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The Use of Modern Architecture in City Marketing

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ABSTRACT

Modern architecture creates iconic city landscapes that increasingly shape our mental imagery of city destinations. By identifying common methods employed in positioning images of modern architecture on destination websites, this study seeks to further the conceptualization of destination image creation in online contexts. A visual content analysis of 125 European city websites was conducted; each coded based on image size, placement, and juxtaposition of modern architecture to other destination elements. The results of this study point out that images of modern architecture are prominently placed to gain attention and be seen as part of the ideal destination image. However, they are not used exclusively but rather in conjunction with images of other city elements.

Keywords: *destination marketing, modern architecture, iconic image, destination image, websites, content analysis.*

INTRODUCTION

In cities such as Bilbao and Valencia, Spain the construction of modern architectural buildings has generated a new market through the promotion of these buildings for tourism. The development of modern architectural structures for the appropriation of tourism activities, such as Frank Gehry's modern building that houses the Guggenheim in Bilbao, Spain, or the City of Arts and Science built in Valencia, has created desirable tourism destinations out of cities that were once not 'magnetic' tourism destinations (Gunn, 1997). In much the same way the Guggenheim transformed the image of Bilbao, modern architecture in other cities across Europe is rapidly becoming synonymous with the destination's image and can be seen on most promotional material, specifically tourism websites. In cities such as Bilbao, San Sebastian and Valencia, modern architecture has become the centrifugal force of the cities, drawing people in masses to view the spectacle of the buildings and other modern structures.

The study of destination image creation has been widely examined in the field of tourism due to the importance of destination image in the process of decision making for potential visitors when choosing a destination, and tourists' subsequent evaluation and restructuring of the destination image after their experience at a destination (Yüksel and Akgül 2007; Bigne, Sanchez, and Sanchez, 2001; Mackay and Fesenmaier, 1997). If a tourist is presented with a certain image and subsequently creates an image of a destination that cannot be provided once they arrive, there is the potential for the image held by the visitor to become negative after the visit, and for the tourist to have an unsatisfactory experience at the location (Bigne, Sanchez,

and Sanchez, 2001). The growth in the Internet being used for choosing a travel destination points to the increasing importance to understand the ways in which images are constructed by the destinations and the ways in which these images are represented by iconic buildings in the cities.

Every city has experienced a degree of growth within the last two decades, which is often expressed through the renovation or construction of new buildings, but for some cities these structures are appropriated for tourism and marketed as iconic images that serve as representations of the city in the minds of tourists. The goal of this paper is to evaluate the promotion of modern architecture as iconic symbols for tourism destination images.

REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

Modern architecture and tourism

Many well-known architects of the 1990's, such as Frank Gehry, Santiago Calatrava, and Christian Marclay, have begun to create "buildings as icons of their own individuality" (Winkenweder, 1999: 34), which often resemble sculptures and are viewed as art more than functional buildings. These modern buildings are in many cases designed to be pure spectacle (Winkenweder, 1999). Just as art is hung in galleries or displayed in homes, many modern architectural structures are created as aesthetically pleasing and unique to the spectator. These buildings are synonymous with the architects, or " 'starchitect', [the] fusion of a star and architect" (Lewis, 2007:4), who designs them. Similar to movies employing the use of stars to draw attention, famous architects are used to draw attention to buildings through the public interest in their work (Davidson, 2000). The emergence of an international celebrity culture, where individuals are drawn to celebrities that are positioned by their notoriety, has begun to influence the field of architecture. The importance of buildings is being evaluated based on their reflection of the architect's personality and authentic design (Lewis, 2007). Just as people travel to gaze at celebrities and locations of movie sets, a new desire is being cultivated with people wanting to view the spectacle of modern buildings designed by "starchitects" (Lewis, 2007:4).

