



AFFIRMING AUTHENTICITY Consuming Cultural Heritage

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Abstract: This paper identifies how British tourists affirm authenticity through visiting socio-industrial cultural heritage attractions. Survey findings of 1,200 interviews with domestic tourists visiting three major British period theme parks highlighted the diversity of perceived authenticity gained by them and, thus, showed the importance of experiential and emotive processes in their interaction with attraction settings. In particular, three distinct thought processes were identified: reinforced assimilation, cognitive perception, and retroactive association. The notion of “insightfulness” is presented as an appropriate characterization of how cultural authenticity is affirmed by individual visitors through the “encoding” of an experience with their own personal meanings. **Keywords:** cultural tourism, authenticity, tourist experiences and benefits, tourism consumption, industrial heritage. © 1999 Elsevier Science Ltd. All rights reserved.

Résumé: L'affirmation de l'authenticité: la consommation du patrimoine culturel. Cette étude identifie comment les touristes britanniques affirment l'authenticité en visitant des attractions du patrimoine de la culture socio-industrielle. Un sondage de 1.200 touristes nationaux qui visitaient trois grands parcs à thème britanniques a souligné la diversité de leurs perceptions de l'authenticité et a ainsi démontré l'importance des processus empiriques et affectifs dans leur interaction avec le cadre de l'attraction. En particulier, on a identifié trois processus cognitifs distincts: assimilation renforcée, perception cognitive et association rétroactive. On présente la notion de la “perspicacité” comme une caractérisation appropriée de comment l'authenticité culturelle est affirmée par des visiteurs individuels à travers un “encodage” de l'expérience avec leur propre signification personnelle. **Mots-clés:** tourisme culturel, authenticité, expériences et bénéfices du tourisme, consommation du tourisme, patrimoine industriel. © 1999 Elsevier Science Ltd. All rights reserved.

INTRODUCTION

Enculturation is more than the internalization of text and categories; instead it is more a holistic experience, interpersonal, and comprising thoughts, feelings, and emotions (Hastrup and Hervik 1994). The search for the authentic cultural experience has been

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described as the search for “the unspoiled, pristine, genuine, untouched and traditional” (Handler 1986:2), for something, “exceptional in its actuality, and valuable” (Trilling 1972:93). It is ultimately a cultural choice, “to do not only with genuineness and the reliability of face value, but with the interpretation of genuineness and our desire for it” (Spooner 1986:200). Whether in the context of a museum or retail shop, what is presumed to be authentic depends as much on the presented interpretation of the displays as that of the viewer. In Western societies, in which political and cultural processes are generally mediated to the consumer by professionals, particularly great reliance is similarly placed in the interpretation of authenticity to the consumer by professionals (Walsh 1992): a sense of place and of the past is conveyed formally rather than organically. As such, in Western societies, what is and is not authentic is largely the consequence of replicated interpretations which although contested by professionals, are commodified for mass consumption. In the 90s, past lifestyles have been used to suggest authenticity in contrast to the modernism of the 50s and 60s.

At a superficial level, commodification of “pastness” has been described as “retrochic” (Samuel 1994): an emphasis of style, rather than substance, and playing with the idea of period, mixing pastness and presentness. This has alternatively been labeled, “past nowness”, with what happened in earlier as one basis for living now (Fowler 1992), or “creative anachronism”, changing the past to one’s own ends (Lowenthal 1985). Such interpretations derive from a perceived popular confusion as to period or sequence, but rather the structuring of pastness as “a vague ‘then’”, a “time before” (Fowler 1992:6) or “broad-brushed contrasts between ‘now’ and ‘then’, ‘past’ and ‘present’” (Samuel 1994:6).

At a deeper level, commodification of pastness can be interpreted as marking needs for identity, and the finding of the true self through the appropriation of pastness. Self-realization in this sense is the need to escape role-playing, and to be authentic (Handler 1986). As the full development of authenticity, it is expressed as identity, autonomy, individuality, self-development, and self-realization (Berman 1970). It is the affirmation of identity through looking back, as a memory but with the pain removed (Lowenthal 1985). It is not just what is recalled, but through visitation of places with associations of pastness, the creation and reaffirmation of identity is enabled. Identities are thereby created through amassing insights into what is associated with the emergence of a culture, and appropriating these insights is pertinent to the consumer’s own understanding of his or her place in time and space.

In Western societies divorced from their origins through urbanization and population migration, such senses of pride and place have to be created. Museums have a key function here, presenting an authoritative interpretation of the significance of a place through time. Attempts to immerse consumers in the past at period theme parks are but one of the latest means of seeking to reach audiences

for whom written text and cased exhibits are thought unstimulating. At the superficial level this is “retrochic”, actors in period costume talking to late 20th century consumers about events pertinent to the period portrayed. While it can be fun, it can deny history as a process, and present rather a series of synchronous pasts. However, without written interpretations, and often without even labeling, period theme parks require cultural competence on the part of their visitors. For many, this is the stimulation of selective memory or nostalgia, often for anachronisms found in the childhood days of older visitors (Walsh 1992). Their design is a form of “resurrectionism”, as retaining this stimulation requires a progressive updating of period, thereby reconstructing that which is important in historical narrative by reference to what is recent (Samuel 1994).

Visitors to period theme parks may thus be dismissed as fun seekers with cultural capital sufficient to interpret what they are viewing, but capital often gained organically and stimulated as memories by the presentation of the parks. To do so ignores the deeper level the commodification of pastness provides for. The search for identity and familiarity in the past provides meaningful leisure to some visitors, aids national cohesion through the communal re-affirmation of popular likeness provided, but also may be built upon to develop critical awareness and a fuller historical understanding beyond then and now categorizations. As Walsh has argued:

The exploration of nostalgia is not necessarily a bad thing; people's emotional attachment to what they remember is of paramount importance. This natural interest in the past should however be used as a kind of preface to a more critical engagement with the past and its links with, or contingency on, the present (Walsh 1992:99).

