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# Place branding and the representation of people at work: Exploring issues of tourism imagery and migrant labour in the Republic of Ireland

Received (in revised form): 7th June, 2007

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**Abstract** This paper addresses destination brand image in tourism marketing and assesses the contribution of tourism's workforce to such image and branding, considering the role that employees play in visitors' interpretation of their experience of destination and place. The focus of this paper, therefore, is on the role of people in the image of place and the potential for contradiction in imagery as the people who inhabit and work within a place change over time. At the same time, both those who promote a destination and those consuming the place as visitors may well have expectations that are fixed in imagery that does not accord with that held within the wider community. The location of this paper is Ireland where the traditional promotion of the tourism brand has given a core role to images of people and the friendliness of the hospitality of Irish people, represented by largely homogeneous images. Recent growth in the 'Celtic tiger' economy has induced unprecedented and large-scale migration from countries across the globe to Ireland, particularly into the tourism sector. This paper raises questions with regard to the branding of Ireland as a tourist destination in the light of major changes within the demography and ethnicity of its tourism workforce.

*Place Branding and Public Diplomacy* (2007) 0, 000–000. doi:10.1057/palgrave.pb.6000083

**Keywords:** *Tourism, migrant labour, Ireland, brand marketing, interpretation, authenticity*

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## PLACE AND PEOPLE IN TOURISM

This paper addresses destination brand image in tourism marketing and assesses

the political context of such branding with particular reference to the contribution of tourism's workforce to such image and branding, considering the

role that employees play in visitors' interpretation of their experience of destination and place. The branding of place, whether for tourism or other purposes, is complex, contentious and contested (Olins, 2004) and draws on a wide range of images (Kotler and Gertner, 2004). Our discussion here will address the interplay of destination branding, perceived authenticity of tourism's products and services, and the role that people play in this relationship. This assessment is an attempt to evaluate part of the complex and dynamic nature of tourist behaviour, recognising at the same time that in doing so some aspects of this complexity may not be fully addressed. Consideration will be given to traditional representations of place, in destination brand imagery, and we will question whether this notion can be reconciled with the presence of people at work, drawn from an increasingly diverse migrant labour pool.

Place, in many respects the 'stuff' of tourism marketing, cannot exist in isolation of the people who inhabit the spaces that they contain. As Shurmer-Smith and Hannam (1994: 13) note

'Place is a deceptively simple concept in geographical thought; we want to make it difficult, uneasy. We want to show that places do not exist in a sense other than culturally, and as a result that they can appear and disappear, change in size and character .... according to the way in which people construct them, Places then have no objective reality, only intersubjective ones.'

Kotler *et al.* (1993: 141), adopting a marketing perspective, 'define a place's image as the sum of beliefs, ideas, and impressions that a people have of a place'. Of course, both within communities and between communities and those outside, there is frequently divergence in terms of how such beliefs, ideas and impressions add up. Contested identity of place is frequently reflective of divergence with respect to geographical analysis, historical interpretation and the championing of contemporary political cause. The context for all three forms of identity is noticeably evident in the case of Ireland, the focus of this paper (Hourihane, 2003; Cronin and O'Connor, 2003; McCarthy,

2005). Contested space in Ireland, as elsewhere, is, in part, a result of fundamental and ongoing change with regard to the notion of place, how spaces within it are used and by whom they are used (Lee, 1999; McWilliams, 2005).

The focus of this paper is on the contribution of people to the image and branding of place and the potential for contradiction in imagery as the people who inhabit and work within a place change over time. At the same time, key stakeholders in this process, notably politicians, destination marketers and others who promote a location as well as those who consume the place as visitors, may well have expectations that are fixed in traditional and outdated imagery, based on romanticised notions that are out of time or, indeed, based in excessive and uncritical familiarity (Prentice and Andersen, 2000). The literature, in the main, focuses on the contribution that people within the wider community make to tourism imagery and how such images are commodified and exploited (Cohen, 1995; Hollinshead, 1996; Dann, 1996) but development of such themes in the employment context is largely neglected.

One useful contextual analysis of the role of people in tourism marketing is provided by Dann (1996), who undertakes a systematic and analytical classification of the contribution that people make to destination image within promotional literature. Dann interprets the varying roles of people within destination promotion as representing a number of different forms. In Dann's 'Paradise Contrived', natives are depicted as scenery within which 'the subjects are not perceived as human beings. Instead, they are displayed as stage extras, artists' models, objects which have replaced people' (Dann, 1996: 70). Natives also act as cultural markers, as indicators of the host culture, as alternatives to scenery and historic monuments but fulfilling similar roles. Dann refers to a further group of pictorial images in terms of 'Paradise Controlled' within which natives act as servants, entertainers and vendors. This dimension may appear to be the most germane to the theme of this discussion and represents

images where local people (as servants) are located close to the inner tourist domain in the form of hotel employees, 'hovering nearby' (Dann, 1996: 73). Here, they fulfil substantially servile roles: as entertainers, adding colour to local culture but playing a role that is generally peripheral to the main images promoted within the brochures, and as vendors in retail outlets and markets, often with a relatively intense level of interaction with visitors. Dann's categories under the final umbrella heading of 'Paradise Confused' include images that see native roles cross over and overlap with that of their visitors, as seducers, intermediaries, as images of the familiar and, indeed, as fellow tourists. In reality, as we shall see, these are the images that have the most direct relevance and application in the context of this paper in representing the commodification of people, hospitality and 'craic' in Irish tourism branding. What Warhurst *et al.* (2000) would call the aesthetic dimensions of service work implies a degree of role proximity between tourist and host or the minimisation of social distance between them (Baum, 2006), a notion that accords with Dann's confused vision of paradise.

