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# On the Marketing Implications of Place Narratives

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# **On the Marketing Implications of Place Narratives**

## **Abstract**

Acknowledging that 'locals' are recognised as an important (yet neglected) dimension of place marketing and following critiques of places as 'products', the purpose of this paper is to give voice to 'local people'. Drawing on local narratives of Santorini, Greece, we call attention to places as culturally significant and discursively produced and consumed. Local narratives provide multiple meanings constructed around the diverse and contested experiences of living and making a living in a place. Our analysis employs the metaphors of 'harsh beauty', 'service business' and 'home' to capture these perspectives. The paper has implications for the development of generative metaphors of 'place' and 'local' within place marketing and contributes to the dialogue over the continued relevance of our discipline to the public sphere.

## **Summary statement of contribution**

The paper contributes to a 'critical' place marketing agenda by capturing local narratives of place. The emergent themes reveal that 'local', far from a homogeneous category, involves multiple and contested meanings, as even within a single narrative the experience of place is built around varied readings of living, working, and consuming. The paper reveals that the production and consumption of place are dialectical rather than distinct processes and delineates implications for marketing.

## **Keywords**

critical marketing, local people, place, narrative

## **Introduction**

Despite Haywood's (1990) articulation of the limits of the marketing concept for tourism, the disciplines of tourism and place marketing continue to apply marketing principles with something less than a critical eye. In focusing on place products and place customers, marketers have been accused of objectifying and commodifying places in order that they can manipulate and control the tangible features of those places to their own ends (Williams et al. 1992). In doing so the needs of those people constituting places have not generally been accommodated (Aitken and Campelo 2011). Essentially, the focus on tourists as 'customers' to be targeted, and tourism destinations, cities, regions and even countries as 'products' to be marketed (Ashworth and Voogd 1990a,1990b; Buhalis 2000; Murphy et al. 2000; Kotler et al. 1999; Kotler and Gertner 2002) marginalises the people actually constituting place (Aitken and Campelo 2011). Such an approach has been criticised for failing to accommodate the public interest, and, especially, to undermining sustainable tourism development (Hall 2000). Thus, there is a need to consider cultural and social concerns in addition to economic and political issues (Anholt 2005). This task challenges the disciplinary boundaries of marketing and calls for a critical examination of the relationship between marketing and society (Tadajewski and Brownlie 2008). Significantly, the complex relationships between place, identity and the local population have recently begun to attract the attention of place marketers (Lindstedt 2011). 'Local people' are thus increasingly treated as an important (yet neglected) dimension of place marketing. According to Braun et al. (2013: 18-19): '[Locals] are not just passive beneficiaries or place customers but could be active partners and co-producers of public goods, services and policies'. Thus, it becomes incumbent upon marketers to accommodate the voices of those people constituting places, to understand how they contribute to the production and consumption of place, to identify how they experience place and impact

upon the experience of others, and, ultimately, to investigate how they impact on the management and marketing of places.

We contribute to these understandings by examining the narrative construction of place from the perspective of local people in Santorini, Greece. Employing phenomenological interviews as 'narrative construction sites' (Czarniawska, 2004), we investigate how people living and working in Santorini construct a sense of place. The paper continues with a rationale for our focus on narratives of place. Next we provide coverage of the methodological approach taken before presenting the main themes that emerge from the interpretation and analysis of local narratives. The paper concludes with a discussion of the implications of the research for place marketing.

### **Towards Local Narratives of Place**

Warnaby and Medway (2013) draw attention to the ethereal qualities of the concept of place and build upon Cresswell and Hoskins (2008) to highlight the material and symbolic foundations of various understandings. Thus, places are not simply geographic locations with objective physical attributes, but have generally come to be understood in terms of three core elements: material form, location, and sense of place (Agnew 1987; Van Patten and Williams 2008). Sense of place, bounded by the material form and location of that place (Stedman 2003), is composed both of emotional reactions to a place and interpretations of that place. That is, sense of place incorporates both place attachment and place meanings. Gunderson and Watson (2007) suggest that emotional attachments to a place help forge strong feelings about the place and, as a consequence, heightened concerns about its management. From this perspective places become 'fluid, changeable, dynamic contexts of social interaction and memory' (Stokowski 2002: 369) where multi-

layered and multipurpose meanings play a crucial role (Davenport and Anderson 2005). Understanding the production and consumption of these place meanings helps to better conceptualise and understand the nature of tourist places (Young 1999) and to identify how, in the context of planning, management and marketing, particular attitudes and behaviours emerge (Davenport and Anderson 2005).

Place meanings are constructed through direct and indirect experience of places (Gunderson and Watson 2007), interactions with others (Kyle and Chick 2007), and through the plethora of narratives (generated by marketers, tourists and locals) that circulate about the place. Indeed, Bendix (2002: 476) argues that narration is an important tool in the creation of tourist attractions and notes how tourist destinations receive visitors 'through the narrative morsels it plants itself or that are put in circulation by others'. Marketer-generated narratives (in advertising, brochures etc.) offer powerful spatialising discourses that help to create 'imaginary geographies' (Hopkins 1998; Young 1999), effectively working to theme, designate, re-vision and re-image places (Hughes 1998) and blur the boundaries between reality and perception (Larsen 2006). For their part, tourist narratives abound as tourists draw on their experience of place and pre-existing narratives to co-construct new stories (Chronis 2005) to be later woven into their own autobiographical tales (Rickly-Boyd 2009). Selwyn (1996) discusses the myth-making inclinations of tourists as their experiences lead them to construct ideas, images and fantasies about the Other that ultimately influence tourism places. Our interest, however, is in the narratives of locals which have been used heretofore in the study of place to investigate issues as diverse as cultural identity in Minnesota (Bird 2002), identity and sociality in the Banda Islands, Indonesia (Winn 2001), and planning implications for industrially harvested peatlands in Ireland (Collier and Scott 2008). In contrast, within the

realm of marketing, local narratives of place receive far less attention (See Kalandides 2011; Lichrou et al. 2010 for exceptions). Our contention here is that, through narrative, local people can simultaneously be viewed as producers and products of the social reality of place. In order to give voice to 'local people' we must depart from the a priori assumption that places are 'products' to be marketed and instead allow locals to generate their own narratives of place (Lichrou et al. 2008; Warnaby and Medway 2013) for these narratives tells us much about how a place is constituted (Kalandides 2011).

