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‘Authenticity’: a familiar word but what are the implications for a destination if it is a popular tourism destination as well as a UNESCO World Heritage site?

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to explore the concept of authenticity using the complex context of Edinburgh’s Royal Mile, a popular tourism destination as well as part of a UNESCO World Heritage site. This is an important study as the view that tourists are requiring authentic experiences appears to becoming more widespread, especially by policy makers. This study is based upon a mixed methodology, which involves observation, interview and the use of online sources. It presents a framework with which to analyse and understand authenticity in the context of a complex location such as the Royal Mile. The analysis reveals a wide range of issues, in particular the distinction between the meaning attached to that which represents the local heritage and culture and that which discards this meaning in pursuit of the ‘fast buck’. This is the first study which has attempted to understand the complexity of a high profile multi-use space, of which the tourist is only one stakeholder. It calls for a sophisticated approach to understanding authenticity that is multi-lens and multi-dimensional. It provides an insight for policy makers, practitioners and analysts into how a complex place such as the Royal Mile, can be analysed drawing upon established conceptualisations of authenticity.

Keywords: authenticity, tourist experiences, heritage, Scottish tourism.

1 Introduction

Tourists are after authentic experiences, or so it is voiced. “Visitors from both overseas and the UK tell us that... the authenticity of the ‘experience’ is vital to all visitors” (Scottish Executive, 2006: 7). Moreover, “VisitScotland’s consumer research shows persistent change trends. It confirms that today’s travellers want: ... an authentic experience (with the experience mattering more than the destination” (ibid: 10). However, it is in the most recent version of the Scottish Tourism Strategy (STA, 2012) that ‘authentic experiences’ are most loudly and repeatedly proclaimed: “At the heart of the strategy is growth via quality, authentic visitor experiences.” (ibid: 2).

However, when authenticity is presented in this manner, as a driver for the development of the tourism industry this presents a set of problems. What is an authentic experience? Unpacked this reveals both a person (the tourist) and what the person experiences. It raises the question of what constitutes an experience. It also raises questions about the context or site of the experience, which draws attention to the agents (e.g. tourism product providers) who are creating this context. When the adjective ‘authentic’ is introduced then this introduces questions about what makes an experience ‘authentic’. However, these apparently simple questions disguise a complexity which perhaps makes it difficult to establish how one caters for the tourist’s desire for an authentic experience. The challenge is how to operationalise the concept of authenticity.

The aim of this paper is explore these questions using the iconic Royal Mile of Edinburgh to ground this study. The Royal Mile is perhaps the most visited and iconic street in Scotland but it is also one which is host to a residential community, a seat of power and justice, as well a place of work. It is a street characterised by the complexity of its different uses. This presents a challenge of how to unpack it and also of how to make sense of it in terms of authenticity and the authentic.

This paper is organised into six sections. The first is this introduction, which is followed by an overview of how others have conceptualised authenticity and the authentic experience. The third section outlines how this research has been conducted. The fourth presents the case study of Edinburgh’s Royal Mile. A discussion explores the implications both empirically and conceptually from which a series of conclusions are presented.

2 Literature Review

Authenticity has received much attention in a wide range of contexts, which include museums (e.g. Prentice, 2001; Counts, 2009), art (Benjamin, 1936), heritage sites (e.g. Pendlebury et al, 2009), archaeology (e.g. Holtorf & Schadla-Hall, 1999), anthropology (Handler, 1986), wine (e.g. Beverland, 2005), food (e.g. Beer, 2008; Lu & Fine, 1995), film (e.g. Jones & Smith, 2005), reality television (e.g. Rose & Wood, 2005), performing arts (e.g. Derbaix & Decrop, 2007), advertising (e.g. Beverland et al, 2008), communication (e.g. Hardt, 1993), business ethics (e.g. Jackson, 2005), career development (e.g. Svejenova, 2005); leadership (e.g. Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999; Toor & Ofori, 2009), forensics (e.g. Rocha et al, 2011); education (e.g. Breen, 1985; Tillema, 2006) and psychology (e.g. Sheldon et al, 1997; Wood et al, 2008). Indeed, a number of these themes have appeared within the tourism domain, which itself has an extensive literature (e.g. MacCannell, 1973; Cohen, 1979; Redpath, 1984; Hughes, 1995; Wang 1999; Moreno & Littrell, 2001; Cole, 2007). This interest in the notion of authenticity has led to a special edition of the Journal of Management Studies in 2005, which presented nine papers on the theme of authenticity in the cultural industry.

The extant literature ranges from philosophical discussion about self (e.g. Heidegger, 1962), to questions about the authenticity of artefacts (Kennick, 1985; Lowenthal, 1992), to quantitative analysis of perceptions based upon the constructs of the concept of authenticity (e.g. Grayson & Martinec, 2004). Authenticity is widely recognised as something that is socially constructed (e.g. Cohen. 1988; Littrell et al, 1993; Hughes, 1995; Moscardo & Pearce, 1999; Grayson & Martinec, 2004; Peterson, 2005). With such variety in how conceived, it is a concept which is still problematical despite this extensive debate about it. Indeed, the extent of the literature is such that it is beyond the scope of this article to review it. However, this paper draws upon a selection of work, primarily from the tourism domain, to guide the discussion about the insights gained into the Royal Mile.

2.1 The concept of authenticity

The concept associated with the words authenticity and the authentic has received much debate. The philosophical view is typified by Heidegger (1962) that to be authentic is to be "something of its own" (Heidegger, 1962: 68). Day-to-day use is typified by the various definitions provided by the online Oxford English Dictionary (OED, 2012) which include "Of authority, authoritative (properly as possessing original or inherent authority, but also as duly authorized); entitled to obedience or respect", "Entitled to acceptance or belief, as being in accordance with fact, or as stating fact; reliable, trustworthy, of established credit", "Original, first-hand, prototypical; as opposed to copied" and "Real, actual, 'genuine". Trilling (1972) informs that the provenance of the word authenticity is the museum, "where persons expert in such matters test whether objects of art are what they appear to be or are claimed to be" (ibid: 93). However, he states that "authenticity is implicitly a polemical concept", a concept which remains open to question with many interpretations.

The elusive nature of authenticity presents a problem for those who are attempting to deal with authenticity related issues. Whilst issues of the authenticity of artefacts in a museum context may have criteria to establish what constitutes the authentic, when it comes to more complex social domains, exemplified by heritage sites and tourist destinations and the issue of the authentic experiences of tourists, then this invites the question of how the concept of authenticity can be understood. In turn, this creates the challenge of how to conceptualise and operationalise the concept in a manner that can be used to guide policies and practices.

2.2 The notion of an authentic experience

The concept of authenticity, in particular its use in the notion of the 'authentic experience', have produced a rich debate since the publication of the seminal paper by MacCannell in 1973. However, there are perhaps two contributions, in addition to MacCannell, which are core to this debate; those by Cohen (1979) and Wang (1999).

MacCannell (1973), drawing upon the work of Erving Goffman, who makes the distinction between 'front' and 'back', argues that 'back' activities structurally support a contrived or manipulated 'front' performance for an audience – the touristic space constitutes a stage set. The audience is distinguished from those who are excluded from observing either the 'back' or the 'front'. MacCannell raises the notion of violation: those (i.e. strangers) who intrude into the 'back' violate the space of those in the 'back', where secrets might lie, even if they do not. The notion of intimacy and closeness arises when the tourist is able to penetrate the front and gain access to 'behind the scenes' (i.e. the back) and the 'truth'. This may arise when invited to share in what is experienced in the back. This contrasts with 'viewing galleries' where the purpose of the tourist is to 'see' and nothing else. However, the back-front distinction dissolves when the back itself is contrived (i.e. "staged intimacy" (ibid:

596) for the benefit of an audience and for which there are “no analytical terms” (ibid: 596). Indeed, the tourist has no means of knowing how authentic the experience is. MacCannell suggests that the front-back distinction can be viewed as a continuum within which “it is theoretically possible to distinguish six stages” (ibid: 597).

Stage 1: Goffman’s front region behind which the tourist attempts to penetrate
Stage 2: a front which has elements of the back presented for the tourist to gaze upon
Stage 3: a front which has been staged to appear like a back region
Stage 4: a back that is accessible to tourists but in a restricted manner
Stage 5: a back that has been ‘cleaned up’ for the benefit of the tourist
Stage 6: “Goffman’s back region; the kind of social space that motivates touristic consciousness” (ibid: 598).

MacCannell suggests that a “false back is more insidious and dangerous than a false front, or an inauthentic demystification of social life is not merely a lie but a superlie, the kind that drips with sincerity” (ibid: 599). He refers to Boorstin (1961) who distinguishes between the active traveller, who is “in search of people, of adventure, of experience” (ibid: 600), and the passive tourist who is sightseeing and seeking pleasure, expecting everything to be done. Boorstin introduces the concept of ‘pseudo-event’ to capture the notion of a contrived experience separate from the realities of the ‘natives’. He argues that Boorstin’s view of the tourist is unhelpful, that rather than seeking the contrived ‘pseudo-event’, tourists seek authentic experiences, instead preferring Goffman’s insights. However, MacCannell concludes that tourists enter tourism spaces because of the experience which is not part of their routine, though may be for those locals domiciled in this space. Goffman’s front-back regions usefully allows the distinction to be made about what is staged in contrast to tourist attitudes about “getting in with the natives”, which “is to enter into a quest for authentic experiences, perceptions and insights” (ibid: 602) of which there are stages of progression. Rather than make a leap from tourist to traveller (Boorstin) the tourist is caught in a space in which the authentic is incrementally sought.

Cohen (1979) examines the Boorstin – MacCannell debate and argues that their focus upon the tourist is misplaced: “ ‘*the* tourist’ does not exists as a type” (ibid: 180), rather that people “desire different modes of touristic experiences” (ibid: 180). Instead, he presents a “highly speculative” (ibid: 198) phenomenological analysis of tourism experiences. Travel arises when there is a need to cross over the “boundaries of one’s life-space” (ibid: 180) and makes the contrast between travel for necessity and for pleasure (to relieve tensions or seek out attractions). Within primitive society, where “powerful mythological imagery” (ibid: 182) locates a sacred centre outside the life-space, this gives rise to the ‘pilgrimage’. In mass tourism, the focus is upon “interest in the culture, social life and natural environment of others” (ibid: 182). Thus, “pilgrimages and modern tourism are thus predicated on different social conceptions of space and contrary views concerning the kinds of destinations worth visiting and of their location in the socially constructed space” (ibid: 183). This distinction in roles is often conflated, though the underlying ‘cognitive structures’ remain distinct. He presents a typology of tourist experiences based upon an analysis of the meaning of “culture, social life and natural environment of others” held by the traveller. Central in this analysis is the importance of the ‘quest for the centre’ and the ‘nature of that centre’, with the ‘privately constructed’ world of the traveller being positioned between the two poles of the pilgrim and the modern tourist. This typology comprises of five modes of experiences:

- Existential: to go ‘native’, give full commitment to their ‘elective’ centre – one chosen and converted to. This is the most challenging experience in terms of its self-realisation. Cohen distinguishes between ‘realistic idealist’ (who accept shortcomings), ‘starry-eyed idealists’ (who see perfection irrespective of shortcomings) and ‘critical idealists’ (who reject the reality). To overcome shortcomings the experience is falsified by those providing it.
- Experimental: to seek an alternative spiritual centre by experimenting with alternative lifestyles.
- Experiential: to “look for meaning in the life of others” (ibid: 186) through authentic experiences of these others.
- Recreational: is a form of entertainment, which restores well-being and is pleasurable; the authentic is irrelevant.
- Diversionary: is “mere escape from the boredom and meaninglessness of routine.... it is the meaningless pleasure of the centre-less person” (ibid: 185-186)

Cohen concludes that this typology spans the tourist’s motivation range of between ‘mere pleasure’, the domain of ‘leisure’, and the ‘quest for meaning and authenticity’, which characterises the domain of ‘religion’. However, there are two problems recognised. First is the distinction between what is intended and that which is realised. Second is the falsification of that which is experienced by the tourist, which draws attention to the mechanisms which give rise to the illusion experienced. .

