DESTINATION-PROMOTED AND VISITOR-GENERATED IMAGES –
DO THEY REPRESENT SIMILAR STORIES?

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ABSTRACT

Destination marketers have been using mass media to communicate notions of tourism experiences to the general public by promoting images. In these circumstances, images help define and direct tourism experiences for potential travelers. Today, aside from representation promoted by the official destination marketers, potential travelers can also get a representation of tourism experiences from images shared by travelers on personal online travel galleries. This study aims to find similarities and differences between images used by destination marketers and images shared at the visit and post-visit stages by travelers and, most importantly, to analyze how visitor-generated images provide value to their audiences. This study discovered that visitors represent differentiated and specialized experiences through their images.

Keywords: Visitor-Generated Images, Consumer-Generated Media, Destination Image, Pictorial Information
1. INTRODUCTION

Photographic images are very important to create and communicate the image of tourism destinations to potential travelers (MacKay & Couldwell, 2004). MacKay and Fesenmaier (1997) point out that photographic images not only present the destination “…but can also communicate attributes, characteristics, concepts, values, and ideas” (p.538). According to Urry (2002), photographic images might present “miniature slices of reality.” In some senses, images act as surrogates for tests of tourists’ experiences, a framework for the planning of a trip.

Beeton, Bowen, and Santos (2006) argue that destination marketers have been using mass media to negotiate notions of quality in tourism experiences to the general public by promoting images. In these circumstances, images help define and direct tourism experiences to potential travelers. Mass media typically try to promote images signifying the previously established representation of a destination to assure resonance with their audiences. As a result, “the notions of tourism experiences are recycled or reconstructed on a continuing basis” (p.). The resonance of this images projection is the phenomenon explained by Jansson (2002) as “spatial phantasmagoria” in tourism and is linked to imaginative hedonism (Campbell, 1987) where potential tourists engage in the representational realms of various socio-spatial information sources (Selwyn, 1996; Jansson, 2002; 2007; Waade, 2006), including literature and photography. This mediation process results in the practice of scripting (Jansson, 2007): the media provide potential tourists with a script for the trip, with particular common-sense performances to take in differentiated settings (Edensor, 2001). In this sense, destination-promoted images act as normative representations of tourism experiences.

However, today, destination-promoted images are not the only pictorial information and destination representation that tourists can get prior to, during, or after the travel. The practice of
tourists’ image sharing has emerged with the advent of new media and technology. McCabe and Foster (2006) claim that a tourist has a narrativistic attitude. Tourists communicate their memories of visiting different places and meeting different people through stories as representations of their lived experiences. Brown and Chalmer (2003) argue that camera is the most successful tourism technology. The use of digital camera is becoming more popular recently because tourists can conveniently take unlimited pictures anytime and anywhere, and review the results immediately (Yang, Kim, & Ro, 2007). With the use of the digital cameras and the new media, tourists can conveniently store, manage, and share their pictures to general public in personal blogs or photo-sharing websites; enable others to find detailed and differentiated ideas and samples of tourism experiences. Within the context of the practice of scripting, Jansson (2007) notes the phenomenon as a trend of increased personal scripts. With the new media, tourists have greater opportunities to compose, and enable audiences to engage with, more specialized and detailed personal scripts of tourism experience. Some of these personal scripts are potentially different from the normative representations of tourism experience promoted by destination marketers.

Despite rigorously framed in conceptual researches (e.g. Jansson, 2007; Edensor, 2001), empirical studies analyzing the trend in representations of tourism experiences (and destinations) influenced by the new media and technology is scant. Drawing on the concept of mediation (Jansson, 2002; 2007; Beeton, Bowen, & Santos, 2005) and scripting (Edensor, 2001; Jansson, 2007), this study attempts to identify similarities and differences between images used by destination marketers and those shared by tourists at the visit and post-visit stages and, most importantly, to identify the values created by the shared images for its audiences in the tourism settings.
2. THE ROLES OF IMAGES IN EXPERIENCE MEDIATION

It is argued that tourism experiences are becoming increasingly mediated (Jansson, 2002; Jennings & Weiler, 2005; Beeton, Bowen, & Santos, 2005). Jennings and Weiler (2005) assert that tourists often engage with others (i.e., personal and non-personal elements) that serve to mediate their tourism experiences in the process of constructing their knowledge. These personal and non-personal elements, the mediators, become essential for creating and delivering quality tourism experiences. Among personal mediators are tourists (i.e., travelers who help mediate other tourists), service providers, governments, and local communities; non-personal mediators include signage, street furniture, design, and settings.

