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Values of Souvenirs as Commodities

Abstract: Although souvenirs have received increased research interest in tourism studies, sociological research in this field still remains limited. This exploratory study aspires to overcome past research negligence on the values identified in social theory for commodities, such as Marx's use and exchange values and Baudrillard's sign-value, as well as introducing an additional one, the spiritual-value. By using a sample of twenty respondents in Veria, a small city in Northern Greece, this study attempts to interpret souvenirs as commodities with certain values and to identify the functions that tourists expect to perceive when purchasing them. Despite its limitations, this study provided a theoretical understanding of the sociological aspects of souvenirs' consumption in relation to the four values.

Keywords: Values of souvenirs, Marx's use and exchange values, Baudrillard's sign-value, spirituality, authenticity

1. Introduction

While on holidays, tourists tend to acquire memorable tangible reminders of their special time, in the form of souvenirs and artifacts (Anderson & Littrell, 1995; Gordon, 1986; Hashimoto & Telfer, 2007; Swanson, 2004; Swanson & Horridge, 2006; Trinh, Ryan & Cave, 2014), which do not only function as reminders of the destination visited, but they may also symbolize tourists' travelling experience, and at the same time represent a particular gaze (Morgan & Pritchard, 2005; Watson & Kopachevsky, 1994). Tourism research on material objects (see for example Collins-Kreiner & Zins, 2011; Hu & Yu, 2007; Kim & Littrell, 2001; Murphy, Moscardo, Benckendorff & Pearce, 2011; Wilkins, 2011; Yüksel, 2007) explores souvenirs prominently from the aspect of consumers' behaviour and their shopping practices without adopting any social theory framework.

In fact, there has been limited research on souvenirs by social scientists as opposed to business and marketing scholars (Swanson & Timothy, 2012). Among the few social studies having explored souvenirs and their complexities, is the study of Watson and Kopachevsky (1994) which examined tourism in the context of commoditization of modern social life and consumer culture. The current research aims at overcoming past research negligence by attempting to interpret souvenirs as commodities with attributed values, as well as identifying the functions that tourists perceive when purchasing them. In more detail, this study reviews the values identified in the literature for material objects, or in other words commodities, and attempts to apply these values in the case of souvenirs. In particular, the values which are being explored include Marx's use and exchange values; and Baudrillard's sign-value. In addition, although the literature (see for example Kaell, 2012; Moufahim, 2013) indicates that souvenirs may also have a spiritual-value, this value has not been explored in depth, a parameter which is being addressed in this exploratory study.

2. Exploring souvenirs: From handmade to mass-produced

Souvenirs are usually interpreted as reminders of the experiences lived during a trip. In fact, the word souvenir means ‘to remember’ (Gordon, 1986). In this way, souvenirs as material objects link people with places and memories (Morgan & Pritchard, 2005; Ramsay, 2009). There are indications and records (see for example Lasusa, 2007; Swanson & Timothy, 2012) that souvenirs existed in the ancient world. It is also known that during the 17th century rulers of Germanic states started to formulate the ‘Wunderkammer’ (wonder chamber), a room where they placed their private collections of curiosities that comprised exotic material objects and artifacts (Hume, 2013). However, a transitional period for souvenirs was the 17th and 18th century, when Grand Tour participants brought back home miniature replicas of the European sites they visited, as well as the 19th century, when Thomas Cook marked the beginning of modern tourism (Corrigan, 1997; Lasusa, 2007; Swanson & Timothy, 2012).

The industrial revolution, during the later part of the 18th century and the 19th century, marked the beginning of mass production of material objects, which has also affected the production of souvenirs. However, mass production of souvenirs became a global phenomenon only after World War II, when tourism movements started to become a privilege of the middle-class in the western societies (Lasusa, 2007). In brief, the industrial revolution and the expansion of tourism activity transformed the search for antiquities and authentic artifacts of pre-industrial era to increased demand for mass-produced souvenirs.

The main difference between pre-mass produced and mass-produced souvenirs is that the former functioned as genuine representations of sites and other artistic works, whereas the latter are identified as cheap and inauthentic commercial objects (Thompson, Hannam & Petrie, 2012). Authenticity, as a socially constructed concept, depends on tourists’ individual perceptions (Asplet & Cooper, 2000; Cohen, 1988; Littrell, Anderson & Brown, 1993; Shenhav-Keller, 1993). However, production and consumption of souvenirs has been affected by globalization. There are cases where tourists are dissatisfied when they realize that souvenirs they bought are imported, usually produced in countries with cheap labor such as China, Indonesia and Vietnam (Littrell et al., 1993; Ming, 2011; Kaell, 2012). However, tourists are not always annoyed when the locally produced souvenirs they buy are made by imported ingredients (Andriotis, 2011). As a consequence, Hashimoto and Telfer (2007) argue that the term ‘geographically displaced authenticity’ concerns the purchase of souvenirs which represents a different geographical area than the destination being visited, as is the case of Cuban cigars sold at Niagara Falls, in Canada.

However, both inauthentic cheap/mass-produced and authentic custom-made souvenirs satisfy the demand of various tourist shoppers (Hu & Yu, 2007). While nostalgia and romanticism motivate several tourists to travel to heritage sites where they can purchase traditional craft souvenirs (Pretes, 1995), the majority prefer to buy inauthentic mass-produced souvenirs which are usual, ordinary and mundane commodities, what Peters (2011) calls banal souvenirs, just because of their lower price (Thompson et al., 2012; Watson & Kopachevsky, 1994). Nevertheless, souvenirs vary according to the way they are interpreted by tourists in relation to their utility, their meanings and the memories they represent. This reveals that souvenirs, either as banal commodities or unique artifacts, are evaluated according to the needs they consciously or unconsciously satisfy.

