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Cultural heritage authenticity: A producer view

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ABSTRACT

The role of the producer (i.e., heritage manager) in shaping the meaning of authenticity is conceptually underdeveloped. We adopt the position that tourists' perceptions of cultural heritage authenticity are greatly influenced by the core attributes of the cultural heritage object and how it is produced. Building on existing research and our analysis, we contend that the Cultural Heritage Object contains three core and overlapping attributes: physical form (Form), links to what is culturally and historically significant (Links), and vitality to actively transmit meaning (Vitality). Using this tripartite conceptualization, we approach Heritage Production Authenticity in terms of the object's Indexical and Iconic cues. In doing so we provide a powerful basis to develop our understanding of heritage production authenticity.

Introduction

In the tourism literature there is a distinct lack of research on how cultural heritage authenticity is understood from the producer perspective. While significant research efforts have been devoted to study heritage authenticity from the tourist viewpoint, including how the heritage experience and its authenticity is co-created (Bruner, 1994a, 1994b; Chronis, 2005), our understanding of the role of the producer in shaping the meaning of authenticity through this co-created exchange is underdeveloped. We focus attention on the nature of the cultural heritage object to understand authenticity from the producer perspective. We suggest that the cultural heritage object and the construction of its authenticity by tourists is heavily dependent on the emphasis producers give to particular attributes of the object.

We establish that the cultural heritage object encapsulates three core attributes. This includes its physical form (Form), the links to what is culturally and historically significant (Links), and the vitality to actively transmit meaning (Vitality). The word 'object' is deployed as it is useful to focus on what is offered by the producer and what this means for understanding authenticity. The cultural heritage object and its three core attributes apply to both tangible and intangible heritage as identified by UNESCO.

A comprehensive and critical review of cultural heritage and authenticity literatures led to our categorization of the fundamental attributes of the cultural heritage object, and to recognizing this as a means to approach Heritage Production Authenticity. In particular, as it relates to the emphasis the heritage producer brings to the cultural heritage object to facilitate tourist co-creation of meaning and authenticity based on the object's iconic and indexical cues (Grayson & Martinec, 2004; Peirce, 1998). In doing so, we address calls to build the producer perspective of heritage authenticity (DuCros & McKercher, 2015; Poullos, 2014; Timothy, 2011; Timothy & Boyd, 2006), and to approach authenticity dialectically in terms of how it is negotiated between tourist and producer (Ateljevic & Doorne, 2005; Bruner, 1994a, 1994b; DeLyser, 1999; Taylor, 2001). Before presenting our argument, we outline the methods used to develop our concepts.

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Methods

Our efforts to conceptualize the cultural heritage object and heritage production authenticity draw on the guidelines provided by [Xin, Tribe, and Chambers \(2013\)](#) regarding the identification, selection, and analysis of the academic literature, validity, alternative explanations, and critical analysis. To begin with, we conducted a boolean search of major databases known to contain articles in the area namely Emerald Insight, Elsevier Science Direct, and Scopus using the term 'cultural heritage authenticity' and limiting the search to scholarly articles published in English between 1985 and 2019. The year 1985 was chosen as that is when a body of work on heritage tourism began to appear ([Timothy, 2018](#)). This search produced over 3500 articles. Adding and changing filters such as Tourism, Heritage, Authenticity, and extracting journals that were not relevant (such as Archival Science) resulted in a total of 465 articles. Scrutinizing titles or abstracts resulted in a further reduction of articles that were not connected or peripheral to our line of enquiry. For example, descriptive research regarding market characteristics, segmentation and demographic profiles, and expenditures. We also eliminated articles that were closely related and repetitious (e.g., commentaries).

As a result of this process a total 143 articles formed the core data corpus. For reasons of space regarding the number of references, the review was narrowed further to a total of 71 articles. These articles were deemed most relevant in shaping this research. Our search for articles using Google Scholar continued throughout the research process. As did searches within the data corpus using particular terms such as genuine, real, true, dialectic, co-creation, interaction, and heritage attributes, assets, object, tensions, essence, transmission and experience. In addition, eight heritage textbooks were consulted to check definitions, meanings and interpretations and assist with constitutive elements. The data corpus also included 18 documents from tourism-related government agencies and heritage organizations, and four interviews with senior management of heritage organizations to add practical rigor to the conceptualizing.

Articles and reports extended back to 1985 and covered a wide range of tangible and intangible heritage contexts. The following thematic codes were used to categorize the articles: (1) Name of the author(s); (2) Year of publication; (3) Research focus; (4) Theoretical lens; (5) Methodology; and (6) Key findings and Contribution. Emphasis was given to seminal works, or those commonly cited especially those that conceptualized, inducted or measured key heritage and authenticity meanings or constructs. To mitigate the potential risk of excluding key articles we conducted independent searches of the key databases.

In terms of overall process, to understand cultural heritage authenticity from the producer perspective we began with the broad aim to examine cultural heritage as a co-created exchange, and as it became apparent that the vast majority of work both on cultural heritage and heritage authenticity adopted the tourist perspective, we focused on what the literature revealed about the properties of the cultural heritage object and how this manifests in terms of a co-created exchange, and used this to assist in our examination of the authenticity literature.

While validity measures exist in empirical research, conceptual research often lacks in validity assessments ([Xin et al., 2013](#)). With this in mind, we paid attention to validity of our concepts (and conceptualizing) by focusing on how they were problematized and articulated, namely the Cultural Heritage Object and Heritage Production Authenticity, and by ensuring that these concepts were faithful representations of the literature and what they purported to be ([Jackson & Maraun, 1996](#); [Peter, 1981](#)). We engaged in a part-to-whole assessment ([Strauss & Corbin, 1998](#)), identifying areas of commonality and difference across the heritage and authenticity literature, grouping this data into emergent categories, and checking and re-checking whether the data, the sub-categories (e.g. Form, Links and Vitality) and our overall categorizations (e.g. Heritage Production Authenticity) exhibited coherence with the meanings, ideas, findings and examples in the literature. This extended to finding agreement on the explanations for the concepts we were developing, as for example in what is revealed in the summary points to indicate the Cultural Heritage Object ([Table 1](#)). Coding was carried out to separate, sort and synthesize the properties and examples into sub-categories of the cultural heritage object and heritage production authenticity (the Indexical and Iconic).

