

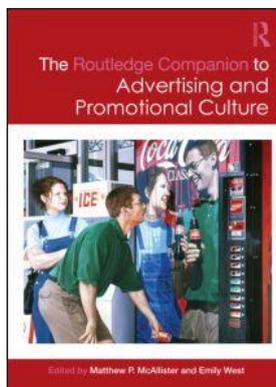
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CULTIVATING THE ROMANCE OF PLACE: MARKETING AS POPULAR GEOGRAPHY

Richard K. Popp

Tourist travel, an industry predicated on the buying and selling of experience, in many ways exemplifies the therapeutic tilt of modern consumer culture (Rothman 1998; Urry 1990). Yet, at the same time, travel's immaterial nature places it at odds with the accumulation generally taken as part and parcel of consumerism. Unlike the market for cars, electronics, clothes, and other purchases, buyers are seemingly left with relatively little to show for the money spent on vacations, outside of photographs and souvenirs. In this chapter, I argue that tourism has in fact had a very material impact on consumer culture, acting as a powerful shaping agent on the broader aesthetics of mass marketing. Advertising, industrial design, fashion, retail outlets, and leisure environments all bear the mark of touristic ways of thinking about space and place. Indeed, tourist travel provides a whole body of narratives and symbols that pass through everyday life (Löfgren 1999), helping to constitute the basic lexicon of consumer enticement: travel landscapes double as advertising dreamscapes, leisure time nourishes fantasies of abundance, and ways of being mobile speak to desires for autonomy and self-actualization.

Tourism promotion and promotional culture are, in this way, engaged in an ongoing dialogue. Travel advertising offers a steady reminder that—given the time and money—taking leave from the mundane world to temporarily immerse oneself in extraordinary environs is a distinct consumer possibility (Turner and Turner 1978). Meanwhile, everyday forms of consumption are presented as somehow akin to the heightened pleasures of space and place that come with venturing outside the boundaries of one's ordinary world. Thus tourism promotion can tell us much about how goods and services in general are sold at a particular moment: it sheds light on the longings for unique experience that everyday buying and spending are framed as substitutes for; it helps to explain how the commercial environment takes shape, materially and ideologically; and it illustrates how consumers are encouraged to understand themselves as enmeshed within far-reaching networks of commerce.

This chapter traces the development of leisure travel advertising and explores how touristic spatial sensibilities came to pervade US consumer culture during two eras: the

late Victorian age, running roughly from the 1870s through the 1910s, and the industrial modern era, running roughly from the 1920s through the 1960s. I argue that, over time, different modes of consumer consciousness have become tightly fused with modes of geographic consciousness. Or, in other words, the satisfactions and pleasures associated with buying have come to closely resemble the satisfactions and pleasures associated with movement through appealing landscapes. In both eras, touristic allusions surfaced throughout consumer culture in wide-ranging ways; and in their various manifestations they revolved around a distinctive, organizing spatial logic: imperial expansion in the late Victorian period and mass mobility during industrial modernity. Finally, I conclude by suggesting that authenticity has emerged since the 1970s as the primary means by which consumer culture draws on the tourist imagination. While these periods bled into one another and aspects of each have cropped up at different times, I argue that imperialism, mobility, and authenticity provide useful ways of periodizing the development of consumer culture. Moreover, the tourist imagination offers a window into how notions of place, identity, and social power have shaped the backdrops of consumer fantasy, and in turn helped to produce, in both an enabling and a limiting sense, the spatial environments of consumer culture (Lefebvre 1991).

