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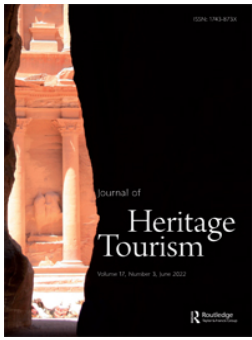
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Industrial heritage in tourism marketing: legitimizing post-industrial development strategies of the Ruhr Region, Germany

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ABSTRACT

Many post-industrial regions reinterpret their industrial past as a heritage resource for marketing purposes. This paper explores how two sites in the Ruhr area in Germany, *Zollverein* and *Landschaftspark Duisburg-Nord*, are narrated in marketing brochures with selective industrial heritage narratives. Industrial heritage is utilized for both immediate marketing purposes and as a tool for memory and identity politics. Through thematic analysis, we uncover that industrial heritage legitimizes the Ruhr – Europe’s largest post-industrial region – as a distinct region by providing a seemingly uncontested, neutral and universal industrial history targeted at a wide audience. Simultaneously, the established narratives reinterpret industrial heritage as places of consumption, valued for their aesthetics and facilities for sports, arts and leisure. Such a marketing practice attempts to tap into the growing demand for postmodern consumption of culture, and simultaneously justifies and institutionalizes a specific, consumption-driven post-industrial development strategy for the Ruhr. The study reveals how the marketing of a post-industrial region promotes a select set of industrial heritage narratives that aim to strengthen the region’s economic position in a neoliberal setting of interregional economic competition.

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Introduction

During the second half of the twentieth century, heavy industry declined in Western Europe and North America (Raines, 2011). Closure of industrial sites not only caused unemployment in former industrial regions (Brüggemeier, 1994), but also eroded social structures of daily life, collective identity and place meanings (Linkon & Russo, 2002; Nettleingham, 2019; Wray, 2011). Over the last decades, many post-industrial regions started revaluing their industrial past as constituting important heritage and recognized the potential to contribute to regional (re)development strategies. Such strategies not only create awareness among inhabitants of an area’s history (Cenci, 2018; Raines, 2011), but also provide symbols to promote the region to external audiences, for instance by transforming former industrial sites to places of postmodern consumption (Berger et al., 2018; Hospers, 2002; Kohn, 2010).

Marketing efforts promoting industrial heritage for regional development purposes do not only attract external investments, but also shape the meaning of the promoted heritage. Heritage is

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constructed, selected and altered through discourse (Ashworth & Graham, 2005; Lowenthal, 1998; Smith, 2006), of which marketing is an integral part (Cunningham, 2010). Marketing efforts 'provide a conceptual space within which the very identity of heritage, itself, is legitimized and constituted' (Waterton, 2009, p. 39). Such efforts do not only affect external perceptions of the region, for instance by shaping the general image of a destination and visitors' loyalty (Saeedi & Heidarzadeh Hanzaee, 2018), but they also affect internal perceptions of (industrial) heritage and the (post-industrial) region. Moreover, narrations of heritage (e.g. in tourism marketing brochures) reflect political-economic power, for instance by promoting perceptions of appropriate uses (Waterton, 2009), representing heritage values held by empowered institutions (Smith, 2006), or narrating inclusion and exclusion of people in place (Goulding et al., 2018).

Despite the obvious link between tourism marketing and industrial heritage, little is known about how industrial heritage tourism narratives are shaped in practice. Research on tourism marketing has, amongst others, focused on quantitative analysis of what is promoted (Lloyd et al., 2015) and how place-branding is received by audiences (Mele et al., 2021; Saeedi & Heidarzadeh Hanzaee, 2018). However, in-depth, qualitative analyses of the content of tourism marketing brochures are scarce, and little is known about questions such as: how is industrial heritage narrated, to which themes do these narrations connect, and which functions are attributed to industrial heritage in the marketing discourse?

The purpose of this paper is to fill this knowledge gap by deconstructing the representations of industrial heritage in the official marketing discourse of Europe's largest post-industrial region: the Ruhr area in Germany (hereafter, 'the Ruhr'). We analyzed marketing documents of two major industrial heritage sites in the Ruhr, the *Zollverein* and *Landschaftspark Duisburg-Nord*, to (1) understand how industrial heritage is constructed and utilized in the external marketing discourse of post-industrial regions, and (2) to zoom in on the implications of this framing for the region's economic and socio-cultural post-industrial restructuring process. We combine concepts from (critical) heritage, regional and destination marketing studies to expose the framing and selectivity of the tourism marketing discourses of areas that use heritage to negotiate and strengthen their post-industrial economic position. The novelty of this paper lies in that we show how consumption-oriented reasoning intersects with heritage discourses, resulting in specific narrations of heritage, aimed at strengthening a region's socio-economic position in a neoliberal setting of regional competition.