The terms used for the sub-categories (i.e. Physical Form, Links, Vitality, Indexical, Iconic) were inducted or taken directly from the literature (the term "Links" was an *in vivo* term taken from one of the interviews). Each author took part in investigating and discussing the examples and explanations in the literature to establish if they were manifestations of the three core attributes of cultural heritage object, or something else, thereby ensuring a fit with the concepts and inter-rater reliability. Further, in order to ensure content and face validity of the three attributes, each author judged the manifestations we found in the literature with regard to how well they reflect one of the three attributes (assessment of content validity) and how well they represent the respective element and not another element that was not part of our conceptualization (assessment of face validity) ([Kock, Josiassen, & Assaf, 2019](#)). By doing so, we also attempted to achieve validity through a consistent systematic meaning ([Kaplan, 1964](#)) of the concepts discussed.

An example of this involved our articulation of heritage production authenticity as the emphasis the heritage producer brings to the cultural heritage object to facilitate tourist co-creation of meaning and authenticity. This conceptualization emerged from the literature based on an understanding of the nature of the heritage object, how authenticity is negotiated between the producer and tourist, and 'what heritage producers do'. More specifically, repeated mention of object cues ([Chronis, 2015](#); [Duncan, 1995](#); [Edensor, 2000](#)) as well as the multitude of forms they can take and how this indicated the potential for understanding the producer role at a fundamental level, eventually led us to consider the nature of indexical and iconic authenticity.

We examined the properties and attributes of the two core concepts for their linkages through constant comparison ([Charmaz, 2006](#)) of the examples and explanations of the heritage object and experience, and the nature and means of determining authenticity, and more particularly, how properties of the cultural heritage object may be appropriated as being genuine, real or true. As we tacked back and forth between our examination of the cultural heritage object and authenticity, we continued to question the make-up of ideas and examples across contexts by asking analytical questions ([Charmaz, 2006](#)) repeatedly such as what characterizes

Table 1
The heritage object.

Core components	The essence of the heritage object
Physical form	<p>Material artifacts (buildings, clothing, implements, records, archeological remains etc.) both original and reproduced are fundamental to the way tourists understand and experience heritage (Bruner, 1994a, 1994b).</p> <p>“Objects are important to the study of human history because they provide a concrete basis for ideas, and can validate them... preserved objects also validate memories; and the actuality of the object, as opposed to a reproduction or surrogate, draws people in and gives them a literal way of touching the past.” (UNESCO, 1994).</p> <p>The artifact, in its original form, because it is a singular or definitive representation of history, carries an aura and authenticity that underpins interaction with the observer (Benjamin, 1973).</p> <p>Heritage artifacts may evolve or even be created new while they contribute to essential heritage links and meanings (Jarvie, 1991).</p> <p>Careful choices are made about the material form of heritage sites, whether in the use of original or reproduced artifacts, or their combination or holistic presentation (Bruner, 1994a, 1994b; Grayson & Martinec, 2004; Landsberg, 1997).</p> <p>The natural and built environment is essential to how tourist providers craft narratives that underpin tourist sensemaking and emotion of place (Chronis, 2012).</p> <p>The physical contours of place are imagined as evidence of how the battle unfolded (Chronis, 2005).</p> <p>The tourist experience of objective authenticity is aligned with producer attempts to restore or preserve buildings and objects based on historically accurate techniques or materials (Andriotis, 2011).</p> <p>The physical form of the object such as its beauty, shape, patina or detail, accentuates meanings of cultural and historical significance (Gell, 1998).</p> <p>The heritage object can exude a presence that is emotionally affecting because it is a definitive representation of type (Peterson, 2005).</p>
Cultural and historical links	<p>Heritage sites draw their meaning from values, ideology, folk heroes, and historic events, places and myths of the past (Bruner, 1994a, 1994b).</p> <p>Festivals, rituals, dress, and craft is determined to be authentic depending upon whether they are made or enacted by local people according to tradition (MacCannell, 1976).</p> <p>Links to imagined communities of the past greatly enable understanding of the heritage object (Ballesteros & Ramírez, 2007).</p> <p>The cultural and historical links of heritage resources bring tangibility, meaning and emotion to the object (Timothy, 1997).</p> <p>The meaning of heritage objects is revealed in the powerful personal and social relationships people have with significant ideas of the past (Massara & Severino, 2013; Anderson, 2006).</p> <p>Historically informed culture is a fundamental resource for heritage placemaking (Delconte, Kline, & Scavo, 2016).</p> <p>The provenance of heritage objects is given significance culturally (Barber, 1998).</p>
Vitality	<p>The heritage object's historical roots offer links to the present (Chhabra, Healy, & Sills, 2003).</p> <p>The ability to bring heritage to life drawing on its core historical and cultural meanings, artifacts, and other connections to the past such as local people is crucial to a powerful heritage experience and to its authenticity (McIntosh & Prentice, 1999).</p> <p>Heritage that signals national consciousness produces an atmosphere that encourages participation and feelings of belonging .</p> <p>Heritage sites can imbue what is virtuous about a past life (Bruner, 1994a, 1994b).</p> <p>Embodied dance performance indicates a deep connection to heritage (Daniel, 1996).</p> <p>Sincerity in the presentation of heritage is crucial to its effective transmission and to how tourists determine its authenticity (Chhabra et al., 2003; Taylor, 2001).</p> <p>Heritage objects lose their vitality when they are stereotyped, caricatured, over produced or routinized as they become separated from their historical and culturally significant source meanings and lose their capacity to connect on a human level (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1995, 2005).</p> <p>Evocative storytelling of history stimulates imagination and emotion and an interactive sharing of ideas, knowledge and experiences (Chronis, 2005; Ross, Saxena, Correia, & Deutz, 2017).</p> <p>Memorial sites can represent their content powerfully such that they stimulate feelings of empathy or respect (Miles, 2002; Winter, 2009).</p>

(continued on next page)

Table 1 (continued)

Core components	The essence of the heritage object
	When consumers believe they are in the presence of something authentic they can feel transported to the context to which the object or location is linked (DeLyser, 1999).
	The enactment of heritage values and meanings that bring insight for the present can inspire the tourist to personalize the experience (Chronis, Arnould, & Hampton, 2010; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1998; McIntosh & Prentice, 1999).
	The artifacts, narratives, values, and familial ties underpinning historic sites when brought to life can be powerful raw materials for tourists to experience identity (Bruner, 1994a, 1994b; Poria, Reichel, & Biran, 2006).

descriptions of tourist experience or sense-making, and how the cultural heritage object might function as an index and how this could support authenticity.

