

Title: Nostalgic Tourism Ain't What It Used to Be: What Makes a Destination Engender Nostalgia?

Authors:

Cora Un In Wong
Institute for Tourism Studies, Macau

Stephanie Si Man Ao Ieong
Institute for Tourism Studies, Macau

Abstract:

Increasing attention has been devoted in the literature to the popularity of nostalgic tourism, which could be viewed as a separate form of tourism whose motivation is of a personal nature. Scholars have during the last few decades published research articles on nostalgic tourism from the perspectives of anthropology, sociology, psychology, management and marketing (Davis, 1979; Graburn, 1995; Wildschut, Sedikides, Routledge, Arndt & Cordaro, 2010). From a sociological point of view, nostalgia is defined as “a sentimental or bittersweet yearning for an experience, product, or service from the past” (Baker & Kennedy, 1994, p. 169). From an anthropological perspective, Graburn (1995, p. 166) commented that nostalgia tourism is travelling “with a wish for the past” and it is a personal effort meant to slow down one’s life cycle, to indulge in one’s earlier stage of life or as a way to counter rapid changes. Stern (1992) suggested that nostalgia can be reflected on one’s own identity, social identity and collective memories. Most of the existing work on this theme focuses on the definition of nostalgia, categorization of nostalgia, tourists’ motivation for engaging in nostalgic tourism, nostalgic activities undertaken at a destination as well as tourists’ consumption patterns in the course of a nostalgic tour.

The present study adopts an interpretive qualitative approach which aims to reveal whether there is a prospect that any destination could be reckoned as a nostalgic destination by some and, if it were to be the case, to identify the elements of the destination that has the potential of fostering nostalgic feelings. Apparently different destinations may have different catalytic elements as regards inspiring nostalgia, but could it be possible that they have some elements in common? This paper uses Macau as a research locus to identify the potential markers that can attract the tourists to a destination suitable and promotable for a nostalgic journey. Macau’s rich history and cultural recourses made it known as a cultural and gaming tourism destination rather than a nostalgic destination (Wong and Qi, 2017; Wong, 2013). Macau thus is an interesting case to illustrate how a destination can provide a sense of nostalgic feelings to tourists; those who would choose to visit Macau repeatedly are the ‘prime suspects’ of being motivated at least partly by nostalgia in a tourism context. The rest of the paper begins with a section providing an overview of the literature. It is followed by a short introduction to the research locus; afterwards comes a methodology section which covers data collection and analysis. Section 5 presents the findings meant to provide a better understanding on how a destination is perceived by tourists as a nostalgic destination as well as what elements are

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perceived to be catalysts which can trigger one's nostalgic feeling towards a destination. The last section concludes.
