

Culture and Heritage: Assignment 1 = LIT REV CRITIQUE

Identify and critically analyse contemporary perspectives on the nature of 'Commodification' and 'Commercialization' and consider how such concepts might be managed for future Culture and Heritage Tourism Development to mitigate negative impacts and enhance positive impacts.

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1. Introduction

'Commodification' the Oxford Dictionary defines as, is 'The action or process of treating something as a mere commodity'. A commodity the dictionary goes on to define, is either 'a raw material or primary agricultural product that can be bought and sold, such as copper or coffee. It defines Commercialization as 'The process of managing or running something principally for financial gain.'

Heritage is defined in The Oxford Dictionary as 'Valued objects and qualities such as historic buildings and cultural traditions that have been passed down from previous generations.' It defines Culture as 'The ideas, customs, and social behaviour of a particular people or society.'

This paper considers the background of what experiences tourists may be looking for, what experiences they demand. It highlights the 'Great Heritage Debate' which academics have been arguing for more than sixty years now. The paper looks at how authenticity is perceived in different ways, by different people and how it has been questioned. Staged authenticity is considered where sometimes the financial reward is pursued over other factors especially social factors. This commodification and commercialisation has sometimes had detrimental effects. Interpretation methods are considered and best practice looked at, for the careful management of these heritage and cultural tourism developments, in order to make recommendations for the future. If Heritage and Culture Tourism managers were to consider sustainable styles of management that considered social and environmental impacts as well as economic gain then less negative impacts could be avoided and more positive impacts gained.

2. Background

Customer demand leads trends and over the years we have seen many. When the 'Tiki Era' was born initially in the 30's people were looking for escapism after years of prohibition, the post war era saw new holiday parks open like Disney and Butlins, we had the swinging sixties with huge music festivals being born then came the seventies and the advent of conservationism. Many post-industrial era treasures were saved and protected for their heritage value and put in moth balls or behind glass screens. The eighties and the era of Entrepreneurialism saw many heritage and culture sites greatly commercialized as opportunities were seen for making money. A lot of these attractions from these eras are run down now and in need of reinvention. Vandalism has also been a problem with these sites as the community were not consulted when they were planned (Dicks 2000). Some heritage attractions have held negative memories for communities. Industrial heritage era sites like coal mines and copper smelting works shut down and led to mass unemployment, second and third generation unemployment, and poverty within these hugely deprived areas. As industry has declined we have seen a rise in heritage attractions and heritage has become the most important and highest growth area for International Tourism (Graham et al 2000). Tourism the largest growth industry, whether it has good or bad impacts on society, culture or environment is certainly bringing money for into communities. The customer doesn't always demand for the heritage experience to be authentic as sometimes they are just looking for entertainment. It is important to host communities however for the experience to be authentic so that it doesn't get in the way of their personal attachment and sense of belonging to their homeland. Zukin (2010) states that positive outcomes in this affinity to place can be gained by authentic portrayal of place.

3. Authenticity

Heritage it has been claimed by Hewison (1987) is 'bogus history'. Bella Dicks (2000) states that "Heritage is the past produced as a set of stories told in the present." Heritage is very much History reprocessed whether this is done well or done badly.

English Heritage states in its vision and values on its website that "people are increasingly looking for experiences that bring history to life.....We offer a hands-on experience that will inspire and entertain people.....our work is informed by enduring values of authenticity, quality, imagination, responsibility and fun". It goes on to talk about the importance of authenticity "We seek to be true to the story of the places and artefacts that we look after and present. We don't exaggerate or make things up for entertainment's sake. Instead, through careful research, we separate fact from fiction and bring fascinating truth to life."

The debate as to what constitutes as 'authenticity' though is highlighted by Dallen (2011) in his book 'Cultural Heritage and Tourism'. He talks about the many schools of thought and theories regarding authenticity. He states that some people suggest that authenticity "is intrinsic in the objects, artefacts or locations being visited. Others suggest that it lies only in the perceptions or experiences of tourists. Some people have even suggested that it matters very little whether a person has an authentic experience or not." Goulding (2000) puts forward research to show how visitors' perceptions differ from person to person regarding their experiences of authenticity. Dallen (2011) goes on to state that many organisations use authenticity as a unique selling point to market their attraction regardless of whether it is true or not, by using staged authenticity and inauthentic pasts. Dimitrios (2013) states however that the authenticity debate is sometimes used as a means for judging an indigenous society. Tourists often have already formed preconceived ideas based on the original culture they are visiting without realizing that everyday practices change and evolve and continuously transform. He cites Bruner (2001, 2005) when he talks about cultures continually changing, "there are no originals" Locals together with the influx of tourists bring this change about.