We also evaluated viewpoints that could bring into question our producer-inspired conceptualization, for example regarding the idea that the meaning of authenticity is in a constant state of flux (discussed within). We also considered alternative explanations and other approaches such as the preservation-based producer focus, and the tactical suggestions touched on the managerial implications sections of the papers we reviewed. We used the literature, the reports and our interviews to triangulate emergent findings.

We gave particular attention to trends and debates in the literature such as the increased emphasis given to intangible heritage, the heritage experience, heritage identity, technological innovations, the preservation versus development issue, and how these matters intersect in terms of illuminating the producer role from a co-creation perspective. Material relevant to each of them (e.g. significant authors, quotations, themes) were divided into (often overlapping) sections. We also examined shifts in understanding such as that toward authenticity being a socio-culturally constructed phenomena and tourists being active meaning-makers. Also, one of the authors followed a key debate in industry through the future museums project to better understand emerging ideas associated with cultural heritage authenticity. While described here in a linear fashion, in reality these analytical processes were emerging and developing throughout the research process.

Heritage production and the cultural heritage object

Highlighting the critical role of producers, Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1995) has been instrumental in considering heritage as a form of meta-cultural production. She and others like Bruner (1994a, 1994b) and Tunbridge and Ashworth (1996) have been influential in explaining that while involving recourse to the past, heritage is subject to the knowledge, skills, and preferences of producers who shape the meaning of the past in the present for tourist consumption.

While not stated explicitly, this view of the heritage as a meta-cultural production is evident across the literature particularly in discussions that highlight how heritage producers deploy powerful representational practices to draw out the cultural properties of the cultural heritage object (Chronis, 2005; Waterton & Watson, 2014), and in terms of how these efforts are co-created by tourists who identify with the shared meanings projected at these sites (Bruner, 1994a, 1994b; Chhabra et al., 2003; Halewood & Hannam, 2001). Chronis et al. (2012) speak about how heritage tourism is fundamentally associated with the production of cultural imaginaries where socially important narratives are infused with collective values. Numerous other examples highlight that heritage is a meta-cultural production in the way it is actively constructed not just by producers and tourists but also by major institutions such as popular media (DeLyser, 1999). And while the aforementioned work considers authenticity as a significant element in this meta-cultural production, it does not offer a focused examination of how it can be approached from the producer perspective.

With the above in mind, we approach the notion of meta-cultural 'production' in terms of the role the producer plays in drawing attention to what is materially, culturally and historically significant about the cultural heritage object. It is also important to note that while we make the necessary distinctions, like various other authors we consider the quality of the cultural heritage object, the co-creation of its value, and consumer attributions of authenticity to be closely related as determining a cultural heritage object to be authentic is invariably associated with recognizing its value (Bruner, 1994a, 1994b; Chhabra et al., 2003).

Core attributes of the cultural heritage object

Heritage is often defined as assets that have been inherited (Yale, 1991), however, this articulation and associated views are of limited use for understanding how producers project its authenticity as they do little to draw from this perspective in terms of understanding the constituting attributes of the object and how this impacts the way producers influence authenticity. There have however been various attempts to capture the core features of heritage. One of the more quoted conceptualizations is developed by Tunbridge and Ashworth (1996) who suggest that heritage has a time component, in that it obtains its present value from the past; a spatial component because the past is played out (i.e., materializes) in a particular place; a multi-dimensional element in the way it is culturally significant and politically charged; and that it is co-produced by multiple stakeholders, including public and private producers and consumers. While valuable, the impact of efforts such as these to categorize heritage is limited for building the producer perspective of authenticity because they adopt a macro view (as in the aforementioned example) and are articulated at a high level of abstraction.

In addition to the academic research, organizations like UNESCO have categorized the cultural heritage object to aid its preservation. They focus, for example, on the role of integrity, which relates to the completeness, accuracy, and intactness of the object's material attributes. UNESCO has also sought to determine authenticity attributes as they relate to the object's design, materials, traditions and techniques, location and setting, and spirit or feeling, as evident in article 13 of the Nara document (UNESCO, 1994). However, we join various researchers (Heynem, 2006; Labadi, 2013; Wang, Huang, & Kim, 2015; Waterton, Smith, & Campbell, 2006) in highlighting the limitations of these attempts given an emphasis on the material nature of the object and the narrow and static conception of authenticity.

Our extensive examination of academic research, government and industry documents and our preliminary interviews provide the basis to categorize the essence of the cultural heritage object based on its most significant and affecting properties and attributes. As a consequence, we contend that the cultural heritage object contains three parts that are fundamental to how the producer engages the tourist in an authentic experience. In Table 1, we highlight how the literature indicates these three higher order attributes of the cultural heritage object based on consistent descriptions of the object. The three attributes, which are most often described but not formally conceptualized, necessarily overlap and comprise its Physical Form, the Links to what is culturally and historically significant, and the Vitality of the cultural heritage object to transmit meaning, especially when this Physical Form and particularly these Links come to life to actively transmit meaning. This attempt to represent the properties or examples of cultural heritage object is not exhaustive but captures the essential foundations of the object and serves as a meaningful conceptual basis to develop knowledge of authenticity from the producer perspective. Because evidence of these attributes that make up the cultural heritage object are across the literature, we provide a brief statement in Table 1 of some key examples to highlight relevance. In the sections that follow we articulate these three attributes by referring to the existing literature.

Physical Form refers to the physical properties of the cultural heritage object and includes (though is not limited to) places, buildings, architecture, landmarks, natural environments, artifacts, people, practices, dance and costume. Our analysis of the literature highlights that all cultural heritage objects possess a Physical Form to some degree including highly intangible heritage objects. For example, with respect to dance, there is dress, gesture, expression, rhythmic motifs and sequences, while even more intangible heritage objects such as knowledge systems and oral traditions include some element of Physical Form, for example in terms of who delivers the object (such as an actor). As apparent in Table 1, there are numerous examples and ways in which the Physical Form mediates the heritage experience including the interpretation of the cultural heritage object's Links (see below). Indeed, our grouping of the appearance and type of Physical Form that is effective in the transmission of heritage highlights that it is especially diverse and can vary from a shapeless, non-descript idol (Gell, 1998) to the grandeur of the Taj Mahal (Edensor, 1998) to the improvisation and creativity of Haitian dance movements (Goldberg, 1981). Examining the Gettysburg landscape, Chronis (2005, 2015) speaks of how the contours of the physical environment are a principal means for imagining how key battlefield scenes and events unfolded.

