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Renewing a historical legacy: Tourism, leisure shopping and urban branding in Paris

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ABSTRACT

This article discusses a form of urban tourism branding based on the archetypal form of consumerism: leisure shopping. Commodity fetishism is instrumental not only to increasing mainstream fashion sales but also to rejuvenating and multiplying city images on the global competitive market. Drawing from fieldwork performed in Paris, the article analyses and discusses the strategies developed by key players to promote leisure shopping for urban tourists. It specifically focuses on the actions of public-led tourism marketing organisations. Paris is historically renowned as a capital of style and a commercial metropolis, which can easily be used as a basis to develop urban branding strategies for promoting tourism. However, urban branding based on leisure shopping *per se* was rarely fostered until recently. Previous theoretic reflections on urban development and consumption – leading to debates on the “fantasy city”, the “cultural-creative city” and “local shopping streets” – provide the analytical basis for understanding the promotion of leisure shopping as an urban tourism branding strategy in Paris and the changing relations between urban political economy and consumer capitalism.

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Introduction

By the end of the 20th century, most world cities had focused on tourism as a source of revenue (Hoffman, Fainstein, & Judd, 2003; Judd & Fainstein, 1999). The economic and cultural production of cities through tourism became important in late capitalism, while urban redevelopment scenarios were planned to accommodate additional retail spaces and welcome a variety of city users (Martinotti, 1996). Together, these two elements secured both increased individual consumption and international investment (Evans, 2003; Gotham, 2002; Judd & Fainstein, 1999; Tretter, 2011). This article connects the on-going promotion of commercial resources in tourism to a changing panorama in urban development by examining leisure shopping as a theme for urban tourism branding in Paris, France. The luxury fashion industry developed early in the 16th and 17th century in Paris, where it was also displayed by the Royal court (Williams, 1982: 8). Two centuries later, the city was the stage for the establishment of urban commercial culture, forged by the “aesthetics of the consumer metropolis” (Tiersten, 2001: 57). The history of the mid-nineteenth century commercial revolution and luxury fashion are embedded in the city’s physical forms as well as in its sense of place; these two ele-

ments constitute strong premises for the branding of Paris for its leisure shopping. In the shift from commercial to neoliberal capitalism, luxury fashion became a more valuable source for the consumerist branding of the city, often driven by the investments of premium companies quoted on the stock market such as LVMH (Louis Vuitton and Moët Hennessy group) or PPR (Pinault-Printemps-Redoute group, today renamed Kering). Suburban retail real estate – such as shopping centres and retail parks located on the outskirts of Paris – and luxury fashion also took hold in the French capital and its region in the last decades of the 20th century, often intersecting with what Marc Berdet defines *fantasmagories du capital postmodernes* (“postmodern phantasmagorias of capital”) (Berdet, 2013: 155–262). This is the case for instance of the high-end factory outlet *La Vallé Village* on the eastern outskirts of the Paris metropolitan region. Parallel to luxury and fashion shopping, Paris is also connoted by more mundane commodity exchange in its neighbourhoods (Lallement, 2010, 2013). A more popular commercial image of the city, emphasising leisure shopping facilities, somehow received less attention in tourism promotion until recently. Today local policy makers seem keener to focus on urban leisure shopping and provide new readings of urban Paris as a shopping destination. This shift constitutes the object of this article.

This article integrates literature on urban tourism branding as a planning and marketing strategy (Ashworth & Voogd, 1990;

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Kavaratzis & Ashworth, 2005) with more critical accounts of the social construction of urban meaning and legitimacy through place marketing consistent with contemporary urban politics (Bradley, Hall, & Harrison, 2002; Colomb, 2012; Kim, 2010; Vanolo, 2008). In this article, the focus is not on urban commodification, the construction of premium consumerist spaces or tourism bubbles, in contrast to previous studies investigating consumption and the visitor economy (for overviews on these matters see Gottdiener, 1997; Judd & Fainstein, 1999; Ritzer & Liska, 1997). The article instead relies more on debates on the recognition of local retailing as sociability incubator (Oldenburg, 1989) and as intangible cultural heritage (Zukin, 2012). The article questions the trend of explicitly integrating leisure shopping into urban branding by asking: What is the nature of branding policies in Paris? Is it alternative to other typical understandings of urban branding? Is the acknowledgment and exploitation of shopping tourism a new feature of urban development strategies in Paris? What can this single case study add to contemporary debates on urban political economy and consumer capitalism?

The article is based on a case study emphasising the process of branding Paris through leisure shopping fostered by tourism marketing policies. Special attention is paid to the engagement of public-led tourism institutions beyond this process. The research was conducted in 2012. A preliminary analysis of a variety of freely available secondary sources (public documents, websites, magazines, press releases) was performed, along with the direct observation of the shopping and tourism landscape of Paris. These sources were used to identify major strategies of connecting leisure shopping to urban tourism branding in the city. Following this first phase, a group of public and private actors was identified as key stakeholders in the observed process. They were interviewed qualitatively in order to investigate their policies, aims and visions more closely.¹ The data analysis was inspired by discourse analysis and its uses in urban research (Jacobs, 2006).²

After introducing and presenting the theoretical framework of this article in the next paragraph, the historical link between Paris, commercial culture and tourism is described in the third paragraph. Tourism and urban branding in Paris is discussed in detail in the fourth paragraph, leading to an account of how local actors have recently turned to leisure shopping as a theme for contemporary urban tourism promotion in the city. In the discussion, the article considers the ambiguous world outlined by the branding of urban retail and tourism. This process concerns the renewal of the historical legacy between Paris and luxury design and the differentiation and multiplication of images of leisure shopping in Paris. In the conclusions, the outlined set of material and discursive practices for economic and geographical competitiveness contributes to answering the main questions of the article.

