

CITIES AS CREATIVE SPACES FOR CULTURAL TOURISM: A PLEA FOR THE CONSIDERATION OF HISTORY

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ABSTRACT

Cultural tourists are infinitely interested in cultural meaning. Signs and symbols, roles and rituals, buildings and landscapes all manifest as marks of meaning and are therefore of perennial interest to tourists. In considering cities as creative spaces for cultural tourism this paper makes a plea for the consideration of history in the projects of both branding and imaging cities as well as the marketing of creative tourism projects. It defends history as a mechanism to protect cultural integrity and uphold authenticity for the sake of the host community as well as for the tourist and in so doing extols the importance of the city's soul — in essence its people. It raises three points for consideration and discussion. First, in imaging and branding cities it argues that tourism stakeholders should strive for congruency between the tourism brand and the tourist experience and in this respect should prioritise self-knowledge of the host community. Second, it argues that greater attention be paid to the organic processes that inform the images that underpin the brand and that the temporal component of 'becoming' in host communities be emphasised as well as the historical depth of the concept of image. Third, in seeking to brand and image the cultural city tourism stakeholders are encouraged to consider the ramifications of imaging and branding on local citizens at large. Host community members cannot be expected to live up to the image or brand that is projected on their behalf if they do not also subscribe to it.

KEYWORDS

*Cities; Cultural Tourism; Branding; Images; Identity;
Authenticity.*

INTRODUCTION

Cultural tourists are infinitely interested in cultural meaning. Signs and symbols, roles and rituals, buildings and landscapes all manifest as marks of meaning and are therefore of perennial interest to tourists. This is what cultural tourism is all about (Enzensberger, 1996 [1958]). Most tourists anticipate that when they visit a place to experience other people's cultures they will encounter the real thing: the authentic portrayal of what Clifford Geertz described as 'webs of significance' (1973: 5). This is, after all, why they are there. In a post-modern world where tourists can travel virtually more easily than they can travel physically they still choose the latter. Despite modern technology there is still no substitute for the sensual, emotional and physical vicissitudes of 'being there'. Cultural tourists still want to experience first hand the semiotics of culture — the architecture, literature, art, food, history and mores — that link the 'webs of significance' together. Like Geertz they too take culture to be an 'interpretive [science] in search of meaning' (Geertz, 1973: 5).

In considering cities as creative spaces for cultural tourism this paper makes a plea for the consideration of history in the projects of both branding and imaging cities as well as the marketing of creative tourism projects. It defends history as a mechanism to protect cultural integrity and uphold authenticity for the sake of the host community as well as for the tourist experience and in so doing extols the importance of the city's soul — its people. It raises three points for consideration and discussion. First, in imaging and branding cities it argues that tourism stakeholders should strive for congruency between the tourism brand and the tourist experience and in this respect should prioritise self-knowledge of the host community. Second, it argues that greater attention be paid to the organic processes that inform the images that underpin the brand and that the temporal component of 'becoming' in host communities be emphasised as well as the historical depth of the concept of image. Third, in seeking to brand and image the cultural city tourism stakeholders are encouraged to consider the ramifications of imaging and branding on local citizens at large. Host community members cannot be expected to live up to the image or brand that is projected on their behalf if they do not also subscribe to it.

CONGRUENCE BETWEEN CITY BRAND AND TOURIST EXPERIENCE

Congruency between the tourism image and the tourist product is clearly essential in successful imaging and branding. As Hankinson notes the success of city branding 'requires consistency between the "induced" image-building processes created by promotional bodies such as tour operators and local authorities and the "organic" processes as portrayed by the mass media. In other words the destination brand like any other must deliver the promise' (2001: 132). In the never-ending dialogue between hosts and guests, however, the essence of the image or brand can easily become lost in translation through ignorance or intention. Tourism stakeholders taking on the role of interpreter may compromise cultural integrity at the expense of communal truth. Cultural webs of significance may be trodden on in the pursuit of pecuniary interest. Business elites within host communities may be tempted to project an image, or brand that effectively puts culture up for sale regardless of whether the images projected are authentic. These temptations are understandable. Cultural tourism is big business. Cultural tourists frequently spend more money than other types of tourists and stay longer in tourism destinations (CCNC, 2004).