A third postmodernist view is offered by Wang (1999), grounded in an evaluation of the two established views developed by MacCannell (1973) and Cohen (1988). Wang contrasts MacCannell objectivist view and Cohen’s constructivist view, though proposes that they are both object-related concepts. The objectivist view is concerned with the originality or authenticity of the object, as in the context of a museum (objective authenticity). However, this view has been critiqued as oversimplistic with Bruner (1994) being cited to illustrate this who identifies four different interpretation of authenticity: reproduction to resemble; historically accurate simulation; the originals; the “authority or power which authorizes, certifies, and legally validates authenticity” (ibid: 354). The constructivist view is that which is “projected onto toured objects” (ibid: 352). Authenticity is socially constructed within a particular social context. There is no absolute original, that these are themselves inventions or constructions. Tourists are not seeking objective authenticity but symbolic authenticity, i.e. for what is perceived as a sign or symbol of the authentic. In response, Wang’s presents the postmodernist view (existential authenticity), which is an activity related concept focusing upon the individual, unfolded to reveal both inter-personal and intra-personal dimensions. Whilst, the object-related authenticity is associated with the ‘toured objects’, activity-related authenticity places emphasis upon ‘tourist experiences’ (authentic experiences): “personal or intersubjective feelings activated by the luminal process of tourist activities” (ibid: 351). This arises in the escape from the daily and participation in the non-ordinary. The real and the fake become blurred with justification for what is contrived or reproduced, as exemplified with Disneyworld and the search for enjoyment. Wang discusses the ontological background to this specific orientation (e.g. Heidegger) stating that “existential authenticity denotes a special state of Being in which one is true to oneself, and acts as a counterdose to the loss of ‘true self’ in public roles and public spheres” (ibid: 358). Wang explores this raising the issue of ‘being true to oneself’, embracing emotions, feelings and spontaneity, and the implications for seeking within tourism, the escape from daily lives. Wang differentiates between intra-personal authenticity, which emphasises ‘bodily feelings’ (e.g. relaxation entertainment, sensation-seeking and excitement) and self-identity and the pursuit of self-realization, and inter-personal authenticity, escaping institutional inauthenticity to reinforce family ties or to participate in ‘communitas’ (e.g. pilgrimages, tour groups) in which relationships with others is as social equals. Wang concludes that authenticity can be achieved even when the toured object is inauthentic for explanations provided through the conceptualisation of authenticity as symbolic or existential.

The contribution of these core works is to demonstrate the multifarious nature of the concept of authenticity and what constitutes a tourist experience, with the added conflict of underpinning ideologies. However, Reisinger & Steiner (2006) argue that because of the “conflicting, irreconcilable differences’ about what constitutes ‘object authenticity’ that “object authenticity as a concept and a term should be abandoned by researchers” (ibid: 81) and present an argument supporting the notion of ‘existential authenticity’ in Steiner & Reisinger (2006). In response, Belhassen & Caton (2006) make the point, whilst ontologically problematic, authenticity is a term used by those engaging in the everyday of what is the tourism industry and thus cannot be ignored. Chhabra (2010: 805) iterates this point: “demand for objective authenticity exists and will continue to prevail”. These both draw attention to the distinction between observers as researchers and observers as tourists and how the latter perceive the concept of authenticity, which the former need to conceptually explain. This, in turn, raises the question of how to reconcile differences. Belhassen et al (2008) provided insight into this by drawing attention to the interplay between place and socially constructions, suggesting that the conceptualisation of authenticity needs to consider the complex interplay between the object and the social as a multi-dimensional construct. Moscardo & Pearce (1999) draw attention to the role of judgement and the value attached to a setting. This is substantiated by Waitt (2000), who established that tourists’ perceptions of authenticity did vary according to factors such as age and gender.

2.3 Inauthenticity: authenticity and commodification

Whilst the discussion to date has been concerned with that which is authentic, there is the issue of what is clearly not authentic, i.e. is inauthentic. An insight is provided by Cole (2007) whose ethnographical study of two villages in a poor and remote mountainous region in Indonesia, questions how one conceptualises authenticity, suggesting that attention should be upon “how the notion is articulated and by whom” (ibid: 956). Although the emphasis of the study is upon how different stakeholders in a community have different requirements about how the community is developed and authenticity is appropriated as a powerful resource for local economic development, attention is drawn to the notion of commodification. Thus, whilst commodification can be used to construct or affirm identity, depending upon who owns the resources, it can also degrade, with the meaning associated with the goods being lost.

An early proponent of this argument was Greenwood (1977), who reasoned that if something can be priced then it can be bought and sold and thus can be handled as a commodity. The OED definition of a commodity, “a kind of thing produced for use or sale” (OED), unpacks to reveal two elements, money and things which have no intrinsic meaning other than their utility or market value. Greenwood argues that in tourism, local culture is a resource which is open to commodification, but with the danger that meaning dissolves as being paid becomes the priority and tourists develop rights. Moreover, “commoditisation of culture does not require the consent of the participants; it can be done by anyone” (ibid: 137). Trilling (1972) provides an explanation that draws upon an early work by Marx to make the distinction between the self and the transformation of self by money; “money, in short, is the principle of the inauthentic in human existence” (Trilling, 1972: 124).

Drawing upon Greenwood (1977) and MacCannell (1973), Cohen (1988) formulated three assumptions. Tourism leads to commoditisation. Commoditisation destroys local authenticity, instead manifests as ‘staged authenticity’ (MacCannell, 1973) (e.g. the staged or false ‘back’). Staged authenticity is counter to the “tourist’s genuine desire for authentic experiences (Cohen, 1988: 372). Cohen suggests that “’authenticity’ is a socially constructed concept and its social (as against philosophical) connotation is, therefore, not given, but ‘negotiable” (ibid: 374). Thus the manner in which its meaning is negotiated should be the focus of discourse. He subsequently discusses how authenticity can be conceived. First is the distinction between the authentic and ‘fake’ objects within the context of museums. The authentic is viewed as traditional, hand-made and natural, in contrast to the modern, artificial and machine-made. Within the context of ethnic art, the notions of authenticity and falseness are presented as existing along a continuum between ‘complete authenticity’ and ‘complete falseness’. Authenticity can be viewed as an emergent property, one aspect of the ‘invention of tradition’ (e.g. Disneyland). Indeed, the new ‘external public’ (i.e. tourists) offer opportunities to embed ‘authentic’ messages in novel ways within “cultural products intended solely for the ‘internal’ local ethnic public” (ibid: 380). Cohen draws upon Appadurai (1986) to examine the opportunity tourists provide (as strangers) to commoditise (through its staging) that (e.g. rituals, costumes, arts) which is normally safeguarded from commoditisation, but, in doing so, lose their intrinsic meaning and, thus, lose the interest of those normally engaged in its production. The exploitative nature of this is revealed: “since the process is frequently initiated by culture-brokers and touristic entrepreneurs from outside the local community, it may well lead to the exploitation of the locals and of their cultural resources by outsiders” (ibid: 381). Moreover, this can lead to degradation of the offering. However, the preceding scenario is not inevitable, with it offering an outlet for self-expression, thus becoming meaningful, not only for internal consumption, but also for consumption by an external public. The different meanings are not necessarily exclusive with the new meanings being additive. However, “one has to bear in mind that commoditization often hits a culture not when it is flourishing” (ibid: 382). Cohen, argues that it is through tourism that the bearers of a culture are able to preserve “a meaningful local or ethnic identity which they might otherwise have lost” (ibid: 382), citing the Third World to illustrate this. Cohen concludes that “commoditisation does not necessarily destroy the meaning of cultural products” (ibid: 383). Moreover, mass tourism absorbs these cultural products as authentic’ in a looser manner than “intellectuals and experts” (ibid), as long as there are at least some authentic traits present.

The intermediary role of retailers between the local artisan and the tourist was examined by Moreno & Littrell (2001). They conducted a study of 15 small retailers in Antigua, Guatemala. It focused upon how retailers embedded ‘tradition’ within the way they “thought about, organised, and operated their business” (ibid: 668). Marketing approaches varied from advertising to positioning of the business, with “location of their business [as] a form of promotion” (ibid: 667). Moreno & Littrell (2001) noted that “One of the most significant findings that emerged from this study was the multiple ways in which retailers thought about and conceptualized tradition in Guatemalan textile products marketed to tourists” (ibid: 672). The retailer perception of the objects sold and how these related to their culture and traditions was described as a set of ‘tradition characteristics’: colour (resulting from natural occurring processes), decorative elements (holding meaning for the Indians), fibre content (traditional, e.g. cotton), function & meaning (native costumes), production techniques (hand production and detailed finish) and tools and equipment (traditional loom). Visual displays of merchandise complemented by appeal to the senses (e.g. scents, music, colour) were viewed as important aspects of their merchandising activity. Retailer’s conceptualisation of tradition and their personal views / beliefs about the preservation of tradition shaped decision making and daily activities, who they sourced from, who their target market is and what product characteristics they would select, as well as ancillary activities such as education and humanitarian activities. Decision making was shaped by underlying motives; complementing the need to have a commercial orientation, there tended to be an altruistic desire to provide work for local artisans. Moreover, production techniques, tools and equipment were important in defining the tradition: “indigenous weaving traditions were central to the procurement, development, production, and marketing of tourism oriented textile products in Antigua, Guatemala. Founded in indigenous weaving customs such products were invested with a cultural and geographic identity that was important to retailers and consumers alike” (ibid: 681). However, despite tradition being conceptualised in widely differing ways, “all textile retailers in Antigua believe they operate their businesses within a framework of tradition” (ibid: 679). One issue concerned the undercurrent of change and how it was negotiated: “retailers described contemporary tourism oriented products as “adapted tradition,” “contemporary tradition,” and “90s tradition” revealing their emphasis on the processual nature of tradition that responds to contemporary conditions” (ibid: 680).

2.4 Authenticity, cities and heritage

The strong association between concept of authenticity and heritage is evidenced in the debates about authenticity in the context of the World Heritage (Jokilehto, 2006; Stovel, 2007; Pendlebury, Short & While, 2009). Moreover, the association between authenticity and heritage within a tourism context is long established (e.g. Greenwood, 1977). However, heritage sites often provide not only an experience of the past, but also shopping, entertainment and relaxation (Waitt, 2000). Indeed, Poria et al (2003) makes the distinction "between *heritage tourists* and *tourists at heritage sites*" (ibid: 249), that they are different with different expectations about the location. Irrespective, that to understand tourist behaviour then it is necessary to understand the relationship between the visitor and that visited (artefact / space).

