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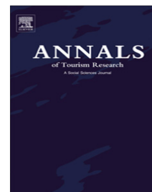

Politics and tourism promotion: Hong Kong's myth making

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ABSTRACT

By using "crisis of identity" as background, this study analyses how post-colonial Hong Kong relies on myths that are grounded in its complex, centuries-old socio-cultural political heritage to convey through tourism an identity different and separate from that of China. This qualitative inquiry, which relies on both online and printed promotional documents reinforced by primary data collected through in-depth interviews, proposes an explanation of the symbolic representation of tourism through four sequential myths. The article concludes that Hong Kong exploits its colonial past to create an identity that enhances its "local Chineseness" with a Western flavor and positions the territory to assume an increasingly hybrid identity to avoid being just another Chinese city.

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Introduction

In the period leading up to the Handover of Hong Kong to the People's Republic of China (PRC) on July 1, 1997, *The Pearl of Orient* was the most popular song broadcast throughout Mainland China. The lyrics conveyed the patriotic notion that Hong Kong was about to return to its "biological" mother after "too many years under its British 'stepmother.'" Eighteen years later, the process of nation

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building between Hong Kong and China remains a work in progress at various levels (Ip, 2012). Hong Kong's status as a Special Administrative Region (SAR) and its "one country, two systems" arrangement have supported calls that it functions as a largely independent city-state within a broader China. However, recurrent rhetoric suggests that Hong Kong could become just another Chinese city (Fong, 2010) and highlights what Ip (2012) calls a continuing quest for a "Hong Kong identity."

At the center of this identity crisis lies the issue of whether Hong Kong is Chinese or international (Fong, 2010). Chun (1996a, p. 65) not only predicted that Hong Kong would "search for its 'identity'" in the years after the Handover but also ascribed the "...total absence of a shared identity among the Chinese there" to a combination of complex historical factors culminating in a crisis of cultural ambiguity and ambivalence precipitated by Britain's decision in 1984 to return Hong Kong to China in 1997. Today, while Hong Kong residents are part of the broader political geography of China, they continue to resist attempts to foster closer cultural and social assimilation with the PRC (Fung, 2001).

Nowhere is this more evident than in the SAR's English and Chinese tourism promotion activities, where references to China are almost non-existent. Its current slogan, "Hong Kong - Asia's World City," specifically dissociates the city from China. The Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTB) continues to rely heavily on Hong Kong's myths, while paying scant attention to similar Mainland Chinese national myths. Such actions may reflect strategic marketing decisions aimed at positioning Hong Kong uniquely in the global marketplace. However, the external rhetoric and representation that distinguish Hong Kong could be more political and historical in nature and inextricably tied to a broader post-colonial resistance to social and cultural assimilation. While the Central government hoped the "return to the motherland" should have been seamless, recent surveys suggest residents' identification with a distinct Hong Kong society has increased since the Handover (Veg, 2013), especially among young people.

Using Hou's (2012) examination of the symbolic authority of tourism as a constitutive exteriorization of China as a springboard, this paper focuses on the process at work in Hong Kong. It provides fresh empirical evidence from the operational practice of tourism to support Chun's (1996a) claims that the identity crisis in Hong Kong's public arena is due to fractured tactical co-options by interests such as the tourism sector. This approach is justified based on the fact that the performative authority of tourism and collaborative sectors (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1998), in their signification of Hong Kong, explicitly acknowledge the city's historical complexity. In other words, this paper highlights the intersection of the ideological power and political authority of tourism (Hollinshead, 2009) through a critical investigation of how Hong Kong signifies itself as a destination. To that end, the study delves into practices of myths as agency and appropriation in the manipulation of the symbolic image of place (McKay, 1994).

Myths, identity and tourism

Lévi-Strauss (1955) relied on historical concepts to define myths as processes of dialectic synthesis of oppositions such that myths are both historical and ahistorical. Myths also vary, as they are affected by environmental changes brought about by increasingly mobile cultures. Because their purpose is to address paradoxes of human ambivalence, myths effectively reconcile history with politics. Connor (1994) argues that nations are themselves myths and that the essence of a nation is its intangibility or subjectivity, or as Anderson (1991) suggests, an "imagined political community." The "imagined place" relies on myths that are both diachronic (changing through time) and synchronic (transcending time) (Lévi-Strauss, 1978).

In his study of the role of government advertising in developing national symbols and myths to shape the conversation about citizenship in Canada, Rose (2003) suggests that all nations have extensive genealogies to create community and bind their citizens. How real or imagined the effects of these stories are depends on the symbolic and metaphorical meanings associated with them (Bowman, 1996). In proposing Shangri-la as a phantasmal destination, Gao, Zhang and L'Espoir Decosta (2012) claim that tourists' meanings attached to the creation of imaginative space are derived from preconceptions and impressions from myths. This study demonstrates the power of the symbolic meaning of myths in positioning Hong Kong as different from China. Myth-making in this instance plays a vital

role in national and local identity building (Robb, 1998) through cultural and heritage tourism (Palmer, 1999).

The unique socio-historical and geo-political positions of Hong Kong warrant an investigation of the role and types of myths that have helped construct its national culture and identity (Cullen, 2006). To Goulding and Domic (2009), national culture is a discourse or a way of constructing meanings about the nation with which people can identify. By exaggerating differences in the three discourses of identity construction in Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore, Chun (1996a, p. 63) highlights that "...identity is not necessarily synonymous with ethnicity." Simply put, Hong Kong may not necessarily identify itself as Chinese. To Chun (1996a), as constructed notions of [national] identities are taken for granted, they become hegemonic in practice (Chun, 1996a) and in language (Said, 2002). du Cros (2004) suggests that national identity, expressed in symbols and discourse, is built on the cultural identity of a nation-state such that the scope of the myths they express become national. National myths therefore build continuity and social cohesion but also shift with the political environment (Chang, 2005 and Hall, 1999). Thompson (2004) suggests that the process for many post-Soviet-era states involved both dissociating from Russia and "re- Nationalification," often with a heavy emphasis on local ethnicity (Saarinen & Kask, 2008). The image of representation, however, may not be based on a logically argued historical narrative but rather on a revised symbolic one.

