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Cities as Creative Spaces for Cultural Tourism: A Plea for the Consideration of History

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Abstract: Cultural tourism around the world is big business. Tourism stakeholders within tourism destinations understandably work hard to develop brands and images that entice cultural tourists to visit. However, when tourism stakeholders involved in this process do not prioritise host community self-knowledge, cultural integrity is compromised and cultural distortion inevitably arises. The purpose of this paper is to raise the issue of congruity between tourism brand and tourist experience, and to make a plea for the consideration of history in the imaging, branding and interpretation processes. The conclusion is that the effective use of local history can illuminate host community self-knowledge for the benefit of both cultural tourist and host community.

Keywords: Cities; Cultural Tourism; History; Images; Identity; Authenticity.

Resumen: El turismo cultural es un gran negocio a nivel internacional. Las partes interesadas en los destinos turísticos trabajan incansablemente, como es de esperar, con el fin de desarrollar marcas e imágenes que inciten a la visita a los turistas de cultura. Sin embargo, cuando las partes interesadas en este proceso no dan prioridad al conocimiento de sí mismo que tienen las comunidades receptoras del turismo, se compromete la integridad cultural e inevitablemente surge una distorsión cultural. El objetivo de este artículo es el de reflexionar sobre la cuestión de la congruencia entre la marca turística y la experiencia turística, y pedir que la historia se considere en los procesos de imagen, marca e interpretación. Se llega a la conclusión de que el uso efectivo de la historia puede iluminar el conocimiento de sí mismo que tiene la comunidad receptora, creando beneficios tanto para el turista de cultura como para la comunidad.

Palabras clave: Ciudades; Turismo de cultura; Historia; Imágenes; Identidad; Autenticidad.

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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 reality of what Clifford Geertz described as 'webs of significance' (1973: 5). This is, after all, why they are there. Despite modern technology, which allows tourists to travel *virtually* more easily than they can travel *physically*, they still choose the latter. This is because there is no substitute for the sensual, emotional and physical experience of 'being there'. In a postmodern world, where 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, they, like Geertz, 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 in the interpretation and marketing of creative tourism projects. It discusses how tourism stakeholders shortchange cultural tourists as well as the host community when the depth of history is not reflected in the tourism images, brands and cultural products that are offered and portrayed. 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. In so doing it extols the importance of the city's soul — its people.

The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate how, through the consideration of history, the historical depth of organic images already evident within communities can reveal notions of cultural identity for the edification of both tourists and host communities. To this end, it raises three points for consideration and discussion. First, in imaging and branding cities — or any destination for that matter — it argues that tourism stakeholders should strive for congruency between the tourism brand and the tourist experience by prioritising self-knowledge of the host community. Second, it suggests that the temporal component of 'becoming' in host communities should be emphasised because organic images within communities frequently underpin tourism images and brands. 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. This applies to all tourism destinations, not just cities. Host communities need to own their identities and histories for cultural identity to be an effective intangible asset.

Congruence between City Brand and Tourist Experience

Congruence 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 or brand projected are authentic. This is 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). However, these temptations do not justify a lack of authenticity in imaging and branding or in creative tourism projects since they only diminish the cultural tourism experience.

Although post-modern discourse 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) this paper argues that cultural tourism demands a greater emphasis on authenticity than ever before. As McKercher and du Cros point out, 'the days have well and truly passed where low-quality experiences can satisfy the gullible tourist' (McKercher & du Cros, 2002: 127). This applies equally to imaging and branding exercises as it does to all cultural tourism enterprises. Nevertheless, as Ward observed, 'typical images still exclude much that makes up the reality of place. Or they appropriate aspects of place in ways that narrow meaning' ... '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 (Ward, 1998: 239-240). This paper suggests that a greater use of local history, and the application of community self-knowledge in the image formation and branding processes, can help to ameliorate this situation.

Prioritising Host Community Self-Knowledge

Host community self-knowledge is crucial information if tourism stakeholders wish to authentically project cultural identity in marketing activities. 'Community self-knowledge' can be understood as intangible heritage which, to use the words of McKercher and du Cros, can be described as soft culture — 'the people, their traditions, and what they know' (2002: 83). Ignorance of community self-knowledge by tourism stakeholders can compromise the cultural authenticity and integrity of local communities either by accident or intention. In contrast, prioritising host community self-knowledge can insure against the compromising of the cultural tourism product by acknowledging community self-knowledge in the imaging and branding process. In this respect the work of historians in providing local history information is crucial.

