

The configuration of the tourism product significance through the print advertising communication technique: then and now

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Abstract

This paper aims at focusing on the importance of tourism product in postwar Greece - with emphasis on the 1960s and the current period - as it was depicted and promoted in the Greek Organization of Tourism posters and other sort of print advertisements.

The first part of the research will be based on an extensive survey the main objective of which is to record, through unexplored and rare sources of information (advertisements and articles in magazines and in newspapers of the time, posters, etc.), the course of the tourism print advertising in Greece during the multifaceted decade of the 1960s.

In the following part the author will attempt a similar research approach to the way the tourism product is being perceived as such in our days and how it is being displayed through the modern means of print advertising. However, the highly competitive predisposition of other types of advertising in tourism products such as T.V., radio, the Internet etc. seems to have claimed and got a big part of the overall current advertising pie. How much and in what way has it affected tourism print advertising? What is the meaning of tourism product print advertising in current Greece, compared to its significance in the 'golden' 1960s? These are issues that will be approached and analyzed in a methodical and argumentative way.

Keywords: tourism product, print advertising, 1960s, mass media, current period

INTRODUCTION

Under the difficult postwar circumstances, the charming decade of the 1960s began, initiating a period of even more important political, social and cultural upheaval during which the Greek economy grew rapidly, but, at the same time, was also structured according to the European and global economic developments. One of the main features of this period was the major political event – as we came to accept it – of the link between the country and the European Economic Community in an attempt to create a common market by signing the relevant treaty in 1962. The developmental strategy of the country was incorporated in five-year-development plans, organized by the central administration, with confusing and unclear, however, orientations. The average annual emigration, which absorbed the surplus of the labor force and favored the achievement of extremely high growth rates, exceeded the annual natural increase of population. Facilitations for the entry of large foreign private capitals and the expansion of consumption began to have a positive effect on the balance of payments, along with occurrences such as the expansion of maritime activity and the emigrants' remittances and of course the rise of tourism. In the early 1960s the tourism sector that began to grow dramatically, was characterized by small size tourism enterprises whose main objective was related to serving the immigrant flow towards abroad, but also a small part of tourists who travelled in Athens, some Aegean islands and Crete. However, very soon these companies began to turn into big travel agencies that made the big shift from simple touring, to mass tourism which was also the main form of tourism for the subsequent decades (Mavropetrou & Petridou, 2008).

On the other hand, media were considered to be as one of the strongest pillars of the postwar societies worldwide as they were the main – perhaps unique – traffickers of information. According to Bernard Cohen (1963), media were able to influence the consumer mass with regard to what were the important issues that should be considered, and this without indicating the way someone must think about them.

This is why advertising had already begun to play an important role within Greek society and State in general. Black and white or colored, printed or broadcasted, advertising managed to leave its trace in the collective memory of the century. It discreetly opened the door of the average urban Greek house to sneak in during the consumer years that followed, thus indicating the Greek house's aesthetics and needs. It wrapped in cellophane everyday life; it divided in installments dreams and plots; it attracted the eyes of children on shop windows; it became a part of reviews staged in theatres, a daily chatting in homes, schools and cafes, a picture and caption at stadiums, shops and bus stops (Arfara, 1997).

In combination with the tourism boom in the 1960s, advertising was probably the only type of the tourism product promotion that was limited almost exclusively in print form not only in magazines, newspapers and other publications of the time, but also in the form of Greek posters and leaflets made by the official state representative: the Greek National Tourism Organization (GNTO). Advertising became soon an important promotional tool of the then rising Greek tourism. But what is happening today? What is the role of tourism print advertising and how can it compete with the mighty mass media such as the internet, television or radio? Does it still retain its visual splendor or has it been conquered by the impersonal capitalist expansionism of the new advertising media?

THE TOURISM PRINT ADVERTISING IN THE 1960S

As the decade of the 1960s entered gently, without particularly acute changes and, as a natural continuation of the 1950s, the country continued to change - especially its big urban centers – since the residential blocks did not stop to emerge one after another. During that decade, both information and entertainment through the media were limited: although there was not even television, people enjoyed themselves by going to the cinema, or by reading light, popular magazines, while they were slowly recovering from the destructive civil war, looking for new visions (Tsoumas, 2015).



Figures 1, 2. ‘Olympic Airways’ black and white ads in an early 1960’s magazine (‘Vendetta’, 1961).

