

THE EFFECTS OF GLOBALIZED AUTHENTICITY ON SOUVENIR

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ABSTRACT. It is common to find so-called “local souvenirs” with labeling indicating a foreign manufacturer. A conceptual framework is advanced for exploring the impact of globalized authenticity on souvenir purchasing. This study suggests that different types of tourists choose different levels of authenticity for different kinds of souvenirs. When purchasing a cultural souvenir, a pleasure-seeking tourist will adopt a conception of globalized authenticity. However, a serious tourist will buy cultural souvenirs with an eye toward objective authenticity.

Keywords: Authenticity; Pleasure-seeking Tourist; Souvenir

1. Introduction. The “made-in-Indonesia” souvenir was challenged for disservice against Taiwan’s image to Chinese tourists. Does inauthentic souvenir matter? Do inauthentic souvenirs affect Chinese tourist experience in Taiwan? The answer relies on the concept of authenticity and modes of tourist. Authenticity has been a controversial issue in tourism literature (Wang, 1999; Pearce and Moscardo, 1986). There are two different streams of views on authenticity: one emphasizes on authenticity in tourism while the other regard it unfavorably.

One stream of works centered on the importance of authenticity. It has long been hold that tourist quest for authentic experiences and places especially in heritage tourism (Timothy & Boyd, 2002). Most tourists seek indigenous people for native living style in real place and in real history. Some visitors such as pilgrim are extremely concerned for authentic sites and rituals (Errington & Gwertz, 1989). Authenticity is a critical issue in heritage tourism and a determinant factor to influence tourist choice of destination (Moscardo & Pearce, 1986). The perception of real experience could affect tourist satisfaction (Moscardo & Pearce, 1986). To reflect the need of authenticity for tourist, tour operators and marketers starts to use “real”, “authentic” and “genuine” in their text (Timothy & Boyd, 2002).

But, another stream of work doubts about the existence of authenticity. Tourism was thought of as a superficial, peripheral, and trivial activity to the concerns of modern society (Boorsin, 1964). Seeking for authentic experience for tourist was ignored and overlooked by some sociological elitists such as Boorstin and MacCannell. By examining mass tourism, Boorstin (1964) regarded tourism as pseudo-events, because the tourist is seeking for staged attractions, contrived experiences, satisfying with commoditized products, cultures, and images. So, he suggested that tourists are unable to have authentic experience.

Likewise, MacCannell (1973) suggested “staged authenticity” to conclude the obviously inauthentic experience. Drawing on the notion of front stage and back stage from Goffman, a structural division of social hierarchy, MacCannell contended that the front stage, where host meeting guest and patron interacting with service providers, could be a “false reality” for show and performance, while the back stage a “real reality” for performers and showers (Goffman, 1959; MacCannell, 1973, p.589-590). Therefore, he concluded that tourists, who were bored with their inauthentic life of routine work, were motivated to quest for genuine, spontaneous and authentic experience, to mingle with natives, to see the real life as it is, only failed to meet these motivations (MacCannell, 1973).

What are the essential factors to affect the concept of authenticity? What elements comprise of authenticity on souvenir? To date, there is very limited consensus on authenticity in tourism (eg. Cohen, 1988 ; Pearce & Moscardo, 1985; Wang, 1999; Reisinger, 2005). Consequently, the concept of authenticity deserves a wider understanding. In addition, little literature has been published on souvenir authenticity. Therefore, the purpose of this study is first to explore the concept of authenticity in tourism and then apply it to souvenir purchasing to figure out the notion of souvenir authenticity.

2. The Concept of Authenticity. Authenticity has been an agenda in tourism literature (Wang, 1999). However, there is no consensus among tourism researchers. Boorstin (1964), a sociologist, maintained first that tourists enjoyed “pseudo-events” because there is no authentic tourist experience. Taking mass tourist travels as example, he suggested that tourist experienced only “environmental bubble” of the familiar hotel and inauthentic contrived attractions, isolated from the host environment and the local people (Boorstin, 1964, p.77). Further, to illustrate the inauthentic tourist experience with restricted sensuality and aesthetic sense, Turner and Ash (1975) indicated the decaying Balinese cultures and arts, converting from indigenous and complicated arts to simplified and western modes to cater to mass tourists.

Modern people live in an inauthentic world (Cohen, 1988). Thus, to escape from the routine work and quest for authentic self and society in elsewhere have been critical motivations for tourists (MacCannell, 1976). MacCannell, challenging Boorstin’s inauthentic and superficial points, contended that all tourists like ancient pilgrims, quest for authentic experience and sacred places in other time and other places. Tourists travel looking for “real life” of others, which have some fascinated quality lacking in their daily places (MacCannell, 1973). But he found that the “real lives” always happened at backstage, where tourists are not welcome to intrude (MacCannell, 1973). To meet tourist’s needs and secure the real lives, a contrived and artificial backstage, “staged authenticity” termed by MacCannell, was invented (Urry, 2002).