Based on the temporal dimension of the tourist experience, mediators of tourism experiences not only exist at the experiential phase (i.e., on-site), but also at the anticipatory (i.e., planning) and the reflective (i.e., recollection) phases (Tussyadiah, 2009). Jennings and Weiler (2005) suggest that mediation is largely associated with information provision. The process of mediation involves gathering, storing, and dissemination of information throughout the overall trip. Mediating tourists at the anticipatory phase may involve information provision for trip planning. A well-known example of an on-site experience mediator is a professional tour guide who is responsible for linking tourists to attractions, facilities, and hosts. Finally, tourists at the reflective phase can also get mediated for remembrance of past experiences.

Mediating tourists at anticipatory phase implies various tourists’ decisions including destination selection. Information provided at this planning stage is vitally important to influence perceptions and notions of destination images. As pointed out by Gallarza, Gil, and Calderón (2002), researchers have recognized the importance of destination image at the stage of destination selection process, especially when previous actual visitations are absent. Recent
studies attempt to conceptualize destination image as a mental construct developed by a potential tourist on the basis of two interrelated components: perceptive/cognitive evaluations and affective appraisals (Fakeye & Crompton, 1991; Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Beerli & Martin, 2004). Perceptive/cognitive evaluations relate to individual’s knowledge or beliefs; affective evaluations relate to individual’s feelings toward or attachment to destinations. The combination of these two components generate overall image relating to the evaluation of destination. While the affective image is typically determined my personal factors, Beerli and Martin (2004) suggest that information sources, including media and advertising, are major determinants that influence the cognitive image. MacKay and Fesenmaier (1997) state that “[s]ince tourism is uniquely visual; photographs are considered paramount to successfully creating and communicating image of a destination” (p.540). Furthermore, they argue that visuals in destination promotion aid to destination evaluation since destination as a tourism product is processed as imagery rather than by its actual attributes. As a result, it is argued that photographic images are effective marketing tools to induce perceptions, fantasies, and imagery (Campbell, 1987).

The use of photographic images for destination promotion naturally involves projecting positively evaluated images to potential tourists (MacKay & Fesenmaier, 1997). Conceptualizing the context of imaginative hedonism, Campbell (1987) asserts that marketers portray images and representation in the media to create daydreams and fantasies in order to intensify (tourism) consumption. Corresponding to this, Jansson (2002) proposes three spaces of tourism experience—landscape, socioscape, and mediascape—arguing that the mediation process through images creates a new potential for mobility in mediascapes, which also involves the naturalization of images and fantasies of foreign landscapes and socioscapes (p.441). The process of image naturalization is associated with the interpretive connections between images
and tourism consumption; e.g., portrayal of old historic buildings may imply heritage appreciation. Projected images from destination promotion affect potential tourists through the creation of fantasies about a destination and the hypothetical structure of the tourism experience; they also lead to the creation of expectation and desire for image verification (Adams, 1984).

The development of the Web 2.0 platform (a platform with participatory architecture that enables an interactive and democratic interface which allows users to easily add content and participate in the online community) and other personal portable technology artifacts has generated a co-creation and production of destination representation on the Internet. Jansson (2007) explains tourists’ new media use from the approach of a dialectical relationship between encapsulation and decapsulation: “An ideal type of encapsulation is theming, in which the design of settings … revolves around a particular symbolic denominator” (p.9). Decapsulation might occur for different reasons such as socio-material or symbolic processes. Jansson asserts that a collective sense of decapsulation can occur when a particular destination continuously fails to meet the media-produced expectation and desires of tourists. Decapsulation can also be caused by subversion of spatial representations, when photographers other than destination marketers portray an alternative view of a destination that disrupts the consistency of the promoted images. In conclusion, the use of new media to share photographic images of a destination can either intensify the themes and tourist rituals promoted by destination marketers or blur the touristic quality of the promoted brand.

Based on the literature, this study analyzes the contents of photographic images promoted by destination marketers and shared by tourists to confirm the following concepts:

- Destination-promoted images communicate consistent notions of positive tourism experiences.
Visitor-generated images represent detailed, personalized, and specialized scenarios of tourism experiences.

Visitor-generated images might represent alternative views of tourism destinations that could disrupt the consistency of quality tourism experiences derived from promoted images.

