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ABSTRACT

Today's tourists seek unique destinations that could associate with their self identity in a profound way. It is meaningful for destinations to design unique physical elements that offer transformational travel experiences. This study aims at identifying how tourists encounter architecture in a destination and if architecture facilitates tourists' self transformation. Based on narrative structure analysis by deconstruction of travel blog posts, the results suggest that tourists perceive architectural landscape as an important feature that reflects destinations' identity. Four different interaction modes—gazing, touring, reading and pondering are identified. Conversational architectural design is suggested for destinations to create a unique experience.

Keywords: *tourism product development, experience, architecture, identity.*

INTRODUCTION

Today's postmodern tourists' needs and anticipations of travel do not only lie in the experiences, but also in the transformation of their selves. Tourists seek unique destinations that they could identify or associate with their self identity in a more profound way. This study argues that architourism (Ockman and Frausto, 2005) is a direction for tourism product development that caters postmodern tourists' anticipations as architectural environment of a city tells its distinctive characteristics. The reasons are two-fold. First, architecture offers a potential mechanism for inscribing the self into the environment, which may facilitate a form of identification that, once conformed, will be able to etch a long-lasting impact for tourists. Second, architourism encourages local architects to design new buildings and complexes that could identify the character of the city, which sustain its uniqueness as a tourist destination.

In order to understand how tourists interpret architectures, thus to design unique and meaningful physical elements of destination attractions, this study aims at empirically identifying: 1) whether tourists perceive architecture as an important feature that reflects identity of a destination; 2) how tourists encounter architectures in a destination; and 3) if architecture facilitates tourists' self transformation thus make their trip meaningful and special. We choose Chicago as a research context

due to its major influence to the history of American architecture and the fact that the city features prominent structures in a variety of styles by many important architects.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Tourists' transformation experience

Tourism is an important component of the process of identity-building (Light, 2001). It plays a significant role in the construction and reproduction of identities. For individual tourist, personal senses of identity in postmodern societies are increasingly defined and affirmed through practices of consumption (Featherstone, 1991; Mackay, 1997). Tourism is a part of this process: the "right" holiday has considerable symbolic value and for many people the choice of holiday-taking is a reflection of conspicuous consumption through which they can reaffirm self-image and social status. In addition, for many "postmodern" or "post-tourist" (Urry, 1990), the choice of holiday type and destination is a practice designed both to differentiate themselves from other class fractions and enhance cultural capital (Munt, 1994). In recent years the huge diversification of types of tourism and destinations—many with a strong cultural component (Craik, 1997)—is the tourism industry's response to the rise of such post-tourists. Researchers identified an increasing role of tourists as "co-producers" of their own experiences. Prentice (2004) suggested the importance of self-development and experiential aspects with a "life-style formation paradigm" in tourism. Ooi (2002) observed the emergence of the "versatile tourist" who is not only experienced at being a tourist in terms of selecting between destinations and creating their own agenda, but also at their capacity for engagement and interaction with destinations and their adeptness in responding selectively to the interpretative stimuli while building cultural capital. Such phenomena often indicate a search for authenticity, identity and encounters that differ from those obtainable through mass tourism (MacCannell, 1976; Urry, 1990). Thus, tourism is being anticipated and experienced in different ways than previously. Tourists seek unique and self-identified destinations.

Therefore, it is important for destinations to identify their uniqueness, which is considered to be a key factor for tourists' travel decision making. In addition, Pine and Gilmore (1999) argued that the growing competition among experience providers will lead them to develop their offerings to a new stage of economic value creation—transformations, allowing the participants to develop their own narratives and draw upon their own imaginative potential, rather than providing ready-made storylines for them. In the transformation economy, the consumer not only experiences, but is also changed by the experience. The desire for experience, or "experience hunger" that characterizes modern society has always been a major driver of tourism (Hall, 2004), especially for the postmodern tourists.

Researchers such as Richards and Wilson (2006) proposed the idea of developing creativity in tourist experiences as a solution to avoid serial reproduction of indistinctive destinations. Here, creative cultural capital could be seen as the software to create a distinctive place image or experience for tourism product development. However, it is also vital to look at the hardware—physical characteristics of destinations such as architecture. The architectural environment of a city tells its distinctive characteristics. Tourists' interactions and experience with the physical features of destinations provide the opportunity to construct their own narratives about themselves.

