Architecture as a Product of Tourism Consumption

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Abstract. Nevertheless, iconic architecture assists in the identification of a place, city or precinct, so, structural, functional and aesthetic aspects of architecture, particularly those that represent unique features, attract tourists. Architecture, according to Aldo Rossi, "is at the same time a place, an event and a symbol". Apart from the construction in the "traditional" sense that one perceives, it is also the process by which a building is lined up. It is therefore understood that the concept of architecture which is used, depending on the purpose, as a means of representation, use, impression, but also commercialization. In particular, regarding to the relationship between Architecture and Tourism, buildings and spaces are understood as "products", that means as a series of enhancing activities while at the same time are completing the image and identity of a place (place branding). The aim of this study is to explore the value of iconic buildings to tourism, while assessing their economic and social value in tourism using the benefit transfer method. For example, the Sydney Opera House is exemplary in this respect and is estimated to contribute "US $ 640 million in annual expenses to visitors to Sydney", as it attracts visitors, indirectly encouraging them to spend the night and further. Concluding, it is noted that the value of virtual architecture is often attributed to the construction of brick and reinforced concrete, while the wider benefits that a building can offer are often overlooked or underestimated. However, what attracts the most stray visitors is the design of the buildings and the virtual architecture which in turn identify a part (country or city) of these important landmarks. While the goal of architects is not to create tourist attractions with economic benefits, however, many are increasingly aware that successful design and functional buildings become attractions for visitors on their own – which form an external environment that requires appreciation, so in the end to end up like tourist products.

1. Introduction

Actually, one of the first things in human mind when hearing about a particular place is usually a typical building, often a landmark, its architectural expression or even a representative landscape. There are buildings, monuments, cities, etc., not only in Greece, but also internationally, which function as tourist attractions without this being the initial goal of their construction. However, there are other buildings, monuments, etc., which were erected serving this purpose, in order to contribute to the tourist promotion of a country. In short, it is commonplace that architecture is an important axis in shaping a country's tourism policy.

Architecture, according to Aldo Rossi, "is at the same time a place, an event and a symbol" [1]. Apart from the construction in the "traditional" sense that one perceives, it is also the process by which a building is lined up. So, the architecture’s concept which is used every time, depends on the purpose, like as a means of representation, use, impression, but also sometime as a means of commercialization. In particular, regarding to the relationship between Architecture and Tourism, buildings and spaces are
often understood as "products" (Figures 1, 2, 3), that is, as a series of enhancing activities while at the same time are completing the image and identity of a place (place branding).

**Figure 1.** The Parthenon, Athens’s landmark.

**Figure 2.** The Chinese Wall, China.

**Figure 3.** Amsterdam: The canal city, Holland. Both of them are considered landmarks of their countries

2. Goals and thoughts

The aim of this presentation is to investigate the value of emblematic buildings in tourism, while assessing their economic and social value in tourism using the benefit transfer method [2]. For example, the Sydney Opera House is exemplary in this regard and is estimated to contribute “AU$640 million in yearly expenditure by visitors to Sydney” as it pulls visitors to Sydney, indirectly encouraging overnight stays and visitor spending [3]. In addition, the use of architecture as a tool for shaping the image of a place (place branding), to become a tourist attraction is part of the presentation. In particular, an attempt is made to investigate the way in which architecture has contributed as a tool of official bodies with the aim of promoting tourism both in Greece and worldwide. Particularly, an attempt is made to investigate the way in which architecture has been contributed as a tool of official bodies with the aim of promoting tourism both in Greece and worldwide.
Finally, an attempt will be made to explore the following questions: 1) what kind (monuments, buildings, landscapes) and what era seem to prevail in an image? 2) Is the image that is projected valid or is it a balance between reality and illusion? 3) How and where is the concept of scenography located? What is the relationship between actor (locals), spectator (visitor) and stage (architecture)?

3. Valuing Architecture
Buildings are valued according to their architectural qualities. According to Roman architect and theorist Vitruvius good architecture is defined by the three qualities of firmitas – firmness, utilitas – utility and venustas – delight [4]. Firmitas or firmness relates to the structural and technical aspects of the building. Conditions of firmness include the materials used, structures, kinds of enclosures and spaces created, and environmental conditions incorporating light and sound, air, heat and ventilation. Utility includes the functional and social performance of buildings which varies according to the intent of the use of the building. Delight refers to “what the building looks like and how it appears to the eye” [4].