4. Staged Authenticity

In his book 'The image - A guide to pseudo-events in America 1964' Daniel Boorstin put forward a theory that the tourism industry was heading away from adventure and reality towards simulated reality "artificial products," in which "picturesque natives fashion(ed) papier-mâché images of themselves," for the tourists who wanted to view them like in the movies. Boorstin thought America was threatened by "the menace of unreality," which was infiltrating society, and replacing the authentic with the contrived.

Dean MacCannell believed tourism to be a rise against the modern world, in his book *The Tourist* 1976. He believed that modern man was looking for a sense of authenticity in past periods in time and other cultures as they were unhappy with their own. Tourists, he thought had an inauthentic understanding of other people and places, implying that they saw things through rose coloured spectacles.

Barthel, D. (1990) describes staged symbolic communities and a sense of nostalgia for America's village past when he states "Staged Symbolic Communities have become important cultural forms in contemporary America. As *simulacrum*s of community, they offer a vision of the organic community with which few contemporary communities can compete. They offer an outlet from the work organization of mass bureaucratic society enabling the tourist visitor to feel both relaxed and in control." He believed that visitors took home not only souvenirs and inspiration for their own homes but a sense of identity, belonging and community. The 'Williamsburg effect' became a leading architectural model for new communities.

5. Measuring Authenticity

Jamal and Hill (2004) put forward the idea that a framework for indicators of authenticity in relation to place and space of cultural and heritage tourism was needed. Authenticity they say sits under three dimensions – "the objective (real), the constructed (socio-political) and the personal (phenomenological) – and" there are "two aspects that contextualize authenticity: space and time. Indicators for addressing the object and experience of place, as well as "sense of place," are discussed" and deemed vital.

McLeod (2006) in Smith, M. and Robinson (2006) talk of the concept of measuring 3 types of Authenticity as:

1. 'Objective authenticity' - things that are not made for the tourist market that can be certified as authentic.
2. 'Constructive authenticity' - new objects sold as souvenirs because they resemble the genuine thing.
3. 'Existential authenticity' - experiencing a genuine traditional thing like a local dancing a local traditional dance.

Bazuk (2008) and Ramkisson (2015) (see appendices 1 and 2) look at different global case studies where a link to authenticity perceived by visitors experience of 'Sense of Place' is investigated. There are throughout my research many examples of the 'Commodification' of heritage, of positive and negative aspects. Lumley (1994), sums up good and bad practice nicely when describing the 'Heritage debate' as having "Pretensions, banalities and failures and a tainted entrepreneurial character on one side and on the other side thought provoking, accessible representation of local life with an ongoing public forum for expressing local identities. The sense of place factor and a sense of belonging factor play a big role in cultivating positive outcomes."

6. Heritage and Culture Interpretation

One definition of Interpretation is 'the act of explaining, reframing, or otherwise showing your own understanding of something'. (vocabulary.com) In terms of heritage interpretation attraction managers have relied heavily in the past on scripting an interpretation of the heritage offers in a style of interpretation known as 'Recreation Interpretation'. It does not reflect all people's 'own' understanding of it if it is been scripted by attraction managers. It has been packaged and spoon fed to visitors regardless of it being authentic or not, an example of this is The Rhondda Heritage Park which is supposed to be an authentic 'recreation' of the past.

Rhondda Heritage Park

In her book 'Heritage Community and Place' Bella Dicks cites Eco (1986) when she states "Is heritage not the 'bad conscience' of economic restructuring in that it takes the fact of a people's decline as its necessary building blocks, whilst at the same time celebrating and displaying that same people's heroic traditions (and charging and entrance fee to see them)?"

Another way of thinking about this however is that the heritage park provides the only significant public memorial the Rhondda has to its mining industry. At its peak it had 66 deep mines with 40,000 people working the coal. In the 1880's around 1,000 people lived there but by the 1920's 168,000 people were living in the Rhondda Valley.

She goes on to state that "The heritage park offers an ongoing, public and institutional forum for the display and reconstruction of those stories, which is qualitatively different from the private ebbs and flows of local oral culture".

