

CREATIVE TOURISM IN THE CITY: HOW FAR CAN THE TOURIST GO?

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ABSTRACT

This paper is based on an understanding of the novelties, offered by creative tourism for the tourists and the local communities, such as “getting closer to local people”, “learning the culture”, “having an engaged and authentic experience”, “being in direct contact with the living culture”. However, it builds further on these by discussing whether in any way creative tourism can also stimulate change in the hospitality industry as well. More specifically, we question whether creative tourism and creative travelers can also transform the paradigm of ‘standardized service encounter’ in city hotels, eventually reducing the phenomenon of emotional labor and its’ harmful effects on hospitality employees. In order to do this the first part of the paper focuses on the concept of culture and its relation to emotions, trying to explain the idea of culture-bound “authentic emotional displays/expressions”. In the second part we propose a new conceptualization of spaces of tourism in the city. We propose that cities have two divergent spaces for travelers; the spaces of creative activities (SCAs) and the spaces of standardized services (SSSs). We discuss that differently constructed characteristics of these two spaces interrupt the continuity of the authentic cultural experience of the creative travelers who may be open to experience authentic encounters not

only during creative tourism activities but also in their interactions with front-line service employees. Thus, reducing the amount of emotional labor required from hospitality employees. Third part of the article is based on our research about the current situation of emotional labor in hotels of Istanbul and it is used to exemplify the characteristics of SSSs concept that we are proposing here. Finally, the last part calls for further exploration of characteristics of creative travelers, SCAs, and the possibility of a transitive relationship between SCAs and SSSs, which may benefit both the travelers and the hospitality employees.

KEYWORDS

Cities; Creative Tourism; Culture; Emotional Labor; Hospitality Industry; Authenticity

INTRODUCTION

The last decade has been a period of intensive interest for “creativity”, which used to be a privileged quality of a limited community. Creative economy (Howkins, 2001), creative industries, creative jobs, creative class (Florida, 2002), creative cities and creative tourism (Richards and Wilson, 2006) have been some of the areas where the concept has been utilized to relate the consequent fields to innovation and imagination.

This paper is based on an understanding of the novelties, offered by creative tourism for the tourists and the local community, such as “getting closer to local people”, “learning the culture”, “having an engaged and authentic experience”, “being in direct contact with the living culture”. However, we would like to build further on this by discussing *whether in any way creative tourism can also stimulate change in the hospitality industry*. More specifically, we question *whether creative tourism and creative travelers can also transform the paradigm of ‘standardized service encounter’ in city hotels, eventually reducing the phenomenon of emotional labor and its’ harmful effects on hospitality employees*.

The concept of creative tourism is at the core of our discussion and throughout the paper we prefer to use UNESCO’s working definition of it, which is as follows:

*“...travel directed towards an engaged and authentic experience, with participative learning in the arts, heritage, or special character of a place. It provides a connection with those who reside in this place and create this living culture.”*⁴⁵

Together with creative tourism, the concept of ‘city’ and the characteristics of different spaces within cities are also important, because we specifically discuss the potential impacts of creative tourism on service encounters in city hotels.

Finally, emotion and emotional labor are at the core of our discussion. We expect by the definition of creative tourism that ‘creative travelers’ are more open to ‘real/authentic’ cultural experiences. Thus, we propose that the encounter of the creative traveler and the front-line hotel employees may necessitate reduced amount of organizational control on the authentic feelings of employees, eventually reducing emotional labor.

In order to clarify the proposed relations between creative tourism in cities, creative travelers, hospitality industry and emotional labor the first part of the paper focuses on the concept of culture and its relation to emotions, trying to explain the idea of culture-bound “authentic emotional displays/expressions”. The second part conceptualizes cities as having two divergent spaces for travelers; the spaces of creative activities and the spaces of standardized services. We discuss that differently constructed characteristics of these two spaces interrupt the continuity of the authentic cultural experiences of the creative travelers who may be open to experience authentic encounters not only during creative tourism activities but also in their interactions with front-line service employees. Thus, reducing the amount of emotional labor required from hospitality employees. Third part of the article discusses the current situation of emotional labor in hotels of Istanbul as an example. Finally, by proposing questions for further research, the last part discusses the possibility of a transitive relationship between SCAs and SSSs, which may benefit both the travelers and the hospitality employees.

