

Languaging Tradition in Tourist Destinations in Portugal

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ABSTRACT

Online tourism texts contain encoded representations of the culture to be visited. Within this representational set, tradition works largely as a tool of authenticity creation. Host culture traditions are presented to the tourist in such a way as to create a cultural gap that the tourist may or may not be encouraged to perceive and cross (as spectator-participant). However, this will only be the case should the tourist find the encounter authentic and believable. The constant challenge to tradition is to maintain authenticity whilst also maintaining appeal and relevance in a changing world. This study unravels the way in which tradition is encoded in a sample of English-language texts referring to Portugal and summarises the implications that this may have in terms of the views held by visitors on the (inter)cultural constitution of the destination.



Fig 1. Tradition as process, values and spectacle

THE STUDY

Online tourism -oriented, locally produced literature, written in English, was collected and classified. The representations of traditional



Fig 2. Tradition as participation and involvement

practices were extracted and characterised using cultural discourse analysis. A quantitative analysis was carried out of the scope, nature and role of tradition using corpora analysis tools.

COMMON ENCODINGS

The forms of tradition identified were:

- the word/concept (*tradition, heritage*)
- unspecified quality (*traditional values*)
- specified quality (*a traditional rural way of life away from the bustle of the city*)
- specific events (*traditional feast*)
- behaviour (*the tradition involves a great bonfire on this day every year*)
- absence of tradition (*although the traditional way of making these cakes is no longer common*)

ENGAGING THE TOURIST GAZE

Tradition was functionally employed in the texts for the pragmatic purpose of engaging the tourist gaze. In this sense, tradition was represented as:

- process (to be followed)
- having intrinsic moral or social value
- spectacle and entertainment
- an opportunity for involvement
- unfamiliar and yet accessible
- open to all
- product for consumption
- unique

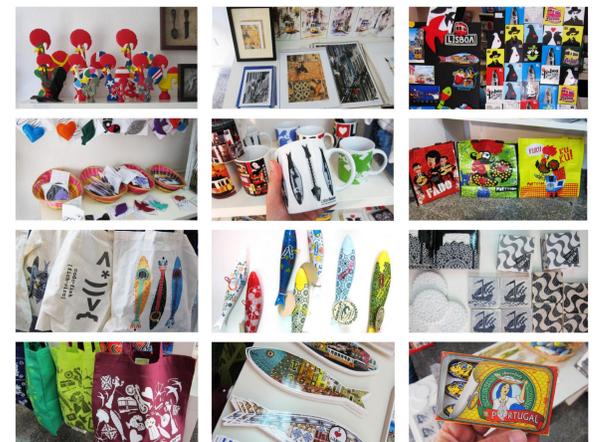


Fig 4. Tradition as product and consumption

AUTHENTICITY

Aspects of authenticity:

- food: *taste, cuisine, dishes, production*
- events: *feasts, fairs, festivals*
- product: *artefacts, handicrafts,*
- lifestyle: *work, leisure, routines*
- tools: *implements, work methods*
- buildings: *architecture, art, features*
- construction: *materials, techniques*
- places: *village, rurality, landscape*



Fig 3. Tradition as experience, for all

POSITIVE CONNOTATION

Positive description and collocation: *old, long, wonderful, best, finest, long-standing, important, friendly, genuine, local, distinguished, time-honoured, strong, valued, heart-warming*

CREATING DISTANCE

- naming (*the goat and the devil*)
- unexplained events or features
- use of original language terms (*rabelo*)
- emphasising age and hence validity
- ring-fencing and claims of uniqueness

CONCLUSION

The language used implies that time, nature and interpersonal relations are those qualities of tradition that should most appeal to the visitor. Authenticity and continuance of tradition is widely claimed, with little reference to the staging of tradition. There is some evidence of hyper-tradition, with dislocation or multiplicities of a single tradition appearing in a number of destinations



Fig 5. Tradition as unique

REFERENCES

- Jaworski, A. & A. Pritchard (eds.) (2005) *Discourse, communication and tourism*. Clevedon, UK: Channel View Publications.
- Quinlan, S. (2005). 'Never short of a smile': A Content Analysis of Travel Guidebooks. University of Waterloo.