The attraction of islands: travellers and tourists in the Cyclades (Greece) in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries

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Islands have long acted as projection surfaces of ever-changing desires. Tourism organisations have drawn most vigorously upon the paradise metaphor in an attempt to position modern island holidays at the forefront of our minds – regardless of an island's location. Tracing the most recent history of our island-longing and illuminating the use of the island metaphor by tourist organisations is the aim of this article. A short account of the history of tourism in Greece (especially the Cycladic Islands) provides the backdrop to an in-depth picture and text analysis of nine official English and German tourist guides to the Cyclades, as well as the English-speaking version of the official Cyclades website. Images and text are coded according to pre-determined themes and contrasted with each other. Investigating islands from the perspective of tourists and tourist organisations, it becomes apparent that the official brochures draw on established island tropes and stereotypical island imagery as a means to attract travellers, and thus follow a long-established pattern of what Western culture considers unique for island locations. Dissonances, however, are emerging as our longing for island locations is contradicted by our need for ease and speed of access, thus negating the sought-after quintessential 'islandness'.

Keywords: island; tourism experience; Greece; brochure analysis; paradise

Introduction

Western culture has been fascinated by islands for many centuries. This fascination resides in their liminal status – neither fully land nor sea. In contrast with mainland locales, visit to them necessitates a journey that involves the crossing of water, and their geographical boundedness gives the impression that they are knowable in their totality within a short time span, affording visitors a feeling of an all-embracing, comprehensive experience (cf. Baum 1997). However, it was particularly during the 18th and 19th centuries that islands became a projection surface for our innermost longings, either as a long-lost paradise or not yet achieved utopian future (Billig, 2010; Gillis, 2004; also Berg, in press). Supported by the emergence of the concept of 'taking a holiday' during Victorian times (Bailey, 1978; Löfgren, 2002; Walvin, 1978), tourism has since inextricably linked islands and holidays; thus turning islands into the prime holiday destination

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promising a return to a slower, more relaxed lifestyle removed from the worries and stresses of normal life. While the original paradise was located on tropical islands, the Cyclades and other Mediterranean islands soon became more affordable and more easily accessible substitutes. With their mix of hot summers, warm seas and an intriguing past, they soon became a favourite holiday destination for northern Europeans (Berg, in press). Tracing the most recent history of our island longing and illuminating the use of the island metaphor by tourist organisations, is thus the aim of this article. Drawing on an in-depth picture and text analysis of both online and paper versions of tourism marketing literature, travellers appear to be drawn to the apparent 'islandness' of their destinations with text and images promoting sea, beaches and islands over other aspects of Greek life and the Greek environment. In reality, however, jarring tensions are emerging in this supposed idyll as the 'islandness' that tourist so desperately seek because it is negated by their need to reach their holiday destination quickly and easily; thus contradicting one of the central facets of the island effect. With dissonances potentially also occurring in many other areas, such as environmental issues, the economy and local political and cultural debates, it is important to emphasise that this article is only able to engage in detail with one perspective, namely that of tourists and the tourism industry.

The beginnings of tourism in Greece and the Cyclades

Independent travellers have been recording their visits to the Cyclades since the Middle Ages (Figure 1). Only a handful in the beginning, numbers began to increase from the seventeenth century onwards (Berg, in press). These travellers had to overcome considerable hardship during their island journeys, as travel was physically demanding, living conditions basic, supplies difficult to replenish, illnesses frequent, pirate attacks possible, boats in a poor state of repair, and heavy winds could enforce long waiting periods (e.g. Bent, 2006 [1885–1889]). While travel in the Cyclades would remain comparatively challenging well into the twentieth century, at least the building of railways in France and Austria in the 1820s as well as Italy and Spain in the 1860s and, subsequently, the construction of a railway line and 'motorway' between northern Greece and Attica in Edwardian times made access much easier (Pemble, 1987, pp. 29–33).

