“Branding the controversial: challenges in destination branding”

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Branding the controversial: challenges in destination branding

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to suggest that branding strategies can be applied effectively to sensitive sites, such as concentration camp memorials and memorial museums – which, in audiences' minds, function as brands. As memorials and memorial museums become increasingly sophisticated in delivering their message and evoking affective reactions as they inform their audiences, it is important that they also consider their branding strategies, and, specifically, their marketing communications with external target audiences. The article presents an exploratory study conducted with informants at the Mauthausen Concentration Camp in Austria in an effort to evaluate the Memorial's brand identity, its association with its country of origin, and its symbolic and experiential dimensions, as communicated by individuals of different nationalities who were interviewed at the site. The study found that informants evaluated the camp's identity as closely linked to forced labor on the local quarry, and as contrasting to the camp's attractive country of origin, Austria. The camp's identity was more connected to Germany in the informants' minds, than to Austria. In other respects, the camp differentiation was limited, as it was perceived as similar to other German labor and death camps, and to other sites of more recent forced labor and mass annihilation. Attempts were made to identify the roles that witnessing and collective memory might play in memorial destination brands.

Keywords: branding, brand identity, destination branding, country of origin, concentration camps and memorials.

Introduction

Walk through Jewish Prague, visit the Old New Synagogue, the Jewish Cemetery, and purchase souvenirs at the local gift shops – and the images of those who perished in the Holocaust haunt your every step. Buses arrive daily at Terezin, in the Czech Republic, and Oświęcim, in Poland, to deliver tourists to the gripping and horrendous stories about the concentration camps of Theresienstadt and Auschwitz, respectively. The Berlin Holocaust Memorial spans a full block in the city center with coffin-like structures that lead thousands of visitors to lose themselves in memory of the millions who lost their lives in the Holocaust. These are places of mourning, places of remembrance, educational destinations – and also brands. And, as brands, they must be carefully managed and thoughtfully promoted. This article addresses challenges that are inherent to branding sensitive destinations, and it presents an exploratory study that attempts to uncover meanings that individuals gain and brand-related inferences they make as a consequence of experiencing a concentration camp memorial.

1. Background

Visits to historical sites that portray events associated with human suffering and mass death have become a significant aspect of tourist visitation (Waitt, 2000; Austin, 2002). For example, the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C., has received visitation levels in excess of 2 million per year since its opening in 1993 (Lennon and Foley, 1999). Despite the fact that there is controversy related to destination brands that portray human suffering (Lennon and Foley, 1999; Wait, 2000; Austin, 2002), institutions such as concentration camps and Holocaust memorials succeed because they combine a memorial with a museum, and also because the memorials are commissioned by an act and with the support of government (Lennon and Foley, 1999). Most importantly, they succeed because they meet individuals' needs: the need to understand and to remember the past, and even the need to experience something that may be darkly fascinating (Steiner, 1971). The latter is known as the phenomenon of dark tourism, i.e., tourism of sites of death, atrocity, and mass killing (Lennon and Foley, 1999; Wait, 2000; Austin, 2002). Creating experience using replication and simulation is central to the phenomenon of dark tourism. That experience is, however, problematic as it begs the question "Is exposure to barbarism an antidote to that very barbarism?" (Gourevitch, 1993; Lennon and Foley, 1999).

The U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum is a case in point of such an experience: the museum itself is located an ocean away from the atrocities it documents. It tells its story through more than 5,000 artifacts collected at various Nazi concentration camps, including photographs, uniforms, letters, and a rail car used to take Jewish prisoners and others to the death camps; and it uses computer terminals, whereby visitors are presented with newspaper and film clips, and can hear taped interviews with survivors (Lennon and Foley, 1999). It also offers visitors personal testimonies from Holocaust survivors, who are situated within easy access on the ground floor, and who readily share their concentration camp experience[1]. Similarly, Jewish Museum Berlin presents a new complex and stark environment (opened in 1999), designed by

[1] Interview with Ephie Weitzner, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, December 23, 2010.