In this paper, we address the role of tourism employees in contributing to the overall images of a destination and consider how such images may be at considerable variance with the 'official' picture promoted politically and by national tourism bodies. Yet such pictures are frequently seen to lie at the heart of visitor expectations of a destination, although they are by no means the only source of a tourist's information collection in advance of a visit. Urry (1990: 68) rightly notes that 'the social composition of the producers, at least those who are serving in the front line, may be part of what is in fact "sold" to the customer. In other words, the "service" partly consists of a process of production which is infused with particular social characteristics, of gender, age, race, educational background and so on'. Where these characteristics are represented in the marketing and branding of the destination, especially as part of Dann's confused sense of paradise, they may become infused into the

overall destination image and the simplified stereotypes of place that visitors bring with them when they arrive as tourists. The true representation of tourism's employees, however, is not necessarily a static fixture within a destination in the manner in which aspects of landscape and historical artefacts may be presented. Employee characteristics can change, dramatically, in response to the way in which a destination evolves and changes, as Cukier (1998: 63) stresses.

'Tourism employment has the potential to effect cultural change within a community, as well as cause a shift in social status for those employed. It can modify social organizations and cause changes in cultural values that, in turn, may have implications for the determination of social status'.

People, within tourism, are also widely recognised as crucial to operational success (or otherwise) of businesses in the sector (Baum, 2002). 'The story of successful tourism enterprises is one that is largely about people — how they are recruited, how they are managed, how they are trained and educated, how they are valued and rewarded, and how they are supported through a process of continuous learning and career development' (Fáilte Ireland, 2005a: 8). In this paper, we would argue that this analysis should also include reference to who they are and the impact that this identity has on the imagery associated with the branding of the destination and the interpretation visitors place upon it.

The context of this discussion is Ireland, a 'confused paradise' where the characteristics of the tourism labour market have altered dramatically over the past decade. The impact of migrant labour within tourism is such that, currently, over 22 per cent of workers in the hospitality sector of tourism are non-Irish (Saavedra, 2005; Fáilte Ireland, 2005b; Melia and Kennedy, 2005), a proportion that is set to rise significantly in the future. While internationally this is not a new phenomenon, multi-culturalism within the tourism labour market in Ireland has emerged over a very short period of time and is distinctive in that it is not

predominantly urban in location but has reached peripheral, rural areas of the country.

Migrant labour within Ireland's tourism workforce may be seen to create a dilemma in terms of Ireland's traditional emphasis on Irish people as part of the tourism product. An intangible conflict may, therefore, exist between the image engendered by the new multicultural workforce and the traditional emphasis Ireland has placed on its welcome or '*Cead Mile Fáilte*', a value that is central to Tourism Brand Ireland (Foley and Fahy, 2004; McManus, 2005). By contrast, other destinations that are also highly dependent on migrant labour for the delivery of their tourism product, Switzerland for example, have not placed the same emphasis on people in their branding, marketing or imagery.

This paper is an exploratory development from ongoing research into migrant labour in the tourism sectors of both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. Methodologically, it mainly draws on secondary sources for its analysis but also includes reference to ideas drawn from ongoing empirical work (Devine *et al.*, 2006) and from an analysis of marketing and brand collateral prepared by Irish tourism promotion agencies. The paper considers the historical and political context of destination branding in the Irish Republic (Deegan and Dineen, 1997) and the links that this has to the evolution of representations that exist about contemporary Irishness. It also addresses the role that people play in forming images of Irishness in tourism (O'Leary and Deegan, 2003) and seeks to assess the extent to which an increasingly international workforce may force change on the representation of Ireland as a destination brand and also impact upon visitors' interpretation of their experiences in Ireland.

## **AUTHENTICITY AND TOURISM IMAGERY**

As we have already suggested, place and identity can be contested concepts in geographical, historical and political terms. In representing a destination for the purposes of national brand development and marketing, what representation can be described as authentic and whose

interpretation of authenticity takes precedence within the promotion of a destination?

Authenticity is a challenging concept in tourism. In the context of destination branding and marketing, the debate centres on whose sense of the authentic is deemed more important, who has ownership of what is seen to be authentic or not, the local community, their guests or, indeed, other stakeholders. MacCannell's (1973, 1976) contributions place the tourist in a position of seeking escape from the modernity of urban living by searching for the post-modern myth of the authentic experience in peripheral locations (such as Ireland) or, as Lanfant (1995b: 35) puts it 'a place of other which is a shelter from change: peasant societies which are supposedly profoundly rural', again a good descriptor of a common marketers' positioning of Ireland. MacCannell distinguishes between what he sees as true authenticity, which is a philosophical, non-negotiable and, apparently, universal interpretation and staged authenticity, which is designed to cater for outsiders to an event or destination. In this sense, MacCannell's notion of staged authenticity gives legitimacy to a representation of place that may, in fact, be far removed from the images held by the community who live there. Staged authenticity of events and other cultural products, according to Cohen (1988), may act as a substitute when such experiences no longer have meaning for local communities but remain core to visitors' expectations of the destination. The commercial transaction of tourism justifies the staging of experience in a way that accords with the visitor's expectations of the destination, irrespective of whether it represents reality as seen by the hosts. This interpretation of authenticity, in the context of the imaging and promotion of tourism, has direct relevance in the Irish context discussed in this paper. MacCannell (1973: 594) argues that tourists are 'motivated by the desire for authentic experiences' but that apparently 'authentic' events are staged for them in advance in order to meet their expectations and perceptions of what is authentic in a destination. Our