Subsequently, the aesthetics of a building extends to ways in which buildings are able to engage the mind. Examples include iconic buildings that make cities easily recognisable, historic buildings that capture the commemoration of famous events and people, and galleries and museums that hold and display cultural values and serve as places of focus and inspiration that bring people (communities) together. Aesthetic or image value and cultural value were added later. Aesthetic value is achieved through the contribution of identity, vision and reputation and as ways in which groups, institutions, and cities express ideas, ambitions and intentions. Cultural value creates a sense of place by connecting location, context and patterns of historical development incorporating cultural symbolism and social meaning [5]-[6]-[7]. The aesthetic and cultural value creates intangible social and community benefits that extend the value beyond the land and bricks and mortar value of the building (Figure 4).

Figure 4. The CCTV Building in Beijing has come to represent ‘new’ China and reinterprets the traditional skyscraper form (2008). Architect: Rem Koolhaas.
4. Architecture as a product of tourist consumption and the phenomenon of Architourism

According to the above, it is difficult to refer to tourism without including architecture, since architecture is a good of tourist consumption and objective tourist capital. On the other hand, Maitland and Newman support that visitors are not attracted to tourist attractions but to "qualities of place and culture such as architecture, people, food, culture and diversity."[8] Virtual architecture (buildings, landmarks, monuments) is particularly tempting as it identifies a place, country or city. But, the structural, functional and aesthetic aspects of architecture, and especially those that represent unique features, are those which attract tourists.

![Figure 5. Apartments building in New York, USA, Architects: Herzog & Meuron, (2017).](image)

![Figure 6. The Gherkin, London, Architect: Norman Foster (2004).](image)

Initially, the phenomenon of Architourism (Architecture +Tourism) was observed from the 17th to the 19th century, when architecture was a destination for a trip, for many of European travellers (Grand Tours), who usually had a high level of education and a similar financial surface, were traveling in a place to admire up close its culture, art and especially its architecture. Thus, many North Americans and Europeans travelled to major capitals, such as Paris, Florence, Rome, Venice, London, and Athens, searching inspiration, knowledge and experience. An important element for the consolidation of this phenomenon was the publication of travel guides or travel albums, where travellers recorded their experiences along with photos, sketches, drawings, etc. So with a photo or a tour description, the reader associatively formed an image for a place. [9]-[10]

It is now clear that tourism, as a means of cultural exchange, depends to a large extent on the creation and spread of a "visual identity". In addition, tourism is based on the "invention" of desire and motivation to participate and become part of a place or culture, with the belief that it will benefit in any way. Thus, where tourists were looking for majestic cathedrals and monumental buildings, such as St. Peter in Rome and the Louvre in Paris, now their interest seems to shift to modern culture, looking for buildings of particular interest, by modern architects who are alive. Some of these are: Norman Foster buildings in London, buildings of Rem Koolhaas, Herzog & Meuron and other leading architects (Figures 5, 6).
A typical example of how architecture helped changing the image of a place by making it a popular destination is Berlin. After this ruined and damaged city was rebuilt after years with great success, it returned dynamically to the place of a great cultural capital of Europe. In addition, the modern architectural buildings in Berlin, which was strongly look like images from Hollywood movies, are inseparably linked to the names of the architects who designed them: Norman Foster with Reichstag, the Dutchman Rem Koolhaas with the Dutch embassy, Frank Gehry the main buildings of DG BankZ, etc. (Figures 7,8,9) It is worth noting that the Jewish Museum, a project designed by the architect Daniel Libeskind in Berlin has been visited by thousands of people just to admire the imposing architecture of this particular architect.\[2]-[6]
But the most important example of architecture as a product of tourist consumption is the Guggenheim Museum, designed by Frank Gehry in Bilbao, Spain (1997) (Figure 10). This museum is considered so catalytic that it is an example of Place branding, even putting the new term of "Bilbao Effect" replacing the existing term of Architourism. Obviously, it was the first time that a single building managed to change a provincial industrial city, without so important history, into a popular tourist destination. Like Frank Lloyd Wright's Guggenheim Museum in New York (Figure 11), Bilbao is a landmark in the history of Architectural buildings, mainly, due to the strong "photogenic" building form, a Frank Gehry’s special characteristic.[11] Especially, this architect usually creates a peculiar architecture giving emphasis to the image than to the essence, composing distinct forms that do not being unnoticed; rising comments both negatively and positively.

