

Developing cultural heritage sustainability from the perspective

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Abstract

Souvenirs provide benefits to cultural heritage (CH) protection from economic and social perspectives; they work as narratives and emotional ties to trigger memories for tourists while strengthening local identities. Though, kitsch, homogeneous and poorly made souvenirs seem to disappoint tourists and locals alike and raise concerns regarding authenticity. Meanwhile, after souvenirs are brought into people's domestic lives, they have a great chance of being devalued. Existing souvenir research is more concerned with shopping behaviours, with few researchers focusing on the emotional value of souvenirs and their impact on people after purchasing them.

This research explores souvenirs from two perspectives, namely authenticity and being sentimentally attractive. Both the perception of authenticity and sentimental attractiveness are essentially formed subjectively. Sentiment in this research refers to long-term cherishing that is less 'intense' than emotion and is more memory-related. The significance of this research resides in its exploration of sentimental souvenirs rather than studying souvenirs in terms of shopping behaviour. There is a lack of theoretical research on the sentimental perception of (CH) artefacts, leading to a knowledge gap in this research area. The aims of researching sentiments and authenticity with regard to souvenirs are to help make designers more sensitive to sentiments before engaging in souvenir design and determine design inquiry suggestions.

This qualitative research explores the perception of souvenir authenticity through semi-structured interviews and focus groups with designers, locals near Taylor's Bellfoundry and souvenir owners. Thematic analysis has been utilised to analyse the audio transcripts of the interviews, followed by focus groups to explore the roles of authenticity and sentiment in souvenirs.

The first part of this study has been to investigate authenticity perception through a set of interviews with craft artisans and designers. The second part offered participatory design workshop and a focus group which were conducted at Taylor's Bellfoundry in Loughborough. This is a major bell-casting (CH) site in the UK, which started casting bells in the 14th century and is still actively manufacturing them. The participants were residents and Taylor's Bellfoundry museum staff who are familiar with the foundry's history and culture. The aforementioned interviews and focus groups are part of the main study.

Sentiments in souvenirs were explored in the participatory workshops and interviews. Different themes have emerged from the thematic analysis. The most important finding is that in the case of Taylor's Bellfoundry, the perception of authenticity is linked with history, ethnography, workmanship and aesthetics as well as with personal memories. These memories include personal stories, craft skills and sensory memories. Authenticity allows locals to have a sense of nostalgia. The findings regarding sentiments in souvenirs show that souvenirs act as receptacles for historical and ethnographic narratives.

A limitation of this research is the so-far small number of participants who have joined this study. In the third stage of the research, this aspect will be addressed by increasing the number of participants and promoting participant diversity. Future studies could expand on the case study to explore CH sites to improve their souvenirs through authenticity and sentiment.

Author Keywords

Souvenir, Sentiments, Emotional Design, Memories, Participatory Design

Introduction

This research argues that the protection of Cultural Heritage (CH) through souvenirs appeals to sentimental values. Souvenirs work as sentimental ties to trigger memories and strengthen local identity (Hunter, 2012). Souvenirs, however, are often kitsch, which has detrimental effects (Swanson & Timothy, 2012) such as the emergence of authenticity anxiety for both tourists and locals (Setiyati & Indrayanto, 2011). In contrast, authentic souvenirs can help build connections between local artisans and tourists, as well as between tourists and travel sites (MacCannell, 1984). When exploring authenticity, it is crucial to note the importance of subjective authenticity (Wang, 1999); sentiment is one of the aspects of subjective authenticity for tourists. The sentimentality of a souvenir refers to the long-term appreciation of an item related to CH.

Considering the above, this research explores key elements of souvenirs that are related to CH, which are authenticity and sentimentality. The aim of this study is to explore the role of souvenirs as a tool to support the preservation of CH.



To further explore the authenticity and sentimentality of souvenirs, this research starts with a literature review and discusses authenticity and sentiment in terms of souvenirs. Then makes use of semi-structured interviews, a focus group and participatory workshops with designers, residents near Taylor’s Bellfoundry. In the end, the research concludes their findings from the study above.

Literature Review

Many souvenirs have homogenised characteristics or can be classified as ‘tourist kitsch’ (Cohen, 1988). Increases in kitsch production may not meet tourists’ diverse needs for souvenirs in the long term. It is worth considering that souvenirs are good cultural carriers since they increase the diverse approaches to presenting local culture to tourists. The originality of culture has been regarded as authenticity in this research. Current souvenir production has an obvious feeling of ‘staged authenticity’, with products selected by elites (Littrell et al., 1993), lacking the presence of cultural diversity (Markwick, 2001).