argument here is that the imprint of an 'authentic' Ireland is laid by means of promotional imagery and advertising copy but that the contemporary tourist can readily see through this on arrival and is confronted by a reality that, while perhaps no less attractive and interesting, does not match their expectations.

MacCannell's notion of staged authenticity to some extent accords with what Wang (1999) describes as constructive authenticity, which is the result of contextual construction of reality within tourists' experiences. The experience is not necessarily inherently authentic in the way that Loyalist or Republican graffiti might be perceived in parts of West Belfast but are perceived in this way because of contextual construction by tourists in terms of their points of view, beliefs, perspectives or powers. The graffiti might accord with Wang's description of objective reality, similar to Selwyn's (1996) notion of cool authenticity to describe external experiences of physical artefacts in the real world — works of art, buildings, festivals and similar external experiences. Wang (1999: 353) also talks about existential authenticity, which 'involves personal or intersubjective feelings activated by the liminal process of tourist activities'. This is close to Selwyn's hot authenticity, the emotional or internal response of the tourist to the experience of a destination or attraction. Wang reminds us that a sense of authenticity may arise from a tourist's own interpretation of their experiences and that such an interpretation may be built from a number of different blocks, not all of which can be predicted. Brown (1996) sees hot authenticity as primarily drawn from human interaction with sociable local people, a notion at the heart of much tourism promotion in Ireland, both within former and current campaigns. In this sense, what is deemed to be authentic is socially and contextually constructed and will change over time and place but will also vary according to individual experience. Cohen's (1988) argument, that there is no such thing as tourist experience as a singular concept (which is where MacCannell appears to start) but rather a multitude of different experiences by individual

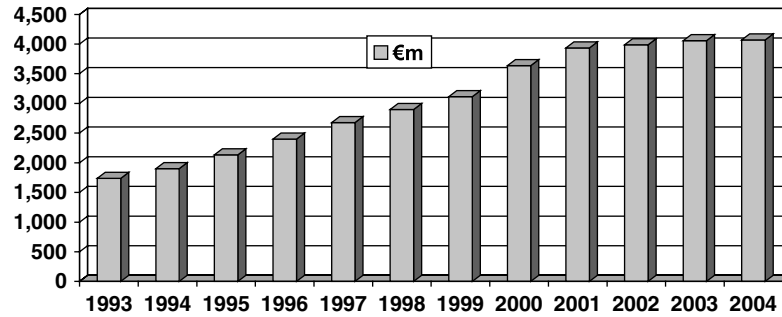
tourists, is a logical corollary of the notion of socially constructed authenticity.

Cohen's (1988) discussion of authenticity further introduces the concept of commoditisation into the discussion about authenticity. Commoditisation 'is a process by which things (and activities) come to be evaluated primarily in terms of their exchange value' (Cohen, 1988: 380) and Cohen raises important questions with regard to how this process may be applied to symbolic meaning attached to religious, cultural and social artefacts and experiences. The politics of tourism marketing and destination branding are such that commoditisation of national identity can take place without consensual support of the community and, certainly, at variance to the contemporary reality of that community. The commoditisation of Ireland in terms of its leprechauns and craic and Scotland as a land of tartan, whisky and shortbread may be of value in some tourism marketplaces but are also highly contestable in terms of the authenticity of the place and identity that they represent.

As we shall see, what is deemed to be authentic, in terms of marketing and brand images, are points of challenge and debate in Ireland. We will approach this debate by addressing the development of tourism in Ireland, the presentation and promotion of Brand Ireland in tourism terms and the extent to which the character of the contemporary tourism labour market is accurately represented by such promotion.

## THE DEVELOPMENT OF TOURISM IN IRELAND

The early development of tourism in Ireland, post-independence in 1922, was a period of some growth and development but also political ambivalence (Deegan and Dineen, 1997) in that other areas of the economy, particularly in the context of rural communities, were seen to be of greater priority and concern. Tourism development in the post-war decades grew slowly until the mid-1960s and then stagnated. The national economic environment at the



**Figure 1:** Growth in Foreign exchange earnings from tourism to Ireland, 1993–2004  
 Source: [22]Fáilte Ireland (2005c: 1)

time was initially one of introversion (Deegan and Dineen, 1997; Lee, 1999; McWilliams, 2005) with a focus on protectionism. Tourism moved into a healthy growth phase during the 1960s but the advent of the ‘Troubles’ in Northern Ireland saw an initial, dramatic fall in the number of visitors to the Irish Republic, particularly from Great Britain, and subsequent stagnation in overall visitors at a time when comparable destinations throughout Europe were experiencing sustained growth in visitor numbers.

