

SYMPOSIUM

Tradition and Culture in the context of today's touristic marketing

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Innovative Marketing Strategies and Heritage

The alliance of tourism and heritage stands high on the list of the numerous paradoxes of tourism. Heritage, in its many different forms and shapes, is of course essential to attract the tourist since it provides the destination with its uniqueness and personality. However, it is also controversial as it requires both protection and capital investment and the two often lead to painful choices, decisions and disagreements. This dual aspect complicates the task of destination marketers and places increasing pressure to seek innovative marketing strategies. Moreover, today's well-travelled, highly experienced and growingly independent tourist, constantly wanting to test and experiment new opportunities, makes matters worse. So, how do you make heritage fit in with these different needs and expectations? Basically, I suggest we begin by asking then trying to answer the following questions:

1. How do you link past, present and future?
2. How do you link people, place and culture?
3. How do you protect, promote and **produce** heritage?

Drawing largely on general as well as personal investigations and illustrating them with a selection of French-led undertakings, I wish to encourage a debate on the limits and possibilities of integrating heritage with innovation and innovative marketing in particular when it comes to seaside resorts but not exclusively so. Let me first point out that innovation itself is a concept that is still wide open for interpretation and questioning. But we are here to question, exchange and compare, are we not? Before doing so, allow me to contextualize the contents of this presentation with a brief reminder of what we all know but tend to forget.

Firstly, I would like to emphasize that in order to attract and satisfy the demands of a fickle, experienced, volatile and increasingly independent tourist, the basic need of ALL destinations is to position or reposition their supply always one step ahead of its competitors. This does not necessarily imply that you are fighting a losing battle. It simply means that since you are not alone in the race it may be better to train for a marathon and not just a sprint.

The second point is that each destination claims – and moreover is convinced – that it has a unique natural, environmental and cultural heritage. Though there is much truth in this statement, the issue is can you still convince someone who can check out what you are saying without even leaving the comfort of his or her own home? In other words, how does your sweet talk measure up to peer-to-peer derived knowledge and experience? In short, how do you go about making sure that your “blurb” or “discourse” stands the test of the “24 hour - interconnected” tourist?

The third point and not the least is that we generally think more about “place” than “people” and tend to overlook the locals who can be extremely efficient communicators. Scroll through a few videos on YouTube if you have any doubts. How does your portrait of the local fit in with his own mobility patterns? In short, what and how have you planned to account for and rank the locals’ importance in your project?

To my mind, the three points I have just raised are crucial before you begin to consider an alliance of heritage with innovation. Heritage is about tangible and intangible testimonies and perceptions. Visually speaking, this building, the Grand Hotel, is a tangible testimony, but it can also be argued that, historically or temporally, its importance is its intangible heritage. To put it differently, I would say it is what happens backstage and how it comes across to the visitors as well as the local population that counts. Ideally, I would argue that to succeed innovative projects should rely on the simultaneous integration of time, place and people. That is what I will now try and illustrate.

PART ONE: HERITAGE: FROM DEFINITIONS TO PERCEPTIONS AND BACK

heritage is about change and movement ... It is both the stage and the backdrop ...of our ...traditions, lifestyles and culture

As technology urges change on ever more quickly, there is a growing need to turn back the clock and understand who we are and where we come from hopefully to see where we are heading. That is what heritage is all about. Thus, contrary to the most frequently recurring caption about time standing still (slide NZ), heritage is about change and movement and our architectural heritage merely testifies the motions and evolutions of our intangible heritage meaning traditions, lifestyles and culture. It is both the stage and the backdrop. The question that arises is how do you make this perceivable? Before looking at Deauville, your sister resort in France. I suggest we take a quick look at a few seaside resorts in different parts of the world. (slides Brighton, Deauville, the Gold Coast, Miami Beach, Aedas resort in Guangdong)

Heritage protection is about providing a harmonious balance ... in favour of visitors but also of the local population.