The use of architecture to stimulate commerce and solidify an urban identity through the cultivation of tourism is not rare; one can easily find tours offered to the masses to view and learn about architectural structures in cities and towns across the world. However, recently there has been a strong recognition that tourists are becoming interested in modern architecture when considering a tourism destination for vacation. There are generally two types of architecture tours that are offered by a destination: framed sights, which display the exceptional, unusual, or large structures; and the quaint sights, which offer viewing of more obscure sights that are tied historically and culturally to an area (Schwarzer, 2002). Urban areas have realized the potential to generate tourism from the positioning of modern architectural structures as "bold[est] signatures of urban identity" (Schwarzer, 2002: 24), and subsequently have capitalized on these structures for modern architecture tourism. The term architourism is conceptualized as the "possibility for a single work of contemporary architecture...to attract hordes of tourists to a previously marginal place" (Schwarzer, 2002: 23). With the opening of the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, Spain, the museum became almost instantly synonymous with the entire city, serving as a symbol of "regeneration" (Ockman, 2004: 227) for a region that at the time was associated with economic trouble. The creation of the Guggenheim in Bilbao began what has come to be known as the Bilbao Effect (Ockman, 2004), that has been enacted in many European cities such as Valencia with the creation of the City of Arts and Science, and San Sebastian which is now home to the Kursaal Cube, among many others across the world.

The concept of creating and appropriating modern architecture for tourism does not only apply to marginal locations; rather, cities that are frequented by tourists realize the potential profits that can be gained by the appropriation of modern architectural structures in their proximity. These cities appropriate the modern buildings through the provision of guided tours, creation of photo opportunities with the building, provision of souvenirs that contain images of the buildings and depending on the purpose of the building, used to house museums and theatrical presentations (Schwarzer, 2002; Yüksel and Akgül, 2007).

What made buildings such as the Sydney Opera House, the Guggenheim, and the City of Arts and Science so unique is that at the time of their construction they resembled no other buildings in the world. This concept of designing buildings in cities that are unique from the surrounding environment, and appropriated for mass tourism, ties to the desire of tourists to escape the ordinary, without being too far from the surroundings they are accustomed (Kirschenblatt-Gimlett, 1998). These works of modern architecture are positioned as a spectacle to be passively gazed upon by tourists, and are manufactured through an agency of consumption (D'Acerno, 2005) in areas that are structurally familiar to many tourists. Ingersoll (2000) notes that architecture is a mechanism that allows the spectacle to control the "planned environment [to] create an artificial pleasantry" (2000: 125). The term spectacle is used in the sense of the Latin root *spectare*, which means: "to look at" (Winkenweder, 1999). When Santiago Calatrava spoke of his Lyon-Satolas Railway Station he notes, "our building is like this painting [Salvador Dali's *Melting Watches*]...once you've seen it you'll never forget it" (Metz, 1994: 89). Lasansky (2004) notes that modern architecture is a site, sign, and event that occurs simultaneously through the different modes of appropriation for people to consume.

As more cities are realizing this great potential for tourism and subsequent profit gained from the creation of a new industry, there is a growing amount of marketing and positioning of these structures as unique and iconic that must be evaluated (Schwarzer, 2002). The initial draw of these buildings is their unique characteristics that make them one of a kind, therefore as more modern architecture is produced there is a greater potential for these images to no longer serve as icons for their destination, but rather become a common installment found throughout many cities. The creation and design of buildings that are unique and lack any substitutability is necessary to create a structure that cultivates a desire to be experienced by visitors (Hudson and Ritchie, 2009). Schwarzer (2002) notes that the "kind of contemporary architecture that stimulates mass tourism has to be not only photogenic but also telegenic- buildings that look striking in a sequence... or that stand out in a static shot" (2002: 26). It is the ability of these modern structures to "capture the popular imagination- globally and locally" (Ockman, 2004: 227), that makes these buildings become so synonymous with the tourism image of the cities they are constructed in.