However, it was then that the vision of Greece as a new major touristic destination was completed and which had already started in the 1950s when the first travel agencies were created. But despite the fact that foreign tourism had already begun, most of them survived more with ticket sales to the aspiring Greek immigrants to the U.S., Australia, Canada and Germany. So it is reasonable the fact that most of the print advertisements of these agencies to be published in the popular literature of the era such as the ‘light’ readership magazines, addressed mainly to female consumers, but also in the newspapers of that period. Small sized, black and white ads with typical images from the most important transport media of the time, such as trains, but mostly ships such as the famous ‘Queen Frederick’ or the ‘Hellenes’ for Australia, as well as aircrafts with the then national carrier ‘Olympic Airways’ began to be the first massive advertising attack of these much promising travel agencies.

In this case, the use of a picture was much more narrative than a simple written text, as it had the power to promote, and perhaps, in some cases, even impose concepts with greater ease, without much analysis or deepening. However, in this case also, we can claim that the image used had the ability to bring the structural composition of a text, as this was the only way it could be interpreted. Thus, it seemed to have its specific ‘grammatical’ rules, its own ‘syntax scheme’, its own language, in general. The so-called virtual textuality seemed to require less difficult, but all the more existent, rules of analyzing and understanding; rules that commensurated with the linguistics of a spoken or written language (Ecco, 1988).

For instance, the first print advertisements for domestic tourism, which were growing more and more, started emerging slowly, too. These, usually simple textual ads without images, but with distinctively bold fonts, were placed on prominent pages of the then popular newspapers or magazines. Their aim

was to attract the readers' interest in small domestic trips, day trips to the Argosaronikos bay by boat or even overnight stays in specific hotels in or around the large urban centers.

This type of advertising messages had less power in shaping the consumers' views and this is why most of the print advertisements on tourism products included the power of the colored image. All the above types of advertisements and many more to follow, were created by several advertising agencies and companies of the time such as GRAPHIS, SPOT, ALMA, DIDTS, DEKO, NEON HELLAS, Katzourakis - Karabot, Greca, ALEKTOR etc. most of which had just begun to systematically form themselves by hiring graphic designers, text editors and account specialists (Perikleous, 2002).¹

Impressive were the print ads designed exclusively for the tourism promotion of specific goods rather than services, which at the same time were magnificent ambassadors of the country abroad as they were associated with its touristic uniqueness. For example, the world-famous brandy firm 'Metaxa' during the 1960s gave special attention to the promotion of its products on a world-wide basis with a series of color print advertisements that could be described as folklore as they included, along with the advertised product, the images of touristic souvenirs of the time such as small *tsoliades*² and *shepherdesses* dolls, traditional musical instruments or even the Parthenon.

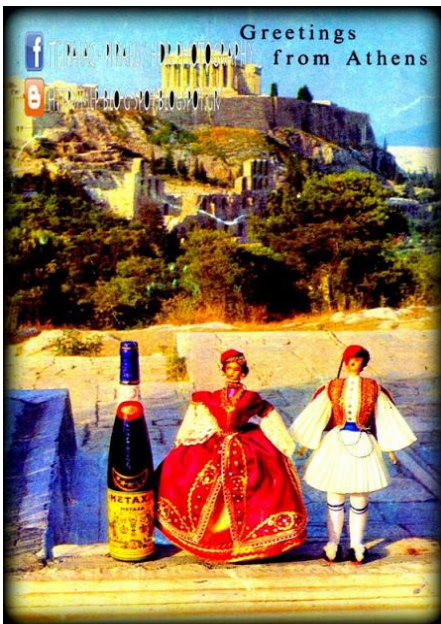


Figure 3. A 'Metaxa' Brandy ad promoting along with the actual traditional spirit the Greek touristic product of the 1960's.

However, from the mid-1960s to the early 1970s, mass tourism had already begun to prevail: large hotel units as well as units of standardized tourism services emerged, while hotel staff was trained

¹ In 1966 the first institution of advertising was founded, the Association of Greek Advertising Agencies, having ten members. Its aim was to promote and elevate advertising as a function contributing to community service, but also to safeguard deontology and ethical behavior among all those who were involved in advertising, namely advertisers, advertising media and advertising companies.