Heritage: utilizing the past in the present

Although a relatively recent phenomenon, heritage is omnipresent in our daily life (Lowenthal, 1998, 2015). In essence, heritage is a specific 'part of the past which we select in the present for contemporary purposes [...] and choose to bequeath to a future' (Ashworth & Graham, 2005, p. 7). Despite often being presented as a physical unit, heritage intrinsically deals with the intangible (Cunningham, 2010; Groote & Haartsen, 2008). As a discursive act situated in the present, heritage values are continuously altered, made-up or forgotten for various reasons (Ashworth & Graham, 2005; Li & Soye, 2017; Lowenthal, 1998, 2015; Smith, 2006). What constitutes heritage and what narratives are worth remembering, is culturally embedded (Yang, 2017). Meanings, therefore, fluctuate over time, place and between people (Ashworth & Graham, 2005; Cunningham, 2010).

Heritage is frequently used to promote a region, for instance to tourists. The social implications of heritage marketing can be manifold. As heritage is socially constructed, it is always created to fulfill a social function. Heritage is frequently drawn upon to make sense of, and relate, the past, the present and the future (Lowenthal, 2015). One way in which heritage can connect past and present is by displaying continuity and progression, which Oakley (2018) describes as *linear time*. By framing the present as the result of accumulating developments over time, similarities between past and present are drawn (Ashworth & Graham, 2005; Lowenthal, 1998). Alternatively, heritage can

narrate a separation between present and past, named *dualistic time* (Oakley, 2018). This framing is often connected to a drastic change, for example, an economic or political crisis. By presenting a lost past, heritage can foster an understanding of past identities (Linkon & Russo, 2002). Through its ability to connect past and present, heritage also facilitates the imagining of possible futures (Linkon & Russo, 2002; Oakley, 2018; Price & Rhodes, 2020). For instance, Price and Rhodes (2020) show how industrial heritage in South Wales expresses nostalgia towards the industrial past and simultaneously forwards coalmining as a possible economic (re)development strategy. Narratives passed on through heritage can function as a source of identity and as a commodity – hence, for simultaneous economic and cultural value creation, with associated tensions between both types of values (Ashworth & Graham, 2005; Lončar, 2016; Stoffelen, 2021).

In short, heritage is actively constructed in the present, and therefore never neutral, objective or intrinsically hierarchical, despite sometimes being presented as such. By default, recognizing certain objects, sites and practices as constituting heritage follows on from selecting, retaining and institutionalizing certain narratives over alternatives (Stoffelen, 2021). Presented narratives are therefore politically loaded, as they reflect values held by empowered stakeholders and contribute to mainstreaming these visions (Lowenthal, 1998; Smith, 2006). Consequently, heritage confirms an existing, or establishes a future, ‘commonsense discourse’ that is internalized by many, but represents the explicit interests of a few (Stoffelen, 2021). A commonsense discourse can symbolically legitimize people in place (Cenci, 2018; Lončar, 2016) or, conversely, de-legitimize others who do not find themselves represented (Goulding et al., 2018). This strategy of legitimizing people in place using heritage narratives appears, for example, in the form of identity politics (Ashworth & Graham, 2005; Smith, 2006; Stoffelen & Vanneste, 2019) and in geopolitical considerations (Bhandari, 2019).

The use of heritage narratives to negotiate and reinforce the status of an authority is what Smith (2006) named an ‘Authorized Heritage Discourse’ (AHD). An AHD: (i) produces hegemonized, sterilized and simplified narratives, free of contesting interpretations; (ii) values expert views and uses of heritage, wherein the non-expert becomes a passive observer; (iii) promotes heritage from the perspective of a socio-economic upper-class, and; (iv) frames heritage as something to be conserved (Smith, 2006). AHDs commonly employ a linear framing of time to suggest intrinsic values, objectivity and timelessness of heritage to legitimize and naturalize its existence, and thereby ensure continuity (Ashworth & Graham, 2005; Lowenthal, 1998).

Due to their political embedding, heritage narratives can underpin attempts to institutionalize a certain territory as the most logical unit for economic or political regulation, or for legitimizing regional development strategies (Bailey, 2019; Stoffelen & Vanneste, 2018, 2019). Selecting and maintaining narratives and symbols that define a region can also mobilize regional identities (Paasi, 2011). Heritage narratives can be used to bring residents on board of otherwise politically inspired ventures. For example, Stoffelen and Vanneste (2018) found how policymakers in two German federal states gained community support for a financially inspired tourism destination merger by framing these plans in a historical identity narrative. Specifically for institutionally complex regions – such as the Ruhr – establishing a regional identity narrative signifies coherence of the area and legitimizes unified policy responses.

Industrial heritage in tourism marketing

Heritage sites have become popular tourist attractions. For post-industrial areas, often struggling with spatial and social repercussions of their industrial past, tourism provides development opportunities by turning industrial remnants into industrial heritage. In the process, heritage narratives are used to underpin socio-economic revitalization strategies. These strategies follow the widespread turn to place-based development (Ray, 1998) and allow tapping into the growing demand for postmodern consumption of culture (Kohn, 2010). As a typical example, Bailey (2019) described how industrial heritage conservation and commercialization in Glasgow (Scotland) supported an

urban development strategy to transform the city's previous production economy into one focusing on consumption of culture.

