destination is invaluable, enabling the salient attributes of the naïve image and the re-evaluated image to be incorporated into tourism marketing planning'.

The components of 'destination image'

One of the most famous descriptions is that of Gunn (1972), who states that destination image consists of two components- the organic and the induced. By the organic image of a destination he meant the totality of what a person already knows or perceives about the destination through newspapers, radio, television, documentaries, periodicals and books, whereas, the induced image is the result of promotion of a particular place as a tourist destination: paid advertising, publicity, public relations and incentives (Gunn, 1997). After Gunn, Mayo (1975) suggested three basic dimensions of images: scenery, congestion and climate, and Goodrich (1978) similarly to Phelps (1986), suggested two dimensions: primary and secondary. Based on the theory of Gunn, Fakeye and Crompton (1991)

added another component to the concept of destination image, which they called the complex image and is formed when a tourist has a direct experience with the destination. Whereas organic, induced and complex images evolve separately, from one another, a primary image can exist in any of the other three dimensions since it comes in existence when a destination is selected as a possible choice (Lubbe, 1998). The relationship between the two components of image (organic and induced), has also been examined by Gartner (1993) according to whom the destination image is formed by three distinctly different but hierarchically interrelated components: cognitive, affective and conative, a theory which was also adapted by Dann (1996).

Only a few studies have attempted to understand the more difficult psychological characteristics of destination image, such as the atmosphere or romance of the setting. In their study, Echtner and Ritchie (1991) suggest that image consists of three dimensions, which were also applied in the current study: attribute/holistic, functional/psychological and common/unique. Common functional attributes are these by which most destinations can be compared (e.g. price, climate). Unique functional attributes consists of the symbols and special events that form part of the destination image (e.g. Big Ben in London, Eiffel Tower in Paris). Common psychological attributes refer to the friendliness of the locals or beauty of the landscape, whereas unique psychological include feelings associated with places of religious pilgrimage or some historic event. Similarly to this approach, Milman and Pizam (1995) suggest three components: the product (e.g. quality of attraction), the behaviour and attitude (e.g. of the destination hosts) and the environment (e.g. climate, scenery).

The formation of 'destination image'

Apart from the components of the destination image, many scholars of tourism aimed to investigate the formation of the destination image and the conceptualisation of a general framework. As Mackay and Fesenmaier (1997) and Baloglou and McCleary (1999) argue, there has been few empirical studies analyzing the factors that influence the formation and structure of an individual's image about a destination.

Gunn (1972) first tried to understand the influence of the various sources of information and their role in destination image formation; in his study he suggested that the modification of the destination image takes place in seven stages. These seven stages that Gunn suggests are: 1) the accumulation of mental images about the vacation experience; 2)
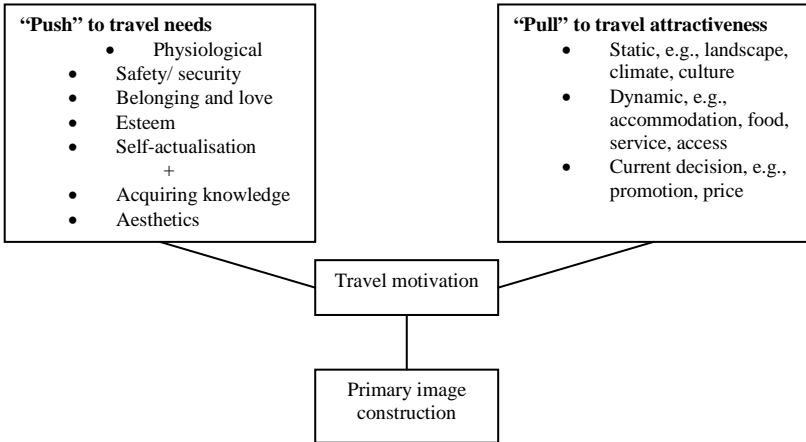
modification of those images by further information; 3) the decision to take a vacation trip; 4) travel to the destination; 5) participation at the destination; 6) return travel; and 7) new accumulation of images based on the experience. Stage theory implies that the image that potential visitors, non visitors and return visitors have, will differ (Gunn, 1972). Several studies supported the theory, and especially the fact that images held by returned visitors are more realistic, complex and differentiated (Pearce, 1982; Chon, 1992).