Although both Boorstin and MacCannell are concerned with authenticity, they do not clearly define the concept of authenticity. Boorstin proposed “environmental bubble”, while MacCannell argued “staged authenticity”. They leave the concept of authenticity ambiguous.

3. Typology of Authenticity. To clear this ambiguous, three conventional types of authenticity (objective, constructive, and existential) were proposed in tourism literature

(Reisinger and Steiner, 2006; Wang, 1999). Objective authenticity addressed the authentic original for objects (Wang, 1999). Constructive authenticity address the authentic setting evaluated by tourists; while existential authenticity refers to self authenticity aroused by activity (Wang, 1999).

3.1. Objective Authenticity. The origin of authenticity came from museum, where expert examine “whether objects of art are what they appear to be or are claimed to be, and therefore ...worth the admiration they are being giving” (Trilling, 1972, p.93). The concept of objective authenticity drawing from museum-linked definition is applied to evaluate toured objects by tourists for toured objects themselves are presumed to possess the quality of authenticity (Wang, 1999; Harvey, 2004). For example, tourist judges cultural products such as arts, rituals and relics as authentic in terms of made by local people, made from local material.

There are specific criteria to measure objective authenticity. Therefore, the tourists themselves are unable to affect the level of authenticity. The authentic experience which tourist obtains is still inauthentic, if it does not meet the criteria of authenticity (Wang, 1999). Thus, such vigor term of objective authenticity, adopted by curators and ethnographers, is an appropriate application for cultural products that are made from natural material by hand before modernity Western impact (Cohen, 1988). When museum-related concept of authenticity is applied to cultural tourism products such as art, festivals, rituals, apparels, and buildings, the criteria of traditional, original, genuine, real and unique are always employed to determine the level of authenticity (Sharpley, 1994).

3.2. Constructive Authenticity. In opposition to object authenticity, Cohen argued that authenticity is a socially constructed interpretation of the realness of the objects (Cohen, 1988). Namely, authentic experiences come from constructed reality by beliefs, attitudes, and powers, not from inherent realness (Cohen, 1988). Therefore the constructive authenticity is a contextual, negotiable, ideological, or expectant one of object (Bruner, 1991; Silver, 1993). Peach and Moscardo (1986) also maintained that whether a tourism setting is real or not depends on judgment of tourist instead of a real property. Even the interaction between host and tourists constructs the concept of authenticity toward cultural and heritage products (Adams, 1996). Every tourist constructs authenticity subjectively by different beliefs and attitudes. Thus, mass tourist can have a different authentic experience toward the same toured objects. The meaning and interpretation of the settings vary depending on the contexts and the individuals.

3.3. Existential Authenticity. Contrary to both objective and constructive authenticity, existential authenticity refers to individual feelings caused by liminal process of tourist activity (Wang, 1999). “In such a liminal experience, people feel they themselves are much more authentic and more feely self-expressed than in everyday life, not because they find the toured objects are authentic but simply because they are engaging in non-ordinary activities, free from the constraints of the daily” (Wang, 1999, P.351). Intuitively, existential authenticity involves a state of being of true to oneself, which forming true self to resist self missing in the public field (Berger, 1973). Wang (1999) employed existential

authenticity to tourist activity, differentiate it from object-related and constructive authenticity.

In general, Wang's typology of authenticity is sound. But can we directly apply his model to souvenir? Both constructive authenticity (referred to setting) and existential authenticity (related to activity) have little connection with souvenir. Only objective authenticity, referred to toured object, has directly relation with souvenir. However, the nature of toured object is not quite the same with souvenir. Moreover, the souvenir shopping has been a required activity in tour schedule (Lehto, Cai, O'leary & Huan, 2004). Therefore, light could be shed on souvenir authenticity which is still largely unknown and uninvestigated.

4. Souvenir Authenticity.

4.1. Souvenir Shopping. Souvenir shopping is seldom included in travel motive, but it is a popular activity tourist frequently participates in (Cook, 1995, Kim & Littrell, 2001). Taiwanese tourists who traveled abroad in 1999 reported shopping souvenirs as their second most important items only to tobacco and wine (Lehto et. al., 2004). But for Chinese leisure travelers, shopping for gifts and souvenirs wins first, following by lodging, food, and entertainment (Cai, Lehto, & O'leary, 2001). Thus, shopping for gift and souvenir explains a significant amount of tourist's total expenditure.