At the same time, Greece took its first steps to become a destination for organised tourism (Eisner, 1993, pp. 126–127). In 1833 it was included in package cruises to the eastern Mediterranean and tours by Thomas Cook and the HAPAG package tours in 1891 (Brendon, 1991; Kludas, 2001). The first travel guidebook by John Murray was published in 1845; by 1900 the guidebook had been expanded to include route suggestions, coloured maps and a Greek–English vocabulary. Furthermore, the selection of Otto in 1832 as the first king of the Greeks opened up Greece to the Germans (Eisner, 1993, pp. 126–128). With excavations revealing even more about the ancient past, the Greek mainland soon became a desirable destination for study trips. In 1892, Dörpfeld, a German architect, organised the first study trip to the islands during which more than 60 scholars and students of German, Russian, Italian, English, American and Greek nationality were introduced to the archaeology of the islands (Manatt, 1914, p. 189; for summaries see Fitton, 1995; Whitley, 2001).

Until the eighteenth century, travellers did not comment on the island location but focused their travelogues on geology, architecture, customs, flora and fauna. It is only from the end of the eighteenth century that we find writers engaging with the island setting *per se*. These writers followed the predominant literary narrative in relation to

Figure 1.   Map of Greece highlighting the main island groups, main cities and neighbouring countries (map adapted from: http://d-maps.com/carte.php?lib=aegean_sea_map&num_car= 13619&lang=en).

Greek island literature as established in the literature of Romantic Hellenism. Flowing from the discoveries of tropical islands in the Atlantic and Pacific, Mediterranean islands – with their heady mix of a beautiful climate, intriguing locals and an imposing Classical past – also became a projection surface for utopian and paradisal longings (for an overview, see Berg in press). It was only on rare occasions that the intellectual and emotional distance between the imagined paradise and the experienced reality was so vast that crushing disappointment was as heart-felt as experienced by Abercromby Trant (quoted in Pemble, 1987, p.127): 'thus at every step a stranger makes in Greece, the veil of romance is forcibly rent from his eyes'.

The two world wars interrupted any systematic efforts of tourism development. Instead, Greece became attractive to a different kind of traveller – the expatriate. As Eisner (1993) argues, it was the pleasant Greek lifestyle that appealed to writers who wanted to escape the doom and gloom of the post-war years. Over the years, several writers made their homes on Greek islands and wrote about their experiences (e.g. Connell, 1980; Durrell, 1978; Finer, 1964; Galt, 1988; Liddell, 1954; Manatt, 1914; Matthews, 1968, 1971). For those who visited for shorter periods, such as William Golding, Henry Miller, Evelyn Waugh, Virginia Woolf, Florence Nightingale, Nancy Spain and Monica Krippner, escape was not their prime motive. Instead, following in the footsteps of Romantic Hellenism, they were entranced by Greece's innocence, beauty and culture (Wills, 2007).

The rise of mass tourism in Greece

It was only in the 1960s that the situation changed in Greece, and major tourism development commenced in the mid-1970s.[1] Between 1960 and 2002 the total number of tourist arrivals to Greece grew by an average of approximately 2.4% per year. Since then, Greece has experienced a minor downturn (Dritsakis, 2004). In 2005, Greece was ranked the 16th most popular tourism destination in the world and the 10th in the world for total revenues from tourist services. In 1999, tourism accounted for 6% of the Greek GDP and ca. 50%–90% of the island/coastal regional gross product (Buhalis, 1999). Recent figures indicate that it now adds up to 18% of Greece's GDP. When the black market/parallel economy is taken into account, estimates jump as high as 28–50% (Buhalis, 2001; Vlami, Zacharatos, & Tsamos, 2006). Most of the visitors come from Europe, with Germany and the UK being the two largest contributors. Island and coastal areas are particularly geared towards tourism and have become ever more developed (Vlami, 2010: Figure 2); Crete and Rhodes now receive almost 50% of all foreign tourists (Andriotis, 2004; Coccossis & Constantoglou, 2005). This development was supported by government-sponsored advertising promotions and higher than average tourism development subsidies (Andriotis, 2004). While there are undoubtedly many negative aspects, it is worth mentioning that these regions have benefited disproportionately financially from tourism.[2] With unemployment in the insular regions below the national average and GNP higher than the Greek average, the islands now form the wealthiest region in Greece (Andriotis, 2004).[3]

Ease and speed of access to their holiday destination are of major relevance to modern tourists (about 77.7% of visitors to Greece come by plane). All islands have regular ferry connections and many now have airports receiving national flights. Only the most developed islands, however, have an international airport that receives direct charter flights, and it is invariably those islands that have the highest number of tourists and are catering most strongly for the mass market (Buhalis, 2001; Rigas, 2009). With cancellations more frequent for ferry passengers, the income profile of travellers indicates that ferry travel is more popular with the time-affluent, but cost-conscious traveller. Plane travel, on the other hand, is preferred by the wealthier population segments and for longer distances (i.e. direct charter flights) (Andriotis, 2004; Rigas, 2009).