Different views were voiced from the community in letters to the 'Llantrisant Observer' a week apart in July 1984. And cited in Dicks' book (2000). One resident wrote "Our only hope for work is tourism. So let us use the beauty and exploit the tourist potential that would come to see our proud heritage." A week later another resident wrote "There is plenty of pride in the valleys..... we are proud of what our children have done, and it has absolutely nothing to do with the – the pits!.... Too many of their mates have coughed their lungs away, to boast about mining, or want to be reminded of it. These views show the divide of feeling in the community. They highlight the fact that personal experience and attachment of place contribute to how people perceive an attraction. Regardless of how people feel about the park the fact is that the local community were not consulted at large and do not have a general feeling of ownership of the Heritage Park as it is today. Many feel hostility towards it that it should be "of and for the people". When the book was written the local area had no kids play park yet the Heritage Park with its Energy Zone had a great park, all be it one you had to pay for thus excluding locals from using it regularly. Her book concludes that neither the spirit of the place nor the voice of the people have been put on display at Rhondda Heritage Park. Although they used local voices to narrate their audio displays, they don't reflect the "multivocality and inconsistencies that characterize real social space."

A growing trend today which reflects better practice is 'Reconstructed Interpretation'. Coaltown coffee in Ammanford is a good example of a new form of entrepreneurial heritage related business.

Coaltown Coffee, Ammanford

Coaltown Coffee are utilizing old coal industry buildings to breathe life back into the community in Ammanford. Providing jobs roasting coffee which is being hailed as the 'new black gold' and an academy for barista skills whilst also showcasing the story of the mines and colliery working days. This initiative provides something locals can be part of and proud of which also plays a part in the regeneration of the place not only as a destination but as a vibrant self-sufficient community. "Scott now wants to make coffee a commodity that puts the town on the map, just like coal had been in the past." (Walesonline) Travel guide Lonely Planet features Coaltown and "also uses the new book to advise coffee-loving tourists to seek out Wright's Food Emporium and Carreg Cennen Castle while in the area." Di figlia, L. (2016) (see appendices 3) considers how abandoned villages represent a resource to rural communities this concept has been adopted here as post - industrial villages have become rural areas again.

7. Future Management and Conclusions

In his book 'Heritage Tourism' Park (2014) states 'A more nuanced and intricate understanding of the dynamics between authenticity and commodification is essential in broadening their meanings and implications in Heritage tourism experiences'. In other words a very in depth approach is needed to fully develop heritage attractions for positive impacts and avoid negative issues arising. Scholarly research should be encouraged and good practice implemented, quality controls need to be put in place with feasibility studies, community consultation and impact analysis being done. Consideration of interpretation, education, sense of place and legacy should be made. Staiff et al (2013) highlighted Crouch's (2002:207) provocative statement 'Tourism is a practice and is made in the process. In making these claims I challenge familiar representations of tourism as product, destination, consumption'. They discussed this in the relation to heritage, interpretation and sense of place saying new ways of understanding needed to be developed. A new reconstructive approach is replacing the old recreation approach where visitors create their own interpretation instead of just revelling in nostalgia. Pearce et al (1998) recommend that for best practise developers should: Vary the interpretative experience, provide personal connections, practise participation, organise the interpretation ideas, provide clear content and ensure to engage with a range of audiences. This approach allows people to experience their own interpretation. Moscardo (1996) says that Interpretation can produce 'Mindful' tourists again enforcing the idea of them connecting with their own interpretation and understanding, in other words making their own unique connection.

Heritage engagement is in a transitional process as the technological era brings new developments. Wright, T. (2008) stated that "the visual image has become the predominant mode of communication. Indeed, for most people, pictures have become the primary channel through which we gain knowledge of the world". Image communication has exploded globally and it transcends language barriers. Wright was relating this to photography before the social media platform Instagram had developed to the extent it has today. Technology is advancing so rapidly and interpretation of images is in the eye of the beholder. Anybody anywhere can now tap into a sense of place from a virtual reality platform. We are creating new ways of marketing and interpreting Heritage and Culture at such a speed now and we are running to catch up with the regulation of it all. It can so easily be used in a negative way but we need to work hard to responsibly learn from mistakes and improve positive outcomes. The world is constantly reinventing itself.