Second, Links refers to the cultural heritage object's connection to what is historically and culturally significant. These Links are numerous and relate to (revered) people, gods, communities, values, beliefs, knowledge, skills, traditions, rituals, meanings, associations, art, science, literature and important events that are uniquely identified by their cultural and historic significance (Prentice, 2001). Crucial to the cultural heritage object and the producer perspective of authenticity, as revealed in Table 1, these Links are typically referred to in terms of being essential to the meaning of the cultural heritage object (Bruner, 1994a, 1994b; Prentice, 2001; Rojek, 1997), to give meaning to the Physical Form of the cultural heritage object (Timothy, 1997; Waterton & Watson, 2014), and for the fact they underpin its Vitality in terms of the transmission of meaning (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1995).

Compelling examples of the power of Links can be seen in numerous and contrasting examples such as in the motivation and experience of tourists making pilgrimage to heritage sites, and where heritage producers bias the historical record and tourists actively contest it (Buzinde & Santos, 2009). The latter example is considered further in the conclusions section from the producer perspective. Also important from the producer perspective is the fact that the identity of the cultural heritage object is most often discussed with respect to its Form and these Links. This is evident for example in the case of heritage place making where the cultural meanings of place are essential to its identity and to engaging tourists (Urry, 1995). These Links may also evolve while retaining core meaning, which as explained below could be crucial to retaining the cultural heritage object's authenticity over time.

Vitality is the third essential attribute crucial to the cultural heritage object and its production. Cultural heritage objects possess a Vitality to effectively transmit meaning from the past to the present. Often described as a life force, Vitality is evident when the historic and cultural significance of the cultural heritage object is brought to life (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1995), and particularly when the Physical Form and these Links are projected powerfully such that tourists co-create heritage as a highly meaningful experience. We focus on the notion of Vitality (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1995) as it is in keeping with how the effective transmission of heritage is described across the literature and because we believe it is more tangible as a producer perspective construct than related terms such as presence and aura (Benjamin, 1973; Rickly-Boyd, 2012a; Rojek, 1997).

Our analysis highlights that the Vitality of the cultural heritage object is apparent across the literature in various incarnations as identified in Table 1, especially in descriptions involving heritage meanings of cultural and historical significance coming to life, and how this results in active transmission when tourists co-create value. We see evidence of this Vitality where producers make compelling use of narrative consistent with literature on the role of narrative in bringing folklore to life (Stephen, 1983). This can for example involve the evocation and integration of iconic cultural events and meanings, such as the spirit of the civil war with notions of national identity (Chronis, 2005). One feature of the New Salem site (Bruner, 1994a, 1994b) and why it is so engaging, is that it powerfully conveys the transformation myth, and how the hardship and unfussiness of life in the village enabled Abraham Lincoln to transform from laborer to lawyer then politician who led the civil war, abolished slavery and saved the Union. Vitality is also apparent for example where performers embody sacred values or beliefs through their performances (Daniel, 1996), and where the

cultural heritage object connects with wider cultural meanings such as those contained in popular culture (DeLyser, 1999). Also evident across the literature is the tourist-led extension of this Vitality when they actively co-create the experience whether internalizing a sense of time, place, identity, community, belonging, or empathy (Chronis, 2005).

A final important point about the essence of the cultural heritage object regards change. We recognize the commonly held view that the cultural heritage object changes (Bruner, 1994a, 1994b; Chronis, 2005; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1995) because it is actively produced for and with tourists, and because the wider culture that shapes perceptions of heritage is in an unending state of flux, however we contend that these essential attributes of the cultural heritage object are relatively stable and for a number of reasons. One is because the meaning given to Form or Links draws from cultural and historical roots that are widely shared and deeply held, often linked to national identity or popular cultural discourse, and reinforced at heritage sites. While another is because of the value attributed to the Form and Links of the cultural heritage object by both producers and tourists and those engaged in preservation efforts.

Heritage authenticity and the producer perspective

We adopt the position that tourist determinations of authenticity in terms of what is genuine, real or true (Beverland & Farrelly, 2010; Grayson & Martinec, 2004; Wang, 1999) is greatly influenced by the make-up of the cultural heritage object and how it is produced to stimulate value co-creation. As noted, we conceptualize heritage production authenticity in terms of the emphasis the heritage producer brings to the cultural heritage object to facilitate tourist co-creation of meaning and authenticity.

To establish this notion of heritage production authenticity, we begin by briefly considering the current state of knowledge regarding authenticity in the tourism domain. While the existing literature has greatly enhanced our understanding of authenticity, the vast bulk of work considers the producer as subtext to the tourist perspective and while describing their role in shaping authenticity rarely examines this perspective at a conceptual level (Bruner, 1994a, 1994b; Chronis, 2005; DeLyser, 1999; Taylor, 2001). Major views on authenticity include the post-modern (Steiner & Reisinger, 2006), objectivist (Boorstin, 1961; MacCannell, 1973) and constructivist position (Bruner, 1994a, 1994b; Chronis, 2005; Szmigin, Bengry-Howell, Morey, Griffin, & Riley, 2017; Taylor, 2001), and as they have been covered in depth elsewhere we do not provide a detailed assessment but rather consider their relevance in the context of heritage production authenticity.

We do not subscribe to the postmodernist view that authenticity carries little weight based on a lack of meaningful distinction between originals and reproductions (Eco, 1986; Steiner & Reisinger, 2006), because it does not matter to tourists in their evaluation of their experiences (Cohen, 1995), or because tourists consume heritage attractions ironically (Urry, 1990). There is ample evidence that tourists are considered and insightful when determining heritage meaning and authenticity (Chhabra et al., 2003; McIntosh & Prentice, 1999; Sather-Wagstaff, 2011; Urry, 1995). It is also widely recognized that authenticity is significant to tourists favoring the heritage object, to the longevity of these offerings, and to producer decision-making (Lu, Chi, & Liu, 2015; Moscardo & Pearce, 1986; Timothy & Boyd, 2003).