Regional redevelopment strategies commonly involve external marketing to attract investments. Although often predominantly aimed at external audiences, marketing efforts also affect stakeholders within the promoted region and influence internal perceptions of collective identity (Ray, 1998; Stoffelen & Vanneste, 2018). Industrial heritage narratives, specifically, can be socially significant to communities, for instance by providing an understanding of the current post-industrial society (Wray, 2011); advancing residents' psychological processing of the often distressing period of deindustrialization (Linkon & Russo, 2002); or helping to fill the identification gap after industrial closure (Cenci, 2018; Hospers, 2002). Simultaneously, industrial heritage narratives frequently refer to a foregone industrial past and can foster an undesired sense of loss (Oakley, 2018) or refer to uncomfortable inheritances (Li & Soyez, 2017).

In the process of selecting and marketing heritage values, communities sometimes become alienated from 'their' industrial heritage. Although Linkon and Russo (2002) argued that industrial heritage is heritage of the working-class, it is often the cultural elite that selects, interprets and alters heritage sites (Berger, 2019; Fontaine, 2018; Wray, 2011). Consequently, industrial heritage can reflect outsiders' views on manufacturing industry, possibly resulting in a lost sense of ownership by people who previously identified with the industry. Such a mismatch between promoted heritage narratives and local stakeholders' interpretations can lead to alienation of these stakeholders from the promoted values, the heritage in question, and, by extension, from the institutions involved in marketing (Waterton, 2005). Consequently, the process of selecting, retaining and institutionalizing industrial heritage narratives for marketing purposes is sensitive.

The reinterpretation of industrial pasts as industrial heritage requires careful management to link up promoted narratives to locally embedded heritage values. Involving local actors to narrate heritage is one strategy to include local knowledge (Waterton, 2005). For example, this can be done by involving local guides for an insider's perspective. Another strategy to prevent conflict is to refer to historical facts, thereby leaving room for interpretation (Berger, 2019). This can facilitate actors' support for tourism development, as 'the very meaning of 'industrial [heritage]' can be transformed [by the observer] to accommodate necessity' (Nettleingham, 2019, p. 624). Yet, this could also hollow out heritage narratives, possibly leading to a lost sense of ownership by people who previously identified with it (Berger et al., 2017).

The Ruhr and its industrial heritage

Several scholars recognize the Ruhr as a best practice of a post-industrial region that turned its industrial past into a resource for regional development (Cenci, 2018; Eiringhaus, 2020; Gruehn, 2017; Hospers, 2004; Yang, 2017). The mining and manufacturing industries of the nineteenth century shaped the area's spatial and social outlook, and therefore the existence of the Ruhr as a distinct region (Berger et al., 2017; Gruehn, 2017). From the second half of the twentieth century, the Ruhr's coal and steel industry gradually disappeared, causing major unemployment and ultimately economic and social deprivation (Brüggemeier, 1994; Raines, 2011). In fact, whereas the number of employees in mining peaked in 1957 at approximately 475,000, in 2018 it only employed about 3000 people. Simultaneously, the Ruhr's population gradually declined to 5.1 million inhabitants in 2016, 11% less than in the 1960s (Regionalverband Ruhr, 2018). Deindustrialization threatened the Ruhr's legitimacy as a region, as the industrial narrative lost validity (Berger et al., 2017; Gruehn, 2017).

In response to the decay of the Ruhr's identity, historians and artists, followed by residents and associations, started to lobby for the recognition of industrial sites as monuments of the Ruhr's industrial past (Berger et al., 2017; Eiringhaus, 2020). Several local initiatives successfully prevented demolition of former industrial sites. Early examples of such initiatives include Zeche Carl, a colliery turned into a community hub by priest Willi Overbeck in 1977, and Eisenheim, a former

workers' town in Oberhausen, where inhabitants negotiated the town's protection under heritage regulations in the early 1970s (Berger et al., 2018). Following this bottom-up attention, authorities also started contributing to the preservation and transformation of these sites (Berger et al., 2017, 2018). One major government-initiated program was the International Building Exhibition (*Internationale Bauausstellung*, IBA), running from 1989 until 1999. IBA was a development project pursuing economic restructuring and improving the region's image, both within and outside the region (Cenci, 2018; Hospers, 2004; Raines, 2011). It marked a new way of handling industrial relics by combining physical industrial inheritances with 'nature', resulting in so-called '*Industrienatur*' (Berger, 2019; Gruehn, 2017). Over the years, *Industrienatur* has gained a wide-ranging meaning: it can, for instance, indicate small mosses growing on former industrial buildings, but can also refer to large parks created in and around former industrial plants, incorporating former industrial waste heaps (Eiringhaus, 2020).