Souvenir, commercially produced, serves as a remembrance, a concrete remainder of extraordinary experience, special moments and events for tourist (Gordon, 1986). Tourists escape from their mundane, ordinary places, looking for extraordinary place or destination. Souvenir is evidence that they have been there, which is psychologically important for tourists (Anderson & Littrell, 1995). Its presence extends the fleeting, transitory experience to eternity (Gordon, 1986).

4.2. Souvenir Category. To understand the myriad of souvenirs, Gordon (1986) classified souvenirs into five categories. The first are pictorial images, containing postcards, poster, photographs, illustrated books, and pictures, which are tangible reminders that prove tourist's presence there (Gordon, 1986). The second type is piece-of-the-rock, including rocks, grasses, shells and driftwood, pine cones, stuffed moose or deer heads, sperm whale, teeth, and stuffed alligators, which are parts of the whole destination environment (Gordon, 1986). The third type is symbolic shorthand, including replicas of well-known attractions, miniaturized icons images, which are mainly manufactured instead of natural material (Gordon, 1986). Markers are the fourth type, consisting of T shirts, coffee mugs, coasters, which are irrelevant to a particular place, people, or event (Gordon, 1986). For example, a key-ring inscribed with "Ali Mountain" becomes marked for Taiwan, helping preserve pleasant memories with Taiwan. Finally, local products are the fifth type, including an array of indigenous objects such as foods, liquor, cooking utensils, clothing, handicrafts (Gordon, 1986).

Pictorial image, piece-of-rock, and local products all share the attribute of local ways of living, including food, drinking, architecture, plant, handcrafted products, entertainment. Thus, this study reclassifies them as cultural souvenir. Likewise, both symbolic shorthand

and markers lose its primitive unique by mass manufactured and miss original style by catering to tourists. They are termed commercial souvenir in this study. Consequently, Gordon's typology of souvenir will be reduced to two types in this study: cultural and commercial souvenirs.

5. Levels of Souvenir Authenticity. Cohen (1988) argued that the notion of authenticity is a socially negotiable construct and proposed an emergent authenticity to replace the museum-related authenticity. He suggested that emergent authenticity is a gradual emergence concept from the tourist perspective to host culture. Certain contrived setting, once viewed as inauthentic, could become authentic over time. Disneyland, for instance, once an example of contrived theme park, is growing to be an eminent representation of American culture (Cohen, 1988). In the near future, Disneyland will eventually turn out to be an American cultural destination.

In addition, Cohen (1988) also suggested that tourist is different from ethnologist, for the former hold less strict criteria of authenticity than the latter. This did not mean that tourist does not care for authenticity. It implied that the degree of intensity of questing authenticity varied, according to the degree of estrangement of modernity (Cohen, 1988). Thus, at a given staged attraction or environment, there is no consensus on the impression of the scene. One tourist with loose criteria will respond to the staged with positive attitude while the other with rigor criteria will not accept it as authentic attraction with negative attitude (Cohen, 1988).

Likewise, Wang (1999) contained that objective, constructive, and existential authenticities are co-existing. He suggested that the existential authenticity is most powerful to account for tourist experience. We can infer that objective authenticity is better than constructive authenticity to explain toured object, while constructive is better than existential to justify toured settings.

Drawn from Cohen's emergent authenticity and Wang's authenticity category, this study extend them into levels of authenticity for souvenir purchasing, which is comprised of high, intermediate, and low level of authenticity. Based on Cohen's emergent authenticity, this study suggests that different tourist own different level of authenticity and level of authenticity varied in different settings. Similarly, grounded on Wang's work, this study argues that authenticity is comparable in term of toured object, setting, and activity. Thus, many comparable level of authenticity can be arranged on a continuum in terms of tourist and souvenir category. This study will discuss the three important levels of authenticity: high level, intermediate, and low level of authenticity.

5.1. The High Level of Authenticity. The curators and ethnographers always employ the strictest standard to distinguish authenticity from fake. For example, McLeod explained authentic African art as "... and piece made from traditional materials by a native craftsman for acquisition and use by members of local society that is made and used with no thought that it ultimately may be disposed of for gain to Europeans or other aliens" (McLeod, 1976, p. 31).

McLeod emphasize the absence of modernity as a basic judgment of authentic for it is relevant to tradition, local, primitive. Similar to these views, Cornet contained authenticity

as “Any object created for a traditional purpose and by a traditional artist, with conforming to traditional form” (Cornet, 1975, p.52).

To define a craft’s authenticity, Littrell, Anderson, and Brown (1993) purposed eight criteria: uniqueness and originality, workmanship, aesthetics, cultural and historical integrity, tourist function and use, craftsman and materials, shopping experience, and genuineness or truth in advertising.