EMOTIONS AND CULTURE

The literature on inter-disciplinary study of emotions has multiple approaches to explain emotional experiences.

On one hand, there are approaches focusing solely on internal factors (e.g. biology, genetics, and instincts) for the explanation of emotional experiences. Darwin (1965) for example, conceptualizes emotions as internal/natural and bases them on instinct. Likewise the commonly referred universalist paradigm of emotions also suggests that there is a universal human system not only for producing emotions but also for understanding the expression of emotions (Gramer and Eibl-Eibesfeldt, 1993 as cited by Eid and Diener, 2001)

On the other hand, there are approaches like social constructionism that focus on external factors and base their explanation of emotional experiences on culture and cultural norms to understand how specific sets of emotional concepts are used in cultures for various purposes. Haré (1986) for example posits that there is no such thing as an emotion, but only collectively

manufactured states. Rosaldo (1984, as cited by Markus and Kitayama, 1991) also contends that:

"...feelings are not substances to be discovered in our blood but social practices organized by stories that we both enact and tell. They are structured by our forms of understanding" (p. 143)

In addition to these two extremes, there are other researchers who suggest that the internal and external factors are complementary rather than mutually exclusive.

As Eid et al. (2001) puts it:

"...the biological perspective is not sufficient for a full understanding of the experience and expression of emotions and must be complemented by consideration of the cultural context in which emotions are experienced, expressed, and perceived" (p.869)

Likewise, Kövecses (2000) not only places importance to the role of physiological aspects but he also emphasizes the importance of both the psychobiological basis of feeling and the effects of culture in conceptualizing emotions. Kövecses (2000) suggests that the aspects of emotions which are not related to the physiology and thus not universal can be explained by:

"cultural knowledge and pragmatic discourse functions that work according to divergent culturally defined rules or scenarios" (p. 183).

He writes (2000) that:

"... the social, cognitive, pragmatic, and bodily factors together provide the key constituents of the experience of emotion in human society..." (p.190)

Although we share the same opinion with the latter approaches on the complementarity of internal and external factors in explaining emotional experiences, the internal roots of emotions are outside the scope of our discussion. Hence, *the diversity of emotional experiences and displays which are based on cultural differences will form the first pillar of our discussion in this paper.*

The second pillar then is 'culture' and its peculiar ways of shaping emotional experiences. The question of "what culture is" has been a thrilling one for scholars in various fields since the early definition of culture by Tyler (1871, as cited by Edles, 2002) as the:

"...complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities or habits acquired by man as a member of society".

It was after Geertz's seminal work (1973) that Tyler's expanded definition of culture has been replaced with the definition of culture as being *"shared symbols and/or meaning"* (p.89).

As many differences as these two approaches have, they also have some common points such as culture being "collective", "shared" and "learned/acquired" among the members of the same group and it is these qualities of culture that ensures its strong influence on people from their birth onward. Culture affects people by influencing how they think about the world, how they understand the world, how they view themselves and others. Emotional experiences are no exception to this influence; culture also affects how people understand emotions and emotional events and how they choose to display their emotions (cf. Markus and Kitayama, 1991).

Various aspects of emotion are shaped by cultural norms and practices throughout individuals' socialization process in a society. Cultural institutions, rituals, artifacts, stories, language and all other means act as tools through which individuals learn the peculiar modes of behavior of that society including the implicit norms related to emotions. Regarding that, Frijda and Mesquita (1995, as cited by Eid et al. 2001) points out three aspects of emotion that are culturally influenced:

1. the social consequences of emotions that regulate the expression and suppression of emotions

Specific examples of how emotions are regulated by their consequences can easily be found in languages, which have very pragmatic roles in creating shared norms in a culture. For example in Turkey *"the baby who doesn't cry doesn't get milk"*, in Japan *"the nail that stands out gets pounded on"* (Markus and Kitayama, 1991) and in America *"the squeaky wheel gets the grease"* (Markus and Kitayama, 1991)

2. the importance of cultural norms for experiencing different emotions

Hochschild (1983) in her classical work "The Managed Heart" also discusses the role of *feeling rules*, social norms that prescribe how people should feel in specific situations (e.g. on a wedding day, at a funeral).

