New Gloss to Urban Heritage: The Discursive Repackaging of Scottish Cities as Wellness Retreats in Online Tourism Promotion Texts 2019-20

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Introduction

Tourism management and promotion have always been the areas of dynamic and interesting identity making and unmaking, of people and particularly of places (Morgan and Pritchard 1998; Pritchard and Morgan 2001; Dredge and Jenkins 2003; Fürsich and Robins 2004; Choi et al. 2007). Tourist destinations compete on the market by promoting their place identities constructed in response to the changing needs and tastes of tourism consumers. Scotland has long profited from the ability to construct a distinctive cultural identity and offering it as an attractive tourism product via the available tourism promotion channels. For instance, strong association between Scotland’s national identity and tourism policy has been shown by Kalyan Bhandari, who also claims, in agreement with John Gold and Margaret Gold (1995), that despite broadening the regional tourism offer and using new promotional strategies, the core image of Scotland has remained largely the same since Victorian times, “emphasizing tradition and tartanry, sentimentality and romanticism, nostalgia and heritage” (2014: 49). These qualities, no longer sufficient in today’s tourism promotion, are also inadequate in the comprehensive brand building strategy for twenty-first-century Scotland (Kamm 2021: 208-10). Modernization efforts involve marketing rural Scotland as the land of magnificent landscapes untouched by humans (Page et al. 2006) and as rejuvenated wilderness ideal for outdoor sports, adventure, and ecotourism (Wawrzyczek 2020), while Scottish cities have built their destination identities on tangible and intangible cultural heritage (Bhandari 2014: 49-51). Most recently, the regional tourism planning and marketing experts operating VisitScotland.com, the
official consumer website of Scotland’s national tourist board, claim that although rural Scotland offers excellent opportunities for “physical and mental detox from fast paced living” (“Insight Department: Trends 2018”: 6), the country’s urban areas are also able to deliver diverse satisfactory tourism experiences in terms of culture, social engagement, and activity.

That it may not always be true has been demonstrated by the recent problem of Edinburgh, considered “the jewel in the crown” (“A Review of the Tourism Scotland 2020 Strategy”) of Scotland’s tourism industry. The success of the city brand built by commercialisation and commodification of its rich multi-faceted heritage backfired and marred its reputation by symptoms of overtourism as recently diagnosed by academics and journalists (Kumar 2018; Ferguson 2019; Hague 2021). Overtourism not only refers to the disruptive influence of tourism on the daily life of local citizens, but also to the deterioration of the quality of visitor experiences.

For a tourist destination, to find itself on a list of places not recommended because of an excessive number of tourists is particularly unfortunate today, when the pursuit of wellness has taken centre stage in leisure choices (“2019 Wellness Trends”) and is expected to constitute a mega-market well into the twenty-first century (Kazakov and Oyner 2019). The new trend has been recognized by smaller cities and towns as an opportunity to engage in creative placemaking to establish themselves or improve their position as wellness tourist destinations (Richards and Duif 2019: 1-20). Consequently, travel industry stakeholders and destination management organisations (DMOs) of many urban locations engage in wellness-oriented promotion in order to target this rapidly growing and demanding market segment.

Wellness Tourism

Wellness tourism has as many definitions as the concept of wellness itself (Smith and Puczkó 2009: 1-27). Yet, despite some differences, there seems to be an agreement among tourism studies researchers that because wellness is multidimensional and includes both physical and psychological state, wellness tourism is “purpose-driven travel to improve well-being in mind, body or spirit; encompassing discovery, connectivity, transformation and fulfillment promoting positive engagement between people, cultures and nature” (“What Is Wellness Tourism?”). Thus, wellness tourism is regarded as a holistic experience with a wide range of dimensions leading ultimately to broadly understood personal transformation (Smith and Kelly 2006; Kelly and Smith 2009; Koncul 2012; Hamed 2015: 52-7; Anttiroiko 2018: 7-20; “2019 Wellness Trends”: 27). Some analysts of tourism-industry trends have already started using the term interchangeably with transformational tourism, which incorporates wellness and betterment achieved, among other things, by “meaningful engagement with a destination’s history, people, culture and environment” (“Insight Department: Trends 2020”: 3). The extended definition of wellness, no longer narrowed to physical health and corporeal fitness, has become a chance for many destinations, especially those that have never been spas or centres of medical therapies with specialist infrastructure before, to profit by promoting themselves as places able to enhance their visitors’ wellness. Scotland’s tourism policy makers did not miss the opportunity either. The authors of the VisitScotland “Insight Department: 2019 Trends” dedicated their entire expert report to the consumer phenomenon of wellness and stated that with its
“abundant natural assets of landscape, culture, food and drink, and heritage”, Scotland was "well placed to embrace and capitalise on [...] wellness tourism" (1). Official tourism organisations and independent entrepreneurs of Scottish cities and towns took a cue from the market analysts and responded, among other things, by adjusting their touristic offer by discursive reconfiguration of their established and lesser-known heritage resources around the concept of wellness as a chance to prosper on the crowded tourism market.