3. CONTENT EXTRACTION: AN ALTERNATIVE TO VISITOR-EMPLOYED PHOTOGRAPHY

Previous works analyzing photographic data in tourism settings typically utilize a photo-based approach called visitor-employed photography (VEP). VEP places cameras in the hands of participants, and has primarily been used to assess visitors’ perceptions of places and subsequent representation of their tourist experiences (Stedman, Beckley, Wallace & Ambard, 2004). This approach is popular among leisure researchers because of its benefits as described by Haywood (1990): photography (1) is an enjoyable, familiar activity to tourists; (2) helps to sharpen observation; (3) helps to identify specific important locations; which (4) gives clearer ideas regarding liked or disliked elements; and (5) facilitates comparisons between places.

MacKay and Couldwell (2004) utilize VEP to elicit and assess tourist destination images at a heritage site. The researchers analyze the visual (photographs) and descriptive (diary) data provided by the participants. The researchers found three major subject themes in the photographs (infrastructure, animation, and personalization) and two underlying rationales for the photographs taken (aesthetics and nostalgia). The researchers argue that the results provide initial support for the usefulness of VEP to generate images of a tourist attraction. Furthermore,
they suggest utilizing the visual data to compare visitor-determined images with destination-determined images.

Stedman et al. (2004) utilize resident-employed photography, a modified VEP that places the camera not with visitors but the host community, to analyze local elements that foster place attachment among permanent residents of high-amenity areas. The researchers utilize the triangulation approach; they analyze the content of photographs resulting from VEP based on a post-VEP interview process with the participants. They argue that the results reveal a complex relationship between ecological and socio-cultural factors in place attachment. A recent similar research by Stevenson and Inskip (2007) uses first-year undergraduate students to take pictures of London; analyzes the content of the pictures and interprets meaning of the city for the photographers.

MacKay and Couldwell (2004) argue that VEP is a favorable technique, as it provides highly visual records of what best captures the visitor’s image of the site. However, there are challenges associated with VEP: visitors/participants managing more than one camera if they bring their own; the cost of cameras, developing, and mailing; and the sheer volume of pictures/data generated (MacKay & Couldwell, 2004). Due to the increasing popularity of digital cameras and online personal photo galleries among tourists, there is a vast amount of travel-related images posted on the Internet. These online images will be valuable as a data source to analyze how tourists represent destinations and their tourism experiences. The online visitor-generated images are comparable with the VEP-acquired visual data because of their unprompted nature. Online photo galleries typically provide features that enable users to give titles, descriptions, and tags for each picture they upload; they also enable viewers to give comments on the pictures and, thus, create online discussion communities. Therefore, it is possible to
triangulate the content of image data with the users’ descriptions and viewers’ comments associated with them. Analyzing online image data to assess tourist-generated representation could overcome the logistic and resource-based problems associated with VEP.

Despite the growing potential of utilizing online image data, tourism research on visitor-generated pictorial data is scarce. Govers and Go (2005) analyze online image and text data to assess the projected image of Dubai (United Arab Emirates). The study was conducted with data provided on private, semi-government, and government tourism organization websites to find out how the tourism sector projects the image of Dubai to potential tourists. However, their research does not utilize the generic representation of Dubai as a destination from the visitor’s perspective. As suggested by MacKay and Couldwell (2004), it is important to provide a practical and theoretical foundation to “integrate visitor-perceived image with destination-promoted image in a meaningful way” (p. 394). This study utilizes image data available online to compare and contrast visitor-generated images (on personal photo galleries) and destination-promoted images (on destination marketing websites) to draw a better understanding of organic representation of destinations and tourism experiences.

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1 Data Collection

This study utilizes official image data (as destination-promoted images) and visitor-generated image data. The official image data were selected from photo galleries of The Greater Philadelphia Tourism Marketing Corporation (GPTMC) website (gophila.com), resulting in 412 samples. The photo gallery consists of 16 sub-galleries, each with a different theme: “Accommodations,” “Dining and Nightlife,” “Events,” “Gay-Friendly Philadelphia,” “General Scenic and Aerial,” “Historic Sites,” “Holidays,” “King-Sized Celebration,” “Museums and
Attractions,” “Neighborhoods and Towns,” “Performing Arts Groups and Venues,” “Public Art, Parks and Gardens,” “Rocky’s Back,” “Shops and Markets,” “Sports, Recreations and the Outdoors,” and “Tours and Transportation.” There are some overlaps within the categories: some pictures were displayed in more than one category (e.g., the “Museums and Attractions” section has many pictures in common with “Historic Sites” and “Rocky’s Back,” since shooting of the movie “Rocky” took place at the Art Museum). Only one of the pictures displayed in multiple albums was included in the samples. The pictures were taken in the Greater Philadelphia area, which includes Bucks, Chester, Delaware, and Montgomery County. Based on the description provided for each picture, this study includes all pictures directly linked to images of the Philadelphia area (e.g., pictures of the Philadelphia skyline taken from Camden, New Jersey were included in the samples).