In the case of the objectivist position, we recognize the fact that an original object can greatly influence tourist perceptions of authenticity (MacCannell, 1973), but do not agree that authenticity is inherent to the object. Others who have sought to clarify the object-centric view also emphasize that objects carry authenticity to varying degrees based on properties inherent to them (Lau, 2010), such as the realness of 'the day in the life of a local' (cooking, washing, playing games, using artifacts etc.), however this remains largely focused on what is contained to the object and fails to appreciate the meaning and value given to those attributes (including their authenticity) is socio-culturally constructed. It also fails to appreciate that important links to meaning while emanating from the object are not inherent to it yet greatly influence the determination of authenticity.

Consistent with the literature we emphasize that tourists can experience authenticity when engaging with reproductions (Grayson & Martinec, 2004; Hede & Thyne, 2010) and based on the faithfulness in which heritage is reproduced (Bruner, 1994a, 1994b). In the case of existential authenticity (Wang, 1999), we accept that tourists can experience authenticity through self-discovery that is largely determined without exposure to the efforts of the heritage producer, however we also recognize that production of the cultural heritage objects catalyzes feelings of existential truth (Cohen & Cohen, 2012; Grayson & Martinec, 2004), and even where sites are appreciated for their authenticity based on the fact they elicit personal insight, how cultural heritage object is represented still plays a crucial role (McIntosh & Prentice, 1999).

With the above in mind, we adopt the view that heritage authenticity is a socio-culturally constructed view of what is culturally and historically significant about the cultural heritage object (Bruner, 1994a, 1994b; Cohen, 1988; DeLyser, 1999). This is consistent with seeking to understand authenticity from the producer perspective given the intent to engage the tourist to co-create the heritage experience and determine authenticity.

Reisinger and Steiner (2006) in their analysis of the constructivist position emphasize that it is incompatible with the object-centric view because constructivists reject the view that authenticity is inherent to an object. They also use this to suggest there is little consensus in terms of how authenticity is established, however this does not account for the fact that research adopting the constructivist position while emphasizing that heritage is socially constructed, negotiable and changing, also identifies clear and often repeated elements of the cultural heritage object that inspire tourists to evaluate its authenticity, such as original objects, the holistic or faithful representation of places or events, and the knowledge, passion or performance of guides and other performers.

More broadly, extant research also highlights that a shared understanding of heritage authenticity extends from highly intangible objects such as myths, fictional objects, and performance to reproduction sites and iconic original artifacts and places and that this is evident across contexts and cultures (Beverland & Farrelly, 2010; Chhabra et al., 2003; Grayson & Martinec, 2004; Waitt, 2000). There is also consensus in the way heritage objects are universally regarded for their iconicity and authenticity based on how they

represent culture and history (Weidenfeld, 2010).

Overall, while the literature on authenticity indicates a host of producer-relevant elements such as the fact they set objectives, exhibit historical scholarship, work creatively with original and created artifacts, seek believability or credibility, use various techniques (e.g. storytelling) and technologies, and carefully manage impressions in the service of authenticity, it is particularly fragmented from the producer perspective as this role in the co-creation of authenticity lacks holistic conceptualization.

It should also be noted that some consideration is given in the literature to the managerial implications of authenticity (indicating the producer view), however they are derived from the tourist perspective and remain general and tactical. Some of the commonly repeated implications are for producers to understand tourist motivations, sensemaking or loyalty; to meet needs and expectations and focus on making the heritage offer more experiential and engaging, to appeal to types of authenticity (e.g. object or existential authenticity); and to avoid over-commercialization (Bryce, Curran, O'Gorman, & Taheri, 2015; Halewood & Hannam, 2001; Yi, Lin, Jin, & Luo, 2017). Some research purports to examine the producer view of heritage authenticity however it does so from the tourist perspective and offers 'strategic' ideas such as a means-end-approach but with very limited explanation to support this view (Kolar & Zabkar, 2010).

The iconic and indexical properties of heritage production authenticity

Consistent with our review of the literature and conceptualization of the cultural heritage object, we contend that authenticity from the producer perspective should incorporate two parts, one that builds on a comprehensive understanding of the cultural heritage object in terms of its essential attributes, and one that can develop our understanding regarding how they enable tourists to co-create authenticity. In addition to building on our understanding of the cultural heritage object and how it is evaluated for its authenticity, our explanation of heritage production authenticity draws heavily on the work of Peirce (1998) and others who have considered the semiotic power of tourist sites including heritage places (Culler, 1981; Rojek, 1997). Peirce wrote at length about how people discern what is real or truthful. Consistent with the constructivist view he recognized that while authenticity is in the eye of the beholder there are cues that represent the substance of an object that greatly influence the phenomenological experience of that object and why it is considered authentic, and that the interpretation of these cues can be widely shared. Peirce identified iconic and indexical cues as two modes of meaning-making to explain how authenticity arises from experiencing an object.

The relevance of indexical and iconic cues to heritage has been given minimal consideration in the literature and not when it comes to a comprehensive examination of what these cues mean or their relevance to heritage authenticity from the producer perspective. Grayson and Martinec (2004) show convincingly that indexical and iconic cues are central to how tourists interpret heritage object authenticity. Similarly, Ram, Björk, and Weidenfeld (2016) model tourist perceptions of authenticity and show iconic and indexical cues to be a key moderator to the exchange, while Hede and Thyne (2010) show that iconic and indexical cues are used to determine authenticity. The critical point about the approach to the cultural heritage object and authenticity adopted here is that these cues and their deeper meanings indicated in the objects Physical Form and Links, offer the basis to comprehend, unpack and (re)construct heritage authenticity from the producer perspective. In the following sections we articulate the meaning of Indexical and Iconic cues and the conceptual linkages to the cultural heritage object and its three core attributes.