Critical engagement sets an objective for museums beyond fun or empathy with period. It provides a third level of commodification purpose. It is the principal thesis of this paper that the affirmation of authenticity by period theme parks can be measured at the three levels of commodification, and through the visitor's own thought processes reported to describe empathy and critical engagement. In particular, three distinct thought processes were reportedly described by visitors in the present study: the processes of reinforced assimilation, cognitive perception, and retroactive association. The more superficial use of commodification, fun, it is proposed can be measured through non-thoughtful processes reported. These tests for authenticity are applied to three “19th century” British period theme parks: Blists Hill Open Air Museum (Ironbridge Gorge Museum), Shropshire; the Black Country Museum, West Midlands; and New Lanark World Heritage Village, Lanarkshire. Therefore, the study was restricted to contexts of comparatively lesser cultural distance. However, the varied recency of the periods presented gives some opportunity to comment on historical context.

As period theme parks are explicit constructions, rather than organic survivals, central to their effectiveness is their design. Like all historians, theme park organizers are necessarily selective in what they provide and how they interpret this by context. Both Carr's and Fowler's seminal comments on historians equally pertain to museum curators. "The facts speak only when the historian calls on them: it is he or she who decides to which facts to give the floor, and in what order or context" (Carr 1964:11), and "The past is an intellectual concept" (Fowler 1987:187). The resource which forms the basis of selection in the present case is 19th century British history, or more correctly the period 1815–1914. As representations of popular culture, two of the three period parks (Blists Hill and the Black Country Museum) present largely a simple concept of culture: that of culture as a social category, the "whole" way of life of a people. The two sites aim to recreate the past in contrived village settings with the use of costumed demonstrators on-site and working demonstrations of traditional crafts and industrial processes. They ignore definitions of culture as a goal of perfection or emancipation, as a progressive moral development or as the esoteric symbolism of a society through its collective body of arts or intellectual works (Jenks 1993). The other site, New Lanark, differs in design as some reference is also made to these other concepts, through the founder's (Robert Owen) socialist beliefs. Further it differs in being built around the remnants on-site of the original New Lanark, whereas the other two sites are largely modern constructions using buildings imported from nearby. Furthermore, New Lanark operates as a living community not just a museum, and in comparison to using live demonstrations, it offers, among other exhibits, a unique Disney-style dark ride to tell the story of past life and working conditions.

The site designers reconcile the contradiction between wholeness and selectivity implicitly rather than explicitly to visitors. An awareness of period, rather than of the anachronistic use of artifacts is needed to identify emphasis and submissions. Likewise, alternative interpretations are not explicitly offered at the parks. As populist attractions, they commemorate collective memory, into which visitors' personal memories are slotted (Connerton 1989). The collective memory presented is one of culture as a context-dependent semiotic system, of accumulated shared symbols representative of, and significant within, the communities presented (Jenks 1993). As such the sites are celebratory, and not simply a legacy of habits and artifacts. Celebration is an interpretation of historical circumstance particular to place and time, implying the capacities to transform and create as processes in this interpretation. Therefore, the three sites may be seen simultaneously as both public symbols and private spaces.

As public symbols they potentially develop, maintain, and dissolve private moods, attitudes, and sentiments. In this way, "private" experiences may be interspersed as part of an ongoing and wider cultural construction (Geertz 1993). As such, consumers have no

privacy, and authenticity is exclusively culturally determined. Formations of particular conceptions of pleasure, in the present case, insight and familiarity through remembering, are likewise culturally determined in such a view (Formations Editorial Collective 1983). In its extreme form, this is the McDonaldization of culture: efficiency, calculability, standardization, predictability, and control (Ritzer 1993) in product delivery and consumer experience. Period parks, as educational charities, do not seek such an objective, which might be termed the irrationality of rationality. A more varied response is sought, involving the consumer in the production of their experience. Indeed, the parks actively promote what they offer as an "immersive" or involving experience of the past. This less deterministic view is that consumers add personal meaning to the public symbolism consumed, and gain authenticity diversely. The present study also explores how far personal meaning is added by visitors.

The raw material, British 19th century history, upon which the three parks are based, is itself a period of change, both in technology and ideas (Rowbotham 1990). Retrospectively, the Victorian period is seen as a unity through the long period of monarchy of its namesake. For contemporaries, the Victorian age was perceived as one of transition, of reconstruction (Houghton 1957). In essence, the "period" retrospectively is identified in terms of political history, very much as Tudor (and Elizabethan) and Jacobean England are also defined. Implicit in continuity is stability rather than change, an interpretation only New Lanark seeks to challenge through its interpretation, using its "dark ride" to convey information on immigration and its reasons. Otherwise, the contradiction implicit in celebrating an era of achievement (successful change), as if it were one of stability, is not addressed.

Celebration is also of success, rather than of Victorian pessimism, the later resultant of contemporary fear of complexity, of social forces out of control, and the failure of the idea of the inevitability of progress to lead to a predetermined end (Von Arx 1985). The "High Victorian period" of the 1890s, the era presented in the two English sites (Blists Hill and the Black Country Museum), was also an era of a mood of doubt (Harrison 1990). As well as an era of success, as a period of transition the 19th century was one of anxieties. Fear of revolution on the part of the property owning classes, of socialism as undermining morality, of unemployment, and of failure and of imperfection, doubt, isolation, loneliness and nostalgia in reaction to new relationships which were without relatedness (Houghton 1957). By commentators as unlike as Marx and Carlyle, the machine was viewed as devouring the "natural" character of humankind, and culture as becoming the mediation between "man" and machine, rather than as before between "man" and nature (Jenks 1993). Similar imagery pertained to towns devouring the landscape (Thompson 1985).

Expressed in built form, the reaction to industrialization can be seen in the Gothic revival (Reed 1990). In art, it is represented by the antithesis of machine and tree.

Since the Romantic era, the symbolic antithesis of Machine and Tree has served to define the essential polarities and alternatives of modern life. The Machine is understood to symbolize everything that is rigid, compulsive, extremely determined or imposed, deadening or dead; the Tree represents all man's capacity for life, freedom, spontaneity, expressiveness, growth, self-development—in our terms, authenticity (Berman 1970:163).