Tourism in the Greek islands: the twenty-first century

Greece as an established holiday brand has challenges of different types to meet.[4] Locally, it is often difficult for a visitor to distinguish different (island) regions of Greece from each other (e.g. Cyclades, Dodecanese, Sporades, Ionian Islands, Crete). With many island groups offering similar vacation options and branding themselves in similar ways, the marketing does not accurately reflect the geological and environmental differences that in fact exist between different regions in Greece. With its characteristic white-washed houses and blue doors and windows, the Cyclades appear to be the only region clearly distinguished visually (Figure 2).[5]

On a regional scale, Greece's marketing efforts have been perceived as quite successful. Interviews conducted with directors of Greek Tourism offices in Germany, UK, Austria, Belgium, France, Italy, Switzerland and the Netherlands in the 1980s indicate that they believed the Greek brand to be 'quite successful compared with their keenest competitors, essentially Spain and Italy' (Papadopoulos, 1989, p. 301). The interviewees identified Greek antiquities as the main distinguishing selling point over other regional competitors.

Figure 2.   The Cyclades in images (top left to bottom right: the port of Adamas on Melos; Melos viewed from the sea; church of Agios Nikolaos at Pollonia, Melos; fields on Kimolos). Permission for image reproduction granted by Rod Feldtmann (top left, top right, bottom left).

In a contemporary tourist survey, visitors listed the climate and antiquities as the main attractions. Not surprisingly, the climate was more important to visitors from northern Europe, while those from Italy, Belgium and France ranked antiquities highest (Table 1). Since then, competition has increased and new (often cheaper) entrants into the Mediterranean holiday market have drawn holiday-makers away from Greece. With final choice now often determined by price, Greece as a member of the Euro-Zone is no longer able to offer the elastic pricing desired by visitors. In 2005, Greece was ranked 16th in terms of visitor arrivals – considerably behind Spain and Italy (Balomenou, Lagos, & Arsenos, 2005, p. 3). A survey of the perceived advantages of Greece *vis à vis* Turkey, Egypt and Italy by US-based tourism operators and travel agents indicated that all four destinations are considered as remarkably similar in their holiday offerings. Greece stood out marginally merely in terms of pleasant climate, great beaches, island locations and personal safety (Baloglu & Mangaloglu, 2001: Tables 3 and 4) (Table 2). No doubt, the current political and financial woes will be negatively impacting current tourist choices.

Worldwide, Greek islands are competing with regions such as Indonesia and the Caribbean that can offer considerable price reductions as well as the allure of a truly exotic experience at a price better or equal to a holiday in Europe (Balomenou et al., 2005). The distance that visitors have to travel to these locations can both be an advantage and a disadvantage: the longer travel time and inevitable jetlag make these destinations less favoured by those on short holidays. On the other hand, their keen pricing and remoteness make them ideal locations for those wishing to have a more exotic holiday on a limited budget.

Table 1. Reasons for choosing Greece as a holiday destination, 1984–5 (*n* = 5258; adapted from Papadopoulos, 1989, p. 307).

Reason		Percent
Average of all responses		
Climate		45
Antiquities		9
Cost of stay		1
Other reasons		17
Combination of climate and antiquities		24
Combination of climate and costs		4
Country of origin	Reason: climate	Reason: antiquities
Climate and antiquities only		
Northern Europe		
Austria	57%	4%
Germany	48%	6%
Netherlands	49%	7%
Switzerland	53%	3%
UK	62%	3%
Southern Europe		
Belgium	32%	14%
France	31%	12%
Italy	30%	25%

Table 2. Unstructured evaluations of US-based travel operators of Greece (*n* = 107; adapted from Baloglu & Mangaloglu 2001: Table 4).