Tourism, Imperialism, and Consumerism

Dating back to colonial America, leisure travel was an important part of recreational life for wealthy elites. For ruling-class young men, the Grand Tour through Europe served as a coming-of-age rite, adding a dash of cultural seasoning requisite for genteel manliness. Closer to home, merchant and planter elites sought refuge from sweltering cities at coastal islands and mineral springs (Aron 1999). But, while these vacation habits helped to structure the expectations associated with tourism, they developed outside of any formal promotional apparatus. This began to change in the early to mid-nineteenth century when a string of new transportation technologies gradually opened tourist travel to the budding metropolises' commercial class. As early as the 1820s, newly dug canals and freshly laid railways whisked bourgeois vacationers to scenic wonders throughout the rural Northeast (Sears 1989). Over the next quarter-century, visits to watering places developed into a yearly ritual of upper-middle-class life. As these travel habits took hold, brief notices for nearby resorts, boasting "the highly medicinal qualities of mineral waters" and "unsurpassed picturesque scenery," began to populate the long gray columns of newspapers like the *New York Herald* ("Greenport" 1847: 3; "Schooley's" 1847: 3). These listings, along with ads placed by travel agents like Thomas Cook & Son, would develop into a mainstay in metropolitan papers (De Santis 1978). Although their enticements offer a window into the ideals of bourgeois recreation, early Victorian newspaper ads did little to systematically cultivate romantic tableaux of place.

The sweeping social transformations associated with corporatization and industrialization in the late nineteenth century triggered promoters to begin conceptualizing and selling places in strikingly new ways. Most important to this process was the phenomenal growth of the railroads. Dating back to the antebellum era, regional railroads promoted resort communities in recognition that more tourists meant increased passenger traffic. This practice took on new scope, and eventually new shape, as rail lines stretched ocean to ocean after the Civil War. Hoping to build transcontinental traffic, railways developed spectacular Western landmarks as tourist attractions, complete with luxurious lodges, dining halls, and organized excursions (Shaffer 2001). To promote their

parks, the lines produced mounds of promotional literature. And at the same time they followed the latest advertising industry developments by promoting the parks nationally with recognizable logos and slogans (Kitch 2005).

The Lackawanna railroad's Phoebe Snow, the Great Northern's mountain goat, and others developed into nationally recognizable trademarks in the first decades of the twentieth century. And, beyond well-known figures, the railroads began to create branded landscapes. In the 1880s, the Northern Pacific dubbed the Yellowstone area "Wonderland," celebrating the region's otherworldly geothermal features, untamed wilderness, and stately native peoples. Much of this work was carried out via the railroad's promotional pamphlets and *Wonderland* travel guides. But it was reinforced in messages such as a 1906 magazine ad featuring a Yosemite scene framed by a feathered headdress ("You'll Need" 1906). To venture into the Yosemite area, as the Northern Pacific promoted it, was to recreate Lewis and Clark's trek into a foreboding and mysterious wilderness. As Shaffer (2001: 52) has written, "in making this strange landscape accessible to tourists, the railroad positioned itself and the tourist experience as a part of the larger civilizing process of westward expansion." The Santa Fe railroad did much the same for the Grand Canyon, tweaking the "Wonderland" narrative and characters to suit what it dubbed the "Titan of Chasms." Again, the railroad used national advertising to lay claim to part of the West's "enchanted" landscape. In one 1906 offering, the Santa Fe's cross-shaped crest could be seen rising like the sun over a Pueblo village ("California Limited" 1906).

The railroads' promotional activities signaled a new phase in tourism advertising. Rather than simply publicizing travel services, as newspaper advertising had done for decades, the railways carefully engineered archetypal images of place meant to speak to the geographic imagination of upper-middle-class, white Americans. Drawing on the region's rugged landscapes, marketers cast the parks as primeval worlds that promised regenerating forms of experience unavailable within Victorianism's coddling confines. "Thousands of nerve-shaken, overly civilized people," naturalist John Muir observed in 1898, "are beginning to find out that going to the mountains is going home, and that mountain parks are useful not only as fountains of timber and irrigating rivers, but fountains of life" (quoted in Shaffer 2001: 88–89). Travel advertisers nationwide seized on just this sentiment, casting wilderness areas as sanctums of virility and spiritual awakening. The Boston and Maine Railroad, for instance, targeted businessmen throughout the Northeast, emphasizing the fishing and hunting opportunities that awaited them in the Maine woods. The copy and imagery were designed, one trade journal explained, "to reach a busy man at a time when work looks exceeding hard and vacations very sweet. That it will cause him to slam down the cover of a roll-top desk with a bang, hurry away and forget to leave his address, seems certain" ("Advertising Vacations" 1909: 52).

