

Tourist in Wonderland: The Architectural Image as a Part of Tourism Marketing

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Abstract. The word “tourism” had emerged in end of 18th century related with the concept of "grand tour" which is a traditional trip undertaken mainly by upper-class Europeans across the Europe by train. After 1930's, when labor class get the rights for annual leave and increased automobile ownership, the word had been coincided with the short-term vacations to relaxing geographies such as beachfront, mountain side etc. In time, the host geographies earned a considerable amount of income from these short term vacations and tourism became an input for urban and architectural planning. Thereafter, architects aimed to increase the attraction of the “place” for tourists by using design.

Antalya had been one of these centers of attraction after 1980's. Since then, the city and its architecture have been reshaped on this ambition. In recent decades, this ambition reshaped the east of the city, especially after the area was declared as "Kemeragzı-Kundu Antalya Culture and Tourism Conservation and Development Area" by the Council of Ministers in 03.08.2004. Thereafter, the area has been redesigned for tourism marketing by architectural image production. The aim of this study is to discuss the notion of “created center of attraction” through the famous book of Venturi, “Learning from Las Vegas”.

Keywords: Tourism, Venturi, Architectural Image, Kundu-Antalya.

1 INTRODUCTION

Beyond functional needs, architecture has always been a part of image-making which is problematized in creation of form. In every kind of architectural production, regardless of scale and typology of the building, creation of form is about creation of both attraction and sign. This is much more highlighted when it comes to commercial activities then domestic ones. Tourism which is often defined as “industry” and delineated as “factory without chimneys” had been one of leading sectors of commerce after 19th century. Hence, the notion of form in tourism architecture gains importance than the others.

On this account, this paper explores how architectural space is revitalized around tourism, how it stimulates the creation of new buildings, and new forms of “desire” that motivate tourism.

2 TOURISM AND ACQUIRED ATTRACTION

Tourism had been one of leading sectors of commerce after 19th century. Although depending on its money making capacity, it has been considered as an “industry”, it has its own unique features, and needs that differentiate this sector from the others. Among these differences most important challenges are about being a service sector. For instance, in order to incite man to change his place, he should be first convinced that he will see and experience

something different than his own habitat. His curiosity should be aroused with something unique and authentic. As this uniqueness which attracts tourists can be in form of an inherent beauty; it can also be in form of created objects of attraction. This definition covers not only natural, cultural and historic but also built environments offering tourists leisure, adventure and amusement. Therefore, design of architectural form as acquired attractions is much more vital in tourism among all other commercial activities.



Fig. 1. Bilbao Guggenheim Museum by Frank Gehry

As the most popular example of created object of attraction, the Bilbao Guggenheim has attracted almost five million visitors since its opening, in 1997 (Fig.1). It's organic curvilinear form stunned and fascinated people who see famous poses from magazines and newspapers, hence this "titanium artichoke" had become one of famous museums in the world already before it has its collection. Frank Gehry, the architect of Bilbao Guggenheim, commissioned for new other iconic buildings before it's ground-breaking.

The number of non-Basque visitors in Bilbao which was less than 100.000 multiplied eight times and the museum attracts an average of 800,000 non-Basque visitors a year. As Rybczynski (2002) cited from the Financial Times, "in its first three years the museum has helped to generate about \$500 million in economic activity and about \$100 million in new taxes". This huge tourism economy accelerated by construction of an iconic object of curiosity was named in architecture as "Bilbao effect" (Plaza, 2007).

In contrast to Nikolaus Pevsner's (1976:136) famous postulate that the "history of museum architecture as a shift from monument to instrument", contemporary examples are showing little desire to disappear. In fact, in recent years, the architecture has witnessed a return to the monument and competing with the art work (Giebelhausen:2011).