### **Investigating Santorini**

Santorini is an island group located in the southern part of the Cyclades island complex in the Aegean Sea<sup>1</sup>. It has experienced rapid tourism development in recent decades and consequently the circuit of tourism production and consumption has been implicated in the way the place is experienced and represented. Though it appears that Santorini has been attracting foreign travellers since the 16th century<sup>2</sup>, the emergence of rapid modern tourism development (based on anecdotal evidence) is placed primarily in the 1970s. A landmark date for the beginning of the 'tourism era' is 1967, when the long-term excavation of the prehistoric city of Akrotiri began. In addition, oceanological and academic research in 1966 (Kontaratos 2007) was implicated in strengthening the

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<sup>1</sup> It consists of a series of islands: Thera, Therassia (little Thera), Aspronissi (white island), Palaia (παλαιά = old) and Nea (νέα = new) Kameni (burned). Thera, Therassia and Aspronissi form a ring enclosing the gulf of Santorini, which has been described as one of the greatest and most impressive calderas in the world (Marinos and Marinos 1978). The two volcanic islets of Kamenae (Palaia Kameni and Nea Kameni) emerged from the centre of the caldera (Marinos and Marinos 1978). Only Thera and Therassia are inhabited.

<sup>2</sup> Including, for example, cartographers and geologists as well as members of monastic orders and later, in the 19th century, sightseers (Delendas 2001)

associations of Santorini with the lost city of Atlantis<sup>3</sup>, further attracting touristic, scientific and artistic interest.

Treating interviewing as a means of narrative production (Czarniawska 2004), the research consisted of 22 phenomenological interviews (Thompson et al. 1989) with local residents of the island (Table 1 provides a short description of the participants). In respect of sampling the goal of the study was to involve individuals who currently live in Santorini and whose experiences are influenced by their involvement in diverse sectors on the island. This was not intended as a way of ensuring an 'objective' representation of Santorini's social reality, but as an effort to generate a variety of place experiences. The participants can be allocated to the following groups according to their main occupation.

1. Local Authorities; including the municipal authorities and municipality council, and members involved in the pre-existing parishes of Santorini.
2. Tourist Trade; including the rental apartments association, travel agencies and the hoteliers' union.
3. Trade; including the retailers' association, the association of vessel owners, and the mule drivers' union.
4. Agricultural Sector; including the Association Cooperatives of Theriac Products private Wineries.
5. Public Services; including the Greek Tourism Organisation office in Santorini, the Citizens Service Centre in Oia, and the Revenue Service.
6. The Media and Press
7. Residents of the village of Imerovigli.

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<sup>3</sup> Associations of the area with Atlantis first appeared in the late 19th century. The archaeological findings of Akrotiri, a 'marvellously' preserved (Palyvou 2001) settlement of the Bronze Age and the renewed associations of the island with Plato's Atlantis created international publicity for Santorini.

This categorisation is consistent with how participants presented themselves during interviews - hence, they recognised how their roles affected their personal experiences of Santorini. Admittedly, such a categorisation does enforce a rather one-dimensional view of the participants though each did reveal the maintenance of multiple roles deriving from their occupation, involvement in island affairs, and personal interests.

**Table 1: Participants' Profiles**

<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Occupation/Education</b>	<b>Origin</b>
Mr. Kondaratos	Early 50s	Tourism entrepreneur/secondary education	Santorinian
Mr. Valvis	Late 30s	Oenologist/higher education	Of Santorinian extract, living 6 years in Santorini
Mr. Venieris	Early 40s	Politician/higher education	Santorinian
Mr. Tripolitis	Mid 50s	Managerial, agricultural sector/higher education	Santorinian
Mr. Koronellos	Early 50s	Tourism entrepreneur/secondary education	Santorinian
Mr. Papadopoulos	Early 40s	Managerial, agricultural sector/higher education	Santorinian
Mr. Kavadias	Early 30s	Tourism entrepreneur/higher education	Santorinian
Mr. Argyros	Early 40s	Tourism trade/primary education	Santorinian
Mr. Argyriou	Late 30s	Journalism/higher education	Non Santorinian, living 10 years in Santorini
Mr. Chryssos	Early 50s	Politician/secondary education	Santorinian
Mr. Markozanis	Mid 50s	Politician/secondary education	Santorinian
Mrs. Venetsanou	Early 30s	Managerial, winemaking sector/higher education	Santorinian
Mr. Panayiotopoulos	Late 40s	Managerial, public sector/higher education	Non Santorinian, living 2 years in Santorini
Mr. Petalas	Late 40s	Entrepreneur/higher education	Santorinian
Mr. Karydis	Late 40s	Managerial, public sector/higher education	Santorinian

Mr. Arvanitis	Early 50s	Entrepreneur/higher education	Santorinian
Mr. Karras	Late 60s	Farmer/primary education	Santorinian
Mr. Mavromatis	Early 40s	Oenologist/higher education	Non-Santorinian, living 10 years in Santorini
Mrs. Danezi	Late 60s	Pensioner/primary education	Santorinian
Mr. Gavalas	Mid 50s	Retired politician/higher education	Santorinian
Mr. Varotsis	Mid 50s	Retired politician/higher education	Of Santorinian extract, living 34 years in Santorini
Mrs. Alexiou	Late 30s	Managerial, public sector/higher education	Non-Santorinian, living 6 year in Santorini

The phenomenological approach emphasises the need for the researcher to demonstrate empathy with the participant and elevates lived experience as the focus of the research endeavour. The conversational style of the interview (Kvale 1996) is appropriate for this study in light of its capacity to produce narratives. This is consistent with Bruner's (2004) understanding of narrative as the primary form through which people make sense of and structure their experiences. According to Jovchelovitch and Bauer (2000) the narrative approach privileges the experiences of participants, treats their narratives as particular representations of the world, and positions them in relation to the wider socio-historical context.