Indexical cues

To explain how indexical cues indicate authenticity Grayson and Martinec (2004) make reference to the handprints of Jimmy Stewart on Hollywood Boulevard. Those handprints are indexically authentic because they have a factual, spatio-temporal link to the actor. With respect to the cultural heritage object, an example of indexical cues are the hundreds of markers at the Gettysburg site, including particular features of the land or artifacts (such as topography and cannon shells) that point to key aspects of the battle (Chronis, 2005). Peirce noted that the "index" refers to cues that, like the handprints, are thought to have a factual and spatio-temporal link with something else, and in this regard these indices and what they represent are associated with a phenomenological experience of fact. To view something as an index the perceiver must believe that it actually has the factual and spatio-temporal link that is claimed. To judge whether a Samurai sword is (indexically) authentic the tourist must have some verification, for example via certification, markings, or a trustworthy context that confirms that the sword was made during the Samurai Era. Or to determine whether a cultural dance performance is authentic the tourist would need to be confident that cues offered during the performance indicate the dancers are being true to their selves or cultural identity.

In the case of tourist market offerings what is deemed factual in terms of this spatio-temporal link connects to a wider set of ideas and meanings and how that is perceived. Reverting back to the Samurai sword example, the factual spatio-temporal cues contained in the Physical Form of the cultural heritage object will point to intangible cultural and historical Links. For example, if the sword was used by a revered Samurai general, such as Toyotomi Hideyoshi, recognized for his feats in battle and for his standing in Japanese culture, then the meaning and significance the tourist attributes to this Link (and how this triggers their imagination) will shape how the cultural heritage object is experienced and appreciated for its authenticity.

A cultural heritage object's indexical cues contain multiple Links to what is culturally and historically significant. The Sagrada Familia possesses various factual, spatio-temporal links most particularly (but not solely) to Antoni Gaudi, his inventive and flamboyant architecture, Spanish architecture, Spanish culture, Barcelona, and the Catalan identity. There are a numerous examples across the literature of cultural heritage object's with factual-spatio temporal Links to a wide range of historically and culturally significant properties such as values, ideology, places, structures, identities, practices, folk heroes, landmarks and historic events (Bruner, 1994a, 1994b; Chronis, 2005; Sahllins, 1999; Watson & Waterton, 2010). The power of indexical cues is also apparent in the

weight of meaning accorded them. For example, an original Rembrandt painting carries Vitality because it was painted by the master's hand and because it has carried an aura so far beyond his lifetime (Benjamin, 1973). Similarly, we know tangible and intangible heritage objects, such as festivals, rituals, dress, and craft carry additional significance (and are recognized for their authenticity) if they are known to have been made or enacted by local people (MacCannell, 1976), just as the provenance of heritage objects possessing this spatio-temporal connection indicates authenticity and adds meaning to the tourist experience (Grayson & Martinec, 2004).

Indexicality also takes the form of psychic links, which in the context of the cultural heritage object relate to a psychological or spiritual connection between performers (such as guides, community members, artists, service staff) and the cultural heritage object and its deeper meanings. This extends the meaning of indexical cues beyond the notion of 'fact'. For example, the authenticity of a commemoration or traditional dance may be determined based on the belief of the object and its historical and cultural significance carries great influence over the performer's identity or performance (Daniel, 1996). From the producer perspective, the signaling of authenticity through psychic cues is akin to notions of 'being versus doing' (Widdicombe & Wooffitt, 1990) where the heritage performer embodies rather than merely relays culture. Daniel (1996) makes the point that dance performances are deemed authentic when performers through their intensity, movement, and creativity of expression are thought to channel their ancestry or the spirit world. These psychic indexical cues and the Links they indicate may also incorporate authenticity infused experiences of closely related elements such as sincerity and integrity (Taylor, 2001; Wang et al., 2015).

Iconic cues

Iconic cues indicate how a cultural heritage object carries a strong physical resemblance to its original form. Peirce (1998) explained that in order to make an assessment based on the objects iconic cues the perceiver must have some preexisting knowledge of the object ('medieval village') that helps to create a composite photograph that serves as a point of reference, which in the case of tourism stems from representations in popular culture, discourse between tourists, and institutions such as the media (Galani-Moutafi, 1999). Although previous research has used the term verisimilitude to describe the idea of 'how something should be' in terms of this kind of similarity (Bruner, 1994a, 1994b), we build on the work Peirce and others (Gell, 1998) who emphasize the role of iconic (and indexical) cues as indicators of authenticity as this offers greater scope to illuminate the producer perspective in terms of what characterizes and gives weight to heritage meaning at the object level.

Importantly, for iconic cues to carry influence they do not need to be grounded in a factual connection to the original but the impression that the object closely resembles the original. Iconic cues are especially relevant in the literature where there is complete reenactment, for example where little or nothing of an old city, heritage trail, or village remains, or in the case of reproduced artifacts (Bruner, 1994a, 1994b; Chhabra et al., 2003; Halewood & Hannam, 2001; Rickly-Boyd, 2012b). A village or city reproduction can carry iconic authenticity as a category of "old city" based on the composite of cues such as plaques, memorials, tours, museums, buildings, and artifacts. In addition, and consistent with the idea that iconic cues and what they represent are deeply enmeshed in culture, Bruner (1994a, 1994b) unpacks the various components of the New Salem heritage site and highlights the different actions of site managers to conform to the culturally accepted view of how the site should look. This includes a wide variety of iconic cues from period dress with round 'granny shaped' glasses to houses possessing a weathered look consistent with what is most thought of as 1830's houses. In this sense iconic cues do not have to be grounded in fact but carry a shared understanding.

However, the literature also highlights that iconic cues can relate to original objects. If one considers the distinctive form of the Eiffel tower, Buckingham Palace, the Mona Lisa or the Great Wall of China, it is apparent that an original object can be regarded for its iconic authenticity because of the singularity of its Physical Form, because that Form is indelibly imprinted on global culture (Weidenfeld, 2010), or because of its recognition as a category exemplar (Cornfield & Edwards, 2000), for example the Galle Face Hotel in Sri Lanka is regarded quintessential example of a Raj period heritage hotel. It is also the case that iconic cues are numerous within a single object, and though mostly associated with the visual they may also take other sensory forms such as the auditory or tactile.

Also important is the fact that iconic and indexical cues are not mutually exclusive. Cultural heritage objects can be viewed as being both iconically and indexically authentic. For example, a tourist may believe that the aforementioned Samurai sword was produced during the 1870's having seen evidence of such but also consider it iconic as a quintessential example of such an artifact. It is also evident across contexts that heritage sites typically rely on a combination of iconic cues that offer a simulation of the past and some original artifacts with indexical links that incorporate a direct connection to the past.