Representation and tourism

Light (2001) reminds us that tourism marketing also has a strong political dimension. Tourism promotion plays a central role in developing, promoting and reinforcing national identities among both domestic and international visitors (Rose, 2003), as the language of tourism has the power to construct and control tourists, culture and the environment (Dann, 1996). Tourism is therefore both inscriptive and performative, as it can be "used to articulate preferred meanings of 'local' place" (Hollinshead, 2004, p. 26) through myths and narratives. Thus, the leitmotif of "worldmaking" proposed by Hollinshead (2004) becomes a creative but often "faux" imaginative process of representation and signification of tourism about culture, nature/place and space. Fragmented and differentiated "faux" scripts enable tourists to consume the "spirit" and meaning of the destination and to become impressing colonizers with the power to homogenize and transform the destination. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1998) ascribes to tourism the ability to project performative effects on socially constructed and theatrically mediated memory of the place, thereby redefining the place to an often under-suspected degree.

McKay's (1994) examination of the politics of cultural selection in Nova Scotia, Canada, charts the rise of the "tourism state" (p. 100) as a "worldmaking" player by manipulating the symbolic image of the province (Hollinshead, 2009). The tourism state, as a whole, contributes significantly to imagining, re-imagining and de-imagining the place, and "essentializes" identity by acting as an interpretive agent. By selecting ideological narratives (e.g. representation of innocence), tourism becomes the "moteur" for myth-making and directs the outlook on the world (Hollinshead, Ateljevic, & Ali, 2009). Such is the performative/inscriptive power of tourism. Similarly, Nyiri (2006) highlights "the agency of the [Chinese] state" in selecting and producing "scenic spots" such as Jing dian that become promotional instruments of patriotic education and national modernization as part of "indoctritainment" (Nyiri, 2006, p. 78). The peculiar historical characteristics of Hong Kong, together with its proximity to China, provide an interesting comparative situation of the performative authority of tourism in the signification of the territory.

Heritage and tourism

Heritage and tourism are increasingly intertwined as heritage attractions and are prominent in tourism development and marketing activities. As symbols of national myths, cultural heritage sites are powerful tools in the construction and maintenance of a national identity (Palmer, 1999 and Nyiri, 2006). In that sense, myths are essential in tourism as they can help construct a sense of national identity within [heritage] visitors' imaginations (Selwyn, 1996). Heritage is quintessentially present-centered, as it is enlisted for present causes (Lowenthal, 1998) and shaped by

socio-political and economic concerns of the moment (Peckham, 2003 citing Halbwachs, 1992). Its contents, interpretations and representations are selected to fit the demands of the present and to ultimately pass on to the future (Ashworth, Graham, & Tunbridge, 2007), as evidenced by the openings of the History and Heritage museums in Hong Kong after the Handover. Heritage is devoid of intrinsic value. Only when its components are imbued with meanings can it achieve value to become representation. Any resulting heritage discourse is therefore contentious and in conflict (Hall, 1997) with competing interpretations, which creates "dissonance" (Tunbridge & Ashworth, 1996). Dissonance occurs because, in becoming the symbolic agency of economic commodity, heritage operates within variegated landscapes of consumption and interpretations by, for example, tourists and residents. As a symbolic agency with political ramifications, heritage effectively excludes those who do not subscribe to the terms of the meanings attached to it. The zero-sum characteristic of heritage effectively creates dissonance (Graham & Howard, 2008). The consequences of navigating and exploring the possible different arrangements brought about by colonialism, nationalism and capitalism (Abbas, 1997) are what Lau (1997) termed an "identity crisis" and highlight the complexity of heritage dissonance and expressed in multi-culturality. Though Hong Kong's population is mainly ethnic Chinese, it is by no means a homogeneous one.

Tourism: the postcolonial and postmodern

This paper acknowledges the significance of the interplay between the postcolonial and the implications of Hong Kong's return to the motherland. As a result, the political identity and status of Hong Kong is far from unambiguous such that "[it is] a type of Chinese colony or province..." with "... a uniquely Chinese-British history" (du Cros, 2004, p.154). Hong Kong cannot, therefore, be disenfranchised of the postcolonial because it was part of the stereotypes, myths, and fantasies about the "Orient" in the Western imagination (Said, 1978). Such a colonial discourse and its inherent contradictions of unequal relationships and perceptions and identities of "duplicity of their position" (Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 1998, p. 43) are useful in understanding the present signifying myths the SAR chooses to represent it. Identity concerns constitute a major aspect of postcolonial views on tourism, as they emphasize the construction of knowledge and power (d'Hauteserre, 2004), just as language is also laced with power (Said, 2002).

Following Hall and Tucker (2004), this study aligns with the Foucauldian postmodern grounding that underscores the power relationship between tourism source markets and postcolonial tourism destinations. This approach recognizes a fundamental power relationship that is reflected in (i) the city's myth as a former colony but imbued with "Westerness" and (ii) the city's myth as an international city but also as a SAR of China with a Chinese cultural identity. These "post" arrangements are complex but appropriate as they highlight the need to understand the deconstruction of the Western representation of the non-Western world (Said, 1993, pp. xix–xxi), the contemporary renegotiation of postcolonial national identities (Graham & Howard, 2008), heritage and the stories they convey, at local levels (Atkinson, 2008). Plural and dissonant voices intersect and collide at these levels in the reconstitution of a "post-" space.