The aim of the present study, located at the intersection of Media, Cultural and Tourism Studies, is to demonstrate how the wellness trend influenced the discourse of online texts promoting Scottish cities as attractive tourist destinations in the 2019-20 season. It is argued that while their familiar tangible and intangible heritage assets featured prominently as tourism products in the promotional websites under scrutiny, they were not nostalgically represented as historic strongholds of Scottishness, but as places and products generating hedonistic existential and spiritual experiences that promised an optimal state of individual well-being.

**Material and Method**

The material under scrutiny was collected from official and independent tourism websites of seven Scottish urban places with the administrative status of cities – Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Inverness, Perth, and Stirling available online in the pre-pandemic tourist season 2019-20, all entered from the VisitScotland.com homepage. Occasionally, it was supplemented by evidence from texts promoting several towns entered from the same website. Over the last two decades, tourism-related information resources have been shifting from the print to electronic media, the process generating numerous general and case studies along the way (O'Connor 1999; Buhalis 2000; Briggs 2001; Gertner et al. 2007; Wu 2018; Lojo et al. 2020). In today’s Britain, like elsewhere in the world, the most exhaustive and up-to-date tourist content appears on expertly constructed tourism web pages – for the whole kingdom, each of its four nations, various geographic regions, cities and other locations – maintained by official tourist boards and/or independent tourism businesses. Scotland’s national tourist board is no exception and conducts its most important and effective promotional activities via VisitScotland.com, its official consumer website. The subpages selected for close reading were all accessed between 20-28 April 2020, which makes the collected textual data synchronic. No account was taken of the websites design, format, and the layers of depth inside VisitScotland.com on which they occurred. Approached as cultural texts, the selected webpages were analysed as evidence validating the hypothesis that the recent strategy of promoting Scottish cities aims to construct yet another commodified version of Scotland as that of a well-being paradise. Approaching tourism discourse as “the content and modalities through which nations promote themselves or are promoted” (Hallet and Kaplan-Weinger 2010: 2), i.e., as a combination of informative and persuasive content (Malenkina and Ivanov 2018: 205-6), a two-step analysis was performed on the collected texts. It involved qualitative content analysis and verbal discourse analysis. Content analysis served the purpose of establishing the dominant thematic components of the touristic offer under scrutiny, while discourse analysis aimed at identifying the types of persuasive linguistic strategies employed to promote the Scottish urban destinations as wellness idyll. As the
textual study sample was relatively small, the linguistic data was collected manually without the help of computer-aided language detection (Malenkina and Ivanov 2018). The identified verbal techniques supporting the argument are relatively limited, considering the much wider range of discursive strategies used in the language of tourism (Dann 1996: 171-94; Maci 2020). This is due to the generic conciseness of tourism promotional e-language, and of “netspeak” in general, as well as competition from the visual and audio content on such websites (Francesconi 2014: 5-6, 33-4). However, visual modalities and other multimodal resources employed by the portal under scrutiny are not analytically addressed in the study.