Destination marketing

In a global market, which is increasingly growing more competitive, it is pertinent that destinations create "a unique identity to differentiate themselves from the competitors" (Hudson and Ritchie, 2009: 217). People have a desire to experience elements that they subjectively desire, and focus on achieving hedonic experiences when they travel (Jenkins, 2003), and therefore when searching for a destination for travel, they search for locations that are positioned in their mind as unique and possess the greatest potential to meet their criteria for an enjoyable experience. Destinations are marketed in ways that promote a positive image in the minds of their audience, yet there additionally exists a need to differentiate a destination so the element of

substitutability is eliminated (Hudson and Ritchie, 2009). When seeking to promote and create a destination's image, often iconic images are employed to differentiate a location from other destinations and position the destination favorably in the minds of potential visitors (Yüksel and Akgül, 2007). Similarly, tourists are often in search of an experience or location that is exotic and different from the everyday (Urry, 1990), and therefore they are often motivated to seek more information or visit a location by images that frame experiences they cannot find elsewhere (Human, 1999). Consequently, many destinations use visuals to position their destination as unique, unsubstitutable (Hudson and Ritchie, 2009), and distinctive to travelers (Yüksel and Akgül, 2007).

Visual communication and image marketing

Tourism is a very visual activity, and photographs are considered to be very pertinent in the creation and communication of a destination's image (Mackay and Fesenmaier, 1997). The promotional materials for a destination are crucial elements in the consideration and comparison process of destinations when potential visitors are in search of a travel location (Wicks and Schuett, 1994). Olson, McAlexander, and Roberts (1986) note that the visual content of advertisements helps to shape the perception of travel experiences through the association of specific experiences with pictures of a destination. More than 50% of advertisement response variability is attributed to nonverbal factors (Hecker and Stewart, 1988), which indicates that photographs and other visual elements are critical in the formation of a destination image. The growth in nonverbal communication in advertising over the past fifty years has been credited for this reliance on and increased impact of pictorial stimuli on the formation of attitudes towards products (destinations) (Mackay and Fesenmaier, 1997; Phillips and McQuarrie, 2004).

The presentation and interpretation of nonverbal cues is seen to play an integral role in the formation of a destination image, and the subsequent positioning of the destination in the minds of potential tourists when comparing and evaluating destinations. Mackay and Fesenmaier (1997) point to the fact that, "pictures not only represent the product (destination), but can also communicate attributes, characteristics, concepts, and values" (Mackay and Fesenmaier, 1997:538). Pictorial elements are often recalled when evaluating a destination, and have a strong potential to influence the affective evaluation of a destination image (Stewart, Hecker and Graham, 1987). Pictures are an established method for creating the image of a destination, and though often stereotypical in content, these pictures serve as exemplars for the early evaluation of destinations when a visitor's organic image of the destination is not very well formed (Mackay and Fesenmaier, 1997). The use of imagery assists in the evaluation of a destination by reducing the attribution set being considered. When tourists' knowledge of a destination is low or the level of involvement with a location is in the early stage, the potential visitor will likely rely on the connection formed with pictures in the marketing material rather than on the actual elements of a location (MacInnis and Price, 1987).

One method employed to establish a destination image, that is easily discernable from other locations, is the use of one or more recognizable tourism images that over time become synonymous with a destination. It has been concluded that a destination's overall image is often tied to one or several easily recognizable and dominantly positioned tourism features (Bowie and Buttle, 2004). Such 'iconic' images become powerful enough that they become quasi synonymous with a destination (Voase, 1999). Not all destinations are comprised of elements that are engaged with the tourism industry, but most can point to one or more locations or features that many people can easily identify as being characteristic or identifying of a location

(Litvin and Mouri, 2009). For those destinations that do not per se possess the 'magnetism,' to draw masses of tourists (Gunn, 1997), the use of one iconic image helps to identify, promote and market the destination through that one 'magnetic' aspect (Litvin and Mouri, 2009). The photos of iconic locations in a destination, as argued by Human (1999), must appeal to the exotic and positioned to reach the aspirations of the tourist. Additionally Human (1999) argues, "the importance of the iconic representation of unique attractions is consistent with Urry's 'tourist gaze' as the reason for travel" (1999: 80). The formation and use of iconic images serve to create an easily identifiable and recallable image in the minds of tourists (Mackay and Fesenmaier, 2000).