This paper argues that regardless of post-modern discourse that sees 'the paradigmatic approach to authenticity based on MacCannell's beginnings as increasingly less relevant' (Cohen, 2007: 81; see Pearce, 2007; Wang, 1999; MacCannell 1976) authenticity in the image formation process is crucial to countering cultural distortion. It suggests that promotional messages need to incorporate truth so that essence of the tourism destination is not short-changed. As Ward observed, 'too often the more important themes are still being badly handled. Thus the linking of deeper meanings of place with promotional imperatives is rarely done in a convincing way. Typical images still exclude much that makes up the reality of place. Or they appropriate aspects of place in ways that narrow meaning' (Ward, 1998: 239-240). To promote authenticity and congruency in the image formation and branding process, this paper encourages the use of history. Understanding temporal aspects of the image formation process can narrow the distance between the organic image and the tourism image and uphold the process of 'becoming' in host

communities. It can also highlight the temporal component of culture as a process rather than a product. In this respect prioritising community self-knowledge is important.

PRIORITISING HOST COMMUNITY SELF-KNOWLEDGE

Identifying culture and portraying it authentically to the world as an image or brand is difficult. As Williams observed,

Every human society has its own shape, its own purposes, its own meanings. Every human society expresses these, in institutions, and in arts and learning. The making of a society is the finding of common meanings and directions, and its growth is an active debate and amendment under the pressure of experience, contact, discovery, writing themselves into the land (1958: 6).

Self-knowledge of the host community is important if cultural information is to be authentically projected in marketing activities. Communities need to know who they are. They cannot uphold their values or honour their truths or prevent other people from defining their reality if they do not own or comprehend a collective identity. Nor can they uphold their identity if a portion of the community is willing to compromise communal identity and integrity for the sake of pecuniary advantage. In that case, as critics of Richard Florida's work point out, cultural tourism may say less about the culture of a community and more about the creative class that portrays it (Scott, 2006; Daly, 2004). Projecting an image that is congruent with a community consensus about shared identity is aided by the consideration of history. As Tosh reminds us 'every situation which requires our understanding in the present — be it a family feud, a political upheaval or a cultural movement — is the outcome of trends and events, some of them spanning less than a lifetime, others extending back to the distant past' (Tosh, 2008: 42).

For historians the subject of identity has long been an area of enquiry, as has identification of the role of the intelligentsia in

defining identity. Historians generally agree that there is never just one identity but many and moreover that identity is continually being fractured, questioned and redefined (White, 1981: x; Whitlock and Carter, 1992). But although it is clear that identity is complex and that frequently many different identities exist within any one society it can also be argued that in the main, communities do subscribe to general notions of identity, particularly if these notions please them or provide for them a sense of belonging.

Indicators of identity manifest as activities and mores of the host community but they are also manifest in history and geography (Anderson, 1991). As Davison points out 'local history, which links our aspirations for community to a sense of place, our fragile present to a seemingly more stable past, has a strong claim on the contemporary imagination. Perhaps this is why the history of towns, suburbs and neighbourhoods continues to flourish (Davison, 2000: 197). Clearly, consideration of history in informing the branding and imaging of cities, as well as concomitant ventures in creative tourism, is important because the images themselves have a history. In this respect it is instructive to review how the concept of image in tourism works.

PAYING ATTENTION TO THE CONCEPT OF IMAGE IN TOURISM

In tourism the concept of image is central. As Walker points out: 'The host community develops the image, the tourist origin region sells the image, the tourist transit region benefits from the image, the travel industry exploits the image, and the tourist buys the image' (2008: 27). We might say that the image in the first instance is the tourism product. Certainly it is the concept of image that differentiates tourism from the travel industry since people travel for a variety of different reasons that have absolutely nothing to do with the image of their destination. Tourists, on the other hand, already hold images in their heads about what they anticipate seeing in a tourism destination and for the most part are alert to any discrepancies discerned between the organic image of a destination and the tourism image with which they are confronted.

In 1972, Gunn conceptually pioneered a considerable amount of literature on the tourism image formation process. Gunn suggested that the image formation process could be divided into two essential levels: induced or organic (1972: 23-26). In his view, 'organic' images emanated 'from sources not directly associated with any development organisation. News reports, movies, newspaper articles and other ostensibly unbiased sources of information generate organic images of places' (Gartner, 1996:461). On the other hand, induced images are 'a function of the marketing or promotion efforts of a destination area or business (Gartner, 1996: 461).