Industrial heritage has become a key aspect of the Ruhr's regional development plans (Regionalverband Ruhr, 2018) and features prominently in regional marketing (Berger et al., 2018). The Ruhr's regional development policy states that in the light of a 'declining number of inhabitants, it is necessary to strengthen cultural historical reference points' (Regionalverband Ruhr, appendix 4).¹ To achieve this, 'important industrial cultural structures and elements will be secured as unique selling points of the region' (Regionalverband Ruhr, 2018, p. 21).²

Two industrial heritage sites stand out in the marketing of the Ruhr and are the focus of this paper: *Zollverein UNESCO World Heritage* (Zollverein) and *Landschaftspark Duisburg-Nord* (Duisburg-Nord). Zollverein is enlisted as UNESCO World Heritage since 2001 (UNESCO, n.d.). Duisburg-Nord is a flagship industrial heritage project of the Ruhr. The tourism project 'route of industrial culture' of the *Regionalverband Ruhr* (RVR), an inter-municipal marketing organization for the Ruhr, includes both sites as anchor points. Both are exemplary for reuse of industrial heritage, by combining physical inheritances with nature, art and leisure activities. They commonly host cultural events and seasonal attractions, such as an ice rink and a swimming pool. Zollverein also hosts businesses and a design museum. Furthermore, Zollverein and Duisburg-Nord have visitors centers, are freely accessible and have a variety of marketing documents, including leaflets, booklets and websites.

Methodology

To gain insights into how industrial heritage is narrated in the authority-initiated marketing discourse of the Ruhr, we conducted a thematic analysis of 15 marketing documents concerning Duisburg-Nord and Zollverein (Table 1). Since we are particularly interested in externally oriented marketing narratives, we opted to focus exclusively on documents available to a non-local audience, which implied excluding on-site information provision to visitors. All documents were freely accessible and sourced from marketing institutions of the Ruhr. We excluded documents concerning specific sections of these heritage sites, like (temporal) exhibitions. If documents promoted multiple locations, we only used sections relevant to Duisburg-Nord and/or Zollverein.

The selection was based on the availability of English versions and the main focus being the industrial heritage sites. Although the English versions of these documents might seem secondary to their German versions, we argue that these are at least of similar significance, as the English language widens their potential audience. Furthermore, because intended for external marketing, these documents fit this research well considering our focus on possible internal social implications of such external communications. However, we recognize that some detail might be lost in translation and we may only cover part of the presented narrative. The inclusion of imagery in the analysis, as will be discussed below, provides an advantage. Interpretation of imagery, despite being culturally embedded, can transcend language barriers (Picazo & Moreno-Gil, 2019).

We performed a thematic analysis because this method facilitates '[making] sense of collective or shared meanings and experiences' (Braun & Clarke, 2012, p. 57). When recognizing that social

Table 1. List of analyzed documents.

ID	Title	Organization	Year
Landscape Park Duisburg-Nord			
D1	Duisburg-Nord information flyer	Landschaftspark Duisburg-Nord/ Duisburg Kontor Hallenmanagement	n.d.
D2	Duisburg-Nord press release Landschaftspark	Landschaftspark Duisburg-Nord/ Duisburg Kontor Hallenmanagement	n.d.
D3	Website Landschaftspark Duisburg-Nord	Duisburg Kontor Hallenmanagement	n.d.
D4	Website NRW Tourism: Landscape park Duisburg-Nord	NRW Tourism	n.d.
D5	Website Ruhr Tourismus: Duisburg-Nord Landscape Park	Ruhrgebiet Tourismus	n.d.
D6	Website Visit Duisburg: Landschaftspark Duisburg-Nord	Tourist Information Duisburg	n.d.
Zollverein			
Z1	Website NRW Tourism: Zollverein	NRW Tourism	n.d.
Z2	Website Ruhr Tourismus: Zollverein	Ruhrgebiet Tourismus	n.d.
Z3	Website Visit Essen: Industrial Heritage	Essen Marketing	n.d.
Z4	Website Zollverein	Zollverein Foundation	n.d.
Z5	Zollverein press release	Zollverein Foundation	n.d.
Z6	Zollverein tourism flyer	Zollverein Foundation	2019
Z7	Zollverein UNESCO World Heritage Site	Zollverein Foundation	2018
Mixed			
M1	Discovery pass industrial heritage trail	Regionalverband Ruhr	2019
M2	Emscher landscape park visitor's guide	Regionalverband Ruhr	2013

reality is constructed through discourse, in line with hermeneutics (Schwandt, 2000), thematic analysis can provide an understanding of the constructed reality beyond individual experiences.

As stated, our thematic analysis included both text and visuals. Imagery, such as photos or maps, communicate meaning and make up a considerable part of tourism marketing efforts (Picazo & Moreno-Gil, 2019). Interpretation of imagery can foster deeper understanding of marketing documents. Our analysis of the visuals focused on what is depicted, how this is framed and how these visuals represent certain meanings and values.

To structure our analysis, we used Braun and Clarke's six guiding phases of thematic analysis (2012). These phases include an initial exploration of the data, followed by generating initial codes (if codes are not pre-defined) and filtering out possible themes. Subsequently, potential themes are reviewed, final themes are defined and the final analysis is written.