The interviews were recorded and fully transcribed. Following Lieblich et al.'s (1998) framework for narrative analysis, we employed both an holistic-content approach and a categorical-content approach to the data analysis. First, the holistic-content approach uses an individual narrative in its entirety and focuses on its content, that is, on the meanings that are conveyed within the story. This essentially involves thematic analysis, which focuses on each text as a whole in order to identify the key themes conveyed without de-

contextualising the themes from the whole story. Each interview was thus read thoroughly, key themes were identified, and a summary based on the key themes was produced to assist the discussions among the three researchers involved in interpretation. Following this, the emergent themes were used to provide categories to aid analysis across interviews, in line with the categorical-content approach to qualitative analysis which extracts and classifies parts of each story into defined categories or groups. This was deemed appropriate because categorical approaches are adopted when the phenomenon is shared by a group of people. The combination of both approaches facilitates the identification of common themes across the participants' stories without overlooking the way that a theme related to each story as whole. These shared themes are presented in the remainder of the paper.

### **Local Narratives: Harsh Beauty, Service Business, and Home**

The analysis of the interviews reveals multiple meanings of place, including cultural, economic, political and social, and thus multiple forms of local identification with it. Participants' stories revolve around the experience of living and making a living in Santorini. We use the metaphors of 'harsh beauty', 'service business' and 'home' to capture diverse and contested meanings of place that emerge in these stories. 'Harsh beauty' incorporates meanings of place as culturally significant, 'service business' includes notions of Santorini as a place for the entertainment of the tourist, and 'home' captures meanings of Santorini as a place to live in.

#### ***Harsh Beauty: Constructing Place Through Cultural Meanings***

The first theme focuses on the cultural construction of Santorini through myth-making. Myth-making draws on the place's geomorphology, history, and culture to create Santorini

as an extraordinary place for visual consumption. The cultural meanings of Santorini are influenced by tourist, artistic and scientific discourses of Santorini, often revealed through instances of intertextuality in the participants' stories.

### *Sublime Nature*

Meanings of Santorini as place focus on its landscape and draw upon notions of its origins in violent natural activity.

The essence of Santorini is that it is an island that was created by nature's rage and only by nature's rage can it be destroyed. There is no other way. (Argyriou)

The island of Santorini as physical landscape emerged as a result of intense volcanic activity<sup>4</sup>. Each eruption demolished a large part of the volcanic structures, creating huge funnels or calderas.

But Santorini persists. Magma welled up again and new volcanoes were built, healing the wounds from the great eruptions. Thera, Therasia and Aspronisi are what remain of the last great eruption 3,600 years ago, which destroyed the wonderful civilisation flourishing on the island during the Late Bronze Age. (Vouyoukalakis 2001: 50)

As a consequence Santorini is one of the geographical locations that have come to be associated with the myth of the lost Atlantis. There remains scientific and philosophical debate around the issue of whether Plato's story is a parable or a reference to a real event. Nonetheless, even in a metaphorical way, the Cyclades plateau, and Santorini in particular, with a large part of its land lost under the sea, effectively serves as *Atlantis* (Kapsimalis et al. 2007).

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<sup>4</sup> According to volcanologists and geologists, it is estimated that over the last 400,000 years, 12 enormous eruptions took place every 20,000 years (Vouyoukalakis 2001)

Landscape is a primary resource for the narrative construction of Santorini as place. Santorini is thus described as 'the eternal rock [that] continues to stand, strong and majestic, rising proudly from the sea and guarding the secrets of Atlantis...' (Santorini.net 2008). Participants call attention to the uniqueness of Santorini as place drawing on its geomorphology.

Santorini is unique regarding its geographical form, the morphology of the earth, because of the volcano, the lava, and the destruction that happened and the creation of the Caldera, which is unique, you don't find it anywhere. Allow me to say this with certainty, because before [...] I was a captain, and I have been around the whole world, such a thing does not exist, it is unique and we have to preserve it. This is one of the main advantages of Santorini regarding harshness, distinct beauty. [...] The beaches with the black sand, which are distinct. Usually in the other places there is the normal sand [...]; here we have black sand, also peculiar. [Kondaratos]

This is not surprising, given that places that attract tourism are characterised by a demarcation from everyday life on the basis of natural, historical or cultural extraordinariness (Rojek 1997: 52). Furthermore, this demarcation leads to a transformation of *land for use* (for example through agriculture) to *land for display* (for aesthetic appreciation) (Urry 2005). Participants' stories reveal visual consumption as a primary mode of appreciating Santorini.

[...] when the ship approaches Santorini, the view, this spectacle that you see entering from Oia towards the centre [of the Caldera], all this view [...] It is a route I have done at least a thousand times [...] However, there wasn't a time that we passed and I didn't go out to enjoy this view [...] And it wasn't only me, it was also all the crew and all the passengers who went out to see this view and this picture that you see only when the ship enters the bay of the island. [Chryssos]

It is important to note that local stories make frequent reference to Santorini as a 'harsh beauty'. What is offered for consumption in Santorini is not just a unique landscape which invites tourists, but also a landscape which challenges them.

The uniqueness of Santorini, what [...] you see here as Caldera and as Volcano and as view, this harsh beauty of Santorini is what invites and challenges every tourist [Kavadias]

The ease with which locals juxtapose 'harsh' and 'beauty' is significant in the construction of Santorini through narrative and myth-making.

A unique part is the Caldera, from Akrotiri to Oia. Oia is a very nice traditional setting. Also the beaches of Kamari, Perivolos, Perissa, and Vlychada, the island has beautiful beaches. A nice experience is the visit to the Volcano [...] eh [...] I believe that the volcanic rocks somehow excite the imagination and one can imagine how violently nature worked here. [Arvanitis]

Local myth-making locates Santorini's extraordinariness in the harshness of its landscape, which is what makes it distinct from other places. This juxtaposition between 'harshness' and 'beauty' has attracted considerable artistic and literary interest. Consider, for example, geology professor Walter Friedrich's *Fire in the Sea*, a scientific book designed for the general audience; photographer George Meis' *Thera or Santorini: Born from Tephra*, a collection of panoramic pictures of Santorini and texts from a writer, an architect and a geologist, and, photographer Demetris Talianes' *Santorini: And the Sea Gave Birth to the Land*, a photographic album interfused with historical, geological and architectural texts.