When we talk about an 'organic' image of a place we are talking about an image that can form in peoples' minds regardless of tourism advertising. Such images develop from a wide variety of sources such as news accounts; export advertising and word of mouth. They also derive and evolve from historical ideas, myths, memories or any number of preconceived imaginings. Images are always informed by and invested with ideas that themselves are the product of memory, myths and mores. The resulting image or images may be either positive or negative since by definition a holistic image incorporates all aspects of a place both good and bad. Tourism images, on the other hand, are invariably positive and can therefore present a very different image of a place from that which might be described as truth. Invoking Gunn, William Gartner suggests that 'the underlying difference between an induced image and an organic image is the control that people in the destination area have over how the image is presented (1996: 461).

When holiday clients tentatively consult a travel agent, visit the internet, or approach any other distribution point to discuss going on a holiday, they are not actually buying a product that they can taste, smell, touch or carry away with them, but an image. They are considering buying what is essentially an idea in their head. The travel agent, information officer, or tourism website acts as a conduit to this idea just as other tourism promotional media does. Such contact points between product and purchase have enormous power in influencing the destination choice of potential tourists. As Gartner makes the point, 'since tourism products are an amorphous mass of experiences, produced and consumed simultaneously, with no

opportunity to sample the product prior to purchase, the images someone holds act as a surrogate for product valuation' (1996: 456).

Tourism images exist along a spectrum of ideas that are only restricted by the knowledge and imagination of the image-maker and are open to manipulation by any party or parties who may benefit from them. This is the case whether tourism images are being generated from outside the host community or whether they are being generated from within the host community. There is, however, a difference. Images generated from outside a host community are almost always predicated on commercial imperatives rather than any concerns driven by issues of identification with the image. Images generated from within a host community, however, are frequently predicated not just on commerce but also issues concerning social solidarity and identity. These images themselves have a history, which are the direct result of the process of culture.

In tourism culture is frequently reduced to an activity or an image. Hence we have the branding and image process and now renascent tourism ventures such as creative tourism. But reducing culture to an image or an activity does not make it any less complex. Nor does creating a tourism venture in order to portray culture make it any less so. Cultures as anthropologists know are in a constant state of 'becoming' and this is a factor very often lost in both branding and image cities and in tourism projects generally. Tourist images represent a process rather than an end in themselves and therefore the interpretation of their meaning becomes essential to tourists.

THE TEMPORAL CONCEPT OF 'BECOMING' IN HOST COMMUNITIES

It is important to understand that images themselves have a history. It is through the process of image formulation that notions of identity can frequently develop. This process necessitates an understanding of the essential causal relationships between image, identity and authenticity. Tensions created in the production of tourism images can either dissolve or strengthen notions about identity that otherwise may not have been examined. An authentic image, for example, can be dissolved over time if host communities

do not identify with the image or feel that it insufficiently portrays internalised perceptions of their social identity. Similarly, a lack of authenticity in an image initially projected can, over time, become authentic if sufficient people have a large enough investment in the image. Authenticity, therefore, becomes a necessary concept to consider when understanding the connection between image and identity. In short, images of a destination are not only products of the imagination, whether they are based on either reality or elements of reality, they are also products of a desired reality, which is perpetrated either by the supply side (the destination region) or the demand side (the generating region). What is at issue here is motivation

This paper stresses the centrality of the concept of 'becoming' in imaging and branding cultural cities and argues for greater attention to be paid to the organic processes that inform the images that host communities project. History is perhaps the only discipline that can effectively uncover these processes and therefore the work of historians should be acknowledged more significantly in the branding and imaging process. In this way greater credence can be given to authenticity over invention, when considering the stories that inform the images and brands that cities project, as well as the creative tourism ventures that they offer. As Hankinson makes the point, 'while there is a considerable body of research into the development of induced and complex destination images, little attention appears to have been given to the significance of images formed through organic processes despite their recognised significance to destination marketing' (2004: 7). It must be remembered that host communities own an organic image process of how they see themselves.

THE HISTORICAL DEPTH OF THE CONCEPT OF IMAGE

In understanding these organic processes, the work of eminent twentieth century economist, Kenneth Boulding (1956) is informative and useful. Boulding's work helps illustrate the complexity of culture but also the complex process of culture, which is so often lost in branding and imaging and tourism projects. Boulding can help us see the concept of image in a very different

way in contrast to how it is frequently invoked in tourism. When we talk about the concept of image in regard to tourism we can see it in a one-dimensional sense, for example, a photograph of a palm tree fringing a white sandy beach, or we can invoke it at a much deeper level. In this sense 'image' is understood in a temporal sense as a social transcript that moves through time. 'The image', says Boulding, 'is built up as a result of all past experience of the possessor of the image. Part of the image is the history of the image itself' (1956: 6). Impressions have a history. They are invested with ideas that inform the image. Boulding makes this point when he says:

The mind of man is a vast storehouse of forgotten memories and experiences. It is much more than a storehouse, however. It is a genuine image affecting our conduct and behaviour in ways that we do not understand with out conscious mind (1956: 53).