Visitor-generated image data samples were collected with purposive sampling by conducting a tag-based search on Flickr (flickr.com). The data collection was performed using multiple criteria. First, a tag-based search was conducted using these keywords: “Philadelphia,” “Philly,” “Phila,” “Trip,” and “Travel.” Images having one or more combinations of the keywords in their titles, descriptions, or tags were included in the sample. Second, all irrelevant images (i.e., pictures having a “Philadelphia” tag but not taken in Philadelphia) were excluded. The data collection on Flickr was conducted on December 7, 2006 resulting in 652 samples.

4.2 The Analysis Procedure

A series of image content analyses were performed to gain in-depth understanding of how Philadelphia as a tourist destination was represented by the organization and visitors. Rose (2001: 56) defines image content analysis as an analysis “based on counting the frequency of certain visual elements in a clearly defined sample of images, and then analyzing those
frequencies.” The main purpose of the image content analyses in this study is to find the motifs and themes of the pictures. The steps of image content analysis in this study follow the semantic categorization by Yang et al. (2007), which include regional, local and global semantics, and the framework of Sternberg (1997) and Govers and Go (2005), which involve identification of actual objects, identification of arrangement, and identification of contextualization (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1. Procedure of the Image Content Analysis**

The first step was to divide the photo region into several local photo regions, generally associated with the visual semantics of the photos, including background and foreground. Yang et al. (2007) propose a simple block segmentation to capture the visual semantics in local photo regions. There are ten photographic regions proposed: one center region, four corner regions, two horizontal regions, two vertical regions, and a whole photo region. Examples of photos categorized into this regional segmentation are illustrated in Fig. 2. Regional categorization gives a foundation to analyze the objects that are focal points of a picture and aids in the process of contextualization of images.
In the next stage, a list of predefined low-level features/objects was created based on their appearance in the pictures. The list was created in SPSS and was measured to analyze distribution and frequency of the features. Correlations between these features were then calculated to identify the arrangement of low-level features in the pictures; the features having positive correlations often appear together, and vice-versa. Based on the arrangement, some local concepts were merged together to generate a higher-level semantic (global concept). As an illustration, if low-level features such as “light,” “street,” and “car” positively correlated with each other, it can be concluded that these low-level features often appear together in a picture and, thus, can be merged together into a higher level semantic, such as “streetscape.” The arrangement of high-level semantics in a photo is then used to extract global concepts such as “historic sites” or “architecture.” Extraction of global concepts is followed by identification of

**Figure 2. Regional Semantic Extraction**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Center</th>
<th>Corner</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image1" alt="Center Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image2" alt="Corner Image" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vertical</th>
<th>Horizontal</th>
<th>Whole</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image3" alt="Vertical Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image4" alt="Horizontal Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image5" alt="Whole Image" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


context in the pictures to identify the focal theme. Flickr enables users to give titles, descriptions, and tags to a picture. This textual information is also analyzed to interpret the narratives of the pictures.

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

5.1 Regional Semantics

The images on GoPhila galleries mostly focus on the center region (30.3%), followed by the horizontal region (26.9%), the vertical region (23.5%), the whole region (14.3%), and the corner region (5%). Similarly, most of the visitor-generated images focus on the center region (34.6%), followed by the whole region (27.4%), the vertical region (17.6%), the horizontal region (11.8%), and the corner region (8.5%). The division of regional semantics helps to better understand how photographers place the focal theme of the images and give context to each theme.