Heritage Mix on Scottish City Websites

Built and Other Tangible Heritage

The examination of the content of the websites under study has revealed the mix of traditional urban attractions, in Scotland and elsewhere in the world, promising excitement, stimulation, and saturation with experiences: sightseeing, shopping, eating out as well as enjoyable cultural events and facilities (Smith et al. 2010: 178-9; Boivin and Tanguay 2019: 68-9; Wearing et al. 2012: 87-91). The opening sentence of the VisitScotland.com website for Stirling accurately encapsulates a typical urban tourism offer: “A wee city with a big history, Stirling punches well above its weight for historic attractions and spectacular scenery, not to mention shopping, places to eat and exciting events” (“Stirling”). Similar types of tourism products were found in the offers of all seven Scottish cities. Their websites invariably recommended entire districts and single objects of architectural heritage: Edinburgh’s “Medieval Old Town and the elegant Georgian New Town, which sit side by side” (“Edinburgh”), its Castle and the Palace of Holyroodhouse; the medieval Cathedral, St Aloysius’ Church and the City Chambers in Glasgow; Stirling Castle, Scone Palace in Perth, Fort George in Inverness, Broughty Castle in Dundee as well as St Machar’s Cathedral and Marischal College in Aberdeen. The webpages of small towns complemented the mosaic of Scottish urban architectural heritage by promoting their historic vernacular buildings. They featured photographs of pastel-coloured seafront houses in the ports of Portree, Tobermory and Pittenweem, the row of white-painted cottages in Kirkcudbright and of antiquated buildings in other places (Keyte 2018; “14 Must-visit Historic Towns in Scotland”), many of which had been rescued from demolition and restored to the benefits of the community by such institutions as the National Trust for Scotland and Scottish Historic Buildings Trust (Watters and Glendinning 2006). Moreover, each city website invited visitors to local heritage museums and art galleries: Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum (Glasgow), the National Museum of Scotland (Edinburgh), the Smith Art Gallery and Museum (Stirling), Perth Museum and Art Gallery, Inverness Museum and Art Gallery, V&A Dundee, Gordon Highlanders Museum (Aberdeen).

Cultural Attractions

Perth and Inverness webpages contained an offer of an enjoyable evening at local theatres and concert halls. To the visitors less keen on literary and musical cultural pleasures, some of the webpages under study proposed sport and recreation facilities, amusement centres and organised events. Edinburgh, that has built its reputation of a
leading European festival city, announced the continuation of Edinburgh’s Christmas and Edinburgh’s Hogmanay as a series of virtual events in the pandemic winter 2020 “to get everyone in the mood for the holiday season” (“Winter Festivals in Edinburgh”). Even in the COVID-destabilised tourist season 2021, its promotional site announced the city’s readiness to pursue its festival schedule in a hybrid formula, in response to the changing pandemic regulations, including its most famous International Festival and Edinburgh Festival Fringe in August (“What’s the Latest News on the 2021 Festivals?”). Dundee, a UNESCO City of Design since 2014, invited tourists to visit its Science Centre, offering “a diverse programme of science shows, workshops and ‘meet-the-scientist’ special events throughout the year” (“Dundee”). Those more interested in sport could choose the activities awaiting them in Foxlake Dundee, a water sports facility offering an aqua park, cable wakeboarding, ringo, and stand-up paddle boarding sessions. Another option was a visit to the Aberdeen Beach Leisure Centre to exercise in its swimming pool, fitness gym and health suite.

Each city promised a unique shopping experience at local boutiques and shopping centres, for instance the ‘Style Mile’ and Mr. Ben Retro Clothing in Glasgow, the Victorian Arcade in Stirling, Dundee’s “main shopping centre,” “bustling weekend markets and stylish shopping centres” of Perth, or the Victorian Market or Eastgate Shopping Centre in Inverness. It is perhaps significant that museum giftshops were regularly mentioned as places of shopping for unique heritage souvenirs: “gift shops which stock a wide selection of gifts and souvenirs” at Stirling Castle, the Crown Jewel shop in the Royal Apartments of Edinburgh Castle, which “offers exclusive lines of specially designed jewellery”, or a gift shop in Edinburgh Ocean Terminal where visitors to the royal yacht Britannia can find exclusive “souvenirs, china, toys, gift food and nautical items”, the McManus Shop at Dundee’s Art Gallery & Museum, which “stocks a wide range of historical reproductions, traditional toys, books and jewellery” (“Dundee”).