After familiarizing ourselves with the data, we started coding the text using descriptive codes: a coding strategy whereby codes label the topic of (text) excerpts from the data. This strategy can be used to highlight common topics and provides a basis for additional analytical rounds (Saldaña, 2021). We coded the visuals using the descriptive codes derived from the text analysis.

In a second coding round, we applied pre-determined codes that we developed using our theoretical framework. Saldaña (2021) labels this 'provisional coding'. In general, applying multiple coding strategies sequentially can enrich interpretation of the data (Saldaña, 2021; Stoffelen, 2019). Specifically for this study, the descriptive codes allowed identifying case-specific topics, while the pre-determined codes helped putting the Ruhr's marketing texts in a broader perspective by connecting them to findings from other regions and broader theoretical interpretations. In the following coding rounds, we iteratively refined and updated the descriptive codes so to incorporate relevant literature-inspired codes that allowed us to interpret the case-specific empirical findings.

The above-described coding process resulted in a coding tree including, from low to high-hierarchy; 'sub-codes', 'codes', '(initial) themes' and 'sub-themes' (Supplementary File 1). After several rounds of (re)grouping codes and forming initial themes, two overarching themes resulted: 'legitimizing the Ruhr' and 'new uses of the past'. Such a post-coding analysis prevents cherry picking from the data and therefore ensures rigor (Stoffelen, 2019). Table 2 provides an overview of the final themes and sub-themes that followed on from our full data analysis.

In the following sections, we explain the findings coming from our data analysis using supportive quotes and images from the dataset. Due to both difficulties with obtaining copyright permissions and space constraints, we opted to reproduce only a few of the analyzed figures.

Legitimizing the Ruhr: narrating a hegemonic industrial history

The marketing documents frame Duisburg-Nord and Zollverein as landmarks important to the identity of the Ruhr. For example, ‘nowhere is the history of the Ruhr District as present as in the Landschaftspark Duisburg-Nord’ (D1). Another document explained that ‘Zollverein stands for an identity-creating culture of remembrance in the Ruhr area’ (Z5). Zollverein is ‘heritage for the entire region’ (M1) and the ‘cultural heart of the Ruhr area’ (Z4). In particular the mining shaft of Zollverein has a cult status, metaphorically described as ‘the Eiffel Tower of the Ruhrgebiet’ (M2). The imagery presents the mining shaft as big, impressive and aesthetically appealing. Consequently, the shaft is central to the marketing efforts. The marketing documents emphasize Zollverein’s status by flagging UNESCO’s World Heritage label.

The first identified sub-theme regards the Ruhr’s industrial history. Zollverein and Duisburg-Nord are ‘monuments of industrial culture’ (Z5) where ‘you can discover living industrial history’ (D1). Organized tours offer ‘authentic guided tours of the coal mine and coking plant [that] fascinate young and old alike’ (Z6), through which the ‘industrial history can be experienced’ (Z6). The studied documents also contain additional, subtle references to the industrial past, for instance by referring to former industrial functions of these heritage sites.

The second sub-theme narrates the period of deindustrialization during the twentieth century. The documents refer to this period as one of ‘structural change’, as the decline of the coal and steel industry severely impacted the Ruhr’s socio-economic characteristics. Duisburg-Nord and Zollverein supposedly represent these changes:

Zollverein has been transformed into a prime site for the art, culture and creative sectors, attracting more than two million visitors a year. This building symbolises the structural change in the Ruhr metropolis like no other. (Z1)

Not only seeing, but immersing yourself completely in the history of the old works which has been witness to so many changes. This is what makes the Landschaftspark one of the most extraordinary attractions in the Ruhr District and represents structural change at its most beautiful. (D1)

The quotes exemplify how these locations transitioned from places of production to post-industrial landscapes of consumption, which symbolizes broader socio-economic changes throughout the Ruhr.

Collectively, the sub-themes ‘industrial history’ and ‘deindustrialization’ narrate the Ruhr’s history as exclusively industrial, thereby suggesting that the area’s history is limited to the industrial age. Berger et al. (2017) and Gruehn (2017) already explained that the area’s widespread industrial development was at the basis of the initial recognition of the Ruhr – a polycentric urban area – as one distinct, coherent region. Therefore, industrial heritage plays an important role in legitimizing the Ruhr: it provides tangible remnants of the industrial past around which narratives are created to signify the region’s existence.

Surprisingly, the amount of text describing the industrial history of the Ruhr is only brief. For instance, the code ‘past industrial activities’, which marked all sections that narrate the industrial

Table 2. Overview of themes and sub-themes.

Themes	Sub-themes
Legitimizing the Ruhr	Industrial history Deindustrialization
New uses of the past	Sports Arts Leisure

past, only makes up for 3% of the codes. This is a surprisingly small percentage for a code marking a broad range of possible narratives, especially when compared to the codes signifying present-day uses, such as sports, arts and recreation (Table 3). The imagery also under-represents historical uses or states of the sites. Only document Z7 contains a historical photograph. The size of this photo is comparatively small, suggesting that it is subordinate to other images. The limited amount of text spent on the industrial history and the absence of imagery indicate that the industrial history is a small part of, or a backdrop to, the story of these industrial heritage sites.