A new example of this aestheticisation is the Gehry designed building for the University of Technology Sydney Business School – the Dr Chau Chak Wing building (CCW). Opened in December 2014 the CCW has already attracted multitudes of visitors who wander in and around the building, gazing at its unique architectural form and presence (Figure 12). There is no doubt that visitors come to see the building as much as students come to be educated. The exterior and interior of the CCW is creative, innovative, provocative and “a space where creativity is encouraged and all ideas
are welcome” [12]. Effectively the CCW has changed the landscape, scale, tempo, visitor activity, and ‘feel’ of the city experience in the Haymarket precinct. The CCW is emerging as an anchor attraction to the Sydney Opera House (Figure 13) pulling visitors from one end of the city to another. As such, the Sydney Opera House and the CCW are demonstrating that space, people, activity and architecture dialectically interact to shape the experience of the visitor. Yet, beyond the Sydney Opera House, few studies have estimated the economic value of iconic architecture to tourism, because SOH is the most comprehensive which is conducted for a single iconic building identified and takes into account economic, audience and social elements, brand strength, and digital footprint. [13]-[14]-[15]

![Figure 12. The Dr Chau Chak Wing building (CCW). A building for the University of Technology Sydney Business School (2014), Architect: Frank Gehry](image)

![Figure 13. The Sydney Opera House (1959-1973), Architect: Jorn Utzon](image)

5. Architecture as a product of tourist consumption in Greece

Greece, at the time of the transition from touring to tourism, was one of the popular destinations mainly for the citizens of European countries. A key element that is widely used in posters of the Hellenic Tourism Organization (EOT) for the Greek tourism promotion is the classical monument and its symbol, the Parthenon. Particularly, is observed in the first poster of the organization, in 1929, where the Parthenon has been photographed through, the entrance to Acropolis hill, Propylaea (Figure 14a), with Nelly's signature (the Greek photographer with international recognition), that the use of this classical antiquity monument architecture is dominated, being for ages the symbol and landmark of Greece, having as a goal to attract the visitors interest.[6]
Since the Acropolis is the most internationally recognizable monument, when the visitor is coming to Greece expects to see in front of him the Acropolis, as well as, an equally important monument of antiquity era in its "authentic" form, as is case when someone is traveling in Tuscany area in Italy to see important Renaissance era buildings, also in their "authentic" form. [9]

However, apart from the Architecture that is inseparably linked to the classical antiquity monuments of Greek culture, the traditional architecture was also promoted (mainly the Aegean island traditional architecture), because the geographical wealth of Greece, the unique landscapes, the beaches and the picturesque harbours, are a powerful "tourism product", as well (Figures 14b, c). In fact, the popular Greek architect Aris Konstantinidis, in his book "The Architecture’s Architecture".
states that: “...in Greece the landscape prevails, artistically made by nature, compared to the built one in relation to other countries where the built landscape is more interested attracting people ...”.[17]

Nevertheless, the "shadow" of the historical ancient monuments in Greece is intense, the modern architecture as a tourist product was absent until the advent of the 21st century. Quite often, Aris Konstantinidis has referred to his texts on Greek modern architecture and tradition, in an attempt to interpret the fact that Greece is unable to present remarkable examples of modern architecture. Among other things, he states, "that the obsession for preserving the old was born from the inability to build something new and worthy as the old". [17]

![Stavros Niarchos Foundation Cultural Center in Athens, Greece, 2016, Architect: Renzo Piano](image)

Figure 16. Stavros Niarchos Foundation Cultural Center in Athens, Greece, 2016, Architect: Renzo Piano

Though, in 2009, the new Acropolis Museum (Figure 15) opened in Athens for the public under the sacred rock, a project of the international architect Bernard Tschumi in collaboration with the Greek architect Michalis Fotiadis and in 2016, the Stavros Niarchos Foundation Cultural Center (Figure 16) was constructed, designed by the Italian architect Renzo Piano and the collaborators of the Renzo Piano Building Workshop architectural office. These two internationally awarded buildings have become poles of attraction for thousands of visitors daily, because both are dynamic buildings of modern architecture and operate as landmarks in Athens city. Especially, the imposing monumental building of the Acropolis Museum is combined very aptly with the classic ancient monument, the Parthenon, and the other classic ancient buildings of the hill.

6. Conclusions
In conclusion, it is noted that the value of virtual architecture is often attributed to the construction of brick and reinforced concrete, while the wider benefits that a building can offer are often overlooked or underestimated. However, what attracts the most stray visitors is the design of the buildings and the virtual architecture which in turn identify a part (country or city) of these important landmarks. While the goal of architects is not to create tourist attractions with economic benefits, however, many are increasingly aware that successful design and functional buildings become attractions for visitors on their own – which form an external environment that requires appreciation, so in the end to end up like tourist products.
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