A typical example is the individuals who are socialized by the “Boys don’t cry” norm. When it comes to *experiencing* emotions which may lead to cry, these individuals will be likely to automatically decrease their emotions for a more culturally-fit emotional response. (Mauss, et al., 2008)

For example, Nussbaum (2001, as cited by Wierzbicka, 2003) also provide us with an explanation of how different normative teachings in different cultures diversify the emotional experiences:

“. . .Societies have different normative teachings with regard to the importance of honor, money, bodily beauty and health, friendship, children, political power. They therefore have many differences in anger, envy, fear, love, and grief...” (p. 157)

3. the social-cohesive functions of emotions

Emotional norms of a culture are *functional* because they *ensure social stability and the well being of those involved* (Bolton, 2005, p.50) they serve as the social lubricant of our every day lives (Ashkanasy, Zerbe and Hartel, 2002)

Most of the comparative research examining the above mentioned culturally influenced aspects of emotion is based on the comparisons of Western and Eastern societies. Cross-cultural psychologists for example distinguish between the independent (idiocentric) and the interdependent (allocentric) self-construals (Markus and Kitayama, 1991). Cultures in which idiocentrism is the predominant personality pattern are called *individualistic* cultures (e.g., Western) and the cultures in which allocentrism is the predominant personality pattern are called *collectivistic* cultures (e.g., Eastern cultures). In *collectivistic* cultures, the social norm is to maintain harmony with others, to meet social obligations, and to support the goals of others who are in a social relationship with oneself. On the other hand, the norm in individualistic cultures is to become independent from others and to pursue and assert individual goals (Eid and Diener, 2001)

For example, North American cultural contexts which are usually considered as typical individualistic cultures, place relatively strong value on happiness and its expression (Matsumoto et al., 1998; Sommers, 1984). Happiness is seen as a sign of a “good self” and of psychological well-being (cf. Markus and Kitayama, 1991). However, in Confucian contexts (Asian countries such China, Korea or Japan) which are typically considered as collectivistic cultures,

harmony among members of a group is strongly valued. As a result, intense personal happiness might counteract that goal, as it may elevate the individual above the group (e.g., Heine, Lehman, Peng and Greenholtz, 2002). Thus, these socio-cultural contexts relatively encourage the *decrease* of happiness while North-American contexts relatively encourage the *increase* of happiness (Mauss et al., 2008)

Another example would be Western societies, which stress positive aspects of emotions (because they demonstrate one’s authentic and unique individuality), and, by extension, generally encourage emotional experience and expression (cf. Markus and Kitayama, 1991; Tsai and Levenson, 1997). In contrast, many East-Asian societies more strongly value emotion decrease, especially with respect to “high-activity” emotions such as excitement (e.g., Eid and Diener, 2001; Gudykunst and Ting-Toomey, 1988; Matsumoto, 1990; Tsai, Knutson, and Fung, 2006). Authors, such as Klineberg (1938) and Potter (1988) discuss that in China emotions are considered as dangerous, irrelevant and illness causing. Eid et al. (2001) also point out that the moderation or suppression of emotions is generally highly valued in China.

Until now we wanted to clarify two important points based on previous research findings:

1. It is important to identify and mark the dimensions of emotions that are sociocultural constructions. Emotional *experiences and expressions of people are intangible* products of social and cultural processes, just like other products of culture such as arts, architecture and historical heritage, which are tangible.

2. A culture, then, may be described in part by its characteristic organization of emotions (Middleton, 1989). Thus, creative tourists/travelers aiming to understand the authentic culture of a society need to be open to experience the authentic emotional displays of their hosts.