According to Chon (1991) the construction of primary images is based on 'push' and 'pull' factors associated with the destination (Figure 1). More precisely, Chon (1989) relates Maslow's hierarchy of needs with 'push' factors, while 'pull' factors are described as the attractiveness of a region and its various elements. The 'pull factors' fall into three categories: 1) static factors, which include the natural landscape, the climate, historical and cultural attractions; 2) the dynamic factors, which include accommodation, catering, entertainment, access, political conditions and trends in tourism; and 3) current decision factors, which include the marketing of the region and prices in the destination, as well as in the country of the origin (Witt and Moutinho, 1995). Although Chon refers to the co-existence of the 'push' and 'pull' factors in the construction of a primary image, he does not state that specific 'push' factors are linked with specific 'pull' factors, or that an organic, induced or complex image must be present before a primary image can be constructed, and thus it remains a complex set of associations which is not easily explained (Lubbe, 1998).

Moreover, Stabler (1988) divides the factors influencing the formation of destination image into supply and demand factors. As shown in Figure 2, transmission of information from supply through the marketing of tourism and the media, previous experiences and opinions of other consumers, combined with motivations and socio-economic characteristics form perceptions: the images of tourism and tourist destinations (Stabler 1988). In comparison to Gunn's theory the demand factors roughly correspond with Gunn's organic image formation, whereas the supply factors with induced image formation.
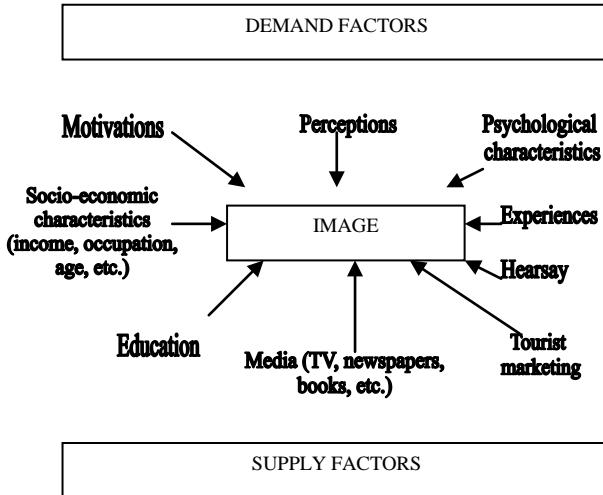
Another approach is the one from Gartner (1993, pp.197-205) who argues that images are formed throughout a continuum of eight stages, which act independently to form one single image in the mind of the individual. He classifies the different agents as a) overt induced I b) overt induced II c) covert induced I d) covert induced II e) autonomous, f) unsolicited organic g) solicited organic and h) organic. His theory is presented in Figure 3.

Figure 1. The construction of a primary image

"Push" to travel needs	**"Pull" to travel attractiveness**
• Physiological • Safety/ security • Belonging and love • Esteem • Self-actualisation + • Acquiring knowledge • Aesthetics	• Static, e.g., landscape, climate, culture • Dynamic, e.g., accommodation, food, service, access • Current decision, e.g., promotion, price

Travel motivation

Primary image construction

Source: Lubbe 1998

Figure 2. Factors influencing the formation of consumer's tourist image

DEMAND FACTORS

Motivations   Perceptions   Psychological characteristics

Socio-economic characteristics (income, occupation, age, etc.)   IMAGE   Experiences

Hearsay

Education   Media (TV, newspapers, books, etc.)   Tourist marketing

SUPPLY FACTORS

Source: Stabler, 1988

Gartner (1993) also summarised some key characteristics of destination image:

1. The larger the entity, the more slowly images change

2. Induced image formation attempts must be focused and long term

3. The smaller the entity in relation to the whole, the less of a chance to develop an independent image; and

4. Effective image change depends on an assessment of presently held tourism images

In addition, according to Font (1996, p.124) three main factors will influence the creation of an image in the public's mind: 1) the previous knowledge that the individual holds and the information deliberately directed by advertising and promotion of the destination, 2) the combination of the communication effort plus the portrait of that destination in the press and 3) the previous experience of the prospective visitor will create the basis for the tourist understanding of the destination.