The Western parks were not the only sites wrapped in romance. Further west, California boosters drew on the state's colonial heritage to cast it as an idyllic land of genteel missions and ranchos. Others in the Golden State seized on its mild climate, citrus groves, and seemingly endless coastline to cast it as an American Mediterranean (Culver 2010). Mining this vein, the Southern Pacific advertised its coastal "Shasta Route" by promoting the distinctly Spanish ambience of California's colonial missions ("Road" 1906). California was by no means the only place to cast itself this way. Areas as seemingly distinct as St. Augustine, Florida and Seattle, Washington were also dressed up as leisurely American Mediterraneans in national ad campaigns ("Goes through Washington" 1906; "Puget Sound" 1903). Cities were fair game for romanticizing as well.

Boosters looking to build an urban tourist trade were well aware that the grandiose boulevards, parks, and monuments that arose out of genteel reform efforts like the City Beautiful movement projected Arcadian and neoclassical qualities onto the industrial cityscape (Cocks 2001).

Such efforts occurred at a time when an interest in all things geographic resided at the center of middle-class culture. A wave of interest in anthropology and natural history, very much rooted in discourses of race, evolution, and civilization, swept through fin-de-siècle culture (Jacobson 2000). At the same time, new communication technologies, ranging from the telephone to the automobile, seemed to be redefining spatial concepts and bringing the outside world ever nearer (Kern 2003). The era's monumental fairs were perhaps the most striking example of this distinctly geographic bent in culture. Fair promoters in Nashville built a replica of the Parthenon, while Chicago organizers modeled the Columbian Exposition's White City on the baroque architecture of Renaissance Italy. If the White City looked like something out of Florence, the Midway's hodgepodge of huts, pagodas, and teepees presented a more ramshackle set of geographic allusions. Taking the Midway's pastiche for inspiration, the skylines of amusement areas like Coney Island were cut by towering pachyderms, minarets, and pagodas meant to simulate the hurly-burly atmosphere of the Orient (Hoganson 2007; Kasson 1978; Rydell 1984). While the organizers and promoters behind the Western parks, expositions, and amusement areas embraced wildly different ideals, all suggested that pleurably disposing of one's free time and money went hand in glove with occupying exotic, spectacular landscapes. Each promoted an aesthetic of the geographically novel, celebrating places that seemed to be situated, whether spatially or temporally, outside the environment of the industrial city.

This spatial sensibility fully saturated consumer culture by the turn of the twentieth century. The palatial department stores that served almost as shrines to a rising consumer ethos were decorated with sumptuous, orientalized interiors. Gimbel's in New York, for instance, featured a carpet department designed to resemble a mosque. Others, such as J. W. Wanamaker's, hosted spectacular Arabesque fashion shows. Nighttime revelers inhabited similarly exotic environs. Lavish restaurants like Murray's Roman Gardens went to great lengths to mimic the sumptuous palaces and villas of the ancient world. Similarly, New Yorkers could seek out roof gardens outfitted to resemble Dutch farms and cabarets furnished like a pirate's hideaway (Erenberg 1981; Leach 1993).

A geographically novel aesthetic pervaded the late Victorian domestic sphere as well. In perhaps the most dramatic example, the bungalows steadfastly promoted by commentators like *Ladies' Home Journal* editor Edward Bok were rooted in the architectural styles of a far-flung British empire (Jackson 1985). While they were built across the country, the style's pitched roof and lush landscaping referenced the subtropical climes occupied by imperial administrators across South Asia. Inside, homemakers took inspiration from empire as well. As Hoganson (2007) has shown, marketers encouraged American women, whether decorating their parlors or stocking their pantries, to imagine themselves at the helm of global empire, enjoying treats drawn from distant corners of the world. Setting up Arabesque cozy corners, many mimicked the orientalized interiors they found at nightspots and department stores. And not uncommonly the promotional campaigns for teas, carpets, fabrics, produce, tobacco, soaps, and many other items depicted conquered indigenous people at the command of white Westerners (Hoganson 2007; McClintock 2000). At times, advertisers likened the appeals of absorbing mass-produced goods with the pleasures of touristic voyages through the Ori-

ent. A Palmolive (1904) ad, for instance, featured a white woman in exotic dress lounging on a divan as a dark-skinned woman presented her with a tray of oils. Behind both employer and servant lay the dramatic backdrop of a Byzantine harbor.