As a concept, community self-knowledge is intricately tied up with local history. It is, in a sense, the container through which communities understand their history. All communities have histories whether they are known or unknown to the community in question. These histories can be understood as the record of the evolution of local culture, of evolving local identity, of people 'becoming' who they are. It is this record that ties the threads in Geertz's 'webs of significance' together. Informing communities about their history and cultural identity is one of the main contributions that academic historians make to society. As Tosh observed '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). Just as in the case of individuals, 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 when a portion of the community is willing to compromise the integrity of cultural identity 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).

Cultural identity has long been an area of interest within the discipline of history, as has identification of the role of the intelligentsia in defining identity. Historians know that identifying local cultural identity is complex and that portraying it authentically to the world as an image or brand is inherently 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).

Moreover, the many differences within all societies militate against cohesive agreement on social portrayal. Total agreement requires either exceptional circumstances or an extraordinary level of social cohesion.

For their part, however, although many historians 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 & Carter, 1992), others believe that communities do hold general notions of identity, particularly if these notions please them or provide for them a sense of belonging (Anderson, 1991; Walker, 2008). That is why, as Davison points out, 'the history of towns, suburbs and neighbourhoods continues to flourish': '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' (2000: 197). In this respect, the contribution that local history makes to the informing of community self-knowledge is both manifold and essential to the upholding of authenticity in cultural tourism.

The Temporal Concept of 'Becoming' in Host Communities

One way that history can contribute to the informing of community self-knowledge is to elucidate the process of 'becoming' in host communities and 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 also be described as the difference between image and truth. In tourism, of course, this abstraction always presents its own difficulties because, although tourism images are portrayed as truths, they are essentially subjective truths that may 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 an imaginative psychological dimension to tourism without which it simply would not exist. In most tourism destinations, many different tourism images, both visual and written, are used to portray the host community over time, whether or not they are authentic. Finding the key to understanding the meaning and motivation behind the images, and the way they evolve, can shed light on the identity of the host community. In this respect it is instructive to review how the concept of image works in tourism.

Paying Attention to the Concept of Image in Tourism

In the early 1970s pioneer work was undertaken on the tourism image formation process. In 1972 Gunn suggested that image formation 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). These images of a place can form in peoples' minds regardless of tourism advertising and can 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. The resulting image or images may be either positive or negative since by definition an organic or 'holistic' image incorporates all aspects of a place both good and bad. In contrast to organic images, induced images are 'a function of the marketing or promotion efforts of a destination area or business' (Gartner, 1996: 461). In this sense the term 'induced image' is synonymous with 'tourism image'. Tourism images, however, are invariably positive and can present a very different image of a place from that which might be described as truth.

Invoking Gunn, Gartner suggested 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, for example, they are not actually buying a product that they can taste, smell, touch or carry away with them. What they are buying is an image that 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. 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). Such contact points between product and purchase have enormous power in influencing the destination choice of potential tourists. It is precisely for this reason that tourism images present for the historian a rich source of cultural identity. Tourism images are frequently a confirmation or a reaction to organic images and are usually informed by and invested with ideas that themselves are the product of memory, myths and mores.

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). This makes tourism images ripe for historical analysis and the possible uncovering of hitherto unknown notions of cultural identity. 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 are frequently predicated not just on commerce but also issues concerning social solidarity and identity. It is through this process of organic image formulation that notions of identity can frequently develop. Tensions created in the production of tourism images can reveal 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. Clearly, authenticity is a crucial concept to consider in the connection between image and identity in the image formation process since these images themselves have a history, which are the direct result of the process of culture. This proposition can further be explicated through an understanding of the historical depth of the concept of image.

The Historical Depth of the Concept of Image

In understanding that images have their own history, the work of eminent twentieth century economist, Kenneth Boulding (1956), is illuminating and informative. Boulding's work helps to illustrate the complexity of culture but also the complex *process* of culture, which is so often lost in branding and imaging and tourism projects. In this respect it helps us to understand the historical depth of the concept of image. In tourism, when we talk about the concept of image, we usually see it in a one-dimensional sense, for example, a photograph of a palm tree fringing a white sandy beach. However we can invoke it at a much deeper level. In contrast, to how it is frequently invoked in tourism, Boulding interprets the concept of image in a temporal sense. In Boulding's analysis the concept of 'image' is understood as a *social transcript* that moves through time. The image '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). For Boulding 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 without conscious mind (1956: 53).

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

> 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).

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 understand 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 they manifest, are the end product of cultural identity not the beginning. This is why the historical depth of images already evident within communities can reveal notions of cultural identity that can inform community self knowledge and by extension imaging and branding and creative tourism enterprises. Explication of this point can be demonstrated by using the example of the historical interplay between organic images and tourism images in Tasmania. Although a region rather than a city, this example nevertheless demonstrates how historical analysis can contribute to a greater understanding of the interplay between organic images and tourism images and their effect on cultural identity.