Architecture as tourist transformation experience

Architecture is often linked to cultural identity. Culture is constituted not by a system of objects alone, but by a discourse that imbues these objects with meaning. It is argued by cultural theorist Bhabha (1990) that we have to recognize the nation (or city) identity as being defined within a dialectical tension. It is a tension between the object and its accompanying narrative: "signifying the people as a priori historical presence, a pedagogical object; and the people constructed in the

performance of narrative, its enunciatory present marked in the repetition and pulsation of the nation sign" (p.298-299). Architecture can be understood as a type of "objective cultural capital". Its value lies dormant and in permanent potential. It has to be reactivated by social practices that will, as it were, revive it.

Urry (1990) suggests that the "tourist gaze" should be regarded as a tourist experience that includes the "consumption" of signs, symbols, cultural experiences, some of which can be purely artificial. Escape to Wisconsin is not so much escape into nature as escape into culturally generated ideals of nature and the natural. Tourism is always artifactual. What attracts and lures people are either mental images of nature to which nature "out there" is expected to conform, or images and plans that have been turned successfully into artifacts and architecture (Tuan, 2005). As in postmodern architecture, travel and travelers display ornamentation and style, aestheticization and symbols, all of them are crucial to confirming the tourist's search for new meaning and dignity (Nuryanti, 1996). Nuryanti (1996, p.250-251) asserts that "postmodern tourists use the power of their intellect and imagination to receive and communicating messages, constructing their own sense of places to create their individual journeys of self-discovery."

Architecture is a form of cultural capital, which fits post-tourists symbolic consumption and their new interpretation of architectural context. Ockman and Frausto (2005) investigated some forms of desire that motivate this type of tourism. They are described as "Authentic", "Exotic", "Escapist" and "Spectacular". Motivated by a desire for authentic experience or for exotic places, for escape or spectacle, or simply an urge for new knowledge, the tourist leaves a familiar environment to view other locations through the lens of his or her own memories, expectations, and fantasies. Whether received in a mode of distraction or attention, perceived as background or foreground, architecture has always been an integral part of the tourist's experience. In other words, the architectural environment for tourism today constructs tourist experiences and is in turn constructed by tourist values.

To preserve or enhance a sense of place, local architects are encouraged to design new buildings and complexes that continue the look of the city. Even tourist-oriented built architectures usually acquire new meanings for the locals, as these built artifacts become a diacritical mark of the city's cultural identity, a vehicle of the city's self-representation before an external public. In this sense, the city creates its own characteristics, which are perceived by tourists as unique that both stimulate tourists' motivation to visit and the creation of any lasting representational masterpieces (Schwarzer, 2005). Using a building to stimulate tourism and solidify urban identity is hardly a new phenomenon，having a history dating back to ancient Greece. In modern times, landmark skyscrapers have been the boldest signatures of urban identity, attracting tremendous numbers of tourists. Particular concert halls, museums, bridges, or monuments have stood out from their surroundings and lent their cities the glamour of instant recognition and allure (Schwarzer, 2005).

Architectural environment, especially modern architectures, also provides consumptions of symbols and cultural capital, which offers a potential mechanism for inscribing the self into the environment. It may facilitate a form of identification. However, beyond the nature of architectural environment is the tourists' engagement with that architectural environment. Identification is a product of the consciousness by which we relate to our surroundings and not a property of the surroundings themselves. The deeper the degree a certain tourist encounters an architectural building, the further he/she reaches the projection process (discussed in the next section). As reflected in Cohen's (1979) "modes of touristic experience", five types of such modes were proposed according to the depth of experience the individual seeks in tourism. Tourism typically involves some encounter with the "other;" in architourism, the architectures. The deeper the experience sought by the tourist, the more strongly will he/she tend to embrace the "other," and to turn into his "elective center" (Cohen, 1988). The

"existential" tourists (Cohen, 1979) who tend to spiritually abandon modernity and embrace the other as their elective center and "switch worlds" (Berger and Luckmann, 1966), or "go native" (Redfoot, 1984) will be the most "purist" of tourists who dip into the meanings of authentic architourism. "Experimental" tourists who experiment with various potential elective centers (Cohen, 1979) will still resemble those of existential tourists. "Experiential" tourists (Cohen, 1979) who seek to participate vicariously in the various roles of others, still seek out the meanings of buildings and local community. "Diversionary" tourists (Cohen, 1979), who seek mere diversion and oblivion on their trips, may or may not engage in the ongoing process of identification. However, for "recreational" tourists (Cohen, 1979), architectural environment is merely a background for them to have fun.