Whilst heritage can be associated with a wide range of contexts, it is perhaps in the urban context that the tensions are most fully revealed. Ashworth & Tunbridge (1999) draw attention to the "difficulties, paradoxes and uncertainties of heritage planning in the cities of Central Europe" (ibid: 116). These tensions, which involve "ideological reinterpretations; realignments of the importance of individual versus collective property rights over cultural heritage; and uncertainty in the roles and operation of the public planning systems in its relation with free market commercial pressures" (ibid: 116) probably have widespread resonance. McKercher et al (2005) who examine the relationship between the different stakeholders with an interest in tourism and cultural heritage management, note that the greater the number of stakeholders, the greater the likelihood for conflict, with this more likely arising amongst peripheral stakeholders on the basis of ideology, with core stakeholders more likely to resolve conflict. One important stakeholder is the local community. It is not uncommon to find that heritage sites and living communities share the same space and that interdependencies exist (Nuryanti, 1996).

An example of the importance of local community is the study by Li (2003) which reveals the contrast between the renovated Chinatown in Singapore, which is "booming and bustling with tourist and other commercial activities" but lacks "spontaneity and authenticity" (ibid: 258) and Hong Kong's Ping Shan Cultural Heritage Trail, which is "characterised by spontaneity and authenticity of the local lifestyle, [but] is abandoned and devoid of tourist facilities and commercial activities" (ibid). Li argues that visitors to both locations came for consumption related activities such as entertainment and shopping rather than the cultural heritage. Thus, the main appeal was the vibrancy of contemporary life in the local communities. Whilst the buildings and community were restyled in Singapore to allow Chinatown to be made more attractive to tourists, Hong Kong's historic buildings were buried among new high rise construction developments. This comparative study draws attention to the "inherent contradictions between conservation and change associated with tourism development", though argues that these "constitute resources more than threats for heritage tourism" (ibid: 259).

An insight into the mechanisms at play in how a heritage site is developed in revealed in Halewood & Hannam's (2001) study of European Viking heritage tourism: "The actual creators of the Viking heritage tourism in Europe, from the archaeologists to the theme-park entrepreneurs, are all very much concerned with the degree of authenticity they are putting forward. At one end of a spectrum, there is the Viking Ships' Museum at Bygdøy which presents icons of pure authenticity against which other Viking heritage activity is constantly compared to by re-enactors, tourists, and tourism organizers." (ibid: 574). At the Jorvik Viking centre in York, UK, there is the juxtaposition between the quest for accurate representation using expertise and the staged presentation of the site. Cohen (1988) argues that " 'authenticity' is a socially constructed concept and its social (as against philosophical) connotation is, therefore, not [a primitive] given, but 'negotiable'." (ibid: 374). However, Robb (1998) notes that, whilst tourists do negotiate their interpretation of visual messages (signboards, displays) in a heritage site, archaeologists are more concerned "with accuracy and the reliability of evidence" (ibid: 582). This is affirmed by Halewood & Hannam (2001: 578) who conclude that "The negotiation of authenticity is not an option at a museum, but in a Viking market it is almost inevitable and even part of the fun of the experience". The market, with its blend of the authentic and commodified offerings, provides an opportunity to experience the 'fun of medieval fairs'. However, Waitt (2000), in a study of the Rocks, Sydney, reveals how a statutory body can sanction and ascribe meaning to the development of a heritage site based on its selective interpretation of official sanitised history, suppressing other aspects of history for whatever reason. It drew attention to the activist opposition to initial government development proposals by the local community and unions. This reinforces the conclusion by Teo & Yeoh (1997) that "Local forces are important and can temper market forces from obliterating deliberately or accidentally the heritage and culture of a place" (ibid: 210), that there is a need to understand local histories and the local people who live and work in a locality.

2.5 The operationalisation of concept of authenticity

The concept of ‘authenticity’ has been necessarily operationalised by the World Heritage Centre for the purpose of inscribing sites with World Heritage status. The criteria for a site to be given World Heritage status includes the requirement to “meet the conditions of integrity and/or authenticity and must have adequate protection and management system to ensure its safeguarding” (WHC, 2011).

The word ‘authenticity’ is defined and incorporated in the World Heritage Centre’s Operational Guidelines with specific reference to the Nara Document on Authenticity drafted in 1994 by 45 experts (WHC, 2011). It argues that a culture is expressed both tangibly and intangibly, this expression constituting its heritage. Conservation is grounded in the values ascribed to this heritage. These values are understood through the information sources about these values. Authenticity is assessed on the ‘requisite basis’ of the credibility and truthfulness of information sources that provide understanding of the values that underpin a heritage. Attributes include:

> form and design; materials and substance; use and function; traditions and techniques and management systems; location and setting; language, and other forms of intangible heritage; spirit and feeling; and other internal and external factors… The use of these sources permits elaboration of the specific artistic, historic, social, and scientific dimensions of the cultural heritage being examined” (ibid: 22).

Moreover, any judgement is made “within the cultural contexts to which it belongs (ibid: 22). The Operational Guidelines require the identification of all applicable attributes and the degree by which they express authenticity. Reconstruction is viewed as “justifiable only in exceptional circumstances” (ibid: 22).

This articulation of what constitutes authenticity draws attention to the truthful and credible expression of the site’s culture in terms of a range of attributes. The focus is upon the object, but also the meaning ascribed to the object. However, it is unclear from whose perspective meaning is ascribed. Is it the meaning judged by experts, the indigenous people whose culture is under scrutiny or those who have more recently inhabited the location associated with the culture?

In 2004, the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH) adopted the Charter for the Conservation of Unprotected Architectural Heritage and Sites in India. This provided a simpler operational definition of authenticity: “The traditional knowledge systems and the cultural landscape in which it exists, particularly if these are ‘living’, should define the authenticity of the heritage value to be conserved” (INTACH, 2004). Where this was absent, then reference would be made to the Nara Document.

2.6 Synthesis

This review reaffirms that the notions of authenticity and the authentic experience are complex, with little consensus about how they should be deconstructed. Some adhere that authenticity resides in the artefact or the object of attention, whilst other relate it to self-realisation and experience. MacCannell’s (1973) focus upon the object of attention suggests that providers of tourism experiences stage these experiences to some degree. In contrast, Cohen (1979) focuses upon the nature of the tourist experience recognising that this can vary from a quest for meaning in the object and going ‘native’, to one orientated towards escapism and pure pleasure. Wang (1999) offers a third perspective which centres upon self-realisation. Whatever view is adopted authenticity is an emergent construct from how the complex interplay between object and social is perceived and understood, which calls for a multi-dimensional construction of authenticity (Belhassen et al (2008). However, this interest with the concept of authenticity needs to acknowledge the counter view of the inauthentic. This concept has been associated with not just the notion of fakeness, but with that of commodification; that by assigning a monetary value, the priority shifts from the meaning associated with the object to economic gain, with meaning being diminished or lost. However, in practice, it is possible to balance the desire to provide the authentic with the need for economic gain, as illustrated using the example of retailers, who intermediate between local artisans and tourists.

Authenticity has strong associations with the context of heritage (Greenwood, 1977). However, heritage sites, particular urban sites are complex locations with many stakeholders. Moreover, tourists need not be particularly interested in the heritage despite their visits. Tensions may arise between the various stakeholders (e.g. public policy makers, heritage site managers) about how a site should be managed and developed (Ashworth & Tubridge, 1999; McKercher et al, 2005), particularly if one stakeholder is the World Heritage Centre, which has authenticity as a criterion for designation to World Heritage status. One other key stakeholder is the local community (Li, 2008) and the contemporaneous life they bring to a site, but a life-style which is not disassociated from the site’s past. Debates about which tensions may arise include the issues of preservation, identity, local economic development and the nature of the tourist experience. This suggests that issues relating to authenticity need to be located in the context of the debates about the site.

The review suggests that a deconstruction of the concepts of authenticity and the authentic experience require a complex framework which captures the inherent variety in its possible interpretation, especially by the different stakeholders who have vested interest in a locality. The proposed framework (Figure 1) identifies four distinct aspects: regulatory context, spatial context, intermediary and experient.

Regulatory context: legislation, policy and politics (Teo & Yeoh, 1997; Waitt, 2000; McKercher et al, 2005)

Spatial context: what exists as the fabric of the space (Teo & Yeoh, 1997; Li, 2003; McKercher et al, 2005)

Intermediary: what is introduced to interface between what exists and the experient; whether it is staged or invented (MacCannell, 1973; Cohen, 1988; Moreno & Littrell, 2001)

Experient: what is sought and how received – the experience (i.e. physiological, emotional, cognitive) (Cohen, 1979; Wang, 1999; Poria et al, 2003)

The **regulatory context** is exemplified by local and national laws as well as the rules / code of other agencies. It is underpinned by politics or vested interests and the power to influence decisions. The **spatial context** is the locally bounded context in which issues of stakeholders have relevance. It recognises that the location has resulted from the progressive domestication or taming of the natural environment (Silverstone & Haddon, 1996) and that current perceptions are of the present and the past (historical and archaeological). Whilst the local context provides the fabric in which authenticity is perceived (i.e. the artefactual legacy of the past), it is complemented by **intermediaries** (e.g. local producers and service providers) who interface between all that inhabit the spatial context and the **experient**, the tourist (or local resident) who has experiences in the locality, whose views and judgements are a function of the physiology, cognition and emotions of the person, as well that person’s characteristics (e.g. gender, age) and background (e.g. education and social associations). These four distinct aspects do not operate in isolation of each other but are inter-related, each shaping the development of te others.

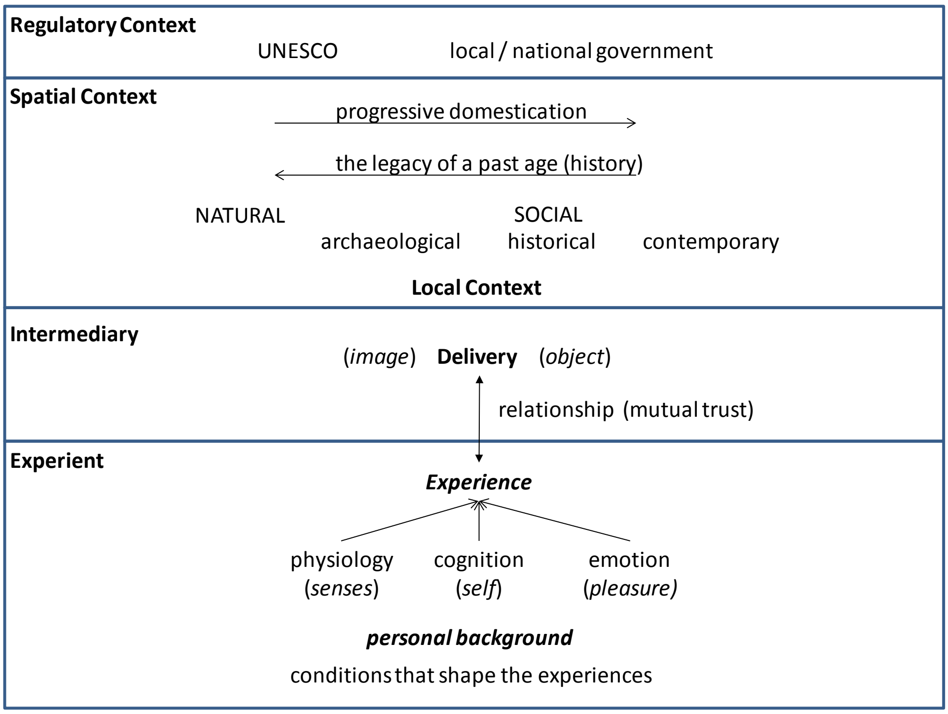

Figure 1 A deconstruction of the concept of an authentic experience

3 Methodology

The focus of this study has been the Royal Mile, site selected because of its iconic status as well as its multi-functional role, serving not only tourists but also residents and workers. The complexity of this study has led to the use of a mixed methodology which provided a variety of sources of data. The study commenced with an audit of the street in July 2011 to identify street facing sites to establish the composition of the street in terms of sites and their primary activity. This involved the compilation of a database of these sites, which commenced with a search of all properties listed by the Scottish Assessors Association’s Valuation Role, available online (www.saa.gov.uk). This was followed by a physical audit of the street, cross-checking database details with observations of actual sites, as well as the recording of observations with photographs. This included visits to a number of retail outlets to understand the product offerings. These businesses were then categorised based on online material and visits. Categorisations were based upon a simple framework of product offering, price bracket, quality, uniqueness and period of establishment. The audit was repeated exactly a year later, this time to assess changes in ownership, tenancy, image and use.

