

**Authentic offers for active tourism as an option to re-
position and re-brand a traditional sun & sea destination:
The case of Cyprus**

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Introduction

Cyprus as a traditional sun & beach destination is still struggling to diversify its product and with the effort to reposition itself on the tourism market. Compared to other Mediterranean destinations like Majorca the process is still at the very beginning. At the same time the specific cultural background of Cyprus as part of the Eastern Mediterranean, with the influences of the Levant, gives specific options to distinguish the product from that of the other Mediterranean competitors.

Even if the official strategy of the Cyprus Tourism Organisation is trying to promote rural tourism as one of the pillars to extend the tourism product and include the rural hinterland into the coastal dominated tourism development, this is mostly limited to the creation of accommodations in (often formerly abandoned) historic buildings in the countryside. Of course the public stake holders engage themselves in developing a number of traditional offers for active tourism such as e.g: hiking trails but an integrated overall strategic is still on its way! The efforts towards establishing an island specific brand is still very much focused on the traditional coastal image.

While tourism authorities still lack a clear perspective on the future rural tourism product, several small-scale tourism businesses as well as NGOs in the field have already done the first steps down the road. The Cyprus Sustainable Tourism Initiative (CSTI) organizes "tree-planting-events" for tourists in rural areas, the accommodation provider Cyprus Villages Ltd. offers its guests participation in so-called "Village Activities" such as bread baking, etc. and the small tour operator "Jalos Active" has introduced dedicated hikes to view the endemic orchids of Cyprus. Taking Cyprus Villages Ltd., the major player in Cypriot "Agrotourism" as an example, the so-called "village activity" programme will be presented. Tourists in small groups get "hands on" experience for example in the traditional production of local Halloumi cheese, in baking of traditional bread in the old village oven, traditional knowledge on herbs and their utilisation, etc. These offers implicitly follow the concept of creative tourism (cf. Richards & Marques 2012) which is more common in the field of urban tourism.

By examining the strategy of the public stakeholders in Cyprus tourism and the activities of innovative private small-sized entrepreneurs and NGOs, the paper will present the options for enhancing the tourism policy of Cyprus by including the private activities into the strategic programme of the national and regional DMOs. Thus a real re-branding can be achieved by stimulating a systematic development oriented towards innovative active tourism products.

The Actual Situation of Tourism in Cyprus as a Starting Point for Active Tourism Offers

Until the end of the 20th century the offers in tourism in the Republic of Cyprus have been strongly orientated towards the traditional sun & beach segment (more detailed, see for example Ioannides & Apostolopoulos 1999, Ayres 2000, Sharpley 2001). As a classic Mediterranean beach destination, the country was able to generate (with a strong focus on the English and German source market) by 2000 respectable growth rates (cf. Figure 1).

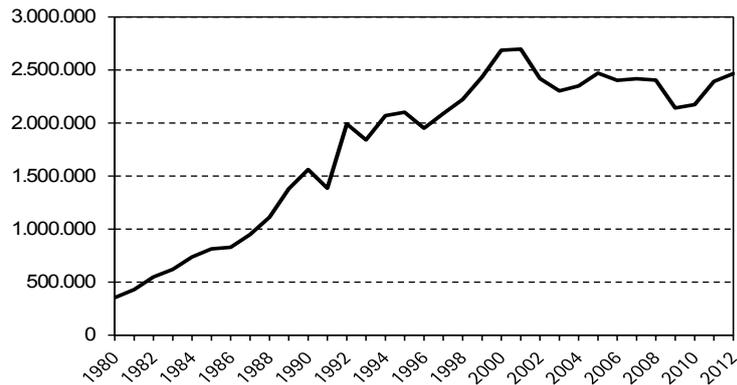


Figure 1: Number of arrivals to Cyprus between 1980 and 2011, source: Republic of Cyprus, Ministry of Finance, Statistical Service 2013

During the two last decades of the 20th century, the sun & beach segment in the four regions of Agia Napa/Paralimni, Larnaca, Limassol and Paphos has been the cash cow of the Cyprus tourism industry.