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celebrated architect Daniel Libeskind, where individual stories of Holocaust victims and survivors are told, with identity cards, personal photos and possessions. These are examples of visually mediated trauma that involve viewing trauma on film or other media, or reading a trauma narrative and constructing visual images from semantic data, or even face-to-face encounters with survivors (Kaplan, 2008).

Visual data, replication, and documentation are also used to bring history to life in the somber barracks and crematoria at Birkenau and at countless other concentration camps. Auschwitz presents one brick building after another, recounting atrocities in some, discussing prisoner background and nationalities in others, similarly using photography accompanied by personal stories and possessions. Theresienstadt recounts the stories of children in the transit camp, shows their drawings, and then ends each story with the final destination information – for most Theresienstadt children, the final destination was a death camp.

In creating new environments, as in the case of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum and the Jewish Museum Berlin, and in adapting the original sites of atrocity to display artifacts of the Holocaust and tell the story of the Shoa[1], as in the case of countless concentration camps, memorial museums have a purpose. They are meant to share knowledge about the Holocaust, to preserve the memory of those who suffered, and to encourage reflection upon the moral and spiritual questions raised by the events, and on one's own responsibilities as a citizen of democracy[2]. It should be added, however, that memorials and sites could potentially face obstacles in situations where local governments keep silent about the past – and rarely do states commemorate their own crimes (Lennon and Foley, 1999). In such cases, memorials are difficult to access. A case in point is Paneriai (Ponary), Lithuania, where German police and SS officers, aided by Lithuanian collaborators, killed over 70,000-100,000 individuals, most of them Jews (www.yadvashem.org, 2011)[3].

Memorial museums and concentration camp memorials, thus, have a purpose to communicate about the history of the Holocaust and to encourage reflection upon the events. They consist of images and also of emotions that individuals recall or experience when they think of the particular memorial experience. In other worlds, words memorial museums have brand identity, and, as brands, they represent a consistent group of characters, images, or emotions that consumers recall or experience when they think of a specific symbol, product, service, organization or location (Simeon, 2006, p. 464; Balakrishnan, 2009).

2. The memorial museum as a brand

As destinations, memorials present many more challenges than most market offerings. Managing a memorial as a brand is, at first glance, a stretch, as it intuitively presents itself as an object that must not be commercialized – that must be maintained as sacred, as a memory to the victims. And yet, as destination brands, memorials must communicate to attract target visitors (Knox, 2004) and to be able to sustain themselves. And they must also provide value (Rooney, 1995; Balakrishnan, 2009) to visitors and other target stakeholders. However, the primary role of the memorial is to relate the story of the events that occurred, to bring the past to life in a way visitors can relate emotionally, to be able to create a vivid memory of the past events.

2.1. Brand communication. For concentration camp memorials and memorial museums, communication about past events is a part of the experience itself – in other words, the communication takes place in situ, rather than with external target audiences. Memorials and memorial museums are becoming increasingly sophisticated in delivering their message and evoking affective reactions as they engage their audience in learning about the history of the camp, and the history of the Shoa. Marketing communication aimed at target audiences is very limited, as these memorials do not typically use traditional media, such as travel magazines, newspapers, or broadcast advertising, or even direct marketing.

However, in order to manage their brands effectively, these destination brands must engage target audiences, create a strong brand identity, and differentiate themselves from other similar market offerings. One venue of external marketing communications that is common for such destinations is the Internet. A well-maintained, easy-to-navigate, search-friendly website will likely build a stronger brand and brand identity, and also attract more visitors and impart information about the site more effectively. Another approach to external communication can be accomplished through partnering with tour providers, whereby the tour providers themselves will communicate about the memorials or memorial sites to prospective visitors.

2.2. Brand identity. In addition to communication, the brand must also be differentiated from other offerings (Palumbo and Herbig, 2000; Balakrishnan, 2009). Concentration camp memorials and memorial museums have brand identities that differentiate them from

[1] Holocaust.

