Chapter 68
The Paradox of Authenticity and Its Implications for Contemporary and “Bizarre” Tourism Campaigns

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ABSTRACT

In this chapter, the paradox of authenticity in the content of the contemporary and “bizarre” tourism campaigns is explored. It is a reflective study that relies on a structure review approach, which aims to give a flavour on how the arguments are presented. The studies examine the structure of the intertwined variables and its implications for tourists’ ‘lifeworld’. This study suggests that the tourists’ lived experience is constructed from their point of view as consumers. In particular, it indicates that (1) pretentious language remains the ultimate power as commodification: and (2) although, tourism campaigns may influence visitors’ intentions they may have only a minor effect on the formation of a favourable brand image of the destination. This study extends the discourse on authenticity as the essence of brand differentiation in the destination branding domain and raises issues for further research.

INTRODUCTION

Contemporary tourism campaigns in conjunction with tourism as an industry aim to inform potential visitors about the benefits, and prestige advantages, and to persuade them and to induce them to take action to visit (Morgan and Pritchard, 2001). However, there seem to be uniform applications in promoting leisure tourism. Common, is using language that is pretentious in both its content and context as a means of constructing a destination’s brand image, accelerating the intention to visit, and positioning. The tourist experience is constructed in this way, and the homogeneity of contemporary tourism campaigns is inevitable and ultimately becomes a trend. In the terms of Habermas (1987) this kind of mainstream would be regarded as the existence of commodification in which leads to ‘colonisation of the tourist’s
“lifeworld”, where contemporary tourism campaign and/or bizarre tourism are exposed to the publics; highlights validity claims i.e. the truth (representing the claim- the content and the context of the campaign), the rightness (establishing the legitimacy, inter-subjective, social world), and the truthfulness (express the intention). This chapter discusses the paradox of authenticity in the discourse of both types of promotional campaign and its implications for the tourist’s ‘lifeworld’.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A bizarre tourism campaign relies on a contradictory strategy in promoting tourist offerings, with a more powerful tagline. It is a contradictory application of contemporary promotional campaign techniques. Unlike contemporary techniques which emphasise the functionality, benefits and prestige of a destination, bizarre tourism campaigns do not highlight positive aspects, beauty or competitive advantage of the destination as a brand. Such campaigns aim to stand out from the crowd, their taglines using words like ‘hate’ instead of ‘love’ and designs choosing ‘hate’ as the basis of their advertising storylines. In other words, instead of highlighting positive language in the content and context of their promotion, bizarre tourism campaigns are more extreme in not it (e.g. Paris, 2014).

The use of “hate” in Marketing literature seems to be associated with online brand communities, which leads to Consumer-generated content (CGC), is used to inform travel-related decisions (Gretzel & Yoo, 2008). On the other spectrum of CGC which contains e-complaints that lead to the anti-brand web sites (i.e. derived from anti-branding domain of study e.g. the study of Kucuk, 2016) is accommodated in online spaces. Arguably, online spaces focus negative attention on specific targeted brand (Williams & Kolbas, 2015; Krishnamurthy & Kucuk, 2009; Bailey, 2004; Harrison-Walker, 2001). Further, in the context of Anti-branding on the internet, Krishnamurthy & Kucuk (2009) denote that internet has empowered consumer through greater information access, instant publishing power, and a participatory audience, which launches meaningful anti-consumption. In line with that, Dessart, Morgan-Thomas, and Veloutsou (2016) reveal that the key drivers of community participation (i.e. in the Anti-brand Community Behaviours) are brand material value, oppositional attitudinal loyalty, negative brand relationship and collective memory, through the mediating effect of community engagement and identification, and social approval. In the extreme spectrum, this kind of online spaces that focuses negative attention on specific targeted brand may emerge as emotional detachment, it generates brand hate (Kucuk, 2016), which explains why consumers against valued brands and how negativity affect their and other consumers’ loyalty. However, would this negative attention on specific targeted brand simply generate brand hate attached with certain attraction or destination’s attributes? Is there any reverse result of the brand hate embedded with certain attraction or destination’s attributes?

To some degree, both of these mainstreams (i.e. Contemporary and ‘Bizarre’ Tourism campaigns) may attract the attention of the international public, as constant media exposure is inevitably inseparable from people’s daily life. However, several target markets may find specific type of promotional campaign as a ‘turn off’ if they are literate and critical in identifying authenticity; this influences their selection as for not only seeking for what brand image attaches with destination and/or attraction but also looking for why the destination is embedded with certain brand image. Adapting Sinek’s (2011) perspective of why the essence of positioning to be a market leader, it is relevant to analyse the exposure of promotional tourism campaigns which aimed to scrutinise effects of destination brand image and behavioural inten-