Talianes observes:

It is not easy to describe Santorini with words, as is the case with everything unique. Once you stand on the Caldera you feel awe before the almightiness of nature. Nowhere else one encounters so closely life and death, white and black, tame and wild, light and darkness. [...] Which artist isn't inspired by this theme? Which photographer will remain unmoved by Santorini? (Talianes 1998, front inside cover, author's translation)

And Odysseas Elytis<sup>5</sup> writes [*Ode to Santorini* - translation by Carson and Sarris 2004]:

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<sup>5</sup> Odysseas Elytis (1911-1996) was a Greek Nobel awarded poet.

You emerged from a thunderpeal's entrails  
Shuddering amid repentant clouds  
Bitter stone, proved, proud [...]

Sea-wakened, proud  
You lifted up your stone breast  
Speckled with the southwind's inspiration,  
For pain to inscribe its very heart there  
For hope to inscribe its very heart there  
With fire with lava with smoke  
With words that convert the infinite [...]

Even a children's book draws on this juxtaposition, building on the idea that Santorini possesses a 'dazzling', yet dangerous beauty (Dagdelenis 2002: 8):

The ship appeared to be listing towards the side of the island, then capsized and finally sank into the deep, dark water. The disaster happened because the tourists were so dazzled by such unfamiliar beauty that they all ran with their binoculars and cameras to one side of the deck, resulting in a fatal shift of the ship's centre of gravity.

The fascination with witnessing 'extraordinary' or 'wonderful' objects is understood as a deep urge in all human cultures (Rojek 1997). In the case of Santorini this is constructed around landscape, which is characterised by 'enormous biophysical diversity, variable geomorphology and intricate insular geography' (Terkenli 2001: 203). The physical setting is in a dialectical relationship with the cultural, which is 'engraved in the present-day landscape' and this link is 'manifested in the visual, experiential and symbolic aspects of Aegeanity' (Terkenli 2001: 203).

### *Traditional Culture Embedded in the Landscape*

For Santorini, the notion of beauty extends to encompass 'tradition', especially as this is reflected in the vernacular architecture and agriculture (viniculture in particular), with both considered integral elements of Santorini's landscape. One participant describes Santorini as 'the island with the vines' and explains:

For me it is a basic element of the island. Odysseas Elytis has written the famous [verse], ok, 'its volcanoes all vines in rows'<sup>6</sup>, this verse refers to Santorini, it is not by chance, it is an island that everyone thinks is barren, yet it is full of grapevines, it is fascinating. [Mavromatis]

In addition, participants highlight the fact that viniculture in Santorini is peculiar, due to the specific geological and climatic conditions resulting in unique varieties of vine. The existence of the vineyards – often referred to as the 'only plant' on the island - is thought to complement in a soothing way the harshness of the barren landscape. Another participant argues that if the vineyards did not exist, Santorini would 'have the image of a lunarscape, it would be an abandoned land, nothing green would exist' (Tripolitis).

Santorini has amazing settlements. The historical centres of the villages are amazing. It has great architectural interest. Imagine that if Le Corbusier hadn't come to Santorini [...] if he hadn't studied Santorini, I don't know if he would be Le Corbusier. [Venieris]

Local narratives are influenced by the architectural and artistic interest the island attracts. Santorini is described by some architects as an 'international ecological model' (Varlamis 2001), commending the 'essential wisdom' of previous generations who, faced with the challenges posed by the volcanic nature of the island and the lack of building resources, created a built environment in harmony with the natural landscape (Varlamis 2001).

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<sup>6</sup> A verse from Odysseas Elytis' poem 'To Axion Esti' ('Worthy It Is').

Furthermore, as an object of desire through visual consumption, vernacular architecture is eroticised; for example, there is reference to ‘architectonic erotic curves’ (Tseklenis 2001). Traditional architecture is thus integral to local myth-making and involves the circulation of a story about Le Corbusier, who is reputed to have reconsidered his modern architectural style after visiting Santorini ‘[as] if he was re-baptised and he launches internationally these erotic curves’ (Tseklenis 2001).

Consequently, participants expressed a keen concern for the need to protect the natural environment and traditional architecture of Santorini. To use a participant’s expression, Santorini should be considered among the “protected species” (Kavadias).

At least if every entrepreneur realises that, he must protect [this place], the central concept must be ‘protect our island’, at least us Santorinians, because... the entrepreneur who is here this year and the next goes elsewhere, he won’t care so much. [Petalas]

To conclude, cultural meanings of Santorini emerge through notions of sublime nature, the juxtaposition of harshness and beauty, and the transformation of the physical and built environment into a landscape for visual consumption.

### ***Santorini as Service Business: Making a Living as Hosts***

As discussed in the previous theme, the particular geomorphology, history and traditional culture as embodied in the physical symbolic landscape (Terkenli 2001) construct Santorini as harsh beauty and demarcate it as an extraordinary place that attracts international tourism. This is central to the notion of Santorini as a place for tourism.

Eh [...] it started here about 35 years ago, when Santorini became known as a result of the work of Mr. Marinatos. He was an archaeologist who, through his excavations there in Akrotiri and [by] linking the lost Atlantis with the excavation findings there, brought Santorini to the attention of the whole world. Many came out of curiosity to see the findings and, together with these findings they saw this amazing harsh

beauty that exists in Santorini and started to communicate by word of mouth. And now Santorini is regarded as one of the most beautiful and most important tourism islands, not only in Greece, but, I think, in the whole world. [Gavalas]

### *A Vacation Place*

Local meanings of place that highlight the role of tourism construct a particular local experience of Santorini as a place to make a living. These meanings have significant implications for how locals view themselves and their place.