Urban branding, tourism and leisure shopping

Literature in the field of urban studies has widely debated the way cities become commodities as a consequence of their repositioning towards tourism. Urban environments have become consumption spaces in their entirety, often turning into “malls with

¹ Twenty-two semi-structured interviews with key players were conducted in Paris between March and September 2012. Their length varied from 30 to 90 minutes. Interviewees ranged from the City councillors in charge of retail or tourism to representatives of retail or tourism organisations. They also included private actors such as the representatives of the retailers' lobby or the marketing managers of department stores and shopping centres. They were asked about their understanding of the relationship between Paris and shopping/tourism and their strategies to promote leisure shopping among tourism audiences.

² This research particularly acknowledges the post-structuralist approaches that consider narratives as a strategy linked to politics of representation (Rossi & Vanolo, 2012: 13).

no walls” (Featherstone, 1991; Gold & Ward, 1994; Gotham, 2002; Gottdiener, 1997; Hannigan, 1998; Kearns & Philo, 1993). However the archetypical forms of elusive consumption – leisure shopping – have rarely been discussed *per se* (an exception are the forerunner articles of Jansen-Verbeke (1990, 1991)). On the other hand, leisure shopping is increasingly informing the choice of destination among visitors (Merenne-Schoumaker, 2001; Moscardo, 2004), making it a feature of the competition between cities and a target for city branding (Anttiroiko, 2014). Recently a Globe Shopper City Index was published by the custom research division of the Economist Intelligence Unit,³ and Global Blue, a leading tourism corporation best known for providing VAT refunds to international tourists (EIU, 2011). The European report states that the Index “seeks to find out which of 33 European cities are best placed to take advantage of the continent's reputation among international consumers” (EIU, 2011: 3), stressing that certain shopping facilities might stand alone as a motivation or reason of interest in a city.

Leisure shopping draws on specific aesthetic and experiential activities involving the pleasure of window shopping and browsing through commodities (omitted to maintain the integrity of the review process); an activity devoted principally to shopping for clothes and accessories, which elsewhere is referred to as “fun shopping” (Gravari-Barbas, 2013: 81). A number of destinations in Asia, Europe and the U.S. have already distinguished themselves as shopping destinations. They range from the so-called capitals of fashion (Paris, London, New York; see Anttiroiko (2014)) to cities and neighbourhoods characterised by a high density of traditional shops and markets with an ethnic and/or “authentic” character (e.g. night markets in South-East Asian cities; see Hsieh and Chang (2006), cities and neighbourhoods characterised by a high density of hypermodern shops (e.g. Dubai; see Henderson (2006)) or fake villages completely devoted to mass consumption and retail (lifestyle centres, retail parks, themed-based outlet centres; see (omitted to maintain the integrity of the review process)). These destinations may base their branding on either historical legacies or completely newly developed retail real estate projects. In keeping with the increased value of city image in late capitalism (Gold & Ward, 1994; Harvey, 1989; Lash & Urry, 1994; Short, 1999), the urban branding of leisure shopping and tourism relies on a less homogeneous set of images than generally discussed, including: luxury design and fashion; niche products addressed to subcultures; enclosed corporate shopping centres; or vernacular shopping streets. The nexus between urban governance and the role of signs, visual images and information in fostering global economies has already been analysed with reference to specific representations such as those related with postmodern spectacle, mega-events, culture and heritage cities, the green economy, Information and Communication Technologies and – more recently – “smart” development (Hoffman et al., 2003; Rossi & Vanolo, 2012: 30–48). These sets of images have been used to sell cities worldwide and attract consumers of services, experiences and commodities through the establishment of urban branding as a marketing strategy in most capital cities across the continents (Dinnie, 2011).

Urban studies literature analysing the link between commercial activities, tourism and urban branding can be summarised as:

1. *Urban branding based on postmodern spectacle.* As Kevin Fox Gotham explained, since the rise of what Guy Debord (Debord, 1973) called “the society of the spectacle” in the early '70s, “the need to present the tourist with ever more spectacular, exotic and titillating attractions” has increased (Gotham, 2002: 1737).

³ The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) is the consultancy unit of the Economist group, a multinational media company specialised in international business based in London.

This gave rise to the “fantasy city” (Hannigan, 1998), a city where room is made for show business brands by selling licensed merchandise on-site. Large retail centres accompany major flagship developments (such in the case of Berlin’s Potsdamer Platz (Colomb & Häussermann, 2003)), while premium retail citadels are established in suburban areas, often trying to reproduce the image of the “fantasy city”, and sometimes becoming tourism destinations in their own right (Goss, 1999; Timothy, 2005). Negative implications of urban development associated with this kind of branding consist in the commoditisation of urban leisure followed by the privatisation of public space (Sorkin, 1992); the segregation of citizens that cannot consume it (Davis, 2006); and the homogenisation of urban space under the same corporate thematised profile (Gottdiener, 1995, 1997; Ritzer, 1993).