Hong Kong: A national Chinese but not PRC City

The socio-political and colonial history of Hong Kong has led to the development of a strong Hong Kong identity in the so-called "heung-gong yan" (Hong Kong people), distinct from that of mainland China (Mathews, 1997). After 1997, Hong Kong faced a two-way road between locality (local Chineseness) and nationalism (re-Sinicization/mainland Chinese), whence the question of the territory's identity (Ang, 1998). Deprived of decolonization and "recolonized" towards an eventual absorption, the population of Hong Kong witnessed a juxtaposition of dual identities that are ambiguously complex and culturally hybrid (Chan, 2013).

According to Mathews, Ma, and Lui (2008), Hong Kong citizens have a negative view of many PRC symbols. Fung (2001, p.594) asserts that "resistance [to adopting mainland Chinese national identity] is a re-definition of the identity boundary in labels like the 'Hong Kong people' and 'Chinese people.'" The sense of unity that defines national identity and separates it from its constitutive "others" is,

according to Walker (2001), the result of the creation of "images of identification" (such as boundary-making), a pre-eminent characteristic and function of nationalism. In that postmodernist sense, a nation is "constituted largely by the claims themselves, by the way of talking and thinking and acting..." Calhoun (1997, p.5). While the nation-state of China emphasizes the "One Country" dimension in its relations with Hong Kong, politicians, journalists and the citizenry focus on the "Two Systems" element that stresses Hong Kong's "national" separateness and distinctiveness. Its expression persists in features such as myths, memories, values, traditions and symbols (Smith, 2009, p.29). Therefore, given the hybrid nature of Hong Kong and its subsequent heterogeneous cultural characteristics, it can logically be seen as a "syncretic nation."

Several events and incidents over the years have bolstered and reinforced the separateness from China (Cheng, 2012). It is therefore necessary to link the politics of culture to the practice of a substantive democracy (Giroux, 1992), characterized here as the practice of any politics of representation and struggle within a discourse of substantive citizenship (Hall, 1997). In other words, the contemporary citizen is seen as able to responsibly juggle the variety of meanings, messages, and images through time and space (Giroux, 1992). Within that discourse, culture thus achieves an epistemological force to become a political proxy for expressing and re-writing differences in relation to broader questions of membership and belongingness. Consequently, any understanding of how national myths and ideals are used and projected in tourism to define Hong Kong requires redefining the relationship between culture and politics (Unger, 1996). Myths assist in such a redefinition by positioning Hong Kong's identity within the symbolic political meanings of cultural and heritage tourism and by allowing culture to become the site of production of differences and struggle over power.

Study methods

This study employs a multi-stage inductive qualitative approach (Maxwell, 2005). It probes the complex relationships between the contested nature of the politics of tourism promotion and the expression of identities through myths within the equally complex political entity of Hong Kong. Secondary data were first collected in the form of brochures, promotional materials and web-based images distributed through the Hong Kong Tourism Board's official English and Chinese language websites between November 2011 and February 2012. To grasp the performative power of tourism and cultural representativity, it was necessary to study the promulgation of the different myths in materials targeted at the Chinese and English language markets. The Hong Kong Tourism Board is a government subvented organization that supports and promotes Hong Kong's tourism in its entirety (HKTB, 2011a). The brochures and websites reflect Hong Kong's tangible and intangible cultural heritage by including 70 tourism attractions and activities, including mainstream products, heritage buildings, museums, temples, intangible heritage, festivals, walks and other activities (see Fig. 1).

This secondary information was supplemented by primary data from semi-structured in-depth interviews during February and March 2012 with four informants in managerial positions at the Hong Kong Tourism Board (see Table 1). The qualitative nature of this study, which relies on the premise that any given instance is particular and unique, allows for a purposive selection of informants (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Furthermore, the postmodern cultural vibe underlying this study makes it appropriate to place greater emphasis on the intensive analysis of quality empirical materials from a small number of respondents (ibid). The concomitant emphasis is on the display of knowledge and findings by giving voice to the singular or instance when it intersects with a general system (Fiske, 1994). The in-depth interviews allowed the researchers to "gain insight into opinions, experiences, motives, and ideas that are not readily obtained through mere observation" (Gao et al., 2012, p. 203). The interviewees were deemed appropriate and knowledgeable given their seniority and professional experiences dating back to the late pre-Handover period with the then Hong Kong Tourist Association (later reconstituted as The Hong Kong Tourism Board).

The study featured a hybrid analysis of data consisting of a semiotic analysis applied to the brochures and promotional materials, a qualitative content analysis reinforced by a system of coding borrowed from Grounded Theory as proposed by Charmaz (2006), and an integrated constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). This hybrid methodological approach was deemed