[2] Adapted from the mission of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, www.ushmm.org/museum/mission.

[3] A search of Lithuanian websites that refer to the Paneriai (Ponary) massacre site reveal only a single Lithuanian tour operator (tourslithuania.com) that offers visits to the memorial. Without guidance from Western websites, visitors would not have any idea where to proceed to visit the memorial, as there are no directions to the memorial from the Paneriai train station, nor anywhere in the proximity of the site.

other memorials. While they have in common the Holocaust experience, the memorials have important distinguishing factors. One such factor, from a destination branding perspective, is the location of the camp, or its country of origin (Javalgi et al., 2001). However, these associations could potentially be blurry, as the primary country of association may be Germany, rather than Poland, Austria, France, the Netherlands, Latvia, the Ukraine, or the Czech Republic – countries where labor or death camps were located.

Another identity dimension is the purpose of the camps – forced labor, transit, holding center, or extermination. Camps located in Germany, such as Dachau, Sachsenhausen, and Buchenwald, were primarily concentration camps, or in the case of Bergenbelsen and Oranienburg, holding centers, whereas, the camps in occupied Poland, such as Auschwitz/ Birkenau, Sobibor, Belzec, and Majdanek, were extermination (death) camps. Theresienstadt, in the Czech Republic, was a transit camp and also a tool of deception, where the International Red Cross had access to observe elderly Jews supposedly undergoing spa treatments, and Jewish children supposedly attending school, drawing, and playing – in reality, most were on their way to death camps. Austria's Mauthausen-Gusen Concentration Camp was one of the largest labor camps in German-controlled Europe, known for hard labor in the nearby granite quarry, and for its annihilation-through-work strategy, or *Vernichtung durch Arbeit* (Maršálek, 2006, p. 35).

2.3. The memorial as a destination brand. As a destination brand, the museum memorial is very different from corporate, product, and service brands – although it has both tangible and intangible components, and it is mostly service dependent (Pike, 2005; Balakrishnan, 2009). A destination brand depends on macro-environmental factors such as politics, weather, and economic influences; geographical constraints that determine accessibility, infrastructure; heritage, culture, and country of origin traits that evolve only over time and cannot easily be changed, diverse and influential stakeholders, and diverse target consumers (Balakrishnan, 2009). Important considerations for memorials may be the relationship to the host country, where the host government may provide aid and even provide financial support for the memorial, and the local community, where locals may facilitate access and welcome visitors. Other considerations are whether the camp is within easy access of a major destination city, and whether there is public transportation to the site: for example, while access to Auschwitz is relatively easy by bus from Krakow, Poland, access to Birkenau is complicated because there is no bus service between Auschwitz and Birkenau. On the other hand, Terezin, the town where the Theresienstadt transit camp is located, is located far from primary tourist destinations in the Czech Republic.

Destination brands are complex and are constantly changing (Trueman et al., 2004; Kates and Goh, 2003) and they must be carefully managed (Balakrishnan, 2009). Importantly, destinations, like corporations, are subject to increasing market complexity – globalization, government policies, foreign exchange fluctuations, and increasing marketing costs; this warrants a corporate branding approach, as posited by Xie and Boggs (2006) and Balakrishnan (2009). As a destination, memorial marketing also requires a greater emphasis on factors internal to the organization, especially the role of employees – for destinations, this refers to local citizens – in the brand building process (Harris and de Chernatony, 2001; Balakrishnan, 2009). For example, in Poland, in the 1990s, during the filming of *Schindler's List*, a U.S. biographical drama film about the fate of Jewish refugees during the Holocaust, there was much sensitivity regarding Poland's perception by the international community, which could have, potentially, negatively affected visitors to its many memorials; that was, fortunately, not the case.