Membership of the European Economic Community in 1972 signalled a significant shift in the economic fortunes of Ireland and laid the bedrock for the major growth in investment and in national prosperity that took place from the mid-1980s onwards. Deegan (2005) notes that tourism became a recognised pillar within national economic development strategy with the accession of a new government in 1987 and the sector, for the first time, was required to operate within a strict performance-related regime on a parallel basis to other sectors within the Irish economy. Moves towards greater transport deregulation and reduced tension in Northern Ireland undoubtedly contributed to the dramatic turn-around of Irish tourism but political will and recognition were very much at the forefront of change.

According to Fáilte Ireland (2005a), in 1996, 4.6 million overseas tourists visited Ireland. By 2004, the number of overseas visitors had risen to 6.5 million, and in 2012 this figure is

targeted to reach 10 million. These figures must be set alongside international arrivals during the mid-1980s that stagnated between one and two million per annum. In 1996, overseas tourism revenue amounted to €1.825bn. By 2004, this figure had risen to €4.1bn and is targeted to reach €6.0bn in 2012. In the same year, domestic tourism expenditure amounted to in excess of €1.00bn, making tourism in total a €5.1bn sector. This figure represented approximately 4.2 per cent of GNP in 2004 (Figure 1).

Within an environment of sustained tourism development and growth, the importance of people to Irish tourism’s competitiveness is generally recognised at political and operational levels. Indeed, the country’s human resource development plan for the sector, launched in 2005 (Fáilte Ireland, 2005a), carries the sub-title ‘Competing through People’ and focuses, in particular, on the need for the country to maximise value to its guests through excellence in all aspects of the delivery of products and services. This report notes that tourism

‘is a people-centered service industry, where staff are an integral part of the consumer experience. Tourism therefore must look to the people working in the industry to serve as a principal source of competitive advantage. In short, there must be something unique in the skills, know-how, and behaviours of those working in the industry that will enable the Irish tourism product to distinguish itself from that of competitor countries.’ (Fáilte Ireland, 2005a: 3)

## THE MARKETING OF TOURISM IN IRELAND — IMAGES OF PEOPLE AND PLACE

Lanfant (1995b: 32) notes that ‘the international promotion of tourism demands that every place should have its own specific character’. In the case of Ireland, this specific character has long been built upon a relatively simple message, one of a rural idyll reinforced through images of ‘people, place and pace’ (O’Leary and Deegan, 2003: 213) in generations of acclaimed movies such as *Man of Aran* (1934), *The Quiet Man* (1952), *Ryan’s Daughter* (1970) and *Waking Ned Devine* (1998) (although the last of these was not actually filmed in Ireland). Rains (2003) stresses the essentially nostalgic imagery that underpins such films while O’Leary and Deegan (2003: 214) argue that ‘Ireland’s international appeal as a tourism destination has been based on its beautiful scenery and welcoming people since Victorian times’ and there is little doubt that the stereotype of the country, internationally, has been substantially built upon such images. Along with many similar pastoral destinations, the marketing of Ireland has continually stressed friendliness and escapism from urban drudgery for many potential visitors. The Irish themselves have not been shy to promote this ideal in the context of tourism and this is very much the image that core visitor markets expect from Ireland, particularly those with Irish ‘roots’. As Cawley (2003: 71) articulates, movie and marketing representation ‘perpetuates particular imagery in the Irish-American mind which has been inherited from parents and grandparents who left Ireland in the early twentieth century’.

Such imagery is also part of a deeper embedded ideology and has long operated under the umbrella of ‘official’ sanction. Over 60 years ago, then Taoiseach (later President) Eamon de Valera addressed the nation in a St Patrick’s Day radio broadcast:

‘That Ireland which we dreamed of would be the home of a people who valued material wealth only as the basis of right living, of a people who were satisfied with frugal comfort and devoted their lives to the things of the spirit — a land whose

countryside would be bright with cosy homesteads, whose fields and villages would be joyous with the sounds of industry, with the romping of sturdy children, the contests of athletic youths and the laughter of comely maidens, whose firesides would be forums for the wisdom of serene old age.’ (quoted in Lee, 1999: 71)

This is a powerful and predominantly rural image of Ireland, one that Lee (1999) acknowledges to have been inaccurate even 60 years ago when the role of Dublin as a metropolitan national capital was rapidly increasing the urbanisation of the country. de Valera’s dream, however, contains a bundling of images (pastoral, rural, anti-urban, at peace with itself) that have, arguably, underpinned the main thrust of the marketing of Ireland as a tourism destination and, to a substantial extent, still do. O’Connor (1993) brings this into clear focus in her claim that Irish tourism marketing has, largely, depicted the country as one of a ‘simple people living their lives in traditional ways far away from the hustle and bustle of city (life)’. Pritchard and Morgan (1996) address this in terms of the way in which, in destination marketing terms, Ireland is represented to hold the promise of escape from pressures of modernity to a pre-industrial society where leisure is paramount and the work ethic a foreign notion. The corollary is that urban representations of Ireland do not really fit into the images that dominate the marketing of the country.