3. Values of souvenirs

Material souvenirs, being either trinkets or luxury goods, vary on quality and cost, and have mainly been commodities in capitalist economies. In this context, Marx’s analysis of

commodity use and exchange-values can be used to explain souvenirs' values. Marx, being influenced by the economic theories of Adam Smith and David Ricardo, formulated his labor theory of value (Rima, 2009). In addition, about a century later, Jean Baudrillard (1981) argued about Marx's theory that "the classical Marxian critique of political economy needed to be supplemented by semiological theories of the sign" (Kellner, 2006, p.2). Thus Baudrillard (1981) criticized Marx's theory by adding the sign-value, which has been explored in studies dealing with the commoditization process of material objects (Dant, 1996; Gasana, 2009; Kellner, 2006; Mendoza, 2010; Mortelmans, 2005; Watson & Kopachevsky, 1994). Moreover, a literature review on souvenirs, see for example Kaell (2012) and Moufahim (2013), reveals the existence of a spiritual-value attributed to religious souvenirs.

On an epistemological level, questions may arise about how the four values can be combined together and thus comprise a souvenir value typology. According to Kuhn (1962), the main issue in scientific progress is the 'paradigm', meaning "the fundamental image of the science's subject matter" (Ritzer, 1975, p.7). At a certain stage in science, knowledge is accumulated within the logic of the science's progression. However, new findings reveal that it cannot be interpreted by an established 'paradigm'. This leads to a crisis that may result in a scientific revolution and the established 'paradigm' is overthrown and replaced by a new prevalent one (Ritzer, 2010). However, "the normal-scientific tradition that emerges from a scientific revolution is not only incompatible but often actually incommensurable with that which has gone before" (Kuhn, 1996, p.103). In this context: use-value and exchange-value pertain to Marxist theory, sign-value to postmodern social theory and spiritual-value to a hybrid theoretical perspective. Therefore, with the exception of the use and exchange-values, both of which belong to the same 'paradigm', the values can be characterized as being incompatible with each other.

Nevertheless, the applicability of Kuhn's 'paradigm' in social sciences is still under dispute (della Porta & Keating, 2008), and as Kuhn (1962) stated more than half century ago "it remains an open question what parts of social science have yet acquired such paradigms at all" (p.15). Tribe (2006) argues that tourism research cannot be conducted in the context of 'paradigms', as they represent a different era, when the "communication of ideas was tightly controlled" (p.367), as opposed to the pluralistic present. This is in line with McFee (2007), who questions the suitability of 'paradigms' within the social science, where competitive and complementary perspectives co-exist in a congruent manner.

Therefore, the juxtaposition of the four values in this survey follows some viewpoints of analytical Marxism, such as the non-dogmatic adoption of Marx's theory in combination with other social theory approaches (Ritzer, 2010). The subsections below will provide a critical literature review of each value in an attempt to provide a basis for the identification of tourists' perceived values of souvenirs.

3.1. Use and Exchange value

In his labor theory of value, Marx (1976) outlined that a material object has two values: "...the use-value [which] is realized without exchange, i.e. in the direct relation between thing and man, while, inversely, its value is realized only in exchange, i.e. in a social process" (p.177). The distinction between these two values is also outlined by Watson and Kopachevsky (1994), who, based on Marx's theory, claimed that: "a commodity has two qualities, the power to satisfy some human or material need (use-value); and the purely symbolic power to command other commodities in exchange (exchange-value)" (p.646).

The use-value of a commodity refers to its intrinsic features that makes it useful to the consumer. Marx (1976) also argues that the production of any use-value requires socially necessary labor time, which is "measured on the particular scale of hours, days etc." (p.129).

On the other hand, the exchange-value is measured in terms of other commodities and thus it is based on the logic of equivalence (Andriotis & Agiomirgianakis, 2014; Baudrillard, 1981; Craib, 1992). According to Marx (1976), the ability of comparison of different commodities reveals that there is something common in these commodities, namely the labor that has been involved in their production. In a similar view, Watson and Kopachevsky (1994) write: “exchanging products as commodities is thus simply another method of exchanging labor, the ‘exchange-value’ being expressed in a single abstract equivalent, money” (p.646). However, these two values are not unrelated. In the words of Marx (1976): “exchange-value appears first of all as the quantitative relation, the proportion, in which use-values of one kind exchange for use-values of another kind” (p.126). Although the correlation between these two values as well as the measurement of their magnitude, are interesting scientific debates, they cannot be dealt in depth in this study due to word count limitations. Instead, this study used these values in an interpretative way, in an attempt to provide an understanding of the sociological aspects of souvenir consumption.

From a tourism perspective, the use-value of souvenirs has a dual functionality for tourists as reminders of the tourism experience as well as products for use in daily life, i.e. a souvenir-cup purchased at the destination can be used at home for drinking coffee (Thompson et al., 2012). Corrigan (1997) states that use-value has also other functions besides an object’s primary utility: “the obvious use-value of a sweater for example, may be to keep one warm in winter, but its signifying or symbolic use-value may be tied to the fact that it was a gift from a family member or friend” (p.34).