Whenever the documents detail the industrial history, descriptions mainly focus on ‘hard facts’, such as dates or numbers:

Until 1985 blast furnaces still burned and pig iron would begin the process of being turned into steel. (D1)

After the pit went into production in 1932 up to 13,000 tons of coal were mined here every day and the workforce numbered over 5,000. [...] The adjunct coking plant was built 30 years later in a similar style. The collier closed in 1986, and the coking plant in 1993. In 2002 the site was inscribed into the list of UNESCO World Heritage sites. (M2)

A length of 150 metres stretches along the coking ovens, in which coal was once turned into coke at 1,000 degrees Celsius. (Z7)

Narratives of what the industrial history comprised are mostly general and fact oriented. What the former industry and the social changes set in motion by deindustrialization, meant to the Ruhr’s inhabitants, is left unnoticed in external communication. In our analysis, we could not apply the pre-defined codes ‘outsider’s views on the industrial past’, ‘overcoming traumatic past’ and ‘unwanted inheritance’, suggesting that the studied documents present the past solely as positive or interesting. In effect, the presented history is distant and abstract, and lacks stories of former workers and associated communities. In this, the industrial heritage marketing narrative of the Ruhr differs markedly from the mining heritage portrayed in South Wales (Price & Rhodes, 2020).

This thin and stripped-down narration of the industrial history connects to previous research findings. Fontaine (2018, p. 102) argued that ‘the vision of the area’s mining past presented [...] is largely simplified and idealized’. Berger (2019) mentioned that scientific and factual narratives often dominate. Simplified representations and the focus on facts provide ‘safe’ and seemingly ‘objective’ representations of the past. More obscure narratives of the Ruhr’s past, for instance referring to environmental pollution or health concerns amongst workers, remain largely unnoticed. In effect, the narrated past is rather harmonious and sanitized. Over time, such a one-sided and simplified narration of history can be problematic, as it does not invite for critical reflection on, and learning from, the past (Eiringhaus, 2020).

Table 3. The 15 most-used codes and their relative frequencies.

Rank (# of 78 codes)	Code	Relative frequency (% of 627 coded elements)
1.	Aesthetics	5.3%
2.	Highlighting change	4.9%
3.	‘Industrienatur’	4.3%
4.	Scale - large	3.6%
5.	Uniqueness	3.6%
6.	Recreation	3.5%
7.	Art	3.5%
8.	Sports	3.4%
9.	UNESCO World Heritage	3.2%
10.	Lighting	3.1%
11.	Touristification	3.1%
12.	‘New possibilities’	3.0%
13.	Commodity for present	3.0%
14.	Past industrial activities	3.0%
15.	Events	2.6%

The ‘industrial history’ and ‘deindustrialization’ sub-themes serve multiple functions. First, the area’s history is presented as a resource for the future instead of as something that led to widespread socio-economic issues and a fragmented urban fabric.

Second, industrial heritage legitimizes the existence of the Ruhr as a coherent region. It provides an easy to grasp version of the area’s industrial history. For the Ruhr, a polycentric region with a complex administrative organization, presenting one shared history is important for legitimizing the region as a distinct unit (Berger et al., 2017). The industrial history narrated in the external marketing documents help in this regard by focusing on a general, shared history that ‘fits us all with the same distorting lenses’ (Lowenthal, 2015, p. 575). While absence of certain heritage narratives is usually understood as something negative as it can deny ownership of heritage (Goulding et al., 2018) and de-legitimize people in place (Lončar, 2016), the Ruhr’s industrial heritage sites seems to strive for the opposite. By simplifying narratives and omitting interpretation, industrial heritage is framed as representing all inhabitants of the Ruhr and zero-sum issues of heritage are (partly) avoided (or negated) (Ashworth & Graham, 2005).

Third, the narrated history sends out a sense of pride. This sentiment appeared most clearly in the Zollverein documents:

Among experts Shaft XII is considered a technical masterpiece: with a daily output of 12,000 net tons of pure hard coal, the facility produces the three- to fourfold quantity of an average colliery in the Ruhr Area. For three decades, the architecture of the coal mine is exemplary for industrial buildings in the Ruhr Area. (Z7)

The coal mine with its largely automated workflows was considered to be the largest and most efficient one in the world (Z5)

As exemplified by these quotes, descriptions of the industrial past generally focus on the scale and state-of-the-art technique and foster a sense of pride. A quote like ‘two years after its closure already the first guided tours were organized by former miners who wanted to present their unique workplace to the world’ (M1) represents this apparent pride. The message that former workers acted to educate about ‘their’ industrial past displays the perceived importance of this past. The expert and non-expert appraisal of industrial heritage line-up well, and together these contribute to a ‘common-sense’ discourse associating industrial heritage narratives with a sense of pride.