Zeitgeist? Did you say? Yes, but for some you are probably thinking. Yet, each of these resorts bears the signs of its epoch, so heritage of the future if its potential is identified in time and then protected. Deauville would surely not be the same if you took away its boardwalk, or Casino, or racecourse. However, the same applies and perhaps even more so, if some privately owned estates had been allowed to disappear in the name of modernity or speculation. In Deauville, two principal nationally derived measures with regard to architectural, urban and landscaped heritage have played a major role for its conservation. The ZPPAUP (Zone de Protection du Patrimoine Architectural, Urbain et Paysager) [1983,1993,2004] recently [2010] replaced by the AVAP (Aires de valorisation de l’architecture et du patrimoine) are meant to preserve, protect and promote all “significant or meaningful” constructions by imposing strict development directives and rules. It is a way of ensuring a harmonious balance between the landmarks, the overall character of the location and the general landscape not only in favour of visitors but also of the local population. Legislation in favour of heritage protection may certainly be debated but its enactment is necessary to support a long-term vision of development. This measure has namely allowed Deauville to maintain not only some astonishing private mansions that would have otherwise

disappeared under the pressure of speculation but also to enhance the image of luxury it sets out to portray.

Innovation is about imagining the product that convinces the tourist and the local resident that they are each exceptional BECAUSE they are complementary ...

A destination's image is itself a personification of heritage management and Deauville is also one of the earliest examples of how the film industry has become a heritage maker for tourism. (Ex: C. Lelouche "Un homme et une femme"). I am not suggesting that you need to win a film festival or even that you need to host one or several like Deauville to put your destination on the map. I am merely pointing out that it is not necessarily a tourist 'product' or a 'tourist activity' that contributes best to attract a tourist to a destination or, for that matter, to fulfil the perceptions and needs of the local population. Deauville has certainly capitalized on that film's success by building up and around it in different ways and promoting itself as a unique destination and if it continues to work it is not because it is alone to do so but because it was the first. That film worked because it was universally meaningful so I am trying to highlight that innovation is about trying to approach your product from a different angle and that it has to fill two voids simultaneously. The first is the tourist who aspires to become someone else. The second is the local resident who must believe that he is lucky enough to enjoy an exceptional life every day thanks to the tourist and not in spite of the tourist or only when the tourist is no longer there. In short, the winning recipe is to develop a different awareness of self and others.

Heritage protection and tourism development thrive on diversity but are nourished by commonly shared goals ...

Getting back to Deauville, the last point I would like to develop is that I could almost bet (and I'm sure I'd have more luck here than in the Casino there!) that your vision of the place is very different from mine and even more from that of the ordinary everyday French man or woman. There are probably many more words to describe it but this tag cloud (tag cloud slide) should sum up what I wish to highlight and explain how this has affected neighbouring resorts and the region in general. The average French person does not need marketers to tell him or her that this part of the coastline is synonymous of luxury – real luxury, not glitter luxury ('bling bling' as the saying goes in France) but a longstanding one tracing back to numerous generations. Heritage protection and tourism development have tuned in on this and to a great extent they have instigated and contributed to the emergence of the 'Pays d'Auge'. This is the area where second homes are indeed second homes and where the local economy has been developed in a complementary manner between the seaside leisure and tourism activity, the industrial harbours and the bordering countryside with its (still!) profitable agricultural activities. Its ease of access to and from Paris has certainly helped but the regional, social and economic fabric has largely supported it and still does. It is by no means coincidental that the Pays d'Auge which includes some names that will ring a bell for you like Calvados, Honfleur, Bayeux, Giverny and Monet, Caen and its Nördik Impakt Festival, Normandy Camembert without forgetting Erik Satie is also a very prominent member of the network Pays d'Art et d'Histoire. The term Pays lays the stress on the close ties that bind the members of the different communities as a coherent group with a commonly shared vocation. That is where the notion of competition gives way to collaboration and where innovation takes on its full dimension provided it also allows to maintain a diversified economic activity.

I shall now sum up this section by saying that I have deliberately chosen to concentrate on these three aspects with regard to Deauville because their underlying notions can be easily

attributed – not reproduced as in copy-paste - elsewhere. They are meant to show that collaborative thinking and cooperative projects do not compromise competitiveness but broaden its scopes. By multiplying your sources of knowledge and know-how you open your spectrum of vision to take in new fields that provide different options of attractiveness. It is not the recipe that is important, nor the ingredients for that matter provided they are quality ones. It is the way a top chef seduces you with a new opus and makes your taste buds tingle because he knows how to bring out the top flavours of each ingredient. It little matters if you prefer the main dish to the dessert, what matters is the originality of the mix, the foundation of innovation.