Dual identity formation

For identification to take place within a specific architectural space, we should look for an equivalent process of mirroring (Metz, 1982). This process would depend on the introjections of the external world into the self, and the projection of the self onto the external world, so that equivalence—the one reflects the other—and identification may take place. Introjection, the absorption of the external world, is echoed within an architectural context in the work of Benjamin (1969), who presents the mind as a kind of camera obscura, a photosensitive plate onto which certain interiors are etched in moments of illustration. However, this occurs only at certain moments, when a particularly memorable event serves as a kind of flash bulb, flaring up like magnesium powder to imprint that interior on the mind. Leach (2002) extended Benjamin's suggestive model of the camera to that of the camcorder, for spatial experiences are seldom static. The photograph gives way to the video movie as the primary model for understanding how moments of spatial experiences are etched onto the mind.

Another important element of this double-movement vision is projective. This remains a crucial aspect of the process of identification that involves a two-fold mechanism of grafting symbolic meaning onto an object and then reading oneself into that object, and seeing one's value reflecting in it. The architectural environment must therefore serves as a kind of screen onto which we project our own meaning, and into which we would read ourselves. Regardless of whether the architecture context is known, tourists may provide their own meanings based upon the experiences they bring with them. Tourism's fundamental nature is dynamic; its interaction with architecture often results in a reinterpretation of the architectures. Tourists' personal engagement and interpretation create their own mental space by traveling the architectural environment to complete their meanings of the architecture reconstruction. Revival is simultaneously a process of creation and transformation (Lowenthal, 1985).

This projection of personality or intentionality onto an object and the investment of meaning explains the creative potential of seeing oneself in the other in moments of identification (Crimp, Deutsche, Lajer-Burcharth, and Wodiczko, 1986). In the hermeneutic moment, one tends to read the projection as though it were the property of the object. Yet in reality, intentionality, authenticity, and all kinds of content are merely projections. Buildings, according to Jameson (1997), do not have any inherent meaning. They are essentially inert, and are merely invested with meaning. This paper could not go so far as to discuss the issue of authenticity of experiences. However, it emphasizes the needs of understanding tourists' interpretative narratives in order for tourism organizations to create unique and meaningful physical attractions. This study, therefore, aims at empirically identifying: 1) whether tourists perceive architecture as an important form for reflecting a destinations' identification; 2) how tourists encounter architectures in destination; and 3) if architecture facilitate tourists' self transformation thus make their trip meaningful and special.

METHODOLOGY

Deconstruction Analysis of Tourists' Narratives

In the postmodern society, people have become separated from "genuine" cumulative forms of experience that predominated in the past and are increasingly reliant on individual experiences for development of the life course (Benjamin, 1996). This makes individuals to piece these discrete fragments of experience together into a coherent story that says something about who they are. In poststructuralist terms, narratives provide the means to link together disparate experiences into a coherent whole and more importantly, a distinct, individualized whole. We all have our own individual narratives, which are arguably becoming underpinnings for our identity. This is, in turn, a significant part of the reason why people travel, or why they travel as they do (Ateljevic and Doorne, 2004). Tourists create their own narratives through travel practices. Narratives are essential to "placemaking". In the world of tourism, fantasy, and reality are interwoven. Tourists' narratives are important in the dynamic and ongoing social construction of places as tourist destinations (Tussyadiah, Fesenmaier, and Yoo, 2008).

In order to understand how tourists interact with architectural environment and how they make meanings of the introjections and projection relationship, it is helpful to examine their personal narratives. A deconstruction analysis is suitable to scrutinize the narratives generated by tourists. Narrative structure analysis by deconstruction of stories into their parts is a useful way to understand the process of encounter in the episode schema. It is also useful to identify the causation (i.e. goal—action–outcome) within tourists' stories about visiting a certain destination, how they encounter the architectural landscape and the outcome of such encounters, which can be in a form of a mere pleasure, personal reflection or transformation. "Deconstruction is antenarrative in action" (Boje, 2001). Stories are exclusive yet shared. Every story legitimates a centered point of view or an ideology among alternatives. However, a story also lives and breathes its meaning in a web of other stories to provide a broader scope of understanding a phenomenon. It is argued by Boje and Dennehy (1993) that there are eight deconstructive moves in order to achieve the goal of reconstructing the story. This study, adopts narrative structure analysis by deconstruction of narratives in travel blogs written by tourists in order to identify their encounters with destination's physical environment and the outcome of such encounters. The deconstruction analysis was aided by a text analysis software ATLAS.ti.