However, and while it is often not explained in any detail, these two types of cues are also "conceptually and practically distinct" (Grayson & Martinec, 2004, p. 298) in the way meaning is processed. For example, in the case of iconic cues, the reproduction site will often be understood based on the overall image and the composite or quantity of these cues as this most closely represents the original or what one would expect it to look like, or because it is regarded a faithful representation of the original. Moreover, the identity of iconic heritage object (and its Links) inspire fascination and appreciation because they are so widely recognized and revered, and because the cultural heritage object's familiarity and singularity means it looks 'just as it should'.

While the indexical object may be processed for its particular factual Links and carry weight because they point to an original or because of the proximity to that connection, such as being in the place where an event actually took place. In addition, a cultural heritage object may be considered indexically but not iconically authentic because it contains spatio-temporal links to an original but is not seen to be especially representative of type or to be widely recognized or valued. Or as noted, the iconic cues maybe especially valued because they and the object they indicate are universally understood and appreciated.

Vitality and indexical and iconic cues

A synthesis of the properties of the cultural heritage object and heritage transmission also leads us to contend that the Vitality of the cultural heritage object and tourist determinations of its authenticity are mutually reinforcing, and that this is of fundamental importance to heritage production authenticity. This is because the historically significant cultural meanings that underpin the life force of the cultural heritage object are what make it unique, significant and influential hence when this life force is in evidence through the triggering of these powerful cues (and the Form and Links they represent) it is more likely that the object and experience will be received as genuine, real or true. Though not stated, the connection between Vitality and authenticity including the role of Indexical and Iconic cues is also captured across the literature and across numerous contexts.

For example in the case of iconic cues and Vitality, according to Bruner (1994a, 1994b) the holistic and faithful reconstruction of Salem (also enabling the Vitality of the site) catalyzes an imaginary reconstruction by visitors as if it was during Lincoln's time. Similarly, DeLyser (1999) points to Vitality and iconic cues in terms of how the dilapidated buildings and the sparse landscape entices tourists to actively experience the authenticity of the wild-west ghost town as this most resembles iconic images of the mythic west popularized in film and fiction and creates the basis on which producers and tourists actively invest the site with powerful ideas about American virtues. Handler and Saxton (1988) note that when the performance of heritage meaning is richly conveyed the experience of the past can become "really real" for tourists (p. 245).

There are also numerous examples where reference is made to the indexicality of the cultural heritage object generating an aura or presence, and how this enables an immersive and an authentic experience (Castéran & Roederer, 2013; Gell, 1998; Rickly-Boyd, 2012a; Rojek, 1997). Grayson and Martinec (2004) speak of how Shakespeare's house, including its contents such as the desk, takes on a powerful presence because the artist is identified to have worked there. Similarly, the link between Vitality and indexical authenticity is also in evidence when a performer's sincerity and genuineness inspire the tourist to actively engage with heritage (Daniel, 1996; Handler & Saxton, 1988), or when the perception of authenticity facilitates meaning-making relating to time, place, identity and community (Bruner, 1994a, 1994b; Castéran & Roederer, 2013; Chronis, 2005; Grayson & Martinec, 2004). This is particularly true in the case of iconic cues as they connect the cultural heritage object to wider and deeply held cultural Links as in the aforementioned example of the Wild West and its popularization in film.

Conclusions

Our aim in carrying out this conceptual research is to provide a sound basis for approaching heritage authenticity from the producer perspective. We first revisit the key tenets of that approach and then elaborate its merit by articulating potential opportunities for future research.

We extend the notion that the cultural heritage object in its tangible and intangible form is a meta-cultural production where producers as key stakeholders in the exchange impart particular emphasis on how it is presented to and understood by tourists. The significance in doing so is one of orientation. It positions the producer as being charged with bringing the cultural heritage object to life and thus draws on the make-up and production of the cultural heritage object in terms of what is materially, culturally and historically significant, and how this extends to an understanding of its authenticity. Heritage production authenticity is an experience underpinned by these essential cultural heritage object attributes and cues and how they are activated when the producer engages the tourist in the heritage exchange. This essence of the cultural heritage object is drawn from core attributes that go to the heart of the heritage entity and thus provide a basis to project the cultural heritage object authentically. These attributes overlap and comprise its Physical Form, the Links to what is culturally and historically significant, and the Vitality of the cultural heritage object in terms of how its Form and particularly these Links come to life to actively transmit meaning.

Using this as a foundation we make a case for heritage production authenticity that draws on the cues that connect Form to its deeper cultural and historical Links and helps indicate production implications to realize its Vitality. We draw on our coding and synthesizing of the literature on cultural heritage transmission and authenticity coupled with the work of Peirce (1998) to create a case for the relevance of Indexical and Iconic cues to indicate how production of the cultural heritage object (and these three attributes) is determined to be genuine, real or true. By locating heritage authenticity at the object and experience level we provide a foundation to develop the producer view of authenticity. In doing so we also indicate how related work can draw out the strategic and creative nature and potential of heritage production authenticity.

The approach to heritage production authenticity also builds on the constructionist view by recognizing that heritage authenticity is a socio-cultural construction determined between producers and tourists as part of the heritage experience. This approach also accounts for the fact that while heritage is a meta-cultural production of which the producer and tourist are important actors, so too are wider contemporary issues and cultural meanings that shape how the object is understood (Chhabra & Zhao, 2015). It also extends the constructionist view in highlighting that while negotiation, subjectivity, and change are integral to the meaning of authenticity, the cultural heritage object has defining and persistent attributes that infuse it with uniqueness and a capacity for transmission and influence including how authenticity is determined.

Future research and limitations

We offer a rich agenda for future research to further develop the producer perspective of authenticity and we also examine the key limitations of our work. The body of literature that considers authenticity, especially at heritage sites, highlights the value in approaching it as a dialectic between the producer and tourist (DeLyser, 1999; Taylor, 2001). However, while this is widely observed

limited ground has been made in conceptualizing the producer role in this dialectic. By considering the essential attributes of the cultural heritage object and the cues that indicate this essence and its authenticity, we have provided a platform for thinking about this dialectic from the producer perspective. There is little doubt that heritage producers understand the need to draw out the Vitality of the heritage object, for example by emphasizing particular cues and Links, such as that described regarding the Lincoln transformation myth at the New Salem site and how this has a bearing on tourists determinations of authenticity (Bruner, 1994a, 1994b), yet while it has been described little is known is how they make related decisions including at the attribute level of the cultural heritage object.

