

KITSCH AND CAMP IN TOURISM AND HOTEL INDUSTRY

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***Abstract:** Kitsch and camp are phenomena that are deeply involved in contemporary everyday life. Understanding these phenomena requires multidisciplinary research in the fields of art, sociology, culture, psychology, and management, that is, market economy, in which tourism is placed as an economic activity, and so is hotel industry, as its material basis. Kitsch in tourism is mostly prominent in hotel management, especially in the field of interior design. There are certain types of hotels such as themed, boutique, design, HIP, "lifestyle." Those are establishments that are different and to whose ambience special attention is paid. They are attractive, attracting specific market segments. They were created because their creators recognized the lifestyle and consumer behavior of individual user groups belonging to specific cultures and subcultures. Understanding and accepting the ambience of these hotels, in accordance with their "magnetism" for specific guests, inevitably leads us to the concepts of kitsch and camp.*

***Keywords:** camp, design, hotel, kitsch, principles, tourism*

Introduction

The emergence of kitsch in tourism is reflected in the pursuit of commercialization of the tourist experience. Cheap copies of world-famous and renowned tourist attractions are made available to mass tourists in various ways. Usually, those are souvenirs, but also events that, with their imitative essence, pander to the prevailing taste and behavior of mass tourists. Here, the purchasing or possessive attitude towards the world, i.e. towards a tourist trip, a tourist attraction and an experience, comes to the fore (Comic et. al., 2001). It is characterized by an obsessive need of tourists to possess, and by the material evidence of the journey and accommodation. A superficial attitude towards tourist values is reflected in the tourists' specific behavior. They are busy taking photos and buying souvenirs, whereas the essential experience in contact with tourist values seems less important to them. Shaping the offer of a tourist destination in accordance with the needs of mass tourists gives legitimacy to kitsch. This is reflected in the creation of "cultural" contents of

an intangible nature, which are increasingly losing their authenticity and connection with the local tradition. These contents can easily slip into kitsch, especially when they are guided by the sole desire for achieving economic benefits (Petroman et. al., 2013).

Hotel industry provides a wide space for the application of kitsch in tourism. The classic definition of hotel industry as “the material basis of tourism” has long been superseded. Hotel industry today is much more than that. Following market trends, specific types of hotels that deserve the epithet of tourist attractions by themselves stand out. Hotels are becoming complex tourist creations that meet numerous and varied needs of tourists. In order to better position themselves in the market, hotels find ways to be different from the competition, usually by eccentric solutions in the field of interior design. This often leads to kitsch. However, on the other hand, hotels show the ability to overcome kitsch in its usual forms of expression by applying camp.

The Concept and the Essential Characteristics of Kitsch

The term “kitsch” comes from the German cultural context, from Munich and the fight for a place in the official culture. Avant-garde artists used this term to signify official, formal, academic art, and abstract artists determined all “objective” art as “kitsch.” Today the word “kitsch” is accepted in most European and in many languages of the world as populist and popular art, sometimes even naive, i.e. spontaneous art, which does not come back to its avant-garde historical sources. The term has been used so much in the history of literature and art that today it no longer covers any individual case, but it implies a vast area of production that is recognized, but very difficult to define (Slapsak, 2009).

According to an Oxford dictionary definition (<http://www.oxforddictionaries.com>), kitsch is explained as art, or an art object characterized by worthless pretension. Kitsch is associated with a reduction in the aesthetic of objects and ideas (Baudrillard, 1998). Kitsch is a creation of low value, whose artistic pretensions are to be available to the widest range of people. Kitsch panders to an undeveloped taste and is often on the edge of acceptability in terms of aesthetic and moral criteria. However, kitsch, as a form of mass pseudo-artistic expression, causes a strong emotional charge in their followers (Bozovic, 2005). Kitsch is treated as merchandise that needs to be sold at any price, regardless of the consequences. Kitsch is a side effect of mass culture. However, the distribution and magnetism of kitsch are reflected in its appeal. A key feature of kitsch is a shallow, superficial, fleeting impression, i.e. emotion, which in no sense contributes to a spiritual and intellectual development, even though it is made by people who are not devoid of aesthetic experience and criteria.

The emergence of kitsch is associated with the industrial revolution in America and Europe, which brought massive migration from the countryside to cities, literacy, and the “instant” education of a large number of people whose lifestyle created some new, also, “instant” cultural needs. It is kitsch that had the power to meet these needs. More specifically, kitsch emerged to satisfy these needs, suddenly sprang up from lifestyle changes, deprived of continuity in education, intellectual development, the aesthetic, ethical and spiritual maturation of the individual.

Kitsch is opposed to creative and spiritual endeavors. It is treated as one of the “modern sins of mankind,” embedded in objects and the nuanced weaknesses of human spirit and the power of his senses.

