
What do you really want? *Kaj zares želite?*

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Abstract

In the period of last 50 years, the discussion of what authenticity really means changed from questions about realism, representation and reality in aesthetics and media studies, to “authenticity as idea” related to national identity and cultural heritage, as well as “authenticity as strategy” in marketing and place branding. Consequently, we can today define heritage tourism more narrowly as a phenomenon based on visitors’ motivations and perceptions rather than on specific site attributes. New perspectives of presentations, including the use of ICT devices are broadening the perspective of heritage tourism shifting it in to the world of virtual reality. Currently the presentation, this is the consumption of cultural heritage, is shifting from “authentic” material environments and experiences in to the hyper-realistic digital ones the differences between the capacities for consumption between different members of the society become reduced.

Key words: authenticity, cultural tourism, cultural heritage, archaeology, ICT, disabilities

Izvleček

V obdobju zadnjih 50 let se je razprava o tem, kaj avtentičnost v resnici pomeni, premaknila od vprašanj o realizmu, reprezentaciji in realnosti v estetiki in medijskih študijah do »avtentičnosti kot ideje«, povezane z nacionalno identiteto in kulturno dediščino, pa tudi »avtentičnosti kot strategije« pri trženju in blagovni znamki krajev. Posledično lahko danes dediščinski turizem opredelimo ožje kot pojav, ki temelji na motivaciji in percepciji obiskovalcev, ne pa na posebnih lastnostih območja. Nove perspektive predstavitev, vključno z uporabo IKT naprav, širijo perspektivo dediščinskega turizma in ga selijo v svet virtualne resničnosti. Trenutno se prezentacija, to je potrošnja kulturne dediščine, premakne iz »avtentičnih« materialnih okolij in izkušenj v hiperrealistična digitalna, se zmanjšajo razlike med zmognostmi potrošnje med različnimi člani družbe.

Ključne besede: avtentičnost, kulturni turizem, kulturna dediščina, ICT, posebne potrebe

Introduction: Seeing *THE* past

Archaeology, when not trying to be an academic discipline and disseminate the results of research only within the academic community, it has an aspiration to present to the public as accurate as possible authentic illustration of the past – it reconstructs the au-

thentic landscapes, rebuilds the authentic architecture, exhibits the authentic items and at least but not at last, presents the authentic archaeological interpretation. The main problem arising is the academic archaeological systematic failure of any form of social responsibility towards the public hiding behind an unimpregnable wall of arguments defining the imaginary no-

tion of authenticity in archaeological interpretation. Limping behind lesson philosophy learned in the beginning of the 20th century when it became obvious that authentic visions, no matter how deeply felt, may be damaging when they do not sufficiently account for our responsibility toward others (Gardiner 2015, 99), or in the case of archaeology the interested public. With other words – in the 20th century the scientifically vaguely but legally all-encompassing principle of authenticity is at least on the rhetorical level the basic and primary principle of the protection of historical and cultural heritage. Although it is mostly employed as an argument without real economic measurable background, it is legally considered being the key to the standard for ascribing value to heritage and consequently creating the basis for its 3P – preservation, presentation and promotion.

In the last decade numerous authors saw the peril of destroying the authenticity of cultural heritage as the initial stage of a process that will lead to the disappearance of important historical information and the lack of awareness of authenticity (Mi and Wang 2021). They noted that:

- At the material level, the protection and repair behavior to often damages the authenticity of the structures it was intended to protect. A failure to restore the original structure or the material selection, different from the original material, functionally change the original functional purpose of the heritage.
- At the material level, too often the unfavorable supervision of the government institutions, ignorance of the investors and owners as well as the weak protection awareness of the general public, make the authenticity of cultural heritage lost in the development process.
- At the non-material level, the lack of authenticity protection for culture and perception will result in the loss of the subject of cultural authenticity, the dislocation of cultural display in time and space, the lack of cultu-

ral integrity, and the simplification of cultural diversity.

- At the environmental level on which history depends, the historical space environment, surrounding residents and natural environment considerations on which historical heritage relies, have led to the destruction of the surrounding environment of cultural relics and historic sites. These processes made the original distinctive spaces lose their authenticity.