New uses of the past

The studied documents describe Duisburg-Nord and Zollverein as places where the industrial past provides opportunities for new activities. Zollverein has become ‘an attractive location for culture and leisure, education and business’ (Z5) and offers ‘1,000 possibilities’ (Z7). The theme ‘new uses of the past’ consists of the sub-themes ‘leisure’, ‘sports’ and ‘arts’. These narratives are often mentioned intertwined:

The Landschaftspark Duisburg-Nord is all about leisure, recreation, sport and culture. [...] Children and young people see the Landschaftspark as one huge adventure playground. There is a giant tunnel slide between two ore bunkers, an open hall for trend sports such as skating and mountain biking, lots of play areas and even an educational farm with horses, donkeys and hens. (D6)

Zollverein offers industrial culture at its best: art, concerts, festivals and sporting opportunities set against an impressive backdrop. (Z1)

The documents describe several sports activities, opportunities for visitors to consume arts, and event activities. Duisburg-Nord hosts ‘numerous events, such as thematic or torchlit guided tours’, making the park a ‘hub for art and culture in the Ruhr Metropolis’ (M2). The hosted events mainly focus on local themes and exhibit local culture. Furthermore, the lighting of buildings forms high-profile public art at both sites (Figure 1). The logo of Duisburg-Nord uses a colorful spectrum referring to the lighting of the industrial relics (Figure 2).

Evident from the sub-themes ‘sports’, ‘arts’ and ‘leisure’, the documents narrate the Ruhr’s industrial heritage to offer various new uses for its inhabitants and tourists. This narrative contrasts with Waterton’s (2009) findings, who indicated that depictions of heritage are commonly devoid of people or depicted with experts or passive observers (see also Smith, 2006). The framing of the industrial heritage of Duisburg-Nord, and to a lesser extent also Zollverein, as sites for non-experts underlines their supposedly universal relevance.

Nevertheless, Zollverein’s marketing narrative contains many elements that are in-line with what has been labeled an AHD. The narrative includes references to cultural activities intended for the cultural elite. For Zollverein there is a focus on ‘high-profile art projects’ (Z3). These are ‘award-winning design’ (M2), known events and avantgarde artists that settle at this location. The food at Zollverein is ‘culinary art’ (Z7) and ‘creative top cuisine’ (Z6). The location is an ‘innovative business location’ (Z5).

Throughout these three sub-themes (leisure, sports and arts) there is a noticeable focus on aesthetics. Aesthetics represent a large share of the coding, making up more than 5% of all codes (Table 3). Duisburg-Nord ‘represents structural change at its most beautiful’ (D1) and has ‘been chosen one of the most beautiful parks in the world by the British newspaper The Guardian’ (D2). The site makes a ‘versatile photo and film backdrop’ (D1) and ‘a popular photo motif’ (M1). The Zollverein documents pay similar attention to aesthetics, naming the site ‘the most beautiful coalmine in the world’ (Z1, Z5 & Z6). Images depict people observing and taking pictures of industrial heritage. The colorful lighting of the buildings, discussed earlier, also contributes to the focus on aesthetics.

New uses and former industrial functions of Zollverein and Duisburg-Nord are narrated side by side, resulting in a dualistic framing of time (Oakley, 2018). The marketing narrative compares the industrial past and the post-industrial present, separated by deindustrialization:

Once the most productive hard coal mine in Europe, today it is home to museums for dance, performance, theatre and design [...], and welcomes around 1.5 million visitors from home and abroad every year. It is regarded as a symbol of the area’s successful transition from an industrial hub to an attractive cultural, leisure and business location. (Z3)

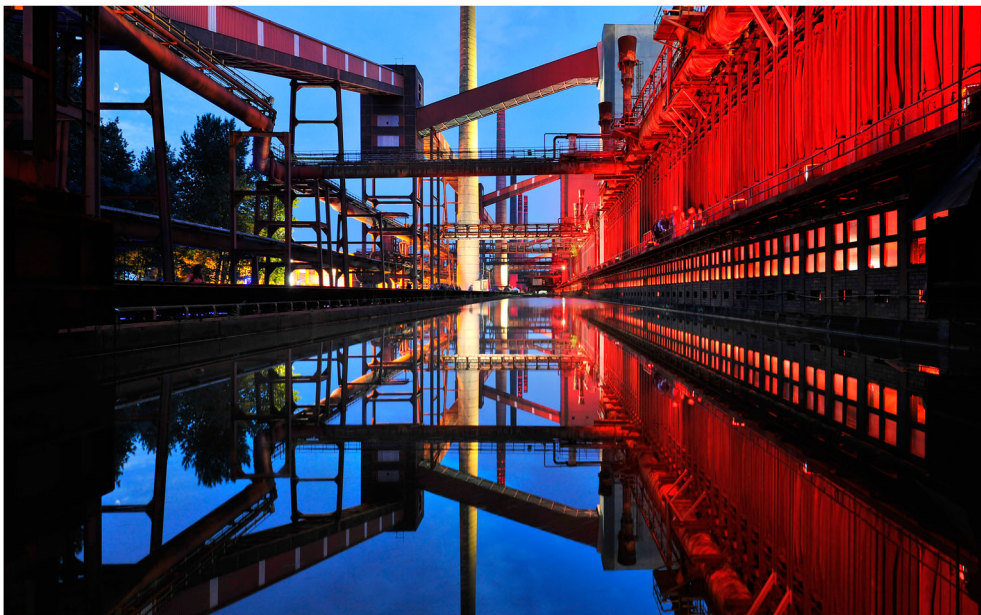


Figure 1. The Zollverein. Detail of Z7. © Frank Vinken / Stiftung Zollverein, used with permission.