Using Chicago, Illinois as a research context, this study uses www.travelblog.org as a narrative resource. The data collection was conducted using both general and specific keyword search. General keywords are terms used in the book of Architourism (Ockman and Frausto, 2005) such as "architecture", "building", "structure", "park", "facade", "monument", "museum", "theater", etc. Specific keywords are buildings and architectural environment names in Chicago which are listed in the book of Chicago Architecture 1885 to Today (Keegan, 2008). Examples are the Willis Tower (originally Sears Tower), John Hancock Center, Marina City, Wrigley Building, Tribune Tower, Chicago Cultural Center, Crown Hall, James R. Thompson Center (originally State of Illinois Building), Historic Water Tower, The Bean (formally Cloud Gate), Millennium Park, Lincoln Park, Grants Park and Michigan Avenue. The exploratory time frame for this research is from November 2008 to November 2009. The search resulted in 39 relevant narratives for the study from a total of 115 travel blogs from www.travelblog.org on travel to Chicago. The narratives have a total of 27,725 words and about 710 words per posting. These travel bloggers are from all around the world (i.e., including international tourists from Australia, Europe, and Asia). Besides the blog text, the study also analyzes the descriptions written by tourists for their posted images.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the deconstruction of these 39 blog posts, tourists perceive architectures and architectural landscape as important features that reflect the destination's identity. Some bloggers wrote that the House of Blues gives the soul for Chicago as a jazz city, and is akin to what was depicted on a movie, "The Blues Brothers" (Exhibit 1.a). For other tourists, the architectural layout of Chicago speaks for its personality. Some tourists associate downtown Chicago as a fusion of Melbourne and Gotham City; it is flat and laid out on a perfect grid of streets, with large skyscrapers and Gothic architecture guarded by gargoyles and encumbered by aging rickety fire escapes, and its train lines running above and below the sidewalks. These tourists also associate the city with a friendly atmosphere (Exhibit 1.b). Tourists also find a harmonious mixture of buildings reflecting Chicago's personality. Even a Corner Bakery Café represents Chicago's characteristics (Exhibit 1.c). Chicago is also viewed as an inspirational city. Exhibit 1.d and 1.e represent a tourist's personal experience and imagination with an architectural element of a building in the city that inspires him/her.

Exhibit 1

a. *"Chicago natives will proudly tell you that the 1980 movie 'The Blues Brothers' is the greatest movie ever made. The movie was filmed in the House of Blues... This is the city that gave the movie its soul"* (by Kuan Yin).

b. *"...while soaking up the amazing contrast of old and new architecture that is the city's hallmark"* (by JackSmith)

c. *"The Corner Bakery Café (on the corner of Jackson Boulevard and Michigan Avenue) is Chicago's answer to Panera's (Bread)."* (by kelleygirl)

d. *"I happen to really like Chicago... A city that sits well with me for unknown reasons. The sign of W-hotel on the wall says: 'Life isn't about finding yourself. Life is about creating yourself'... I need messages like that to inspire me."* (by LexTraveler)

e. *"It is said that the tower sways some inches whenever strong winds strike the city ... I could have parachuted off the top of the Willis (formerly Sears) Tower with my pashmina!"* (by LexTraveler)

Based on the narratives, there are four different interaction modes with which tourists encounter the destination's physical environment that reflect their level of engagement. (1) Gazing; tourists merely do sightseeing and observe architecture and structures as a part of the city scenes. (2) Touring; tourists further observe by visiting the interior of the buildings. (3) Reading; tourists are participating in a tour to gain knowledge of the history and stories behind the buildings; they try to relate or compare the structures with the ones in their hometown or any movies or imaginary scenarios. (4) Pondering; tourists could be referred to as existential tourists who take an outsider's view; they sit back and ponder while gazing on classical architectures.

For some tourists, walking through the city and sightseeing is a pleasure activity to experience the city's architectural environment (see Exhibit 2.a). For others, the architecture in Chicago is interesting while touring. In exhibit 2.b, a tourist, even though she is not an architectural buff, finds the two hours of architecture tour are well spent seeing the, often surprisingly beautiful, interior of public and financial buildings. She even finds the Chicago prison as significant for her experience. Through reading the architecture, some bloggers remember their pleasant memory (see Exhibit 2.c). Sitting in the lobby of a hotel on extremely modern furniture, looking around at more classical architecture, highlighted by the spinning disco balls makes *a tourist* to ponder the contrast of the architecture in Chicago (see Exhibit 2.d).

