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*IMPROVEMENT OF COMPETITIVENESS OF THE GREEK GOLD
AND SILVER WARE ENTERPRISES THROUGH A SUSTAINABLE
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FOR MORE JOB CREATION, SOCIAL
COHESION AND RESPECT TO THE ENVIRONMENT. CASE STUDY:
THE CITY OF ATHENS*

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Summary: The creation of an information system offering on the one hand guidelines on the optimum locations for the gold and silver enterprises, on the other hand norms and standards of organization and design for their locales should contribute to create a favorable environment minimizing obstacles (land-use constraints, transportation costs, etc.) and promote the idea of an ecological entrepreneurship and innovation.

Keywords: gold and silver ware, cultural heritage, location, competitiveness, environment

Improvement of competitiveness of the Greek gold and silver ware enterprises through a sustainable economic development for more job creation, social cohesion and respect to the environment

Case study: The city of Athens

In the general context of an evolving milieu in the center of Athens, with ageing buildings, increasing foreign population, traffic and spatial restructuring problems, the traditionally center-located crafts face new problems to be solved.

1. OBJECTIVE

Thus the objective of this research project is the development of an information system in order to support small and medium-sized enterprises of Greek gold and silver ware. This information system should determine on the one hand the optimum locations for the gold and silver ware enterprises, on the other hand specific norms and standards for the organization and design of their locales that should contribute to create a favorable environment minimizing obstacles (land-use constraints, transportation cost, etc) and promote the idea of an ecological entrepreneurship and innovation.

2. GENERAL FRAMEWORK

- The small and medium-sized enterprises (representing 99% of the Greek enterprises) are the most affected by the general economic crisis.
- Gold and silver ware represents a significant part of the Greek cultural heritage. Ceramic as well as gold and silver ware have a millennia tradition in Greece. Jewelry is an important field in today's arts and culture; moreover it is among the important professional fields of the Greek economy (8668 enterprises).
- Urban areas are the most often chosen locations for this kind of enterprises of which the biggest number is concentrated in Athens.

- The techniques that are used in various phases of the productive process (such as metallization) and the problematic management of their waste disposal are directly responsible for the important increase of pollutants, rendering the gold and silver ware a non environment friendly activity. The integration of innovation in order to decrease pollution (new techniques, cleansing of waste, etc.) is strongly connected with the maintenance of their location in the centre of cities.

Thus, this research focuses on the interdependence of the above parameters such as location, production activity, environment and culture. It focuses as well on the improvement of this interdependent relationship through integrated innovation. Furthermore, the electronic tool, in particular, will be able to provide the following:

- Possibility to analyze the characteristics of gold and silver ware products (market conditions, competitive products).
- Information on the targeted clientele.
- Determination of location criteria (demographic features, land use, urban law, market condition, other competitive enterprises, necessary resources, etc.).
- Possibility of location choice through GIS.
- Comparative evaluation of alternative locations and choice based on urban and environmental parameters.
- Proposals of architectural standards for the best organization and functional design of the gold and silver ware laboratories.

3. METHODOLOGY

- Investigation of the needs and demands related to the economic, environmental and spatial dimensions of the small and medium-sized enterprises of gold and silver ware.
- Determination of norms and standards for the creation of a Database and an Electronic tool which will determine the optimum location for the establishment of gold and silver ware enterprises in combination with their productivity and competitiveness.

Steps of the Research Process

- Analytical observation and recording of the sector based on secondary publications.
- Field research based on the general hypotheses derived from the investigation of secondary literature and from the research objectives.
- Integration of the field research results into an electronic database.
- Statistic treatments of the field research results, through appropriate programs.
- Description of the field research results.
- Conclusions.
- Proposals.

First results

The research has been carried out on 135 gold and silver ware SMEs of which 78 (57,8%) workshops, 34 (25,2%) mixed (import, retail, manufacture) and 23 (17%) exclusively jewelry.

- 54,1% are private firms while 45,2% have other legal statuses.
- An important number (40%) had been using a different name (sale, succession, heritage) probably benefiting of an existing clientele.

- Most of the SMEs of gold and silver ware (58,5%) are owners of their locale while 40,7% are tenants.
- An important percentage (41,5%) has relocated the main reason being the acquisition of a locale, which in most cases is in a residence. In these cases, the reduction in transportation time and circulation problems, the perspective of a bigger working and storage space combined to the high security standards, are presented by the professionals as essential advantages for the new location.
- Direct accessibility to services and banks (21,3%), followed by the possibility for a bigger space (19,4%), the non-obstructive supply and delivery (16,4%), the facility of promotion for the SME (16%) and finally, security are described as the most essential advantages for their location in specific areas.
- The basically used raw materials by the workshops are gold, silver, copper, platinum, palladium, precious and semi-precious stones. Thus, according to the quantitative data of this research, 74,1% of the SMEs use gold for 34,5% of their production, 54,8% use silver for 25,5% of their production. Copper is not used by 89,6% of SMEs while it is used by 10,4% of manufacturers who use it for 4,8% of their production. As for platinum, the majority of manufacturers (97,8%) do not use it in the production process as raw material. In the same way, palladium is not used as raw material by 99,3% of the manufacturers. These data change completely as far as precious and semi-precious stones are concerned. 35,6% uses precious stones as basic material, for 16,6% of the total production. Finally, the percentages are almost the same for semi-precious stones as 37% of the SMEs use 17,2% for their total production.
- As far as the production phase is concerned, most of the workshops or

manufactures use handwork (53,9%) together with casting (38,3%).

- The main products of gold and silver ware are mostly of modern design (54,1%), classic (31,2%), archaic (7,6%), and byzantine (7%). The preferences of
- that they are ready to introduce new technologies in order to improve the production process and the promotion of their products.
- 57,8% of the manufactures have less than 5 employees.

Until now, the major problems which have been recorded are:

- the high cost of raw materials,
- high taxes,

the consumers are directly influencing production and innovation.

- The possibility of valorization of new technologies in production and in promotion seems to be a major concern for the manufacturers. 67,4% declared
- low subsidies,
- problems in the promotion of the Greek gold and silver ware due to the complete absence of promotion abroad,
- lack of safety. And finally,
- the importation of cheaper jewelry (from countries mainly of East Asia, such as China and India) constitutes a basic problem for these SMEs.

The project started on February 2007 as a EUREKA Project.

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