To solve the authentic problems of Maori culture products and services, the Aotearoa Maori Tourism Federation established three criteria: “from the mind of a Maori, by the hand of a Maori, and that the producer or provider has a genealogical and spiritual connection to a tupuna Maori” (Asplet & Cooper, 2000, p.308).

Revilla and Dodd (2003) found that the tourist relates Talavera pottery authenticity with its appearance and utility, traditional characteristics and certification, difficult to obtain, locally produced, and low price.

5.2. Intermediate Level of Authenticity. As the destination is thronged with tourist, many local cultural products will be inevitably manufactured in quantity to meet the rising demand. To cater to tourist with more charming characteristics, contrived cultural products are purposely embellished to look real, leading to change the meaning of original products (Cohen, 1988). For limited authentic local cultural products, tourists finally accept the fake airport art as if it were an authentic one (Graburn, 1967).

5.3. Low Level of Authenticity. Visiting friends and relatives, visiting Disneyland, and going to resort such as seaside, skiing, health, spa, have little to do with authenticity. For those pleasure-seeking tourists, they will delightfully accept low level of authenticity. The tourist seeks for entertainment in the pleasure settings. Since they seek for entertaining, relaxing experience, they can take the make-believe (Cohen, 1979). Likewise, they find great pleasure from the played games even though they are aware of the inauthenticity of the games (Feifer, 1985).

6. Modes of Tourist. Cohen (1979) proposed modes of touristic experience on the basis of depth of experience: existential, experimental, experiential, recreational, and diversionary. The existential tourists leave modernity for the primitive other place, they avoid beaten track and go to native. They hold high criteria of authenticity, however, they are likely unable to distinguish authentic from fake on attraction or atmosphere (Cohen, 1988). So, they are most like to be the victims of what MacCannell term staged authenticity (Cohen, 1988). Second, the experimental tourist travel many primitive other places to find out their selective one (Cohen, 1988). The third, experiential tourists tend to involve true life of others (Cohen, 1988). Both experimental and experiential are similar to existential, sharing with vigor authenticity.

The fourth, recreational tourists, motivated with restoration and recuperation, tend to loosely accept authentic replica, buying fake experience resemble to genuine (Cohen, 1988). Finally, diversionary tourists, irrespective of authenticity, chiefly focus on funny, cute or lovely experience (Cohen, 1988). We can conclude that recreational and diversionary tourists incline to put less important on authenticity.

Based on Cohen's typology of tourist on level of authenticity, this study argue to classify tourist into two types: serious tourist and pleasure tourist. The notion of serious tourist is borrowed from "serious leisure", involving those tourists who have special interest and devote substantial effort to seek in term of authenticity (Robert, 1996). In post modern, Urry (2002) argued that tourist seeks for play, pleasure and pastiche. This study adopts his notion of pleasure tourist to replace with Cohen's divisionary and recreational tourists. Thus, the typology of tourist consists of serious, who hold high level of authenticity and pleasure ones with low level of authenticity.

7. Relating Modes of Tourist to Souvenir Authenticity. The souvenir authenticity model considers both modes of tourist and categories of souvenir simultaneously to explore souvenir authenticity, differing from the traditional concept of individual authenticity standard such as toured objects, settings, services. For instance, Boorstin (1964) explored authenticity by pseudo-events, while MacCannell, (1973) by staged settings. In addition, this study argues that the concept of souvenir authenticity is a continuum from high level to low level. Therefore, the level of souvenir authenticity is decided by modes of tourist and type of souvenir. The modes of tourist affect the level of souvenir authenticity. As purchasing cultural souvenir, pleasure-seeking tourist will judge souvenir with intermediate level of authenticity. However, they will adopt low level of authenticity toward commercial souvenir. Serious tourist will use high level of authenticity to by cultural souvenir. But, they will apply intermediate level of authenticity to commercial souvenir.

8. Conclusion. In global community, it is common to find a denoted local souvenir, labeling with abroad manufacturer (Asplet & Cooper, 2000). For instance, in United States and Canada tourism destination, many welcomed souvenirs are made from Vietnam, or Indonesia, where labor and materials are much cheaper (Timothy, 2005).

This above analysis of souvenir authenticity leads to a conclusion, indicating that the degree of souvenir authenticity corresponds to modes of tourist. Serious tourist tends to adopt vigor authenticity whereas the pleasure-seeking are less concern for authenticity. Furthermore, even the serious tourist will only adopt intermediate level toward the commercial souvenir. In addition, the pleasure-seeking Chinese tourist will not concern for souvenir's authenticity.

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