However, since the turn of the millennium, stagnation in the afflux of tourists has to be stated. Despite repeated efforts to diversify the beach product in the coastal area by adding e.g. offers for golfing or spa and an intensive marketing abroad, this situation hasn't changed during the last ten years. This refers to the stagnation phase of Butler's well-known destination lifecycle model (cf. Butler 1980), the crucial stadium, when the rejuvenation of as destination has to be prepared to avoid a decline of a mature product. At the same time the average revenue per tourist with about 700 € (cf. Republic of Cyprus, Ministry of Finance, Statistical Service 2013) is an indicator for a demand which refers more to a budget destination than a high-end tourism attractor.

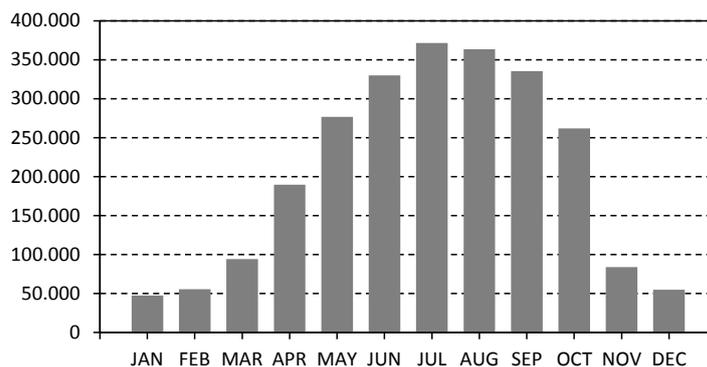


Figure 2: Arrivals of tourists in Cyprus per month in 2012 Source: Republic of Cyprus, Ministry of Finance, Statistical Service 2013

Another factor indicating a suboptimal performance of the tourism industry in Cyprus is the high seasonality of the tourism demand (cf. Fig. 2). Again this refers to the actual coastal orientation of the tourism products. Quite typical for coastal destinations the summer months between June and September show a good performance during the

high season, whereas late autumn, winter and early spring are marked by very low figures. So at the turn of the century Cyprus could be described as a destination in stagnation, characterized by a mono-structural tourism product and a strong seasonality.

As other Mediterranean destinations Cyprus intended in this stadium to diversify its product by developing new offers in the rural hinterland of the coastal beach resorts (cf. Sharpley 2003). The "Strategic Plan for Tourism 2000-2010" of the Cyprus Tourism Organisation aimed "at repositioning Cyprus on the tourist map as a distinctive tourist destination, differentiated from competition, reinforcing in this way its competitiveness and securing the sustainability of tourism on the island" (CTO 2000: 17). The main targets of the strategy were:

- "increase of the per capita tourist expenditure
- improvement of seasonality
- increase of tourist arrivals
- increase of the length of stay
- increase of repeated tourism" (CTO 2000: 5).

Apart from revamping the traditional sun & sea product and focussing on quality aspects a special focus has been given in the Tourism Strategy 2010 on the improvement the seasonality and the increase the expenditures as core priorities. This shall be achieved by new tourism products to be developed: "The 'special interest products' will act as attractors to the destination, which at the same time will offer opportunities for activities and entertainment (things to do and see). Top priority products are the Themed Routes, Museums, Agrotourism, National Forest Parks, Nature Trails and Events, all of which will be given maximum priority" (CTO 2000: 7). So special interest products are seen as the key to "create the multidimensional tourist experience on which the repositioning of Cyprus as a tourist destination is based on." (CTO 2000: 47) and the rural hinterland with its possibilities for active tourism products plays a key role in this intended turnaround of the destination. Apart from the construction of two marinas and the cultural tourism in Nicosia (cf. Gronau, Kaufmann and Sakkadas 2011) most of the activities are based in the rural inland.

During the last years some effort has been made concerning the reorientation of the destination. To foster Agrotourism a funding programme has been lanced which induced the numer of beds in this segment to rise from 472 [in 2001] to 927 beds [in 2008]; (CTO 2010). Even if this might look like a success at first sight, the occupancy rate with only 18.5 per cent (CTO 2010) is an indicator, that this segment is not yet performing as is might do. At the same time it has to be stated, that the public encouragement of Agrotourism focused mainly on the creation of accommodation facilities by reconstruction abandoned buildings and quarters in the rural villages (cf. Sharpley 2002).