Furthermore, Baloglou and McCleary (1999) after reviewing the relevant academic literature concluded that image is mainly formed from stimulus factors and personal factors. Stimulus factors (Baloglou and McCleary 1999) or information sources or image forming agents (Gartner 1993) are the forces which influence the forming of perceptions and evaluations. They refer to the amount and diverse nature of information sources to which individuals are exposed, including destination information acquired as a result of having visited the place (Beerli and Martin 2004). Personal factors or internal factors refer to socio-demographic characteristics of the individuals (gender, age, level of education, place of residence, social class, etc.) as well as those of a psychological nature (motivations, values, personality). In this way individuals build their own mental picture of the place, which in turn produces their own, personal perceived images (Ashworth and Voogd 1990, Gartner 1993). These personal factors affect one's cognitive organisation of perceptions, thus also influencing the perception of the environment and the resulting image (Beerli, Martin, 2004).

Finally, Beerli and Martin (2004) developed a model to conceptualize the formation of the destination image. According to their study that differentiates between first time and repeat visitors, information sources and personal factors influence the creation of an overall image. Their model is presented in Figure 4.

Figure 3. Image formation agents (Source: Gartner 1993)

Image change agent	Credibility	Market Penetration	Destination Cost
Overt Induced I Traditional forms of Advertising (e.g. Brochures, T.V., Radio, Print, Billboards, etc.)	Low	High	High
Overt Induced II Information received from Tour operators, wholesalers	Medium	Medium	Indirect
Covert Induced I Second party endorsement Of products via traditional Forms of advertising	Low/ Medium	High	High
Covert Induced II Second party endorsement Through apparently unbiased Reports (e.g. Newspaper, Travel Section articles)	Medium	Medium	Medium
Autonomous News and Popular culture: Documentaries, reports news Stories, movies, television Programs	High	Medium/High	Indirect
Unsolicited Organic Unsolicited information received Rom friends and relatives	Medium	Low	Indirect
Solicited Organic Solicited information received From friends and relatives	High	Low	Indirect
Organic Actual Visitation	High	---	Indirect
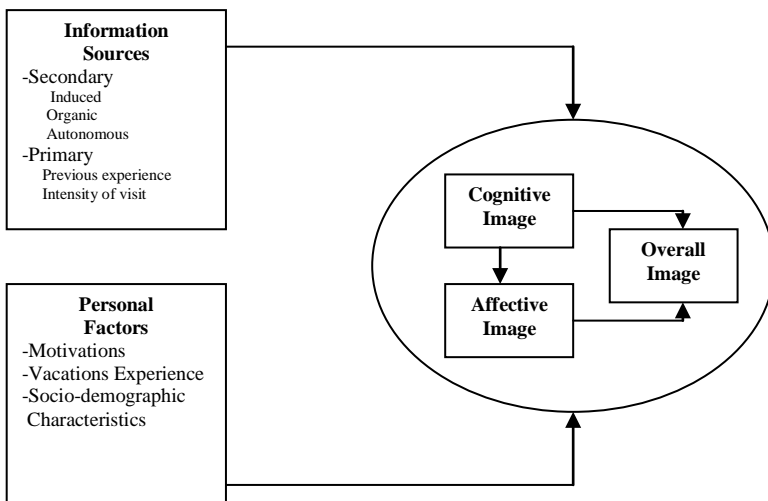
Source: Beerli and Martin 2004

Measurement of 'destination image'

After a review of the techniques that have been used in the academic literature to measure destination image, there seem to be two main approaches: structured (scale format) (Haahti and Yavas, 1983; Gartner, 1989; Baloglou and Brinberg, 1997) and unstructured (open-ended questionnaires, repertory grid analysis) methodologies (Embacher and Buttle, 1989; Reilly 1990; Walmsley and Jenkins 1993; Dann 1996; Driscoll et al, 1994). Echtner and Ritchie (1993) suggested a combination of both structured and unstructured methods in order to capture the complex assessment of the destination image. That is a set of scales to measure the common attribute-based components of destination image, along both functional and psychological dimensions, and a series of open-ended questions to capture the holistic components of destination image along both functional and psychological dimensions, as well as the presence of distinctive or unique features or auras (O'Leary and Deegan 2003). Their method was also adopted from other researchers (Choi et al., 1999; Murphy 1999; Chen and Hsu 2000; O'Leary and Deegan 2003).