Icons

An icon can be evaluated in three ways in the study of semiotics (Chandler, 2002): 1. an icon is something or someone that would be instantly recognized as famous; 2. an icon on a computer screen signifies a particular function; and, 3. religious icons are works of visual art representing a devout or holy image. For the purpose of this paper icons will be viewed as meaning: "something or someone that would be expected to be instantly recognized as famous" (Chandler, 2002:40). In the context of this paper, an iconic building would be recognized and associated with a certain city. When looking at icons from a semiotic perspective, the terms 'iconic' and 'symbolic' are viewed as varying 'modes of relationship' between sign and the signified. There does not exist a 'pure' icon, because there is not necessarily a perfect copy of the signified that is symbolically represented or reproduced. The iconic method of representation is one 'in which the signifier is perceived as resembling or imitating the signified" (2002: 36). Iconic signifiers are highly evocative, and simply do not draw our attention to their mediation, rather they 'present reality more directly than symbolic signs" (2002:41). Artistic license, which is a legal agreement given to allow a person or organization to recreate and distribute images, and the reproductive capabilities of the method of communication, in some cases restrict the ability of the icon to most effectively represent the symbol (Warnaby and Medway, 2008). For the purposes of advertising Dowling (2001) posits that the use of symbols can 1) create awareness 2) trigger recognition and 3) activate already stored images in a person's mind. For the purpose of destination marketing these iconic images of a city serve to assist in the formation and recall of the destination image, with the goal of creating a discernable image in the minds of potential visitors (Etchner and Ritchie, 1993).

The creation of an iconic image is "always dependent upon properties of the medium in which the form manifests" (Lyons 1977: 105). The placement of an icon in a communication medium is typically the beginning of the information and is placed in a way to gain attention. Fledges (2005), in his dissertation, offers a new theoretical approach to visual communication, which explains that iconic images are made to be the focal point of the communication, and are often times "juxtaposed to other icons" (Fledges, 2005: 221) in the medium of visual communication. When examining the attention placed on iconic images, Chandler (2002) explains that the vertical axes at which a picture is placed has a meaning in and of itself. The placement of an image of a symbol at the top of a communication medium indicates that the symbol is the "ideal image" and one placed at the lower portion takes on the meaning of the "real image" (Chandler, 2002: 113). For the purpose of an iconic image the icon is supposed to resemble something that is instantly recognized, and the placement of the image to gain the most attention and in the most positive manner (at the top of the page) helps to gain the desired attention. In Fledges (2005) study he proposed the concept of symbolic transfer, where the

symbolism of the iconic main image transfers meaning to the “images at the side or in adjacent” (Fledges, 2005: 222). The symbolic transfer of an iconic image to the surrounding images creates a cohesive story that translates into a “verb like content” (Fledges, 2005: 222) that gives a cohesive image. Additionally Chandler (2002) explains that through the use of systematic analysis a visual text can be analyzed by the examination of the shots or scenes being related to the first and creating a cohesive image or story.

Researchers point to the importance of conducting content analysis of destination image creation in marketing materials. Mackay and Fesenmaier (2000) emphasize the importance of understanding how the destination image is shaped by destination marketing and conveyed to visitors during the destination choice process. Although the visitor forms a destination image subjectively, there is a need to evaluate the external stimulus that creates and changes these images (Gartner, 1993). Several previous studies have examined the verbal and pictorial elements of destinations’ promotional material, and from these studies it has been posited that there is a definite advantage to be gained from the further evaluation of destination generated promotional material such as guide- books, websites, and travel brochures (Mackay and Fesenmaier, 2000). This study is intended to further the conceptualization of the creation of destination image through the positioning of modern architecture as icons for destinations. This study has two main objectives:

- 1) Identify the most common methods employed to position images of modern architecture to gain attention, place importance on the image through positioning, and the symbolic transfer of the image of the modern building to other images of attractions in the city.
- 2) Compare differing visual images of modern architecture and positioning of this pictorial content on the destination marketing website for each city.

METHODOLOGY

The sample of websites was selected from the European Cities Marketing website (<http://www.europeancitiestourism.com>), which is a network of over one hundred City Tourist Offices and Convention Bureaus, across thirty-two countries in Europe. This study has a sample size of 125, which will consist of all destination marketing websites for the cities and countries that are members of the European Cities Marketing organization. Seven websites had to be eliminated from the sample because they were either for a tourism company that belongs to the organization, or the site was not linked through the organization’s web page.