2. *Urban branding and the “cultural-creative” turn.* The popularity of the works of authors such as Florida (2002, 2005) and Landry and Bianchini (1995), has introduced the much-abused idea of favouring the renaissance of obsolete urban space into buzzing districts, devoted to welcoming well-off international knowledge workers and – consequently – investors. While the aim of the article is not to discuss the many critiques of the notion of creativity or the relationship between the so-called creative economy and the city (Pratt & Hutton, 2013; Scott, 2006), it is important to stress a shift in urban branding based on the notion of culture instead of “mere” entertainment. Cultural events have started to be associated with local productions because of their peculiar creative process that could become profitable, in this renewed context, in fostering tourism and consumption. As Vanolo pinpoints, “such endeavours appear to be explicit ways of associating a product with a place (or co-branding), developing the capabilities both of selling the city and of selling the product, and creating new symbols for both the geographical location and the commodity under the aegis of the celebration of culture, which certainly helps in selling both” (Vanolo, 2008: 380).

3. *Local shopping street.* Since the 1990s a variety of protection measures have been introduced to safeguard certain commercial city centres from the advent of suburban corporate consumption spaces (Guy, 1998). These have ranged from Town Centre Management (TCM) to Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) (Coca-Stefaniak, Parker, Quin, Rinaldi, & Byrom, 2009; Peel, Lloyd, & Lord, 2009). The outputs of these tools – which are strictly entrepreneurial and aimed at downtown revitalisation (Ward, 2010) – fall into the typologies mentioned previously. TCM and BIDs have also served to expel unwanted street walkers and inhabitants from public spaces (Lippert, 2012) and legitimise non-elected entrepreneurial coalitions in deciding on public spaces or urban regeneration (MacLeod, 2011). Drawing on the sociability incubator that local shopping streets may represent (Oldenburg, 1989), vernacular commercial venues have started to be considered as the opposite to downtown or especially regenerated areas. Local shopping streets are defined as “urban cultural ecosystems (...) formed by ordinary city dwellers interacting in vernacular spaces” (Zukin, 2012: 282). As Zukin continues “(U)nlike the standardised architectural designs and transnational ownerships of both central shopping streets and suburban malls, [local shopping streets] present a ‘face’ of local social and cultural identity” (Zukin, 2012). Local shopping streets also provide useful sites for tourism: Zukin herself states that she spotted the local shopping street in Amsterdam, later becoming part of her fieldwork, in the English-written *Amsterdam Time Out!* (Zukin, 2012: 283).

Branding the “fantasy city” or the “cultural-creative city” is often connected with uneven urban landscapes characterised by residential and commercial gentrification (Hamnett, 2003; Van Criekingen & Fleury, 2006) Urban development paradigms as such have often been criticised in terms of the urban standardisation they foster (Vivant, 2013) or because of their elitism and ambiguous social and political implications (Hamnett, Hamnett, & Cooper, 2007;

Zukin, 2010). In contrast to those, “local shopping streets” are becoming popular because of their ability to spread local developments in neighbourhoods that are off the beaten track and sustain diverse, independent retailing (Zukin, 2012). In one of the most famous articles on the political economy of tourism and urban branding, Kevin Fox Gotham (2002) states that for Lefebvre (1991), tourism was “something involving people travelling to locations that are consumed as spaces of consumption, instead of the circulation of commodities among people.” (Gotham, 2002: 1753). The urban branding of leisure shopping *per se* can be understood as providing urban experiences to be sold to tourists. It also aims to facilitate the circulation of commodities among tourists. Tourist-consumers are often seen as “resources” that might placate the effects of the economic recession certain cities are facing. It is worth noting that the branding of “local shopping streets” to tourism is not immune from the negative implications of “fantasy” or “cultural-creative” branding (Zukin, 2008). Moreover, the typologies described are not self-excluding, or equally adopted in all parts of the world. As different as they are, the “fantasy city” branding, the “cultural-creative city” or the “local shopping street” branding, all emphasise the role of retail services and the shopping experience in forging urban landscapes suitable for tourism.

Paris, the capital of shopping?

Aesthetic and experiential shopping is often associated with the Paris cityscape, and has long constituted an attraction for visitors. As early as the 17th century, Paris-based French court life consumer habits were imitated by the upper classes throughout Europe (Tiersten, 2001: 59). Later on, at the end of the 18th century, the galleries of the Royal Palace were:

“(...) a sort of Paris within Paris, a centre of life, pleasure, luxury, any kind of inebriation; all Europe longed to come here and foreigners spent their booty at Royal Palace cafés, brothels, play houses, shops. No pleasure was good, no luxury object had a price, no commodity was fashionable if they were not coming from the [Paris] Royal Palace.” (Lavallée (1846) quoted in Berdet, 2013: 42; Author translation; Author emphasis)

The Royal Palace galleries were the models for the arcades built at the beginning of the 19th century and which much fascinated Walter Benjamin, himself a frequent visitor to *la ville lumière* in the early 20th century. A step in consumer capitalism was taken by the city between 1860 and 1900, when France pioneered in retail and advertising. Paris was “a sort of pilot plant of mass consumption” at that time (Williams, 1982: 11). This was expressed by the new department stores, the most famous of them lining newly built, opulent boulevards. David Harvey (Harvey, 2003: 212) underlines that Baron Haussmann’s reforms of that time changed Paris into a city devoted to consumerism, spectacle and leisure, something which is part of the city’s cultural heritage today. Department stores represented the constructed form of synthesising Paris’s establishment as a commercial metropolis. Their status was not immune to criticism due to the difficulty of French political culture in accepting “liberalism as both an economic and a social doctrine” (Tiersten, 2001: 3).