Eating out, attending coffee houses and bars regularly appeared as an attractive proposition for visitors to Scottish cities and towns. The offer ranged from gourmet restaurants to smaller eating places at the museums, art galleries, and other centres of recreation and entertainment. From the VisitScotland webpage entitled “Holidays: City Breaks Scotland”, one could click on a specific city and be further directed to a special culinary card on the grid. The key phrase appearing in each of them was “quirky places to eat.” Their quirkiness and eccentricity stemmed from imitating exotic locations, for instance of New Orleans, a tropical island, a 1920s prohibition Chicago bar; having theme days and menus, for example Willy Wonka’s Chocolate Factory, Game of Thrones, Harry Potter and The Walking Dead; specializing in foreign cuisines: Turkish, Indian, Lebanese, Spanish, Japanese, or serving Scottish classics. The “quirky” culinary offer was supplemented by a variety of smaller eating places at various cultural institutions. For instance, the Sterling Smith Art Gallery café invited to “light lunches and refreshments”, while more snobbish culinary attractions involved a visit to the Royal Deck Tea Room at the yacht Britannia berthing in Edinburgh to try “specialty teas and coffees, delicious home-made scones, soups and sandwiches, all made on board;” lunch at the popular Art Lovers Café in Glasgow; the cafe at the Botanic Gardens in Inverness offering “teas, coffees, tray bakes, ice cream, lunches, soup and great scones”, and a coffee-house and restaurant at the Inverness Eden Court Theatre and Cinema complex. Simple or sophisticated, those places promised to cater for all types of tastes,
expectations and culinary fantasies and suit every pocket. A few smaller towns also included their local culinary specialties alluringly described as “delicious”, “succulent”, “fragrant”, and all “locally-made.” (“14 Must-Visit Historic Towns in Scotland”). Although the promotion of Scottish “edible heritage” was a constant element on the analysed websites, it coexisted with imaginative offers of foods originating from other real and fictional places, a reflection of the global trend identified in culinary tourism studies as food democracy or food cosmopolitanism (Brulotte and Di Giovine 2014).

Natural Heritage

In addition to the mentioned standard urban tourism propositions, content analysis of the study webpages revealed prominent presence of yet another type of aspects of Scottish cities, not treated as a mainstay of urban tourism in general, namely their natural resources. The first group of such attractions consisted of those partly man-made and involved all sorts of parks, gardens, and scenic walking trails. Thus, Stirling recommended its Allie’s Garden, “a 2 acre biodiversity garden which is perfect for picnics”; Perth’s webpage mentioned Kinnoull Hill Woodland Park “beautifully situated on the banks of the River Tay” that includes “an abundance of flora and fauna” and has “excellent open viewpoints across the Perth countryside”. Glasgow invited to its Botanic Gardens located by the River Kelvin. Edinburgh’s important natural attraction was its Royal Botanic Garden, euphorically described as “72 acres of stunning scenery” with “fantastic views of the capital’s skyline”, but there were also “remarkable royal gardens” at the Palace of Holyroodhouse and the Edinburgh Zoo, “the wildest visitor attraction in Scotland”. Visitors to Inverness were invited to try “a 2 hour circuit walk through the city centre along the banks of the River Ness”, during which one could watch rich fauna and flora and “explore both sides of the riverbank”. Those keen on outdoor activities could continue the walk “towards the Great Glen Way or along the Caledonian Canal”. A separate long section on the Inverness website was devoted to the city’s Botanical Gardens, Nursery & Secret Garden poetically described as “a green emerald in the heart of the city”. Dundee’s webpage recommended a trip to the Law’s summit to admire panoramic views not only over the city centre, but also the River Tay and the surrounding hills. As all of the cities under scrutiny are either ports located at the mouth of a river or have a river flowing through it, it is no surprise that many of those natural “wonders” were water-related. This was best observed in the promotion of Aberdeen’s distinctiveness stemming from its being a city by the sea and of the sea; a place where “urban dolphins leap at the harbour mouth” and “golden sands stretch for miles – towards vast dunes to the north and high cliffs to the south.” Another geographic peculiarity of Aberdeen brought to the tourists’ attention was its location around the mouths of the rivers Dee and Don, “bringing crystal clear waters from the Cairngorm mountains.”