‘In terms of place identity, urban centres were not seen as truly Irish, but were depicted as “foreign” imports. .... There has been an extraordinary persistence of this romanticized rural image, particularly in tourism promotion .... (although) more people in Ireland now live in urban areas than in rural ones.’ (McManus, 2005: 237)

Lanfant (1995a: 9) notes that ‘all official rhetoric on international tourism supposes that there are identities to preserve, maintain, seek out and celebrate’. Lanfant (1995b: 37), elsewhere, develops this theme by arguing that ‘traditional societies are vigorously encouraged to retain their own cultures intact for the sake of tourism. Tradition has come to be a resource for publicity in the market’. In the context of this



discussion, the ‘official rhetoric’ in the branding and marketing of Ireland for tourist consumption (at least within some markets) appears to be primarily concerned with what McIntosh and Prentice (1999: 592) call the ‘commodification of pastness’, which can be interpreted ‘as marking needs for identity and the finding of the true self through the appropriation of pastness’. Given the post-colonial context within which Ireland in the 20th century and Irish tourism, specifically, have evolved, this need to retain and promote pastness is, perhaps, understandable. Indeed, the exploitation of nostalgia is one of the more frequently employed marketing strategies by tourism destinations that may be somewhat uncomfortable with aspects of their present. As Walsh (1992, cited in McIntosh and Prentice, 1999: 592) comments ‘the exploration of nostalgia is not necessarily a bad thing: people’s emotional attachment to what they remember is of paramount importance’ but such interest needs to be critically tempered by an assessment of how the past links to the present. In Ireland however, the interpretation of pastness in social and cultural terms is not without contest and debate while the varied interpretations of the present, as we shall see, do not always reflect a consensus view.

Within this romanticised picture, O’Connor (1993) notes that one of the most striking aspects of Irish tourist imagery is the way in which Irish people are represented, located as they are within Dann’s confused paradise. Irish people, especially those to be found within a rural context, are regarded as an ‘essential ingredient in the publicity package’, with much more emphasis in the Irish tourism promotion literature on the qualities of Irish people than is the case in the marketing of other European countries. This analysis is further reinforced by Foley and Fahy (2004: 211), who argue that ‘the ease of interaction with Ireland’s friendly people and the delight of a colourful and cultural landscape have been the twin pillars of the Irish tourism product offering, forming the “core values” of Irish tourism as perceived by overseas visitors to Ireland.’

Likewise, Quinn (1991), in an analysis of tourist board promotional brochures, concluded that Irish people were typically depicted in reassuring roles, delivering service to tourists in ways that suggests that they are like personal friends of the family. Pritchard and Morgan (1996) compare the dominant images in marketing brochures for Ireland, Scotland and Wales. Looking at brochure covers and brochure contents in material targeting North American visitors, people images were found to constitute just 2 and 10 per cent, respectively, within Welsh collateral and 0 and 7 per cent in that promoting Scotland. By contrast, 25 per cent of the images on Irish brochure covers and 20 per cent of those within the brochures themselves depict people. Both Gibson (1994) and Buckley (1999) refer to country branding in the early 1990s and the positioning slogan used extensively at that time of ‘Ireland — come for the landscapes; experience the people’. Likewise, O’Connor (1993) notes that hospitable, friendly, welcoming are three recurring and related epithets of tourist publicity. She ascribes this friendliness to a desire to please the tourist.

Images from Tourism Ireland’s more recent brand marketing of the whole island of Ireland underpin the continuation of the de Valera heritage (Figures 2 and 3) and reinforce the idyll of a homogeneous people, friendly, rural and rustic. These pictures, employed within Tourism Brand Ireland and its accompanying script, confirm the co-incidence of place and people and, perhaps by default, locate these both, substantially, within a romanticised, rural and pastoral setting.

Further analysis of Tourism Ireland’s publicly available photographic images (accessed at <http://www.tourismirelandimagery.com/default.asp> on 13th April, 2006) reveals 164 images under the people and adults category. Of these, the majority depict crowd scenes or what appear to be visitors to the country in various contexts (hospitality, sightseeing, etc). While urban scenes are clearly in evidence, a disproportionate majority picture Ireland in rural and traditional terms — predominantly pastoral and nontechnological. Pertinent to this



**Figure 2:** The marketing of Ireland 1  
 Source: Tourism Ireland, , Tourism Ireland, Dublin/Coleraine, accessed at [http://www.tourismireland.com/corporate/publications/files/TI\\_Understanding\\_OurBrand.pdf](http://www.tourismireland.com/corporate/publications/files/TI_Understanding_OurBrand.pdf) on 13th April, 2006.



**Figure 3:** The marketing of Ireland 2  
 Source: Tourism Ireland, Understanding our Brand, Tourism Ireland, Dublin/Coleraine, accessed at [http://www.tourismireland.com/corporate/publications/files/TI\\_Understanding\\_OurBrand.pdf](http://www.tourismireland.com/corporate/publications/files/TI_Understanding_OurBrand.pdf) on 13th April, 2006.

paper, of the 164 images identified, 17 appear to depict ‘locals’ in leisure or nonworking contexts (Dann’s Paradise Confused) while a further eight can be said to represent people working in various situations — bars, hotels and entertainment (Paradise Controlled in Dann’s terms). Of these 25 photographic

images, none appear to depict any element of cultural or ethnic diversity within the Irish population.