DIVERGENT SPACES IN CITIES: SCAs AND SSSs

The evolution of tourism and the tourists is in harmony with the two points mentioned above. The expectations of the creative traveler are very different from those of other types of tourists we have known until now, who were contend with the “staged/unreal authenticity”. As creative travelers demand to be “real actors” in the

“real/authentic lives of hosts”, creative tourism assists them to get in a closer contact with the host community and to explore the diverse cultures of the world not on surface but in depth. Examining the creative tourism web pages from around the world (^{43, 44, 46, 47}) also proves that authenticity during workshops and hands-on cultural experiences is essential.

The city, on the other hand, is a complex space, or better said a very complex area formed of multiple spaces that are constructions of different realities. Thus, in this paper we would like to advance the existing research on creative tourism by examining what kind of experiences emerge as the creative traveler moves through these different spaces/realities within the city. Among various spaces within the city we focus on two that are important for creative tourism. The first one is spaces where creative activities are held and the second one is spaces where creative travelers stay or in other words accommodation units, such as hotels. We name these spaces respectively as SCAs (spaces for creative activities) and SSSs (spaces for standardized services) and posit that they are divergent spaces. Figure 1 shows how we conceptualize these two new spatial constructs we are presenting here.

We define SCAs as places where creative activities are held with the aim to offer the travelers authentic cultural experiences, help them understand the culture and the people living there. SCAs are places where by being there creative travelers separate themselves from the ordinary “tourists” because the creative experience at SCAs offers a deeper exploration of the culture than sought by the ordinary “tourist”. SCAs provide experiences to the very core of the culture which the traveler is curious about.

The examples of SCAs can be very diverse. The studio of a local artist in Santa Fe where the traveler learns the ancient technique of wax encaustic; the local music room in Zimbabwe and South Africa where the traveler experiences listening and playing the marimba music and the kitchen in Istanbul where the traveler takes cooking classes which specialise in the cuisine of Turkey are all examples of SCAs. However, one thing is common to all of them and that is SCAs provide personal interaction with local people.

Thus, in addition to the above mentioned characteristics of the SCAs we also suggest that the personal interaction of the traveler and the local within SCAs is a natural one. We posit that the nature

of the SCAs and the characteristics of the creative traveler together will generate an open communication between the host and the traveler. Eventually allowing the local people to interact in their authentic ways including their authentic emotional styles.

The communication of “real” emotional styles has benefits for both sides. For the creative traveler, it provides an in-depth learning environment of culture. It also helps the traveler to clarify the intentions, attitudes, identity and meaning of the host. For the host, the chance to communicate through authentic emotional style is even more important since it protects him from experiencing unnecessary and harmful emotional dissonance.

On the other hand, the reality of standardized service spaces (SSSs) is constructed for different purposes. We define SSSs as places, designed to offer travelers a more familiar, less surprising and comforting experiences compared to the novel, surprising and unaccustomed experiences offered at SCAs. The typical example of the SSSs are standardized accommodation units in cities such as hotels. The level of standardization can be different in a multinational hotel chain and in a locally owned city hotel depending on various reasons. However, the idea of standardized service is generally common to all accommodation units in cities. As travelers move away from SCAs to SSSs, they also move away from an authentic experience to a staged experience

SSSs are not only physically standardized but also emotionally standardized. The front-line employees of SSS are prevented from communicating with their authentic emotional styles through the use of organizationally prescribed feeling rules. Employees are trained and supervised in order to provide the hotel customers with a standardized “moment of truth” (Carlzon, 1987) each and every time. The motto of: “*smile you are on stage!*” is a typical example of such emotional standardization, which we captured during our study in hotels in Istanbul. This message is used in a five-star hotel in Istanbul and is communicated to employees as frequently as possible during organizational trainings and also during their regular work day through the use of the credo cards, which are a permanent part of employee uniforms.