A brief supplementary content survey of the webpage “The 10 Most Beautiful Towns in Scotland” authored by Matthew Keyte and operated by the independent travel booking company Culture Trip revealed that their recommendations of those less known destinations similarly contained frequent references to their unique natural attributes. Portree on the Isle of Skye is “famed for its natural beauty”; in Plockton on the west coast in the Highlands one can find cabbage-palms growing there thanks to the mild climate created by the North Atlantic Drift; Millport on a small island in the Firth of Clyde offers a view of “the beautiful islands of Bute and Arran;” Kirkcudbright in the
Lowlands overlooks the River Dee; and Kelso in the Scottish Borders “stands where the rivers Tweed and Teviot converge.” In fact, the promotion of most Scottish cities and towns on different portals, including VisitScotland.com, was never limited to their strictly urban attractions but also showed them as gateways to great outdoors due to the networks of walking and biking routes to nearby spectacular countrysides. It is the closeness to nature and harmony between the man-made and natural heritage that made the Scottish cities distinctive among many other urban destinations in Europe.

The informative content survey of the study webpages gives the impression of Scottish cities being marketed as destinations of rich national heritage: built, cultural, and natural. At the same time, certain repetitive discursive strategies identified in the promotion of that multi-faceted heritage disclosed the efforts of the urban DMOs to foreground its potential to meet the wellness needs of prospective visitors.

**Discourse of Well-being**

The most straightforward verbal choices to this effect were those frequently used in the descriptions of the previously mentioned small towns characterized as wholesome places generally conducive to well-being, for instance: “a friendly unhurried pace”, “tranquil haven” or “a stress-free holiday destination” promising “a quality of life [...] hard to beat anywhere in the world.”

Another category of identified expressions with the similar effect consists of ego-targeting sentences and clauses (Dann 1996: 185-8) in the imperative, motivating the users of VisitScotland.com to take care of their well-being in a Scottish city:

- refresh your mind, body and spirit
- escape the stress of modern-day life
- find your bliss with a calming escape by the water
- take a step back from the fast-paced nature of modern life
- find the quiet gateways that your heart desires
- feel your stress melt away
- learn how to calm your mind
- clear your thoughts amid the leafy pathways and grassy expanses
- let the stresses of the modern world drift away
- take a leisurely stroll.

On individual promotional webpages, the suggestions of how to achieve a state of well-being were more specific and appeared in various combinations. Many related to the experience of sensory pleasures, often generated by food and drink: “savour delicious food and drink”, “enjoy freshly prepared Scottish meals”, “pick up tasty treats” or have breakfast prepared with “mouth-watering local produce”. Another type of positive experience in the Scottish cities was the delight of exposure to aesthetically pleasing man-made and natural heritage specified by means of noun phrases with euphoric attributive adjectives such as “superb sculptures”, “outstanding monuments”, “splendid surroundings” and “stunning floral flower gardens”. Positive sensations were also promised by intangible cultural climate of “cosy cafes”, “friendly pubs” and “atmospheric decks.”

Predictably, the most sophisticated forms of enhancing bodily well-being were offered by various Scottish hotels, among them those located in the cities and towns. A visit to some randomly selected urban luxury and spa hotels subpages accessed from “The
Guide to Accommodation in Scotland” generated a list of adjectives constructing those places as mini-paradises: “restful”, “intimate”, “serene sanctuary”, “mesmerizing”, “the epitome of style and excellence”. The descriptions were authenticated by the specification of on-site facilities enabling visitors to improve their physical condition: “a range of massages and hydrotherapy treatments and a gym” (The Marcliffe Hotel and Spa, Aberdeen); “5 treatment rooms, a 15m swimming pool, Finnish sauna, Turkish steam room, Spa Bar and a state-of-the-art quad layout Technogym-equipped gym” (The Balmoral, Edinburgh), “a private residents’ only gym and a treatment room” (Hotel du Vin, Glasgow), “a 17 metre indoor heated swimming pool, sauna, steam room and a fully equipped gym” (The Stirling Highland Hotel), or a “leisure club and spa, with pool” (The Inverness Palace Hotel & Spa). The offer did not change much when the same hotel offers were revisited in May 2021, the only significant novelty being the presence of the ‘We’re Good to Go’ logo on individual hotels’ webpages, or other forms of COVID-19 updates, meaning that they have carried out risk assessment and meet the government and public health requirements to function safely. However, as these are standard amenities found in luxury hotels copywriting everywhere, the identified adjectives highlighting the guests’ well-being look more like marketing clichés than novelty.