For middle-class Americans throughout the period, the pleasures of modern shopping and commercial leisure were indivisible from the pleasures of moving through spectacular environments (see Figure 5.1). In many ways this aesthetic referenced the longstanding associations between consumption, the exotic, and the carnivalesque. Much of the symbolic appeal that traditionally attached to goods came from the basic fact that their origins tended to lie in places afar. Adding to their exotic nature, they were often vended by transient sellers who themselves had passed through these mysterious environments. Furthermore, they were encountered amid the festivities of the marketplace—a liminal atmosphere where everyday social conventions were for a time turned on their head (Agnew 1986; Lears 1994). Thus the marketplace had long been experienced as a geographically curious space that in its boundary-subverting qualities temporarily drew the outside world near. The fin-de-siècle fascination with the geographically novel drew on this tradition, but it also represented something new. The carnivalesque was premised on a static buyer who watched foreign items circulate through their local communities. In contrast, middle-class consumerism at the turn



Figure 5.1 Frances Benjamin Johnston, “Pan-American Exposition, Buffalo, N.Y., 1901: Man in wheeled chair at souvenir shop with 4 other persons”

Source: Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, DC.

of the century took a touristic perspective that assumed the well-to-do could venture out to see those exotic origin sites for themselves. If this venturing forth took place more often than not in the simulated settings of expositions, restaurants, and department stores, it nevertheless took a sort of imperial wandering as its reference point. The budding promotional apparatus within the tourist trade helped set the stage for these fantasies, showing that Westerners could pass through and indulge in the appeals of distinctly non-Western and atavistic settings. For those nerve-shattered businessmen left pasty and enervated by office work, a ferocious wilderness awaited that promised to steel their bodies and minds. Others, left wanting by Victorianism's prim decorum, could seek out the passion-infused environs of the Latinate and Oriental; a brief rail or sea journey was all that stood in the way. This mode of thought was spatially predicated on geopolitical expansion into "absolute space," to borrow a term from Smith (2003: 12), or the sense that exploration, conquest, and colonization were bit by bit filling in the gaps of the cartographic record, all the while bringing new areas and their riches into the metropole's orbit. Thus selling goods and services against the backdrop of wild, exotic, and romantic landscapes fit into a much larger project of redefining the world's unfamiliar zones as a great Western preserve. Behind the ersatz architectural flourishes and spectacular interiors lay the basic message that everyday spending could sate the same desires for power and privilege as imperial conquest.

Tourism, Modernity, and Mobility

Marketers built on this tradition in the near half-century running from the 1920s through the 1960s, but modified it in significant ways. Most importantly, the imperial aesthetic of old gradually fell away and was replaced by one predicated on modernity, mobility, and the vacationing sightseer (MacCannell 1999). This shift reflected a number of cultural currents, including a growing orientation toward leisure, middlebrow self-improvement, and "push-button" convenience (Fraterrigo 2009; Rubin 1992). As Americans across income levels began to enjoy paid vacation time, midcentury social observers predicted that travel habits would homogenize along upper-middle-class lines. From this perspective, tourist travel offered an educational and enjoyable form of self-improvement through exposure to the world's great sights; making use of an ever-expanding transportation base, vacationing Americans could piece by piece see the world. This line of thought was well encapsulated in a late-1950s ad campaign mounted by United Airlines ("How Many?" 1957: 107). Featuring montages of iconic American tourist stops, each ad asked: "How many of these famous places have you visited?"

Again, transportation interests would play a central role in promoting tourist travel. The airlines joined the railways and steamship lines in touting destinations along their routes. The Pan American subsidiary Panagra, for instance, took it as a chief concern for more than three decades to cast South America as an attractive vacation site, highlighting big-ticket attractions like the beaches of Rio and the ruins of Machu Picchu ("Agreement" 1964). And, as the major airlines grew and added routes, they promoted new lures as they came online. TWA, for instance, created colorful, full-page ads in the late 1940s illustrating its foreign destinations. "It's a wonderful time to see Italy," one typical missive remarked, before adding that only TWA offered direct flights to Rome ("It's a Wonderful Time" 1949). Others played on the novelty of air-age spatial scales. "Fifteen steps to Britain," the British Overseas Airways Corporation ("Fifteen Steps" 1958: 23) tempted readers in the late 1950s, referring to the air stairs that led the way

onto a transatlantic flight. Aviation manufacturers saw great promise in piquing tourist desires as well, encouraging Americans to think along air-age lines and consider an entire world of vacation options (“How Will Jet Flight Affect the Days?” 1957).