To understand the differences between the projected images on GoPhila and the visitor-generated images on Flickr, Fig. 3 illustrates the comparison of images of one major attraction at a historic site in Philadelphia, the Liberty Bell. Comparing these images of the same attraction enables us to easily pinpoint the differences in the regional semantics of images resulting from different selections of focal appearance, foreground, background, and angles. The projected image sample has the Liberty Bell as a focus (with a very clear appearance) in the center region, with the Independence Hall building in the background. Ten out of sixteen images posted by visitors have the Liberty Bell as a focus; seven images place the bell in the center region; two out of the seven images have the exact same background as the GoPhila image. However, in three images (V2, V4, and V6), the bell was placed in the vertical region with tourists as background. In image V3, the bell was placed in the center region but taken from a different angle with
tourists as background. The difference of those images from the mainstream reflects the creativity of the photographers as well as the contextualization of images. The other visitor-generated images portray the bell as a background, having tourists as the focal appearance, hence suggesting the performance of “touring the bell” as a focal point and the Liberty Bell as the context.

![Image of Liberty Bell](image.png)

**Figure 3. Images of the Liberty Bell: Regional Semantics Comparison**

Apart from the attraction sections, major differences in regional semantics between the projected images and the visitor-generated images were also found in the image collections of “Neighborhood and Towns,” “General Scenic and Aerial,” and “Dining and Nightlife.” While most of the projected images place the focus in the center regions, many visitors place the focal appearance in the corner or vertical regions.
5.2 Local Concepts (Low-Level Semantics)

Low-level features were extracted from the GoPhila and the visitor-generated image samples. Several predefined local concept families with low-level features were listed and the local concepts having less than 1% frequency were removed from the analysis. Nineteen local concepts were extracted from both image samples (see Table 1). Among the highest frequency of local concepts found in the GoPhila images are “Building” (44.7%), “People Foreground” (39.6%), “People Background” (37.6%), “Tree” (33.5%), “Interior” (31.8%), “Sky” (27.4%), and “Lights” (22.8%). On the other hand, the highest frequency of local concepts found in the visitor-generated images are “Building” (45.3%), “Interior” (32.4%), “Sky” (28.4%), “People Foreground” (24.6%), “Tree” (23.1%), “Sign” (19%), and “People Background” (17.1%).

Despite similarities in the local semantics between the projected images and the visitor-generated images, several differences were identified. The projected images have higher frequency in the facility- and service-related features such as “Food and Drinks” compared to the visitor-generated images. Within the local family of “Streetscape,” although the frequency of “Street” in the images on GoPhila is higher than on Flickr, the frequency of “Car” is lower. This can be an indication that the destination organization is trying to portray the ideal condition of the city infrastructure with little or no traffic, which will lead to a positive image. On the other hand, visitor-generated images portray the streetscape as-is, revealing the true condition of the city. There is a significantly high percentage of the appearance of people as both foreground and background in the GoPhila images, indicating that the destination organization attempts to portray the experiential image of Philadelphia as a tourist destination.
Table 1. Extracted Local Concepts (Low-Level Semantics)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GPTMC (GoPhila) (N=412)</th>
<th>Flickr (N=652)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Keywords</strong></td>
<td><strong>Frequency</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Human</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People Foreground</td>
<td>163 (39.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People Background</td>
<td>154 (37.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Structure</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building</td>
<td>184 (44.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bridge</td>
<td>14 (03.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statue</td>
<td>58 (14.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sign</td>
<td>77 (18.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flag</td>
<td>25 (06.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stairs</td>
<td>18 (04.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sky</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sky</td>
<td>113 (27.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cloud</td>
<td>38 (09.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Plant</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tree</td>
<td>138 (33.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grass</td>
<td>50 (12.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Streetscape</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Street</td>
<td>70 (17.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Car</td>
<td>37 (09.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Night Scene</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lights</td>
<td>94 (22.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Indoor</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interior</td>
<td>131 (31.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Water</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water</td>
<td>57 (13.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Food &amp; Drinks</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food &amp; Drinks</td>
<td>54 (13.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Animals</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animals</td>
<td>17 (04.1%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.3 Feature Arrangements and Concept Merging

The extracted low-level features were analyzed to find the arrangement of each concept within the images. Several local concepts having positive correlations (i.e., often appearing together in one image) were merged together to form a higher-level semantic (global concept).
The feature arrangement and concept merging of the GoPhila and the Flickr images are illustrated in Fig. 4 and Fig. 5, respectively.