Between May 2011 and July 2012, particular in the months after the first audit, there were a number of semi-structured interviews with leading stakeholders to understand the significance of the Royal Mile to them. This included one city councillor, a retailer, the founder of a leading attraction, community committee members from two community associations, several representatives of the City Council as well as the Director of a Heritage organisation. There were also a number of informal discussions with stakeholders, these arising from chance meetings at various local events. To compensate for the lack of data from visitors, comments were examined from a well known user-generated-content tourism review website. This source of spontaneous commentary about the Royal Mile is argued to be a valid source as it is as likely to reflect honest opinion as views received through survey or interview.

Supplementing this was attendance to a Charrette addressing the Royal Mile on the 12th January 2012, organised by the Edinburgh City Council as part of a consultation process on the future development of the Royal Mile. This provided insight into the range of issues which concerned those participating in this consultation process, as well as the opportunity for informal discussions with attendees. Also used were official documents primarily from the City of Edinburgh Council and the World Heritage Committee.

4 The Royal Mile

4.1 Introduction

The Royal Mile, the main street in the Old Town of Edinburgh has a long historical heritage; the Palace of Holyroodhouse, at its east end, was first established as a monastery by David I in 1128, but Edinburgh Castle, at its west end, has a much older pedigree. The many historical buildings located between these book-ends are a legacy of its rich heritage and ongoing development. It is in the context of developments over one hundred years ago that the concept of authenticity and inauthenticity perhaps first appears. Morris (2007) draws attention to the ‘re-making of Edinburgh Castle in the later half of the nineteenth century. The restoration of buildings within Edinburgh Castle was driven by the desire common-place at that time to assert Scottish identity in the manner of their restoration. Thus, the buildings within the castle were preserved with an imaginative interpretation of what might be in keeping with the past, which was legitimised as an authentic restoration by reference to historical records and other surviving buildings.

The following account provides insight into the Royal Mile. It commences with a profile of the street, drawing upon an early but pertinent attempt to develop a tourism strategy for the Old Town in which the street is located. This is accompanied by an insight into its World Heritage status. This is followed by an insight into how the visitor views the street. The next section introduces the offering to the tourist focusing upon two specific forms, one an attraction, the other being retail, but which is also the issue of controversy. The following two sections provide an insight into different viewpoints about the street, the first being that of a local community, the other that of a local councillor. The account is brought up-to-date with two recent developments, the first being the release of a tourism strategy for Edinburgh with specific focus upon the Royal Mile and the second a Charrette held in January 2012 bringing together a wide range of stakeholders with view to attempting an participatory approach to developing the Royal Mile.

4.2 The Street

The Royal Mile is a spatially defined location, likened to the spine of the herring-bone structure that characterises the Old Town, with narrow ‘closes’ running off it on either side. It is a passageway of variable width, but bounded by high buildings on both sides. It comprises of five parts; feeding from the Castle is Castlehill which passes into Lawnmarket, High Street, Canongate then Abbey Strand which is terminated with Holyroodhouse. The street is approximately one mile in length, but only a few hundred yards in width, though this varies along its length.

The street hosts a rich configuration of buildings, monuments and other structures, some of which date back over 500 years (e.g. the oldest dwelling house is Moubray House, built around 1477 (Birrell, 1980)), whilst others are more recent (e.g. the building of the Scottish Parliament started in 2000, it opening in 2004). Building type varies considerably in terms of age, architecture and function, with residential properties intermingled with non-residential with their many different uses. Indeed, the buildings have housed Scotland’s nobility, intellectuals and murderers to name a few. Moreover the buildings have witnessed many events, of which, today, the annual Edinburgh Fringe Festival and the bi-annual Thistle Service of the Order of the Thistle (Figure 3, Figure 4) are but two. The street accommodates a significant variety of tourism products, as well as a diverse range of other facilities and services that cater for a wide range of non-tourist stakeholders, including residents, both permanent and temporary (e.g. students), workers and both local and national government policy makers. To illustrate, Figure 2 reveals the interplay of both past with the present and also the different functions served such as justice, work, religion, public gatherings and tourism. Figure 3 reveals how tradition lives in the present, but establishes continuity with the past (Hobsbawn, 1983). Moreover, it can be crowd-puller with the world watching (Figure 4), even if the weather is ‘dreich’.

Figure 2 The interplay of Justice (Law Courts [built 1632-9 as Parliament Hall then increasingly used for legal cases, re-faced in the 19th century] with parked white prison vans), Work (roadwork), Religion (east gable of St Giles Cathedral [church first mentioned on site 854, current exterior dates from 1829]), Public gatherings (Mercat Cross [restored 1885, but dates back to 14th century]) and Tourism (signage promoting ‘scary’ tours [between Mercat Cross and roadwork sign] and tourists [note the photographer in foreground]). [dates provided by Birrell, 1980] (from Harwood & El-Manstrly, 2012a)

Figure 3 Awaiting the Queen for the Thistle Service of The Order of the Thistle (5th July 2012)

Figure 4 The Queen has arrived (5th July 2012)

4.2.1 The Old Town Strategy, June 1989

In 1989, “a visionary, authentic strategy” (EPG, 1989: 1) that presented a vision and development plan for the Old Town which was “commercially attractive and socially beneficial” (ibid: 5) was produced. This was the outcome of a review of the Old Town, as part of a broader Edinburgh Tourism II Programme, which aimed to “firmly establish the city as a major international tourism destination” (ibid: 1). The strategy acknowledged the distinction between tourism and local community, recognising the Old Town as “a complex environment. Its many layers of history, personality, significant structures, opportunities and daily activities are not readily revealed” (ibid: 67). The Old Town is described as evolving “organically over a periods of centuries as a complex, jumbled, multi-use community, where homes, work-places, and areas of recreation were integrated in an unplanned manner driven by a complex changing mix of market forces” (ibid: 17). Underpinning the strategy is the need for a “living, exciting, organic community” (ibid: 17). One weakness of the area was the “lack of local serving retail establishments” (ibid: 19), noting “a serious shortage of grocers” (ibid: 21).

As a tourism destination, it raised the importance of synergistic effects: “perhaps more important than the impact of any single attraction is the synergy between attractions.” (ibid: 30); that visitors “can be encouraged to visit The Royal Mile as an integrated experience” (ibid: 30) and that “it is understood by individual discovery” (ibid: 39). It identified the need for a clear Old Town identity, as well as issues relating to traffic, maintenance and development. Drawing upon other successful city tourism initiatives, it noted the importance of the pedestrian’s comfort, that tourists are mostly pedestrians, which thus draws attention to the pedestrian environment. Moreover that

> “recurring themes among successful physical improvement programmes are elements of animation – banners, flags; directional and interpretive signage; café opportunities; aesthetically appealing window displays; large market spaces with interesting mixtures of local and international specialities; and comfortable, visually appealing gathering places which serve as focal points” (ibid: 33)

The vision, based upon consultation with stakeholders, was stated as

> “to create the finest street in Europe – the Royal Mile – and to surround it with what will certainly become one of the most attractive and exciting environments for living, relaxing, working and visiting that can be found anywhere in the world” (ibid: 35)

Underpinning this vision are five objectives, one of which is to provide

> “a complete Old Town experience”, which embraces “the full drama of Old Town – its history and personalities, its physical beauty and special character, its excitement as a marketplace with foods, goods and interesting, friendly people” (ibid: 37).

However, it was also noted that the “Old Town is not a museum” (ibid: 38). In presenting the vision it is stated

> “All agree that the Old Town is an important and special place that must be treated with respect. Its authentic richness, vibrancy, and diversity must be sustained, enhanced, and passed on to future generations with the care and attention it deserves” (ibid: 36).

The strategy presented a wide range of proposals, which included a Castle tram, widened walkways, shop frontage improvements, stone-cleaning and improved signage. How much of the strategy was implemented is unclear. Irrespective, the strategy draws attention to the authentic nature of the fabric of Royal Mile, the mingle of its different stakeholders, as well as the synergistic opportunities of complementary offerings located within this fabric to provide a tourist experience.

4.2.2 Status as World Heritage site

In 1995, the Royal Mile became part of a World Heritage site when the Old and New Towns of Edinburgh were inscribed by UNESO World Heritage Committee (WHC). The evaluation by the Advisory Body to the WHC reported:

> The level of authenticity in Edinburgh is high. It retains its historic role as the administrative and cultural capital of Scotland and has preserved both its layout and its stock of high-Quality buildings to a remarkable degree. (WHC, 1995:81)

Recognition of this prestigious award led to the formation in 1999 of Edinburgh World Heritage (EWH) as a not-for profit organisation, with donations being received from both City of Edinburgh Council and Historic Scotland. Its aims include to champion the site, to monitor, co-ordinate, financially assist developments of the site and to promote the site (www.ewht.org.uk/what-we-do, accessed, 26th May 2012). Moreover, this status is promoted by Edinburgh Tourism Action Group (ETAG) to Edinburgh businesses as an opportunity to attract visitors (ETAG, 2011).

The existing statutory instruments (e.g. Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997) were regarded as a sufficient mechanism to protect the site (WHC, 2006). Despite this, a variety of development proposals for Edinburgh, including one (the Caltongate development) in very close proximity to the Royal Mile, led the WHC, in their 2008 review of the state of inscribed properties, to express concern about the potential impact of the Caltongate development upon “the integrity and outstanding value of the World Heritage property” (WHC, 2008: 207). The development was suspended when the London based developer, Mountgrange Capital, went into administration in March 2009. The subsequent acquisition of the site by a new developer, Artisan Real Estate Investors (South Africa), reopens the debate.

4.3 The visitor

The views of visitors are revealed by their comments on a well known user-generated-content tourism review website. Of the 1181 reviews posted by the 24th June 2012, 636 rated the Royal Mile as excellent with only 9 rating it as poor or terrible.

A simple content analysis based on the frequency of occurrence of words use, presented in word cloud format (Figure 5), reveals the disposition of commentators towards the Royal Mile. The most commonly used word is ‘shops’ suggesting its significance to the Royal Mile experience in terms how the street is perceived, irrespective of whether positive or negative. Two words that draw attention to how the ‘street’ is to be experienced are the words ‘walk’ and ‘see’, with ‘great’, ‘lovely’ and ‘interesting’ each suggesting how received. The ‘castle’ is a prominent feature, with ‘buildings’ and ‘restaurants’ also having weight.