In its domestic iterations, tourism promotion was inseparable from the car culture that solidified in the midcentury United States. “America today,” gushed one Plymouth (1946: 86) ad, “is a nation of open roads . . . of smooth, long highways, just beckoning you to go places and see things!” Such exhortations rested on a sprawling automotive infrastructure that included automakers, oil companies, rubber manufacturers, road builders, and dozens of other large industries. At the same time, enthusiasm for the private car was underpinned by utopian dreams that modern society and technological progress could be brought into harmony with pastoral tradition (Seiler 2008). Coupled with a fast-spreading system of turnpikes and interstates, the private car could act as a touristic pipeline, as Americans streamed out of metropolitan communities to pass through a circuit of national sights and shrines. Tapping into the domestic themes of the era, manufacturers framed tourism as a way to foster national pride, while at the same time building familial togetherness. Ford, for instance, featured Gettysburg, Bunker Hill, and other battlefields in ads promoting a line of station wagons. The makers of gasoline, tires, and other products also recognized that their fate was tied to the nation’s growing car culture, seizing on vacation themes as an easy way to sell oil and rubber. These manufacturers produced reams of free travel literature available for pickup at service stations (Rugh 2008). But beyond that they regularly featured tourist sights and vacation themes in advertising campaigns. “Firestone Lets You Follow the Lure of Lovely Trails,” one 1957 ad proclaimed, tempting vacationers with a striking photo of Utah’s Monument Valley (“Firestone” 1957: 95). And, as more and more Americans took to the road, they fueled the growth of new industries, such as the motel and roadside dining trades. The national chains that grew out of this trend, including Holiday Inn and Howard Johnson’s, along with the bus lines that carried less affluent travelers, joined the chorus of corporate voices urging Americans to get behind the wheel (Jakle 1985). In all, the gaggle of industries with a vested interest in working the automobile deeper and deeper into the norms of American culture acted as a major promotional apparatus for domestic tourism throughout the era.

Reflecting a growing appreciation for the economic promises of tourism among managerial elites, official and semi-official booster groups emerged as active marketers during the industrial modern era. The most dedicated of the early groups, Southern California’s All-Year Club, used aggressive magazine advertising throughout the 1920s and 1930s to redefine the region’s winter havens as year-round destinations. Impressed by Southern California’s good fortunes and desperate for their own economic remedies, a wave of other states followed suit, creating active tourist boards, embracing the tenets of mass marketing, and appropriating funds for national ad campaigns (Berkowitz 2001). While spending fluctuated from year to year, this type of booster advertising remained common during the mid-twentieth century. Across the Atlantic, European governments also saw the value of systematic promotion, teaming up with state railways, steamship lines, and local hoteliers to attract American tourists in the 1920s and 1930s (Buzard 2001). After the war, heavy advertisers like the British Travel Association and French Government Tourism Office worked from the presupposition that long-distance travel was shifting from a class to mass phenomenon in the United States. Hoping to lure this middle-income crowd, they filled glossy magazines with lush and fantasy-laden images of place (Popp 2012). “People dream about visiting far-away places,” David Ogilvy (1963: 122)

reminded tourism marketers, adding: “Your advertisements should convert their dreams into action—transforming potential energy into kinetic energy.”

If the prospects of a booming tourist trade had been alluring to a rebuilding Western Europe, it proved intoxicating to the developing world. According to the wisdom of the day, tourism represented a quick road to modernization as dollar-toting tourists financed more traditional modes of industrialization (Endy 2004; Klein 2003). The promise of speedy development spurred more and more distant locales to actively market themselves. And, as they did, advertisements for faraway tourist spots filled professional-class magazines in the 1960s. Subscribers to titles like the *New Yorker* could open a single issue in 1965 to find prominent ads boosting everywhere from Panama (1965) to the Kingdom of Jordan (“The Flowers Bloom” 1965) to the Philippines (“Return” 1965).