Figure 4. Feature Arrangement and Concept Merging: GoPhila Images

The GoPhila images are richer in low-level features (local concepts), indicated by the higher number of positive correlations among the local concepts (i.e., a higher number of local concepts appear together in one image). Fig.6 illustrates this fact, comparing an image of the City Hall from GoPhila with some of the visitor’s images from Flickr. The destination-promoted image frames the City Hall with its surrounding (i.e., building, streets, lamp posts along the street, etc.) while the visitor’s images capture (and portray) the building (or part of the building) with only one or two additional local concept (i.e., building and sky). Since the projected images are typically taken by a professional photographer, most of the images contain more objects compared to the images taken by tourists. Furthermore, since the projected images are taken and

* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
** Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
published for promotional purposes (i.e., to deliver a positive image of the city), they are made richer in details compared to the visitor-generated images.

**Figure 5. Feature Arrangement and Concept Merging: Flickr Images**

Based on the correlations among local concepts, there are four emerging global concepts identified among the GoPhila images: “Neighborhood,” “Night Scene,” “Indoor,” and “Outdoor.” Meanwhile, five global concepts were identified among the Flickr images: “Neighborhood,” “General Scenic,” “Indoor,” “Outdoor,” and “Attraction.” Based on the concept arrangement, the GoPhila image of City Hall on Fig. 6 can be categorized into “Neighborhood,” “Outdoor,” and “Night Scene;” while the visitor’s images are categorized as “Attraction” because of the iconic sense of the building that is presented on the images. Even though the GoPhila galleries are classified into different themes, there is a high degree of similarity between images within the same category and between categories. The reason for
portraying images with similar themes (e.g., similar local concepts and regional semantics) is to ensure a consistent notion of the quality and image of the destination. These similarities were reflected by the identification of less-but-broader global concepts within the GoPhila images. On the other hand, the generic images taken by the visitors are more varied in content (i.e., with more variety of objects overall, although with fewer objects appearing together in one image) and presentation. Therefore, there are more global concepts identified in the generic images.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Destination-Promoted Image</th>
<th>Visitor-Generated Images</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image1" alt="V1" /></td>
<td><img src="image2" alt="V2" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image3" alt="V3" /></td>
<td><img src="image4" alt="V4" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 6. Images of the City Hall: Comparison of Concept Arrangement**

The appearance of “tourists” in both the GoPhila and the Flickr images mostly occurs in the indoor settings and is closely associated with “Food and Drinks,” which indicates the experience of tourism services. The themes of “General Scenic” and “Neighborhood” in the Flickr images share similar characteristics with the GoPhila images. However, the GoPhila galleries have a considerable number of images within the “Night Scene” concept, which was not
found in the Flickr images. Taking night scene pictures requires special tools and relatively high photography skills. Tourists might also schedule tours during the day or simply enjoy taking pictures during the day more than at night.

5.4 Contextualization and Interpreted Meaning

The gallery categorization on GoPhila marks the clear contextualization of the photos. Each image is characterized by the theme of the gallery it belongs to. On the other hand, contextualization must be given to the Flickr images based on the regional, local, and global semantics as well as the interpretation of the image meaning. Generally, the images can be categorized into five different contexts: attractions, facilities/services, general scenic, events, and self (i.e., tourists). The images on GoPhila have strong associations with attractions, facilities/services, and events, with some highlights in general scenic. On the other hand, the visitor-generated images on Flickr represent more of self, attractions, and general scenic. Based on the contexts of their images, the Flickr album owners can be categorized into site-centric and self-centric photo editors. The site-centric editors feature a number of attractions and general scenic shots of Philadelphia, while the self-centric editors focus on expressing their self-images and tourist experiences to the viewers. For tourists, the images are the proof of “being there,” the documents of the trip.

Drawing on the results of image contextualization and the categorization of album owners, it can be concluded that visitor-generated images have two important intertwined dimensions: informational and social. In other words, audiences exposed to these images can retrieve information about the particularities of the products (i.e., the destination and tourism activities it can afford) and simultaneously “interact” with the album owners. Since the visitor-generated images are usually arranged in a set or album based on their temporal sequences, an
individual image is a fragment of a tourist’s narrative; it can be viewed as a piece of information that will complete the story of experience when it is tied with all other images in the same contexts. Additionally, since tourists add personal cues and perspectives to these images, audiences are not only able to relate socially to the album owners, but are also able to build a cognitive understanding of the personalized nature of the trip.