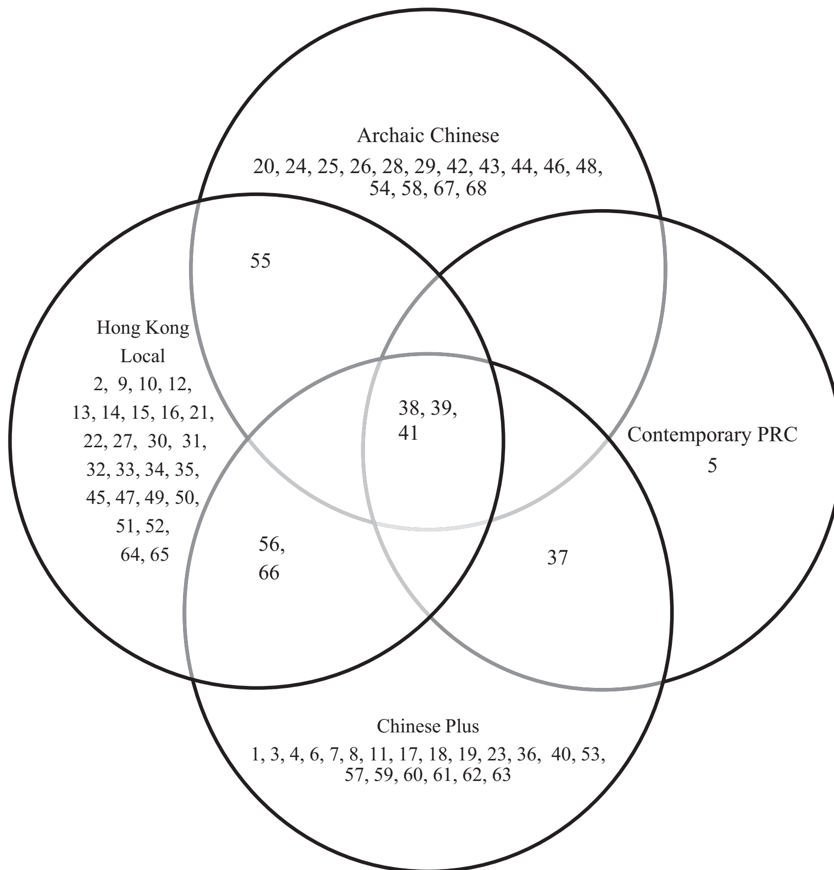

Fig. 1. Classification of Hong Kong's cultural and heritage attractions.

necessary to stretch the content analysis beyond its purpose of identifying surface meaning to reveal symbolic meanings of the materials and to match the subject of hybridity of place and culture under examination. A consistent system of memo writing was employed throughout the research process to assist with the analysis of data.

Semiological analysis enables a deeper understanding of data by providing a means to discover what lies beneath signs (Berger, 2012) such that its general principles are applicable to cultural systems of signification. Hence, the method serves to identify and examine intrinsic structuring order within the signification system (visual and material data) of tourism promotion (Echtner, 1999), emphasizing denotation (literal meanings of text, etc.), connotation (cultural meanings attached to text, etc.) (Berger, 2012), and key signifiers (de Saussure, 2011). Both text and pictures become data for analysis (Barthes, 1977).

An initial denotational analysis of the range of tourism products offered was conducted to categorize them according to myth selection and signification, which was later verified by the analysis of interview data. Classification is based on the core tangible attributes of each place and activity, such as walks. Such a descriptive analysis enabled the researchers to evaluate the range of products employed by the HKTB. A subsequent connotational analysis of the materials was undertaken to determine how these products were presented. A comparative analysis among the different thematic ideas was then carried out at the level of both their denotations and connotations to determine whether any effort was made to bridge the differences among the themes.

Popular attractions	Major Museums
1. The Peak *	37. Dr. Sun Yat Sen Museum (former home of Dr Sun)
2. Hollywood Road, Cat Street & Man Mo Temple (antique area on Hong Kong Island)*	38. Hong Kong Heritage Museum (museum opened after the Handover to highlight local culture) *
3. Western Market (refurbished colonial market)	39. Hong Kong Museum of Art
4. Lan Kwai Fong and SoHo (nightclub area)	40. Hong Kong Museum of Coastal Defense (site of former British fort built to protect the Harbour) *
5. Golden Bauhinia Square & Special Flag Raising Ceremony (site of Handover of Hong Kong to China) *	41. Hong Kong Museum of History (museum opened after the Handover to highlight Hong Kong's history)*
6. Repulse Bay (Beach and former colonial rest area)*	**Temples**
7. Stanley Market & Murray House (western style outdoor market)	42. Chi Lin Nunnery / Nan Lian Garden (Buddhist Nunnery built in the Tang style)
8. Happy Valley Racecourse	43. Sha Tin Che Kung Temple (temple to honour Song Dynasty military leader)
9. Jumbo Kingdom (floating seafood restaurant)	44. Miu Fat Buddhist Monastery (
10. Aberdeen (remnant fishing port)	45. Hung Shing Temple (remote temple dedicated to god of the sea – restored and winner of UNESCO award)
11. 1881 Heritage (refurbished former Marine Police Headquarters – now high end shopping mall)	46. Yuen Yuen Institute (Confucius Institute)
12. Cheung Sha Wan Road Fashion Street and Apliu Street	47. Che Kung Temple (one of Hong Kong's oldest temples)
13. Ladies' Market	48. Lo Pan Temple (temple built to the patron saint of builders)
14. Temple Street Night Market	**Intangible heritage**
15. Jade Market & Jade Street	49. Cheung Chau Festival (festival to celebrate breaking of an epidemic – noted for its 'floating' statues)
16. Yuen Po Street Bird Garden/Flower Market, Goldfish Market	50. Tai O Dragon Boat Festival
17. Clock Tower (remnant clock tower from colonial railway station)	51. Tai Hang Fire Dragon Dance
18. Avenue of Stars (walk along Kowloon waterfront highlight Hong Kong films star)	52. Yu Lan Ghost Festival of the Hong Kong Chiu Chow Community
19. A Symphony of Lights (evening laser light show)	53. Dining *
20. Kowloon Walled City Park (city park on site of former notorious walled city noted for it crime and debauchery)	**Signature Events and Festivals**
21. Sik Sik Yuen Wong Tai Sin Temple (temple to local deities)	54. Chinese New Year Celebration
22. Lei Yue Mun Seafood Bazaar (seafood dining area)	55. Hong Kong Cultural Celebrations
23. Sha Tin Racecourse	56. Summer Spectacular
24. Ching Chung Koon (Taoist temple and	57. Hong Kong Halloween Treats
vegetarian restaurant)	
25. Ping Shan Heritage Trail (Historic trail commemorating the Tang clan)	58. Hong Kong Mid-autumn Festival
26. Kat Hing Wai (500 year old walled village)*	59. Wine & dine month
27. Tai Fu Tai (traditional Chinese mansion from the 1860s) *	60. Hong Kong Winterfest
28. Fung Ying Seen Koon (Taoist temple)	**Walks**
29. Lung Yeuk Tau Heritage Trail *	61. Central & Western District – Travel Through Time
30. Lam Tsuen Wishing Trees & Tin Hau Temple (site of spirit tree that grants wishes)	62. Garden Road Leisure Walk - A Century of Architecture
31. Sai Kung Town (rural town famous for its seafood restaurants)	63. Tsim Sha Tsui – Cornucopia of Delights
32. Lantau Island (outer island – home to Hong Kong's last hippies)	64. Shau Kei Wan – Evolvement of a Fishing Village
33. Cheung Chau Island (outer island with a traditional fishing culture) *	65. Yau Ma Tei & Mong Kok – Markets for leisure and Pleasure
34. Lamma Island (outer island with a traditional fishing culture and many parks)*	66. Wong Tai Sin & Kowloon City – A Popular Temple and A City Transformed
35. Peng Chau Island (outer island with a traditional fishing culture)*	67. Yuen Long - First Heritage Trail in Hong Kong
36. Victoria Harbour	68. Lung Yeuk Tau Heritage Trail