The extent to which the fears of contemporaries, as well as the successes of their era, are presented is a further test of authenticity which can be applied to the three period parks. Historical interpretations of British 19th century socioeconomic developments have emphasized, among other things, concepts of plentitude, progress, self interest and self help, social order, the creed of an elect people, evangelicalism, gender differentiation and domesticity, and municipal collectivism as responses to market failure. These eight concepts offer criteria by which the authenticity of the experience facilitated by the period parks may be measured for its "completeness". Such concepts are important given that the historical settings of period theme parks are presented as authentic, and that they should offer visitors a chance to appreciate some aspect of past society or culture (Moscardo and Pearce 1986).

Plentitude refers to the widening of the range of everyday things experienced by working and particularly middle class households in, 19th century Britain (Briggs 1988): a level of material prosperity previously unheard of for many. These objects were gathered in Victorian homes, particularly those of the middle classes. Progress refers to the near universal faith of the period in the unlimited progress science seemed to offer (Harrison 1990; Young 1936), a certainty that truth existed to be discovered, and that through the accumulation of knowledge disputes could be resolved (Carr 1964; Houghton 1957). This was the assumption that the progress of science must also mean the progress of civilization, and the making of a population both moral and happy. Self interest and self help refer both to individuals' roles and the perceived best interests of society generally. This is the certainty of the period that the economy was regulated by the laws of supply and demand, and that its mainstay was the motive for profit; that the pursuit of self interest would result in the general good (Harrison 1990). The *laissez faire* ("leave alone") principle pertained, emphasizing industrialization, competition, self-help, private enterprise and private property which was glorified as the supreme virtue, a gospel. The commercial spirit led to respectability through money, the achievement of salvation through work and success (Houghton 1957). As such, through this ideology, the English working class made itself in the century as much as it was made (Gregory 1984). Appropriate effort was both mental and physical (Briggs 1990).

Social order refers to the ordering of the working classes, from a genuinely casual labor force at the bottom of the hierarchy, through the unskilled, the skilled and the lower middle class of clerks and shopkeepers (Lawton and Pooley 1992). The creed of an elect people

was an enhancement of the nationalism found throughout Europe of the period. In art, "Attention was directed to the land of the people, to the peasantry and its tasks, and to documentation of its way of life in all its mundane forms. The local and familiar became national and significant" (Osborne 1992:232). This, in itself, was a search for the authentic by artists. France had made Britain insular at the outset of the century, and by its end this insularness was the basis of British imperialism, popular creed of romance and adventure (Springhall 1986; Young 1936). Evangelicalism refers to the set of religious beliefs as rules of behavior towards a "good" life, and the "eternal microscope" which was perceived as penetrating the recesses of the heart and the details of daily life, giving every action its value in this world and consequence in the next (Harrison 1990; Young 1936). The moral authority of the Church was transferred to the home through the master (husband).

Gender differentiation and domesticity refers to the subject role of women, and the sacredness of home life. The correct place for women was perceived of as being in the home, and women were excluded from political or economic power. This was the idyll of the "virtuous wife" and "happy home", the wife submissive and obedient to her master (husband) (Wolff and Arscott 1990). At the extreme this led to "woman worship" in the Romantic tradition, and a view that marriage could be a form of desecration of female purity for the genteel (Houghton 1957). Home life, to which a wife was pivotal, was perceived as sacred, peaceful and ordered.

Finally, municipal collectivism as a response to market failure, shows the beginnings of a recognition that the certainties of the period were not such. It was the recognition that *laissez faire* could not deliver communal goods such as parks, water and sewage (Fraser 1990). In the absence of the benevolence of individuals, cities sought to provide these goods.

To a contemporary British audience many of these concepts may seem morally reprehensible, amusing, or at least quaint, for socio-economic changes of the 20th century have challenged and replaced almost all of these certainties, with the exception of plentitude. Therefore, the challenge for period parks representing the 19th century is to convey these ideals convincingly as "certainties" if empathy with the period is to be achieved. This implies particular challenges for reflexivity due to the ideological gulf between present and past.

AFFIRMING AUTHENTICITY

The study attempted three main objectives. First, it sought to test for authenticity through definition of the experiences and benefits reported by tourists visiting the three period theme parks used as case studies for the project. In particular, the study sought to appraise how far the eight emphases (including the fears, successes and instability of the period) identified as pertinent to contemporary 19th century history are understood when visiting three socio-

industrial period theme parks in Great Britain. In this way, the “completeness” of the presentations experienced by visitors is reviewed. Second, the study sought to demonstrate that authenticity is affirmed by visitors through three distinct psychological processes of reinforced assimilation, cognitive perception, and retroactive association, effecting empathy and critical engagement. Third, the study sought to appraise how far personal meanings are part of the reported experience in order to identify whether the experiences of authenticity gained among visitors were diverse.

Study Method

A two-stage approach to data collection was used. In the summer of 1994, 40 semi-structured one-to-one interviews were conducted with adult domestic tourists visiting each of the three attractions to explore their experiences and benefits in their own words. These were explored using a 15–20 minute interview using the principles of “laddering” advocated in marketing (Reynolds and Gutman 1988). In this way, a context-specific and inductive profile of individuals’ thoughts and emotions was defined. Visitors were, in particular, asked to reflect upon, and describe, what sort(s) of experience(s) or benefit(s) the attraction had provided them with, what thoughts or feelings had come to mind, or in what ways they had responded to particular exhibits, and *why* those experiences or benefits were important to them. The second stage of data collection involved testing the generality of selected dimensions derived from the previous semi-structured interviews. To this end, the categories of reported beneficial experiences were incorporated as opinion items into a structured interview schedule, and tested on a sample of 1,200 adult tourists. At each of the three attractions, 400 domestic tourists were interviewed throughout the summer and supporting “shoulder” seasons of 1995.

Following piloting of the structured survey, it was deemed inappropriate to adopt seven-point Likert scales as used in much North American leisure behavior research (Manfredo and Larson 1993). Respondents found the seven-point scales difficult to use, which may reflect cultural differences between British and American respondents (Prentice, Witt and Hamer 1998). Instead, a less discriminating three point hierarchical rating was adopted whereby visitors were asked to identify, for example, which thoughts and emotions they had experienced during their visit (identified from a list), and which they had “most deeply” thought about or “most strongly” felt. In this respect, the adoption of three-point ordinal scales limited analysis of the data to non-parametric tests; principally, two sample Chi-square analysis to test for contingency. Results from both the stages of data collection are employed in this paper to show how tourists affirm authenticity, thus drawing both upon the “thick” description derived from the qualitative surveys undertaken and the generality derived from the structured survey.