Looking through the arguments, we realize that today a museum or an archaeological site is a place of total iconism – an allegory of the modern consumer society glorifying total passivity in the observation of the past. Its visitors must behave like dehumanized – access to each attraction is regulated by means that discourage any individual initiative. The gaze upon the monument is defined, prescribed... and it is not only the real thing, but institutionally mediated abundance of reconstructed truth, if the visitor obeys the regulations. And it is the role of archaeologists, the scientists, to reconstruct a credible and “objective” past, to present the authentic archaeological heritage.

But here it seems that that the foundations of the archaeological idea of authenticity were shaken by the theoretical discussions (based on practical practices) in tourism studies, and more recently by the inclusion of modern technologies in to the process of presenting the past. Everything enhanced and virtual became the new reality, reality distancing itself from the basic archaeological notion of authenticity based on material remains, and shifting slowly towards the authenticity based on information as such, based on knowledge about the past.

Selling the experience

Although not in the field, in the academic literature the contemporary tourist has been ridiculed for his manner of, motivation for, and achievement in travel. Basically, numerous authors describing the quest of tourists for authenticity in (cultural) tourism in the last 50 years have evi-

dently underestimated the potential of cultural tourism and the potential of the interested tourists to influence the development of the tourist sector. Especially in regard to the role of cultural tourism based in the presentation of cultural heritage and its role in the sustainable development.

It was Daniel J. Boorstin that already in 1961 mentioned that the Americans suffer from extravagant expectations (Boorstin 2002) and that members of a modern society individually provide the market and create demands for the illusions that flood our experiences, illusions that deceive ourselves. Derived from his perception of the modern society was also the conclusion that modern tourists do not seek authenticity at all – in their search of only entertainment and enjoyment they are easily satisfied by an inauthentic tourism experience. In the past, he claimed, the traveler was active and traveling required much planning, time and money. In modern times the tourist expects all planning to be done for him with no risk involved. Even when not being part of mass-tourism, the tourist has guidebooks to tell him what to see, with a star system so he knows what is most important. Based more on his perception of the American society, he assumed that people were no longer experiencing reality in their lives; in their quest for the unfamiliar they were being presented a series of pseudo-events. Tourism, especially large scale, mass tourism, was seen as being just another example of how American life had become overpowered by pseudo-events and contrived experiences. He concluded that the tourists only seldom liked authenticity of to them often unintelligible foreign cultures, but instead preferred their own provincial expectations. Translated in to the language of archaeology we could observe that the public presentations were focused on the “modern” aspects of the past, archaeology was pushing the limits of modern behavior, modern practices and modern relations back in to the past. The past was being appropriated in the basic sense of the word.

A decade later it was Dean MacCannell, that presented a revised view of tourism and

tourist motivation. His tourist was not a victim of a contrived and illusory culture, but instead on a quest for authenticity that involved paying homage to the symbols of modernity. Still it was the first time that he introduced the concept of staged authenticity in tourism (MacCannell 1973). The term “staged authenticity” is one used by tourism and cultural resource management researchers to define a way that traditional, or in the case of archaeology past, cultures are presented (i.e. staged) to outsiders. It can be manufactured by tourism professionals (in theme parks, performances and such), but it can be the way that locals perceive what tourists want to see and experience. Consequently, tourists are not allowed to see real life as lived by the natives, to see the original archaeological heritage since these “back regions” are hidden from tourists and reserved only for the indigenous populations or for professional specialists. At best, tourists are shown “front regions” that are designed to look like the real thing. The industry specialized in the efforts providing the tourist with the feeling he had an authentic tourist experience, and prohibiting him to realize he has failed in his quest.

But how was the motivation for tourism perceived at the end of the seventies. John Compton (1979) suggested several motives, including: escape (from the drudgery of everyday life), relaxation, prestige, especially among those who do not travel, regression (i.e., being able to act immaturely without being judged by one’s reference groups), education and novelty. Actually, with the notion of novelty he turned the whole narrative upside down – novelty was a relative concept without any semantic relation to authenticity. Everything goes – everything was a novelty for the tourist. The past was slowly conquering its grandeur.