² Tsoliades or Evzoni are selected soldiers of the Greek army. They took this name from the uniform they wore and which was officially established by King Otto of Greece in the 1830s; he, himself also wore this uniform in special occasions.

according to the new requirements of the time. In the years that followed management, marketing and informatics were also introduced. However, since the mid-1950s, another type of tourism products promotion had already begun to appear in the major tourism fairs in Europe and America, strongly supporting the tourist development of the 1960s: the famous tourist kiosks which under the auspices of the Greek National Tourism Organization were the first ambassadors of Greek tourism abroad.³

The promotion of the country's tourism profile was based on the showing of antiquities, holiday resorts and areas of natural beauty through posters, giant photographs, maps and copies of museum exhibits, promoting, at the same time, the Greek 'nation brand'. Tourist brochures were also distributed and information was provided on hotels and local transport. All these, of course, were because foreigners had to be convinced that Greece was a modern, vibrant and civilized country. For this reason, in the Greek kiosks were displayed photos and statistics of commercial Greek shipping activities, artistic and spiritual events, large industrial and public works, the Greek social welfare, etc. At the same time those kiosks served diplomatic purposes as the relations between Greece and the exhibition host country had to be strongly highlighted (Roussopoulos, 1955). In addition to the posters, on which we will comment below, touristic brochures were a new, interesting form of print advertising, as the multiplicity of their pages and small size made them particularly informative and easy to use. As new symbols of Greek tourism, the late 1950s and the early 1960s brochures featured distinctive images of the Greek culture, either in the form of photography or visual imagery combined with text in English, French or German, in quite sophisticated fonts that made their pluralistic writing even more intense. These brochures, whose creators were quite remarkable fine and graphic artists of the time, such as Fokion Dimitriadis, Giorgos Manousakis and Michalis Katzourakis, constituted the first 'portable advertising ambassadors' of the post-war Greek tourism in the country of every aspiring foreign visitor.

THE SPECIAL CASE OF THE TOURISM POSTER

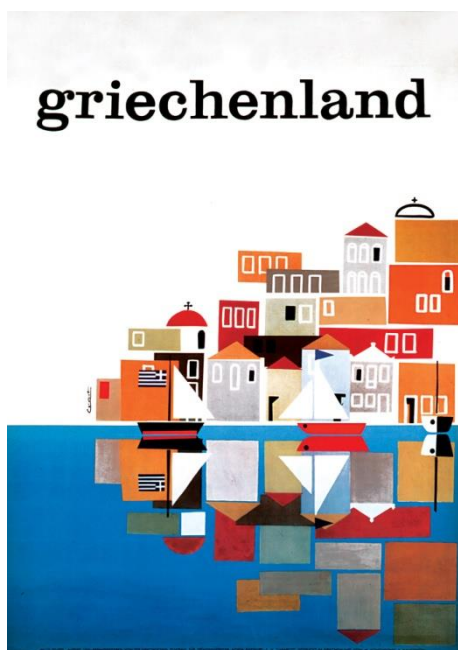
The big advertising campaign of the Greek National Tourism Organization (GNTO) for the promotion of Greece abroad focused on another type of print ads that would promote the Greek tourism in the most ideal way: the tourist poster. Although the poster was an advertising means that first appeared in the middle of the 19th century and which was quickly established as a tool for communication, promotion and information, due to its multiplicity but also its wide dispersion qualities, it would seem to function well, too, as an information and influence means of mass consumption until the end of the twentieth century. In Greece, it appeared at the beginning of the 20th century and its peak coincided with the Greek National Tourism Organization establishment, that is, in the 1950s.

At the time, it was a useful advertising tool, the importance of which seemed to have been understood early enough by those who were responsible for the promotion of Greek tourism, and as a result, thousands of tourist posters have been issued to serve this purpose, since then. It definitely constituted the most characteristic and still effective means of communication of the Greek national

³ The participation of the architects Dimitris Moretis and Alexandras Paschalidis (later Moretis) in the creation of the tourist kiosks at the international tourism fairs was catalytic as those kiosks were treated for the first time as independent architectural works and not as simple, ephemeral constructions.

brand on the international tourism scene, when Greece emerged as an unexplored and much promising worldwide tourism destination (Koutsovassili, 2013).

In these posters, Greece, despite its major political problems of the time, emerged as the country of carelessness, warmth, sun and sea. In particular, the focus of this period was always in conjunction with the natural beauty of the island or coastal areas, travel within the country, cultural or sporting activities, such as sailing, as well as historical monuments. Of particular significance were the posters that were made in the framework of the Athens Festival and the performances that were presented at that time, such as 'Norma' with Maria Callas in 1960 and 'Medea' in 1961, accordingly. These works can be described as unique not only in the Greek poster history, but in Greek modern culture history, too, as they depicted not only important artistic events, but also a particularly prolific period of high artistic importance in the history of the Theatre of Herodes Atticus and the Ancient Theater of Epidaurus, too (Kostiani, 2016). All the above stereotypes would constitute until the end of the 20th century a large part of the average Greek's collective consciousness and thus an integral part of their national identity. The attempt to represent Greece through graphic design with modern, abstract, flat compositions and detailed, color photographs which rendered photography as the dominant textual genre of the poster, was particularly impressive. In addition, posters of the 1960s were primarily narrative, without the conceptual ones being absent (Vlami and Dittmar, 2012).