I have experienced tourism since I was 6 years old. I remember opening my eyes and selling coca colas and orangeades. This is how I remember it, this is how it started [...] I met the American well, since I was 10 years old, in '84 and afterwards, as a tourist. I grew up within this, talking to the American, interacting with the tourists, with customers who were passing by... [Kavadias]

Um [...] by '85 tourism had already surged and people started building hotels or rooms [to let] and [...] by '95 the entire Santorini [...] um [...] had started being full of rooms and hotels, which of course all belong to Santorinians and [...] um [...] and for the most part these are families that make their living. [Koronellos]

Santos (2004) argues that travel writing not only promotes, but constructs tourism places. In this case, the notion of Santorini as a brand is linked to the attractive image of the island worldwide. Powerful narratives are implicated in the creation, management and communication of place brands (Croft et al. 2008). Santorini is portrayed by locals as possessing a 'celebrity' status among tourism destinations internationally. Participants mention, for example, the island's considerable coverage in international media. As producers of place, the participants are well-informed regarding the media treatment the island receives.

In the 90s the rapid rise began. Rapid, we are talking about more and more visitors coming, and also painters, photographers, who come and photograph these landscapes. Santorini becomes famous across the whole world [...] The result is that at this moment after the Akropolis and Parthenon, the most known name for Greece is Santorini, for instance on the internet there are about 2,000,000 websites which refer to Santorini [...] and for me it is significant and indicative that the biggest specialised travel publication in the world, 'Travel and Leisure' ranked Santorini in

the 3rd, 3rd or 4th place in the world in terms of tourism destinations [...] Also, the BBC did research on the 50 most romantic places on the planet, where there is a special reference to Santorini. [Argyriou]

Importantly, for at least some participants, the economy of Santorini is now almost completely dependent on tourism. In supporting this notion, participants often 'borrow' from national (and perhaps) international discourses regarding Greece's economic basis.

The economic activity of the residents is clearly tourism, all the other occupations or activities are clearly secondary or some are undertaken as hobbies, i.e. the cultivation of vineyards and fields, that is the agricultural sector. Indeed, there is a monoculture of tourism. [...] Our islands, or our area, is registered in the European Union for what role it will play within the European Union. For example, I will give you one example, Germany has the industry, here, it is a vacation place. [Chryssos]

I believe that Greece should be advertised more and I also believe that the State should treat the matter of tourism with seriousness, because apart from tourism and shipping I don't think that we have anything else in which we could see an economic rise, that is, the only domains in Greece which are really productive are tourism and shipping. [Arvanitis]

### *Locals as Hosts*

As tourism has now fully developed on the island, the language of marketing and of customer service has a strong influence on how locals perceive their role:

Now, tourism is a delicate plant, we can compare it to a flower, a plant, which you have to look after every day, and to care for, to water, to cultivate, in order to preserve it. Otherwise, if we don't pay attention [...] if we are not careful it will wither. Because the people, the visitor who comes here [inaudible] wants to leave behind all his troubles and to come here as we say to be amused, to have a good time, and to be recharged in order to go back and start his job again and his occupations. This is why we should create these conditions in terms of infrastructure but also by making the entrepreneurs realise that we should, even give priority [to the tourists], let's say in the bank or elsewhere in order [for the tourist] to get a fast service and to leave as satisfied as possible. Because the satisfied visitor is the right advertising [...] Otherwise he will leave and if he leaves dissatisfied he will not come back and of course will also not advertise the island. [...] We need to deal with these [lack of infrastructure] deficiencies differently. With hospitality. With the Greek hospitality, which I don't believe that the Greek has forgotten. He is always hospitable, always has a good word to say to a guest that comes here, that he meets in the street, always keen to serve and answer different questions. [Chryssos]

The construction of Santorini as a vacation place encourages locals to assume the role and responsibilities of hosts and to provide hospitality at every moment. Local narratives here revolve around the importance of engendering a 'service culture' (Warnaby and Davies 1997) for the place as a whole (beyond each individual business).

And of course the positive thing is that all the citizens in the world want to visit Santorini, all the citizens, either Australian or American, let's say. Personally, when I go to America [and they ask] 'where do you come from', [if you say] 'from Greece', 'all right', but when you say from Santorini, 'oh, my God!' [he pronounces this in English]. In other words, we must take advantage of this [...] The visitor has to really enjoy these unique moments that he has in Santorini. That is to say, when the visitor is drinking his coffee there shouldn't be a car passing next to him. The visitor has to enjoy every moment, has to enjoy everything on the island. This is the best, the best advertising [...] It's simple. One leaves from the other side of the world to spend 5 unique days of his life in Santorini, because he has dreamt of these days, he has, and it is not coincidental that Santorini is [...] the first destination for weddings is Santorini, this is not a coincidence, so, it is a unique moment in his life. Therefore, we should make sure that he enjoys these days [...] If we can understand this thing, I believe we have succeeded. [Petalas]

Here we see how much emphasis is placed on ensuring a positive customer experience. While these participants assume that everyone wants to visit Santorini, in the excerpt below we see evidence of a new focus on customer retention.

The issue of Santorini is not whether people will come. It is whether they will come again. People will come once, because it has this heady beauty, [but the issue is] how we will bring them back the second time. [Argyriou]

Thus an important experience for the local is the seduction of tourists. Seduction, according to Deighton and Grayson (1995) involves the construction of a consensus, in this case regarding how locals and tourists should behave. In particular, participants' stories reflect principles of service marketing in their attention towards fostering a culture 'where an appreciation for good service exists' and where providing hospitality and giving priority to tourist satisfaction 'is considered a natural way of life and one of the most important norms by everyone' (Grönroos 1990: 244). We therefore use the metaphor of

'service business' to frame these local narratives that foster the 'culture of the customer' (du Gay and Salaman 1992) as a way of living for the entire population. However, the application of service marketing concepts to the place as a whole can lead to a commodification of place to the extent that market relations subsume and dominate social life (Gotham 2002). This becomes problematic for some locals who construct Santorini as their home (this is examined in the following section).

Concerns exist around the necessary planning to avoid the degradation of Santorini's physical and cultural character. This includes references to overbuilding and what some participants refer to as 'optical pollution' (Alexiou).