But in the beginning of eighties Umberto Eco (1983) published a series of essays with a hypercritical description of the contemporary tourist industry. Discussing mostly American post-modern tourist attraction, he described them as being hyper-real. Their deliberate creation was

a process where the American imagination demanded the real thing but the market fabricated the absolute fake. Derived from the American concept of prosperity, which is focused on having more than is needed, it produced artificial tourist attractions that try to be extravagant and better than the original. He concluded that it is certain that tourists prefer hyper-realism to real sites. And archaeology was actually following if not even creating the trend – it was the period of reconstructions and reenactments, where the past, to be presented crated anew following the demands and expectations of the consumers (Barker 2010; Hartford 2016).

However, tourists may simply be satisfying different types of utility – of form, time and place (Cohen 2002). While seeing a real prehistoric painted cave in a real setting might be preferred, it may simply not be possible, given time and place constraints. Also, it must be admitted, the tourist may not wish to suffer the travails of a trip to a remote locale. Seeing a real Roman city has a major constraint – since the best preserved are in the remotest regions of the today “civilized” world visiting them poses to the average tourist a major problem directly addressing the time, money and efforts the tourists are able (and willing) to invest. And since there are no time machines to take travelers back to the “real thing,” with the help of hyper-realism the tourist satisfies his experience, while perhaps actually learning something about the “real thing.” The end of century, with the development of technology and with the introduction of practices that explained and promoted archaeological heritage, enabled experiences that were better than real, authentic in their own way.

But it was John Urry (2002) that described the trends in the new millennium, claiming that the post-tourist knows that they are a tourist and that tourism is a game, or rather a whole series of games with multiple texts and no single, authentic tourist experience. Further he noted that the post-tourist takes pleasure in the fact that so many tourist experiences are available so all of these motivations can be satisfied. It was

all based or actually adapted to the notion that the modern or actually post-modern (post-tourist) is a critical consumer that embraces openly the increasingly inauthentic, commercialized and simulated experiences offered by the tourism industry. And the presentations of the past – including museums, archaeological parks and reenactment events, are a constituent element of cultural tourism. Although developed still in the eighties these concepts make more sense in the last two decades when the post-modern world is characterized by globalization, hyper-consumerism, the experience economy and new developments in technology. Consumers have numerous choices and possibilities, and often undertake seemingly incompatible activities simultaneously in order to capitalize on this array of opportunities. Cultural tourism is no exception (Kobiałka 2013).

It was in 2007 that in the monumental volume *Tourism and Politics*, Debbie Lisle described the rise of dark tourism as the last real experience in the post-tourist world (Lisle 2007). She demonstrated that the myth of modern tourism is centered on the possibility of encountering authentic difference, a claim actually less possible if we take into consideration the fact that tourism is a global industry from the 1990s. She claimed that the only “real” places in the world are conflict areas and war zones affiliated with death and violence and that the Dark tourism tell us a great deal about the relationship between tourism and conflict. They illustrate that places of conflict are not excised by the tourist gaze, but are instead integral to it.

In the same year James Gilmore and Joseph Pine published the book *Authenticity: What Consumers Really Want* – they were not only thinking of tourism, but of consumer culture in general (Gilmore and Pine 2007). They claimed that people increasingly see the world in terms of real and fake, and because of the shift to the experience economy want to buy something real from someone genuine. Today goods and services are no longer enough – what consumers want today are experiences described as memo-

rable events that engage them in an inherently personal way. As paid-for experiences proliferate, people now decide where and when to spend their money and their time. But in a world increasingly filled with deliberately and sensation-ally staged experiences, in an increasingly unreal world, consumers choose to buy or not buy based on how real they perceive an offering to be. They claim that business today, therefore, is all about being real. Original. Genuine. Sincere. Authentic. Presenting the real past. And of course, this brings us back to the objects of dark tourism, elements of archaeological heritage linked to conflicts and death as the optimal places to present the authentic reconstruction of the past.