3. Brand dimensions

The primary dimensions of brands are the functional, the symbolic, and the experiential dimensions, as herein discussed. A functional dimension is one in which the brand solves some type of consumption-related problem: these are physical traits that are related to the purchase or use of a product (Aaker, 1996). Such attributes signal quality and/or value (Zeithaml, 1988; Dawar and Parker, 1994) related to the experience. In the case of a concentration camp memorial, among the dimensions that are relevant are the environment preserved or recreated, the true-to-life rendition of the concentration camp experience, and even the number and quality of objects that are used to recreate the environment. Missing artifacts are also meaningful: for example, in the case of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, one of the factors that frequently surfaces in tour presentations is the number of items that had been previously displayed on loan from Auschwitz, which are no longer on display because they had to be returned[1].

Another dimension is the symbolic dimension, in which the brand is used to associate the user with a desired group, role, or self-image, and to satisfy the visitor's psychological needs (Keller, 1993). The symbolic component includes visual imagery, metaphors, and brand heritage (Aaker, 1996). In the case of the concentration camp memorial, much of the visual imagery is provided through documentation and projections and, in the case of recently-built memorials, such as the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, the Berlin

[1] Interview with Ephie Weitzner, U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, December 23, 2010.

Holocaust Memorial, and the Libeskind Building of the Jewish Museum Berlin, through symbolic and haunting architecture. For example, the post-modern Jewish Museum Berlin Libeskind Building has a zinc façade, and it consists of three sections: the Garden of Exile, the three Axes of the German-Jewish experience, and the Voids, recalling the gas chambers and confusion experienced by the Holocaust victims; together, these form a symbolic visual and spatial language, providing visitors with their own experience as they walk through the spaces (www.jmberlin.de, 2011).

The experiential dimension, whereby the brand fulfills the individual's sensation, variety, and/or cognition stimulation (Park, Jaworski, and MacInnis, 1986; Keller, 1993), relates to what it feels like to experience the brand. For camp memorials, their mere presence on the site of unspeakable terror constitutes an important experiential factor. For camp memorials and museums, artifacts, projections, recordings, interviews, the presence of survivors on the premises, and the symbolism of the architecture, all combine to create a stimulating affective environment for the visitor, and thus enhances the experiential dimension of the brand.

The next section describes an exploratory study conducted at the Mauthausen concentration camp in Austria, with the purpose of evaluating the memorial's identity, its association with its country of origin (Austria), and its symbolic and experiential dimensions, as communicated by individuals of different nationalities who were interviewed at the site.

4. Study

Study informants consisted of visitors to the Mauthausen Memorial, 21 years old or older, who were approached on multiple visits to the Memorial. With the highest and most severe rank for brutality among Nazi concentration camps, the Mauthausen-Gusen Concentration Camp (Mauthausen) is known for hard labor in the nearby granite quarry, and annihilation through work (Maršálek, 2006, p. 35). From the spring of 1938 until the spring of 1945, approximately 120,000-320,000 inmates of more than 37 nationalities were murdered, shot to death, denigrated, frozen or beaten to death, starved, or exterminated through hard labor (Maršálek, 2006). Many inmates at the camp, too sick or weak to work, were killed through an injection of gasoline to the heart or through medical experiments (Maršálek, 2006). Yet others died in the 380-volt electrified cables around the camp while trying to escape (Maršálek, 2006). One of its most notable survivors was Simon Wiesenthal, founder and head of the Jewish Documentation Center in Vienna, and a freelance Nazi hunter, who, with the cooperation of Israeli, Austrian and West German governments, successfully brought to justice nearly 1,100 Nazi war criminals, including Adolf Eichmann (Simon Wiesenthal Center, 2011).

The informants were asked a number of questions and then were asked to elaborate on their responses in an attempt to combine data collection methods to achieve representations consistent with informant experience in all its contradictory richness, rather than simply to represent the average response (c.f. Wallendorf and Belk, 1989, p. 70). The respondents were from Canada (6), the United States (15), Germany (10), Spain (11), Australia (8), Austria (8), the United Kingdom (4), the Netherlands (2), the Czech Republic (1), Slovakia (2), France (2), Italy (2) and Colombia (4), for a total of 79 respondents. With regard to gender distribution, there were 48.1 percent male and 51.9 percent female informants. A total of 36 percent of informants had a university degree, 12 percent had some university education, 12 percent had a postgraduate degree, and 40 percent completed a high school education. The mean age was 45.5, with a median age of 47.