Authenticity

This research explores authenticity through groups of tourists, makers and residents.

Authenticity Perception According to Tourists

For tourists, authenticity brings new feelings (Potts, 2018, pp.81–82). Authenticity can be conveyed via an emotional mediation object such as a souvenir that can extend the users’ identity and memories (Elomba & Yun, 2018). Souvenirs must be presented in a way that inspires tourists to see them as authentic objects that incorporate sentimental ties related to the individuals’ expectations of the CH.

Authenticity Perception According to Makers and Locals

Understanding authenticity from the makers’ and locals’ perspectives has the benefit of improving regional identity and self-identity, which contributes to the diversity of regional information.

Figure 1 provides a summary of the literature review on authenticity (Carroll, 2015; Bergadaà, 2008; Littrell et al., 1993). It contributes to establish an authenticity perception framework, which needs to be refined in the data collection process. Firstly, ‘history and ethnography’ refers to tourists being able to acknowledge past objects, techniques, cultures and other relevant concepts.

Secondly, ‘uniqueness’ refers to using local materials (Bergadaà, 2008) and local manufacturing.

Thirdly, ‘workmanship’ includes craft knowledge and artisanship. Newman and Bloom (2012) also emphasise the importance of artefacts having any form of connection with the creator.

Fourthly, ‘aesthetics’ highlights the visible, semiotic power and artisanal appreciation (Littrell et al., 1993).

Lastly, ‘utility’ is an element of souvenirs, but it is rarely researched.

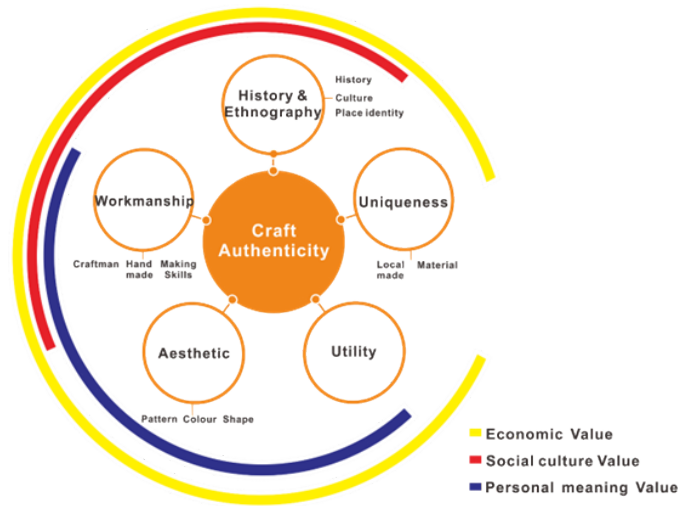


Figure 1. Souvenir authenticity perception regarding craft knowledge (created by the author, 2022).

Sentiment vs Emotion in Souvenirs

Sentiments are a complex experience of consciousness, bodily sensations and behaviours that reflect the personal significance of a thing, an event or a state of affairs (The Britannica Dictionary, 2022). Emotion, for comparison, places more emphasis on motion while sentiment places more emphasis on the feelings and memories.

Compared with ‘emotional design’, sentiments may be less designed for short-term desires, focusing more on long-term emotion and arousing memory. In this context, this study chooses to explore sentimental souvenirs, referring to souvenirs that can be a long-term collection and that evoke memories of tourist sites.

Methodology

This research has started with a literature review. Since there is much research regarding authenticity in souvenir design, this research aims to prove and refine the models of Figure 1 using inductive reasoning. Furthermore, literature reviews featuring sentiment research are rare in the design discipline, meaning the research uses deductive reasoning to generate themes from interviews and creative participation workshops. To achieve the aim of understating authenticity and sentiment in souvenirs, this research has made use of semi-structured interviews, focus groups and creative partic-

Table 1. Research Method for Authenticity and Sentiments

Title	Research theme authenticity or sentiments	Sampling methods	Participant identity and numbers
Expert interviews	Authenticity and sentiments	Purposive sampling	Experts (4)
Creative participatory workshop	Sentiments	Purposive sampling	Experts (3)
Bellfoundry focus group	Authenticity and sentiments	Snowball sampling and convenience sampling (Bellfoundry social media)	Residents (3) and museum staff (2)
Bellfoundry interviews	Authenticity and sentiments	Snowball sampling	Tour guides (3)

ipatory workshops (see Table 1). The interviews, focus groups and workshops have been audio recorded and transcribed for thematic analysis. The text-based data has been hand-coded with NVivo software.