Concerning the activities for special interest tourists (which might be accommodated in the Agrotourism locations) quite a number of approaches have been lanced during the last years:

- Six wine routes have been created to attract tourists to the hinterland by visiting different wineries, taste the product and get an on-hand sight of the wine yards (CTO 2008)

- Cycling routes have been established to promote this sport tourism activity (CTO 2011a)
- European long-distance hiking trails (CTO 2007) and so-called “Nature Trails” (CTO n.d.) were designated across the island.

All of these segments try to target tourists to come to Cyprus outside the high season and spend more money than the average package tourist in a beach resort. Even if Cyprus, to a certain extent, is meanwhile perceived as apt for these active forms of tourism (cf. Harms and Kagermeier 2013: 24) the promotion of Cyprus as a whole year round destination has so far generated only limited results. So the actual Tourism Strategy of 2011–2015 repeats more or less the same targets like its predecessor 10 years before: “Improving the competitiveness of the tourist industry of Cyprus” by “special interest tourism” like “sport tourism, cycling ...hiking ...rural tourism ... and wine tourism” (CTO 2011b: 1). Talking about “problems and shortcomings” and “the needs of the market” (CTO 2011b: 2) in an indirect way expresses, that the repositioning strategy has still a long way to go.

Active Tourism as an Option for Further Development?

Active tourism can be seen as special interest or niche tourism. As outlined by Buhalis, the application of niche products usually can be applied by mature destinations as part of a rejuvenation approach: “Destinations that are at the later stage of their development should focus on repositioning their tourism products with alternative niche marketing strategies”(Buhalis, 2000: 101). But at the same time it has to be underlined – as the example of Cyprus shows – that the application of this approach is not as easy and doesn’t come along without great efforts. It can be understood as a challenge for all stakeholders: “Niche tourism product development is often associated with high levels of entrepreneurship at the destination and an individual desire to carve out specific market niches for a destination” (Novelli 2005: 82).

The re-orientation of the destination means, that quite complex products have to be developed and branded, which meet the requirements of the customers of hybrid appealing offers for creative and active tourism. This requires a much more intensive cooperation of stakeholders from different fields (accommodation, culinary arts, activities, marketing; cf. James 2005; Pechlaner, Fischer and Hammann 2006; Law, Leung and Buhalis 2010; Richards and Palmer 2010). At the same time most of the new developing offer elements are provided by SMTEs. This post-fordistic production scheme which is especially based on the economies of scope saw up to now only little advances.

The destination government structures in Cyprus have hitherto been marked by a classical top-down approach with quite weak relations and cooperation between the different public and private stakeholders on the regional, national and international level. The national Cyprus Tourism Organisation (CTO) understood its role mainly in just promoting the destination and assuring a certain quality level not really exercising a clear leadership position. The regional, national and international hotel investors and tour operators acted to a great extent quite separately when bundling the simple holiday package.

During the last years the CTO has established regionalised tourism bodies, thus hoping to facilitate the creation of specific regionalised tourism products. But – apart from

structural deficits regarding a solid own basis for financial resources – the newly established regional sub-destination tourism bodies show a clear weakness concerning possible master minds which could play a central role by playing the leading motor of the re-orientation.

Even if there is are convincing potentials for re-orientating the destination, the dominant stakeholders – representing the traditional sun & sea segment – seem hardly capable of fulfilling a leadership role in the re-orientation process and are practising a persistence oriented position. On the other side offerers of innovative new products are often too small and not well organised enough to achieve competitive product quality and gain market access. The top-down approach on the national level is not really apt to facilitate and encourage the development of self-organised regional structures. A few innovative stakeholders having the capacity of investing into new products on their own and gaining market access are – seen the circumstances – preferring not to integrate themselves into the regional networks and acting isolated on their own, thus not fulfilling their role as innovative entrepreneurs which may lead to the restructuring of the destination.

Seen the constraints of the private stakeholders, regional DMOs are seen as key players in the re-orientation of rural tourism destinations (Pechlaner, Volgger and Herntrei 2012) but as Morgan, Pritchard and Pride (2002: 56) state: “Few Destination Marketing Organisations (DMOs) have considered or explored the markets for their various niche products”.