The informants were asked to elaborate on the memorial's *a priori*-to-the-visit perceived identity including their expectations for the visit, listed under expectations in Table 1 (see Appendix). They were asked to elaborate on the Memorial's post-visit association with its country of origin, Austria, and, specifically, on the impact of the visit on the informants' perceptions of Austria. Finally, they were instructed to reflect on the symbolic and experiential dimensions of Mauthausen, by elaborating on their post-visit mental associations with the Mauthausen Memorial. An abbreviated report of select findings is included in Table 1.

5. Findings

5.1. Expectations from the visit to the memorial. Some informants had no *a priori* expectations related to their visit at Mauthausen. For theses informants, a typical response was "I didn't know what to expect. We don't hear about this much in Canada, we hear about Auschwitz, but not much else" (Canadian female). Most other informants, however, knew precisely what the Mauthausen experience would provide: "learn about actual conditions and daily life of prisoners" (U.S. male); "thought it would be emotional and draining, and it was... surprised because the structure is still standing" (German female). Other noteworthy responses included the following: "an understanding of how such crimes can be committed by a supposedly 'civilized' people" (U.K. male); "pain, atrocities, injustice, death" (Spanish female).

5.2. Memorial country of origin. References to the destination country, Austria, were mostly positive. Respondents, for the most part, dissociated Austria

from the Nazi concentration camp. Some responses contrasted Austria's beauty with the atrocities at the camp: "Austria remains beautiful" (Canadian female). Others welcomed and further urged on Austria's preservation efforts. Typical responses in this regard were: "Austrians should contribute to the preservation" (U.S. male); "admiration for its preservation" (U.S. female). Yet others were surprised to see that atrocities were committed in Austria: "Didn't expect to find this in Austria" (U.S. male).

Attributions for the Mauthausen atrocities were made primarily to Germany, rather than to Austria: "I equate it more to the German occupation, than to Austria" (U.S. male); "it was a German concentration camp" (Dutch male). This is in line not just with perceptions of this concentration camp, but with perceptions of concentration camps situated in other countries. Camp survivors echo this sentiment – most resonantly, German poet and survivor, Paul Celan, in his poem *Death Fugue*: "death is a master from Germany, his eyes are blue/ he strikes you with leaden bullets his aim is true."[1]

However, there was some cautioning that Austrians could not fully blame the Germans: "... it would be unwise of Austrians to blame the Germans for every WW 2 atrocity" (U.K. male). Yet, on the most part, perceptions were that the camp's primary purpose was to further Nazi building interests, which, in the informants' perceptions, were not connected with the camp's country of origin, Austria. Thus, the brand identity for Mauthausen is not related as closely to Austria in the same way as most other destination brands are linked to their own countries of origin.

5.3. Symbolic and experiential dimensions of Mauthausen. Post-visit mental associations with the Mauthausen Memorial were very strong, with the Memorial eliciting extensive reference and imagery of the camp experience: "Death stairs, bones, rain, suffering, tragic, rocks, mud, slaves, beating, abuse, prisoners, anger, soulless" (Canadian female); "Hitler, Germany, World War, starvation, exhaustion, loss of hope and dignity" (Canadian female); "tragedy, suffering, cruelty, dark side of human condition" (U.S. male). There were frequent associations with Germany: "German occupation..." (U.S. male); "German, hatred..." (U.S. female).