But, souvenirs are not always connected to the tourism experience, because souvenirs are also on sale through the internet and in antique shops (Swanson & Timothy, 2012). Consequently, someone can purchase a souvenir depicting a landmark of a certain destination, which he has never visited. For example, Jubilee souvenirs from the British monarchy are souvenirs sold widely online (The British Monarchy, 2012), and in the majority of cases their purchase is not a result of tourism activity. Thus the use-value of these objects differs, and it is not clear whether they serve as reminders or as collectables (Belk, 1995). Another instance where the use-value of a souvenir changes is when souvenirs being given as gifts. In this case, souvenirs cease being reminders of a trip because they are not bought for tourists’ own use but instead they confirm the personal relationship and the social bonds between the donor (tourist) and the recipient (Clarke, 2008; Sherry, 1983).

In reality, the exchange-value is only defined in relation to other commodities as an objective value of all commodities (Shepherd, 2002). Thus the exchange-value of souvenirs is identified in the consumers’ mind as the amount of money they pay to purchase them. According to Marx’s theory the concept of exchange-value is not identical with the concept of the price, but as Lapavitsas (2003) defines: “when commodity transactions reach the ‘money’ stage, exchange values become consistent and mutually compatible money prices among commodities” (p.11). Prices of souvenirs differ proportionately to tourists demand and follow the rules of supply and demand of modern capitalist economies. But in general, souvenirs as mentioned above tend to be purchased by tourists as cheap commodities, thus their exchange-value is revealed in their low price. From a different perspective, exchange-value plays an altered role mainly in the case of antiquities, or hand-made objects, when they are purchased with the expectation that they may increase their exchange-value over time or when they are collected for investment (Anderson & Littrell, 1995; Corrigan, 1997).

3.2. Sign-Value

Among the notable representatives of post-modernism is Jean Baudrillard (1981) who introduced the concept of sign-value as the symbolic identity, as well as the image a

commodity reveals to its owners or to those who desire to possess it and therefore it is related with issues of prestige and identity (Dant, 1996; Gasana, 2009). “Henceforth commodities are not merely to be characterized by use-value and exchange-value, as in Marx’s theory of the commodity, but by sign-value the expression and mark of style, prestige, luxury, power, and so on - which becomes an increasingly important part of the commodity and consumption” (Kellner, 2006, p.3). According to Baudrillard (1981), in modern capitalism commodities are produced, traded (exchanged) and consumed as signs and therefore consumers are more fascinated by their sign-value than their other two values.

Sign-values also predominate over use and exchange-values, because according to Baudrillard’s theoretical analysis, signs prevail over reality and reconstruct reality (Kellner, 2006). In contrast to Marx, Baudrillard (1981) argues that the analysis of the commodity is to be noted in consumption as opposed to production, since consumed commodities are regarded as signs pertaining to a certain societal status (Baudrillard, 1981; Mortelmans, 2005). In fact, the notion of sign-value was not in use in Marx’s time, but it emerged in the 20th century with the advent of mass production and commercialisation (Kellner, 2006).

Sign-value is detected in souvenirs purchased on travels which in many cases include tourists’ most valued possessions (Wallendorf & Arnould, 1988). It can also be recognized in souvenirs purchased online by non-tourists specifically when consumers or collectors desire to acquire souvenirs regardless of their cost, which are obviously very significant to them. It is obvious that sign-value is connected to luxurious and prestigious souvenirs, which are usually rare compared to mass-produced souvenirs. For instance, Belk (1995) studied the behavior of collectors in the context of luxury consumption and noted that: “collecting also does things for us that ordinary consumption cannot” (p.486). Evans-Pritchard (1993) recognized collecting as a major motive for traveling, and underlined a certain category of souvenirs: the antiquities. As Evans-Pritchard (1993) noted, collectors fascination on ancient objects exhibited in museums and private collections reveals their emotional ties to the past. Likewise, Baudrillard (1981) associated the production and exchange of sign-values to the “collective caste privilege” (p.117) of the aristocracy.

As mentioned above the consumption of a sign-value differentiates certain consumers from others, thus dignifying them with prestige and status (Baudrillard, 1981). This associates sign-value with the origins of authenticity in souvenirs. Littrell et al. (1993) in their survey on what makes a craft souvenir authentic noted that authenticity depends on the subjective representations of tourists but clarified that authentic souvenirs should have some certain characteristics like: “uniqueness and originality, workmanship, cultural and historic integrity, aesthetics, and function and use” (p.204). Such criteria of course distinguish genuine traditional souvenirs from mass-produced and thus load the former with sign-values.

Although souvenirs may be produced, interpreted and consumed as signs, the majority still continue to be mass-produced, inauthentic and cheap reminders of the tourism experience, i.e. a cigarette lighter marked with an image of the Eiffel Tower, or a t-shirt marked with the image of Parthenon, can also be perceived as signs with certain meanings, but in practice they do not ascribe prestige and social status to their consumers. Therefore, sign-value is linked almost entirely to authentic, rare and unique souvenirs.

3.3. Spiritual-value

The concept of spiritual-value has its origins in de Brosses’ (2009, cited in Boer, 2011), term ‘fetish’ whereby he meant “an object attributed with superhuman and magical powers” used for religious purposes (p.417), and in Durkheim’s (2008) influential work ‘The Elementary Forms of Religious Life’, where devotees sacralised ordinary objects and “attributed them with supra-human powers” (Watson & Kopachevsky, 1994, p.648).