Hence niche marketing strategies for active tourism products can be seen as a way of repositioning tourism products and destinations. However they need a highly developed level of entrepreneurship associated with a high quality and service level. They fulfil their role not only by stabilising the demand in the low season, but may at the same time help to change the image and perception of the quality of a destination (cf. Gronau and Kagermeier 2013). Thus they might as well contribute to the stabilisation of the traditional products of a destination. In the following chapter some examples from Cyprus will be discussed which show, that – apart from the official strategy of the CTO – private initiatives exist which prove the possibilities and potentials of Cyprus for active niche tourism products. So the main challenge is to find a destination governance approach (cf. Bieger, Beritelli & Laesser 2007) which integrates the public activities with the creative private approaches in a comprehensive change management (Schuler 2012) which really can foster the repositioning of Cyprus as the Island of Aphrodite in the Eastern Mediterranean.

Repositioning Cyprus Via Active Tourism

Framework conditions for active Tourism

Based upon the previous chapters the following section will aim at providing an insight to the situation of active tourism in Cyprus, while also addressing the problems of the sector by referring to the aforementioned general framework conditions in the destination of Cyprus.

To identify given products in the field, the authors refer to the rather broad definition of the “Active Tourism Organization”, which defines “Active Tourism is a travelling phi-

losophy that combines the adventure, eco tourism and cultural aspects of a holiday". (Source: Active Tourism org.)

As described in the sections before, the CTO has spend some effort to establish a more authentic tourism product in the hinterland of Cyprus, in this context pilot projects in the field of hiking, biking and trekking have been launched, moreover the development of infrastructure for those has been funded. Amongst these there has been substantial funding for bike routes in the Troodos Mountains, the signs along the E4 long-distance-trail and several other local tracks. Furthermore already in the agro tourism programme of the 90ies or even before, in the context of the Laona Project, there has been funding for the installments of local museums related to cultural heritage such as traditional handicrafts, as for example the basket museum in Ineia or the herbal garden in Pano Akourdalia. Unfortunately these pilot projects have never reached a descent demand due to inappropriate management, in terms of opening hours, attractive design, didactic concepts or even maintenace. Hence these pilot projects initiated by the public sector can nowadays only work to a certain extent as base for the development of active tourism products. The emphasis of today's products in the field clearly relies on private initiatives from several very heterogenous stakeholders.

Structure of active tourism supply

The main players nevertheless can be grouped mainly into two groups: the voluntary sector, i.e. clubs, associations and NGO's and secondly into private companies providing commercial services in the field. With regards to the activities a wide range can be detected, ranging from the field of cycling, both racing- as well as mountain bikes, hiking and trekking in its various forms, to hands-on courses dealing with local cultural heritage such as cheese making, cooking courses or perfume workshops. Exemplary the following section will provide two state-of-the-art examples of activities each from the voluntary as well as from the private sector.

In the first section two professional companies providing services in the field characterizing the supply of active tourism, will be introduced. In case of the first example Cyprus Villages Ltd., the active tourism offers have to be seen as an additional offer to their core business as an accommodation company, while the second example of "Zypernbike Ltd." presents a provider with a clear focus on active tourism products.

Cyprus Villages Ltd., the major player in Cyprus agro tourism, already looks back on nearly 25 years of engagement in the field of agro tourism. Today, the company owns about 100 restored houses in 5 villages of the Pitsilia region and offers a rough lodging capacity of 250 beds. The two core villages in particular can be described as the perfect symbiosis between an agro tourism resort and a traditional Cypriot village. The accommodation units, as well as other additional infrastructure, e.g. an outdoor swimming pool, a meeting room and a tavern, are allotted all over the villages. Of course, the company infrastructure does not only consist of accommodation units. Already in

the nineties the management realised the need for additional activities for their guests. Following the company's mission of encouraging sustainable tourism, the company concentrated on environmental friendly, nature and cultural-related active tourism products. As a consequence, hiking trails, a bike renting station and a horse farm have been established and are accompanied by guided hiking and bike tours as well horse riding courses. Furthermore the so-called village activity programme was introduced, which aims at active tourism products with a clear focus on local cultural heritage. The beforehand existing connection with the local community e.g.: including tourists in traditional events has been integrated into an extensive activity programme for the tourists. Three main dimensions have been taken into consideration when elaborating the concept: the mediation of local traditional culture to the tourists, the interaction between locals and tourists and referring to economic capital creation, the opportunity to open up new sources of income for the locals. Taking these aspects into account, the following activities are nowadays, on a regular basis, offered to the guests of Cyprus Villages Ltd.:

- Cooking courses on traditional Cypriot food
- Baking course on traditional Cypriot sweets
- Course on traditional herbs and their utilisation in the existing herbal garden
- Bread baking in the re-activated village oven
- Producing traditional Halloumi cheese
- The production of traditional olive oil using the traditional olive mill
- Participation in the orange and olive harvest

All these activities are carried out by locals who are not employees of the company implying intensive training and preparation on a variety of topics (i.e. culture, marketing). The major part of the participation fee requested remains with the locals; just a small portion to cover organisation and transfer costs goes to the company. Therefore the character of the given active tourism products concentrates more on the authenticity of the offer, than on the service level or the quality of the product. It is not supposed to be a professional product but an authentic activity. At the same time the programme is very well perceived by the customers, a majority of the participants even see the programme as major argument for a re-booking with Cyprus Villages Ltd. (cf Gronau/Kaufmann, 2009).

Already 10 years ago the German-based company "Zypernbike" started offering cycle tours in Cyprus in close cooperation with the local "Club Aldiana"; over the years the company has established an extensive supply of cycling activities. The portfolio includes bike tours, bike renting, bike holidays, and training camps including a wide range of customers from recreational, to active and also professional level. The company engages itself in local events such as the "Cyprus Sunshine Cup 2013", but also organizes specific events such as the yearly "Trans-Cyprus-Tour". It has established

strong ties with professional international companies in the field such as “feltbicycles” or “Continental” and at the same time it has specific media-partners for the MTB and the road bike segment. In brief the company operates on a highly professional level concentrating on a high level of quality. The product clearly focuses on cycling as an activity, at the same time specific offers such as the 8-village-tour, combines the culinary experience in small local taverns with a laid-back cycling experience. Therefore this product represents a less authentic and less cultural orientated product than the one of Cyprus Villages Ltd., but it showcases a very professional activity-orientated provider of high quality active tourism products.

Beside commercial providers of active tourism products there is a rich variety of voluntary organizations working in the field, one example might be the “Cyprus Sustainable Tourism Initiative” a local association aiming at a more sustainable destination. The “**Cyprus Sustainable Tourism Initiative**” (CSTI) is an independent organization. It was established in 2006, following a 2-year long project of the British Travel Foundation that created a partnership of UK leading tour operators, environmental Cypriot NGOs, the Cyprus Tourism Organization (CTO), Cyprus Agents and small village producers, their communities and associations. **CSTI** aims at harnessing tourism demand (tour operators, agents) with the supply of tourism resources (small producers and their communities) so as to develop a sustainable approach to tourism in Cyprus. Part of this strategy is of course also to offer a memorable experience for the tourist; the CSTI therefore understands itself not as a provider of tourism products but as initiator and incubator of innovative approach towards tourism product development. Ideas are conceptualized, presented to major tour operators on the island and in case of a common interest introduced as a pilot project. In addition to activities aiming at a more sustainable tourism industry such as the case of waste management or minimum standards for sustainability of the industry, CSTI is also engaged in developing activities for tourists, in order to support a more sustainable destination. One example might be the “tree planting” event, which was addressed at locals as well as tourists to support the reforestation policy of the Cypriot Forestry Department. Several national as well as international organizations amongst them local banks and international tour operators, sponsored tree seedlings which were then planted in a one-day event. The event was offered to tourists as a special excursion and included an introduction to the role of reforestation within Cyprus, and a barbecue party after the planting session; the success of the event resulted in an ongoing activity. Of course the amount of participants as well as the number of events is limited; nevertheless it might be an interesting example for a meaningful form of active tourism in Cyprus.

To complete the overview on existing activities the Herbal walk of the Cyprus Herbia workshop could be mentioned. This small club provides so-called “herbal walks” operated in English language and therefore open to tourists as well as locals on an irregular basis. Especially in spring time Cyprus is full of herbs and local guides with designated

knowledge on herbs and their utilization offer guided walks. During the walk participants are encouraged to touch, smell and taste the plants, in order to get to know them up close and personal. Participants learn to identify and experience some of the herbs, they learn about how they are traditionally used on the island, either as food or even as medicine. The walks are usually announced short notice via the internet; they lack a broader communication as well as any kind of standardization. Nevertheless they represent an interesting example how an active tourism product such as hiking might be enriched by local components and therefore create a unique experience.