Urban Heritage Palimpsest in Scotland 2019-20

Are the presented textual findings sufficient to reliably support the claim about a transformation of Scottish cities and towns into hotspots of blissful well-being? The informative content of the study webpages alone does not testify to a radical heritage re-evaluation. What some authors qualify as wellness tourism resources (Hamed 2015: 55) may equally well be perceived as products and services promoting the cities as cultural, heritage, arts, and literary destinations, as places of unique regional gastronomy, often with well-developed sports infrastructure (Smith et al. 2010, passim). Nevertheless, the 2019-20 promotional repertoire of touristic propositions was noticeably permeated by vocabulary strongly connoting mental, psychological, emotional, and bodily well-being. Thus, rather than conclude about promotional metamorphosis of Scottish cities as tourist destinations, the notion more accurately characterising the presented findings is that of a discursive palimpsest.

The concept of the palimpsest, established in urban, literary, and cultural history studies, fits well the place promotion games observed in today’s highly competitive tourism industry (Powell 2008; Thomas 2010; Mitin 2018; Hagen and Diener 2019). Approaching the online texts promoting the Scottish urban destinations as metaphorical analogues of re-used medieval “parchment manuscripts”, one finds in them traces of diverse place narratives offered at different times to attract visitors. Each layer is a mark left by responses to the turning points in post-war travelling styles and consumer needs: the emergence mass commercial tourism in 1960s and the diversification and specialisation as a result of globalisation since the 1990s (Gyr 2010: 32-35). Those “manuscripts”, once produced and circulated as printed guidebooks, brochures, and leaflets, now continue in electronic formats on specialised websites. Their discourses are constantly rewritten and revised. The discourse “layer” added in the 2019-20 season was that of well-being, which modified – without erasing – urban heritage attractions of architecture, arts, gastronomy, museums, festivals, and events.
The proposition of the palimpsestic promotional discourse of Scottish makes sense in a wider context of Scotland’s national tourism policy based on foregrounding a designated aspect of the country’s heritage in a particular season. In 2009, the Scottish government’s Tourist Board implemented the Themed Years programme, at first changing annually and biannually since 2020. The themed years encourage all tourism operators to innovatively highlight certain types of tractions of Scotland. For instance, 2015 was the Year of Food and Drink; 2016 – Year of Innovation, Architecture and Design; 2017 – Year of History, Heritage and Archaeology. The year 2020, planned as Scotland’s Year of Coasts and Waters, continued into 2021 and was followed by the Year of Scotland’s Stories 2022 (“Scotland’s Themed Years”). The present analysis confirmed the discursive traces of those past and present celebratory heritage themes in the promotional palimpsest of the Scottish cities and towns.

Meanwhile, wellness tourism has evolved from an emerging into a developed market. The COVID-19 pandemic, apart from its devastating economic effect on the touristic branch globally, additionally heightened people’s awareness of the importance and fragility of physical and mental health. It is anticipated that, at least in Northern Europe, post-pandemic wellness holidays will be in great demand, albeit mostly at domestic and previously under-visited destinations (“Wellness Tourism Sector Has a Positive Outlook”). In Scotland, preferred travel directions are going to be countryside and coastal locations (“Navigating the New Normal-Post-Covid 19 Tourism Consumer Trends”). The predictions for city tourism in the nearest future are not equally optimistic, as urban spaces pose special problems in planning large-scale events in sports and culture, maintaining distance in public places and facing possible restrictions of access to major attractions due to renewed waves of infection. Market researchers prognosticate that it is only in 2023 that city tourism may return to the pre-crisis volume (Jiricka-Pürrer et al. 2020: 3-5). If so, the theme of wellness is likely to stay for some time as a visible layer in the discursively constructed place identities of Scottish cities and towns, until it loses its appeal and becomes overwritten in response to other needs tourists do not even know today they have. Even if correct, the prediction does not necessarily apply to local residents, many of whom find their well-being deteriorate with the growing popularity of their cities as tourist destinations. In Edinburgh, for instance, a group of discontented inhabitants initiated a campaign to limit short-term touristic lets in the city centre, to which the Scottish Government responded by a public inquiry into the situation in 2019 (“Research impact”) and the subsequent request to the city councils to establish their own licensing schemes of holiday rentals in designated “control areas” by October 2022 (Carey 2022).