With the exception of the stairs, rocks and other associations with the granite quarry, the associations for this camp were very similar to those of other places of mass destruction. There were even some direct associations with atrocities at other Nazi concentration camps and ghettos: "Auschwitz, Sachsenhausen, Treblinka, Warsaw Ghetto, Dachau, Belsen, Buchenwald, etc." (U.K. male). Other responses associated the atrocities at Mauthausen with other more recent atrocities: "Soviet Union, China, Baghdad and perpetration of terror" (U.S. male); "others in the world, hate, terror" (German female); "Spanish republic..." (Spanish male); "recent camps of extermination in Serbia" (Italian female).

6. Discussion

6.1. Witnessing: inciting to action. As an effective destination brand, a memorial should transform and should incite to action. It should not cater to those who need to experience something that may be darkly fascinating (Steiner, 1971) – to those in search of dark tourism destinations (Lennon and Foley, 1999; Wait, 2000; Austin, 2002). Stressing images of the repulsive may attract certain viewers for Freudian and/or sadistic reasons (Sontag, 2003; Kaplan, 2008); however, this must not be the purpose intended for concentration camp sites and memorial destination brands.

The Mauthausen Memorial visitors interviewed for this research were exposed to the recreated environment of the camp and to mediated images of human suffering. Audio-visual media was used to make the spectators witness human pain by displaying disturbing images and experiences (Chouliaraki, 2006). As such, it is important to note that the informants in the study were in fact at a distance from the scene of suffering: the media alone could not mediate a broad spectrum of bodily sensations such as smell, touch, heat, or discomfort – the visual thus severed suffering from its physical context and weakened its moral appeal (Chouliaraki, 2006).

Visually mediated trauma – i.e., viewing trauma on film or other media, or reading a trauma narrative and constructing visual images from semantic data – or even a face-to-face encounter with the survivor are not likely to lead to action, to pro-social behavior (Kaplan, 2008). Nor does empty empathy, whereby one's empathy may be aroused by each image, but then, as images come in succession, the empathy dissipates (Kaplan, 2008). With empty empathy, each catastrophe image cancels out or interferes with the impact of the prior image, and, in this process, viewers note the pain of individuals at a distance, and do not experience more than a fleeting empathy, with a rapid diminution of the affect (Kaplan, 2008).

On the other hand, for some individuals, it is possible that the outcome of the memorial experience resulted in witnessing – i.e., experiencing a vicarious image-induced trauma which resulted in personal transformation (Kaplan, 2008). An example of witnessing is offered by Susan Sontag's description of her initial

[1] http://www.nytimes.com/books/98/05/03/reviews/980503.03rortyt.html.

reaction to photographs of concentration camps when she was twelve years old, which led to a sense of shock, of numbing, of being forever changed, along with a belatedness trait of traumatic reactions (Sontag, 1977; Hirsch, 2004; Kaplan, 2008). Sontag was transformed by the experience of seeing the photographs: the photographs haunted her as she grappled with questions about morality, meaning, and emotion in images (Kaplan, 2008). The result of witnessing is an ethical self-examination, reflection, and learning; at the highest level, witnessing involves productive activism, wanting to change the world and eradicate injustice (Kaplan, 2008).

The goal of camp memorial destination brands should be to create meaningful witnessing experiences for visitors, rather than simply to provide visually mediated, site-specific perspectives of the Holocaust. Research studies could be conducted to examine the processes and communication needed to create the desired affect and emotion intensity such that the experience would lead to action on the part of the visitor to the memorial.

6.2. Collective memory and commodification. There has been ample focus on the topic of collective memory associated with traumatic destinations and grim global realities, such as death in vehicular pile-ups that are too common in emerging markets, mines that continue to explode long after the end of civil wars, kidnappings, and dangers from disease (Pelton, 2003). Grim collective memories are an important part of the destination brand, along with all the planned and unplanned aspects of the destination experience. For example, in the process of developing a documentary that dealt with the selling of souvenirs around Ground Zero after the 9/11 tragedy, Marcoux and Legoux (2005) found that the commodification of the site was just as much part of the collective memory as the history of the events.