While ads for such novel destinations were aimed at a more affluent crowd than the typical Texaco or All-Year Club missive, all shared a base assumption that industrial modernity was an era of fluid, easy movement (Osman 2011; Tomlinson 2007). It was in this manner that a touristic ethos most deeply permeated midcentury consumer culture. Instead of taking imperial conquest as its chief reference point, modernist consumer culture was more fundamentally shaped by fantasies of absolute mobility. Streamlined appliances made to resemble speeding bullets, car culture, ranch homes, sportswear, furniture, and shopping malls all reflected aspects of modern tourist culture. The aesthetics and underlying assumptions of each hinged on a fundamental view of the world as readily traversable space. Symbolically, then, vacation travel was the apogee of a prosperous and technologically empowered society that had bested austerity and staked out time to play (Popp 2012). Material plenty and the time to enjoy it were the twin pillars beneath slogans like “See the USA in Your Chevrolet,” and marketers selling everything from gasoline additives (“Ethyl Corporation” 1957) to cereal (“Post-Tens” 1957) piggybacked on this appealing picture of easy, leisured mobility (see Figure 5.2).

If there was an epicenter for this way of life, it was Southern California. Indeed, an idealized vision of life there was a foundational part of the midcentury tourist imagination. The region’s ranch homes, set amid spacious lawns, seemingly fused resort living with everyday life (Culver 2010). Ensuring that each home had the requisite space to double as recreational playground were the ribbon-like freeways that connected urban commercial districts to vast outlying tracts of undeveloped land (Avila 2004). In this way, infrastructures of mobility built on emerging leisure habits to produce a distinctly modern way of living. So closely were the Golden State and midcentury leisure linked in the popular imagination that garment makers battled in court over use of the term “California.” Los Angeles’s reputation for glamour and modern style, coupled with the city’s popularity with vacationers, meant that by the 1930s consumers nationwide were adopting the casual style of dress they saw emanating from the Pacific coast (Taylor 1946). Sensing a real threat riding a sea change in American norms of dress, New York-based apparel makers mimicked the trendy California look and created geographically deceptive labels like Wieder of California and California Sportswear, Inc. A Golden State industry group, California Apparel Creators, pressed for an injunction to halt the New Yorkers’ appropriation of the term, but were ultimately unsuccessful in their efforts. California, the presiding judge explained, described a holiday-minded way of life rather than a site of production (“California for All” 1946). From this perspective, California was less a distinct geographic entity than a consumer sensibility geared toward an informal, leisured, and suburban ideal.

“But...we do agree
on any cereal assortment —
as long as it's **Post-Tens**”



THIS TASTY ASSORTMENT OF CEREALS spells “vacation” from breakfast problems. Here’s a choice to suit everybody—every day. Seven wonderful cereals—roasted, toasted, popped, or puffed—in ten individual boxes. How about making *your* family happy—with Post-Tens?



ALL POST CEREALS HAPPEN TO BE JUST A LITTLE BIT BETTER.



Figure 5.2 “Post-Tens”

Source: *Life*, July 29, 1957, p. 42.

Along with California-style recreation and mobility, the midcentury tourist ethos was more earnestly built on internationalist notions of human contact across space. This worldview, exemplified by early visions for the United Nations, rested on an “American Century” ideology of infrastructure building and modernization unifying the world into

one great heterogeneous, yet harmonious, community (Zunz 1998). American modernism and International Style architecture were the aesthetic outgrowth of this ideology. As the industrial designer George Nelson (1967: 30) commented after surveying the world's travel infrastructure in 1967, "The universal architectural response to mass travel is mass modern." From this vantage point, the gleaming new airports and hotels were like nodes in a modern transport network fitted onto the globe (Sorkin 1992). Hopping from one to the next, jet-setting Americans could see the world's great sights, all the while remaining within a circuit fundamentally shaped by the assumptions of American modernism. And accordingly these vacationers could understand consumer capitalism as a modernizing force, introducing values of technological progress and democracy into foreign settings that would nevertheless retain a tasteful modicum of local color. The Hilton International Hotels constructed from Los Angeles to Istanbul after World War II were perhaps the ultimate expression of this worldview. Architecturally, the hotels shared a common look. Sleek lines of concrete and glass formed the exterior of the buildings, and each housed an elegantly spare lobby. But, also, each site was individualized through the understated use of local motifs and design elements (Wharton 2001).