Figure 5 Words used in comments about the Royal Mile (Word Cloud generated using Wordle)

Closer inspection of the comments reveals the contrast between general admiration for the history, architecture and heritage related attractions (e.g. the castle, palace, St Giles and the museums) and the very mixed views about the retail offerings (‘shops’). Of those that do draw attention to retail offerings, a number appear entirely happy with the tourist gift shops and the retail offerings (e.g. “some of the items for sale are actually really nice”), whilst others distinguish between the retail offerings, with warnings about the ‘overdose’ of ‘tacky’ shops or ‘traps’ which offer imitations, gimmicks, junk or kitsch. One reviewer goes so far as to issue a caution, “A word of caution though, the shops on the royal are owned mostly by an Indian family, so check carefully to be sure the items you are purchasing are from Scotland and not China, Pakistan or India”. Another takes a very negative view: “totally spoilt by the tawdriest souvenir shops selling fake kilts, 'see you Jimmy' wig hats and cheap (quality not price) cashmere and eating houses of the poorest quality. Beauty transformed into a squalid theme park that Scotland should be ashamed of”. However, the profile of the respondents, in terms of age and ‘likes’ is perhaps suggestive of their expectations and the acceptability of what is experienced. This individualist view of how a place is viewed is compounded by the timing of the comments in that the Royal Mile attracts different types of tourists at different times during the year. It is also compounded by the insight provided by one interviewed tourism product provider, who drew attention to different customer attitudes towards their product offering depending upon the customer’s home country. Customers from developed economies appeared to be more experience orientated, whilst those from emerging economies with little tradition of international travel were more product focused.

4.4 The Offering

The offering of the Royal Mile is characterised by its variety. An audit in 2011 of street facing non-residential properties reveals variety in the functional types of buildings (Table 1). However, the types listed in Table 1 disguise the variety contained (see Harwood & El-Manstrly, 2012 for a more complete account of the audit). For example, Attractions include seven museums, a castle and a palace. Food / Drink includes eleven pubs, eight fast-food outlets and a variety of restaurants, which comprise not only those serving Scottish fare but also Indian, Thai, Mexican (Figure 6) and Italian fare. Retail outlets include those serving those with interests in body-piercing, Christmas goods, the occult, soap and skateboards. There are 51 outlets that can be classified as gift shops and perhaps three which could be described as exclusively kilt shops. There are also four whisky shops, of which one also sells tobacco products, and one specialist cigar merchant. Whilst many outlets cater for tourists, a number serve the local community of residents and workers, these including a primary school, a pharmacy, four newsagents and bookmakers. Conspicuous is the absence of a butcher, baker or fishmonger.

TYPE	Count of non-residential sites (2011)
Accommodation	33
Attraction	15
Bank	1
bureau de change	1
Church	3
Closed	6
Court	1
food / drink	49
Government	1
Graveyard	1
historic building	1
local government	1
office	17
retail	98
School	2
Store	3
textiles mall	1
Tours	2
University	1
Venue	3
Grand Total	**240**

Table 1 An audit in 2011 of street-facing commercial properties on the Royal Mile (from Harwood & El-Manstrly, 2012a)

Figure 6 An ‘Authentic Mexican Restaurant’ (taken July, 2012)

The offering also extends to open-topped tour buses, street performers (including Braveheart’s William Wallace who collects for charity), market stalls and stands promoting tours (particularly those that exploit Edinburgh’s alleged reputation as a haunted city). The Royal Mile is also host to a range of pageants, such as the annual opening of the Scottish Parliament, the resurrected annual Riding of the Marches and the biannual Service of the Order of the Thistle. It is also host to one-off events such as the royal wedding of Zara Phillips on the 30th July 2011. Each year in August, part of the High Street is one of the popular sites of the Edinburgh Fringe festival. Likewise the Castle esplanade becomes a stage for the Edinburgh Military Tattoo. The cosmopolitan fusion of different cultures in revealed in Figure 7, which draws attention to the distinctly Scottish piper, whilst behind is a rickshaw for hire to those who wish to be cycled about town, and a hand-held sign directing (red arrow) people to a Kurdish & Middle East restaurant.

Figure 7 A view down the ‘top’ of the Royal Mile (Lawnmarket) revealing a heterogeneous blend of cultures: Scottish piper, a rickshaw and a hand-held sign directing (red arrow) people to a Kurdish & Middle East restaurant. (from Harwood & El-Manstrly, 2012a)

4.4.1 Attractions

The attractions include both public and privately owned facilities, some recently opened whilst others are more established. For example, Camera Obscura first opened its doors to the public in the 1850s, whilst The Queen's Gallery was opened in 2002. Each of the attractions has its own style of presenting its offerings, blending traditional showcasing of artefacts with more hands-on experiences. The notion of experience is explicitly promoted in the names of two attractions; Loch Ness Experience and The Scotch Whisky Experience. However, the former closed doors in September 2011, this site reopening as a Nero Coffee House.

A study of the other attraction, the Scotch Whisky Experience (SWE), provides an insight into the concept of a created experience underpinned by the need for authenticity. The SWE describes itself as

> We are not a distillery, but rather a visitor experience which incorporates all the facets of Scotch Whisky from production to blending, tasting, history and heritage. We do not produce Whisky, but can work well to compliment the experience of visiting a distillery.
> (www.scotchwhiskyexperience.co.uk/scotch-whisky/Questions_answers_whisky_tour.php, accessed, 5th June, 2012)

The SWE was the inspiration of the Managing Director of an Edinburgh whisky bottling and distribution company in the 1980s. Alastair McIntosh (AM) recognised the possibilities offered by a visitor centre to promote the quality and history of the Scottish whisky industry. However, underpinning this was the need for the offering to be authentic in other words, “the real thing, honest, truthful and a reflection of the integrity of whatever you are trying to promote” (AM, 2012). Endorsement for the venture was gained from both the Chairman of the Scotch Whisky Association as well as all the whisky producers. In July 1986, the Scotch Whisky Heritage Centre was incorporated and in 1987 it acquired the old Castle Hill School. This was a red sandstone building, built in 1887, but closed in 1951, but more importantly located close to Edinburgh Castle in Castlehill.

The Centre opened to the public in May 1988. Reflecting the view that the history of Scotch whisky was important, a tabloid car ride, incorporating appropriate sounds and smells, had been created which told the story of Scotch whisky since 1687 starting with an illicit still. This was complemented with free dram to taste the whisky. A shop offered a wide range of whiskies. A visitor survey of customer perceptions before and after the tour revealed that the outside of the Centre did not portray what was going on inside. It was perceived prior to the tour to be a static museum rather than the experience felt of the tour. This prompted much debate about the name of the Centre, which led to its renaming in 2006 to the Scotch Whisky Experience.

In 1998, a restaurant was opened which provided the opportunity to taste traditional Scottish food. With learning about Scotch whisky being a core value of the Centre, a Scotch Whisky Training School was launched in 2001.

The latter part of 2008 was taken up by the refurbishment of the tour, again informed by a customer survey of their views. The aim was to give the visitor what they wanted. The £3m project to revamp the tour was named Project APPLE, the acronym standing for: Authenticity, People, Passion, Learning and Excellence. It was felt that this “acronym captured all the points we were trying to go for” (AM, 2012). The historical tabloid was replaced by a ten minute car ride through a distillation process that has been translated into an innovative multimedia tunnel of displays, with the simulation of the associated sounds, smells and motions (e.g. vibration) of the process. The next experience after the ride was the provision of a “more sophisticated approach to tasting whisky; nosing, tasting and the flavours of whisky” (AM, 2012). This involved a detailed briefing about the different types of whisky based on region, supported by a scratch and sniff card to reveal sample smells of the regions. Underpinning this was the aim to educate visitors about the heterogeneous nature of whisky, that it was not one taste but a taste of considerable variety. This was followed by instruction in how to taste a chosen whisky from one of the regions, which was conducted in room containing the world’s largest whisky collection. This collection of over 3300 bottles, with the oldest bottle dating back to 1893, had been acquired by Diageo in March 2009. The revamped tour opened in May 2009.

The shop, an important outlet, reopened in March 2012 following a £1m revamp. The aim was to create an innovative experience which enabled the shopper to learn about whisky. The revamp included the provision of a feature-piece chart that mapped out the different flavours of malt whiskies and also the reorganisation of whiskies into their regional families.

An enduring quality of Scotch Whisky Experience has been the notion of authenticity. The authenticity of the SWE has been a configuration of different elements. One feature was learning: about how whisky is made, that there are differences in whiskies and how to differentiate these through the senses. Another has been experience “something that you [the visitor] are involved in” (AM, 2012): through the tasting, but also through the simulated experience of the production process. The quality of the staff, in particular, their knowledge and their ability to communicate (many were bilingual), was an important enabling part of this. Core has been the aim to create an experience that was ‘excellent’ or ‘world class’, that had more than appeal, had a WOW factor, but underpinned by “something that is credible, believable and clearly authentic from the point of view that this is the whole industry talking… every single detail of what goes on here has been approved and examined closely by the whole of the industry” (AM, 2012). This was the industry talking about itself, honestly and openly.

4.4.2 Controversy

The popularity of the Royal Mile with tourists has given rise to tensions between residents and local businesses, exemplified by the complaints about disturbances associated with the ‘night culture’, typified by ‘hen’ and ‘stag’ nights (S1, S2). However, one issue has risen to apparent prominence. This concerns the growing presence of ‘tartan tat’ retail outlets (Figure 8), first reported in the Scotsman on the 8th January, 2002 (S3). The ongoing coverage by the Scotsman, reveals feuds between traders (S4, S5), concerns about the genuine article(S6), the abuse of intellectual property (S7), the manner goods are promoted in the street (S8), the selling of Chinese made cashmere clothing labelled Made in Scotland’ (S9, S10), and accusations that the Royal Mile was suffering from ‘cultural rape’ (S11), becoming an ‘Eastern bazaar’ (S12) and turning into Disneyland (S13). However, it is counter-argued that there is customer demand for these items, otherwise these outlets would not be economically viable (S14). This draws attention to the differences in the type of retailers to be found in the Royal Mile.

Figure 8 ‘Tartan Tat’? (from Harwood & El-Manstrly, 2012a)

4.4.3 <u>Retail</u>

The diversity of retailer types is illustrated in the names of the gift shops and the message they attempt to invoke. For example, the following selection suggests a strong association of what is offered to the heritage and culture of Edinburgh and Scotland: *Celtic Craft, Elgin Cashmere, Hector Russell - kiltmaker, heritage of scotland.com, I LOVE EDINBURGH, Pride of Edinburgh, Real Scot Shop, Scottish Experience, The Genuine Article, The Luckenbooth*. However, product offerings vary considerably, from what might be referred to as ‘genuine’, that which is crafted in Scotland (jewellery, linen, pottery), identifiable as Scottish (e.g. shortbread, tartan, marmalade, whisky), perhaps branded (e.g. Ortak, Walkers, Pringle, Ross) or more expensive, to that which is of indeterminate origin, of questionable quality and cheap (‘tat’). Moreover, individual outlets vary in their product range, some veering to the more genuine, whilst others veer to the tat. Indeed, some retailers differentiate themselves from others, particularly the tat by proclaiming somewhere on their shop front, “Guaranteed Handmade in Scotland”, “Authentic Tartan Goods” or “Scottish family owned and run business”.

To illustrate perhaps, two contrasting retailers are described.