Clearly, there is a sensitive interplay between consumption, the market, and culture that have characterized those debates, as well as the meanings attached to the respective sites; in the case of the Ground Zero site, Marcoux and Legoux (2005) found that the destination can be invested with multiple, sometimes conflicting, even contradictory meanings and values. Like Ground Zero, Holocaust sites are considered sacred places, especially for those whose relatives ended their lives there; but they are also places imbued with political and ideological meanings (Marcoux and Legoux, 2005), and they are heavily commodified, and not just with memorial gift shops. The sites are often surrounded by shops that sell souvenirs, from silver and gold Star of David jewelry to antique Kiddush cups in Jewish Prague, to Kosher restaurants in the proximity of the Raoul Wallenberg Holocaust Memorial Park in Budapest or the Museum Judenplatz Vienna. As such, all aspects of the memorial and the memorial environment should be taken into consideration in defining and communicating about the destination brand.

Finally, the memorial experience is also constructed at the individual level: individuals also consume socially-, culturally-, and historically-constructed representations to produce their own representations (Nguyen and Belk, 2007) of the memorial experience. As such, the interpretation of the destination brand will be very closely associated with the visitors' own background – note, for examples, the Spanish respondents' references to the forced labor camps under Francisco Franco's rule.

Conclusion

The present study proposes that branding strategies could potentially be used in the case of sensitive sites, such as concentration camp memorials and memorial museums. The article argues that these sites are indeed destination brands that must be carefully managed and promoted.

Interviews conducted with informants at the Mauthausen concentration camp in Upper Austria attempted to evaluate the memorial's identity, its association with its country of origin, and the Memorial's symbolic and experiential dimensions, as communicated by individuals of different nationalities who were interviewed at the site.

The study found that informants evaluated the camp's brand identity as closely related to the granite quarry and that they juxtaposed death and destruction at the camp with the beauty of Austria. The camp's identity was also less connected with its Austrian country of origin in the informants' minds, rather than to Germany. In other respects, the camp is not much differentiated from other labor and death camps dating to the German occupation, and from other, more recent sites of forced labor and mass annihilation. In this sense, in terms of interpretation, the individuals interviewed for this study are likely to have created their own socially-, culturally- and historically-constructed representations (Nguyen and Belk 2007) of the Holocaust experience at the Mauthausen site.

Over the years, many Holocaust survivors chose to repress the past and not burden their offspring with their story of oppression and humiliation; of those who courageously stepped forward to share their experience, few are still alive and able to tell their story of the Shoa. All that will soon be left to future generations to help them witness the Holocaust are the memorial destination brands – with their buildings, artifacts, recordings, photographs, and other visually-mediated images of the Holocaust experience.

In memory of Rosa Halberstadt,
Jagowstraße 2, Alt Moabit, Berlin.

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Appendix

Table 1. Representative responses (abbreviated)