This conclusion is further supported by analysis of the Tourism Ireland’s 2006 resource kit for overseas marketing, particularly in the UK and North America (Tourism Ireland, 2006a,b).

In photographic image terms, this material focuses on ten promotional themes (bed and breakfast; castle; cycling; fresh air; Galway; gardens; Gate Theatre; golf; pub; and round tower) from which story lines are built. These images are predominantly rural (only one is overtly Dublin) and overwhelmingly represent traditional images of the country and its people. All but one include people images of both guests and their hosts but none of these give even a hint of diversity within contemporary Irish society. Tourism Ireland (2006a), as a resource kit for travel professionals, does explore some of the growing contrasts in the country in its textual material (but not in its pictorial imagery). This source recognises two key contrasts: between 'Green pastoral' and 'Metro-Dublin' and also between Ireland North and South. It also highlights economic and social change and notes that Ireland is increasingly European, cosmopolitan and is characterised as 'more of a melting pot/more immigration'. The same source, however, further explores the image of the island of Ireland through the eyes of overseas holidaymakers within which 'the essence of Ireland is made up of People, Place, Living and Historic Culture'. Within this, the dominant themes of place are relaxing, authentic, green, unspoilt, wet, rural, striking. Within historic culture (a theme that outweighs living culture), the key features are museums, spiritual, legends, castles, Celtic, romantic and mythical. Within this bundling, 'warm, witty people' are a major motivator to visit the country. Thus, we can note some recognition of change within Ireland's dominant image in these current sources but it is very much in the context of 'small print' when set alongside the dominant and traditional themes within the visual imagery presented.

In contrast to the dominant images of these promotional sources, alternative interpretations of the authentic in contemporary, urbanised Ireland (Lee, 1999) include recognition of a country within which Dublin, as economic, political and cultural capital, dominates in a hugely disproportionate way and over two-thirds of the population are either Dubliners or drawn into the city as commuters, learners or consumers

(McManus, 2003). As O'Leary and Deegan (2003: 213) note, 'Ireland's traditional tourist images — relating to people, pace and place — are increasingly threatened by the development of the Celtic tiger economy.' Our main concern here is with people and place although the notion of pace, in this context implying a sense of leisureliness, is implied in the places that form the nucleus of Irish tourism imagery.

'The substantial economic growth in Ireland may have had a negative impact on the "sense of place" of Irish people, with a perceived dilution of the traditional Irish values of friendliness, and the distinctive sense of national identity. This raises important issues about the changing nature of the Irish tourism product and the validity of images of Ireland projected in campaigns promoting tourism.' (Foley and Fahy, 2004: 216)

McManus (2005) further addresses contradictions that have emerged between modern, urban Ireland (the Celtic tiger) and the pastoral images of the West that still dominate in formal tourism marketing and in the images of film and television. She points to the impact of a stereotyped 'authentic' commodification of Irish heritage and culture for purposes of tourism in both rural and urban parts of the country as running counter to the desires and aspirations of an increasingly multi-ethnic society. In particular, McManus questions the appropriateness of traditional tourism market imagery, relating as it frequently does to a homogeneous people as a core dimension, in the light of growing multi-ethnicity in the tourism workforce. At the same time, in an earlier essay, McManus (2003: 36) highlights the positive cultural benefits of multiculturalism, something that does not currently feature in the marketing of Ireland or its major cities as destinations. She argues that

'These new immigrants have a great potential to enrich our culture and have already begun to create a visual imprint on some of the larger towns, where new shops and businesses are catering for a wide range of tastes'.

The conundrum, therefore, is the manner in which this particular representation of people

within the branding of ‘authentic’ Ireland and its people builds upon images of ethnic homogeneity and the stereotyped personality image of the *cráic*. This representation continues to dominate the conventional presentation of tourism marketing imagery. It depicts a representation or image that is an intrinsic part of the tourism product and underpins international visitor expectations of the country and its people. Therefore, any perceived diminution of this will lead to a perception that the quality of the tourist experience may suffer in terms of perceptions of authenticity, although this may rarely be articulated in these terms in an overt manner. Péchenart (2003) gives examples of Irish journalists demonstrating the communication problems that can arise as a result of the use of non-Irish employees within tourism, both in the direct linguistic sense and in terms of rather more subtle cultural nuances that can underpin service encounters. As we shall see, the structure and composition of the contemporary workforce in Irish tourism is, increasingly, at variance with the image presented in the marketing of the country as a destination. At what point does Ireland recognise the reality of its contemporary social and community ‘face’ and seek to represent this more accurately in its brand images? How would such honesty play in major, traditional markets, particularly Irish American communities, where potential visitors are mature in demographic profile and traditional in perceptions and expectations of ‘home’?