“Insightful” Tourists

The scaled experiences (thoughts and emotions) of tourists visiting the three survey attractions are summarized in Tables 1 and 2 and are shown as those thoughts or emotions deeply thought about, and those otherwise thought about by tourists at each attraction. These thoughts and emotions were found to relate primarily to insight into past overall lifestyle, past industrial processes and experiences of nostalgia or personal memories. However, as discussed later, these experiences were not found to relate to the key emphases (historical accuracy) of century British society. However, the nature of the experiences gained did suggest that many visitors

Table 1. Insightful Process: Thoughts Experienced by Tourists^{a,b}

Experiences (thoughts)	Blists Hill		Black Country Museum		New Lanark		Significant differences between sites		
	Thought deeply about (%)	Otherwise thought about (%)	Thought deeply about (%)	Otherwise thought about (%)	Thought deeply about (%)	Otherwise thought about (%)	Chi- square =	Significant at:	Cramer's =
Past Overall Lifestyle									
What people's lives were like in the past	35.0	24.8	37.8	27.3	41.3	32.0	16.83785	0.00208	0.08376
The hardships endured in past life	45.0	32.0	55.5	23.3	41.0	30.5	20.36230	0.00042	0.09211
The standards of present day life	13.5	30.8	19.3	31.0	13.0	35.0	—	—	—
Comparisons between life then and now	30.8	35.0	37.5	27.5	32.8	34.3	—	—	—
Thoughts about the future	3.3	19.3	2.0	16.8	2.5	14.0	—	—	—
The inspiration of Robert Owen	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	49.5	18.0	n/a	n/a	n/a
Past Industrial Processes									
The conditions in which people had to work	25.3	39.8	28.5	42.8	21.5	41.8	—	—	—
How hard people had to work	23.0	35.8	26.5	40.0	19.0	38.8	10.63943	0.03093	0.06658
How skilled people were	11.0	41.5	5.0	39.3	4.8	29.8	34.47656	0.00001	0.11986
Health related issues of the work	6.3	36.8	6.0	37.3	6.5	37.5	—	—	—
How technology has changed	17.8	37.0	11.5	46.0	12.3	39.3	12.63068	0.01323	0.07255
The significance of the industrial revolution	5.8	25.5	3.3	30.5	5.8	27.8	—	—	—
Nostalgia/Personal Memories									
Relived memories	22.8	20.3	33.0	17.5	20.3	18.8	20.10337	0.00048	0.09152
Could relate to a lot of things	13.3	26.0	21.5	22.8	16.0	23.5	10.38304	0.03445	0.06577
Thought about ancestors	10.0	23.5	15.5	25.5	8.0	23.8	14.18869	0.00672	0.07689
Everything seemed realistic or authentic	11.3	26.8	20.3	28.0	14.5	24.3	16.42169	0.00250	0.08272

^aNote: If a respondent mentioned more than one thought, all thoughts are recorded in the above list, therefore $N > 400$ for any site.

^bSignificance levels of Two Sample Chi-square coefficients are shown where these are < 0.05 .

Table 2. Insightful Process: Emotions Experienced by Tourists Visiting the Parks^{a,b}

Experiences (emotions)	Blists Hill		Black Country Museum		New Lanark		Significant differences between sites		
	Strongly felt (%)	Otherwise felt (%)	Strongly felt (%)	Otherwise felt (%)	Strongly felt (%)	Otherwise felt (%)	Chi- square =	Significant at:	Cramer's =
Past Overall Lifestyle									
Enlightened about the lifestyles of people in the past	15.3	13.8	17.8	12.5	21.5	15.5	—	—	—
Surprise at people used to live	2.8	7.0	4.8	4.8	3.5	6.0	—	—	—
Amazement/astonishment with the living and working conditions	6.5	15.5	4.8	10.5	4.8	9.8	—	—	—
Impressed with how good the living conditions were	1.3	5.8	1.5	5.8	15.5	16.3	138.36363	0.00001	0.24011
How bad the conditions must have been	26.0	24.8	24.3	21.0	10.5	19.0	48.35810	0.00001	0.14195
A sense of fear from the living and working conditions	3.0	13.5	5.5	10.3	2.3	8.8	11.65051	0.02015	0.06967
Sympathy for the people who had to live and work in those conditions	26.0	34.0	37.5	22.5	34.0	24.3	20.16684	0.00046	0.09167
Appreciative of today's quality of life	37.8	21.5	46.0	15.3	45.8	18.3	—	—	—
Past Industrial Processes									
Fascination with past industrial processes	27.0	23.0	19.5	15.3	14.8	19.3	32.01099	0.00001	0.11549
Impressed with the technical achievements shown	17.3	21.8	11.8	17.5	18.5	18.8	11.82412	0.01871	0.07019
Nostalgia									
Nostalgia or yearning for the past	8.0	11.3	9.0	13.0	5.5	7.3	12.28693	0.01534	0.07155

^aNote: If a respondent mentioned more than one emotion, all emotions are recorded in the above list, therefore $N > 400$ for any site.

^bSignificance levels of Two Sample Chi-square coefficients are shown where these are < 0.05 .

were both “mindful” during their visit: that they were sensitive to content and drawing on novel distinctions (Moscardo 1996) and that the experiences were also affective and associative in nature. The insightful and affective nature of the experiences reported illustrates that visitors affirmed authenticity through dimensions of both empathy and critical engagement in relation to the past, as reported through instances of feeling, for example, “a deep sense of fear” and “sympathy for the people”. Furthermore, the experiences were perceived by visitors to be beneficial in terms of having gained insight into something new, having enjoyed reliving memories, from being made appreciative of their present lives, or from having had fun (Table 3). Such appreciation and insight into the past is characteristic of an authentic experience (MacCannell 1973) and serves to

Table 3. Insightful Outcomes: Benefits Gained by Tourists Visiting the Parks^{a,b}

