

Marketing Innovations for Sustainable Destinations

26 An Investigation into the Relationship between Marketability of a Destination and the Long-Term Survival of Hawkers

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Design and setting by P.K. McBride

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Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to explore the relationship between the marketability of a tourist destination and the long-term viability of hawkers, a component of the retail sector. This research is concerned with those traders who operate outside a fixed retail outlet, in the main tourist areas. It is concerned with those that sell products rather than a service, such as car and boat hire, and excludes time share selling. There are a number of terms that could be used to describe these sellers, but for consistency, hawker despite some of its negative overtones, has been used.

It is not the purpose of this chapter to distinguish between the formal economy (those who are monitored in some way by the government) and the informal economy (where no such structure exists). Henry and Sills (2006) give a comprehensive list of the terms that could be applied to the hawker economy. They include terms such as 'hidden', 'underground' and 'subterranean' which might be apt from the government perspective, from a tourist perspective; hawkers on the beach are all too visible and in some cases omnipresent. Hawking is one of the earliest forms of retailing and is likely to remain part of the tourist landscape for the foreseeable future, and shows resistance to government regulation.

Hawkers have not always been popular with shopkeepers who have argued that they take trade away from established shops. However, evidence from the Adriatic coast (Nelken, 2006) does not support the view that they threaten established trades. Groups such as shopkeepers and local officials often call for the removal of hawkers but this is unlikely to be effective despite the introduction of legislation. Although in many countries they are operating illegally, the local police often lack the resources or inclination to prosecute. There is some local sympathy for the hawker who is seen to be trying to scrape a living from the 'rich' overseas visitors. Even in countries where hawking is not permitted by law it is difficult to differentiate between locals and visitors interacting, and those who are broking a sale, if the goods and the monetary exchange are not clearly visible.

Chapter extract

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