These islands really have nature's blessing to offer something different and they can offer much to tourism [...] unfortunately until now central government planning hasn't been good regarding what we want from Santorini, what we want from the Cyclades, what we want from these islands. [Markozanis]

I have in mind another Santorini [...] The other Santorini is the Santorini of the 70s [...] I say it is a Santorini that was brutally raped by us. It could have been developed in another way and preserve its character [...] It could have. [Venieris]

All this plain that you see from Pyrgos was full of vineyards in the past, imagine how much better it would be. While now there are the [...] the building pollution as the [...] architects say, which has occurred on the island and has [...] distorted the island's landscape. [Mavromatis]

Thus local narratives of Santorini also reflect a fundamental paradox in tourism marketing; that the development of tourism destroys the very thing tourists come to experience (Mill and Morrison 1985; Haywood 1990; Ryan 1991). In this case, the source of tourism interest, the Santorini myth as embodied in the island's landscape, is deeply implicated in the island's rapid tourism development and hence its primary construction as a tourism

place. Further, tourism development now seems to have negative implications for the Santorini myth.

### *Santorini as Home: A Place for Living*

Santorini for me is something special, I have grown up here, my family is here, my wife, she is also from here [...] that is, there are things that keep me, that attach me to Santorini [...] here I feel completely different from anywhere else. [Kondaratos]

The image of Santorini is what you see outside my window. I overlook everything else. And this is how I want it to stay, this is Santorini for me. It is an island, which I can't leave for more than 6 months, because, simply, I miss it. [Kavadias]

Participants' stories here shift attention from the myth of Santorini as constructed for tourism consumption towards their own attachment to the place. Place attachment is a sense of emotional belonging people develop for a place (Dixon and Durrheim 2004) and, as such, is thought to contribute to one's sense of wholeness and connection to one's society and culture (Stokowski 2002). Due to this bond, place identity and self identity are interrelated concepts where 'talk about place becomes talk about identity' (McCabe and Stokoe 2004: 2). Place identity thus involves, 'a deep-seated familiarity with the environment, a sense of bodily, sensuous, social and autobiographic 'insideness' that arises as the result of individuals' habituation to their physical surroundings' (Dixon and Durrheim 2004: 457). Furthermore, place identity can be seen as a symbol of the self.

I am local, but I was not born here [...] Of course my parents were from here, ok, my parents were born here and I came at some stage [and] I liked it. [Varotsis]

Even if it sounds egocentric, I wouldn't like to leave and every time I leave I can't wait to come back and of course this happens to all the people for their place. It is not an exclusive right of Santorinians, it is for all the people who have lived, who have grown up in a place, even if it is not considered as beautiful as Santorini, they all want to return to their roots. [Gavalas]

The place becomes meaningful as 'home' through interactions and relationships with others. The following participant celebrates 'the life of Santorini':

I came and settled back in '94, because I believed that it is worth living the life of Santorini. Because I wanted to believe that, in the summer the tourism industry may operate, but the winter is for the Santorinians [...] During the winter it is the companionships, the friends, eh [...] the closer relationships that develop and the [...] more human relationships, which do not exist in the summer. [Karydis]

It is interesting to note that 'home' is associated with a temporal dimension, that is, with the wintertime. It is during this time, when the tourism industry ceases or slows down and participants can step outside of their role as tourist hosts, that this sense of place becomes salient. Thus we see how 'time and space intersect and fuse' (Bakhtin 1981:7, cited in McCabe and Stokoe 2004), to create particular and distinctive identities with the authentic 'local' experience built around winter. This winter/summer distinction becomes important for locals in terms of the resources and infrastructure required for those who reside here in the winter. The status of 'local' here refers to someone who lives on the island, especially on a permanent basis. The following participant explains how those who live on the island during the summer months only do not face the same issues as those who stay during the winter.

Basically they [those who come only during the summer for business] do not face the same needs, the very fundamental [needs] that those who stay in Santorini during the winter have and so [...] you know they clearly focus on the professional issues. [...] The needs are different, you understand, the fact that I have the need of a paediatrician to staff the health centre, [whereas] to those who possibly do not even have children or their children are grown it isn't [...] of fundamental importance [...] that someone invests in this sector. They demand that investment and that the local authority or [...] the State do some works for other things, the airport, the port. I am also interested in the port, but in the final analysis [I am interested] because I am coming as a resident of Santorini [...] It is different with the needs of the residents who have all their basic living needs to cover here and different of those who are coming only for professional reasons. Of course, both are desirable. [Alexiou]

Key demands of the local people revolve around health and education. Due to the place's insularity and small population, available services are not as extensive as those the citizens of an urban centre would normally enjoy. For example, the health centre that operates on the island can provide primary healthcare but in the case of serious health problems or emergencies patients have to be transported to Athens. A participant who in the past was involved in the local authorities explains:

We looked after the schools, to give everything that they were asking for the benefit of the children, to create rooms, to create desks, to buy everything they had asked for. We spent a lot of money for education and of course for health [...] and, I will tell you something that perhaps doesn't exist anywhere [else], that we bought [...] an aeroplane [...] for those people who have some episode and there is no way to deal with it here and in order for the EKAV [National Centre of Emergencies] to come and take the patient. Because the [waiting] time is long [the patient] is in danger and in most cases many people have lost their lives due to this delay. So we bought, in 1996 if I am not mistaken, such an aeroplane, which, for free, without anyone [citizen] paying a penny, transfers [patients]. [Gavalas]

Finally, another domain of resident interest is the development of cultural and other events for locals, as there are not too many options for entertainment during the winter time. According to the one participant, the island generally lacks 'psychagogia' [Venieris], which in Greek literally means 'leading of the soul' and refers to the notion of self development through entertainment, beyond mere amusement of oneself.

This perspective highlights issues of origin, community, familiarity, but also everyday life. Winter is the time when local residents can fully participate in the 'local' life and deal with citizen issues, such as health, education and entertainment. The roles emphasised within this perspective are those of the 'local', based on origin and emotional attachment to the island and the 'citizen', based on resident everyday life. However, 'home' is also demarcated from tourism in two ways. First, through the temporal demarcation of

Santorini as home by associating it with the winter season and, second, through emphasis on the everyday life of the residents.