A content analysis was conducted on the home page of each website, which was the only page that was evaluated for the study. First, the visual representations of the modern architecture were coded by the sequential placement of the images in the upper half of the web page. Semiotics explains that images placed in the “upper” portion of a page are the “ideal” images (Chandler, 2002); for the purpose of this study the placement of images of the modern architectural building in the upper portion of the web page indicates the ideal image of the city. Second, the web page was coded by the attention drawn to the images of modern architecture. Images of the icon are indicated to be the main focus of a message medium (Fledges, 2005); therefore the image content was coded by looking for the use of larger images of modern buildings in comparison to other images on the home page, the use of color in contrast to other images, and the placement of the image in the center of the page. Third, an analysis of the positioning of images of the modern buildings was coded based on the presence of other city elements in the images containing modern architecture, and the placement of other images of the city that are alternated or juxtaposed to the images of the modern building. Symbolic transfer

occurs when an iconic image, or an image with the greatest attention, is placed with other images adjacent to or at the iconic image's side that become symbolically connected to the iconic image (Fledges, 2005). Finally, the visual content of the websites was evaluated based on the repetition of the images of modern buildings on each home page. The analysis of the repetition of the images of modern architecture is important because the repetition makes images become powerful through increased visibility. Through repetition, images become quasi synonymous, or iconic symbols, of the destination (Voase, 1999).

RESULTS

In the sample of 118 sites that were evaluated it was found that 71 (60%) did contain images of modern architecture on their home page, with the remaining 47 (40%) not containing images of modern architecture, see Table 1. When evaluating the focus drawn to the images of modern architecture, several results were evaluated. In the content analysis the presence of images in the upper portion of the webpage signified the ideal image of the city. For the purpose of this study the upper portion of the page is quantified as the upper half of the webpage. The presence of images of modern architecture in the upper portion of the web page was evaluated in the 71 destination marketing home pages, which contain images of modern architecture, and the evaluation revealed that 83.1% of those websites contained images of modern architecture in the top half of the webpage. This indicates that these images of modern architecture are placed as part of the ideal image of the destination that is created by the destination marketing organization (Chandler, 2002).

Table 1
Websites Containing Images of Modern Architecture

	Number of Pages	Percentage of pages
Websites containing images of modern architecture:	71	60%
Websites not containing images of modern architecture:	47	40%
Total	118	100%

Further, the content analysis looked at the placement of the images of modern architecture in the center portion of the pages, which is done to draw attention to that image (Fledges, 2005). It was seen that 77.5% (55) of all webpages containing images of modern architecture have those images positioned in the center portion of the page, with the remaining 22.5% (16) having those images located to the left or right portion of the page. Of the fifty-nine websites that have images of modern architecture positioned in the upper portion of the webpage, 86.4% (51) of those images are also placed in the center of the webpage, see Table 2, further drawing emphasis to the images of modern architecture by making these images one of the first images viewed and the center of focus (Fledges, 2005).

Table 2
Positioning of Images of Modern Architecture on Websites

		Number of pages	Percentage of pages containing modern architecture
Images of modern architecture in top of page:	Yes	59	83.10%
	No	12	16.90%
Images of modern architecture in center of page:	Yes	55	77.50%
	No	16	22.50%

In addition to evaluating the positioning of the images of modern architecture the images were evaluated based on the size of those images in relation to other images on the home page and use of color, see Table 3. The presence of larger images of modern architecture are used to gain the viewer's focus and are placed on the home page to gain more attention than other smaller images on the webpage. The evaluation of the size of the images of modern architecture found that the images containing modern architecture were larger than other images present on the web page in 50 (70.4%) of the 71 websites in the study containing images of modern architecture. In the 50 web pages containing larger images of modern architecture in relation to the other home page images, 94% of those images were found in the center of the upper portion of the home page. Through the use of larger images and the placement of those images in the center and upper portion of the home page, the images of modern architecture are seen as the focal point on the home page of the destination marketing web page. In addition, the images on the webpage containing modern architecture were coded to reveal if color was used as a distinguishing element to gain focus. The content analysis revealed that all of the images are presented in color, which is consistent with the other images on all websites in the sample, therefore the color of the images of modern architecture does not create contrast to the other images, and does not draw additional attention to the images containing modern architecture.