Description	Frequency (%)
Historic, ancient ruins, archaeology, old	14
Sunshine, blue skies, beaches	11.2
Relaxing	10.3
Islands	10.3
Memorable, magnificent, beautiful, majestic, magical	9.3
Fascinating, exciting, stimulating, exotic, colourful, attractive	7.5
Friendly, hospitable, inviting people	4.7
Cuisine	4.7
Fun, entertainment	3.7
Culture, diverse, democracy, civilisation	1.9
Dirty, crowded, noisy, spoiled	1.9
Mysterious, mystic	1.9
Expensive	1.9

Visitor profiles

Whether competing on a local, regional or worldwide level, the character of visitors to Greece has changed almost completely over the last 100 years. Until the 1950s, most visitors continued in the traditions of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century travellers who were well educated in ancient history and classical authors, and had primarily cultural interests when visiting Greece (Galani-Moutafi, 2004). As Murray's *Handbook* states: 'a journey to Greece is full of interest for a traveller of every character, except indeed for a mere idler or man of pleasure' (1884, p. 7). Likewise, the chosen advertising slogan by the GNTO 'You were born in Greece' made reference to visitors' interests in the Greek past.

However, already in 1968, the slogan, and with it the entire advertising focus, was changed to 'Fun in Greece' – thus officially changing Greece's holidaying profile to one of pleasure seekers (Wills, 2007, p. 79; Terkenli, 2001).

This shift in tourist profiles is underscored by research into tourist types. Research by Selanniemi among Finnish tourists visiting Athens and Rhodes in the 1980s was the first to identify two contrasting visitor types – those attracted by beaches, sun, sand and sea and those with cultural interests (Wills, 2007; Galani-Moutafi, 2004). A more detailed set of types was developed by Fotis in relation to visitors to Rhodes and Wickens who studied visitors to the Chalkidiki. Fotis (summarised by Buhalis, 2001, p. 444), classified visitors into *Tranquillers* (seeking relaxing holidays), *Culturers* (with a major interest in Greece's history), *Budgeters* (holidaying within a constraint financial budget) and *Nightlifers* (seeking nightlife entertainment). Wickens (2002) identified five visitor types: the *Cultural Heritage* type (who want to experience 'real' Greek culture and immerse themselves in Greece's history), *Raver* (focused on sensual and hedonistic pleasures), *Shirley Valentine* (looking for a romantic experience with a 'Greek God'), *Heliolatrous* (sun-seekers) and *Lord Byron* (who seek a nostalgic engagement with the 'ideal' Greek past). While tourist profiling can be made ever more detailed and categories broken down even further, it is interesting to note that – despite their different motivations – the activities engaged in and experiences encountered on their holidays do not differ substantially between different types as all involve beaches, museums and ancient sites to varying degrees. The difference is that cultural types may seek out sites before going to beaches while sunseekers seek out sites when all other travel needs have been met (or when the weather is bad – a commonly noted phenomenon by museum guards).

Analysis of official tourist brochures: methodology and discussion

As demonstrated above, the switch from a well-educated traveller interested in the cultural remains of a great past to mass tourism concerned with an emphasis on the three Ss (sun, sand and sea – often complemented by the fourth S, sex) occurred in the 1960s and was one supported (if not initiated) by a governmental marketing strategy (for an overview of the history of pleasure-seeking beach holidays, see Löfgren, 2002). Based on 15,000 miles of coastline, c. 200 inhabited islands, an average of 300 sunny days annually and a lack of diverse resources on most islands, there was a natural emphasis on the pleasure-seeking dimension with the almost inevitable social and economic consequences (e.g. seasonal income and employment, increased competition between destinations also offering the three Ss, holiday-home ownership and seasonal population changes, reduction in quality of natural and cultural capital, urbanisation of coastal zones and islands; see Andriotis, 2004 for a summary of problems encountered). It is only in the last 5–10 years that Greece has been attempting to forge a new holiday image for itself by offering alternative activities (such as activity, hiking and spa holidays) and by attempting to diversify destination locations by marketing the smaller islands more strongly. Island locations remain at the very core of the brand 'Greece'. A detailed analysis of the literary and visual tropes presented in the official holiday literature and websites for the Cycladic islands for the year 2010/2011 provides a true measure of the intended island image today and whether the change in marketing tactics has penetrated all dimensions or whether it continues along established themes.