Conclusion

Judging about the heritage values of Scottish towns and cities based on marketing discourses is never conclusive due to their impermanence and constant manipulation. To stay competitive, tourism managers of each urban location try to keep its product cluster unique by innovative re-composition of the existing resources and introducing new ones. At the same time, they all face similar tourism demand patterns and react to them, typically by adding a new gloss to the existing product (Dujmović and Vitasović 2015; Bignè and Decrop 2019). Due to such “transitory marketing tricks”, a phrase borrowed from Kavaratzis and Ashworth (2006), rather than conclude on the cohesive
identity of a particular city, one can at best speak about a mix of its parallel sub-
identities. The study demonstrates that in the tourist season 2019-20, the attractions of
Scottish urban destinations were discursively adjusted to the well-being tourism
scenario. Yet nobody knows for how long. While tourism experts are trying to foresee
Scottish tourism 50 years ahead ("Tourism Futures 2069"), we may be sure that
whatever the new socio-cultural trends are, they will reshape the mediated cultural
identities of Scottish cities and their heritage more than once.

The use of the palimpsest metaphor for describing the e-discourse of Scottish heritage
in tourism industry today may raise some doubt due to the time scope of the present
study limited to one tourist season. Yet this limitation may stimulate spin-off research
projects involving pre-internet materials of earlier advertisement campaigns about
Scotland and Scottish cities as places for vacations. The findings also encourage a
longitudinal study to observe directions in further evolution of Scottish tourism
promotion. A sociologist of tourism might be interested if the actual websites users
accept the vision of Scottish (urban) heritage discussed here or construct alternative
interpretations influenced by their sociocultural position.

Cultural heritage tends to be discussed in lofty terms as a stronghold of national pride
and a living archive of society's values essential for maintaining national and/or
regional identities. Meanwhile, the tourism industry perspective on heritage is much
more pragmatic. It involves its usability for the economic benefit of the community,
i.e., the enjoyment of its value against a financial return. Usability, however, is not an
intrinsic characteristic of a heritage item and needs to be constructed in response to
the market demands. While Scottish urban heritage, material and intangible, remains
stable and firmly rooted in established forms, it requires selection and interpretation
for the sake of global tourism marketing to maintain its attractiveness, desirability, and
"consumability". The perception of heritage as an economic asset may be a more
effective motivation for its protection and conservation than an integrated education
strategy. The discursive manipulations of Scotland's urban heritage, like the one
demonstrated in the present study, give a chance to generate financial resources
helping heritage properties and traditions to flourish for many more generations.

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NOTES

1. City status in the UK is granted by the British monarch: see “List of Cities” (2022). Dunfermline in Scotland became a city as a winner of the Platinum Jubilee Civic Honours competition in 2022 and is therefore not included in the present study. For the administrative definition of the town in the UK see Carl Baker (2018).
ABSTRACTS

The study, located at the intersection of Media, Tourism and Cultural Studies, is an analysis of the cultural identity of Scottish cities emerging from their on-line promotion as tourist destinations in the last pre-Covid-19 season 2019-20. It is argued that Scotland’s tangible and intangible urban heritage was consistently promoted as generating hedonistic, existential and spiritual experiences leading to an optimal state of individual well-being. The material under scrutiny involves official and independent tourism websites of six Scottish cities available on VisitScotland.com in 2019-20. Treated as cultural texts, they are analysed as evidence of the emergence of yet another commodified version of Scotland’s regional identity as a well-being paradise. The notion of place identity in the context of tourism is understood as a combination of selected physical attributes of a destination with a system of meanings and values attached to them by means of carefully planned discursive operations. Verbal discourse analysis is employed to demonstrate the prevalence of wellness discourse in the promotion of multifaceted urban heritage attractions. The term ‘palimpsest’ is proposed as a metaphoric description of the multi-layered place identities of the Scottish cities constructed in the texts under scrutiny. A concluding prediction is made that those identities constitute but a transient phase on the continuum of promotional efforts to adjust Scotland’s urban tourism offer to the changing consumer demand.

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Mots-clés: villes écossaises, tourisme du patrimoine urbain, tourisme du bien-être, identités-palimpsestes et lieux, textes de promotion touristique, analyse du discours

Keywords: Scottish cities, urban heritage tourism, wellness tourism, palimpsestic place identity, tourism promotion texts, discourse analysis
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