In a world where 'Experience Tourism' is growing so is as ever our knowledge and understanding of our own spiritual journeys, there is a new found movement to discover our own interpretations and meanings and experience a sense of raw place. A more mindful tourist visitor expects a better experience of heritage and tourism provision. Therefore a non-scripted version of one's own interpretation that is unique to each of us and not spoon-fed by mass commercialization and consumerism is needed. With the advent of the technological era and as the modern tourist visitor evolves more tangible forms of interpreting intangible heritage and culture provision are being developed that simply were not possible in the past.

If Heritage and Culture Tourism developers start with the people who live there in those communities and engage them with the development by tapping into their sense of belonging and sense of place an authentic connection will be found. This authentic connection can be developed into a tangible story. History has passed but heritage is alive in the people who carry on these traditions today in whatever form they may have changed and evolved into over the years. Conservation for its own sake has been found not to work but today we are part of the 'Creative Era' where better solutions could be found. A multisectoral approach where all stakeholders work together would boost positive outcomes from developments (Bozidar 20015) (see appendices 4). Utilizing heritage industry buildings to breathe life back into the community, providing jobs in current market skills that link with heritage and culture in creative and marketable ways. Showcasing real stories from the past scripted by local voices so locals can be part of new developments and proud of them. All these things can play a part in the regeneration of a place not only as a destination but as a vibrant self-sufficient community in the face of the uncertain political climate where Brexit and Austerity threaten. If Heritage and cultural attractions can factor in a partnership with a link to a viable local business which is a producer of a local heritage or cultural product they may have a new future. There is demand for homegrown, local produce. This can give the new venture a real sense of authenticity, it is no longer something from the past behind a glass screen, it is a real thing happening today but a living manifestation of Culture and Heritage. Conaghan et al (2015) recommend an implementation of the model for the transition towards the sustainable management of tourism destinations (SMTD) in policy making. If all these recommendations were to be implemented to develop and manage Heritage and Culture Tourism then negative social, economic and environmental impacts might be mitigated and positive impacts might be enhanced.

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Further Case Study Examples

Appendice 1

Badruk, M. et al (2008) talks about connecting visitors' perceptions of authenticity at Canyon de Chelly National Monument, Arizona and states "This study examines the effect of visitors' characteristics, motivations and sense of place attachment on perceptions of authenticity at a cultural heritage site. The most important motives for visiting were 'To enjoy nature' and 'To experience Navajo culture', visitors perceived a strong sense of place identity but a weaker sense of place dependence. Preservation of the archaeological resources was the most important contributor towards an authentic experience, followed by learning about customs and values of local people, meeting local people and visiting with an authorised Navajo guide. Attending interpretive programmes contributed the least. Place identity emerged as the strongest predictor of perceptions of authenticity, suggesting that a strong emotional bond is an important factor in visitors perceiving a site to be authentic. As visitor motivations for learning about the Navajo culture increased, so did perceptions of authenticity. Higher age also led to increased feelings of authenticity. As education levels and prior experience increased, perceptions of authenticity decreased."

Appendice 2

Ramkissoon (2015) sets out to explore "the relationships between destination image, existential authenticity, and different dimensions of place attachment in the nature-based tourism context in Australia. A visitor-centric model is proposed in which existential authenticity is the principal mechanism that links destination image to different dimensions of place attachment. The results indicate (a) a positive and significant effect of destination image on existential authenticity; (b) a positive and significant effect of existential authenticity on place dependence, place identity, place affect, and place social bonding; and (c) a significant mediating effect of existential authenticity in the relationship between destination image and each of the four dimensions of place attachment."

Appendice 3

Di figlia (2016) states "Abandoned villages can be considered both as discarded elements of modern society and as sources of identity. This paper considers this attribute as an added local resource, which can trigger processes of regeneration and local development with positive impacts on economy, environment, landscape and local community. Does the reality of abandoned villages represent a rural resource in itself? What value can be attributed to abandoned villages? Is it possible to imagine new scenarios or roles for abandoned villages."

Appendice 4

Bozidar (2015) discusses how agrotourism farms which contribute to the rural cultural tourism offer in Croatia can be supported to enhance future positive outcomes. He puts forward the idea that contemporary tourist consumers demand a perceived authenticity of the rural tourism offer and its products. By implementing a multi-sectoral approach to implement new tourism products based on ever changing consumers' trends a better more sustainable and highly competitive tourist destination can be achieved. In other words, if all sectors and voices in a community work together a far better product can be offered which keeps everyone happy. Consultation gives the community ownership and the product is then more authentic

