THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TOURISM AND URBAN PLANNING IN SINGAPORE

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Abstract

The short nationhood of Singapore has witnessed many progresses and advances in the various aspects of the country. In the most evident way, the physical environment has undergone enormous changes that resulted in a cityscape almost beyond recognition from its historical past. This dissertation chooses to explore the process of nation building in relation to the tourism planning and development. Whilst urban planning is susceptible to economic forces and political demands, the tourism development is subjected the postmodern condition of the late capitalist society where consumption is eminent.

Tourism, by its own merits, warrants a discourse to include many aspects in economy, politics, environment, sociology and anthropology. A postmodern analytical framework is adopted in this work to clarify the changing landscapes in Singapore under urban planning strategies and tourism development. In particular, it employs the interpretation postulated by Zukin in which “dreamscapes and spectacles” are constantly produced to serve as urban landscapes of consumption. The postmodern urban landscapes exemplify the prevalence of consumption that provide a context for people to
engage in the collection of signs and images of many different cultures. This practice brings about a generalised process that creates landscape-spectacles which commodifies history and culture for mass consumption by tourists who demand novelty and uniqueness. In the case of Singapore where the rapid development in economy and urbanisation left little natural scenic landscapes for tourist consumption, the process Zukin identified is particularly accelerated.

The dissertation first provides an overview of both urban and tourism planning to establish the relationship in their respective development. The development will be explained in two main phases, namely the pragmatic phase when economic concerns was primary and the juncture when planning decisions in both operation take on a broaden perspective. Finally, the “dreamscape” created out of the Singapore River is offered as a case study. The Singapore River will be shown as an entity that has evolved from merely serving as a historical reminder to become a postmodern urban landscape of consumption where contemporary culture is staged.

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