The Historical Depth of Images — Tasmania as an Example

For the first fifty years of its settlement in 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 organic image as a repository for some of the worst criminals in the British Empire since its birth as a penal colony in 1803. Throughout this period the burden of bearing the image caused the free settlers of Van Diemen's Land considerable consternation. The shame attached to such an appalling organic image drove them to consider how they could improve the 'impressions' that outsiders held about them. Soon they discovered that a vehicle tailor-made for the purpose of removing and creating 'impressions' could be found in immigration and tourism promotion. Once discovered, various interested bodies and individuals who in some way stood to benefit employed this vehicle. 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 reaction to their organic image as the 'Dunghill of England', many different images, both visual and written, were used to portray Tasmania whether they were authentic or not (Walker, 2008). The themes of Englishness, scenery, fertility and climate that were ubiquitous in their immigration and tourism images speak to this fact as Tasmanians embellished them to counteract their negative organic image. As a result Tasmanians began to identify with these themes and over time developed a peculiar attachment to 'place' and to the promotion of nature over culture, which endures even today. In short, Tasmanians began to believe and identify with their own rhetoric. The more the images were used to promote Tasmania to the wider world, the more Tasmanians subscribed to them and the more authentic they became over time. By the late nineteenth century, Tasmanians had a huge investment in identifying with the contemporary positive meanings inherent in the immigration and tourism images they projected.

Because of their unique and remarkable beginnings social redemption and positive image building were a necessity for early settler Tasmanians. As a result, 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. Much of the rhetoric surrounding tourism in Tasmania, therefore, 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. Consequently, over time, Tasmanians changed their image 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).

Without doubt the image formation process in Tasmania played a central role in the development of a Tasmanian identity and is still reflected in Tasmanian society today. Few contemporary Tasmanian tourism stakeholders, however, are cognisant of the deeper meanings behind the inherited images and brands that they project. The first reason for this is that community self-knowledge about the history of the interplay between organic and tourism images that Tasmanians have owned over time is generally not well known. Another is that many tourism stakeholders do not see it as their job to enquire into the deeper meanings behind the images that they have inherited. Consequently they frequently adopt and apply images without questioning their deeper meaning or realising that a fuller explanation for tourists could only enhance their cultural tourism products. This is likely to be a situation replicated in other tourism destinations. 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 makes sense, therefore, for the work of historians to be integrated more significantly into the imaging and branding process as well as creative tourism projects. Historians are perhaps the only practitioners who can effectively uncover the deeper meanings within the historical image formation process. Through their contribution greater credence can be given to authenticity over invention when considering the stories that inform the images and brands that tourism destinations project, as well as the creative tourism ventures that are offered.

The Ramifications of Imaging and Branding on Local Citizens

This paper has stressed the centrality of the concept of 'becoming' in imaging and

branding cultural cities and has argued for greater attention to be paid to the historical depth of the concept of image as well as the organic processes that inform the tourism images that host communities project. It has suggested that tourism stakeholders need to be cognisant of local history and community self-knowledge when they image, brand and interpret cultural products for both the benefit of cultural tourist and host community. 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. However, tourism stakeholders need to be aware that 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' — a factor very often lost in the branding and imaging of tourism destinations and in tourism projects generally. In this respect it must be remembered that tourism images represent a *process* rather than an end in themselves and that therefore the authentic interpretation of their meaning becomes essential to tourists.

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. 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 community members cannot be expected to live up to an 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. Host communities need to own an investment in their own image if they are to live up to the image or brand that is projected on their behalf. They need to be a partner to it. In the case of cities, for example, the question becomes 'whose city, after all, is it?' Strategically, and in every way, it makes more sense for tourism stakeholders to project an image that already reflects authentic culture.

Clearly, cities, and their host communities have a greater chance of authentically 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 these qualities represent a diverse mixture, elements that attract the cultural tourist approximate best to 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 & 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 for the benefit of both host community and cultural tourist.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the main contribution of this paper has been to highlight the importance of history in the tourism imaging and branding process. Because all host communities own organic images which themselves have a history, historical analysis can not only contribute to community self-knowledge, which is its brief, but concomitantly to the depth of meaning in the tourism imaging and branding and interpretation processes. The aim was not to propose

ways, for example, as to how tourism practitioners could improve a bad destination image — this is a subject for a different paper — but rather to highlight how an understanding of the image formation process within communities can inform an understanding of cultural identity for the benefit of cultural tourism. It is suggested that if the concepts of culture and cultural tourism are to be expanded to accommodate renascent 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 as this can only enhance cultural tourism products. In considering cities as creative spaces for cultural tourism, then, this paper makes a plea for the consideration of history in maintaining authenticity in tourism images and brands as well as in creative tourism projects. It defends history as a mechanism to uphold authenticity and protect against cultural distortion.

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