To conclude this very brief and very exemplary overview on existing active tourism products or approaches towards such in Cyprus, a very high degree of heterogeneity has to be identified. Beside the existence of various providers ranging from commercial to voluntary organizations or even individuals, a clear difference in service quality, standardization and communication of the offers has to be stated. Furthermore there is a significant difference in location as well as timing when it comes to the supply of such offers. On the other hand all offers lack an integrated and active communication strategy, they also lack integration in any form whatsoever, whether it is thematic, regional or time related. As a result these offers are known only to very specific target groups and only to a limited amount of people; hence it is not possible to refer to an established active tourism sector in Cyprus although there are several isolated active tourism offers.

Structure of active tourism promotion

Based on the overall strategy of the CTO the promotion of various forms of niche tourism is spurred on. By communicating various very specific tourism products the perception of the destination Cyprus is supposed to be broadened and the destination therefore attract new target groups. The field of active tourism therefore plays a growing role in the tourism communication strategy of the CTO. Following the goal of broadening the perception of the destination of Cyprus, various thematic fields or possible forms of experiencing the island are presented. The communication nevertheless focuses on presenting forms of active tourism in a very vague and brief way, instead of presenting actual products or introducing possible providers. As illustrated by the attached clipping from a state-of-the-art brochure of the CTO, the very promising topic of orchids is for example presented within a few lines, outlining the existence of various endemic species and stressing the role of orchids within local society but without any reference to existing orchid walks, orchid exhibitions, existing botanic gardens etc.! Another communication deficit can be identified by the following example of sports tourism promotion. Single events such as the marathon are promoted without referring to the overall existing field of running sports. Newly established cycle routes are mentioned without any detailed information for example on what type of routes, where to get the information from or regarding possible providers of cycle tourism,

whether in form of renting out bicycles or even providing tours on the established routes.

Orchids





Text and images
by Alexios Nicolaou

A member of the family Orchidaceae, which includes between 25,000 and 35,000 species, orchids can be found throughout the whole world with the exception of the Arctic and Antarctic regions. The greatest number of species is found in humid tropical areas. In Cyprus, 50 species and sub-species of orchids can be found. Of these, 6 are indigenous.

In Greek mythology, Orchis was the son of a nymph and a satyr. During a festival honouring Bacchus, he polluted the God's rites by attempting to rape a priestess. His punishment was to be ripped apart by wild beasts and transformed into a powerless and inconspicuous plant.

Theophrastus was the first of the ancient writers to mention orchids. He was struck by the similarity of their two tuberous roots to the male genitalia. It was Theophrastus, inspired by the myth of Orchis, who named this genus Orchis, and the family Orchidaceae. His terminology was used later in antiquity by other writers including Dioscorides and Pliny.

Pliny mentions that after drinking a concoction prepared from the large tuber of an orchid, erotic desire is increased, while after drinking a concoction prepared from a small, soft tuber, erotic desire is curbed.

The ancient Greeks believed they could control the sex of their unborn children by eating the tubers of orchids. If a father ate a large young tuber the child would be male, if the mother ate a small tuber the child would be female.

There is a similar tradition in Cyprus that says that if a woman eats the large tubers of an orchid she will bring a son into the world, while if she eats the small tubers of last year's flower she will bear a daughter.

The orchid's tubers are subterranean dormant organs. The resemblance of orchids to insects is due to their difficulty in attracting pollinators. To accomplish this, orchids assume the shape of a female insect in order to trick the male equivalent



Figure 2: Cyprus Orchids, Source: CTO, 2010

Therefore the existing communication can neither support a growing awareness on active tourism products within the destination, as for example establishing closer links between the existing providers, nor does it give detailed information to possible active tourists wanting to visit Cyprus. Hence the existing communication of active tourism by the CTO can only be described as rather general and vague. It completely lacks an internal marketing approach as it fails to provide an external marketing which draws attention to existing specific active tourism products and providers.