In 2012, when the research this article is based on was conducted, only four historical department stores still operated in Paris, two of them located on Boulevard Haussmann, the *Galeries Lafayette* and *Le Printemps*.⁴ The annual footfall on this major shop-

⁴ In another research devoted entirely to Parisian department stores and tourism branding (omitted to maintain the integrity of the review process), the Author considered *Le Bon Marché* in Paris’ 7th district, the *BHV* in the 4th district, the *Galeries Lafayette* and *Le Printemps* in the 9th district. This selection reflects that adopted by APUR (2006, 2012).

ping street was reported as 120 million.⁵ Evans (2003) remarks that department stores represented the first consciously designed socio-spatial prototypes to blur the distinction between traditional urban tourism attractions – such as museums and art houses – and retail activity. Department stores “first encouraged free entry and browsing” (Evans (2003: 436)), a possibility that also contributes to the stores’ repositioning as a tourist destination, in a similar manner to other cultural sites (Cummings & Lewandowska, 2002: 22–3, quoted in Evans, 2003). Indeed historical department stores have become urban icons able to promote tourism not only in Paris but also in many other European cities.⁶

Parisian department stores are also quoted in Global Blue/the Economist Intelligence Unit European Globe Shopper City Index (EIU, 2011), where Paris stands in fourth position after London, Barcelona and Madrid.⁷ The city is described as having “the most boutiques on the Index, as well as urban malls and shops, from the *Galeries Lafayette* to *les Puces*, the famous flea markets.”⁸ Global Blue appears to have already classified the city’s consumerist appeal as due not only to its modern commercial iconic venues (the department stores), but also to corporate mass-market venues (the non better specified “urban malls”) that are important elements of Paris’s “fantasy city” landscape. Along with these, shopping resources include non-central niche-consumerist locations and less standardised venues such as “the famous flea markets”. Flea markets are intended as “cultural” shopping sites since they are part of the tangible and intangible heritage of Paris as much as department stores. They are also “cultural ecosystems” following Zukin’s consideration of vernacular space (2012). They also provide an “authentic” flare to commodity exchange; “authenticity” being the most sought-after feature among tourists as urban consumers (MacCannel, 1973; Zukin, 2008). Although they are not capitalism-based shopping venues, flea markets are useful for city branding. Their value may be as much as that of the luxury designer brands on Faubourg Saint-Honoré or Avenue Montaigne, the locations that translate Paris’s historic legacy with luxury industry⁹ and *haute couture* catwalks on the urban shopping scene, suitable for city marketing (Kapferer, 2011). City branding images addressing tourism include flagship products and venues – “those which build the positive dimensions of the city image abroad” (Kapferer, 2011: 186) – as well as the salient culture of the city.

Some shopping sites have become *de facto* tourist attractions in Paris. Douglas G. Pearce noted that “if visiting churches represents one face of tourism in Paris, the historical and cultural, shopping constitutes another, the modern and commercial” (Pearce, 1999). According to the press releases distributed by the Paris Convention and Visitors Bureau during the communication campaign called *Shopping by Paris*, 60% of visitors to Paris revealed that shopping

was one of their main motivations for deciding to visit the city (OTCP, 2011). While little data is available on tourism and shopping, what there is seems to confirm that the areas demonstrating a strong legacy of luxury shopping or the rise of a retail culture in Paris are all major tourist attractors. According to Premier Tax Free, another company providing VAT refund to non-EU consumers, the boulevard Haussmann area recorded 26% of Parisian tax-free transactions in 2010. The Faubourg Saint-Honoré area (22%) and the Champs-Élysées (20%) followed. Avenue Montaigne recorded 11% of tax-free transactions while the 6th *arrondissement* (a district dense with high-end shops including the oldest historical department store still operating, the *Bon Marché*) recorded 8% (OTCP, 2011). The annual footfall on the Champs-Élysées – the famous shopping avenue that today hosts both the historical luxury brand *Louis Vuitton* and the mass market brand *H&M* – was 90–100 million in 2010, a quarter of whom were tourists (Picard, 2011). This limited data is based on the quantity of tax-free sales, a number that considers neither national nor European tourism nor non-refunded transactions by international tourists. Some scholars have also documented the tourism appeal for non-central niche-consumerist locations through qualitative analysis (Van Criekingen & Fleury, 2006).

In the Globe Shopper City Index (EIU, 2011) London is considered to have more shops, a wider range of international brands and better accessibility than Paris, while Barcelona and Madrid offer high-end and luxury products at a lower price. Although dropping to fourth position in the overall score, Paris ranks first in cultural services in addition to shopping, matching the idea of a shopping city “with a culture” rather than just commodities. Commercial venues and the shopping experience are embedded with the city urban culture (Lallement, 2013).