STUDY METHODOLOGY

Data for this study was collected through a questionnaire survey amongst visitors of Ios. Both English and Greek questionnaires were designed in order to guarantee that all of the respondents understood the questions and responded properly. In order to collect quantitative and qualitative data, both closed ended and open-ended questions were applied, like in the study of Echtner and Ritchie (1993). More precisely, aiming to investigate destination image, the list of attributes composed by Echtner and Ritchie (1993) have been used. However, since these attributes are designed for general destination image measurement, some attributes were excluded from the list. The first part of the questionnaire aimed to explore the image of Ios as a tourist destination, and thus asked respondents to choose from a list, the attributes that better described the island. In addition three open-ended questions were provided, aiming to capture the holistic and unique images of Ios. The second part collected demographic information on visitors such as gender, education, marital status.

The survey was conducted in the summer of 2006 on Ios. The sample contained information from 144 tourists, who were approached at the port before departure, in order to make sure that they would be eligible to respond the questionnaire. Finally, in order to accomplish a correct data analysis, the Reliability of the scales was examined. In the current study Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was found 0.757 which is a satisfactory level of reliability.

STUDY FINDINGS

The sample consisted of almost equally male (48 per cent) and female (52 per cent) tourists, mainly students (71 per cent) aged till 35 years old (98 per cent). The majority of them were singles (91 per cent), well-educated (75 per cent) with a medium income (51 per cent) coming from all over the world and travelling independently (86 per cent). 85 per cent were visiting the island for the first time and their main purpose was holidays (89 per cent). Tourists participated in the survey were mainly influenced from their friends and families (65 responses), secondly from travel guides and brochures (37 responses), and finally from travel agents and the internet (34 responses each).

Image of IOS

A list of 32 attributes in combination with three open questions, were used to measure the image of Ios as a tourist destination. A 5 point scale was used to describe the closest feeling of the responders to each attribute: 1 represented the closest answer to the positive aspect and 5 the closest aspect to the negative aspect. The responses (in percentages) are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. The attributes and the responses in percentages

	%					
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	
Attractive scenery	28	45.5	18.9	7	0.7	Unattractive scenery
Very pleasant weather	72.2	18.1	6.3	2.8	0.7	Very unpleasant weather
Interesting historic sites	5	7.9	37.1	33.6	16.4	Uninteresting historic sites
Exciting nightlife	66.7	27.8	4.2	0.7	0.7	Boring nightlife
Nice Beaches	53..5	37..5	5.6	3.5	0	Not nice beaches
Wide range of sport activities	12.7	35.2	40.1	9.2	2.8	Small range of sport activities
Interesting events/festivals	3.5	19.1	39	28.4	9.9	Uninteresting events/festivals
Great variety of restaurants	15.3	35.4	25.7	17.4	6.3	Small variety of restaurants
Rich shopping facilities	3.5	17.4	42.4	26.4	10.4	Poor shopping facilities
Quality accommodation	17.5	27.3	43.4	9.1	2.8	Not quality accommodation
Good information facilities	10.4	36.8	36.8	12.5	3.5	Not good information facilities
Attractive architectural sites	7.7	16.9	34.5	32.4	8.5	Unattractive architectural sites
Efficient transportation	41.7	30.6	18.1	6.9	2.8	Inefficient transportation