Run in the Sun



RUN IN THE SUN

Anyone can become a member, regardless of age, and those who are just visiting the island can go along and join in the fun. For more information, call +35724114111 or log on to www.pedols.com.cy

Visitors are also welcome to join in the more eccentric running/jogging/walking activities of the 'Hash'. For those that don't know it, the 'Hash House Harriers' is an international 'fun-running' club that's well established in almost every country around the world and generally described as a 'drinking club with a running problem'. Basically, a 'hash' is a paper-chase. The 'hare' lays a trail with four for the runner's 'pack' to follow. Their progress is hampered by several 'false' trails and regular 'beer drinking' stops. Anyone can participate – even families with young children – as this is not so much a race, but more a social event. It's a great way to discover the countryside and new friends. There are hashing clubs in all main towns.

Running is a very popular sporting activity in many countries around the world and Cyprus is no exception.

In recent years, many runners of all age groups are coming to this tiny eastern Mediterranean island to take part in the international marathon events that are held here. They have discovered that, not only are the marathon courses memorable because of their spectacular scenery and the fact that each event incorporates a place of archaeological or historic importance, but also that Cyprus is the perfect place to combine a family holiday with their favourite sport.

The first international marathon event to be held in Cyprus took place in Pafos in February 1989. The starting point for the marathon was Patis tou Romiou the legendary birthplace of Aphrodite and took runners along the coast to finish in front of the Paphos Medieval Fort. Runners had the chance to choose between running the full marathon, half marathon or the 10 km Road Race. Almost 400 runners took part in that first event and many well-wishers lined the route, which added to the festive atmosphere.

Since then, the Cyprus Marathon has gathered momentum and drawn interest from runners all over the world. In the spring 2008 event there were 550 participants with 350 coming from 20 other countries. The event always attracts a wide variety of contestants who range in age from 15 to over 70.

Whilst some of the runners are keen to finish in a good place and compete fiercely for finishing positions, most are happy to cover the distance in an acceptable time. More than 150 trophies and prizes in 48 categories are awarded, so it is hard not to be a winner!

For amateur runners and sporting enthusiasts alike, the 'Pierides Demetrious' Cyprus Runners Club, in Lefkosa, offers a range of less competitive running and sporting activities in a friendly and social environment. The club's aim is simple to promote running as a means of healthy exercise... with a few philanthropic activities thrown in for good measure.



- The Amathus Half Marathon & 10 km is on Sunday 23 November 2008 and all ages are welcome to join in the fun which will follow a course that begins and ends at the archaeological site of Ancient Amathus, near Lemesos.

- The Cyprus Marathon, Half Marathon & 10 km will be held in Pafos on Sunday 15 March 2009.

For more information and/or registration, call +357 22370396 or +357 99357358 or e-mail: run@cyprusmarathon.com

Web sites:
<http://www.sportnet.net/main/web/ama>
<http://thunathalfmarathon/index.html>
<http://www.cyprusmarathon.com>

Marathon History

The marathon can be traced back to the story of the ancient Greek soldier, Pheidippides, who ran from the Battle of Marathon to Athens to deliver the news to an anxiously waiting population, that the Persians had been defeated. He arrived at the senate and proclaimed "nenklakamen" (we are victorious) before collapsing and dying on the steps of the Senate.

Cycling Routes

A comprehensive package of informative promotional material about the Troodos cycling routes has recently been completed. It includes:

- A guidebook with description of routes, altitude, road surface condition, and degree of difficulty, points of interest and other useful information for cyclists.
- A map of the network, including information about places of interest, services, etc.
- A pocket leaflet including basic information and a graphic design of the network which can be used in promotional activities to create awareness about the project.
- A poster which can be used in exhibitions, events, etc.

The Troodos cycling route project has been implemented by CTO and is 50% co-funded by the European Regional Development Fund of the European Union. It is part of a large comprehensive plan of cycling routes that will eventually cover most of Cyprus' inland areas.

In the long term, the CTO's aim is to link the rural cycle network with the coastal areas, creating a national route network spanning the entire island. CTO is currently in the planning process of the second phase of the network. The project is coordinated by Monica Liatif.

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Info: miatli@visitcyprus.com 21

Figure 3: Cyprus Running Events, Source: CTO, 2010

Towards an active tourism sector in Cyprus, identifying the gap

Following up the results of the two sections beforehand, in the following section the existing active tourism supply will be confronted with the actual communication of it. As outlined before the supply can be described as rather heterogeneous; various suppliers ranging from commercial companies to NGOs, or even individuals providing numerous products with a clear difference in service quality, standardization and communication. The following figure tries to illustrate this situation by introducing several circles ranging in size and color. Within the figure the communication strategy is also visualized in form of three pages outlining the words “amazing”, “pretty” and “unique”. This illustration refers to the vague and poor information promotion strategy in the field. The existing gap between the heterogeneous but rich supply and the poor communication is subsequently visualized by three flashes.