Benefits Gained	Blists Hill		Black Country Museum		New Lanark		Significant differences between sites		
	Most important %	Otherwise gained %	Most important %	Otherwise gained %	Most important %	Otherwise gained %	Chi-square =	Significant at:	Cramer's =
Cognitive									
Had an insight into how people used to work	17.8	48.5	18.3	44.0	22.0	44.5	—	—	—
Had an insight into how people used to live	17.8	50.3	19.0	44.0	22.3	43.0	—	—	—
Learnt about industrial processes	19.3	33.8	10.3	27.0	10.0	25.3	35.49551	0.00001	0.12161
Learnt about social history	13.0	38.3	11.5	30.3	18.8	32.5	16.80736	0.00211	0.08368
Been able to show children how people used to live	7.0	9.0	17.3	5.3	13.3	6.0	22.79311	0.00014	0.09745
Retroactive									
Enjoyed reliving memories	19.8	16.5	28.8	17.8	15.5	15.8	25.45245	0.00004	0.10298
Shared memories or life experiences with others	9.8	14.8	20.5	8.8	9.3	10.5	33.65562	0.00001	0.11842
Reinforced									
Drawn comparisons between life then and now	36.8	35.0	42.3	28.8	31.3	32.8	13.77967	0.00803	0.07577
Feel grateful that you live now and not then	39.3	23.5	37.8	8.3	38.3	25.0	—	—	—
Non-thoughtful									
Had fun	12.3	47.8	14.0	45.0	11.3	38.5	11.20571	0.02435	0.06833
Been entertained	7.0	42.3	11.5	42.5	7.3	29.5	29.48104	0.00001	0.11083
Spent time with family or friends	5.8	26.5	4.5	35.3	5.5	26.0	10.61036	0.03131	0.06649
Spent time in pleasant surroundings	7.8	51.3	3.5	42.5	29.3	40.8	75.86716	0.00001	0.17780

^a Note: If a respondent mentioned more than one benefit, all benefits are recorded in the above list, therefore $N > 400$ for any site.

^b Significance levels of Two Sample Chi-square coefficients are shown where these are < 0.05 .

re-affirm an individual's cultural "center", or, the locus of meaning within one's world (Cohen 1979).

Despite visitors to the three period theme parks describing the attainment of empathy and insight into the past, the emphases of 19th century Britain, as represented by the eight historical concepts discussed earlier, were not a main feature of the contrived experience of the three sites. Instead, in describing their overall experiences gained, some tourists reported a more "rosy" view of the past in relation to reminiscences of their own histories, memories, or nostalgia. In this way, the qualitative research showed that past society was described, potentially "re-defined", by a significant minority of visitors as "the good old days", "good times", "better previous days", "the time of our childhood" and "of fond memories". Thus, through assimilation of the experience by some visi-

tors into something more familiar and personal, many of the prominent fears of 19th century British society were not evident. Conversely, however, other visitors saw the period in very negative terms using adjectives such as “horrific”, “a hard life” and “terrible conditions” to describe their experience of the past as portrayed at the three sites.

Evidence of the experience of progress as a 19th century feature was in particular reportedly noted by visitors at New Lanark in relation to the technical skill and social achievements which were made during the village’s history, especially in relation to the provision of welfare for the working class. The significance of the industrial revolution and insight into “industrial progress” was a key insight gained by visitors to Blists Hill, and mining life was a key feature of their perception at the Black Country Museum. Thus, the creed of an elect people was somewhat evident at all three sites in their portrayal of ordinary working class lives at the turn of the century. To some extent, the concepts of self-interest and self help and social order were also evident in visitors’ reported perceptions of the period experienced. For example, visitors’ comments included description of how “you only had a good life if you were rich”, but that there was seemingly “a greater sense of community then”, “a bustling close community where they helped each other”, “people overcame their troubles”, and “people didn’t want for much then”, although respondents did perceive life today to be much “easier”. On the whole, however, reference to concepts such as plentitude, evangelicalism, gender differentiation and domesticity, and municipal collectivism were not widely evident in the reported experiences of visitors to the three sites.

The beneficial experiences reported by respondents were defined by three characteristic psychological processes using terms adapted from learning theory (Gazda and Corsini 1980). In particular, the three processes described below are founded on the Gestalt view of learning (Wertheimer 1980): all learning or perception is insightful and insight is gained as a process whereby perception is assimilated with personal experience. This view of learning has, in the field of human education, replaced a passive process (stimulus/response) with a lively, in depth one. The three distinct processes are used here to illustrate how personal meaning was added to visitors’ reported experiences of each site. The first distinct one identified, that of reinforced assimilation, represents the psychological process whereby new ideas or insights are gained through comparing the experience with the existing content of the mind; in this case, comparisons between past and present lifestyles. The second, that of cognitive perception, represents the reported acknowledgement of improved comprehension or new insights or additional information gained. The third process, retroactive association, represents the action whereby a new experience is changed or assimilated into a familiar experience, or in this case, drawing personal meaning through nostalgic reflection on past personal experiences or memories.

While the sorts of experiences reported by visitors may not be surprising considering the similar content of what is presented at the three period theme parks, the process whereby historical information becomes assimilated into personal relevance means that individual visitors in effect gain diverse experiences of authenticity. If this view is correct, there is a need for heritage attraction managers to acknowledge the potential influence of individual psychology on the consumption of cultural tourism encounters. In effect, attraction settings become an interactive encounter, or “meaningful environment” (Wertheimer 1980); that is, salient visitor characteristics such as motivation and past experience interact with perceived attraction setting factors or attributes. As such, visitors “encode” the information attained in ways that are personally meaningful. Therefore, the interpreter cannot assume that manipulations of the attraction setting along the dimensions that he or she regards as important will determine performance because individuals may have encoded the information along some other dimension, such as when personal memory is added.

Process of Reinforced Assimilation. Reflection on the past and its comparison with present lifestyles was found to be a prominent experience reported by respondents at the three British period theme parks. Indeed, of the 1,200 tourists interviewed at the three attractions during the quantitative research, 36.8% of the sample overall perceived that the most important benefit they had gained was from having made, or reflected on, comparisons between “life then and now”, and a further 32.2% reported this benefit as being otherwise important. Further, 22.3% of the tourists interviewed also stated that they had benefited from having felt grateful that they lived now and not then, and 38.4% agreed that this was the most important benefit they had gained from their visit. In describing their empathy with the past, they recognized that “life was different then”, realized “the advantages of living today” and appreciated “what we’ve got now—things we take for granted”.