Fig. 2. Jewish Museum by Daniel Libeskind

Another iconoclastic museum design like Bilbao Guggenheim is Jewish Museum in Berlin, designed by Daniel Libeskind (Fig 2). It attracted 350,000 visitors in two years before it even had any exhibits. Actually, the building itself is a work of art, which is creating an experience rather than being a passive spectator. The design was defined as “the act of using architecture as a means of narrative and emotion providing visitors with an experience of the effects of the Holocaust on both the Jewish culture and the city of Berlin” (Kroll:2010). These two successful examples serve to illustrate the role of architectural form in creation of tourist attraction.



Fig. 3. Jumeirah Palm Island Mega Project and Dubai marina

Dubai is also a popular paradigm, which is artificially created over the gulf. In case of Dubai, we have several icons creating a landscape of man-made topography by technology and capital. This is an “artificial heaven of consumption”, and tourism is one of the city’s most important sources of income. Today, 25 percent of Dubai’s Gross National Product (GNP) derives directly or indirectly from tourism. The main reason of this challenging work is the shift from oil economy-based on depletable resources- to service economy- based on non-depletable resources. Currently, less than 10 percent of Dubai’s gross national product derives from oil production, compared to 55 percent in 1980 (Jensen, 2011: 48-61).

One of the main reasons of this challenging shift in the economy is the massive investment over architecture and urbanism in recent decades. The strategic plan for urban growth of the Emirate of Dubai (1998-2050), proposing more than half century for targeted development, is a comprehensive strategy for the not only Dubai but also the whole Emirate (Al Darmaki:2008). The aim is to initiate new foundations for urban economy by promoting mega projects such as world's tallest skyscraper Burj Halifa or largest artificial islands Dubai Palm Islands (Fig. 3). The basic objective of these constructions is to develop coastline of Dubai by using striking architectural forms and make Dubai as one of the top tourist destination in the world.

3 DUCKS, DECORATED SHEDS AND THE CASE OF KUNDU-ANTALYA

In 1972, Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown, and Steven Izenour analyzed creation of architectural image as a part of tourism marketing on the case of Las Vegas, the first example of such kind of touristic destinations. Las Vegas as a desert metropolis built on all forms of entertainment; had not existed at the beginning of the 20th century. In just a century of its existence, Vegas managed to create new forms of acquired attraction. Hence, today it has drawn millions of visitors and trillions of dollars in wealth.

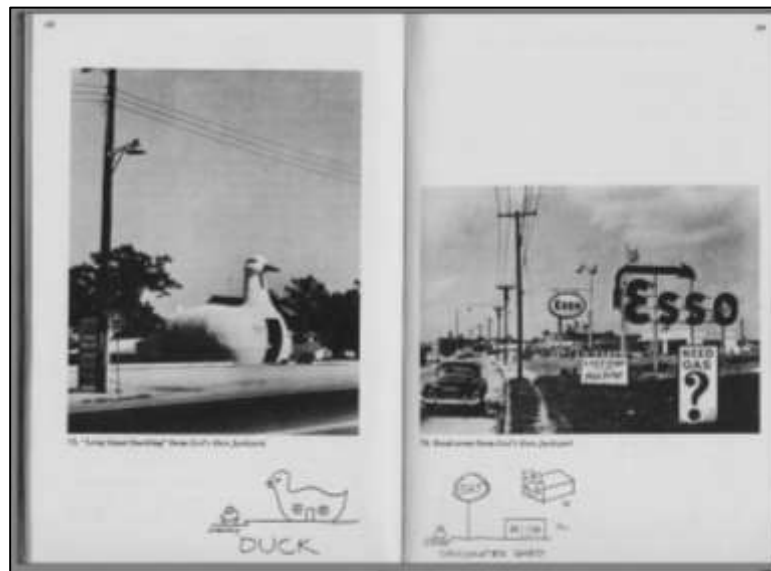


Fig. 4. Duck and the decorated shed from Learning From Las Vegas(1972:89)