Likewise, Freud (2004) mentioned the existence of material objects as totems in other primitive tribes and referred to tabooed objects that enveloped the “objectified fear of demonic powers” (p.29). It seems that the practice of attributing supernatural powers to objects is as old as mankind and can be found in primitive tribes, as Durkheim (2008) reported in the case of central Australia. Therefore, the objectification of religious practices and beliefs started with primitive religious systems and continues in today’s advanced institutional religions. Spiritual-value can also be found in the writings of Scheler (1992) in which he claimed that material objects have values, as in the case of worship objects that have a holy value.

Religious souvenirs purchased during pilgrimages are considered by some researchers, e.g. Swanson and Timothy (2012), to be the true origins of modern souvenirs. These relics are differentiated from ordinary souvenirs because of the attributes attached to them by the individual’s consciousness, and “pilgrims buy them as sacred relics, endowed, in their imaginations, with some miraculous or magic power” (Nance, 2007, p.1066). These blessed souvenirs seem to be a special category of souvenirs with healing and miraculous attributes worthy to be explored in a profound level. For instance, Andriotis (2011) found that in Orthodox Christian religion, sacred objects are believed to be transformed into blessed objects when they are placed on saints’ icons or sacred bones, and by this procedure they are converted into relics in the minds of the faithful.

Di Giovine (2012) reveals that mass-produced souvenirs sold in the shrine of San Giovanni Rotondo in Italy, such as rosaries and imitations of Padre Pio’s garments, are the most desirable by devotees. It is a commonplace practice that British and Irish devotees either use them for themselves or place it on the bodies of sick acquaintances of theirs, so as to heal from serious diseases. The healing abilities of blessed souvenirs are also reported in Moufahim’s (2013) survey about Shi’a Muslim women who purchased such religious objects which are either already sacred, or they will become during some ceremonies. Such souvenirs have obviously a differentiated use-value not only as reminders of the travel experience, but also as reminders of the spiritual experience. Recipients of such blessed gift souvenirs identify a similar use-value, although they have never visited the specific sacred destinations. These blessed gifts offer them a spiritual experience if they are used in religious ceremonies and prayers, something that is confirmed by Doney (2014) who analyzed the religious practices of German Catholics during the 19th and 20th century in Aachen and Trier, Germany. In the words of Doney (2014): “those who could not attend [the religious festival in Trier] sought the same proximity to the relics as those who could – they wanted items that had physically touched the relics” (p.66). On the other hand, the exchange-value of these specific souvenirs does not differ from regular souvenirs, and the concept of sign-value is compatible partly because it correctly interprets the production and consumption of blessed souvenirs as signs of faith and religion.

However, the attributed identities of blessed souvenirs such as the ability to empower the sentiment of faith, as well as their healing and curative abilities, cannot be interpreted by the above mentioned values. Since use-value is based on the logic of utility, exchange-value on the logic of equivalence and sign-value on the logic of difference (Baudrillard, 1981), there evolves the question of which value is based on the logic of spirituality. Although there are many definitions of spirituality, this study conceptualises spirituality in terms of religious belief in a higher and supreme power (Andriotis, 2009). Spiritual-value is perceived as the value according to which devotees attribute supernatural powers to blessed religious commodities. Therefore, it is not seen from the non-religious perspective of those who search for meaning and harmony (Belhassen, Caton & Stewart, 2008; Sharpley & Jepson, 2011; Willson, McIntosh & Zahra, 2013).

From the aforementioned review it is evident that the three types of values (use, exchange and sign) have been theoretically developed in social sciences. However, a fourth value, the spiritual one, not previously explored in depth, has been identified. Based on these findings, and the lack of applied sociological research to explore tourists' perceptions on the values of souvenirs, the next section will review the methodology of the study and present the findings of the primary research.

4. Study methods

According to Marshall and Rossman (2011), perceptions and interpretations based on individual experiences are better analyzed with the use of in-depth interviews. To explore the applicability of values in the context of souvenirs, the semi-structured interview format was considered more appropriate to the aim of this study, which was to collect a large amount of data, concerning wider conversation topics (Berg, 1998).

This study was carried out between August and December 2013 in Veria, a small city in Northern Greece. Veria was used as a sample unit because it is the hometown of one of the authors, and therefore he is familiar not only with the place, but also with its society's cultural tradition, activities and beliefs (Andriotis, 2013). The respondents included in the sample were selected among those who had traveled during the last five years and during their trips had purchased souvenirs. They were approached at cafes, working places and shops. In total, twenty-nine interviewees were approached and twenty of them (ten men and ten women) agreed to participate. The twenty in-depth interviews were considered a satisfactory sample since the last interviewees did not add any new information and therefore it was assumed that data saturation was attained. Respondents were between 27 and 61 year old, and in terms of their educational background, ranged from junior high school graduates to master's degree holders. The interviews lasted between forty minutes and an hour and a half, and were recorded in notebooks.

Following the collection of limited demographic data (gender, age and educational background), the question topics included which souvenirs informants purchased, for what purposes, whether they ever ordered souvenirs from friends and relatives who traveled as well as whether they affiliated souvenirs with social status. Matters of authenticity, collecting and spirituality were also addressed. The interviews were evidently not strictly limited to these questions but there were conversations that touched on other important topics as well.