Note: * marks these attractions have different content in English and simplified Chinese

Fig. 1 (*continued*)

Table 1
List of respondents.

No.	Position	Gender	Age
Respondent 1	Senior manager- Executive level	Male	46–55
Respondent 2	Former Senior level manager- Destination development	Female	46–55
Respondent 3	Senior manger level- Marketing	Male	36–45
Respondent 4	Managerial level- Strategic planning	Male	36–45

This study relies on triangulation of the various interpretations of different types of data (Gibson, 2007) and each of the researchers' reflexive positions (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Internal checks were conducted through ongoing comparisons of theoretical arguments by the researchers and a "constant back and forth movement between questions posed" (Kushner & Morrow, 2003, p.38). Clearly, qualitative content and semiotic analyses are dependent on the researchers' judgment. The first author, a Chinese national, struggled to focus on a methodological reflexivity but was conscious of the "incipient… relativism" (Johnson & Duberley, 2000, p. 179) of her opinions. This concern was addressed by recognizing the differing theoretical sensitivities of all three researchers, particularly during the analysis/coding processes (Glaser, 1978). A form of audit trail (Creswell & Miller, 2000) was also used as a validation tool, which assisted in tracking all research decisions made and activities performed. Corroboration of factual information was accomplished among the information provided by the four respondents and between their responses and the HKTB's official publications. Similarly, the analytical themes that emerged were confirmed through consensus after comparative analyses. The four themes that identify and place myths along a time continuum are: perpetual archaic Chinese, bustling Hong Kong local, creative Chinese-plus and Contemporary PRC (see Fig. 1).

From perpetual 'archaic Chinese' to 'Contemporary PRC'

Perpetual Archaic Chinese myth

Most of the attractions studied (63 out of 68) (see Fig. 1) reflect national myths that are associated with Hong Kong's unique identity. Those that represent Hong Kong's local cultural identity appear most frequently, followed by heritage attractions that represent its pre-colonial Chinese culture. This pre-colonial heritage forms the basis of the "archaic Chinese" national myths that pre-date the British acquisition of Hong Kong in 1842 under the treaty of Nanking. The "Archaic pre-colonial Hong Kong" thus traces its origins to the coastal indigenous Chinese populations. Many of the festivals and built heritage celebrated reflect traditions formed during this period. They signify an identity of "Hong Kong people" of which the local commoners became reluctantly proud after 1997 but which China sees in more prosaic terms as a geographic descriptor and as a label of the local populace (Fung, 2001). The significance of these shared symbols and ethnic myths is powerful, as they conceptualize a notion of homeland (Smith, 1986).

The archaic Chinese myths become "mythomoteurs" that serve to tell stories (Smith, 1986) about the city's origins: "Hong Kong is a Chinese city…The place was populated with large numbers of residents, producing high quality products and living well" (The Hong Kong Heritage Museum; in Chinese only) (HKTB, 2011a); its special character: "[Hong Kong] is a port open to foreigners (R1);" and destiny of the nation: "Hong Kong now is the same Hong Kong as before (R2)." The values embodied within these "mythomoteurs" are non-falsifiable, not because they are irrational and devoid of objective arguments but because the claims they represent are normative (Snyder & Ballentine, 1996). When the Museum of History focuses on the "Hong Kong story," it implicates the nationalist "mythomoteurs" by devoting significant space to pre-colonial and post-Handover Hong Kong.

The official recognition and association of historic Hong Kong to the fishing and farming communities it comprises placed the "nation" on the periphery of Imperial China until 1841. This "archaic Chinese" national myth is projected and perpetuated today in remnants of both built and intangible heritage, including numerous temples and historic buildings, as well as some ancient festivals (see

Fig. 1) celebrating synchronic customs (the Chinese New Year celebration and the Hong Kong mid-autumn festival) (HKTB, 2011a). The primitive nature of these "archaic Chinese" myths and their constant grounding in ancient Imperial China also legitimize an "un-tampered" and authentic identity (vis-à-vis contemporary Mainland China). For example, the official description of the Kat Hing Wai walled village emphasizes the "Chineseness" of the place and relies on a nostalgic invocation of innocent simplicity to highlight an imagined myth of continuity of Chinese culture:

> "[Kat Hing Wai] *was built about 500 years ago during the Ming dynasty and is still inhabited by the descendants of the Tang clan*..." (HKTB, 2011a).