The essential point about this meaning of image is that it is not static but dynamic. It is in fact a 'transcript' passed down from one generation to another. As Boulding explains:

The basic bond of any society, culture, subculture or organisation is a 'public image,' that is, an image the essential characteristics of which are shared by the individuals participating in the group. ... A public image almost invariably produces a 'transcript'; that is, a record in more or less permanent form which can be handed down from generation to generation (1956: 64).

Further, in 'primitive, non-literate societies the transcript take the form of verbal rituals, legends, poems, ceremonial and the like, the transmission of which from generation to generation is always one of the principal activities of the group' (1956: 64-65). In modern, technological societies, however, the transcript is more sophisticated involving the camera, the tape recorder, and the computer. Nevertheless, despite the advantage of technology in developing the transcript, 'we are still unable, at least to date, to record touch, taste

and smell. We have no direct means of transcribing sensations, emotions, or feelings except through the crowded channels of symbolic representation' (1956: 65).

When we talk about the concept of 'image' as a social transcript we can appreciate the temporal importance of images. Images are always informed by and invested with ideas that themselves are the product of memory, myths and mores. In this sense tourism images and the ways that manifest are the end product of this process not the beginning. The question is how can this process of 'becoming' be truly conveyed to tourists? As Boulding pointed out, despite the advantage of technology in developing the transcript, 'we are still unable, at least to date, to record touch, taste and smell. We have no direct means of transcribing sensations, emotions, or feelings except through the crowded channels of symbolic representation' (1956: 65).

This paper suggests that the way this concept of image can be used to elucidate the process of becoming in host communities is to understand the evolving connection between the image that a country presents of itself over time and the reality of the place as it is. This might be described as the difference between image and truth. With tourism however, this abstraction presents its own difficulties because although tourism images are portrayed as truths, they are essentially subjective truths that may also have no relation to authenticity or even contemporary reality. Hence a paradox persists in tourism because although tourism is underpinned above all by considerations grounded in reality such as commercial imperatives, there is a psychological dimension to tourism without which it simply would not exist. Clearly, in most tourism destinations many different images, both visual and written, are used to portray the host community over time, whether or not they are authentic. It is the motivation behind the tourism images that is the key to understanding the depth of the image and the way they evolve to shed light on the identity of the host community. This proposition can be illustrated by using the island of Tasmania as an example.

THE HISTORICAL DEPTH OF IMAGES — TASMANIA AS CASE STUDY

For the first fifty years of the nineteenth century the Island of Tasmania, then known as Van Diemen's Land, was variously known around the British Empire as the 'Dunghill of England'. This colloquial and derogatory expression, described the Island's image as a repository for some of the worst criminals in the British Empire since its birth as a penal colony in 1803. Over the next fifty years the burden of bearing the image caused the free settlers of Van Diemen's Land considerable consternation. Soon, however, a vehicle tailor-made for the purpose of removing and creating 'impressions' was found in immigration and tourism promotion and once discovered this vehicle was employed constantly by various interested bodies and individuals who in some way stood to benefit. For middle-class bourgeois Tasmanians it became a particularly potent tool and offered important opportunities. Behind their efforts to promote Tasmania were always two great motives. The first was to remove the 'hated stain' of convictism and achieve social and moral redemption from the shame that accompanied their initial image as a penal colony. The second was to promote Tasmania as a wholesome and attractive destination to much-needed emigrants and tourists throughout the British Empire and the world. Because the second motive was to some extent dependent on the first, both motives were inextricably intertwined.

In Tasmania, many different images, both visual and written, were used to portray Tasmania whether, at the time, they were authentic or not (Walker, 2008). However, the more these images were used to promote Tasmania to the wider world the more they became authentic over time as Tasmanians subscribed to them. In short, Tasmanians began to believe and identify with their own rhetoric. By the late nineteenth century Tasmanians had a huge investment in identifying with the contemporary positive meanings inherent in the themes of Englishness, scenery, fertility and climate that they had portrayed and moreover in motivating other Tasmanians to identify with these images. This explains why Tasmanians developed a peculiar attachment to 'place' and to the promotion of nature over culture, which endures even today.