Both corporate and independent contemporary retailers are increasingly directing more attention towards urban tourism, in an attempt to capitalise on culture city fetishism. The Head of the *Union du Grand Commerce de Centre Ville* (UCV), a lobbying group composed mainly of corporate retailers and luxury groups,¹⁰ stated that “urban tourism can be a new growth driver for businesses to inner cities” (Picard, 2011). The same was claimed by the Paris Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCIP) in a newsletter addressed to local retailers: “*Le commerce*¹¹ doit pouvoir bénéficier de la manne touristique” (Demonchy, 2011) (“retail trade must be able to benefit from the manna of tourism”). A study on tourism and shopping in Paris produced by the Paris Convention and Visitors Bureau states that shopping is a pillar of Paris tourism (OTCP, 2014). While it is not surprising that retailers are interested in attracting a more mobile population provided this includes solvent consumers, public actors may also be concerned. A reciprocal repositioning of retailers towards urban tourism on one side and of public stakeholders on the other side emerges in Paris; the former forced by the need to continue selling commodities and the latter driven by the need to continue selling experiences and services in a global competitive market.

Before discussing the actions undertaken by public-led tourism marketing organisations, a general introduction to tourism and urban branding in Paris is given in the next paragraph.

Tourism and urban branding in Paris

The development of urban leisure in Paris in the second half of the 19th century not only contributed to attracting new kinds of visitors to Paris (e.g. modern tourists), but also fostered a new internationally attractive image of Paris as a leisure city

⁵ Retrieved from OTCP website, accessed on 12/05/2012.

⁶ As a result of a workshop with international students conducted by the Author (2014), it was revealed that even in a city which is not generally known as a world leisure shopping destination such as Helsinki, Finland, the local historical department store *Stockmann* is branded for tourism due to the number of tourist visitors.

⁷ The European Globe Shopper City Index was first published in 2011. While an Asian Globe Shopper City Index was released in 2012, no update to the European edition has been published until now. The index is based on a variety of qualitative and quantitative indicators, evaluating 33 European cities. They are grouped in five categories: *shops*, the number and variety of shops and brands, seasonal sales, the avoidance of counterfeit products; *convenience*, languages spoken by shopkeepers, shopping hours, price negotiations and safety; *affordability*, product costs and exchange rate stability, accommodation, restaurants, transport; the latter three are further analysed in the category *hotels and transports; culture and climate*, measuring attractions & UNESCO sites, sporting and cultural events, the range of international cuisine, visa regulations and climate. See also <http://www.globeshopperindex.com/en/Methodology>. Last accessed 01/04/2014.

⁸ <http://www.globeshopperindex.com/en/destinations/europe/Paris>. Last accessed 01/07/2013.

⁹ In the 16th and 17th century the French state called for the subsidy and promotion of luxury crafts and fine arts (Tiersten, 2001: 59).

¹⁰ Among them: *Printemps, Galeries Lafayette, C&A, Casino, LVMH, CAFOM, Richemont*.

¹¹ The French word *commerce* can assume in English different meanings. However, the meaning here focuses explicitly on retailing and not any form of trade or business.

(Csergo, 1995: 145). Department stores and the world's fairs jointly epitomise the ability of commercial culture to attract leisure visitors (Picon-Lefebvre, 2013: 131). Today Paris hosts around 29 million tourists per year (OTCP, 2013) and is considered one of the most visited cities in the world. Reflecting the Globe Shopper City Index, Paris is continuously struggling to maintain its tourism leadership against London, an issue that is much debated in the popular press (Bender, 2014; Collomp, 2014; Gordon, 2014; Litzler, 2014). This struggle was also reflected in the competition for the 2012 Olympic Games that Paris lost to London. According to some scholars, this was not due to any technical gaps in the Paris dossier, but rather the fragile brand that Paris represents (Anttiroiko, 2014: 68; Kapferer, 2011). The Anglo-American type of urban branding is not applied straightforwardly in Paris. For many years, Paris has stood out for its “soft approach” to city marketing strategies compared to London’s “hard approach” based on power, internationalism and liberalism on one side and a sensuous idea of globalised culture promoted through systematic communication campaigns on the other (Chevrant-Breton, 1997).

As far as tourism and urban branding are concerned, relying on the city’s prestigious architectural and cultural heritage image was deemed sufficient until now. Urban interventions in the last decades of the 20th century – the decades which saw the rise of the role of tourism in the global political economy (Judd & Fainstein, 1999) – were only fleetingly designed to cater directly for tourism. The Pompidou Centre or the redevelopment of the Louvre, to name but a few famous sites visited by tourists, were primarily thought to celebrate French grandiosity (Pearce, 1998). Douglas G. Pearce considers that the urban image-making and symbolic construction suitable for tourism seems to be a largely indirect and incidental factor in Paris (Pearce, 1998: 473). However urban redevelopments planned for tourism have been done in nearby Marne-la-Vallée, a municipality in the Eastern metropolitan area of Paris. One part became the tourist destination of Disneyland, a project greatly supported by the central government (d’Hautesserre, 2001). *Disneyland Paris* was followed by the development of another project, *Val d’Europe*, including a large regional shopping centre and a high-end factory outlet village. The general development of *Disneyland Paris* and *Val d’Europe* falls under the principles of the “fantasy city” and it is with this character that it contributed to the semiotic enlargement of Paris’s central tourism district (d’Hautesserre, 2013).