Exhibit 2

a. *"I loved seeing and smelling a constantly changing landscape of people, buildings, and cultures"* (by Pastor Steve).
b. *"The City of Chicago is truly beautiful in its architecture… even the prison is of architectural interest…"* (by leuchtkind).
c. *"The Nichols Bridge from the Art Institute to Millennium Park embraces a wonderful contrast of architectural styles that takes on even more drama as the sun sets and the lights come on… It brought me back to the pleasant afternoons of my childhood."* (by kelleygirl).
d. *"I loved the vaulted ceilings, painted gold"* (by LexTraveler).

Different forms of self identification and transformation are identified in the narratives. When encountering the skyscrapers in Chicago, some tourists express a sense of conquer. For example, *Edgar* labeled his blog as being "on the top of the world". Here, a tourist's ego comes alive; his/her self-confidence is magnified at the larger scale of the tall buildings. "When we see humans in a building, and know there are eyes up there, that's the emotional connection. Tall has power" (Gluckman, 2003, p.60). Architectural environment evoke memories and anticipations which associated to tourists' personal footprint and identification. A vivid picture was depicted in exhibit 3.a. Another tourist expresses her desires of relating the anticipated city landscape she sees from commercials, TV programs, and magazines to the attachment of those places. Exhibit 3.b reflects a high level of engagement and self-identification. Another blog post reflecting self-identification is titled "My kind of city" (by *Mandy Nath*). This resonates Schulz's (1980) research that the identity of a person is defined in terms of the schemata developed from the environment, because they determine the "world," which is identified as them. "This fact is confirmed by common linguistic usage. When a person wants to tell who he is, it is in fact usual to say: 'I am a New Yorker', or 'I am a Roman'. We understand that human identity is to a high context a function of places and things" (p.21). In a postmodern society, with a loose social community and easy facilitation for traveling, people seek to experience different places and construct their own narratives about who they are. Their definitions of identification become pluralized and probably one destination could only represent one fragment of their identities. That is why they keep on traveling to find, or create, the rest fragments of themselves. Once they find a place that represents or confirms their certain piece of identity, the impact of the place is long lasting and they most likely would visit this destination again and again.

Exhibit 3
a. *"I was five years old with long brown pigtails holding my mother's hand as I came off the old "EL" skipping along and pressing my nose to the cold glass to see the animated snow scenes in the store windows"*(by kelleygirl)

b. *"Chicago reminds me of me. In a way it's not reality"* (by amandainshenzhen)

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS
Tourists' narratives show that tourists put a great importance in architectural environment of a destination and perceive architecture as important for self-transformation. Tourists prefer architectural structures that provide an opportunity for conversation between the architectural structure and him/herself, between tourists' past and present, between architecture's past and present, or between tourists' anticipated scenarios (i.e., scenarios seen from movies, etc.) and realized stage. The dual identity formation process is required in order to create a unique and meaningful physical attraction for

potential visitors and more importantly, repeat visitors. It is hard for destinations to sustain popularity in architecture which could be reflected by the example of declining visits for Guggenheim Museum in Balboa. Initial growth in visitor numbers has been replaced by financial problems as the novelty effect begins to wear off (Munsters, 2001).

The bean (official name is "cloud gate"), on the other hand, due to its reflective nature, is a great illustration of this dual identification process. People see themselves and everything around them reflected through this aluminum "cloud" structure. However, it is not truly the same reflection, it twists and bents objects reflected in it. Therefore, it allows tourists to create their own mental constructs of how they perceive the architectural environment and themselves as far as their imagination allows. Many tourists take photos of their self image reflected in the bean and label them "my reflection in the bean". The bean is perceived as interactive and conversational which uniquely associated with Chicago. It is therefore not only important that tourist destination has a special structure which facilitates orientation, but that it consists of concrete objects of identification (Schulz, 1980).

It is desired to design a unique tourist destination that offers transformation experiences for tourists and thus facilitates the dual identity formation process. This study relates to the concept of "Genius Loci" in architecture by Schulz (1980). Genius Loci is a Roman concept. Ancient Roman believes that every "independent" being has its genius, its guardian spirit. This spirit gives life to people and places and determines their character or essences. Ancient man experienced his environment as consisting of definite characters and recognized that it is of great existential importance when come to terms with the genius of the locality where his life takes place. However, during the course of history the Genius Loci has remained a living reality, although it may not have been expressively named as such. No matter a destination would like to attract and engage tourists in gazing, touring, reading or pondering, it must has its Genius Loci, the spirit of the destination and its architectural environment as stage for tourists' identity transformation.

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