One important aspect of analyzing visitor-generated images is to discover the appearance of negative images of the destination or the overall tourist experience. A small number of images (less than 1%) portraying deserted buildings with broken windows or unclean subway stations were found in some of the Flickr albums. Other negative images are from a demonstration in Independence Square, which is a main tourist district. Some photos of old and odd objects from around the city (such as bricks, rails, chains, etc.) were also found among the images. However, since the objects were presented artistically, they might not be perceived as negative images. While some of these pictures are tagged with the keyword “travel,” most of them are highly positioned as artistic works, which are associated with photography as a tourist activity and not so much with the experience of place in general. This type of picture, however, cannot be interpreted as an alternative view of the destination. By producing and sharing these pictures, visitors may be trying to share their personal achievements (i.e., the accomplishment of being able to produce artistic photographs in the context of a tourist site), which can be viewed as a personal and social dimension of sharing. Additionally, visitors may also try to show their social networks some interesting spots in the city where people can capture these artsy pictures, which in practice are often referred to as the sites of “Kodak Moments.” This, in turn, will potentially create a new set of spatiotemporal justification for travel and provide different scenarios or scripts for potential visitors.
6. CONCLUDING REMARKS

It is argued that destination marketing organizations have typically used similar types of images to communicate notions of the tourist experience to reinforce the desired image in the minds of potential travelers. This hypothesis is proven by the findings of this study, which indicate the similarities of images provided on the GoPhila photo galleries within the same category (sub-gallery) and between categories (sub-galleries). On the other hand, based on the high similarities in regional, local, and global semantics, it is also evident that some tourists tend to reproduce the same types of images projected to them at the pre-visit stage, resulting in continuous reproduction of destination representation. However, this study discovered that even though there are some visitor-generated images that are identical to the projected images, most visitors represent the destination differently based on their personal perspective and experiences by communicating the meaning and context of pictures to viewers. Destination-promoted images are richer in details of objects and arrangements, but visitor-generated images are richer in contextualization and meaning, and in personal knowledge, belief, and experience. This result supports the second hypothesis, suggesting that even though visitor-generated images are largely fragmented, they communicate more detailed and specialized scenarios of travel when they are presented as a set.

Since the process of picture-taking for the purpose of promotion usually involves professionals and has no limitation of space and time in taking the pictures (i.e., time, location, and features can be arranged), the destination marketer can produce high quality pictures portraying objects in their best condition. By displaying these photographs on their websites, destination marketers try to expose the ideal conditions of the city, which will lead to a positive evaluation. On the other hand, visitors have space-time limitations in the activity of picture
Taking; the quality of the experiences, and, in turn, the pictures, depend highly on the particularities of the visit (e.g., weather). Therefore, visitor-generated images tend to reveal a conditional view of the city, which is differentiated or specialized based on the actual visitation. Consequently, they are important to communicate a differentiated notion of tourism experiences to potential tourists. This result does not support the third hypothesis; the fragmented and conditional nature of the visitor-generated images does not contribute to the disruption of the promoted images; it creates differentiated scenarios that enrich the informational nature of the sharing practice.

The trend of production and consumption of images by tourists suggests the magnitude of the use of the Internet as a media to provide and share information in the process of mediation, especially for tourists at the anticipatory phase of experience. For potential visitors, searching for information on the Internet enables them to get differentiated images on the same media and compare them side by side to evaluate the destination. For the destination marketers, images posted by visitors on CGM should be viewed as complementary to the destination-promoted images in terms of creating an overall image of the city and the tourism experiences it can afford. Destination marketers can incorporate visitor-generated images on their websites to support tourists’ needs of sharing—for instance, by creating a Web 2.0 platform or links to Web 2.0 sites on their websites, thus allowing visitors to retrieve, store, and disseminate destination-related information and build social networks.

One limitation of this study comes from the method: this study utilized image content analyses, which are quantitative in nature, to interpret image data that are rich in qualitative and cultural significance. To overcome this limitation, this study triangulated the content analyses with a qualitative interpretivist approach to deduce the image meaning from textual descriptions.
about the pictures. This study was conducted without direct interaction with the visitors. Hence, this study has no influence on the behavior of the visitors and the quality of the data. However, a further study involving visitors’ intervention might potentially be able to get richer stories for contextualization. Further studies can be done to analyze the characteristics of the visitors, e.g., to find out if visitors from different nationalities and cultural backgrounds represent a destination differently. This will be valuable to help destination marketers understand how to represent destinations to different market segments.

REFERENCES