PART TWO: INNOVATION FROM PRESSURE TO PLEASURE

Innovation, Networks and the Peeping Tom syndrome ...

Innovation does not systematically rhyme with new but it definitely implies seeing, doing and being different. The dedicated expression is ‘thinking out of the box’. That is what creativity is all about. My belief is that to be innovative you must first think in terms of producing heritage not just staging it. Without ‘erasing’ or drawing a clean slate, rather than adopting what has worked elsewhere and then adapting it to your environment, the ‘I’ of innovation can be used as a guideline to:

IMAGINE
INSPIRE
And ...
INVOLVE

I prefer to speak about the Peeping Tom syndrome and not merely the 24-hour connected tourist because the latter is certainly not the only one to keep a constant watch on the doings of his/her worldwide network or to invite complete strangers to what should be his/her privacy. The downside of awareness is that it makes surprises difficult. The upside is that it urges you to anticipate renewal. The following are three examples of thinking out of the box and I have chosen them firstly because they have imagined a new approach to marketing tourism heritage. Secondly, I believe that to think out of the box you must not look in your own backyard, therefore I purposefully chose to avoid looking at other resorts. And, last but not least I think that the key to innovation is to pull down existing barriers and that today marketing locations according to territorially derived categories does not really make much sense.

Heritage is about staging, showcasing and reviving past know-how and skills while adapting them to present day needs and expectations of both tourists and locals...

With over 800 000 visitors in 2012, Chambord is one the most popular castles in the Loire Valley. It is also the first to allow visitors to spend the night there and as the domain’s curator points out no other bed and breakfast in the area can claim that when you look out of your window on waking up you get the feeling that you are royalty. Admittedly, you will be staying in an adjacent lodge, not the main castle. It has nevertheless been calculated that the initiative will generate more than half a million euros in annual income to cover the refurbishing of new sections of the castle.

Things have also changed in Lyon where the fourteenth edition of the Festival of Lights attracted over 4 million tourists in December 2012. When a religious celebration turns into a mind-boggling array of technically sophisticated light and sound shows that bring to life the facades of the major historical monuments and sites, past and present melt into one to redesign the destination's future. Staging and showcasing the built-up heritage has also revived past know-how and skills that have been adapted to present day needs. Additionally one should not lose sight that the festival is free for one and all to enjoy, visitors and local residents alike.

It may seem common-place to speak about festivals since they are the daily bread of destination marketing but festivals also induce new talent and creativity. Such is the case with The European Lab for Festivals that in its third edition still piggy-backs on another major recurring event "Les Nuits Sonores". This example again illustrates that what matters most nowadays when marketing heritage is 'How' rather than 'What'. Talent, creativity, know-how and competences are mobile and transferable and as such they need to be encouraged through concepts that do away with borders or frontiers. Celebrating the Opera by staging a number of film productions of different operas at different time intervals in a ski resort or a seaside resort is an example of how heritage can be 'deterritorialized'. It is by introducing new values that a destination may earn added value. Fundamentally speaking, it consists in matching outside skills with local competences and vice versa.

Strictly speaking, none of the above-mentioned undertakings is unique or new for that matter. However, each one corresponds to a set of principles I shall now develop in my conclusion.

CONCLUSION:

I began this presentation highlighting the paradoxical nature of marrying tourism and heritage marketing. I shall conclude with another paradox and underline that for this alliance to succeed it is preferable to divert the tourist's imagination away from it. It is the mix of events that are not heritage specific that are used to attract visitors to Deauville. It is initiatives that do not aim at attracting the tourist that have ensured the possibility of building on this resort's heritage and ensuring its continuity. It is the connection between the resort and its surrounding environment that has allowed it act as a catalyst for local and regional development and stimulated economic diversification. My suggestion is that innovation stems from exogenous sources and that a destination's strength lies in its capacity to inspire beyond the limits of its recognized heritage. If you agree, then why not take this one step further and seek collaborative projects beyond your territorial frontiers?