Anticipating the future one might argue that as long as the tourist thinks a fantasy-laden tourist site or experience is real, then this is simply inauthentic – if the tourist knows the site is fake, and still likes it, perhaps even more than seeing the real thing, then this is hyper-reality. However, this taxonomy condemns as merely inauthentic many tourist sites and experiences that are so fantastic that the traveler should have realized they were fake, and perhaps did so on at least some level of consciousness (Cohen 2002).

Conclusion:

Participating – a dialogue with authenticity

For tourism studies, allegations of inauthenticity generally relate to staged events and touristic experience that fail the objective authenticity test – it assumes that there is an undistorted standard to determine what is or is not genuine (Umbach and Humphrey 2018). But is it really so? Here we can come to assess the appropriateness of authenticity, not in terms of the appropriateness of its explanatory and constitutive beliefs but instead in terms of whether an instance of authenticity successfully plays the functional role that it is “meant” to play. And archaeology has a problem with that – as a discipline it has a problem in defining what is it meant to do. To preserve the authentic landscape, feature, item... or to explain? It is easy to hide behind the preservation of the authentic but hard to explain it.

In this period of nearly 50 years, the discussion of what authenticity really means has been going on in many different academic fields, from questions about realism, representation and reality in aesthetics and media studies, to “authenticity as idea” related to national identity and cultural heritage, as well as “authenticity as strategy” in marketing and place branding. All these discussions influenced the question of authenticity as a cultural concept in tourism and consumer culture from different analytical views, and related the discussions of authenticity in tourism studies to other theoretical and academic fields – in our case archaeology as a specific constitutional element of cultural heritage.

In the last two decades it was argued that authenticity is a spent issue in tourism – that it is no longer relevant to tourists, a redundant concept which they no longer concern themselves with. However, the fact that authenticity lacks a universal definition does not prove its redundancy. It simply shows that the concept has not reached “basic concept status,” but then, it does not have to. As long as tourists continue to concern themselves with evaluating authenticity of cultural objects and experiences by whatever criteria they apply, then authenticity should remain firmly embedded in the development of tourism theory (Mkono 2012).

But is it still credible to consider and analyze consumer behavior as an expression of false consciousness? If we accept that authenticity is never objective, but always constructed, then we should take seriously accounts whereby consumers themselves perceive their experience as authentic. Empirical studies have explored consumers’ own voices, and uncovered processes whereby consumers experience acts of consumption as helping them achieve moments, or subjective states, of authenticity. They see themselves not as duped victims of false consciousness, but as active agents capable of framing and pursuing life-goals with a degree of autonomy. Numerous authors suggested that we ought to take such positions seriously and treat consumers (in this case tourists) as active agents in the production

and performance of authenticity (Umbach and Humphrey 2018).

Consequently, we can define heritage tourism more narrowly as a phenomenon based on visitors' motivations and perceptions rather than on specific site attributes. This means that heritage tourism is not only tourism in places categorized as heritage or historic places based purely on the fact that they present history, but history featured is part of the experience and partially links it with motivations for the trip (Poria, Butler and Airey 2003). In this sense, authenticity is actually performed, and through the term performative authenticity authors linked the two positions that have emerged in tourism studies with respect to the concept of authenticity – on one side object related (authenticity synonymous to original and trace) and subject related modes of authenticity (existential authenticity covering bodily feelings, emotional ties, identity construction and narration related to place) (Knudsen and Waade 2010). The latter corresponding to the evolution of the modern cultural tourist that was transformed from consuming the vision about past history, passing to consuming past cultural, historical and natural resources as well as intangible heritage and attractions to finally actively performing a structured decision-making process based on criteria of desirable leisure experiences such as engaging in social interaction, doing something worthwhile, feeling comfortable and at ease in one's surrounding, being challenged by new experiences, having the opportunity to learn and participating actively (Sheng and Chen 2012; Di Pietro et al. 2014). Especially the young generation asked for a different cultural consumption model – knowledge-based activities that are participative *in situ* (Papathanasiou-Zuhr and Weiss-Ibáñez 2014). Especially in this population the use of modern ICT devices, included in to the daily activities, enabled the changes in cultural consumptions. Not that the only facilitated the broad information remotely but also facilitated the access and consumption for categories of assets that were previously considered being less

accessible (Vasile et al. 2015). And further they stimulated all the senses allowing the consumption of the information in both terms of education and entertainment (Addis 2005).

