

# Chapter 17

## The Urban Sensescapes and Sensory Destination Branding


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### ABSTRACT

*The sensory attractiveness of destinations has recently been one of the most important focal points when considering the impact of senses on positive and memorable travel experiences. Specifically, urban areas reflect different multisensory dimensions that can be analyzed and included in marketing efforts to stimulate positive tourists' experience and memory of a place, but also to encourage local sustainable development. Despite the fact that tourism studies center tourist experience mainly on visual impressions, recent researches stress the importance of recognizing and understanding the role of the human body in forming positive experiences, which is in tourism literature known as sensescapes (i.e., tactile, visual, gustatory, olfactory, and auditory senses).*

### INTRODUCTION

The sensory attractiveness of places has recently been recognized as an important aspect in the management of tourist destinations since studies suggest the positive impact of senses on memorable travel experience (Agapito et al., 2014). Even though tourism studies center tourist experience on visual impressions (Pan & Ryan, 2009), recent research stresses the importance of recognizing and understanding the role of the human body in the formation of positive experiences, which is in tourism literature known under the term sensescapes, i.e tactile, visual, gustatory, olfactory, and auditory senses (Dann

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& Jacobsen, 2003; Pan & Ryan, 2009; Porthaus, 1985; Agapito et al., 2017). It has been argued that destinations reflect authentic multisensory experiences, can be branded based on their unique sensory features, and in doing so stimulate tourists' positive emotions and memory of a destination. However, studies in tourism that empirically recognize the role of five human senses in the creation of a positive experience are still scantily researched, especially in the context of urban areas where there is still a need for more theoretical and empirical discussion.

Urban areas reflect different multisensory dimensions that can be analyzed and included in marketing efforts to stimulate positive tourists' experience and memory of a place, but also to encourage local sustainable development. The approach to sustainable tourism indeed depends on effective local governance and stakeholders (Beaumont & Dredge, 2010). Governance plays a key role in the creation of a stable environment for households, the private sector, and investors (Detotto et al., 2021). For instance, tourism stakeholders should focus on the creation of experiencescapes, operational spaces where they are interconnected, and where experiences are formed and consumed in a meaningful way (O'Dell, 2005). Furthermore, servicescapes can be designed by the man, physically controlled and managed, and consist of signs, tools, artifacts, and so forth (Bitner, 1992). All-natural and artificial objects of a large urban setting can provide a symbolic representation of a place where each human sense plays an important role in experiencing the city (Borer, 2013). Thus, the ability of a government to produce the services that visitors expect is important (Detotto et al., 2021). Finally, both experiencescapes and servicescapes should be coordinated to produce bettered strategies, convey meaningful sensory impressions, and stimulate consumer reactions, persuading certain consumption activities that are going to happen in a destination.

## **BACKGROUND**

### **Urban Tourism**

Defining urban tourism remains unspecified in the literature (Romero-García et al., 2019). However, scholars defined urban tourism in a variety of ways, such as being referred to as economic activity (Brouder & Ioannides, 2014), complex social phenomenon (Bulatova & Ul'chickij, 2015) as a short-term trip to urban settings with a large population or as a complex system (Romero-García, et al., 2019). However, it is deemed as a complex network, firstly because it is an open setting and can develop along with other cities, has a connection among urban tourism elements and other close cities, and finally, has diversified dimensions of tourism activities (Romero-García et al., 2019; Valeri, 2016; Valeri and Baggio, 2020a; 2020b; 2020c; 2021; Baggio and Valeri, 2020).

As a more simplified explanation, urban tourism refers to a variety of activities performed by a tourist where the city is the central destination and place of interest (Ye et al., 2019). It is dissimilar from other tourism forms due to its complexity and effect on the tourists' behavior (Edwards et al., 2008). In this context, tourists' experiences are formed based on different urban features, and accessibility of the city's space together with other attractions such as hospitality services, and public transportation (Ashworth & Page, 2011; Xu & Zhang, 2016). In general, tourism is mostly urban in its nature and is developing faster than tourism of other types of destinations across Europe (Nilsson, 2019).

Moreover, some academics argue that the complexity of urban tourism makes certain obstacles in creating tourists' satisfaction, since several urban dimensions clash, such as the city's features, sectors, and functions (Edwards et al., 2008). Wearing and Foley (2017) suggest that overall tourist satisfaction

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