system						system
Low price level	14.6	41.7	22.9	18.8	2.1	High price level
Local people are friendly	31.3	48.6	11.1	6.3	2.8	Local people are not friendly
Spacious	2.1	30.6	36.8	24.3	6.3	Crowded
Rural	8.3	32.6	47.9	8.3	2.8	Urban
Developed	4.9	34.7	46.5	13.2	0.7	Undeveloped
Easily accessible	13.3	46.9	23.8	11.2	4.9	Isolated
Clean	12.5	45.1	25.7	15.3	1.4	Dirty
Easy to communicate with locals	34.3	41.3	14.7	6.3	3.5	Difficult to communicate with locals
Unique cuisine/drinks	4.2	36.8	31.9	18.8	8.3	Common cuisine/drinks
Unique customs/culture	5.6	19.4	43.1	19.4	12.5	Common customs/culture
Adventurous island	14.8	39.4	22.5	18.3	4.9	Not adventurous island
Relaxing	34.7	34	18.8	7.6	4.9	Stressful
Not commercialised	5	13.5	34	27	20.6	Commercialised
Excellent reputation	16..2	45.8	29.6	7.7	0.7	Poor reputation
Safe	20.8	51.4	18.8	7.6	1.4	Unsafe
Exotic	3.5	31.5	42	19.6	3.5	Familiar
Adult oriented	50.7	25	21.5	1.4	1.4	Family oriented
Excellent quality of service	6.3	36.4	49	8.4	0	Poor quality of service

In addition, in order to analyse the destination image scale, the following means and standard deviations of all items were calculated, as well as the percentage of loyalty and are presented in Table 2. Note that the closer the mean value to 1, the more positive the image about the specific attribute.

As can be extracted from Table 2, the vast majority (90 per cent) of the tourists view Ios as the ideal place for party (exciting nightlife) (1.40), with a very pleasant weather (1.41) and nice beaches (1.59). According to the 76 per cent of the respondents, Ios has been perceived as a place clearly for adults (1.77), where local people seem to be an advantage of

the island since 80 per cent of the tourists perceived them as friendly (2.00) and easy to communicate with (2.07). Contrary, around 80 per cent believe that Ios does not have interesting historic sites (3.55), rich shopping facilities (3.22), interesting events and festivals (3.21) or attractive architectural sites (3.16). The virtually close to '3' neutral mean score in the attribute of culture indicates that Ios is considered of having indifferent culture and customs (3.04) as perceived by the 75 per cent of the respondents.

Table 2. Mean score, Std Deviation and loyalty of the attributes

	Mean	Standard Deviation	Loyalty (1+2) %	
Attractive scenery	2.07	0.9	73.4	Unattractive scenery
Very pleasant weather	1.41	0.78	90..3	Very unpleasant weather
Interesting historic sites	3.55	1.24	12.1	Uninteresting historic sites
Exciting nightlife	1.40	0.67	94.4	Boring nightlife
Nice Beaches	1.59	0.75	91	Not nice beaches
Wide range of sport activities	2.54	0.92	47..9	Small range of sport activities
Interesting events/festivals	3.21	0.98	22.7	Uninteresting events/festivals
Great variety of restaurants	2.63	1.12	50.7	Small variety of restaurants
Rich shopping facilities	3.22	0.97	20.8	Poor shopping facilities
Quality accommodation	2.52	.97	44.8	Not quality accommodation
Good information facilities	2.61	0.95	47.2	Not good information facilities
Attractive architectural sites	3.16	1.05	24.6	Unattractual architectural sites
Efficient transportation system	1.98	1.06	72.2	Inefficient transportation system
Low price level	2.52	1.02	56.3	High price level

Local people are friendly	2.00	0.96	79.9	Local people are not friendly
Spacious	3.02	0.94	32.6	Crowded
Rural	2.64	0.85	41	Urban
Developed	2.70	0.78	39.6	Undeveloped
Easily accessible	2.47	1.01	60	Isolated
Clean	2.47	0.94	57.6	Dirty
Easy to communicate with locals	2.07	1.03	75.7	Difficult to communicate with locals
Unique cuisine/drinks	2.80	0.99	41	Common cuisine/drinks
Unique customs/culture	3.04	1.02	25	Common customs/culture
Adventurous island	2.59	1.09	54.2	Not adventurous island
Relaxing	2.13	1.12	69	Stressful
Not commercialised	3.44	1.11	18.4	Commercialised
Excellent reputation	2.53	2.71	61.3	Poor reputation
Safe	2.17	0.89	72.2	Unsafe
Exotic	2.88	0.88	35	Familiar
Adult oriented	1.77	0.92	75.7	Family oriented
Excellent quality of service	2.59	0.73	42.7	Poor quality of service
Mean Functional	2.45	0.43		
Mean Psychological	2.56	0.45		
Overall Mean	2.51	0.40		

Next part of the questionnaire consisted of three open ended questions that aimed to capture the holistic and unique images of Ios as a tourist destination. In order to achieve this, all responses were labelled and classified by the author. Respondents were free to give more than one responses in each question. Therefore, the analysis of the responses is not in percentages, but in frequencies. The first question aimed to capture respondents' overall impressions of Ios.