Our understanding of heritage tourism would benefit from research that examines how heritage producers conceptualize what is essential to the objects cultural and historical significance and how they relate this to their production efforts and authenticity. It would also be fruitful to consider how producers differentiate between indexical cues and the power of different Links. Especially as these cues and Links can be overt, for example when, where, or by whom an artifact was produced and what this triggers in terms of a range of historically embedded socio-cultural meanings. However, they can also be far less obvious or based on myth while still crucial to production and how authenticity is co-created by tourists. Here too it would be useful to give focused attention to how they make cultural heritage object attribute related decisions. Such as dealing with the fact that Form can carry many cues that impact authenticity by provoking layers of meaning in the tourist imaginary, or how some cues may be especially effective in this regard, for example in the case of the patina of an original object. Consistent with the power of indexicality, this may be seen to carry certain traces of heritage and thus could be considered very influential in evoking Links whether revered individuals, places or events. More broadly, given that many cultural heritage objects are semiotically dense and rich in Links it would be interesting to consider how producers approach this well-spring of identity and communication options.

An opportunity also exists to consider how heritage producers manage the 'cultural commercial tension' given the commercial demands facing heritage providers and the propensity to over-commercialize (Goulding, 2000; Hewison, 1987). It is important to better understand how producers preserve the cultural heritage object while retaining its Vitality and authenticity over time. Our preliminary interviews indicate that heritage producers can be highly sophisticated in the way they understand and approach this tripartite essence of the cultural heritage object, including the layers of that object, and how to blend preservation and authenticity with focused efforts to ensure the cultural heritage object remains relevant and engaging. It would be useful to examine whether they work with the indexical and iconic properties of the object to build identity and appeal while retaining relevance. Researchers like Sahlin (1999) suggest this is the case in terms of the way Sumo heritage has evolved over time yet maintained its indexical and iconic cues and Links in the sense that its permutations retain source meaning, form, tradition, and ritual.

This may also be evident for example in the case of heritage hotels and managing the artifacts, myths or branding activity over time with the influx of new high-profile guests (as a way of managing the indexicality into the future while retaining the cultural heritage object's essence). While Form remains largely fixed in an architectural sense (though these producers often leverage Form through their renovation stories), for example in the case of Raffles hotel in Singapore or the Fairmont in San Francisco, other tangible cues and associated Links are dynamic as the new list of dignitaries, celebrities, and other high-profile people and events add to the history and cultural significance of the cultural heritage object. It would also be worth considering whether there is an understanding of what this might mean from the perspective of iconic cues as the accumulated stories, myths and artifacts presumably can add layers to the objects brand identity (and basis for communication) over time.

There is also potential in investigating heritage production authenticity in reproduction sites in terms of whether specific attention is given to psychic links as may be evident in formal or informal training or expectations of employees from service providers to performers. It could be interesting for example to consider how producers enable guides to take ownership of the cultural heritage object so that their identification, pride, or knowledge brings Vitality (and authenticity) to the production. Again, preliminary research indicates that this can be carefully managed for example in the case of one major heritage offering that requires all guides carry out periodic research on the site to add substance and energy to their performances.

This work is not without its limitations. There are other stakeholders and perspectives that can have a marked effect on heritage production authenticity and pose questions for the approach adopted here. Two such examples involve the political and highly personal influences. Tourists may seek highly idealized, personal meanings that diverge significantly from the official or factual interpretation of the site (Bryce, Murdy, & Alexander, 2017). Carnegie and Kociatkiewicz (2019) highlight that tourists approach heritage with their own preconceptions and personal aims and that this can lead to a significant re-interpretation of the producer message. With that in mind, it would be useful for future research to examine heritage production authenticity (and Vitality) through this personal lens to see whether producers do or could better account for these interpretive issues by for example offering a multi-dimensional representation of heritage that enables different interpretations while still drawing on the essence of the cultural heritage object.

Another limitation of the research involves the issue of heritage production authenticity where heritage is contested (Bruner, 1993). Having considered the literature it is clear that heritage is often contested where the producer is perceived to have presented a biased or selective account of the heritage object and its historical and culturally significant properties, and usually in a way that is consistent with the hegemonic view (Buzinde & Santos, 2009; Sather-Wagstaff, 2011). With this in mind, we are of the view that our conceptualization of the cultural heritage object and heritage production authenticity, most particularly the fact that it incorporates a holistic, layered and co-created view, highlights that it offers a sound foundation to examine an ideological view of contested heritage and authenticity from the producer perspective (Tribe, 2008).

It is our view producers should offer a pluralistic and respectful representation of the layered history, character and perspectives of the object including where it is confronting, problematic or painful. There are ideological and practical reasons for this that also point to possibilities for future research. The first is because tourists increasingly expect a more complete representation of heritage

including better accounting for minority voices and difficult subject matter (Buzinde & Santos, 2009; DuCros & McKercher, 2015; Sather-Wagstaff, 2011); because heritage Vitality may be enhanced by projecting multiple views including those that are open to dispute (Bruner, 1993); and as doing so may enhance the cultural heritage object's authenticity. There is literature that examines branding in cultural and co-creation terms which stresses that heritage brands tell the whole story of their past including recognizing their mistakes and deficiencies (Beverland, 2009) as this can enhance their legitimacy and authenticity.

In terms of future research it would be valuable to examine contested heritage from the producer perspective of authenticity as this is largely overlooked. There could be value in considering the literature on strategic action fields (Zeitl, 1980) as this can help to understand and anticipate meaning co-creation as both a complimentary and contested phenomena (Laamanen & Skalen, 2015), and how multiple voices may co-exist. A strategic action field is a constructed mesolevel construct in which actors engage with one another on the basis of shared and not always consensual understandings about the purposes of the field, relationships to others in the field (including who has power and why), and the normative rules that govern action in the field. Strategic action fields can be examined to better understand how meanings within a heritage field are framed and received through an ideological lens, and consequently may be a useful to examine how multiple cultural heritage object inspired messages are presented and interpreted, how legitimacy is ascribed or questioned, and how meanings may be presented to enhance understanding or acceptance.

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