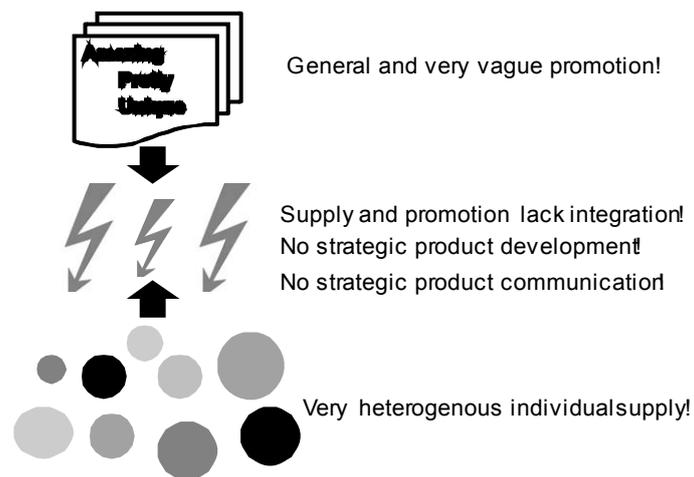


Figure 4: Gaps in Active Tourism (own source)

In order to create a more detailed insight to the problems in the field of active tourism in Cyprus the following aspects have to be mentioned:

- As elaborated earlier clear deficits in the field of marketing have to be mentioned. On the one hand the external marketing does not provide an adequate insight to the existing supply while on the other hand a total absence of internal marketing has to be stated.
- At the same time the supply lacks in its present form any corporate approach whatsoever, there is no communication and no network platform for suppliers to exchange know-how or develop common product or communication strategies.
- Furthermore in many cases the supply itself lacks a professional approach; there is no licensing system and no quality insurance system in place.

In brief the field of active tourism in Cyprus is still in an evolving stage, there is plenty of potential based on initial and often rather innovative initiatives from various stakeholders, but in its present situation there is no way to call the various heterogeneous approaches an active tourism sector.

Based upon the existing problems a few recommendations might be adequate at this stage: there has to be a stronger collaboration amongst various stakeholders in terms of exchange of information, coordination of products, thematic, regional or at least time bundling of active tourism products and of course proactive marketing. Due to the structure of the actors involved there is a need for a central body such as the CTO to initiate a platform to further spurn on the development of the sector. Due to the vital interest of the CTO to improve the active tourism field in order to reposition Cyprus as a destination, this might be a good opportunity to take action and develop the existing initiatives into a real active tourism sector.

Conclusion Lessons to Learn for Repositioning Destinations via Active Tourism

The initial question of this article was to investigate the opportunity of repositioning and therefore re-launching a destination in the end of its life-cycle via the implementation of active tourism products. The consulted literature, such as Buhalis, Novelli or Morgen & Pritchard, show clear potential for such an approach, at the same time the strategic plan of the Cyprus Tourism Organization clearly stated the approach to reposition the island via niche tourism products, such as active tourism and therefore follows the theoretic path being outlined by the before mentioned authors. The situation of Cyprus being a typical example of a sun & beach destination in its final stage of the tourism life-cycle could therefore, based upon the assumptions of the authors, provide case-study evidence for the practical implementation of such an approach. That is why the authors decided to choose Cyprus as a case study on this matter. While analysing the state-of-the-art situation of the Cyprus tourism industry and more specific the situation in the field of active tourism, the authors have to conclude that although Cyprus was amongst the first destinations to implement active tourism products, the sector until today lacks a decent performance, as outlined in the article. Various very heterogeneous products characterize the supply in the field of active tourism; no decent promotion of the sector is done, no integration of the given stakeholders has taken place and therefore an active tourism sector does not exist to this day. Hence the authors were not able to provide case study evidence for the opportunities related to active tourism as an approach to reposition a destination, an adequate overview on the active tourism sector in Cyprus could be supplied, as well as an adequate analysis of the theoretic opportunities for utilising active tourism in the context of destination management and by doing so clearly identifying the existing theoretic potential of such an approach.

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