The empirical analysis consists of nine 'official' Cyclades tourist brochures provided by the Greek tourist authorities in the UK and in Germany, as well as the English-speaking version of the official Cyclades website.[6] The material was analysed in two ways: first, all pictures were numbered and coded based on their content[7] (for a detailed explanation of this methodology, see Edelheim, 2007). Broad categories were: with/without people,

active/passive, location – indoor/outdoor, time of day, natural environment, built environment and hospitality facilities. The second analysis was textual. Here, Baloglu and Mangaloglu's (2001) categories of themes, as presented in Table 2, were used as the basis for the analysis, with further categories added based on the frequency of their emergence in an initial trial. Categories include islands, ocean, weather, historical references, religious attractions, mountainous terrain, local originality, arts and crafts. The textual analysis was carried out manually due to the complexity created through using material in two different languages. Each coding exercise was done by two persons in order to reach a consensus about interpretations and to discuss pictures or texts that could be construed in different ways.

Picture analysis

Table 3 summarises the results of our picture analysis. There was a rather small emphasis on pictures with people in the brochures, around a quarter of the total, and the majority of these

Table 3.   Picture analysis. (Note that percentages do not amount to 100% as pictures can have several motives and thus be classified in several categories simultaneously.)

Sex	
Women	11.7%
Men	17.3%
Number of people	
1 person	5.6%
2 people	2.4%
3 or more people	10.9%
Activities	
Passive	7.3%
Active	10.6%
Location	
Indoors	7.9%
Outdoors	86.5%
Time of day	
Sunrise	0.1%
Day	78.9%
Sunset	4.6%
Night	2.8%
Natural environment	
Forest	4.2%
Hill	27.6%
Cliff	15.3%
Ocean	31.2%
Beach	14.1%
Animal	2.8%
Other	1.5%
Built environment	
Boats	17.6%
Harbour	6.8%
Garden	4.7%
Building	47.7%
Art	2.5%
Hospitality facilities	
Accommodation	6.4%
Food & Beverage	9.1%
Other	2.6%

were of locals. This is an unusual strategy as tourist brochures commonly picture tourists in different holiday settings in order to create a tangible tableau for readers in order to emphasise the service promise on offer (Kotler, Bowen & Makens, 2010). That there are more pictures of men than women is also uncommon – the reason for these choices seem to have been to incorporate images of local people in the brochures to highlight the original character and distinct experience the islands offer. In addition, Scott suggests that the emphasis on men in Greek pictures references men as 'Greek Gods' available for sexual encounters as characterised by Wickens' (2002) category of 'Shirley Valentines' tourists. Women, in contrast, are marginalised as 'backwards, traditional and unattractive' (Scott, 1995, p. 387). The largest number of pictures had three or more people in them, a signal to readers that the destinations are family-friendly, or places where socialisation is part of the offer, rather than being exclusively for couples, or independent solo-travellers.

Whereas earlier studies have emphasised the relaxed nature of holidays in the Cyclades, it is again notable that most of the pictures with people show them engaged in activities. As a large part of the people are portrayed as locals, it can again be a sign of using locals working in traditional jobs (fishing, farming) to highlight the 'authentic' character of the destination (MacCannell, 1976).

The vast majority of pictures were portraying outdoor views and were taken during daytime hours. This is an indication that the official brochures want to maintain the traditional holiday emphasis of relaxing breaks in a natural setting, rather than focusing on evening and night entertainment or on elaborate built facilities. A third of all pictures show the ocean as a main feature and, when pictures of beaches are included, almost half of all pictures show blue water as their main feature. This may not be surprising for brochures presenting island destinations; what is, however, a little unexpected is that another third of the pictures show hills and mountains, whereas dramatic cliffs make up another large category of pictures.