## **Discussion and Implications**

'Harsh beauty', 'service business' and 'home' frame the distinct but interwoven ways in which Santorini is constructed in participants' narratives as sublime nature for consumption, a commercial servicescape for entrepreneurial activity and a place of belongingness for everyday living. Sense of place is thus multifaceted, involving the extraordinary and the everyday, negotiated through the experiences of living in and making a living in a place. This has implications for the way 'place' and 'local' are conceptualised within marketing. Furthermore it contributes to the discussion of production and consumption (in this case of place) as interwoven, dialectical processes.

### ***Generative Metaphors of Place***

Participants' stories reveal the 'meaning perspectives' (Mezirow 1990) which locals develop and use to interpret their experience of place. This involves multiple forms of belongingness to place, as place meanings emerge through local experiences of living in and making a living in place. To capture these forms of belongingness we frame their stories using 'harsh beauty', 'service business' and 'home' as metaphors of place. This has implications for how place is understood; which aspects of place we focus on and which we leave out. The use of metaphors is central in marketing discourse (O'Malley et al 2008; Brown 2008). Schön (1993) examines metaphors as important modes of thinking about things, making sense of reality, and setting problems we later try to solve. He uses the term 'generative metaphor' to encapsulate the process through which metaphors, as ways of looking, are involved in transferring understandings from one domain of experience to

another, thus helping us to make sense of complex abstract phenomena by drawing on more familiar and ‘concrete’ domains of experience. Therefore, metaphors are powerful in shaping our understanding of different things, determining which issues are important for consideration while making others invisible. As such, they also construct what are perceived as the problems of a given situation and the appropriate courses of action (Schön 1993). In making sense of Santorini through the metaphor of ‘harsh beauty’, the visual appeal of the island is foregrounded. Within this metaphor, a decline in the islands’ visual appeal would be catastrophic and therefore attention is directed toward protection of the natural and physical landscape. In contrast, within the metaphor of Santorini as a ‘service business’ the focus naturally shifts to managing tourist experiences and customer retention – both of which demand increasing customer orientation. Finally, the metaphor of ‘home’ foregrounds familiarity, community and quality of life for the citizens of the island. In this sense, the metaphor of home captures a space in which to undertake the routines of daily life and through which one finds one’s identity best mediated (Rapport and Dawson 1998, cited by Svašek 2002: 498).

Place marketing is dominated by a conception of places as products to be marketed for the attraction of external audiences. A city product thus consists of ‘contributory elements’, such as the specific services or even a particular isolated characteristic of a city, and the ‘nuclear product’, which is the city as a whole (Sleipen 1988, cited in Ashworth and Voogd 1990b). Similarly, a tourism destination is ‘logically the point of consumption of the complex of activities that comprises the tourism experience and ... [is] ultimately what is sold by place promotion agencies on the tourism market’ (Ashworth and Voogd 1990a:7). This product metaphor directs marketers’ attention to place attributes that can be packaged to appeal to different audiences. However, the metaphor often places the people

constituting place outside of marketers' frame of reference (Hall 1997). Some authors question the relevance of the marketing ethos (Bovaird and Rubienska 1996) and argue for a shift in marketing's moral basis (Crane and Desmond 2002) in order to embrace issues of a public interest. Market orientation, in particular, is positioned at the heart of critical discussions of marketing relevance. For example, Holcomb goes as far as saying that marketing orientation can destroy a city's 'soul': '[t]he city is commodified, its form and spirit remade to conform to market demand, not residents' dreams' (1999: 69). Our focus on the local narratives of place enables us to place local people in the centre of our frame of reference and to use generative metaphors that capture their experience of place.

However, it is important to note that narratives are not only structures of meaning, but also structures of power (Santos 2004), because the 'ability to assign meaning to a place is an act of power which has real effects on the people living in it' (Human 1999: 83). Symbolic values and meanings are not given, but contested and actively involving processes and the construction of place entails the interests or positions of dominant groups (Meethan 1996). Urry claims that 'it is hard to envisage the nature of contemporary tourism without seeing how such activities are literally constructed in our imagination through advertising and the media, and through the conscious competition between different social groups' (1990: 13). Philo and Kearns (1993), discussing the marketing of post-industrial cities, suggest that the selection of certain aspects of place in the process of destination marketing tends to favour and promote certain interests over others; the interests of dominant groups in particular. Therefore, an understanding of place requires the exploration of the social relations that underlie the production of text (Gotham 2002). In the case of Santorini dominant cultural ('harsh beauty') and economic discourses ('service business') that identify the island as predominantly a tourism place are echoed in participants' stories of their place. However,

a sense of place as 'home', distinct from tourism, is also formed in their stories. 'Home' is temporally associated primarily with wintertime.

### ***'Local' Sense(s) of Place***

Furthermore, local narratives capture the inconsistencies and multiple meanings involved in 'being local'. Focusing on the local experience through the narratives of consuming, hosting and living in Santorini reveals that local meanings of place are fluid, contested and inconsistent. Place meanings shift throughout each story moving from Santorini as 'harsh beauty', to 'service business' and 'home'. These stories thus embrace culture, society, economics and politics.

In 'harsh beauty', aesthetic appreciation of place becomes central as participants draw on tourist, artistic and scientific discourses that have shaped the myth of Santorini as an extraordinary place. Here, sense of place coagulates around the experience of consuming place and place is understood primarily as an object of visual appreciation. The tourist experience itself has long been theorised as the tourist gaze (Urry 1990) and 'harsh beauty' thus demands preservation of the landscape's aesthetic qualities. Amsden et al. (2010) also document the beauty of landscape as a key aspect in the creation and maintenance of sense of place in an Alaskan community. For cultural geographers landscape is understood as 'a cultural image, a pictorial way of representing, structuring or symbolising surroundings' (Daniels and Cosgrave 1988: 1 cited by Terkenli 2002: 233). Similarly, Hospers (2009) discusses the role of the city's graphic and built image for city marketing.