As far as the municipality of Paris is concerned, the influential socialist Mayor Bertrand Delanoë (2001–2014)¹² has always stated his commitment to making Paris a “shared city” (*ville partagée*) among different social classes as well as different peoples crossing Paris (Clerval & Fleury, 2009). Smoothing over the distinction between what targets tourists and what is planned to serve residents became a policy introduced by the local government. This commitment has also had an impact on the nexus between the city, commercial activities and tourism. Emmanuelle Lallement (2010) noted that under Delanoë, the Paris City website started to group a detailed list of Paris street markets, *bouquinistes* (the booksellers of used and antiquarian books lined along the banks of the River Seine), second-hand markets, flower markets, and boot sales under its “Leisure” column:

“These alternative markets are undoubtedly grouped together because they all administratively represent temporary retail, but isn’t this also because they take part in the same image of Paris, the one of the ‘80 villages’¹³ of Paris? We can assume that

this image is delivered to Paris’s inhabitants, who are generally fond of living in sociable neighbourhoods rich in services. The same image seems however to be addressed to tourists, certainly attracted by this so ‘authentically Paris’ neighbourhood life” (Lallement, 2010: 67–68. Author translation)

Delanoë’s policy of the shared city, not strictly a brand but certainly a vision, includes the promotion of “local shopping streets” suggested by Zukin (2012). It is worth noticing that some French scholars have strongly criticised the politics of the current Paris socialist administration, mostly because it doesn’t seem to seriously engage in halting the process of residential and commercial gentrification taking place in Paris (Clerval, 2013; Van Criekingen & Fleury, 2006). The embellishment of the image of the city and the cultural enhancement of the image of Paris are more important than responding to gentrification-led socio-spatial urban problems. Anne Clerval and Antoine Fleury (2009) consider the action of the municipality of Paris to be closer to the paradigm of the “cultural-creative” city than to the preservation of “urban cultural ecosystems (...) formed by ordinary city dwellers interacting in vernacular spaces” (Zukin, 2012: 282). The result is a city tailored for the consumption of the middle and upper classes.

The nature of branding policies in Paris is less well defined than in other cities, such as London. The link between commercial activities, tourism and urban branding reflects this specificity. Acceptation and rejection of consumer capitalism principles applied to cities outline an ambiguous sphere, consistent with the nature of the French political culture.

Institutional tourism organisations are becoming important patrons of branding Paris for leisure shopping, and in so doing they remodel the image of Paris. In the next paragraphs, the process of branding Paris through leisure shopping *per se* is discussed with reference to public-led tourism marketing organisations.

Renewing a historical legacy

A variety of institutional tourism organisations operate on different scales in France, responding to city or regional councils (Violier, 2003). In Paris, they include the Paris Convention and Visitors Bureau (OTCP), reporting directly to the City Council and the Paris and Île-de-France Regional Tourist board (CRT), which is dependent on the Île-de-France Regional Council. The CRT mission is specifically to promote the destination of Paris “from either side of the *peripherique*”,¹⁴ the famous ring road that administratively, materially and symbolically identifies the city limits. Lastly, the national tourism development agency, Atout France, may also influence the tourism marketing of Paris. Atout France is a public-private partnership with the legal status of a private company; a consortium of related businesses, companies, foundations, organisations and institutes that pool their efforts to further French competitive advantage. Tourism organisations as such are important key players in adjusting the tourism image of Paris. As far as leisure shopping branding is concerned, this process focuses the promotion of Paris on its historical legacy with urban consumption and its venues. The historically constructed image of the city is proposed as a “cultural” bonus for leisure shopping. In doing so, the models of the “fantasy city”, “cultural-creative city” and “local shopping street” are continuously mixed and transformed.

In keeping with the most common post-Fordist strategies of fostering material and immaterial tourism consumption through actions involving arts, technologies, local handicrafts, and heritage promotion (Gotham, 2002; Savitch & Kantor, 2004), the Paris Convention and Visitors Bureau (OTCP) and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Paris (CCIP) started a communication campaign

¹² Anne Hidalgo, a member of the Socialist Party herself and formerly Delanoë’s First Deputy, has now replaced Delanoë. Ms Hidalgo won the municipal elections in spring 2014.

¹³ The column lists 80 weekly markets (Lallement, 2010).

¹⁴ <http://www.new-paris-ile-de-france.co.uk/>. Last accessed 28/06/2012.

based on promoting the city's leisure shopping appeal. Called *Soldes by Paris* during the winter sales of 2006–2007, it was renamed *Shopping by Paris* in 2012. Supported by four institutional partners (Paris City Council, ATOU France, OTCP and CCIP), the campaign has changed slightly over the seven years since it was first launched. It was supported by a dedicated website and initially accompanied by events in some neighbourhoods, then subsequently integrated into the “shopping” column of the OTCP website and other OTCP seasonal events. However, the main campaign identity has not changed: *Shopping by Paris*¹⁵ was organised with the aim of exploiting the historical legacy of Paris as a fashion capital and glamorous consumer marketplace (Roll, 2009). In OTCP press releases, Paris is accurately defined as the “capital of fashion and shopping”, where “tourism and retail are complementary” (OTCP, 2012: 8; Author emphasis).¹⁶ The (then) Head of the OTCP also emphasises a *liaison* between the luxury, fashion and tourism industries that are historically close in Paris.¹⁷ This supports the legitimisation of leisure shopping as a theme for urban tourism promotion. Branding is an ideological selection process of the tangible and intangible aspects of a place that produce value propositions (Kapferer, 2011; Kavartzis & Ashworth, 2005; Knox & Bickerton, 2003). Of course, “branding is not constructing *tabula rasa* narratives; rather, it epitomises a long articulation and framing process that must have a certain basis in the local identity and debates” (Vanolo, 2008: 371). For Paris, this includes luxury brand design, the legendary *haute couture* catwalks but also modern commercial institutions, postmodern retail business and local shopping nodes anchored to neighbourhood sociability. The link between urban and commercial phenomena in Paris helps to establish a parallel link between urban identity and its market identity, both shaping the image of Paris as an attractive city that might be called a capital of shopping (Lallement, 2010, 2013).