As the above definitions clarify, when travelers move between these divergent spaces, they experience different and contradictory realities. As travelers move from SCAs to SSSs, they

also move away from an authentic experience to a staged experience. The authentic cultural experience of the “city traveler” is interrupted once he gets outside the creative context (e.g. workshop) to enter an accommodation unit (e.g. hotel). Within a standardized hospitality unit, the traveler has no more the chance to learn and experience the authentic local culture. Even more, the only experience that the traveler can expect is unauthentic performances of hospitality employees during service encounters. Or in other terms, while the suppliers of creative activities try to offer the most “original” cultural experiences, the accommodation suppliers work really hard to offer the most “standardized / staged” service encounter.

Obviously, the success of the interaction between the traveler and the tourism employee relies upon the employees’ creating an appealing, positive emotional climate. To achieve this, “*employees work on their own emotions and seek to manipulate those of the customer working within the commercial feeling and display rules set by the organisation*” (Bolton, 2005, p.113). Thus, this encounter is neither an authentic experience for the traveler nor it helps him to understand the living culture and local people.

This phenomenon is referred to as emotional labor. The term was first defined by Hochschild (1983) as, “*...the management of feelings to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display*” and has been an important topic of research for scholars. It is important to point out that the use of term emotional labor is appropriate only when emotion work is exchanged for something such as wage. As a result emotional labor is differentiated from other types of emotion management by the fact that it has exchange value and by the fact that it is controlled by the organization (Wharton, 1993).

Emotional labor is generally a phenomenon of SSSs, such as city/urban hotels where standardization is much higher compared to accommodation units in rural areas. In addition to preventing continuity of the authentic cultural experience of the traveler, it also results in impaired social and cognitive skills, as well as greater physiological and psychological reactivity (Mauss et al., 2008). Emotional labor is most commonly associated with greater negative affect, lesser feelings with authenticity, greater job strain and greater rates of burnout (Mauss et al., 2008)

THE STATE OF EMOTIONAL LABOR IN ISTANBUL

Based on one of our previous researches, we argue that although Istanbul is known for its authenticity and is a candidate city for attracting creative travelers, the case of staged/unauthentic emotional display also prevail in hotels of Istanbul.

In order to understand the extend of emotional labor and its multi-level consequences for front-line hotel employees in Istanbul, we collected data from a sample of one hundred and fourteen front office and concierge employees of thirty-four hotels, which include five-star, four-star, and boutique hotels of Istanbul

The framework of the study (see Figure 2) was designed to analyze the relationship between emotional labor and emotional dissonance, studying the effects of deep acting and surface acting on emotional dissonance separately. Surface acting occurs when regulation influences only the *emotion expression* like putting on a happy mask although one is terribly sad (Ashforth and Humphrey, 1993) Deep acting occurs when regulation influences *the felt emotions* (Ashforth and Humphrey, 1993).

Furthermore, the framework focused on some of the consequences of emotional dissonance both for the individual (e.g. emotional exhaustion, job satisfaction) and the organization (intention to quit) while trying to determine the individual and organizational variables that may moderate these relationships.

The primary data was collected by questionnaires carried out at the hotels using a questionnaire composed of 7 different scales – *emotional labor scale* (Brotheridge and Lee, 1998), *job satisfaction scale* (Cammann, Fichman, Jenkins and Klesh, 1979), *emotional exhaustion scale* (Maslach and Jackson, 1986), *job related affective well-being scale* (Van Katwyk, Fox, Spector, Kelloway, 2000), *positive-negative affectivity scale* (Watson, Clark and Tellegen, 1988), *supervisory support scale* (Greenhaus, Parasuraman and Wormley, 1990) and *coworker support scale* (Caplan, Cobb, French, Van Harrison and Pinneau, 1980) and demographic information part.

The major findings of study are in alignment with the literature suggesting that emotional labor is a source of increased physiological and psychological reactivity (Mauss et al., 2008). The results of the study show that surface acting results in higher levels of

emotional exhaustion and is perceived to be a source of increased health problems and intention to quit from the job (Salman Ozturk, et al., 2008)

The considerable moderating role coworker and supervisor support play in the emotional labor process is also a noticeable finding of the study. It was found out that coworker and supervisor support decrease emotional exhaustion, increase job satisfaction and affective well being, thus contributing to the psychological well-being of organizational actors.