Expectations	Associations	Impact on perception of Austria	Country	Gender	Age	Educ.
We don't hear about this much in Canada, we hear about Auschwitz but not much else	Hitler, Germany, horror, world war, starvation, loss of hope and dignity, exhaustion	Austria remains beautiful	Canada	F	49	Some univ. work
Disappointed that barracks were closed	Torture, political application, suffering	No impact... it's a contrast to the beauty of the country side	United States	F	49	Univ. grad.
I wanted to see how it looked and felt…	Tragedy, cruelty, suffering, dark side of human condition	Austrians should preserve it	United States	M	60	Univ. grad.
I wanted to see what the SS did, to learn history	World War II	I like the country and the people, no change	United States	M	65	Univ. grad.
Get an idea of what took place here... good thing to preserve it	Death, torture, SS, pain	It hasn't at all	United States	M	53	Univ. grad.
I wasn't sure how detailed the experience would be	Tragedy, death, humanity, inhumanity, deceit	... Now seeing this camp I can understand how evil can reside among beauty	United States	M	33	Univ. grad.
To experience what the holocaust was like in person	German occupation, death of innocent, total disregard for life	I equate it more to the German occupation than to Austria	United States	M	64	Post grad.
To see what happened here	Injustice, pressure, nationalism	No	Germany	M	62	H.S.
All that happened here not long ago	Power, terror, arrogance, use of force, injustice	No	Germany	M	59	H.S. dipl.
Terrible feats	I can't even say it	No, there was no connection	Germany	F	24	H.S. dipl.
It met my expectations	Gruesome, awful, unthinkable	No	Germany	F	57	H.S. dipl.
... People closed their eyes	Sufferings, pain, shame, sadness, hate.	It has not affected me	Spain	F	50	Univ. grad.
Exactly what we saw, the living and working conditions	Extermination, people's values, extremism, ignorance, separation	No	Spain	F	47	Univ. educ.
Very negative expectations	SS, Nazi, Auschwitz	Austria is beautiful and will not change because of the memorial place, Austria is more	Spain	F	33	Post grad.
To get a real appreciation and view of how was the life in the camp	SS, Jews, Spanish Republic people, Gestapo, U.S. army	Not at all	Spain	M	33	Univ. grad.
Very hard to see the reality of the moment but necessary	Injustice, World War II, slaughter, humiliation, Nazi, exploitation.	No way, it is not linked to the country where it is located	Spain	F	24	Some univ. educ.
Thunderstruck, where is the human race going?	Death, human depravity, imperialism, fascism	Is the truth valued?	Spain	M	34	H.S. dipl.
No expectations	SS, Hitler, terror, death, starvation, fear	No	Australia	M	25	H.S. dipl.
Expected it to be a pretty horrible place to go	Hunger, suffering and liberation in the end	No impact	Australia	F	24	H.S. dipl.
Thought to be emotional and draining and it was, surprised because the structure was still standing	Cruelty, man's inhumanity to man, not learning from the past, repeating history horror	Very surprised about the Austrians in the majority ignore what happened, it is pretty hard to believe	Australia	F	52	Post grad.
I studied history, I knew a lot of Nazi regime, was what I expected	Barbarity, sadness, total waste of human endeavour	Not at all	Australia	M	55	Univ. grad.
Expectations were met	Gruesomeness, fanaticism	No, why should it?	Austria	M	64	H.S. dipl.
No expectations noted	Injustice, terror, suffering, sorrow, inhumanity, deprivation of human rights...	No	Austria	F	27	Some univ. educ.
No particular expectation; the same as what we know already	Holocaust, II WW, craziness from human beings, unbelievable	No	Italy	M	32	Univ. grad.

Table 1 (cont.). Representative responses (abbreviated)

Expectations	Associations	Impact on perception of Austria	Country	Gender	Age	Educ.
I thought it could be like this but once you arrive you find out that is more powerful than expected	Discrimination, how humans can be so insane, respect of people, death and fight for people's right	It doesn't change my opinion	Italy	F	31	Univ. grad.
Understanding of how such crimes can be committed by a supposedly "civilized" people	Auschwitz, Sachsenhausen, Treblinka, Warsaw, Ghetto, Dachau, Belsen, Buchenwald, etc...	Minimally – but it would be unwise of Austrians to blame the Germans for every WW 2 atrocity	Great Britain	M	72	Univ. grad.
No expectations	Hitler, SS, racism, ignorance	Did not know that in the surroundings people did not know	Slovakia	F	30	Some univ. educ.
Seeing live (not pictures in a book) life conditions of the prisoners	Nazi, death, suffering, pain, horror, fear	This experience doesn't impact us a wrong impression about Austria	France	M	30	Post grad.
Without expectations	Evil, experiments, ignorance	It is difficult to believe that so many people have lived in such a system, but the generations change	Colombia	F	30	Post grad.
I could verify what I knew from history	Violence, terror, cruelty, atrocity, dominance, authoritarianism, inhumane acts	The country has already passed this sad reality. I'm leaving the country deeply impressed by its warm welcome	Colombia	M	63	Univ. grad.