Differences in the official narratives of these "Archaic Chinese" myths in English and Chinese are negligible. The emphatic connections to history in the "Archaic Chinese" myths encapsulate their synchronicity (Lévi-Strauss, 1978). There is a subtle dual political undertone, as part of China's national building strategy leading up to and immediately after the Handover was to claim that Hong Kong has been Chinese for 4,000 years or more, while the British era was just an unfortunate blip during a period of continuous settlement (du Cros, 2004). However, the other political undertone of these "archaic Chinese" myths aimed at local residents, highlights how Hong Kong is not associated with the emergence of modern China: "*We have our own unique culture* (R3); *Hong Kong is not a Chinese city* (R1)." The forms, narratives and symbols chosen to project these myths through heritage tourism, and the audience they target, thus shape the stories they represent to ultimately have a profound impact on the cultural significance of their texts (White, 2001). In other words, one way in which the national culture of Hong Kong makes sense of the past through tourism promotion is through differentiated "...encodation of events in terms of pregenerative plot structures..." (Lévi-Strauss, 1978, p. 1716). Memory is therefore mediated through these fragmented and differentiated scripts: "*There is a big difference between ethnic Chinese, traditional Chineseness and Chineseness promoted by the Chinese state*" (R1). In that sense, the dichotomies inherent in historical texts become paradoxical, interfering elements to any hope of full assimilation of the SAR within the PRC. They are therefore not neutral.

Bustling Hong Kong myth

An extension of the "archaic Chinese" myth is the "bustling Hong Kong" myth, which also traces its origin to indigenous Chinese populations. It reflects the SAR's contemporary urban and colonial Chinese cultural influences that have shaped the collective memory of the city. Again, there are evident cultural and heritage attractions in the form of local temples, intangible heritage, outdoor markets, various Cantonese, Hakka and Tanka historic sites developed during the colonial period, and festivals that celebrate Hong Kong's unique identity of local "Chineseness" that continued to develop under British rule (see Fig. 1). The popular Sik Sik Yuen Wong Tai Sin Temple is one such example. The temple is portrayed as "*very unique in Hong Kong*" (R2), and "*is where worshippers pray for good fortune through offerings, divine guidance and fortune telling*" (HKTB, 2011a). The temple, which is part of the everyday life for local residents, especially before major decisions, is portrayed to tourists as the place to communicate with the god Wong Tai Sin if "*they want their wishes to come true*" (R2). This is part of a fatalistic Chinese conceptual worldview that the future is beyond human control. Thus, by projecting the "folk-populist" product (Chun, 1996b, p.144) of superstitious belief in supernatural influences for consumption, Hong Kong's tourism authorities manipulate the national image through public (Chun, 1996a) and cultural discourses: "*[p]eople go to this temple when they have big decisions to make...they want their wishes to come true...The underlying Feng Shui is a significant culture*" (R2). The "soft" projection of this local myth is powerful, given that it is an essential part of everyday life in Hong Kong but not necessarily in Communist China, where superstitious beliefs were suppressed for several decades (Smith, 1991).

The Cheung Chau festival is also a local celebration of thanksgiving to "*god Pak Tai to drive off the evil spirits* [plague] *besieging the island*" by "...*parading statues of deities through the narrow lanes*" (HKTB, 2011a), and its bun festival attracts crowds of local Hong Kong and international tourists alike: "*When a lot of local people join these festivals, like the bun festival... it shows to tourists their popularity among the local community. It also provides them a Hong Kong atmosphere when local people are around*" (R3). The local Hong Kong crowd becomes a subliminal co-opting agent of tourism promotion to

foreign tourists. "... *[T]he mainland tourists like to feel the difference of Hong Kong*" (R3). Such promotion reinforces the differences in the national identity between Hong Kong and Mainland China among both domestic and international visitors (Rose, 2003). In this sense, the myth of ethnic and local Chineseness in Hong Kong's identity is instrumentalist, as it has only been employed to define the nation.

A major signifier of the bustling "local Hong Kong" myth is the image of its famous night markets (see Fig. 2). The post-war transformation of Hong Kong into a free market port also altered the rhythms of everyday life. As factories ran around-the-clock to ship the "Made in Hong Kong" tag to rich industrialized countries, a night-time economy, epitomized by the neon signs in the streetscapes, flourished around local street markets. The economic advancement brought about by manufacturing industries improved the standard of living and was crucial to the consolidation of a "Hong Kong consciousness" away from the transient mentality. A better way of life was made possible through a permanent settlement where locals could anchor a more articulated sense of identity (Turner, 1995). China as the motherland was simultaneously receding in the local consciousness. Today, the neon signs towering over the bustling street markets have become evocative of the city as bustling with

Fig. 2. Syncretic of local markets (HKTB, 2011b).

crowds and are ritualized by tourism professionals "*for an experience of local Chinese lifestyles*" (HKTB, 2011b, p. 36)

Hong Kong is historically represented as an outpost where traditions were maintained while they were being actively dismantled in China, especially during the Cultural Revolution. Today, the promotion of traditions derived from "local Chinese" myths emphasizes the remembrance of a form of cultural consciousness that was completely divorced (back then) from the creation of a national identity (Chun, 1996a).

Progressive Chinese-plus

The "Chinese-plus" myth, reflected in Hong Kong's "East meets West" campaign (originating in the 1970s), conveys the unique character of a city with a foot in both Eastern and Western cultures but fully immersed in neither. The myth is borrowed from Mathews' (1997) work, where he identified Hong Kong as ethnically Chinese but somehow different from and superior to China. It includes attractions such as distinctive colonial urban landscapes, fortifications, dining establishments, and Western festivals and activities, such as self-guided walks (see Fig. 1). This myth shows how colonialism has led to a better Hong Kong. In that sense, the Victoria Harbour, which "*…is the core identity of HK*" (R2), serves as an iconic symbol of Hong Kong's international status and is featured prominently in promotion campaigns. The Victoria Harbour connotes the colonial status of Hong Kong as a major trading post that evolved into a forward-looking and vibrant economy with an international reputation. It celebrates the existence of a unique lifestyle—"*[T]he harbour is the sign of Hong Kong's history, which all Hong Kong people know*" (R2)—which encapsulates the idea that Hong Kong's traditional Western connections have improved on its Chineseness, distinguishing it from other Chinese cities (Ma, 1998). Though the memory of the colonial period is fading, its legacy lingers and is recognized as a significant myth in creating a strong and unique brand image of Hong Kong as the only Western city in the East (Okano & Wong, 2004). As "Asia's world city," Hong Kong is international but with the unique hybrid cultural features of being "*…a natural, vital and multicultural gateway not only to and from China, but also to the rest of Asia and beyond*" (Brand HK, 2012).