The analysis of the study results was carried out at two levels via the constant comparative method (Flick, 2009). At the first level, the notes collected were read and re-read several times, until they turned into more coherent and meaningful data so as to group the informants' perceptions under the four main categories of values identified in the literature. At the second level, the results were compared to evidence from secondary sources so as to confirm whether they validate theoretical schemata and empirical findings. The comparison carried out at the second level was a form of triangulation, which increases the study's validity and reliability (Andriotis, 2000; Patton, 1990).

Moreover, an attempt was made to increase the validity of the analysis by following Colaizzi's (1978) recommendation to ask two interviewees if the study results were confirmed. This process of 'member checking' helped the authors to avoid falsified interpretations of the informants' opinions that could occur during data analysis (Marshall & Rossman, 2011).

5. Study findings

All respondents mentioned that while travelling they bought cheap, mass-produced and commoditized souvenirs such as t-shirts, cups, pencils, jewelry, necklaces and ceramic art, confirming findings of past research which revealed that the purchase of souvenirs is a normal tourist behavior and practice (Gordon, 1986; Lasusa, 2007; Peters, 2011; Swanson & Timothy, 2012). Another notable finding is that half of the informants ordered souvenirs from relatives and friends who travelled to locations they have never been, considering this practice as commonplace. Based on these general findings, the following subsections will analyse the four values identified in the literature.

5.1. Use-value

The use-value of a commodity reflects its properties to satisfy human needs (Marx, 1976). This was evident in this study since eighteen informants confirmed that souvenirs satisfy their need to remember places they have visited as well as their need to use them as functional items in their everyday life.

Twelve out of the respondents stated that cheap and mass-produced commodities become a memento if they have an inscription or an imprint that signifies the place's name, icon or photography. To this end, a 34 year-old female informant identified the location's logo clearly marked on the item as a criterion to purchase a souvenir. In her own words:

I bought a T-shirt with the classic imprint I love Corfu. You can see the same logo on various other T-shirts sold at other destinations. They differ on the location printed on them such as for example I love New York or I love Paris.

The quote above is consistent to Thompson's et al. (2012), who stated that it is not the form of the souvenirs that ascribes the location, but instead their imagery and caption. This was also vividly illustrated in the narration of a 45 year-old male informant as follows:

While being on vacations at the island of Paros, I saw a small ceramic donkey bearing two baskets, serving as salt and pepper set. It was an amazing piece of work but it had no logo on it. So I asked the vendor if she could paint the island's name on it and so she did. I still have it and it is one of my favorites.

Undoubtedly, the above notions refer to souvenirs that are similar in many locations and countries and what distinguishes the one from the other is the imagery of each location's logo. However, there are souvenirs which are trademarks of certain locations such as traditional clothes or local musical instruments, which are often purchased by tourists. As seven informants mentioned their intention of purchasing souvenirs was to know and come in touch with the local culture and civilization of the host societies and the main means to remember the place visited was the souvenir. As a 51 year-old male informant stated: "the means which connects me with the places I visited is the souvenir. Whenever I use my Eiffel-tower pendant I remember being there".

Nevertheless, every traditional look-alike souvenir does not ensure its origin as a 33 year-old female narrates:

In Tunis, I bought some scarves I wanted to give as gifts to relatives, believing I would be donating them a local product. When I looked at them at the hotel, I realized they were made in China. I felt so disillusioned by that.

There are also cases where local products and trademarks are not desirable by tourists. As three informants stated their main criterion to purchase a souvenir was its aesthetic appearance even if the souvenir was not marked with a local logo, or even when it was not a

local product. Similarly, Kaell (2012) interviewed American tourists who travelled to the Holy Land and found that when they realized that some of the souvenirs bought were made in China, they were not disappointed.

Besides, the recognition of the use-value of souvenirs as mementos, use-value was also confirmed by five informants who bought souvenirs for their utility to fulfill their standard needs. This was more obvious in souvenirs like garments and perfumes, sometime even brand names, where the locality was not the major reason to acquire those commodities, as a 59 year-old male stated: “when I am on holidays I always like to buy a nice cravat or a coat”. But even as far as cheaper commodities like cups with the location’s logo or local handmade ones were concerned, many of the informants stated that they liked drinking their coffee or tea in these cups. It is also a fact that tourists being on holidays buy some commodities for practical reasons, such as a toothbrush, toothpaste or razors, that they forgot to bring with them, and these commodities can be transformed into souvenirs when the tourists return to their homelands:

The difference between these objects and ordinary souvenirs is the intention ascribed to them. While souvenirs and mementos are brought home to serve as a reminder of the journey, these objects are acquired for different reasons and only start functioning as souvenirs in retrospect (Collins-Kreiner and Zins, 2011, p.21).

Such a case was confirmed only by one 36 years old male interviewee who stated:

Berlin was the last location I travelled and I only bought toothpaste. When I went back to the hotel I realized that it was a teeth-cleaning gum and not what I needed. However, I kept this product, useless though it was, and whenever I look at it, it reminds me of this specific trip as a pleasant memory.

Whether the souvenirs were purchased for reasons of remembrance or utility, or even both, use-value was acknowledged by the vast majority of the informants, even by the one mentioned above who described souvenirs “as useless things”, but kept such a memento to remember a pleasant trip he once made in the past.

Among the informants there were also seven who noted that besides the souvenirs they acquired for themselves, they also bought presents for relatives and friends. As a 29 year-old female stated: “I usually buy small souvenirs for gifts to my relatives and friends. This is evidence of remembering them”. In this case the use-value of souvenirs, does not exist for the donors, but for the recipients. Nevertheless, donors and recipients of gifts seem to interpret this symbolic transaction under an emotional view rather than under a utilitarian view (Clarke, 2008).