Theorists overcome difficulties in defining kitsch by explaining its manifestation in society, shaping specific principles (Mol, 1973). One of the most recognizable principles of kitsch is the principle of cumulation, or accumulation. It refers to, for example, the accumulation of jewelry, interior design decorations, and the like. The following distinctive principle of kitsch is the principle of synesthetic perception, i.e. simultaneous aesthetic experience using multiple senses. This principle is compatible with the previous one, given that accumulation by itself activates different senses at the same time. A principle of kitsch that is very widespread and recognized is the principle of comfort. This principle expresses the human need for making as less effort as possible— physically and intellectually. In this context, high technology, mechanization and automation launch products whose ease of use deprive people of unnecessary effort. On the other hand, the absence of physical exertion entails a lack of desire for intellectual effort, which means that people do not have the need to understand “serious” works of art, to try to comprehend the essential idea and the point of the artist, thus they find a stronghold in the conformist dimension of kitsch that leads them to intellectual laziness.

Kitsch is based on these three key principles that work synergistically. These principles form the basis for the identification of the main attributes of kitsch, such as: inauthenticity, commerciality, hybridity, sentimentalism, spectacularity, aggression, imitativeness (Bozovic, 2009).

Kitsch in Hotel Industry

A hotel is not only a commercial establishment, i.e. a spatial-functional framework for the realization of the services of accommodation, F&B, entertainment, recreation, relaxation, and the like. A hotel is much more than that. It is a specific cultural and socio-psychological stage, on which guests and employees alternate in different roles.

The pervasive competitive struggle in the market has forced hoteliers to understand that they cannot only meet the existential needs of guests by

providing basic catering services. Hotels also strive to meet the socio-psychological and cultural needs of the guests, to penetrate to the core of their consumer behavior, to adapt to their wishes and requirements. This means that hotels want to provide their guests with a cloying, sentimental, idyllic picture of the world in the reflection of a pink mirror. Therefore, along comes kitsch, as an important tool in the fight against the competition, as an instrument for attracting clients. There is a link between stereotypes and kitsch, and it is reflected in standardization (Uysal Urey, 2013). We refer to an uncritical and non-selective application of standardization, which stifles the uniqueness of hotel offers and leads to stereotypes. On the other hand, the standardization of kitsch in hotels lies in the predictability of the guests' reaction to their basic features. In this context, by incorporating kitsch, not only in interior design, but also in the shaping of the entire ambience, hotels recognize the needs of their clients. In this way, kitsch-clients get the possibility to satisfy their kitsch-needs; they are encouraged to continue to develop their wishes and requirements in the same direction, which the hotel will meet with its offer, for appropriate compensation. In addition, marketing encourages the elements of kitsch in the offer, by its aggressive and oversized impact on the senses, simulating the potential experience and effects of consuming the hotel product.

This can be seen in examples of themed hotels. A themed hotel has emerged as one of the forms of materialization of postmodern tendencies in tourism. The point is that the most famous world's tourist attractions are the key factor in the development of these hotels. They are the main theme for the construction, equipping, decorating, i.e. for the creation of themed hotel products.

The area of Nevada desert in the United States, i.e. today's Las Vegas, is the most important meeting place for themed hotels in the world. The most famous themed hotels are replicas of well-known world cities ("New York, New York", "Paris", "Venetian"), enliven the ancient Egyptian and other ancient civilizations ("Luxor", "Caesars Palace") or the ambience of the Middle Ages ("Excalibur"). Themed hotels simulate different places and events with their structures, content, and ambience inspired by the previously chosen theme. These hotels are tourist attractions by themselves (Kosar, Lj., 2013).

The above-mentioned principles and attributes of kitsch are clearly manifested in the design of the hotel ambience. The principle of accumulating in the interior design is almost ubiquitous. It does not apply only to the design of hotel space, where we mainly refer to the stationary equipment, but also to the inventory, the way of serving, the sensory qualities of food products. This principle inevitably supplements the principle of synesthetic perception, which aggressively insists on the simultaneous activation of different senses. When it comes to the hotel ambience, we primarily refer to the activation of the senses of sight and hearing. The interior overloaded with details, and therefore,

debatable in aesthetic terms, becomes “enriched” with a new dimension of kitsch by adding light effects.

Music is an inevitable component of the hotel ambience, common for public spaces, primarily in the food and beverage sector. Elevators and other communication space (staircases, hallways), as well as accommodation units equipped with music are increasingly present. However, over-dimensioning the experience, causing short-term emotions with the help of music is expressed in hotel management in the organization of different events – formal lunches and dinners, banquets and other celebrations, where the music program combining visual and auditory effects is often abundant with elements of kitsch. Kitsch in the choice of music for dedicated events, as well as generally, in the context of the supportive function of the hotel ambience, greatly degrades the taste, moderation, and refinement of the interior design of the hotel.