The suites of walks in Hong Kong also exemplify the Chinese-plus myth. "Avenue of Stars" (see Fig. 3) celebrates the contributions of the media-oriented popular culture through the emergence of artistic genres like Kung Fu movies and its star Bruce Lee in the cultural consciousness of Hong Kong, turning Hong Kong into the center of an "alternative" Chineseness: a hybrid culture of East and West. By also symbolizing the axiomatic capitalist and consumerist identity of the city, the rise of a media-driven pop culture broke cultural barriers that had accumulated since colonization and facilitated the emergence in the popular imagination of Hong Kong's cultural independence (Anderson, 1991). Today, the juxtaposition of the walk in Kowloon with Victoria Harbor in the background, achieves the double feat of (i) celebrating the phenomenon of East meets West through Cantonese pop culture and the city's British colonial past, and (ii) reinforcing through tourism the metaphorical representation and narrative of this Chinese-plus myth in one of the world's most iconic ports.

Ironically, Chinese language materials provide stronger support than the English versions to Hong Kong's "Chinese-plus" identity, consistent with Bhabha's (1990, p. 293) "doubleness" role of writing in the construction of "the nation" for the people which it simultaneously objectifies. For example, the Chinese material describes the Peak on Hong Kong Island as "*… designed by the famous architect Terry Farrell*" (HKTB, 2011a), serving as a reminder to Chinese visitors of Hong Kong's international links.

Numerous references to Hong Kong's colonial past in Chinese language materials likewise do not appear in English materials. To explain this discrepancy, respondents evoked the necessity to address the different needs of different market segments: "*We will make some minor adjustments… depending on the customer needs* (R1); the different cultural sensibilities of different source markets: "*if the publications are targeting Chinese tourists, we usually have our cover page with a visual of young people, a family or a young couple*" (R2); and mere linguistic differences: "*Of course there are differences between the English version and the simplified Chinese version in terms of the exact wording. However, the key*

Fig. 3. Picture of avenue of stars (taken by the first author replicating the HKTB picture).

messages are the same" (R3). However, projecting different contents accentuates Hong Kong's separateness and difference in the local consciousness and in the minds of the Chinese and international tourists.

History is also chronicled differently. While the English brochure of the Hong Kong Museum of Coastal Defence (Hong Kong Walks) states that "...*the Museum of Coastal Defence features a Reception Area, Redoubt and Historical Trail that paint a vivid picture of Britain's readiness to defend Hong Kong against any aggressors*," the Chinese brochure mentions that "*the renovation of the museum aimed to match the exhibition and to deliver a vivid experience for the customers and at the same time allow them to understand the cost of war*" (HKTB, 2011b). The nature of the message thus ascribes a political meaning to both difference and omission. The term "aggressors" in English relates to Russia and Japan. In that context, language is consciously used as a worldmaking agent that reinforces the differentiated making of the place, people, knowledge and history. This dual approach is also reflective of the unequal power relationship, signified not only by language (Chinese vs. English) but also by the myths it purports to create and narrate. Myths are deliberately and unconsciously, politically and historically charged such that the resulting political signification and correctness trumps the ideal of historical truth. Rhetoric and its objectives are therefore not neutral (White, 1973).

Contemporary PRC

The post-Handover political situation of Hong Kong warrants special attention. du Cros (2004) believes that different Hong Kong national myths have emerged in the post-Handover period to position Hong Kong as a progressive, free, predominantly Chinese but multicultural part of China. This

fourth myth, the "PRC national myth" is temporally and characteristically postcolonial. It is symbolised by the Golden Bauhinia Square (5), the site at which Hong Kong was returned to China (see Fig. 1), which for mainland Chinese tourists is an iconic attraction that is symbolic of being "the remains of Western domination of the SAR, now back in Chinese hands" (Arlt, 2008, p.140). Based on Holt's (2004) explanation of the role of myths in cultural branding, Bauhinia Square symbolises a broader contradiction with the national Chinese ideology such that the myth is deemed to be created. The contemporary PRC myth thus has implications for both China and Hong Kong. To the Hong Kong Tourism Board, the symbolism of the place lies in the cultural contradiction it represents as Hong Kong moves from the periphery of the British colonial empire to its emerging symbolic identity of a populist world, defined as an autonomous place where people's actions are perceived to be guided by intrinsic authentic [Chinese] values (Holt, 2004), on the periphery of a broader, altered Chinese PRC myth.

This dichotomy is not unexpected, as postcolonial Hong Kong continues to embody compelling (pre-PRC) myths that provide sustenance to these contradictions. The colonial legacy transforms tourism into an area of contested meanings in the postcolonial as Hong Kong continues to project itself as distinct from the image of China to instead celebrate its "otherness." The various manifestations of the colonial legacy thus empower Hong Kong to maintain its stronghold on the directive role it plays in the imaginative creation of tourism and heritage sites that in turn enable the [Hong Kong] nation to pursue the possible enunciations of articulated meanings and national significance. Its adopted title as "Asia's World City" is a conscious positioning of Hong Kong as an international destination, part of Asia [and not of China] that recognizes the motif of fused cultures (HKTB, 2011a).