As it is discussed in the seminal book “learning from Las Vegas”, this eye-catching architecture of Las Vegas is actually based on a phenomenon of communication over space achieved through style and signs. Venturi and his colleagues classified Vegas buildings in two groups. First buildings are the ones who wear the sign on. Rather than being unique architectural forms, these buildings are generic structures, identified through the signs on them. Therefore Venturi called them “decorated sheds”. Second group of buildings called “ducks”. Ducks don’t require signs because they are what they have inside. Their form is their sign and it is the result of their function. Hence, form of duck is one and only, can’t be changed or transformed because it is strongly connected with the building. If you change form of duck, it won’t be a duck anymore. Nevertheless, decorated sheds can be anything because

of their generic nature. They are identified by the signs on them. If you change the sign, it would be a new decorated shed.



Fig. 4. Same concept from two distinct regions of the world. Left: WOW Venezia Hotel Antalya Turkey- right: Venetian Hotel Macau China

The symbolism in the architecture of tourism also serves to the same idea. As mentioned before, the symbolism of architectural form is a matter of image-making in tourism in order to create attraction. The symbols transformed into signs, and these signs are chosen from globally known symbols, so they became approved signs of attraction. For instance, Venice, a well-known touristic destination, became a symbol replicated several times for tourism (Fig.4).

Antalya had been one of these touristic centers of attraction after 1980's. The city has not only natural beauties but also rich archeological heritage attracting lots of tourists every year. However, in recent decades, an ambition for improving the attraction of the "place" for mass tourism, reshaped the east of the city, especially after the area was declared as "Kemerağzı-Kundu Antalya Culture and Tourism Conservation and Development Area" by the Council of Ministers in 03.08.2004; and the area is redesigned for tourism marketing by architectural image production. After then, the area became a wonderland of decorated sheds (Fig. 5).



Fig. 5. Wonderland in Kundu. (left to right) Delphin Imperial Hotel in form of Chrysler Building, Concorde De luxe Resort, Titanic Beach Hotel, WOW Topkapı Palace, WOW Kremlin Palace, Royal Taj Mahal Hotel

The reason of the multiplication of decorated sheds than ducks is the main question. The answer lies probably in the consumable nature of mass tourism. As in case of Las Vegas (Fig. 6), Kundu is also designed not for modern tourist but for the post-modern one whose idea of tourism is based on consumption of place. Although Venturi (1972:36-66) did not praise one approach or the other, he argued that clients are better served by decorated sheds than by dramatically modeled buildings, no matter how exciting. After all, in a sector like tourism which is based on consumption of place, the decorated sheds make economic sense.



Fig. 6. Aerial view of Las Vegas

In such kind of tourism concept, hotels have very short lifetime expectancy. Old buildings which had been already consumed and getting less attention have been demolished over the years to make room for the new larger and more impressive resorts; or even striped down to its macrostructure, get a new decoration and shell according to a brand new concept. This rapid change always awakes the attention of the tourist by creating new places to discover on the same site. Therefore, the client and the tourist prone to new monuments and icons

4 CONCLUSIONS

According to Rushmore (2004), “a hotel's economic life averages about 40 years, but the standard deviation is 20 years”. Nevertheless, this is much shorter in Kundu region. First generation of hotels in Kundu built between 2000 and 2005. Almost all of them experienced interior renovation in 10 years period, while few of them had major transformation in overall concept in recent years, which means in 15 years period. Various factors affect the economic life of a tourism facility, but “concept obsolescence” can be key to hotel value decline. The paradox of ducks vs. decorated sheds is also about concept. Decorated sheds have simple concepts, mostly replicated images of already existing masterpieces but they are easy and economical to strip down and redress the macrostructure with another consumable concept.

On the other hand ducks have strong concepts which create unique center of attraction. Although their concepts are not easy to consume in short period of time and have a potential of being a classic in time; in case of being obsolescence it is not economic to make a renovation that ducks mostly replaced by another new hotel. Therefore ducks are infrequent under the pressure of the consumption of space in tourism.

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