The *Paris Shopping Book* is published annually by OTCP at the start of the campaign, introduced by a personal editorial of the (former) Mayor.¹⁸ Proposed itineraries tie luxury boutiques – Place Vendôme jewellers or Avenue Montaigne *haute couture* stylists – with global corporate stores. A few independent fashion designers are also proposed. Most recommendations, however, are concentrated in the central districts of 1er, 2ème, 4ème, 6ème et 8ème arrondissements (Paris inner districts), where 4 out of the 7 administratively recognised tourism zones are also located. Prestige department stores including *Le Printemps* and the *Galleries Lafayette* in the 9th district are listed in a dedicated column. The itineraries proposed by the *Paris Shopping Book* mostly concentrate on an extended area of what French architect and planner Virginie Picon-Lefebvre calls the “hyper-Paris of tourists” (Picon-Lefebvre, 2013). This is an area where the concentration of goods and services devoted to experiential consumption produce a simultaneously real and imaginary place: the Paris of fashion and luxury (Picon-Lefebvre, 2013: 130). Indeed, imagination is a strong incentive to travelling. An established brand linked to Paris (Kapferer, 2011), luxury design is associated with specific, delimited locations of Paris and caters little for the needs and spending power of low-income groups. This image, which is partly, but not uniquely, retraced in the *Paris Shopping Book* itineraries, seems to contradict the idea of the “shared city” the socialist political administrators are committed to. The cor-

responding area produced when overlaying the *Paris Shopping Book* itineraries primarily represents and contributes to the production of a mix of “fantasy” and “cultural-creative” space, emphasising the identity of downtown areas as culture and consumption spaces turned into leisure and tourism destinations (Ward, 2010).

Differentiating a consolidated image

The *Paris Shopping Book* proposes itineraries that divide the capital into shopping sectors, identifying stores of interest to six imaginary shoppers. In the 2013 edition,¹⁹ they are the *Selects*, the *Trendys*, the *Creatives*, the *Bobo-chic*, the *Ethic-ethnic* and the *Astucieux* (“shrewd” bargain hunters). Cities are made up of a multitude of brands (Kavartzis & Ashworth, 2005: 512), and so is the shopping city, according to consumers’ tastes and spending power. On the OTCP website, a variety of shopping suggestions can be browsed under headings such as *Hot spots*, *shopping by district*, *Fashion and accessories*, *Luxury*, *Gastronomic shopping*... pinpointing Paris’s exploited images, lifestyles and narratives.²⁰ This approach associates shopping with Parisian urban culture, coherent both with post-Fordist strategies fostering tangible and intangible tourism consumption (Richards, 2014; Savitch & Kantor, 2004).

This is also the strategy of the Paris and Île-de-France Regional Tourist Board (CRT), whose mission is to promote the city’s historical, world famous tourist attractions, seeking to match these with “the modernity and vitality of its cultural creativity”.²¹ The CRT does not produce a specific promotion devoted to shopping like the OTCP. Leisure shopping is a theme developed only transversally, but the board plans to extend this theme further in future.²² There is a shopping section on the CRT website; attractions are listed under a variety of headings²³ such as *Fashion and designers*, *Culture* (in this case mainly libraries), *Antiquities*, *Home*, *Luxury*, and *Markets*, comprising mainly street markets, confirming Lallement’s (2010) previously discussed argument.

The CRT also commissioned a special edition of the Lonely Planet Paris guide in 2007, published with the title *Paris Rediscovered* (Delabroy, 2011). In keeping with the principle of emphasising images of the city based on the much debated notion of “creativity” launched by Florida (2002, 2005) and Landry and Bianchini (1995) (for an overview in tourism studies, see Richards, 2014; Richards & Wilson, 2007), in this guide small scale shops with a bohemian feel stand alongside mass market shopping venues and the historical department stores. Altogether, they represent a vast set of shop windows displaying a variety of images all suitable for fostering leisure shopping as a theme for tourism promotion:

“Paris fashion is more than ever about the freedom to play mix and match with prices, such as pairing a top from H&M or Uniqlo with designer jeans, or vice versa. For fashion and shopping heavens, go to Galleries Lafayette or Printemps Haussmann which both have designers’ sections. Paris is also home to numerous private stylists whose showrooms you can sometimes visit to see them at work, such as Beau Travail or try the Rue Houdon in Montmartre and the Rue des Gardes in the Goutte d’Or neighbour-

¹⁹ Also available on-line: <http://www.parisinfo.com/ou-sortir-a-paris/shopping/infos/guides/paris-capitale-du-shopping/visites-et-shopping/paris-shopping-book-2013>. Last accessed 24/10/2013.

²⁰ <http://en.parisinfo.com/what-to-do-in-paris/shopping/info/guides/paris-capital-of-shopping>. Last accessed 14/04/2014.