The majority of the respondents described Ios as being a party place (103), with beautiful beaches (63), warm weather (29), nice sea (24), and white-blue houses (29). The second question intended to determine the atmosphere and mood that tourists experience during their stay in Ios. According to their responses, most of them experienced happiness (49)

and a party (49) and relaxing (41) atmosphere, while others considered Ios as a friendly (27), exciting (32) and adventurous (15) place. The last question was designed in order to find out which attractions are considered distinctive or unique on Ios by the tourists. The majority perceived bars/clubs (62) as being the most unique tourist attractions on the island, followed by Manganari and Mylopotas beach (48), and the main village (Chora) which are included in the first three most frequent responses. Other important attractions are Homer's tomb (19), water-sports (9) and the windmills (7).

As for the satisfaction level and the intention to recommend the island, half of the respondents are extremely likely to recommend the island to others. 44 per cent of the sample was 'very satisfied' from their vacation in Ios and 41 per cent was' satisfied', which both together give an impressive outcome. Concerning the expectations of the visitors, 63 per cent found Ios 'better than their expectations', and only 9 per cent 'expected more'. Finally, almost one third of the respondents found exactly what they had expected.

Having established the overall tourists' perceptions of Ios as a tourist destination, it became apparent that some within group differences in the view of tourists might have existed. It was hypothesised, that gender, satisfaction level, distance of the home country of the respondents, first time and repeat visitors, might make a difference in how tourists view the island.

In fact, repeat visitors see Ios more positively in terms of nightlife, low price levels, and consider the place more adventurous than first time visitors. On the other hand, first time visitors find the events organised in Ios, slightly more interesting than the repeat visitors do. Previous studies supported that the greater the distance from the home country, the more positive the responder. Similarly, this study found that respondents who live far from Greece are more positive towards the weather, the level of space, the development, the relaxation and commercialization on the island. Regarding the level of satisfaction, the outcomes revealed that more satisfied visitors evaluate Ios more positive in terms of nightlife, weather, price levels, communication with locals, and consider the island as more relaxing, adventurous and less commercialised than less satisfied visitors. Finally, regarding the gender of the respondents, males are more positive than females towards pleasant weather, exciting nightlife, level of development, accessibility, safety and relaxation.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Based on the literature review and as could be drawn from the above analysis and especially from the hypothesis testing, indeed the influence of the supply factors (intensity of visit, previous experience) and of the personal factors/demand (vacation experience and satisfaction) on the formation of the image of Ios is apparent, since differentiations lied between these particular sub-groups. In general, however, Ios has been proofed to have a very strong destination image that satisfies its visitors, a fact, which explains the thousand kilometres covered by the Australian and American visitors to reach the island. The study showed that except of the usual characteristics of the Mediterranean islands 'Sea, Sun, Sand Destination', Ios revealed to obtain some further qualities. Hence, Ios, similar to other islands, is perceived to have very pleasant weather, nice beaches and relaxing atmosphere. However, its most remarkable characteristics have been: 1) its 'Nightlife', 2) its being 'Adult oriented' rather than family oriented, 3) an 'Adventure island' and the most significant 4) a place where 'Bars are perceived as the most unique attraction'. As such, Ios could be regarded as a party-island with global reputation.

The retention and moreover the development of the current image is a valuable strategy taking into consideration that the market of young travellers is big, and the potential travellers are many. However, Ios needs to differentiate itself from other islands or destinations which offer the same product such as Ibiza in Spain, Agia Anapa in Cyprus and Cancun in Mexico. The importance of differentiation in image creation is well recognised in the literature. Ios needs to promote its competitive advantages such as low accommodation prices for young people and the variety of bars available for all tastes of music. Appropriate actions should be taken to convert the island into a competitive package holiday destination for young people and Ios residents should adjust to this tourism policy.

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