Table 3
The Use of Color and Image Size to Create Image Focus

		Number of pages	Percentage of pages with images of modern architecture
Image of modern architecture in color:	Yes	71	100%
	No	0	0%
Images of modern architecture larger than other images:	Yes	50	70.4%
	No	21	29.6%

The content analysis also sought to evaluate the potential for symbolic transfer to occur, where an iconic image or image with the greatest attention is juxtaposed to others that are symbolically connected to the main image (Fledges, 2005). For the content analysis the images were coded based on the inclusion of other city elements with modern architecture in the images and the juxtaposition of additional images of the destination around images containing modern architecture, which for this study is quantified as being positioned directly by the image of

modern architecture or alternating with those images containing modern architecture. The content analysis found that 70.4% (50) of the images containing modern architecture did not only depict modern structures, rather the images additionally contain other elements of the city. The inclusion of the modern architecture with other city elements in the images on the web page creates an iconic destination image that contains images of modern architecture as part of the destination image being created for tourists. Further, it was found that 79.9% (56) of the websites contained more than one image on the screen that are juxtaposed to the images of modern architecture. The placement of additional images of the tourism destination adjacent to the images of modern architecture or inside the images containing modern architecture further creates a cohesive destination image.

The repetition of images increases visibility and has the potential to make images more powerful in the minds of viewers (Voase, 1999). The websites in the sample were evaluated by assessing the number of times modern architecture is displayed on the home page. It was found that only 39.4% of the websites contain two or more images of modern architecture. Though the images of modern architecture are placed as an ideal, iconic image of the cities, these images are not often made more accessible in the minds of the viewers through repetition.

CONCLUSION

Architecture has long been part of tourist attractions, in addition to serving as an attribute of destination image. More recently cities have realized the potential of architecture to serve as a signature of urban identity and the subsequent potential of these modern structures to aid in generating tourism (Schwarzer, 2002). A content analysis of 125 destination marketing websites discovered the placement of larger images of modern architecture in the center of the website, and the placement of these images in the upper portion of the page, to create an iconic, cohesive destination image that consists of both modern architecture in conjunction with other city images. The placement of these images of modern architecture on these web-sites points out that the modern architecture in these cities is intended to become part of the main destination image for tourists, as well as gaining the focus of the tourists by the use of larger and more centered images of modern architecture in the upper portion of the webpage. Of the websites used in the study, 70.4% contained images of modern architecture presented with other destination images, therefore creating an iconic image that comprises of multiple city structures.

The findings of this study connect with those the statement by Ockman (2004) relating to modern architecture used to capture imagination. The positioning of the images of modern architecture indicates that these buildings are not merely a site to be viewed in the city, but rather they are iconic images which are synonymous with the city identity and are meant to be consumed by the tourists. Through the use of modern architecture that is juxtaposed to other city images, these buildings become more telegenic, which, as pointed by Schwarzer (2002), is necessary to stimulate mass tourism to these structures. This study directly concludes that modern architecture is being placed as iconic elements of destination image, which is intended to draw tourists based on the spectacle of the buildings that is created by globally recognized 'starchitects' (Lewis, 2007), in order to generate mass tourism.

The results of this content analysis will be used to assist in the goal of contributing to the growing body of knowledge that is spawning from the study of tourism image creation for destination marketing purposes. The evaluation of the results of the content analysis will assist in the creation of a framework to conceptualize the use and placement of modern architecture as part of the iconic image for tourism destinations. Recently there has been a growth in the

number of destinations that market modern architecture to generate tourism, which leads to a need for a better understanding of the ways in which modern architecture is viewed and consumed by tourists. Further research is suggested to understand what aspects of these structures are appealing to the tourists and how these buildings are being consumed during travel to the destination. Also, other communication materials should be taken into account in addition to websites.

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