When asked about the quality of specific thoughts and emotions which they had experienced during their visit, 47.2% of all respondents reported that they had thought deeply about the hardships endured in past life (as presented at the sites), and a further 28.6% had otherwise thought about these hardships. Significant minorities of tourists at each site also reported having deeply thought about what people’s lives were like in the past, the conditions in which people had to work then, how hard people had to work and some had felt a strong sense of sympathy for the people who had to live and work in the conditions portrayed at each attraction (Tables 1 and 2). Their perceptions of life in the past included descriptions of how “life then was hard, grueling and torturous” and reported feelings of “disbelief”, “amazement”, “astonishment”, “realization”, “horror”, and “fear” related to the lifestyles presented in the attractions. Recognition of the hardships endured in past lifestyles and the comparison with today’s standards of living was frequently

found to have made respondents feel more appreciative of their present lives, thus “reinforcing” their identity and satisfaction with present lifestyle (Table 2). The process of reinforced assimilation represents the process whereby, during the comparisons of past and present lifestyles, visitors seemingly incorporated new ideas or insights (authenticity) with their existing knowledge and in a personal subjective manner. In other words, there was some evidence to show that visitors encoded new information in a way that was more personally meaningful to them. This is illustrated in the following quote by one respondent interviewed at New Lanark during the preliminary qualitative research:

I would say I've gained an insight into the past. It makes you reflect upon life then and today, and it made me think about what it would've been like for my child if he had been living then; he would have started work at ten years of age; to think of the working machinery; that it must have been a terrifying place with all those machines going at once; and the health-related issues. We take things like medical help and education so much for granted these days. It really makes you think about what your children would miss if they'd been living then; you really get an understanding of what hard work it was ... and also how hard it must have been for our grandparents; what a tough life they must have had; my granny worked in a mill. No, I'm glad I'm living now. I feel more appreciative of my life today and relief to be in the life of the future (a 41–50 year old female respondent).

In this respect, the experience of cultural authenticity gained is that which is assimilated through previous personal knowledge and in relation to that which is personally significant.

Process of Cognitive Perception. This cognitive perception process represents the reported attainment of new insights or information, or improved comprehension as a result of the experience gained. Here the new insights gained are not assimilated with personal experience or relevance and the cultural experience gained is unfamiliar. A substantial minority (45.8%) of all the tourists interviewed during the quantitative research at the three attractions reported that they had gained an understanding of how people lived in the past; and a further, 19.7% stated that this understanding was the most important benefit gained from their visit (Table 3). Moreover, 45.7% reported that they had learned how people used to work, and, 19.3% felt this was the most important thing they had gained. Visitors reported how they had “got increased insight into what life was like from actually seeing things in operation, from absorbing the feelings and emotions” and how “you read about what life was like but actually seeing it and experiencing it makes it much more realistic and thought provoking”.

In contrast to the reported experiences of enhanced understanding into what was presented at the attractions, formal learning about social history and industrial processes was much less frequently cited as an important cognitive benefit during the visit

(Table 3). This finding probably reflects the generalist motivations for visiting such attractions among “incidental” cultural tourists (Prentice 1993). In this way, experiential insight more appropriately defines the nature of cognitive outcomes reported here, rather than factual recall as has generally been the focus of many museum studies. Therefore, the process of cognitive perception is an experiential learning whereby improved comprehension is reported from perceived empathy and critical engagement with the past. In particular, it may involve cognition relating to a topic in which the individual has a particular personal interest. It could be argued that insight (authenticity) is somewhat dependent upon the particular interests and experience of the individual visitor. This process can be illustrated in the following quote taken from an interview undertaken at Blists Hill:

I gained a view of what the world was like then, in very vivid terms; a real feeling of what it was like; it was very authentic. The surprise is the biggest thing. It taught me about a way of life I knew nothing about. I knew about the Industrial Revolution, but not about the life conditions. I feel I've learnt a lot and identified with their hardships. It's remarkable at my age to learn; I suppose we're never too old to learn. It's insight into the past so that we can appreciate it more; otherwise we tend to forget. I was particularly interested to see the industrial and technical side. That's really why I came here. I have a particular fascination with the industrial processes of how things were made. I was surprised at how long it took to make any one thing; it took a great deal of effort and skill (a 41–50 year old male respondent).

Process of Retroactive Association. About one-quarter of the respondents (25.3%) agreed that during their visit they had thought deeply about a past which they could personally remember, and a further 18.8% stated that they had otherwise relived memories. These reported experiences were thus associated with personal experience or meaning. In this way, a new experience (authenticity) is made familiar by retroflective thinking; and so are their descriptions of empathy and critical engagement with the past. Objects become imbued with personal meaning and histories. In particular, their memories and personal histories were found to be stimulated by certain objects in the museum buildings, such as tin baths, clothes mangles, furniture, the open fires, ornaments, old-fashioned sweets and certain tools and industrial equipment.

Of the tourists interviewed during the quantitative research, 21.3% reported that the most important benefit they had gained from their visit stemmed from the enjoyment of reliving personal memories, and a further 16.7% felt this was an otherwise important benefit. Indeed, tourists reported how the visit “gave me a sort of nostalgia feeling; I enjoyed reminiscing about my childhood”, “your memory suddenly clicks back to things our grandparents and probably their grandparents had”, “it was an insight into something I'd forgotten about, and therefore I'm glad I came”, and, “As you get

older, you live more on memories; what you had, you miss". In this way, the experience of authenticity gained by visitors was associated directly within the personal memories and meanings of individuals. Therefore, the realities or emphases of 19th century British history become experienced as nostalgia, or a "rosy" redefined picture of the past. The process of retroactive association is illustrated in the following quote in which the respondent described her experience at the Black Country Museum:

Nostalgia ... I grew up living with my grandmother in a cottage not far from here, so I remember what it was like. I can remember being bathed in a tin tub; I remember the mangle and the grate, and my granny cooking fresh bread and home made jam ... I picked out things I could remember. I sat in the school classroom and it felt so realistic; the school had the same desks as we used to have in our school; I couldn't do all the sums on the board, though. A little girl skipping in the yard brought back incredible memories; fond memories. It takes you back to your childhood; it reminds you of a part of your life that you'd forgotten about. I would definitely say I've shared my memories today, even with complete strangers (a 51–60 year old female).