²¹ <http://www.new-paris-ile-de-france.co.uk/>. Last accessed 28/06/2012. This web sites as currently changed its name in www.en.visitparisregion.com (15/04/2014)

²² Shopping represents an essential element for the 2011–2016 period, responding to the wishes of the Regional Council as emerged in an interview with a CRT developer, Development Unit, Marketing and Communication Office, and in charge of developing tourism products; 07/06/2012.

²³ <http://en.visitparisregion.com/attractions-paris/shopping-60356.html>. Last accessed 15/04/2014.

¹⁵ In the article we refer to *Shopping by Paris* also to point out previous years of the campaign, when it was actually named *Soldes by Paris*. We acknowledge that the claim *Shopping by Paris* is not consistent with English grammar. The latest press releases (at the time of writing this article) can be downloaded here: <http://presse.parisinfo.com/actualites/communiqués-de-presse/shopping-by-paris-2014>. Last accessed 15/04/2014.

¹⁶ Most of the excerpts quoted were originally in French. The translations are the Author’s.

¹⁷ Personal interview, 26/03/2012. See also Roll (2009).

¹⁸ The editions of 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, and 2013 have been examined.

hood, or also Rue Keller, in Bastille.” (Delabroy, 2011: 20; Author emphasis).

The strategy of promoting smaller-scale shops featuring fashion, antique/vintage, design, and art has been credited with fostering local development. It may also have significant effects on the retail attractiveness and repositioning of certain districts (Jansson & Power, 2010: 900). In this case, the less famous fashion hotspots selected in the guide contribute to the marketing of leisure shopping spaces by transferring their symbolic meaning into the general image of Paris. In so doing, they differentiate and multiply the image of the “shopping capital” beyond the luxury design districts. As Novy (2011: 106) summarises, attempts to respond to the desires of many international city visitors to escape planned tourism zones and become familiar with experiences and places that have not been constructed for and do not provide for tourists, have introduced new forms of activities and policy concerns. The CRT branding of leisure shopping in Paris follows this trend.

Conclusion

The urban tourism branding of leisure shopping contributes to the emergence of a sphere in which political and economic stakeholders devise material-discursive practices to reinforce their economic and geographical competitiveness. Commodity fetishism is instrumental not only to increasing mainstream fashion sales but also to rejuvenating and multiplying city images on the global competitive market. The strategies developed by a limited number of public-led tourism marketing organisations have been analysed in this article with the aim of showing the inextricable link of the actions contributing to the promotion of leisure shopping in Paris. In doing so, different elements were also intersected: the *Shopping by Paris* campaign, the shopping columns on a variety of institutional websites or connected products and a few discourses calling for links between retail and tourism. This has identified Paris as a location where different perspectives on leisure shopping and urban tourism collide.

Since the research was qualitative in nature, and focused on one particular city and the ongoing process of branding Paris for leisure shopping, attempts to generalise are problematic. Paris is historically renowned as a capital of style and a commercial metropolis, which can easily be used as a basis for developing urban branding strategies suited to tourism promotion. However, the acknowledgement and exploitation of shopping tourism *per se* is a new feature in public-led tourism policies. In the past, the political culture did not easily accept the emergence of consumer capitalism in France, and today it seems sceptical about proposing a consumerist image of the city. To overcome this problem, the images offered to brand Paris as a leisure shopping destination are embedded with the cultural promotion of the city. One of the most quoted articles in urban studies about urban development and tourism is Graeme Evans’ “‘Hard branding’ the cultural city” (Evans, 2003). Writing at the beginning of the 2000s, Evans discussed the cultural turn of cities as an adoption of retail marketing strategies aimed at selling urban cultural resources as commodities on a global market. In Paris the commercial city is “hard culturalised”. In this light, leisure shopping is exempt of cultural and social stigmatisation and can continue to serve contemporary capitalism; this represents a major debate on consumer capitalism demanding further investigation.

Multiple images of Paris as a leisure shopping city are offered. In doing so, common branding models related to consumption are continuously mixed and reconstructed. The urban branding of the “fantasy city” is distanced, in favour of the “cultural-creative city”, emphasising local tangible and intangible heritage embedded in creative industries and products, and in favour of the “local shopping street”, emphasising not (so) standardised markets and

neighbourhood shopping venues. These two models are possibly more consistent with the idea of a shared city much vaunted by the socialist-led Paris local government. The nature of branding policies in Paris, and France generally, is difficult to assimilate to forms of branding explicitly based on the attraction of affluent mobile populations and international investors. This does not mean that the “soft approach” to city branding and marketing of Paris does not aim to cater for tourists and the economy. It does, but it does so in a more ambiguous, less explicit way. In this regard, our analysis points to the theoretical limitations of analysis of urban branding based on Anglo-American models; it also emphasises the need to study the specific cultural conditions of urban contexts. Future analyses should focus more on power dynamics and negotiations on tourism-oriented consumption policies that take place outside Anglo-American urban branding paradigms.

Promoting leisure shopping *per se* is not purely a Parisian speciality, it also concerns other cities or regions, which may or may not have the historical legacy with fashion and shopping that Paris has. The Global Shopper City Index is merely a marketing tool, but its very creation demonstrates the increased interest in the matter. Further studies are needed to understand the implications of leisure shopping in contemporary urban development.

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