The first is responsible for the conversion of the reservoir at the top of the Royal Mile, built in 1849 and decommissioned in 1992, into a traditional working weaving Mill, producing tartan and kilts, with additional retail outlets. The site spans a number of floor-levels. The owner of the business is a third generation kiltmaker, with several other longer established outlets in the Royal Mile. The underlying philosophy of the mill is the belief that "shopping nowadays has got to be an experience", so the emphasis has been upon creating the experience. The weaving equipment is on display allowing the tourist to gaze upon the weaving process (Figure 9). There is a display of tartans and highland dress through the ages, as well as the opportunity to be photographed in 'ancient Scottish costume'. However, the kiltmakers are not visible, they "don't want people to watch them". The products are predominantly from Scotland and include clothing and accessories associated with the kilt, including jewellery. The price and quality is typified by reference to the distinction between a £19-96 kilt offered by cheaper competitors and the kilts offered by the mill: "an authentic kilt should be made of good quality wool, there should be a lot of material in it and it should be made in Scotland". Moreover, that "if people realise what a kilt is ... they would not want to spend £300 - £400 for the fun of it – if they want it for fun... to hang on a wall, then a £20 kilt is a £20 kilt", in other words, that there is a place for the cheap souvenir. Nevertheless, there is a distinction, and that to make this clear, "we try to educate them". Indeed, the online presence captures the shift away from a purely transactional exchange to one of dialogue: "We do not process orders & payments online, as we feel that a personal service is required when ordering your Highland Dress & Accessories" (www.geoffreykilts.co.uk/orderform.html, accessed 8th June 2012).

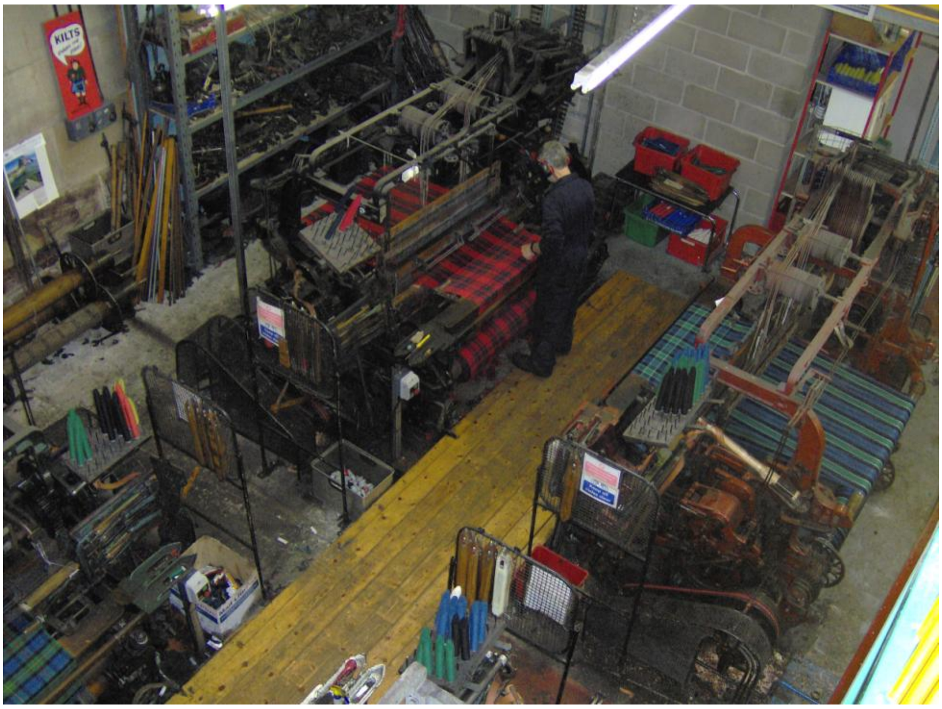

Figure 9 Gazing from the gallery onto the weaving area where tartan is produced (taken Sept, 2011)

In contrast is an apparently successful retailer, who has a number of outlets in Edinburgh, with upwards of nine in the Royal Mile. The retailer has also been the focus of some of the controversy previously mentioned (S11). Together with a competitor, they have the most significant presence on the Royal Mile in terms of retail outlets. However, the nature of retail outlet varies, with some targeting the more discerning customer who is prepared to pay for a better quality item (e.g. a tweed jacket or cashmere jersey). Others could be ascribed as catering for the cheaper tourist souvenir hunter, with product offerings characterised by their relatively low price (e.g. a kilt 'package' from £65) and perhaps poor quality. These latter outlets, in common with the practices of other retailers selling similar type goods, had displays outside the shop on the street (e.g. Figure 8). A browse in several outlets revealed a number of goods of indeterminate country of origin.

These two illustrations, reveals the marked difference in terms of product offering. For example, the kilt 'package' from £65 (which provides a set of items to wear with the kilt) contrasts with the named 'outfit' from £655 (e.g. Prince Charlie outfit). The difference might be accounted for by the quality of the kilt and accessories. However, another issue concerns the strategy of providing what appeals to customer and what customers will buy. This might account for the presence of an American bourbon in an outlet selling Scottish items, or cheap souvenirs which give a feel of being Scottish (e.g. soft toys), but have a Made in China label. It draws attention to the distinction between those are supporting that which is local and related to culture and heritage, even if the locals are new inhabitants from other cultures who bring with them their taste (e.g. non-Scottish restaurants), and those who are perhaps in for the 'fast buck', selling what will sell.

4.5 Community

In contrast to the retail sector is a local community comprising approximately 6,000 residents. It might not have a prominent profile on the front street. The high walls of the buildings, pitted with opaque windows, rising above the non-residential properties at street level, disguise any form of habiliation (Figure 10). However, a visit to the rear of the Royal Mile provides a glimpse into its living community though the way people with front doors on balconies utilise this visible space, perhaps with plants in pots or a stream of flags (Figure 11).

Figure 10 A view looking up the High Street towards St Giles Cathedral, with a crowd awaiting the Queen to make the return journey from the Thistle Service of The Order of the Thistle (5th July 2012) (from Harwood & El-Manstrly, 2012b)

Figure 11 Lady Stair Court 2 with its access to the balconies (from Harwood & El-Manstrly, 2012b)

This community is represented by a variety of community associations. Two prominent associations are the Edinburgh Old Town Association (formed 1975) and the Edinburgh Old Town Development Trust (formed

2009), both concerned with local developments. Also with an interest in the Royal Mile is The Cockburn Association, with a long established remit to protect Edinburgh’s heritage, being founded in 1875. One group that banded together in 2005, was the Canongate Community Forum (also known as SOOT: Save Our Old Town), which has had a prominent role in opposing the significant Caltongate Development to the north of Canongate.

Spokespeople for several of the associations raised a variety of concerns, in particular the out-of-balance relationship between economic development, in particular, tourism, and the local community. A view was expressed about Edinburgh’s status as a World Heritage site, which is about “preserving it, which is not what, if it is a city, it is about”. The main point being made was that; “Edinburgh is a living city, people live there… one of its great strengths is that it is not a museum”, “we want people to come and visit the place, but we want them to see a little bit more reality and the reality is disappearing really fast.. that any signs of it being a living city are rapidly disappearing”. However, “there seems to be an assumption with tourists that they are only interested in the past”, with associated activity giving credence to this view of Edinburgh as a museum. The Royal Mile is being transformed into a ‘stage set’, with the people who live and work in the street being rendered invisible and thus neglected. This was reflected in concern about the lack of retail outlets with offerings appropriate the local residents (e.g. grocers; in the mid-1980s “there was a very good fishmonger”) and the growing night-culture, typified by the popularity of Edinburgh as a destination for hen-nights and stag-nights, though this centres upon the adjacent Grassmarket and not too distant George Street, with the Royal Mile absorbing spill-over as well as providing accommodation for the revellers.

Prominent are the issues of tartan tat and the “very turned down image” of the street. There is the expectation that there would be retailers selling tourist goods, indeed “there has always been a few locals selling tourist goods”, but that the number of this type of outlet had recently mushroomed, displacing other types of outlets (e.g. bookshops, jewellery shops and community serving outlets). One viewpoint expressed was that having “kilts and outfits hanging outside around the windows… is not our culture... and that others should respect that” and that “most of us who are locals find this very distasteful and giving the wrong impression”. Moreover, there was the perception that Edinburgh City Council owned “a hugh number of the properties”, so should be able to control the proliferation of the tat outlets. However, an audit of the non-residential properties on the street reveals that many of the owners of the properties that are ascribed as tat are privately owned and are rented out.

4.6 A policymaker’s view

Policy making at a local level is the function of the local authority, in this case Edinburgh City Council. The notion of authenticity was not new. Efforts over the last few years to understand what makes a city destination successful drew upon the work of Communications Group consultancy and their report “The Power of Destinations” (TCG, 2006). The report highlighted authenticity as one of six elements for a successful destination brand; authenticity being associated with both the identity and ‘intrinsic essence and flavour’ of a location.

On the issue of authenticity and the Royal Mile one city councillor commented, “there is a story that you are trying to tell… it is to get over that this small capital city nestling between the Pentlands and the Forth has been here for time immemorial ... and we are old, slow and we will be here until time endeth”. The uniqueness of Edinburgh’s offering, its Old and New Towns is such; “you have this precious bit that you have got to protect at all times”. The emphasis is upon the historical fabric and protection. However, the street has changed:

> “this used to be a working street... it is not a working street any more... it used to be a street with gold-smiths, and Lords and lairds in levels above the street... it had pigs... everything happened in the street... you don’t see that anymore... you see a sanitised version of that... nonetheless it still gives the visitor an experience... I seldom hear people say they are disappointed by Edinburgh”

Indeed, any negativity regarding changes appears to be perceived only by locals, not visitors:

> “I have never have anybody tell me they weren’t particularly happy with the Royal Mile other than the citizens of Edinburgh... who tell me and they worry about things like tartan tat and again the quality retail offering that is here... but I come back to the point that if that’s what customers want”

The response to the debate about ‘tartan tat’ was that “if that [tartan tat] is something that somebody wants to buy... it must a successful model”. Whilst there might be a desire for “them [tourists] to go away with ‘genuine’ artefacts from craftspeople of genuine Scottish product”, there is the issue that of what the customer wants, what “might be an amusement to them for a short period of time but it is an amusement that drives an economy... it is actually an economy of misconceptions”. One interpretation of this is that ‘jimmy-wigs ‘and other items regarded as ‘tat’ are a revenue generator, but as amusements rather that what might be construed as authentic, though this interpretation itself is problematic in that the boundary between the two is vague. Indeed, “if there is a challenge for Edinburgh, it’s that challenge of ensuring that the visitor thought that they got the real deal... that they left thinking that was authentic, that was what I wanted to see and.. for me there are huge challenges around that” and that relates to how to embrace change and development. However, despite the efforts to understand what makes a destination successful there is a still a lack of clarity of what constitutes an authentic experience, “I am wondering what a definition is of a fully authentic experience”.

In contrast to the view of above is the issue of the need to attract inward investment. This draws attention to the image of Edinburgh in terms of its attractiveness to businesses. The image of a “Highland coo... always called Hamish and pictures of Edinburgh Castle” were suggested to self-perpetuate an image that engenders difficulties in attracting businesses. Nevertheless, as a destination, it was recognised that whilst “you can attract somebody to a city for one reason… Edinburgh can attract you back for more than one reason and that is hugely important”. Edinburgh offers a lot of variety, both as a leading centre for a variety of business sectors as well as its tourist offering.