5.2. Exchange-value

The exchange-value of souvenirs was realized by the interviewees as the price they paid to acquire them and therefore their opinions conduced to the fact that souvenirs are in general low-priced commodities. This acknowledgement leads to the verification that almost every tourist is able to purchase such a cheap commodity and this may explain, besides the need to remember the tourist experience, why the purchase of souvenirs is accepted as a normal tourist activity in general. All interviewees considered souvenirs as cheap and worthless small objects and just four informants noted that souvenirs have only aesthetic and sentimental worthiness. This was mentioned by a 45 year-old male who said: “if a souvenir is expensive and fragile you don’t buy it”. This was also confirmed by Lasusa (2007) when he

stated: “most people are often hesitant to call them ‘art objects’, because we believe that they are cheap, mass-produced and crudely made, and they often are” (p.274).

This survey was conducted in Greece in 2013, five years after the beginning of the economic crisis when the purchasing power of Greeks had decreased dramatically (Stylidis & Terzidou, 2014). A 33 year-old female noted (and was confirmed by others) that after the economic crisis they changed consuming behavior:

In Nikiti, Chalkidiki where we had our last vacations there was a small gift shop which sold some nice lanterns but they were quite expensive, around 25 euros each. If the price was about 10 euros I would have bought one, but in general after the economic crisis I became very cautious with shopping.

In a similar pattern was the statement of a 55 year-old female informant, who stated: “in Krakow (Poland), I saw some gorgeous amber jewelry but it was too expensive, the cheapest started at a price of 50 euros. I could not afford to buy any.” The result of the financial crisis is that the Greek travelers have decreased shopping. As a 51 year-old male respondent quotes: “nowadays we just enjoy traveling as we stopped buying expensive goods while being on vacations”.

The exchange-value of souvenirs also seems to play an important role in the case when tourists find brand name commodities and other products at discount prices (Wilkins, 2011). This was confirmed by one informant who ordered his friend traveling to the United States to buy him a pair of Timberland shoes. As he stated: “I wanted them because they were the original ones and they were cheaper than in Greece. I also wanted this pair of shoes from the United States, because I have never been there.” Contrary to the search for original commodities, a 51 year-old male quoted: “While being on vacations in Thailand about twenty years ago, I found some imitations of Lacoste and Hugo Boss shirts at a price of 1/10 in comparison to Greece and I bought many of them”.

Whereas all the respondents confirmed their representations about souvenirs as cheap commodities, and sought low-priced souvenirs in general, exchange-value played a crucial role in their consumer behavior. A constant comparison of the prices of similar commodities that could also be found in their hometown seemed to affect their purchasing decisions.

5.3. Sign-value

Baudrillard (1981) introduced the term sign-value of commodities and related it to matters of social status and prestige that a consumer acquires. In the modern capitalistic era status seems to be an important matter for the middle-class, which Lasusa (2007) defines as the main class consuming souvenirs:

On a tourist trip, a middle class member is able to temporarily buy the feeling of being upper class...I believe that middle class members most often partake in this activity [souvenir collecting] and also have the most to gain from it (p.274).

However, acquiring souvenirs may be a beloved activity of the middle-class but it is inarguable that “cheaply made and mass-produced souvenirs [that] are not thought to have intrinsic worth” (Lasusa, 2007, p.276) are not able to increase somebody’s social status. And if the middle-classes of the modern societies try to gain social prestige through various means, Greece’s current diminishing middle-class struggles to survive realizing sorrowfully that its amenities belong to the past. This perhaps explains why, in the context of this survey, none of the informants mentioned any purchase of souvenirs for the purpose of gaining prestige or improving their social position. A noteworthy statement about this belongs to a 38 year-old informant who asserted: “souvenirs do not add prestige to a person, because they are usually

unworthy. There are objects that give status, but I can't consider them as souvenirs, in this case it is more about an investment." Similarly, a 45 year-old male respondent declared:

I don't believe that ordinary souvenirs like cups and T-shirts are correlated to social status matters, with the exception of some certain and unique souvenirs like original paintings add prestige. For example, when I was in Skopelos for vacations I met a retired marine architect who constructed amazing small-scale replicas of sailboats that were very expensive and only some ship-owners and businessmen were able to purchase them. I think that owners of such souvenirs gain prestige because they are prosperous and want to display their unique acquisitions.

In this study only one case could be considered as partially fitting to the sign-value concept, because it refers to the element of differentiation of the persons' identity. A 33 year-old female though mentioned the intention to differentiate herself from the others by buying souvenirs:

In Prague, I bought a book from the Medieval Torture Museum. I knew that this book was not available in my country and that none of my friends would have it. This made me feel like I was more informed compared to others. I was fascinated by the thought that I had something nobody else did.

Nonetheless, the above mentioned informant did not relate the acquisition of this book to gaining prestige and this is why this case is partially considered as sign-value.

Finally, one informant declared he was a collector of coins but he did not combine his hobby with items of social status:

I collect coins, and when I travel abroad I bring back as many as I can. Also, when someone else goes for vacations I order him to bring me back local coins. But I am not a systematic collector, I do this whenever I can and remember.

Therefore, it is obvious that collecting is not only related to rare and unique artifacts or commodities but it can also be a simple hobby irrespective of prestigious matters.

