Tasos, 65, Bed Linen Shop, Larnaca

**1. Can you tell me a few things about yourself? For example, when and where you were born? Did you study for anything? Have you travelled or lived overseas?**

*My name is Tasos and I’m 65 years old. I’ve had this shop since 1983 and we’ve been retailing quilts, bed sheets and pillows since then. I’ve got three children; my two daughters are married and work in Nicosia and my youngest, my son, is 26 and works for KEO [producers of Cypriot beer]. I work here with my wife.*

**2. Have you ever owned another business in the past? How long have you been an owner of a business? How many businesses have you owned in the past?**

*I opened this shop in 1983, after having spent many years working with my wife in a laundry in Dromolaxia [a village near Larnaca Airport]. But I’ve never owned another business.*

**3. Can you tell me about the history behind your business?**

*Up until 1982 we both worked in the laundry in Dromolaxia. However, the owner of the laundry also imported types of bed linen from Greece because he knew someone who made them. In 1982 the laundry closed down and from what I was told the owner opened a shoe shop in Nicosia. So we decided to open a business of our own since we had managed to save some money. We knew quite a lot about bed sheets and quilts, especially my wife, and decided to open this business. We knew a number of merchants since we had been involved in the market for many years, so it was easy. We found this shop here which is ideal because it’s in the centre of Larnaca town; it’s a busy street and there are quite a few tourists.*

**4. What advantages did you see in continuing your business?**

*The area that we’re in is very good, because the street is always busy especially in the summer time. Though don’t think that we make a lot of money, but we make enough to supplement our pension. The rent is the same, we have a lease that’s renewed every ten years, but it’s not the cheapest of rents. Pantelis [the owner of the building] could definitely rent it to someone else for a lot more, but he knows that we always pay the rent on time and don’t cause any trouble; that’s what I like to believe anyway.*

**5. Are you facing any obstacles or problems in keeping your business going?**

*I don’t think we have any major problems. The rent is at a reasonable rate even though he increased it considerably the last ten years, we’re in a good area and we have quite a few customers. It’s just that people don’t prefer these types of shops anymore. Your mum would come to the shop but you wouldn’t. You would go to shops like Athienites {a department store which sells cheap household items]. Don’t you think that I could stock cheap pillows for €10? But why should I when I know the customer won’t be happy with their purchase? I prefer to stock quality items and have satisfied customers. My customers are all Cypriots who come back over and over again.*

**-So your business is doing well considering?**

*Not that well. It’s gone down but what can I do? We have our pension as well which is something and we get by.*

* **Since things aren’t going so well why don’t you retire?**

*If I close it, what would I do after? Stay at home and get bored or go from one coffee shop to the other around my neighbourhood? Or would you suggest that I get a job paying €800 and work ten hours a day? I’m not at an age where I should be thinking about experimenting or change. We’ve done what we’ve done with our lives. When you get to my age you’ll realise that you need something steady at this age to get by. We’ll stay here for another 15-20 years, if God allows us to live until then, and maybe after that we will stay at home [his wife nods in agreement].*

**6. Considering the experience that you have built up over the years but also the experience that you are going through now, would you say that you are still able to maintain the business and deal with the problems that affect it?**

*We’ve been here so many years and at least we’ve managed to make a good name for ourselves in the market. Like I said, the income from here might not be that much but it’s enough to keep us in business. I used to say that when I get to 65 I would retire so I could have time for myself. Though when the time came, I didn’t want to stop nor do I ever want to.*