Human-made environments focused to a large extent (almost half the pictures) on the typical white-washed houses and churches that the Cyclades are known for, with another quarter of the pictures portraying boats and harbours. These categories are standard features in brochures presenting Greece suggesting that brochures are imitating the stereotypes created about what foreign tourists expect to find, rather than daring to educate about alternative views (cf. Travlou, 2002).[8]

Textual analysis: the bigger picture

The results of the textural analysis are summarised in Table 4. This shows the very strong emphasis in the material on the 'islandness' of the destination. A fifth of the text focuses in

Table 4.   Textual analysis of single words and themes.

1	Island	21.73%
2	Ocean (sea, harbour, coast, bay)	14.27%
3	History (ancient, old, history, archaeology, castle, ruin)	13.64%
4	Religious (church, cathedral, monastery, chapel, sanctuary)	9.22%
5	Climate (sunshine, blue skies, beaches)	8.97%
6	Hill (mountain, cliff, rock, peak, cave)	8.46%
7	Originality (people, local, farm, fishing)	5.11%
8	Adjectives referring to beauty	4.66%
9	Arts (craft, music, dance, singing)	3.07%
10	Adjectives relating to stimulation	2.17%
11–17	Culture; Volcano; Cuisine, Relaxation; Hospitable; Fun; Mystic	8.7%

different ways on attributes and specific features of the places, constantly pointing out their island character. The second textual group is linked to 'islandness' in equal measure in that it focuses on the waters surrounding the land, referring to geographical and geological formations that islands are defined by. The third and fourth categories are related to one another in that they are both creating a distinct narrative of the islands by emphasising the history of and on the islands, either through references to old civilisations, archaeological finds or their strong religious heritage.

The fifth largest theme refers to the climate of the islands; this is to be expected from brochures aimed at travellers from the north of Europe who often see the countries around the Mediterranean as typifying 3S tourism. Counts in this category are lower than expected which indicates that the Greek tourist authorities are aiming at a more 'sophisticated' image where the destination's unique selling points are based on the island status and rich regional heritage.

The hills that were a strong theme amongst the pictures are merely the sixth largest textual theme. The reason for this is that hills and cliffs make for excellent and dramatic pictures. Text, in contrast, needs to evoke within travellers a flavour of the anticipated experiences; with the exception of active tourists who go for brisk walks or mountain climbing, it is easier for the brochures to present an account of a relaxing holiday by the sea, the beaches and the opportunity to travel from island to island. It could therefore be suggested that the common holiday activities the brochure texts are proposing are 'relatively passive form[s] of physical and mental relaxation' rather than 'active relaxation' where the mind relaxes whilst the body is active (Voigt, Brown, & Howat, 2011, p. 21).

The numbers in the final categories were not very large. Some brochures had a larger emphasis on some themes, but as a total these categories do not offer up any significant insights, although they stand for almost a quarter of the text in the material as a total.

Textual analysis: the island picture

Digging down deeper, the second textual analysis scrutinises the adjectives associated with the word 'island' (Figure 3). Adjectives are separated into four textual categories: descriptive, directional, place-related and other. Of these, direction and place describe geographical relationships between the islands and/or the mainland, while the category 'other' mainly represents nicknames or geological characterisations – they are of lesser importance for the purpose of this study. Our main focus is on the category 'descriptive' which presents a striking picture of continuity of well-established paradise island tropes in modern tourism literature, such as the assumption of unspoilt nature (beautiful, picturesque, wonderful), a return to a golden age where humans are in tune with nature (authentic, hospitable, real), and a simpler life free from the shackles of civilisation (traditional, peaceful). 'Small' stands out as the most frequently used word by far. Not only does this choice of word invoke a belief that the island is knowable in its entirety, hence facilitating a much more intimate and holistic encounter than would be possible on larger islands or indeed mainland locations, but it also implies a less touristic experience and hence a deeper and more truthful authenticity.