From a policy maker’s perspective, whilst Edinburgh has a clear sense of identity grounded in its historical roots and has a rich offering to its different stakeholders, there appear to be a variety of tensions that need to be reconciled: for example between potential visitors and potential business investors, between retailers and local community about the product offering, between protection and development. More specifically, whilst authenticity can be attributed to the physical artefactual fabric of the Royal Mile, there is a challenge to ensure that the visitor has the experience that they were expecting, though how to define it as an authentic experience remains open to question.

4.7 Edinburgh 2020: The Edinburgh Tourism Strategy (January, 2012)

In January 2012, a vision and strategy for the development of Edinburgh was launched. This was the outcome of an Edinburgh Tourism Action Group (ETAG) facilitated consultation with local tourism stakeholders. Included in its core priorities for the period 2012-2015 were issues to do with housekeeping, sustainability and the "quality of the cityscape", of which the Royal Mile was one priority: "Formulate and deliver a coherent vision for the Royal Mile, enhancing the quality of the streetscape to support retail and improve the visitor experience, managing it as a five star visitor attraction" (ETAG, 2012: 21).

4.8 A Charrette (January, 2012)

A Charrette on the Royal Mile, held on 12th January, 2012, and organised by Edinburgh City Council, brought together over 70 stakeholders, including residents and businesses, for a series of presentations and a workshop. The outcome was a set of actions that included the creation of a strategy for the development of the street, the creation of an organisational structure to manage the street (e.g. the recruitment of a full-time person to facilitate the development and promotion of the Royal Mile) and the establishment of a Charter relating to the quality of the street. It also included the identification of a range of specific issues (e.g. variety of the retail offering, vehicle – pedestrian balance, the maintenance of the street fabric and anti-social behaviour).

A Town Centre Coordinator for the Royal Mile was appointed in April 2012 as part of the Development and Regeneration team with the task of working with partners to help to realise this aspiration.

4.9 A year later (July 2012)

A repeat of the audit a year after the first one revealed that change had visibly affected fifteen non-residential street facing properties (see Harwood & El-Manstrly, 2012b for details). Most were associated with a change in ownership of the business, which commonly resulted in a change in use. These included four outlets selling Cashmere and related products, two opening as coffee houses, with the others being a Japanese restaurant offering ‘home cooking’, a whisky and wine outlet (Figure 12) and a Scottish food purveyor. One site was empty with its former occupant moving to another central Edinburgh location.

Figure 12 A High Street outlet offering whisky as well as wine and beer (NB. window spelling of ‘whiskey’ in contrast to shop sign ‘whisky’) (from Harwood & El-Manstrly, 2012b)

5 Discussion

This exploratory study reveals the complexity and dilemma facing anyone attempting to understand what constitutes the authentic and an authentic experience. The descriptive account presented of the Royal Mile outlines its more prominent features and events. The Royal Mile embraces a historically grounded complex configuration of many elements, which are the result of many influences, for example, the regulatory instruments enforced by the institutions, which restrict what can be done.

5.1 Framework

The challenge presented is how to understand the Royal Mile in terms of authenticity in such a way as to deconstruct its many elements. The framework offered in Figure 1 together with the literature reviewed, provides one approach to this deconstruction. It identifies four distinct but inter-related aspects: regulatory context, spatial context, intermediary and experient.

5.1.1 The regulatory context

The regulatory context is provided by the legislation relating to planning and heritage at both the national and local levels. However, it is conditioned by the requirements of UNESCO’s World Heritage Centre. This has created tensions with regard to several more recent developments, in particular, Caltongate, a development in close proximity to the Royal Mile and within the Old Town. This draws attention to the attitude’s and values of the policy makers. Whilst legislation sharpens boundaries between what is and not acceptable, the decisions made at the local level affect day-to-day developments (e.g. rates, shop signage, street displays and tenancy agreements). However, aside from the different political agendas of councillors, there is the need to encourage investment in Edinburgh for economic development, whether from local sources or overseas. This has resulted in the redevelopment of a number of city centre sites over the last few years to provide tourism accommodation (ETAG, 2012), which sustains the self-reinforcing cycle of increased provision for tourists and increased numbers of tourists. These developments have created tensions with local community groups such as the Canongate Community Forum, who have opposed the Caltongate development.

Whilst planning permission is given to individual submissions, it is open to question whether decisions are made within the context of a long term view of how the Royal Mile should be developed and any sense of identity for the street. Identity is how ‘one’ wishes to be perceived by others, is constituted through what is done and how promoted, which differs from what is perceived and experienced (Alessandri, 2001). The need for an Old Town identity was recognised in the 1989 Old Town Strategy. Moreover, this strategy made the recommendation that the Old Town need to be treated with respect, drawing attention to authenticity as one defining characteristic.

Recent developments (late 2011-early 2012) have been a series of events that have centred upon a Charrette in January 2012, this leading to the appointment of a co-ordinator for the Royal Mile as well as other proposals. The challenge faced is whether the co-ordinator is able to bring all stakeholders together around the table, particularly the retailers who are responsible as intermediaries between the street and tourists. These retailers have a responsibility for their part in the creation of the identity which is perceived and experienced by those visiting.

5.1.2 <u>The spatial context</u>

The site has evolved from its first inhabitation, becoming progressively domesticated with its natural features becoming tamed (Silverstone & Haddon, 1996). Observation of the site reveals the mix of the contemporary with the historical in terms of its artefacts (e.g. buildings, monuments and other structures) and their organisation. These artefacts each have their own story to tell, with some closely related to others, perhaps through the same builder, architectural style or shared events, whilst others are unrelated to any. The collection of artefacts defines the local context and contributes to the construction of the site’s identity. The introduction of architectural styles for more recent buildings and whether they fit with what exists, needs to be considered within the context of these earlier periods and both the adoption of styles from locations afar and the creativity of architects – builders from these earlier periods. The artefactual nature of the Royal Mile underpins the WHC’s view of authenticity. However, the Royal Mile is a living street, with different stakeholders rubbing shoulders with each other; policy makers, residents, businesses, workers and tourists, creating the potential for the conflict suggested by McKercher et al (2005).

The evidence of non-residents is everywhere, particularly in the local and national government buildings, university buildings, law courts, as well as the many outlets and attractions catering for tourists. The pageants are staged events that can attract large audiences, some of which have a long tradition such as the Service of the Order of the Thistle. This event brings together the actors (e.g. the Royal Family, the Royal Archers) (Figure 3) to enact a centuries old tradition for which there is a restricted audience, despite the attempts of an interested or just curious, mass of onlookers (Figure 4). In contrast, is the annual four week long Fringe Festival, held in August, which draws such a crowd of both actors and visitors, that the population of Edinburgh is allegedly doubled. For this period, part of the High Street is transformed into a stage hosting many spontaneous performances in fusion with a seething mass of tourists.

In contrast, the evidence of the community is not strong. The architectural appeal of the historical buildings contrasts with the lifelessness of the residential structures, which ascend above the non-residential outlets as walls pitted with opaque windows, which hide the community (Figure 10). Does anyone actually live there? At the street level there are a few newsagents and grocers, a shoe shop, as well as two charity shops, but in total they are limited. The primary school and Canongate Kirk towards the bottom of the Canongate are perhaps the only significant testimony of this community. Nevertheless, the living nature of this community can be found, though not extensively, when visiting the rear of the buildings facing onto the Royal Mile; here the exterior living spaces characterised by the front door on open balconies are arranged with objects (e.g. plants, bunting), which extends private worlds beyond the interior into an observable domain (Figure 11).

This complexity was recognised in the 1989 Old Town Strategy for tourism. This strategy proposed the need for a clear Old Town identity as well the provision of a “complete Old Town experience” (EOTR, 1989: 37), whilst sustaining the authentic nature of the Royal Mile’s fabric. Underpinning this was recognition of the need for a “living, exciting, organic community” (ibid: 17). Whether much of this strategy was implemented is open to debate, but it draws attention to the challenge of how to balance the desire for preservation of the artefactual with the need for a living community, a debate recognised in Li’s (2003) study of Hong Kong and Singapore. This is made more challenging with the growing tourist appeal for Edinburgh city centre, in particular, the Royal Mile and how the street should develop. Li’s observation was that the community was an important feature of this, if spontaneity and authenticity is to be preserved. Moreover, whilst it is a street with a rich heritage, it also provides facilities for shopping, entertainment and relaxation, within a local surrounds that also provides these (e.g. Princess Street). Thus, tourists are not necessarily heritage tourists (Poria et al, 2003), but visiting the Royal Mile because they have heard of it and are curious.

5.1.3 Intermediation

Moreno & Littrell (2001) introduced the notion of the retailer as an intermediary between the local artisan and the tourist. However, it is proposed that there are many forms of intermediation between the site and its heritage and the tourist (e.g. tour guide, bus tour, museum, pub, retailer and the local who is stopped to be asked a question). They shape how the tourist experiences the Royal Mile; they all tell a story about the Royal Mile, whether it present in the symbolism of artefacts sold, the narratives of the guides or the gossip in the pub. For those that have a dedicated space within which the visitor can browse, then the manner in which this space is utilised can give rise to a sense of connection with the heritage and culture of the street. For example, the Mill has an exhibit which tells the story of how the kilt has been worn over time. This raises the issue of how the space is configured and the meaning of the street and that with which it is associated, is inscribed into this space through the artefacts present.

This is clearly illustrated with the Scotch Whisky Experience, where every aspect of the space has been carefully considered by the Whisky Industry, which has invested in this outlet as its spokesperson. The representatives from the industry are the experts or 'knowledge system’ (INTACH, 2004) which can validate the message and experience presented by the venue. Whilst each of the parts of the offering (e.g. the shop, whisky collection and car ride) is presented in a different manner, underpinning each staged presentation is the attempt to provided an honest and credible insight into whisky, its history, traditions and how it is made and consumed. The whisky tasting session gives a firsthand learning experience of the different types of whisky. In contrast, the Disneyfication of a distillery through the car ride attempts to address the challenge of how to create an appreciative experience of what is involved in the making of a whisky. Meaning is inscribed in all that is presented to inform and educate those who experience the site. Indeed this notion of meaning is perhaps equitable with World Heritage’s focus upon the values that underpin a heritage and how credible and truthful are the sources that inform about the heritage. Whilst there is necessarily a commercial aspect to this venture to ensure viability, this does not detract from the emphasis upon experience of something honest and credible. A similar argument can be levelled at the Mill. This has extensive floor-space dedicated to its retail operation which is committed to predominantly Scottish produce. However, the layout allows for the restricted opening up of the back (MacCannell, 1973) which provides the opportunity to gaze from the gallery upon the weaving equipment and observe the making of the tartan that is on display in the shop, thus legitimising these offerings. This specific example of how the back is opened, illustrates how MacCannell’s characterisation of how the back can be accessed, can be exploited by intermediaries to enhance the tourist’s experience.

In contrast, the retailers accused of selling ‘tat’ invite the question of whether their approach is orientated towards providing access to the heritage and culture of the Royal Mile and the context in which it exists or towards exploiting the opportunity to sell items at relatively low cost. This introduces the commodification argument presented by Cohen (1988) and Greenwood’s (1977) reasoning that giving a price to something commodifies it and in doing dissolves the meaning associated with that something. However, this reasoning needs to be tempered.