The Concept and the Essential Characteristics of Camp

We can speak about camp in the context of the subcultures that emerged in the period between the 1960s and the 1970s. Contemporary subcultures originate, among other things, from the cultural underground, and are supported by the moral anarchism of camp (Bozinovic, 2009). The sensibility of camp is seen as archness, irony, theatricalization. Camp is explained as a parody that is considered to be one of the basic features of postmodern art (Hutcheon, 1989). The determination of camp as “creative weirdness” is remarkable. As a lifestyle, camp synthesizes the aesthetic, ethical, anthropological, philosophical, socio-psychological dimensions. Camp is a lie that tells the truth. Camp can refer to scandalous poverty or low social background in snobbish circles, as well as to a physical defect in times of domineering beauty. But, in addition to covering up the secret, camp also reveals it, for the reason of its equal deviance of the substituent behavior, and that is its ambivalence (Kor, 2003).

Given that engaging in defining camp is a “Sisyphean task,” listing its key features will serve us to understand its essence. Camp is thoughtless, snobbish, obstinate, always personal, never universal. Camp is an expression of rebellion against stereotypes, conventionality, boredom, and predictability of everyday life. The word “camp” originates from the French slang, where the verb “se camper” loosely translates as “to present yourself in an exaggerated or overly modern way.” The essential feature of camp is, in fact, posing. In other words, camp supporters are posers. However, their appearance and behavior are not motivated by the imperative “to be trendy.” Their motive is caricatural, ironic. Camp gives priority to form over content, irony over tragedy (Muzafertija, 2008). Camp talks about the aesthetics of ugliness, which opposes the classical criteria of beauty. Camp culture represents the lifestyle of

minority. The moment when it starts to go into conventional social trends, it threatens to slip into kitsch, which means sentimentality, cloyingness, quaintness. Kitsch offers comfortable certainty, while camp offers adventure.

However, linkages between kitsch and camp are inevitable. Camp should be seen as conscious toying with kitsch. By overemphasizing kitsch features, it is striven towards their negation, with which they obtain a caricatural and ironic nature, and even approach art.

Camp in Hotel Industry

Camp as an exaggerated approach to aesthetics, as a possibility of playing with kitsch, is a challenge for hotel interior designers. Eccentricity driven by the desire to be different from the competition often leads to camp, which particularly refers to boutique, design, lifestyle, or HIP hotels. Boutique hotels are small, usually urban hotels of different design, personalized service, and usually independent ownership. Design hotels are recognizable by their architecture and interior design. HIP hotels synthesize the basic features of boutique and design hotels. The acronym HIP means Highly Individual Places. Due to extraordinary originality in the construction, furnishing, design, service delivery style, these hotels are more than establishments that provide accommodation. Lifestyle hotels are a unique combination of the above mentioned types that are adapted to the user's lifestyle (Kosar, Lj., 2014).

The main market trump of all these specialized types of hotels is difference. Aesthetic overemphasizing, oversizing, over-modernity, which can be presented in an exaggerated use of high technology, make these hotels attractive to the very narrow market niche. These people recognize camp manners that govern the shaping of the ambience of such hotels. They are willing to pay for such excellence, exclusivity, and eccentricity that attracts them. Guests of these hotels are not always necessarily true "camp supporters," i.e. members of the camp subculture that manifest their affiliation with the camp lifestyle. The existence of such hotels offers its guests a temporary, brief foray into the camp world. As an example of application of camp in the shaping of hotel ambience, we can use the hotel "Seven" in Paris. It is a futuristic boutique hotel in whose rooms there are levitating beds, optically illuminated fabrics, a fragrance dispenser connected to TV channels (www.sevenhotelparis.com).

Conclusion

Kitsch is everywhere around us, even in the design of a hotel ambience. Examples of kitsch in hotel practices are numerous. Themed hotels in Las Vegas symbolize kitsch in hotel industry. The key principles and attributes of kitsch – oversizing, overcrowding, an attack on the senses, encouraging

intellectual laziness that is reflected in a conformist lifestyle, imitation, cloyingness, spectacularity, mannerism – converge in the hotels of Las Vegas. It is these hotels that profile Las Vegas as a kitsch tourist destination, given that replicas of world famous tourist attractions are concentrated there. The absence of desire for full tourist experience in contact with authentic cultural and artistic values is compensated for brief satisfaction with artificial creations like a clear reflection of kitsch culture that is mirrored in the integration of guests' needs and hotel offers.

We fight against kitsch in hotel industry with minimalism, simple forms, proven aesthetic criteria, which can lead us to monotony. Escaping this monotony on the road to diversity leads to the application of camp in hotel design. However, it is not always easy to distinguish between the elements of kitsch and camp in shaping the hotel ambience. Camp as a design concept can easily slip into kitsch. This happens in cases of mass appeal of camp elements, and therefore a greater availability of these establishments for broader market segments. Modernity as an imperative of camp is transformed into a fad as a feature of kitsch. Therefore, it is necessary to maintain the caricature and irony of camp, as an expression of rebellion against conventionality and stereotypes of classic catering services, on the level of attractiveness for the minor, very specific market niche.

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