Figures 4, 5. Two characteristic tourism posters designed by Freddy Karabot in 1961 (left) and Michalis Katzourakis in 1963 (right).

Many of the new compositional and technical changes were due to the painter Michalis Katzourakis who, together with Freddy Karabot, created the K & K company, and while being visual communication experts they worked as art consultants for the Greek National Tourism Organization from 1959 to 1967 (Kaltaki, 2014). With their help and expertise, the poster was no longer a simple painting work lithographically transferred into a piece of tin, as it was in the 1950s, but a new,

effective way of graphic art which, based on the principles of visual communication, supported the proper promotion of the valuable tourism product.⁴

MARKETING AND NEW MEANS OF TOURISM ADVERTISING

Approximately fifty years after the 1960s, Greek tourism has become an important economic and cultural value, and it is now considered to have a credible contribution to the growth of the gross national product. In this context, however, it should be noted that the way of dealing with and managing the tourism product has changed radically since, as it now comes under the uniform strategy of *tourism marketing*. According to this, the new communication tools for the promotion of the tourism product, which constitutes an amalgam of goods and services, are not limited to print advertising, but extend to areas such as the Internet, the radio and the television advertising, public relations etc. (Kapoor, Paul & Halder, 2011). The ability to buy space in the media (press, radio, television, the Internet, etc.) which can be used in order to convey the desired commercial message, gives to the advertised tourist company the absolute control over the content of the campaign while, on the other hand, it is estimated that the average consumer is able to receive thousands of advertising messages on a daily basis (Avraham & Eran, 2008). More specifically, with regard to the Internet, which is today the most modern way of informing, communicating, promoting and even selling products and services, the prospective clients have unlimited possibilities for direct information about destinations as well as for choices on travel, accommodation, leisure activities, holiday packages, either through online advertising or through special tourism sites. This feature offers flexibility, multiple options but also the ability to compare prices and find bargains, while enables users to have in real-time integrated information, which is constantly updated for certain destinations services (Kokkossis, Tsartas, Gkrimba, 2011). At the same time, the website can 'educate' the non-traveling public and attract new friends who are willing to spread the message to their beloved persons by enhancing 'oral' advertising.

Television, one of the most developed advertising media⁵ throughout the business world, has been popular both for entertainment and information. Its wide range of broadcasting and the large number of viewers it attracts constitute its important advantages and render the tourism product advertising not only immediate but also effective, despite being costly.

Radio advertising, perhaps the most international and one of the oldest of this kind, now technologically advanced, still plays an important role in promoting the tourism product with clever and effectual spots and commercials (Arens, Arens, Weigold & Schaefer, 2011).

THE PRINT ADVERTISING TODAY

⁴ Famous painters of that period such as Spyros Vassiliou, Panagiotis Tetsis, Giorgos Manousakis, Louiza Montesantou, Elli Orphanou and even George Vakirtzis, who, although known for his exquisite cinema giant posters, had made a number of remarkable works for the touristic promotion of the country, responded to the then invitation of the Greek National Tourism Organization to promote Greece abroad, winning the impressions of experts outside Greece.

⁵Its rapid growth in Greece has been observed over the past twenty years with the entry of many private TV channels. Two-thirds of the advertising spots last 60 seconds, although a 10-second spot is capable of conveying a message.

According to marketing, advertising spreading to different types of media (information, sports, social, professional, etc.) to maximize target audience coverage, was expected to have an impact on the importance of print advertising, which nowadays is restricted to specific types of application. On the new terms of tourist offer basis, print advertising aims at the promotion of Greek culture through many activities related to history, architecture, gastronomy, conferences, agro-tourism, festivals, as well as the classical archaeological monuments, modern and traditional arts, as well as creative industries such as fashion (SETE, 2010).