How the twin ideals of easy mobility and internationalism intertwined and surfaced throughout midcentury consumer culture can perhaps best be seen in the first generation of shopping malls. Cropping up at the confluence of arterial roadways, developments like the Northgate mall (1950) in suburban Seattle were shaped by a sort of universal American modernism. Like the Hiltons, they rejected the opulent look of old in favor of low-slung concrete slabs and extended plate glass windows. And, also like the Hiltons, Northgate was outfitted with local flourishes, such as a totem pole, to provide a splash of local color (Clausen 1984). The same aesthetic was on display at the Wanamaker's Cross County opened in suburban Westchester, New York in 1955 to replace the company's recently shuttered Manhattan store. Embracing the hallmarks of modernism and equipped with a three-story parking garage, the interior design took episodes in Hudson Valley history as a leitmotif (McLaughlin 1955). Like the ornate late Victorian department stores that preceded them, these retail dream worlds drew heavily from the period's tourist imagination. Akin to the airports and hotels that moved globetrotting tourists along a high-modern travel circuit, the new malls and freestanding department stores were positioned to catch a hyperkinetic public. And, like the vacationing sightseer, consumers could locate themselves and quickly take in area color, without sacrificing comfort and style.

Mobility, infrastructure, and the global networks of modernity they enabled were the common threads that cut through suburban ranch homes, sportswear, international hotels, and mall architecture. All suggested continuous horizons over which a vast network of roads, airways, and terminals expanded, bringing a world of destinations within reach. And all were connected to Faustian visions of industrial development and modernization. In the eyes of transportation-industry executives, each new sightseer further capitalized a global travel grid. And, similarly, regional boosters transfixed by the prospects of modernization saw a booming tourist trade as their means of connecting into global capital flows. Thus, instead of escaping modernity, the predominant tourist imagination at midcentury was fundamentally predicated on celebrating it. This ideology of "push-button" leisure and easy globetrotting was no more reflective of most Americans' lived experience than the imperial fantasies that had preceded it. But for half a century the vacationing sightseer provided a coherent

set of aesthetics, themes, and assumptions that melded the touristic imagination with everyday consumer fantasy.

Travel, Authenticity, and Postindustrial Promotion

By the 1960s, modern mobility and its infrastructure had begun to lose luster. Certainly, vacation travel remained appealing and transportation interests continued to tout their technological breakthroughs. In particular, the airlines, which faced the prospect of filling enormous new jumbo jets, made a concerted effort to mass-market vacations to distant locales. But this push proved to be more of a last gasp than a triumph, as postwar affluence strained under the pressures of stagnating wages, rising fuel costs, and deindustrialization in the mid-1970s (Schulman 2001). *Forbes* went so far as to pronounce the “end of an era” in one 1974 report (“Tourism” 1974: 44). The business magazine could have just as easily announced the start of a new one, however, marked by the fragmentation of midcentury tourist culture. Partly, this splintering reflected a major shift in marketing ambitions away from chasing a large, relatively undifferentiated mass market to the targeted pursuit of narrow, and easy to define, niches (Cohen 2003). But also it reflected the emergence of a new player in the tourist trade—global hospitality firms. The earliest of these, the Walt Disney Company and Club Med, emerged in the 1950s (Avila 2004; Furlough 1993). But it was in the decades to follow that their influence would be most dramatically felt as businesses like Harrah’s, Caesar’s, Sandals, and others, along with conglomerates like Anheuser-Busch (owners of the Sea World and Busch Gardens parks), grew into industry giants by engineering playgrounds intended to speak to the travel fantasies of particular market segments (Davis 1997; Rothman 1998).