From our picture and text analysis it can be concluded – with nods to Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, Gauguin's Tahiti paintings and Garland's *The Beach* – that current tourist brochures of the Cycladic islands pay silent homage to a long and well-known line of island tropes. Never explicit, but always present in the subtext, these brochures are a continuation of beloved island books in a revised format. An unspoiled environment, a stress-free stay, and hospitable and down-to-earth people, evokes the imagery of a life remote from modern

Group	Adjective	A - Eng	B - Eng	C - Ger	D - Eng/Ger	E - Eng	F - Ger	G - Eng	H - Eng	I - Eng	J	Total
	Small	4		2	1			13	4			24
	Beautiful	1		1	2			4				8
	Uninhabited				1			4	1			6
	Holy	1						4				5
	Largest				2			2				4
	Traditional								2	2		4
	Authentic							1	2	1		4
	Picturesque	2						1				3
	Rocky			1				2				3
	Sacred	1							1			2
	Rocky	1							1			2
	Mountainous	2										2
	Peaceful	1						1				2
	Hospitable								2			2
	Inhabited							1		1		2
	Wonderful							2				2
Descriptive	Fertile							2				2
	Busy	1										1
	Virgin	1										1
	Barren	1										1
	Typical				1							1
	Simple								1			1
	Unchanging			1								1
	Dream			1								1
	Green							1				1
	Cosmopolitan							1				1
	Homely							1				1
	Antique							1				1
	Real							1				1
	Neighbouring			2	2			10	2			16
	Surrounding				1			8		1		10
	Easternmost				3	2	1					6
Direction	Nearby	1			1	2			1			5
	Northerly	1							1			2
	Westernmost							1	1			2
	Southern				1							1
	Seagull				3							3
	Sister			2								2
	Our				1							1
Other	Pirates								1			1
	Home								1			1
	Marble			1								1
	First						1					1
	Volcanic							1				1
	Cycladic	3			3	7		7				20
	Greek	1			1	1		1				4
Place	Milos		1	3								4
	Aegean	2			1							3
	Naxos						2					2
	Keros									1		1

Figure 3.   Textual analysis of adjectives associated with the word 'island'/'Insel' taken from nine official English and German tourism brochures and one official English tourism website. Adjectives are classified under four categories: descriptive, directional, place-related and other.

pressures. With the modern reality rarely as idyllic as the stereotype, the brochures are a typical example of how texts virtually construct physical places – so that the consumption of the physical place is more a confirmation of the virtual place than an appreciation of the island reality.

Islomania

As the above synthesis and tourist literature analysis has demonstrated, our attraction to (Greek) islands has a long history (Billig, 2010; Gillis, 2004). With their ability to act as a mirror for our innermost desires, it is no surprise that islands have become one of the most popular holiday destinations. Their ability to entice us visually and viscerally is amply exemplified by the recent example of the 'I left my heart in the Aegean Sea' blog phenomenon: in 2003, an engineer working in Taiwan published 124 of his holiday snaps from the Cyclades on his blog to share with his friends. Almost instantly the website became an online phenomenon. Six thousand visitors on the first day turned into one million visitors after the first month. Nearly two million visitors had viewed the blog over the first six months. Following the approach by a publishing company, the pictures were commercialised through a photo book, desk calendar and jigsaw. More importantly, perhaps, an analysis of the blog comments themselves indicated a deeply felt desire by 40% of those who had read the blog to visit the Cyclades in that year or in the near future. In several cases, the longing was so pronounced that a trip had already been arranged (Lin & Huang, 2006).

Regardless of whether the trigger for our island-longing resides in images or text, it is unlikely that islands could have become such tourism hot spots were it not for certain

"Islandness"	Tourist Reality
• Need for travel/remoteness	• Ease of access
• Crossing of the sea	• Speed of access
• Boundedness	• Sun, sand, and sea
• Favourite holiday destination	• Island = mainland

Figure 4.   The island–tourist dilemma.

features that appear to differentiate them from many mainland locales, including the need for travel, the crossing of a sea and their boundedness (Royle, 2001; for critical discussions on 'islandness' see Broodbank, 2000; Rainbird, 2007). As Renfrew (2004) has pointed out, islands take on special meaning because they feel remote and necessitate a journey, however short, that removes us from our daily lives and thus creates the phenomenon of 'islandness'. Or as Baum (1997, p. 21) has phrased it, 'the feeling of separateness, of being cut off from the mainland, is an important physical and psychological attribute of the successful vacation' – one most easily experienced on an island (cf. also Butler, 1993, p. 71). More importantly, the journey requires us to cross water, an element qualitatively different from land. Islands – neither land nor sea – are conceived as liminal places that by their very nature promise a different range of experiences. In addition, islands are the only obvious physical form that has clear and unmistakable edges and can often be explored fully by walking (Mina, 2009), further confirmed by the fact that a miniscule number of picture in the brochures analysed depict cars. Not unlike the very popular city holidays, islands give the illusion of being a microcosm of the world at large and knowable in their totality within a short time span, affording visitors a feeling of an all-embracing, comprehensive experience.