## TOURISM, EMPLOYMENT AND THE CHANGING FACE OF IRELAND

Estimates of the actual numbers employed in Irish tourism vary. Melia and Kennedy (2005) put the total at around 200,000 full- and part-

time workers, of whom some 22 per cent are international employees. Fáilte Ireland traces the growth in the number of those employed on the basis of notional full-time equivalence. Following a period of virtual employment stagnation from the late 1970s onwards, the early 1990s clearly represent a period of phenomenal growth for Irish tourism, reflected in a massive increase in employment. Building on this, the five years between 1999 and 2004 saw an increase in sectoral employment of over 50 per cent (Table 1). While the data represented in Table 1 are drawn from a number of sources (and therefore may not exactly compare like for like), the overall picture is sufficiently clear and dramatic to reflect the reality of major change.

The growth in tourism generally and, specifically, in tourism employment must be seen in the wider context of major change in Irish society and within the economy, a process frequently encapsulated in the ‘Celtic tiger’ descriptor for the country from the mid-1990s onwards. Kirby *et al.* (2002) and Coulter and Coleman (2003), among others, point to the watershed in Irish life that has been the result of economic prosperity, creating opportunity for many of the population, particularly the urban young, on a scale unprecedented in the country’s history.

Within this seeming utopia, the economically enfranchised generation, the young people within the ‘tiger’ economy, born in the late 1970s and early 1980s, are described by McWilliams (2005) as ‘the Pope’s Children’, born as they were either side of the Pontiff’s historic visit to Ireland in 1979. They espouse attitudes and values very different from their parent’s era and, as the Irish manifestation of Tulgan and Martin’s (2001) ‘Y-generation’, are highly mobile, aspirant, demanding and, perhaps,

**Table 1:** Numbers at work in tourism

1978	1982	1989	1992	1999	2000	2001	2002	2004
18,295	17,341	25,190	23,302	95,488	105,267	118,427	141,000	145,100

1978–1992 figures represent direct employment from Deegan and Dineen (1997: 77).

1999–2004 are full-time equivalent figures compiled from various Fáilte Ireland sources.

overarchingly 'now-driven' in their expectations of work, leisure and life in general.

Within a change that has seen Ireland move close to the top of the international table in terms of average GDP and adult unemployment shrink from over 17 per cent in the mid-1980s to low single-digit figures, tourism has been one of the success factors within the 'Celtic tiger' economy, in both wealth generation and employment terms. The reality of aspects of tourism-induced employment, however, is that it continues to demands skills and acceptance of working conditions that do not match the expectations of work held by the new generation of Irish workers, who have traditionally formed the labour pool from which tourism draws its workforce. As a result, the sector, along with others in labour-intensive production and services, has turned to new sources of labour to fill a wide range of lower skills jobs, particularly in hospitality service and production. The main focus of this labour market response has been to recruit internationally for employees, to open up what has historically been an almost homogeneous labour market to international recruits on a scale unprecedented in Irish and, possibly, European history. Indeed, Forfás (2006) recognises the vital role that migration currently plays within the development of the Irish economy and projects future skills requirements within the Irish economy by key sector, including tourism.

Waves of migration in the tourism sector are not a new occurrence. Baum (2006) traces examples of vocational mobility in the sector in Europe back to the 13th century and discusses the important role that, primarily, southern Europeans played in developing the culture and character of hospitality operations in industrialised Europe in the 19th and much of the 20th centuries. The current wave of employment migration in the tourism sector, however, appears to be different. Ireland has attracted migrants from both within and outside the European Union, including a substantial number from beyond Europe. As an example, it is estimated that there are over 250,000 non-

Irish nationals employed in the economy of the Irish Republic or some 13 per cent of the entire workforce. This figure reaches 17 per cent in the Irish tourism industry (Anon, 2005). This growth was stimulated further in 2004 following the accession of ten new Member States to the European Union. It is estimated that new arrivals from within the Union reached 50,000 in 2004 (*Fáilte* Ireland, 2005c). **03** In addition, some 9,000 work permits were issued to non-European Economic Area nationals.

The data within specific work areas of tourism is particularly interesting. Fás (2005) identify the role of migrant employees within selected work categories in Ireland and those with the highest proportionate penetration of non-nationals in 2004 include 25.6 per cent among waiters and waitresses (the highest level for any category), 20.8 per cent for chefs and cooks, and 8.2 per cent for cleaners.

McLaughlin (2005) emphasises the positive economic impacts of immigration. In the case of Ireland there is a general consensus that economic performance of the country would be severely constrained if labour immigration declined. McLaughlin also stresses that the Irish economy, unlike the economies of many other developed nations, has been able to maintain both population growth and dependency ratios, which in turn ensures economic growth. Migrant workers are also beneficial to the local economy in terms of consumption, housing and entertainment (Jarman, 2004). Williams (2005) considers the benefits of human capital migration in terms that go beyond advantage within individual workplaces. He addresses labour mobility in terms of knowledge transfer, innovation and competitiveness, both within the organisation and within the wider economy. On this basis, there is new value to be gained by an organisation or a community in allowing entry to workers from different backgrounds because they have the potential to bring new ideas and practices to the local workplace. Balanced against this must be recognition of the undoubted deflationary impact on wages of a liberal migrant worker policy, which is certainly

in the short-term interest of tourism businesses (Riley, 2004). At the same time, the pull factors that underpin migration to Ireland cannot be underestimated. Eurobarometer (2005) notes that Dublin is the second easiest city in Europe in which to obtain employment and this reality is heavily promoted on websites throughout Eastern Europe.