Again, shifts in tourism marketing dovetailed with more sweeping changes in culture, in this case corresponding with emerging consumerist notions of authenticity and personal becoming (Binkley 2007; Osman 2011; Zukin 2010). Advertisers boosting remote locales pursued adventure travelers whose sense of self and distinction was nourished by “going off the beaten path” (Popp 2012). According to this tourist trope, treks through faraway lands might distinctly bring on eureka moments of self-realization. “Looking for Yourself?” (1971–72), asked one ad placed by the New Zealand Government Tourist Office. “Try Looking in New Zealand.” In other cases, market research led areas to strike a more hedonistic tone. “Come play on the adult island,” the island of Grand Bahama urged after one such study revealed that its best prospects were the “Las Vegas” crowd (“Grand Bahama” 1970). Less suggestive but just as telling of the new tourist sensibility, marketers like Carnival Cruise Lines sold their fun-ship cruises as an opportunity to rediscover an inner self—the one that friends at home would never believe (Wayne 1988). Although aimed at different markets, each pitch was underpinned by a sense that the authentic self could only come out elsewhere, in some leisure backstage area (Goffman 1959).

Signaling what type of space plays host to the “real me” is in this way an important aspect of postindustrial consumer culture, and shows up throughout everyday life. Given the amount of time many Americans spend on the road, it is not surprising that cars offer one such opportunity. Vacationland decals, such as the OBX (Outer Banks, North Carolina) ovals plastered to cars trapped in rush-hour traffic across the Mid-Atlantic (Washington 2003), reference a few weeks each year when a more at-ease and complete self can come out of hibernation at the family beach rental. Similarly, the hunting

decals that grace many pickup trucks evoke wilderness playgrounds where the driver's virile masculinity, stifled in everyday life, can run rampant for a time. Camouflage jackets and Tommy Bahama shirts play a similar role, letting sportsmen and beachgoers identify themselves by dress. These symbols speak to very different idealized landscapes, but they share a touristic ethos anchored in leisure worlds where an authentic self can fully bloom. And, again, this idiom shapes the built environment of buying and spending in important ways. Nowhere is this more evident than in the elaborate landscapes that characterize many of today's retail chains. Whether it be the faux-hunting camp décor of a Cabela's or the Huntington Beach vibe of a Hollister, commercial spaces simulate those far-off sites of self-actualization (see Figure 5.3).

How tourist destinations are sold speaks more to consumer ideals than reality. In this regard, tourism promotion has much in common with how many other goods and services are advertised. But, unlike the case with most other products, selling tourism explicitly addresses the spatial dimensions of consumer longing by keying in on the surrounding environment. Moreover, it does so at levels that, in contrast to private settings such as the home, are little subject to individual control. Instead, tourism deals with geographic entities, whether they be cities, nations, or regions, that are widely understood to be the products of social relationships and natural processes rooted in time. Passing through an appealing place is ultimately a serendipitous experience in this regard: the pleasures it affords are essentially a product of the traveler's good fortunes rather than her or his own making. Geographic allusions, from Arabesque show windows to California sportswear, can thus be understood as an ongoing effort to introduce



Figure 5.3 “Huntington Beach Surf City, USA® Live,” Video wall exterior to Hollister Co. store, Fifth Avenue, New York City, November 2010

Source: Photograph taken by author.

these feelings of serendipity into the everyday commercial environment. They illuminate how place, as a cultural phenomenon with distinct existential appeals, has consistently been appropriated into marketing channels. Yet we can also see that the value it lends has been malleable, holding shape for decades and then subtly shifting during key transitional periods.

This dynamic of permanence and fluidity makes the touristic imagination a useful way of periodizing consumer culture. Imperialism, mobility, and authenticity provide ciphers to prominent selling themes. And, beyond that, touristic conceptions of place have provided a logic to the spatial configurations underlying different forms of consumer society. But perhaps most significantly they allow us to see how the interplay of geographic thinking and consumer desire endow globally transformative cultural processes—ranging from the racial subjugation of imperial conquest to the technocratic order of easy mobility to the postindustrial atomization of therapeutic authenticity—with the symbolic foundation and material weight of common sense.

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