In stark contrast to this lure of the islands stands the tourists' need to get to their destination speedily. There is a strong correlation between high tourist arrivals and the existence of an international airport. Islands that can only be reached by boat see a considerably lower numbers of tourists.[9] As a consequence of our need for ease and speed of access, islands are no longer 'islands' in the geographical sense; the needs of modern tourists negate their very existence (Figure 4). Instead, they have become an extension of the mainland coastal resorts and beaches that have been stretched into the sea. Here, planes will land daily and build a bridge to the tourists' homeland. Thus, along with many other tourist destinations, islands as geographic locations have become commercialised, they have become an industry. As a consequence, their character has often been reduced to a brand that has preserved its romanticised pleasure-seeking aspect whilst, for all intents and purposes, being land-based, easy to reach and convenient to access. With the islands' previously having acted as an ever-changing mirror of our innermost desires, it is intriguing to see that their current incarnation is that of a mainland location.

Acknowledgements

Notes

1. In 1938 Greece received 90,000 visitors, in 1960 the numbers increased to 399,000, to 1.6 million by 1969, and almost 11 million in 1999 (Buhalis, 2001; Wills, 2007, p. 29).
2. Holiday tourism is therefore the most dominant economic activity on most of the islands. Only few (i.e. Melos and Kimolos – mining, Delos – archaeology, Tinos – religion, Syros – business) have a more diverse economic base.
3. However, it must be acknowledged here that there are major differences between individual islands (e.g. Tsartas, 1992).
4. Greek tourism activity is overseen and promoted by the Ministry of Tourist Development through its governing body, the Greek National Tourism Organisation (GNTO). In addition to its head office in Athens, it has established branches in all 13 regions of Greece and information desks at major tourist centres in Greece. The GNTO also operates ca. 25 offices in the major tourism feeder countries around the world (Buckley & Papadopoulos, 1986; Vlami, 2010).
5. It should be noted that the combination of blue and white echos the colours of the Greek national flag.
6. (A) *Greece-Cyclades*; (B) *Best of Milos in Responsible Tourism 2007*; (C) *Kykladen – Paradies für Inselspringer*; (D) *Milos Guidebook 2009*; (E) *Island of Naxos – it's multicolour*; (F) *Der beste Reiseführer – Speziell für Sie*; (G) *Escape Guide. Minor Cyclades and Amorgos – No one will find you here!*; (H) *Island Hopping – One Trip, Many Destinations!*; (I) *Walking Holidays – Take the Secret Tourist Trail...;* (J) http://www.visitgreece.gr
7. The coding of the pictures was done by a research assistant who was briefed on the type of categories to be analysed. Each picture from the brochures was numbered and its content recorded in a database. Every brochure was analysed in its own right; it was only as a second step that this information was brought together in one combined database. It is acknowledged that subjectivity is inevitable in any coding process, and the research assistant was therefore guided to point out pictures with potentially ambiguous messages. A discussion about those pictures followed in which a consensus, based on criteria set beforehand, was reached before entry of the data into the database took place. This is in line with suggestions, given in earlier studies, on how to reduce biases in coding exercises (Leiss, Kline, & Jhally, 1990).
8. An interesting feature was one large brochure called 'Der Beste Reiseführer – Speziell für Sie' (The Best Travelguide – Especially for You) that reused the same pictures on a frequent basis, even though they were supposed to portray different places on different islands. The suggestion that can be made is thus that images from the islands are so interchangeable that it does not even matter if the same picture is used once, twice, three or even four times – 'it all looks the same anyhow', hardly complimentary to the perceptiveness of the brochure-reader.
9. It is likely that direct and indirect access islands attract different kinds of tourists. An in-depth analysis of tourist profiles in relation to island destinations as well as emerging consequences for marketing and location branding present a separate research question that, unfortunately, is beyond the scope of this paper.

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