Since tourism has also been divided into two very important sections, domestic and foreign, print advertising follows this division, creating new ways of promoting the tourism product. As regards the advertising which addresses to the foreign clientele, we can detect a number of new but also many old applications adapted to the contemporary cultural, aesthetic and technological data. At the same time, we can add that the private initiative is very much in competition with the public interest in tourism, as, except the Greek National Tourism Organization, there are many private companies, large travel agencies, or even well organized hotel units that are interested in the modern tourism product. Thus we will observe that the traditional poster is still a classic form of tourism advertising, but not of the same importance as in the 1960s, and of course in a quite smaller number of prints. We will find it in many tourist offices in Greece and abroad, in several exhibitions of tourism products (objects or services), hotels, public or purely touristic areas. As far as Greece is concerned as a general holiday destination, apart from the well-known, classic poster themes, we will also observe that the textual genre that prevails in most of them is photography; we will also notice an important development in the actual text itself which usually consists of a phrase or slogan which accompanies the keyword 'Greece' and serves to the conveyance of additional messages beyond the obvious one.

The accompanying text is usually written in English, and its placement on the poster is not limited or predetermined. However, despite the fact that the photographs used are all colorful, detailed with great perspective and intense brightness, the dominant color is blue. Finally, most posters of this kind are of narrative character and keep distance between the viewers and the depicted objects, humans or places, some of which seem to prevail (Koutsovassili, 2013). As regards the posters which focus on specific forms of tourism such as gastronomic tourism or agro-tourism, the photographic material used seems to have the same value as the accompanying text which, in addition to being far more extensive, may be in more than one language. The same is seen on domestic tourism posters, which are usually commissioned either by public bodies such as municipalities, counties and the Ministry of Tourism (social tourism), but also the private initiative. In this case the dominance of the image in the form of photography is evident, and in all cases the text is written in Greek, except from a few exceptions. In both cases, however, particular websites addresses are obviously pointed out on the posters, prompting readers to use them for further information.



Figure 6. A modern tourism poster based on photography, bearing a minimal text message and the website address of the Greek National Tourism Organisation.

Tourism product ads are also common in the everyday press, such as newspapers, magazines of general or special interest magazines and journals such as those which concern tourism or others related to agro-tourism, politics, art and gastronomy. Most of the times they are accompanied by special tributes or articles about Greece in general or about some of its regions. The way they are presented is quite relevant to the way the modern tourism poster is shaped, but in a better structured, smaller and possibly more effective form.



Figure 7. Contemporary Greek tourism ads in foreign magazines seem to be both impressive and effective.

Brochures are still an important form of the contemporary print advertising as they are useful pamphlets that highlight, inter alia, not only the entrepreneurs' contact with the consumers, but also the high profile of each enterprise, such as hotel units, restaurants, travel agencies etc. The modern brochures are carefully designed, usually with colorful photographic material, an impressive cover and contain useful instructions and information.

Tourists and travel guides still constitute another modern and effective way of print advertising, though many of them have been replaced with many interesting and yet handy internet applications which can now be easily accessed through tablets and mobile phones, except laptops and desktops. Apart from the well-known, exclusively professional tourist guides, special advertising guides have been published in recent years by various international companies (Gorgolitsas, 2009).

CONCLUSIONS

Post-war print tourism advertising, especially that of the 1960s, when Greek tourism began to shape its current successful physiognomy, played an important role. The lack of other effective media that could combine textual information with the power of image made print advertising the main means through which Greek tourism was promoted both abroad and within the country. The posters, brochures, advertisements in magazines and newspapers of the era were the ideal ambassadors of the country's cultural and morphological values, shaping its high tourist potential.

However, in the modern times of globalization and technological development, the means available to promote the tourist destination create new data which have also great potential. In their everyday lives, modern consumers can choose between multiple destinations, different types of tourism products, as well as multiple ways of transport and stay as now there are plenty of choices. Tourism advertising has, since a long time, stopped being a mere combination of image and text, as concepts such as motion, sound and media speed can now be combined and create a synergy of senses, resulting in the formation of a typically influential consumer-based virtual reality (Lagerkvist, 2008).

More precisely, by studying the way the Internet and users behave, we can notice that consumers constitute an active body. There are many options available on the screen (categories of a menu, references in a text, etc.) and thus they can freely choose both the tourism product to buy and the time they will spend on this purchase.

Web publishing is much easier than the print publishing, in many cases cheaper and the material that the public has at its disposal is vastly larger. A natural result of this multitude of information is the greater specialization and the consumers fragmentation into several, but also smaller and of more specialized interest groups (Epitedios, 2002).

Contemporary print tourism advertising, although it has lost a great deal of its glamour and its influential value in shaping the viewpoint of a much larger tourism product clientele, still claims a bit of this new order. However, many times it is deliberately combined with the contemporary media whose competitiveness is no longer negotiable.

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