In Tasmania the image-imagination spectrum was heavily biased toward the imagination as Tasmania's image oscillated between the visitor-generating region and the visitor-destination region and a consciousness of how best to portray Tasmania against an organic image that was anything but positive. As time went on Tasmanians became aware that if travellers and tourists could be enticed to Tasmania they might turn into emigrants. This made social redemption and positive image-building a necessity for Tasmanians. Consequently, over time, Tasmania ranged in description from being a colony where the inhabitants had to be 'vindicated' to a state in which having been 'redeemed' they lived in a place, at least in their own eyes, that was 'like no other country in the world' (Burn, 1840; TTPC, 1960).

Much of the rhetoric surrounding tourism in Tasmania developed from the rhetoric produced to entice immigrants to Tasmania's shores and from the disjuncture between the colony's holistic image and the images those interested in developing a positive image wished to portray. A corollary was that this situation unavoidably impacted on a Tasmanian identity: first through the exercise of promoting nature over culture as a way of ameliorating the hated stain, and second through the mechanism of the 'social transcript' whereby succeeding generations imbibed the images projected to counter the 'hated stain' as part of their identity. Image development, first for immigration and then for tourism, therefore, played a central role in the development of a Tasmanian identity and this legacy is consequently still reflected in Tasmanian society today.

RAMIFICATIONS OF IMAGING AND BRANDING ON LOCAL CITIZENS

This paper suggests that the ramification of not prioritising host community self-knowledge in imaging and branding projects is that images may be developed and projected that are incongruent with local culture. In this event they distort reality at the expense of the host community. Host community members cannot be expected to live up to the image or brand that is projected on their behalf if they do not also subscribe to it. In this respect tourism stakeholders need to consider the ramifications on tourists as well as local citizens.

If the host community is to live up to the image or brand that is projected on their behalf they also need to be a partner to it. Whose city, after all, is it? Tourism stakeholders need to be congruent with host community conversations about the authenticity of cultural projects. While branding and imaging a city can unite a community under one banner it can also divide communities that lack a cohesive social story. Host communities need to own an investment in their own image. Strategically it makes more sense for tourism stakeholders to project an image that already reflects authentic culture.

Cities, and their host communities have a greater chance of cultivating creative places for cultural tourism if the integrity of their own local culture is honoured. As Holcomb points out the wrong kind of 'packaging and promoting the city to tourists can destroy its soul. The city is commodified, its form and spirit remade to conform to market demand not residents' dreams' (Holcomb, 1999: 68). Attention to what is important to the host community is central to its success as a creative city (Florida, 2002; see Scott, 2006). According to Florida this is, after all, the reason why cultural tourists enjoy travelling there and why the creative class is attracted there. Evidence corroborates this. In surveys undertaken in both London and New York tourists were attracted to these cities not by individual attractions but 'by qualities of place and culture — "architecture", "people", "food", "culture", "diversity"' (Maitland, 2007: 30).

While it is a diverse mixture of elements that attract the cultural tourist the closest approximation to describing these elements would probably be a 'sense of identity and place'. As Evans notes in quoting Pratt, 'a creative city cannot be founded like a cathedral in the desert: it needs to be linked to and be part of an existing cultural environment. We need to appreciate complex interdependencies, and not simply use one to exploit the other' (Evans, 2009: 1031; Pratt, 2008: 35; see Ashworth and Tunbridge, 1990). In being aware that images themselves have a history that is owned by the host community, historical thinking and analysis can help uncover these complex interdependencies and thereby narrow the distance between the organic image and the tourism image.

CONCLUSION

If the concepts of culture and cultural tourism are to be expanded to accommodate reascent cultural tourism ventures such as creative tourism, then this expansion must also pay homage to the intangible concepts of social identity, integrity and authenticity that have developed historically. In other words imaging and branding of contemporary cultural tourism products needs to incorporate a temporal component that allows for the complexity of culture to be conveyed as understood by social theorists like Klukhohn (1949) and Williams (1958) as well as the historical and contemporary reality of the host community. This paper has suggested that because all host communities own organic images which themselves have a history, historical analysis can contribute to the depth of meaning in the imaging and branding process. In considering cities as creative spaces for cultural tourism this paper, therefore, makes a plea for the importance of history in maintaining authenticity in the projects of branding and imaging cities, as well as in creative tourism projects and defends history as a mechanism to uphold authenticity and protect against cultural distortion.

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