Authenticity Perception

This research aims to prove and refine the models in Figure 1. To investigate authenticity in souvenirs, four university experts in crafts and design were interviewed. The aim of these interviews has been to get an understanding of authenticity according to experts' cognition. This research has chosen to interview design and craft experts to understand, first, the importance of authenticity in souvenir design according to experts' understanding, second, how to recognise authentic feeling and, third, what the criteria of authenticity are according to these interviewees.

Regarding the focus group and interviews, five people participated in the focus group. Two of the participants were Taylor's Bellfoundry museum staff. Another three participants were residents who had lived near the Bellfoundry for more than 15 years and had knowledge about Bellfoundry. These participants were recruited as they were ideal when considering the research emphasis on both historical and ethnographic factors in authenticity.

Sentimental Souvenirs

The research method adopted to explore sentimental souvenirs started with conducting interviews and creative participatory workshops with design and artisan experts. In the workshop, designers and artisans were invited to bring an emotionally charged souvenir before sharing a story regarding the souvenir, using Figure 2 from the Premo emotional response tool (Laurans & Desmet, 2017) as a probe to describe sentiments before designing badges or key rings. During this process, participants interpreted the emotions figures according to their own understanding.

Findings

In this section, the preliminary results from the first part of the study are presented.

Perception of Authenticity in Souvenirs

The findings regarding authenticity perception support the model of variables that affect souvenir authenticity perception, as generated from the literature review. Due to the perception of souvenirs being influenced by the experience of travelling, authenticity perception in souvenirs and travelling are considered in these results.

Most of the participants linked their authenticity perception with history and ethnography and workmanship. The partic-

ipants expressed a willingness to buy an authentic souvenir because they knew the artisan or had some type of connection with the souvenir makers. For example, participant Online 1B says: 'I meet them (the artist) ... if I like the work, I buy a piece (of it). ... I admire the artist a lot and I'm very happy that I got it'

Authenticity can bring a sense of nostalgia, as was mentioned throughout the Bellfoundry workshop. For an explanation of the nostalgia regarding the bellfoundry, Bell 1C states: 'I've seen a lot of forges and heavy industrial equipment being used. To me, this was just pure nostalgia, absolutely fantastic. I like old buildings, steam trains, anything sort of around the Victorian era.' The making process of casting also triggers the feeling of nostalgia.

This study raises awareness of authenticity being attached to memories of visiting or working with CH. These authenticity-related memories could be triggered by different senses like sight, smell and hearing. Surprisingly, in the Taylor's Bellfoundry focus group, smell was mentioned constantly as especially triggering a direct link with the Bellfoundry. Participant Bell 2S said: 'The first time I came was for the smells ... (the) metalworking and then you've got woodworking and they will smell slightly different'.

Sentiments in Souvenirs

The Premo emotional response tool is not always suitable for describing sentiments in research. Participants found the pictures presented to them could not fully express their sentiments, which are more complicated than those of the figures in the pictures. Therefore, the researcher had to instigate conversations to complement the sentiments depicted in the images. Sentiments regarding the souvenirs have the potential to change with time, going from positive emotions to neutral or negative emotions and vice versa. The memories embedded in a souvenir may also change or build up with time. To be more specific, the memory could start with a tourist site and then transfer to scenes and memories of using the artefact with friends and families. The sentiments also may not change through time.

Conclusion

The aim of this study has been to explore authenticity perception and sentiments in souvenirs. This research explores souvenirs about authenticity and sentimental. To achieve this study goal, this research has used interviews, a focus group and participatory workshops, asking participants to share narratives regarding authenticity and/or sentiment perceptions. This research finds that emphasising sentiment in design may be different from traditional emotional design, with sentiment possibly being a choice that includes potential longer emotional attachment.

Based on the findings above, the uniqueness this research contributes is both theoretical and practical with regard to the development of souvenirs for the protection of CH. This research has also conducted a case study into Taylor's Bellfoundry in Loughborough, which is a CH that is rarely researched. This not only helps residents to express their narrative but may also encourage further potential academic study.



Figure 2. The Premo emotional response tool (Laurans & Desmet, 2017).

Only a small number of participants, however, took part in this study and participant types have been limited. This will be addressed in the next step of the research. Future studies could expand the case study to CHs that need to improve their souvenirs by providing authenticity and sentimental attractiveness.

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