A kilt is a traditional item of clothing that is made in Scotland according to prescribed methods, is likely to cost at least £300 and is worn with pride. Likewise, the whisky bottle is sold in the Scotch Whisky Experience’s shop, but the shop acts as an intermediary between the Scottish producer of traditional produce and the tourist. The shop is laid out by region to give association with the locality that that each whisky belongs. This contrasts with the £20 kilt, which is of indeterminate origin, poor quality and which no discerning kilt wearer would contemplate wearing. It is a souvenir, one of an array of souvenirs available in the retailer selling ‘tat’. Such souvenirs may have not have a label of origin or instead reveal that it is Made in China and is perhaps mass-produced. It may serve as a symbolic reminder for the tourist of the visit. However, the distinction is not so much in terms of the meaning ascribed to the artefact by the buyer, but by the seller. What is the motive of this retailer? Is it to serve as an intermediary between local producers and tourists as illustrated in Moreno & Littrell’s (2001) study, which revealed concern about how to portray the traditions of the locality within the space of their retail outlets? Alternatively is it to make money, selling anything that will sell, devoid of any concern about the culture or heritage that it symbolically represents, to those whose culture it is and to those who are looking for some reminder of their visit? Since rates are high and the prices of goods sold are cheap, then floor space needs to be exploited to the fullest (e.g. high displays, narrow passageway and spilling out onto the pavement as illustrated in Figure 8). Products are sourced from locations which can produce them at the lowest cost. The image presented to the tourist is of association with the Royal Mile and Scotland, manifesting in the name of the outlet and the goods offered.

The two examples suggest that a retailer or, for that matter, any intermediary, can position itself somewhere on a continuum between the altruistic concern for local heritage and culture and a selfish desire to make a ‘fast buck’. This contrasts with Cohen’s (1979) polarisation between ‘complete authenticity’ and ‘complete falseness’. For example, the new whisky off-licence (Figure 12), whose window above the doorway announces ‘Whiskey Tasting Bar Inside’ and ‘Single Malt Whiskeys’ Over 300 Inside’, presents a confusing message arising from whether there is any significance about the misspellings, since Scotch whisky is not spelt with an ‘e’, unlike whiskies from outside Scotland. Indeed, how would the discerning customer interpret this, particularly in relation to the barrel outside the shop on the street. In contrast, the Authentic Mexican Restaurant (Figure 6) is explicit about the genuineness of its offering, whilst the newly opened Japanese Restaurant, legitimises it food by informing readers of its website about the heritage of the food offered. Neither is claiming links with Scottish culture; instead both retailers are affirming their own cultural heritage and thus contribute to the cosmopolitan nature of the Royal Mile as main street in a capital city. This is despite the commercial nature of what they are doing. This new propsed conceptualisation of authenticity recognises that there is a degree of commodification in many of the intermediary offerings. The distinction relates to the meaning and values underpinning what are offered.

5.1.4 Experient

The focus of the provided experience is the tourist, whether this is an overseas visitor, someone from outside the area or a resident wanting to do touristy things. Moreover, their interests are assumed to vary considerably, from those with an interest in the heritage of the Royal Mile to those who are seeking the pleasures of the stag or hen party. Whilst the evidence of how tourists perceive authenticity in this study is limited, the few comments suggest that Cohen’s (1979) constructivist view is no less appropriate as a conceptual explanation of how tourists experience than the existential view of Wang (1999).

Another way of considering this is revealed in the example of the Scotch Whisky Experience. This reveals not only concern about truthfulness about the authenticity of the offering, which is approved by the whisky industry, but also the importance of the visitor in defining what constitutes a good experience. Indeed, individual characteristics and backgrounds (Waitt, 2000) affect how authenticity is perceived, which may embrace emotions as well the senses (Wang, 1999). Indeed, the concept of authenticity perhaps resonates with the concept of quality. Customers may each have their own conception of what constitutes quality of service or goods. However, from a provider’s perspective there is the need to operationalise this term in order to ensure a consistent performance, which leads to specifications which distinguish between what is acceptable and what is not.

Whilst it is beyond the scope of this paper to operationalise the concept of authenticity, an insight into how it can be operationalised draws upon the distinction between whether the intermediary’s assertion about the authenticity of the offering is truthful and whether the experient has an expectation that the offering is truthful. This suggests four responses (Table 2), two of which will lead to satisfaction, this being where there is alignment between intermediary assertions and experient expectations. The third reflects the experient’s lack of appreciation about the intermediary’s assertions on the truthfulness of the offering. The final response is the situation where the experient expects the offering to be truthful, but it is not; the intermediary is deceiving the experient, which raises the question of what happens if the deception is exposed?

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2" rowspan="2"></td><td colspan="2">INTERMEDIARY
(assertion)</td></tr>
<tr><td>TRUE</td><td>FALSE</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">EXPERIENT
(expectation)</td><td>TRUE</td><td>Satisfaction</td><td>Deception
(concealment)</td></tr>
<tr><td>FALSE</td><td>Unappreciation
(visibility)</td><td>Satisfaction</td></tr>
</table>

Table 2 An experient’s responses to the truthfulness of an intermediary’s assertion about the authenticity of the offering

This simple framework highlights the constructed nature of the intermediary’s offering, but in a manner that is embedded with meaning and values that are truthful, as exemplified by the Scotch Whisky Experience. Moreover, it draws attention to the interplay between the intermediary and the experient and that the experient cannot be considered in isolation.

5.2 Implications

The framework offered provides a simple structure with which to understand the different both the different conceptualisations of authenticity and how authenticity relates to the complexity of the Royal Mile. The analysis presented reveals the complementary insights of the different perspectives of this multifarious concept. That their respective focus addresses only one aspect of what is necessarily a multidimensional concept. The deconstruction into the four distinct aspects of regulatory context, spatial context, intermediary and experient acknowledges both the validity and the distinction between the authenticity of the toured object and the existential need for self-realisation. This refutes Reisinger & Stoener’s (2006) argument calling for the abandonment of object authenticity, thus supporting Belhassen & Caton’s (2006) argument that it cannot be ignored. Moreover, it draws attention to the need to consider the complex interplay between the object and social (Belhassen et al, 2008).

The epistemological stance adopted is that authenticity is socially constructed (e.g. Cohen. 1988; Littrell et al, 1993; Hughes, 1995; Moscardo & Pearce, 1999; Grayson & Martinec, 2004; Peterson, 2005) and involves judgement about the both the object (setting) and experience in the context (Moscardo & Pearce, 1999). The existential view presented by Wang (1999) has validity in the sense of a person seeking meaning for their life and being true to one’s values and beliefs, but this needs to be distinguished from the seeking of pure pleasure or escapism – Cohen’s (1979) Recreational and Diversionary experiences.

The studies found in the literature vary in terms of setting (e.g. city, museum or artefact) and, thus, draw attention to the unit of analysis. The Royal Mile suggested a multi-level view of how authenticity can be perceived:

- The meta-level of the World Heritage site comprising the Old & New Towns
- The Royal Mile as a bounded space
- A bounded space at a more localised level (e.g. the residential part of Canongate with its primary school and church or the commercial stretch of Lawnmarket and its retail outlets)
- A specific site (e.g. St Giles Cathedral, a retail outlet, Camera Obscura)
- A packaged product or service (e.g. kilt outfit, restaurant meal or busking musician playing on the street)
- A single artefact (e.g. the Jimmy wig or glass of malt whisky)

This creates a methodological challenge in that it draws attention not only to how authenticity is constructed, but also the unit of observation or analysis and to that unit’s context and deconstruction. The authentic co-exists with the inauthentic and, moreover, the boundary between the two is not just blurred, but is open to debate. This supports the view that authenticity is not merely about truth or genuineness, but involves negotiation (Halewood & Hannam, 2001; Robb, 1998), as suggested by the proliferation of retail outlets, especially in the Lawnmarket, which sell souvenirs on the basis that there is demand and that these souvenirs are accepted as something by which to remember their visit. They are symbolic and hold meaning, irrespective of where produced or how sold – as long as they have the appeal of being indigenous.

5.3 Limitations and future directions

This research is constrained due to its attempt to take a systemic overview of issues relating to the relationship between the concept of authenticity and the complexity of a multi-functional site such as the Royal Mile. The empirical data, whilst rich in insight is drawn from a relatively limited range of sources. This prevents a deeper, finer grained insight into the issues. Nevertheless, the scope of this study, which is exploratory, provides a conceptual framework which reveals the complementary nature of the different conceptualisations. This framework needs more development and finer grained resolution. Moreover, a more detailed study is required of the multi-dimensional nature of authenticity in terms of how it is perceived by different stakeholders, particularly tourists. This will permit a deeper appreciation of how authenticity is appreciated and how it relates to different demographic groups. Furthermore, there is indication in this study that there is a cultural aspect to how authenticity is constructed that needs clarification, which leads to potentially conflicting challenges for those attempting to provide an authentic experience to an international audience.

Finally, there is the need to operationalise the concept of authenticity in such a way that policy makers, who establish authenticity as a core feature of their tourism strategy, provide guidelines to providers of tourism products and services so that they can take appropriate action. This calls upon the development of multi-dimensional instruments which are able to measure the concept, and thus provide a means to assess how authenticity relates to experiences.

6 Conclusion

This study has attempted to deconstruct the concept of authenticity relative to a complex setting. A selective review of the literature reveals the multifarious manner in which authenticity is conceived. From this literature a framework has been derived which makes the distinction between regulatory context, spatial context, intermediary and experient. This framework, when used to analyse the complexity of the Royal Mile, reveals a variety of issues. The Royal Mile is what is what it does. It has a rich artefactual legacy of buildings and monuments, but it is also a community and as well as caters for those seeking shopping, leisure and entertainment. The vibrancy of the Royal Mile is suggested to be enhanced with local community participation in policy issues, particularly with regard to its development. Moreover, the street’s identity is a creation, by those frequenting the street, of which retailers are a contributory element. If the street has a profusion of ‘tawdry’ gift shops amongst its architectural fabric, is the street’s identity an old dignified person in hard times selling what they can to make ends meet? The retailer, alongside others which interface between the fabric of the street and the tourist, are intermediaries. However, the distinction is made between those intermediaries who are concerned about the meaning that underpins what they offer and how that is associated with the Royal Mile and the context in which the street exists and those who are unconcerned with focus upon the ‘fast buck’. This becomes important if one is to distinguish between those that are contributing to the authenticity of a location and those that are dissolving it. Authenticity, in this specific usage, relates to how the values of the local heritage and culture are portrayed though intermediaries. The inauthentic arises when the intermediary discards meaning, being more concerned with the sale – the ‘fast buck’. The experient, more specifically the tourist, may be unconcerned about the inauthenticity of the retailer, particularly if pleasure is the goal. However, if the experient is unaware of a deception, then is found to have been deceived, raises the spectre of how the street is then viewed. Two major issues arise. First concerns the need to appreciate authenticity as a complex interplay between the artefact and the social, between the intermediary and the experient. The second concerns the need to consider the multiple levels at which authenticity can be conceived, but also in association with the inauthentic.

Moreover, this analysis suggests that the disparate literatures each address a specific aspect of authenticity in a manner which can complement the others. The framework offers itself as an instrument to provide an insight into the big picture and how all the different elements relate to each other. In summation, authenticity as a concept may be open to debate about its meaning and usage. However it is proposed that this is due to the limited lenses through which it viewed as well as the limited dimensions which are considered. Instead, it is proposed that a multi-lens, multi-dimensional perspective is required, especially if the concept is to be operationalise by those who expose the need to provide tourists with authentic experiences.

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