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSIONS

Employees of hospitality industry as being an important part of service industry workforce unfortunately have come to be defined as “*mere simulacrums on the organizationally designed emotional stage*” (Bolton, 2005, p.4). Today, emotional labor is so embedded in service work that it goes unseen, unrewarded and even exploited.

There are many different variables leading to this current situation. All those variables are embedded in the greater phenomenon of tourism, which historically has developed on the discourse of “sovereignty” of the customer (du Gay and Salaman, 1992), disregarding its detrimental influences on the environment, on the local community and on the tourism employees. However, the new generations of tourism seem more sensitive regarding the issues of environment and the local communities. The new generations of tourism, like creative tourism, inspire to achieve a progress that will also benefit the people and the places.

As we acknowledge this trend, we also would like to stimulate discussion on whether the benefits of creative tourism for the cities and for the local communities can also be extended to include the hospitality workforce in order to intervene with the phenomenon of emotional labor.

We suggest that this discussion should start with a focus on the characteristics and motivations of creative travelers. It is obvious that they prefer a type of tourism that differentiates them from the rest of the “tourists”, as for them tourism is a source of building identity. They are after the original not the standard, they are motivated by a need to learn new cultures in every creative way

possible, they are open to novel experiences and they are ready to appreciate authentic encounters.

Based on these characteristics, we propose the following questions for further research: “*What is the perception of the creative traveler about the “staged emotional performances” taking place in SSSs, such as hotels? Considering the above motivations, can we assume that anything standard and artificial will be repulsive to them, including the emotionally prescribed interaction with the service employees? If given the chance will they prefer to interact with the service employees within the emotional norms of that culture and will they perceive this as a learning experience rather than a potential source of conflict?*”

Taking the nature of creative tourism and the creative traveler into account, this paper foresees an important possibility for positive answers to these questions. Hence, we believe that any affirmative answer will suggest a chance for transitivity and continuity between spaces of creative activities and spaces of standardized services regarding authentic experiences, eventually reducing the amount of emotional labor required from hospitality employees.

We believe that elaborating answers to above questions in the theoretical realm will not only contribute to the discussion of emotional labor and authenticity in different travel modes but also will practically improve the quality of creative travel experience for such an effort will reveal what is actually demanded and appreciated by the creative traveler and what is taken for granted and delivered as the one best way of service by hospitality industry. In our case for example, we suggest that there is no one best way for service encounters and that the resemblance of service encounter in different hotels is so high that the human part of the “service” no longer serves as a tool differentiate one hotel from another.

Historically, standard service spaces are not designed for the needs of the creative traveler. In many cases SSSs just adapt to commonly accepted industry practices in every way from service encounter to design of physical space. However, in case of an incongruity between what is demanded by the creative traveler and what is provided by the hospitality industry, in a way consistent with what we have foreseen in this paper, change will be inevitable. For any hotel aiming to accommodate the creative traveler will need give up the obsession of standardization. The change might range from

physical space design to operational issues such as the current definition of “service”, marketing activities and human resources policies.

For we assume that creative traveler is after an authentic experience by nature, we claim that ‘staged emotional performances’ will not be demanded and consequently the emotional content of service definition by hotels will eventually disappear. Standardized service encounter will no longer be the focus of marketing communication. Human resources activities will acknowledge the value of native culture as a service component, thus selection, training and socialization processes will be designed accordingly.

Although these mentioned changes would be realized in line with the demand of creative traveler the quality of experience will improve for both sides. While creating more satisfied service takers who get what they actually seek, the changes will also lead to more satisfied employees who are free of the burden of acting organizational feeling rules. Therefore considering these hypothesized consequences further research for finding out answers to above questions would pragmatically make sense as well.

Though it seems that the discussion has ended up with a fundamental fact: match the supply and demand qualitatively, it is much complicated than that. For creative tourism is a newly established concept and the discussion of it should include the clash of different socio-cultural realities and the questioning of established organizational rules. Eventually, the emerging picture can have important social and operational consequences. Therefore, we strongly believe that the literature needs further exploration of how far the creative traveler can go in his/her ambition for authenticity in the city.