Another issue related to the sign-value concept that was not confirmed in this study was the absence of the demand for authenticity. All of the interviewees were aware that the souvenirs they purchased were manufactured and mass-produced commodities and none of them requested authentic and unique souvenirs. Even two of the informants who referred to the acquisition of handmade souvenirs commented only that they were chosen because of aesthetic matters and not because they were considered authentic. These facts confirmed what Hashimoto and Telfer (2007) call 'geographically displaced authenticity' and are substantiated by a 49 year-old male as follows:

I bought, while being on vacations in Ithaca, a small Cycladic reproduction of an ancient Cycladic sculpture. I knew that it wasn't handmade and that it had no relevance to Ithaca's culture but I liked it and so I got it.

5.4. Spiritual-value

Spiritual-value was confirmed in five out of the twenty respondents, who referred to blessed icons, rosaries and crosses. In addition to them, three more informants mentioned they purchased religious souvenirs during their vacations but declared that they didn't believe in supernatural attributes. The five respondents who recognized the superhuman powers of blessed souvenirs also stated their strong belief to the traditions and rituals of Eastern Orthodox Christianity. However, they declared that not any religious object or commodity comprises spiritual-value and as a 60 year-old female commented: "these religious souvenirs are only worthy when they are blessed by monks or priests." This is in line with Andriotis'

(2011) finding that rosaries made by monks in the monasteries of Mount Athos are considered to be more valuable than others sold outside the monasteries because they are blessed by the monks' prayers. As a 39 year-old male believed, these blessed objects built up psychological and emotional ties:

The cross I am wearing was placed on the right hand of St. John the Baptist's sacred relic, as on other relics of Saints at the Dionysiou Monastery at Mount Athos. So this cross is blessed and I believe that it offers me grace.

Likewise, another male informant, 38 years old, stated: "A friend brought me a rosary from the St. David Monastery in Euboea. I am wearing this rosary on my hand all the time and I believe that it helps me in difficult moments of my life". Moreover, another 34 year-old female informant stated the following about the healing powers of a certain religious souvenir:

I believe that in a difficult moment blessed souvenirs help people to overcome these situations. Although it is not allowed for women to visit Mount Athos, I have a friend who works there and I order religious souvenirs from him. I had problems with my pregnancy in the past and had to come through the painful experience of two miscarriages. After that I was wearing a blessed Madonna belt, (a white latchet), during my pregnancies, that are given at Vatopedi Monastery. We also realized that there was a health problem related to my condition, but I believe that it was due to a combination of the blessed belt and my belief, as well as the help of medicine, that I overcame my problem and gave birth to babies.

The above informant was the only one who reported a healing experience caused partially by a blessed object but the other four also confessed their belief to such incidents.

Although the above mentioned respondents referred to blessed religious objects bought from monasteries, it is also known that these objects are sold also elsewhere. As a 60 year-old female explained: "if you buy an icon from a monastery it is considered to be blessed. If you buy it from the market, you need to place it in a church for at least 40 days, and then it becomes blessed." This finding is related to Moufahim's (2013) survey on Shi'a Muslim prayers who -among other ceremonies- put bottles of water on sacred tombs to transform them into blessed religious souvenirs.

The majority of respondents (twelve out of twenty) stated that they believed in God but declared that they do not believe that religious souvenirs carry superhuman powers. Therefore, it should not be considered that everybody who believes in God and follows the religious traditions accepts the supernatural powers of a blessed religious commodity. As a 36 year-old male informant quoted: "I believe in a more personal relationship with God, i.e. through prayers or church-going; my belief is not reinforced through worshipping an icon".

Instead, a non-believer expressed a noteworthy opinion about religious souvenirs:

I don't believe in religion, but I believe in the power of the evil eye. As far as religious souvenirs are concerned I know that they are mass-produced and therefore I do not consider them worthy. A religious souvenir is valuable if a monk makes it by his hands and prayers, but I am not convinced of the spirituality of mass-produced objects of religious tourism. For example, there are several places which sell ready-made icons. Are they authentic? Of course they are not. And this is the reason I merely consider them commercial.

Finally, perhaps due to the economic crisis only one respondent mentioned the offer of religious souvenirs to relatives believing that such gifts transfer grace and harmony to the recipients and confirming that religious souvenirs play the role of gifts and symbolize a helpful object for the relatives and friends at home who are in need of them (Di Giovine, 2012; Griffin, 2012). Although it depends on the belief of the donors and the recipients about the attributes of such souvenirs, in some certain cases donors, either believe that a blessed

souvenir induces God’s intervention in their relationship with the recipients or hope that these souvenirs will be an incentive for the latter to get closer to God (Kaell, 2012).

6. Conclusion

A literature review on the values of souvenirs revealed that there is a lack of sociological research in the context of tourism. From a literature review undertaken for the purpose of this study it was evident that use-value, exchange-value and sign-value are topics that are theoretically developed and examined in social sciences, but have not been extensively applied in the field of tourism. Adding up to these three values, this study identified an additional one, the spiritual-value. Although the term has already been reported in other studies (Kaell, 2012; Moufahim, 2013), it has been used only in a general descriptive manner of spirituality that surrounds religious objects without a thorough examination. (Figure 1 summarises the literature in an attempt to reduce the complexity of the concepts identified).