A minority of respondents (11.3%) interviewed during the quantitative research also felt that they had benefited from having shared memories or life experiences with others, of whom most (13.2%) overall reported that this was the most important benefit they had gained during their visit. Some tourists commented that they felt they had "passed on their experiences", or had "relived memories and I had enjoyed being able to talk about my experiences with other people". One respondent at Blists Hill described how her granddaughter was "too young to remember what it used to be like, but we'll talk to her about it later on; we'll remind her when she's taking things for granted". In this way, it can be postulated that the beneficial experiences being gained on-site by tourists are potentially beneficial to others as well as potentially longer lasting and thereby spatially divorced from the site, as advocated elsewhere (Bruns, Driver, Lee, Anderson and Brown 1994).

Non-Thoughtful Process. Benefits from having experienced "fun" and having "been entertained" were also cited by tourists visiting the three attractions, in addition to the thought processes outlined above (Table 3). For example, 43.8% of them stated that they had benefited from having had fun during their visit, and 12.5% reported this to have been the most important benefit they had gained. In addition, 38.1% reported that they had enjoyed from having been entertained, although only 8.6% stated this as the most important benefit from their visit.

The most important gain for a minority of tourists (16.8%) was the opportunity of having spent time in pleasant surroundings, with a further 44.8% indicating this as otherwise important. Another advantage reported by a minority of tourists at each of the three sites was of having spent time with family and friends (Table 3). These

benefits highlight the more hedonic gains derived from being at the three attractions, whereby visiting is an end in itself rather than a means to an end. Further, the reported outcomes of visitors' experiences of authenticity in this regard are more superficial in nature.

Site Differences

Table 3 shows how the three attractions differed in terms of the benefits reported by tourists during their visit, although these differences were slight as evidenced by the small Cramer's V statistics. Differences were also found in relation to the emotions reportedly experienced by tourists at the three sites (Table 2). In particular, the comparison highlights slight differences in the period(s) and context portrayed at the sites, differences in social message (site ideology), and effects of differences in the physical settings of each site. However, on the whole, the beneficial experiences reported were consistent across the three attractions, indicating the generality of insightfulness as a characterization of what was experienced. Of the differences noted, however, more tourists at Blists Hill felt that they had benefited from having learned about industrial processes than tourists at the Black Country Museum and New Lanark. Of the tourists interviewed at Blists Hill, for instance, 19.3% stated that having learnt about industrial processes was the most important benefit, and a further 33.8% stated that this was an otherwise important result. The corresponding percentages for the Black Country Museum and New Lanark were 10.3% and 10.0% of tourists who indicated that this was the most important advantage, and 27.0% and 25.3% stated that benefit as otherwise important. This finding may be related to the fact that slightly more tourists at Blists Hill were found to be visiting with a specific interest in industrial history or archaeology, than those at the other two sites, and thus may have given more attention to the industrial exhibits.

The differences noted in Table 3 also show that more tourists at the Black Country Museum were found to have rated having relived memories and having shared the same with others as important benefits gained from their visit. In particular, 28.8% of tourists at the Black Country Museum had indicated the enjoyment of reliving memories as the most important gain, compared to 19.8% at Blists Hill and 15.5% at New Lanark. Similarly, 20.5% at the Black Country Museum reported having shared memories with others as being the most important benefit, compared to only 9.8% at Blists Hill and 9.3% at New Lanark. This difference highlights a potentially stronger nostalgia context present at the Black Country Museum, possibly because of the later period portrayed (that is, up to the early 20th century, compared to portrayals of the, 19th century at Blists Hill and the late 18th to early 19th century at New Lanark). With the exception of the Black Country Museum, memories could only have pertained to anachronisms of the periods portrayed. Indeed, Baker and Kennedy (1994) have similarly identified

the nature of a nostalgia emotion as “context specific”. In the present case, the Black Country Museum in comparison to the other sites gives some support to the hypothesized affect of context familiarity on the quality of visitors’ experiences.

Of the tourists interviewed at New Lanark, 16.3% stated that they had felt impressed by how good the living conditions presented were, and 15.5% more had felt strongly impressed. In comparison, only 5.8% of tourists at Blists Hill and the Black Country Museum had felt impressed with the living conditions presented, with 1.3% and 1.5%, respectively, having felt strongly impressed. Due to New Lanark’s strong social message through its site interpretation, it was unsurprising that fewer tourists at New Lanark (10.5%) were found to have experienced a strong feeling of how bad the conditions must have been in the past compared to 26.0% at Blists Hill and 24.3% at the Black Country Museum. Fewer at New Lanark also reported having thought about how skilled people were in the past in comparison to visitors at the other two sites, possibly as there are fewer skills being demonstrated at New Lanark as its interpretation focuses on a single industry (Table 1). In contrast, more tourists at New Lanark (29.3%) were found to have reported that spending time in pleasant surroundings was the most important gain, in comparison to those visiting Blists Hill (7.8%) and the Black Country Museum (13.5%). This difference may be attributed to New Lanark being enjoyed for the layout of the village, its picturesque “rural” setting and buildings.

Furthermore, fewer tourists at New Lanark felt that they had benefited from having been entertained during their visit. For instance, 29.5% interviewed at New Lanark felt that they had enjoyed this, compared to 42.3% at Blists Hill and 42.5% at the Black Country Museum. This difference may be result from the strong social message delivered by the interpretative media at New Lanark, or of the lack of perceived “activity” happening in the village at New Lanark, in contrast to the presence of costumed demonstrators and wider range of industrial or craft processes being shown at the other two sites (Beeho and Prentice 1997). In contrast, several beneficial experiences were found to be consistent across the three sites, including those of understanding of how people used to live and work, enlightenment about past lifestyles, and feeling grateful that one lives now and not then (Tables 1, 2 and 3). These consistencies highlight the generic nature of insightfulness attained from visiting.

