

Heritage, Tourism and National Identity

SENSE OF PLACE.

Heritage and Identity

- ▶ Heritage is deeply associated with constructing and legitimising collective constructs of identity ranging from class, gender, ethnicity to nationalisation. (GRAHAM et al 2000)
- ▶ MacDonald says that Heritage sites / attractions are material testimony of identity. (MacDonald 2006).
- ▶ Heritage sites / attractions create “symbolic meanings and national embodiments” (Park 2015, P93)

Heritage and Identity

- ▶ Heritage portrayal and interpretation assists nationals to realise their essential elements of their own unique cultures and history. (Park 2014)



- ▶ Potential to reinforce identities and encourage national pride, in the way that they often communicate histories past and present.

Heritage and Identity

CAVEATS!

- ▶ NB: Outcomes are very much dependant on the way in which a heritage / history is depicted! (Positive or Negative Interpretation / Biased Accounts / 'Rose Tinted' Past / Commercialised Focus????).
- ▶ Views and opinions of heritage interpretation can be very subjective!

Heritage and Identity

- ▶ What is crucial for any heritage portrayal / interpretation for IDENTITY, is that it is 'authentic' and holds 'genuine meaning' to a community and locality.
- ▶ “The popularity of heritage tourism , particularly within domestic settings relates to the fact that its images and symbols encountered and experienced during visits reveal a past that is “OURS”..... and communally enduring” (Park 2010, p29).
- ▶ Bell 2003, argues that this relates to 'shared memories' (Community Solidarity)

Heritage and Identity

- ▶ Heritage sites therefore can hold much significance to a 'Community' / Group..... , it is therefore VITAL that *accounts of a past* are genuine.
- ▶ Heritage needs to be as AUTHENTIC as possible! Both for formal / informal education - (Wider Tourists), but also to ensure 'connectivity' with *locals* (Sense of Pride / Identity....)

Heritage and Identity

- ▶ Such outcomes can be detrimentally influenced if heritage is invented, acquired, embellished!!!
- ▶ Some attractions have been criticised for being overly commercial in their focus:



*Overly nostalgic / reminiscent, overly exaggerated in accounts of history, inauthentic in interpretation (falsified heritage).

*Exhibits being subject to modifications / reappropriation and reinterpretation etc.....

Heritage and Identity

- Objectives / Challenges of a heritage site need to be clearly understood.

-COMMERCIAL FOCUS or EDUCATION FOCUS (Historic Community).

-Dilemmas of differing sectors: Public / Private and Voluntary.

-Different remits / objectives / societal pressures / economic confines.....

Heritage and Identity

- ▶ A strong emphasis needs to be placed on heritage interpretation at sites, as it commonplace today to see “Regional Identities” being articulated via the heritage sector.
- ▶ HERITAGE = Contemporary means by which to represent regional / national identities.



EG: Europe in the 19th Century (Nation States)

Heritage and Identity

- ▶ Hobsbawm 1983 - - Took this further and suggested that heritage *has and is* used as ‘Social Engineering’ ??

EG; use of sports / festivals / systems / clubs - associations, to instil social order a result of patriotism????!!!!

Heritage and Identity

- ▶ Theorists non supportive of the positives of heritage tourism positively impacting on regional / national identity quote the examples of commercialised attractions and sites.
- ▶ Views: They question whether commercially orientated sites fully fulfil the role of supporting 'identity formation and maintenance'.

Other concerns - Difficulties / complexities of interpreting and portraying political unrest, War.....??!!

Addressing modern times of globalisation (loss of traditions - modernity??!!)

Heritage and Identity

- ▶ Others would disagree and suggest that today heritage is particularly important and is a positive entity as it ensures identities are maintained in a globalised and changing world.
- ▶ DIASPORAS TRAVEL = Individuals in search of their “roots” - -often satisfied through heritage attractions.
- ▶ Harrison 2010 - - Heritage attractions create the ‘LOCAL’ at a ‘GLOBAL level

Heritage and Identity - - DIASPORAS

► Diasporas and Tourism



Nations or ethnic groups living outside their traditional homelands and bound together by spatial concentration / identities.

Popular examples of Diasporas Tourism = *Scotland , Ireland , China....*

[Scotland Handout - - -Year of the Homecoming 2009 / 2014...]

[Red Tourism in China - Domestic Tourism]

Heritage and Identity - DIASPORAS

- ▶ With Diaspora Tourists having little knowledge of a culture or heritage , it is important for an accurate portrayal of a ‘past’ to be provided so that a ‘valid / legitimised’ identity can be created.

Heritage and Identity - DIASPORAS

► NB: PROBLEMS / CAVEATS!

Problem - Danger of creating something that the industry believes that the visitor wants (£ orientated + driven?! / Inauthentic Imagery?!)

Problem - 'Created Identity' to benefit from an affluent overseas visitor (USA / IRELAND?).

Problem - 'Alienation of Heritage' - International tourist becoming aware through heritage interpretation of a 'darker' past - - which can lead to 'troubling, disconcerting and ambiguous' experiences and links not wanted! (Coles and Timothy 2004).

Heritage and Identity - DIASPORAS

► Positives of Diaspora Tourism

“GLOCALISATION”

Large scale micro targeting towards increasingly differentiated consumers within a localised context (Robertson 1995) - - - - - **LOCAL TO GLOBAL**

Positive and active ‘wide’ promotion of a heritage / culture.

Heritage and Identity - DIASPORAS

- ▶ Heritage sites can be a 'positive' to promote heritage and history , as they are capable of reappropriating and reinterpreting distinctive local (national) culture and identity within a global setting .
- ▶ Such sites assist in reaffirming PLACE -BASED IDENTITIES / SENSE OF PLACE.