The real challenge, here, is that delivery of an Irish tourism promise that places people at the centre of the offering demands skills that go beyond the traditionally technical. There is a requirement for dimensions within our understanding of work and employment in tourism that includes a sense of culture as well as emotional (Hochschild, 1983) and aesthetic aspects (Warhurst *et al.*, 2000; Nickson *et al.*, 2003) as key components in the skills bundling for Irish tourism. These represent skills that are an integral part of what might be styled the authenticity of place, components of the native culture, of the image that is projected to the outside world of the destination and its people. With this in mind, how does the new face of Irish tourism, built as it is on a heterogeneous, multicultural and multinational workforce, fit in with the images projected by the highly successful marketing of the country as a destination?

## CONCLUSIONS

This paper unites evidence from apparently disparate domains, namely aspects of the images that dominate the promotional focus of tourism marketing in Ireland and changing composition of the country's tourism workforce. The underpinning theoretical link between these evidence sources is their relationship to authenticity in the delivery of tourism products and services. In pre-1990s Ireland, MacCannell's (1973, 1976) 'real authenticity', perhaps, existed in the sense that the reality of much of the Ireland that visitors would experience could be said to accord with the images that were employed to project 'people, place and pace' so that they were, by and large, in tune with the reality that tourists' would find on the ground. MacCannell's notion of 'staged authenticity', by

contrast, was of limited importance except within the confines of locations such as Bunratty Folk Park. As we have seen, social, economic and demographic trends, in Ireland, have been change-defining over the past 15 years with the result that the pastoral simplicity of 'people, place and pace', as evoked by de Valera's 1943 broadcast and promoted as a dominant image in the country's tourism marketing over the past half century, may not really exist and has to be staged, for the benefit of tourists, in pubs, hotels and theatres. The evidence presented here suggests that the marketing of tourism in Ireland has not altered significantly to reflect changes within the country's social and demographic structure. At the same time, such change is widely evident to visitors through their general exposure to 'people, place and pace' and, particular in the context of this discussion, those who serve them in all areas of tourism work and who are, therefore, an integral part of their tourist expectations and experience.

This paper seeks to address issues that can be seen to be sensitive in political and cultural terms and are challenging in terms of national image, social and cultural change, economic development and political efficacy. These issues are particularly potent in the context of Ireland, a destination that has striven to brand itself, to the outside world, in tourism terms on the basis of particular images of 'people, place and pace' that combine an external reality of the early 20th century with the political rejection of a colonial past (Deegan and Dineen, 1997).

A liberal inward migration policy in Ireland, formed as a consequence of the growing 'tiger' economy, has undoubtedly served the country well in terms of meeting its labour market requirements. Nowhere is this more the case than in the tourism sector where a range of jobs, particularly in front-line positions, have been filled by migrant workers from across the globe. This manifestation of large-scale labour mobility to support the needs of the hedonistic mobility of tourists, while not unique (the cases of domestic migration to the Malaysian island of Langkawi (Bird, 1989) is another example), is

perhaps unparalleled at a national level, encompassing non-national migration to both urban and rural locations. Furthermore, the Irish experience of such mobility is one of intensity over a very short period of time, with no signs of imminent abatement. Such changes within the labour force, especially in work that directly confronts the visitor in the 'boundary spanning' roles (Bateson and Hoffman, 1999) that represent the tourism sector at point of delivery provide challenges to both the desirability and practicability of maintaining the myth of traditional Irish service as represented in brand marketing. Further questions can be raised regarding the impact of tourism-related migration on aspects of the culture of host communities. Phillips and Thomas (2001), in the context of Wales, raise a range of questions regarding the impact of in-bound tourism on the status and use of the Welsh language. The widespread in-migration of employees to rural areas, in Ireland, may well raise similar concerns in terms of both language and wider cultural attributes and, as a consequence, act to dilute the very features of Irish life that are core to the marketing of the destination.

Tourism branding and marketing in Ireland has either not woken up to the evident cultural and economic change within society and, in particular, tourism's workforce or it has chosen to ignore this reality in the perceived interests of providing its main markets with images that they expect from the country. A strategy, based on the latter, may reflect Azarya's (2004) argument that tourism destinations, seeking to promote the 'primitive' (and traditional images of Ireland may be said to fall into this classification) need to promote their own marginality. If they are not marginal to and different from the everyday, globalised experience of their visitors, they cannot attract the attention of potential tourists. As a result, 'every effort is made .... to keep display as genuine as possible, though still under tight control. .... All [agencies] join forces in maintaining this marginality, turn it into a saleable commodity and maximise its commercial value for all involved' (Azarya, 2004:

964). Whichever explanation rings more true, they run the real risk of fuelling visitor dissatisfaction when expectations engendered by marketing do not match the reality of their interpretation in the heritage sites, hotels, pubs, restaurants and airline check-in desks that visitors use while in the country. Authenticity of tourism representation, in this context, may need to reflect a contemporary reality rather than a staged idyll, reflective of a lost past. Clearly, reconciling such representation in image terms is a real challenge to tourism in Ireland in branding, marketing and, indeed, in training and development terms. A failure to address this challenge may have serious long-term consequences for Irish tourism at a destination and individual business level as visitors recognise the disparity between what the brand promises and what reality actually delivers.

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