Added Insight

The mechanism by which authenticity is sought has been suggested as the search for insight. The core product of tourism may be defined as the experience(s) facilitated for tourists (Goodall 1993) consumed out of a desire for novelty, socialization, prestige, relaxation, intellectual enrichment, enhanced togetherness, regression to adolescent behavior (Crompton 1979; Crompton and

McKay 1997) or other objectives. Due to the relatively short time spent by cultural tourists at built attractions demands are often to “show and know” the past, rather than to be amazed or entertained. From such a perspective, attractions are in essence experiential products facilitating feelings, emotions, imagination and knowledge; quite literally constructions for experience. Contemporary museum design seeks to take the visitor’s imagination from the observation of artifacts to the comprehension of the processes making it of significance (Schouten and Houtgraaf 1995). However, the settings produced constitute only part of the production process. Attractions can be viewed, in effect, as social spaces which allow for meanings to be assigned, and incorporate the dynamic social relations of the setting and the varied experiences which imbue it with meaning for the people who interact within that setting (Wearing and Wearing 1996).

From this perspective, each tourist will arrive at a cultural attraction with his or her own agendas, contexts or “cultural imaginings” (Macdonald 1992) based on personal interests, previous experience, and knowledge. Such tourists will range from those having their primary intent a motivation to visit the attraction, through those for whom their visit is incidental to their vacation, to those who have “accidentally” visited (Hughes 1987, 1996). For the former in particular, their visit is unlikely just to be a search for new experiences or insights, but part of their general lifestyles, even to their employment in the cultural sector (Richards 1996). Such personal factors will ultimately tailor the experiences people enjoy or appreciate and how they react to attraction settings. In this respect, tourists at heritage attractions assist in the production of their own experiences through their imaginations, emotions, and thought processes, and imbue objects in the setting provided with their own personal meanings. Consequently, individual tourists may interpret the context provided at cultural attractions in an entirely different way from what was intended, such as through memory prompts rather than educational insight (Beeho and Prentice 1995). Experiences of authenticity are thus also likely to be diverse.

This paper has shown that tourists at heritage attractions can be seen as “mindful” in how they seek authenticity in response to the context provided. Mindfulness is essentially a cognitive concept, referring to “visitors who are active, interested, questioning and capable of reassessing the way they view the world” (Moscardo 1996:382). The tourists surveyed are more than cognitive in their response, however. A broader concept is needed; insightfulness may be defined as both an emotional state of mind in which tourists consciously and emotionally interact with the attraction setting, with their own personal meanings induced and the benefits gained from this process, which is associative and affective, rather than simply cognitive. Here one may contend that to date, too much tourism research has assumed that people are not in “active negotiation with their symbolic environment, but are passively shaped by it” (Mellor 1991:114). In particular, it has been assumed that as

observed behavior in historic places may be similar by diverse tourists, so are their experiences. Implicit in such observations has been a failure to recognize that interaction can be cerebral as well as physical (Claws 1996).

"Insightfulness" is thus founded in the search for authenticity, perception, and insight. It represents what is achieved by tourists from their encounter in terms of the attainment of emotionally-charged and value-laden personal insights and association (here presented as three distinct psychological processes). Therefore, insightfulness recognizes that visitors to an attraction aid in the production of their own experiences of authenticity. Thus, the concept of insightfulness is offered here as going some way toward the replacement of the traditional passive view of authenticity (MacCannell 1973) by a more interactive one. As such, rather than being constructed generically for all tourists, the experience of places and authenticity is distinctly personal and significant to the individual. Furthermore, the concept adds the potential to further one's understanding of tourist behavior through learning theory and to how a cultural tourism experience may be seen as beneficial to the individual in the longer term as well as to society as a whole. Insightful tourism can thereby be applied to understand the longer term value of heritage visiting and can usefully be tested in the recollection phase of the tourist experience (Falk 1988).

CONCLUSION

This paper has shown that insight, derived from enjoyable and mindful or stimulating interaction with the attraction setting, represented a key component of the beneficial experiences reported by many tourists visiting three British period theme parks. Furthermore, the benefits realized by visitors were found to constitute not just new insights into the past, but the reaffirmation of identity through an understanding of a person's place in time and space. The key emphases identified as being pertinent to historical accuracy of British 19th century society were not however a prominent reported feature of the insight gained by visitors. Instead, the findings emphasized that the cultural heritage settings were appreciated most for the personal, familiar, or affective responses generated from the attainment of insight.

Therefore, dimensions of cultural tourism experience which need to be considered include affective as well as cognitive benefits as responses to cultural heritage tourism settings, and a stronger emphasis on the personal dimensions of visiting. Three distinct psychological processes were identified from visitors' reported experiences: reinforced assimilation, cognitive perception, and retroactive association. The evidence of these processes provided some illustration that tourists aid in the production of their own experiences of authenticity through their selective assimilation of information and in their critical engagement with the past. As such, visitors gained diverse experiences of authenticity due to the assimi-

lation of information with that of direct personal meaning or significance.

The processes identified from tourists' reported experiences of an attraction may thus be seen as potentially representing greater importance than the identification of cognitive outcomes of a visit or attention to the reception of historical accuracy. For instance, an understanding of the experiential thought processes and reactions of tourists to their surrounding environment arguably provides a greater insight into the nature of what is actually being derived from visiting, than a concern for whether factual knowledge has been attained. This concurs with studies by Pearce (1984) and Hull (1991) who found that visitors may only recall minimal facts from their visit, but the visit overall has had a strong emotional impact on each individual. The complex nature of the experiences gained further confirms an argument that the behavior of consumers is more sensorily complex and emotion laden than has been reflected in more traditional approaches to marketing research (Hirschman and Holbrook 1982).

The complexity of the way in which heritage tourism encounters are hence imbued with personal meanings presents a potential difficulty for cultural interpreters trying to achieve fuller historical understanding. The contention here is that many tourism studies to date have neglected to address this issue. In particular, perspectives in authenticity have not been interactive in their approach. The notion of insightfulness presented in this paper is an attempt to facilitate an understanding of cultural tourists as itinerant "encoders" of historical and cultural information and experiences, although one that requires further empirical testing. In this alternative view, insight is gained from heritage settings, whether contrived or real, and that information is assimilated by tourists and personal meaning added, thus making tourists active players in the production of their own "meaningful environment" and their own experiences of authenticity. ■

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