'Service business' reveals an entrepreneurial identity in relation to Santorini. In this sense, the place becomes a commercial servicescape and the locals are engaged in hosting for

tourists. Arnould et al. (1998) observe how wilderness is communicatively staged as a servicescape around cultural themes and customer/service provider interactions. In the case of Santorini the cultural themes relate to the myth of Santorini as a place that emerged from intense volcanic activity. These are echoed in stories of the island as 'harsh beauty'. Furthermore, being tourist-oriented is the primary concern of the local within this frame. Gill and Larson (2013) utilise interviews with entrepreneurs in the western US to argue that entrepreneurial and occupational identities are simultaneously shaped by place and engaged in place-making. In the case of Santorini, participants' stories draw on personal experiences of growing up in a tourism place (hence place shapes their entrepreneurial identity), and on discourses about the importance of tourism in the Greek economy, in order to highlight the need to create and maintain a service culture and to support their role as hosts.

'Home' is about belonging to place. This is negotiated through emotional attachment, social relationships and everyday life routines. Aitken and Campelo (2011) reveal how for Chatham islanders traditional ownership of property and direct lineage to ancestry provide them with rights to belong to but also to feel ownership of their place. In a similar vein, in the case of Santorini for some participants origin and family play an important role in negotiating place as home. For others, however, who are not of Santorinian extraction, everyday life and resident activities are highlighted as important aspects of 'home'. In the academic literature home is understood as a place that holds 'considerable social, psychological and emotive meaning for individuals and groups' (Easthope 2004: 135). In studying Sudeten Germans' narratives of 'home' and 'homeland', Svašek observes that people are engaged in 'multiple identification processes, many of which are not necessarily rooted in genealogical or territorial assumptions' (2002: 498). People can therefore also

feel 'at home' when they do not have genealogical claims to a place. Furthermore, in the case of Santorini, regardless of origin, participants use the winter as a temporal dimension of 'home'. Everyday life is associated with wintertime, when touristic activity decreases.

### ***Producing and Consuming Place***

Production and consumption of place cannot be considered as two separate processes but rather as a full circle of seduction (Hall 2005). This involves 'objectification' of place which further incorporates processes of place 'enchantment' and 'disenchantment' (Rojek 2000). The cycle of seduction is exposed when we consider the links between 'harsh beauty' and 'service business'. In these, Santorini is viewed as an object to be consumed (through myth-making) and marketed (through hosting). Place 'objectification' thus involves the process of 'enchantment' through which place is transformed into 'landscape' (Urry 2005) and is symbolically turned into an object of awe and desire, through notions of sublime nature (Lengkeek 2002), extraordinary (Rojek 2000) physical landscape and traditional culture as embedded in the landscape. 'Objectification' simultaneously involves 'disenchantment' when the place is viewed as a resource for the attraction and satisfaction of tourists.

In the case of Santorini, the expansion of tourism business is considered to spoil the Santorini myth, especially through the expansion of building. This is in line with a paradox in marketing places; places that have attempted to direct their resources towards the satisfaction of customers may have lost the very thing that has made them attractive and unique in the first place (Mill and Morrison 1985). This conception of tourists as destroyers of the place's authenticity is based on the host/guest binary (Arramberi 2001;

Sherlock 2001). However, our analysis reveals that locals also internalise and relay marketing rhetoric on customer orientation (e.g. Hackley 2003) actively participating in the consumption and production of Santorini as a tourism place.

It is also important to note here that the experience of being a citizen of a place is somehow overshadowed by market discourses that concentrate on notions of the consumer/producer of place. In line with Kilbourne et al. (1997), this illustrates the dominance of the notion of individuals as consumers rather than citizens. In order to facilitate such a theorising of place within marketing, a shift away from micro-marketing discourse is essential. This suggests that our dialogue should embrace alternative, critical perspectives and, furthermore, openness to pluralism and disciplinary diversity (McDonagh 1995). This is essential for the continued relevance of our discipline to the public sphere (Hall 1997). These relate to the issue of quality of life and entail concerns over education, the arts, health and the natural environment (e.g. Kilbourne et al. 1997).

## **Conclusion**

‘Place’, as an arena of multilayered and multipurpose meanings is a useful focal point for the examination of marketing relevance both in terms of theory and practice. By focusing attention on the narrative construction of place and on local people living and making a living in a place we contribute to a research agenda that embraces the ‘critical’ relationships between marketing and society (Crane 2000; Tadjewski and Brownlie 2008). Such an agenda encourages a shift away from micro-marketing discourse on place products and invites marketers to embrace and ‘celebrate the complex, kaleidoscopic nature’ of places based on people’s diverse experiences (Warnaby and Medway 2013: 356). Participants’ stories reveal different forms of located subjectivity, which inform the

critical relations between place, identity and local population. We thus provide insight into the way sense of place emerges in local narratives as fluid and multifaceted. In so doing, we offer three generative metaphors through which locals' sense of place can be informed and understood. Even within a single story, local place meanings shift from Santorini as 'harsh beauty', to 'service business' and to 'home'.

Following the need to focus on 'local people' as an important yet neglected dimension of place marketing, we naively expected that local narratives of place will somehow be distinct from tourists' and marketing's narratives of place. What the research reveals is that local people participate in marketing discourse and this is reflected in their stories about the island. In the case of Santorini, social relations are shaped by a particular experience of tourism development. Therefore participants' stories draw on dominant cultural ('sublime nature') and economic discourses ('tourism's role in the Greek economy'). Furthermore, a different sense of place as 'home' emerges as a distinct form of belongingness to place and, for many of the locals, is temporally associated with wintertime.

Further research should therefore expand attention on 'dissonant' narratives of place as these can reveal alternative experiences of place beyond place objectification and draw our attention to issues of quality of life, education, the arts, health and the natural environment (Kilbourne et al. 1997). By dissonant narratives we refer to stories that contrast the dominant narratives (e.g. Brown et al. 2005) of place. The experience of place and its meanings can be diverse for people with socio-economic, cultural and even generational differences. In an increasingly dynamic world, the challenge for marketing is the inclusion of competing and shifting narratives of place (for a practitioner's perspective, see Northover's (2010) discussion of the role of a branding programme in opening dialogue

about a contested city's future). This needs to be addressed by further research. Furthermore, this research opens up the question of how interactions between locale-specific discourses and broader discourses shape local narratives of place for further investigation. These challenges require nuanced methodologies and treatment of the term local people, because the term 'local' hides a multitude of tensions between living, producing, destroying, protecting, and consuming place.

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