It is exactly the ICT devices that in a specific area of cultural heritage consumption, in our focus in the case of archaeology, can enable, when discussing the involvement of persons with disabilities the shift from the discussion about minorized identities towards a common experience. Since disability is not a personal trait that an individual possesses but a way of seeing things, consuming information, that includes the whole of society (Fraser 2018, 12–20). And in the moment when the presentation, this is the consumption of cultural heritage is transformed from “authentic” material environments in to the hyper-realistic digital ones the differences between the capacities for consumption between different members of the society become reduced. Modernizing the presentation of cultural heritage becomes “normalization” of the consuming society.

Implementing virtual heritage technologies can, beside advertising the archaeological sites and promoting the events on them, be used as means documenting the heritage and reducing its vulnerability, caused by exposure of access. But most important it allows to resurrect the complexity of destroyed or not accessible sites and items (Farid and Ezzat 2018). Information and communication technology in the role of assistive technologies forms a collective and interactive support for knowledge and performs different roles pursuant to the type of disability to enable the consumption of cultural information and to address the question of authenticity of information provided.

Summary

In the period of last 50 years, the discussion of what authenticity really means changed from questions about realism, representation and reality in aesthetics and media studies, to “authenticity as idea” related to national identity and cultural heritage, as well as “authenticity as strategy” in marketing and place branding. All these dis-

cussions influenced the role of promotion of cultural heritage and especially archaeology in cultural tourism and consumer culture.

Consequently, we can today define heritage tourism more narrowly as a phenomenon based on visitors' motivations and perceptions rather than on specific site attributes. This means that heritage tourism is not only tourism in places categorized as heritage or historic places based purely on the fact that they present history, but history featured is part of the experience and partially links it with motivations for the trip. New perspectives of presentations, including the use of ICT devices are broadening the perspective of heritage tourism shifting it in to the world of virtual reality.

It is exactly the ICT devices that in a specific area of cultural heritage consumption, in our focus in the case of archaeology, can enable, when discussing the involvement of persons with special needs the shift from the discussion about minorized identities towards a common experience. And in the moment when the presentation, this is the consumption of cultural heritage, is shifting from "authentic" material environments and experiences in to the hyper-realistic digital ones the differences between the capacities for consumption between different members of the society become reduced.

Povzetek

V obdobju zadnjih 50 let se je razprava o tem, kaj avtentičnost v resnici pomeni, premaknila od vprašanj o realizmu, reprezentaciji in realnosti v estetiki in medijskih študijah do »avtentičnosti kot ideje«, povezane z nacionalno identiteto in kulturno dediščino, pa tudi »avtentičnosti kot strategije« pri trženju in blagovni znamki krajev. Vse te razprave so vplivale na vlogo promocije kulturne dediščine in predvsem arheologije v kulturnem turizmu in potrošniški kulturi.

Posledično lahko danes dediščinski turizem opredelimo ožje kot pojav, ki temelji na motivaciji in percepciji obiskovalcev, ne pa na posebnih lastnostih območja. To pomeni, da dediščinski turizem ni samo turizem na krajih, ki so kategorizirani kot dediščina ali zgodovinski kraji zgolj na podlagi dejstva, da predstavljajo zgodovino, ampak je predstavljena zgodovina del izkušnje in jo delno povezuje z motivacijo za potovanje. Nove perspektive predstavitev, vključno z uporabo IKT naprav,

širijo perspektivo dediščinskega turizma in ga selijo v svet virtualne resničnosti.

Ravno IKT naprave lahko na določenem področju potrošnje kulturne dediščine, v našem fokusu v primeru arheologije, omogočijo, da se pri razpravi o vključevanju oseb s posebnimi potrebami premik od razprave o minoriziranih identitetah k skupni izkušnji. In v trenutku, ko se prezentacija, to je potrošnja kulturne dediščine, premakne iz »avtentičnih« materialnih okolij in izkušenj v hiperrealistična digitalna, se zmanjšajo razlike med možnostmi potrošnje med različnimi člani družbe.

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