Figure 2. The logo of Duisburg-Nord. © Duisburg Kontor Hallenmanagement GmbH, used with permission.

Where once there was the smoke of chimney stacks, today it's a very different programme: industry and nature. (D1)

The juxtaposing of the industrial past and the 'green' present, as in the quote above, also appears in marketing images (Figure 3). It is used for sports activities as well, as visitors can go 'alpine climbing [...] in the former ore storage bunkers' (D2) or 'dive against a unique industrial backdrop' (Z2). Even the pipe slide in the playground at Duisburg-Nord 'lead[s] down through two ore bunkers' (M2).

Conclusion

This paper aimed to gain insights into how a tourism marketing discourse narrates industrial heritage. We analyzed common narratives, themes and heritage functions attributed to industrial heritage with a case study of two major industrial heritage sites of the Ruhr area in Germany: Landschaftspark Duisburg-Nord and UNESCO World Heritage Zollverein. We found that the consumer-oriented marketing discourse transforms industrial pasts into industrial heritage to negotiate and strengthen the economic position of a post-industrial region. This marketing practice presents



Figure 3. *Industrienatur* at Duisburg-Nord. Detail of D6. © Thomas Berns, used with permission.

a seemingly neutral story targeted at a wide audience that justifies a particular consumption-driven development strategy to deal with post-industrial recovery at the Ruhr level.

Parts of the Ruhr's heritage marketing discourse reflect elements of an Authorized Heritage Discourse (AHD) (Smith, 2006), as it narrates the Ruhr as a self-evident, uncontested region, thereby strengthening present socio-economic structures. These elements were most prominent in the narrations of the Ruhr's industrial history and deindustrialization. The documents narrate the history in a simplified, brief manner, that is open for interpretation. Consequently, a sanitized past, free of contestation and negative memories, is presented.

As such, industrial heritage is used as both a commodity and an identity marker to negotiate the socio-economic position of a post-industrial region in a neoliberal setting of economic competition between regions. The simplified narratives combined with the 'new' uses, actively shape a 'commonsense discourse' (Stoffelen, 2021) of industrial heritage that justifies and institutionalizes a specific post-industrial recovery strategy. Industrial heritage narratives serve as the self-evident symbol for the Ruhr. Simultaneously, industrial heritage is adapted to tap into the growing demand for postmodern consumption of culture (Kohn, 2010) to achieve social and economic restructuring.

Overall, these findings demonstrate how tourism and regional development objectives shape heritage discourses by emphasizing present-day consumption of these sites. In the process, we identified that not all elements of the Ruhr's marketing narratives meet the characteristics of an AHD. Differences were most prominent in the descriptions of new uses of the heritage sites, where industrial relics appear as sites of consumption, valued for their aesthetics and facilitation of sports, arts and leisure. This differs from an AHD by: (i) the focus on non-expert interpretations of heritage instead of an expert oriented focus; (ii) the valuation of new interpretations instead of the marketing of interpretations based on history; and, (iii) the focus on physical uses of these heritage sites instead of a conservation oriented, hands-off approach. Also when compared to other post-industrial regions, such as South Wales (see Price & Rhodes, 2020), the Ruhr's marketing discourse differs in amongst others its thin narration of industrial history and its focus on 'new' uses.

This research combined concepts from heritage studies and destination marketing studies to highlight how heritage interpretation in marketing discourses underpins specific development policies. It provides insight into the construction of heritage in a tourism destination marketing discourse, in an area that uses heritage to negotiate and strengthen its post-industrial economic position. We unraveled how marketing efforts influence meanings associated with heritage and showed how representations of heritage shifted to suit an economy driven by consumption of culture.

Future research could focus on the alignment between values ascribed to heritage by institutions and inhabitants. This alignment is crucial for achieving successful regional development but has remained under-researched. For instance, how top-down initiated 'sanitized' and fact-oriented heritage narratives are received by inhabitants remains largely unknown, especially with sensitivity to spatial differences in a large, polycentric area such as the Ruhr. Furthermore, changing socio-economic realities can change the demand for heritage values. More research is needed to deepen understanding of the interactions between the supply and demand for heritage as a commodity and identity resource in changing socio-economic realities.

Notes

1. Original text: 'Gerade bei einem tendenziellen Rückgang der Einwohnerzahlen ist es notwendig, die kulturhistorisch bedeutsamen Siedlungsschwerpunkte zu stärken.'
2. Original text: 'Industriekulturell bedeutsame Strukturen und Elemente sollen als Alleinstellungsmerkmal der Region gesichert werden.'

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