The global nature of tourism accentuates this tension, as the various "scapes" of late capitalism magnify the complexities of relationships underlying the culture industries and national identities (Appadurai, 1990). The appeal of the colonial legacy is tangible and continues to have an impact, opening up a re-imagined postcolonial "transmodernity" (Venn, 2006a). It also provides the tourist industry with marketable elements and myths that appeal to tourists (Mok & Dewald, 1999). As a dynamic agent in the selection and production of rhetoric in the construction of place, tourism becomes a critical communicator of Hong Kong as postcolonial. It does so by re-conceptualizing power and place and by facilitating the co-articulation of collaborative compossibility in the production of the place through the agency of other cultural identities anchored in arts and education (Venn, 2006b) based on dynamic evolutive hybrid myths.

The language used, however, has a significant impact on the projection of tourism. There is stronger evidence of China nation building in Chinese language tourism materials. In the Chinese description of the Hong Kong Heritage Museum (opened after the Handover),"*Hong Kong is a Chinese City*" and "*a perception exists that before the British occupation of Hong Kong in 1842, Hong Kong was just a barren piece of stone... this view will be immediately eliminated from your mind. Indeed, long before the British occupation, agriculture and fisheries had been developed for hundreds of years.*" This information was not included in the English version. Likewise, "*The* '*Hong Kong Story*' *exhibition is divided into eight galleries, beginning with the 400 million years Devonian and ending with the Handover to the motherland in 1997*" (Hong Kong History Museum, HKTB, 2011a); this text is included only in Chinese and is omitted from the English version. Chinese tourism narratives tend to emphasize Hong Kong's long-standing connections with China. For instance, the English description of the Golden Bauhinia Square is factual and rather nostalgic, highlighting that "*Prince Charles was present to witness the relinquishing of what had often been described as the richest jewel in the British Crown.*" The Chinese version is more patriotic, noting "*The flag is hoisted at 8 a.m. and brought down at 6 p.m. every day, attracting many tourists and citizens.*"

It thus becomes clear how rhetorical devices and narratives are used in the production of cultural representations. The choice to project cultural discourses of tourism by "the stilling of certain voices, the subjugation of alternative knowledge," (McKay, 1994, p. 247) in either language reveals not only different historical interpretations in promotional activities, but also a "cultural cooking of images" (McKay, 1994, p. 223) that constitutes power struggles consequential to the contestation of Hong Kong's colonial legacy. The contemporary PRC myth therefore enables Hong Kong tourism authorities to position the territory's identity through selective symbolism (Hall & Tucker, 2004) so as to bring about natural changes (sublimation) that in practice will eventually totalize through systematic reconstitution (in combination with or without other myths). Therefore, the role of tourism as agent

of representation and exteriorization of Hong Kong is signified through its "Hong Kongness" or its local Chineseness.

Conclusion

To explore how "national myths" are employed in positioning Hong Kong as a tourist destination, this study examined the postcolonial as an area of contested meanings, which has an impact on how Hong Kong is presented through its tourism materials. In response to a call by Hollinshead (2009, p. 526) for further "longitudinal descriptivist interpretations" in political analyses in Tourism Studies, the paper extensively discusses and describes how tourism assumes a symbolic authority to constitutively and ideologically exteriorize (Hou, 2012) Hong Kong by signifying its identity through myths. The approach employed is distinctive, as it portrays Hong Kong as a "postcolonial tourism destination" for China.

The study demonstrated that the unique geo-political and historical situation of Hong Kong has led to the creation of four types of national myths promoted by the local destination marketing organization that are associated with the singular identity: the "archaic Chinese" myth, the "bustling Hong Kong" myth, the "Chinese-plus" myth, and the "contemporary PRC myth. Taken together, these myths enable the tourism authorities to use the uniqueness of Hong Kong as a powerful creator of hybrid "social knowledge" or "held truths" to strengthen the city's appeal. This extends Hou's (2012) constitutive exteriorization of [China] through the symbolic authority of tourism and suggests that such interpretations and justifications are applicable to hybrid places. Indeed, the local indigenous Chinese culture and its historical legacy highlight national identity as prism through which the politics of space and culture in tourism are refracted. This dual nature of Hong Kong enables its tourism efforts, through languages (Chinese and English), to reflect both internally (on tourism itself) and externally (the exteriorization of its national expression) to provide contested meanings to identity that are clearly embedded in its postcoloniality. Interestingly, this study conveys the idea that in its relations with China, Hong Kong seems to exercise its "power of contestation" through tourism in the postcolonial by asserting its local Chineseness. It shows the dual representation of tourism, which by encompassing the broader issues of identity, heritage and history, signifies a cultural history to the Chinese market different from its cultural genealogy (Appadurai, 1990) as an international icon.

Clearly, the "One Country, Two Systems" model has enabled Hong Kong to firmly embrace its unique local identity as a means of resistance to the metropolitan center (Fung, 2001). China's decision to adopt a "non-interfering" approach is also unambiguously related to the broader and thornier issue of ultimate re-unification with Taiwan. These facts, however, cannot fully explain the reasons for the widening identity gap between Hong Kong and China. As this study demonstrates, today's tremolos are history at work. The discourse of tourism is quintessentially politically charged. This study argues (through the Chinese-plus myth) that the current trend towards global transnationalism could provide the solution to the identity conundrum on the southern coast of China. As such, tourism as agency exhibits hybrid authority (Venn, 2006b) to bring about changes in public discourses on its significance. With its fundamental objective of promoting the uniqueness of a place, tourism marketing highlights the dilemma of promoting a unique Hong Kong out of postcolonial hybridity. An alternate explanation lies in the fact that tourism marketing is heavily influenced by politics, with a small and occasionally with a capital "P" (Crick, 2003 and Pike, 2005), which highlights the reality that the tourism industry must be cognizant of public sentiment when positioning a destination in the market. In that perspective, a broadening of critical tourism research to other postcolonial "hybrid" contexts of multicultural and plural societies would be useful to ascertain whether, and if so, how they use tourism to declare their differences (through myths?) in the face of increasing competition in the international arena.

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