Figure 1. Values of souvenirs

Values	Purchasing purpose of souvenir
Use-value	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To use as a memento of the tourist experience • For utilitarian use of everyday life while being on vacation (and after returning home)
Exchange-value	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For the price (cheap-expensive) • For investment purposes (expecting to gain a higher price in the future)
Sign-value	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For prestigious purposes and social status gaining • For collecting (usually authentic, unique and rare souvenirs)
Spiritual-value	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For the empowerment of religious faith • For the belief that certain religious souvenirs have supernatural powers (healing and protecting identities)

The overarching sub-themes of the values of souvenirs that emerged from the literature were used to falsify the findings of this study as well as to provide a better understanding of the meaning of souvenirs’ values.

First, in the context of this survey use-value was primarily recognized in souvenirs that were perceived as tangible carriers of the vacations’ memories. The main reason respondents purchased souvenirs was to remember the sites they travelled and less for utilitarian usage. Thus the use-value proved to be the main reason that respondents acquired small trinkets considering this a normal social travel behavior.

Secondly, the exchange-value seemed to play a prescribed role for the respondents, as they considered souvenirs cheap and banal commodities. With regard to the financial crisis in Greece the importance of the exchange-value was only considered in the search for low-priced commodities which respondents were able to acquire. The fact that no informant bought authentic handmade souvenirs that could gain added exchange-value in the future indicates that souvenirs were not purchased for investment.

Thirdly, prestige and social status were not the requested elements respondents sought. It is also worth mentioning that all respondents were of low and middle income and therefore the purchase of expensive and unique souvenirs was not identified in this survey, even when some respondents affiliated unique and authentic souvenirs to matters of prestige. Therefore, sign-value was not identified and this may be due to the fact that the Greek middle class members live in a period of economic crisis where they try to survive and not to acknowledge their identity in luxurious commodities.

Finally, the concept of spiritual-value emerged from the literature review as well as the data provided by in-depth interviews. While spiritual-value was identified in five out of the twenty respondents, it revealed the way individuals attributed superhuman powers to material commodities through religious belief. Besides, spiritual-value should not be considered as a continuity of Marx's labor theory of value, and neither a supplementary concept of Baudrillard's sign-value. Marx's and Baudrillard's theoretical notions on values were based on the critique of capitalism's norms of production and consumption. In contrast, spiritual-value is based on religious beliefs and practices that existed in primitive tribes and continues to exist in modern capitalist societies.

From the review it is evident that some of the themes under study fall into more than one values. Likewise in the context of this survey the blessed rosary a respondent acquired from a Monastery in Mount Athos has a use-value since it reminds him this particular trip and spiritual experience, it has an exchange-value because he purchased it at a certain price and finally it also has a spiritual-value as he believes that it offers him supernatural protection from bad luck. This finding is in line with the study of Hume (2009) who analyzed the transformation of boomerangs of aboriginal Australia, exhibited at the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery. These traditional artifacts have a use-value, because they have been used in hunting by Aborigines and now they have an exchange-value, not only because they are bought by museums, but also because collectors purchase them. In addition, they have a sign-value as they are parts of Museums' collections.

In discussing the concept of souvenir values, fundamental domain assumptions have been grouped under the four broad types of values, by using headings, non-mutually exclusive. Nevertheless, when one refers to individual types of values, they only concentrate on the area within which the specific value is located. Thus, it is arbitrary to place one type of value in one category rather than another. In reality, more than one type of value may be in process at any given time. For instance, sign-value can be detected in rare, unique, authentic and therefore expensive souvenirs, all of which are characterized with an exchange-value that is revealed in their high price. As a result, although the various types of values are discussed separately for the purposes of this study, in reality they are interrelated. However, due to word count limitations it was not possible in this study to explore the inter-correlation of the four values in depth, an issue which should be addressed in future research.

Another critical point to address is the management/marketing implications of this study which explored the purchase and spending patterns of Greek consumers in an era of financial crisis. This study provided a souvenir value typology which can help product designers, retailers and vendors to understand better consumers' demands and expectations. While it was not the aim of this study to use differences of respondents based on their socio-demographic characteristics as explanatory to the four types of values, it was found that most of the devotees who believe in the supernatural attributes of blessed religious souvenirs ordered them from their relatives or friends who traveled to specific monasteries, unlike other devotees that purchased religious souvenirs but declared that they did not believe in their superhuman attributes. However, further marketing research is required to explore differences in demands of tourists with different socio-demographic characteristics, such as income, nationality, age, education etc., as well as differences in travelers who are facing the consequences of the economic crisis compared to those who do not.

To conclude, a detailed scrutiny of the values of souvenirs shows that it has been insufficiently developed in the tourism literature from a sociological perspective. In this study, an attempt was made to address this shortfall by using concepts developed in social sciences. However, due to its exploratory nature, this study was limited to a small number of respondents all of which were of Greek origin. Certainly, there is more work to be done in understanding the specific components of the values of souvenirs. For instance, in this study

the religious identity of the respondents, who were of Greek Orthodox Faith, made clear the need for further surveys that will examine the spiritual-value concept with informants of other religions and cultural background, displaying thus a wider and more substantial understanding of the values of souvenirs that emerged and were analysed in this study. Further research is also needed to replicate the findings of this study by proceeding through “structure comparisons of cases that differ on the values of their outcome variables than it does through a succession of single-case studies” (Hicks 1994, p.90). Thus, it would be useful to verify the extent of comparison of this study’s findings through parallel studies within respondents of different cultural and social status, in order to examine whether the elements of values described in this study apply elsewhere.

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