Figure 1

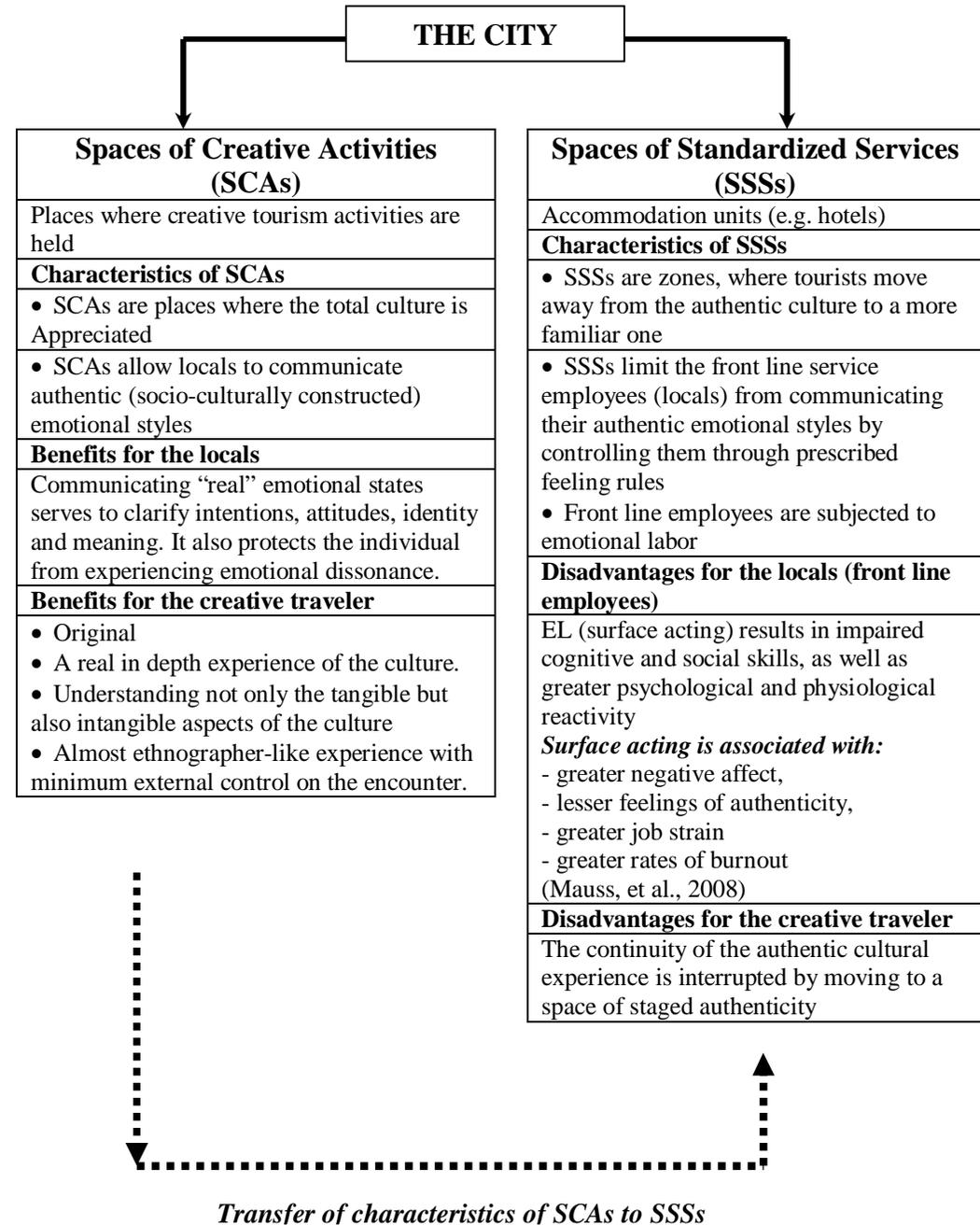


Figure 2



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